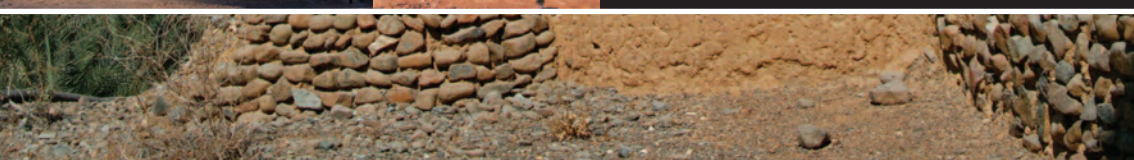


HISTORY



'He who does not know his past cannot make the best of his present and future, for it is from the past that we learn.'





Preserving the heritage and traditions of the past is a key focus of UAE Government policy.



HISTORY

THE UAE HAS A LONG HISTORY, recent finds in the Hajar Mountains having pushed the earliest evidence of man in the Emirates back by tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years. Prior to this the earliest known human occupation for which there is significant evidence dated from the Neolithic period, 5500 BC or 7500 years ago, when the climate was wetter and food resources abundant. Even at this early stage, there is proof of interaction with the outside world, especially with civilisations to the north. These contacts persisted and became wide-ranging, probably motivated by trade in copper from the Hajar Mountains, as the climate became more arid and fortified oasis communities focused on agriculture.

Foreign trade, the recurring motif in the history of this strategic region, seems to have flourished also in later periods, facilitated by domestication of the camel at the end of the second millennium. At the same time, the discovery of new irrigation techniques (*falaj* irrigation) made possible the extensive watering of agricultural areas that resulted in an explosion of settlement in the region.

By the first century AD overland caravan traffic between Syria and cities in southern Iraq, followed by seaborne travel to the important port of Omana (perhaps present-day Umm al-Qaiwain) and thence to India was an alternative to the Red Sea route used by the Romans. Pearls had been exploited in the area for millennia but at this time the trade reached new heights. Seafaring was also a mainstay and major fairs were held at Dibba, bringing merchants from as far afield as China.

The arrival of envoys from the Prophet Muhammad in 630 AD heralded the conversion of the region to Islam with Dibba again featuring, this time as a battleground in the wake of the Prophet's death. By 637 AD Islamic armies were using Julfar (Ra's al-Khaimah) as a staging post for the conquest of Iran. Over many centuries, Julfar became a wealthy port and pearling centre from which great wooden dhows ranged far and wide across the Indian Ocean.





