

# THE JOURNAL

OF THE  
SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES  
ASSOCIATION



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THE  
**JOURNAL**  
OF THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES ASSOCIATION



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[www.oman.org.uk](http://www.oman.org.uk)

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# ASSOCIATION NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

You may be aware that His Majesty  
The Sultan has not been well recently.  
I have written to him on behalf of the  
Association wishing him a speedy recovery.

## THE FUTURE

Once again we have had a successful and interesting year with a number of events, both in UK and Oman, which are described in this edition of the Journal.

Our future looks bright and we continue to be financially secure and to be able to hold the costs of events to a manageable level which enables members and their guests to attend. If you have not been to any recent events do please come to catch up with your former comrades. This has many advantages as much networking takes place, social, jobs, helping those who need support to name but a few.

We need to maintain our membership for the future of the Association, so do encourage those who have disappeared to reappear.

## CONGRATULATIONS

We congratulate Lt. Gen. Simon Mayall on being appointed a KBE in the 2014 Birthday Honours.

## THE MEMORIAL

The SAF Memorial at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire is in a poor state and after discussion with the director we have decided to replace it. This will be in green marble with gold lettering the wording being the same as on the present one. The cost will be about £15,000 and finance for this is in place. It is anticipated that a rededication will take place in June/July 2015 in the presence of **COSSAF**, our President. Details will be circulated and will be on the website (and thanks also to **Chris Long-Price** and **David Macfadden** for drawing our attention to this).

## THE LOST PROVOST

In the 2014 Journal we published an article about "The Lost Provost" on page 32 which was submitted by Michael Sabine. Michael would like to say that his investigations into this interesting story are on-going and he hopes to add to it, perhaps on the website, or certainly in the next Journal.

## MEDALS

People sometimes ask for replacements, or medals to which they are, or think they are entitled. It is no use applying to either the Omani authorities or the Association for them as there is now no workable system to provide them. However, the simple and effective way to get medals to which you are entitled is to go on-line to GOOGLE and put in Omani Medals. There are a number of companies that have them for sale at reasonable prices. This works well.

## PROPOSED ASSOCIATION VISIT TO OMAN IN MAY 2016

Following the successful and enjoyable family visit to Oman in May 2014, we are considering another privately arranged visit for members with wives and partners to the Sultanate in early May 2016. This is a good time of year as prices are lower than in the high season.

The programme, which would be managed by **Ian Buttenshaw**, would include a tour of Dhofar and also parts of Northern Oman. We would need 14 people to make the tour viable. If you are interested in taking part please email:

**Ian Buttenshaw** ([buttens@omantel.net.om](mailto:buttens@omantel.net.om)) and  
**Nigel Knocker** ([nigel.knocker@btinternet.com](mailto:nigel.knocker@btinternet.com))

**BY 1 NOVEMBER 2015** giving personal details of your time in Oman. Further details will be circulated once we know if there is sufficient interest.

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# THE OMAN ARTILLERY

A team of former officers of the Oman Artillery under **Col Hugh Colley** have decided to produce a history of the Regiment's activity in the Dhofar War. The history will focus mainly, but not exclusively, on the actions of RA and contract personnel. A chronological framework has been drafted and work is now in hand to incorporate individuals' accounts of specific events. We would be delighted to receive contributions from any SAF Association members whatever their cap badge, who feel their memories would be of interest.

Points of contact are **David McFadden** at [dm\\_project@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dm_project@yahoo.co.uk) or **Miles Thomson** at [jm.thomson@homecall.co.uk](mailto:jm.thomson@homecall.co.uk)

# SALALAH/DHOFAR LADIES DINNER NIGHT

The next Salalah/Dhofar Reunion Dinner will be held on Friday 11 September 2015 at the Army & Navy Club, 36 Pall Mall, London. It will be a Ladies Dinner Night, Black Tie and miniatures. If you are interested in attending and not on George's database, please contact him on: [georgecorrea@btinternet.com](mailto:georgecorrea@btinternet.com) or 01722 742835.

**George**

## FOR YOUR DIARY

### Friday 12 June 2015

SAF Association Cocktail Party, Army and Navy Club.

### Tuesday 16 June 2015

SAF Association Golf Match, Dorset Golf and Country Club.

### Saturday 11 July 2015

Ruddle Cup, Polo Tournament, Tedworth Polo Club.

### Sunday 26 July 2015

Wessex Lunch, South Cadbury.

### Friday 27 November 2015

SAF Association Dinner, Army and Navy Club.

## WEBSITE

Thanks to **Neil Fawcett** the website has been overhauled and now looks most professional. We will endeavour to keep this up to date. You can find it at [www.oman.org.uk](http://www.oman.org.uk) (Thanks to **Ian Gordon** for drawing our attention to this.)

## WELCOME CONTRIBUTION

We would like to express our thanks to Betty Foxton for her kind donations towards the cost of production of the Journal.

## CONTRIBUTIONS FOR JUND OMAN

For those who send contributions for Jund Oman please email them to: [gondoman@omantel.net.om](mailto:gondoman@omantel.net.om) and copy to: **Hassan al Mujaini** at: [haasoman@gmail.com](mailto:haasoman@gmail.com)

## SAF COMBAT SHOOTING TEAM

We would like to congratulate the SAF Combat Shooting Team after achieving first place in most competitions of the 2014 British Army Shooting Championship in Bisley.

## THE 31ST SCOTTISH SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES (SAF) ASSOCIATION DINNER

will take place at

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**SATURDAY 7 MAY 2016**

Douneside House is undergoing major refurbishment in 2015 and is closed. It will re-open in 2016 under new management. Provisional bookings for accommodation for 2016 are now being accepted. (Minimum stay of two nights).

For further information regarding the Scottish Dinner please contact either:

**Robin Hastie Smith:** [hastiesmith@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:hastiesmith@blueyonder.co.uk) or

**Neil Lamb:** [neillamb@btinternet.com](mailto:neillamb@btinternet.com)

## 2015 WESSEX LUNCH

This year's Wessex Lunch will once again be held at **The Camelot, South Cadbury, Somerset BA22 7EX** on **Sunday 26 July 2015** starting at **1200** hours. The cost will remain at £25 per head which includes spit roast (probably lamb) with all the trimmings, choice of puddings, wines, beers and soft drinks. Other drinks may be purchased at the bar for cash. Booking requests, together with cheque made payable to **Wessex Lunch** should be sent to **John Kirkham, The Old Rectory, Oake, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AR**. Early booking is advised as numbers are limited. If an acknowledgement is required please supply an SAE or an email address.

## ASSOCIATION TIES

Green Ties and a few Red ones are currently available from the Membership Secretary, address on page 3. Cost is £25.

Cheques should be made payable to the SAF Association or by BACS transfer to SAF Association.

Sort Code 40-15-17. Account No: 72019116.

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# RNOV SHABAB OMAN II



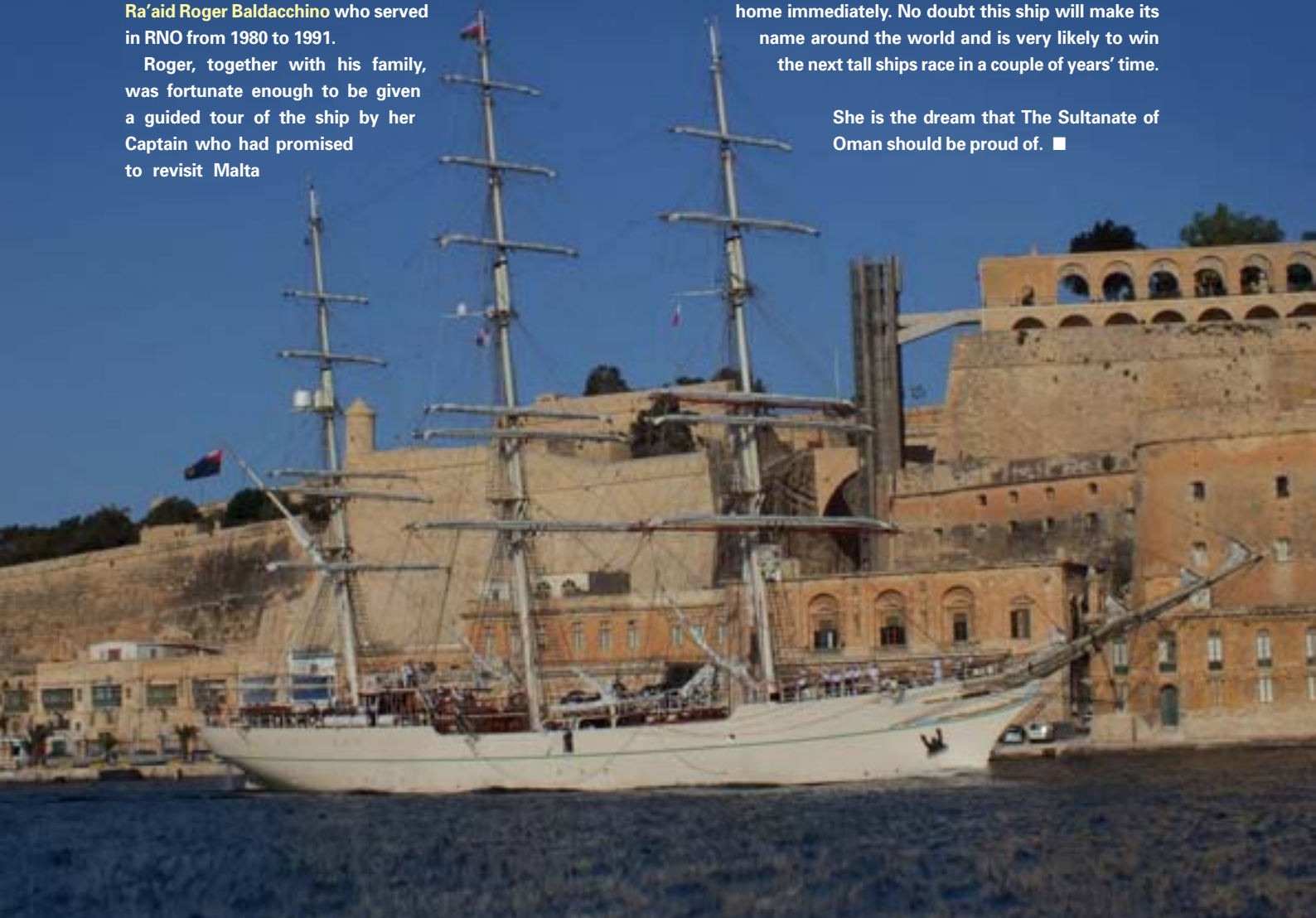
Entered into service in August 2014, *Shabab Oman II* is an 87 metre long ship with a beam of 11 metres and her tallest mast measures 50 metres. On her maiden voyage, *Shabab Oman* called at Grand Harbour in Malta on the 21 October for a three day visit before proceeding on to Oman. She was visited by **Ra'aid Roger Baldacchino** who served in RNO from 1980 to 1991.

Roger, together with his family, was fortunate enough to be given a guided tour of the ship by her Captain who had promised to revisit Malta

with the new *Shabab Oman* (the previous *Shabab Oman* had visited Malta in September 2013).

*Shabab Oman II* is a fantastic ship equipped with the latest navigational equipment and the internal design has been blended with a touch of Omani culture, making one feel at home immediately. No doubt this ship will make its name around the world and is very likely to win the next tall ships race in a couple of years' time.

She is the dream that The Sultanate of Oman should be proud of. ■



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# ‘AN ENDURING RELATIONSHIP’

*Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and Royal Air Force Exhibition launched at the RAF Museum London*



**Commander RAFO AVM Matar Al Obaldani and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Andy Pulford at the RAF Museum exhibition launch of ‘An Enduring Relationship’ on 15 July 2014.**

Within the ‘Milestones of Flight’ exhibition hall at Hendon a new year-long exhibition opened on Tuesday 15 July, 2014. It charts ‘A History of Friendship Between the RAF and RAFO’. Since 1959 and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman’s Air Force through to today’s RAFO, the panels explore the close relationship in military aviation, part of the bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Britain which extend back more than two centuries.

Following a noon fly past and precision drill by the RAF, **Regiment Commander RAFO Air Vice Marshal Matar Al Obaldani**, assisted by **Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Andy Pulford**, cut the tape and launched the exhibition. The lunchtime event featured Omani coffee and delicacies with cultural displays in a tented souk whilst above in the gallery Omani and British military musicians offered a musical selection.



*The exhibition is free to attend and runs to 14 July, 2015. The Museum wants to hear stories from those who may have served in Oman*

The exhibition delivered with the support of RAFO Archives Division devotes significant attention to photographic heritage. RAFO Historical Archive and Document Section was established in 2006 and evaluation of historic material has led to the identification for preservation of more than two million pictures and two thousand films.

The exhibition is free to attend and runs to 14 July, 2015. It has been curated by aviation historian **Ross Mahoney**. The Museum wants to hear stories from those who may have served in Oman. Contributions are warmly invited and may be sent to [ross.mahoney@rafmuseum.org](mailto:ross.mahoney@rafmuseum.org)

**Lester Hillman**  
22 July 2014



Commander RAFO AVM Matar Al Obaldani (above) and RAF Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Andy Pulford (below), opening the exhibition, RAF Museum, London on 15 July 2014.



Above: A heritage collection extending to more than two million pictures and two thousand films.

# PRESENTATION OF THE SULTAN OF OMAN'S ARTILLERY COMMEMORATION BOOK TO THE MASTER GUNNER ST. JAMES'S PARK

**General Sir Timothy Granville-Chapman GBE KCB** Master Gunner St James's Park accepted The Sultan of Oman's Artillery Commemoration Book on behalf of the Royal Regiment of Artillery at a luncheon held at Armoury House on 23 September 2014. Representatives from the Embassy of The Sultanate of Oman were **Mr Ahmed Said Al Kathairi** Deputy Head of Mission and **Air Commodore Ali Al Farsi**, Military Attaché.

The Commemoration Book is a duplicate of the one presented by The Sultan of Oman's Artillery to The Sultan in 2010 in order to mark the fortieth anniversary of His Majesty's accession. **Major General**



**bin Salim bin Rashid Al Baluchi**, Army Commander and previous Commander of SOA presented this book to the Royal Artillery in recognition of the significant contribution by those British officers and NCOs who have served on loan/attached in staff appointments or on contract to the Oman Artillery.

The book sets out to record some highlights in the evolution of the Oman Artillery. Although the book is in Arabic, and naturally concentrates on the activities of Omani Gunners, it includes the contribution made to the development of the Oman Artillery by members and former members of



Left to right: Nigel Knocker, Miles Thomson, Graham Smith and Ian Ventham.



Chris Long-Price on the left with the Master Gunner. In the background on the left is Tony Smith and on the right Tom Bremridge.



Left: Hugh Colley and Ahmed Al Kathairi talking to Master Gunner (out of the picture).



Left to right: Mike Goodfellow, Nick Quarrelle, Tony Smith and Graham Smith.

the Royal Artillery over a period of 28 years. Rather than attempting to provide a full translation of the book, explanatory English translations and elaborations have been developed for those photographs featuring British personnel. We are grateful to **Julian Paxton** for his meticulous work on translation. Julian, who served in the Royal Artillery, worked in the oil industry in Oman.

The Commemoration Book with the English index and a bound record of Loan Service Personnel in SOA 1961-1989 (compiled by **Miles Thomson** and **David McFadden**) was formally passed to the Master Gunner by **Colonel Hugh Colley**. The Master Gunner said that he was delighted to accept the Commemoration Book on behalf of the Royal Regiment of Artillery from The Sultan of Oman's Artillery and that the book with the English index and list of Loan Service Personnel will be a welcome addition to be proudly displayed in the Royal Artillery Museum. The Master Gunner reinforced how the Royal Artillery valued the close and warm association with The Sultan of Oman's Artillery. The Deputy Head of Mission from the Oman Embassy, Mr Ahmed Said Al Kathairi, said how pleased he was to attend the presentation on behalf of The Sultanate of Oman which well illustrated the growth of mutual professional respect and binding friendships between the two countries.

#### Attended the presentation and lunch

##### Guests

General Sir Tim Granville-Chapman, Master Gunner St James's Park  
Mr Ahmed Al Kathairi, Deputy Head of Mission Oman Embassy  
Air Commodore Ibrahim Al Farsi, Military Attache Oman Embassy  
Brigadier Ian Christie, former CO MR  
Colonel Nick Quarrelle, Regt Sec RHQ RA  
Lt Col Charles Holden, representing Cracker Support

##### Hosts

Mike Hardy (OA – event organiser), Hugh Colley (OA), Nigel Knocker (DR & Chairman SAF Association), Bugs Hughes (OA), Tom Bremridge (DR & HQ SAF), Mike Goodfellow (OA), Nick Holbrook (SOAF), John Lewis (OA & HQ SAF), Chris Long-Price (OA), David McFadden (OA), Douglas Maclaine (OA), Graham Smith (2 AIT Psyops), Tony Smith (OA), Miles Thomson (OA & HQ SAF) and Ian Ventham (OA). ■

## BOOK REVIEW

### EXOCET FALKLANDS

By Ewen Southby-Tailyour  
Published in 2014 by Pen and Sword in hardback at £25  
ISBN 978-1-78346-387-9

Ewen served in SAF in 1966 as a company and reconnaissance platoon commander in NFR for which he was awarded the Bravery Medal. He then had a distinguished career in the Royal Marines in both amphibious warfare and SBS. He is a keen sailor.

This is the story of the French AM39 Exocet: an air launched, sea skimming anti-ship missile deployed by Argentina against the British during the Falklands campaign in 1982. It is also a narrative of three British Special Forces operations designed to destroy those missiles on the Argentine mainland before they could be launched by the Super Etendard fighter bombers that carried them.

This is a very well researched and detailed account of the many Special Forces operations connected with the Falklands war, both leading up to it and what happened with all those involved in those operations. To attempt to review specific aspects of it would be an injustice to the author.

To quote **Rowland White**, author of *VULCAN 607*, "A deeply researched, gripping account that peels away the layers of one of the most intriguing episodes of the Falklands war."

NBK

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The Combat Stress free 24-hour Helpline is open to serving personnel, UK Reserve Forces, Veterans and their families. We'll listen and can help.

[www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

Delivered by the mental health charity **Rethink Mental Illness**

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# THE ARMED FORCES DAY RECEPTION...



*...Held on Thursday  
11th December 2014  
at the Montcalm  
Hotel, London*



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## BOOK REVIEWS

### ‘STATEBUILDING AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN OMAN’

POLITICAL, MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AT  
THE END OF EMPIRE (LONDON: IB TAURIS, 2014)

ISBN: 978-1848856349. Current Amazon price: £55.80. RRP: £59.50.  
Publisher: I.B. Tauris

In the depths of the Cold War and in the wake of Britain’s announcement of its intention to withdraw ‘East of Suez’ by the end of 1971, Britain was faced with the stark reality of a Marxist rebellion in the Dhofar province of Oman. “State Building and Counter Insurgency in Oman” offers an exploration of the attempts by officials and politicians in Whitehall and the Gulf to reconcile attempts to protect national interests and create an effective, centralised Omani administration and security bodies, whilst maintaining the image of strategic withdrawal and the sovereign independence of Oman. This book thus provides vital information and analysis for students and researchers of Middle East History and Politics, the decline and end of empire and the policymaking processes at the heart of an imperial and military withdrawal.

Reviewed by Dr. James Worrall

### THE PRINCIPLES OF ARAB NAVIGATION

Anthony R. Constable and William Facey (eds.)  
ISBN: 978-0-9571060-1-7  
Hardback, jacket 160 pages; 258 x 200 mm  
Colour throughout; 11 maps Appendices, Notes,  
Bibliography, Index Publication: February 2013.  
Price: £35.00

The book deals with the Navigational principles spelled out principally by the Omani poet/navigator Ahmed Ibn Mājid al-Najdī as translated by Gerald Tibbetts. The chapters aim to convey an understanding of Ibn Mājid’s account of navigational methods and includes one chapter on the voyage of the Jewel of Muscat from Oman to Singapore in 2010.

AVAILABLE FROM:  
Oxbow Books [www.oxbowbooks.com](http://www.oxbowbooks.com)  
Dr Anthony Constable  
[constable.tc@gmail.com](mailto:constable.tc@gmail.com)

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# THE INSPIRE FOUNDATION

## *Rundle Cup Polo Tournament*

Following the invitation by **Lt. Col. Rory Steevenson** (DR 1978-80) in last year's Journal, some intrepid members of SAF braved the elements to make the journey from the South West and were rewarded not only with brilliant weather but a stunning day's entertainment at Tedworth Polo Club, Tedworth Park, Wiltshire on 12 July 2014.

The INSPIRE Foundation of which Rory is the Executive Director, raises funds to sponsor research projects in hospitals and universities in the UK to benefit individuals with spinal cord injuries.

It proved to be an excellent day's entertainment with not only some first class polo matches but competitions between eventers and jockeys mounted on horses, bicycles and wheelchairs too. REME provided the six jumpers for the free fall display team and the band of the Royal Marines played in the afternoon. There were numerous trade stands. Arriving mid-morning, we were greeted with coffee and pastries. Skilfully orchestrated between chukkas of polo we were treated to a champagne reception, marquee luncheon and tea and cakes in the afternoon.

The Army table included SAF members **Mike** and **Dee Goodfellow**, and **Johnny** and **Jenny Kirkham** (both SOA), **Mike** and **Penny Lobb**. **Ian Thompson** (DR), who was accompanied by his wife **Diane**, auctioned a magnum of champagne.

Photographed right, and representing the Royal Hospital, Chelsea are In-Pensioner **Harry Puttick** L/Royal Welch Fusiliers

and In-Pensioner **Marjorie Cole** LWRAC. They are shown drawing prize tickets with Rory and the **Lady Amherst** – one of the INSPIRE Foundation's Patrons. She is **Nicola Cecil (née Michels)**, daughter of the late **Major Tim Michels** DR, WFR and SSF. The CDS **General Lord Richards** also put in an appearance at tea time and seemed well known to the SAF hands.

The gap in the team 'To Be Confirmed' turned out to be **Harry Wales** (bottom) who helped the Army defeat the Navy 7-4½ in the Rundle Cup.

POLO 2015 will be held on Saturday 11 July 2015. All inclusive tickets cost £75.00 including all food and liquid refreshment! For Application Forms and further information please visit [www.inspire-foundation.org.uk](http://www.inspire-foundation.org.uk) or telephone 01722 336262 ext 2465 and ask for **Lorna McGregor** INSPIRE Foundation Events/Public Relations or call Rory Steevenson 07777 603588. A very good Haf! indeed.

