



## LECTURE PROGRAMME 2009–10

Please note: some lectures start at 5:30pm and others at 6:00pm,  
some are on a Wednesday and others on a Thursday.

Questions? Contact Dr James Onley at [j.onley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.onley@exeter.ac.uk)

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### 11 November 2009, Wednesday

“**WINDTOWERS OF DUBAI**”, a lecture and book launch by **Dr Anne Coles** of University of Oxford on the book she co-authored with Peter Jackson about the traditional windtowers of Dubai. Signed copies of her book, *Windtower* (published by Stacey International), will be available for purchase at a discounted rate. **6:00pm in the Middle East Association, 33 Bury Street, St James, London SW1**. Nearest tube station: Green Park. Please RSVP to James Onley ([j.onley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.onley@exeter.ac.uk)) if you plan to attend.

*Abstract:* For much of the early twentieth century, clusters of windtowers defined the creekside skyline of the trading port of Dubai. These dramatic architectural features were both strikingly beautiful and also practical. They captured the breeze, funnelling it into the rooms below, providing comfortable conditions in the humid heat of Gulf summers. They were not only a popular feature of the courtyard houses of notable trading families up and down the Gulf Coast, but seasonally ordinary people, too, erected windtowers above their homes. Today, windtowers have become an important symbol of the cultural heritage of Dubai. This lecture, while featuring the design and architecture of these windtower dwellings, includes substantial social research to provide an unusual insight into the ways of life of the inhabitants, their culture and history. Building on their earlier study undertaken between 1969 and 1974, Anne Coles and co-author Peter Jackson have re-visited and expanded their original research, incorporating interviews with the families concerned and the latest technical techniques.

*Biography:* Dr Anne Coles is a geographer, who lived and worked in Dubai from 1968-71. She has spent many years in the Middle East, and her career has combined research, university teaching and professional practice. She has particular interests in the cultural aspects of development, migration and human responses to ‘difficult’ environments. Anne is presently a research associate at the International Gender Studies Centre in Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

### 3 December 2009, Thursday

“**STARGAZING IN OMAN: A DYING ART**”, a lecture by **Dr Harriet Nash** of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. **5:30pm in room 116, SOAS**.

*Abstract:* In Oman, stars are still used to time water shares for irrigation at night. In many places light pollution means that stars cannot be used, and elsewhere most people prefer to use wristwatches. However, the oral tradition of using stars, probably dating to pre-Islamic times, survives in eight villages. Over the last four years the stars used and methods of telling the time with them have been recorded for the first time in seven of the eight villages. The stars were identified by watching them with the farmers, returning at different times of year to see all of the stars used. The decline of star use in these communities was also documented. The presentation will give some of the results of this research, describing how the information was collected, how the farmers time their water shares by the stars, and how they organise the management of the irrigation systems.

## **21 January 2010, Thursday**

**“ANCIENT SOUTH ARABIA AND THE NEAR EAST**, a lecture by **Alexandra Porter** of the British Museum, Department of Middle East. Held in conjunction with the Council for British Research in the Levant and the Palestine Exploration Fund. **6:00pm in the Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum.**

*Abstract:* South Arabia does not even feature on many maps of the ancient Near East. Scholars have not recognised the significance of South Arabia in the ancient Near East due a limited knowledge of this area. However, in recent decades there have been astonishing developments in the understanding of the region, as a result of archaeological excavations and the enormous quantity of written sources that have been discovered. This information demonstrates that South Arabia had a strong cultural identity characterised by unique and original features but was at the same time part of the broader historical and cultural system of the ancient Near East. In this lecture we will outline the history of interaction between the Fertile Crescent and South Arabia. We will examine the models of migration vs indigenous development in the origins of the ancient South Arabian civilisation, the role of the incense trade in the rise of the South Arabian kingdoms, and the various influences reflected in ancient South Arabian art.

