



# GAZELLE



مجموعتنا دورية للتاريخ والطبيعي

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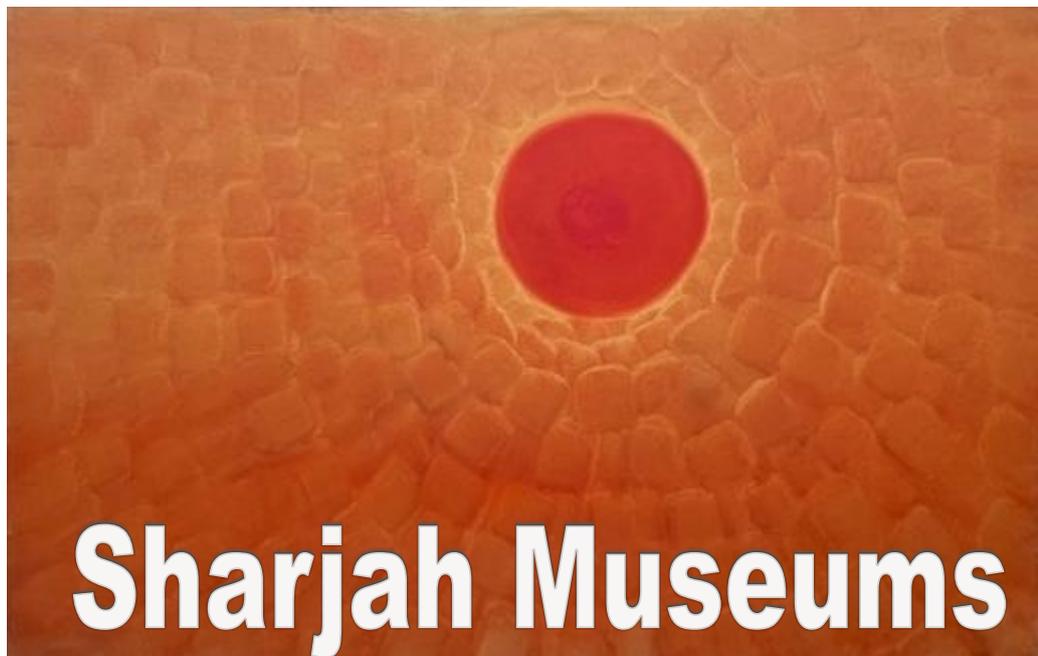
**Contributors—**

Thanks to the following for their contributions this month:

Gary Feulner, Binish Roobas, Valerie Chalmers, Iain Dodson, Margaret Swan, Anelisa Lambert and Rahul Shah.

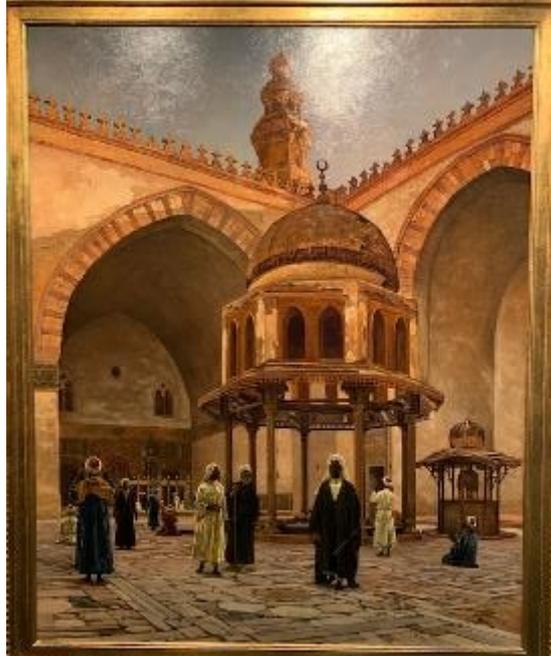
Please send your contributions to the:

[gazelleeditor@gmail.com](mailto:gazelleeditor@gmail.com)



