

An eventful year...



2007 was an eventful and exciting time for me. After a pioneering year based in York working as Principal Adviser to the Archbishop of York, I returned to London at Easter and resumed my position as Director of Wind Sand & Stars. Although it was wonderful, hugely stimulating and rewarding to work for the Archbishop, I missed Wind Sand & Stars and was delighted to be back.

On 6th September I became an extremely proud mother when Mollie was born - she is an absolute joy and remarkably tolerant of the demands of office life. I am looking forward to taking Mollie to the Sinai and introducing her to the desert and our extended family of Bedouin guides, now in their third generation, with new grandchildren arriving during 2007!



wind
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stars

news

Issue 8 January 2008

Throughout this busy time, the office staff have provided stability, keeping on top of things while I was away and when Mollie was born. My heartfelt thanks to everyone for your unstinting support.

We are looking forward to 2008 and, working in partnership with our Bedouin guides, to exploring new areas and sharing new experiences and adventures in the Sinai. I do hope you will join us!

Dr Emma Loveridge, Director

Berkhamsted School Report

A team from Berkhamsted School went to the Sinai in October 2007 with a packed itinerary. Starting with a tour of the legendary Pyramids and Sphinx in Cairo, the team then boarded their bus for the long journey through Egypt to the serene tranquility of the Sinai Desert.

Having met up with their Bedouin guides and camels, the team headed into the desert. For many this was their first experience of



"Berkhamsted School has travelled with Wind Sand & Stars three times to the Sinai, a larger party each time, and on every occasion we have been delighted by the care, courtesy and competence of the guides and helpers who travel with us. Everything works, from the food to the camels, and we always feel completely safe. The best thing about it is the open

night sky, a transforming experience for so many of the young people away from street lights and familiar British sights. Two months on from our last trip and still parents are telling me that their youngsters have not stopped talking about it!"

*Richard Coupe, Teacher,
Berkhamsted School*

desert, camels or indeed camping, but as soon as everyone had laid their beds out under the stars and stared silently into the sky, any worries were soon left behind.

"I want my camel to hurry up!" was the cry that greeted the first day of camel trekking. After a few hours of shifting around in uncomfortable saddles, everyone appeared to have grasped the art of camel riding. That evening, the team sat round the open fire, stomachs full of freshly baked bread and sweet Bedouin tea, and spent time talking to their guides about their nomadic life.

One of the highlights of the trip was the team's ascent of Mount Sinai (Moses' Mountain), departing very early to reach the summit by late morning. They team also took time to visit St Catherine's Monastery, perched on one side of the mountain. All too soon it was time to say farewell to the Bedouin guides who had become such good friends.

Projects update...



Gordonstoun School

In March 2007 Gordonstoun School embarked on an exciting new project in the eastern sandstone desert with the Mezeina Bedu.

Chris Ince reports *"This was a departure for Gordonstoun, as in all previous years we had worked with the Gebeliya in the Sinai Mountains on garden restoration. In 2007 we decided to construct a dam and a series of sediment traps in a narrow canyon. The task involved removing tonnes of sediment that had accumulated in three erosion bowls, the largest of which was some 18 metres in diameter and 6 metres deep! As well as this the pupils heaved a huge amount of rock to make sediment traps to prevent these bowls filling up again. Finally we constructed a dam across the exit point of the lowest bowl in the canyon. The project was a success, we achieved our objectives and hope that autumn and winter rains will be retained in the canyon bowls."*



The local Sheikh, Hamid was keen that this would be a water retention resource not just for his people and their livestock, but also for the wildlife. He recognises the importance of water for the whole desert ecosystem and this project would encourage reptiles, insects, mammals and plant growth.

In March 2008 a team from Gordonstoun are looking forward to returning to the same area to construct a meditation garden and well.

News from Sri Lanka

We are pleased to report that work in Sri Lanka is ongoing and our links with a local NGO (non-governmental organisation) continue with regular communication.

This project originally came about through a link founded many years ago between Sri Lanka and St Mary Islington Church in London. Emma Loveridge was instrumental in assisting St Mary's in responding to a request for help following the Asian Tsunami



in December 2004. Emma's knowledge and understanding of the region, along with a strong logistical support network through Wind Sand & Stars, allowed her to put together a team of ten specialists to go out to the region and provide some of the help that they so desperately needed. Within one week, Emma, her team and the church raised £75,000 in funds and also donated equipment. Along with a local Christian NGO in Sri Lanka, she set up a long-term sustainable partnership to continue to offer support to this needy region of the world.

Emma has kept in touch with the key individuals involved in this project, exchanging regular emails and letters with the local priest and town councillors, as well as the NGO directors.

There is good news on the NGO's housing programme, which is nearly complete, although additional funds are required to



finish off a few final roofs. The NGO also continues its important work with young people placed with families and is still running vital training and support.

We are cautiously optimistic for the future, but there is considerable tension and disruption from fighting in this north-eastern Tamil zone of Sri Lanka, so the NGO is working in difficult circumstances. We sincerely hope that there may be an opportunity for Wind Sand & Stars to become involved directly in assisting with further work at some point in the future.

