

# Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey Project

PATRON : H. H. SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN

1996-1997 Season

## *Occasional Newsletter*

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### *Our thanks to all our sponsors and supporters for their help during the past season*

*With the summer now well upon us, making outdoor archaeology somewhat unpleasant, ADIAS team members have now wrapped up their fieldwork for the 1996-1997 Sixth field season and have returned home, where many of them are hard at work preparing reports on the results of the season's work.*

*Work in Abu Dhabi will resume next winter.*

*As this last issue of the Occasional Newsletter for the year suggests, however, the process of the investigation of the archaeological heritage of Abu Dhabi's coast and islands is a continuing process, not least the task of analysing data and of preparing publications and lectures that will bring knowledge of the Project's work to a wider audience, both within the academic world and the public at large.*

*With support from our Patron and from sponsors, ADIAS looks forward to an equally rewarding Seventh Season in 1997-1998.*

#### *Ancient cairns found on Shuweihat*

Readers of the *Occasional Newsletter* will recall that ADIAS field archaeologist Jakub Czastka carried out a survey a year ago for the Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Oil Operations, ADCO, along the route of the new Main Oil Line from Habshan to Jebel Dhanna.

During the course of that survey, a re-examination of a group of cairns on a hill close to the Dhafra Beach Hotel, first identified in the early 1980s, was undertaken, to put them in the context of recent discoveries by ADIAS in the region.

As part of a visit to the far-flung reaches of the

Western Region in early May to oversee the placing of warning signboards around sites on the island of South Yasat, (Yasat al Sufla), Czastka had the opportunity also to carry out a brief survey of mesas on Jezirat Shuweihat, to the west of Jebel Dhanna.

Although he was unable to find any trace of Late Stone Age tools, which have previously been recorded from the area, he did, however, identify three cairns, similar to the Jebel Dhanna cairns; on the top of one of the mesas. Two had been damaged, one badly so, by recent vehicular movement, although the third remained in relatively good condition.

With the assistance of Minister of Information and Culture His Highness Sheikh Abdulla bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the discovery of the sites was drawn to the attention of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Butti Al Hamed, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Municipality and Town Planning Departments, and Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, and Sheikh Mohammed has kindly agreed to ensure that the sites are preserved.

An initial examination of Jezirat Shuweihat was commenced several years ago at the request of President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

#### *ADIAS to feature at annual Seminar*

The annual Seminar for Arabian Studies takes place in Oxford, UK, in mid-July. As usual, it will be attended by a number of ADIAS team members. Director Dr. Geoffrey King, a member of the Steering Committee of the Seminar and now Pro-Director for Postgraduate Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS, of the University of London, will present a paper reviewing results of

work on a number of Abu Dhabi's Western islands, focussing on Ghagha', while Jodie Benton will present a paper outlining aspects of the March excavation season on Merawah.

### ***ADIAS at Sharjah Symposium***

To coincide with the inauguration of Sharjah's new Archaeological Museum in early May, the Sharjah Directorate of Antiquities held a three day Symposium entitled '*The Arabian Gulf: Ancient History and Glorious Civilisation.*' attended by a number of archaeologists both from within the UAE and overseas.

ADIAS was represented at the Symposium by Dr. Geoffrey King, (Director), Peter Hellyer (Co-ordinator), and our lithics draughtsman, Arleen Edwards, while Dr. King made a short presentation based upon ADIAS survey work on the islands of Yasat al Ulya, Yasat al Sufla, Al Ufsai'yah, Dalma and Ghagha'.

Besides providing an opportunity to outline ADIAS work to other colleagues working in the Emirates, the Symposium also was of value in permitting discussions to be held with specialists who have skills and expertise to offer to ADIAS for future seasons.

In particular, useful discussions were held with Professor Hans-Peter Uerpmann and Margrethe Uerpmann, of Germany's University of Tubingen, who have been undertaking studies on skeletal remains from a Late Stone Age site at Jebel Buhays in Sharjah, which may be roughly contemporary to the site identified by ADIAS on Merawah. The Uerpmanns are both leading experts on the period. Subject to approval of ADIAS plans for the spring 1998 season, the Uerpmanns have now agreed to visit Merawah to examine the MR-1 site.

### ***Publications***

Printing of the academic report of the first season of ADIAS is now well under way. Written by Project Director Dr. Geoffrey King, it is a summary of all the archaeological knowledge of Sir Bani Yas, Dalma and Merawah up to the 1992 season, and a gazetteer of the sites found during the preliminary ADIAS surveys of the three islands, on the basis of which excavations on those islands were subsequently undertaken.

Thanks to the interest and support of Minister of Information and Culture His Highness Sheikh Abdulla bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the report is being produced with full Ministry backing. Further details will be announced to sponsors in due

course.

Details of some of the Project's work will, as usual, be provided to the Ministry of Information and Culture for inclusion in its 1997 annual Yearbook, to introduce ADIAS to a wider audience.

A number of other academic papers are also under preparation or at press.

### ***...and Finally***

This issue of the *Occasional Newsletter* will be the last for the current season.

As has become a regular practice, ADIAS team members have been busy for much of the period from last autumn right round until recently, with the major season of activity in March and April involving work on Merawah and at Mantiqa As'sirra, while ancillary excavations and other activity have taken place on Sir Bani Yas and on Balghelam.

As usual, ADIAS is grateful to all of those who have provided assistance and support, both in terms of logistics, such as the Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Oil Operations, ADCO, (transport), and the Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company (accommodation at Medinat Zayed during the Mantiqa As'sirra work), and in financial terms, amongst whom should be cited in particular the Private Department of His Highness Sheikh Zayed.

Other support has come from a number of firms and organisations, including Abu Dhabi Duty Free, Union National Bank, the Al Fahim Group, the Abu Dhabi Gas Liquefaction Company, ADGAS, the Abu Dhabi Hilton, British Petroleum, Emirates PhotoMarketing, Emirates Insurance and ICL.

We are also grateful to the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, ERWDA, for access to their accommodation facilities at Ruwais, and for loaning the services of their staff botanist for a survey at Mantiqa As'sirra.

The Office of our Patron, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has continued to provide steady and invaluable support throughout the season.

His Excellency Sheikh Surour bin Mohammed Al Nahyan also kindly permitted us to continue our work on Balghelam, while His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Butti Al Hamed facilitated work at Mantiqa As'sirra through the Diwan of the Ruler's Representative in the Western Region..

The Sixth ADIAS season, just completed, has seen further progress in the identification and evaluation of important aspects of Abu Dhabi's archaeological heritage, and we express our thanks to all those sponsors who have provided such useful support for our work.