

**The British-Yemeni Society
Journal**

2006

THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

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BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY JOURNAL

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CONTENTS

Officers and Executive Committee 2006–2007		Inside front cover
Chairman's Report	<i>Victor Henderson</i>	3
'Sands of Time' exhibition in Sana'a	<i>Julian Lush</i>	6
Soqatra Training Centre	<i>Bill Heber Percy</i>	8
Christmas in Dhala, 1939	<i>Helen Joly de Lotbinière</i>	11
Salute to an Adventurer: Musée Henry de Monfreid	<i>Julian Lush</i>	21
In the Lion's Paw: Henry de Monfreid and the British at Aden (1916–1922)	<i>Editor</i>	24
Remembering Leigh Douglas	<i>John Peterson & Peter Kemp</i>	36
Book Reviews		39
Obituaries:		
June Knox-Mawer	<i>Nigel Groom</i>	68
Derek Harvey OBE	<i>Francine Stone</i>	71
Third International Red Sea Conference		Inside back cover

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A group of musician/singers and dancers (*Fanoun al-Yemen*) from Yemen's Ministry of Culture took part (2–8 July) in this year's *Salaam Music Village* in London, a celebration of the Arts and Culture of the Islamic World involving participants from twenty Islamic countries. The Yemeni group later performed in Liverpool, Cardiff and Sheffield. The photograph of the four Yemeni dancers: Emad, Mahdi, Hani and Esam, was taken at Kew Gardens on 2 July; the other photograph, of Abdullah Hussain and Ali Hussain, was taken during a performance in Regent's Park on 8 July.

Paul Hughes-Smith

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Thirteenth Annual General Meeting, Thursday 22 June 2006)

The Society has had another active year at a time when there are some signs that our government is putting more effort into developing bilateral links. This has been noticeable in the business field, where a small government-backed scoping mission, organised by the British Consultants and Construction Bureau, visited Yemen in the Spring to look at the prospects, particularly in the engineering field. I hope that before long it will be possible to mount a larger trade mission to Yemen.

Another promising sector that ought to be developed is tourism to Yemen. Like all of you, I would wish that the FCO Travel Advice for Yemen were more positive than it is. But, at least I can say that it is better than it was, and all those involved in the promotion of tourism in both countries have a job to do. There have been some positive articles about Yemen in the British press in recent months – I can think of a couple on Soqatra and another on Rada'a. We need more of them to whet the appetites of people who are looking for somewhere new to spend their holidays – and perhaps we should lobby for an outward tourism mission. Your committee will explore the possibilities.

Of course, the Society makes its own contribution to the development of tourism. In November last year Alan D'Arcy, to whom I take my figurative hat off, led another successful tour to Yemen. This was the eighth tour organised by the Society, and the ninth tour is being planned for later this year.

In October we enjoyed an illustrated lecture by Carl Phillips entitled 'Big Birds, Bees and Trees in South Arabia past and present'. His talk was derived primarily from results of archaeological excavations in Tihama where he has worked for several seasons and has been supported by the Society.

Your committee is all too aware that most of our meetings take place in London and that many members find it difficult to travel from far away places. We were therefore delighted that two of our members, Nick and Jill Hammans, gave a talk describing their travels in Yemen entitled 'Frankincense, Amazement and Myrrh', to the Exeter branch of the Royal Geographical Society in December. We need more such initiatives, and your committee would welcome suggestions from members of the Society.

In January this year we were grateful to the Middle East Association (MEA) for the invitation to a discussion group meeting led by Captain Roy Facey, the Aden Port Development Adviser, and Abdulrab al-Khulaqi, the Marketing Director, entitled 'Aden in a Changing Region'. Roy Facey's presentations have become a permanent feature of the MEA's calendar and are always informative and entertaining. In March, Frank Gardner OBE, the BBC Security



Abdullah Saadat, renowned lute ('ud) player and singer from Tihama, at the Horniman Museum, London, on 5 July.

Paul Hughes-Smith

Correspondent was invited to give an illustrated lecture on his 'Impressions of Yemen'. It was particularly striking that Frank's affection for the Arab World and for Arabs in general survived, absolutely intact, his dreadful experience in Riyadh a couple of years ago, which so transformed his life.

The Islamic Art Circle at the School of Oriental and African Studies invited the Society to attend a lecture by Dr Salma Samar al-Damluji, a long-standing member of our Society. Her subject was 'The Yemen Architecture Project from Yafa' to Hadramaut'.

In May, Pat Aithie was to have launched her new book *The Burning Ashes of Time* in London with the support of the Society. Unfortunately she was taken into hospital just before the meeting and an alternative programme had to be devised. We are grateful to Bill Heber Percy for coming to the rescue with an account of last year's Soqatra visit and a report on the Society's support for the Hadibu Training Centre. John Mason, our Hon. Treasurer, could not be present but kindly provided a selection of his excellent photographs of the Island to accompany the talk. We are also very grateful to Bill for his untiring and fruitful work on behalf of other Soqotran NGOs.

Looking forward, and returning to the subject of tourism, we hope that members will be able to visit the Soqotra exhibition in Edinburgh this summer. Under the title 'Soqotra, Land of the Dragon's Blood Tree', this will be formally launched at the Royal Botanic Garden on 30 June – next week – and will be open to the public from 1 July until 29 October. If you know of any tour operators specialising in eco-tours, I hope you will do your best to persuade them to visit Edinburgh to see what a golden opportunity awaits them!

Our first meeting after the AGM will be the launch of Peter Hinchcliffe's account, with co-authors John Ducker and Maria Holt, of the last days of British rule in South Arabia, entitled *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden*. This will take place at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, 2 Belgrave Square, on 20 September.

At long last the exhibition of Nigel Groom's photographs, displayed here at last year's AGM, was opened in Sana'a in late May. The Society was represented by our Vice-Chairman, Julian Lush, and Alan D'Arcy, and the event was presided over by Michael Gifford, the British Ambassador, and Dr Elizabeth White, Director of the British Council in Sana'a. Our thanks are due to the Government of Yemen and Sharif Haider al-Habibi for their support for this exhibition which is later intended for permanent display in Bayhan.

Over the year the Society has continued to support a number of projects, which are gradually coming to fruition. Details of the grants made by the Society are included in the accounts presented by our Hon. Treasurer, John Mason, whom I warmly thank for looking after our funds. Thanks are also due to the other societies and individuals who have supported us, in particular Ann Thomson at the MEA for arranging the meetings that we have held there, but we are also greatly indebted to our host today, the Ambassador of Yemen, and to the staff of the Embassy for the hospitality extended to us once again on the occasion of our AGM. As the new Chairman of the Society I am delighted to have been able to welcome HE Mohamed Taha Mustafa as the new ambassador of Yemen. He arrived in Britain after 'Id al-Fitr last year and presented his letters of credence in February this year. May I also mention that Khalid al-Yamani has now replaced Faisal al-Abdali as the Embassy's representative on your committee.

I take the opportunity here to thank Julian Paxton for soldiering on as Hon. Secretary of the Society for an additional year, which is way beyond the call of constitutional duty. We urgently need to find a successor for him.

I am sad to record the deaths of Dr Derek Harvey OBE, who will be remembered for his knowledge of the birds of Yemen and for his keen interest in wild life conservation; of John Hewitt MBE, who wrote a fascinating account for the Journal in 2004 of his 'First Footsteps in Yemen – 1947'; and of Philip Allfree, whose vivid and entertaining memoir of his time as a political officer in the former

Eastern Aden Protectorate, *Hawks of the Hadhramaut* (1967), is a modern classic of Arabian travel literature.

But to end on a happier note: I am sure you were as delighted as I was to learn of Sultana al-Qu'aiti's appointment as MBE in HM The Queen's Birthday Honours List – a richly deserved award for her charitable work in Yemen.

VICTOR HENDERSON

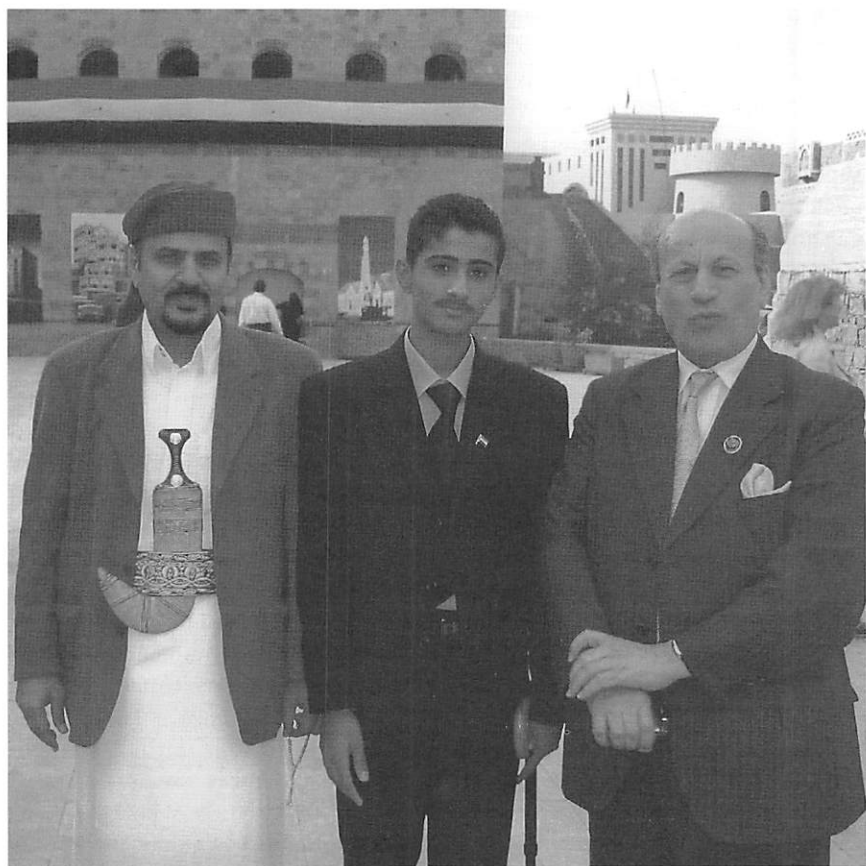
'SANDS OF TIME': Exhibition of photographs of Bayhan, 1948–50, at the National Museum, Sana'a

In true Yemeni style, the newly enlarged National Museum was ceremonially opened on the morning of 27 May 2006. A red ribbon was cut and a plaque in Arabic and Sabaic unveiled by the Vice-President, HE Abdul Rabbo Mansur, before a throng of dignitaries including Khalid Ruwaishan, Minister of Culture. The opening of the Museum was a necessary precursor to the opening of the British Council's 'Sands of Time' exhibition in the Museum's new gallery the same afternoon.

Somewhat to the disturbance of qat-chewers, at 4pm a second throng assembled for the launch of an exhibition of photographs taken mainly by Nigel Groom when a young Political Officer in Bayhan in 1948–50. To his photographs, which were first put on display (with support from Dirham Abdo Saeed and Longulf Trading) by the British-Yemeni Society at its AGM in June 2005, Elizabeth White, Director of the British Council, had added several, more contemporary pictures of the Al-Habili family in the possession of Sharif Haidar Saleh Al-Habili, and had entitled the exhibition 'Sands of Time'. After the exhibition closes on 16 June, it is planned to move the photographs to a house in Bayhan for permanent display. This accords with Nigel Groom's wish that the younger generation should have the opportunity to see something of the way of life which their antecedents led but which has since disappeared.

The British Ambassador, Michael Gifford, and Abdulaziz al-Gendary, General Director of the National Museum, both gave short addresses to mark the occasion, whereafter Sharif Haidar led the guests through the new gallery where the 40 or so photographs were displayed.

JULIAN LUSH



From left to right: Sharif Haidar bin Saleh Al-Habili with Muhammad bin Awadh al-Aulaqi and Shaikh Saleh Farid al-Aulaqi outside the new wing of the National Museum, Sana'a.

SOQOTRA TRAINING CENTRE

BILL HEBER PERCY

The author was founding chairman of the Society, 1993–97.

In early 2005 a party from the British-Yemeni Society which included the Hon. Secretary, Julian Paxton, the Hon. Treasurer, John Mason, and the author, visited Soqotra. Whilst there they had an opportunity to tour the Soqotra Training Centre (STC) and to meet some of the staff and students.

The STC, a charitable organisation, was started by Len and Wendy Pearce in 2000 to provide facilities for Soqotran students to learn English from Level 1 to Level 7, and to be introduced to basic computer skills and the Power Point programme. There is an enormous demand for places, and in the academic year 2004/2005 some 120 students were enrolled at the STC. Under the auspices of the British-Yemeni Society, Shan Egerton, Mary Morgan and the author launched an appeal for funds for the STC. The response was magnificent, and over £12,500 was raised. Special thanks are due to the Muhammad bin Issa (MBI) Foundation for its generous contribution. £10,000 was transferred directly to the STC to support its activities in the 2005/2006 academic year. In addition, 3 computers with their ancillary equipment were obtained, and through the efforts of David Reid were packed and air freighted to Dubai, where they were then loaded on a dhow bound for Soqotra. Miraculously they arrived safely and are already in use. The balance of the appeal is being retained to support the STC's future activities.

The present academic year, which ends in May when the monsoon wind starts to blow, has seen 115 students registered for the main English courses. 17 of these are in Levels 5 – 7, and are also studying computers. Meanwhile, at the request of the local authorities, a special class has been started to help secondary school teachers on the island improve their English teaching skills, and another class for hotel workers, immigration and customs officers and airport personnel. Thus the staff at the STC have been very fully occupied. Despite this, they have been able to raise specific funds to assist some fishermen on the island replace equipment destroyed in the Tsunami disaster, and to help a bedouin community construct a primary school.

The STC has now completed five years of English language teaching and four years of computer instruction. Over 400 certificates have been issued to students who have completed between 1 and 5 years of study. Of those who have completed their studies, 15 now have jobs in the tourist industry as guides and translators. Two have gone to university in Saudi Arabia on scholarships, and two others have gone to mainland Yemen to continue their studies there.

In a recent letter the director says, 'I am delighted to learn that the balance of the Appeal, £2,800, will be available to the STC for the start of the next academic year



Staff and students at the Training Centre



'Certificate Day' at the Training Centre, May 2006

in September. It will be of great assistance to us. Will you please thank the donors on behalf of myself, the other members of staff and the students. Whilst the STC remains the flagship of our work on the island, we would like to launch out and start two or three other projects in areas where, with the knowledge we have built up over the last five years, we see huge needs. One is for a locally developed and manufactured hand pump for wells. An engineering friend built one in an afternoon and it now works as a demonstration model on our own well. We would like to train two Soqotrans to build and retail these pumps. They can be built for about \$40 using materials already available in Soqotra. They are easy to operate and can produce a litre per stroke from a depth of 9 metres. Another project is a locally produced (it is already being manufactured in the Mahra area on the mainland) solar desalination plant, also using local materials, and producing 6 litres of fresh water per day from brackish or dirty water. We would also like to start a small nursery for citrus trees. We believe that none of this will distract us from our paramount work in the STC'.

All these proposed projects seem eminently practical, and valuable to the Soqotran community. During our visit we came across evidence of the brackishness of many of the coastal water supplies, and noticed the lack of locally produced fruit and vegetables. The establishment of a nursery citrus garden would seem to be particularly worthy of support.

As a visitor to the island for only a couple of weeks, it ill behoves me to comment, but in comparison to some high profile projects financed by international development agencies of various hues and acronyms, and relatively bottomless pockets, the STC is doing work of considerable importance on a mere shoe string. For example, we admired a stretch of dual carriageway recently built around Hadibu (the capital), which must have cost millions to construct but would seem under-used even if every vehicle across the island were on it at the same time. Interestingly, a stretch of this carriageway was washed away by a flood soon after completion. The total budget for the STC for 2004/2005 was \$49,000. With 120 students in the school this equates to about \$400 per student – remarkable value for money. Funding remains a considerable problem. Whilst it is possible, if not easy, to raise funds for a specific project, to keep on raising money for an open-ended project like the STC, where the bulk of costs are recurrent, is much more difficult even though it may be of greater value to the future of Soqotra and the Soqotrans.

CHRISTMAS IN DHALA, 1939

HELEN JOLY DE LOTBINIÈRE

Helen de Lotbinière arrived in Aden in late 1939 to join her husband, Edmund, a Captain in the Royal Engineers, who had been posted there shortly after the outbreak of World War II. She was then 27 and it took all her youthful determination to overcome bureaucratic and other wartime obstacles to her travelling overseas. Married accommodation in Aden was then at a premium, but Edmund succeeded in finding a small mud-brick house in a walled garden in Sheikh Othman for them to rent.

Helen had an adventurous spirit worthy of her father, H. T. Ferrar, the New Zealander geologist on Scott's first expedition to the Antarctic. This, her unaffected charm and striking good looks won her friends and admirers in all walks of Aden's expatriate society. Her letters home are those of a naturally gifted writer with an artist's eye for detail, and offer vivid and entertaining impressions of life in Aden between 1939 – 1941. The Editor is grateful to her niece, Virginia Forbes, for permission to publish extracts from Helen's early letters describing her new home in Sheikh Othman, and the visit which she and Edmund made to Dhala in December 1939 at the invitation of Freya Stark and Stewart Perowne. Freya's own account of this visit was published in 'The Times' on 28 March 1940 and later reproduced in her book 'East is West' (1945). Helen died in 1953.

27 October 1939

'Everything is so thrilling and *romantic* that I scarcely know where to begin an attempt at description. I am sitting in a garden of date palms and yellow-flowering shrubs (one is *henna* which has a very heavy, sweet scent), beside a well and a small swimming pool; the gardener is leading a camel up and down an earth ramp, which by means of ropes and pulleys causes a leather bucket, shaped rather like a kettle, to fill at the bottom of the well, and then to rise with a pleasant squeaking and groaning of wooden tackle, to spill its contents into the pool; the pool is a concreted tank standing above the ground about 4 ft. high, and 6 yds. by 3 yds.; the water is deliciously cool and slightly brackish. A flock of pretty little Persian *bulbuls* are enjoying the garden too. In fact I am in an Arabian garden, in an oasis, in a desert of Southern Arabia!

