



Emirates Natural History Group Al Ain Chapter Newsletter March / April 2008

ENHG Al Ain Chapter Committee

Sincere thanks to **Michelle Maclean** for her work as Environmental Officer over the past couple of years; following her resignation from the committee, we would like to welcome **Jodie Healy** as our new Environmental Officer.

Chair: Brien Holmes; **Vice Chair** Brigitte Howarth; **Treasurer:** Chris Henry; **Secretary:** vacant; **Membership:** Amer Abu Kuhail; **Photography:** Bob Reimer; **Newsletter:** Margaret Lambert; **Library:** Amer Abu Kuhail; **Flora:** Marion Campey and Martha Coetzee; **Fauna (Insects):** Brigitte Howarth; **Fauna (Birds):** vacant

Visit the webpage at <http://www.enhg.org/index.htm> or contact us at enhg@yahooogroups.com (all Al Ain chapter members)

Volunteers needed to join us on the Committee!!

We are especially interested in recruiting a volunteer to act as **treasurer**. Please let us know at an upcoming meeting or field trip if you are interested. You can also let us know by sending an email to any committee member.

Upcoming Events

"Treasures of Sudan" March 9th to June 8th.

ADACH is presenting an exhibit of the "Treasures of Sudan" at the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi. As part of the opening of the exhibit on Monday March 10th, there was a series of lectures presented on various topics related to the exhibit. Dr. Mark Beech extended an invitation to ENHG members who were able to attend.

The lectures that I attended were very informative with one covering the sweep Sudanese history from prehistory to post-Islamic times while the other focused on a site used during Roman times. The exhibit is curated by the British Museum of Natural History and is well worth a drive to Abu Dhabi to see.

Bob Reimer



What We've Been Up To:

Prior to the IEW we undertook a number of activities:

15 Feb: Birding on the Ghantoot via Sweihan road. Also on **15 Feb** a trip to a metal staircase up Jebel Hafit and a tour of one of the steep, dramatic wadis that extend along the western slopes of the Al Ain landmark.

16 Feb: Mahdah then Aboul and Khubayb to look for dragonflies and birds

20 Feb: Khutwah moonwalk

Inter Emirates Weekend 29th Feb – 1st March 2008

Saxaul Forest and Sandstone Formations

With the Inter Emirates weekend in Abu Dhabi in full swing we decided to participate in some of the interesting activities. The day tour to the Miocene elephant tracks sounded really interesting, but was just a little outside our time bracket as it would have taken a full day. As an alternative we joined the group to visit the sandstone formations, saxaul forest and flamingoes, led by Allestree Fisher.

As there have been numerous publications about the saxaul forest, (also called dew forest) over the years, it is not necessary to go into too much detail again. We were not sure what to expect, a forest of any kind in the desert sounded rather weird, especially when you come from an area that has thick and impenetrable tropical rain forests. So the sight of a 'forest' of several dead looking trees was quite disappointing at first. It was not until a closer inspection however that we realized that the trees were very much alive and were trying very hard to exist in this barren landscape. We were fortunate to have the expert advice of Allestree Fisher at hand and soon realized that this was rather a unique 'forest'.

Saxaul trees are a throwback to prehistoric times and require very little water to survive. They grow very slowly and rarely exceed a height of ten feet with gnarled, weathered trunks and dense thorny branches. The wood is so hard it does not float and provides excellent firewood.

A small belt of about two / three metre high saxaul trees 'Haloxylon persicum' can be found only south of Abu Dhabi in the Al Whatba region, although it extends some 100km all the way from Medinat Zayed. It is also called 'dew' forest, because the tree waters itself. Condensation from the regular, heavy fogs in the area drips from the weeping foliage into the ground before it can evaporate thus feeding a rather deep root system.

The area we visited just south of Al Wathba was surrounded by extensive salt flats or 'sabkhas' with the trees growing in an approximately ten metre high sand ridge. Just exactly how they have managed to survive remains a mystery despite the explanation, as there was hardly any foliage present to act as a water supply. Another very interesting fact of survival in such a desolate landscape. Unfortunately there was no sign of any wildlife around other than three locals blotting the prehistoric landscape with their very modern and noisy quad bikes.