**Mike Lobb**



*The gap in the team 'To Be Confirmed' turned out to be Harry Wales who helped the Army defeat the Navy*

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# THE JEBEL AKHDAR WAR 1957-1959

*by Ian Buttenshaw*

*This article continues on from the "Expansion and Reunification of Oman 1950 - 1956" in the last Journal. The period 1957 - 1959, saw the Muscat Armed Forces transformed into the "Sultan's Armed Forces", reorganisation commencing, and with British support, the final defeat of the dissidents who had withdrawn to the vastness of the Jebel Akhdar. Oman was finally reunified for good, and SAF started to retrain and develop so as to better defend Oman.*



### Chronology

- 1957 March The Three Independent Forces redesignated Regiments: Muscat Infantry becomes Muscat Regiment (MR); Batinah Force becomes Northern Frontier Regiment (NFR); Muscat and Oman Field Force becomes Oman Regiment (OR).
- 1957 June Dissident elements infiltrate central Oman
- 1957 July Oman Regiment (OR) attempts to capture Bilad Sait, but is forced to withdraw suffering heavy casualties and is later disbanded. The dissidents capture Nizwa
- 1957 July Sultan Said requests British assistance
- 1957 Aug Combined TOS/British/MAF Force captures Nizwa
- 1958 January Britain agrees to assist in expanding Muscat Armed Forces
- 1958 April MAF renamed Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and first CSAF appointed
- 1958 November A British SAS Squadron arrives, to assist SAF eliminate the dissident elements, as well as additional Ferret Scout Cars from British Life Guards.
- 1959 January A second British SAS Squadron arrives
- 1959 January A combined SAS/SAF assault on the Jebel Akhdar succeeds and the plateau and rebel HQ is captured. The dissident leaders escape abroad

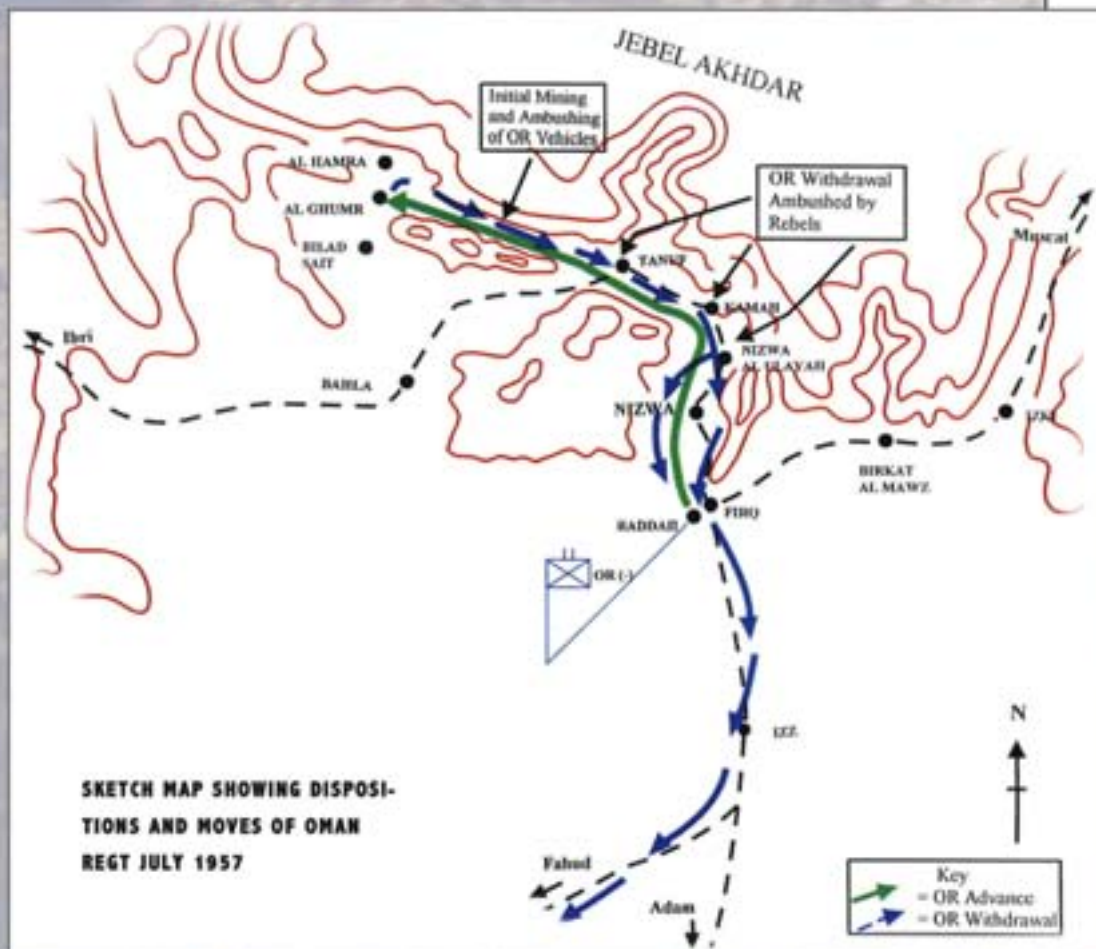
The situation at the end of 1956 and early 1957 had a positive outlook from the Sultan's point of view, as the red flag of the Sultanate flew over the interior for the first time in half a century and the Saudi threat had receded with their expulsion from Buraimi. However, beneath this apparent calm, the unrest was bubbling. An Omani Liberation Army was being recruited and trained by Talib in Dammam, money and arms started to trickle back into Oman, and financial support from various sources increased.

The Muscat Armed Forces at the time comprised:

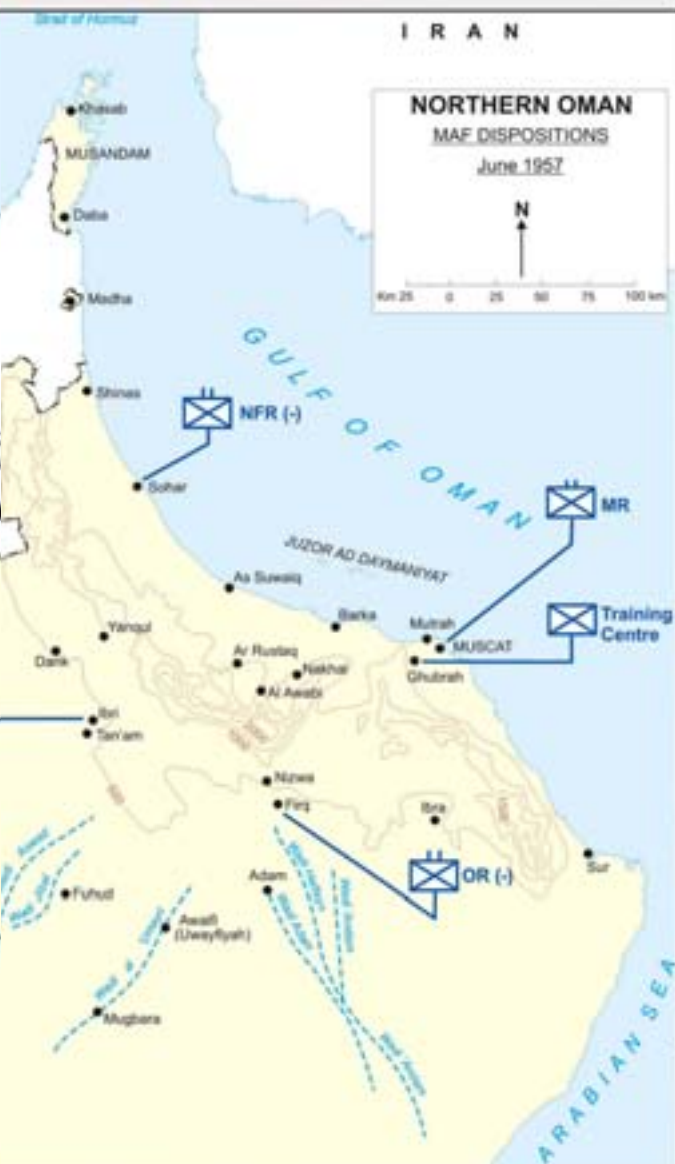
- The Muscat Infantry. Employed on guard duties in Muscat but able to provide one company (about 120 men) and a Mortar Platoon for operations. Additionally it had an Artillery Troop of six Guns.
- The Batinah Force, comprising 200 men based in Sohar with a detachment at Buraimi.
- The Muscat and Oman Field Force, about 300 half-trained men designed to protect the Oil Company. They had a camp near Firq and one at Ibbri.

On 1 March 1957, as part of the overall reorganisation, the three military elements of the Muscat Armed Forces were re-designated Regiments :

- Muscat Infantry became the Muscat Regiment (MR).
- Batinah Force became the Northern Frontier Regiment (NFR).
- Muscat and Oman Field Force became The Oman Regiment (OR).







### The Initial Uprising of May - June 1957

By early 1957, Talib had completed the plan to infiltrate his Oman Liberation Army (OLA) into the interior of Oman.

The outline plan was to land the initial group of rebels in the Sharqiyah Area, drawing the Muscat Armed Forces away from Central Oman, so Talib could arrive in Central Oman and link up with Ghalib, who was living at Bilad Sayt and Sulayman Himyar (who would attempt to escape from Muscat), then recapture Nizwa and reinstate Ghalib as Imam.

The plan went wrong. Talib was delayed; the leader of the Sharqiyah landing was talked into negotiations in Muscat, arrested and imprisoned. Talib eventually landed near Suwaiq on 14 June with several hundred followers and arms and equipment. He made his way into Central Oman and joined up with Ghalib, who again claimed the title of Imam. Thus, suddenly the Sultanate was faced with rebels in its midst. To avoid direct confrontation Theordered to capture Bilad Sayt and destroy it in order to deter the tribes from supporting Talib and Ghalib.

OR, accompanied by Sayyid Tariq, moved towards Al Hamra to pick up some loyal tribesman to assist in the capture of Bilad Sayt. The tribesmen insisted that the fort at Ghumr be destroyed first to protect their rear.

At lunchtime on 6 July A Coy of OR left for Bilad Sayt, followed in the afternoon by the CO with the Column HQ, the remaining troops and two Victorian Screw guns. Small picquets were left in the forts at Nizwa and Firq and the Camp at Raddah.

On 10 July, A Company came under fire in the Ghumr area and the screw guns were put into action against the fort. They had no real effect and ran out of ammunition. (This was probably the last time anywhere in the world that these guns were used operationally). It was decided to send 3.7 inch mountain guns from Muscat instead.

### The Collapse of The Oman Regiment and the Loss of the Interior

As OR waited for the arrival of the Mountain Guns, before carrying out the assault on Bilad Sayt news came that the rebels had started mining and ambushing OR's lines of communication, which should have been guarded by loyal tribesmen.

On 12 July, with the inability of OR to make headway, the COS of MAF decided to send reinforcements; one company from MR plus the mountain guns were despatched via Sumail and a Company of NFR from Sohar via Ibbi.

Meanwhile, the situation was getting worse and vehicles were ambushed near Tanuf and Izki. Suleman bin Himyar escaped from Muscat on 13/14 July and ambushed a MAF vehicle en-route killing the wounded OR casualties it was carrying. It was evident that little headway was being made, so the CO decided to abandon the Bilad Sayt Operation and withdrew. However, on the way back OR was heavily ambushed at Tanuf, Kamah and especially Nizwa al Ulayah and the withdrawal developed into a rout. OR moved to Raddah and then to Fahud, abandoning a lot of stores, and leaving the detachment in Nizwa fort to be captured by the rebels.

This was effectively the end of OR and the remnants of those who took part in the operation were flown to Sohar, leaving one company at Buraimi. This collapse placed MAF's capability to defend inner Oman in serious jeopardy, and as a result the Sultan asked for British assistance on 16 July 1957.

# RECAPTURE OF THE INTERIOR

Britain reacted speedily to the Sultan's request and, by early August, two companies of 1 Cameronians were flown from Bahrain to Fahud and two Squadrons of Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS) moved to Ibri where they were joined by 200 men of NFR. One troop of 15/19 Hussars in Ferrets were also flown in from Aden. The RAF also provided support.

The operational plan was simple. One column was to be formed at Fahud and to advance from there towards Nizwa. Known as 'Carter Force' after the name of the Commander TOS, who was in command, this column comprised:

- ▶ Coy (+) NFR
- ▶ 3 x Squadrons TOS
- ▶ D Coy Cameronians
- ▶ Cameronian Sp Gp (Mors/MGs)

A second column, 'Haugh Force', named after its commander, the CO of MR, and made up of elements of MR, was to move from Muscat through the Sumail Gap.



Above: The overall Commander of the Oman and British Force directing operations prior to the capture of Firq

Below: 'Crown Hill'

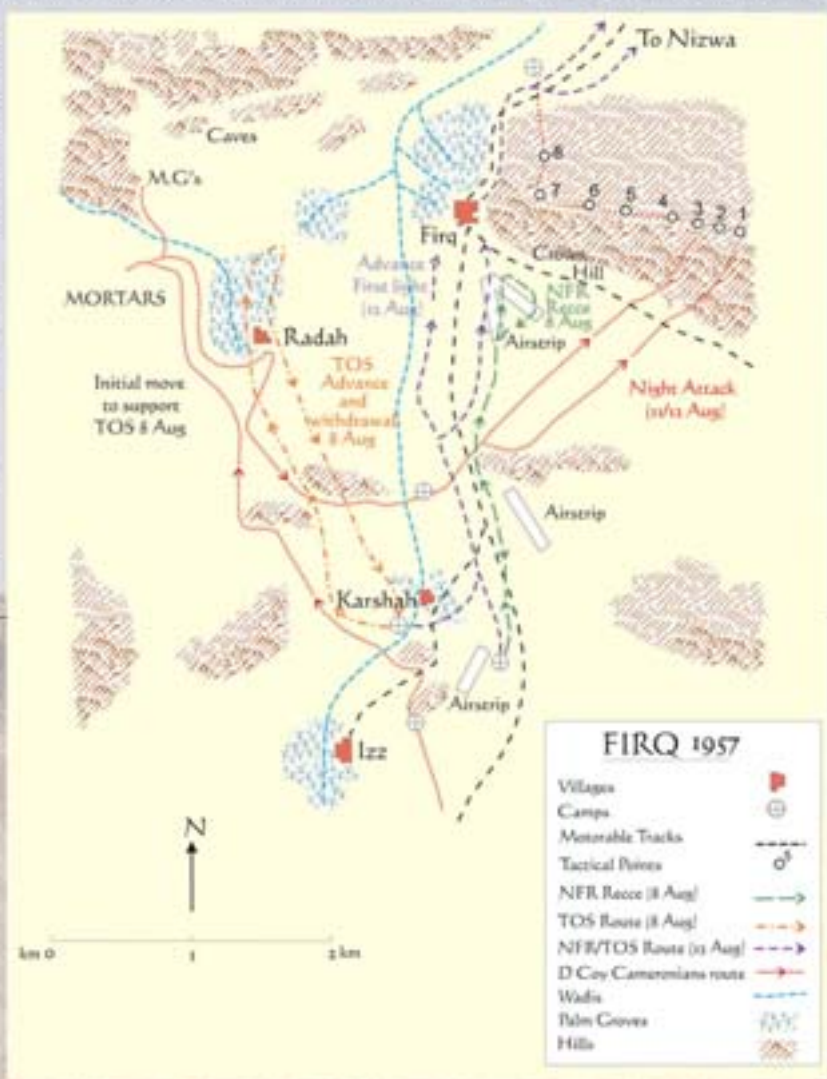


Right: Returning after the capture of Izz  
Background picture: 'Crown Hill'



PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN

- 5 August 'Carter Force' assembled at Fahud
- 6/7 August Advance of ground forces started at night from Fahud.
- 7 August TOS and NFR surrounded Izz. Izz surrendered without resistance during the morning to the political emissary and his loyal tribesmen. The advancing force established camps just north of Izz and prepared an airstrip.
- 8 August TOS advanced to Raddah, which was not occupied by rebels. About 400m north of Raddah TOS came under heavy rebel fire from a date plantation nearer Firq and were halted. The Cameronians moved into a position to the west of TOS with their Mortars and MGs to provide fire support. No progress was made during the day and at 1500 hours the TOS withdrew covered by the Cameronians. At the same time the Political Liaison Officer and an NFR protection party moved towards Firq, via the old airstrip, to try and parley with the rebels. They came under heavy fire from the village and 'Crown Hill' and withdrew.
- 9 August: Preparations for the attack on Firq commenced. Ferret Scout cars intercepted rebel landrovers trying to reach Firq from Birkat al Mawz. Haugh Force continued to advance up Wadi Samail.
- 10 August Preparations for the attack continued.
- 11 August 'Haugh Force' was held up fighting in the Muti Area and RAF Venom support was provided for them. At 2200 hours D Coy Cameronians carried out a silent night attack and occupied 'Crown Hill' above Firq and put an end to enemy sniper fire from there.
- 12 August NFR and TOS moved at first light under cover from the Cameronians and occupied Firq and then Nizwa, both without opposition. Haugh Force was able to clear the Muti/Izki area. Birkat al Mawz surrendered when Haugh Force met up with leading elements of Carter Force.
- 13 August A series of joint patrols by NFR, TOS, the Ferrets and British Engineers reached Bahla, Bilad Sayt and Tanuf. The Engineers started to prepare Tanuf for destruction.
- 14 August Tanuf fort was destroyed by explosives.
- 17 August British troops less Ferrets were withdrawn



## Nizwa Captured



*Clockwise from left: NFR soldiers and Askars in Nizwa fort following capture. Breaches in the fort wall from Venom rockets can be seen; Soleman's Himayars landrover destroyed during operations; Nizwa fort showing Venom strikes on walls*

## The Aftermath

In late August loyal tribesmen got to the top of the Jebel Akhdar and skirmished with the rebels near Saiq, but then withdrew. Other attempts to get to the top by MAF in September were also fruitless.

Basically MAF were not strong enough to assault the Jebel by themselves; they were also tied up in suppressing the rebels still on the lowland and various operations were mounted in October 1957 to subdue the rebels in Tanuf and Kamah areas, mainly involving NFR, supported by the Muscat Artillery and Ferret Scout Cars.

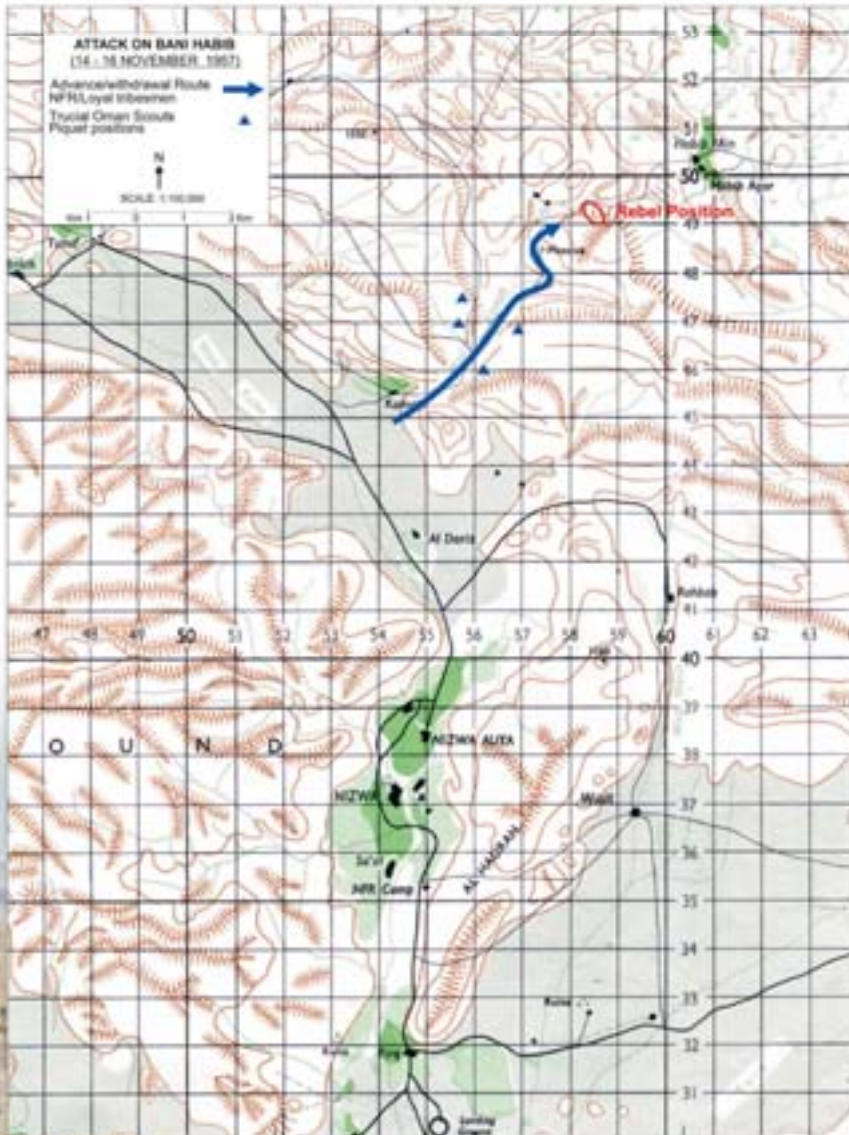
Rebels maintained a steady pressure on the MAF by descending from the Jebel, firing on military patrols, ambushing vehicles and mining roads. TOS continued to be employed in Nizwa to assist MAF.

Eventually in November it was decided to make a serious attempt to get on top of the Jebel via Wadi Kamah.



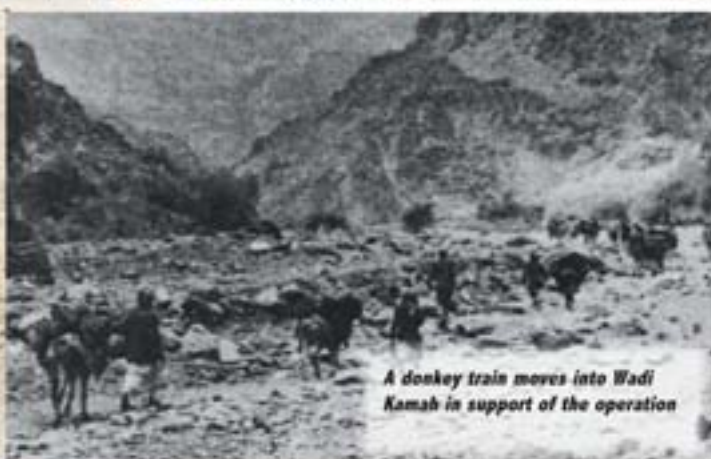
*Nizwa camp, September 1957*

# THE JEBEL WAR BEGINS



## ATTACK ON BANI HABIB 14-16 NOVEMBER 1957

On 14th November 1957 a diversionary attack by armoured cars of the British 13/18 Hussars, (who had relieved 15/19 Hussars) in conjunction with Royal Air Force Venoms, was made against the village of Muti on the western side of the Jebel. The following day the attack on Bani Habib began. At first light some 80 men of NFR in two detachments, on either side of 50 loyal tribesmen, and with Trucial Oman Scouts picqueting on their flanks moved on the Jebel Akhdar up the Wadi Kamah. The first objective, Black Rock, was reached, after a Royal Air Force attack, without opposition and the Royal Air Force then turned their attention to the next feature, Mosque Hill. After rocket and cannon fire by Venoms the ground forces continued their advance but at a slower pace as the going became harder. The force soon came under fire from rebel snipers on the upper slopes, and although attacked by Venoms on call, these were not silenced, whilst a Shackleton dropped ten 20lb fragmentation bombs with little effect. Despite enemy fire, however, the advance continued and the column reached the top of Mosque Hill where it halted to reform. During this halt six sorties of Venoms "rocketted and strafed" the slopes, and attacked targets on top of the Jebel. Advancing from Mosque Hill the attackers met fairly sustained but inaccurate small arms fire, and progress became slow. After about 500 yards it was obvious that the objective would not be reached before nightfall and accordingly camp was made. Supplies were dropped by Pioneer aircraft but almost half were lost down a 3000ft ravine flanking the route; meanwhile Venom sorties against the upper slopes and the summit were maintained. Next day, 16 November, the Commander decided to await a delivery of water and rations before pushing on. However, it was found that the Second in Command was missing; search parties were organised and, after several hazardous and unrewarding hours, the force Commander decided to withdraw. Throughout the search and withdrawal, which was completed without further loss, the Royal Air Force provided continuous cover. Following this abortive attack enemy activity increased; roads were mined and camps at Nirwa and Izki, occupied by the Sultan's Forces, were sniped at. So many vehicles were blown up on the road from Muscat via Izki to Fahud that the Oil Company drivers refused to use it.



