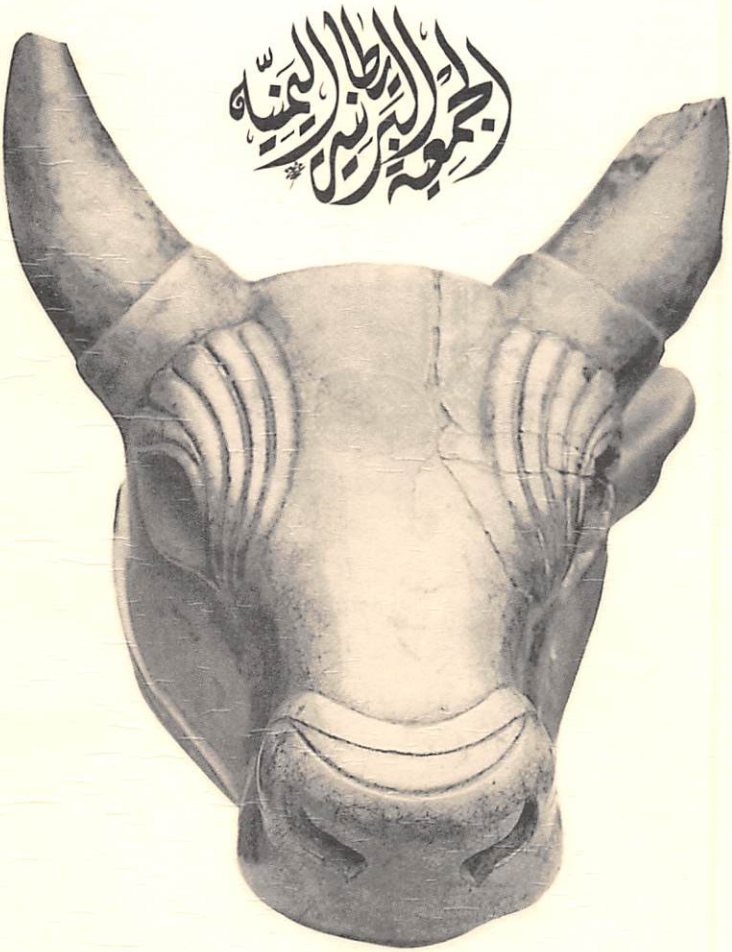


The British-Yemeni Society Journal

2009

THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

Registered charity No. 1027531

OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
2009-2010

Co-Presidents: Mr Mohamed Taha Mustafa, Yemeni Ambassador in London
Mr Timothy Torlot, British Ambassador in Sana'a

Vice-Presidents	Dr Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher
	Douglas Gordon
Chairman	Dr Noel Brehony C.M.G.
Vice-Chairman	Julian Lush
Hon. Secretary	Rebecca Johnson
Hon. Treasurer	John Mason
Ordinary Members:	Dirham Abdo Saeed
	Victor Henderson C.M.G.
	John Grundon O.B.E.
	Dr Shelagh Weir
	Dr Abdulaziz Ali Al-Qu'aiti
	Anderson Bakewell
	Najla Abu Talib
	Julian Paxton
	James Spencer
	Muhammad al-Sadah
	Ginny Hill
Hon. Editor	John Shipman

Website: http://www.al-bab.com/bys/

BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY JOURNAL

Vol. 17. 2009

CONTENTS

Published by

THE BRITISH-YEMENI SOCIETY

c/o The Hon. Secretary, 2 Lisgar Terrace, London W14 8SJ
Tel: 020 7603 8895
Email: l.rebeccajohnson@gmail.com

ISSN: 1356-0229

Part of a mosaic by Gillian Hills, inspired by her visits to old Sana'a, which has been exhibited in galleries in Worthing and Lewes.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Sixteenth Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 17 June 2009)

If it is any surprise that you see your Vice-Chairman in the Chairman's seat, it is because Victor Henderson resigned as Chairman earlier this year for the very understandable reason that, with his other commitments, he felt unable to devote the necessary time and energy to the Society's affairs. We much regret his departure and express our sincere thanks to him for all that he has done for the Society.

We are, however, most fortunate that Dr Noel Brehony, with his wealth of Arabian and Yemeni experience, has agreed to become the new Chairman in January 2010.

I also wish to record the Society's debt to Mr Khaled Alyemany, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy, who has served on our Committee and has made many positive contributions to the work of the Society. Khaled is about to return to Sana'a to take up another diplomatic appointment, and his place on the Committee will be taken by Mr Muhammad al-Sadah to whom we extend a warm welcome.

At this point I feel it would be appropriate to express our sympathy with Yemen over the various misfortunes that have beset the country in recent months. The consequent security problems and negative FCO travel advice now mean that normal visits to Yemen are out of the question. Various planned trips to Yemen have had to be cancelled, including a Channel 4 production 'On Tour with the Queen' scheduled to visit Aden; the Royal British Legion's trip to Aden's war cemeteries, and a 'Far Frontiers' country-wide tour.

However, it was good to see a refreshingly positive story about Yemen appear in the Travel Section of *The Guardian* on 23 May 2009. This was by Kevin Rushby and entitled 'Yemen behind the Headlines'. During a recent cruise in the Indian Ocean, I observed much interest in visiting Yemen among my fellow passengers who were greatly disappointed at being unable to call at Mukalla and Hodeida due to the ship's diversion to avoid piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

We will of course encourage travel to Yemen whenever the situation permits. In this connection I should mention that Mr Abdul Wahab Sadaka has been appointed Tourism Counsellor here in the Embassy of Yemen, and that Dunira Strategy, PR Consultants, have been retained as advisers by

Yemen's Tourism Promotion Board. Thus anyone interested in travelling to Yemen should apply for advice to Mr Sadaka. Alan D'Arcy is no longer able to act as our tour leader, and in present circumstances we have no plans for a further Society tour to Yemen.

Meanwhile, new books about Yemen by Society members include:

The Birth of Modern Yemen by Brian Whitaker. This is an e-book available at www.al-bab.com/yemen/birthofmodernyemen

Warriors of Arabia by Dr Franco Grima (a memoir of the author's time in South Arabia 1962–65)

Yemen: Jewel of Arabia by Charles and Patricia Aithie (a revised paperback edition of the hardback published by Stacey International in 2001)

Establishing Peace in Hadhramaut: an historical study of Hadhramaut's experience in eliminating the tribal feud 1933–1953 by Dr Abdul Aziz bin Ali bin Salah Al-Qu'aiti (in Arabic and published by Arabian Publishing Ltd, London);

Books by non-Society members include:

The Lost World of Socotra by Richard Boggs (published by Stacey International, 2009).

Among recent exhibitions relating to Yemen were Gillian Hills' Yemen-inspired mosaics at the Chalk Gallery in Lewes; and images of Aden from the 1930s, together with a film taken by the Besse family, at the Louvre in Paris. I should also mention that Stephen Gracie, an Australian member of the Society, has amassed possibly the world's largest collection of Yemeni daggers (janbiyas) and is looking for more!

To encourage further interest in and study of Yemen, we have revived the Essay Competition, offering prizes of £500 and £250 with the deadline now extended to 30 September; and amongst universities we are offering a Research Grant of £500, with submissions by 31 October and the award to be made in January 2010.

The Society's lecture programme last winter and this spring comprised:

16 October 2008 – Fernando Carvajal, a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter, spoke on *Yemen: Beyond the Horizon*;

20 November 2008 – Quentin Morton gave an illustrated talk on the early oil exploration of Yemen in which his father, Mike Morton, was a pioneer;

5 February 2009 – The Rev. Peter Crooks gave a moving account of his experiences during his time at Christ Church, Aden, and of the work of the Ras Morbat Clinics;

20 May 2009 – Dr Jac van der Gun, in a joint lecture with the Society for Arabian Studies, spoke on *Water in Yemen: changing views on a rapidly changing resource.*

The full Autumn programme will be sent out later this summer, but an advance note for your diaries is 24 September at the Middle East Association when Captain Roy Facey will give his annual update on Aden Port.

The Society has made several donations to deserving causes:

£1000 to the *Friends of Hadhramaut* for the flood relief fund;
£500 towards the *Death and Burial Conference* in September 2008;
£500 to Dr Nizar Ghanem's *Health and Culture Centre* in Sana'a.

Besides these donations made directly by the Society, we have acted as a conduit for the funds raised by Bill Heber Percy for the Soqotra Training Centre, which reached a total of £21,000. I am sure the Society will wish to congratulate Bill on this most impressive achievement.

As to membership, I am glad to say that the Society now has 299 members, including some 20 new members who joined during the year and to whom we extend a warm welcome.

But it is sad to have to report a number of deaths since last year's AGM: Abdelmalik Eagle, David Ledger, Murray Graham, Colonel David Smiley, Geoffrey Clayton, Will Arber and Mrs Alison Weir.

The newly co-opted members of our Committee – Muhammad al-Sadah, Ginny Hill and Dr Noel Brehony – are nominated for election at this meeting; and Dr Brehony is additionally nominated for election as Chairman from January 2010.

Finally, I should like on behalf of the Society to express warmest thanks to HE the Ambassador and his staff for the generous hospitality which I know once again awaits us at the reception which follows this meeting.

JULIAN LUSH

FIVE YEARS OF DIPLOMACY IN CANADA

DR ABDULLA ABDUL WALI NASHER

The author, a Vice-President of the Society, served for several years as Minister of Health in Sana'a before being appointed Yemen's Ambassador to Ottawa in 2003. His tour as Ambassador ended in November 2008. We are indebted to him for contributing this account of his time in Canada.

The life of a diplomat is full of constant travel and change, like the ocean's tides that constantly come and go. We arrive in a place, scurry around getting to know everybody, developing special relationships and growing fond of one another and then...start all over again when colleagues depart or our own posting comes to an end. Every single one of us attempts professionally to achieve the very best during each appointment that we serve, but it is the human relationships that we form during these postings that characterize the essence of our quality of life in a foreign land. Although we must eventually leave a country behind, these precious memories of special friendships and bonds that we formed are ours to keep for a lifetime.

The journey to my five years of diplomacy started in London, the city that I had fallen in love with at first sight in September of 1963, upon my arrival as a student from Aden. In July, 2003, I was vacationing there with my family and I found myself contemplating my recent appointment as Ambassador to Canada. In one of the city's bookshops I found a publication called '*National Geographic Traveler: Canada*' which covered the country from coast to coast, providing details on its history, geography and people.

It became immediately evident that the major cities located in each Province and Territory, were spread out over an unimaginable magnitude of terrain. I devoured the entire contents of the publication, but felt I had only just grazed the surface of this astonishingly vast and beautiful country. I was, in fact, starting to feel slightly overwhelmed, and although I had survived the rigours of medical school, graduated from Liverpool University, risen to the challenges of being a medical practitioner and junior surgeon in the UK, a Professor of Surgery in Aden and Sana'a, and had completed several successful years as The Minister of Health for Yemen, I was starting to wonder how any of this might actually qualify me to be an Ambassador and was experiencing an unfamiliar sense of disquiet about being launched into a field where I had no familiarity. To say that I found this daunting was an understatement and I was in a quandary as to where to begin wondering if this was such a good idea. I decided I must

seek out the advice from someone I knew would have the answers.

Before I left for Ottawa, in November 2003, I visited my good friend Frances Guy, who was then the British Ambassador in Sana'a, and asked her to assist me in my dilemma. She did her best to calm my nerves and very kindly handed me some salvation in the form of a little book on Diplomacy, *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations,* which I desperately hoped would represent the definitive encyclopaedia of Ambassadorial life.

I also greatly appreciated the very kind gesture of His Excellency Edmund J Hull, the American Ambassador, in providing me with an invaluable publication entitled, *The Modern Ambassador: The Challenge and the Search* by Martin Herz of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy of Georgetown University.

Although I was well-armed with these precious manuals, I still felt a bit like a man overboard, keeping afloat by clinging to the ship's cat.

As luck would have it, in October 2003, I was also fortunate enough to meet with the new non-resident Canadian Ambassador to Yemen, Roderick Bell, who was in Sana'a presenting his credentials to the President. He provided me with a wealth of insight into the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs as well as directions for negotiating the tangled labyrinth of its inner workings. I learned that Ministers of State were difficult to meet – real progress came by spending one's days scampering through the complex maze of bureaucracy and gnawing at the heels of senior officials. It was dawning on me that the life as a diplomat bore some striking resemblances to that of a rodent... but with much better *hors d'oeuvres*!

I am also very grateful for the fortuitous crossing of paths with my predecessor and dear friend Mustapha Noman on his return from Ottawa, just prior to my own departure. He was a goldmine of helpful hints and indispensable advice. With supplemental encouragement and words of wisdom from our Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Dr. Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi, and the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mohayaddin Al-Dhabi, as well as a crash course from the Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Institute, I was beginning to feel cautiously optimistic and rather buoyant.

On 28th November, my wife Ilham and I travelled to London, and two days later, I flew to Canada, while Ilham took the train to Newcastle to attend her convocation for her PhD in Environmental Engineering, prior to joining me in Canada.

When I arrived in Ottawa, it was a hypothermia-inducing minus 15 degrees. I emerged from the airport in utter disbelief, having left plus 28 degrees in Sana'a. My driver explained to me nonchalantly that winter had not technically begun yet and then described, in a sadistically cheerful way, the horrors of freezing rain, wind-chill factors and explained that Ottawa had the dubious honour of having the coldest January mean temperatures of any capital in the world, except for Mongolia and Kazakhstan. I was starting to have serious misgivings about whether I would survive the week, let alone January!

Fortunately my anxiety was abruptly cut short by the flurry and bustle of the diplomatic life, which waits for no one. Ilham and I found ourselves immediately immersed in an awe-inspiring sea of new faces, meetings, receptions, dinners and welcoming parties. We were oblivious to the rapidly dropping thermometers outside having quickly discovered that the extraordinary friendliness and warmth of the Canadian people kept us insulated from the cold and made us feel immediately at home away from home.

