

Makhad *Friends of*

People Spirit Environment

Dear Friends

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One of the joyful things at this time of the year is the exchange of greetings cards to friends. Communication between people is essential for the promotion of better understanding and there are many methods by which this can be achieved. Some of these are illustrated in the articles of this issue.

For instance, the young Bedouin camel men from St Katherines village, who have been learning to communicate via the internet, told us that communication was *everything*. Some of them were not able to read before the course and yet they realize now the value of electronic communication with the outside world.

On a different note, Ann Blagden, who is sponsoring the well in one of the Bedouin gardens, came out to Sinai herself and met the owner and his family. Great delight and growing friendship has sprung up from this face to face communication.

Language was not a barrier either when Frank James and the group built a meeting room for Dr Ahmed's Herbal School. They worked alongside Dr Ahmed's students mixing cement, carrying water and buckets of stones. Working together for a common purpose fosters strong bonds between people.

Pictures too are a useful form of communication and the

Makhad Trust is very grateful to Tim Rickard, a professional film maker, who brought out a group of students from Charleton Kings Youth Club, Cheltenham and was able to make a film of the group working with the Bedouin.

It takes time and effort to maintain good levels of communication and I hope that our Newsletters have been able to keep you informed and in touch with us.



Susie

Special points of interest:

- A first cheque from the Sinai Office.
- Why does a camel boy learn the internet?
- 530 Garden requests—can we live up to the expectations?.
- An entrepreneur leads the way for women.
- New Journeys for 2008.
- The Friends, how can we improve?

Makhad Trust News

Last month saw the first cheque signed in our new office in St Katherines. Michael Ratcliffe our Makhad Trust Chairman balanced carefully on some paint cans to write and then handed over the cheque to Mahmoud Ahmed our Office Manager. This must have brought luck to the

office as the long awaited furniture arrived and we are now hoping to have an official opening in February 2008 to which all local officials will be invited.

2008 is looking good for the Makhad Trust.



Michael Ratcliffe - Chairman and Mahmoud Ahmed - Office Manager, Sinai

A Great Responsibility!



Hussein stands proudly beside his repaired well

Five hundred and thirty Bedouins in the St Katherine's area have now put their names on our list for assistance with their gardens. Each time we climb through the wadis or visit the village we are stopped and asked politely whether we have remembered a particular garden. It is an overwhelming response from the Bedouin, and one that the Makhad Trust must strive to live up to.

It is not as simple as it might seem, there are moral questions to be thought out. For instance what decision should MT

take about a hamlet requesting help for a well to provide drinking water when those villagers do not have a garden that fits our criteria for assistance? What do we say to a sponsor who forms an attachment to the garden owner and wants to contribute more funds to him? Also we must be seen to be well organized and fair, it is a small community and everyone is aware of what goes on.

We began with the sponsorship of the wells in 3 different gardens. All work was carefully documented and the garden owners were delighted. Since then many other garden owners have walked up to visit these gardens, examined the excellent work and talked to the owners about the scheme. Then they put their names on the list.

The economic reality of an adequate water supply to the garden is more food for the owner's family but the personal gift of encouragement from his sponsor is almost as important. To

the sponsor it is the satisfaction of knowing exactly where his funds have gone and to have the opportunity of learning about the family and possibly visiting them as several of our sponsors have done already.

Scilla Elworthy, Ann Blagden, Janie Prince and Jo and George Elworthy from Eden have all visited and are bringing out groups to work on the small dams above each garden. Cath Barton and Ruskin Mill, also sponsors, have groups organized for April 2008. Our list of sponsors is growing too.

In addition to sponsoring a well, there is also the dam and sometimes a compost toilet required. As soon as sponsorship funds are received payment to the garden owner in Sinai is made and work begins. It is a scheme that is immediate and has huge potential for assisting the economy of the mountain gardens and the communication and friendship between people.

Meeting the Family! - Ann Blagden



What was I doing out there ?

It all began back in June during the Makhad weekend at Mayhill. I teach belly dancing in Cheltenham and thought how wonderful it would be to connect my students and their Middle Eastern dance culture with the Bedouin of the Sinai desert. With the gardens scheme my students would be able to have a real input into helping maintain a Bedouin family in their traditional lifestyle.

What was it like to see the garden and meet the family? Eight of my students were keen to support the project and start raising the £750 needed. I received information telling me about the garden which gave me and my students a real focus and a sense of belonging but the next step was to see the garden myself, so in September I joined a working journey.

I was a little apprehensive as we entered the garden and sat on rugs in the shade of beautiful trees. Out came the tray with 3 tiny glasses and a fire blackened tea pot, followed by a dish of the sweetest grapes I had ever tasted. Hassan a quiet shy young man began to smile. After tea Hassan showed me proudly round the garden. We peered into the deep almost empty well and meandered among the grapevines and apple and

pomegranate trees. Over the wall a lone pear stood amongst the dust and rocks, a poignant symbol of the struggle for life. The words, "*Ann will be your sponsor*", suddenly made me feel a huge responsibility. The family needed the money now but how long would it take us to raise it?

How we raised the funds! We held a traditional Hafla, where the students and local tutors performed dances for their friends. It was great fun and to our delight we raised £900. My students feel even more interested in Hassan's garden now and we hope that soon we will be able to bring a group out to work building a dam for him.

The connection I hoped for has begun and is spreading out.

