



May 2003 Photo Competition Results

The Spring 2003 Photo Competition – with “LIGHT” as its focus - was well attended. Members voted on their 3 favourites and a professional judge nominated one himself. Thanks to all the competitors. Here are the four winning photos, with credits.



Judge's Choice:

Ken Hendy

"Light Behind Light"

Taken by the Creek, Bur
Dubai, May 03.

People's Choice winner:

Phil Iddison

***"Silver Lining, Light
Waves"***

Taken at Qurm Beach, Muscat,
Oct 02.





May 2003 Photo Competition Results cont.



People's Choice winner:

Josette Garey

"Inside a Wind Tower"

Taken in Ras Al Kaimah
Museum, Feb. 03.

People's Choice winner:

Bob Reimer

"Half a Toad"

Taken in Musah, Oman,
Jan. 03





Editorial

Welcome back to a new season. We hope you have a wonderful 2003 – 2004. This issue is the first under new publishing – Will Moore continues where Andrea left off – “I hope I can create a newsletter worthy of the standard she set” says Will.

This is going to be our busiest season ever. Aside from having more weekly outings and planned field trips, the Al Ain Chapter of the ENHG will be hosting the Inter-Emirates Weekend, participating in the fourth Annual Al Ain classical Music Festival, and running numerous workshops in our new [thank you Principal Crawford] workshop located in the Al Ain English Speaking School. More photo competitions are coming, the first one in December – submission deadline is November 25th, so you must hurry to enter. The ENHG now has a new website < www.enhg.org > thanks to Mr. Bob Reimer and others who have put in a lot of time and effort. Check it out. But enough for now – time to read on.

Useful Current Maps

by Murphy Turner & Bob Reimer

Finding good current maps of the UAE is a chore as those that have been here for a while can attest. It has gotten better in the last few years. I have been asked to write a little article on where to get good road maps of the UAE. A big problem is any road map older than two months is outdated as they have more than likely completed a new road, or opened up one that had kilometers of diversions. Even verbal or written directions are only good for a short period of time. Roundabouts disappear and are replaced. Also of course there is the problem of each having several names (i.e. the Stork, Bird, Al Jimi Cinema (long gone) or the Arabic name Al Baladiya). Or for example we have the Clock Tower Roundabout, which no longer has a clock tower, or a roundabout, but you can bet your last Dirham it will be known as the Clock Tower Roundabout for years to come.

So what is the solution? I have collected maps from wherever I can find a free map and stuffed it in the console of the jeep. Every hotel I stay at, I have them fax a map with the confirmation. If I am visiting a store I ask if they have a map. These maps can be very useful, as they will have details of the surrounding area that you cannot find on most commercial maps. I ask at the hotels for maps of the city, Emirate. I have found some of the best maps were free ones at a hotel or tourist attraction.

The best maps of detail that I have found for the cities are in the phone book. The maps are a little small but with some very good information.

The UAE off Road Explorer is a good resource. It was published as an off road book but has good overview maps with all the main roads. I paid 100 Dhs for my copy when it first came out and assume it is still around that price and can be found in most of the bookstores.

My favorite is Off – Road in the Emirates by Dariush Zandi. He has the original off road guide and the latest version has GPS waypoints and a lot of details and good descriptions.

By far the best roadmap I have found for major roads is “Satellite Road Map of the United Arab Emirates” published by Zodiac Publishers. It has all the major roads with the route numbers. The satellite images of the cities are interesting but of little use in navigating. Interestingly, you can see Palm Island taking shape in the satellite image. I am not sure if it is available in the bookstores but can be purchased online at www.zodiakpublishing.org

The best online site for maps of the UAE is <http://www.uaelocator.com/main.htm> which has links to very detailed maps of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. One website, mappoint.msn.com or <http://mappoint.msn.com> (note: www.mappoint.msn.com does not work) maps of UAE and Oman are not bad and include a fair bit of topographical detail.

