



Great Arab Revolt Project

Sixth Fieldwork Season

Monday 14th November – Monday 28th November 2011
Southern Jordan

Introduction

The Great Arab Revolt Project (GARP) is planned as a ten-year project to investigate First World War archaeology in Jordan and develop new heritage sites for visitors. In contrast to the Western Front, where considerable fieldwork has taken place, First World War remains in Jordan have never been systematically investigated. These remains have particular interest for four reasons:

- they are associated with the exploits and legend of Lawrence of Arabia, an iconic historical and cultural figure in the English-speaking world
- they represent a struggle, known as the Great Arab Revolt, that was central to the creation of the states and conflicts of the modern Middle East
- they represent the archaeological imprint of a distinctive type of irregular or guerrilla warfare which has been of huge historical importance over the last 90 years
- they offer a range of military landscapes, sites and artefact assemblages, and a range of memories, associations and modern significances, which contrast with the more familiar archaeology, commemoration and tourism of the Western Front

Our aim, working closely with Jordanian colleagues and local communities, is to catalogue the visible remains (buildings and earthworks), to carry out surveys and trial excavations at a representative sample of sites, to record oral histories and folk memories, and to develop one or more sites for effective public presentation.

The Great Arab Revolt Project is based at the University of Bristol, and is supported by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, the al-Hussein bin Talal University, the Jordan Museum in Amman, the Council for British Research in the Levant, HRH Prince Hassan, and *Current World Archaeology* magazine.

(For reports on past fieldwork, see *Current World Archaeology* 23, 27 and 39, plus the GARP website at www.jordan1914-18archaeology.org)

The main focus of the first two field seasons (2006 and 2007) was

- a) the Late Ottoman trench-fortress around Ma'an, and
- b) the Late Ottoman defences in and around Wadi Rutm Station, which lies approximately 60 km south of Ma'an on the Hijaz Railway.

Ma'an was the principal Ottoman military base in what is now southern Jordan, and we have established that the high ground for miles around the Hijaz railway station was entrenched in 1916–1918, transforming the area into a First World War trench fortress. Wadi Rutm, about 60 km south of Ma'an, is the site of a fortified railway station, an Ottoman army camp, a fortified hilltop redoubt, and various other military features on and close to the former railway line extending in both directions. While Ma'an represents a major, heavily defended base, Wadi Rutm represents the militarization of communication lines and the landscape more generally.

Season's 3 and 4 (2008 and 2009) focussed on:

- a) the Late Ottoman defences in and around Batn Al-Ghoul Station, approximately 55 km south of Ma'an on the Hijaz Railway, particularly Fassu'ah Ridge; and
- b) the Late Ottoman redoubts and Hashemite tribal army base at Wuheida, approximately 15 km west-south-west of Ma'an on the Aqaba road.

Fassu'ah Ridge occupies a stunning location on top of an escarpment overlooking Wadi Rutm and was the possible Ottoman command-and-control base for the entire Batn Al-Ghoul/Wadi Rutm area. We carried out a comprehensive record of all the standing remains, and further survey work to set the fort in its wider context, including recording the bread ovens and discovering the mule lines.

At Batn Al-Ghoul Ottoman Army camp, which comprised about 50 tent rings, we established that there was excellent preservation of *in-situ* organic remains reflecting the character of Ottoman military occupation in the later stages of the war.

At Wuheida, work focused on two main aspects of an extensive militarised landscape. Three Ottoman hilltop forts or redoubts on the Eastern Hill were recorded. Also surveyed were a series of complexes of stone alignments extending down approximately 2km of the wadi immediately to the west. The alignments indicate the former locations of enclosures, tents, and fire-pits of Prince Feisal's Arab Northern Army when it was based here between February and September 1918.

Last season (2010), two new sites were chosen in order to compare and contrast with previous season's work to try and determine the pattern of militarization in the landscape. Working at Tel el Shahm, a fortified station, and a railway camp north of Aqabat Hijaz, strengthened the hypothesis that the area along the Hijaz Railway was much more heavily militarised than at first thought. In addition, the fortifications discovered at Ramlah were investigated due to their unusual construction. These fortifications were clearly structured in such a way that none of the team had seen before, with crudely made low openings in the stone walls, looking exactly like prone rifle firing positions. A rapid test excavation, however, indicated that the ground had been deeply dug and that the firing positions would most likely have been at standing height. Light munitions were found in the area and also cigarette paper, indicating that the soldiers had used this dug-out as living quarters.

It has now been established that the high ground around the Hijaz railway was heavily entrenched in 1916-18, and the impression grows of a large-scale counter-insurgency operation

in southern Jordan between July 1917 and October 1918 – testimony to the effectiveness of the Arab military effort. It has also been established that there is an excellent presence of remains reflecting the character of the Ottoman military occupation in the later stages of the war.