The oasis was Sheikh Othman where Helen's husband Edmund had rented 'an Arab mud-brick house of two rooms, one below and one above, set in the garden in which I am now sitting. We have *five* Somali boys to look after us, the bare necessities in the way of furniture and eating utensils, and the luxury of five Persian carpets to cover the broken concrete floors... Sheikh Othman is an Arab village of mud-brick buildings [where] a few industries are carried on in a haphazard manner, such as brick-making, cloth weaving and dyeing, pottery etc. There are about a dozen houses set in gardens like ours, occupied by Indians, Arabs and a few British people... and the Scottish Medical Mission. Then there are the Government Gardens, and the rest is desert. The Arabs are a very colourful, gay and friendly community – all smiles, greetings and curiosity. There are a great many Somalis from across the Gulf of Aden, who are taller [and] darker skinned ... the



Helen and Edmund Joly de Lotbinière with Antonin Besse (wearing bow tie) and a naval visitor, Aden, 1940.

night comes suddenly at about 6pm; the stars above the waving palm tops are brilliant, and the quiet from the desert is more powerful than the buzz of noise coming from the village.'

Helen and Edmund were invited by Freya Stark and Stewart Perowne to spend Christmas with them at Dhala, in the mountainous hinterland of the Protectorate, an opportunity to travel outside Aden which they eagerly grasped.

22 December

'The great day at last!... At 9.30 am Freya and Stewart arrived in a box-body Ford to pick us up. Away we went, careering over the roadless desert towards the

mysterious mountains already shimmering purple in the heat. You can imagine my excitement – that wonderful, ecstatic feeling when one is setting forth into the unknown! I could have laughed and sung and clapped my hands for joy, but I curbed my primitive outbursts in deference to our companions who are definitely of a higher order than the usual run of mankind... We crossed the ten miles of sandy desert to the oasis of Lahej, which is quite a large strip of fertile land where the rivers emerge from the hills, and the water emerges from beneath the river beds to be used for irrigation before it loses itself in the desert... We tottered down into one of the waterless wadis, which formed our road for the next sixty miles: an arid boulder-strewn gash in the fantastic volcanic mountains, sometimes a mile wide, sometimes barely wide enough for the car; it winds and twists this way and that, and we bump and rattle and crash and crash again. Sometimes it looks as though we have come to a sheer rock wall and that there is no possible way out of these oppressive red, purple and black mountains, but at the last minute there is a narrow turn, and on we go. What is so surprising is the astonishing variety of trees, shrubs and *flowers* – bright red and yellow flowers on leafless, almost branchless trees...'

Five miles from Dhala the battered Ford's rear axle broke in half, and they had to complete their journey on foot.

'... the air was cool and exhilarating like our beloved New Zealand mountains... We walked for about a mile up the last stretch of the gorge, where the trees became larger and leafier with every bend; and on either side of us the rock walls rose almost perpendicular, but with sufficient ledges for villages to maintain a hold far above us, scarcely distinguishable from the rock from which they were hewn. The women and children were terrified by the sight of four pale-faced Europeans walking, and they set up a frantic hullabaloo, shrieking, crying and dashing wildly about on the rocks; a handful of men and small boys were *very* brave, and came down into the wadi-bed to walk at a discreet distance behind us.. Suddenly we were faced with the true end of the valley, the Khureiba Pass up to the Dhala plateau, which lies at about 5000 ft. We zig-zagged up a track which would have been rather alarming in the car, and I was thankful to be on my two flat feet. We came out onto the plateau as night fell. The stars came out above the jagged mountains, the half moon rose to light our way, the crickets warbled shrilly in every little thorn bush, and we walked with joy and peace. About half way across the plateau is Sufrah, the Government Guard Post,... [and beyond] the Rest House, where dinner, baths and beds awaited us'.

23 December

'The view from the Rest House is glorious; it is perched on a little rise of its own, and the yellow, uneven, part-cultivated country slopes away on all sides to the rim of hills and mountains; in one direction is the Arab town of Dhala, with the Amir's

medieval walled castle above it; behind us is the huge pile of Jebel Jihaf, 8000 ft.; and to the North the high, level, wall-barrier of the unfriendly Yemen... The Italians have gained influence in the Yemen, and Aden feels that it must guard against attack from that quarter should the Italians come into the war against us. Freya and Stewart, in a most tantalising manner, have been discussing the possibilities of getting into the Yemen to spread British propaganda. Yesterday, Col. Lake [Deputy Governor] and Arthur [Bentinck, the Governor's ADC] arrived at tea time. When the sun has lost its heat, the wind is piercingly cold; but Arthur and I, to everyone's horror, wrapped ourselves up in coats and rugs and sat outside to watch the sunset lights on the mountains, until we were driven in by the cold at about 7.30pm. Then we all spent the evening huddled round the pressure lamp: Freya reading Job in Hebrew, Stewart reading Milton, Col. Lake reading a two months' old *Times*, Arthur scrabbling through an attaché case full of correspondence [and] Eds [Edmund] reading a modern novel!

'Today we have had two official calls, one from the Amir of Dhala [Nasr bin Shaif], and one from his son [Haidera], the Amir of Jebel Jihaf. We watched them come out of the castle gate... cavorting towards us on their Arab ponies, with their guards running on foot beside them. The countryside is full of activity – men working in their small patch-work fields of millet, warriors jog-trotting on foot, slung about with every kind of weapon; traders with three or four loaded donkeys; women walking gracefully along every path, in orange and black striped garments, with earthenware water jars on their heads, or more often petrol tins flashing in the sunlight; and children *everywhere*. Men, women and children are all friendly and very inquisitive, though the women are inclined to be shy and to relapse into giggles. The whole scene is like some of those old Italian landscapes with so much distance and detail that they captivate one's imagination completely – I never thought they could be real, but now they have come alive before my eyes.'

24 December

'This morning we returned the Amir's call. Freya and I put on stockings, and scarves over our heads, [so as] not to offend Mohammedan eyes. We drove to the village, and then walked up a rocky pathway winding through, round, and above the stone houses of the little town to the steps of the great arched door in the castle walls; there stood the Amir to receive us, with his son and innumerable guards and hangers-on, each one more ruffianly than his neighbour... but none the less a welcoming and pleasant crowd. The castle walls have round towers at each corner, and inside there is a tall keep in which the women are housed, and various other buildings, all of stone, unmortared, and sloping gradually inwards as they climb to four or five storeys. We were given tea flavoured with rose-water, sitting on hard kitchen chairs in the Amir's official reception room, which [also] housed a table, a wireless set, and photos of our King and Queen and of the Amir's family... We sat



The Rest House, Dhala

with long silences, and patches of conversation which appeared to be prompted by spasmodic inspiration rather than a flow of thought... Freya and I visited the Harem in the keep, and found one wife, and one daughter by a former wife, and countless slave women and children. The wife and daughter were beautifully dressed in Indian silks, with bracelets, rings, necklaces, and ear-rings... The Amir then conducted us round his town; we saw the dispensary (astonishingly clean and cool), the school for about 30 boys, and the Jewish quarter [whose community] lives amicably beside the Arabs, executing all the crafts, leather work, silver work and so on.'

'This afternoon Stewart took us for a walk through choppy little hills to a cemetery for the men who died while up here in 1903 to mark the boundary between the Aden Protectorate and the Yemen, which was then in Turkish hands (during the 1914–18 war the Turks came right down to Sheikh Othman, and used to exchange fresh foods grown in the oasis for distilled drinking water from the British port – Col. Lake was here all through that period, and has many interesting stories to tell). The cemetery is a very lonely and desolate spot, and of course completely neglected, so Stewart is arranging for a rough stone cairn to be erected, and for a brass tablet with the names set in it....'

25 December

'A never-to-be-forgotten day! Almost the best Christmas Day I have ever had – if only all my family could have shared it with me. First thing in the morning we each found a Christmas stocking which Freya had put together for us! She is such a *sweet* person, as well as being so amusing and interesting and clever. Then we all dressed in clothes fit for riding, and after breakfast there assembled the most

amazing collection of English, Arabs, horses, donkeys and baggage, and we set off to spend the day on Jebel Jihaf.

'We wound our way up, up, up, and still up an apparently uninhabited rocky land, until we came over the rim into a magic [world] hanging beneath the sky – a land of crags and castles, cactus and cultivated terraces, alive with human activity, and stretching away on all sides the blue hazy distance of jumbled range on range. We went to visit the Amir of Dhala's son [Amir Haidera] in his airy fortress above the world. This Jebel Jihaf is difficult to describe – it is a great chunk of a mountain above the Dhala plateau, with a kind of bashed-hat crown in which are many fortress villages, terraced fields and wells, so surprising after the two hour climb on horse-back up rocky trails which one would imagine led nowhere, unless to the Giant's castle at the top of Jack's beanstalk! The Arab ponies look as though they are on the brink of death, but they are the toughest little creatures imaginable, and climb rock faces like cats; I was mounted on a mare with a U-back, and a sucking foal at her heels, but she never faltered, though I did once or twice, and preferred my own feet. Having reached this wonder upland, we spent another hour winding our way across it until we were within sight of Amir Haidera's *dar*, the six-storeyed tower with small walled courtyard set on the loftiest peak of the mountain. Below this peak we were met by about 200 of the Amir's troops, who fired off their rifles into the air, and danced and sang to the beating of drums. The Amir dashed down on a wild looking pony and gave a fine exhibition of horsemanship, which excited



The Amir's castle, Dhala



Amir Haidera bin Nasr with (from left to right) Edmund, Col. Lake, Freya Stark, Arthur Bentinck and Helen during their visit to his fort on Jebel Jihaf.

all the other horses into leaping up and down stone walls and generally enjoying the occasion. The army formed a guard of honour on either side of the zig-zag stairway up which our horses stepped unconcernedly to the gate into the courtyard. This *dar* is typical of the fortress tower of every village – they are always built at the highest point of the village and the population retires into them at time of siege; they are dry-stone-walled with a batter [sloping face], five or six storeys high, two or three low-ceilinged rooms to each floor, small windows on the floor level with wooden shutters; the interior walls of this *dar* are white-washed and decorated in geometric patterns of red, black and yellow. Before lunch we were taken up onto the roof to see the view, which was *magnificent*; mountains and valleys of course, but on such a gigantic scale that it took one's breath away. Job's tomb is said

to be on one of the mountains to the West... We were then given a lunch of Arab food – titbits of mutton and chicken to begin with, followed by a huge bowl of rice and highly spiced meat which was delicious; after that the sweet course of unknown spicy cereals, and lastly honey eaten with spoons out of small gourds... Freya and I visited the Harem; two much prettier wives than those at Dhala, but just as vacant and inanimate, and almost certainly consumptive. We sat cross-legged on the floor, and Freya chatted with them until the Amir joined us, when they relapsed into complete silence – apparently they may not speak when their lord and master is present unless he addresses them directly... Col. Lake, Eddie and I did the homeward journey on foot... we *hurled* ourselves madly down the 3000 ft. [drop] by a tremendous valley gash in the mountainside, and arrived at the Rest House at about 6pm, very thirsty, pretty tired and *blissfully* happy.’

27 December

‘Col. Lake and Arthur left early to return to Aden. Freya and Stewart wanted a quiet day writing... so Eds and I set off on an adventure of our own. Our objective was the top of an inviting mountain about 7000 ft. high called Jebel Mafari, which even Col. Lake has not climbed. We set off on ponies with one pock-marked henchman, who tried to make us stop and rest every quarter of an hour, and indicated that it was quite impossible to reach the slopes of the mountain at all; however, we brutally kept him moving, and followed our own sense of direction until



Guard of Honour, Jebel Jihaf

the inevitable band of cheerful ruffians began to attach themselves to us, and entered into the spirit of the expedition. At every small group of dwellings we were offered hospitality, tea out of rusty tins and flat round chapattis of millet flour. We left the horses at about 2000 ft. below the top of the ridge, and had a very hot, steep scramble up a semi-precipice until we came up onto the long knife-edge ridge which runs for perhaps a mile gently upwards to culminate in a rocky knob with a village and *dar*. Our arrival was a tremendous event for the villagers as the women had not seen white people before!... They gave us blessed water to drink from their earthenware drinking vessels...[and] their courtesy and hospitality was such that we could not have hesitated to accept everything they offered. Then, having done all they could do for our comfort, the headman made the whole community sit in a massed body about ten yards from us to watch us eat our sandwiches; there was a gabble of excited interest, and we threw them smiles and nods at intervals. After expressing our appreciation and thanks as elaborately as we were able, we set off on the return journey. Our wild looking guides led us directly to the top of the precipice on the North of the knife-ridge, and we looked *straight* down a rock wall for about 2000 ft. to the gentler slopes of the mountain; for a moment we each had a fleeting suspicion that we were to be pushed over! But they showed us a perpendicular crack down the face of the wall, in which zig-zag steps were cut the whole way down – and down we went... until our knees had almost turned to water. The ponies had been brought round to meet us, and with many handshakes and farewells we headed for the civilisation of the Dhala plateau.'

28 December

'We made the return journey to Aden, bumping and bucketing down the wadi beds to the hot desert land. In Lahej we paid a call on the Sultan [Abdul Karim bin Fadhl], who entertained us in a large garden-room furnished by Waring & Gillow, [and] again we were offered tea flavoured with rose water. The Sultan has quite an air about him, is westernised and speaks English, but... pretends that he cannot; all the conversation was in Arabic, so Eds and I sipped our tea in silence. [We] arrived at our dear little dwelling place in the late evening to find *letters from home*, and flowers and welcoming notes from friends.'



Henry de Monfreid in the Red Sea

SALUTE TO AN ADVENTURER: MUSÉE HENRY DE MONFREID

JULIAN LUSH

Henry de Monfreid became a legend in his own lifetime for his exploits in the Red Sea and Ethiopia during the early decades of the last century. After returning to France from East Africa in 1947 he settled in Ingrandes, a picturesque village in the Vallée de l'Anglin, Indre-en-Berry, where he remained until his death in 1974 at the age of 95. He is buried in La Franqui, Aude, where he was born.

To celebrate de Monfreid's remarkable life, a small museum was established at Ingrandes in 1990. De Monfreid is now also commemorated in Sana'a where Le Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales recently changed its name to Le Centre Culturel Henry de Monfreid. The Red Sea coast of Yemen was, of course, the scene of several of Henry's early escapades.

The de Monfreid house in Ingrandes (which passed first to Henry's daughter Gisèle and then to his granddaughter, Amélie) is of fair size, surrounded by a wall, set on a steep slope overlooking the river l'Anglin, but hardly comparable to the more substantial 12th–14th century chateau nearby. The museum is in a house adjoining the de Monfreid property and more conveniently placed for public access. Here displayed in several rooms is a substantial collection of memorabilia highlighting different aspects of Henry's long and prolific career as 'Adventurer, Writer and Watercolourist'.

De Monfreid's reputation as an arms smuggler aroused the obsessive suspicion of the British authorities in Aden during and following the First World War. And the museum proudly displays the expulsion order, issued in August 1917 and signed by the then British Political Resident, Major-General J.M. Stewart, banning him from Aden for the duration of the war.

In 1919 my father, Maurice Lush, en route to Addis Ababa to join the British Legation there, visited Djibouti which he described in his memoirs as 'the home of the famous contrabandist de Monfreid, author of *Pearls, Arms and Hashish** and other books on the Red Sea'. He added: 'There exists in some collection of archives at Oxford a memorandum by myself on the Arms Traffic in Abyssinia in 1920 [which] I think I must have written after meeting Henry de Monfreid... He lived on a hill above the sea near Djibouti in a villa where his wife... played Chopin divinely on a grand piano which was wheeled in the evening haze onto the patio!'

De Monfreid's books about his extraordinary life, first published in the 1930s, won him a popular readership and international acclaim for their epic appeal and anthropological interest. Amongst his many admirers was the British explorer

* *Pearls, Arms and Hashish: Pages from the Life of a Red Sea Navigator, Henri de Monfried* (Gollancz, 1930) contains the oral account of his life which de Monfreid gave an American writer, Ida Treat, in c.1929. The book, to which Treat contributed a Foreword and Conclusion, was published under her name.



De Monfreid's house in Ingrandes

Julian Lush

Wilfred Thesiger who, writing of his own travels in Ethiopia in 1935, recalled in his autobiography, *The Life of My Choice*, that:

'I had bought de Monfreid's *Les Secrets de la Mer Rouge* and *Aventures de Mer* in Addis Ababa, and had just finished reading them. I had found his account of a wild and lawless life fascinating. He had come to Jibouti in 1910 as a clerk in a commercial firm, but soon found he had nothing in common with the *petit bourgeois* mentality of his fellow Frenchmen. The Danakil, however appealed to his romantic nature, and he learned their language and spent all his spare time consorting with them... he threw up his job and became a Muslim [adopting the name Abd-al-Hai] and virtually a Danakil. He bought a dhow, enlisted a crew, fished for pearls off the Farsan islands and ran guns into Abyssinia through Tajura, to the fury of the long-established French gun-runners who traded more or less officially. When his dhow was wrecked he built himself another, which he named *Altair*... [When] we arrived in Jibouti...there among the native craft was de Monfreid's *Altair*; he was now in France and the boat was for sale. I later went on board and met some of his crew, whose names I already knew from his books, and I was half tempted to buy the boat and see if I could make a livelihood trading and pearling in the Red Sea. De Monfreid had bridged the gap between himself and his crew, identifying himself with them to the extent of becoming one of them. He had been rewarded by their acceptance, and I envied him his achievement...'

According to the museum, de Monfreid wrote some 70 books, including

numerous novels, although not all the titles are listed. His *Vers les Terres Hostiles d’Ethiopie*, however, incurred the displeasure of Emperor Haile Selassie and led to his expulsion from Ethiopia in 1933 (he returned there after Mussolini’s conquest). Much less widely known is de Monfreid’s artistic talent inherited from his father Daniel, a painter and art dealer, who was Gauguin’s representative in Europe during the latter’s last years in Tahiti and the Marquesas, and also a friend of Toulouse-Lautrec. The museum exhibits several examples of Henry’s competent and colourful sketches, describing them as being ‘marked by a serenity oblivious of the ruggedness of his journeys, as if he wished only to retain fleeting impressions and primary emotions’, a characterisation which sounds better, perhaps, in the original French than in translation!

I hope that this note on the de Monfreid museum at Ingrandes (tel. 02 54 37 65 25) will encourage others to pay it a visit. Meanwhile, there is an exhibition commemorating his work in the field of photography – *En mer Rouge, Henry de Monfreid photographe* – at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, which runs until 2 October and sounds interesting.



De Monfreid’s boat *Al-Tair* which Wilfred Thesiger visited in Djibouti in 1935.