The most up-to-date paper map available is the GeoProjects 2003 map of UAE. I have not seen this for sale in UAE but it is available through a number of mail order houses including <http://www.maptown.com/unitedarabemiratesmaps.html> and <http://www.omnimap.com/catalog/int/unarabem.htm>.



A Snail's Contribution

By Gary Feulner

Al-Ain ENHG stalwarts Brigitte Howarth, Bill Jones and Will Moore had earlier reported finding the rare snail *Bulinus wrighti* in a typically isolated location - in this case a pothole pool in a bedrock ravine feeding a tributary of Wadi Khutwah. *B. wrighti* is a potential host for the schistosome parasite (although the disease is absent in the UAE and Oman) and the schistosomiasis research unit at The Natural History Museum in London, interested in increasing the genetic diversity of their research population, asked whether some specimens could be obtained. This provided the perfect excuse for a return visit in late May, despite the heat, in company with Brien Holmes, Walid Harkim and ENHG Chairman Gary Feulner.

The wadi system that debouches at Khutwah is one of the largest along the mountain front south of Madam and Hatta, and it is correspondingly richer in evidence of past human settlement, cultivation and other uses, deep within the rugged mountain environment. At several remote sites terraced fields are served by well preserved falajes, or in some cases protected from erosion by diversion channels below steep slopes. Stands of date palms, farfar trees (*Tecomella undulata*) and henna (*Lawsonia inermis*) remain where they were once cultivated along the wadi banks, as do several agaves (presumably introduced in the modern era). A small grove of *Aloe vera* was seen near an enigmatic U-shaped stone structure, for which Brien Holmes made a good case that it may have been used as a sundial to time water use. Also seen were the foundations of numerous dwellings, graves and even chicken coops.

The heavy rains that fell in the Al-Ain/Buraimi area in early April were reflected in the relative good health of many common Hajar Mountain perennials. Although the group was moving quickly with a focus on many different things, more than 50 species of plants were recorded, more than half of which were in flower or seed. Among the most delightful to see again after an absence of several years was *Boerhavia elegans*, whose delicate network of thin shoots and tiny flowers creates the impression of a wispy, red-purple haze. Most annuals, however, seem to have come and gone already.

In the vicinity of Khutwah itself, Brien pointed out the copper smelting sites that he has been studying - circular accumulations of frothy, pale slag mixed with mud bricks from the kiln walls, many still showing the clear imprints of human fingers. Brien was especially proud to show off the remains of several Umm Al-Nar tombs that were first discovered during an ENHG field trip. This is believed to be the only confirmed Umm Al-Nar tomb site within the mountain front in this area.

The presence of so many enthusiastic and experienced observers made for an exceptionally interesting day but created its own problems. Said Gary, "I really felt stretched to try to pay attention to at everything at once and still move along."



The upper Khutwa settlement, long abandoned, shows the remains of considerable human effort to build a lasting community. Homes, retaining walls, terraces, and date palms remain to remind us of times past.

Photos by Will Moore



Monthly Presentations

The first official monthly meeting for the new 2003/2004 season of the Al Ain Chapter of the Emirates Natural History Group was held in the downstairs ballroom of the Intercon hotel on September 9th, 2003. New members were welcomed, future plans outlined and a general regrouping occurred. Due to unfortunate circumstances our scheduled presenter was unable to attend, however a highly spirited presentation by Dr. Brigitte Howarth, Dr. Laurence Garey, Bob Reimer and Bill Jones was given on an evening night-light insect attracting outing they had conducted the week previously in Wadi Tarabat, behind Jebel Hafeet. The area has great significance for environmentalists in the UAE and abroad as it is one of the only (if not THE only) large-scale desert area that has had non-native wildlife removed and fenced out permanently. Already the plants and insects have begun to recover and soon, it is felt, the small fauna will also return, attracted by the plant seeds and insects now to be found there (but previously wiped out by goats primarily and other non-native wildlife forms. An excellent presentation which the authors used to attract more adventure seekers to their next outing on the Wednesday evening following to the base of Mount Mahdah. This outing was also highly successful as it was combined with a Moon-Mars photography outing going to the top of the mount.