## Sharjah Museums

On Sunday 5th June 2022 DNHG members visited three museums in Sharjah. The first museum visited was Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization where we had a guided tour of the exhibition "Wonder and Inspiration, Venice and the Arts of Islam". The exhibition presents a selection from the rich collection of works of art and documents preserved by the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, in collaboration with the Sharjah Museums Authority. Its aim, through a display of 72 objects, is to demonstrate in three chapters the intensity and the profitability of the cultural and artistic exchanges between Venice and the Islamic world from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age. The first chapter, Encounters, expresses the ways of meeting and exchange of knowledge between Venice and the Islamic world. The section includes some ancient objects from the East as official gifts presented to the Doge, the head of the Serenissima Republic. The second chapter tells and illustrates how immediately these encounters became reciprocal Dialogues, rich of interests



'The Mosque of Sultan Hassan, Cairo' by Aloysius O'Kelly (1850-1928). Oil on canvas. At the Art Museum by Anelisa Lambert

### No queuing at Kew

see page 7



(Continued on page 4)

## Announcements and Recordors

### Monthly Speaker

Monday 20th June at 8pm

Note that this is a hybrid meeting which will take place at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management (click on our [website](#) for a location map) and will also be available on Zoom.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will also precede the presentation this month

**Speaker:** Elise Harrington

**Presentation:** “From Earth to Mars:  
Parallels between neighbouring planets”

Elise Harrington is a research associate at the Space and Planetary Science Centre at Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi. She holds an MSc in Geology from Western University, Canada for her research in radar satellite remote sensing. Her research has taken her across the inner solar system, studying mountains on Venus, salt domes on Earth, an impact basin on the far side of the Moon, ancient lakes on Mars and minerals in rare meteorites. She has also worked with astronauts, supporting training programs at the European Space Agency. Outside of work, she enjoys engaging in public outreach, travelling and trying new foods.

While Earth is rich with water and teeming with life, Mars may seem like a cold, stagnant rock in comparison. But rocks record history, and closer inspection of Mars' surface tells stories of dramatic lava flows and dried-up seas.

Although Mars might not have erupting volcanoes and surface oceans today, the planet is still geologically active. With wind blowing across its surface, “Marsquakes” shaking the ground and seasonal storms, Mars is a dynamic desert full of its own beauty. Many elements of the Martian landscape remind us of our home. Through fields of sand dunes, dry cracked ground and imposing extinct volcanoes, Mars paints some familiar pictures. Indeed, one of the best ways to study our neighbouring planet from afar is to get up close to environments on Earth. Through terrestrial analogue studies, we're better able to study the past and the present states of Mars through a modern lens.

*Camaraderie enjoyed on field trips  
from past and present times*



Send your ideas for field trips to the DNHG Field Trip Co-ordinator, Sonja (contact is on page 8)



### DNHG Recordors

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### From the Editor:

The DNHG welcomes Heidi Struiksma, who will replace Margaret Swan as the newsletter editor.

A busy, transitional time for us here at DNHG but it's business as usual. Please send all Gazelle-related correspondence (articles, news and/or photos) to:

[gazelleeditor@gmail.com](mailto:gazelleeditor@gmail.com)

Enjoy your read!

# Spotlight! On the DNHG Sharjah Museums Field Trip

**A Cultural Experience**  
  
**at The Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, Sharjah**  
  
**by Anelisa Lambert and Rahul Shah**



Water flask- Ottoman workmanship: leather embroidered with silver.



Wicker shield lined with silk, with steel boss - Persian workmanship with Ottoman additions. 17th century AD



**The Aref El Rayess Temporary Exhibition**  
  
**at the Art Museum, Sharjah**  
  
**by Rahul Shah**



**Technologies from Yesterday**  
  
**at Al Mahatta Air Museum, Sharjah**  
  
**by Iain Dodson**

## Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

and opportunities for both sides and on many different levels (trading, science, literature, art). The third chapter, Inspirations, exemplifies with a rich sampling of works 'in comparison', both Islamic originals and objects made in Venice, how the two cultures influenced each other's techniques, decorative styles and ornaments. This exhibition runs until 2nd July 2022.