IMPORTANT DATES

- c.5500 BC Evidence of extensive human occupation in UAE.
- 5500–3000 BC Occupation by skilled groups of herders using finely made stone tools (so-called 'Arabian bifacial tradition').
- 3000–2500 BC Hafit period – era of earliest collective burials first noted on the lower slopes of Jebel Hafit in the interior of Abu Dhabi.
- 2500–2000 BC Umm al-Nar period – era of first oasis towns (e.g. at Hili, Tell Abraq, Bidiya, Kalba) dominated by large, circular fortresses; burial of the dead in round communal tombs; wide-ranging trade contact with Mesopotamia, Iran, Indus Valley, Baluchistan, Bactria (Afghanistan); first intensive use of copper resources of Hajar Mountains; area referred to as *Magan* in Mesopotamian sources.
- 2000–1300 BC Wadi Suq period and Late Bronze Age – an era which is characterised by fewer towns; change in burial customs to long, generally narrow collective tombs; close ties to Dilmun (Bahrain).
- 1300–300 BC Iron Age – introduction of new irrigation technology in the form of *falaj* (pl. *afraj*), subterranean galleries which led water from mountain aquifers to lower-lying oases and gardens; explosion of settlement; first use of iron; first writing, using South Arabian alphabet; contacts with Assyrian and Persian empires.
- 300 BC–0 Mleiha period (or Late Pre-Islamic A–B) – flourishing town at Mleiha; beginnings of local coinage; far-flung imports from Greece (black-glazed pottery), South Arabia (alabaster unguent jars); first use of the horse.
- 0–250 AD Ed-Dur period (or late Pre-Islamic C–D) – flourishing towns at ed-Dur and Mleiha; extensive trade network along the Gulf linking up the Mediterranean, Syria and Mesopotamia with India; imports include Roman glass, coinage, brass; massive production of coinage by a ruler called Abi'el; first use of Aramaic in inscriptions from ed-Dur and Mleiha.
- 240 AD Rise of the Sasanian dynasty in south-western Iran, conquest of most of eastern Arabia.
- 6th/7th cent. AD Introduction of Christianity via contacts with south-western Iran and southern Mesopotamia; establishment of monastery on Sir Bani Yas by Nestorian Christian community; Sasanian garrisons in inner Oman and evidence for contact in the UAE shown by coins and ceramics from Kush (Ra's al-Khaimah), Umm al-Qaiwain and Fujairah.
- 630 AD Arrival of envoys from the Prophet Muhammad; conversion of the people to Islam.
- 632 AD Death of the Prophet Muhammad; outbreak of the *ridda* movement, a widespread rebellion against the teachings of Islam; dispatch of Hudhayfah b. Mihsan by the Caliph Abu Bakr to quell rebellion of Laqit b. Malik Dhu at-Tag at Dibba; major battle at Dibba, collapse of the rebels.



Julfar used as staging post for Islamic invasion of Iran.	637 AD
Julfar used as staging post for Abbasid invasion of Oman.	892 AD
Buyids (Buwayhids) conquer south-eastern Arabia.	963 AD
Geographer Yaqut mentions Julfar as a fertile town.	c. 1220
Close commercial contact between Northern Emirates and kingdom of Hormuz, based on Jarun island in the Straits of Hormuz.	14 th –15 th cent.
Portuguese circumnavigation of Cape of Good Hope by Vasco da Gama using Arab navigational information.	1498
Portuguese–Ottoman rivalry in the Gulf.	16 th cent.
Venetian traveller Gasparo Balbi's description of coast of UAE from Qatar to Ra's al-Khaimah; mention of Portuguese fortress at Kalba; first mention of Bani Yas in Abu Dhabi.	1580
Description of the East Coast of the UAE by a Dutch mariner sailing in the <i>Meerkat</i> .	1666
Growth of English trade in the Gulf; increasing Anglo–Dutch rivalry.	1720s
Sharjah and most of Musandam and the UAE East Coast, all the way to Khor Fakkan, under control of Qawasim according to Carsten Niebuhr, German surveyor working with the King of Denmark's scientific expedition.	1764
Repeated English East India Company attacks on Qawasim navy.	1800–1819
General Treaty of Peace between British Government and sheikhs of Ra's al-Khaimah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ajman, Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi.	1820
Survey of the Gulf resulting in the publication of the first accurate charts and maps of the area.	1820–1864
Collapse of the natural pearl market; first agreements signed by rulers of Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi for oil exploration.	1930s
Oil exploration agreements finalised in Ra's al-Khaimah, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman.	1945–1951
First export of oil from Abu Dhabi.	1962
British Government announced its intention to withdraw from the Gulf region; discussions begin on formation of a federation of the emirates.	1968
First export of oil from Dubai.	1969
Agreement reached amongst rulers of the emirates to form a union.	10 July 1971
Formation of the State of the United Arab Emirates.	2 Dec 1971
Sheikh Zayed, 1 st President of the UAE, died.	2 Nov 2004
Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan elected as new President of the UAE.	3 Nov 2004





The Portuguese arrival in the Gulf in the sixteenth century had bloody consequences for the Arab residents of Julfar and East Coast ports like Dibba, Bidiya, Khor Fakkan and Kalba. However, while European powers competed for regional supremacy, a local power, the Qawasim, was gathering strength. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Qawisim had built up a fleet of over 60 large vessels and could put nearly 20,000 sailors to sea, eventually provoking a British offensive to control the maritime trade routes between the Gulf and India.