Dr. Howarth and Bill Jones with the moth lamp and reflective sheet. Photos by Bob Reimer



One attracted bug got too close to the light.



Workshop #1

By Brien Holmes

Following Murphy Turner's presentation on convoy driving guidelines and important vehicle equipment, Campbell Miller of the family medicine department of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences gave a lively and information presentation on basic first aid for field trip participations.

The key letters to remember, he reminded the group, are S, F, D, D and N. These are for Skin, First aid, Drink, Drugs and Nasties. (create your own mnemonic!)

Skin:

Slip, Slop and Slap to protect your skin! Slip into a long-sleeved shirt, preferably of a light color, and long trousers.

Slop on some sun screen, preferably a 15+ or 20+ strength sun screen. Campbell also reminded every to replenish. Sun screen wears off, especially when hikers are perspiring. He also reminded the group what the numbers for sun screen relate to: a 15+ sun screen means you can be out in the sun 15 times longer than if you had no sun screen, before your skin begins to burn.

Slap on a hat, preferably one with a broad brim, and slap on some sunglasses.

You should also remember to apply sun screen to places we sometimes forget, such as the underside of the nose, especially if you are near water. It is also an excellent practice to keep your lips from cracking by using a lip balm or salve.

First Aid:

First aid means always carry a first aid kit. What to include in your first aid kit? Campbell recommends the list described at www.stjohn.org.au, with one modification: extra large bandages. It is also important to know what to do with the items in your first aid kit and how to use them

Drink:

Drink . . . lots of water. A person needs 330ml of water per hour just sitting in the car. If you are cycling or hiking, you will need 750ml. Water is fine to replenish lost moisture, he reminded the group, but if you are exercising for longer, you must also think to replenish the salts you lose. If you drink large volumes of water, you run the risk of water intoxication. If you are going to be on a field trip of more than one hour, you should take along some salty crackers or a drink that includes the elements you need to replenish. There are several commercial brands of isotonic drinks.

Drugs:

Drugs are something often overlooked on a field trip. He reminded the audience that both caffeine drinks (tea, coffee) and drinks containing alcohol cause individuals to urinate and lose water. If you are going on a hike, take your medication, Campbell urged, even if it is only some Panadol. He also recommended an ointment such as Bactroban for treating bites.

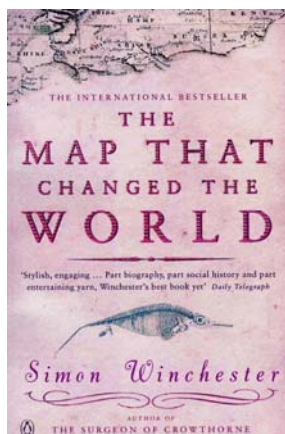
Nasties:

Nasties are those critters we sometimes encounter on field trips such as snakes, spiders and scorpions. It is always a good idea to have an insect repellent available, he said. For bites that may include venom, he reminded the audience that the practice is to apply a pressure bandage that is why you need all those large bandaids and wrap the limb from the end moving towards the body (ie from toes to hips or from fingers to shoulders). It is also important to immobilize the limb; any movement causes the tissue to 'pump' the venom closer to the chest. Use a splint, even rolled up newspaper or a stick, to immobilize the limb as you move the individual to a hospital as quickly as possible. For scorpions, the bite is seldom fatal, but can be exceptionally painful. Apply ice or cold water and wrap the affected area with ice. Panadol will provide some relief as you make your way to the hospital. For ticks, it is important to remove the tick's head, so be sure your first aid kit includes a pair of tweezers.

We hope Campbell and others from the FMHS will be available later in the season to demonstrate some of the techniques.