The 2011 fieldwork season

The Road to Aqaba

This season, we plan to begin the second phase of the Great Arab Revolt Project. Having explored the militarised landscapes along the Hijaz Railway between Ma'an and Mudawarra during the first five years, we now plan to explore the road between Ma'an and Aqaba. This routeway was heavily contested between June 1917 and September 1918. Regular Hashemite and British forces played a larger role here, so that the conflict combined both conventional and guerrilla elements. We wish to contrast the archaeological imprint here with that already investigated on the railway. We hope also to initiate a major oral history project in this more heavily settled region.

Abu al Lissan: fortifications and battle site

Known from historical sources, including *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, as the site of a major battle between Hashemite and Ottoman forces, we wish to carry out a preliminary reconnaissance of the battle site and assess its potential for future work. We also wish to explore forts and other military features, once part of the defences guarding the road through the mountain pass near the village. We hope to involve the local community in this work, and we hope that the community will become a source of oral-history data.

Logistics

At present we are unable to fund places on the expedition beyond a small core team. All other participants at this stage in the development of the project are self-funding. This includes a contribution to the cost of post-excavation work and the publication of results (without which archaeological fieldwork cannot be justified). The price per person for the 2011 season is £2,450.

This sum will cover the entire two-week fieldwork season, including flights, 3-star hotel accommodation, good-quality food, and comprehensive insurance for UK residents. Non UK residents will have to take out 'working holiday' travel insurance if they are not already covered. Our current plan is to use the Edom Hotel at Wadi Musa. This ensures private accommodation with en-suite facilities in a medium-sized, family-run hotel. Two day-excursions are also included in the price, one to Petra (the hotel is located only a few minutes walk from the entrance to the archaeological site), one to Aqaba, taking in sites associated with Lawrence's campaigns, including Wadi Rum.

The budget is used as follows: 74% goes towards flights, accommodation and insurance. 17.5% goes towards transport, drivers, fees, equipment and lunches in Jordan. 8.5% goes towards post-excavation research, specialist reports and publication. The core team have their flights and accommodation paid for but they provide their time and expertise for free, both during the excavation and throughout the year.

Jordan is a friendly and welcoming country, but the geographical, economic, political and cultural differences between Britain and Jordan are considerable. Though our aim is to maximise

comfort and convenience – to maintain our own morale, to ensure good work is done, and to make the whole experience the fun that archaeology should be – we cannot guarantee that everything will always go smoothly. On the other hand, all participants will be encouraged to share ownership of the expedition, to participate fully in decision-making and problem-solving, and thus be part of a team which works as an effective collective.

In setting up the expedition, we will need to complete formalities and make bookings, and in doing so we will incur expenses. It is important, therefore, that we establish who is joining us at an early stage. If you wish to join the expedition, you will need to send us the following by 30th April at the latest:

- A deposit of £450, in the form of a cheque payable to: Dr N Faulkner and Mr D Thorpe, T/A Great War Archaeology Group. This deposit is non-returnable UNLESS it is necessary to increase the price due to cost of flights, in which case deposits WOULD BE RETURNABLE to anyone who wishes to withdraw. As places are limited, it would be advisable to send your deposit as soon as you have decided to join us to ensure you secure a place. The balance of £2,000 will be due by 15 June at the latest.
- Two colour passport photographs (for completion of your Jordanian security form). PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME ON THE BACK OF THE PHOTOS
- The following information (for your Jordanian security form and for medical insurance purposes): your full name, mother's maiden name, full date and place of birth, nationality, passport information (number, date of issue, place of issue, expiry date), occupation, home address, any allergies or medical complaints potentially relevant to medical insurance, and any previous excavations at home or abroad you have worked on (THIS INFORMATION IS VITAL TO COMPLETE JORDANIAN FORMALITIES AND TO ARRANGE INSURANCE COVER IN GOOD TIME). Please also provide a contact telephone number and e-mail.

Please note that your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after the date of the dig (ie: 28 May 2012). If it is not, you will have to renew it before 15 June when all information has to be submitted to Jordan.

You will also need to ensure that your typhoid, hepatitis A and tetanus vaccinations are up to date.

Insurance can only be provided for residents of the UK. Overseas participants will have to arrange their own insurance which should be on the basis of a 'working holiday'.

You should send your deposit cheque, passport photos, security form/medical insurance information and contact details to: Susan Daniels, GARP Administrator, 3 Millers Croft, Copmanthorpe, York, YO23 3TW. Susan can be contacted via e-mail, susan@gwag.org or by phone: 07815 570507.

If you are applying from outside the UK, we will strongly recommend flying to London to join the main group here. If for any reason this is likely to be especially impractical or inappropriate, then please contact Susan to discuss the matter.

Places are limited. We will allocate places to all suitable applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. Early booking and payment of the deposit may, therefore, be advisable.

Dr Neil Faulkner
Dr Nick Saunders
Mr David Thorpe
Directors, Great Arab Revolt Project: University of Bristol
January 2011