We then went from one desolate area to another to have a look at the sandstone or aeolianite formations representing the left overs of previous flooding of the Gulf area. Sandstone carved by wind and weather into smooth, artistic formations. Very spectacular, but again no sign of any wildlife although Allestree Fisher had seen a few lizards here before. Once again it was very disappointing to see just how little some of the local inhabitants from nearby farm camps cared about their environment as the area is obviously being used for general garbage disposal.

On our way home, a quick stop to have a look at a flock of flamingos resting in some brackish backwater. A fence prevented us getting a closer look so we had to rely on our zoom lenses. (*See Deborah West's poem below*)

All in all a very educational excursion and our thanks to Allestree Fisher for his expert advice.

As usual, one of the highlights of the trip was to meet some very interesting people who share similar interests about the country we have chosen to live in, even though only temporarily.

Bev and Juergen Raasch: Al Ain Chapter

References:

www.arabianwildlife.com/nature/natu_ems/en22.html (last accessed 8/3/08)
Tribulus 13.2 Autumn/Winter 2003



Saxual (Dew) Forest



'Haloxylon persicum'



Sandstone or aeolianite formations



Yep, it was hot!!

Photos: M. Lambert

Primordial Grace

A flock of winter dwellers
 gently stand in the Al Wathba Lake Preserve
 Juveniles wading in shallow, salt ponds
 have soared away from distant ancestors
 Such instinct to follow an unknown destiny
 to continue the cycle of life
 In this watery breeding ground
 they dip & sway their heads from side to side
 to filter brine shrimp in their beak
 After a delicious meal one foot is tucked into
 the body as perfectly balanced for sleep
 The Greater Flamingo knows its purpose
 submitting to the will of nature it endures
 Bounded by the fences and highways of men
 they still remain sensitive to disturbance
 For some unknown reason birthing has been
 Interrupted . . . no one knows why they say
 The trumpeting notes are made by raising long necks
 to the sky to tell a story without words
 Shadow white in color with black flight feathers
 Only with extended wings reaching to the sky one can
 glimpse the pretty pink below their wings
 The dazzling sight of birds in unison
 & harmony from the beginning

By Deborah West



Photo: M. Lambert

Check out the IEW Photos at

<http://www.enhg.org/enhg/IEW2008/index.html>

Elephant tracks



Photos: Drew Gardner

AWARDS

Congratulations to:

Bob Reimer was the recipient of the **Bish Brown Award**. The Award is given in recognition of Bob's contributions over the years, including his work on our website, on damselflies and dragonflies, photography (including coordinator the Al Ain photo competition for the past couple of years) and committee work.

Dubai Chair **Gary Feulner** was the recipient of the **Sh. Mubarak Award**.

The winners of the Open Photographic Competition were:

1st Prize – Mohammed Arfan Asif of DNHG for his photo of a pair of Little Green Bee Eaters.

2nd Prize – Angela Manthorpe of DNHG for her underwater photo of a Whale Shark.

3rd Prize – Drew Gardner, Chairman, ENHG Abu Dhabi, for his photo the gecko *Pristurus carteri*.

Each of the prize winners received a copy of one of the UAE's new natural history volumes.

Fossils and Flowers

On 22 March, we took advantage of the plentiful plants in flower this month and a visit by one of the most knowledgeable individuals when it comes to flora of the UAE. Our tour was to the base of Jebel Hafit, in a small wadi that runs from the area of the hot springs down towards the lake. Joining us was Gary Brown who has contributed many articles based on his field work in every corner of the UAE.

Because Jebel Hafit has a reputation for an amazing assortment of fossils, we also checked specimens to identify the corals, bivalves, gastropods and other marine life that are now preserved as fossils.

'Three Challenges From The Humanities'

The Zayed Center for Heritage and History had a special speaker on 25th March - Professor Marc Shell of Harvard University is "one of the world's great scholars" whose books have been translated into a number of different languages. He is the Irvin Babbitt Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard where he teaches in both the undergraduate Literature Concentration and the University's graduate program in the History of American Civilization. The title of his talk was 'Three Challenges From The Humanities'.



Photos: Bev Merrick

School Trips 1

Late March we took Year 5 from AAESS to Khutwa for their topic field trip concerned with life cycles. This was a very successful trip which the children thoroughly enjoyed!

Early April saw a group of Year 4 visiting Khudra. The youngest in the group was about 9 years old whilst the oldest about 11. The topic was 'habitats' and in the past we have had 4 stations and have rotated groups of children through these as they observe and record their findings in worksheets which we have prepared for them.