Our second museum visited was Sharjah Art Museum where we again had a guided tour to see the Aref El Rayess Exhibition which presents a largely unknown body of work created by the prolific Lebanese artist Aref El Rayess (1928–2005). The exhibition includes a wide range of paintings, drawings, works on paper, sculptures and tapestries that together revealed the rich and complex artistic practice of this important Arab modernist. It explores several key moments in the development of his work - the years of training spent between Lebanon, Senegal and Paris, the abstract materialist works produced in Italy, the overtly political paintings inspired by the Algerian War of Independence, the liberation struggles of the 'Third World' and of African-Americans as well as the Lebanese War and the Deserts painted during his stay in Saudi Arabia. This exhibition runs until 7th August 2022.

The third and final museum visited was Al Mahatta Airport Museum, which was the first airport built in the region in 1932 and then turned into a museum. We went to see the exhibition hosted by Sharjah Museums Authority to mark the National Civil Aviation Day, a celebration of the landing of the first aircraft in Sharjah in what became the UAE. The exhibition "Sharjah, the First UAE Flying School I" commemorates fifty years of prosperity and development in the aviation field in the United Arab Emirates. DNHG member, Hazelle Page, who is Collections Manager for Sharjah Museums Authority guided us through the exhibition which tells the story of the first aviation school in the United Arab Emirates and the efforts of its founder, the late Captain Adel Al-Deeb. It includes some stories of prominent figures who attended the flying school, personal flying records and correspondences, and a collection of Captain Adel Al-Deeb's personal items, such as his flying licenses and uniform. The exhibition also features the story of the first Arab woman to obtain a pilot's licence in 1972. We also visited the hangar to see the planes which were on display. This exhibition runs until 2nd September 2022.

All three visits were very much enjoyed by everyone and many thanks are expressed on these pages to Hazelle Page for organizing the whole trip. More photographs from the visits can be seen on the Spotlight page.

Contribution by Valerie Chalmers, based on notes by Hazelle Page



### The Windtower Book

In the *Book News* article on page 4 of the January Gazelle, the launch of a new edition of the Windtower was announced. The photograph on the left shows author, Peter Jackson (right) in conversation with Kevin Hasler at the recent Emirates Airline Festival of Literature.



For anyone interested in Dubai's architecture, culture and fascinating historical development, this is a must-have coffee table book. Originally co-authored with Anne Coles in 1975 as a short monograph, it was later published as a book in 2007. This edition compares traditional architecture with modern, in light of global warming.

More about Peter, who is the Architect Advisor in the Ruler's Office in Sharjah, and the development of the book over the years can be read at the following link:

<https://fridaymagazine.ae/life-culture/people-profiles/uncovering-secrets-of-al-bastakiya-s-windtower-houses-1.2315371>

## Field Clips

### Who's Next Door? Saudi Plants

In March 2022, I had the opportunity to visit remote areas of northwest Saudi Arabia to participate in a survey of native plants there. From the point of view of a naturalist sensitive to biogeography, it was educational and sometimes insightful to take note of the similarities and differences seen between the flora of the southeastern Arabia (the UAE) and that of the northwest. Some examples follow:



*Aizoon canariense* in fruit, NW Saudi.

The prostrate *Aizoon canariense* (Aizoaceae), common on gravel terraces in the UAE, is similarly common in a variety of environments in NW Saudi. The same is true of the prostrate *Tribulus terrestris* (Zygophyllaceae). Both species are widespread globally.

Another prostrate, *Lotononis platycarpa* (Fabaceae), is uncommon on slopes and gravel in the UAE, but is very common in a spectrum of environments (except mobile sands) in NW Saudi.



Desert Broom *Leptadenia pyrotechnica*, NW Saudi.

The large Desert Broom *Leptadenia pyrotechnica* (Apocynaceae, formerly Asclepiadaceae), a species found westward to the Sahel zone of West Africa, was rare in NW Saudi, perhaps because it is at the northern limit of its range, and it was limited to sand substrates.



