

Our Aden Trip 2007

I am Jenny Egelnick (Née Wheeler) and was in the Lower and Upper Sixth forms at Khormaksar Secondary from January 1965 (we arrived late December 1964) until July 1966 when I left and returned to England to train as a teacher. I came on this trip with my husband of 37 years who wanted to see for himself where a lot of my family's tales came from. We left France where we live on Friday still surrounded by snow to night-stop with our eldest son and his family and to be on the doorstep for Heathrow, unfortunately that didn't allow for cancelled trains but we made it in time.

Our flight out was good with an unexpected stop in Sa'ana decided we needed to change aircraft, still arriving in according to the itinerary. Two taxis took us out to the Gold Mohur Bay and while we breakfasted rooms were made quite quickly so we were able to shower and change. We much time on our first day here as after sleep for some and others including us we headed for Steamer Point en masse Crescent and Rock Hotels somewhat jaded but still there.

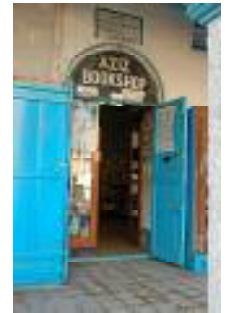


Queen Victoria is still sitting on her throne in the gardens but sadly most of the little duty-free shops have gone. We did visit the Aziz bookshop which appeared to have the same stock in it as when we lived there judging by the age of the books and the pier opposite looked just the same. After a very hair-raising drive to Steamer Point we carefully selected a taxi with enough seats, 4 new tyres and 3 opening doors to use for most of our stay. Enter Mohammed 1 (Ali). Before returning to the hotel we located St Anthony's Roman Catholic Boys' School which was ready for classes inside but had been left unused and was now sadly dilapidated and deserted. There were however a lot of boys playing in the school grounds. That

night we ate in the Chinese restaurant on the hotel beach, a very good meal even though a bottle of mediocre wine cost £30!



and then it was Khormaksar Sheraton Hotel in available for us didn't waste sea swims for finding the Surprisingly



Crater was the first stop on day two which I had only been able to visit briefly at the start of our tour due to the conflict then. We confirmed our return flights before visiting Tawila Tanks where water was stored when there was any – a first for all of us. The local people we met on our travels were very friendly. We then headed for our school after a walk along Khormaksar beach and a drive around the old quarters there, now all surrounded by high walls making it rather difficult to recognise old homes especially as numbers on them in English were few and far between. The wooden flats were very dilapidated.



Our old school is now a University for training teachers. see the former photos. The school where we were Twynehams? or and in use. Outside we were doing by about us we were where we chatted water and were we were leaving



Having passed through a checkpoint to school we were told not to take any was open to the road unlike before fenced in but the Twinings? or possibly something similar - huts were still there the main entrance we were asked what members of staff and when they heard invited inside to meet the Deputy Dean over some very welcome bottles of allowed to take some photographs. As there was a member of staff who had been at a local school and played sports against our school during our time there and quite likely one of our entourage present at the time.

Heading back along Ma'alla Straight we stopped so I was able to see my old flat at Harlton House now re-named and take some photos of it. The flats which formerly didn't have stores under them now have and it seemed to be a thriving area. The old garage opposite was still there although where we used to buy our records had gone. Moving on to the British War Graves cemetery we were trying to find a specific grave which an ex-OK had requested a photo of as it was where her father had been laid to rest. Sadly the wooden crosses which had marked his and other graves had deteriorated and we were unable to find one with his name on. The search continues! This was followed by lunch for those of us who indulged and another swim and sunbathe followed by an interesting dinner in the hotel where the waiter could not take the order properly and things went from bad to worse! Most of our starters didn't arrive and some of the food we had ordered was "off the menu" which we were told somewhat later – doesn't help when you have been involved in catering and can see how poorly trained the staff are. What we did have was tasty enough although to have rice with anything meant a predominance of which the majority of people would find difficult to eat more than half!



Day three we got up earlier, had breakfast, Mohammed 1 was waiting and we headed for Little Aden with the exception of my husband Chris whose knee was playing him up and as this trip didn't go to anywhere particularly relevant to me as again it was too dangerous for us to visit more than the once at the start of our tour, he was saving his mobility for future trips. There were still flamingos near where the salt pans used to be which surprised me as I had recently seen a television report on Lake Nakuru which we had visited on our trip to Nairobi like many of you that showed that there were very few left. Sheikh Othman had increased in size to that of a city and shortly after that we saw our only camels on the scrubland, no camel carts anywhere, just a few donkeys pulling carts dotted about. We travelled as far as we could into Little Aden, checkpoints permitting, then on our return stopped at the



Silent Valley cemetery to pay our respects. Once again this was very well looked after even down to the odd plants which were being watered in memory of those who rested there. Having actually looked at our mode of transport it was interesting to note that some of the headlights were held in place with cigarette packets and the spare tyre on the roof rack was bare and had a large hole in it. He left this very unceremoniously on the sand in Silent Valley.



On our way back we experienced another first – we drove on to Slave Island and around it in an attempt to take some photos looking across to the mainland. Unfortunately due to Military restrictions we could not get near enough however we did stop on the causeway linking the two to take some.



This was followed by a return visit to the old Khormaksar quarters to try to locate another house followed by a visit to the Aden Mall or Lulu Supermarket which seems to cater for the wealthier members of the community with its air conditioning and selling cars, electrical goods, gold, bridal wear and fashions to mention a few in the other stores under its roof. A further attempt was made to try and find a list or plan of those buried in the Military cemetery in Ma'alla to no avail so a visit to the Roman Catholic church is planned another day to see if

they can help. (The boys did make several visits to solve the mystery during our time in Aden and it is now pending an E-mail photograph once the information can be located.) Once more reunited with my husband and post lunch we headed for a swim and sunbathe before dinner at the Fish restaurant at the hotel, another interesting meal of misunderstandings!