Inland, the arc of villages at Liwa were the focus of economic and social activity for the Bani Yas from before the sixteenth century. But by the early 1790s the town of Abu Dhabi had become such an important pearling centre that the political leader of all the Bani Yas groups, the sheikh of the Al bu Falah (Al Nahyan family) moved there from the Liwa. Early in the nineteenth century, members of the Al bu Falasah, a branch of the Bani Yas, settled by the Creek in Dubai and established Maktoum rule in that emirate.

Following the defeat of the Qawasim, the British signed a series of agreements with the sheikhs of the individual emirates that, later augmented with treaties on preserving a maritime truce, resulted in the area becoming known as 'The Trucial States'.

The pearling industry thrived in the relative calm at sea during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing both income and employment to the people of the Arabian Gulf coast. Many of the inhabitants were semi-nomadic, pearling in the summer months and tending to their date gardens in the winter. However, their



meagre economic resources were soon to be dealt a heavy blow. The First World War impacted severely on the pearl fishery, but it was the economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, coupled with the Japanese invention of the cultured pearl, that damaged it irreparably. The industry eventually faded away just after the Second World War, when the newly independent Government of India imposed heavy taxation on pearls imported from the Gulf. This was catastrophic for the area. Despite their resourcefulness, the population faced considerable hardship with little opportunity for education and no roads or hospitals.

Fortunately oil was on the horizon and in the early 1930s the first oil company teams arrived to carry out preliminary surveys and the first cargo of crude was exported from Abu Dhabi in 1962. With revenues growing as oil production increased, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who was chosen as Ruler of Abu Dhabi on 6 August 1966, undertook a massive programme of construction of schools, housing, hospitals and roads. When Dubai's oil exports commenced in 1969, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, *de facto* Ruler of Dubai since 1939, was also able to use oil revenues to improve the quality of life of his people.

FEDERATION

At the beginning of 1968, when the British announced their intention of withdrawing from the Arabian Gulf by the end of 1971, Sheikh Zayed acted rapidly to initiate moves towards establishing closer ties with the emirates. Along with Sheikh Rashid, who was to become Vice President and Prime Minister of the newly formed state, Sheikh Zayed took the lead in calling for a federation that would include not only the seven emirates that together made up the Trucial States, but also Qatar and Bahrain. Following a period of negotiation however, agreement was reached between the rulers of six of the emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Fujairah and Ajman) and the federation to be known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was formally established on 2 December 1971. The seventh emirate, Ra's al-Khaimah, formally acceded to the new federation on 10 February 1972.



The United Arab Emirates was formally established on 2 December 1971.



There were a lot of dreams, I was dreaming about our land catching up with the modern world, but I was not able to do anything because I did not have the wherewithal in my hands to achieve these dreams. I was sure, however, that one day they would come true.

The prosperity, harmony and modern development that characterises the United Arab Emirates, led today by President HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, also the Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and his fellow-members of the Supreme Council of Rulers of the seven emirates, is due to a very great extent to the role played by Sheikh Zayed, both prior to the formation of the federation and in the nearly 33 years that followed until his death in November 2004. The achievements of his career are well summed up elsewhere in this *Yearbook*, but a brief overview of his life is appropriate here.

Born around 1918 in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed was the youngest of the four sons of Sheikh Sultan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi from 1922 to 1926. He was named after his grandfather, Sheikh Zayed bin Khalifa. At the time that Sheikh Zayed was born, the emirate was poor and undeveloped and life, even for members of the ruling family, was simple.

Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, as Sheikh Zayed grew to manhood, he displayed an early thirst for knowledge that took him out into the desert with the bedu tribesmen and into the sea with the fishermen and pearl divers, to learn about the people and the environment in which they lived. He later recalled with pleasure his experience of desert life and his initiation into the sport of falconry, which became a lifelong passion.