## **17 February 2010, Wednesday**

**“‘THAT WAS HOW WE LIVED’: RECONSTRUCTING URBAN SPACE AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN PRE-OIL KUWAIT”**, a lecture by **Farah Al-Nakib** of SOAS, sponsored by the LSE Kuwait Programme. **5:30pm in the Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS.**

*Abstract:* Over the course of nearly 250 years, from the time of its settlement in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century until the advent of oil urbanization in the 1950s, Kuwait town grew into a thriving maritime urban centre serving as a gateway between the Gulf littoral, southern Iraq, and the hinterlands of Najd. Most English-language histories of pre-oil Kuwait have focused on the port town’s economic and political developments in relation to its various external links: the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean trading networks, the pearling industry, international diplomacy vis-à-vis the Ottoman and British empires, and the international market economy. Less attention is given in the historiographic discourse to the *internal* dynamics and patterns of urban life in Kuwait before oil. This absence is no doubt due to the paucity of available local records and the relative abundance of British and foreign sources on Kuwait’s early history. My paper attempts to close this gap in both the historic record and the historiographic discourse by using a number of oral histories conducted with members of Kuwait town’s early inhabitants who are still alive today to trace the socio-spatial growth, layout, and organization of urban space and to analyze the patterns and practice of everyday life in Kuwait before the advent of oil.

## **17 March 2010, Wednesday**

**“BETWEEN NOTABLES AND REVOLUTIONARIES: A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SHIA COMMUNITIES IN EASTERN SAUDI ARABIA”**, a lecture by **Toby Matthiesen** of SOAS. **5:30pm in room B102, Brunei Building SOAS.**

*Abstract:* The Shia communities in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia underwent profound socio-economic changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Ottoman period, local notable families worked together with Ottoman officials and, in 1913, these notables submitted peacefully to Ibn Saud. Although the important administrative posts in the Eastern Province were given to Saudi allies from Najd, these notables continued to play an important role throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The post of the Shia Qadi, for example, was constantly occupied by some of the main Shia notable families. This Shia elite benefitted from the oil boom and managed to get relatively high posts in the oil industry. Many members of these families were also drawn into the various leftist groups active in the Eastern Province such as the Communists and the Baathists.

The Shia Islamist movements that emerged in the 1970s, however, started struggling against this Shia elite as much as against the state. Although in al-Ahsa and Tarout, for example, descendants of the main notable families were recruited into these movements, the bulk of the activists in Qatif stemmed from other families. After the death of some of their leaders and the return of the Shia Islamist Opposition from exile in 1993, the political role of these notable families has been diminished.

### **26 May 2010, Wednesday**

**THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, followed immediately by the lecture listed below. **5:30pm in the Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS.**

**"HOW PEARL FISHING SHAPED THE SOCIETIES OF THE GULF, FROM THE NEOLITHIC TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY"**, a lecture by **Dr Rob Carter** of Oxford Brookes University about the subject of his forthcoming book.

*Abstract:* The pearling industry of the Persian Gulf is of immense antiquity, going back over 7000 years to the Stone Age. The peoples of the Gulf then gathered and wore pearls, along with other elaborate combinations of shell jewellery, and may even have traded them by sea with their neighbours in southern Iraq. In later centuries, the pearls of the Gulf were well known to the Achaemenids, the Greeks and the Romans, and famed for their quality and abundance. The industry continued to thrive after the coming of Islam, with pearls being treasured possessions of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs and their courtiers. Gulf pearls flowed in increasing quantities into the international markets from China to Europe, and by the 18th century AD the settlement patterns of the Gulf had begun to change in order to accommodate a voracious global demand. Numerous coastal settlement sprang up which specialised in pearl fishing, and most of the modern towns of the Gulf owe their origins to the pearl fishery. The cash economies of the Arab states along the Gulf littoral soon depended almost entirely on pearls, and the crash in global pearl markets, prompted by the advent of Japanese cultured pearls in the 1920s and 30s, brought both an end to the industry and the onset of great hardship. Many of the coastal towns may have disappeared entirely, but for the income derived from oil exploration concessions, followed by the advent of oil revenues. Dr Carter has been researching the historic and prehistoric pearl fishery since 2005, and is currently completing a book on the subject, to be produced by Arabian Publishing.

### **16–19 September 2010, Thursday–Sunday**

**RED SEA V: NAVIGATED SPACES, CONNECTED PLACES**, a conference at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, **University of Exeter.**

*Details:* This is the fifth international conference on the peoples of the Red Sea, supported by the Society in collaboration with the Seminar for Arabian Studies. Organised by the MARES Project at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. After a focus at the 2008 conference on the territorial hinterlands, Red Sea V brings the conference back to the Red Sea itself, and to the theme of life lived on and from the marine environment in all periods. The call for papers ends on **1 March 2010**. The conference organisers would in particular welcome proposals for papers from potential speakers in the fields of archaeology, anthropology, history and linguistics on subjects including. Conference website: <http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/mares/conferences.htm>

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## **OTHER EVENTS 2009–10**

### **22 October 2009, Thursday**

**SUDAN EAST AND WEST: ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURE.** The opening of a photograph exhibition at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Stocker Road, **University of Exeter**. After the opening, the exhibition will be open from 26 October to 18 December 2009, Mondays to Fridays, 9am to 5pm. For more information, please call 01392 264040.

