



The Memorial at Ash in Surrey

Turkish Government and indeed the mining of salt continues until some ten years ago. The Naval Commander in Chief had learnt that the garrison at Salif was only 100 men and on 12 June 1917 a landing party was dispatched. The aim of the assault was to hold the enemy whilst the plant was being removed or destroyed, and if circumstances allowed, to capture the garrison. The assault was successful and the garrison captured - eighty-five Turkish regulars with twenty-five Arab Gendarmerie and some civilian officials were made prisoners, against a British loss of one killed – Private Read, and three wounded. His death is noted in one review of the action – *“Private Read of H.M.S. Odin, who had the misfortune to jump almost on top of a Turk, and to receive a rifle-bullet at point-blank range. It would seem that the Turk fired by accident rather than intent, for all his messmates were on the point of holding up their hands, realising that they were completely surrounded.”* The action resulted in four awards for gallantry – one Distinguished Service Order and three Conspicuous Gallantry Medals including one to Able Seaman Francis Noble for rescuing the fatally wounded Private Read.

desalination plant. The current inhabitants mainly live in two villages depend mainly upon fishing. As for electrical service, island inhabitants depend on electricity supplied by generator, whether owned by individuals or groups. Its white sand beaches and excellent diving are potential tourist attractions but its remote location and lack of investment mean that such potential is unlikely to be fully realised. However a trip to Kamaran was a challenge and with interest and support of friends a journey was planned.

In late November 2006 I, along with Jim and Margaret Milne and Peter Howarth-Lees, flew from Riyadh to Yemen and after a couple of nights in Sana’a set forth for Kamaran Island. The journey to Kamaran Island was surprisingly straight forward. By road, westwards to the Red Sea from Sana’a and through the spectacular Haraz mountains, with distant villages hanging from mountainsides. Small roadside villages bustling with market activity and ever onwards the road descending by hairpin bends down towards the Tihama coastal plain. The occasional halt for photographs, the purchase of an illicit case of chilled beer and security check points - at one of the latter the thrust of a handful of qat to chew on the way. Through the crossroads town of Bajil, and after five hours to the port city of Hodeidah for an early lunch. Northwards for a further hour along the bare and bleak plain towards the coast and along the peninsula neck until arriving at Salif. The fishing boat to ferry us across the Kamaran Passage was almost ready and after surveying Salif’s bleak prospect from the remnants of the salt work’s conveyer belt, embarked for the twenty minute journey across the water.

As a consequence of this successful research, the next challenge was to investigate the possibility of visiting Kamaran Island and locating his grave. Research online led revealed that today the 102 sq.km. island could be reached in twenty minutes by boat from Ras Al-Saleef. The island is a flat place with little vegetation and no higher than 24 meters above sea level. It is hot, humid and, at times, windy with seasonal rain averaging only three inches annually – drinking water is limited to a number of wells and a newly established

Below: Kamaran North Point