IN THE LION'S PAW: HENRY DE MONFREID AND THE BRITISH AT ADEN (1916–1922)

At the outbreak of the First World War, Ottoman Turkey controlled the whole length of the eastern shore of the Red Sea from 'Aqaba to Shaikh Sa'id at the extreme tip of South Western Arabia, except for territory in 'Asir controlled by the tribal supporters of Sayyid Muhammad al-Idrisi. Al-Idrisi was to ally himself with the British against the Turks, in return for British cash, arms and occasional naval support. Meanwhile, the treaty which the Turks had negotiated with the Imam in 1911 allowed them to disengage from the Yemeni highlands and to concentrate their forces in Sana'a, in Hodeidah and their other garrisons along the Tihamah coast, and in the southern region of Hujjariyah bordering Britain's Aden Protectorate. Despite British attempts to persuade him to act otherwise, the Imam respected this treaty until the Turkish evacuation of Arabia in 1919. The British had insufficient troops in Aden to avert the humiliation of an early Turkish advance into the Protectorate, culminating in Turkish occupation of Lahej for the duration of the war.

Since a major British strategic concern was the defence of the Red Sea route to India, two naval patrols were established to operate along the coast of Turkish Arabia: one from Suez to Jeddah, and the other from Jeddah to Aden. An additional objective of patrols in the southern sector was to prevent supplies reaching Turkish garrisons and ports such as Hodeidah, Mocha and Luhayyah. This inevitably led to the interception (and often destruction) by British patrol vessels of Arab dhows in or near smaller Yemeni ports and anchorages.

Britain's policy of blockading ports on the eastern shore of the Red Sea was tightened in 1916 to reduce the incidence of smuggling; the only permitted exceptions being traffic to and between Idrisi-held ports such as Midi and Jizan, the regular steamer service to Jizan from Aden, and French and Italian maritime traffic with Jizan. Apart from Kamaran which the British occupied for strategic reasons in 1915, British patrols to other Red Sea islands such as Farasan (claimed by al-Idrisi), Hanish and Jebel Zukar were mainly designed to forestall their seizure by the Italians. Britain's blockade of Turkish ports in Yemen proved only partially effective; and it hurt not only the Turks but also the livelihood and interests of local Arabs whose goodwill Britain wished to cultivate. The blockade also exposed the sizeable British Indian merchant community in Hodeidah and elsewhere, already deprived of consular protection by the war, to economic hardship and the risk of reprisals.

Henry de Monfreid began his career in the Horn of Africa in 1910, working for the Djibouti firm, Guignony, as a trader in Abyssinian hides and coffee. He was then in his early 30s, with a restless and independent spirit which his new job failed to satisfy. Having acquired a love of the sea in boyhood, sailing with his father in the Mediterranean, he decided to abandon Guignony, to buy a dhow and to try his luck pearl fishing and trading in arms. Djibouti, since replacing Obok as the capital of French Somaliland, had become the centre of a flourishing arms trade into the Horn and Arabia. A syndicate of local French firms imported arms mainly from

Belgium, using Arab middlemen to sell and distribute them. It was a lucrative business which generated considerable customs revenue for the French administration who turned a blind eye to the fact that the arms trade was officially prohibited in Arabia by both the Turkish and British authorities.

Before the declaration of war on Turkey at the end of October 1914, de Monfreid had landed consignments of arms at Khor al-'Umaira and Ras al-Ara (on the southern Arabian coast between Perim and Aden), and lesser cargoes on the Tihamah. He ceased arms smuggling thereafter, concentrating on pearling and periodic shipments of provisions and passengers to Yemen. He obtained a concession from al-Idrisi to establish a pearling operation on the Farasan islands, but, denied French political support and in face of what he saw as British obstruction, he was later forced to abandon the project. He therefore felt more than justified in flouting the blockade of the Yemeni coast which the British had unilaterally established in January 1915. The Governor of Djibouti regarded the blockade as a damaging threat to Djibouti's economy; he was therefore happy to issue permits to de Monfreid to sail to destinations such as Assab and Massawa on the African shore of the Red Sea, as a cover for his illicit journeys to Yemen.

De Monfreid enjoyed playing 'cat and mouse' with British Red Sea patrols, and claimed to have had eight uneventful encounters with them before his luck ran out. It did so on 25 October 1916 when his dhow, *Fateh al-Rahman*, was intercepted by HMS *Lumka*, under Commander Murray, 4½ miles off the Yemeni coast, nearly 10 miles SW of Mocha. De Monfreid had just put ashore his 20 passengers and cargo of kerosene so there was no overt evidence of blockade-running. But he only had a permit to sail from Djibouti to Dumeira on the African shore of the Red Sea, and Murray considered his explanation for having veered so far off course unconvincing. Murray was instructed to take de Monfreid and his dhow to Perim for further investigation. De Monfreid spent a month in Perim as the 'guest' of the Assistant Resident, Major R. B. Graham, before being released (just in time to meet his young wife and three-year-old daughter in Djibouti on their arrival from France). The British, despite their interrogation of de Monfreid's crew (who had been allowed no contact with de Monfreid since his detention on board HMS *Lumka*) failed to find any evidence, even among de Monfreid's personal papers, which would have justified confiscation of his dhow. But their suspicions of him persisted.

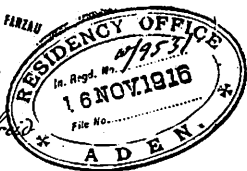
During the first half of 1917 De Monfreid was allowed to return to Aden to supervise repairs to *Fateh al-Rahman* and two other dhows which he had now hired to the Djibouti authorities. He was also permitted to construct a motorised dhow in the Ma'alla shipyards in partnership with a local French business tycoon, Antonin Besse (who after the Second World War was to endow the foundation of St Antony's College, Oxford). Construction of the dhow was completed in early August when de Monfreid applied for an exit permit to take it to Djibouti.

PÊCHERIE FRANÇAISE DES ILES FAROU
(ARABIE)

MACRES & PERLES FINES

Henry de Monfreid

DJIBOUTI
COTE DES SOMALIS



Djibouti 14 Nov. 1916

Monsieur le Résident
à Aden

Monsieur le résident

J'ai eu l'honneur de vous écrire de
Perim pour vous offrir centiers pour mon
bateau qui s'y trouve retenu.

N'ayant pas reçu de réponse j'en conclus
que peut-être cet arrangement ne vous a pas
semblé possible. Je ne saurais donc me permettre
d'insister d'avantage.

Veillez agréer Monsieur le Résident
mes respectueuses salutations

H. de Monfreid

Letter from Henry de Monfreid to British Resident, Aden

Courtesy: British Library

Unbeknown to him, the Resident Naval Officer in Aden, Gillespy, had been working hard to prevent this. In a report dated 3 August to Captain W H D Boyle, the Senior Naval Officer (SNO), Red Sea Patrol, Gillespy stated:

'I have this (Friday) forenoon had before me a Somali named Noor Ali, a native of Zayla [in British Somaliland], who informs me that for 5 months last year he served in a small dhow belonging to de Manfred [sic]. During that time the dhow made three trips between Djibouti and a place called Oosaf on the southern Arabian coast to the eastward of Sheikh Syed [Sa'id] with cargoes of provisions and stores, also arms and ammunition, for the Turkish troops at Sheikh Syed... He states they were twice boarded by a British man-of-war but passed themselves off as pearl fishers. Noor Ali states that there are other members of the crew of the same dhow who are now at Masha [Gulf of Tajoura] who are willing to give evidence to the same effect.

... the large dhow which has been built at Maala for de Manfred is, I understand, complete and ready for sea. There would appear to be sufficient evidence to justify the authorities in impounding this new dhow (which is of 100 tons capacity) at any rate for the period of the war. It seems to be a most anomalous condition of affairs that so notorious a blockade runner as de Manfred should be permitted to make use of the building facilities of Aden to enhance his illicit trade.'

Gillespy's report, with its implicit criticism of the Aden government's inertia, was copied to the Residency where it galvanised the First Assistant Resident, Major W M P Wood, and his junior colleague, Major Bernard Reilly, into a fever of activity. The following day Reilly interviewed Nur Ali and two other Somalis (one of whom was a member of de Monfreid's crew and said nothing to compromise the Frenchman). Since Reilly did not speak Somali, he, like Gillespy, will have depended on the services of an interpreter; in Gillespy's case this was the Admiralty's interpreter, Entoub Ali, who Nur Ali later claimed had sought to put words into his mouth to incriminate de Monfreid. Statements attributed to Nur Ali, and to another Somali, Jama [Juma'] Ali, were recorded by Reilly in English, in his own handwriting. Both Somalis were illiterate, and each statement bears, in addition to Reilly's signature, an inky cross instead of the more usual thumb print. There are striking discrepancies between these statements and what Gillespy quoted Nur Ali as having told him: de Monfreid's shipment of arms to the southern Arabian coast is now said to have taken place between 4 and 5 years ago instead of in 1916; the arms were handed over not to Turks but to Arabs; and the dhow was never boarded by British men-of-war. Nur Ali's statement added: 'Since the war the foreigner [de Monfreid] has not been running arms, but I believe he now intends to do so in his new dhow'. Apparently Nur Ali could not remember the foreigner's name, so he identified him by physical description and by reference to his current presence in the Ma'alla shipyard.

Commenting on these papers to the British Resident, Major-General J M Stewart, Wood minuted: 'I do not think there is the slightest doubt that [de Monfreid] is implicated in the trade (gun-running). We have sufficient evidence to justify us in refusing [him] permission to leave in the dhow'. When Wood (who had already passed a copy of Nur Ali's statement to the French Consular Agent, Adolphe Ries) was later asked by Ries for a copy of Gillespy's report, Wood replied that he couldn't give him one but that 'the facts stated in it are the same as in the statement with the exception that the time of committal of offence [i.e. the landing of arms on the southern Arabian coast] is given as one year ago instead of between 4 and 5...' This was manifestly untrue, and, as we have seen, there were other striking discrepancies. When Ries later taxed Reilly with the fact that Nur Ali, back in Djibouti, had repudiated the statements made in his name in Aden, and that therefore the basis of the Residency's case against de Monfreid was unsound, Reilly brushed this aside on the grounds that he himself had recorded Nur Ali's testimony. In fact, Nur Ali said nothing in front of Reilly which could be regarded as compromising except the speculation (echoed by the other Somali, Jama Ali) that de Monfreid intended to use the new boat for arms smuggling. Nevertheless, Residency officials chose to consider this material as sufficient pretext for refusing de Monfreid a permit to take the new boat to Djibouti, and for banning him from Aden for the duration of the war. Neither option had entered their heads during the months that de Monfreid had been in Aden building the new boat, until they saw Gillespy's report. The timing of Nur Ali's statement so close to de Monfreid's planned departure for Djibouti strongly suggests that Gillespy was determined to bounce the Residency into impounding the boat and that he engineered matters to that end.

Before his expulsion from Aden, Monfreid wrote to the Resident saying that he had heard that certain Somalis had made defamatory statements about him and requesting an opportunity to clear himself before a competent legal authority. His letter was ignored.

Through the French Consular Agent in Aden, Adolphe Ries, the Governor of Djibouti vigorously objected to the impounding of the dhow on the grounds that his administration had been intending to hire it. He refused Aden's request to confine de Monfreid's future sailings to the African coast, although he did agree not to intervene on de Monfreid's behalf if the latter was caught in Britain's exclusion zone (which stretched from Lith, south of Jeddah, to Shihr, east of Aden). The Governor's disenchantment with the British was stoked to outright anger in early March 1918 when de Monfreid was arrested off British Somaliland, and taken to Berbera despite the fact that his papers were in order.

On 4 March 1918 the British Commissioner, Berbera, had telegraphed Aden:

No. 9292 of 1917.

Aden Residency.
8th August 1917.

On the authority of rule 255 of the rules under the Aden Settlement Regulation No. VII of 1900 published in Government Notification No. 3512, dated the 9th July 1909, I hereby order the exclusion of Mons. de Monfried from the limits of the Aden - Settlement for the period of the war.

Mons. de Monfried is directed to leave Aden by the first available steamer for Djibouti.

(sd) J. Stewart,

Major-General,
Political Resident, Aden.

^w
No. 9293 of 1917.

Aden Residency.
8th August 1917.

Copy forwarded to the Assistant Resident in charge Police, Aden, with a request that this order may be personally served on Mons. de Monfried.



J. Stewart

Major,
First Assistant Resident, Aden.

*Returned with receipt. — I have served the order personally on M. de Monfried this morning.
10 August 1917.
R. Maitly Major
A.R.*

'It has just been reported that on March 2nd dhow containing arms and ammunition including small gun and possibly machine gun, having on board Frenchman with assumed name Abdul Hai said to be well-known gun-runner, anchored off Karam. Ammunition reported to be intended for the dervishes and to be disembarked at Hais or Mait. Urgently request that arrangements may immediately be made with naval authorities to do what is possible...'

The SNO, Red Sea Patrol (now Captain Alexander Palmer of HMS *Juno*), immediately ordered Commander C E V Craufurd of HMS *Minto* to track and intercept the dhow and take it to Berbera. This was done on 6 March. Later, in a report dated 12 March, Palmer commented: 'I have no doubt in my mind that this clever rascal [de Monfreid] succeeded in landing the arms at Mait whence they would be sent to Jid Ali, one of the Mullah's strongholds distant about 50 miles from Mait. He [de Monfreid] admitted [having] landed at Mait to replenish water as one cask had gone bad...' Palmer would soon have to eat his words.

Meanwhile, Berbera had asked Aden to send them as much background on de Monfreid as possible. On 9 March Wood sent a telegraphic reply which was long on unsubstantiated suspicions, short on hard fact and wrong in several details. Wood's tendentious report, which included the loaded comment: 'the man's wife is pure German. Her father lives at Stuttgart.', can only have been intended to encourage Berbera to believe the worst of de Monfreid. Particularly misleading was Wood's reference to 'strong suspicions that [de Monfreid] had been running despatches to Turks or else arms and ammunition' when he was detained at Perim in 1916. Likewise Wood's statement that 'it was also ascertained by private enquiry from high sources that at Jibouti in 1914-15 [de Monfreid] was given two years' imprisonment by the French courts in connection with the arms traffic'. The source for this, who could hardly be described as 'high', was Adolphe Ries, a businessman in Aden (founder of the eponymous firm of Paul Ries) who doubled as French Consular Agent there. In 1916 Ries had told Wood's predecessor, Lieut-Colonel H F Jacob, that de Monfreid had been sentenced in Djibouti to two years' imprisonment but had been released and sent to France 3 months later to serve in the French army. Wood and the Resident, General Stewart, in reply to Berbera's request for further information on de Monfreid's prison sentence, decided not to question Ries further and merely reiterated that their source was 'a very good one'. In fact, de Monfreid's sentence was for only six months, and arose from an uncorroborated charge of selling ammunition to a Somali who had accused him of this offence. De Monfreid was fined on the separate charge of having defrauded Djibouti customs on a consignment of unsold arms which he had buried on the island of Mascali, north of Djibouti, and which were discovered there by the French authorities in late 1914.

When intercepted by HMS *Minto* off the Somali coast, de Monfreid was on his way to Mukalla to buy wood for a new dhow to replace the one impounded

SOMALILAND PROTECTORATE.

No. 352/17



GOVERNMENT HOUSE.
BERBERA.
BRITISH SOMALILAND.

13th April, 1918.

Sir,

1 April

I have the honour to forward, herewith, for your information, copy of an order issued by me prohibiting Monsieur Henri de Montfried from being in the waters of this Protectorate or from landing in the Protectorate.

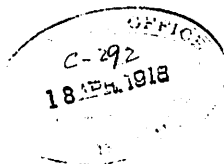
2. The case against him for gun-running has been dropped partly in view of certain assurances given to me by the Governor of Jibouti and partly on account of the fact that a conviction was not certain, as the prosecution depended almost entirely on circumstantial evidence.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

S. H. A. M. M. M.
Lieut.-Colonel,
Administering the Government.



Resident

A copy might be to the H.C. Egypt

DM
19/4

THE POLITICAL RESIDENT,

A D E N.

per [unclear]
19/4/18

by Aden. He had a permit for this from the Governor of Djibouti. He was detained at Berbera (largely on board HMS *Minto*) for some 25 days without any official notice of the reasons for his detention or any opportunity to state his case except in private and unofficial conversation with Commander Craufurd (which the latter duly recorded and circulated). On 2 April Palmer, SNO Red Sea Patrol, informed Wood that Berbera had abandoned its case against de Monfreid and that HMS *Minto* was taking him back to Djibouti. Meanwhile, on 1 April the Commissioner of Berbera, Lieut-Colonel G H Summers, issued a 'Proclamation':

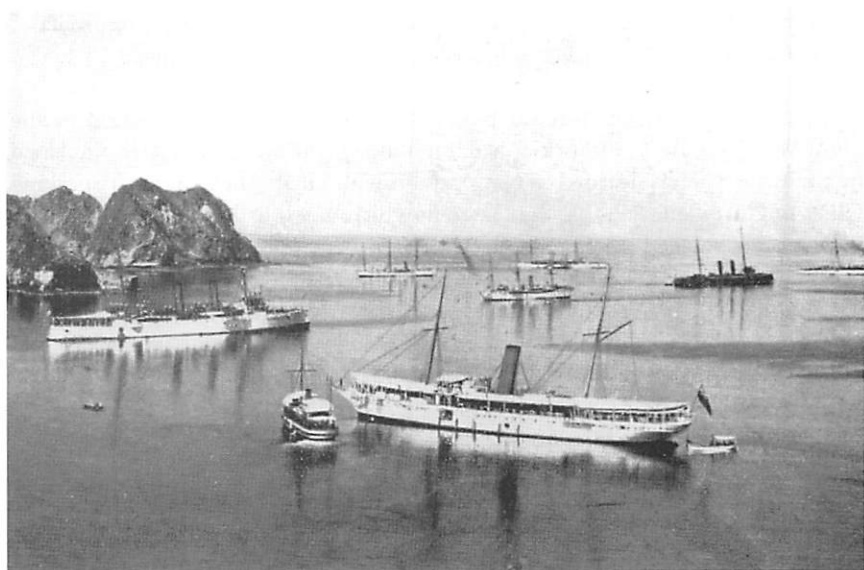
'whereas it has been made to appear to me that the presence of Henri de Montfried [sic] in the [Somaliland] Protectorate is dangerous to peace and good order... I, Gerald Henry Summers... Acting Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief... do hereby order and proclaim that the aforesaid Henri de Montfried is prohibited from being in the Protectorate or in the territorial waters of the Protectorate during a period of two years beginning on 1st April 1918, under penalty of imprisonment...'

This proclamation, couched in the pompous language of the time, was clearly intended to save the Commissioner's face. Summers had been overzealous, and with the disappearance of the informants who had accused de Monfreid of gun-running the case against him had fallen apart. Publicly, Summers took the line that the case had been dropped 'partly in view of certain assurances given me by the Governor of Djibouti and partly on account of the fact that a conviction was not certain, as the prosecution depended almost entirely on circumstantial evidence.' In fact, Summers had completely ignored the Governor of Djibouti's representations on de Monfreid's behalf and his repeated requests for information about the reasons for de Monfreid's arrest.

