

Makhad Trust Newsletter

April 2018

Makhad
People Spirit Environment



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***News from Sinai,
Wells Project, Beekeeping
Training Project, Orphan
Herb Project, & the new
Carpentry School***

News! Rain and Cement



Firstly, there has been rain in Sinai! In fact a lot of rain fell on a large areas of Egypt including Cairo where they had floods, in the desert to the East and Nuweiba too. There was rain in St Katherine's but not nearly enough. The weather had been getting colder day by day, and rain was forecast for the 21st but never came. Then, during the early morning of Thursday came rain of the sort we usually experience in Scotland! Dank, cold drizzle for hours and very cold. Now that some rain has come, everyone is hoping that there will be more. At least there was enough for the spring herbs to bloom which will help feed the bees.

Secondly, the matter of cement might seem an odd subject for a newsletter but it has been big news here and a theme that has run throughout this trip. The army offensive in North Sinai, against terrorist cells operating near the Palestinian border has continued - though without any change to the peaceful order in South Sinai. In order to thwart their enemies getting weapons or defending themselves, all supplies, including all the useful stuff and food, have been prevented from coming into Sinai via the Suez canal tunnel. With no new cement arriving here, existing supplies have shot up in price or people have been unable to buy any. We were very worried about whether the scheduled dam build could go ahead but fortunately Mahmoud found some rather expensive but available cement. Some of our well owners were not so fortunate and others decided to wait until it was available and the price has dropped back. As well as cement other supplies that have been hit are hoses, generators, and spare parts for everything. It seems the embargo has been relaxed somewhat now and we hear that some supplies are beginning to come through. We hope that everything will be back to normal very soon.

One thing that has been in better supply recently is tourists. It has been busy over the Easter holidays which are extended here due to the Christian and Coptic holidays being on successive weekends. Faraj is being kept very busy by the influx and by his diplomatic role liaising with the security forces to keep everything working to everyone's satisfaction. Mahmoud is still our lynchpin

for the work here and did sterling work organising the dam and journey while coping with a family crisis. We had a lovely lunch with Dr Ahmed, and bumped into Hussein from Wadi Zuweitin too. All are well and interested to see us.

As usual the Spring Trips are a hybrid affair as the Chair of Trustees, Michael Ratcliffe was visiting with another trustee, Sherif Samra from Cairo. And to complicate matters another of our Trustees, Dick Stainer was running a dam build journey at the same time. While Dick and the group were hauling stones and cement, Michael, Sherif and Helen were in various meetings in Cairo and chasing up some of the very important administrative work that enables the trust to continue its good work. After Cairo, there were visits to all of the projects except the wells project (there are just too many wells to see) before the visitors departed and the Project Team we left to carry on the work. It was a very successful trip on all fronts.

Journey and Dam Build



A strong team of American theological academics plus two English people from Stroud, led by Dick and assisted by Fabienne, completed the Trust's 20th dam on 12th April. The dam was built just above Oda's dam in Wadi Shaq to supplement two previous dams there. The wadi has a huge water catchment which caused our first dam to silt up. This one should increase the water catchment of both dams here. Some of the group arrived in St Katherine's early so they could attend the Easter Service at the monastery before heading up to the mountains. After three days the dam was complete so the team, this time led by Helen, walked over the

beautiful wadi Akhmah pass to Ramadan's garden for the night. A flock of camels was then enlisted for the next day, to take most of the party up Mt Sinai, saving them some of the ascent but not the 750 steps to the chapel at the top. Everyone made it and we had the summit to ourselves. The following day we went to visit the monastery in Wadi Tala where St John Climacus reportedly wrote Jacob's Ladder of Divine Assent. On their last day the American group went for a bespoke tour of the monastery, including the famous library. One of the students on the trip is studying one of their manuscripts for his Masters thesis. Eid provided cooking services along with other Bedouin and Shaban was chief of hospitality, as well as building. Some of the American participants are hoping to bring another party on a future journey and we look forward to seeing them again.



