

# Review of ADIAS Archaeological Season for 2001-2002

*(The following is a short round-up of work undertaken by the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey, ADIAS, during the 2001-2002 autumn-to-spring season, including work outside Abu Dhabi. Work by other UAE departments and foreign teams is not covered).*

In Fujairah, excavations were undertaken by ADIAS on the edge of the coastal plain at Qidfa in late December and January. The work followed the carrying out of a survey of the line of a new water pipeline from Qidfa to Al Ain for the UAE Offsets Programme. The work, immediately adjacent to the site of a new desalination plant on the coast at Qidfa, confirmed that the date palm gardens at Qidfa had formerly covered a more extensive area than they do today. Evidence of occupation included the remains of water distribution channels, field walls and stone surrounds for palm groves, as well as two Muslim cemeteries. Ceramics were of Late Islamic date.

During the survey, the ADIAS team also identified a number of previously unrecorded sites elsewhere in Fujairah and Ra's al-Khaimah, including probable pre-Islamic burial cairns in Wadi Saqamqam, abandoned settlements at Qirath and Qurrayah and a copper smelting complex near Muna'i, in Ra's al-Khaimah.

Winter work by ADIAS in Abu Dhabi focused mainly on compilation of a database of the results of the last ten years of work, with over 1000 individual sites and sub-sites now recorded. Further fieldwork was undertaken on the island of Futaisi, adjacent to Abu Dhabi, where a preliminary archaeological survey has now been completed. Apart from three large hearths of possible pre-Islamic date, all other sites, including water catchment systems, a graveyard and pottery scatters, can be securely dated to the Late Islamic period.

In association with the Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Oil Operations, ADCO, a fourth phase of work was undertaken at the Jebel Dhanna sulphur mine complex. ADCO support also facilitated the carrying out of further survey work in some of the oilfield areas, including Asab, Sahil and Bab, with several previously unrecorded sites being added to the gazetteer of sites for these field areas.

Further fieldwork carried out by ADIAS at an archaeological site at the Abu Dhabi Airport Golf Club, coupled with a detailed study of the flint tools recovered

during earlier work at the site confirmed the importance of the site during the Late Stone Age period, around 5,500 to 4,000 BC.

The Airport site was first discovered on a range of low hills inside the perimeter of the Golf Club in 1995. That work showed that the site had been occupied during the Late Stone Age, the early to middle Bronze Age, around 3,000 BC to 2,000 BC, and in the Late pre-Islamic period, around the beginning of the Christian era.

A review of the stone tools and animal remains from the site was undertaken by the ADIAS flint tools expert, Dr. Heiko Kallweit, from Germany's University of Freiburg, with the assistance of Dr. Mark Beech, ADIAS environmental archaeologist. This was coupled with further visits to the site, to search for new material uncovered as a result of recent rains. As a result, the site was proved to extend further than had been originally recognised, and new flint material was collected.

During the site visits, a tiny crescent-shaped fragment of worked flint, known as a microlith, was collected. This provides useful insight into the way of life of the UAE's Late Stone Age inhabitants. Two further examples were also identified during the detailed review of material collected during the earlier phase of fieldwork. The microliths are "teeth" of flint that would have been set into a wooden handle for use as an early sickle or knife for cutting grasses. Further fieldwork at the Airport site is planned next winter.

In association with the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, ERWDA, ADIAS now has responsibility for palaeontology on the coast and islands of the Western Region of Abu Dhabi. This relates, in particular, to the fossil material from Late Miocene outcrops, stretching from near Rumaitha, in the east, to Jebel Barakah, in the west. Further fieldwork has been undertaken in the Ruwais area, with previously unrecorded fossil sites being identified.

One result of this new responsibility is that ADIAS has now taken over the database put together by the London Natural History Museum, following its work, along with Yale University, in the Western Region in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Details of that database have now been added to the ADIAS website - [www.adias-uae.com](http://www.adias-uae.com)

*Peter Hellyer*

## Reviews, Publications and Research

### Wild about Mammals

*by Marijcke Jongbloed, Robert Llewellyn-Smith & Moaz Sawaf. Published 2002. Arabian Leopard Trust. A5, 72 pp., spiral bound*

Having heard that a new book on mammals of UAE was in press, I was pleased to be asked to review it. This was particularly so because ERWDA is currently carrying out a terrestrial baseline survey of the fauna and flora of Abu Dhabi, and field differentiation of some of the mammals, gerbils and jirds in particular, can be quite difficult, especially for less experienced staff.

Spiral bound and running to 72 pages including covers, this book is marketed as a field guide to the terrestrial

mammals of the UAE. How then does the book fare? There are few books on mammals of the Arabian peninsula, let alone the UAE, and this new publication seems to be a synthesis of information from the three main ones – Kingdon, Harrison and Bates, and Osborne. Some thirty-one species are covered, with one side of a double page spread being devoted to photographs and the other devoted to text containing information about the animal depicted.

The text really does not allow the reader to differentiate between some species and there are some factual errors (and spelling mistakes). That said, two difficult species to distinguish, Sundevall's and Libyan Jirds, have been dealt with well. It might be noted here that there are two other species of jird that may occur in UAE, namely