Now day four, some of us decided on a more relaxing start to the day so after a lazy breakfast we headed to the beach for more swimming and sunbathing. As I had been promised a gold chain we



decided to avoid the heat around midday and four of us took a taxi back to the Mall to try the gold markets there. Unfortunately they didn't open until the evening however we did some confectionery sampling and bought a selection of the wares, not realising that we were not supposed to bring food stuffs into the hotel – our bags were always scanned on re-entry & this time they were looked inside & we had to report to reception and confess our sins. They weren't the slightest bit worried luckily. After lunch and more beach we returned en masse this time to the Mall and I'm now wearing a

gold chain! Dinner that night was in the restaurant in the hotel again, an improvement on the previous visit!

As we wanted to visit some different places my husband and I went off on our own on day five with Mohammed 2. My school bus used to go past the dhow graveyard and one of the family tales was that the boat used in The African Queen had been dumped there with mainly its funnel exposed. My husband wanted a photo of himself on the approximate spot where it had been although the land there had all been reclaimed and I believe the African Queen is now somewhere like South Africa where it is moored as a restaurant or similar. From this point you could see the remnants of some dhows further out in the bay looking towards Slave Island where they had been left, we didn't see any traditional ones afloat.



We tried unsuccessfully to revisit the Aziz bookshop that had been closed on our way out and still was on our return. We scaled the very rough heights to reach Steamer Point Hospital where we weren't supposed to take photos again – my mother had worked there and my father had worked in the Photographic Section of the Headquarters building for Middle East Command. There was a building just below the hospital that was surrounded by a wall and security was rife which may



have been the same building. I was also looking for Chapel Hill School as my brother had attended it. We later discovered that it had been blown up along with the British houses near there – possibly meaning the Barrack blocks that were there presumably during the civil uprising and this also presumably accounted for the state or rather lack of the road up to the Hospital which was still very much in use although some of the outbuildings were looking very dilapidated. Our attempts to visit Tarshyne were thwarted as the main beach club

area of yore was again surrounded by security so that we couldn't get very near – it is still a beach club of some sort. The nearest we could get was to go down between the flats which were part of the old Officers quarters and onto the beach there. Some of these were in a sad condition, others had had extensions added and were quite respectable. I did not see any houses although these may have been in the beach club complex. The old Officers Mess is still there on the rocks but again we could only see this from a distance and according to Mohammed 2 the President has a weekend place there. This explained why we could not go further along the coast in that direction. He then took us to the other side of Gold Mohur Bay to show us where a new hotel complex is being built before returning us to our hotel.



After lunch and more beach time we went on a boat trip which went as far as Tarshyne Bay in one direction and then on past Gold Mohur Bay to some other secluded areas with amazing rock formations for an hours trip. It was most enjoyable. Dinner was again in the fish restaurant where in spite of choosing the specific fish you wanted to eat, what came through on your plate was a bit hit and miss but very pleasant never-the- less. Having got to grips with the way it worked there after the last visit at least everyone had more on their plates to eat.

Our last day! This was spent soaking up the last of the sea and sun once we had breakfasted, packed our bags, deposited our luggage behind Reception and handed our keys in. We did stop for lunch but were soon back on the beach again until sunset – see numerous pics! – then we changed into our travelling clothes and headed for the Chinese Restaurant again after our usual pre-dinner drinks. We chose this as we had received the quickest and most accurate service on our previous visit and had booked taxis for 21.30 to take us to the airport. Oddly enough the service was slow in spite of us telling them when we had to leave although they were fairly busy and the final bill was somewhat higher than it should have been, however this was adjusted before our departure. Mohammed 1 was outside with his taxi but Mohammed 2 was nowhere to be seen. M1 offered to squeeze us all in plus luggage but we declined and eventually called another taxi feeling somewhat let down by M2 as he had been very good until then. Maybe he became involved in a qat chew!



We arrived at the airport in plenty of time and were able to sit anywhere on the aircraft for the flight to Sa'ana. We were met on arrival by the transport from the Sheraton Hotel there where we were booked in for the night including breakfast before returning to the airport for the rest of our journey to Heathrow. The transport was not so prompt in the morning!



Our flight back was uneventful which could also cover the meals – I think only half of the food was eaten – a goodly mixture of rice and couscous with a small suggestion of chicken and sauce on top was rather dry as were the breakfast pastries and afternoon tea sandwich & cake. The food on the way out was far more appetising. After collecting our luggage which was amongst the first cases off, we said our goodbyes and Chris & I headed for a cup of tea and a sandwich before starting our journey by public transport to South London to our eldest son's house for the weekend. My husband then returned to France where we live and I stayed on to Grandson sit for half term before returning to France too.

We had a very enjoyable trip and as you can see not too taxing yet I saw everything I wanted to - unless there were security reasons why not - and more. The attempts to turn Aden into a resort destination have a long way to go – a good start was the local stores with all their beach inflatables hanging up outside although there were so many of them I feel it was rather a case of wishful thinking! The hotels are going up but the drive through from the airport leaves a lot to be desired in places. The new roads have probably enabled the drivers to drive faster and more recklessly – when I think that I took my first driving lessons there and have driven ever since all over the world I would not wish to do so there! The almost uninterrupted sunshine is a bonus and the locals were certainly friendly towards us and we came back feeling relaxed and glowing in our attempts to make the most of the sun!