De Monfreid's anger and frustration is evident in a letter to the Governor of Djibouti written on 16 April 1918:

'J'ai pris connaissance du requisitoire du Résident de Berbera qui semble n'avoir d'autre but que d'écartier les responsabilités. Ces procédés semblent inspirés par Aden, tant les analogies sont frappantes, surtout dans la valeur des arguments spéciaux employés contre moi.

Veuillez vous rappeler, Monsieur le Gouverneur, dépositions qui servirent de prétexte à mon expulsion d'Aden, dont nous avons eu ici la démenti formel par la bouche même d'un témoin. Jamais d'ailleurs les autorités d'Aden ne consentirent à me confronter avec ces indigènes. Même méthode à Berbera; on cherche des charges contre moi mais on me met dans l'impossibilité de les discuter en ne me les faisant pas connaître. Pendant vingt cinq jours que dura ma détention on aurait pu eu le temps de me confronter avec les gens qui m'accusaient. Il est probable que l'édifice



HMS *Minto* (centre foreground) c.1915



Henry de Monfreid on board HMS *Minto* with Chief Engineer Vincent who acted as his interpreter, March 1918

de mon accusation semblait trop fragile aux autorités de Berbera, sa lecture seule montre clairement que son but est tout autre que la recherche de la vérité...'

De Monfreid's friend Antonin Besse, who had financed construction of the dhow which the Aden authorities had impounded (and which was later purchased by the British Navy), learned in conversation with HMS *Mimo*'s French-speaking Chief Engineer, Vincent, that the telegram which Wood had sent to Berbera on 9 March had sabotaged any hope of de Monfreid's early release. Besse also knew that Wood had given Bethell, Assistant Commissioner, Zayla, a confidential dossier on de Monfreid to deliver to Berbera. He therefore saw de Monfreid's detention as part of a plot by Wood to get the Frenchman caught. Apparently Vincent also told Besse that he and his fellow officers were 'scandalised' by the way de Monfreid had been treated.

Meanwhile, Wood, prompted by a note about de Monfreid by his predecessor, Lieut-Colonel H F Jacob (who had been transferred from Aden to Cairo in 1917) wrote to the Qu'aiti Sultan, Ghalib bin Awadh, on 17 April to warn him that de Monfreid might turn up in Mukalla to buy wood and that if he did, would he kindly arrest him and hand him over to the British authorities. The Sultan graciously agreed to do this should it prove necessary. Jacob's note (addressed to the High Commissioner in Cairo, Sir Reginald Wingate, and copied to Aden) contained a revealing comment with regard to the legality of the British intervening in the affairs of local Protectorate states in order to exclude or detain undesirable foreigners:

'... We can do in war time anything we please. De Monfreid is a dangerous character – repudiated by the French, but still used by them.'

Jacob's reference to French repudiation of de Monfreid was thoroughly discredited by a letter dated 28 November 1919 from the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, to Viscount Allenby (who had replaced Wingate as High Commissioner in Cairo), stating that the Quai d'Orsay were pressing London for Aden's exclusion order on de Monfreid to be lifted. Until Curzon's intervention, the Aden Residency had prevaricated on this issue in correspondence with the French Consular Agent who, once the war had ended, repeatedly urged Aden to lift the restriction.

In 1920, in response to an unconfirmed report from the Naval Officer, Cairo, of gun-running into Yemen by de Monfreid from an island depot near Djibouti (this has the ring of old information being reheated for British consumption) Aden sent a Police Constable to Djibouti to investigate. The latter later reported that for the past three years there had been no arms smuggling from the French port or nearby islands.

On 14 February 1919 Reilly (who was to become Aden's first colonial governor in 1937) had piously minuted that 'even after the blockade is raised I think we shall have to watch [De Monfreid's] activities pretty closely in connection with contraband arms traffic'. Reilly was true to his word. De Monfreid's arrival in Aden in August 1921, in his new dhow, *Al-Tair*, en route to Bombay, prompted Aden, ever prisoner of past prejudice, to warn Bombay that 'de Monfreid, a French resident of Djibouti, suspected of gun-running during the war as he is known to have been a gun-runner before the war', was on his way. Bombay later reported that the vessel had been searched but that no arms other than the few declared had been found. De Monfreid's return to Djibouti the following January and his further trip to India via Aden in April 1922 were duly noted by Aden's Police Inspector Barnes who reported to the Assistant Resident that his men had failed to extract anything of interest from de Monfreid's crew.

The demonisation of de Monfreid, driven by the paranoia of a few individuals and irreversibly enshrined in official papers, fostered the image of a lawless Frenchman, an infamous *loup de mer*, as dark and alien as his native crew, who posed as a Muslim and had an uncanny ability to evade arrest. Monfreid was transformed into a bogey, and his will and capacity to damage British interests in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden were exaggerated out of all proportion to reality. In wartime, few British are likely to have seen him in a more romantic light: in the mould, for example, of Baroness Orczy's *Scarlet Pimpernel*. But de Monfreid's smuggling of provisions into Turkish Arabia was a mere drop in the inward flow of illicit commerce; it could have had no material impact on the blockade. Chasing de Monfreid through the reefs and shoals of the Red Sea may have been an agreeable sport for British naval patrols, but it diverted resources from more important operational tasks.

The few who emerge with credit from the saga of de Monfreid's relations with the British include Commander Craufurd and officers of HMS *Minto*, who treated de Monfreid with a respect and sympathy which he warmly acknowledges in his memoirs. Likewise Major Graham, de Monfreid's urbane 'host' on Perim, who ensured that his crew were properly fed during their continued detention at Perim after the Frenchman's release. The less honourable treatment which de Monfreid experienced elsewhere seems to have been influenced by an unthinking, at times vindictive prejudice. But perhaps some allowance should be made for the corrosive effect on the judgement of Aden's British Indian officials, of an enervating climate and imperial *hubris*.

JOHN SHIPMAN

REMEMBERING LEIGH DOUGLAS (1952–1986)

John Peterson writes:

My first contact with Leigh Douglas came as I was preparing to conduct fieldwork in Yemen on a study of political change during the reigns of Imams Yahya and Ahmad. Knowing that we had common interests, Leigh contacted me and we met in London.

More particularly, Leigh was doing his doctoral thesis on the Free Yemeni movement. The Free Yemenis represented one of the first attempts to create a constitutional monarchy in Yemen. In 1948, Free Yemeni intellectuals, such as Muhammad al-Zubayri and Ahmad Muhammad Nu'man, had made common cause with the al-Wazir family to unseat Imam Yahya and to replace him with an al-Wazir contender and an effective parliament. The Free Yemenis were aghast when Imam Yahya and some of his sons were killed. Within a few weeks the first attempt at a revolution in an independent Arab state ended badly when Yahya's son, Ahmad, captured Sana'a, and either beheaded or imprisoned the erstwhile regime's principals.

Although the Free Yemenis had figured in many contemporary and scholarly accounts, Leigh was the first scholar to focus on the movement. His assiduous research drew on British and Yemeni archives, on thorough study of the Free Yemeni organ, *Sawt al-Yaman*, and on numerous interviews with Yemenis both inside and outside Yemen. From his doctoral thesis derived his book *The Free Yemeni Movement 1935–1962*, edited by Giovanni Chimienti, which was published (1987), after Leigh's death, by the American University of Beirut where Leigh was teaching. This followed his stint as resident director of the American Institute of Yemeni Studies in Sana'a.

My last contact with Leigh was a Christmas card from him in Beirut. Shortly afterwards, he was dead, a victim of an apparent reprisal for the American bombing of Tripoli. There are those scholars who begin with a flash, often provoked by the careful work required to produce a doctoral thesis, but who either never live up to their potential or fail to publish. The tragedy of Leigh Douglas is that he never had the opportunity to grow and produce academically. Leigh's work on the Free Yemenis was path-breaking, and we will never know where his intellectual interest and promise would have taken him next.

Peter Kemp writes:

At the time of his death in Lebanon twenty years ago in April 1986, Leigh Douglas was one of a handful of Westerners still living in Beirut, most of whom were journalists, teachers, diplomats or ageing retirees who had settled in Lebanon in happier times. There had been previous abductions of US and French citizens who were held hostage for lengthy periods, but Leigh and Philip Padfield, a fellow

teacher and neighbour, who was walking home with Leigh on that fatal evening, were among the first British citizens to go missing.

It was their misfortune to fall into the hands of a group set on revenge in a manner that has since become all too familiar. On this occasion, the US bombing of Libya a few weeks earlier was the proximate cause.

Many more foreign hostages were to be taken in the following months, including Brian Keenan, Jackie Mann, John McCarthy and Terry Waite. They were lucky to regain their freedom after years of popular campaigning and intense diplomacy on their behalf. Leigh and Philip were not so fortunate.

Leigh had first gone to Beirut to track down documents in the course of research for his doctoral thesis on the Free Yemeni movement. Like many visitors before him he fell in love with the seductive charm of the cosmopolitan city nestled between the turquoise sea and the soaring mass of Mount Lebanon. Its magical blend of the Arab East with the easy ways of the Mediterranean belies the horrors which it has witnessed over decades of intermittent conflict.

From afar, Leigh's decision to take a job teaching politics at the American University of Beirut (AUB) may have looked like folly. But the picture of a country in complete turmoil conveyed in the news at the time gave a misleading impression. The reality in Beirut was a relative calm that prevailed for much of the time, punctuated by outbursts of extreme violence that made more headlines around the world. Foreigners were not party to the country's sectarian conflicts, and for the most part felt safe, their presence even offering some assurance to the Lebanese that their country was still habitable.

In many respects the historic campus of the AUB was a perfect base for an aspiring Middle East scholar. The university was largely untouched by the civil war, and its intellectual life still vibrant. Leigh was also in Lebanon at a time of great hopes. The country had been getting back on its feet after the devastation of the Israeli invasion in 1982. Sectarian militias no longer ruled the streets as the state reasserted its authority; the rebuilding of the former battle zone downtown had begun.

The Lebanese dream of peaceful co-existence was returning after a period of brutal conflict, and there were visions of Lebanon reclaiming its former role as a commercial, intellectual and recreational hub for the Middle East. On the lush, tranquil campus of AUB, it was possible to believe in Lebanon's renaissance.

For Leigh, AUB offered the opportunity to teach at a world-class university that had educated generations of the region's intellectual elite. He imparted his passion for the Middle East and the study of its politics to a new generation of students.

The reward for Leigh and others who hung on in Beirut, despite the difficulties, was the appreciation of Lebanese students, colleagues and parents for whom the continued presence of the tiny foreign community encouraged them to believe that Beirut would thrive once again. However, the epidemic of hostage taking in 1986 was a precursor of worse to come. In the four years that followed,

the country descended into some of the worst fighting in 15 years of intermittent civil war. It was the tragedy of Leigh Douglas and Philip Padfield to be among the thousands who were to die violently in those awful years.

The Leigh Douglas Memorial Fund (LDMF)

The fund was established with donations from Leigh's family and friends to support continued scholarship on the Middle East. It is a charity, and has distributed more than £18,000 since 1990 to assist scholars and experts pursuing research, mostly on Yemen, in fields as varied as archaeology, social anthropology, folk tales, history, geography, linguistics, public health, and marine archaeology. Small grants have enabled scholars to travel, conduct field research or attend conferences, which otherwise would not have been possible.

The LDMF has also funded an annual memorial prize in Leigh's name, in association with the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES), for the best doctoral thesis on a Middle East topic presented at a UK university.

The LDMF helped to organise and supported a successful three-day conference on Contemporary Yemen at SOAS in London, and on the tenth anniversary of Leigh's death in 1996 it organised an evening of talks and music in his memory at the Museum of Mankind in London.

Recipients of direct financial support from the fund have included:

Youssef Abdullah (Director of Antiquities, Sana'a), Huda Alwan (Cartography in Yemen), Bernard Haykel (Zaidi/Wahabi conflict), Geoffrey King (Islamic archaeology), Nahida Coussonet (Zaidi power in the Middle Ages), Carl Phillips (Excavation at Al-Ham id, Bajil, Yemen), Edward Prados (Marine archaeology), Joseph Kostiner (Yemen unification), W. Flag Miller (Arabic language), Shelagh Weir/Ahmad Muhammad Jibrán (Tribes in Razih), Janet Watson (Sana'a dialect), Robert Hoyland (Islamic Arabia), Ingrid Hehmeyer (Architectural restoration), Ahmad Almas (Water use study), Carolyn Han (Yemeni Folklore), Hafiz al-Noodi (Sickle cell gene in Yemen), Julian van Rensburg (Traditional boats in Socotra), S. A. Buckley (Mummification in ancient Yemen), Ian Philp (Civil society and human rights), Sebastian Prange (Medieval Yemen), Dominique de Moulins (Utilization of the doum palm, Tihama)

Brismes Prize Winners:

M. Mohamed Ali, William Donaldson, Francine Stone, Anthony Toth, Ahmad Abdul-Kareem Saif, James Onley, Recep Cigdem, Nicola Pratt, Paul Newson and Konrad Hirschler

Conferences and organizations supported by the fund:

World Circuit Arts, Seminar for South Arabian Studies, Society for Arabian Studies

Any enquiries, please contact Venetia Porter, Secretary of the Leigh Douglas Memorial Fund (VPORTER@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk).

BOOK REVIEWS

Wilfred Thesiger: The Life of the Great Explorer by Alexander Maitland, HarperCollins, 2006. Pp.xv + 528. Maps. Illus. Notes. Bibliog. Index. Hb.£25. ISBN 0-00-255608-1.

Many people have stories about meeting Wilfred Thesiger. The best is of course Eric Newby's – of Thesiger running into him and Hugh Carless on some rocky mountain in the Hindu Kush and saying, at the sight of them blowing up airbags to sleep on, 'God, you must be a couple of pansies'.

My own introduction to him was of a different kind. I was exploring Ennedi (in the Tibesti massif) on camel-back in 1954 when my Guraani guide, Ordugu, suddenly extracted from his pocket a piece of homespun, unrolled it, and passed over, from his camel to me on mine, a passport photograph of Wilfred Thesiger! He explained that he had guided Thesiger on his Tibesti trip thirty years before, amazed at the way he rode at great speed on his camel for hours without dismounting. The photo had been given him by Thesiger, and he had treasured it ever since as a sort of talisman. But since Idris Daud was actually Thesiger's guide and companion on that occasion (as on many others) I can only suppose that Ordugu had been one of those who (as Thesiger recorded in a letter to his mother) 'came with me from Darfur [but] fell out by the wayside, only Idris remaining to the end'.

My next introduction to Thesiger was bizarre in a different way. In the great hall of Buckingham Palace I observed his craggy profile along the lines of people waiting to be presented with medals by The Queen. (Thesiger's was of course well earned; mine, as a mere diplomat, 'came with the rations'). Over the teacups that followed, I ventured to address him and told him of Ordugu and the passport photo. He seemed entranced, and before he returned to Africa, we lunched together several times, he wearing, as he always did in London, an immaculate pin-striped suit and carrying a rolled umbrella. I had not expected to feel at home with a man who so enjoyed shooting beautiful wild animals, but that series of lunches at least disabused me of accepting the often-repeated charge that Thesiger 'lacked a sense of humour'.

It was incidentally his Tibesti trip in 1938 that led Thesiger, with his lifelong passion for testing his powers of endurance, to explore bits of the world inhabited (if at all) by desert bedu. The Marsh Arabs, with whom he would spend seven years, may have been regarded by him as what one might call 'waterborne bedu'. They worshipped him, especially for his ability to carry out circumcisions (no less than 6139 while he was with them) much less painfully than the operations of local practitioners.

Readers of the splendid books he was eventually persuaded to write may have been so riveted by his more famous adventures as to overlook his fearless conduct

as a soldier in World War II with the LRDG and Stirling's SAS, let alone his earlier participation in operations against the Italian invaders of his original 'home' in Abyssinia, for which he was awarded the DSO. Of all this Alexander Maitland gives us a full account, as he does of Thesiger's unusual childhood in Addis Ababa where his father was Britain's representative at the Imperial court and where he himself was to attend the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie (whom Thesiger greatly revered); and of the equally unusual 20 years at the end of his life in the wilds of Kenya living with Samburu tribesmen (who fleeced him mercilessly). Maitland also describes Thesiger's time in Kutum as a member of the Sudan Political Service, his experiences in Palestine, Syria and elsewhere, and his work for Britain's Anti-Locust unit in the Hadhramaut area, which prepared him for his crossing of the adjoining Empty Quarter.

It is the practice of writers on Thesiger to speculate about his sexuality. They all note his admiration of young Arab tribesmen and what he calls their 'androgynous beauty', and he certainly chose such young men as his companions everywhere. He himself declared that the attraction they had for him was 'only aesthetic' and he quoted Bin Kabina (who was one of them) as saying that homosexual practices were ridiculous and obscene. Whether the attraction of his young companions went beyond the aesthetic is none of our concern. So let us leave it at that.

The only woman he clearly adored was his formidable mother, Kathleen, to whom he constantly wrote long affectionate letters and took with him on many less exacting expeditions. Her death in 1973 in her nineties was the severest blow he ever suffered.

Alexander Maitland was for many years Thesiger's close friend (as well as an expert on other travellers in the Arab world), and he has had unique access to his diaries and other manuscripts. No one else could have written so full and magisterial a biography. Everyone intrigued by Thesiger's complex personality and astonishing life must be extremely grateful. My only small criticisms are that it is here and there a trifle repetitive and would have benefited from closer proof-reading and a fuller index. But the book is a magnificent tribute to a most remarkable individual – the last great traveller in the old style.

Perhaps I may just add a brief account of my last experience of Thesiger since it discloses an engaging feature of his personality. This was when I took my wife (the author of books on Indigo) to call on him in his Chelsea flat in 2000 to ask if she might see (and even borrow to copy) some of his photographs of indigo-wearing denizens of South Arabia. He couldn't have been more gracious, ushering us into the room where his thousands of splendid photographs were carefully stacked, and saying, 'Make yourself at home and use any you fancy'.

Requiescat in pace. If anyone deserves to rest in peace, Wilfred Thesiger does.

GLENCAIRN BALFOUR PAUL

Bagpipes in Babylon: A Lifetime in the Arab World and Beyond by Glencairn Balfour Paul, I. B. Tauris, 2006. Pp.xix + 329. Illus. Maps. Index. Hb. £20. ISBN 1-84511-151-6.

