

Makhad *Friends of*

People Spirit Environment

Dear Friends

Inside this issue:

<i>Bedouin Garden Restoration –the impact</i>	2
<i>Evolution of a Community Group in UK</i>	2
<i>A Youth Group makes a working Journey</i>	3
<i>The Elephant Pump Saga</i>	3
<i>A man of many Parts</i>	3
<i>Friends News for 2008</i>	4

Throughout the Easter weekend most of us will not have been working in our gardens. It has been cold and wet. In the Sinai mountains the almond trees spread their delicate lace brightening the winter landscape but this winter has yet to bring any rain or snow. It is a worrying situation for the Bedouin garden owners, but the help from our sponsors to repair and deepen their wells has given many of them renewed hope.

This expectation has caused the Makhad Trust to re-double its efforts at publicity, and with this in mind the Newsletters will be circulated to a wider readership. Shortly they will also be available on

our new web, an even more important publicity tool. The web, designed by Tom Davis, will be ready in June 2008. It will have the same attractive and uncluttered design as the old web but with information that describes current projects. The web and Newsletters will form the basis of our publicity, particularly for the gardens.

In this issue, Tim Rickard, MT schools and colleges liaison representative, writes about the Charleton Kings Youth Club journey last autumn during which he made an excellent film. This is now being used to send out as advance publicity and for external presentations. Addi-

tional presentations to both students and adults have been made recently and as an immediate result Newent School and May Hill Community are planning to sponsor a garden and form working groups.

All this publicity together with the efforts and generosity of garden sponsors and working groups is helping to preserve the Bedouin's traditional way of life based around the economy of their gardens.



Happy Gardening!
Susie

Special points of interest:

- The Makhad Trust treads new grounds.
- Will help be too late for one garden?
- A community takes small steps to a big idea.
- A Bedouin entrepreneur with a sense of humanity.
- Journeys for 2008.
- The Friends, a summer function planned.

Makhad Trust News

As part of the Makhad Trust's drive to increase the funding necessary for both the sponsorship and administration of the Gardens Scheme, it is planned to hold a fund raising function called the **"Lost Gardens of Sinai Sponsors' Soiree."** This will be held on

Saturday 13 September 2008. Several venues are being considered including Grove House in Oxford. It will be an important occasion and for the many garden owners waiting for sponsorship much hangs on its success. Pictured here is one of the lucky ones, Amriya.



‘It May Be Too Late!’ - Susie Drummond



Spaiha (on the left) shows Mahmoud and I his last well.

The sun was vanishing fast when we arrived at the garden. It was on its own, several kilometres up a remote wadi strewn with boulders. At first all seemed well. It looked to be a large garden with a well constructed wall. The stone house was attractive and in good repair. Then we saw the trees, or rather the depressions in the earth where trees had been.

The anguish of Spaiha as he showed us his cracked water tank and then took us further up the wadi until we reached his

last and only useable well, was almost too great to absorb. Spaiha built this garden himself 15 years ago and it benefits 14 members of his family. At one time he had over a hundred fruit trees and so many vegetables that he was able to sell 4 sacks of dried tomatoes as well as surplus apricots. The water began to diminish 8 years ago and he had to dig another well. Now this well at 8m depth does not give sufficient water and his trees are dying. He has no funds left to make it deeper.

We will try to help you Mahmoud and I explained, but it may take some time to find a sponsor. *‘It may be too late,’* he said sadly. *‘I have 45 trees now and what will happen this summer?’*

His plea has touched my heart but now that we have so many requests for help, currently 560 including 12 women, we have tried to develop a system that is strictly ordered, but I find myself wanting to slip Spaiha to the front of the queue. As I do with

Owed’s garden.

At first I did not want to take this garden on because Ibrahim, the man who looks after it, is not the owner and this is a possible cause of disputes. But Mahmoud explained that Owed was a sick man on regular kidney dialysis in the village. That he was a good man but a poor man with a family to support, and that although he had been offered a sizeable sum of money for his garden he would not sell. As he told us later when we visited him in the village, *‘What is money, it soon goes, but a garden is for your children. It is for life!’*

Again I was moved by the thoughtfulness Mahmoud had shown, by Ibrahim who we met and who works in Owed’s garden for no reward, and by Owed for his love of his garden and his desire to pass it on to his children. It is a privilege to work with these mountain people and their gardens, but we need your help to continue.