I very soon realized that the better part of diplomacy involves an enormous amount of listening and the never-ending creation of relationships with individuals from every walk of life – the Senate, Parliament, government, business, media, academia and the general public all have a role to play in the reality that diplomats create for themselves and the vehicles that they choose as the most effective to promote their countries and their relationship with the country in which they are posted. It struck me immediately that Yemen was a country that most people knew very little about. This was a positive and a negative. On one hand, there were no preconceived notions and people were fascinated by images of its unusual beauty and the sheer mystery of a land that is 'uncharted territory'. On the other hand, Yemen, having a low profile, meant that it did not appear frequently on Canada's radar, in terms of recognition or assistance. It became abundantly clear that I had my work cut out.

I formulated a game plan and clarified my objectives. Simply put, my goals were to build upon the friendly relationship that did exist between our two countries, strengthening ties and bilateral relationships. Although this sounds quite simple, I was soon to discover that raising public awareness of this little known Arab country would entail a highly ambitious and energetic personal campaign to promote and educate people about Yemen's unique qualities, opportunities, limitations and needs. All of this had to be accomplished in a finite period of time, under the confines of a

limited budget and in a post-9/11 environment. Fortunately I love a good challenge!

I decided the best way to extol the virtues of the 'Unknown Arabia' was to bring in an expert who was sure to capture everyone's attention, and that is why in February 2004 I called in my very good friend, brilliant author, and Yemen's famous adoptive son, Tim MacIntosh-Smith. In 1982 Tim graduated from Oxford in Arabic Language Studies. His professor told him to take a break and 'Go somewhere respectable and practise!' He ignored this advice and went to Yemen instead where he became so completely intoxicated with the land and its wonderful people that he decided not to leave and remains there to this day. His perspective on the country is unique – words of a westerner spoken from the heart of a Yemeni. We pried him away for a week, his first trip across the ocean, and during that time he lectured at Ottawa and Calgary Universities and the Canadian Parliament. The impact was an invigorating introduction to the Land of the Queen of Sheba for our Canadian friends.

Emboldened by this visit and heartened by the response and the developing curiosity about Yemen, I managed, a few months later, to convince three Canadian journalists, along with the manager of a Canadian tourist company, to visit Yemen. Our national air carrier, Yemeni Airlines, provided the tickets, while the Sheba Hotel and the Universal Travel and Tourism Company in Sana'a provided accommodation and travel around the country. This was a thundering success and generated much interest and press coverage.

This was but the first of many successful and ambitious visits between Canada and Yemen that were to take place over my term. Future missions included Ministers and Members of the House and Senate, senior government executives, trade representatives and officials from a variety of business groups. These trips were highly productive, leading to deals and contacts but most importantly they cultivated deep personal relationships based on trust, admiration and friendship, the building blocks of true success.

My days were spent immersed in an endless series of meetings, receptions and dinners. It was not long before I started to feel comfortable wearing each of the many hats that a successful Ambassador must don during the course of any given day – educator, negotiator, strategist, historian, deal-maker, promoter, archaeologist, entertainer and host. My wife and I delighted in accumulating so many wonderful friends and associates who

all shared an enthusiastic fascination with Yemen – its overwhelming beauty, the magic of its people, its culture, customs and rich history. Dinner parties at the House of Yemen were always lively and informative with last-minute additions at the table being commonplace. Numerous seeds of cooperation as well as many vital Canadian/Yemeni relationships took root in our dining room.

While most of my time was spent promoting Yemen, we could not help but become mesmerized by the beauty of Canada and inspired by its timeless values of good governance, freedom and tolerance. I was so fortunate to have the opportunity to travel across this great country, visiting many cities including Quebec, Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Niagara Falls, St. John's and Saint Andrews. While I was always received with customary friendship and warmth wherever I went, I feel that I must give special mention to the City of Calgary where visitors are subjected to the ultimate in uninhibited friendliness known as 'Western Hospitality'. I made several visits to strengthen our business ties with Canadian oil and gas companies located there and each time found myself engulfed by a welcome suitable for a long-lost brother who had risen from the dead.

Calgary is the home of Nexen Inc., Yemen's greatest success story and corporate citizen. Few global companies can match the extraordinary philanthropic generosity and corporate responsibility of this great company which has extended support to Yemen for health, hospitals, annual medical visits, water and the most important gift of all – education. Every year Nexen awards ten scholarships for Yemeni students to study at the University of Calgary and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, thereby investing in the future of our country.

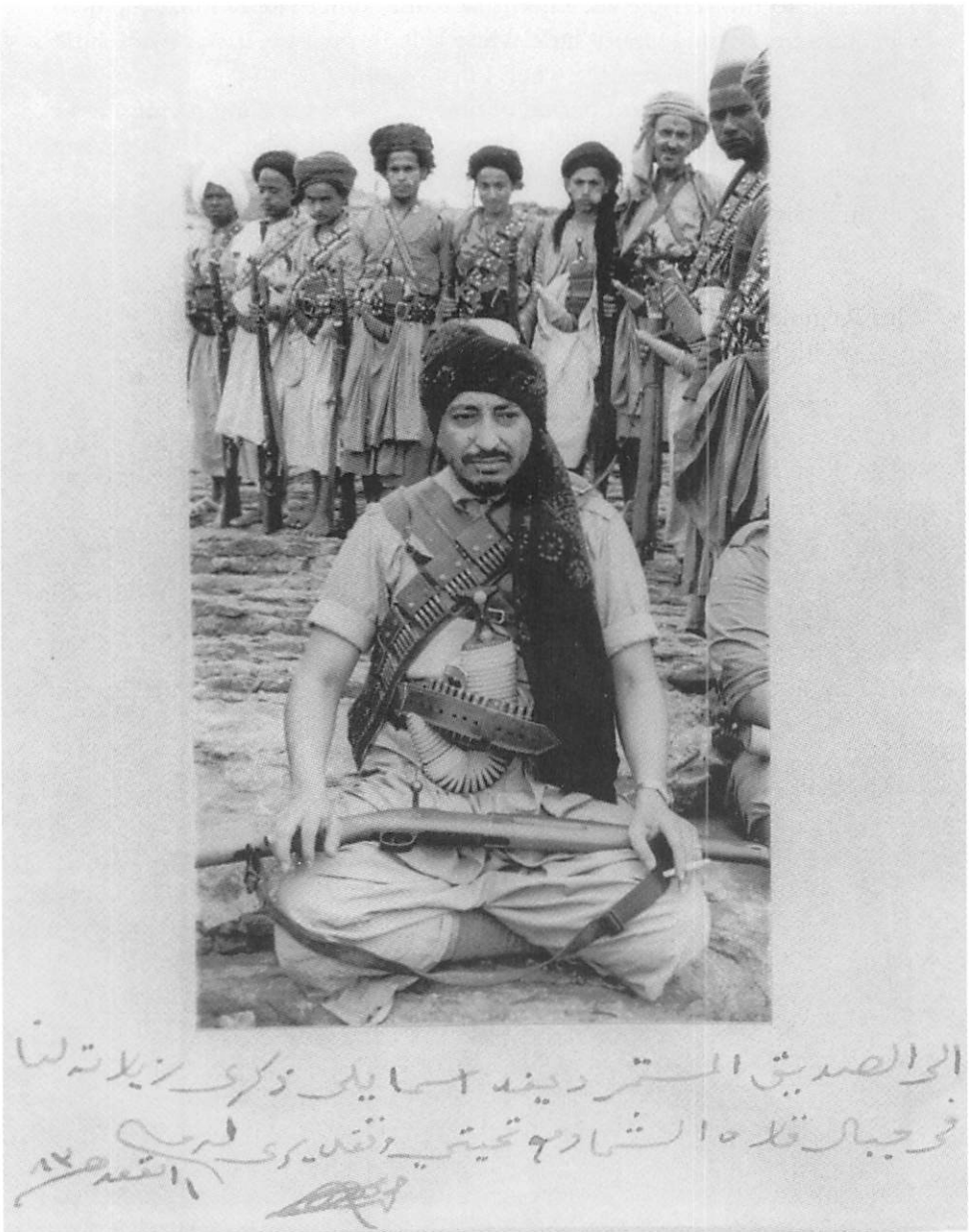
As I look back at what Ilham and I consider to have been one of our life's greatest adventures, I cannot help but wonder what the next chapter holds in store... but I have a feeling that it may evolve out of something that Canada has taught me! I lived in the UK for 15 years and four of those years were spent in Edinburgh. The fact that we were just 50 miles from St Andrews, the town where golf was born in 1400 AD, was of no consequence to me. When I came to Canada I was surprised by the number of people who seemed to be utterly obsessed with this peculiar game. I came under a lot of pressure to play, and after much resistance I finally caved in and reluctantly agreed to take a lesson. It was amazing – before the lesson was over, I was completely hooked. Never did I dream that I would

succumb to this terrible addiction that causes otherwise rational adults to spend hours chasing after a little white ball. In my case, it was many little white balls – I was so terrible when I first began!

However, within a short period of time I felt that I was improving and to quote the immortal words of President Gerald Ford, 'I knew I was getting better at golf, because I was hitting fewer spectators'.

So when people ask me what I might do next…I smile and say, 'Watch out Tiger Woods, here comes The Yemeni Eagle!

Wedding of Ambassador's daughter, Maha Nasher, 20 July 2007. From left to right: Dr Ilham Basahi (Ambassador's wife), Maha Nasher, Abdo (groom), Dr Abdulla Nasher and Aziz Nasher (son).



The inscription reads: 'To our friend Mr David Smiley, a memento of his visit to us in the mountains of Qara, with my greetings and esteem – Imam Muhammad al-Badr'

COLONEL DAVID SMILEY: A Tribute

BERNARD MILLS

Major Bernard Mills C.B.E. has been a member of the Society since its formation in 1993. After retiring from the British Army he served, under the aegis of Colonel Smiley, as a military adviser to Royalist forces in Yemen.

David Smiley, who died on 9 January 2009 aged 93, was born in 1916 and was commissioned into the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues) in 1936. During the Second World War he served initially as a regular soldier with his Regiment before being seconded to Special Force duties in Ethiopia; later, with SOE, he was parachuted behind enemy lines into Albania; and, in 1945, into Thailand and Indo-China with Force 136. He emerged from the war highly decorated for bravery and with a notable reputation for irregular soldiering. Two people who served with him in Albania were to influence his role in Yemen: the first his life-long friend, Lt.Col. (Billy) McLean MP; and the second, Julian Amery MP, who later became Minister for War in the Conservative government. In 1958, on Amery's recommendation, David was appointed Commander of the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces at the time of the Jebel Akhdar campaign to dislodge tribes loyal to the rebel Imam, Ghalib bin Ali. David's successful three year tour in Oman brought him back into the field of guerrilla warfare but this time as the hunter rather than the hunted.

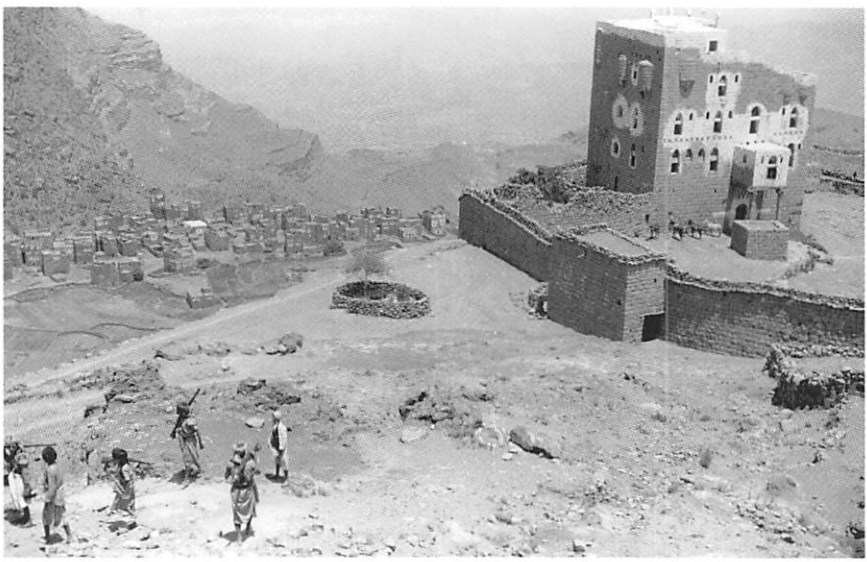
The conjunction of three events led to David's involvement in Yemen: the overthrow of Imam Muhammad al-Badr by Republican officers in an Egyptian-backed coup in September 1962; a visit by Lt. Col. McLean to Saudi Arabia; and David's decision to retire from the British Army at the end of his tour in Oman. The arrival of the fugitive Imam in the Saudi border township of Jizan, and his appeal to the Saudis for help, led Crown Prince Faisal to ask McLean to go to Yemen to report on the situation there and on the degree of support which the Imam was getting from the tribes in the North West and East of the country against Republican/Egyptian forces. On the strength of his visit to Yemen and his vigorous representations to Conservative leaders, McLean was able to persuade the British government to withhold recognition from the Republican government.

A cabal of Julian Amery, McLean and David Stirling, the wartime founder of the SAS, set about providing practical as well as political support to the Imam. David was pulled out of retirement by Amery to help

organise a small group of British ex-servicemen to advise and operationally assist the Imam and Royalist Princes. Some French and Belgian mercenaries were also recruited to provide military training to the Royalist tribes. The finance, arms and ammunition for this operation were to come largely, if indirectly, from the Saudis.

On 14 June 1963 David set out on the first of the nine trips he was to make to Yemen over the next four years, criss-crossing the country's mountainous and harshly beautiful terrain on long journeys, more often than not on foot and alone except for the two or three tribesmen accompanying him as guides and bodyguards. This in itself for a near fifty year old would have been a triumph of mind over body; but bearing in mind the daily danger of air attack, the proximity of Egyptian and Republican positions to his routes, and the risk of kidnap by venal tribesmen, it was indicative of his great courage. Despite the large reward for his death or capture, David was never betrayed or put at risk by his Yemeni companions.

David's first visit was to the Imam at Qara in North West Yemen where Muhammad al-Badr had set up his HQ. David also visited two of the Princes fighting on the Western front line before making his provisional report to the Imam, which he later repeated to Crown Prince Faisal in



Amir Hassan bin Hassan's headquarters, Jebel Ahanoum, 1963

David Smiley with Amir Hassan bin Hassan on the roof of the latter's headquarters on Jebel Ahanoum, 1963.