School Trips 2

Last month more than 30 students from the Dubai Women's Campus of HCT came to Al Ain to tour the Al Ain Oasis and raise money for Thalassaemia testing kits. We received the following from Alison Oglesby, Health Science Faculty, Dubai Women's College:

"I wanted to say a big thank you on behalf of Maureen, myself and the students. Al Ain Oasis was a really beautiful place and we all enjoyed our morning with you very much. You were a very informative and really enthusiastic guide. We raised 1,170 dhs going to Thalassaemia testing kits (UAE Genetic Research Fund). Thank you once again and hope to see you with another group next year!"

BIG Hikes with Bill Jones

Thursday 20th March saw the conquering of Jebel Sumaini
Saturday 5th April, Jebal Guvail (Swiss Mountain) was once again put to the test and succumbed!

First ever Species Survival Commission Chairs' Meeting, Al Ain, February 11-16 2008

Thanks to Bob Reimer and Dave Clark (and others) for taking time to show some of the delegates to the IUCN meetings (held recently at the Hilton Hotel) some of the attractions here in the UAE and northern Oman. Mike Bayman of Dubai kindly met two of the chairs, Dr. Vincent Kalkman and Dr. Rene Dekker, and took them for a bird watching tour from Dubai to Ras Al Khaimah. We were able to show them the sites and sights around Al Ain as well as take them to Ghantoot to get one of the birds that birders want to see in UAE, the grey hypocolius. Thanks to Tommy Pedersen's excellent birding site guide (<http://www.tommypedersen.com/UAE.htm>), we were able to locate the birds within minutes of arriving at Ghantoot. We also went out to Aboul, were serendipitously we were able to see and capture a previously unidentified species of dragonfly that Vincent was later able to identify from his museum's collection. More information about that will be in an upcoming article in *Tribulus*.

We were pleased that two of the chairs could take time out of their busy schedule to present talks to us at our general meeting. Dr. Sascha Spector of the American Museum of Natural History and Dr. Vincent Kalkman of the Netherlands National Museum of Natural History presented very interesting talks on the importance of invertebrate conservation.



Grey hypocolius



Dr. Vincent Kalkman holds an unidentified dragonfly

Photos: Bob Reimer

Oasis walk in Al Ain

We met in the parking lot in front of the National Museum and enjoyed the walk organized by Phil Iddison. (A copy of Phil's book is available at <http://www.enhg.org/alain/phil/alainoasis/alainoasis.html>)

Although we have done this walk in the past; this weekend's event was a little different as we stopped now and then to look for snails! We have been asked to look for specimens of terrestrial snails and found some in the Jimi Oasis earlier in the week. We hoped to find more in the Al Ain Oasis.

During our walk we met these farm workers who were busy making bread. They roll the bread dough out with a small piece of doweling on a piece of plywood, and then throw the bread – as a pizza pastry maker would -- before placing it on the oil drum. The heat comes from the palm fronds which, when dry, burn quickly and give off a considerable amount of heat.



Photos: Bev Merrick

ENHG Clean-up

As you know, we support the Emirates Environment Group's 12/12 program each December. However, as these national clean up days are usually during the week, our members cannot participate. As a result, we schedule a wadi cleanup one weekend each season, to collect rubbish left behind in one of our favorite destinations. This year, we tackled Jazira.

Yes, the old swimming hole is filled with gravel but a new pool . . . suitable for refreshing after a morning's chores . . . has been created by Mother Nature. (Not as impressive a setting as the old pool but now you can hike up the wadi easily!)

February general meeting Tuesday 26 Feb

Our presenter was the man in charge of the restoration work at the Jahili Fort, Axel Huhn

Axel studied architecture from 1996 till 2003 at the Berlin University of Technology.

Since 2007 he has been working for Roswag & Jankowski Architekten, the firm now contracted to complete the reconstruction of the Jahili Fort for the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH). The title of his talk was "Earthen Buildings in Mexico, Bangladesh, Germany, Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates".

His discussion of earthen buildings in the UAE will continue at the Jahili Fort where ENHG members will be able to watch workmen preparing earth and applying the material to the walls, parapets and floors. The date and time of this event will be announced soon.