### **27 October 2009, Tuesday**

**INSIDE THE KINGDOM.** A lecture by **Robert Lacey** and launch of his new book, *Inside the Kingdom*, about Saudi Arabia, sponsored by the Saudi-British Society. **5.30pm at the Middle East Association, 33 Bury Street, St James, London SW1**. Please email the Hon. Sec. know if you would like to come: [ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk).

### **7–8 November 2009, Saturday–Sunday**

**ANCIENT INDIAN OCEAN CORRIDORS: PLACING COASTAL & ISLAND SOUTH ASIA IN THEIR BROADER INDIAN OCEAN CONTEXT.** A joint UCL-University of Oxford conference to be held at the School of Archaeology, **Oxford**. For details, see <http://sealinks.arch.ox.ac.uk/html/projectevents.html>

### **11 November 2009, Wednesday**

**BOOK LAUNCH OF THE ARABS: A HISTORY BY EUGENE ROGAN.** RSVP to Julia Cook at 01865 284780 or [julia.cook@sant.ox.ac.uk](mailto:julia.cook@sant.ox.ac.uk). 5 pm at the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, **Oxford**.

### **12–14 November 2009, Thursday–Saturday**

**THE QUR'AN: TEXT, HISTORY & CULTURE.** The 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on the Qur'an hosted by the Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS, **London**. For details, call 020 7898 4379, email [cis@soas.ac.uk](mailto:cis@soas.ac.uk), or visit [www.soas.ac.uk/islamicstudies/conferences/quran2009/](http://www.soas.ac.uk/islamicstudies/conferences/quran2009/)

### **1 December 2009, Tuesday**

**SLAVERY IN THE PERSIAN GULF IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.** A seminar by **Jerzy Zdanowski**, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies Jagiellonian University, Krakow. 5 pm at the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, **Oxford**.

### **14 April 2010, Wednesday**

**MUSCAT & OMAN, 1962–64: SERVICE IN THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES: RECOLLECTIONS BY CONTEMPORARIES OF THE TIME.** An informal illustrated talk by **David Gwynne-James** and **Allan Williams**. 7 pm at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, 2 Belgrave Square, **London**. Members only. For details, see: [www.rsaa.org.uk/lecture.html](http://www.rsaa.org.uk/lecture.html)

### **30 June–3 July 2010, Wednesday–Saturday**

**THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY GULF: THE CHALLENGE OF IDENTITY.** The annual Gulf conference at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, **University of Exeter**. This conference will examine the multifarious challenges of 'identity' at all levels—political, economic, socio-cultural, and international—as the GCC states, Iran, Iraq and Yemen undergo paradigm-shifting but highly contrasting changes. Papers and alternative panel proposals are invited.

Abstracts or panel proposals with abstracts must be received by **1 March 2010** (full papers are also accepted as a basis for selection). For information, or to submit an abstract/paper by electronic means only (in Word format, 1.5-spaced, 12-point, with footnotes and bibliography), to: Prof. Gerd Nonneman (Al-Qasimi Chair of Gulf Studies): [g.nonneman@ex.ac.uk](mailto:g.nonneman@ex.ac.uk).

### **7–10 July 2010, Wednesday–Saturday**

**THE 2010 GULF RESEARCH MEETING.** The first annual conference of the **Gulf Research Foundation** at the **University of Cambridge**. The meeting seeks to provide an academic environment to foster Gulf studies and to promote scholarly and academic exchange among scholars working and/or having familiarity with the Gulf region: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Iran, and Iraq. The Gulf Research Meeting aims to identify issues of importance to the Gulf region and provide a basis for academic and empirical research into those fields. Particular emphasis is given to encourage young scholars to engage in the debate and take part in research collaboration. Deadline for submissions: **15 December 2009**. For details, see <http://grcevent.net/cambridge/index.php>.

### **22–24 July 2010, Thursday–Saturday**

**THE SEMINAR FOR ARABIAN STUDIES, ANNUAL CONFERENCE.** To be held at the British Museum, London. For details, see [www.arabianseminar.org.uk](http://www.arabianseminar.org.uk).