> 'Although only in his late twenties, Amir Hassan had scored some spectacular if short-lived successes against the Egyptians...including the temporary occupation of Harib and the capture there of a Russian helicopter with its Soviet crew. Although he possessed great personal courage, he suffered from ill health, and had only recently returned from a visit to London for medical treatment. He was now commanding some 2,500 Royalist troops and tribesmen in operations against the Egyptian-held town of al-Qaflah, about five miles from his headquarters'
>
> (David Smiley in his memoir, *Arabian Assignment*, p. 135).

Riyadh. In this he drew attention to three basic Royalist failures: first in tactics because they were attempting to attack towns when they should have been ambushing, mining and cutting the Egyptians' long lines of communication; second – the complete lack of coordination between the Princes in command of the royalist armies due to the lack of a radio net; and third – the chaotic supply chain.

David's second trip to Yemen was in November 1963, by which time the British, French and Belgian advisers whom he had asked for, with a view to setting up a radio net and to training tribesmen in the use of heavy weapons, had been recruited and were in place with the Imam and with some of the Princes in the front line sectors. His third trip in March 1964 to the North West was to witness the complete failure of Princes Abdullah

Hussain and Muhammad Isma'il to capture the important town of Hajja due to bad planning and lack of coordination. The Royalists were forced to retreat leaving a number of scarce heavy weapons to fall into the hands of the Republicans. David's report to the Imam on this debacle was critically blunt; he once again stressed the importance of attacking lines of communication, isolated camps and ambushing convoys, and the futility of set piece attacks on towns which tribesmen were incapable of sustaining.

David's fourth trip in March 1965 saw some success for his ideas. Prince Muhammad bin Hussain, the Royalist commander in the North East, had identified at Humeidat a narrow gorge which controlled the only road route from Sana'a to the Eastern provinces where there was a sizeable Egyptian garrison of some 10,000 men. This was successfully taken on 14 April 1965, and, despite a determined counter-attack by Egyptian parachutists and commandos a month later, was tenaciously held with the support of tribesmen led by Prince Muhammad. The gorge remained under Royalist control until the end of the civil war, and the stranglehold on the land route and the difficulty of air supply was one of the main reasons for President Nasser's two visits to Saudi Arabia during that year to discuss Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen.

It was at the end of this visit to the region that David was given command of all foreign advisers in Yemen. But this was, in effect, a nominal appointment since the advisers, generally, had little influence on the way the war was run although they did give valuable technical support; the Princes did what they wanted to do with little coordination between themselves and often in pursuit of personal or factional interest; and the influence of the Imam on the conduct of the war was minimal. However, the good relationship which David and Billy McLean had with the Saudis, and their consequent access to Saudi money and arms enabled them to motivate the actions of individual Princes, especially Muhammad bin Hussain.

David made two more visits to Yemen in 1965, a year which saw little military activity, a partial cease-fire being in force, but a great deal of diplomatic activity including the Jeddah Conference of August that year between President Nasser and King (as he had now become) Faisal at which the former agreed a phased withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Yemen in return for a cessation of Saudi aid to the Royalists. It was also agreed that a conference between the Royalists and Republicans should be convened at Haradh in November to discuss the formation of an interim

government pending a plebiscite to be held before November 1966. David attended the Haradh conference as a correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* until he was warned by the Saudis that his life was at risk there. The conference eventually broke up without achieving any agreement.

In February 1966 the British Government (now under the Labour Party) published a Defence White Paper announcing its intention to withdraw its armed forces from South Arabia in 1968. This immediately changed Egyptian plans: the cease-fire was broken, the withdrawal of Egyptian forces stopped, and Nasser announced that he was willing to stay twenty years in Yemen if that was necessary to preserve the Republic.

David shared with most of the British advisers in Yemen a sense of both astonishment and betrayal at the British government's action. He had helped the Royalists achieve an almost unbelievable victory over the Egyptians (at Humeidat), which could have aided the survival of the fledgling Federation of South Arabia. After this devastating blow, David and his British colleagues remained in the field more out of loyalty to the Royalist Princes and their tribal supporters than in any real belief that the situation could be salvaged.

Having been appointed a Gentleman-at-Arms in Her Majesty's Bodyguard in January 1966, David had told Prince Sultan in Riyadh that he would not be able to renew his contract nor his command of the foreign advisers but would be available for *ad hoc* visits to Yemen in future if required.

The next two years were to be a very unsettled period for all parties to the Civil War, with the Republicans engulfed by a power struggle between President Sallal and General Hassan al-Amri; with the various branches of the Bayt Hamid-ud-Din competing for succession to the Imamate, Prince Muhammad bin Hussain being the most likely candidate; and last but not least, the debacle of Egypt in the six day war with Israel in June 1967.

David's last visit to Royalist Yemen was to be an arduous ten day trek in November 1967 through Arhab and Nihm across the Sana'a/Sa'da road to Heimatain and back to the Royalist HQ in the Jawf at Amara. He returned to Britain at the end of that month thinking his travels to Yemen were finally over. David retired from any further irregular soldiering to live quietly with his wife Moy, his loyal supporter in all his adventures, first on their farm in Spain and later in London.

David always kept up contacts with his Arab friends, and it was a great delight and surprise for him to be invited by Dr Abdul Karim al-Iryani to

visit Sana'a as the guest of the government in February 2003. The purpose of the visit was for David to brief Yemeni historians and senior military officials on his role with the Royalists in the civil war and on his understanding of the politics and tactics of the Royalist commanders. The visit was a great success and an excellent example of the warm relations which now exist between Yemen and Britain.

Hallmarks of David Smiley's personal and military distinction were his exceptional bravery, his integrity, and his loyalty to family and friends. He was much loved by those of his fellow countrymen who knew him, and won the esteem and affection of the many Albanians, Omanis and Yemenis who crossed his path.

Colonel Smiley with Dr Abdul Karim Al-Iryani (centre) and Dr Abdulla Abdul Wali Nasher, Sana'a. 2003.

YEMEN: BEYOND THE HORIZON

FERNANDO CARVAJAL

The author is studying for a PhD at the Institute of Arab & Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. He has travelled widely in Yemen to conduct research on the relationship between tribal areas and central government within an emerging democratic environment. This article is an abridged version of his presentation to the Society at the Middle East Association on 16 October 2008.

My presentation will focus more on contemporary Yemen than on its history. I will attempt an overview of four main issues of contemporary interest before looking at the topic of change in Yemen and the importance of citizenship within the context of change.

I first visited Yemen in 2000, and for some time I have wished to present a new perspective on the country's highly complex and interesting society. When we look at the available literature on Yemen's culture, politics, anthropology and history, we find much about the past but not so much about the future. I believe that a discussion of the following four topics will help to throw light on the current situation: tribalism, economic development, politics and security.

Academic studies on Yemen have accurately described the intricate relationship connecting all sectors of society, while most of us tend to pick tribalism as the point of departure for all discussions on Yemen. This approach is validated by proverbs which express the essence of Yemeni society such as *al-yaman hiya al-qaba'il wa al-qaba'il hiya al-yaman* ('Yemen embodies the tribes and the tribes embody Yemen').

Tribalism endures in the 21st century as more than a primitive form of social organisation. Tribes, we should remember, obstructed the absolutist ambitions of the Ottomans, maintained a border between the Imamate and the Aden Protectorate, and became the primary military force fighting the Revolution of 1962. This history served to strengthen the role of tribalism as a source of identity, and the position of tribal leaders as major sources of political and economic influence at the local and national level.

During Yemen's modern history, that is from 1962 to the present, tribes have ended their isolation and entered the global scene. Their interaction with the outside world has been facilitated by migration, the presence of international organisations involved in rural development, the emergence and growth of modern government, and the information age of satellite TV and the internet.

Today a strong sense of tribal identity seems to survive primarily in what is referred to as Upper Yemen. This is a V-shaped area extending northwest from the capital Sana'a to Sa'dah, and east from Sana'a towards Marib. In this area people proudly identify with their tribe not only in social relationships but in legal, economic and security matters. Today, tribes as political entities continue to present a challenge to central government, while the presence in their territory of the institutions of central government, be they military, administrative or judicial, represent a threat to the notion of tribal autonomy.

From an interview I had with Shaykh Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Tayman of Sirwah, it emerged that tensions between the tribes and government were rooted in the latter's failure to meet the former's economic expectations. However, another factor is that the role of the traditional tribal leader *(shaykh al-mashayikh)* as an agent of reconciliation is seen to have been undermined by the State's coercion of individuals against the interests of tribal populations.

History lives in the memory of tribes, and Yemen's historical experience has proved the advantages of hostage-taking. Tribesmen believe that through kidnappings and the sabotage of oil installations they can pressurise the State and extract concessions from it in the form of basic services such as the provision of potable water, electricity, schools and medical clinics.

The death of Shaykh Abdullah al-Ahmar, paramount shaykh of the Hashid tribal confederation, in December 2007, has represented a turning point. For the first time in over 60 years Yemen will face a modern generation of tribesmen. In Shaykh Abdullah's son, Hamid al-Ahmar, and in other young tribal leaders such as Shaykh Umar Hussayn Mujali of Sa'dah and the sons of Shaykh Abdullah al-Tayman, we can see the character of the new generation and their attitude towards the country's new socio-economic and political structures. But a priority concern for the new generation continues to be economic inequality and their share of the income from the exploitation of the country's natural resources.

I do not believe that it is irresponsible to link many of Yemen's problems to its prolonged economic crisis, and to the disappointment of popular expectations aroused by the oil boom of the 1970's in the Gulf states. Surpassing the negative economic impact on South Yemen of the collapse of Soviet Union, and the devastating consequences of Yemen's reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, has been the loss of Yemen's strategic location within the major shipping lanes connecting East and West. Today, ports

'...Yemen embodies the tribes and the tribes embody Yemen.'

Bini Malcolm Collection, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford OX2 6JF

which were once Yemen's pride are overshadowed by Djibouti and Dubai. The loss of Aden and Hodeida as major ports in the region, has been an enormous blow to the economy of the most populous but poorest state in the Arabian peninsula, whose limited oil resources are already in decline.

Yemen's efforts to attract foreign investment and aid from international donors have fallen short of expectations. Many observers blame corruption as a major obstacle to economic development, but there are many other factors, such as weak government, decaying infrastructure, diminishing water resources and increasing unemployment.

But against this must be set, as a potential sign of progress, the growth of private institutions of higher learning and the increasing number of students enrolled in state universities. Many of these young college students believe that they can contribute to the economic growth of the country through small enterprises, and these we are beginning to see in the technology sector. The fact that around 60% of college students are female and they are beginning to marry at a later age is another positive sign. Entry into the Gulf Cooperation Council (and access to the economic benefits of membership) remains a goal of President Saleh's government, but this should be part of a comprehensive development strategy and not an end in itself.

This brings us to the third and fourth topic of our discussion, namely politics and security. In the area of politics, we should recognise the presence of two indivisible spheres: domestic politics and external pressures. I contend that these two spheres are indivisible, partly to distance myself from Ahmad Abdul Karim Saif's view in his book *Politics of Survival* that internal struggles are the main influence on Yemeni politics; and partly because I wish to focus on the impact of external forces on the course of Yemeni national politics today. For example, in the post-Unification period, with the introduction of democratic institutions, political mobilisation which previously depended on tribal forces is now conducted through competing political parties. In the run-up to the last presidential election in September 2006, most observers saw Yemen as unpredictable and unstable as ever. Yet the election passed without major incidents and a significant consequence was the emergence of the Joint Meeting Party (JMP). This new group brought together most if not all viable opposition parties and was led by Faisal Bin Shamlan as its presidential candidate. Unfortunately, however, the JMP failed to meet popular expectations as an effective organ of opposition. This may be inherent in the character of the party itself, composed of Islahis, Ishtirakis, Unionists and Nasserists with diverging

agendas. While the JMP has been able to expose the government's failed policies, it has been unable to present any compelling alternatives.

In this political environment, tribes continue to remain a relevant force. Evidence of this surfaced last year when in reaction to a meeting of the National Solidarity Council (NSC) convened by the Hashid tribes, the Bakil tribes, headed by Shaykh Naji al-Shaif, convened a separate assembly. The NSC's initial resolution indicated that the tribes aspired to represent the disempowered voice of the Yemeni people. Politics in Yemen today, both local and national, are at a crossroads. Old institutions continue to gasp for air at a time when a new generation is looking to new strategies for political mobilisation but still finds it hard to limit the influence of traditional forces.

This situation has led to a steadily deteriorating security environment. There are three main areas of concern: insecurity as a consequence of tribal grievances; the impact of transnational political violence; and the rise in criminal activity (such as car theft and drug trafficking). Once again, I mention the tribal factor first simply because it is a fundamental element of Yemeni society. Kidnappings perpetrated by tribesmen, mainly against tourists or employees of foreign companies, represent a major obstacle to development at the national level. Yemen loses millions of dollars each year from donors or direct investment as a result of the negative image portrayed by media reports of kidnapped tourists. Furthermore, the increase during the last 24 months in transnational political violence directed against foreigners rather than foreign interests clearly represents a collapsing security environment. The failure to deter activities by 'al-Qaeda affiliates or sympathisers' within Yemeni territory has discredited the government both locally and in the eyes of the international community.

We now see a new dynamic in Yemeni politics – that of *allegiances* in contrast to the old dynamic of *alliances.* All political actors, whether islamists, tribal shaykhs or political parties, now struggle to win the allegiance of their respective constituencies. However, the challenge in Yemen remains one of turning 'loyalty' to the tribe (in its broad sense of family, place and history) into loyalty to the nation.

A number of American observers who have criticised the so-called pact between al-Qaeda and the government as a betrayal of the 'War against Terror' base their criticism on media reports rather than on-the-ground information which paints a different picture. In order to better deal with the challenge to nationhood of misguided loyalties, it will take more than

shooting missiles from unmanned 'drones' or the imprisonment of hundreds of 'suspects'. Government efforts to advertise youth summer camps and to enlist the support of organisations like the Boy Scouts implicitly recognise this. Last year's Youth Festival in Sana'a, an event hosted by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, in which dozens of Boy and Girl Scouts took part, was very impressive. But programmes like this cost money, a cost to parents or government, and a lack of funding leaves young people vulnerable or too preoccupied with the need to support their families to participate.

