

Right: Jim surveys the scene from one of the Tihama style accommodation huts.
Far Right: Peter, Jim & Owain at the Kamaran cemetery



A small swell allowed for an almost comfortable ride and in approaching the island viewed Kamaran town and harbour to our left as we made for our landing at Ras Hadi Bin Moosa. A small gap in the ancient coral of the island allowed us to climb onto land and a warm welcome from Mohammed Al Zubairy our host. Mohammed, a native of Sana'a, had lived in Jeddah and developed a passion for diving. With a view to having his own dive resort he had planned to build such a resort on the uninhabited Hanish Islands further south. International politics and the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over ownership of the islands thwarted this plan and he was offered two alternative sites on Kamaran Island. On relocating to Kamaran there was still a sizeable garrison on the island – occupying, in the main, the old British administrative buildings. With a view to encouraging tourism and the lack of any obvious military threat the government of the now Republic of Yemen agreed to substantially reduce this garrison to some dozen or so soldiers. Mohammed had built a rest house facility on the west coast of the island north of Kamaran town with a number of traditional Tihama style huts as accommodation and was now attracting visitors interested in diving and the flora and fauna of this island.

The aim of our trip was to find the North Point Christian Cemetery and with the aid of some old maps and Google earth had a good idea where to look. With the aid of Mohamed's driver we made towards to the old administrative buildings – all in a

Below: Kamaran Airport Building



serious state of disrepair. After a brief discussion with the local Lieutenant we followed the military truck to the cemetery, which was indeed where we had supposed. The cemetery is some fifty metres square and the boundary wall was heavily damaged. The graves, some twenty-five in all, were clearly visible - the majority with brick and concrete casings. Unfortunately all of the grave stones had been lost and thus there was no way of identifying individual graves. However we knew that we had come to the last resting place of Private Read. We distributed Royal British Legion poppies amongst the graves and, to the bemusement of the watching military, recited Binyon's lines,

"They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

After sketching the layout of the cemetery and further photographs we took our leave, thanked the Lieutenant and made our way to the Kamaran town. Other than the remnants of an old Portuguese fort and some later colonial buildings the town and port is small and basic. We drove back to our rest house via the old airport which had once been a regular stop off for Aden Airways – a bleak and desolate echo of its past activity - derelict buildings. Our mission accomplished, the evening at the rest house was enjoyably passed overlooking the straits and the lights, in the distance, of Salif – a supply of freshly grilled fish and cold beer keeping us content.

My thanks to Jim, Margaret and Peter for their company and support in making this journey, and in commemorating, in some small way, the sacrifice of Private Read.

Readers interested in visiting the region can find out all they need to know about planning a trip from Mohammed Al Zubairy on +967 733 711 742 or see www.kamaran.net for contact details and pricing.