These travels provided Sheikh Zayed with a deep understanding both of the country and of its people. In the early 1930s, when the first oil company teams arrived to carry out preliminary surface geological surveys, he obtained his first exposure to the industry.

In 1946, Sheikh Zayed was chosen to fill a vacancy as Ruler's Representative in the Eastern Region of Abu Dhabi, centred on the oasis of Al Ain, approximately 160 kilometres east of the island of Abu Dhabi itself. The job involved not only the task of administering the six villages but also the whole of the adjacent desert region, enabling Sheikh Zayed to learn the techniques of government as well as deepening his knowledge of the tribes.

Sheikh Zayed brought to his new task a firm belief in the values of consultation and consensus, in contrast to confrontation.



Foreign visitors, such as the British explorer Sir Wilfred Thesiger, who first met him at this time, noted with approbation that his judgements ‘were distinguished by their acute insights, wisdom and fairness’.

Sheikh Zayed swiftly established himself not only as someone who had a clear vision of what he wished to achieve for the people of Al Ain, but also as someone who led by example.

A key task in the early years in Al Ain was that of stimulating the local economy, which was largely based on agriculture. He also ordered a revision of local water ownership rights to ensure a more equitable distribution, surrendering the rights of his own family as an example to others.

With development gradually getting under way, Sheikh Zayed commenced the laying out of a visionary city plan, and ordered the planting of ornamental trees that, now grown to maturity, have made Al Ain one of the greenest cities in Arabia.

Despite the lack of government revenues, Sheikh Zayed succeeded in bringing progress to Al Ain, establishing the

All the picture was prepared. It was not a matter of fresh thinking, but of simply putting into effect the thoughts of years and years.





The new generation should have a proper appreciation of the role played by their forefathers. they should adopt their model, and the supreme ideal of patience, fortitude, hard work and dedication to doing their duty.

rudiments of an administrative machinery, personally funding the first modern school in the emirate and coaxing relatives and friends to contribute towards small-scale development programmes. Oil production was to provide Sheikh Zayed with the means to fund his dreams, with the export of the first cargo of Abu Dhabi crude in 1962.

On 6 August 1966, Sheikh Zayed succeeded his elder brother as Ruler of Abu Dhabi, with a mandate from his family to press ahead as fast as possible with the development of Abu Dhabi. One of his early steps was to increase contributions to the Trucial States Development Fund, while when, in February 1968, the British announced their intention of withdrawing from the Arabian Gulf by the end of 1971, Sheikh Zayed acted rapidly to initiate moves towards establishing closer ties with the emirates, these efforts culminating in the establishment of the UAE. Sheikh Zayed was elected by his fellow rulers as the first President of the UAE, a post to which he was successively re-elected at five-year intervals.

The new state emerged at a time of political turmoil in the region. A couple of days earlier, on the night of 30 November and the early morning of 1 December, Iran had seized the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb, part of Ra's al-Khaimah, and had landed troops on Abu Musa, part of Sharjah (*see section on Foreign Policy*).

Foreign observers, lacking an understanding of the importance of a common history and heritage in bringing together the people of the UAE, predicted that the new state would survive only with difficulty, pointing to disputes with its neighbours and to the wide disparity in the size, population and level of development of the seven emirates. Better informed about the character of the country, Sheikh Zayed was naturally more optimistic and the predictions of those early pessimists were shown to be unfounded.

During his years in Al Ain, Sheikh Zayed had been able to develop a vision of how the country should progress. Once Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and then President, he had over three and a half decades to devote to making that vision a reality.

One foundation of his philosophy as a leader and statesman was that the resources of the country should be fully used to the benefit of the people. He saw them to be not as a means unto themselves, but as a tool to facilitate the development of what he believed to be the real wealth of the country – its people, and, in particular, the younger generation.

