**John Eacott**

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| Our speaker for this meeting was one of our members, John Eacott, sharing his unique experiences from his time in the "Sultanate of Oman". He had quite a few slides in his presentation, on which he based his talk. Oman is part of the Arabian Peninsula, with lots of desert area.  John went to Nizwa in September, 1996 as the Dean of a new Teachers College, which had just opened the previous year. | E:\2013 12 Probus booklet Photos\Eacott, John.tif |

The turnover rate was very high as the 6 colleges in the country had 18 Deans during his 3 years in the country and only one other person lasted the full three 1,ears. John worked for a Canadian company who had contracts with the government to supply teachers. One of his primary jobs was to supervise the construction of new buildings for the College, including computer labs. During the fina1 few months of his stay, they were planning for a new Stadium and Fields for sporting events. John suggested they arrange to use the modern facility already in Nizwa, which was rarely used. They said they would rather build their own as there was lots of funding available. At one point, the students were upset with the Ministry of Education and wanted to stage a demonstration. They approached John and requested permission to break some windows. He talked them into submitting a petition signed by all concerned. This was appreciated by his superiors because some colleges received quite extensive damage during their demonstrations.

There were 2 customs that made the staff meetings of 110 people very unusual. A salutation and handshake for everyone in the room was given individually, even by those arriving late for meetings. Muslims also pray 5 times a day, so it was not uncommon for those attending to just get up, go to the side of the room and recite their prayers.

John was accompanied by his '"wife, one of only 7 western women in the country. In all, the Western community in Nizwa, a city the size of Woodstock, only totaled 30 people. The first year they spent in a small apartment building, and thought of not returning to Oman due to the disturbing actions of one of the families in the building. They were able to obtain a 3 bedroom house for the last 2 years, which made for a much more enjoyable lifestyle. They enjoyed parties and picnics with other staff members and also activities with the other westerners. They were also able to do some exploring and sightseeing.

Nizwa, the size of Woodstock, is 8,000 years old and is a 2 hour drive from Muscat, the bustling main city of Oman. It is nestled at the foot of a range of mountains, with nothing but miles of sand and gravel on the other side. They have an ancient mini-waterway through the city with an intricate system to control water use by the residents.

The coastal towns of Oman were renowned for their shipbuilding and navies.

There are 2 large military bases in the country, which are the main staging areas for the British and U.S. forces in the Middle East.