The third issue affecting Yemen's security is the rise in criminal activity. I remember in 2000 when I first visited Yemen how people spoke of Yemenis as warm and hospitable people. That is all you would hear from everyone, Yemeni and foreign. But since 2006 I have noticed that people increasingly point out instances of petty theft and more serious criminal activity, and caution visitors to be on their guard.

We now come to the topic of 'change'. In my opinion there can be no greater obstacle to change than weak strategies for disseminating information, and this has been one of civil society's major failures. Information is needed in remote areas, not just in urban centres, to bring tangible change to the average Yemeni. When I speak of information, I mean a real dialogue with the population. That is what the cooperatives of the early Revolutionary period aimed to accomplish, and was the avowed goal of the General People's Congress but one which ultimately failed for lack of resources.

Dialogue can lead to a better (bottom-up) understanding of essential development needs in peripheral areas of the country. Also, while some urban centres are directly connected to the global economy, hundreds of villages remain isolated. When we think of change we must not only look for surface areas of opportunity, as many donors do, but we must also identify both agents and vehicles of change, and assist in developing them. This is where the JMP, for example, has failed to prove itself. When one asks Yemenis who else they see in the presidency, they cannot identify anyone with sufficient experience or political capital to take over. In the past century Yemenis looked to Imams, the military and the presidency as agents of change. While the Imams failed to implement change fast enough, the military filled the gap but soon exhausted their capacity. In the last decade of the 20th century the presidency brought about tremendous change but in this century it faces formidable obstacles.

Today, Yemenis, young and old, look for an agent of change. They are

Tribal guard, Awwam Temple, Marib.
Bini Malcolm Collection, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford OX2 6JF

willing to follow and construct a constituency for those who emerge to fill the vacuum, but they realise that the vacuum cannot be filled by a political party or an NGO.

Another area where civil society has failed to construct an effective constituency is in the field of women's rights. Even though I witnessed the major participation of women voters in the 2006 elections, they failed to identify themselves as a group constituency.

Constituency building is a major vehicle of change and by strengthening a sense of citizenship would help to promote greater individual responsibility.

In the book which he wrote in 1967 about his time in North Yemen during the Revolution of 1962, Scott Gibbons records an amusing incident from his first tour of the countryside arranged by President Sallal. His military guide, eager to demonstrate to foreign journalists popular acceptance of the new regime, asked an old man on the roadside what he thought of the revolution. The old man replied, *al-hamdulillah,* long live the revolution! The guide smiled at Gibbons, and then asked the old man what he thought of the Imam. The old man replied, *al-hamdulillah,* long live the Imam! As the guide ground his teeth in frustration, Gibbons laughs and thinks to himself, this old man doesn't even know that there has been a revolution! Such is the environment within which civil society operates today.

JANBIYA SHOWCASE

Stephen Gracie, who lives in Australia, has been a member of the Society for several years. He has assembled an extensive collection of Yemeni 'janbiya' daggers and has sent us photographs of just a small portion of his collection which we reproduce here. In a letter to the Hon. Secretary he wrote:

This collection is now probably one of the largest outside Yemen...and I am currently working with several contacts in Sana'a, knowledgeable in this field, to provide a history of the daggers and some form of classification based on design, time period, geographical location, family status etc. The final goal will be to publish this information in book format and to put the collection on public display, probably back in Yemen.

I am always looking to buy good quality *janbiyas* and would be glad to hear from members of the Society who may be interested in selling their daggers into my collection. My email address is: sjgracie@optusnet.com.au

FIGHTING FIT

TAHER ALI QASSIM TELLS CHRIS ARNOT ABOUT HIS UNPREDICTABLE CAREER.

The following article by Chris Arnot appeared in 'The Guardian' on 22 November 2008. It is reprinted here by kind permission of Guardian News & Media Ltd.

Taher Ali Qassim was seven or eight when responsibility for the family farm in the Yemeni village of Karaba landed on his slim shoulders as the only surviving male. His two younger brothers never survived infancy and his father and older brother had long since set off for Aden in search of work. The boy farmer would never see his father again. He died soon after arriving in that bustling port, a strategic staging point for the British navy in the 1950s.

'Malaria probably killed him,' Qassim speculates. 'It was rife.' Smallpox, too. One of his earliest memories is of charity workers coming to the village to vaccinate all the children against it. It was an early introduction to an aspect of his eventual career in public health management. Not that he could have imagined such a dramatic change of fortune when his small hands were struggling to grip the plough handles. 'I hated ploughing,' he says, emphatically. But not quite so much as he hated the goats that became his responsibility when his sister left home to get married.

'Every time I drove them to the top of the mountain, I'd look towards the horizon and say to myself: "I want to get away from here," ' he recalls. Within a year or so he was off. First he followed in father's tyre tracks as far as Aden. Many years later, he made it to another port that still had some strategic importance to the British economy in the 50s.

By the time Qassim arrived in Liverpool in 1995, however, the city's economy was struggling to get off its knees. Still, it must have seemed a place of comparative wealth for someone from his background, I suggest.

He nods and admits that at first he couldn't see what all the fuss was about. He still feels frustration when 'lack of resources' is trotted out as a reason for not taking up one of many campaigns and initiatives that he pushes for in his role as public health manager for two of Liverpool's five healthcare neighbourhoods. 'Where I came from, people were dying of malaria or malnutrition. In the developing world, obesity is a sign of wealth. Here it's more usually associated with poverty. Eventually you come to realise that health inequalities are relative to where you are. People in the

north of this city are likely to die seven years earlier than those in the south.'

The neighbourhoods that Qassim is responsible for are Liverpool East ('huge problems with alcohol and drugs') and South Central. 'There are pockets of deprivation in the south and this is one of them,' he says. Well, we are in inner city Toxteth – in the Arabic Centre, to be precise, next door to the Somali Women's Centre and opposite a Caribbean take-away. This is one of the boltholes that he evidently uses in those brief periods between meetings. He has a meeting this afternoon with the Alcohol Action Group (AAG) and another this evening in a community centre in Anfield. Residents near the home of Liverpool FC are worried about the air pollution caused by the cars revving up outside their homes at the end of every home match.

He'll listen to their concerns in a few hours' time. For now he has put aside an hour to chat about his extraordinary life in a warm, windowless room. The public health manager removes first his jacket and then his jumper to reveal a natty yellow shirt. The frame beneath it looks lean. He cycles regularly and likes to eat healthily. With the occasional glass of wine? 'Of course,' he beams. 'We share the cooking as we share everything,' he says of his Irish wife Ann, who is deputy director of public health in the north west. Does that make her his employer as well as his spouse? 'Theoretically, yes. She looks after management and performance of primary care trusts, and I work for the Liverpool PCT. But she has nothing directly to do with my work.'

Qassim is 56. Or at least he thinks he is. Birth certificates were hardly commonplace in Yemeni villages in the early 1950s. His elder brother, Ismail, told him that he was nine when he finally escaped to Aden in a Land Rover taxi that arrived in the village once a month. Ismail was 16 or 17, married and earning what was considered a good wage for a Yemeni as a naval clerk. He paid for the taxi that would bring a new life to a little brother torn between mounting excitement at his liberation and sadness for his weeping mother. 'She must have been in a terrible dilemma,' Qassim reflects. 'Another son would eventually be able to send her money. But her husband had gone to Aden and died.' I ask whether his mother survived long after his departure. 'She only died last year,' he reveals. 'She was a fighter, an amazing woman.' For a moment his eyes mist over. But soon they're gleaming again as he recalls the excitement of arriving in Aden, turning on a tap and seeing running water. When he went to school for the first time, he was 11. The other pupils sneered at the 'mountain boy' from

the north. But he confounded everyone by coming out with top grades. 'Ismail had educated himself at night school and he gave me extra tuition at the little house that we shared,' he explains.

Qassim's education continued in fits and starts, set against the turbulent background of revolution and civil war. He had a spell as a soldier before joining a nursing school run by Americans. His English came on in leaps and bounds, but his next move was to a Swedish hospital where there were two attractions. One was the chance to work on public health schemes, including vaccination programmes and hygiene promotion. The other was the Swedish woman who eventually became his second wife and the mother of his third child. Later he would have two daughters with Ann, whom he met while working for a Norwegian version of Save the Children.

Eventually, they headed for the UK where Ann had a place at the University of Liverpool to do her master's degree. Qassim went to the University of London to upgrade his own qualifications, but found the great metropolis too big and impersonal. One of the aspects that he most enjoys about his current job is the opportunity to interact with a wide range of Liverpudlians, including police, teachers, councillors and housing officials. Improving health depends on improving housing and education, he points out. 'When I came here, I soon discovered that Yemenis, Somalis and Liverpool-born black children had the lowest educational achievements.'

His MBE was awarded for his work on founding the Black and Racial Minorities Network to mediate between parents and schools as well as to set up housing and health improvement projects. 'It started on a voluntary basis,' he explains. 'But eventually came under the wing of the PCT as part of my job.' Another part of that job might find him as the only ethnic minority representative addressing a meeting on a predominantly white estate. 'I've always found Liverpool people friendly,' he maintains. So does he feel like an honorary Scouser?

'I don't think I'll ever speak the dialect,' he grins. Perhaps his mastery of English is enough to be going on with. It was good enough for him to complete his own master's in community health at the city's School of Tropical Medicine. Now he's working through the AAG to try to persuade students throughout the city that getting regularly legless is not necessarily an undergraduate right of passage. 'We're trying to involve the Students' Union to get across more effective information,' he says. 'Just telling them

not to do something doesn't work. People in this country have a choice about how they want their lifestyles to be.'

Where he came from, there was no such thing as lifestyle. There were just lives or, more accurately, existences. Trying to persuade Liverpudlians to consume less and exercise more may have its frustrations, but for one public health manager it's infinitely preferable to ploughing and herding goats.

Taher Ali Qassim, pictured with HE Mohamed Taha Mustafa, Ambassador of Yemen, after receiving his award of the MBE in 2008. Taher Ali holds the warrant signed by HM Queen Elizabeth, while the Ambassador displays the medal.

TEACHING ENGLISH IN ADEN

THANOS PETOURIS

The author, a member of the Society, is a PhD candidate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

I have always thought that there was something providential in the way in which I, as a graduate in my mid-twenties, first came to know Yemen in 2005, through working in Aden as an amateur teacher of English. 'Choosing Yemen as an introduction to the Middle Eastern world, is like jumping into the middle of the ocean to learn swimming!', exclaimed an American fellow teacher, with extended experience of the region, after hearing the reasons for my visit to the country.

Teaching is a profoundly interactive exercise, which can equally affect the views of the teacher and of the person being taught; and it was not long before I found myself being educated by the very Yemeni students whom I was expected to introduce to the complexities of the English language, and the intrinsic nature of the Western way of life.

Teaching a foreign language is not an exercise *in vitro*. It involves human beings of different ages, social and cultural backgrounds, who have their own preconceptions about the world around them, and thus present one with a constant flow of challenges and new experiences. Teaching also involves a process which allows one to better understand the community in which one lives, and at the same time to re-evaluate the ways in which one's own culture is being perceived by one's students. On the basis of my experience of teaching at the Modern American Language Institute (MALI) in Khormaksar, Aden, and of visiting local government schools to test and identify potential candidates for the Institute's English language scholarship programme, I will try to offer some impressions of Yemeni youth formed through contact with my Adeni students.

What one cannot possibly overstate when discussing the role of education in Yemen, is the thirst of the new generation for learning, especially when it comes to learning a foreign language. There is widespread trust not only in the ability of education to offer one a better life, or better employment opportunities, but also in the proposition that a new, educated generation of Yemenis can find solutions to the chronic problems that have been plaguing the country for decades. In this respect, a salient difference between students in Europe and Yemen is that the Yemenis take every opportunity to make the best out of the evidently scarce educational

View of Crater from Sirah island. *Thanos Petouris*

Crater, Aden. *Thanos Petouris*

material and resources at their disposal. Before even organising the course which I was going to teach, I found myself immersed in a sea of requests for extra homework, written assignments, even out-of-school meetings with students who wanted to practise their English as much as they could.

Another unmissable characteristic of these students was the diversity of their social and geographic origins. Contrary to one's expectation of finding a highly privileged minority of boys and girls of affluent Adeni families attending the Institute, it soon became clear to me that my classes included students from such underprivileged areas as Dar Saad and Shaykh 'Uthman as well as ones from as far away as Yafa' or Hadhramawt. It would appear that a considerable number of families were ready to make significant sacrifices for the benefit of their children.

The greatest surprise, however, came when comparing the numbers of boys and girls who attended the school. Between 2005 and 2007 (when I returned to MALI for a few months) there was a marked increase in the number of female students who now made up about half the total number of students. Being able to teach mixed classes and to observe closely the relationship between the two sexes, I would immediately say that the images of passivity and marginalisation reproduced in the West with regard to women in such traditional societies as Yemen, rapidly vanish before one's eyes. Not only have I had the opportunity to teach girls whose dreams were to become businesswomen, or to study medicine or law, and to acquire a more active role within society; but I was also able to experience the extent to which female students were more progressive and forward thinking than their male counterparts in their ideas about the kind of lives they wanted for themselves and their families. I believe that if there is any hope for the future of the country, then it certainly lies in the hands of women.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that young men adopt a passive stance towards what is happening in their country; they just tend to refer to issues such as corruption, poverty and the consumption of qat with a degree of cynicism. While they can identify the main causes of Yemen's underdevelopment, they are clearly dubious whether the present political configuration can provide viable solutions. Despite expressing readiness to change their world, in practice they tend to approach the future rather warily.

Over the past months the international media and certain think tanks have consistently portrayed Yemen as a potentially failed state, sometimes competing among themselves to predict whether civil unrest, rising prices,

dwindling natural resources, transnational terrorism will singly or collectively bring about its demise. However, the opportunity to meet and talk with the youth of Aden – not only the privileged ones of the private language schools but also students from the impoverished neighbourhoods of Buraiqa – has given me grounds for hope and optimism about the future of the country. It is true that the new generation are cynical about the likelihood of solutions being found in the near future to the problems confronting the country, but the confidence which they appear to feel in their own ability to build a better society for themselves and their children is uplifting.