*A donkey train moves into Wadi Kamah in support of the operation*

# THE FORMATION OF THE

## Developments in 1958

As the year began there was growing recognition that the problem was not going to be easy to solve. Firstly the rebel leaders had secured external backing, which served to broaden the situation to an international one. Additionally, it was becoming increasingly clear that larger and better equipped forces would be required. All this of course meant increased British commitment.

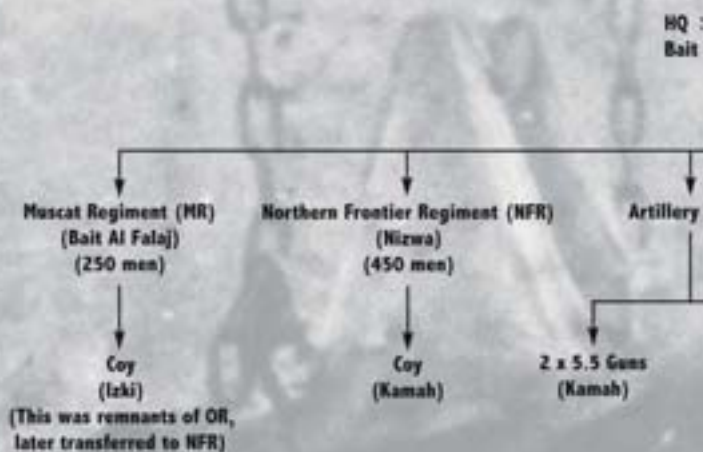
Enemy harassment of MAF steadily increased from the beginning of the year. Izki and Nizwa camps were fired upon and mines were laid on various routes.

## Increased British Support for the Sultan, January 1958

In January 1958 the British Under Secretary of State for War, Julian Amery, accompanied by Foreign Office and War Office representatives, visited Muscat and held a series of meetings with the Sultan. Out of these meetings emerged the Agreement of July 1958 to provide both civil and military assistance to the Sultan. It was agreed to second 23 British officers to appointments in the Sultan's Armed Forces and to help in forming an Air Force of five aircraft with pilots seconded from the Royal Air Force. Gifts of military equipment, especially transport, were also made. On 22 January the Sultan and Mr. Amery concluded their meetings and initialled an exchange of minutes pending final agreement. Meanwhile certain measures were to be put in hand at once, including the appointment of a British Chief of Staff to the Sultan's Armed Forces, and the loan to the Sultan of two 5.5 inch guns with stores and 400 rounds of ammunition. As a result, on 19 February 1958, 'Paywar' by voice aircraft having proved ineffective, the 5.5 inch guns went into action scoring many hits on the main rebel villages in the Jebel Akhdar, on Saiq, Bani Habib and Shurajjah. This was the prelude of much to come.

The two 5.5 inch guns which arrived in Muscat on 12 February were placed under the control of the MAF Artillery troop which was commanded by an officer previously with the Pakistan Artillery, with a British Major on secondment serving as the FOO. This troop moved to just north of Nizwa, and joined the two 75mm Mountain Guns already there. Registration began on 19 February. Between 20 and 24 February inclusive, 167 rounds were fired and 62 hits observed on Saiq, Bani Habib and Shurajjah.

## DISPOSITIONS ON FORMATION



**The 5.5 inch Gun**

*Left: The gun's arrival at BAF, 1958*

*Above: The guns in action at Kamah, mid-1958*

*Far left: On the way to Kamah, February 1958*



# SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES

## ORGANISATION OF SAF (APRIL 1958)



**Colonel Smiley appointed Commander Sultan's Armed Forces April 1958**

On 23 April 1958 Colonel D. de C. Smiley, MVO, OBE, MC, (Royal Horse Guards), then British Military Attaché in Stockholm, was appointed, in fulfilment of the British Government undertaking, Chief of Staff to the Sultan. On his arrival in Muscat and Oman, however, the Sultan made him Commander of his Armed Forces and the Forces were renamed the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

## Armoured Car Support to SAF

The Ferrets of the 13/18 Royal Hussars replaced the 15/19 Hussars in early 1958, and assisted SAF with convoy escorts, for both their own re-supply convoys as well as those of PDO. Initially one troop was based at Izki and later a second arrived at Bait al Falaj. The Ferrets provided vital fire support to SAF Patrols trying to contain the rebels in the Jebel Akhdar, as well as deterring ambushes of vital re-supply convoys. D Squadron of the Life Guards eventually replaced the 13/18th Hussar Troops between August and September 1958



*Clockwise from left: Ferret escort on the Firq Plain; Ferret vehicle park at Bait al Falaj; A mined Ferret and surviving crew; Locals show an interest in combined SAF/Civilian Convoy escorted by Ferrets as it arrives in Nizwa*



# WAR ON THE JEBEL

## Commander's Reconnaissance and Appreciation

The new Commander's first task was to assess the situation, and this he did by making a series of tours and flights over the Jebel and its approaches, with visits to the local Walis.

Muti and Muaydin villages, reported as held by the enemy, were both entered without interference, and it became apparent to the Commander that a more offensive spirit was wanted.

At the end of June, following a reconnaissance of the base of the Jebel Akhdar, CSAF appreciated that the enemy could reinforce their stronghold with men and supplies at will and that, although there were a number of obvious places at which to station blockading forces, his available forces were quite inadequate to do the task. In June the Squadron of Trucial Oman Scouts was withdrawn from Izki, which had in consequence to be garrisoned by recruits from the Depot before they had completed their basic training. Later in the month the rebels succeeded in running a lorry of reinforcements and weapons from Sharjah, through the Customs Post at Aswad, down the Batinah Coast, through three posts of Government tribal guards, past Awabi, and down the Wadi Bani Kharus to a point where they unloaded the supplies and burned the lorry. This old ex-British 3 ton lorry carried four Browning .5 anti-aircraft guns, nine mortars, 13 Bren guns and their ammunition, three wireless sets, and not less than 40 men.

As a result of this episode a platoon of the Muscat Regiment was sent to garrison Awabi, and the following week a section of the Regiment was ordered to the Customs Post at Aswad, in the extreme north of the Batinah Coast, to search all vehicles entering from Trucial Oman.

At the beginning of July mines began to take a heavy toll, and every officer in the Northern Frontier Regiment was blown up, some more than once. As Landrovers and lorries were sandbagged, casualties were seldom serious. Landrovers, however, were temporarily banned in the Nizwa area, and replaced by one ton trucks; after being withdrawn and fitted with extra steel plates under the mudguards they later proved their worth.

It was apparent to CSAF that his immediate tasks were :

- ▶ to tighten the blockade around the Jebel in an effort to reduce men and supplies reaching the rebels
- ▶ to patrol the tracks leading up to the Jebel, to pinpoint rebel positions, and to acquire topographical information and thus improve the available maps, as a preliminary to selecting a line of assault
- ▶ to instill a more aggressive spirit into the Sultan's Armed Forces and raise its morale by successful actions and experience.



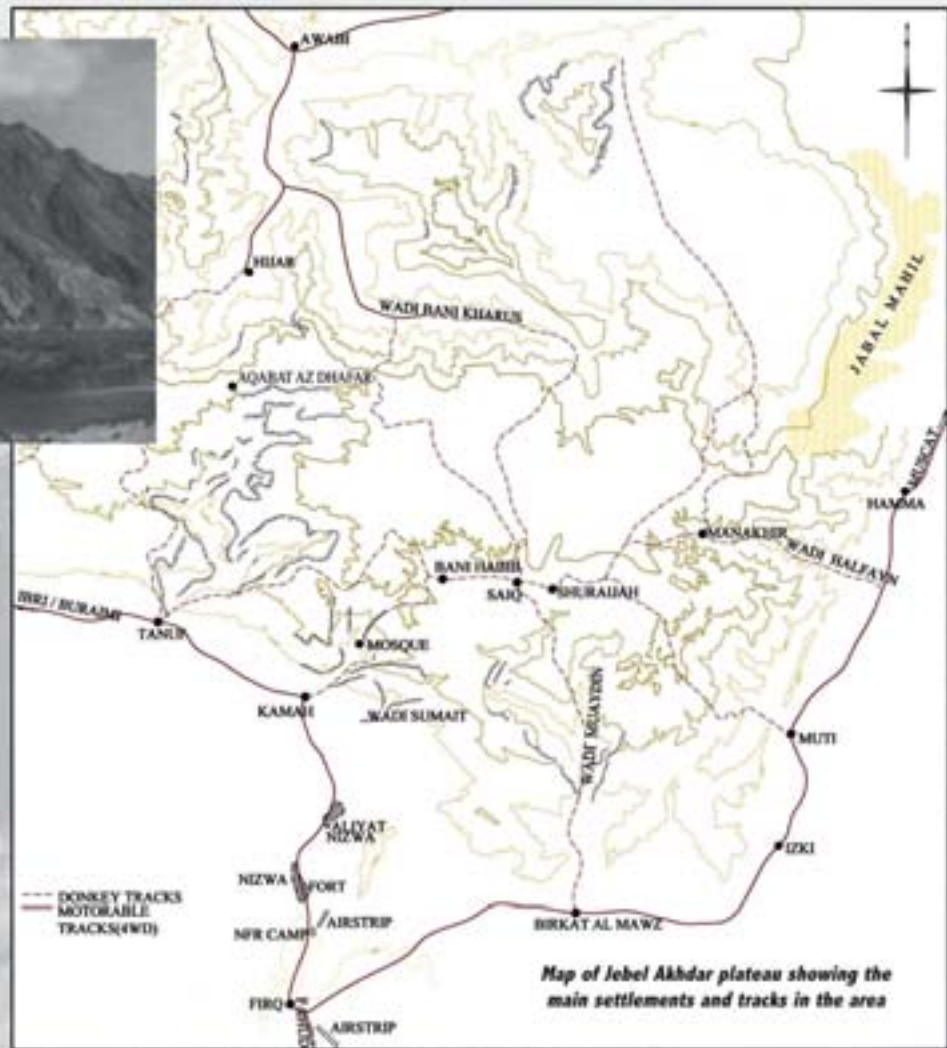
*Clockwise from left: NFR picquet position overlooking Wadi Tanaf; SAF Artillery Troop 5.5 in action at Kamah; G2 Intelligence HQ SAF and Sayyid Tariq bin Taimur; Trucial Oman Scouts camp at Izki*





Above: Northern Frontier Regiment picquet position above Izki

Below: A Patrol from NFR searches the panniers of a donkey train passing through Nizwa, looking for arms and mines being smuggled into the interior



**Commander asks for and is allotted additional British Troops**

It was also evident that British troops would be required and CSAF asked for a brigade for an assault on the Jebel. When it appeared unlikely that a brigade would be available he asked for two battalions, and stressed that one should be either a Royal Marine Commando, a Parachute battalion, or a Special Air Service unit. He did not feel that a normal infantry battalion would be fit enough to carry out an assault without a lot of extra training.

He was finally allotted a Special Air Service Squadron (later increased by Regimental Tactical HQ and another Squadron) whilst the two troops of 13/18 Hussars then in Oman were relieved by one Squadron Life Guards; the relief was completed between 16 August and 28 September.

**Squadron Life Guards arrives**

On arrival the Squadron Life Guards deployed with a troop at Nizwa, at Izki and at Awabi, with two troops in reserve and for convoy duty with Squadron HQ at Bait Al Falaj. Apart from their protection and reconnaissance duties, the Life Guards wireless communications proved an invaluable asset.

**Rebels Overtures for Peace Rejected**

Early in October the last rebel supply route passable to camels and donkeys was cut when the Northern Frontier Regiment occupied Tanuf; thereafter they had to rely on man-carried supplies. Early in November the Trucial Oman Scouts occupied Yanqul, through which it was suspected arms reached the Jebel. Meanwhile aggressive patrolling by the Northern Frontier Regiment increased. Unexpectedly the rebels made overtures for peace, the terms for surrender being flown from Muscat to the Sultan at Salalah. During the ensuing short armistice road mining incidents slackened off. Nevertheless air reconnaissance continued. The rebels' demands, however, were quite unacceptable to the Sultan and hostilities re-opened.

# THE WAR INTENSIFIES

## GETTING ON TO THE JEBEL

### Patrol Reaches Top of the Jebel Akhdar

In the second week of November a patrol from the Muscat Regiment found a way to the top of the Jebel, which was unguarded, up a track on the north side of the Jebel. This route, known as the Hajar track, led from Hajar to a peak overlooking the Aqbat al Dhafar, and entailed a six-hour climb to the top; for part of the way it consisted of some eighty steps cut by the Persians many centuries ago, but although steep it was passable to donkeys.

### 'D' Squadron Special Air Service Arrive 18 November 1958

A week later, on 18 November 1958, 'D' Squadron 22 Special Air Service Regiment arrived from Malaya. 'D' Squadron was organised in four troops (or patrols) of about 16 men each. Although totalling less than 80 men they had good fire power and equipment, including FN rifles, Browning MGs and Energa grenades.



*'The Steps' on the route up from Hajar - found by MR in November 1958*

### Special Air Service Squadron deploy and patrol. Firm Base Formed Area Aqabat Al Dhafar

Little time was wasted in settling in at their base camp at Bait Al Falaj before 'D' Squadron 22 Special Air Service set about exploring the northern and southern slopes of the Jebel. 16 and 17 Troops moved to a base at Awabi in the north whilst in the south 18 and 19 Troops with two mortars moved to the Northern Frontier Regiments Camp at Tanuf. Active patrolling began on 24 November and on all SAS patrols men from SAF were attached for the mutual benefit of both units.

16 and 17 Troops moved south from Awabi up the Jebel by the Hajar track discovered by MR, who sent some men with them as guides. On reaching the top the two troops pushed on and found the rebels entrenched on the Aqabat al Dhafar. To enable them to work forward a platoon of the Muscat Regiment was ordered up to provide a firm base. The enemy, however, was reinforced and it became apparent that only a set-piece attack would dislodge them. Consequently, CSAF decided to hold the firm base in order to divert rebels to that sector from other parts of the Jebel. Meanwhile patrolling continued on both sides of the Jebel. Opposition was encountered, and casualties inflicted. The rebels were skilful and as early as 26 November a Corporal of 22 Special Air Service Regiment was killed.

For the Special Air Service it was a far cry from Malaya. Conditions were totally different. In Malaya, visibility was limited to 20-50 yards, and encounters were short and sharp; in Oman the air was crystal clear and a man could be picked out at 2,000 yards, although with difficulty, for the rebels were adept at fading into their background. Consequently encounters with a highly mobile adversary were liable to last for hours at long range, and to counter this, the Special Air Service carried out extensive patrolling by night. Only thus were they able to get to grips with the rebels, and to outmanoeuvre them.

The Khamah slab



### Rebel Strength and Armament

At that time it was estimated that the rebel strength was :

Externally trained Omanis	60 - 100 (all operational)
Rebel Tribesmen	400 - 500 (60% operational)
Foreigners	Unknown but probably not more than 10

### Rebel Mining, Dispositions and Morale

During 1958 the rebels laid at least 120 anti-tank mines and about 80% of these damaged vehicles. Two M6 mines were also laid and one caused five casualties. Evidence showed also that the rebels had some American hand grenades. Mines were laid not only by the rebels but also by local villagers, who were paid a special bonus for successful detonations. From time to time the rebels mortared the SAF camps at Izki, Mati, Kamah and Tanuf, such harassing fire not exceeding six bombs at a time. Picquet posts containing about ten men each armed with a rifle and 50 rounds dominated the approaches to the Jebel and provided positions from which to snipe patrols at long range. Despite rumours that the rebel morale was low there was no apparent evidence to support this.



Above: Wadi Hajar from Cassino, overlooking the route up

Left: Looking South up the Wadi Hajar towards the Sabrina-Cassino ridge

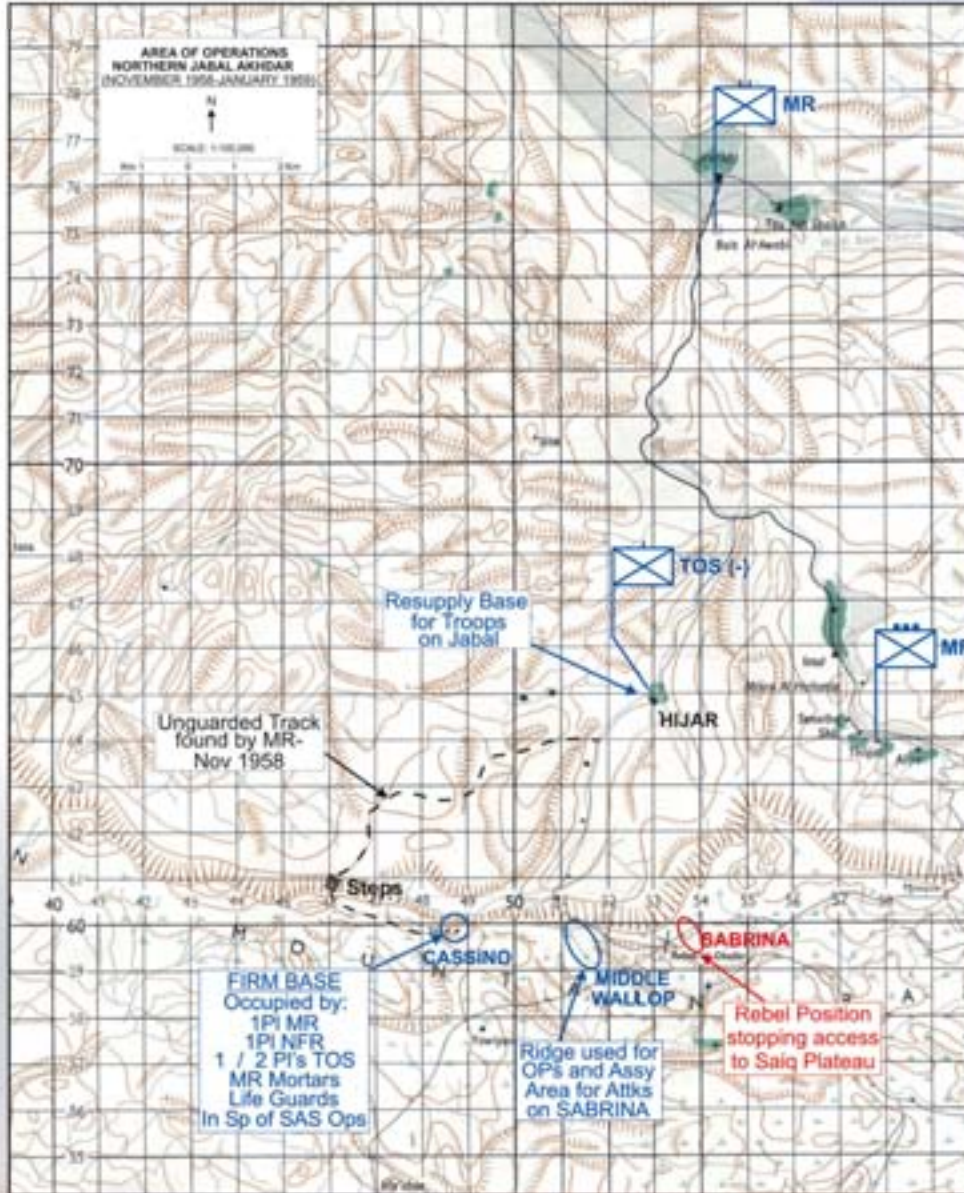


A successful encounter occurred on 1 December. By 0100 hours 19 Troop had established a base within 800 yards of a rebel held cave; meanwhile 18 Troop, surmounting difficult escarpments, moved forward to take up fire positions which were reached by 0530 hours. The Special Air Service Report records that :

*"The appearance of the rebel leader at 0625 hours was the signal to open fire on all rebels in the target area. The 3.5 RL team scored a direct hit in the main cave and placed another bomb in the middle of a group of four rebels killing them instantly. Rebel reaction, despite their surprise, was vigorous and quick. Over 30 rebels returned fire on to both troops from behind sangars".*

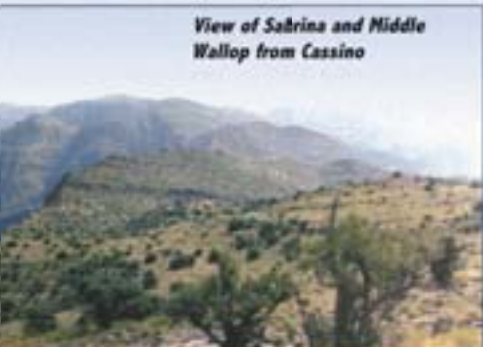
During the withdrawal four Venoms from 8 Squadron Royal Air Force delivered cannon and rocket attacks, and mortar fire was brought down on the cave area. Subsequently enemy casualties were reported as 20 killed; apart from an ammunition vehicle mined, the Special Air Service suffered only superficially. Later in the afternoon about thirty rebels attacked a standing patrol from 16 Troop. It was estimated that five rebels were killed (although later unconfirmed reports gave twelve killed), several wounded; the enemy continued to close in but the patrol withdrew under covering fire, as darkness was falling, without casualties.

# THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES – DECEMBER



1958

View of Sabrina and Middle Wallop from Cassino



From the Rebel end - Sabrina blocks the route to the plateau, showing Middle Wallop and Cassino



Mortaring the Aqabat



Left: Sabrina from Middle Wallop showing the ground the SAS would have crossed to attack Sabrina



## DEVELOPMENTS ON THE AQABAT

### Firm Base Area Aqabat Al Dhafar Strengthened

At the end of December, one squadron Trucial Oman Scouts moved to Awabi on the northern front and established a base at Hijar, and from there maintained two troops on top of the Jebel, thus reinforcing the troops of the Special Air Service and Muscat Regiment holding the firm base opposite the Aqabat Al Dhafar position.