Dr. Campbell Miller (and friends) giving a workshop talk on Outing Safety. photo by Will Moore



The Map That Changed the World, by Simon Winchester, Penguin Books, 2001, 338 pages.

Reviewed by Jerry Buzzell

On a bookshelf in our home in Vermont, there sits an old family Bible (vintage 1787) with a ratty cover and delicate yellowing pages. Opening this Bible up to Genesis, Chapter I, one notes the marginal inscription which reads "Before CHRIST 4004".

In 1658, the Bishop of Armagh, James Ussher, after exhaustive research into holy scripture, calculated that The Creation began at 9 o'clock in the morning on Monday, October 23rd, 4004 BC, and that by midnight Saturday, October 28th, it was finished, so God rested on Sunday. Many people still believe that the world is 6007½ years old (less eleven days, since (Protestant) England only adopted the (Catholic) Gregorian calendar in 1752).

Scientists recently announced that studies of the background microwave radiation have led them to conclude that the Universe is about 13½ billion years old. Most authorities today suggest that the Earth is about 4 billion years old, that life on Earth began about 1½ billion years ago, and that man is about a million years old.

What gives?

What gives is geology (the study of the rocks) and paleontology (the fossils within the rocks). Geology is a relatively new discipline. One of the first serious geologists was the Englishman William Smith, who first studied the geologic strata and their relationship with particular fossils and later made the first geological map of England, thus laying the foundations for modern geology and the death knell of a 6000 year old world. By putting Genesis behind us, geology also led the way to Charles Darwin, Hiroshima, the double helix, the Hubble Space Telescope, Dolly, Star Wars, and stem cells.

William Smith, a blacksmith's son, was born in the village of Churchill in Oxfordshire in 1769. He developed a fascination for fossils as a boy. He apprenticed to a surveyor at age 18 and four years later went to work as a surveyor and drainage engineer for a colliery in Somerset. As he descended the bucket into the mine, he became fascinated by the stratifications he could see in the earth. He noted the layers and, more particularly, their orientation and relationship with each other. He theorized that different strata are related to each other in a regular fashion and therefore as strata reach the surface, they succeed each other in a predictable fashion. 1799 was a pivotal year for him (and for geology). He made what is arguably the world's first geological map, a map of the area around Bath. He outlined the characteristics of twenty-three major geological strata, beginning with the chalk (youngest) and ending with the coal (oldest), a list which was to be of enormous influence in the young field of geology. And he was fired from his job as canal surveyor.

Smith had mused for years about doing a map of the geology of England and Wales. In 1812, the eminent cartographer John Cary announced that he would publish Smith's map and things started to move. Cary produced the engraved plates (16 of them) and Smith coloured in the geology. The map was published in 1815; it is about eight feet high by six feet wide and, by all accounts, a thing of beauty. It was the first true geological map of a country and is the direct ancestor to the Ordnance Survey.

The Geological Society (President, George Bellas Greenough) was founded in 1807 as a "geological Dinner Club" of eminent gentlemen and scientists. Smith was not invited to join. He was, after all, not a gentleman. He got his hands dirty working in the field. He would be out of place in a geological Dinner Club.

However, Smith's work was too public and too important to be ignored. So Greenough and his cohorts simply stole it. A colleague of Smith was persuaded to supply them with copies of notes and the plates as they were printed. One hopes that he was duped; one fears it was otherwise. Anyway, four years after Smith's map came out, that of the Geological Society was published.

Continued on p. 8 .



The Map That Changed the World, cont.

The Map That Changed the World by Simon Winchester is the story of William Smith and his insights and contributions, his trials and tribulations and ultimate triumph.

The author is a journalist and writer of popular historical and travel books. This one is laced throughout with his research – insights into the effects stratigraphy has had on society, the importance of the canals and their replacement by the railways, theories about the origin of fossils, learned societies in eighteenth century England, etc.