Schoolboys in Upper Yafa' keen to practise their English. *Thanos Petouris*

Ein Jude im Dienst des Imams: Der erfolgreiche Geschäftsmann Israel Subayri by Yosef Tobi, Vol. VII of *Mare Erythraeum,* Staatliches Museum fur Völkerkunde, München, J.H. Röll Verlag, Dettelbach, 2008. Pp.168. 14 b/w illus. Hb. €89.90. ISBN 978-3-89754-265-5.

There have been many studies on Yemeni Jews, but this is the first book devoted to the most colourful and extraordinary Yemeni Jewish personality of the twentieth century, Israel Subayri. A self-made man in the modern sense of the word, his life fluctuated between Imam Yahya's Yemen, the Germany of the 1930s, and what is now the State of Israel. He was the Imam's chief weapons provider and importer of luxury goods, and anchorman to foreign visitors and scholars in Sana'a; it was through him that the collections of Yemeni antiquities in the museums of Hamburg, Harvard and Jerusalem originated.

In this book, Yosef Tobi of the University of Haifa, who is the foremost authority on the history, ethnography and intellectual heritage of the Jews from Yemen, has reconstructed Subayri's life and times through the documents preserved by the Subayri family in Israel.

In the first chapter Tobi explores the economic situation of the Yemeni Jews under Imam Yahya. We will return to this later.

The second chapter describes Israel Subayri's background. The family originated from Subayra, near Qa'taba (on the former border between North and South Yemen, east of Ta'izz), moving to Sana'a in the 19th century. They were connected with the Rabbinic elite in Yemen. Their business (shopkeepers) expanded through the more sophisticated needs of the Ottoman Turkish administration. After 1918, they moved into the respected and rewarding art of weaving gold-thread belts for the *janbiyas* worn by *sayyids* and *qadhis.* After his father's death in 1924, Israel Subayri acquired half the family business (valued at the very considerable sum of 900 riyals) from his brother. He then bought his brother's share in their parents' house, and acquired a large building in the Qa' al-Yahud for 300 riyals. These and other documents were issued (in Arabic) by the Rabbinical Court, and then authenticated by Qadhi Husayn bin Ali al-Amri, *ra'is al-diwan.*

The enterprising Subayri soon became aware of the need for accommodation in Sana'a of a growing number of European travellers and official guests (and some American visitors such as Dr Coon from Harvard

Museum). Behind his home, he built a European style hotel to which foreigners were also assigned by the Yemeni government. Subayri thus became the chief middleman for many foreign visitors to Sana'a. Tobi quotes at length from Hans Helfritz and Hugh Scott (who described Subayri's red wine as 'pleasant to the taste, but somewhat heavy and potent'), and also speaks of a certain Mr Bailey who borrowed 1500 riyals from Subayri before disappearing into thin air!

The third chapter deals with the decades-long friendship between Subayri and the celebrated scholar Carl Rathjens who visited Yemen several times between 1927 and 1938, and whose excavation of the temple at Huqqa (north of Sana'a) was the first professional archaeological dig in Yemen. Rathjens' three volume *Sabaica* and his *Jewish Domestic Architecture in Sana'* a remain basic studies.

Rathjens was authorised by Imam Yahya to take his collections, largely gathered with Subayri's assistance, to Germany (72 camel loads!), and these are now in Hamburg and Jerusalem.

The fourth and fifth chapters cover Subayri's foreign trade activities. In 1934 Subayri became Yahya's main weapons provider, importing guns, pistols, mortars, machine-guns, ammunition (and equipment to establish an ammunition factory) mainly from Germany and Belgium.

The broad range of so many other imports managed by Subayri is even more surprising: a soap factory, paper for Yemen's only newspaper *(al-Iman),* 200 dozens of black fezes and 208 kg of toys; but also perfumes, shoes, deck-chairs, marquees, a textile factory with its raw materials, and two 8 cylinder Horch (known today as Audi) motor vehicles. In 1938 Subayri arranged through Schroder Bank the minting in London of 10,000 riyals for the Imam's treasury.

The sixth chapter covering the period 1939/40 mirrors the intensification of Nazi persecution of Jews. While this did not affect Subayri personally, it is sad to read of the desperate efforts made by his main commercial partner, previously in Hamburg but now in Liège, to maintain his business links with Subayri. The book ends with Subayri's later years in the State of Israel.

Photographs of the Subayri family in the courtyard of their house in Sana'a, and, later, of Subayri himself in Jerusalem during the 1930s, in his elegant coat and hat, illustrate the stark contrast between the two worlds which he successfully bridged. Two other photographs, by Toni Hagen, show Sana'a as it was in the early 1960s, *intra muros.*

Returning to the first chapter, here Tobi presents us with an overview of the economic situation of Yemeni Jews under Turkish rule, and under Imam Yahya. Their tax burden under the Imam was lower than that of Muslims, Jews having to pay only the *jizya*. But Tobi concludes that the Jews fared much better under the Turks, whose administration opened the country up to the wider world, than they did under the restrictions applied by the Imam. However, the chapter on the Jews in Serjeant and Lewcock's *City of San'a* comes to the opposite conclusion. Incidentally, it is incorrect of Tobi to state that the menial task of collecting human excrement for heating the *hammams* would have been assigned to the Jews, since this was, in fact, the major occupation of members of the lowest Muslim class, the Bani al-Khums, until liberated by the Revolution of 1962 (they still bear the name of al-Hammami).

This book provides a fascinating insight into the Yemen of Imam Yahya, its economic relations with the world at large and into Jewish-Arab relations. The innumerable business documents make the book an important source for an economic history of Yemen in the first half of the 20th century. Although the Rathjens' collections in the Hamburg Völkerkundemuseum and in the Jerusalem Museum are well documented, this is not so for the Yemeni antiquities (also originating from Subayri) in the Harvard Peabody and the Harvard Semitic Museum. It is good to know that Tobi plans their publication.

Ruth Achlama who translated the book from the original Hebrew into German must be applauded for her fine and meticulous work. There is only one desideratum to be expressed here, namely that the property documents from the 1920s should be published in their original Arabic.

WERNER DAUM

Peripheral Visions: publics, power and performance in Yemen by Lisa Wedeen, University of Chicago Press, 2008. Pp.300. Index. Bibliog. Maps. Illus. Pb. ISBN 13:978-0-226-87791-41.

Lisa Wedeen is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, and her book is based on 18 months of research in Yemen between 1998 and 2004. In *Peripheral Visions* she both tests political science theories, especially on nationalism and identity, against events in Yemen and uses the theories in a way which will help area specialists see these events in a new

and different light. Though some readers might be deterred by the discussion of theory, they will find a rich reward in the erudition and analysis which she brings to her subject. She builds on earlier studies, notably Paul Dresch's *A History of Modern Yemen* and Sheila Carapico's *Civil Society in Yemen*. The book is highly relevant to understanding Yemen today.

She asks, 'What makes a Yemeni a Yemeni?' In a state with weak institutions and limited government capacity, where loyalties to tribe, sect or region can be very strong, how does a feeling of national identity develop? She looks at how unity is imagined, showing that Yemeni nationalism in its present form is a product of a 20th century construct that built on an older sense of a Yemeni distinctiveness that had rarely found expression in a single political entity before 1990. Yemeni unity is developed by political actors with different concepts of what it would mean to people with contrasting ways of imagining what unity should embody. Unification was brought about by the special circumstances in which the two distinct political systems found themselves in the late 1980s. PDRY had never fully recovered from the effects of the disastrous internecine fighting in January 1986. Its regime was fearful of losing authority if not power, as it struggled to overcome its economic problems and the loss of its main source of external support: a Soviet-led bloc in the grip of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The North, also affected by internal economic and political problems, saw its own salvation in unity and understood that the weakness of the South presented an unique opportunity. Most Yemenis in the late 1990s wanted unity but the aims and motives of the political actors had little in common and took no account of different states of institutional development, and of disparities in population size and economic weight. The euphoria of 1990 was quickly replaced by disillusion – as harsh reality overcame the dreams of what unity would bring, making it difficult if not impossible for the two leaderships to make unity work, as the events of 1994 were to show.

Wedeen takes this further in the second section which deals with 'seeing like a citizen, acting like a state'. She examines the 1993 elections which were held in unprecedented democratic conditions, involving over 40 political parties, many critical newspapers and energetic local campaigning. Yemen, it appeared, was in a process of transition to democracy. The Southern politicians clearly hoped that they could attract substantial votes in the North based on the social and administrative achievements of PDRY. However, moves were discreetly orchestrated to ensure that Northern politicians dominated the government. The Southerners had

entered unity through an agreement that gave them much greater weight than their population and resources would have commanded. Painful adjustments would now be necessary. Disappointment, disillusion and personal antagonisms could only be resolved in the civil war of 1994. The 1997 elections were less democratic but by then the die had been cast. Looking at how the tenth anniversary of union was celebrated, Professor Wedeen observes that the former Southern leader was airbrushed from photographs of the unification ceremony of 1990. Though many Southern politicians continue to play prominent roles in Yemen, the current unrest in the old PDRY suggests that the present form of unity is not what they imagined in 1990.

Throughout the book, Wedeen points out that Yemeni nationalism may now be a powerful concept but that national solidarities are not developed through state institutions but through the actions of people in everyday life – performative politics as she calls it. She uses a vivid account of a hunt for a mass murderer to illustrate the weaknesses of institutions in unified Yemen.

When institutions are weak people resort to other means of expression. In the fascinating third section of her book, she examines the role of *qat* chews in the political process. Such chews can consist of like-minded individuals who will often choose subjects for discussion and invite speakers. They may be democratic but in many 'chews' the place setting of participants reflects a hierarchy. They can also be quasi-public events in the sense that politicians and officials can use them for often very frank discussion and debate. She describes one such occasion where up to 80 people attended a *qat* chew at which the late Jarullah Umar argued for the need for electoral politics to enable the Yemeni Socialist Party to survive. Such gatherings are not that different from the *diwaniyah* in Kuwait or the *majlis* in other parts of the Gulf. As Wedeen notes, the regime has to tolerate the critical discussions of the *qat* chews because it cannot suppress them, and in some cases seeks to use them to its own advantage.

In the final sections, she turns her attention to the respective influences of tribal, religious and local loyalties as a background to understanding sectarian conflict and in particular the emergence of 'Believing Youth' and the well documented fighting around Sa'ada in recent years. She develops this by looking at the rise of political Islam in various forms and how promotion of piety can be enhanced, if not intentionally, by the application of neo-liberal economic reform programmes. Her analysis provides useful background to understanding the politics of the General People's Congress

and the Islah party. It also links into her main thesis that the individual can owe strong allegiance to tribe, region and sect and that these affect how Yemenis see the state and interact with it, particularly a state with weakly-developed institutions.

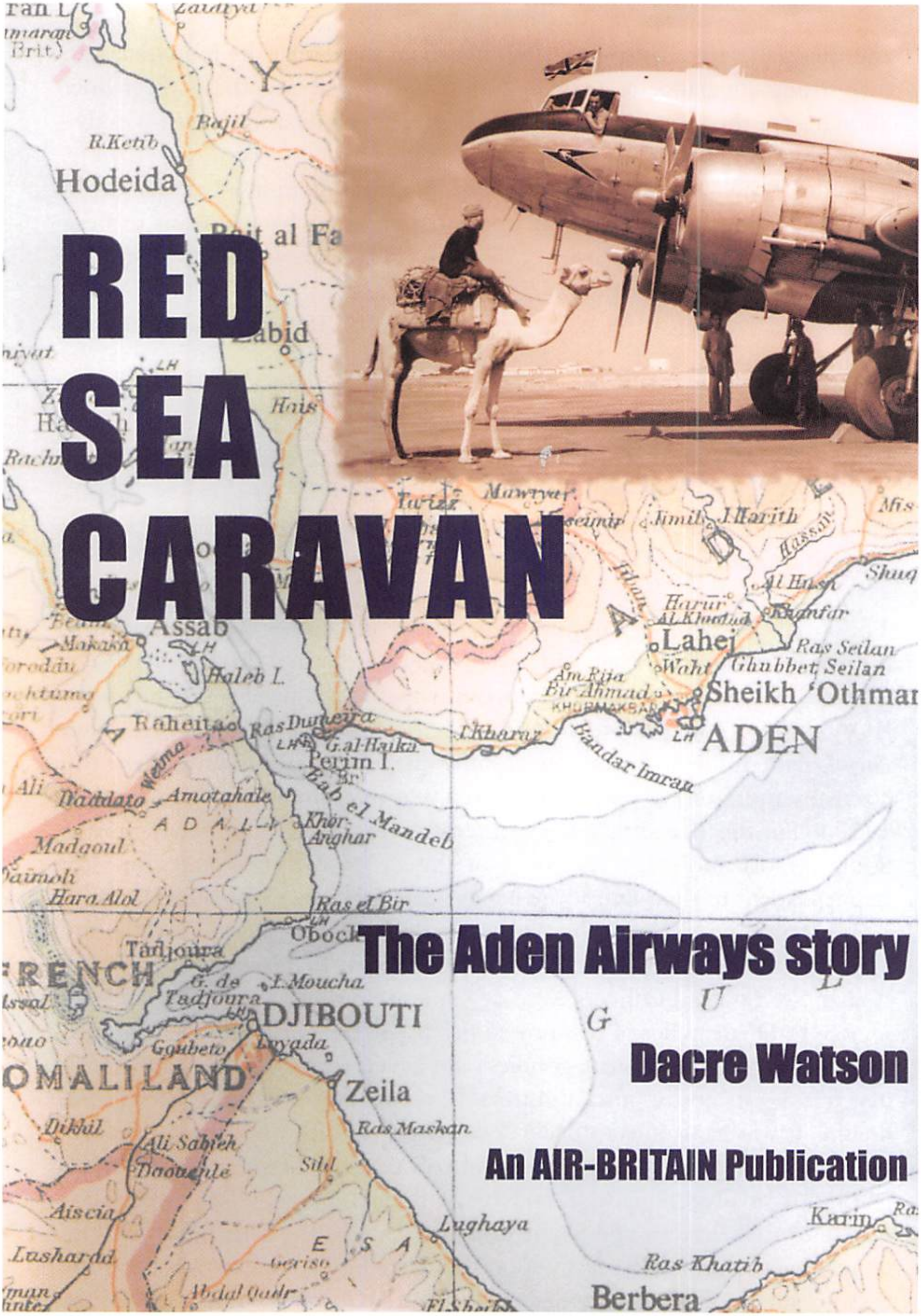
Some of the facts will be familiar but in setting them in a broader world Professor Wedeen enhances our understanding of what it means to be a Yemeni. The specialist reader will thus find much of interest in this original, elegant and imaginative study.