Prior to this, Muscat Regiment Battalion HQ had established itself at Awabi to control all non-SAS operations north of the Jebel, and all road moves in the area.

### Administrative Difficulties Postpone Exploitation into Aqabat

Until air supply, which began on 8th December, came into its own, supply to the Hijar position was by donkey; ammunition, rations, water - all had to be carried by donkey or man-pack up a steep and difficult route, which took from five to seven hours. Consequently plans to exploit forward on to the Aqabat had to be postponed owing to the administrative difficulties. Vigorous patrolling was carried out by night and the Special Air Service soon became familiar with the ground in their area. Subsequently a dismounted detachment of Life Guards (twenty) took nine Browning MGs to this position, whilst a platoon of the Northern Frontier Regiment was also added to the force.

### Night Attack in Aqabat Al Dhafar Position 27 December 1958

Thus reinforced and with air supply functioning, the Special Air Service mounted a night attack, supported by the Life Guards Brownings and the heavy mortars of the Muscat Regiment, against the Aqabat Al Dhafar position. Scaling the cliffs with the aid of ropes, the Special Air Service surprised the enemy. Fighting raged throughout the night of 27 December, often at close quarters. The Special Air Service Report records :

*"...40 to 60 rebels were engaged. The rebels stood to and fought well. They even shouted to the troops 'come on and fight jonnie'. At 0800 hrs 28 December 16/17 Troops withdrew to base. Later intelligence sources confirmed that 9 rebels were killed, there were no SAS casualties."*

By late December, however, it had become apparent that with the force available it would not be possible to crush the rebellion before the onset of the hot weather in April. The rebels were skilful at making good use of ground and exploited their advantage of dominating the heights to such an extent that daylight penetration of the Jebel became impossible. The local population lived in fear of the rebels and consequently Arab guides were not forthcoming. Nevertheless the patrols had provided valuable information about the routes and terrain, whilst successful encounters had raised the fighting spirit of the Trucial Oman Scouts and Sultan's Armed Forces. It was appreciated, however, that one Special Air Service Squadron was insufficient to assault the Jebel, defeat the rebels and hold the plateau against counter attack pending the arrival of the Sultan's Forces. Accordingly, CSAF asked for an additional Special Air Service Squadron from Malaya, which was agreed.

# MOVES TOWARDS VICTORY

## REINFORCEMENTS

### CO 22 Special Air Service Arrives : Joint Force HQ Formed 7 January 1959

On 1 January 1959 CO 22 Special Air Service with his HQ arrived in Oman, and a joint SAF/SAS/RAF HQ was formed and on 7th January a Tac HQ was established at Nizwa in the Northern Frontier Regiments Camp. CSAF appointed CO 22 SAS his Deputy Commander with authority to issue orders to any units deployed, whether British Army, Trucial Oman Scouts or Sultan's Armed Forces. This HQ co-ordinated action of both ground troops and aircraft and provided a centre for the collection, collation and dissemination of intelligence.

### 'A' Squadron 22 Special Air Service Arrives 12 January 1959

'A' Squadron 22 Special Air Service arrived from Malaya on 12 January and after five days intensive training relieved 'D' Squadron in front of the Aqabat position on 18 January.

### The Administrative Problems

The administrative problems were considerable and the success of the whole operation depended on solving them. Plans had to be prepared for maintenance by air and also by donkey. Not only did some donkeys have to accompany the assaulting troops on the first night, but others had to be ready to move up the Kamah track once it was clear. The donkeys were important as insurance should bad weather prevent the planned air drops from taking place.

The stores for the air drops were either flown from Sharjah, 180 miles away, or Bahrain, 500 miles away. Certain stores were obtained in the first place either from Aden, 1500 miles away, or certain items of clothing, ammunition and batteries, from the United Kingdom. Two types of load were pre-packed at airfields; one type for use on the first day consisted of food, blankets, water and ammunition (mainly small arms and Browning); the second type, designed primarily for the second day should there be heavy fighting, consisted entirely of ammunition.

The donkey problem was not easy, involving as it did over 100 donkeys and their civilian handlers. Further, the Somali donkey, bought by the army, was unaccustomed to mountains, ate grain, and required training, whilst the Jebel donkey was used to mountains and lived on dates, but his owner disliked exposing him to danger. The handlers were often unreliable as they frequently succeeded in losing their loads.

### Rebels Harassed from the Air

Throughout this time the rebels were being continually harassed from the air, and during December alone four Venoms of the Royal Air Force, based at Sharjah, carried out 94 sorties. Sorties were not confined to daylight but fires seen at night in rebel territory were attacked. In January Venoms available for operations were increased to eight.



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### Planning the Assault on the Jebel

By 5 January 1959 sufficient reconnaissance had been carried out to enable plans to be made. It was apparent that a daylight attack on the Jebel in the face of rebel vigilance was not feasible and that consequently a night approach was necessary. Such an operation over difficult ground demanded moonlight, and so it was decided to mount the operation during the full moon period 22-26 January 1959.

Development of the Aqabat position was considered but rejected for between the Aqabat position and the rebel villages of Bani Habib, Saiq and Shurajjah lay three intervening features, all formidable, all of which would have to be taken, and all impossible to outflank. An attack from the south, however, offered certain advantages besides being shorter and more direct, and gave an opportunity to reach the top in one night, an essential for success. Administratively it was simple to mount an operation from the south, for not only was Tac HQ at Nizwa close by a landing strip with civilian contacts at hand, but also the Special Air Service stores were not far away at their base at Bait Al Falaj. The ground dictated a direct attack up the mountains, for although the donkey tracks followed the wadis these were dominated by high cliffs on either side. In mountain warfare it is a principle to attack up a spur and not a valley. Further, the southern route permitted effective artillery support. It was also appreciated that such a line of attack would strike the weaker of the two rebel tribes, and that if they were routed then the flank would go and the rebellion would crumble away.

After further reconnaissance from the air by CO 22 SAS it was decided to attack from the south between the Wadis Kamah and Sumait. The advantages of this route were that it was unguarded and, being from an unlikely direction, offered the chance of surprise and was short enough to be climbed in one night, enabling the leading troops to be established on top of the Jebel by dawn, where they could be supplied by air.

Success depended on drawing the rebels away from the ground dominating the line of advance. Consequently a deception plan was an essential. The following diversions were made before D-Day, to concentrate rebel attention on the Tanuf and Aqabat areas :

- *From 8 - 22 January*  
‘D’ Squadron, Special Air Service, and ‘A’ Company Northern Frontier Regiment carried out offensive patrols in the Tanuf area and occupied some high ground normally used by the rebels as an observation post
- *From 18 - 22 January*  
‘A’ Squadron, Special Air Service, ‘C’ Squadron Trucial Oman Scouts and elements of Muscat Regiment and Northern Frontier Regiment carried out offensive patrols in the Aqabat Al Dhafar area, Muscat Regiment and tribal irregulars carried out a probing attack up the Jebel from Wadi Bani Kharus
- *On the night 23/24 January*  
‘A’ Squadron, Special Air Service, leaving one troop, the Trucial Oman Scouts and platoons from Muscat Regiment and Northern Frontier Regiment in the Aqabat area, crossed over the Jebel and moved down to Tanuf
- *During night 23/24 January*  
‘A’ and ‘C’ Companies Northern Frontier Regiment made diversionary attacks in the areas of Tanuf and Izki respectively
- *On the night 24/25 January*  
The leaders of the donkey handlers were told, in strictest confidence, that the assault would be up the Tanuf track, and this news soon reached the rebels

Throughout this period, apart from one attack on D-3, Venom air strikes and Shackleton bombing was concentrated on areas away from the chosen route.

#### THE DIVERSIONARY MOVES



...ion  
...aid bin Taimour  
...ultan of Muscat & Oman  
...to notify you that the last phase of our  
...y operations have just started.  
...many tribes in the interior remained loyal  
...s and others have declared their loyalty  
...the start of these operations, there are,  
...ever, a small number of men who still follow  
...traitors, but now have been surrounded.  
...r Land Forces have started to advance against  
...men, and the more help given by people to our  
...troops, the more we are able to finish these  
...operations and bring life back to normal.  
...in case of an escape of a traitor, people in the  
...area should not shelter him; they should in fact  
...hand him to the authorities of provide the  
...necessary information about him. The army is  
...coming with peace and security to all the loyal  
...people and to make them free from the dominance  
...of the foreigner.  
...Written in Muscat

*Left: Translation of a message from HH Sultan bin Taimour, air-dropped and distributed to villages around Jebel Akhdar*

# ASSAULT UP THE JEBEL

The Assault, 26

## The Final Plan

The plan was to seize a feature nicknamed 'Beercan' on top of the Jebel by an assault from the south after a night advance, and then to secure a feature further on towards Habib called 'Colin'. The assault was divided into three phases:

### Phase I

The capture of Pyramid, Beercan and Colin by 'D' Squadron Special Air Service, and Vincent (a feature about one third the way up Pyramid) by 'A' Squadron Special Air Service, by first light D+1.

### Phase II

'C' Company Northern Frontier Regiment to relieve 'A' Squadron Special Air Service at Vincent. Dismounted troop Life Guards to take over Pyramid.

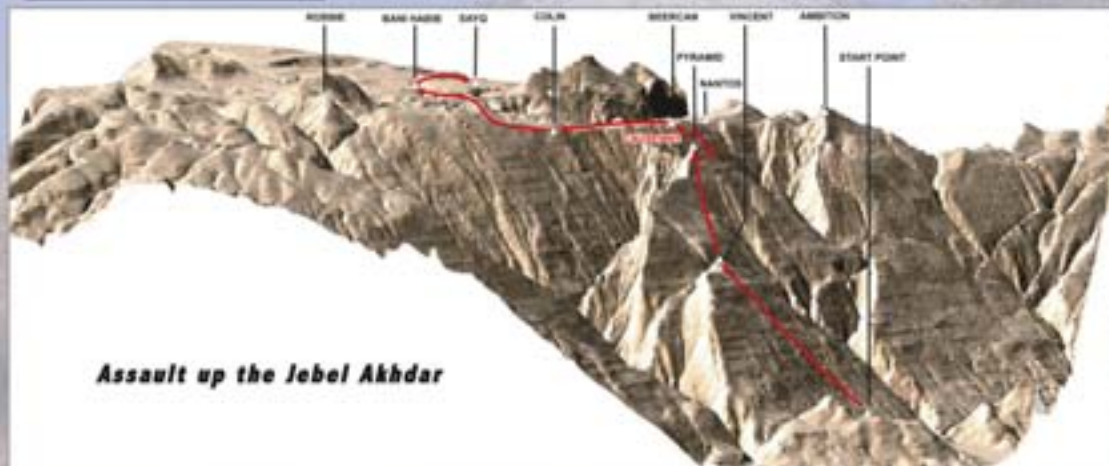
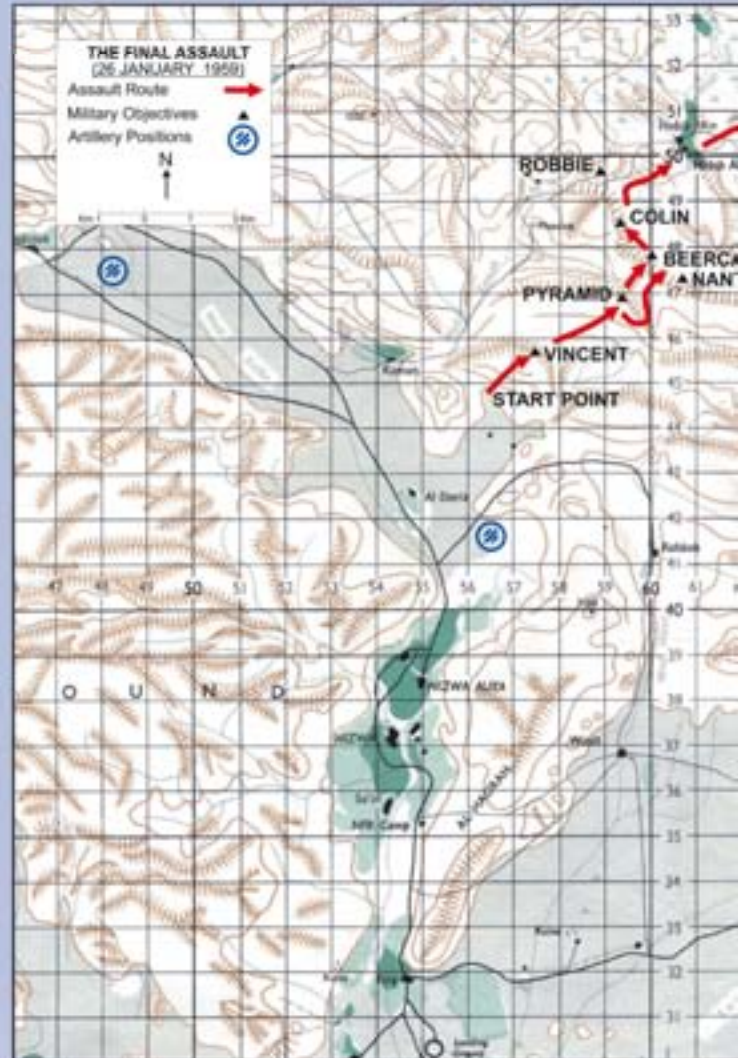
### Phase III

Consolidation by: 'D' Squadron Special Air Service on Colin and 'A' Squadron Special Air Service on Beercan.

In addition 50 tribal irregulars were to cooperate on the south side and accompany the two Special Air Service Squadrons, whilst in the north 200 local tribesmen, strengthened by a platoon of the Muscat Regiment, were to create a diversion from the Awabi area, and if unopposed, were to climb to the top of the Jebel by way of the two main tracks from that direction. Whilst the Venom Squadron based at Sharjah provided close fighter support, three Valettas from Bahrain were to make nine supply drops on the morning of D+1. Two helicopters stood by at Nizwa to evacuate casualties to the field hospital there.



Left: CSAF in Saleman's cave, the rebel HQ, right after the capture



Main picture: Pyramid, Vincent and Ambition



**January 1959**

D-Day was to have been 25 January 1959, but the weather forecasts being unfavourable, with clouds below the top of the Jebel, it was postponed for 24 hours. In the event this was a wise decision.

'A' and 'D' Squadrons Special Air Service, then in camp at Tanuf, were briefed during the morning by CO 22 SAS; at 1000 hours the donkeys moved off to the donkey assembly area at Kamah previously prepared by the Northern Frontier Regiment. Subsequently that evening both Squadrons motored to Kamah arriving there after last light where they debussed in the Assembly Area and waited for the moon to rise. After half an hour they re-embussed and moved forward to the Start Line. A strike of donkey handlers delayed the arrival of the 'F' Echelon donkeys which should have followed 'A' Squadron ahead of the Commanders HQ. These donkeys, twenty-five in all, i.e. ten per squadron and five for HQ, carried the Squadron's Browning MGs and ammunition and the HQ wireless and FOO's wireless sets. Eventually these donkeys followed, fifteen minutes in rear of the HQ. At 2030 hours as the Special Air Service troops moved forward they heard the diversionary attack go in on the Aqabat position on top of the Jebel. All went well, and surprise was achieved, for both the rebel leaders were at the Aqabat position some eight hours march away from Beercan. The going however was difficult and progress slow. A few unfit or overladen soldiers were left behind to make their own way while the squadrons pushed on. The small Somali donkeys were somewhat of a hindrance and the majority had to be abandoned at Vincent although a few reached Pyramid. In contrast the local Jebel donkeys were good. There was some confusion at Vincent when 'D' Squadron Special Air Service took two different routes down the escarpment, but both fortunately joined up again fifteen minutes later. Near Vincent occurred the only casualty, caused by a stray bullet exploding a grenade in a Special Air Service soldier's pack; he and two men behind him were badly wounded and, although evacuated by helicopter without undue delay, two of the three men died within 24 hours. 'C' Company Northern Frontier Regiment came under machine gun and mortar fire from the Kamah Slab, but the SAF Artillery engaged and soon put a stop to this. A .5 Browning



*CO 22nd SAS and Sayyid Tariq on the plateau immediately after the successful assault*

opened up on the leading Special Air Service troops, but both enemy gunners were stalked and killed with a well aimed grenade. Pyramid was reached after nine and a half hours hard climbing. Between Pyramid and Beercan a high ridge known as Causeway had to be negotiated and this took two hours to cross and entailed, at times, the use of ropes. Causeway proved impassable to donkeys. Shedding their heavy packs and equipment, 'D' Squadron of Special Air Service, pushing on, occupied Beercan at about 0630 hours and, without opposition, consolidated. The first of the Valettas began the re-supply drop on Beercan at 0645 hours. The nine supply drops took place as planned, incidentally being mistaken by the rebels for a landing of parachutists. The first drop was widely scattered and there were many breakaways. After ten hours of climbing the troops were too exhausted to do more than collect sufficient ammunition to repel the expected counter attack, but this never materialised. At 0700 hours the HQ arrived, including an Air Liaison Officer (ALO) with a ground to air set.

By 1700 hrs on 27 January, in addition to the Special Air Service on Beercan, there were Life Guards on Pyramid and 'C' Company Northern Frontier Regiment on the cliff edge, with 15 Tribal Levies approaching Pyramid.

By midnight 'D' Squadron Special Air Service had moved forward and secured the hill feature called 'Colin' unopposed, leaving 'A' Squadron to secure Beercan. More air re-supply arrived and the troops rested.

On 29 January the advance across the plateau commenced. 'D' Squadron occupied Habib by 1200 hours and the next day elements of both 'A' and 'D' Squadrons occupied Saiq and Shuraijah. CSAF and Sayyid Tariq flew by helicopter to Saiq on 30 January to meet the villagers, as well as to look at Suleiman's Cave. Meanwhile the tribal irregulars (numbering about 70) and a platoon of Muscat Regiment were approaching from the north and eventually arrived at Saiq on 31 January.

Rebel caves and dumps were easily found but there was no trace of the rebel leaders or their hardcore followers. No major opposition was offered once the Special Air Service had reached the top, apart from some firing in the Kamah and Muti areas which was finally silenced by Northern Frontier Regiment troops on 1 February.



*Askars, SAS and NFR Troops on the plateau after the assault*

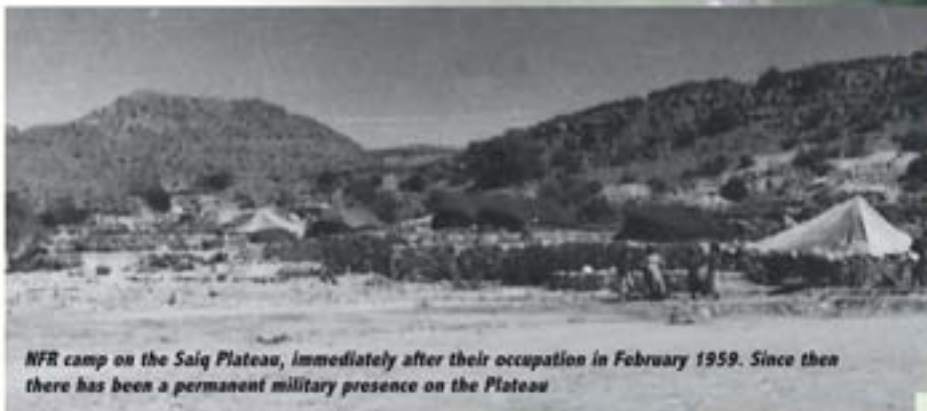
## MOPPING UP

The cordon around the mountain was tightened and extensive patrols were carried out by Muscat Regiment, Northern Frontier Regiment and Special Air Service, but no signs of the leaders could be found. It became apparent that the three leaders and some of the hardcore had slipped off the mountain via Wadi Halfayn, bribing the Tribal Guards to let them through before moving on to Sharqiyah and then on to Saudi Arabia, which they reached on 22 March 1959.

To restore order to the Jebel and re-establish control, Lt Col Colin Maxwell was appointed Governor of the Jebel Akhdar, and a company of Northern Frontier Regiment started to build a camp above Saiq next to the Airstrip that had been cleared.

Success on the Jebel did not put an end to the rebellion; weapons and mines were still regularly smuggled into the country, enabling minor attacks on army outposts, mining of roads and even attacks in the capital area. Externally the movement concentrated on securing support from radical external factions.

Patrolling and searches continued well into the middle of the year after the Special Air Service were withdrawn. TOS assisted and various joint SAF/British exercises took place during the latter part of the year.



*NFR camp on the Saiq Plateau, immediately after their occupation in February 1959. Since then there has been a permanent military presence on the Plateau*

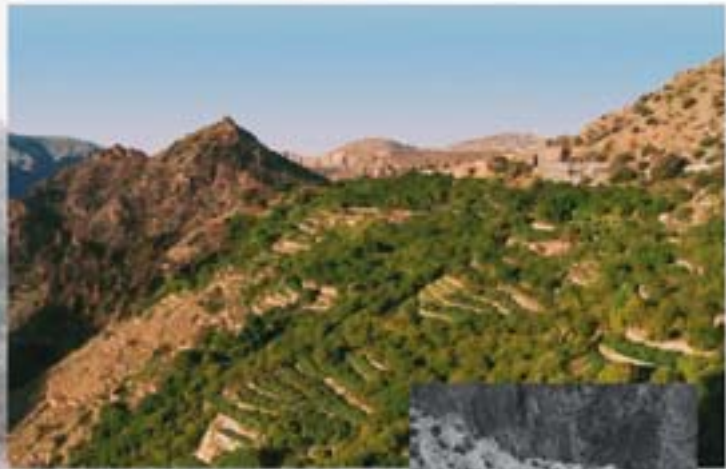


*Cliff edge on the north side of Casino-Sabrina ridge*



**Jebel Akhdar Campaign Medal**

*This was the first of all Omani medals, and was awarded to Officers and trained soldiers serving in SAF between November 1st 1958 and February 1st 1959*



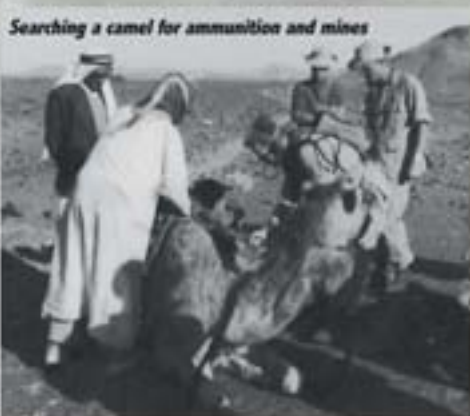
*Above Terraces below the rebel village of Shuraijah, shown right  
Left: Bani Habib from the south-west*



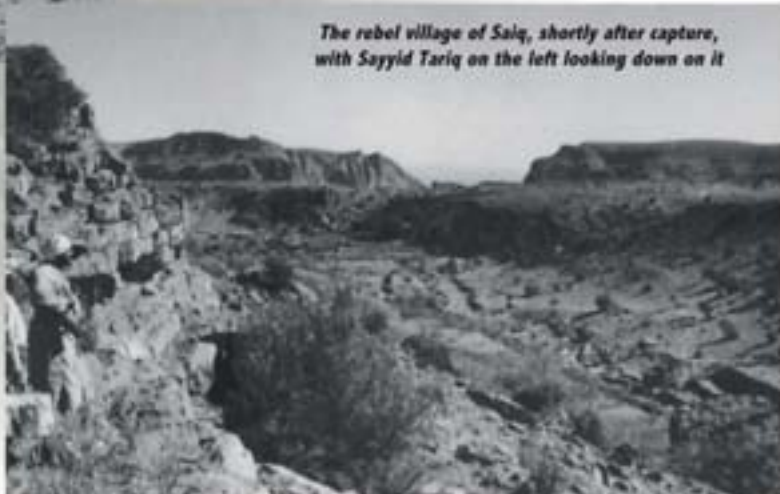
*Vehicles patrolling the foothills of the Jebel Akhdar looking for arms smugglers and rebels*



*Nizwa Camp - Tactical HQ for the Campaign*



*Searching a camel for ammunition and mines*



*The rebel village of Saiq, shortly after capture, with Sayyid Tariq on the left looking down on it*

### The Sultan's Gallantry Medal



This was the first of the Omani Decorations and was instituted in late 1959, but the first recipients were not promulgated until early 1960, for their actions during the Jebel Akhdar Campaign. Recipients can use the post-nominal letters WSh, taken from the Arabic 'Wisam Shuja'at'. It is an extremely rare medal and has only been awarded seventeen times; of these five have been posthumous.