Within this framework, Sheikh Zayed believed that all of the country's citizens have a role to play in its development. Both men and women, he believed, should play their part. Recognising that in the past a lack of education and development had prevented women from playing a full role in much of the activity of society, he took action to ensure that this situation was addressed rapidly and, under his leadership, the country's women came increasingly to play their part in political and economic life.

Sheikh Zayed also believed in encouragement of initiatives designed to conserve the traditional culture of the people, in order to familiarise the younger generation with the ways of their ancestors. In his view, it was of crucial importance that the lessons and heritage of the past were remembered.

Unless wealth is used in conjunction with knowledge to plan for its use, and unless there are enlightened intellects to direct it, its fate is to diminish and to disappear. The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people.





He who does not know his past cannot make the best of his present and future, for it is from the past that we learn. We gain experience and we take advantage of the lessons and results [of the past].

If the heritage of the people of the UAE was important to Sheikh Zayed, so too was the conservation of its natural environment. His belief in conservation derived from his own upbringing where a sustainable use of resources required man to live in harmony with nature. This led him to ensure that conservation of the environment was a key part of government policy.

As in other areas of national life, Sheikh Zayed made it clear that conservation is not simply the task of government. He believed firmly that there was also a role for the individual and for non-governmental organisations, both of citizens and expatriates, applying this belief not just to concerns such as environmental conservation, but to other areas of national life as well.

Sheikh Zayed imbibed the principles of Islam in his childhood and they remained the foundation of his beliefs and principles throughout his life. He was a firm and dedicated opponent of those who sought to pervert the message of Islam to justify harsh dogmas, intolerance and terrorism. In Sheikh Zayed's view, however, such an approach was not merely a perversion of the message but is in direct contradiction of it. Extremism, he believed, has no place in Islam. In contrast, he stressed that:

Islam is a civilising religion that gives mankind dignity. A Muslim is he who does not inflict evil upon others. Islam is the religion of tolerance and forgiveness, and not of war, of dialogue and understanding.

Islam is a civilising religion that gives mankind dignity. A Muslim is he who does not inflict evil upon others. Islam is the religion of tolerance and forgiveness, and not of war, of dialogue and understanding. It is Islamic social justice which has asked every Muslim to respect the other. To treat every person, no matter what his creed or race, as a special soul is a mark of Islam. It is just that point, embodied in the humanitarian tenets of Islam, that makes us so proud of it.

He recognised, however, the necessity not only of eradicating terrorism, but of tackling its fundamental causes. Besides the international campaign against the types of terrorism, there should, he believed, be a strong international alliance that worked,



in parallel, to exert real and sincere efforts to bring about a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict.

Sheikh Zayed was also an eager advocate of tolerance, discussion and a better understanding between those of different faiths and, in particular, was an ardent advocate of dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

In the realm of the foreign policy of the state, his firmly-held belief in eschewing rhetoric in the search for solutions led the UAE to adopt an approach of seeking to find compromises, and to avoid, wherever possible, a resort to the use of force, whether in the Arab arena or more widely. Under his leadership, therefore, the country became an important provider of overseas aid, both for the development of infrastructure and for humanitarian relief, whether provided through civilian channels, as in the case of the reconstruction of Iraq following the defeat of the Saddam Hussein government in 2003 or, occasionally, by sending units of the UAE Armed Forces as international peacekeepers, such as to Kosovo in the late 1990s.

At the same time, the UAE, under his leadership, showed its preparedness to fight to defend justice, as was seen by its active participation in the war to liberate Kuwait from occupation in 1990/1991.

Sheikh Zayed with King Abdullah of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.



ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

During the autumn-to-spring 2006/2007 season for archaeology in the UAE, the usual programme of extensive research, both by local departments and by visiting academic teams, continued to be carried out. This has been supplemented by an increasing number of surveys with an archaeological component being executed throughout the country as part of environmental impact assessments and baseline studies prior to major development programmes. As a result of the work, a number of significant new discoveries have been made, while further work on previously-identified sites has also helped to deepen knowledge of the country's prehistory.