Evolution of a Community Group - Anni James



It all began with my Father in Law, Frank James. He had been on a working journey in Sinai and was so enthusiastic about it that he decided to sponsor one of the Bedouins’ garden dams. This in turn inspired my husband Peter and I to sponsor a garden well ourselves and raise the funds through our coffee company and the sale of Selema’s bags.

We learned that there were many gar-

dens requesting help and wondered if the small community of May Hill, Gloucestershire where we live might also be interested. In some trepidation we organised a talk in the village hall.

To our surprise 25 people turned up on a cold February evening.

We made the room look as inviting as possible with a pictorial display of Makhad Trust work, Selema’s bags and early spring flowers. There was wine and small eats on offer. Once people were comfortably seated around small tables informal presentations were given by Danny, Susie, and Scilla Elworthy covering the formation of the Makhad Trust and the Garden Restoration Scheme. Tim Rickard also showed a short film he has made illustrating youth groups working on water restoration projects in the gardens. Both the

talks and film generated a useful number of questions and such interest that a community group was formed in the following days.

Now the group have begun planning events such as a photographic competition to make a local calendar for 2009, a themed 1940s tea party, a wine tasting and a concert in an attempt to fund May Hill’s sponsorship of a garden in Sinai, also a possible working trip in the following year. Each event will have ties to Sinai, to inform people that by taking part they are also sponsoring the garden.

The strong community bond this has achieved so far makes us feel that this may be a good model for other communities to follow.

Charleton Kings Youth Club— Tim Rickard

The Students “We were a mixed group, three administering adults accompanying students aged twelve to eighteen, four girls and seven boys from the community of Charleton Kings in Cheltenham. Some of us travelled on new passports while some had been abroad before. However well prepared, none of us had any real idea of what to expect in Sinai.

We worked in Dr Ahmed’s herbal garden for several days helping to clear out a spring reservoir, and also made a journey to Mount Sinai for

sunset followed by a camel trek to watch the sun rise across the desert.

For all of us it felt good to be with friends and to do something useful to help the community. Most of us enjoyed the food and the test of physical endurance digging and working with Dr Ahmed’s students. Some would have stayed to walk and explore and sleep under the stars forever. Everyone agrees that this amazing journey so far from home has opened our hearts and minds to another world.”

Tim “Friends will know how rich an experience is a journey in the Sinai and how long it can take before we come to understand the sometimes subtle transformations and impulses which can arise.

A month since our return, I’ve had more time to think about what the students made of their journey while editing the video. I’ve had to distil our journey to twenty minutes. Watching those images again and again has helped me to sustain and reinforce the memories of a wonderful

journey and Makhad’s precious trinity of people, spirit and environment.”



Editor. In April Tim is accompanying an adult group to film them building a small dam in one of the gardens.

The Elephant Pump Saga - Frank James

In the interests of clean energy I unwisely promised that I would take on the job of building an Elephant Pump. If it was successful it could be used as a trial in one of the Sinai gardens. It should be quite simple as it is an ancient Chinese principle and there are working drawings on the net (www.pumpaid.elephantpump.com). The principle depends on drawing a knotted string through a pipe. At each

knot there is a washer. As the rope is drawn round a pulley at the wellhead, the washers pass up the pipe lifting water. Some of this dribbles back down the pipe where the next washer lifts and so on.

At my farm I need to make a pump which will lift saved water from the roofs of our outbuildings to a tank in the garden at a higher level. Now the workshop floor is covered

with rope, plastic waste pipe, washers, a bag of cement, a bucket, bicycle chains, cogs and the water tanks are frozen solid.

It is not the principle which has held things up, it is the difficulty of connecting the principle to a bicycle chain and pedal drive force to make it simple to use. Help to finish it or it would be very welcome indeed. (01452 830266)



Old fashioned ‘shadoof’ requires the water tank to be beside the well. Many gardens must use a oil pump to reach a water tank at a higher level in their gardens.