*Zygophyllum coccineum*

Cushions of succulent *Zygophyllum* shrubs (Zygophyllaceae) are very common in NW Saudi, as they are in the UAE, but the species are different and they continue into mountains and gravel plains environments, as they do not in the UAE.

The aromatic wormwood *Artemisia sieberi* (Asteraceae), which dominates the *Artemisia* steppe flora found in the high Musandam and on the Central Iranian Plateau, was also present at high elevations (>1000m) in NW Saudi. However, most of the associated plants of the high Musandam are not present in NW Saudi.



Odd coastal plain association: *Haloxylon salicornicum* and *Tephrosia* sp., NW Saudi.

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## Field Clips

(Continued from page 5)

No *Convolvulus* species (Convolvulaceae), whether shrubs or annuals, were observed in NW Saudi, whereas they are a regular component of many environments in the UAE.

The invasive mesquite tree, *Prosopis juliflora*, has not (yet?) taken hold in NW Saudi. Only a few examples were seen.

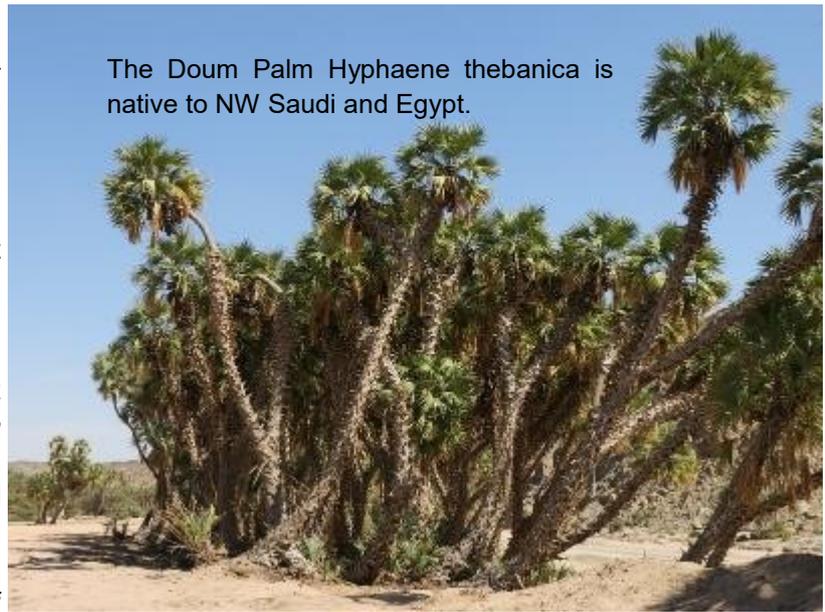
A few undisturbed plains areas of the Red Sea coast featured a very unusual association of *Haloxylon salicornicum*, common on sandy plains in the UAE, was co-dominant with a *Tephrosia* species. In the UAE and Oman, *Tephrosia* is typically a plant of mountain wadis.

Some of the above differences may be the result of latitude, since NW Saudi is securely in the temperate zone. Other changes may be due to different rock and soil chemistry, since NW Saudi consists primarily of Precambrian granites and associated metamorphic rocks, very different from the Hajar Mountain ophiolite and the Musandam carbonates of the UAE. Other differences may be due to historical factors such as natural transport from neighboring areas. The NW Saudi flora shares many elements with that of Sinai and northern Egypt, while the UAE flora reflects its proximity to Iran and Pakistan.

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One feature shared by both areas is the problem of heavy grazing by domestic livestock, which in NW Saudi includes large herds of sheep as well as camels. The result is a reduction in plant diversity and the dominance of unpalatable species. The problem extends to mountain areas but appears to be diminished in rugged terrain in NW Saudi because the number of feral goats does not seem to be nearly as large as in the UAE.

Contribution by Gary Feulner



The Doum Palm *Hyphaene thebanica* is native to NW Saudi and Egypt.



The NW Saudi mountains have a granite core surrounded by associated metamorphics.



A *Fagonia* species dominates the windswept coastal plain, NW Saudi.