NOEL BREHONY

Red Sea Caravan: The Aden Airways Story by Dacre Watson, Air-Britain (Historians) Ltd, Staplefield, West Sussex, 2008. Pp.216. Bibliog. Appendices. Index. Many b/w & colour illus. Hb. £42. ISBN 978-0-85130-409-0. (available from author at £40 + £5 postage: email: dacrewatson@btinternet.com).

This is a hefty work, as lavishly illustrated as any coffee table book but at the same time a serious and extensively researched history of Aden Airways. The subject matter is organised chronologically starting with BOAC's Red Sea routes in 1948 and the birth of its offspring, Aden Airways, the following year. The ensuing chapters chart the progress of the company more or less on a chapter to a year basis up to its termination in 1967 when the British left the former colony, the ill-fated Federation of South Arabia and what remained of the original Protectorates (mostly Eastern Aden) to their fate at the hands of the National Liberation Front.

As a one time 'frequent flyer' on Aden Airways, I was particularly interested in the details of their upcountry services. In places like Dhala or Beihan, we Political Officers were dependent on the airline's twice weekly service to Dhala, where I was posted briefly in 1964 and for seven months in 1966. It brought our mail, goodies (and necessities) from Aden and a regular trickle of mostly official visitors. By 1966 the air route was our vital lifeline. It was hazardous to drive down to Aden with the danger of mines on the road and the threat of ambush by dissident tribesmen who by 1966 had mostly evolved into well trained and disciplined guerrillas owing allegiance to their leaders and paymasters based across the Yemen border. The increasing state of lawlessness within the faltering Federation was the context for the destruction of an Aden Airways DC3 by a bomb secreted on


RED
SEA
CARAVAN
The Aden Airways story
Dacre Watson
An AIR-BRITAIN Publication
Hodeida
Assab
Lahej
Sheikh 'Othman
ADEN
Perim I.
Bab el Mandeb
DJIBOUTI
FRENCH
SOMALILAND
Zeila
Berbera

board, and the death of all its passengers including a colleague, Tim Goschen, on a flight from Maifa', Wahidi, in November 1966. This was almost certainly not an act of NLF/FLOSY terrorism but the tragic outcome of a feud within the ruling establishment of the Wahidi state.

Of course flights within the Protectorates were only part of Aden Airways' network. Dacre Watson comprehensively catalogues all the regional routes with timetables which include flights to Nairobi, Asmara, Khartoum, Cairo and up the Gulf to Bahrain, flown in conjunction with other carriers such as East African Airways, Air India and Ethiopian Airlines.

For the avid student of the history of civil aviation, this is a most valuable addition to the genre, while also being accessible to and entertaining for the general reader. No detail is omitted: routes and timetables, crew rosters, memories of staff members, descriptions of aircraft, details of the many remote airfields served by the company, and scores of photographs, many in colour, covering every facet of Aden Airways' operations. The wealth of detail is staggering and is a tribute to Dacre Watson's researches and many sources, including former pilots whose personal records and memories he was able to call upon.

To anyone who served or lived in Aden and particularly in its hinterland, this book is a nostalgic reminder of our past; many old friends and long forgotten faces and places haunt its pages. I am very grateful to the author for this outstanding encyclopaedia of one of aviation's least known backwaters to which I willingly gave six years of my life! And to the student of British colonial history in the Middle East, to the many British people who spent time, if only after the second world war, in Queen Victoria's first imperial acquisition, this will be a volume to constantly dip into and to cherish. The price may sound a lot but I consider it well worth paying for such an unique publication.

PETER HINCHCLIFFE

Abdul Rahman bin Sheikh Al-Kaff: 'Amid al-Usra al-Kaffiyah by Ali bin Anis al-Kaff. Arabic. Privately published, Seiyun, Hadhramaut, 2008. Pp. 296. Illus. Appendices. Pb.

The immense overseas wealth of the al-Kaff family enabled it to play a leading role in the civic and social life of Wadi Hadhramaut during the first

half of the last century. For most of this period (1910–1948) Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Sheikh al-Kaff, the subject of this biographical memoir, was 'head of the al-Kaff family' as he is described in the Arabic subtitle of the book. 'Clan chief' would be equally appropriate, for by then 'the family' comprised many different branches.

In Western literature about Hadhramaut, Sayyid Abdul Rahman has been overshadowed by his younger brother, Sayyid Abubakr bin Sheikh (1887–1965), partly because the latter was more directly associated with efforts by the local rulers and the British to bring peace and order to the region in the late 1930s, and partly because Abubakr outlived Abdul Rahman by some 17 years, succeeding him as head of the al-Kaff family on his death in 1948. But the two brothers worked closely together in pursuit of their shared philanthropic and charitable interests, and, as the author suggests, they should be considered as 'two wings of a single bird'.

The foundations of the family fortune were laid by their father Sayyid Sheikh in the second half of the 19th century. Born in Tarim in 1839, he made his way to Singapore at the age of twenty, and over the years established what was to become a prosperous business empire based on trade and real estate in Singapore and Java.

Abdul Rahman was born in Singapore in 1886 and visited his homeland for the first time in 1892, when his father decided to return to Tarim. On Sayyid Sheikh's death in 1910, Abdul Rahman became head of the family. He had already gone back to Singapore in 1907 to enter the family business, and he was to remain there, apart from an interval of six years (1913–1919) spent in Tarim, until 1931 when he returned to Hadhramaut for the last time.

The two brothers inherited not only substantial wealth from their father but also his civic spirit; in 1897, to promote the local economy, he had introduced a silver currency which remained in circulation until 1944. Between the wars the brothers financed extensive programmes of social, economic and cultural development. These included four schools in Tarim and Seiyun providing free education at primary and intermediate levels; a fully equipped and staffed hospital, public libraries in Tarim and Seiyun, and a 300 kilometre paved road linking the coast with the interior. Meanwhile, Sayyid Abdul Rahman was the driving force behind the formation in 1915 of *Jam'iyat al-Haqq*, an association of Tarim notables which established the town's first modern school and was to exercise *de facto* responsibility for civil affairs in Tarim until the 1940s.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first provides background on the al-Kaff family and on Sayyid Abdul Rahman's upbringing, education and early travels between Singapore and Hadhramaut, and within South East Asia. The second reviews the family's charitable works. The third discusses Abdul Rahman's personality, and includes the text of two of his public speeches. The fourth comprises selections of prose and poetry written by local scholars and *literati* in praise of Sayyid Abdul Rahman and his benefactions. The book also includes two appendices with many family photographs of Singapore and Tarim, and copies of correspondence which sheds interesting light on Abdul Rahman's relations with the local rulers, and on the range of charitable and social causes which he supported. The longest document reproduced is Sayyid Sheikh's will of 1898, and also included is a commentary on this by Abdul Rahman's scholarly friend and contemporary, Muhammad bin Hashem. A sad blemish is the poor English in which a four page note on Abdul Rahman's career is expressed at the end of the book.

This is a hagiography rather than a critical study of Abdul Rahman bin Sheikh's life and times, and in form and substance it may be regarded as a companion volume to the biographical memoir of Abubakr bin Sheikh, co-authored by Anis al-Kaff, which was published in 2007. The book's major virtue is to focus attention on a man strongly motivated by the ideals of his Muslim faith, whose wealth underpinned his desire to reform and rebuild his homeland, and who spent much of it in the service of his community.

JOHN SHIPMAN

Arabian Peninsula: An Account of operations in the Dhala Region April 19 – June 2 1958 by David Gwynne-James, Chiltime Publishing Ltd, Beaconsfield, 2008. Maps. Appendices. Bibliog. Illus. A4 Pb.£7.50. ISBN 978-0-946367-09-2. (available from Shropshire Regimental Museum: email: shropsrm@zoom.co.uk).

This is a relatively concise account of military operations in the Dhala area, Aden Protectorate, commencing in April 1958. The author was a junior officer in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI) who took part in the brief campaign, and the book is very largely based on the regiment's War Diary. It was published last year to mark the 50th anniversary of the operation to raise the siege of a British Political Officer by 'dissident'

tribesmen in collusion with the neighbouring Yemeni authorities. The Political officer in question, (Fitz) Roy Somerset, who has contributed to this review and appears to have almost total recall of the events of half a century ago, commented, 'I had no idea my rescue had created so much turmoil amongst the armed forces!' 'Turmoil' there probably wasn't, but there is little doubt that there was some agitation in military and political circles. This was because the scale of the operation to put down what was described as 'a general uprising' (involving, it was thought, up to 3000 tribesmen) in the Amirate of Dhala was believed to be beyond the capabilities of the troops stationed in Aden Colony; never mind the locally raised Aden Protectorate Levies (APL) who had not distinguished themselves in counter-insurgency operations elsewhere in the Protectorate. Accordingly, two companies of the KSLI were summoned from an exercise in Kenya to reinforce a full battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment being flown out from the UK. In the end the force deployed up-country comprised – in addition to elements of the KSLI, the York and Lancaster's and the APL – a company from the Buffs, two troops of Life Guards, two troops of 13/18 Hussars, and a section of Royal Artillery, with strong RAF air support including Shackleton bombers and Venom fighter aircraft. All this to rescue one Political Officer and his local escort!

The account of the actual operation is excellent reading. It is well supported by clear maps, a wealth of images and a useful historical background to the outbreak of 'dissidence' and the involvement of the Yemenis who were surprisingly well armed and proved to be no pushover. Roy Somerset ('Descendant of the Plantagenets besieged in desert fort' was the gist of one tabloid headline) defends the need for the operation and questions the author's use of 'hostage' to describe his predicament: 'Hostage is wrong. We were besieged but by our consent. To have abandoned our fort would have been a fearful *aib* [shame]. To remain where we were gave the RAF and the army a chance to inflict casualties on as concentrated a collection of *'adoo* [enemy] as one was likely to encounter in the Western Aden Protectorate where the enemy was very elusive'.

As a former Political Officer myself (in Dhala six years later) I found this a fascinating account of a small skirmish, in relative terms, in the history of the painful decolonisation of South Arabia. But it will also be of interest to any student of Britain's moment in the Middle East. That the text is vivid, readable and well illustrated is a bonus.

PETER HINCHCLIFFE

Warriors of Arabia: Memoirs of a Medical Officer in Aden and Beyond by Franco Grima, privately published, Malta, 2009. Pp.234. Illus. Maps. Glossary. Bibliog. Index. Pb. €30. ISBN 978-99932-0-684-2. (obtainable from author: email address: francogrima@onvol.net)

This enthralling memoir covers the period July 1962 – July 1965 and is written with clarity and immediacy. The author spent these three years as a Regimental Medical Officer with the Federal Regular Army (FRA) on secondment from the Royal Air Force. The FRA grew out of the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL), a force which was directly employed by the British Government. In 1961 the APL was handed over to the Federal Government, when it became the FRA and entered a period of rapid expansion with Arab officers replacing seconded British officers.

The author was present at all the major campaigns which took place during his three year tour: from the Radfan insurgency, which is commemorated by Yemen as the start of 'The Armed Struggle for Liberation', to the convoluted troubles on the Baihan frontier. In addition to the duties of a regimental medical officer, the author often found himself the only doctor in remote areas of the country where conditions were harsh and medical services non-existent. The demands of the civilian population were myriad, and the problems of a breech delivery and an outbreak of smallpox all came his way. His rapport with his brother officers and the respect in which he was held by the medical orderlies under his command is clear. He records, without being judgmental, the mounting pressures on the tribal and political loyalties of both officers and men, arising from the involvement of Egypt in Yemen, the activities of the two nationalist organisations in the Federation, and the increasing fragility of the Federal Government.

The author's use of the term 'Imam-King' throughout the book seems likely to raise some eyebrows, although it is doubtless intended to encapsulate the Imam's claims to spiritual and temporal authority. I have come across the term nowhere else. However, the German traveller Hans Helfritz used the cognate expression 'Priest-King' at least once in the English edition of his book, *The Yemen: A Secret Journey* (1958). The British normally referred to Yemen's Hamid al-Din rulers as 'Imam'. After the Treaty of Sana'a in 1934 they recognised Imam Yahya as 'King of Yemen' and addressed him in person and in correspondence as 'Your Majesty'. On page 69 the author wrongly dates this treaty to 1950. On the same page he refers

to Sultan Awadh's *two* grandsons (Ahmad and Ibid); in fact, the Sultan had two other grandsons (Salih and Muhammad); all four were executed by the NLF after independence. On page 81 Sharif Hussain was Amir Saleh's father, not uncle. The author's transliteration of Arabic names is a trifle haphazard but achieving consistency in this field is a challenge which few of us are equal to.

The text is copiously illustrated with the author's photographs which vividly evoke the people among whom he served and the harsh beauty of their landscape. His book is a valuable addition to the literature of this troubled period in the history of South Arabia.

BILL HEBER PERCY

Establishing Peace in Hadhramaut: a study of Hadhramaut's experience in eliminating the tribal feud 1933–1953 (ihlal al-salaam fi Hadhramaut: dirasah tarikhiyah li tajribat Hadhramaut fi al-qadha''ala al-thar al-qabali) by Abdul Aziz bin Ali bin Salah Al-Qu'aiti, Arabian Publishing Ltd, London, 2009. Arabic. Pp. 430. Maps. Illus. Bibliog. Index. Hb. £50. ISBN 978-0-9558894-1-7.

This book discusses the process which brought peace to Hadhramaut, a region which for generations until the late 1930s had been bedevilled by blood feuds and tribal warfare. It builds on the extensive research carried out by the author in collaboration with the Sudanese historian, Dr Muhammad Said al-Qaddal (now sadly deceased), for their biography (1999) of the author's father, Sultan Ali bin Salah Al-Qu'aiti. During the 1930s Sultan Ali administered the hinterland of the Qu'aiti State on behalf of his cousin, Sultan Salih bin Ghalib Al Qu'aiti, who divided his time between his coastal capital, Mukalla, and his property in Hyderabad.