These are not your average diplomatic memoirs – but then Glen Balfour Paul is not your average diplomat. For a start he spent much of his career, (and about a quarter of this book) in the Sudan Defence Force and the Sudan Political Service. To conclude, he has spent a ‘third age’ busy in a variety of tasks all over the world. His diplomatic years were the interim – he served in the Gulf, and was Ambassador to Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia.

In many ways he had a fortunate life – from a secure Scots background, although one where the family seemed to be always on the move. (Indeed the one map missing from the quiver of plans on pages xiii to xvi, is a chart of the various Scottish castles, farms and country houses between which the author, his parents and his children flit.) During the War, the merest chance – a mix-up over names – diverted him from joining his battalion in the Western Desert, to the rank of *bim-bashi* – Lieutenant Colonel – in the Sudan Defence Force and an active but far less lethal campaign in Abyssinia.

Balfour Paul records the war years, and indeed his time as a political officer in the Sudan, with a light and fluent pen. He concentrates, he tells us ‘on the odder aspects, but there are plenty of accounts of the serious features of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium...’ as indeed there are. What he provides is an entertaining account of life for an administrator in the remoter provinces of that vast country, but also the account of a sensitive and adventurous observer. Long treks by camel to call on neighbouring French administrators, amateur archaeology, the vagaries of administration set against the background of accelerating progress towards Sudanese independence.

Like most members of the Sudan service, Balfour Paul possessed intelligence, excellent Arabic and a robust practicality – assets which the Foreign Office promptly exploited by posting most former Sudanis to the Persian Gulf, after a minimal process of indoctrination in Whitehall. He played a key role in the removal of Sheikh Shakhbut of Abu Dhabi and his replacement by his brother Zaid – one of the Arab world’s more genteel coups and one which made possible the extraordinary economic development of the lower Gulf. Like most British diplomats, he greatly admired Sheikh Rashid of Dubai – at that stage leading his Emirate along the first steps in its meteoric commercial career.

After a sabbatical at Oxford, Balfour Paul was posted to Iraq as Ambassador at a time when Saddam Hussein was just entrenching himself as absolute ruler. A rich and important country, though not one in which the British Ambassador had much influence or access. Ironically his Gulf years were to haunt Balfour Paul – the Iraqis chose to sever relations with Britain at the very moment of our withdrawal

from the Gulf – he learnt about it from the BBC World Service! Jordan was to follow – a less significant country but one where the British Ambassador had a certain weight and where he helped devise the formula which enabled Jordan to survive the 1973 Arab/Israeli War more or less unscathed. His last post, Tunis, was certainly pre-retirement and while appreciating his splendid residence, Balfour Paul found less to interest him.

He had two happy marriages and six children. But his first marriage was shadowed by his wife Marnie's ill health, which ended with her early death. He married his second wife, Jenny, only a few years before retirement, and she became the companion and indeed the occasion of much of his post-retirement travelling.

Which is where Yemen enters these memoirs. Balfour Paul visited Sana'a in 1982 on an academic mission, but Jenny accompanied him and was fascinated by indigo – its cultivation and use. It was a fascination which led to two very successful books and to a series of pilgrimages to the various indigo fields of the third world. In an active retirement – running the Middle East Association, fundraising, writing history – it is the travel which most impresses. When he is not bear-leading spoilt tourists round Yemen or Peru, this pensioner is forever sleeping on roofs, hitching lifts on lorries when the taxis break down and generally moving like a back packer through the various countries he visits – hardships occasional lightened by the odd night spent at the nearest Embassy residence with a former colleague.

It is Balfour Paul's decency and sensitivity which shine through this book. He has deliberately chosen to keep it light – 'life is too serious not to be taken lightly', he writes. I would have welcomed a little more on two of today's burning issues on which he is well qualified to write – Iraq and Darfur. But *Bagpipes in Babylon* is composed with taste and skill like a Lebanese mezzeh – light, varied, well-flavoured and to be recommended.

In one of his many poems which illuminate this book, he writes of a stonemason:

*Enough
for this man that his skill
had truth by the forelock. In his
tough credo, whatever was
indisputably valid
was also good for a laugh.*

It is not a bad description of the author (and is why I was tempted to entitle this review 'A Kilt among the Futahs' had it been the Journal's practice to give titles to its reviews!).

DAVID TATHAM

British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955–67 by Spencer Mawby, Routledge, London and New York, 2005. Pp.210. Notes. Bibliog. Refs. Index. Map. One plate. Hb. £75. ISBN 0-714-65459-0.

This is an important work for the Middle Eastern specialist and comes at a time of apparent re-awakened interest in Aden as the 40th anniversary of the British withdrawal in 1967 approaches. It is painstakingly researched and draws on much previously unpublished material including interviews with former British Political Officers, amongst them, the reviewer. Spencer Mawby rather endearingly, while warmly acknowledging the 'generous help' of seven of my former colleagues, comments that many of us 'will disagree with some of the conclusions reached in this study'. I do not share all his points of interpretation but I am sure that many of us would not quarrel with the main thrust of his findings. The indecently hasty relinquishment, under extreme nationalist pressure, of our base in Aden together with abandoning without any prospect of protection, our allies, the traditional Rulers, forming the leadership of the South Arabian Federation whom we had pressurised to throw in their lot with ours, and with no measured hand-over to a successor regime was hardly Britain's finest moment in its otherwise impressive history of decolonisation. But that in no way detracts from the tireless efforts of many British officials on the ground, whatever their personal misgivings, faithfully striving to implement a policy which from its outset was seriously flawed and in the end proved totally unworkable. And apart from expressing serious misgivings at the practice of 'keeni meeni' – counter subversion methods of a highly unorthodox nature in which some of us at the sharp end were involved, Mawby is not critical of how we in the field tried to do our best in unpromising circumstances.

What the British did, why we did it and why he believes it didn't work is clearly recorded by the author. He describes the origins of the British involvement in South West Arabia, the development of Aden Colony and its two Protectorates, the subsequent 'forward policy' of constitutional (but, sadly, hardly any social) development, which culminated in the formation of the ill fated Federation of South Arabia and the eventual derailing of the colonial project before it had any chance of coming to a successful conclusion.

The received wisdom is that the Labour government which came to power in 1964 under Harold Wilson, very much under the influence of its left wing, embarrassed by being doctrinally 'uncool' with its continued possession of colonies and overseas bases took an early opportunity to 'scuttle' from Aden. Mawby challenges this assessment: the shifts in Labour's policy were, he feels, subtler and displayed a greater degree of flexibility than such a black and white interpretation implies. Labour, even Wilson himself, shared 'the romantic attachment to notions of imperial responsibility that had marked Conservative policy' In other words a continuing commitment to a world role.

The problem, was that senior Labour ministers (and Denis Healey, then Defence Secretary was a case in point as revealed in his autobiography 'The Time of my Life') never, from the outset, had any confidence in a Federal project dominated by the 'backward sheikhs'. Thus the relatively sophisticated nationalist politicians of Aden colony with whom especially left wingers within Labour could instinctively empathise should not have been forced into a shotgun wedding with these reactionary backwoodsmen. Greenwood, the Colonial Secretary was of the same mind and believed that the solution to be a unitary government weighted more in favour of the Adenis than was ever practical given the circumstances of a rapidly deteriorating security situation, feeding on Egyptian support for ruthless and very successful anti-Federal insurgents. The trouble was, as Mawby points out, that the nationalists wanted much more from Britain than the Labour government was prepared to offer and by the time that HMG was prepared to concede the dismantling of the base and an earlier than expected withdrawal in order to facilitate a smooth hand-over to local nationalists – it was much too late. Aden politicians with whom Labour had enjoyed a good relationship had been swept away by the hard men of the two main radical nationalist movements. And the tougher of the two, the Marxist leaning National Liberation Front (NLF) carrying all before them through their own efforts, declined to be seen to be negotiating with the obviously on-the-run-soon-to-be-leaving Colonial establishment so as to preserve the purity of their Revolution from collaboration with the enemy.

An excellent, thought provoking study and a 'must' for the serious student of the period. It is also accessible enough for the more general reader and I highly recommend it despite the ridiculously high price.

PETER HINCHCLIFFE

The Church of Scotland South Arabia Mission 1885–1978: A History and Critical Evaluation by James McLaren Ritchie, Tentmakers Publications, Stoke-on-Trent, 2006. Pp.430. Map. Illus. Appendices. Bibliog. Index. ISBN 1-901670-18-X.

The Church of Scotland Mission to South Arabia was founded by a young orientalist and missionary of ancient Scottish lineage, Ion Keith Falconer, who died of malarial fever in 1887 within a few months of establishing a base for himself and a medical colleague in Sheikh Othman. During the next 80 years the work of the Mission, centred mainly on the Keith Falconer Hospital in Sheikh Othman, was carried forward by a small and fluctuating number of medical and evangelical staff. Temporarily closed on the eve of independence in 1967, the Mission reopened the following year in what had now become the People's Republic of South Yemen. But it came under growing official pressure to withdraw, and finally did so in 1972.

Meanwhile, a link was established with the government of North Yemen, which paved the way for the secondment of missionary staff to serve in the hospital at Rada'a from 1972 to 1978.

The first seven chapters of this book chart the history of the Mission and of the changing ecclesiastical and political context in which it operated. The last three chapters offer a critical evaluation of the work of the Mission. The Appendices, which run to over 150 pages, include, amongst other papers, a brief overview of the history of the region; a most interesting and wide-ranging report made by a visiting Danish cleric, Erik Nielsen, in 1958 (which led to the effective merger of the Church of Scotland and Danish Missions in Aden after many years of close cooperation); and two valuable eye-witness accounts by Miss Helen Thom of the situation in the country during the four years preceding independence in 1967, and the four years which followed it, ending in the Mission's withdrawal in 1972.

A recurring issue in the book is the strategic dilemma which the Mission faced in allocating resources between medical and evangelical work. This was to cause intermittent tensions within the Mission, and between it and the Church of Scotland's Foreign Mission Council (FMC) in Edinburgh. The author, the Reverend James Ritchie, who served with the Mission in Sheikh Othman as administrator and treasurer 1950-1963 (and later with the Mission to North Yemen in the 1970s), inclines to the view that more emphasis should have been placed on the evangelical and educational side of the Mission's work (as originally envisaged by Ion Keith Falconer) than on the medical; but whether the very small number of conversions which occurred during the Mission's tenure can be attributed to this perceived imbalance remains open to question. Chapter 9 of the book gives details of the few Muslims who did convert, including one or two (e.g. Muhammad Ali Murshid) who did so of their own accord and not in response to proselytisation. The Mission's best known convert was Dr Ahmad Sa'id Affara, a graduate of Edinburgh, who was a lynchpin of the Keith Falconer Hospital from 1939 until his retirement in 1961, and became a popular and much respected figure in Sheikh Othman.

One of the little known facts which this book brings to light is the important medical work which the Mission began in the remote statelet of Beihan in 1952 (where with the enthusiastic support of the Sharif and his family a clinic was started by the indomitable Miss Cowie) and which was continued through the 1960s until the Mission finally withdrew from South Yemen in 1972.

Thanks to the diligence of the author, a gap in the annals of Britain's non-governmental relations with South Arabia has now been filled, and we have a published record of the Mission's activities and of the men and women who devotedly served its cause, sometimes in circumstances of extreme difficulty and hardship.

In his researches the author has drawn mainly on the minutes and other correspondence relating to the work of the Church of Scotland's FMC. He appears not

to have consulted British Colonial records of the period. This is, perhaps, regrettable since the Aden government leaned heavily on the assistance of the Mission during the 1930s and 1940s in cultivating relations with the Imam of Yemen, and in establishing the rudiments of a health service in the Protectorate. Its files contain correspondence with and about Mission personnel which throws useful light on their unsung contribution to British and local interests. Reproduced in Appendix 6 is the vivid account by Dr Patrick Petrie (seconded to Sana'a from the Keith Falconer Mission) of his overland journey from Sana'a to Aden in 1942. This was published in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* (under the pseudonym 'William Robertson') in 1943/44, and Petrie sent an abridged version to the then Governor of Aden, Sir John Hathorn Hall.

There are one or two surprising omissions from the bibliography: for example *Whilst I Remember* by Sidney Elisabeth Croskery (Blackstaff Press, Dundonald, 1983). Dr Croskery, a Quaker, served with the Medical Mission in Sana'a (1939–42), and later (in the 1950s) with Miss Cowie in Beihan. Her book includes a lively account of the challenges of life in both places. The inclusion of *A Medical Survey of the Western Aden Protectorate, 1939–40* by P. W. R. Petrie and K. S. Seal (Colonial Office, 1943) and *A History of Modern Yemen* by Paul Dresch (CUP, 2000) would also have been fitting.

The index is less than comprehensive, and more thorough proof-reading would have eliminated many of the typographical errors which occur in the text. But these are minor blemishes in relation to the service which the author has done to the memory of those who sustained the Keith Falconer Mission through the many decades of its existence.

JOHN SHIPMAN

The Burning Ashes of Time by Patricia Aithie, Seren, 2005. Pp.206. Map. Illus. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 1-85411-398-400-X.

What have Cardiff and Aden and/or South Wales and the Yemen in common? The answers will be found in Patricia Aithie's *The Burning Ashes of Time*, literary companion volume to Charles and Patricia Aithie's superb photographic record of their Yemeni travels *Yemen: Jewel of Arabia* (Stacey International, 2001). Patricia's quest to piece together her family's links with the coal and shipping industries that made Cardiff the most important coal exporting port in the world and helped establish Aden as Britain's fortress guardian of the sea routes to India is recorded in her new book at two levels. First there is her Yemeni travelogue covering generally familiar ground but enlivened by the author's enthusiasm, insights, eye for place and scenery and empathy with the people. Secondly, there is her scholarly investigation of the South Wales/Yemen nexus and how it was that a breed of seafaring Yemeni

tribesmen should come to stoke the boilers of Britain's Royal and Merchant Navies and establish in Cardiff the oldest settled Arab community in Britain.

All will enjoy such vignettes as her visit to the mountain village of Katina to look up the family of the Imam of Tiger Bay's Islamic Centre or her account of Sheikh Abdullah Hakimi, the free thinking Sufi sailor, who built the first mosque in Wales, and, as a leading member of the Free Yemeni movement, founded in Cardiff *Al Salam* one of the first Arabic newspapers in Britain to voice dissent against Imamic rule. But it was depressing to learn that on his return to Aden in 1952 he was imprisoned by the British in an attempt to stabilise British/Yemeni relations, to die two years later from suspected poisoning. These and other tales will revive old memories and although Patricia stretches the imagination by drawing parallels between Yemenis and Welshmen as sharing a sombre sense of history no one would deny a common love of poetry and language.

Her account of the free movement of goods, capital and labour which characterised 19th-century British commercial enterprise and which put both Aden and Cardiff on the map is fascinating stuff. The defining date was 1839 when Haines made Aden Queen Victoria's first imperial possession and when the Second Marquis of Bute built the world's largest walled dock in Cardiff. At this time, the ancient port of Aden had fallen into ruin and its population declined to barely six hundred. Likewise Cardiff, a Roman fort on whose foundations the Normans built their great castle, had just emerged from fishing village status. It was Welsh steam coal, the finest in the world, mined from the sylvan valleys of Merthyr and Aberdare and the vision of two remarkable men that transformed the fortunes of both places. Haines, determined to restore Aden to its former commercial greatness, laid the foundations of a prosperity that reached its apogee in the early 1960s when Aden became one of the foremost bunkering ports in the world and the 'Hong Kong of the Middle East'. Bute, a commercial genius and creator of modern Cardiff, risked his entire fortune to make coal and Cardiff synonymous and the place where the world's first £1 million cheque was written.

Aden's coal bunkering progress was not quite as smooth as the book implies. Coal might have made Cory Brothers and Powell Duffryn's fortunes and Cardiff one of Britain's biggest coffee importers, yet from 1881 until the mid 1930s Aden was locked in a bitter battle for coal bunkering supremacy with the rival Perim Coal Company. Perim Island's well sheltered deep water harbour could accommodate the biggest ships within a few hundred yards of its onshore bunkers whereas Aden's was so shallow that ships had to be anchored two miles offshore. Only when Aden deepened its harbour and oil replaced coal did Perim's Coal Company collapse leaving only Aden in the field.

Cardiff and Aden's latter day history make dismal contrasts. Cardiff became Wales's first capital city boasting Britain's most modern Sports Stadium and the only publicly funded opera house to be built since the 19th century, whereas Aden,

since Britain's departure in 1967, has yet to rebuild its former prosperity. But the links forged between the Yemen, South Wales and indeed several other British cities survive. Many of those stoking Shamiris and Yemeni Sindbads (who already numbered 5,000 in Cardiff alone in 1900) stayed on to marry Welsh girls and five generations later have become a vital and integral part of the community. Patricia Aithie's book is a fascinating and valuable addition to the history of Britain's moment in South West Arabia, but an index would have been useful.

JOHN HARDING

Kidnapped in Yemen: One Woman's Amazing Escape from Terrorist Captivity by Mary Quin, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh and London, 2005. Pp.240. Maps. Appendix. Illus. Hb. £16.99. ISBN 1-84596-018-1.

Hostage taking has a long tradition in Yemen. Sons of tribal leaders were semi-permanent 'guests' of early twentieth century Imams, held (and fed and educated) in the palaces of the Imams, partly to ensure the good conduct of their families. Under the Republic foreigners were kidnapped by tribes or villagers and used as bargaining counters in negotiations with the Sana'a government. Unfavourable international publicity would draw attention to the inadequate control the government had over the country, providing extra bargaining capital for the kidnapers. The promise of a road, a school or a medical clinic might be the outcome of negotiations and the hostages would then be released. There was an unwritten code of practice in the procedure. Hostages were well looked after. If they were held in a remote village they were free to move around that village, and households vied with each other to feed them well.

For the foreign captives, the uncertainty of the experience could be terrifying, but the procedure was well-established and even benign. All this changed in December 1998 when a party of western tourists was seized some 300 kilometres east of Aden. The central government sent a force to rescue them. The hostages were used as human shields in the armed confrontation. Four were killed and the other fourteen hostages released.

One of those rescued was Mary Quin, a senior executive of the Xerox company in the eastern United States, a New Zealander and an enthusiastic traveller in remoter corners of the world. She has now written an absorbing account of her experiences, describing how it affected her life, with the story of her own investigations into the background and motivations of her captors.

Victims of terrorist outrages continue to be victims after those outrages. They become symbols and pawns in a propaganda war, and it is refreshing to have one victim asserting her own individuality. Her cool account of just what happened

when the tourists were seized is gripping. The tension and the detail of weaponry, the characters of her fellow tourists and (as far as she could determine) of the various captors, the intense drama of the shoot-out and rescue, the shuffle back to an abnormal normality – these chapters read like a thriller.