At around this same time, the ultimate ignominy was visited upon Smith. Although he was avidly sought after for his surveying and drainage expertise, he was not a money manager and in 1819 he was sent to debtors' prison. Although he only spent 2½ months there, the experience was certainly the low point in his life; he was released to find his possessions had been seized and sold to pay his debts. Broken in spirit, he collected his wife and nephew and headed north to Yorkshire where he was to spend most of the rest of his life.

Even before his imprisonment, the Geological Society was changing and becoming a force in English science as Greenough and his colleagues were pushed aside and real scientists took over. These influential people realized the importance of Smith's work. Slowly a movement grew to bestow upon Smith the honours to which he was clearly entitled. This culminated in his being presented the inaugural Wollaston Medal, geology's highest honour, by the Geological Society in 1831, an honorary doctorate of letters by Trinity College, Dublin in 1836, and a pension from the British government. Smith basked in the glow of belated recognition, until his death in 1839.

The Map That Changed the World, written as popular science by an experienced journalist, is an entertaining read. This morning, I re-read a review of it in *Science*, where it was pointed out that a 'definitive biography' of Smith is being prepared, and it was suggested that Winchester might have waited for this before publishing. The author looked down his nose at some of the themes Winchester pursues and suggested others which he might have written about. Popular science is seldom popular with the professionals. I'm not a geologist; I enjoyed the book and recommend it.

The New ENHG Workshop

by Dr. Brigitte Howarth

Checking the diary there are now three Tuesdays a month when ENHG events are held, yes, the workroom is ready for action! What is the workroom? Oh, excuse the jargon and let's explain. Over the past few years the idea of a 'home' for ENHG has been brought up and discussed, enquiries made and usually the subject would be left hanging in the air due to the difficulties of finding a suitable location. Initially the reason for the discussions was our growing number of items belonging to ENHG, such as cameras, insect nets, books, first aid kit etc. which would gather dust in the houses of those kind enough to give them a temporary home. Further thoughts about the Group's activities gave more reason for finding a location where workshop sessions could be held, a 'hands on' opportunity for those interested to explore natural history further.

Frequently the types of venues discussed involved educational establishments in order to form a partnership that would benefit both, anticipating involvement of students in ENHG activities. And indeed, this is what happened in the end. A closer look around Al Ain English Speaking School revealed a small storage room full of tools and equipment. Due to its proximity to a classroom it seemed perfect and so an appointment was made with the head of School, Mr. James G. Crawford. His enthusiasm for ENHG was obvious and when the subject was broached about us having a facility to store our equipment and also hold workshop events, Mr. Crawford agreed and in fact also offered a larger room for use during workshop evenings for larger groups of people. Thus, Al Ain Chapter of the ENHG now has a workshop! The room was cleared by the school and we were given a free reign as to what type of repairs and alterations we would want to do.

Due to the type of equipment that will be stored there, it was felt imperative that electricity, light and an AC should be installed first. A few volunteers gathered together to inspect what needed doing in preparation for an electrician and it was felt that the old false ceiling needed to be removed. This caused great hilarity with folk resembling chimney sweeps by the end with all the dust and sand that had gathered above the ceiling which tumbled down onto

Continued on p. 9



everyone with each pulling down of wooden sheets. Eventually the ceiling had been removed, the dust and sand cleared away and it was then time for the carpenter and electrician to move in and lay cables, put up a new ceiling, install lights, and make a hole in the wall for an AC unit. An AC unit was purchased and fixed into place and now the room is ready for action. Other work is needed such as painting walls, filling in cracks in the floor, and some more cleaning. The idea is to be able to move the library into its new home by the October meeting so that it can be made available once again to everyone. The plan is to be able to offer the library facility to the students at school, too, and to make access easier for members on other days than just the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

The types of activities that the workshop could be used for are endless. The first few meetings have had members putting together pottery, looking through a microscope at some insects, watching a DVD on the Eden project, and being very well prepared for all eventualities in the field by Dr Campbell Miller with advice on safety on field trips, together with sound advice from our very own Murphy Turner on what equipment should be in our cars and the rules of the road whilst driving in convoy. The future will bring many more opportunities for folk to gather in the room and enjoy a diversity of activities, some involving the computer that was donated to the Group by Tom and Anne Carter. It is an opportunity for members to discuss issues, learn or share some skills, be able to work on our insect collection, use the library and much, much more! All in all, an evolution for ENHG!