The author tells how by the mid 1930s Britain's geopolitical interest in bringing stability to the region coincided with the urgent desire of leading Hadhramis to establish peace and security in their turbulent homeland. Harold Ingrams was Britain's chosen instrument and was posted to the region in 1936, having made a nine week exploratory visit there with his wife, Doreen, in 1934. The author identifies Sultan Ali bin Salah, Sultan Ali bin Mansour, Ruler of the Kathiri State (centred on Seiyun and Tarim in Wadi Hadhramaut), and the celebrated Hadhrami philanthropist, Sayyid

Abubakr bin Sheikh al Kaff, as 'men of enlightenment' who acted as Ingrams' principal co-adjutors. Together they succeeded in negotiating a three year truce, signed by some 1400 tribal chiefs, and later extended for a further ten years. The author divides the credit for this historic achievement fairly equally between Ingrams (who was able to call upon the RAF in Aden to bring two recalcitrant tribes to heel) and his Hadhrami colleagues.

The author devotes about a third of the book to an analysis of the historical background to the long and arduous business of pacification. He draws on a diversity of Western and Arabic sources, and includes a detailed biographical note, in English and Arabic, on Harold and Doreen Ingrams, written by their daughter Leila.

The rest of the book comprises a treasure house of original documentation largely connected with the peace-making efforts outlined and discussed by the author. Much of this documentation is published for the first time and includes correspondence between Sultan Ali bin Salah, British officials (mainly Ingrams) and local political actors; it also includes a number of tribal treaties and agreements. An explanatory note is helpfully appended to each manuscript (the note, however, on page 145 does *not* relate to the text above it), and each manuscript is fully reproduced in typescript in the last section of the book.

The author deserves to be congratulated not only on making such a wealth of original material accessible to future researchers and area specialists (conversant with Arabic), but also for his readable and balanced presentation of the historical background to the establishment of peace in the region. The text is illustrated with numerous period photographs, including images of many of the personalities involved in the peace process. Although a bit heavy to handle, this book is a production of exceptional quality, with a sewn binding and cloth covers.

Yemen's former Prime Minister, Abdul Qadir Ba Jammal, contributes a Foreword to the book, and shares the author's view that Yemen today can draw useful lessons from Hadhramaut's experience in bringing tribal feuding to an end during the first half of last century.

JOHN SHIPMAN

Yemen: Jewel of Arabia by Charles and Patricia Aithie (with an introduction by Mark Marshall CMG), Stacey International, 2009. Revised paperback edition. Pp. xix + 212. Maps. Illus. Bibliog. Index. Chronology. $16.95. ISBN 978-1-905-299935.

This book was first published in hardback in 2001, with the support of the Yemen Tourism Promotion Board, and reviewed in this Journal that same year. Since then other illustrated books on Yemen have been published but none have really matched the superb standard of photography in this new paperback edition. From the appealing image on the cover of a young Yemeni girl riding a donkey, to the many views of buildings and scenery, the reader is lost in admiration for a country that is quite different from anywhere else in the world.

Although the format of the paperback means that it has had to be reduced in size, the photographs still retain their quality and interest. The font used for the text is an improvement on the rather heavy text of the original. There is now less wasted space in the design, and the new leaner layout is most attractive. The content is the same as before, covering the whole of the country, but with some new information about Soqotra under the chapter heading: 'Islands of Yemen'. Since the original publication of the book, Charles Aithie has been able to travel all over Soqotra with his camera and amass an impressive photographic archive. He is also a geologist by training, so it is not surprising that he sees Yemen through its rocks, mountains and former volcanoes.

It is a pity that space does not allow for more of his collection of photographs to be included, but as always with a travel book of this kind, there has to be a balance between all the areas covered in the body of the text. Aden is not the most photogenic part of Yemen, and thankfully in the new edition the picture of that port (which might be anywhere in the Middle East) has been much reduced in size. It is a little irritating to be reading about Aden and then to turn over the page and find a study of the termite mounds found elsewhere in Yemen. The chronology has been updated and records the flooding and devastation in Hadhramaut and Mahra caused by heavy tropical storms in 2008. Maps are always a problem in any publication, and although they have been improved, it is a little disconcerting to follow a road which apparently leads nowhere!

JULIAN PAXTON

Riot: South Shields 1930: Britain's First Race Riot. A Stage Play by Peter Mortimer with an Arabic translation by Abdulalem al-Shamery. Five Leaves Publications (info@fiveleaves.co.uk), 2008. ISBN 978-1-905512-49-2.

This is the script of a two-act play written by Peter Mortimer in 2005 about Yemeni seamen's experiences in South Shields, and about what is subtitled as Britain's 'first race riot' in August 1930. The story of the events and Mr Mortimer's research and development of the idea has already been told in his book *Cool for Oat* (2005).

As the introduction suggests, in the current era of economic recession and islamophobia it is instructive to look back to another time when similar issues were raised, although mercifully today's responses have been less violent. The pugilist prowess of Yussuf brings to mind that of 'Prince' Nassim Hamed sixty years later. While race may have played a part, it is as likely that cheaper (foreign) competition for British jobs was the underlying cause – again an issue of our times.

The play has two main strands: the love story between Thelma and Yussuf, complicated by her father's rejection of Yussuf; and the competition for work between English and Yemeni seamen, together with collusion between the Shipping Federation and the National Union of Seamen in favour of British seamen. The play allows reasonable exposure of the issues, although the leading role of narrator/continuity man (news vendor etc) seemed to interrupt the flow, certainly on paper.

Riot was initially written and performed in English. Although tinged with 'Geordie', the text is in modern English which unsurprisingly grates slightly with the quotations from contemporary newspaper excerpts. This edition also includes a translation into Arabic by Abdulalem al-Shamery. The Arabic is a sound (also relatively formal) rendering, but the font size of the text is so small (41 pages of Arabic versus the 67 pages for the English version) that anyone trying to use it as a script may struggle.

There are a few textual oddities which are mildly distracting. There is also a suggestion that Yemeni seamen were chewing *qat* in South Shields which seems improbable considering the lack of timely airfreight in the 1930s.

Given the similarities of situation, the play provides an interesting mirror of the change in English society, particularly with the advent of the welfare state and human rights legislation. *Riot* is unlikely to be a West End hit, but it serves to remind us of enduring societal concerns and reactions to them.

JAMES SPENCER

Abdelmalik Eagle, 2006

Brian Fyfield Shayler
Friends of Hadhramaut

OBITUARIES

Abdelmalik Badruddin Donald Rossley Eagle (1938 – 2008)

Abdelmalik Eagle, who died suddenly in May last year at his home in Durham, was an active member of the Society and a much valued contributor to its Journal.

After leaving school, Abdelmalik did his national service in the army, which introduced him to Aden and Southern Arabia. In 1964, after graduating from St Catherine's College, Cambridge, with a degree in Ancient Greek, he successfully applied for an English language teaching post in Saudi Arabia. He served first in Jeddah, later in Riyadh and finally in Taif. During his time in Saudi Arabia he learned Arabic and embraced Islam. He returned to Britain in the 1980s to study for an MA in Islamic Literature at Manchester University. The elegance of his Arabic script, which matched the neatness of his written English, was a source of admiration and envy!

Abdelmalik travelled widely in the Middle East, but the two countries where he perhaps felt most at home were Yemen and Oman. His knowledge of Yemen's history and culture was vividly reflected in his obituaries of leading Yemeni personalities, and in his book reviews. It is hard to imagine any other European writing with such detailed knowledge and understanding, as Abdelmalik did, of Imam Badr (died 1996), Qadhi Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani (died 1998), senior princes of the Hamid al-Din family, the late Mufti of Yemen, Sayyid Ahmad Zabara, and, more recently, of younger personalities such as Mujahid Abu Shawarib, Yahya Mutawakkil and Jarullah Omar. In addition to writing for the Society's Journal, Abdelmalik contributed to *The Independent, The Guardian, Impact International* and *Dialogue.*

As a devout Shia Muslim, Abdelmalik deeply felt the suffering of the Iraqi people and remained closely in touch with the Khoei Foundation in London where a memorial service was held for him in June 2008. His earlier funeral and burial took place at the Mosque in South Shields.

Abdelmalik was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, and the Anglo-Omani Society. He also supported two other, Yemen-related, charities: *Friends of Hadhramaut* and *Friends of Soqotra.*

EDITOR

Glencairn Balfour Paul
(1917 – 2008)

Glencairn Balfour Paul, Arabist and former diplomat, who died on 2 July 2008 at the age of 90, spent much of his retirement in close association with the University of Exeter. As an Honorary Research Fellow at Exeter's Centre for Arab Gulf Studies (later the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies) he played a significant part in organising international conferences on the Gulf region and Yemen. His researches at Exeter produced a number of papers and articles on the political economy of the Gulf states, but his major accomplishment was his book *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's relinquishment of power in her last three Arab dependencies* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). This meticulously researched, finely balanced and elegantly written work charts the ending of Britain's administration of Sudan and Southern Arabia, and the termination of Britain's treaty responsibilities in the Arabian Gulf. Glencairn's initial career in the Sudan Political Service, his later service as a British diplomat in the Gulf, and his intensive exposure to the politics and culture of North and South Yemen at a conference on that region hosted by Exeter in 1983, admirably qualified him to tackle this challenging survey.

His association with Exeter continued for more than 25 years until his death. His sharp intellect, tempered by his courtesy and sense of humour, his wise counsel, and his readiness to share his extensive knowledge of the Middle East with a whole generation of postgraduate students, won him widespread respect, gratitude and affection. It was fitting that his autobiography *Bagpipes in Babylon: A Lifetime in the Arab World and Beyond* (2006) should have been launched at Exeter's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS). He elected to compose the book in a light and readable vein, commenting that 'life is too serious not to be taken lightly'!

Glencairn spent much of his career (about a quarter of his book) in Sudan: during the war on secondment to the Sudan Defence Force from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; and after the war in the Sudan Political Service on postings to Blue Nile and Darfur provinces (where the job which he had been promised as archaeologist fell through on Sir Douglas Newbold's early death). It was his apprenticeship in these remote areas of the country to which he owed his fluency in Arabic. A vivid account of his time in Darfur as Resident Adviser to the Masalit Sultan in Geneina, was published in *Meetings with Remarkable Muslims* (Eland, 2005).

Glencairn Balfour Paul, 2006

Before leaving Darfur in 1954, when Sudan was heading for independence, he embarked on a trek by camel with his wife, Marnie (who was to die tragically early in 1970), and their two small daughters. Leaving them at the last waterhole, he set off to explore the Ennedi foothills in the French district of Tibesti, and to look for prehistoric rock paintings. After a few days alone he met up with his local guide, Ordugu. One memorable morning Ordugu produced a carefully preserved passport photograph of Wilfred Thesiger in proof of his claim to have accompanied Thesiger on his Tibesti expedition thirty years earlier.

After returning to Britain, Glencairn entered the Diplomatic Service, and, following a posting in Santiago, was sent as First Secretary to Beirut. Later, in the mid-1960s, he was appointed Political Agent in Dubai where he played a key role in the replacement of Shaikh Shakhbut, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, by his brother, Zaid. His next posting was to Bahrain as Deputy to the then Political Resident, Sir William Luce, whom he had known and much admired in Sudan. In 1969 Glencairn was appointed Ambassador to Iraq at a time when Saddam Hussein was positioning himself to take full control of that country. After Iraq broke off relations with Britain (over the issue of the Shah's seizure of the Tunb and Abu Mousa islands) Glencairn was transferred to Jordan where the main events of his tour as Ambassador were the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in 1972, and his marriage to his social secretary, Jenny Scott. His diplomatic career ended with two years as Ambassador in Tunis which he considered 'the least inspiring job in the service but [with] the most inspiring Residence to do it from'! The Residence at La Marsa had been a former summer palace of the Bey of Tunis. Before moving to Exeter, he spent 1978–79 as Director-General of the Middle East Association.

In 1982 Glencairn visited Sana'a on behalf of the University of Exeter, accompanied by his wife, Jenny. This was their first visit to Yemen, and it aroused her fascination for indigo, its production and varied uses. Glencairn took great pride in Jenny's emergence as a world expert on the subject. Her interests led to their travels to other countries in the Arab world, to parts of Asia and West Africa where indigo was still produced and even to the remote Polynesian islands of the Marquesas, where Glencairn was delighted to be in the footsteps of his relative Robert Louis (Balfour) Stevenson.

On 19 September 2008 the IAIS hosted a reception to celebrate Glencairn's life. It was a multitudinous occasion attended by members of

the family and a host of friends and former colleagues. Speakers drew attention to the breadth of Glencairn's interests – as watercolourist, linguist, occasional librettist, archaeologist, and widely respected poet (his collection, *A Kind of Kindness,* was published in 2000 by Cervisian Press).

Of the many written tributes to Glencairn, perhaps the following words speak for all who had the good fortune to know him:

'Nous pensons très fort à Glencairn, c'était un homme de lumière et la lumière ne meurt pas...'

EDITOR

Alan Roland Denny
(1917 – 2008)

Most British members of the expatriate community in Aden prior to its independence served there for a limited number of years before moving on elsewhere. Few ever returned to Aden. Alan Denny, who died on 5 July 2008 a week before his 91st birthday, was one of those who came back, serving there for nearly fourteen years over a period stretching between 1947 and 1967. For an expatriate his knowledge and experience of the territory and people of both the Colony and the Western Protectorate was therefore almost unique.

Born on 11 July 1917 in South London, Alan Denny started his career with a series of jobs in the City and, with war against Germany looming, joined 53 City of London Brigade of the Territorial Army in 1936. His unit, an artillery one, was sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force, but when German advances and the collapse of the Belgian army forced the BEF to retreat, he was cut off and unable to reach Dunkirk with the main force. Instead, with one or two others, he attempted to get out of France by heading South to the Mediterranean coast. Hitching lifts with cooperative French lorry drivers before the French lines were broken, they reached Marseilles and found a ship which took them to Gibraltar and so returned to England.