Mary Quin's life changed. Survival of the ordeal gave her a fresh appreciation of life. But, through reading and internet surfing, she obsessively researched the background of the incident, tracing the links between Yemen and the North Finsbury Mosque, Abu Hamza and his son, and the captors. Her researches took her to call on Abu Hamza in London and back to the site of the scene, and to calls on senior Yemenis including the then Prime Minister, Dr Abd al-Karim al-Iryani. The quest for enlightenment has a background of (or is the background to) a transformed life: falling in love and moving to Alaska.

Yemen is a fascinatingly complex country and Mary Quin is not deterred by its mystique. Her approach, uncluttered by the baggage of Yemen scholarship, makes her observations fresh and persuasive. She writes with modest confidence and her account is a unique contribution to studies of contemporary Yemen and the wider canvas of international terrorism.

Altogether a remarkable book.

PETER CLARK

Cool for Qat: A Yemeni Journey: Two Countries, Two Times by Peter Mortimer, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh, 2005. Pp.239. Illus. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 1-84018-946-0.

Peter Mortimer was commissioned by the Customs House Theatre in South Shields to write a play based around the Yemeni seamen's riots in that town in 1930. He knew nothing about the riots and nothing about Yemen. With a Travel Award from the Arts Council, he went to Yemen in 2004 to gather some background on the people about whom he would be writing. This book is an account of the just under three weeks which he spent in Yemen gathering that background, interwoven with some factual information about the riots in South Shields.

Cool for Qat is more for those who have never encountered Yemen before than, for example, members of the British-Yemeni Society. It would give the former a small taste of the country, which might, hopefully, whet their appetite for more. Mr Mortimer skims across the surface of Yemeni history, and only touches on the country's magnificent scenery during his bus ride from Taiz to Sana'a; but instead of looking at the scenery, as had apparently been his intention, he watched the film *Predator* which was being shown on the vehicle's TV system! However, he does describe the plastic bag problem well, and we do get some feeling for the countryside although one longs for more.

Like the author, I had never heard of the Yemeni seamen's riots, so I hoped to learn something about them from this book. But I felt that I had only gained a superficial knowledge of their causes and effects. Racial tensions and unemployment in South Shields were obviously factors but the spark which triggered them eluded me. For a comprehensive appraisal the reader will need to look elsewhere.

The title of this book leads one to expect some in-depth discussion of qat-chewing and its effects, but it appears to have been chosen more as an eye-catcher. The author's knowledge comes from the qat-chews which he experienced during his short time in Yemen, and from no further research. We are once again told that qat tastes like privet – I am always surprised by the number of those who seem to know what privet tastes like!

Where the author does come into his own is in his description of the warmth and hospitality of the Yemeni people. He was completely taken aback, as all of us are, by their kindness and generosity, without which he would have been unable to travel around the country to the extent that he did.

As the author himself says, he is no travel writer. His book offers a highly personal account of his short visit to Yemen. But he was obviously captivated by the country and even more so by its people, and we must hope that his book will entice others to get to know them too.

HEATHER HENDERSON

Like Nowhere Else by Denyse Woods, Penguin, Ireland, 2005. Pb. ISBN 1-844-88042-7.

Novels are not usually reviewed in these pages, but I was asked to look at this one because it was set primarily in Yemen. I was a little wary, as I do not normally read romantic fiction. However, I felt drawn into the book from the start. The author, the daughter of an Irish diplomat, knows Yemen well and her descriptions of its scenery and atmosphere fully reflect this. For me, the love story became just a thread to connect all the sights, smells and feelings which the country evokes.

The author, in addition to visiting the country, has obviously done some research, and there are references in the text to Carsten Niebuhr, Freya Stark, Doreen Ingrams and Tim Mackintosh-Smith amongst others. Her observant eye notes the men waiting outside Bab al-Yemen with their paint rollers, and the changing colours of Jabal Nuqum, and to anyone who has visited Yemen her vivid descriptions of people and places will bring back nostalgic memories.

I would therefore thoroughly recommend *Like Nowhere Else* for the picture it paints of Yemen – and if you enjoy love stories then here you have an added bonus!

HEATHER HENDERSON

A Silver Legend: The Story of the Maria Theresa Thaler by Clara Semple, Barzan Publishing Ltd, 2005. Pp.xii + 165. Illus. Glossary. Bibliog. Index. Hb. £19.95. ISBN 0-9549701-0-1.

It was a brilliant idea of Clara Semple's to devote a book to this offbeat but fascinating subject. She was initially inspired to do so by her interest in the jewellery of the Nile Valley in which she was already a recognised expert. But her new subject entailed years of exploration over a much wider area. The result is a splendidly illustrated account of the Maria Theresa dollar (or Thaler) drawn from many sources as well as her own personal studies. Anyone who has lived in North Africa or Arabia should need no introduction to the Thaler which they must often have seen adorning the necks or the coiffure of Arab women, many fine examples being illustrated here.

And what was this remarkable coin? Its origins are as remarkable as any other aspect of the story. Maria Theresa inherited the headship of the Holy Roman Empire on her husband's death in 1745 after producing for him no less than sixteen children (amongst them the famous figure in France, Marie Antoinette). She also took up in a big way the minting of the imperial coinage. The Thaler (hereinafter the MTD) bore on one side her own handsome head and her generous bust – allegedly the secret of its popularity amongst Arab men, quite apart from its pure silver content. When she finally died in 1780, the MTD went on being produced all over the place for 200 years, unchanged and still dated 1780, and was distributed far and wide, finding its way to markets as remote as Tokyo and Togo.

The main centres of production were latterly Birmingham and Bombay; and during a final decade (1949–61) the British Royal Mint struck four and a half million MTDs, indistinguishable from the beautifully engraved original.

It will interest English readers of this Journal that during those two centuries all British explorers in Arabia and Africa found that a plentiful stock of MTDs was essential for their progress, if not also for their survival. Amongst the best known were Sir Samuel Baker and his wife on their intrepid search for the source of the Nile in the 1840s, Richard Burton, Rosita Forbes, right through to Bertram Thomas and Wilfred Thesiger.

In Yemen itself it was the great Danish explorer Carsten Niebuhr who first reported to Europe the hoards of MTDs in Sana'a. Yemen had built up its stocks by discovering the value in Europe of coffee, which it was the first to grow in quantity and exchange for MTDs, as did Abyssinia when coffee growing was developed there. We learn that in 1923 some 32,000 MTDs would be needed to buy 100 tons of coffee beans in Addis Ababa.

Semple has dug up dozens of entrancing stories about the MTD, too many to be mentioned here. It was good to be reminded of the problems suffered by Evelyn Waugh, when covering as a journalist the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, in finding

the necessary MTDs to buy a railway ticket from Diredawa to Addis.

GLENCAIRN BALFOUR PAUL

Nur al-ma'arif, Lumière de la Connaissance: règles, lois et coutumes du Yemen sous le règne du sultan rassoulide al-Muzaffar edited by Muhammad Abd al-Rahim Jazim. 2 vols of Arabic text (pp.695 and pp.274) with a short introduction in French, published by the Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sana'a (CFAS), 2003 and 2005.

This is one of the most important books on Yemen ever published. It assembles much of the palace archives of the Rasulid Sultan al-Muzaffar, and provides an extraordinary and detailed insight into the administration, economy, foreign relations and international trade of the Rasulid state at its political, military and civilizational apogee. Many scholars will need to work on this incredibly diverse and detailed material before its wealth can filter down in new histories of medieval Yemen. But the publication's importance goes far beyond Yemen; it will have to be taken into account for any future history of the Islamic world's medieval economy; in particular it throws much new light on the international trade of this period, especially in the Indian Ocean. I do not hesitate to compare these two volumes in importance with the Cairo Geniza archive discovered at the end of the 19th century.

The editor, Muhammad Abd al-Rahim Jazim, has provided us with a printed text of fine quality. Whoever has to read or edit medieval manuscripts will be able to appreciate the meticulous accuracy of the editing. The footnotes – all the product of difficult and independent research – provide a wealth of insights. The value of this book cannot be overstated: Muhammad Jazim has made an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the medieval Islamic world.

In this review I only have the space to locate *Nur al-ma'arif* (the title chosen by Muhammad Jazim) in its historical context and to highlight a few key aspects.

At a time of great weakness in the central Islamic world, with the Mongol threat from the East, with the Crusaders on the offensive from the West, and with Egypt and parts of Yemen being ruled by the Shi'a Fatimids, the situation was ripe for an energetic new ruler, such as Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin). In 1171 he dissolved the Fatimid caliphate in Cairo, and in 1174 assumed control of Syria and parts of Mesopotamia. Meanwhile in 1172/73, he had sent his brother Turanshah first to Nubia and then to Yemen, and thus it was that Aden, Ta'iz, Dhamar and Zabid became united with the Ayyubid state.

Ayyubid rule in Yemen modernised and radically transformed much of the country by introducing feudal and taxation systems which were continued under

the Rasulids, as the *Nur al-ma'arif* testifies. When al-Malik al-Mas'ud, the last Ayyubid left Yemen in 1228, one of his feudatories, al-Malik al-Mansur Nur al-Din 'Umar bin Ali bin Rasul, took possession of the whole of Yemen, and also Mekka, obtaining confirmation of his position as Sultan from Baghdad in 1234. The long reign of his successor, al-Muzaffar Yusuf (647–694 H 1249–1295 AD) was the most powerful and most splendid period of medieval Yemen, with its capital at Ta'iz. In 1278, Muzaffar Yusuf conquered Dhofar, whence Yemen controlled all the ports on the southern coast of Arabia. He also did repair work on the Ka'ba.

The *Nur al-ma'arif* was compiled at the end of Muzaffar's rule in the 1290s, and must have constituted the collective archive of the state administration, possibly made for the Sultan himself. Al-Muzaffar Yusuf (according to Marco Polo, 'one of the richest men in the world' because of the income from the Aden customs) took a great personal interest in documentation and writing, being himself an author of works on medicine, astronomy, book-keeping etc.

The *Nur al-ma'arif* provides us with detailed information about Yemen's main products: cotton, *wars* (a kind of saffron), madder, indigo, incense, swords, paper, books etc.; the country's major imports (and re-exports to the North) such as pepper, cloves (twice the value of pepper), cinnamon, ginger, wood, and iron; and its export of horses, the indispensable war-machines of the time, to Persia and India (the export of horses from Aden was a government monopoly and included an elaborate credit system). The book quotes the prices, taxes and destinations. It also contains chapters on weights and measures in Yemen, Mekka, Cairo, Constantinople, Abyssinia and Gujarat. We learn how the cadaster worked, about book-keeping for the agricultural production of the country, about the building trade – in short about everything of relevance (including the fact that civil servants and the military paid 1% income tax).

We also get an insight into the widespread political influence exercised by the rulers of Yemen in Gujarat, Kanbay, Mangalore and in the ports of the Malabar coast from where Chinese products were imported. The convoys from and to India were escorted by Yemeni galleys (*shawani*). Their cargo was unloaded in Aden, whence it was trans-shipped to 'Aydhab.

A subject I am much interested in is Yemeni jewellery and metalwork. The *Nur al-ma'arif* provides detailed statistics on the jewellery being produced in the suq in Sana'a, and the prices of the various items. The same for swords, copper and brass objects. It is thus clear that the fine tradition of Yemeni silver and *janbiya*-making can now be firmly traced back to the Rasulid epoch. Also that large decorated metalwork bowls of the 'tasa' type were already manufactured in Sana'a at that period, and not only imported from Cairo or Damascus.

CFAS must be congratulated on having made this publication possible.

WERNER DAUM

Yemen Engraved: Illustrations by foreign travellers 1680–1903 by Leila Ingrams (with Foreword by Professor Saleh Ali Ba Surrah, and Preface by Professor Richard Pankhurst), Stacey International, 2006. Pp.188. Glossary. Key. Map. Hb. £27.50. ISBN 1900988-704.

One of the most revealing aspects of Leila Ingrams' *Yemen Engraved* is to compare it with the earlier *Ethiopia Engraved* which Ms Ingrams published with Richard Pankhurst in 1988. Christian Ethiopia attracted far more sketching travellers, drawn by its religious heritage as well as, initially, by legends of Prester John. Perhaps more important they could and did sketch. In Yemen, by contrast, a sketching or even note-taking non-Muslim traveller was often reduced to subterfuge: you crouched down shrouded in your *abbaya* as if to relieve yourself and quick – out with pencil and paper for a rapid sketch or note before your Muslim companions became suspicious. The coin and inscription collector Thomas Arnaud used this ruse in 1843. So there is far less material available on Yemen than there is on Ethiopia.

Richard Pankhurst's assistance with this new volume is gratefully acknowledged by Ms Ingrams, and his Ethiopian influence is also recognised in several of the initial engravings; early on there is one of the Sabaeen temple at Yeha for instance, though none of the Sabaeen buildings or inscriptions at Marib, Baraqish or elsewhere in Yemen are included. This omission highlights another difference between Ethiopia and Yemen, often still relevant today: despite periodic upheavals in the former it was easier to reach Sabaeen Yeha and on to Aksum, capital of the Aksumite kingdom, than to venture to the eastern desert rim of Yemen with the more prolific and outstanding remains of ancient cities enriched by careful agriculture and the incense route. These are some of the oldest remains in the country but tribal disagreements can, now as then, still be a hindrance to travel.

While the selection is therefore more restricted especially in the depiction of northern Yemen, there are some marvellous images of Yemeni landscape and architecture. Tribal troubles may have restricted travel to the far north with its remarkable mud *zabur* architecture but architectural sketches elsewhere usefully depict buildings which have since disappeared, particularly in the case of Hodeidah and Luhayyah.

Another area barely frequented until very recently is Mahra, represented here by some unusual engravings by B. A. R. Nicholson from an unpublished manuscript in the Royal Geographical Society. Socotra is also well represented partly because of its remarkable flora but also because its position in the Indian Ocean led to its being considered as a possible coaling station in the early days of steam (though there is rather too much repetition of Captain Head's view of Hadibu – reproduced three times!). Steam was also the stimulus for the presence along the South Arabian coast and up into the Red Sea of those indefatigable marine surveyors,

Captains Haines and Moresby, Wellsted and Lieutenant Cruttenden; we have Wellsted's sketch of Naqab al-Hajr but sadly not the famous one of Husn al-Ghurab where the first Himyarite inscription was found. More could perhaps have been made of Mocha and Aden including some of the early Portuguese charts or, later, some Dutch material on Mocha. And maybe a few more of Baurenfeind's sketches from the Danish expedition, especially that of Yarim where poor Peter Forsskal died and was with great difficulty buried. Local hostility to having the grave of a Christian in their midst highlights the conservative Islam that made sketching so difficult in the Zaidi highlands.

The reproductions are sometimes unkind to the originals – muddy and indistinct in several cases. But the chapter on fauna and flora is superbly illustrated, the engravings sharp and clear. Neither *Yemen* nor *Ethiopia Engraved* has an index, a sad omission for reader as well as reviewer. But the map at either end is excellent and really does include all the places mentioned in the text. That is a real treat! And so is the overall impression left by *Yemen Engraved* of this extraordinarily beautiful and historic country.

SARAH SEARIGHT

Le Yemen vers la République: Iconographie historique du Yemen (1900–1970) sous la direction de François Burgat, Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sana'a (CFAS), 2004. Pp.315. French/Arabic text. Illus. Chronology. Hb. £25. ISBN 2-909194-07-8.

One of the most enjoyable discoveries in this book are the photographs of Sana'a under snow: barefooted Yemenis, who do not seem in the least disconcerted, grabbing at the strange white powder on the ground, and holding their umbrellas as if snow was the most normal thing for them to experience.

Those who have lived in Sana'a will recognise many familiar sights in the photographs, nostalgically burnished with the charm of yesterday, and will leaf effortlessly through major events of Yemen's 20th-century history. But one should not be tempted to use this book as a reference tool. There are quite a number of mistakes, slips and sloppy statements, and it is practically impossible even for a reader closely familiar with the period to separate these from the more reliable aspects of this pictorial history. Clearly, the idea is very appealing: to bring together the visual material, the first-hand impressions of the actors, the spirit of the times and events. An example likely to linger in one's mind are the drawings of Imam Yahya's assassination in 1948: in their naivety and their lack of all fictional colouring these provide a glimpse into the more disturbing aspects of Yemeni culture.

In many ways, however, the reader might have expected more. For example, the plundering of Sana'a in 1948 by Hashid and Bakil tribesmen was a major factor in

the growing anti-Imamic movement among city people. This could have been brought into focus with the Samsara Ibn Hasan (p.133) by showing the building before and after it was damaged in 1948. Also, the many photographs with executions of enemies of the Imam are not linked to the political developments which they sparked e.g. the decapitation of Husayn al-Ahmar in 1960 brought the powerful Hashid tribes onto the side of the Republic in the civil war of 1962 to 1967 (not 1970, as stated on p.310).

In any future attempt at pictorial history it is imperative that photographs should be linked with short texts explaining the historical moment and its context. There are two good examples of this being done (pp.216 and 219) in regard to Nu'man and Zubayri, the Republican leaders. More of the same would have greatly enhanced the value of the publication.

Apart from this lack of contextualization, there are a number of mistakes which could easily have been avoided. There are still many Yemenis around who are familiar with their history. If some of them had been invited to critically read the text they would have spotted the kind of error which appears on p.277 where we are told that Sinan Abu Luhum was the Sheikh of the Hashid!!

I am reliably informed that the flags illustrated on pp.41–42, purporting to be those used by the states of the former British Protectorate of South Arabia, include several which were not in use or never existed (e.g. for the Wahidi, Soqotra/Mahra and Upper-Yafa' sultanates) and omit at least one (Mahra) which was in use before independence. The flag attributed (wrongly) to the Qu'aiti state is the same as that assigned to Aden on the previous page, while the flag (wrongly) captioned 'Sultanat Bas-'Awlaqi' approximates to the Qu'aiti flag.

I am also informed that the Yemeni delegation to Rome (pp.77–80, p.85) was led not by Prince Husayn but by Prince Muhammad, and did not include Prince Husayn. The date of Prince Husayn's visit to the UK (p.83) was not 1934 but 1937; he went to attend King George VI's coronation. Signor Gasparini (p.86) first visited Sana'a in 1926. He was then serving as Italian Governor of Eritrea and was sent to Yemen negotiate a treaty of economic cooperation and friendship. His second visit (from Rome not Eritrea) as Mussolini's envoy was in 1937, not 1936.