**Sgt Ali Rashid MM. NFR. Section Commander at Nizwa, Jebel Akhdar, July to October 1958 and on 4 November 1958.**

During the last four months Sgt Ali Rashid has shown himself to be outstanding as a Junior Leader. He is a very skilled and efficient soldier, a first class Junior Leader and his courage and determination under fire has been an example to all ranks of his company, both British and Arab. As commander of the 'Special Patrol Section' he has acted as company leading scout on all operations and has played a leading part in every contact with the enemy.

On one occasion when on patrol he saved the life of a British non-commissioned officer, Sgt Reece, Royal Marines, who was in close contact with the enemy and had been shot twice from close range. Sgt Ali Rashid, realising Sgt Reece was in difficulty, left cover and shot a rebel at a range of ten yards. A few minutes later the section came under heavy mortar and machine gun fire and was pinned down. Sgt Ali Rashid, though wounded by a mortar bomb which fell ten yards from him, played a leading part in extricating the section. During the whole action, which lasted for over thirty minutes, Sgt Ali Rashid showed complete disregard for danger or his own safety.

He has always shown tenacity and determination to close with and destroy the enemy. In all circumstances he has been an inspiration to the rest of his company, whose morale has directly benefited.

*(Note : Sgt Ali Rashid also received the British Military Medal for the action on 4th November 1958)*

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# 44TH NATIONAL DAY

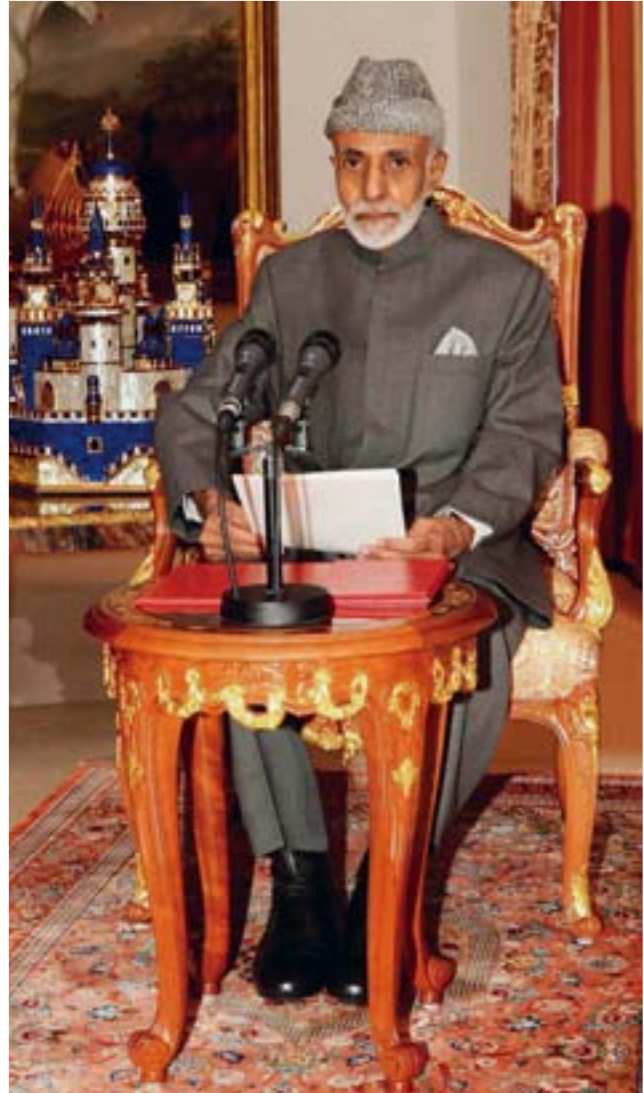
*His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces addressing the people of Oman on national television, greeting the citizens of the Sultanate on the occasion of the 44th National Day; as well as greeting the Armed Forces*

“We would also like to salute our courageous Armed Forces – with all its formations and in all areas of the dear homeland – for their commendable national role which has always earned our full appreciation.

“We reaffirm our continuous will to provide the Armed Forces with all equipment to enable them to perform their sacred duty of defending the territories of the nation and safeguarding its achievement.”

**His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said**, may Allah grant him good health and welfare, gave an audience at His Majesty’s house in the Federal Republic of Germany to **His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said**, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers and **His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said**, HM The Sultan’s Advisor in the presence of **Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi**, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court.

After getting reassurance about His Majesty’s health, they expressed their sincere wishes and prayers to Allah to shower His Majesty with care and grant him good health and a long life.



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# ROYAL OFFICE



**HE General Sultan bin Mohammad Al Nomani**, Minister of Royal Office receiving **Rt. Hon. Alan Duncan**, Minister of State for International Development of the UK on 9 February.



**HE General Sultan bin Mohammad Al Nomani**, Minister of Royal Office receiving **Lt. Gen. Sir Simon Mayall** Special Adviser to the British Minister of Defence for the Middle East on 29 September.

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*The Opening ceremony of the Armed Forces Hospital in Salalah under the auspices of **HE General Sultan bin Mohammad Al Nomani**, Minister of Royal Office on 3 September.*



# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (MOD)



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi**, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs (MRDA), receiving **HE Jamie Bowden**, UK Ambassador to The Sultanate in his office in Bait Al Falaj Camp on 24 September.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** receiving **Lt. Gen. Sir Simon Mayall** Special Adviser to the British Minister of Defence for the Middle East Affairs and **Lt. Gen. Thomas Becket** from the British Ministry of Defence on 29 September.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** visiting the Republic of Singapore to attend the Singapore Air Show from 9-14 February and received by HE Minister of Defence of Singapore.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** receiving **Lord Astor**, Under-Secretary of the British Ministry of Defence in his Office in Bait Al Falaj Camp on 16 September.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** presided over The Sultanate delegation to the First Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Defence Dialogue for (GCC) Countries and US in KSA on 13-14 May.



Office of COSSAF held a night of poetry "In Love of HM The Sultan" at the Alshafaq Club under the auspices of **HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** on 18 September.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** presided over the celebration of the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund commencing construction works of the Tourist Resort Project in Jebel Al Akhdhar on 23 March.



RNO celebrated the arrival of its vessel (*Shabab Oman III*) at Said bin Sultan Naval Base under the auspices of **HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** on 16 November.



**HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** presided over The Sultanate's Delegation participating in the meetings of the thirteenth session of the Joint Defence Council and the Defence Ministers of GCC States which was held at Bayan Palace in Kuwait on 11-12 November.





**His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces**, conferred medals of Excellent Service and Royal Commendation to a number of officers and personnel of the Ministry of Defence, Sultan's Armed Forces and the Royal Guard of Oman.

The ceremony was held at Bait Al Falaj Camp under the patronage of **HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** who presented the medals.



Royal grant to the military and national shooting teams for their outstanding representation of The Sultanate in International competitions distributed by **HE Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi** on 18 September. ■

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# OFFICE OF SECRETARY GENERAL AT MOD



**HE Mohammed bin Nassir Al Rasbi**, Secretary General at MOD, receiving **Susanna Mason**, Director General Exports and Commercial Strategy at the British Ministry of Defence on 23 February.



Oman Geospatial Forum 2014 was held by MOD National Survey Authority during 24-25 November at the Oman International Exhibition Centre under the auspices of **HE Mohammed bin Nassir Al Rasbi**.



RNO celebrating the reception of *Al Rahmani* vessel (2nd vessel of Project Khareef) at SBSNB under the auspices of **HE Mohammed bin Nassir Al Rasbi** on 17 March.



**HE Mohammed bin Nassir Al Rasbi** signed an agreement with the Lulu Group to run the military commercial complex on 12 November. ■



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# OFFICE OF COSSAF

*In all notes of the meetings that **Lt Gen Ahmed bin Harith Al Nabhani** has held with visiting dignitaries, to save repetition he is shown as COSSAF. Similarly, except where shown, meetings reviewed military cooperation between the countries concerned and matter of common interest were discussed.*



**COSSAF** receiving **James Wharten**, Member of the British Parliament in his Office in MAM on 25 May.



**COSSAF** receiving **Lt. Gen. Sir Simon Mayall**, Special Adviser to the British Minister of the Defence for The Middle East Affairs on 29 September.



RNO celebrating the reception of *Al Rasikh* vessel at SBSNB (3rd vessel of Project Khareef) under the auspices of **COSSAF** on 28 September.



Office of **COSSAF** celebrating the distinguished Officers, NCOs and Personnel of the Year under the patronage of **COSSAF** on 15 December.



**COSSAF** honouring international shooter Able Seaman **Wadha bint Nasser Al Balushi** for her brilliant records in the international competitions on 27 May.



The SAF Combat Shooting Team achieving first place in most competitions of the 2014 British Army Shooting Championship in Bisley. They were awarded many cups and medals during the period 25 June - 3 July. The Omani team won 26 Cups and 83 Gold Medals, 29 Silver and 26 Bronze. What an achievement!

*Sultan's Armed Forces celebrating 11 December, Armed Forces Day and 7 December, the Retirees Day.*



COSSAF participating in the meeting of the Supreme Military Panel for the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the GCC States in Kuwait on 29-30 October.



# ROYAL ARMY OF OMAN (RAO)

*RAO hosted the joint medical exercise “Medical Cooperation 3”  
executed by the Medical Services of the Armed Forces of  
GCC countries. 21-30 December.*



CRAO receives the Honorary Fellowship Certificate from The US Supreme War College on 25 August.



RAO, represented by a number of 23 Brigade units, executed the joint exercise “Ta’won 2” (Cooperation 2) with the participation of units from Qatar Emiri Armed Forces on 6 November.



CRAO honouring the distinguished officers, NCOs and personnel of RAO of the Year on 15 December.



National Free Fall Team participates in the 38th World Military Parachuting Championship 2014, Solo, Indonesia on 17-28 September. The team achieved 3rd place in the Target Competition and 7th place in the overall final results.



RAO Band participating in the International Military Festival for Military Bands in Edinburgh, Scotland held 25 July - 25 August.



RAO celebrating the graduation ceremony of new batch of cadets of Sultan Qaboos Military College under the auspices of **HE Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi**, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat on 7 December.



National Parachuting Team wins Asiana Parachuting Championship and Indonesia Open 2014, Bandung, Indonesia on 6-13 September. ■



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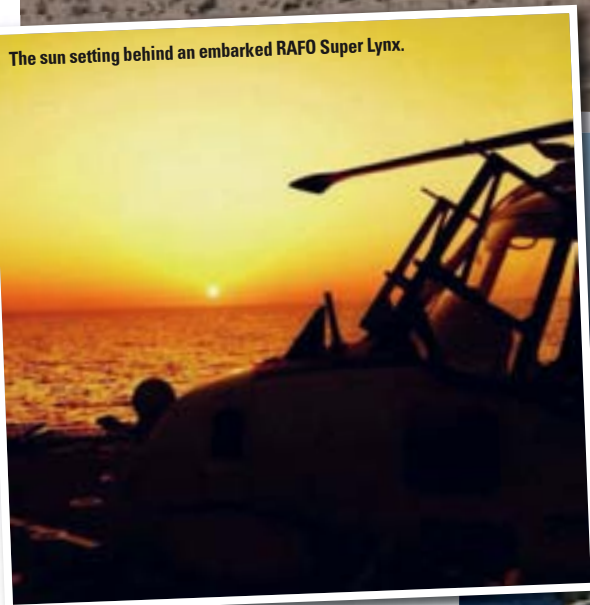
# ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN (RAFO)

It has been an extremely busy year for 15 Squadron, based at RAFO Musana. Participation in a number of exercises, including a major helicopter exercise in the UAE and with The Sultan's Special Forces, enabled new tactics to be developed and implemented. Aircraft were embarked in Royal Navy Oman vessels to support an exercise with the UK Royal Navy and Pakistani Navy, including multi-threat training, ASuW training and helicopter cross-deck training with the British and Pakistani ships. Development of the aircraft's defensive aids suite and offensive capability continues.

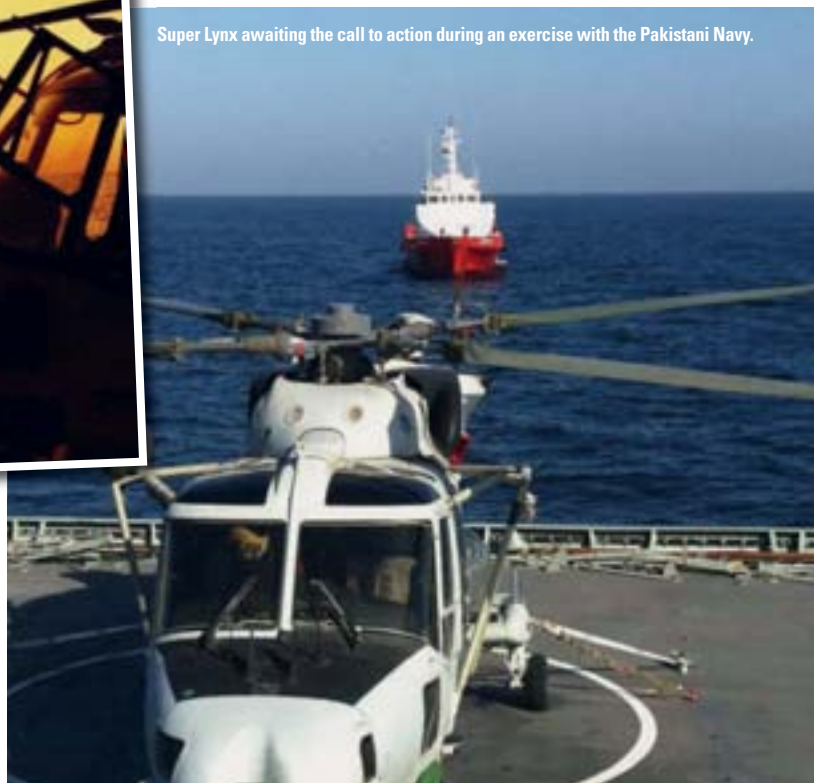


Super Lynx firing air to ground weapons during a live firing exercise.

The sun setting behind an embarked RAFO Super Lynx.



Super Lynx awaiting the call to action during an exercise with the Pakistani Navy.



*Development of the aircraft's defensive aids suite and offensive capability continues...*



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN

For 1 Sqn, RAFO Masirah, 2014 has been a challenging year which began with the grounding of the PC-9M fleet due to corrosion of the airframe. Whilst the Mushak fleet enabled Elementary Flying Training (EFT) for the new course of student pilots to continue in Oman, Basic Flying Training (BFT) students were dispatched to Croatia and South Africa, accompanied by RAFO QFIs, to continue their training. Many of these students have graduated successfully and have been posted to fighter, transport or helicopter AFT. PC-9M aircraft have now been repaired and both BFT and QFI training have recommenced at Masirah.



PC-9Ms in formation over Masirah.



RAFO C130J.

In its first full year of service with RAFO, 5 Sqn, detached to RAFO Seeb, made great progress with operational evaluation and introduction to service of the CASA 295 MTA. The aircraft now assists with RAFO's weekly transport schedule whilst developing its operational role, including challenging operations from Saiq.



RAFO CASA 295 MTA Tactical Flying in Spain.

*Many of these students have graduated successfully and been posted to fighter, transport or helicopter AFT.*



RAFO CASA 295 MTA in the Hajar Mountains.

**"After I lost my leg in an IED explosion in Afghanistan, the RAF Benevolent Fund helped me to get my independence back."**

**FORMER SAC MICHAEL GOODY**

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**To find out more, or to donate, visit [www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org)**



The RAFBF is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081006) and Scotland (SC038109)

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## JAGUAR FAREWELL

Finally, 2014 saw the retirement of the mighty Jaguar from RAFO service. The first Jaguar aircraft arrived in SOAF in 1977-78 with the 27th airframe being delivered in 1998. Over the intervening 37 years, the Jaguar was the mainstay of SOAF/RAFO's operational fighter capability. An entire generation of RAFO fighter pilots, including the current CRAFO, DG Ops, Dep DG Ops and 3 current station commanders, have held operational status on the Jaguar, cutting their operational teeth in air-to-ground and air defence roles. Supplemented and supported throughout by RAF Loan Service pilots and contract engineering, with RAF engineers too until the 'noughties', Jaguar operations and QRA were conducted from RAFO Masirah and RAFO Thumrait. An extensive avionics upgrade around the turn of the century provided new capabilities, such as NVG and laser target designation, which enabled the aircraft to

A number of the remaining aircraft have found their final resting place in AFTC at RAFO Seeb and the newly formed Military Technical College for technician/groundcrew training. The final flight was a 4-ship from RAFO Thumrait to RAFO Seeb on 23 July 2014 flown by the last remaining operational Jaguar pilots on 8 Sqn.



RAFO Seeb following the last flight of RAFO Jaguars (CRAFO centre back).



maintain its cutting edge: throughout, it remained a real pilots' aircraft whom most have been proud to fly. Many of us have heard the infamous stories such as the car flattened by a Jaguar and we have seen the pictures of the very low flying Jaguars (look on Google if not!), but it is important also to remember the massive contribution the aircraft and all those who flew it and worked on it made to the security of The Sultanate for almost 4 decades. Sadly, we have lost airframes and friends along the way, the aircraft being notoriously unforgiving, especially in the 'operating to the limits' environment of Oman.

RAFO Hawk over Jebal Shams.



Oman from Hawk Cockpit.



RAFO receiving the first new batch of the tactical aircraft (C-130J) on 14 April.



RAFO Pipes participating in the international competitions in Glasgow, Perth and Dundee, 9-16 August.



RAFO participating in the joint UK-Oman Air Exhibition in Hendon Museum. The air exhibition was inaugurated by **Air Vice Marshal Matar bin Ali Al Obaidani** in the presence of **Air Chief Marshal Andrew Pulford**, Chief of Staff of the British Royal Air Force.



CRAFO visiting the International Air Show at RAF Fairford Base on 11 July. ■



# ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN (RNO)

*Assigned by HM Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, HE Ahmed Bin Nasser Al Mehrzi, Minister for Tourism, presided over a ceremony held by RNO for the launching and naming of the new 'Shabab Oman II' sailing vessel on 8 May.*



*RNO executed the naval exercise "Khanjar Had" (Sharp Dagger) on 6 May with units of the Indian Navy.*



2014 Sultan Qaboos Sailing Trophy was presented to the Portuguese Association of Sail Training (Aporvela) by the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman in Spain, **Her Excellency Kifaya Alraisi** and **Commodore Yaqoob Al Kamashki** of the Royal Navy of Oman at the annual Sail Training and Tall Ships Conference 2014 in La Coruna, Spain, 14-15 November.



RNO celebrating the retirement of *Almabroka* vessel after completing 30 years in the service under the auspices of **Rear Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi**, CRNO on 19 August.



RNO participated in the joint naval exercise (Itihad 16) executed by the navies of (GCC) Countries, with support from RAFO on 22 February - 5 March. ■





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*RNO celebrated Annual Day on 3 November under the auspices of HE Lt. General Hassan bin Mohsin Al Shreiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs.*



## COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

*Staff and Command College celebrated the graduation ceremony of its 27th batch under the auspices of HE General Sultan bin Mohammad Al Nomani, Minister of the Royal Office on 21 July.*



# NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE (NDC)

The National Defence College (NDC) carried out the concluding strategic exercise (Decision Making – 1) for its first course, 8-19 June.



The National Defence College commencing the Second National Defence Course under the auspices of **Major General Salim bin Musalm bin Ali Qatan** on 3 September.



NDC celebrated the graduation ceremony of its first batch under the auspices of **HE Darwish Bin Ismail Al Balushi**, Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs on 22 July.

## *NDC, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Pact on Academic Affiliation*



The Board of the NDC held a meeting on 8 January chaired by **Lt. General Ahmed bin Harith Al Nabhani**, COSSAF, Chairman of the Board of NDC. ■



# CONCLUSION OF SAF 2014 ANNUAL SMALL ARMS COMPETITION

**HE Nasser Bin Hamoud Al Kindi**, Secretary-General of The Royal Court Affairs presided, on 3 April, over SAF 2014 Annual Small Arms Competition. He presented HM Medals to the best rifle and pistol shots.



Oman, represented by SAF, was chosen to host the 2nd edition of the CISM world football trophy in 2017 as announced by the President of the International Military Sports Council (CISM) during the 69th General Assembly & Congress – Quito, Ecuador on 7 May. ■





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# SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES GOLF MATCH 2014

## NINETEENTH ANNIVERSARY MATCH

*Monday 30 June 2014 at  
Dorset Golf and Country Club – Near Wareham, Dorset*

What a brilliant day we all had! The weather was glorious – dry, some sunshine, but with a nice cooling breeze so it wasn't too uncomfortable. The occasion was truly celebrated with an excellent lunch. This fixture is for those who have served in a military or civilian capacity in, or have a strong affection for the Sultanate of Oman, or adjacent countries in the Middle East and private guests with a military/police background. Ladies are most welcome to attend either as players or for the lunch only. This year we had 20 players with two extra ladies for lunch and we were pleased to see three lady players out for the second time.

Players ventured out from 10:08 in seven groups of three players. The match was followed by lunch where **Captain John De Winton** Royal Navy (Ex Chief of Staff for the Sultan of Oman's Navy) kindly presented the prizes.

We had some very good scores and a new winner this year **Richard Evans** (SON/Royal Navy) 40 points. Second was **Alec Armitage** (British Army) on 36 points. Third was **Martin Waterhouse** (Royal Navy) on 34 points. Fourth was **Nick Last** (Royal Navy) on 32 points. Longest drive was achieved by Nick Last (Royal Navy) and the nearest the pin was **Mark Whitley** (Royal Navy). The Ladies winner was **Honor Brown** who took home a bottle of sparkling Rosé wine.