Geology for Beginners

This was an informal, introductory session on geology. The purpose of the night was to share some of what we know -- and have collected -- about the geology of this part of the world. We have field trip information, a modest but impressive rock collection, reference books and enthusiasm. The hope is we can bring together individuals with an interest in things geological. There will be a brief overview of geology and distribution of the geology "course" former field trip coordinator Nick Saines compiled many years ago.

Photography Competition May 2008

Just to remind you, full details on the rules and requirements can be found on the ENHG web site at:

<http://www.enhg.org/alain/photocomp.htm>

While May 13th, the deadline for entries, may seem a while off now, it's amazing how fast time disappears in the spring with so many activities on. One thing that will make it easier to put your entry together is to select

your best pictures each time you are out taking natural history photographs and store them off in an entries folder. This will reduce the burden of looking through lots of shots in the first two weeks of May! Be critical ... Is the subject really in focus? A sharp, in-focus eye is key for pictures of any subject that has one like people or animals. Is the background pleasing? Large depth of field can be a problem with many digital cameras so that you get distracting elements in focus in the background. Are there disturbing elements at the edges of the image that can't be cropped out? Most viewfinders do not show 100% of the image captured, and even if they do, it is easy to miss elements on the edges such as a piece of trash while concentrating on your main subject. The most important thing is that the image speaks to you. Would you enjoy having the picture on your wall for a year?

While "Photoshop" has become a verb, there are other ways to enhance your photographs without going to the expense of Photoshop. Some free packages are:

Google Picasa: <http://picasa.google.com/>

FastStone Image Viewer: <http://www.faststone.org/FSViewerDetail.htm>

IrfanView: <http://www.irfanview.com/>

All of these packages will allow basic enhancements to your photographs including cropping. When you adjust your images, be sure to do it on a copy! You always want to have something to go back to in case a change doesn't work out. The judges tend to penalize images that are over-processed so watch for things like bands around your subject that result from too much sharpening.

There are many great resources on the internet that can help you with your photography. In the past I've mentioned Alain Briot's essays that are posted on Luminous Landscape and Alain's own site, Beautiful Landscape. He has completed his series on Photography and Art and started a new one on Composition. These are well worth reading. If you want specific help with your natural history photography, one of the best sites is the recently established BirdPhotographers.net. There are forums for more than just birds and you will get excellent advice on how to improve your best images.

Here are the links to look at:

http://www.luminous-landscape.com/columns/briots_view.shtml

(Check out other essays on this site as there are articles by several authors here. George Barr's essays on "Taking your photography to the next level" are also helpful ...

<http://www.luminous-landscape.com/essays/next-level.shtml>)

http://beautiful-landscape.com/Thoughts_list.html

<http://www.birdphotographers.net/>

(Free registration required to post. There is a lot of good information that can be gleaned by just browsing.)

Jerry Buzzell or myself will be happy to answer any specific questions you have on how to print and mount your images for entry into the competition. You must be a member of the ENHG, Al Ain Chapter to enter.

If you've entered the competition before, we're looking forward to seeing your great new images this year! If you've never entered the contest, then at least ***Give it a go, mate!*** You might just surprise yourself!

We will be awarding prizes of Dh100, Dh75 and Dh50 for first, second and third place, respectively.

If you have any questions about the competition, please do not hesitate to contact Bob < breimer@emirates.net.ae > or any committee member.

Beauty Contest . . . for Camels!!!

If you have never considered a camel as beautiful then you could have been surprised by the camel beauty pageant held from the 2nd to the 10th of April - it might even have made you change your mind! Events started at 7am every day and continue throughout the day except on Friday when there was a break for Al Juma Prayers. The contest was at Madinat Zayed on the road to Liwa, the last town before Liwa.

Check the BBC website link: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7325790.stm

Bill Jones

Geology with Ben Jordan (formerly UAEU)

Pillow lavas, Geotimes Pillow Lava, Wadi Al Jizzi, Oman

Pillow lavas form as lava is erupted underwater (or under glaciers). It is actually the most common surface rock on Earth, but we rarely see it because most pillow lavas, obviously, are underwater and on the bottom of the ocean. In some unusual instances examples of this kind of lava will be tectonically thrust onto a continent where they can be seen. The "pillows" form because as the lava comes in contact with the water its outer surface cools instantly. Because of the pressure of the water the lava does not explode, but rather cools quickly into a rounded shape. The image here is from the Geotimes Location in Wadi Al Jizzi, Oman. It is the best-preserved example of pillow lavas anywhere on Earth and lies just under a bridge about 3 km west of the Oman Mining Company's copper smelter. Its name comes from the fact that a famous photograph of it appeared on the cover of the journal *Geotimes*. Since geologists were always referring to it as "the Geotimes lava" the locality was given that as its official name by the international community of geologists.