Perhaps the most important area of study, both in the Emirate of Sharjah and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, at least in terms of extending the chronology of man's presence in the UAE, has been into the earliest evidence of human occupation, in the Middle and Late Palaeolithic period.

One important development was a decision by America's Yale University to resume palaeontological work in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi. A team from Yale visited Abu Dhabi at the invitation of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) in late 2006, to re-examine all of the major Late Miocene fossil sites identified during previous work in the early 1990s by a joint team from Yale and London's Natural History Museum and additional work over the last decade by the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey (ADIAS). A five-year programme of further fieldwork commencing in December 2007 is now being planned.

In terms of archaeology, perhaps the most important area of study, both in the Emirate of Sharjah and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, at least in terms of extending the chronology of man's presence in the UAE, has been into the earliest evidence of human occupation, in the Middle and Late Palaeolithic period.

Until relatively recently, the oldest-known archaeological sites in the country were dated to the Neolithic or Late Stone Age period, from around 7500 years ago to 5500 years ago (5500 BC to 3500 BC), at the beginning of the modern, or Holocene, geological period.

Early in 2006, however, work in Sharjah by teams from the Sharjah Directorate of Antiquities, Germany's University of Tubingen and Britain's University of Oxford reported the discovery of stone tools from the Palaeolithic period on limestone outcrops

to the west of the Hajar Mountains, pushing the earliest evidence of man in the Emirates back by tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years. Further work was undertaken in early 2007.

One area investigated by the Sharjah-Oxford team produced evidence of a group of well-delineated sites, essentially *in situ*, with prolific surface scatters of stone tools. The tools identified by the study are similar in type to other artefacts known to be of Upper Pleistocene age, or the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic, from Oman and the Horn of Africa, and suggests that there may have been a 'Southern route out of Africa' across the southern and eastern Arabian Peninsula, through which early man spread into Asia.

Elsewhere in Sharjah, the joint German–Sharjah team continued work on a group of sites at Jebel Faiyah, one of which produced evidence of a previously-unknown Palaeolithic stone industry buried under nearly 1 metre of sterile deposits that underlie an area of Neolithic occupation. Dating of the Palaeolithic layer is now under way, in an attempt to determine the age of this earliest part of the site.

Studies in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi, undertaken by ADACH, in association with an expert from Britain's Cambridge University, have also confirmed the presence of Palaeolithic material at Jebel Barakah, west of Jebel Dhanna. The presence of early stone tools in this area was first noted in the early 1990s, although a very broad date range from the Middle Palaeolithic to the Neolithic period had then been suggested. Survey work in late 2006 identified two further sites, with the three known localities all representing the same type of stone tool industry. Similar to material found in Sharjah and also in Oman, the assemblage of material from the three sites has now been dated to the Middle Palaeolithic period. It is not yet possible to date the sites more precisely than between a range from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago, and more work is required in order to refine the dating of this important discovery.

The Neolithic period in the Emirates is now relatively well known. By this period, which began locally around 5500 BC, the people of the UAE were already building extensive settlements,

Tools similar in type to other artefacts known to be of Upper Pleistocene age, or the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic, from Oman and the Horn of Africa, suggest that there may have been a 'Southern route out of Africa' across the southern and eastern Arabian Peninsula, through which early man spread into Asia.



Excavations under way at
Jebel al-Buhais.
(Dr Sabah Jasim)

Among the discoveries at Akab, an island in the Emirate of Umm al-Qaiwain, have been mother-of-pearl fish-hooks, a large number of tubular beads made from chlorite and shell, and the finest Neolithic beads ever found in the Emirates.

such as those on Abu Dhabi's western islands of Marawah and Dalma, were using imported pottery and locally-made gypsum vessels and were trading by sea with Mesopotamia. A number of new sites from the period have been identified during the last year, one of the most important of which was found during an environmental impact assessment survey for the planned Khalifa Port Industrial Zone, north-east of Abu Dhabi.