There were 20 competitors on the Lakeland Course. It was nice to see some new faces attending our gathering for the first time. They were Nick Last (Royal Navy), Richard Evans (SON/Royal Navy), **Andy Sinclair** (Royal Navy Fixed Wing), **Jenny Waterhouse** (Guest), **Angela Lovegrove** (Guest/wife). It would be nice to make it 30 competitors next year and please bring wife, girlfriend, partner for lunch and perhaps to drive home!

The competitors were: Alec Armitage (British Army), **Ted Brown** (Guest), Honor Brown (Guest), **Graham Cross** (SOAF/Royal Flight), Richard Evans (SON Salalah/ Royal Navy), **Robin Gainsford** (Royal Navy/SON/Ministry of Environment), **John Gunning** (Commander SON), **Henry Hogger** (British Ambassador Syria/Basra), Nick Last (Royal Navy/Armillia Patrol), **Colin Lovegrove** (SOAF/RAF). Angela Lovegrove (Wife of Colin Lovegrove), **Patrick Sheahan** (British Army/Iran), Andy Sinclair (Royal Navy Fixed Wing), **Robin Snaith** (Military Insurance Broker), **Philip Sevier-Summers** (British Army/SOLF), Martin Waterhouse (Royal Navy/Submariner), Jenny Waterhouse (Wife of Martin Waterhouse), Mark Whitley (Royal Navy/Gulf LCTs), **Brian Whittingham** (Royal Navy) and John De Winton (SON/Royal Navy).

The course was in an immaculate condition but there is plenty of room for others to join us and let's try and make the next occasion up to 30 competitors, especially with more lady players and guests for lunch on **16 June 2015**. There will be plenty of prizes. The cost will only increase by one pound to £46.00. It would be particularly

nice to see some of the old faces who have played before, returning and challenging the winner. Please encourage all your eligible friends to join in. Please e-mail me, [robingainsford@hotmail.com](mailto:robingainsford@hotmail.com), if you have not already done so, to show interest and I will put you on my e-mail list. If you would like to stay at the club hotel, we can offer Bed & Breakfast for £40.00 per person and you could have another round the next day at 50% green fees. I would like to record my thanks to previous winners of the shield who have smartened it up and inscribed their names eg. Alec Armitage and Martin Waterhouse. ■

**Robin Gainsford** – 01929 471419 – [robingainsford@hotmail.com](mailto:robingainsford@hotmail.com)

## DUQM REFINERY DESIGN

**Alec Johnston** (SON, as it was then, 1974-1977) is a member of the Risktec team facilitating a high level technical risk assessment of the Refinery Design being finalised by Foster Wheeler using HAZOP (Hazard and Operability) techniques combined with SIL (Safety Integrity Level) Studies of critical control loops and interlocks. Alec worked on this project from August 2014 to February 2015. He has carried out similar studies in Salalah in support of Octal and their recent expansion.

Foster Wheeler in Reading were awarded a contract by Duqm Refinery & Petrochemical Industries for the Front End Engineering Design (FEED) of Phase 1 of the Duqm Crude Oil Refinery and Petrochemical Complex.

Located 600km south of Muscat, the capital of Oman, Phase 1 of the project comprises the development of a grass-roots refinery with a planned processing capacity of 230,000 barrels per day of crude oil.

The FEED includes the design of the crude distillation/vacuum distillation unit, sour water strippers, amine units, and offsite and utility systems, and the management of four licensors who are developing process design packages for licensed units. The FEED is scheduled for completion in the second quarter of 2015.

*Note:* Duqm Refinery & Petrochemical Industries Company LLC (DRPIC) is a 50:50 JV company owned by Oman Oil Company SAOC and International Petroleum Investment Company which was established by the Government of Abu Dhabi. ■

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# SOME EARLY MEMORIES

*by the late John Quinn*

## **HQ Sultan's Armed Forces, April 1974 – February 1979**

When I left London I was expecting a three-year contract working in the Defence Department, with the equivalent rank of captain. So I was surprised to be met at Seeb Airport by an Omani officer, **Mohammed Harith**, in uniform and telling me that I was to be an officer in the HQ of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). It was difficult to find out what I was to do as his English was very little better than my non-existent Arabic, but he took me to the camp at Bait al Falaj (BAF) and showed me to my quarters, one half of a portakabin, with an iron bed, a collapsible and collapsing wardrobe, an arm-chair and a desk and chair. There was an air-conditioner (A/C) fitted in the wall, which was essential, but sometimes of mixed value. This type of a/c was known, and rightly, as a wall-banger. They were very noisy and vibrated strongly, and in a portakabin this meant that the whole structure vibrated in time with the a/c – not conducive to sleep, to working or even to sitting doing nothing. I gathered that in the other half of the 'hut' was another officer with whom I shared a shower etc., between our rooms. It transpired that he was Baluch officer on the Garrison staff who was well established and became a mine of information on the funny ways of both SAF and BAF!

It was about two o'clock in the morning before I got to bed and to sleep, having been told that I would be collected at nine for breakfast before being taken to the office. Fortunately, I had brought an alarm clock or I would certainly have failed to make my first appointment. At the appointed time I was collected by a tall, grey haired but dapper British officer in very smart khaki drill uniform – shirt, shorts, red stable belt and beret and highly polished brown leather sandals. He introduced himself as **Major Peter Larg**, and we were to become not only colleagues but close friends for the rest of my time in Oman. Over breakfast, mulligatawny soup, cornflakes, bacon and eggs, etc., Peter briefed me on my job. I was to be the Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General (DAQMG), Operations, which was a staff appointment that I understood and which was very satisfying. I had come out to be a civilian in a dreary office in the grade of captain and I found myself as a major, with an important staff appointment in an operational HQ. There was a war on at the time, and just by chance, there had been a 20% increase in the rates of pay for contract officers since I had signed my contract in London! It seemed as though I had fallen on my feet at last.

Bait al Falaj was a sprawling camp, scattered about a white-painted 'Beau Geste' looking stone fort, where our offices were located. The 'Fort' was at least two hundred years old and had seen little in the way of improvements since it had been built. Changes to the use of its rabbit warren of little rooms were always temporary, but it had a charm and an interest all of its own. There were, for example, no loos. As a result there was a regular movement of officers to and from the Mess and, in the circumstances, this often meant a break for refreshments before returning to work. One other disadvantage of the Fort's construction was that it was very difficult to air-condition (AC) properly. My first office relied on a table fan to stir the air, and the dust, but mostly any paper on my desk. Eventually I was able to move to a more civilised office, but even here the AC was not very effective. Still, we were able to cope and, in extremis, there was always the Mess within five minutes' walk, and that was pleasantly cool most of the time. The majority of the other buildings were either portakabins or wooden huts with the occasional old stone bungalow. The Officers' Mess was more modern and reasonably comfortable, if simple, and there were a number of single-storey stone buildings where longer-serving officers lived. They were more interesting than my box and were very much in demand. Apart from the Fort the rest of the camp accommodated administrative elements such as the vehicle workshops, transport lines, stores, medical centre, telephone exchanges and the accommodation for all the soldiers who worked and lived there. Most of the latter were Baluch, Indian or Pakistani, but with a growing number of Omanis. There were also the offices of the Defence

Administrative Division, who filled the role of a ministry of defence albeit with no operational responsibilities. They dealt with finance, purchasing, recruiting contract officers (me) and bricks and works engineering. There were also the usual camp-followers – tailors, laundry, cookhouses, soldiers' canteens (no alcohol!) and open-air camp cinema. It was a little town in its way, very basic, and very, very dusty, but generally self-contained. Of course, there were also armed guards on the gates and the whole area was enclosed in a high, barbed-wire fence. While the war was being fought in the south of the country some 800 miles away, there was always a threat of attacks in the Capital Area, and we were on the fringe and would have been an attractive target.

But back to the job, and the armed forces I had joined. We were a mixed bunch, comprising some 8,000 souls – Arabs, Baluch, Indians, Pakistanis, British (including the occasional colonial Canadian, Australian, Rhodesian, South African), but no Americans. We had a small air force (Sultan of Oman's Air Force – SOAF) and a very small navy (SON), but the majority made up the Army, which at that stage were not designated as anything but SAF. The whole was commanded by a British Loan Service (seconded) Major General, and SOAF and SON had senior officers, again seconded but from the RAF and RN, who were responsible to the Commander, known as CSAF. When I joined he was **Major General Tim Creasey**, a good soldier and ideal for the post. At this time most of the officers were British except for the majority of doctors, who were Indian, a couple of Pakistani vehicle specialists and a number of Pakistani naval officers. By this time, too, there was the first sprinkling of Omani officers filling junior posts in the infantry regiments and one or two learning to be staff officers. The British contribution was made up of seconded or loan service officers in all three services, who did tours lasting from eighteen months to three years before returning to the UK, and a similar number of us who were there on contract. We were all former members of our own army, navy and air force, but were on three year contracts which were renewable on a yearly basis. I went for three years and stayed for eleven, but there were some who stayed much longer – one or two up to twenty-five years!

The war that was going on was in the south of the country and had been in progress for some six years, with occasional rumblings in the north. It had started as an internal movement to overthrow the ruling family but had developed into a political struggle between the Sultan and a significant number, 3-4000, of disaffected tribesmen primarily from Dhofar, the southern province. They were by now based in the communist state, The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), who, with the connivance and assistance of their own supporters from East Germany and Cuba, provided all support, equipment and training that an insurgent force might need, including in the middle of 1974, sophisticated Russian-made Surface to Air and Surface to Surface Missiles which had a noticeable impact, if only for a short while. At the beginning, they were much better equipped and trained than SAF but as time went on, and, crucially, oil was found providing the necessary finance, SAF became an efficient and effective fighting machine, thanks mainly to their British officers and the other support given by Britain. This was in the form of a battery from the Royal Artillery, a squadron of Royal Engineers, a squadron of the SAS and, crucially, a Field Surgical Team made up by surgeons and theatre staff from British service medical units, and a flight of RAF helicopters. By the time I arrived, the tide of war had turned in our favour, although only after some serious guerrilla fighting and significant casualties, and the final pattern of the war was becoming clear. But there was still some way to go. Oman was itself spending heavily on the war, foreign officers did not come cheap but were essential, and Omani soldiers needed a proper reward for the dangers they faced. But there was by now a reasonable helicopter force, jet ground attack aircraft and a comprehensive range of transport aircraft. Improved weaponry and communications were being introduced and the support structure

was improving all the time – again to British military standards. Finally, in this very brief summary of events, The Sultan had recognised the need to look after his soldiers and to plan for effective armed forces after the war. There was a wide programme of development of modern barracks and the infrastructure needed to sustain a modern army, navy and air force.

I have not forgotten that important support also came from Iran, in the form of a fully equipped brigade, some 2000 strong with guns and aircraft, with their own command structure but under the operational control of CSAF, and for a while a Special Forces unit and an Engineer squadron from Jordan. In a fit of generosity (and in anticipation of a purchase of new, modern replacements), **King Hussein** of Jordan, a close friend of The Sultan, presented The Sultanate with 36 Hunter ground attack aircraft. This may sound wonderful, but the aeroplanes were nearly all past their use-by date and, after they had all eventually landed at Thumrait, the desert airfield north of Salalah, only about a third ever flew again! But those that did fly played an important part in the later stages of the war and, in those days, gift horses were not for looking in the mouth.

It was here that I came in – how could I spoil it all?

I was responsible to the AA&QMG, a seconded Gunner Lt Colonel named **Sean Jackson**, for the day-to-day management of all the administrative elements serving primarily the Army, but in some common-user areas, the other two services also. My brief covered the following fields:

Unit movement, transport, supply of weapons, ammunition and warlike equipment, defence stores (barbed wire, corrugated iron, camouflage nets, etc.), personal equipment such as web equipment and boots, and generally anything that was necessary to keep an army fit to fight and also properly trained. There were separate departments officered by specialists in all these fields and I obviously worked closely with them and relied on their advice, but the responsibility for ensuring that what was needed, got to the right place at the right time was mine. This required close links also with the air force and sometimes the navy, to ensure that the air and sea transport was available when we needed it, sometimes at very short notice. The great strength of a force like ours was that we all knew each other well, both on and off duty, and this ensured that almost invariably things worked well.

One example of what was involved took place early in 1975, when a major operation was planned against the adoo in Dhofar. In preparation, significant amounts of stores and ammunition were moved south, but all did not go as planned and I spent several days with little respite, with a radio link to Salalah in my office, and another in my bait, dealing with a myriad number of requests for resupply. Whenever a request came in, I had to telephone the appropriate providing department to get what was needed to the airport, ask the air force for an aircraft and tie the two together.

The upshot of what had been a successful first year in SAF was that in April 1975, I was called into my boss' office and told that there was to be a reorganisation of the HQ, and that I was to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and to take over the post of GSOI (Operations, Staff Duties and Training).

In simplistic terms, as GSOI I was responsible for the implementation of force policies for the day-to-day supervision of three main areas of activity – operations in a general sense, organisation, which the Army calls Staff Duties, and training. I answered immediately to a British Loan Service Colonel named **Stewart Green**, who had been made the Principal Staff Officer and who worked directly to

CSAF who was an excellent commander provided one did one's job and also stood up to him when he was in a bullying mood which was not infrequently. CSAF directed policy, through his staff, down to the commanders of the formations beneath him. In so far as the war was concerned, this was the Commander Dhofar Brigade, while in the north there was Commander Northern Oman, who managed all the units in the area, primarily training and administrative units, ensuring that the necessary infrastructure for a complex military machine fighting a war, worked properly. It all sounds rather clever and a bit pompous but was in fact generally straightforward to anyone trained in the British Army and its staff systems and practices, slightly modified to suit the local situation, customs, people, language and weather, and the wide range of expatriate officers who made it all work – which it generally did.

To help me I had two staff-trained Loan Service Majors, **Leslie Barron** and **Ken Brown**, and two Captains, **James Innes**, a Coldstream Guardsman, and **George Morpeth (aka Lord Morpeth, a Viscount)** from the 9th Lancers). We also had a learner, a delightful Omani officer, Lieutenant **Ali al Harthi**. Again our clerical staff were all Pakistani ex-soldiers, trained in the way of The British Indian army and very good value, if occasionally a bit wayward and “Not understanding, Sahib!”

We all worked in the small complex of offices in Bait al Falaj Fort. There was an operations room where a map display of the country showed the dispositions of the whole of SAF and, in detail the deployment of troops and units on the ground in Dhofar. There were radio and telephone links to HQ Dhofar Brigade so that we could respond immediately to reports and requests and pass on orders and intelligence that we received. It was all a bit *ad hoc* but it worked, which was all that mattered, and it worked because everyone was adaptable and prepared to get involved and to react and to think on their feet. Anyone who couldn't was returned to England quite quickly. The result was a happy and effective staff and HQ generally and it was satisfying, interesting, rewarding and fun to be there. At the time we worked in English although moves were in hand to have orders and other papers translated. This did present problems for the Omani staff-learners, but they were very carefully selected and soon learned the sometimes eccentric ways of the British officer.

There was another occasion when we were invited to brief the Under Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Yussuf al Alawi**. He was a very sharp and well-educated Dhofari (from the Southern Province where the war was being fought), and had indeed been a rebel himself in the early stages of the conflict, but had seen the light and come over to The Sultan's side when he took power from the old Sultan. It was my first briefing at this level and I started in the way I had been taught, with a description of the ground on which the particular operation was being carried out. After a couple of minutes, Yussuf interrupted me, saying, “I think we can skip this bit, Colonel, I suspect I know the ground rather better than you or anyone else in SAF!” At least he said it with a glint in his eye and we understood each other, and remained on cordial terms thereafter. But it was a salutary lesson for me and I never underestimated the underlying tribal and political undercurrents again. On another occasion towards the end of the war a decision had been taken to shell a town in South Yemen in order to hamper the movement of enemy forces into Oman. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, a very polished, experienced and intelligent westernised Omani, named **Qais Zawawi**, had been asked by The United Nations to go at very short notice to New York and explain to the Security Council what had happened and why. CSAF was in Dhofar and was unable to get back in time and so I was deputed to give Qais the background. We talked for ten minutes on the tarmac at SEEB airport while his plane waited for him. He, too, was well able to follow our reasoning and after one or two questions, went on his way, to obtain total support for our actions from the UN. ■

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# JACK SULLIVAN

## **Jack was born in 1925 and lived something of a boy's own life...**

Jack Sullivan was S10 Salalah in the early 1970s. Here are a selection of some of his sketches which he did whilst in Oman.

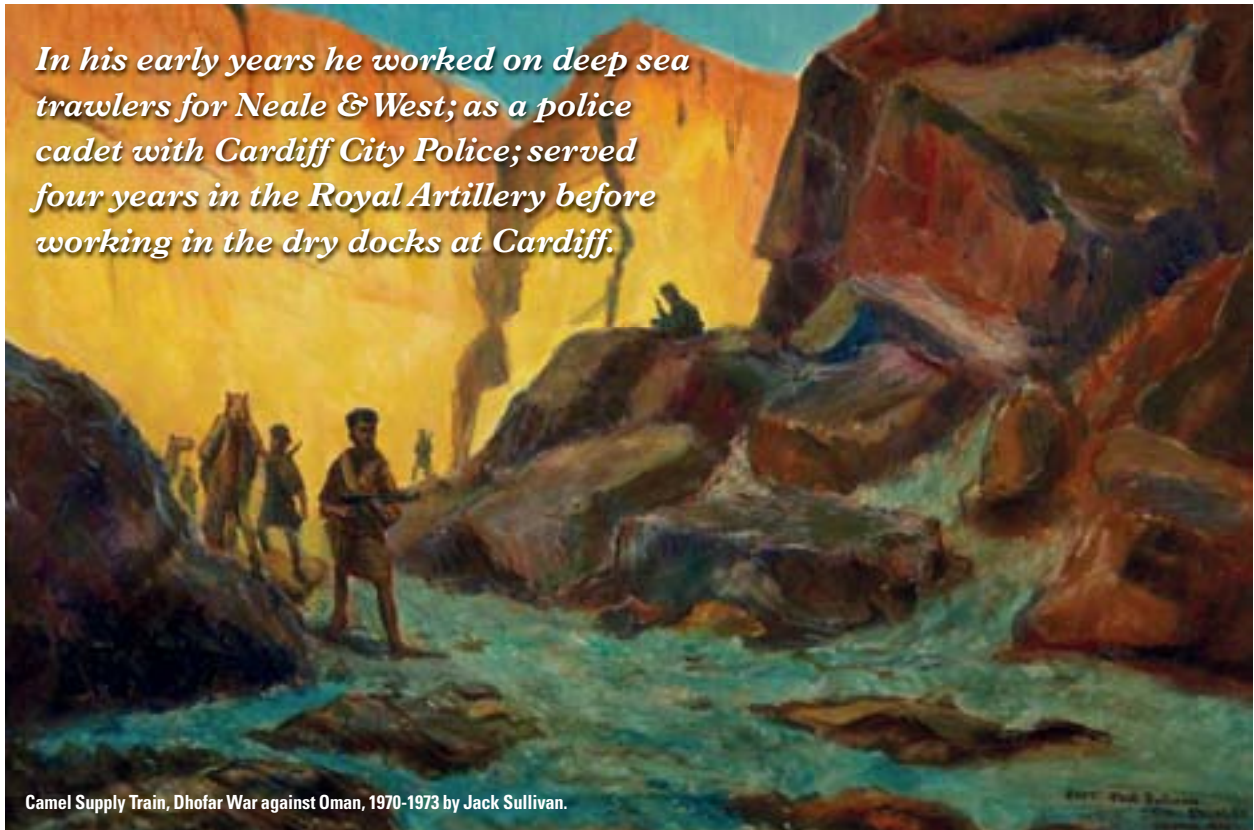
In his early years he worked on deep sea trawlers for Neale & West; as a police cadet with Cardiff City Police; served four years in the Royal Artillery before working in the dry docks at Cardiff. In 1949 he became Police Constable Jack Sullivan in the British Transport Commission Police at Cardiff Docks. In 1955 he joined the Kenya Police and served during the Mau Mau Emergency. Later he transferred to the Bahrain State Police working in Intelligence which led on to him joining the Royal Navy with the rank of Lt. Commander RNR, working in Naval Intelligence in The Middle East. When he eventually returned to Cardiff he worked with children and on schools projects in a voluntary capacity.

Throughout his life, Jack always kept a sketch book by his side and he painted hundreds of scenes depicting the world around him. He painted ships and the sea, people from the community including seamen, dockers and policemen as well as scenes from his years in Africa. He held many art exhibitions and became one of Cardiff's best known artists of recent times.

Several books have been written about Jack and his work including the story of the large mural which he designed for Stuart Street, depicting scenes from Butetown and the docks. Another excellent publication displaying many paintings from Cardiff's docklands is "Tramp Steamers, Seamen & Sailor Town" published by the Butetown History & Arts Centre.

**Jack Sullivan died in 2002**

*In his early years he worked on deep sea trawlers for Neale & West; as a police cadet with Cardiff City Police; served four years in the Royal Artillery before working in the dry docks at Cardiff.*



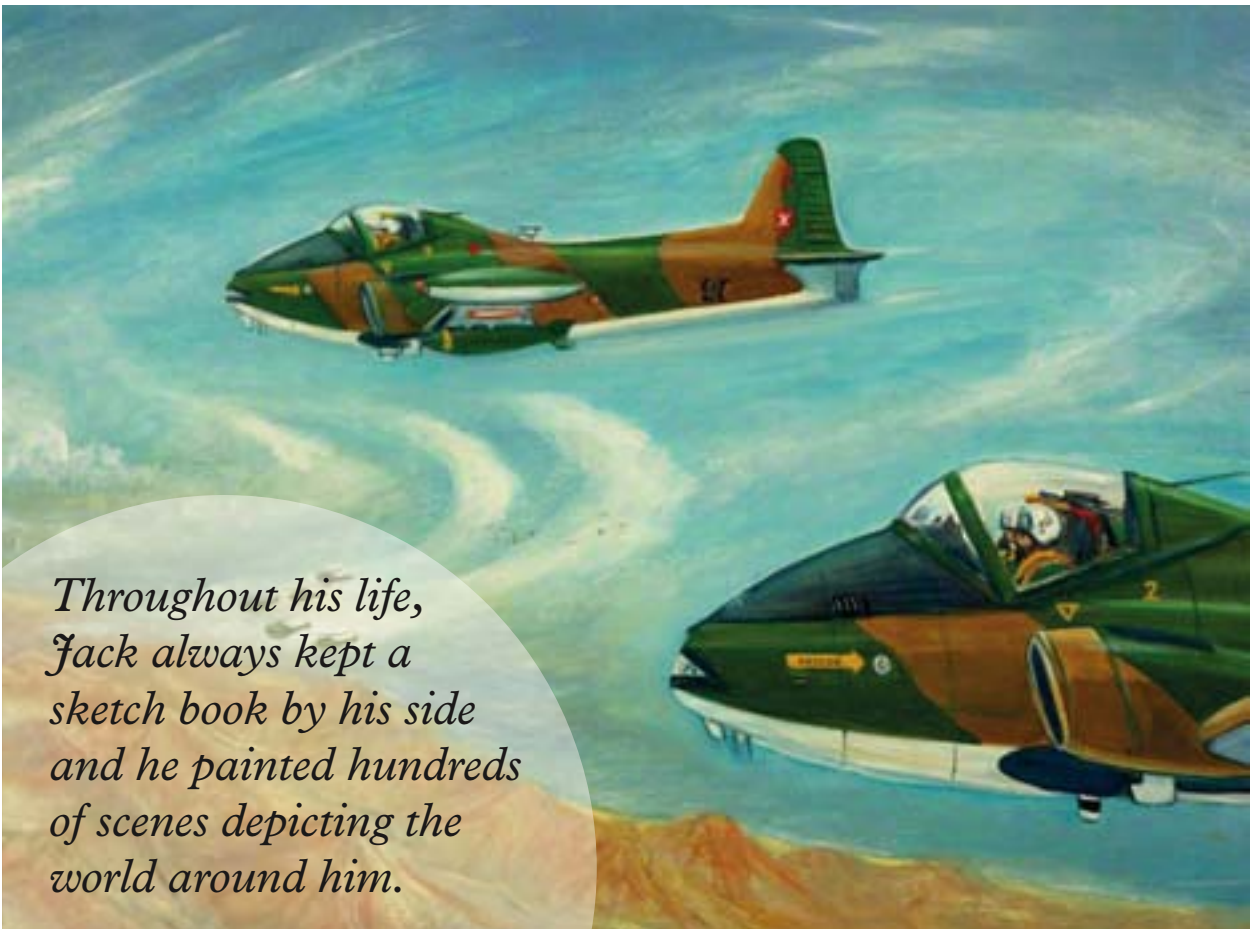
Camel Supply Train, Dhofar War against Oman, 1970-1973 by Jack Sullivan.