April and September Retreats

**Retreat in the Sinai Desert, Egypt, with a rhythm of worship and fellowship, silence and prayer.
Optional walks and camel rides, and a visit to St Catherine's Monastery with its unique art collection.**

The Sinai is rich with the history of our Christian heritage and pilgrims have been drawn to this land for centuries. For those who yearn for time away from their hectic lives, there are two special opportunities this year to participate in a Retreat.

Based in one area, these will involve meditating in the silence and beauty of this ancient place. Both will be led by experienced and accomplished spiritual leaders. Although of Christian basis, the Retreats are open to everybody.

Dates

19th to 26th April 2008

*Led by The Venerable Malcolm Colmer,
Archdeacon of Hereford.*

Bringing a long experience of leading retreats with Wind Sand & Stars, the Archdeacon will encourage participants in their spiritual life, with an emphasis on pastoral care.

20th to 27th September 2008

Led by The Revd. Paul and Mrs Diana Hunt.

A welcome return of this husband and wife team to the Sinai.

2009

Looking ahead, there are plans to run a special Retreat in 2009 to link in with "A Book of Silence" by Sara Maitland, due to be published by Granta this Autumn. With a focus on exploring and understanding silence, the Retreat would be emphatically non-denominational and is likely to involve a night vigil, readings and meditation exercises.

You may also wish to organise your own group. Emma Loveridge is always happy to help and discuss spiritual and theological input.



Affective Leadership

N: *the ability to move others to achieve outstanding results*

Wind Sand & Stars provides a unique, five-day, self-learning experience designed for corporate professionals, which will take you on a personal journey of discovery in one of the most beautiful desert landscapes of the world. We offer a truly original and powerful experience that will unleash your true potential in leadership!

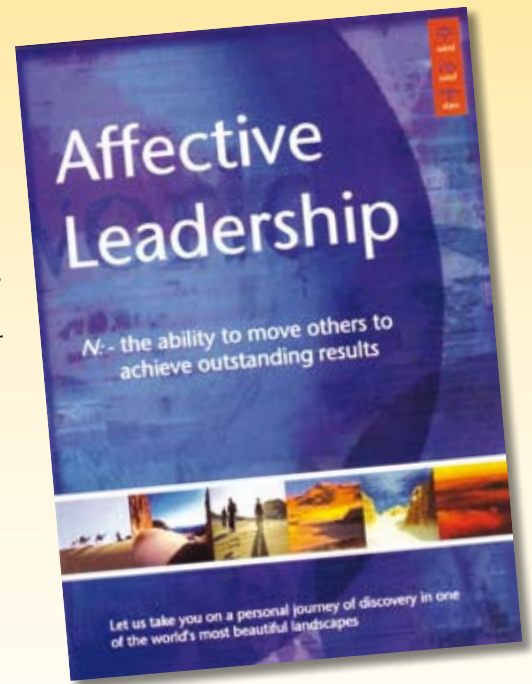
"Emotionally intelligent leaders start by looking inside - at what they feel, think and sense about their organisations. Tapping into that kind of insight can become easier if a leader makes a habit of retreating to a quiet place to reflect."

Daniel Goleman

There will be no flip-charts and no power-point, just direct, personal communication. Finding the power of conversation without the distractions of your normal surroundings will make you a stronger communicator in the boardroom and in all other areas of your life.

We invite you to step out of the complex world for a few days, to see things more clearly and emerge with a new vision for your future.

Please view our website for more information or contact the office directly.



Thank You

None of our work in the mountains and desert, with the Bedu, the Monks and the National Parks, could have happened without Dr. Rabia and his team. Together with the Bedouin community, they have cared for us and all who journey with us, for many years with inspiration and diligence.

A big thank you also goes to our in-house Leaders who have worked in the Sinai over the years and know the area and the people extremely well. Thanks also to our carefully chosen Freelance Leaders, all of whom are put through our rigorous checking and training procedures and do a fantastic job for Wind Sand & Stars.



Responsible Travel

Ethical trading standards and practices are vital to the future growth of international tourism. Wind Sand & Stars believes in doing business only in



a manner which is sustainable in the long term. We respect the local people, their values, their culture and their beliefs. In return, they respect us and our guests. Our visits help to preserve rather than threaten their traditional way of life.

On a larger scale, we work with government authorities, NGO's, the National Parks, local and other organisations to ensure that we are also working in harmony with the bodies who look after this precious region.

Above all, we strive to be considerate and respectful of the land and its people who we know and have come to love.

For more information on our Responsible Travel Policy please visit our website.

Congratulations!

Our congratulations to Hussein on the birth of his first grandson, Maged.

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It's been a fun year in our new office in the Business Design Centre in Islington and always lovely to see friends and colleagues when they are in London. Please do give us a call in advance if you are in town!



To receive your newsletter electronically, please register by emailing your name, house number and postcode with the subject "Newsletter" to office@windsandstars.co.uk