

RECORDERS' REPORTS FOR JULY - DECEMBER 1991

Archaeology and Palaeontology

After the inevitable disruptions caused in the first half of 1991 by events further up the Gulf, the usual teams of foreign archaeologists and palaeontologists returned to the Emirates in the second half of the year, (and in early 1992), to continue excavations and surveys throughout the country.

On the palaeontological front, the teams co-ordinated by the British Museum (Natural History) and funded by our Corporate member, the Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Oil Operations, ADCO, continued work in both the Western and Eastern Region of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The teams' co-ordinator, Peter Whybrow, reports on the season of work elsewhere in this issue of TRIBULUS.

Archaeological studies, as usual, have been much more diverse, with major activity by teams from Britain, France, Belgium, Australia/Denmark, Germany and Japan during the course of the cooler months on sites at Julfar, in Ras al Khaimah, Ad Door and Tell Abraq in Umm al Qaiwain, and at Mileiha in Sharjah, while survey work was undertaken in the East Coast enclaves of Sharjah. The Department of Antiquities and Tourism in Al Ain continued work on sites in the Hili area, and also began investigation early in 1992 of some Islamic sites in the desert south west of Al Wathba.

Apart from the excavations at Julfar, little work has been done on the country's Islamic archaeology, and the Al Ain Department now plans a series of surveys and excavations to get a clearer picture of the pattern of settlement in the Islamic period.

A related project has been a survey of the traditional architecture of Islamic date in the Emirate of Ras al Khaimah, carried out by members of the British team that worked at Julfar autumn and early winter. The focus was on buildings of a defensive nature and on mosques, whether in good repair or in ruins, with a view to recording these vestiges of the country's past, and to identifying candidates for future restoration.

Most of the forts and towers were shown to be of relatively recent date, less than three hundred years old. Some of the more prominent ones, however, like the old

fort at Dhayah, north of Ras al Khaimah, which was abandoned after being shelled by the British in 1819, are on sites which, judging by the pottery present, had clearly been occupied much earlier.

With restoration of the country's older buildings now being given a higher priority, the best news of the autumn was the announcement by the Government of Fujairah that UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan has agreed to finance the restoration of the great mud-brick castle that dominates the plain of Fujairah. Much of the work is expected to be carried out by Omani craftsmen who have completed similar, and excellent, restoration projects in Oman.

Another candidate for urgent restoration work is the old palace in the Wadi Hail, also in Fujairah, and some Group members were active early in 1992 in efforts to put together a restoration programme.

While the Group as such undertook no archaeological work of its own, Group members were also involved in the successful raising of sponsorship for the Tell Abraq excavation in Umm al Qaiwain and for the archaeological survey of the islands of Sir Bani Yas, Dalma and Merawah, which was due to begin in late March.

General Motors, Emirates Airline, Spinneys Abu Dhabi, The British Council, the Holiday Inn, the Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company, the Union National Bank, ADCO, Wimpeys and the Higher Colleges of Technology, a number of them amongst our Corporate members, deserve thanks for their readiness to support studies on the archaeology of the Emirates.

Previous issues of TRIBULUS have profiled excavations at Julfar and Ad Door: elsewhere in this issue is a report on the expedition led by Professor Daniel Potts on the Bronze and Iron Age site at Tell Abraq. Notes and Queries also includes items on recent accidental discoveries of coin hoards and on other topics of an archaeological interest.

PETER HELLYER
Archaeology Recorder

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Programme of Meetings – July to December 1991

1st July	–	"Desert Driving," two films from ADCO.
5th Aug	–	"Conserving America: the Challenge on the Coast," USIS film.
2nd Sept	–	"These Beautiful People," Film on Namibia.
16th Sept	–	"An Introduction to Abu Dhabi," by Peter Hellyer
7th Oct	–	"A Day above Oman," by John Nowell.
21st Oct	–	"Plate Tectonics," by Dr. Ken Glennie.
4th Nov	–	"A History of Al Ain," an ADCO film.
18th Nov	–	"A Look back at Natural History in the UAE," by Bish Brown.
2nd - 5th Dec	–	Group trip to Oman
16th Dec	–	"Ancient Astronomy," by Ghassan Kubba.