Wells

We got to see most of the wells that had been worked on since the last visit but we didn't go to see the wells in the far desert as these ones had been particularly badly hit by the cement embargo. Wells that have to be lined or that need the top of the well stabilised with a cemented wall were most affected. However we were still able to start 12 new wells this time, thanks to the generous support of our funders. Below are the current well statistics. It would be really exciting to reach the huge milestone of 400 completed wells during the next trip in July, provided the work is done. We just need 7 more wells to complete to reach the target.

In November I wrote about a garden owner who had made a super human effort to enclose his large garden with a dry stone wall so that we would come to do a site visit. The man's name was Eid and his garden is in Wadi Itlah. There was no report on progress in the last



newsletter because Eid was too sick to organise the work. We were very worried about him and about his ability to carry out the contract on his well. During this visit we found that Eid still suffers very badly from back pain and a leg problem but his son has been able to take over the work. They had done some digging to deepen the well but still have quite a lot of work to do. We hope they will have finished by the time of the next visit and that they will be able to start planting up the garden.

While on route to check on a well in Naqb El Howa, above the village of Abu Sila, we were ambushed - in the nicest possible way - by Mousa Ahmed. Mousa is the son of Dr Ahmed and he wanted us to make a site visit for a garden well, abandoned long ago. Here is the story.



“There were old houses here at the top of the pass going into Naqb El Howa (pronounced Nack Bill Howa) from Mousa’s grandfather’s time and before. His grand father Mousa, had a shop up here and sold all sorts of useful things including food, women’s clothes, and handcraft materials. His father was a trader and travelled to Suez to get these things in the days when there was no tunnel. He would leave his camel and get the ferry to Suez. He bought clothes, goats, materials at Suez and brought them back here. This was a central point for trade with people from Gharba and Sheikh Awad to the East, St Katherine’s nearby and Nuweiba etc. He would go to the East coast to sell things from Cairo and buy fish in return which he brought back here to sell as dried salted fish. Also he took fruits and nuts from the mountains to Suez. He was a famous trader. This was around 1920 to 1935 (ish) he also took fruit to the coast. This is a good place to store things because there is always a dry wind here. (Howa means wind). This wadi was also a main Hadj route from Suez through Sinai and St Katherines via Naqb El Howa on to Nuweiba for the ferry to Aquaba. Lots of people came this way.”

Latest statistics

	Completed	Underway	Waiting Sponsor	Waiting List
Garden Wells	202	14	32	203
Community Wells	191	13	50	179
Totals	393	27	82	382

Beekeeping Training

The trainees beekeepers finished their theory training last month when they took delivery of their bees. Salem, their teacher had ordered the bees from a big honey company just south of Cairo and went to collect them. The collection date had had to be postponed



due to the embargo on goods coming through the Suez tunnel (just like the cement) but they eventually got them at the end of March. The new beekeepers have gardens over a wider range than before, with some beekeepers living about 10 miles out of St Katherine’s. Others who have gardens in the mountains brought camels to take away their bees in their hives. There are 10 new

beekeepers this year so there should be plenty of honey in the future. Due to the lack of rain over the last 18 months so there are few herbs growing this spring, there has been a big concern over where the bees will get their nectar. Quite a lot comes from the gardens but the trees don't have blossom all the season. We are hoping that the recent small rains will allow some herbs to grow soon. If this doesn't happen the bees will become nomadic, and be moved from place to place following the flowers. The honey making starts in July.



Herbal Horticulture



We made two visits to the Herbal Horticulture project. Our first visit was with two of our trustees and people from our sister organisation The Nuwamis Society for Development, and the second was when Mahmoud, Faraj and Helen went to visit some of the herb gardens started by the children. First though, we were given information and explanations about many of the herbs they had been studying as each child stood up and talked about a single herb. They have almost completed their training now and have just a few weeks left. They will then be nurturing the plants they have raised from seed until they are big enough to pick and dry the herbs, in a couple of years. They will also be gathering and

propagating more herbs for their gardens. During our visit in early March we saw two of the gardens, near to Selim's house. When we went past this time the herbs had already doubled in size. We also went to visit the garden that around 6 of the children have made in the next village. They have used an old abandoned garden up on the shoulder of the mountains belonging to Esmere's family and have planted over 50 herb plants. They only have a little water from the garden well so at their request I made a site visit for the well which is now on the waiting list, awaiting a sponsor. Esmere, who is 12 is the owner of the garden but Selim will help her with the well.