If anyone has suggestions as to what type of activity they'd like to see happening at the workshop, please let any of the Committee members know. Also, if anyone would like to help in the final stages of decorating/preparing the room, please contact the Committee. For anyone who doesn't know where Al Ain English Speaking School is, watch out for directions on the email discussion group! See you at AAESS on October 21st!



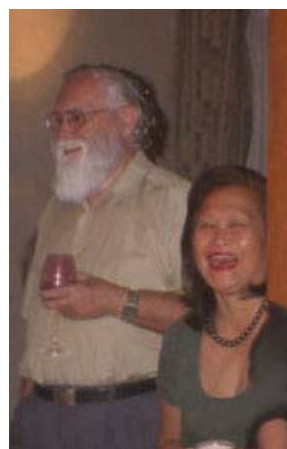
The new ENHG workshop at The Al Ain English Speaking School – (the blue door back of the tennis court)
Photo by Dr. Brigitte Howarth



Inside the new workshop – new ceiling, lights, a/c, paint and floor finish, plus some new furniture and a donated computer make this a very useful place for ENHGers.
Photo by Dr. Brigitte Howarth

Lifetime ENHG Membership Granted

Ruth and Earl Dunn – longtime members of the Al Ain Chapter of the ENHG were awarded lifetime membership at the August general meeting. Speeches of praise and thanks for eight years of memories were given as people bade them a fond farewell. They are off to Toronto for a period of semi-retirement. Bon-voyage and Godspeed Ruth and Earl. Photo by Will Moore





ENHG Al Ain Schedule of dates for 2003-2004		
September 2003		
Tuesday, 02	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 09	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 16	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 23	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
October		
Tuesday, 07	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 14	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 21	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 28	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
November		
Tuesday, 04	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 11	General meeting (proposed date for AGM and Iftar Dinner)	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 18	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 25	General meeting (possibly first day of Eid)	Intercontinental Hotel
December		
Tuesday, 02	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 09	General meeting (proposed date for photography competition)	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 16	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 23	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
January 2004		
Tuesday, 06	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 13	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 20	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 27	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
February		
Tuesday, 03	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
(ENHG Al Ain will likely participate in the classical music festival in February)		
Tuesday, 10	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 17	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 24	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
March		
Tuesday, 02	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
(ENHG Al Ain will likely host the Inter Emirates Weekend in March)		
Tuesday, 09	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 16	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 23	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
April		
Tuesday, 06	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 13	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 20	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 27	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
May		
Tuesday, 04	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 11	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 18	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 25	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
June		
Tuesday, 01	Committee meeting	H and J balcony
Tuesday, 08	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel
Tuesday, 15	Workroom meeting	AAESS
Tuesday, 22	General meeting	Intercontinental Hotel

Last, but not Least -

The spring Marmalade Competition this past year was tastefully executed - sadly it was a competition between two entries by the same contestant, Will Moore - Needless to say both 1st & 2nd prize went to the prolific Mr. Moore - His entry, "Al Ain Marmalade" won 1st prize. When asked the secret to his 2nd entry, "Marmoney," he would only say that it cost him a lot more than the prize-winning batch. His recipe remains a secret as he refused to divulge his secrets to those competing against him! - 'Next year, perhaps," he stated, "if some real competition develops." Congratulations William!

The prize, fittingly was a lovely wooden bread-board and bread-knife set.

Thanks to all for the fun. See you next season.



Bitter oranges from Sharm Oasis make the best marmalade according to local pro Geoff Sanderson. Photo by Will Moore