P.22 shows a drawing of the Emir al-Idrisi, and without any additional guidance the uninitiated reader may well think that the Idrisi state was in Yemen (the information on p.304 is incomplete). The treaty of Da'an (1911) did not give the Imam 'temporal leadership for all the Zaydi territories'. The Chronology does not mention the independence of South Yemen (1967).

On the funnier side are the problems which the authors of this book seem to have with aircraft: on p.39 we discover a picture of three Yemenis flying over the hilly vineyards of Cairo – this is of course the Rhine, not the Nile! A closer look by the authors at the aircraft on p.193 would have revealed its maker (Junkers).

The 'gold coin' of Imam Ahmad (p.57) is a well-known forgery, struck with the

dies of the Silver Rial (a beautiful coin, the last true example of 'Islamic' coinage).

The photographic material in this publication has been drawn from the sources listed on p.6. It is astonishing, however, that the most extensive series of old photographs from Yemen (Hermann Burchardt, 1902), including his images of Jewish life in Sana'a, have not been made use of. The book reproduces, of course, much from the archives of the well known French doctor, Claudie Fayein, but why are the photographs of Eva Hoeck, who worked at the same time as a doctor in Ta'iz and Hadramut (in the 1940s and early 1950s) not used? Where is Eva Gerlach (1950s), and Hedwig Weiss-Sonnenburg (1926)? Where are the Italians?

The Arabic texts have obviously been written and translated by non-Yemenis, which has added to this book's limitations. Why, for example, are the male headresses on p.48 given the name *qamuq*, which surely no Yemeni would understand? Finally, a better (yet still short) introduction to the social strata of yesterday's Yemen than that on pp. 16–17 would have been desirable and not difficult to achieve. François Burgat, where were you?

WERNER DAUM

The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean by Engsang Ho, University of California Press, November 2006. Pp.xxvi + 357. 4 Maps. 2 tables. 25 b/w photographs. Bibliog. Index. Hb. £35.95. ISBN 0-520-24453-2. Pb. £13.95. ISBN 0-520-24454-0.

For centuries Hadhramis were obliged to leave their poor and arid homeland to seek their fortunes in the wider Indian Ocean region, with its networks of trade and migration stretching from the East African coast to the Indonesian archipelago. Emigrants usually travelled abroad without wives and often married indigenous women. Their progeny were known as *muwalladin* (a term which also applied to any Hadhrami born abroad). Hadhrami emigrants included *sayyids*, descendants of the Prophet, who enjoyed a degree of religious prestige within Muslim communities wherever they settled; many became merchants; some religious teachers and jurists; others became mercenaries; several even founded local dynasties through intermarriage.

A remarkable feature of the Hadhrami diaspora was the ability of Hadhrami expatriates to maintain a sense of identity with their homeland, while adapting to and flourishing in their countries of adoption. They remitted money to their families in Hadhramaut, often sent their foreign-born sons there to absorb intrinsic Hadhrami values and to experience the local way of life; and more often than not they aspired to retire there.

The graves of pious ancestors played an important symbolic role in the religious and social lives of Hadhramis, particularly in Tarim, commonly referred to in

Hadhramaut as the country's 'Vatican'. It was at al-Hisaysah, not far distant from Tarim that Ahmad bin 'Isa al-Muhajir, forefather of the *sayyids*, had chosen to settle after migrating to Hadhramaut from Iraq in AD 932. The burial places of renowned ancestors became a focus for pilgrimage, which helped to nurture a Hadhrami's sense of affinity with the homeland. The recording of family genealogies also played its part in maintaining and developing ties of kinship within and between Hadhrami communities in the Indian Ocean diaspora.

Before 1995, when an international workshop on the Hadhrami diaspora was convened at SOAS, the history of the diaspora had been largely neglected by modern scholars. The workshop proved a turning point, and the papers presented at it were published in *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean 1750s–1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). These included a notable one by Engseng Ho entitled *Hadhramis abroad in Hadhramaut: the Muwalladin*. A slightly expanded version of this paper is included in Chapter 8 ('Repatriation') of his book (pp.224–239). Other scholars who participated in the 1995 workshop have since published important contributions to the study of the Hadhrami diaspora. These include Natalie Mobini-Kesheh's *The Hadhrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942* (1999); Linda Boxberger's *On the Edge of Empire: Hadhramaut, Emigration, and the Indian Ocean, 1880s–1930s* (2002); and Ulrike Freitag's *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland* (2003).

Hadhramaut's culture of emigration and return, and the interaction between the diaspora and the homeland in a changing world are the broad focus of Engseng Ho's work. His text is divided into ten chapters under three sections: 'Burial', 'Genealogical Travel', and 'Returns'. His Preface introduces and encapsulates the rationale and thesis of his book, and on p.28 he cites 'the interweaving of genealogy, theology and history' as a defining feature of his interpretation of the region's past.

The theoretical framework of the book is elastic, allowing the author latitude to roam freely through time and space within and between chapters, and to include in his study a good deal of extraneous matter. This places considerable demands on the reader's ability to keep abreast of the author's train of thought, especially when confronted with dense, sometimes impenetrable, thickets of anthropological jargon. For example:

'The reciprocal motion that was set up within a textual medium was a process of schismogenesis, in which home and the world, in their interaction, came to be dichotomized as source and satellite, relic and replica...' (p.117).

'The grave is a semiotic complex that enacts a passage from silence to vocalization. This initial motion begins a dynamic of signification that launches the dead and silent person within the earth into discourse.' (p.190).

'At stake in this duality of closedness and openness was not a static tension but a dynamic of signification, which maintained discursive control over an expanding sphere of exchange rather than reject or throttle it'. (p.198).

The author seems to enjoy playing with words, and he evidently enjoys coining new ones ('exilic', 'imaginal', 'annalistic', 'interdigitation', 'uxorilocal', 'rhizomic', 'syntagmatic'), and also investing words with new meanings (e.g. 'ascendant' to mean 'ancestor' on p.197). Perhaps he simply enjoys challenging or teasing the reader's intellect!

The author claims that 'Hadrami migrations were self-consciously linked with the propagation of Islam'. This is an untenable view since most migrants would have been unqualified to play a missionary role and would have had more worldly priorities, while those *sayyids* who were qualified had no monopoly of religious teaching. Indeed, some *sayyids* with famous Sufi lineages actually donned military uniform, when it suited them, in direct contravention of the advice of their famous Sufi patriarch, al-Faqih al-Muqaddam (d.1161) 'to break the sword' and pursue a peace-promoting religious life.

Engseng Ho, currently an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Social Studies at Harvard University, is perhaps at his best and most fluent when discussing his fieldwork. His personal impressions of people and places (pp.63–71; pp.249–255) are vivid and pleasing; his case histories of *muwalladin*, young men and women, are one of the highlights of this book. His biographical notes on personalities of the past – religious leaders, writers, poets, historians – and his comparative analysis of their product and influence constitute another highlight. In this context he singles out two historians for special mention: Abdul Qader bin Shaikh al-Aydarus, son of an emigrant Hadhrami father and Indian mother, whose *Revealing Light* recorded details of the Muslim world of the Western Indian Ocean in the 16th century; and Muhammad Abubakr al-Shilli, who was born in Tarim in the following century and, after a spell in India, settled in Mecca where he wrote *The Irrigating Fount: Biographical virtues of the 'Alawi Sayyids*. The author uses these references as a peg on which to hang a discussion of Sufi metaphysics which even the stout-hearted may at times find trying and hard to digest. It is difficult to fathom why an Arabist of the author's experience has chosen to compromise his treatment of the Aydarus work by mis-translating its Arabic title as *The Travelling Light Unveiled*. The title should, in fact, read *The Unveiling* (or *Revealing*) *Light*, for the Arabic contains no reference to 'travelling'. There are other aberrations or caprices, in fact too numerous to list. One must ask why he refers to 'Ahmad Abad' and 'Ahmad Nagar' in that form instead of using the standard 'Ahmadabad' and 'Ahmadnagar', and then fails to maintain the consistency of his self-chosen style by referring to 'Hyderabad' instead of 'Haidar Abad'.

The author, for mystifying reasons, has also chosen the term 'creole' as a

synonym for *muwallad* (a Hadhrami born abroad); 'creole' normally refers to a person of negro or European descent in, or connected with, the West Indies and has no relevance to the Hadhrami diaspora. His insistence on using the term is a recurrent irritant and source of confusion.

Much of Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to a tendentious and digressive commentary on Britain's relations with South West Arabia (historical ground which in relation to Hadhramaut has been usefully and unpolemically covered by Freitag and Boxberger). The relevance of this commentary to the avowed purpose of the author's study is far from clear, and the same applies to his discussion in Chapters 1 and 10 of Yemeni politics before and after the civil war of 1994. The author describes Hadhramaut, following the Advisory Treaty of 1937, as a 'colony' and, more apocalyptically, as Britain's 'last colony'. In actual terms it was neither (although Aden itself was designated a Crown Colony in 1937), and this doubtless explains the general lack of public reaction to the Treaty which so puzzles the author. Hadhramaut was no more a colony, by the standard definition of that word, than, for example, were the sultanates of Trengannu or Perlis or indeed much of the Arab and Islamic world. Britain's last colony was, in fact, Sarawak (1946); and perhaps her last act of Imperial adventurism in Arabia was the penetration of the Mahra mainland in October 1963, although Britain had entered into treaty relations with its Sultan since as early as 1876. The Qu'aiti sultanate was not set up with British loans and arms, as the author claims (p.257). There were no funds available for loans and the territory's budget was heavily subsidised by Qu'aiti assets in India. Besides, Qu'aiti paramountcy in Hadhramaut was well established long before 1881 when the British intervened to help the Qu'aitis take control of Mukalla in part settlement of a loan which its ruler, the Kasadi, had failed to repay. A Treaty of Friendship with the British followed in 1882, and one of Protection in 1888. For an authoritative survey of the origin and development of the Qu'aiti sultanate, amongst other contemporary issues, the reader should refer, for example, to Boxberger.

Meanwhile, the reference on p.82 to 'foreign Yafa'i occupation', echoing Ahmad al-Junayd's feelings on the subject, surely calls for a corrective footnote that the Yafa'i presence in Hadhramaut, along with a number of other tribal groups of similar Himyaritic origin like the Seiban, Nowwah, Humoom and Awabitha, dated from pre-Islamic times (although many, wrongly, date it to Badr Bu Tuweiraq's era or to the Yafa'i expedition of 1705). It is also incorrect to suggest that the Kathiris first arrived in Hadhramaut from Dhufar with Badr Bu Tuweiraq (d.1570); they had come in the train of Salim al-Habudhi (d.1276) and the Kathiri ruling family originally traced their lineage from Ali bin Omar (d.1422) rather than from Badr Bu Tuweiraq. Moreover, Seiyun, the latter's capital, was founded long before Bu Tuweiraq's era and was named after one of the four sons of Hazramaveth of the Book of Genesis, the other three being Shibam, Tarim and Taris.

The whimsicality permeating elements of this book is likely to provoke mixed reactions; but there can be no doubt about the author's passionate engagement with his subject; nor, indeed, about the insights which his fieldwork in the early 1990s equips him to offer. At the same time the author's focal concentration on the works and opinions of the *sayyids* has naturally been at the expense of other social groups with a manifest claim to scholarly attention. This inevitably raises questions about the validity of certain of the author's conclusions. It is regrettable, for example, that he did not find the space to discuss the longstanding rivalry between the *sayyids* and other eminent groups such as the 'Amudi shaykhs of Daw'an, to which he refers in a footnote on p.202 as being beyond the scope of his study! One must hope that such imbalances will be redressed, and that in future studies of the region the voices of Salah al-Bakri, Muhammad Abdulqadir Ba Matraf, Sa'id Awadh Ba Wazir, Abdulqadir al-Sabban and other Hadhramis of non-*sayyid* origins will also be seriously considered in the interest of accuracy, without which no truly comprehensive accounts, so essential to cultural bridge-building, can be presented.

The author has assembled an interesting array of photographs, some of which aroused nostalgic memories. However, I wish he had felt disposed to share with the reader more of the diasporic and 'hybridized' literature which he claims to have unearthed, thereby opening fresh vistas for further study and historical research. A glossary of terms would also have been useful.

GHALIB BIN AWADH AL-QU'AITI

Sons of Sindbad: An Account of Sailing with the Arabs in their Dhows, in the Red Sea, round the Coasts of Arabia, and to Zanzibar and Tanganyika; Pearling in the Persian Gulf; and the Life of the Shipmasters and the Mariners of Kuwait by Alan Villiers, reprinted by Arabian Publishing, 2006. Pp.xl + 408 Introduction. 50 b/w photographs. Map. Appendices. Hb. £25. ISBN 0-9544792-3-8.

By his mid-thirties when he first visited Arabia, Alan Villiers (1903–82) had already made his name as a sailor, photojournalist and writer. The second son of an Australian poet and trade union leader (who died young in 1918), Villiers went to sea in 1919, serving his apprenticeship in the coastal schooners which traded off Tasmania, but soon achieved his ambition of deep sea sailing in a square rigger.

Shortly before his arrival in Aden in late 1938, Villiers had completed an epic voyage around the world in a schooner of his own, the *Joseph Conrad*. He knew that he was living through the last days of sail and that 'only the Arab remained making his voyages as he always had, in a wind-driven vessel sailing without benefit of engines... The Arabs had been sailing...for countless centuries before we even knew the ocean existed: that they still sailed very much the same trade routes in

much the same way I thought remarkable evidence of their ability and spirit.' It was in this mood of empathy, born of his own sea-faring experience and natural modesty, that Villiers looked around for an Arab dhow master prepared to take on a lone Westerner wishing to record as much as he could of the last days of sail. An introduction from Harold Ingrams, then Resident Adviser in Mukalla, led him to Aden and indirectly to a family of Kuwaiti merchants, the Al-Hamads, with an office in Crater. Through the Al-Hamads he was put in touch, first, with the captain of a little Yemeni *zaruq* in which he spent two weeks on a voyage to Jizan, and later with the young captain, Ali bin Nasr al-Nejdi, of one of the great ocean-going Kuwaiti *booms* then at anchor in Ma'alla Bay. Nejdi's *boom*, whose Arabic name *Al-Bayan* (meaning 'clarity' or 'eloquence' but sometimes used as a synonym for the Qur'an) Villiers curiously translates as the *Triumph of Righteousness*, was making the age-old voyage from the Gulf to East Africa with a cargo of dates from Basra. The dates had been sold at Berbera, and the boat was continuing its voyage with cargo and passengers from Aden eastwards to Mukalla and Shihr in Hadhramaut, and thence to ports along the East Africa as far as Zanzibar. The return voyage to Kuwait would be made in the early summer of 1939 with a full cargo of mangrove poles from the mosquito-ridden Rufiji Delta, south of Zanzibar, in addition to coconuts and cloves and a hundred cases of vermicelli!

Like the French sailor and adventurer, Henry de Monfreid, Villiers travelled among his companions as an equal, an honorary member of a mutually sustaining brotherhood of the sea; he was deeply impressed by their cheerful acceptance of the hardship and unremitting toil of their working lives, and their unquestioning faith in the Almighty. His only privilege was to have his own few feet of space on the poop, where he slept on a carpet for the next six months. Soon after leaving Aden, a serious accident on board the dhow left him semi-conscious and temporarily blind. This physically handicapped him for the rest of the voyage, and his main contribution to the welfare of his Arab companions lay in the basic medical treatment which he was able to offer those who fell sick. Villiers' knowledge of navigation, his tireless curiosity and his unassuming friendliness – so different from the European officials with whom the crew usually came in contact – won him their respect, and he soon picked up sufficient Arabic to understand the management of the *boom*, and even to take part in conversations on the poop.

Sons of Sindbad is the work of a naturally gifted writer, sailor and photographer. It is a compelling, at times lyrical, at times poignant, evocation of maritime life in the western half of the Indian Ocean on the eve of World War II; a tonic to read, such is its descriptive power and such the humanity of its author:

'Along the [Ma'alla] beach where the hard brown earth merged into brackish, smelling mud, a dozen small dhows stood propped on stilts or leaned crazily towards the sea, while their skirted sailors carried out repairs, or with endless chant and song,

applied hot paying-stuff to their ships' undersides, using their bare hands. Here and there the shapely hulls of partly finished dhows rose from surrounding piles of twisted wood from the Yemen and logs from the Malabar coast, out of which skilled carpenters, working only with adze and Indian drill, had hewn them. The sweetly curved bows of the new sambuks seemed to look in amazement over the odds and ends of wood which had given them birth.'

'... the [Mutrah] anchorage was full of Persians. Five of their *booms* arrived, having come up from Africa in company. The bay resounded with their haunting boat songs as their longboats pulled for the beach, the *nakhodas* standing and waving as they passed their countrymen's ships. After sunset the creak of their great halliards getting the sails aloft, ready for the sea again, came clearly in the intervals of dancing and the tramp of hard bare feet. Mutrah Bay, that night, was very beautiful under the bright stars. There was no moon, but the stars gave light as the Persians made ready for the sea.. The wind came from the north-west before midnight, gusty, burning with the heat of all the surrounding stone and the desert beyond, hot so it scorched the face like a furnace blast, and even aboard the ship out in the bay it was impossible to sleep.'

The book was first published in 1940 and reprinted only once, in America, in 1969. A further reprint has long been overdue and Arabian Publishing are to be congratulated on producing a book of such excellent quality. This includes a collaborative Introduction by William Facey, Yacoub al-Hijji and Grace Pundyk, which combines a biographical account of Alan Villiers' remarkable life with a thoughtful assessment of the place of *Sons of Sindbad* in the travel literature on Arabia. As the only work of the genre on the sea-faring Arabs, the book is seen to rank with Wilfred Thesiger's *Arabian Sands*, a view which few who read it are likely to contest. The illustrations – 50 black and white plates – superbly complement the text.

JOHN SHIPMAN

A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca and a Siege in Sanaa by Arthur J. B. Wavell. First published in 1912 by Constable and Co. Reprinted by Garnet Publishing Ltd, Reading, 2005. Pp.viii + 349. Appendix. Index. Hb. £25. ISBN 1-85964-182-2.

The publishers are to be warmly commended for their initiative in reprinting this little known classic of Arabian travel literature, first published in 1912 but out of print for many decades.

The author, Arthur John Byng Wavell (hereafter AJW), was born in 1882. He was a cousin of Field Marshal Earl Wavell (1883–1950) and a fellow Wykehamist. They had several attributes in common: strength of character, tenacity of purpose,

a wry sense of humour, and physical courage, qualities often belied by their apparent shyness and reserve in public. Both men graduated from Sandhurst in time to serve as subalterns in the Boer War; and they both won the Military Cross for bravery in action during the First World War.

