

# “The History of Relations between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.”

## Special Briefing

by Owain Raw-Rees



gathered from private sources throughout the Kingdom and the library of recordings of oral histories from village elders nationwide. Dr Fahad delivered his presentation in two halves firstly providing an overview of Saudi Arabia’s history from its inception and secondly highlighting the important role played by renowned British explorers and travellers in recording the history of Saudi Arabia.

Further to Dr. Fahad’s presentation, the author has taken this opportunity to compile a resume of the early history of the Saudi nation and its relationship with Great Britain.

Following the coming of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of the caliphate with its seat variously in Mecca, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus and latterly Constantinople, life in the Arabian Peninsula outside of urban settlements remained in part rural and in part nomadic with many small tribal and sub-tribal dominated areas owing only the loosest of allegiances to any central authority. With the passage of time even adherence to the core values of Islam weakened and into this apparent vacuum during the later half of the eighteenth century emerged the emir of Al-Diriya Mohammed Al Saud. The Al-Saud family in conjunction with the revival of orthodox monotheistic Islamic values as espoused by Mohammed Ibn Abdulwahab expanded their realm in central Arabia, from Al-Diriya throughout the Nejd and, by conquest, the First Saudi State (1745-1811) expanded its authority through the leadership of Saud bin Abdulaziz and reached as far as Karbala in the north, which was sacked in 1802, Saud occupied Mecca in 1803 and was receiving tribute from as far afield as Ras Al Khaima and Oman. The expansion of the Saudi State became a matter of grave concern to the authority of the Ottoman Caliph and in 1813 through military

Through the generous hospitality of the British Ambassador and the team at the Embassy, the RGBB endeavours to arrange Special Briefings that will satisfy the broad range of interests represented by our membership. Whilst our focus on business affairs is pre-eminent, the RGBB is also conscious of the need for a greater understanding of the culture and history of our host nation the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was therefore with great pleasure that the RGBB with the support of the sponsorship of AXA Insurance and the British Embassy welcomed Dr Fahad Al-Semmari, Director of the King Abdulaziz Foundation to address members and guests on the evening of Monday, May 21, 2007. Dr Fahad spoke on the History of Relations between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. He was appointed to his current position by royal command and as the most distinguished historian in the country he was uniquely well placed both to inform and to entertain his audience.

Dr Fahad combines the talents of great academia with an intensely energetic and practical approach to recording Saudi Arabia’s history. Two of the most successful results to date of his tenure in office are the immense collection of manuscript documents



Left:  
A full Amenity Hall for the Briefing which was co-sponsored by AXA Insurance and The British Embassy.