Hearts and Minds up on the Jebal, 11 October 1971, translating for an SAS doctor. Operation Jaguar by Jack Sullivan.



Dhofar War Memories, 1970-1973 by Jack Sullivan.



*Throughout his life, Jack always kept a sketch book by his side and he painted hundreds of scenes depicting the world around him.*

Top Cover for Operation Hornbeam, Dhofar War, 27 June 1973, by Jack Sullivan.



Battle of Mirbat, B Squadron and G Squadron, Dhofar War (SAS involved), 19 July 1972, by Jack Sullivan.

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# REMEMBERING...

## **Michael Gallagher, M.B.E., F.R.G.S., F.L.S.**

**Michael Gallagher**, who has died aged 92, was an outstanding naturalist, for whose services to wildlife conservation in Oman he was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire in January 1994. His wartime service in the Royal Army Service Corps took him round the Cape of Good Hope to join the 8th Army in the Western Desert of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, after which he went to Sicily and mainland Italy, before returning to England to join the British Liberation Army for the Normandy landings to end the war in Germany. His further service took him back to The Middle East, Guyana and Christmas Island where his interest in natural history flourished in places where little study had so far been carried out.

On retiring from the British Army in 1976 in the rank of Major, he joined the Office for Conservation of the Environment in The Sultanate of Oman, where he continued his study of natural history, wrote *'The Birds of Oman'* and set up the Oman Natural History Museum. By the time he retired from the Oman Government in 1998 no fewer than 29 wildlife species had been named after him, including mammals, reptiles, insects, a scorpion, a fish, molluscs and a plant. The author of many scientific papers, popular articles and books, his achievements were celebrated with a seminar, resulting in a Festschrift book in his honour entitled *'The Natural History of Oman'*.

Michael Desmond Gallagher was born on 2 September 1921 and went to Ardingly where he shot in the school VIII. Following his father, **Brigadier Henry Gallagher, CBE, BSc**, he joined the RASC as a volunteer at the outbreak of war and went to Sandhurst. Later he shot for his corps at Bisley. After the end of World War II he saw service in regimental and staff postings in Palestine, Gibraltar, BAOR, Guyana, Christmas Island, Bahrain and Sharjah. Adopting nature as a hobby, he led adventure training projects and was selected to join the 1974-75 Zaire River Expedition. His posting as DAQMG, Military Assistance Office, HQ British Forces Gulf in Bahrain led to close contacts with Oman. In 1973 he led a reconnaissance to study an area of the Jebel Al Akhdhar with a view to recommending boundaries for a national park. In 1975 he joined the first British Flora and Fauna Expedition to northern Oman and two years later led the second British Expedition to Dhofar. In January 1977 he joined the Office of the Adviser for Conservation of the Environment as Assistant Adviser (Field Studies) and was commissioned to write *'The Birds of Oman'*.

In 1982 Michael joined the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture under **His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said**, where



he established the Oman Natural History Museum and later extended it to include the Whale Hall and the Fossil Exhibition. Within the Museum he established the National Herbarium of Oman and its associated Botanic Garden, as well as the Shell and Coral Collections, the Insect, Invertebrate, Fossil, Osteological and other collections.

Michael's quiet manner sometimes masked his strong passion for natural history. He received specialists and students alike with warmth and dedication to push forward research in the hands of all who were interested, whether as a hobby or as professionals. Once, when at dinner with a prominent Omani family, his hostess asked what species the bat was that had just swooped over them. Without a flicker he replied, 'Look at page so-and-so and you will find out.' Only later did she discover that it was not a bat but a bird. Michael was such a gentleman that he

would never have contradicted her in front of others. Even after retirement, he was able to display his meticulous command of detail and plain language, as both author and a Contributing Editor for *The Journal of Oman Studies*. The carpet of wild flowers on the sea front by his house would never have been there but for Michael's persistence that influenced local affairs in his latter years.

In 1975 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and was awarded the Zoological Society of London's Stamford Raffles Award for 1993 in recognition of his 'contributions to zoology, in particular to Arabian ornithology'. In 1994 he was elected a Fellow of the Linnaean Society of London. His bibliography extended to over 114 books, scientific papers and articles in popular journals, a record that would be the envy of many a university professor. He never married.

He died peacefully in his sleep on the morning of 27 July 2014.

**David Insall**

## **Mr Robert Alston CMG QSO DL, Chairman The Anglo-Omani Society and former HM Ambassador to Oman:**

"...I served as British Ambassador to Oman in the late 1980s whilst Michael was still here, working at the Natural History Museum. He was at the same time a real gentleman and someone with a real determination to create, for the first time, a modern understanding of the country's natural heritage. His *'Birds of Oman'*, produced at about that time, remains the standard work and is in a class of its own. Oman owes him full recognition as one of a pioneering generation..."



### John Quinn

John, who died on Wednesday 2 April 2014, was commissioned into The Royal Artillery on 6 February 1953. He had a standard army career alternating between regimental and staff appointments until 1970 when he retired. He then ran a nursing home in Suffolk; was the Factor on the Isle of Colonsay for a year, and worked for Nicholson Harris in London, a city financial firm. He was then in the Emergency Planning Department in Wiltshire County Council.

In Oman John was DAQMG HQ SAF and then became GSO1 from April 1974 to February 1979. After leaving HQ SAF he joined the Oman Research Department from February 1979 to April 1985 as Controller Admin and Assistant Director General Support.

John was a member of the SAF Association Committee for a number of years. He and Nigel Knocker jointly edited the SAF Association Journal from 1990 to the time of his death.

He played a full part in the life of the village of Poulshot being a churchwarden for 13 years and a member of the PCC.

John was a rumbustious character, full of life and fun and was always ready to help anyone who needed it. In his youth he was a keen and accomplished rigger player, and in Oman a referee for the Oman RFC. He was also an enthusiastic amateur actor and took part in amateur dramatics both in Oman and UK.

John took an Open University degree in Humanities with History and achieved a 1st Class BA (Hons) of which he was particularly proud.

Our sympathy goes to Suzie who supported him so magnificently during his long illness, and to Robin and Tessa and the grandchildren.

**Nigel Knocker**

### Wing Commander PMC (Mike) Welply RAF Regiment

**Mike Welply**, born 3 May 1934, died on 18th February 2015 aged 80. From 1973 to 1975 he commanded No. 51 Squadron RAF Regiment which, along with 2 Squadron and 15 Squadron, completed regular detachments to RAF Salalah to provide airbase protection during the Dhofar campaign. Many members will remember Mike's enthusiasm and energy as his squadron embraced their role and provided aggressive forward defence from the fortified "Hedgehogs" out on the plain well beyond the airfield perimeter.

Working closely with SAF units and the Royal Artillery Cracker Battery, the RAF Regiment Squadrons deployed considerable firepower, communications and transport. As well as mounting operations in their own right, they released scarce SAF infantry units for forward operations on the Jebel and were thus true force multipliers. Mike and his colleagues pioneered Force Protection techniques and tactics in Salalah which proved successful in later conflicts in the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most of Mike's early service was with RAF Regiment squadrons at home and abroad. After commanding 51 Squadron, he served on exchange duties with USAF in Washington before a series of staff appointments. He was promoted to Wing Commander in 1981 and retired early, at his own request, in 1984 to work in the City of London. He was a founding member and Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals and was made a Freeman of the City of London.

Mike and his family settled in Thame, Oxfordshire; he became Mayor of Thame in 2002 and Chairman of Oxfordshire District Council in 2010. He remained a staunch supporter of the RAF Regiment in retirement and was awarded the Commandant General's Commendation for outstanding service to the Corps in 2014. He also cherished his memories of service in Dhofar and was a proud member of the SAF Association. He is survived by his wife, **Sue** and son, **Ben** to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

**Tim Jones**

### Philip Cookson

**Philip Cookson** sadly died on 28 June 2014. Philip served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1973 mainly in submarines. From 1965-67 he commanded OBERON and was much involved in the confrontation with Indonesia. He perfected a system of launching Royal Marine SBS from under the surface of the water to land them on the coast. Amongst his "passengers" was **Paddy Ashdown**, later leader of the Liberal Democrats. He commanded the submarine school at HMS DOLPHIN at Gosport from 1969 to 1970. This was followed by service in Lisbon where he helped to establish a new NATO command structure in Portugal mainly on the intelligence aspects.

His service in Oman was initially with SON where he was Staff Officer (Operations) and then Chief Staff Officer (Operations). In both appointments he was quietly and extremely efficient and helpful. He then served in the secretariat on the staff of CDS. After this Philip became the Naval representative on the Omani Joint Military Intelligence Staff in which he was most effective in analysing and



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briefing on the naval aspects of the “tanker war” during the Iran Iraq war. He was able to make visits to tankers at sea which had been struck by Iranian missiles.

He was always keenly interested in Oman and served as a committee member with the Anglo-Omani Society.

Philip married **Nicola** in 1962. She sadly suffered a severe stroke and Philip looked after her as best he could despite suffering himself from dementia until his death. We send our condolences to all his family. He will be much missed.



### Wing Commander Andrew Coak

**Andrew** died quite suddenly aged 70, on 27 August 2014. He was the son of **Major Ernest** and **Mrs Eileen Coak**. Studying at St Erbyn’s and Humphry Davy schools, he played rugby for the Cornwall Schools XV and then later, taught at Milton Abbey School, Dorset.

Andrew Frank Howard Coak joined the Royal Air Force in 1970. In 1983, as a Squadron Leader, Andrew was seconded to The Sultan of Oman’s Air Force as the Senior Administration Officer initially at Thumrait and then Salalah. As a contract officer, Andrew moved to HQRAFO as the Senior Personnel Staff Officer. It was in Northern Oman that he met **Veronica**, who worked as an FMS nurse; they married at the British Embassy in 1989. That year he was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander.

He was deeply involved in the creation and construction of the Jebel Park Golf Club at Ghallah and was a most popular Captain from 1989 to 1991.

In 1993 at the inception of the RAFO Air Academy at RAFO Ghallah, Andrew served as the first OC Officer Cadet Training Wing.

Andrew was awarded the WKhM in 1995. In 1999 Andrew and Veronica returned home to Pendeen, Cornwall. He ran the Centre for Pendeen and was Captain of the Senior Section West Cornwall Golf Club. In addition he was an invaluable member of the Old Penwithians’ Association; as their Secretary, he worked tirelessly to save and restore the School War Memorial, which was completed and rededicated on 1 May 2014, just four months before he died. A great contributor, companion and story teller, he is very sadly missed.

Our condolences go to his widow, Veronica; daughters **Julia** and **Emma**; a son, **James**, and grandchildren **Olivia**, **Jonathan**, **Benjamin** and **Amber**.

Colin Lovegrove

### Major AS (Ali) Harvey

**Major AS (Ali) Harvey** RA (Retd) died peacefully in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary on 26 January. He was having treatment for cancer and contracted pneumonia. Most of Ali’s regimental soldering was done in the Commando Gunners, but in addition he served twice in SAF, in the Oman Artillery: firstly as OC Izki 1977-1979 and latterly as SO2 Arty Ops/Trg 1984-1985.

Ali was a stalwart operator who set high standards and had a considerable influence on the professional development of young Omani Officers. Our thoughts are with **Christine**, his widow, his children and grandchildren. ■

# DEATHS

The following deaths have also been recorded:

- 16 May 12 **OASIM ALI MUHAMMAD HASHIM**  
(Chief Clark Salalah Garrison 1970-1990)
- 28 Mar 14 **Ian Sprackling**
- 20 Mar 14 **Alan Howard – Harwood**
- 2 Apr 14 **John Quinn**
- 9 Jun 14 **David Woodcock**
- 23 Jun 14 **John Hutton**
- 28 Jun 14 **Philip Cookson**
- 27 Jul 14 **Mike Gallagher**
- 27 Aug 14 **Andrew Coak**
- 8 Nov 14 **Neil Porter**
- 8 Nov 14 **Ashley Tinson**
- 14 Dec 14 **Donald Macsween**
- 26 Jan 15 **Ali Harvey**

## JOINED IN 2014

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sam Supple</b>             | Drum Major SOLF 77-85                     |
| <b>Brian Carter</b>           | MR 66-67                                  |
| <b>Garry Duffy</b>            | SAF Sigs 07-10                            |
| <b>Chris Pollard</b>          | RYS 92-99                                 |
| <b>Martin McGowan-Scanlon</b> | Ops/Trg Officer OCR 80-82                 |
| <b>Peter Lynch</b>            | RA Detachment 71-72                       |
| <b>Kevin Gorman</b>           | RAF Salalah 71/72                         |
| <b>Gregory Blunden</b>        | SAF Eng 11-14                             |
| <b>Peter Cogan</b>            | Senior Artillery Adviser 06-09            |
| <b>Tony Calder</b>            | NFR 64-65                                 |
| <b>Peter Everard</b>          | 2IC B Squadron OG, OC Para Training 76-80 |

## LOST CONTACT IN 2014

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>JB Saunders</b>           | Apleton                  |
| <b>Major RJ Kane</b>         | Salisbury                |
| <b>Major Gen. JJJ Phipps</b> | BATT 70-82               |
| <b>Captain C Wilson</b>      | AIRWORK & SAF SIGS 69-74 |
| <b>C Allum MBE</b>           | SOAR 82-84               |
| <b>Wg. Cdr. Wilson</b>       | SOAF 80-83               |
| <b>J Lawton</b>              | SOAF 84-86               |
| <b>Lt. Col. NR Forrestal</b> | JR 76-78                 |
| <b>ACG Gordon</b>            | Miami                    |
| <b>Mr Scott</b>              | RAFO 84-95               |
| <b>Col. T. Browne</b>        | Hyde Park Barracks       |

Please let us have up-to-date contact details, home and email addresses.

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# JEBEL JOTTINGS 2 DONKEYS TO DIANA

*by Tim Jones (Grey 39, 1972-74)*

As the mid-1973 monsoon season approached, SAF was well established on the Jebel in Dhofar – but was very stretched.

In the far west, on the border with South Yemen, the isolated battalion at Sarfait (Op Simba), continued to take “incomers” most days whilst dominating the Capstan and Khadrafi areas below the escarpment. Manston had become a key logistics base, forward airhead and mounting base for further operations. The Hornbeam positions north of Mugshayl were in place but had not yet been fortified into a wired and mined obstacle line. Meanwhile, the Diana positions north of Salalah had succeeded in reducing the risk of further adoo stand-off attacks onto the airfield. They also provided defended OPs for the artillery (Cracker Battery) and mortars (RAF Regiment) based at the “Hedgehogs” surrounding RAF Salalah. In the eastern area, although the “jaysh” presence had reduced, there were still important positions to be maintained and civil development programmes to support.

Consequently, the helicopters of SOAF were in great demand carrying water, ammunition, food, defence stores, troops, mail and even live goats to the widely deployed forces. Emergency stocks were needed everywhere to sustain operations during the forthcoming monsoon when the “khareef” or low cloud clings to the ground and the foothills of the coast in Dhofar often making flying very hazardous or impossible.

Into this situation 3 company Jebel Regiment were redeployed from Op Simba to Um al Gwarif to become the Brigade reserve. One of our first tasks was protection of a resupply operation to Diana 1 which, at first glance seemed fairly straightforward. **Nigel Knocker** (acting Brigade Commander) explained, “You just have to provide, before first light, two lines of pickets along a couple of ridges running north of Salalah. The helis can then safely fly low up the gully you are protecting to re-supply Diana 1 during the morning. Roll the pickets back once the helis are finished and you’ll be back for dinner. By the way, since you are going up the hill, use the donkey platoon to carry some supplies with you to save a couple of heli lifts. But you’d best use trucks to take the donkeys across the plain through the Hedgehogs to the foothills or they’ll be knackered before you start! **Spike Powell** (Z Company) can take you across the plain giving flank protection and secure your start line, Cracker Battery and the RAF Regiment will provide fire support. Oh, don’t forget to muzzle the donkeys! Any Questions?”

Well, perhaps not so straightforward but, several hours later, after a typical SAF inter-service/cross-unit brainstorm session, tremendous co-operation and helpful advice, orders, and even some rehearsal, we were off. However, it was immediately clear that the donkeys had not listened to the orders, had not attended the rehearsal, and had no enthusiasm for leaving their stables in the middle of the night! Eventually they were manhandled into the trucks but, by the time we had reached the Hedgehog outer defences of RAF Salalah, several had eaten their muzzles and were complaining loudly about their disturbed night. Scoops of RAF sugar seemed to help and at last we unloaded amongst the anthills,

checked maps and compasses, and set off up the ridges with Spike’s unmistakable chuckle sending us on our way into the darkness. Then it started to rain.

Some years earlier I had served in Borneo and Malaysia and patrolled jungle ridges but this was different. The ground was savagely broken with rocks, mud and sharp bushes making progress very hard work. As we climbed ever higher, dropping off gun groups and half sections at picket points en route, the heavily laden donkeys seemed to dance their way along the impossible path whilst we mere mortals slipped, stumbled, and fell, cursing bruised knees and elbows as we went. It was a real nightmare and we were indeed fortunate that the adoo were not waiting for us – or perhaps they were too busy laughing!

After hours of wet and slippery torture we reached the last picket spot and made contact with our callsigns on the other ridge. We were all in position – amazing!! As dawn broke, we could hear the beat of a 205 as it emerged through the drizzle below us, on its way to Diana 1 with its 4 burmails in the underslung net. Alhamdulillah – we are on the right ridge!! Of course we knew that – the donkeys would have told us if we weren’t!

Re-supply complete and 2 heli sorties saved = one casevac or 2 days of water? Mabruk the donkeys! Mission accomplished and we did make it back for dinner. Spike was still chuckling.

Thanks Colonel Nigel, a bit different from Simba!! What next? ■

## What next?

(By Nigel Knocker)

This lighthearted article by Tim, which vividly describes the operation, was the prelude to the establishment of the Diana positions on the Jebel thus preventing adoo attacks on RAF Salalah, and also driving the adoo back into the Jebel. As a result, following a visit by Lord Carrington, then UK Minister of Defence, the UK support for Oman in all its aspects was continued – a far reaching what next.)

## FOR YOUR DIARY

FRIDAY 12 JUNE • COCKTAIL PARTY  
ARMY AND NAVY CLUB



TUESDAY 16 JUNE • ANNUAL GOLF MATCH  
DORSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB



SATURDAY 11 JULY • RUDDLE CUP  
POLO TOURNAMENT, TEDWORTH POLO CLUB



SUNDAY 26 JULY • WESSEX LUNCH  
SOUTH CADBURY

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# A STORY FROM 1938

I recently received some family correspondence from a cousin which included a letter to his grandparents from his father **Group Captain James Chapple**, a regular RAF officer, who made a forced landing on the Oman coast in 1940. At the time, he was serving as a junior officer with 31 Squadron in Peshawar flying Vickers Valentias in the Waziristan campaign. I quote the relevant extract from his letter below and thought it might make an interesting inclusion in the next journal, particularly for SOAF members. When forced to make an emergency landing on what appears to have been the Musandam Peninsula he was flying a team from India to collect new aircraft in Aboukir, Egypt from where the letter was written.

*"I was forced lower and lower until we were only 300ft above the sea in driving rain and could actually see the sharks swimming about! Still 20 miles from the rocky coast of Oman I was sitting in my cockpit in about 2" of water, soaked and blinded while the machine was being thrown all over the sky like a feather. It was completely out of control twice! We RAF pilots only send out calls for assistance when it is a case of life or death and at last I had to do this through my wireless operator. Then I told all the chaps [the crews for the three returning Valentias] to put on their life saving jackets and be prepared "to take it" if I hit the water. I don't think I'm a coward but I knew real fear at that moment especially with all the helpless chaps sitting in the back relying on me to win though. Thank god I made the shore but here a fresh danger threatened – the mountains (I could not get over them owing to clouds and lightning) rise sheer out of the water to 5,000' and there are no beaches to land on – it is a desolate land of volcanic rocks and gorges. Eventually with only 1/2 hour of petrol left I did the only possible thing – I ran down the coast towards Muscat. Here at 7 o'clock (dusk was falling) I found a sandy beach and risked a forced landing – it was successful! It was near an Arab village called Kalba [across the peninsula from Dubai] and soon a crowd of heavily armed Bedouins arrived – would they be friendly was the general question? Luckily they were and the Sheikh – one **Hamid Bin Abdullah** – insisted on sharing his house and food for the night. I had got through by wireless to Habbaniya and told them we were safe. I have never experienced such hospitality as these simple desert folk extended to us. We sat around in a ceremonial circle and 47 dishes of food were placed on the ground before us. Luckily the Sheikh's brother spoke Urdu and I conversed with him. After two hours we took ceremonial coffee and cigarettes and the Sheikh told us that we could retire which we did gratefully. Next morning petrol was brought from Sharjah by plane and we took off after much "salaaming" and rifle shooting by the tribesmen. We spent two days doing inspections then continued our slow progress against head winds to Bahrein Isle and Shaibah. We stayed at Habbaniya and Amman owing to bad weather and eventually struggled in here after taking 41 hours of gruelling flying from India. We are staying in Egypt for a week..."*

I think it is a wonderful example of the Omani hospitality those of us who served in Oman experienced. My uncle was not always so lucky as he was shot down piloting a Halifax over the German/Dutch border in May 1943 and had a somewhat less cordial stay in Stalag III the Great Escape Camp.