Dates for your diary

May 13 – Photography contest entries due!!

May 27 – Photography competition

June 3 – Season-ending committee meeting

Plant of the month

BRASSICACEAE (Cruciferae) Mustard Family.
Physorrhynchus chamaerapistrum (Boiss.) Boiss.

Arabic name: khafij, fijeelah, khophaje

English name : donkey cabbage

This plant is found in many locations in and around Al Ain, and in the wadis and oases of the Hajar Mountains close by in Oman. Currently in flower at the moment. Petals pale purple in loose long sprays. It has a perennial woody base, branching stems up 90-150cm in height. Lower leaves fleshy, oval 2-9cm x 3-15cm, smooth edge, sharp or round tip. Upper leaves smaller. The plant is grazed by goats and donkeys. Perhaps it could also be called goat cabbage!

Traditional uses include the use of an extract of leaves and stem as ear drops to relieve earache and the powdered seeds, mixed with milk applied to remove warts.

Sorry, no picture; maybe next edition.

Links

Emirates Environment Group newsletter:
[march_newsletter_fin.pdf \[-547K\]](#)

Dragonflies!!!!
[IUCN Odonata Specialist Group](#)

Wildlife Middle East News:
[www.wmenews.com](#)

For information on date palm pollen, check out Phil Iddison's article at
<http://www.enhg.org/alain/phil/spathe/spathe.htm>

Astronomy Picture Of the Day has assembled what they consider the 12 best pics from 2007 on the one website.
<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/apoys2007.html>

Are you having dust problems, are you spending ages in Photoshop healing? View this web site on **how to clean your sensor.** www.cleaningdigitalcameras.com

This is a collection of **Mezyad Fort** pictures
<http://someone1986.blogspot.com/2008/03/mezyed-fort.html>

Sarooj by Jodie Healy

Sarooj is the Omani name for a type of 'burnt clay cement' used in building and restoring forts and castles and the construction of the walls, ceiling and lining of aflaj. In English it is referred to as artificial pozzolan – artificial because the reactive properties are only released during the heating process.

The benefits of sarooj are its impermeability (which makes it ideal for lining a falaj system), its durability and good weathering properties as well as being relatively inexpensive in terms of raw materials (although it is labour intensive and probably not terribly energy efficient in terms of its production). Traditionally, low grade sarooj was used as mortar whilst higher grade sarooj was used to plaster walls and for construction.

Sarooj factories producing sarooj in the traditional manner can still be found in Oman. The Omani Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has a production site in Nakhal and is well worth a visit for those interested in seeing the production process. Sarooj from this site is being used in the reconstruction of various forts in Oman (such as Al Rustaq and Jabrin) as well as being shipped to other Gulf countries.

So how exactly is sarooj made?

The raw material

The soil is primarily taken from land that has been used for agricultural production although it has also been described as coming from the mountains and from the sides of 'natural slopes'. Traditionally, identification of the raw material is done by sight only and different areas produce slightly different varieties of sarooj. A mineralogical analysis conducted by the Civil Engineering Department at Sultan Qaboos University in the 1990's showed the presence of *quartz*, *calcite* and *dolomite* as well as the clay minerals *illite*, *montmorillonite* and *palygorskite*. A chemical analysis revealed the composition to be primarily of *silicon dioxide*, *alumina oxide* and *iron oxide*.

The process-

- ❖ The soil is sieved to remove gravel etc.
- ❖ It is then arranged in connecting circular beds and mixed with water to form a paste (called '*ghailah*'). It is left to absorb the water (or 'cure', for those who like more technical terminology) for a day and this process is repeated for two more days.
- ❖ The *ghailah* is then shaped into 'patties' (about 25cms in diameter and about 5cm thick) and left to dry for up to a week or so.
- ❖ The '*Mahabba*' is then constructed by arranging dry date palm logs in 3 layers (about 20 trees per layer) and placing dried fronds between the logs to help with the burning. The 'patties' are then stacked on end on top of the logs for up to about a metre.
- ❖ A layer of wadi stones is then placed in between the stacks for the production of 'Al-Nourah' which has bleaching properties (although some people say the stones help in the production of lime).
- ❖ The whole thing is set on fire and burns for approximately 4 days.
- ❖ The burnt 'patties' are then crushed and sieved again. When water is added to this dry mix, lime is released, hence the concrete like properties. In this form, it takes approximately 3 – 8 hours to 'set'.