Before going to France, Alan Denny had also become a Special Constable in the City of London Police. This police experience led by a turn of fortune to his appointment in 1941 to the Kenya Police. At that time, following Mussolini's declaration of war on Britain, Kenya's northern

frontiers faced a threat from Italian forces in Ethiopia and Somaliland and he was posted to the remote but sensitive border district of Turkana.

In April 1947 Alan Denny married Catherine Sayer and transferred to Aden, where his daughter Rosalind (Roz or Lindy), the TV expert and writer on cookery, and, three years later, his son Andrew were born. His new position was in the Government Guards, a police/militia force of about 500 men at that time, which provided the Political Officers in the Western Protectorate with their bodyguards and helped them to maintain law and order. Their duties included the manning of a number of small posts in particularly difficult locations, including some on the Protectorate-Imamate border. Denny's principal role was to supervise the proper functioning of these garrisons, requiring much travel, sometimes to areas which motor vehicles could not reach, together with a good understanding and at times some tactful diplomacy with the Protectorate chiefs concerned. When one or other of his two more senior officers was on leave he also acted as Deputy Commandant.

In 1952 Denny transferred to the Aden Colony Police, with whom he served as a senior Superintendent until 1956. Throughout their time in Aden, Catherine was the Judge's secretary in the Aden Appeal Court. His career then led them to the West Indies, where he became an officer in the Trinidad Special Branch, and in 1959 to a similar post in the Tanganyika Police. When Tanganyika gained independence in 1962 (together with the other East African territories held by Britain) most of its expatriate Colonial Service officers were pensioned off and had to find new careers. Denny spent a brief period in Liberia, working as a security officer for a diamond company, before returning to Aden in 1963 in the rank of colonel to a headquarters post in the newly established Federal Guard (expanded out of the Government Guards), where his previous experience was to be of considerable value. His family was still with him and they lived in Champion Lines, but they had to cope with the hazards faced by many senior officers during that dangerous period. A bomb under his car failed to go off, but his children recollect that he slept with a revolver under his pillow and that the interior lights of his car were disconnected to avoid presenting an illuminated target to any assassin when he opened the car door at night. He was made an MBE for his service with the Federal Guard, remaining with them until the British departure from Aden in September 1967.

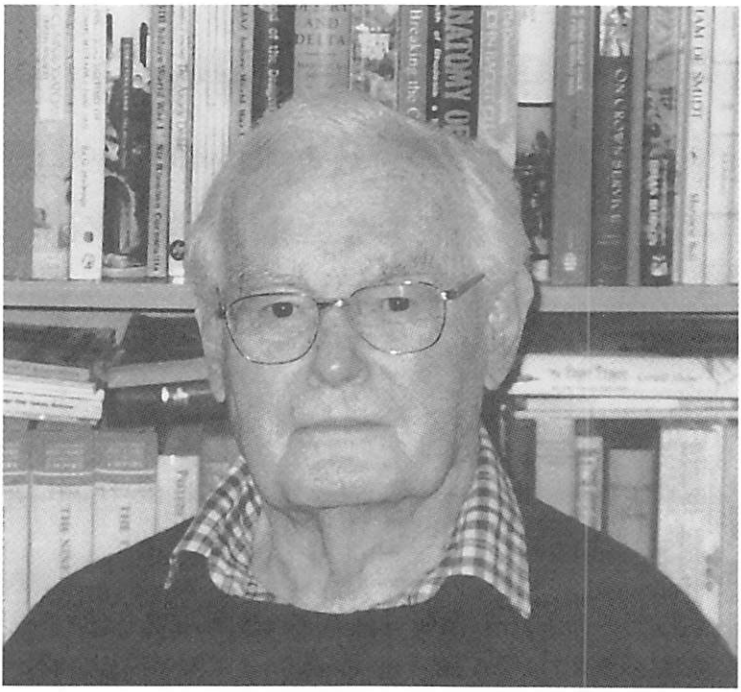
After filling in time as a Probation Officer in Buckinghamshire, Alan

Denny then returned to the West Indies to spend the remaining eight years of his career with the Jamaica Police as a Special Adviser, mostly concerned with training. He finally retired in June 1978, when he was awarded the Jamaica Order of Distinction. He and Catherine had divorced in 1976 and he was later married to Dorothy Shackleton, who died in 1993, and then shared the last ten years of his life in Sedlescombe, Sussex, with Audrey Miller, who survives him together with his two children and two granddaughters.

Alan Denny was a kind, warm-hearted, generous and hospitable man, very self-reliant, full of energy even in his later years, and interested in everything and everybody around him, although he rarely spoke of his past experiences. He will be greatly missed not only by a family of which he was exceedingly proud but also by the many friends he accumulated wherever he went over his long and varied career.

NIGEL GROOM

In Alan Denny's garden, Khormaksar, Aden, 1949. From left to right: Jimmy James (Deputy Commandant, Government Guards); Sharif Hussain; Catherine Denny with baby daughter; Sharif Salih bin Hussain (Amir of Bayhan); Abdullah Hassan Jaffer; Nigel Groom; Mrs James; Qadhi Muhammad al-Bakri (Qadhi of Bayhan); Alan Denny (inset).



MURRAY GRAHAM
(1924 – 2008)

Murray (Alexander Mungo) Graham, who died in September 2008, was one of the first to join the British-Yemeni Society when it was formed in 1993. Born in Rhodesia, he was brought up and educated in South Africa. After the war, in which he served in the South African Air Force, he moved to Britain where he had strong Scottish and Yorkshire roots. Having a degree in chemistry, he joined British Petroleum (BP) at their Grangemouth refinery, and in 1953 was posted to BP's Aden refinery. In Aden, where he met and married his wife, Vera, he found himself well placed to pursue his interest in military, naval and postal history against the background of Aden's connections with India, East Africa and the Gulf. Over the years he built up a notable collection of stamps and postmarks (including those of North Yemen), and his expertise in this field was to win him international repute. Murray continued to serve with BP in Aden until 1962 when he and his wife with their three children returned to London.

Murray's enduring interest in Southern Arabia formed the foundation for many of his friendships and associations, not least his membership of the British-Yemeni Society and the Aden Dinner Club. His knowledge of Aden's colonial history was encyclopaedic, and was underpinned by a matching collection of books, journals, maps, photographs and water-colours, including sketches by Joseph Rundle, a young naval officer who took part in the invasion and capture of Aden in 1839. Murray contributed to *The Philatelist, The Journal of the Oriental Philatical Association* and *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*. He was always happy to share his wide-ranging knowledge, and his many friends and correspondents around the world greatly benefited from his enthusiasm and the meticulous accuracy of his information.

EDITOR

David Ledger
(1939 – 2008)

David Ledger, who died on 12 November 2008, will be remembered by members of the Society who served in Aden during the traumatic events that led up to British withdrawal in 1967. He will however be known to a wider audience as the author of *Shifting Sands: The British in South Arabia* (1983). Many accounts have been written before and since about the British connection with this part of the world, but David Ledger's narrative tells the plain unvarnished truth about an unfortunate and tragic episode in British colonial history. In discussing British involvement in Aden he describes how an honest if belated attempt to bring development and prosperity to a remote corner of Arabia became a thorn in the side of the British political establishment and an international embarrassment. He concludes his account with an epilogue about the Arab friends we let down and the fate of the leaders and the regime which followed British rule.

For his National Service in 1960, David Ledger was drafted into the Intelligence Corps and served on secondment to the Trucial Oman Scouts. After completing his military service he joined the British High Commission in Aden, where he worked in the Information Section with Derek Rose, whose murder he describes in his book. He was therefore well placed to know all about events taking place as they happened and was able

to keep notes that would later prove invaluable when he turned to writing and publishing *Shifting Sands.* After his service in Aden, David Ledger returned to what is now the United Arab Emirates, and for six years was adviser to the late Ruler of Fujairah. In 1974 he went into business and was a frequent visitor to the Middle East. But clearly he had always wanted to write about his experiences in Aden, which for him and for many of us who were there was a formative influence in our lives. He finally found time to write up his notes and to look back on those times of tragedy and farce with nostalgia, some humour and a measure of detachment.

JULIAN PAXTON

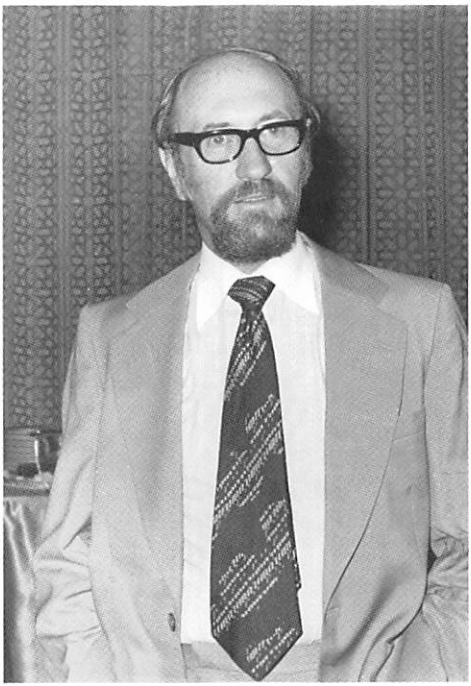
GEOFFREY CLAYTON
(1933 – 2009)

Geoffrey Clayton, who died in March 2009 after a brave battle against cancer, spent almost forty years in international banking, mainly in the Middle East but also in the Far East and Europe.

His career in the Middle East started in the late 1950s with the Eastern Bank in Bahrain. This was followed by an attachment to the Rasheed Bank in Iraq. He was then sent to Lebanon for Arabic language training at the FCO's Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies (MECAS) in the mountain village of Shemlan.

From the mid-1960s until 1967, Geoffrey served as Manager of the Eastern Bank, Mukalla, in the Eastern Aden Protectorate. The Bank, situated by the seashore, was a haven of air-conditioned comfort in which Geoffrey and his wife, Winifred, generously entertained members of the town's expatriate community. Not only did they share with us their privileged access to luxuries unavailable in the local *suq* (such as fresh steak and other delicacies from Kenya), but also the use of their squash court, the only facility of its kind in the entire region.

During the early months of 1967, against the background of growing political turbulence in Aden, Mukalla became the scene of several terrorist incidents which precipitated the evacuation of British families. Geoffrey resolved to remain at his post, but a bomb attack on the Bank made his position untenable; he was rescued from the roof of the building by an SAS helicopter, and given temporary refuge in the British Residency before

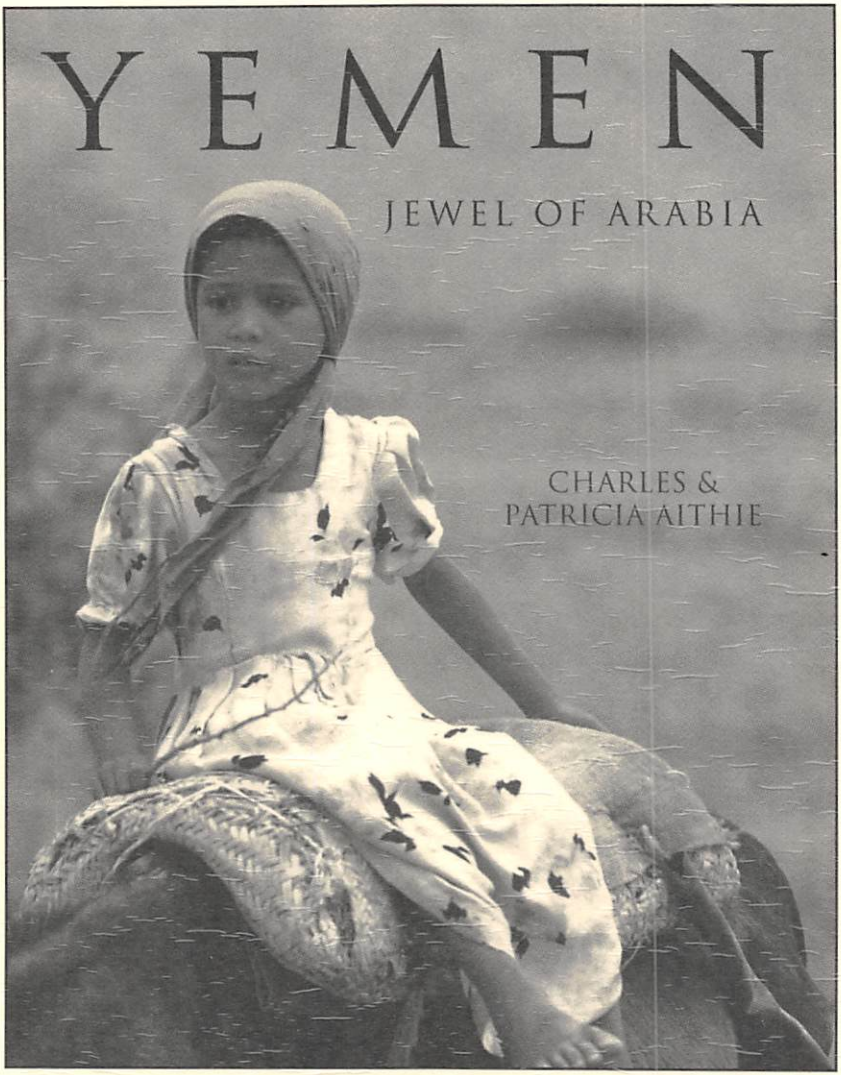


flying out to Aden. Geoffrey showed similar courage in running the gauntlet of political violence in downtown Beirut. Having resigned from the Eastern Bank, he spent seven years managing a consortium bank in Lebanon. In 1975 he was recruited by Lloyds for the challenging task of opening and running their office in Cairo, and he was to remain in Egypt for nine years. His next posting with Lloyds was to Taiwan, and his last before retirement was to Switzerland.

Geoffrey was a devoted family man, and his wide range of interests included sailing, travel and the arts. In addition to his membership of the British-Yemeni Society and the MECAS Association, Geoffrey supported *Friends of Hadhramaut* and a number of other charities. He is survived by his wife, Winifred, his son, Walter, and his two daughters, Sarah-Jane and Wendy.

EDITOR

Designed and produced by David McLean
Printed by Portland Print, Kettering, England



This book is reviewed on page 49 of the Journal