Continuing studies of already-known sites in Abu Dhabi has also produced good results. A joint team from ADACH and Britain's Birmingham University undertook a third season of work on Neolithic sites near Umm az-Zamul in south-eastern Abu Dhabi, with several rich and previously unidentified sites being identified. This work continues to provide valuable information on occupation of the Rub al-Khali (the Empty Quarter) around 7500 to 6000 years ago, when many desert areas had a higher rainfall than they do today.

At Akab, an island in the Emirate of Umm al-Qaiwain, further work by a team from France's CNRS on a site first identified in 1989 has shown that the site was settled on several occasions from around 4000 BC to 3500 BC, the last five hundred years of the Neolithic period. Few other sites covering this period have so far been identified in the UAE and the further work on the site has added a substantial amount of new information. Notable discoveries include fish-hooks made of mother-of-pearl shell, a type of object previously unknown in the Arabian Gulf, one of the finest Neolithic beads ever found in the Emirates and a large number of tubular beads made of chlorite and shell. The inhabitants of the site were focused on exploitation of the marine resources of the adjacent lagoon and also on deep-sea fishing, with tuna being a particular target species.

Elsewhere in Umm al-Qaiwain, much of the coastline of the Khor al-Beida lagoon has been affected by recent residential development, with the loss of a number of areas of archaeological interest, and with developers showing little interest in preserving, or even investigating, known sites. One by-product of the development programme, however, was the cutting of a large section through a sand dune that exposed a Neolithic graveyard site



An ivory comb from Dibba,
first century AD.
(Dr Sabah Jasim)

first excavated in the late 1980s. Studies by a team from Britain's Oxford Brookes University identified a 6 metre sequence of stratigraphy through the dune, which was formed between 16,000 and 10,000 years ago. The cemetery has now been clearly dated to around 5000–4850 BC, with shell middens from later in the fifth millennium BC on top. Following abandonment of the site between the late fifth to mid-fourth millennium BC, it then appears to have been re-occupied from around 3500 BC to 3350 BC, just before the commencement of the UAE's Bronze Age 'Hafit' period. Only a very few sites from the fourth millennium BC, apart from the last couple of hundred years or so, are currently known in the Emirates, and this site, along with that of Akab, help to provide at least some understanding of the UAE's 'Dark Millennium'.

To the south of Umm al-Qaiwain, a major area of shell middens at Hamriyyah, in Sharjah, was investigated by a joint team from the Sharjah Directorate, Bryn Mawr College in the United States and Germany's University of Tübingen. Although this site had been noted before by researchers, the full extent and chronology of these middens was not evident until an extensive topographic and artifactual survey was conducted. So far, nearly 100 hectares of ancient occupation have been mapped, with finds and radiocarbon data indicating that the area was exploited from the Neolithic period right through the subsequent history of the Emirates until recent times, with the most extensive occupation being during the Iron Age II period, from around 1100 BC to 600 BC.

The same team also resumed excavations in the winter of 2006/2007 at the major site of Tell Abraq, on the border between Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain. First excavated in the late 1980s and early 1990s by a team from Australia's University of Sydney, Tell Abraq was occupied for over 3000 years, from the early Bronze Age to the beginning of the Christian era. One purpose of the renewed research, in association with that at the Hamriyyah site, is to assess environmental change and the evolution of the coastline over the period from the Neolithic period until recent times.

Finally, further research into the Neolithic period was undertaken by the Sharjah Directorate of Antiquities and the University of Tübingen at Jebel Faiyah, south of Dhaid. The northern end of the

Residential development in Umm al-Qaiwain exposed a Neolithic graveyard site which, along with the site at Akab, has shed some light on the UAE's 'Dark Millennium'.



The site of Tell Abraq was occupied for over 3000 years, from the early Bronze Age to the beginning of the Christian era.





A subterranean tomb dates to the second millennium at Jebel al-Buhais. (Dr Sabah Jasim)

Archaeological research undertaken at the extensive Iron Age settlement at Muwailah, near Sharjah International Airport, highlights Muwailah's role as a centre for pottery production and exchange within the region and at an inter-regional level.