## Field Clips

### No queuing at Kew!

Way back in time when I was studying for a degree in librarianship, one of my fellow students announced that she had just been appointed a position at the Kew Gardens library. I remember thinking that that would be an amazing job and she of course was thrilled.

Fast-forward to 2022 and in Central London, ready for some peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of the Jubilee celebrations, my husband suggested a visit to Kew Gardens—we were not disappointed.

A UNESCO world heritage site, Kew Gardens house *“the largest and most diverse botanical and mycological collections of the world”* according to Wikipedia. Consisting of 132 hectares (330 acres), Kew Gardens evolved from a private exotic garden and was founded in 1840.

Drawn by the Victorian architecture, we explored both the Palm House and the Temperate glasshouses, the former displaying palm species from around the globe whilst the latter exhibit 1,500 species of plants from temperate regions of the world.

The grand entrance to the Palm House was guarded by various emblematic and mythical statues representing noble houses. Each creature proudly bore their family crests, as can be seen in the photo below left. The spiral shape is an example of how architecture is inspired by nature in the following two photographs. A staircase wends the way to a higher vantage point whilst a New Zealand black tree fern focuses on a frond unfurling from its spiral infancy.

The Temperate House has 15,000 panes of glass in all and covers 4,880 square metres. It stands 19 metres high at the tallest point and is a marvel to behold. Adorning this Grade 1 listed building are classical designs, either embossed onto the walls or three-dimensional; the central block and two octagons in particular have ornate sculptures, having been completed first in 1863. Terracotta urns hide chimneys from a heating system invented during the steam era.

All in all, it was a fascinating tour. We even passed a badger sett during our walk around the grounds. No sightings of course as badgers are shy, nocturnal creatures.

There was so much more to see and do but we simply ran out of time so had to leave much of Kew for another day.

Contribution by  
Margaret Swan



Looking out from the Palm House



Standing guard



A man-made spiral



A spiral in nature

Kew Gardens operates daily with several volunteers and employs over a thousand staff. It even has its own police force! More information can be found online but if you are planning a summer trip, visit:

<https://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/visit-kew-gardens>



The Palm House



One of the 'Octagons' in the Temperate Glass house

## Dubai Natural History Group (DNHG) Programme 2021/2022

Monthly lectures start at 8.00pm

20 June (Hybrid meeting—In-person and Zoom)  
AGM, then:  
Elise Harrington will present an illustrated talk entitled:  
“From Earth to Mars: Parallels between neighbouring planets”  
  
(Lectures will resume in September)

### DNHG Field Trips

9—16 July DNHG Trip to Northern Sumatra  
7—19 September DNHG Trip to Madagascar (with a shorter version from 11—19 September)

Please note that field trips will only take place in accordance with current Dubai Government regulations. These have been relaxed but participants still need proof of vaccination or proof of PCR test not older than 72 hours upon registration/arrival.

## DNHG COMMITTEE 2020/2021

When possible, please contact committee members outside office hours

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## DNHG Membership

DNHG membership remains one of Dubai's best bargains at Dh100 for families and Dh50 for singles. Membership for the current year is valid from September 2020 to September 2021. In consideration of the restrictions on our lectures and field trips due to COVID-19, **all members who were paid up (or considered paid up) for 2020—2021 will be automatically renewed for 2021-2022**, without a renewal fee.

New members can join by (i) sending to the Membership Secretary (see above) a completed one-page membership form, which can be downloaded from our website ([www.dnhg.org](http://www.dnhg.org)) and (ii) making payment to our Emirates NBD account by cash deposit or transfer from your bank or ATM, using our IBAN number AE640260001012012013302. However, this process does not always identify the payer. So if you wish to pay by cash deposit, please also photograph or scan a copy of your payment confirmation and send via e-mail to the Membership Secretary, so we know whose money we have received.

DNHG membership entitles you to participate in field trips and helps pay for our lecture hall, publication and distribution of our monthly newsletter, the *Gazelle*, our post office box, additions to our library, incidental expenses of speakers and occasional special projects.