Would any of our supporters be willing to sponsor Esmere's well? She would be very grateful for your support. Write to me for more details. The well will cost £1300 to restore.



The Carpentry School

The Carpentry building is now nearly complete and the roof is on (but not in the photograph). Ahmed, the teacher, will be carrying out the final fixings of plastering, painting and electrics so it will be completely finished by the end of Ramadan in mid June. Then his first pupils will be ready to start. We met with Ahmed and four of the prospective pupils at the building earlier in the trip. At the beginning of the trip Michael and Helen went to buy carpentry tools in the tool shop neighbourhood of Cairo. Whole streets were devoted just to the sale of tools and found a small, family run old business that was able to supply our needs, with the help of a runner who went to get lots of extra supplies from other shops! The tools are now in Mahmoud's care and waiting on the start of the school in around 6 weeks time.





Mahmoud - the Seed-man

Michael our Chair of Trustees came with us to meet our seed-man Mahmoud Hassan, for the first time. When we went to his garden we found that Mahmoud had been very busy planting many of the seeds we had brought from UK in order to increase his stock. They don't look much at the moment as the seedlings are small at this time, but his big polytunnel was full of seedlings. We have been asked to provide more seeds on the next visit. Word is getting around that there are seeds to be had from Mahmoud and as well as selling the seeds for a small token for

each packet, he is giving advice about planting and growing the seeds too.

The Library

On our visit to the library we found that Farhana had resumed command, with her new baby daughter helping out. The library continues to run but at present there are not many activities to draw in the children. This will all change soon as our sister organisation, The Nuwamis Society for Development, has arranged for story tellers to come and get the children involved. This should be an exciting time for them and we hope to hear how it has gone by the time of the next visit. In the meantime the library will be making a short move. It is currently installed in the City Council building but the building is going to be restored, including the library room. This upgrade is well overdue as the building is very shabby indeed. We hope that the library will be able to move to another room in the building once the refurbishment has taken place, one that has more windows and light.

We can give an update on the Literacy Program now. Sherif, our trustee who also heads up the Nuwamis Society for Development says that they have received the large grant from the Australian Embassy for the Concentrated Learning Experience literacy program and they are now in the process of processing the funding (it takes a while in Egypt) and then organising the planning of the program. It may be September before it starts but it should be an exciting program, involving many of the Bedouin women and some Bedouin men. It is interesting to note how many of the well owners are not able to write their names on the contracts and so use a thumb print. Life must be difficult when they come up against any form of bureaucracy of which there is a huge amount in Egypt. We hope the literacy course will make everyone's lives easier.

GDPR

Like all other organisations we have been preparing for the new GDPR regulations which come into force on 25 May. You will probably have been asked to Opt In for all sorts of mailing lists you have been subscribing to for years and we are doing the same.

We really want to keep in touch with our supporter community, so if you want to continue hearing about the Makhad Trust, you will have to opt in to the email that delivers this newsletter, or just email enquiries@makhad.org with the subject Opt In and we will add you to our new database. We will be deleting our old data base in June and so if you don't opt in, this will be the last newsletter you will receive as we won't have any record of your email address unless you contact us. If you forget you can still find our website and contact details and ask to be put back on the list.

The Makhad Trust does not share its database or information with any other organisations. We only keep the information that is needed to contact people who have asked to be involved.

Future Journeys

If you would like to know more about journeys, please let us know so that information can be added to the data base and we can inform you of forthcoming trips. The next one will probably be in Spring 2019.

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Children from Esbaia, including some of our herbal growers