Christopher further consulted his cousin who added the following: *"Also the readership may not realise that the Valentia was a large biplane which carried about 20 passengers and had an open cockpit at the front for 2 pilots sitting side by side."*

**Christopher Allanson**  
NFR 1964 / SAFTC 1965

The story of the Musandam landing got me thinking that, as foot soldiers, we probably all had one hairy experience in the air in Oman – other than being flown upside down before breakfast in a jet provost (to be shown the country!) on arrival as part of the initiation rights. One sensed that the SOAF pilots quite enjoyed the thrill of seeing a soldier get out of the plane looking very green...

My own hairy moment came on a mid morning flight from Nizwa to Saiq where, as you know, the winds got quite strong as the morning progressed. I joined the sixth and last Beaver flight, all rations etc., having been already airlifted. As we approached the top of the jebel the engine cut out momentarily and we enjoyed a particularly 'close' view of the village (forget the name but the one just under the crest) before the engine was brought back to life and we managed to hoist ourselves over the crest. It was probably only a couple of seconds but seemed an awful lot longer. We had a rather bouncy landing and repaired to the small mess immediately for a very large brandy. Even the pilot, who had done a heroic job, needed fortification. I forget his name now but, I do remember he was just off Beverleys in Bahrain and this was his first flight up the mountain. He told me that he had to discipline himself to remember the Beverley was much higher off the ground than the Beaver! ■

## 2015 SAF ASSOCIATION DINNER

will take place in the

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FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2015

PLEASE APPLY BY 13 NOVEMBER 2015 AT THE LATEST

To: Neil Fawcett

Two Oaks, Mayfield Fold, Burnley BB11 2RN.

## 2015 SAF ASSOCIATION COCKTAIL PARTY

will take place in the

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FRIDAY 12 JUNE 2015

The usual eats will be provided

PLEASE APPLY BY 22 MAY 2015 AT THE LATEST

To: Neil Fawcett

Two Oaks, Mayfield Fold, Burnley BB11 2RN.

# SUPPORTING OUR SAF ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

## *Dr Jane Hanley's Study into Post Natal Depression*

**Hon Senior Lecturer in Perinatal Mental Health.  
Past President of the International Marcé Society for Perinatal  
Mental Health  
College of Human and Health Sciences  
Swansea University, Wales**

Jane Hanley, who was in the Force Medical Services from 1979 to 1983, a very active member of the Association and very well known to many of us, has completed a detailed study on Post Natal Depression. You may wonder what this actually has to do with us! Well quite a lot.

In 2011 Jane asked if we could help her to get to Oman and perhaps arrange some funding. **Neil Fawcett** and **Nigel Knocker** approached the Anglo-Omani Society who approved a grant to help her with her study. Jane completed her study in 2014 and has produced a detailed thesis on the subject. This took a great deal of preparation involving a variety of agencies in Oman. Just to illustrate some of this Jane says:

"I made the following arrangements prior to my visit

- Contacted the Oman Embassy for the contact addresses of relevant personnel
- Contacted the lead in the project, Prof Samir Al Adawi, Clinical Psychologist Sultan Qaboos University Oman
- Sought and was granted ethical approval for the research from the ethics committee in Sultan Qaboos University
- Contacted academics and psychiatrists in Sultan Qaboos University to discuss and record the treatment options for mothers in both Muscat and villages outside the main towns
- Explore the in-patient facilities for mothers with mental health problems with their babies
- Contacted personnel in the new psychiatric hospital."

This is a highly specialised subject. We congratulate Jane on the work that she has done. If anyone would like to see the report please let us know. ■

## **2015 WESSEX LUNCH**

This year's Wessex Lunch will once again be held at **The Camelot, South Cadbury, Somerset BA22 7EX** on **Sunday 26 July 2015** starting at **1200** hours. The cost will remain at £25 per head which includes spit roast (probably lamb) with all the trimmings, choice of puds, wines, beers and soft drinks. Other drinks may be purchased at the bar for cash. Booking requests, together with cheque made payable to **Wessex Lunch** should be sent to **John Kirkham, The Old Rectory, Oake, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AR**. Early booking is advised as numbers are limited. If an acknowledgement is required please supply an SAE or an email address.

## **SAF ASSOCIATION TEE, SWEAT AND POLO SHIRTS**

For 2015 the embroidered SAF emblem is being offered in the colours of your choice. The original version is in red with black detail and lettering, but should you wish to have the design in another colour, please do specify with your order.

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# A SERVICE TO REMEMBER

*There was a strong SAF turnout on 6 January 2015 for the Service to Remember Captain Nigel Loring WB, Light Infantry, held in the KOYLI Memorial Chapel of St John, York Minster. Nigel was killed on 6 January 1975 during Op Dharab at Sherishitti whilst commanding 2 Company, The Jebel Regiment.*

## **Eulogy by Colonel Patrick Shervington MBE representing The Sultan's Armed Forces**

**Nigel** and I served on Secondment to the Sultan's Armed Forces 1974-75. We were brother officers together in the Jebel Regiment, jebel meaning mountain.

This is a poignant occasion, 40 years on to the day that Nigel was killed leading his Arab soldiers on operations in the mountains of Dhofar, the southern province of Oman.

**Louise, Mary and Anthony**; thank you for the love and vision for this tribute service to remember your brother. And we remember too your dear parents, **Toni** and **Walter** and all your family, especially Nigel's nephews and nieces. Thank you as well to **Ian Savers** and The Light Infantry, Nigel's Regiment, of which he was so proud. And I'm sure he would be equally proud of The Rifles. The first eulogy by **Richard Cousens** has given a vivid account of Nigel's service in his Regiment and I will be reinforcing and echoing his words.

It is a privilege to share today with you. There are several of us here from our Oman days: Contract and Loan Service officers, slightly battered perhaps, 40 years on! Omanis have a delightful phrase for us: "Grey Beards!"

This is actually an expression of respect and affection. Indeed, three years ago on a SAF Association visit to Oman, the Army Commander told us that our service and sacrifice had played a key part in the success and stability of his country today. That is an accolade and recognition that we greatly value. Those of us here with you are representing all who fought in the Dhofar War from many Nations, but especially from the British Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, Special Air Service and a wide range of civilians 'in support'.

Our village in North Wiltshire has a book club and this month we are reading a novel by **Gabriel García Márquez**. To quote from it: "I returned, trying to put the broken mirror of memory back together from so many scattered shards." My memories of Nigel remain vivid.

Cast your minds back to the mid-seventies. Yes, The Troubles in Northern Ireland were still in full swing, but there was also, dare I say, the Cold War drudgery of the cold, damp North German Plain and Salisbury Plain.

Nigel volunteered for Oman as a young officer in need of adventure, to do some 'proper soldiering'. And he was not disappointed. The freedom, the fellowship, the physical hardships and military challenges were meat and drink to him.

The Brits have long had an affinity with the Arabs and the Omanis are especially delightful people.

On first arrival in Oman an early port of call was to the Headquarters of the Sultan's Armed Forces, in an absurdly picturesque white fort, now a museum, just outside the capital, Muscat. Here the Commander, **Tim Creasey**, a fierce British General from my own Regiment, The Royal Anglians, gave a welcoming inter-

view. Nigel and I compared notes afterwards and agreed that it was brief and to the point:

"Good morning. I have three things to say to you.

*First.* The Jebel is a harsh environment. You must be physically and professionally very fit;

*Second.* You are commanding Arab soldiers and must speak their language very well;

*Third.* There's a war on. You must be very brave!

Good morning."

Blunt, challenging and wise advice for all one's military service:

- Know your stuff.
- Communicate.
- Go for it!

Some of the "Grey Beards" here still speak that beautiful, difficult language really well. Nigel spoke good 'Jaysh' (Army) Arabic.

I had an early setback to my confidence to communicate. On arrival at Seeb Airport, at the unholy hour of 3:00am, I was met by a swarthy driver, wearing the grey beret of The Jebel Regiment. We roared off in the dark towards Nizwa in a rattling Landrover along rocky and dusty tracks; no hard top roads then. So far, so good. But the driver knew only one speed – flat out! I became a little nervous (I could use an earthier expression), and rehearsed what I wanted to say in my best Arabic, learnt in our 12 weeks at the Army School of Languages at Beaconsfield. After crashing through a dry riverbed I plucked up courage and said (commandingly!): "Driver, shawya, shawya, please slow down. There is no hurry. I'm here for 18 months, hopefully. Insha'allah." He smiled or scowled, I couldn't tell which, and... put his foot down!

My confidence to communicate only returned later when Nigel, with that characteristic dry chuckle of his explained that the driver was a Baluchi from the Mekran coast of Pakistan and spoke only a dialect of Urdu.

Our training was carried out in the North of this stunning country and there was time to explore, socialise and to visit the local markets, souks.

Then it was time for the Regiment to deploy south to Salalah. We had a key role in the overall mission of 'securing Dhofar for civil development'. It was warm work in every sense; patrolling, holding ground, building sangars (raised trenches of rocks) and denying freedom of movement to the enemy. These were the insurgents known as the "Adoo" who operated from the remote hinterland and from across the border in South Yemen, where some of us had served in the Radfan and Aden, a decade earlier.

One of the delicious ironies of the British Army is that we train soldiers from foreign armies who then fight against us. In one skirmish we were mortared. Listening in to the Adoo radio, we distinctly heard fire control orders, in English, directing: "Left 100, add 200." We did a quick mental calculation and with another of his dry chuckles, Nigel suggested that we should slip sharpish into our sangars!



Louise Brown, the inspiration behind the Service to Remember her brother Nigel, with John McKeown, Rosie and Patrick Brook.

We were well armed and equipped and supported by helicopters, jets, artillery and armoured cars. We carried a heavy weight on our back with ammunition and water of particular importance. In much of the harsh rugged terrain donkeys were our principal support and resupply transport. Occasionally the ubiquitous Skyvan transport aeroplane was able to bring stores into rough landing strips, including one morning half a dozen live goats which we feasted on! Those of us on the jebel hugely appreciated the support of the pilots and aircrews, with their great skill and courage.

We were not encumbered by body armour and wore woven cotton headdresses, the shemagh, not helmets.

I must confirm that helmets and flak jackets would not have saved Nigel and those killed and wounded with him on 6th January 1975.

We had been given welcome orders to go on the offensive and to dominate an area that had been until then 'No go, bandit country'.

Nigel was leading his Company from the front, pressing hard along a wadi, a rocky exposed valley, towards the objective – the store caves at Sherishitti. My Company was holding the high ground to Nigel's right (south) and another Company was moving eastwards along a ridge line to Nigel's left (north). It was rough, jagged country and Nigel's leading troops were ambushed with a withering weight of fire from a strong group of Adoo. There was a fierce and protracted battle, but our advance was halted. We didn't reach the caves. There was some outstanding leadership and bravery on the 6th January. Nigel's own example certainly inspired and motivated the Brits and the Omanis.

I'm sorry if this account has been distressing, but I thought you would want a flavour of Nigel's life and death in Oman.

A few weeks later I was home on leave and visited Nigel's family. His mother and sister Louise met me at York station. As I got off the train and saw them standing on the platform I thought: "This is going to be so hard for you to bear." One was a very young lady and I rather blurted out: "My goodness, you are so like Nigel!"

We drove to your house, Louise, where I met your father. We all had a lovely lunch and although it was intensely sad, we talked

almost happily about Nigel. I showed you a photograph of him dressed in such unconventional uniform that his Light Infantry Adjutant would have amended the Duty Officer roster. And you laughed when you saw the little goatee beard he had grown. Grown with some difficulty I should add, as he was so fresh-faced.

So we were able to smile and when it was time to head back to the station Toni and Louise went to get the car and I was alone with his father. He thanked me for coming and as we shook hands he gripped my arm and simply asked: "Did Nigel die bravely?" Looking him straight in the eyes I replied: "Yes, Sir."

Significantly the Dhofar War is still studied today by the military and in academic circles as a model campaign. Oman has changed beyond recognition, modernised and developed. Praise Allah, it is largely uncontaminated so far by Islamic extremism.

**Jock Stirrup**, then a young RAF jet pilot, who supported us on the Jebel and joined us on foot patrols, is now a Marshal of The Royal Air Force, and a former Chief of the Defence Staff. He remains crystal clear that it was a campaign and cause worth fighting for. He said to me only last month: "Those who did not make it home most certainly did not die in vain."

Looking at Nigel's plaque, here in this Chapel, at the Book of Remembrance in the Chapel at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and, perhaps most of all, at the cemetery in Muscat, I echo that sentiment, however grievous the loss. The Light Infantry, now The Rifles, have since suffered heavy losses in Afghanistan with some fine young soldiers and officers, like Nigel, killed in action. With so much recent and ongoing attention on the commemoration of the Great War, I will end with a poem by A.E. Housman, himself from strong Light Infantry country:

*"Here dead lie we because we did not choose  
To live and shame the land from which we sprung.  
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;  
But young men think it is, and we were young".*

Nigel will always be young. ■

# THE JOURNAL

OF THE  
SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES  
ASSOCIATION



The Journal is the official magazine of the Sultan's Armed Forces Association. It serves a readership which is actively involved in the development of the country. Published each year for the last 46 years, and with a current print run of 4,000 copies, the Sultan's Armed Forces Association Journal is circulated to all individual and company members of the Association as well as:

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## SAF ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GOLF MATCH

TUESDAY, 16 JUNE, 2015  
DORSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB,  
NRWAREHAM

For directions see [www.dorsetgolfresort.com](http://www.dorsetgolfresort.com)

SCHEDULE:	09.00-10.00	Arrive – coffee with bacon butty
	09.40-11.00	28 Stroke Handicap Stableford on 7000 yards Lakeland Course in groups of 3
	Approx 15.30	3 Course lunch with prize giving
	Approx 17.00	Depart

This will be the nineteenth year of the event and we are looking for 30+ gentleman and lady players to turn out. The occasion is intended to be both sporting and fun and certainly the first eighteen competitions have been extremely enjoyable. The facilities at the Dorset Golf and Country Club are excellent and it is only 2 hours by car from Heathrow, 1 hour from Southampton and 20 minutes from Dorchester. Wool railway station is 2 hours 15 minutes from Waterloo. Applications are limited to 28 handicappers or less from the SAF Association or Anglo/Omani Society, or anyone who can be shown to be a friend of the Sultanate. Spouses may attend lunch only for £18.00. Club members will be charged £23.00.

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# 2015 SAF ASSOCIATION DINNER

will take place in the

ARMY AND NAVY CLUB, PALL MALL, LONDON AT 1900 FOR 2000HRS ON  
**FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2015**

**PLEASE APPLY BY FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2015 AT THE LATEST**

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ADDRESS: .....

Service(s)Unit(s) in SAF: .....

Dates of service in SAF: .....

I would like to sit near: .....

THE ABOVE INFORMATION WILL ASSIST IN SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Please send me ..... ticket(s) at **£40** each for the Dinner on **Friday 27 November 2015**.

Other guests **£45** per head.

Please list name(s) of guests

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... made payable to the SAF Association.

**PLEASE APPLY BY FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2015 AT THE LATEST**



# 2015 SAF ASSOCIATION COCKTAIL PARTY

will take place in the

ARMY AND NAVY CLUB, PALL MALL, LONDON BETWEEN 1830 AND 2030HRS ON  
**FRIDAY 12 JUNE 2015**

**PLEASE APPLY BY FRIDAY 22 MAY 2015 AT THE LATEST**

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FROM: (BLOCK CAPS) .....

ADDRESS: .....

Please send me ..... ticket(s) for the SAF Association Cocktail Party on **Friday 12 June 2015**.

Costs are **£25** per person or **£40** per couple.

Other guests **£30** per head.

Please list names of guests

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... made payable to the SAF Association.

Or book by email and pay your fee into the SAF Association's Bank Account: Sort Code 40-15-17 Account No. 72019116 (HSBC Burnley)

**PLEASE APPLY BY FRIDAY 22 MAY 2015 AT THE LATEST**

*WILL BE CONTINUED IN 2016*

# REORGANISATION AND EXPANSION

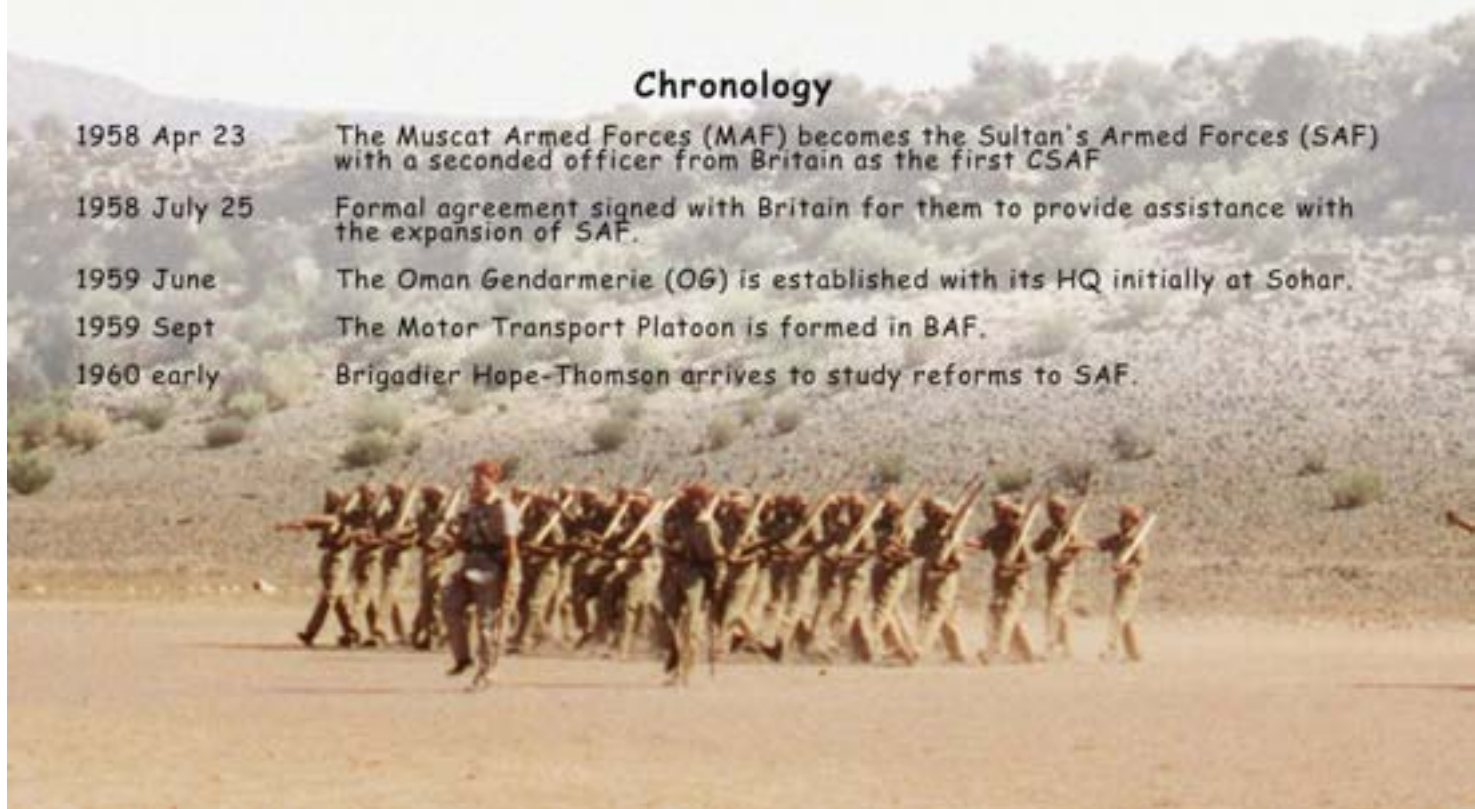
## SAF DEVELOPMENT FROM 1958 TO 1970

*by Ian Buttenshaw*

*This article continues on from the article in the last Journal about the Jebel Akhdar War. SAF had been formed during this conflict, but following its successful conclusion in February 1959, it was essential to develop and retrain SAF to better defend the now united Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. This article covers SAF's general transformation from 1958 up to the Accession of HM Sultan Qaboos in July 1970. It specifically excludes the early years of the Dhofar conflict that started in 1965, which are being covered in the "40 Years On" series of articles.*

### Chronology

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1958 Apr 23  | The Muscat Armed Forces (MAF) becomes the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) with a seconded officer from Britain as the first CSAF |
| 1958 July 25 | Formal agreement signed with Britain for them to provide assistance with the expansion of SAF.                               |
| 1959 June    | The Oman Gendarmerie (OG) is established with its HQ initially at Sohar.   |
| 1959 Sept    | The Motor Transport Platoon is formed in BAF.  |
| 1960 early   | Brigadier Hope-Thomson arrives to study reforms to SAF.  |




1960 mid	The Independent Guard Unit (later known as Muscat Garrison Guard Unit) is formed in BAF.
1960 May	The Coastal Patrol is formed as part of OG and begins its first patrol along the Batinah.
1960 Aug 4	The Hope-Thomson Report is accepted by HH Sultan Said bin Taimur, and implementation commences
1960 - late	Artillery Troop expanded to Battery size on receipt of their new 25 pounder guns
1961 early	An Ordnance Section is established in BAF
1961 early	MR is released from Garrison duties and starts retraining at a new camp at Bid Bid
1961 mid	SAF Signals Troop established at BAF
1962	The Training Depot is redesignated SAF Training Centre (SAFTC)
1962 Feb	Rotation of Battalions between Nizwa and Bid Bid commences (NFR move to Bid Bid, MR to Nizwa)
1962	First Force Electrical and Mechanical Engineer Officer (FEME) appointed
1964 Jul	The Ordnance Depot is established at BAF.
1964 Nov	Troops from SAF (NFR) operate in Dhofar for the first time
1965 May	SAF (MR) operates in Dhofar in Battalion strength for the first time.
1965 late	A second MT Platoon is raised
1966 Jan	Red Company, the first troops for the new Desert Regiment (DR), is formed within NFR.
1967 early	Signals Detachment in Dhofar expanded to a troop
1967 April	The last of DR companies form up and the Battalion reaches full strength
1969 Jan	Second-in-Command OG is transferred to Muscat Police as Commissioner and SAFTC trains first recruits for the newly restructured Police Force.
1969	The Medical Section is redesignated Force Medical Unit (FMU)
1969	Baluch Askaris are recruited to guard the Salalah Perimeter (These were to become the Baluch Guard and later the Frontier Force)
1969 Aug	The Ordnance Depot is redesignated the Force Ordnance Depot (FOD) and an Ordnance Maintenance Park is established at Midway (Thumrait)
1969 late	The all Baluch Z Company of MUSGAR Guard Company is stationed in Salalah to patrol the plains.
1970 Jun 21	The Sultan of Oman's Navy (SON) is formed and incorporates the OG Coastal Patrol.



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