



a region of the world. Last year the College visited Africa, South East Asia & Australasia, the Far East, the Middle and Near East, North and Central America, North & East Europe and South Asia. The aim of the overseas tour is to examine, at first hand and from a strategic perspective, the current position and future prospects for the preservation and enhancement of the stability, security and prosperity of the region in general, and in particular the countries visited.

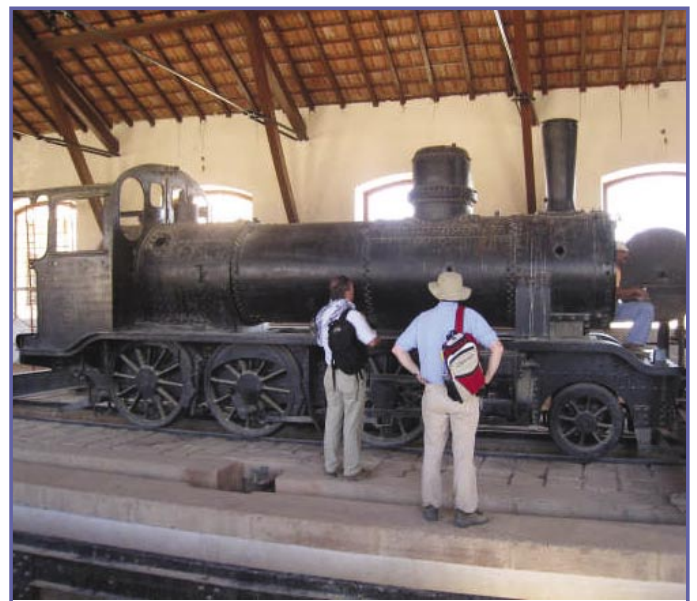
### Visit to Saudi Arabia

The Middle East tour delegation, which consisted of 11 Members, led by the Commandant of the College himself, Vice Admiral Charles Style, concluded their tour in Saudi Arabia, following visits to Jordan, Israel, the West Bank and Oman. Only one of the delegation had visited Saudi Arabia before, and so the programme was aimed at giving them a good understanding of the Country's history and culture, together with the key strategic issues facing the Kingdom, through a series of public and private sector briefings.

The visit started in Riyadh, with scene-setting discussions with the British ambassador and his staff, senior executives from BAE Systems, and economists from the Saudi British Bank. The following day included an office call with Chief of Staff MODA, a very informative session with the Majilis Ash-shura, and lunch at the MODA Officers' Club hosted by the Saudi Staff College. The superb King Abdulaziz Historical Centre

(which is thoroughly recommended if you have yet to visit) provided an excellent insight into the history of the Kingdom, and Islam in particular.

The Delegation then moved to the Eastern Province to visit the King Abdulaziz Air Base at Dharan, Saudi ARAMCO, and the Saline Water Conversion Company's Desalination Plant at Al Khobar. A reception hosted by Terry Evans, Head British Trade Office, gave the delegation an invaluable opportunity to meet with some of the Province's key business men and women.



Finally, after a C-130 flight to Medina and a 5 hour road-trip the party was privileged to be able to view the Kingdom's historical sites at Mada'in Saleh, including the Nabatean tombs, Hejaz Railway and Elephant Rock. All in all, after a busy 6-day programme, the Delegation left having gained an invaluable and balanced insight into one of the region's key players, and it provided an essential reference point for their understanding of the breadth of Arab and Islamic views on regional and cultural issues. Equally importantly, the Delegation left with a realisation that there is far more to Saudi Arabia than they had previously realised. As one visitor said, 'It has been an eye-opener to see Saudi Arabia at first hand. More progressive, moderate and in many ways modern than expected, it was a great experience.'