Other uses of sarooj – Flights of Fantasy

On our walks we often come across copper smelting sites next to sarooj sites (Nuway, Khutwa) and we are looking at the link between them. Similarly, I'm hoping to investigate the possibility of 'sarooj' pottery production as we sometimes come across pottery that looks as if it were made of sarooj.

Sarooj in Al Ain

In Al Ain there is a district called Al Sarooj although I have yet to investigate properly any sites of sarooj production or sites of extraction of the raw material (and if there are any volunteers who want to help 'walk' the district – let me know!). It may have been used in the Al Ain oasis and in the construction of forts in the area but we've yet to survey the area and 'positively identify' it. Volunteers...anyone?

References

- HAGO, A.W. and AL-RAWAS, A.A., An investigation into the traditional method of production of sarooj. *Science and Technology* 4 (1999) pp 35-43
- AL-RAWAS, A.A. and HAGO, A.W., Evaluation of field and laboratory produced burnt clay pozzolans. *Applied Clay Science* 31 (2006), 1-2, pp 29-35
- HAGO, A.W., AL-RAWAS, A.A. and AL-RIYAMI, A., Effect of varying cement content and curing conditions on the properties of sarooj (artificial pozzolana). *Building and Environment* 37 (2002) 1, pp 45-53
- AL-RAWAS, A.A., HAGO, A.W. and AL-SARMI, H., Effect of lime, cement and sarooj (artificial pozzolan) on the swelling potential of an expansive soil from Oman. *Building and Environment* 40 (2005) 5, pp 681-687

Edinburgh and Dr. Kath Visit

Khudooma Al Neimi



In the 1st of February, I took a train to Edinburgh, to meet Dr. Kathleen McSweeney, an Osteoarchaeologist in the University of Edinburgh. I know Kath from her work in Hili archaeological bone remains in Al Ain. In my way to the train station at 5:30 am it was raining, but not usual rain, but it was snow raining, like small drops of white, little hard, an oval crystals. The path in my way start to be painted by white color as these snow drops accumulated spread on it like rise seeds, from the excitement I extend my hand from my coat to collect some drops to feel them.

The train comes in time as usual in UK; there was very passengers in this train coach in this early time of the day. We passed on several cities in our way to Edinburgh such as Oxenholme and Penrith. I changed train in Carstairs. It was colder in Carstairs, but no snow around. In my waiting to Edinburgh train, I used to time to speak with some passengers. I asked one lady are you Scottish, she answer yes, within our chat I said they mention to me Scottish speak different accent, but it's easy to me to understand it, a man standing beside use extended a line of smile in his face.

I reached Edinburgh, around 9:12 am, so I took the time to move around the train station, then using my map I walked to Kath office in the University of Edinburgh. The building is historic, and after greetings she made me a cup of tea, and later took me to see her department laboratories, and their equipments, teaching and leaning resources. It was quite fascinating and useful to see them. Kath invited me to lunch at 1 pm, and we had it in an Italian restaurant, the service was great with nice sea food. We used the time to talk about my study, and Kath future wishes to complete her research and studies on the bone collection in Hili.



I used the chance also in being in the University of Edinburgh to visit to Dr Eva Panagiotakopulu, Lecturer in Environmental Archaeology, who I was corresponding via e-mail regarding the insect remains which I am studying from Hili, and we started a discussion to find method to complete work on it.

I returned back to Preston, using this time a direct train. In talk to one lady beside me, she said I am English but I work in Edinburgh and she grownup in Lancashire. Her accent may I say was Scottish, but it normal that people get the accent of the place where live. This can give a view about the ability of human to adapt to other community. In reaching Preston I was surprised not to find snow in the street, so I understand that what I saw in early morning was just a normal weather condition. I asked later one of my colleagues in the resident hall who said we normally do not get a lot of snow in Preston.