A Working Journey— Frank James

We were an odd group as we walked together out of the air conditioned terminal at Sharm el Sheik airport into a wall of heat: Colin, a project manager for a major civil engineering company, Ann, a belly dancing teacher, Fiona, the Administrator for the Makhad Trust, and a grim opinionated man of no recognizable occupation. We were not a little apprehensive.

The first night was spent in the desert under the stars where we shared a campfire and evening meal with the

Bedouin, a gentle introduction to our main task which was to help with the construction of a stone building to house Dr Ahmed's herbal healing school. We were based in Amran Gardens and on our first day a 40 minute walk down Wadi Itlah revealed a roughly circular building about half a meter high, piles of stones and a small mountain of grit. Our job was to help the Bedouin complete the building over the next four days. A chain gang was soon established and after half

a day we fell into a rhythm. After another day we were able to break the language barrier and the building rose steadily. By the third day we were able to joke with our fellow builders and indulge in arm wrestling and by the fourth day when the roof had been put on we felt almost a family. It seemed a small thing we had done when there was so much more still to do. But I for one felt as though we had been privileged to catch a glimpse of the last corner of the garden of Eden hanging



on by its finger tips to a way of life that had remained untainted by consumerism. It is a way of life that must at all costs be preserved, for the Bedouin are surely the humble aristocrats of the human race. Man as he was meant to be.

Communication—Fox Net Computer Centre

An inspection of the computer course was part of the Makhad Trust's agreement to provide 25 Bedouin students with tuition. My doubts on how this could best be accomplished were immediately dispelled when I met with the courtesy and enthusiasm of 13 young men who had assembled in the small centre in St Katherines village. They were

aged between 16 and 23 and of varied levels of education. Two had never learned to read or write in Arabic and yet the course had taught them to operate Windows in English and the keyboard in Arabic. I asked them why they wanted to learn to use the Internet. "***The net is future life***", said Gameel a Tourist Guide. "***You must learn for future***

jobs", Salah told me and "***All the world is communication***," said Saed whose friends are Russian, American, English and Egyptians and who now corresponds all over the world. Fox Net can be proud of what they have accomplished. Their efforts have inspired young men to pursue their education.



Ramadan Mousa Sala demonstrates his knowledge.

Fansina'— Women's Craft Centre

Selema pictured here with Mahmoud Mansur and Salem Masoud are like-minded Jebelia entrepreneurs. But Selema is more unusual in that she has pioneered Fansina, a business for women who come from a tradition where they are not normally the breadwinners. The women make beautiful silk and beaded bags in their homes using materials

and designs supplied by Selema when she tours the outlying villages once a month. The bags are then collected up, finished in the Fansina Craft Centre and sold to the many visitors who are provided with tea and a friendly meeting place. Home-based work has earned the women much needed cash and can be the families' only means of

support in an area where paid employment is limited.

This month Fansina will move into the new Craft Centre partly funded by MT. It is Selema's dream to bring prosperity and education to the women of her tribe and the new Craft Centre with its large display and work rooms will be a great opportunity for further progress.

The Makhad Trust wishes continuing success to Fansina in 2008.



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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

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

Spring & Summer Journeys 2008

13-20 March, *The Alchemy of Stillness*
8 days, £875 + flight

A Sinai desert retreat including guided desert exploration with Danny Shmulevitch and Nicholas Janni.

6-13 April, *The Alchemist's Journey in the Sinai Desert* 8 days, £780 + flight

A special journey in the desert and mountains with Dr Ahmed, celebrated Bedouin herbal doctor and teacher.

21-28 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.

14-21 Jun, *A Bedouin Garden Working Journey*
8 days, £560 plus flight.

Working journey in the mountain gardens.

[Www.makhad.org](http://www.makhad.org)

Friends

Letters:

Many of you write to thank us for the Newsletter but we would like to publish your suggestions so please do write in to the Editor with your views. Judith Kendra is taking a month's sabbatical in Laos and Cambodia but writes that "It is wonderful to get feedback from you". Liz Kingsnorth who is living in India writes, "I read the Newsletter with strong memories of my times in Sinai and I love to hear what is happening". Christopher Roper argues that for greater publicity the Newsletters should be sent out to a much wider database, not exclusively Friends members. We take these views seriously.



Frank James and Colin Watson, Friends who are now investigating a 'green energy' pump to be used in the gardens.

The Friends Committee and other advisers have long felt that the Newsletter should be sent out to a wider base, Christopher's letter echoed this. We have therefore decided to discontinue paid membership of Friends as from January 2008. Anyone who has an interest in the Makhad Trust or has

been on a Journey will be considered a 'Friend' and receive a Newsletter and invitation to the functions. Our inner core of very active Friends will be called upon for help and advice.

Makhad UK—Meet and Greet

On Friday 8th February 2008 from 7pm at the Star Anise Restaurant in Stroud we are holding an informal drop-in for all those living locally who are interested in the Makhad Trust. The Star Anise has delicious food, a licence and on Friday evenings a local singer and guitar player performs in an informal atmosphere. Danny, Cath and Ann will be there to welcome anyone who would like to learn more about the Makhad Trust and have a pleasant evening. The Star Anise is on the corner of Slad Road and Gloucester Street, near the Bus Station. (Tel No: 01453 761 938).

All are welcome, bring a friend and drop in.

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 £10 a head and everyone will be asked to bring a contribution to the food and drink.

We hope to make this a great success and build on the wonderful support we gained this year from all our participants. So please put this date in your diary.

Happy Christmas from the Committee!