Faraj Mahmoud — A man of many parts

Faraj Mahmoud Faraj, owner of Fox Camp Tourist operations situated a kilometre below St Katherines village, is recognised by his community as a ‘strong’ man. He has energy, drive and ideas. Fox Camp itself throngs with tourists of every nationality. There is a delightful herbal garden and a small museum of Bedouin artefacts which he

has collected himself. Mixing with the tourists in the camp is a constant succession of Bedouin waiting for Faraj, appealing for work or help and lately to be put on his list of garden owners who have requested MT assistance. For Faraj, a clever businessman, is part of our Sinai team on the garden restoration.

His desire to help the Jebeliah restore their gardens, his knowledge, advice and encouragement are invaluable. In addition he brings ideas about how the scheme can be improved. His latest plan is to push forward an expansion of the fruit drying and selling outlets in St Katherines to enable the gardens to become economically viable.



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Friends of Makhad was started in November 2006 in order to assist the charity Makhad Trust. If you would like to receive a Newsletter and receive an invitation to a Friends function or for more information about the Makhad Trust, please contact the Secretary.

Friends Committee:
S Drummond - Secretary, J Drummond - Treasurer,
C Barton, A Blagden, D Shmulevitch, R Devas

Letters should be addressed to Editor, (contact details above)

Makhad Journeys 2008

20 - 27 April A Bedouin Garden Working Journey with Cath Barton 8 days, £560 + flight

A working journey in the mountain gardens followed by a trek to Mount Sinai and a day in the desert.

23 - 30 Sept A Bedouin Garden Working Journey with Scilla Elworthy 8 days, £560 + flight

Working journey in the mountain gardens followed by a trek to Mount Sinai and a day's walk in the desert.

5 - 12 Oct A Desert Feast with Scilla Elworthy 8 days, £875+ flight

Desert exploration followed by several days of retreat and solitude in stunning desert landscape.

6 - 13 Nov Gail's Sinai Experience with Gail Simmons 8 days, £750 + flight

A walk through the mountains leading to Mount Sinai followed by a trek in the desert and a short stay in a Red Sea resort.

Friends

Letters: Colin Watson writes from Saudi Arabia where he is currently working as a Project Manager. "The Newsletter reminds me of the wonderful week I had working on Dr Ahmed's Herbal School and helps to keep me in touch with the Makhad Trust's work and news about Frank's trial Elephant Pump. Please continue to send me each issue but to my new email out here."

Alasdair Gordon from Waldorf College has asked us to invite you all to their **Sinai Bedouin Festival to be held in Stroud on the 2nd and 3rd of May**. There will be a banquet on the Friday and Saturday evenings with a Bedouin Market on the Saturday to include Egyptian dance lessons, drumming, storytelling and an exhibition. If you would like more information please telephone Alasdair on 01453 840009



Makhad UK—Meet and Greet Cath Barton

What do a stay in Amran Garden in Sinai and an evening in the Star Anise restaurant in Stroud have in common? Well, one answer would be that Star Anise's home made falafel and bread reminded us of Mahmoud Ahmed's wonderful cooking. Another would be that both are a makhad, a meeting place. Those of us, 15 in all, who

gathered in Star Anise on a February evening were able to reminisce about our journeys to Sinai, or, for some, look ahead to a first visit and meet others with whom we will be traveling. Five of us who will be working together in the Sinai gardens at the end of April were there. I had already met the others individually, but they had not met before so this was a great opportunity for them to begin to get to know one another.

Danny and Ann had set up a display to update Friends on Makhad projects and we also had a chance to read an article which Gail Simmons recently had published in the Sunday Telegraph, great publicity for the Trust's work. If you live in the area and would like an opportunity to attend an evening like this in the future please let us know by writing to the Editor.

Makhad Summer Barbeque

On Saturday 7 June 2008 the Summer Barbeque will be held in Janie Prince's garden, Hawkchurch, Axminster, near Lyme Regis, Devon.

As this is some distance for many people there will be plenty of room for camping and on the following day, Sunday 8 June, those who are able to stay overnight will be able to participate in a friendly discussion. Charge will be £15 and everyone will be asked to bring a contribution to the food and drink.

Your invitations will be sent out in April, if you do not receive one and would like to come, please let us know. We hope to make this a great success and build on the support we gained last year, so please try to come. and bring a friend, or members of your family.