Jebel is known to have been an important area for the extraction of raw flint during the Neolithic period, and a number of tool-production and settlement sites have now been identified, as well as later Iron Age burials. As noted earlier, Palaeolithic material is also present at one of the sites, buried deep below the Neolithic occupation levels.

Moving into the Bronze Age, which lasted in the Emirates from around 3000 BC to 1300 BC, investigation by the Sharjah Directorate and Tübingen of a copper smelting site in Wadi Helou, deep in the mountains, produced a remarkable find of a large semi-spherical copper ingot, weighing almost 5 kilograms. The exploitation of copper ore at the site appears to have been undertaken both in the Bronze Age, perhaps around 4000 years ago, or 2000 BC, and during the Islamic period.

Numerous sites of copper exploitation have been identified in the mountains of Fujairah, Sharjah and Ra's al-Khaimah, with several previously unrecorded sites being discovered in June 2007 during an environment impact assessment for a new gas pipeline from Abu Dhabi to Fujairah, but the Wadi Helou site is the first Bronze Age copper exploitation site in the UAE to be subjected to detailed scientific study.

In Sharjah, which perhaps has the most extensive archaeological research programme of any of the seven emirates, further work was also undertaken at the extensive Iron Age settlement at Muwailah, near Sharjah International Airport. Carried out by a team from Bryn Mawr College in the United States, in association with the Sharjah Directorate, the work has produced useful new information that highlights the role of Muwailah as a centre for pottery production and exchange within the region and at an inter-regional level and has also shown the way in which Muwailah grew rapidly during a relatively short period. Founded by the ninth century BC, the site was destroyed by fire between 800–600 BC, most probably between 800–750 BC. Reasons for its destruction have yet to be identified, but may well be related to an invasion by forces from elsewhere in the region.

While individual archaeological sites are of importance in understanding the UAE's past, so too are studies of particular



Studies of particular areas can show how settlement evolved over hundreds and thousands of years in the UAE.





Changes affecting the way settlements evolved over hundreds and thousands of years may include climate change, changes in shoreline and economic factors related to political change within the broader region extending from the Arabian Peninsula to Iraq, Iran and Pakistan.

areas, which can show the way in which settlement evolved over hundreds and thousands of years. The changes that are evident may, of course, be related to a variety of factors, including climate change, changes in shorelines and economic factors related to political change within the broader region extending from the Arabian Peninsula to Iraq, Iran and Pakistan.

One such study was undertaken by a group of students from Zayed University in Dubai of the Ghalilah area, in northern Ra's al-Khaimah, which has been occupied since at least the early Bronze Age, working closely with the National Museum of Ra's al-Khaimah.

Another survey, carried out in the Wadi Baggara area of southern Ra's al-Khaimah as part of an environmental impact assessment for a new pipeline, identified an extensive settlement that had apparently been abandoned 200–300 years ago. Consultation with a local resident suggested that the desertion of the area may have taken place because of a devastating epidemic that wiped out virtually the entire population – an indication that factors relating to human health can also have an impact on past settlement patterns.

Much of the archaeological work that has taken place over the past year is being brought to the attention of the international academic community through publications and conferences, and a total of seven papers and presentations on recent UAE discoveries were made in July 2007 at the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies in London, the key annual gathering on the archaeology of the peninsula.

Closer to home, the first GCC Archaeology Exhibition was held in the Fujairah Exhibition Centre in November and December 2006. The exhibition featured 1000 cultural and historical treasures from the region and attracted more than 40,000 visitors from across the UAE and elsewhere in the region.

The combination of dedicated scientific research and the carrying out of preliminary surveys prior to new development has continued over the last year to shed more light on the ancient history of the UAE. While the country's eyes are firmly focused on the future, on-going research into the UAE's past is set to produce further significant results in the years ahead.