AJW may have inherited his zest for adventure from their grandfather, General Arthur G. Wavell, who had served as a soldier of fortune in various parts of the world. In any event, he had too independent a nature to tolerate barrack-square routine, and after completing a military survey of unexplored areas of British South Africa in 1904/5, AJW resigned his commission in the Welsh Regiment and bought a sisal plantation near Mombasa. It was his contact with Arab and Muslim society in East Africa which aroused his interest in Islam and in the possibility of undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca in the guise of a Zanzibari Arab claiming to have studied medicine in England.

To this end, having acquired a working knowledge of Arabic and Swahili, he recruited Masaudi, a Swahili Muslim from Mombasa, and Abdul Wahid, a Shi'a Arab ostensibly from Aleppo, to accompany him on pilgrimage. In his book AJW describes Abdul Wahid not only as being from Aleppo but as 'established in Berlin'. This was presumably to protect the latter's identity since he was actually resident in London, working as a translator and teacher, his real name was Abdul Majid, and he came from Baghdad!

In late 1908 AJW and his two companions spent a few weeks in Damascus before embarking on their onward 1000 mile journey by rail to Medina (for which a third class ticket then cost £3.10s.). This was to enable AJW to acclimatise himself to living as an 'Oriental' and to polish up his knowledge of Islamic custom and ritual. Despite all his careful planning, AJW knew that the success of his enterprise ultimately depended on the discretion and presence of mind of Masaudi and Abdul Wahid, as well as on his own agility in modifying his 'cover story' as circumstances dictated. Although his Muslim confederates did not fail him, AJW remained dogged by the worry that sooner or later either he or Masaudi would run into a pilgrim from Mombasa or Zanzibar who would recognise them and give the game away. And he was under no illusion as to the likely fate of a European exposed to 'the wild fury of the pilgrim mob', grimly concluding that 'a quick passage to a better world by a sword-thrust or bullet would probably be the best that could befall him'.

AJW was not the first Englishman to undertake the pilgrimage in disguise. Richard Burton (1853), Herman Bicknell (1862) and John Keane (1878) had all preceded him; but he was the first European to travel on the recently completed Hejaz railway link to Medina. Local Bedu, accustomed to servicing overland pilgrims to Medina with camels and guides, viewed the new railway as a threat to their livelihood. The Turkish garrison at Medina was thus the target of intensive sniping during AJW's three week sojourn there.

AJW's lively and informative account includes some evocative scenes such as Friday prayers in the Haram at Mecca:

'Scarcely a square yard of the great space remained unoccupied. The uniform movements of this vast concourse during the prayer, and the strange stillness that pervades, appeal strongly to the imagination. During... that phase of prayer when the forehead is placed on the earth, not a sound but the cooing of the pigeons breaks the brooding silence; then, as the hundred thousand or more worshippers rise to their feet, the rustle of garments and clink of weapons sweeps over the space like a sudden gust. The moment the prayer is over there is a rush to perform the towaf, and a few minutes later the roar of that human whirlpool may be heard at a considerable distance from the Haram'

The second half of the book recounts AJW's travels and travails in Yemen in 1910/11. On his return to London from the Hejaz in 1909, he had toyed with the idea of leading an expedition to the Tibesti highlands via the Sudan or Libya, but later abandoned it in favour of a project to explore the hinterland of Arabia to the north or east of Sana'a. With the blessing of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), which he had joined in 1905, and with their conditional offer of some financial support, he arrived in Hodeida towards the end of 1910. On this trip he decided to travel in the character of an English convert, Hajji Ali Wavell, using the title which his pilgrimage in 1908/9 had earned him.

He was accompanied to Hodeida by Abdul Wahid: 'I was anxious to have him with me – at the outset, at any rate. For one thing he is a Sheie [Shi'i], and comes of a well-known family. As such he would be sure of a welcome from the fanatical Zaidi citizens of Sana'a. He has a long tongue, a talent for introducing himself and for making friends with all and sundry, and is, beside, a most fluent liar. Since our last expedition these great qualities had been running to waste, for I had failed to induce him to adopt British nationality and stand for Parliament'.

However, the Turkish authorities in Hodeida were unimpressed, suspected AJW of being a spy and refused to allow him to proceed to Sana'a. AJW therefore sent Abdul Wahid home and made a hurried visit to Aden to recruit a servant. He happened upon a young tribesman from the Aden Protectorate. The latter, by name of Ahmad, proved to be a youth of character and resource whose loyalty to AJW, despite, or perhaps because of, their shared vicissitudes, never wavered.

AJW and Ahmad managed to slip secretly out of Hodeida and to reach Sana'a before the Turks could intercept them. A few days later a large force of Yemeni tribesmen, partisans of the Imam equipped with field guns, started to besiege the capital. Noteworthy is the fact that AJW was one of only two Europeans in Sana'a during the four month siege which followed, the other being an Italian trader, Signor Giuseppe Caprotti, whose help to AJW, at some risk to himself, was

unstinting. The Turks soon convinced themselves that AJW was a British officer in disguise who had been sent to Yemen to assume command of the insurgents' artillery. They therefore kept him and Ahmad under constant surveillance and, later on, under virtual house arrest, with the intention, as soon as the siege was lifted, of sending them back to Hodeida and of expelling AJW from the country. Anticipating this, AJW and Ahmad one evening managed to evade the attention of their minders and to escape. They planned to head for Marib and thence make their way to Hadhramaut and the southern coast of Arabia. But they were betrayed by a hired accomplice and recaptured by the Turks. Having suffered physical mistreatment and other indignities, including a spell of imprisonment, they were released into the custody of the British Vice-Consul at Hodeida. The British Foreign Office declined to support AJW's claims to compensation from the Ottoman Government. AJW publishes the relevant correspondence in an appendix; the hauteur and obfuscation of British officials in the heyday of empire still have a familiar ring!

AJW did not originally intend to publish an account of his journey to Mecca, in the belief that it had broken no new ground. But his experiences in Yemen must have acted as a catalyst, for his narrative of both episodes was published in 1912. In 1918 a cheap edition of his book, shorn of its chapters on Yemen, appeared with an introduction by Leonard Darwin, son of the celebrated naturalist. Darwin was President of the RGS when AJW had called on him to discuss his plans to explore Arabia, and has left us with this impression of AJW:

'There entered my room a young man, rather below the middle height, evidently very light in weight, with dark hair and a much-tanned complexion; and he began discussing the matter in hand – the loan by the Society of some instruments... with no assurance of manner and with apparent diffidence...'

Darwin was beginning to wonder how his visitor could possibly muster the nerve to undertake an expedition into the wilds of Arabia when, as if to allay his doubts, AJW quietly remarked that he had visited Mecca and Medina in disguise. Ever after their interview Darwin felt that he had been in contact with 'an exceptional personality'. His feeling was amply borne out by AJW's initiative, following the outbreak of the First World War, in raising a force of Arab irregulars, many of them local water-carriers equipped with rusting and obsolete rifles, to repel German attacks on Mombasa. This force, known initially as Wavell's Arabs, was, at AJW's request, later renamed the Arab Rifles. In January 1916, AJW, now a Major, was killed defending a position guarding the Uganda Railway.

The reprint omits the seven illustrations, including a photograph of AJW in Arab dress taken in Damascus in 1908, as well as the detailed map of Arabia which appeared in the original (1912) edition. No explanation for this is offered.

Moreover, an all too brief introductory note on the author is only to be found on the dust cover. Such sins of omission are regrettable but do not greatly diminish the thanks due to Garnet Publishing for reviving the memory of this intrepid and engaging young traveller, and for making his enthralling narrative available to a wider readership.

JOHN SHIPMAN

An abridged version of this review will appear in the November 2006 issue of 'Asian Affairs'.



OBITUARIES

JUNE KNOX-MAWER
(1930–2006)

June Knox-Mawer's death at the age of 75 ended a distinguished career in radio broadcasting, notably as a presenter of *Woman's Hour* on the BBC. But before that, after a spell as a journalist in Chester, she had spent some 6 years in Aden, followed by 11 years in Fiji, as the wife of a member of the Colonial Legal Service. Her husband Ronald Knox-Mawer, a barrister, was posted to Aden as Chief Magistrate in 1952, some six months after their marriage. Just before she left England the *Daily Express* took her on as their Aden stringer. She was then aged 21.

The normal tour for expatriates in Aden was 13 months, followed by nearly 6 months of leave, and her husband would become Acting Chief Justice while the substantive judge was himself on leave. This meant that, despite her youth, she had to be a decorous *grande dame* in Colony society for much of her time. She wrote entertainingly of this in her memoir 'The Sultans Came to Tea', published in 1961. She brought a spirited zestfulness to the restrictions of Colony life; some may remember her as an alluring Queen of Sheba in a fancy-dress parade round the swimming pool of an RAF officers' club, with a cohort of retainers and riding a caparisoned camel (until it fell in).

The Aden judiciary had no function in the Aden Protectorate, which was closed to expatriates in the Colony, there being no roads, hotels or adequate security. But June Knox-Mawer was keen to meet Arab chiefs, entertaining a young girl's romantic fancy of being 'ushered into a black goats hair tent by a bearded Valentino'. Her first such contact was the young and recently knighted Sultan of Lahej, Sir Ali bin Abdul Karim, the senior and most sophisticated of the Western Protectorate chiefs, whose Sultanate abutted the Colony. He commuted to Lahej from his palace in Crater (where June visited his wife in the *harim*), attended Aden parties, played tennis weekly with her husband and took them to different parts of Lahej on picnics. But Sultan Ali was an admirer of Colonel Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism, sponsoring a political party in Aden, the South Arabian League, under his close friend Sayyid Muhammad al-Jifri, which called for the British to leave Aden and for the Colony and the Western Protectorate to become a unified state under Sultan Ali's control. This was a notion abhorrent to other Protectorate rulers. When al-Jifri was banned from Aden and took refuge in Lahej, the Knox-Mawers were taken to see him there on one of their visits. This basically social friendship with the Sultan and his henchmen, together with June Knox-Mawer's liberal-minded though no doubt well-intended cables to the *Daily Express* following social meetings with others in Aden involved in the political scene, was embarrassing to the Governor of Aden, then trying to negotiate a federal constitution for

the Protectorate which the chiefs could support. Shortly after the Knox-Mawers left Aden Sultan Ali absconded to Cairo and was deposed.

Through Sultan Ali, June Knox-Mawer also met Sultan Saleh bin Hussayn, the Audhali Sultan, though communication was restricted by his lack of English and hers of Arabic. He invited her to visit Mukeiras, bordering Yemen on the high plateau, then being developed as a source of fruit and vegetables and as a potential hill station. Aden Airways had started to run a weekly Dakota service there, their first into the Protectorate, which enabled the young Sultan to visit Aden easily and join in its social scene. June Knox-Mawer spent a fortnight there, with a chaperone, as the Sultan's guest, giving her a taste of the up-country Arabia she so keenly sought, although she was disappointed to find other Europeans already there – a small group of officers of the Cameron Highlanders. Outside of Lahej this was her only trip into the Protectorate.

June Knox-Mawer's time in Aden clearly made a deep impression on her and she wrote about it with enthusiasm and fluency, especially in "The Sultans Came to



June Knox-Mawer with H. H. Sultan Ali Abdul Karim of Lahej and a member of the Sultan's household.

Tea'. Students of 'the end of empire' in South Arabia will probably find her sympathetic portrayal of Sultan Ali a valuable counterweight to British officialdom's somewhat negative view of him at the time. In the 1980s, by then a well-known voice on the BBC, she presented 'Tales of Araby', a series of interviews with people some of whom she had known in Aden. These included a memorable description by Heather Seager of the nearly successful attempt by a religious fanatic to assassinate her husband, Basil Seager, the British Agent for the Western Protectorate, while they were spending Christmas 1951 together in Dhala. Also included were interviews with Lady Champion (wife of a Governor of Aden), Major-General James Lunt (who had published his own memoirs of his time in Aden), and Muhammed Farid, a former Political Officer who became Foreign Minister for the Federal Government. She also wrote several books derived from her experiences in the South Seas. In 1991 she published a novel, 'Sandstorm', a romantic account, in a pre-First World War setting, of a girl married to a repulsive Deputy Political Resident in Aden who found consolation and steamy love with an Arab prince. This clearly drew heavily on her own Aden experiences; the prince, who much resembled Sultan Ali, was 'The Emir of Jehal', which is but 'Lahej' reversed. It won the Boots Romantic Book of the Year prize for 1992.

NIGEL GROOM



DR DEREK HARVEY OBE
(1928–2006)

Derek Harvey, who died on 31 March 2006 at the age of 78, spent twenty-five years of his professional life providing health care in Zambia, Oman, Brunei and Yemen where his medical expertise was perfectly matched to his love of bird watching in far flung lands. Born to a pastor father, once a missionary in China, and a music teacher mother, he attended Kingswood School in Bath and went on to earn his MB and BS at St Mary's Hospital London in 1953. In the same year he married Meriel O'Hara, emulating his father by taking as his bride a vivacious woman with an AGSM in Piano, Violin and Viola. Derek first embarked on his medical career at Ashford Hospital Middlesex and then, following four years of service as a Graded Specialist Squadron Leader at RAF Halton, he set up a 5-member group practice in St. Columb Cornwall in 1958 where he and Meriel settled in with their young family. Fourteen years and five children later he exchanged the Cornish countryside for the African skies of Zambia. This was in 1972 and with the exception of one year as senior medical adviser to Shell International in London (1978), he led the life of an expatriate professional in Africa, Asia and Arabia until he retired in 1997 and returned to his beloved Lancefield House, a Grade II Listed home in Padstow, Cornwall.

Derek had both the administrative and practical medical expertise ideally suited to overseeing health care for large corporations in the field, such as Shell Aviation and Royal Brunei Airlines in Brunei, Shell Petroleum Development in Oman and Roan Consolidated Mines in Zambia. Total responsibility for field workers and their families in 22 clinics and a 35-bed hospital in Oman or a 100-bed hospital for Brunei Shell Petroleum, for instance, were meat and drink to him. His last posting from 1992–1997 saw him running the Joint Companies' Clinic in Sana'a where he provided round the clock primary care and occupational medicine services to the large community of oil companies in Yemen.

This was the professional Derek Harvey. But he shall also be remembered for two further callings that dwelt within the same ample frame – that of an amateur ornithologist and of a consummate host. Amateur birder (his own description) does not really do justice to Derek's commitment to avifauna. He used to say that 'birding was something you did, like cleaning your teeth each day.' Despite a heart condition and the dodgy hip that restricted his mobility, Derek 'birded' everywhere he went, noting and sharing his methodical observations. From his clinic in Sana'a he wrote a weekly column for *The Yemen Times* on Conservation in Yemen, headed up the Yemen Ornithological Society from 1993 to 1995, helped co-ordinate the Yemen records for the Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) and described the birdlife in his garden, contributing astute records of avian habits often overlooked by the bands of globetrotting twitchers who came through. His

article 'Wildlife Conservation Initiatives in Yemen' (December 1999) in this journal followed his illustrated talk to the Society in January (see <http://www.albab.com/bys/articles/harvey99.htm>). It demonstrates Derek's effective advocacy of education and environmental protection in Yemen. He was a driving force in the initiatives that took place at governmental, multilateral and NGO levels in the 1990s. Without him one doubts that the preservation of the Aden wetlands, the Yemeni schools programme for bird conservation and the Biosphere project on Socotra would have been birthed so lustily. A tribute to Derek by Richard Porter can be read in *Sandgrouse* 28 (1), the journal of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME). Gavin Watkins, ODA vet in Yemen 1990–1994, recalls the fun and purpose of birding trips Derek organised to seemingly unlikely venues such as the Sana'a rubbish dumps and the Tihamah *subkha*. He was a 'great enthuser', said Watkins.

Derek made friends with discernment, grace and irrepressible bonhomie. One always found a refreshing welcome in his home – be it the luxury of a shower after weeks in the field, a glass of scotch tinkling with ice, sparkling conversation, intense exchange of news from the conflict-torn tribal areas outside Sana'a, encouragement and indefatigable assistance for one's projects, or just a lively evening of bridge or chamber music. His and Meriel's hospitality attracted diplomats, researchers, artists, travellers. One such friend and bridge partner, Tim Mackintosh-Smith, remembers fondly the 'the magisterial ticking off' Derek gave him once for having mistaken ravens for crows in his first book, *Travels in Dictionary Land*. Only Derek could make one feel at home while figuratively boxing one's ears.

It is no surprise that Derek was awarded an OBE in 1995 for his service to the community in Yemen (the citation mentioning other career achievements such as President of Rotary International in Zambia). He also received the Silver Oak Leaves for Bravery shown in his general practice.

Here was a man who lived his life so well that his gift was contagious, and being around him quite simply made the world work better. He is survived by his wife, two sons and three daughters, and three grandchildren.

The writer wishes to thank Richard Porter, Tim Mackintosh-Smith, David Stanton, Gavin Watkins and Meriel Harvey for their help in compiling this tribute.

FRANCINE STONE

Society for Arabian Studies

RED SEA PROJECT

Phase 3

Cultural Connections of the Red Sea

Friday 27 October and Saturday 28 October 2006

Following two successful conferences held in association with the British Museum on, 1: *Trade and Travel in the Red Sea Region in the Red Sea* (2002), and 2: *People of the Red Sea* (2004), the Society is organising a third two-day event entitled *Cultural Connections of the Red Sea* focusing on the following topics:

Maritime Networks: commercial connections: cultural relations of Red Sea maritime traditions and industries - particularly the cultural roles of harbours, boats, boat-building and navigational routes/dimensions.

Ecological Connections: with a focus on natural history - natural distribution of plants, crops, fish, mammals, birds - which have, at some time, influenced local culture.

Sacred Space: pre-Islamic, Christian and/or Islamic spiritual/religious and political routes and connections: the spread of religious and political frameworks and traditions within the Red Sea region - pre-Islamic shrines, churches, mosques, building materials/styles; political & religious networks etc.

Identities: spread of other cultural identities, of and to the Red Sea, with an emphasis on craft traditions and anthropological perceptions: textiles/costume, architecture, pottery, rock art and other archaeological artefacts.

Intellectual Landscapes: Visual and oral artistic interaction with the region: with an emphasis on art, music, dialects and literature and linguistics.

Tickets £28 / or £25 Society members and British Museum Friends
from Christine Lindner, 16/4 Comiston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH10 6AH
Tel: 07775 726325. E-mail: CB Lindner <s0453472@sms.ed.ac.uk>

Project Co-ordinator **Janet C.M. Starkey**, j.c.m.starkey@durham.ac.uk

More information at: www.dur.ac.uk/red.sea



Cutting sorghum in Wadi Hadhramaut c.1964

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