

death, although other causes, such as poisoning or internal injury cannot be ruled out, as the body was decomposed and mummified. It would seem, therefore that further trapping in this area could well yield wildcats for the breeding population. The presence of numerous feral cats reinforces the opinion of MJ that outbreeding to the large feral cat population is a major problem for the wildcat.

It is to be hoped also that in future it may become possible to carry out ecological and behavioural studies on the wildcats, so as to build up a body of knowledge which will be of value should conservation and range management measures become desirable in the future.

It is a pleasure to record here the sponsorship by Royal Dutch Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airlines, Al Futtain Motors

and the Union National Bank, which made this pilot study possible. Traps were generously loaned by the Beit al Barakat Breeding Centre in Oman, and invaluable financial and personal assistance was provided by the members of the Dubai Natural History Group. Last but not least, the quail and mice, who gave their lives for this project, deserve special mention. All these have our warmest thanks.

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## 20,000 graves at Ad Door site

There may be as many as 20,000 graves at the two thousand year old archaeological site of Ad Door just outside the town of Umm al Qaiwain, according to the leader of the archaeological team from Belgium's University of Ghent.

The Belgian team leader, Professor Ernie Haerinck, calculates the figure on the basis of the area of the site, and the discoveries made so far.

"The site is a minimum of four square kilometres in size," he says. "We can assume that half of it contains graves, and excavations so far have suggested that there is at least one grave in each ten metre by ten metre square. This would mean that there are at least 20,000 graves on the site, of which less than one per cent have so far been examined by archaeological teams."

During his 1992 season, Haerinck and his team cleared two areas of the site, totalling 2,700 square metres, and found a total of thirty graves. Some were of a new style, being simple burials without stones, while some showed evidence of rituals taking place at the time of burial.

"From the discolouration of the sand, we can deduce that oil or grease must have been dragged along a five or ten centimetre strip around the graves," he says. Scientific analysis of the discoloured sand is now planned for next season.

The finds for the 1992 season, Haerinck said, were many and varied, with a considerable amount of very thin glass being discovered, unfortunately all in fragments.

"The styles are new, and probably came from Rome or Syria," he adds.

A fragment of a stone sculpture that may represent a mythical beast, the griffin, was also uncovered, along with several pieces of terracotta objects depicting a camel with a rider, bone plaques, and a number of small terracotta statuettes of women.

"These statuettes are very similar to others found in the Eastern Arabian site at Thaj," Professor Haerinck notes. Other finds included several new forms of pottery, both local and imported, a new form of incense burner, and a few coins, of the same type as those found earlier on the site, while Haerinck also noted that a number of iron ar-

rowheads, ten to twelve centimetres long, had also been uncovered.

"These are exactly the same in shape and size as a number on display at the Museum in Al Ain, where they are part of an exhibition of weapons used until very recently by local people. This would suggest that the same style of arrowhead may have been in use for nearly two thousand years."

Over the past few years, the archaeological teams working at Ad Door, from Britain, France, Denmark and Belgium, have concentrated on excavating particular graves or other sites. On the basis of 1992's work, however, Professor Haerinck now advocates a different approach.

"The only way to understand the Ad Door site is to clear large areas, to show the relationship between the graves and the surrounding land. This year, for example, most of the objects we found were not in the graves, but between them."

"In the 1993 season, I shall continue making large exposures of land to give us a better understanding of the site," Haerinck adds.

With new finds being made each season, the archaeologists are continually revising their assessment of what the town of Ad Door used to be. Now, Haerinck believes, there is sufficient evidence from excavation to suggest that it was a port, a religious centre and a living city, all rolled into one. From the discoveries already made, and from the size of the site, it is evident, he believes, that Ad Door was one of the major population centres of the Southern Gulf during its heyday, which lasted from around 100 BC until the third Century AD.

The work at Ad Door is being carried out under the patronage of Supreme Council member and Ruler of Umm al Qaiwain, His Highness Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Mu'alla. Haerinck thanks the Ruler for his support, and also for that of Crown Prince Sheikh Saud bin Rashid, and the Director of the Diwan, Sheikh Khalid bin Rashid. Logistic support was also provided in part by General Motors, who loaned a vehicle to the archaeological team, and by other local businessmen.

**PETER HELLYER**

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