

Another Reunion in Rosh Pinah 30 April -1 May 2019

as recalled by Peter Keeda

The mystery committee set the ground rules and maintained their secret identity. Their authority was unquestionable mainly because no one knew who they were ...

In the early stages of planning it seemed that EVERYONE wanted to participate and it was getting out of hand. It was getting as 'big-as-Ben-Hur' with some people even volunteering to camp on the grass in tents! The final number was twenty-one, split over two campuses – the main group at Galila's "Beit Hameiri" and 100 meters down the hill, the second group at Villa Tehilla ("Glory Mansion"). 'Down-the-hill' became significant, as to reach the main campus one had to schlep up 100 metres of steep, cobbled incline, which at our age ain't a stroll in the park.

BBQ's at Beit Hameiri were the focal point of much mirth on the first and last nights with various anonymous chefs burning the food ... and Bernie orchestrated some hilarious charades. Did anyone find out the connection between Shackelton and the Aussie convicts?

On the way north most of us stopped off in Nazareth for the 'best hummus in the Middle East' and then on to the Basilica of the Annunciation. I, personally, could have done without the latter, which I (being lachrymose-intolerant) did ...

Effie was our guide for the first day. Effie, aka Jack Jacobi, ex-Melbourne Betar is a brilliant guide and he took us to some amazing sites. Even more amazing was that no one was late for the bus at any of the numerous stops ... well, almost no one!

Our first stop with Effie was Alma in Tefen. Alma is a not-for-profit organisation which gathers social media information from northern Israel, Lebanon and Syria and disseminates reports on the security situation on Israel's northern border. It is a public funded, non-political and non-aligned. Their only stipulation is loyalty to the State of Israel. Their staff consists of Druze, Muslims and Jews and was established by retired Israeli intelligence officer Sarit Zehavi, who lives nearby in Kfar Havradim with her five children. We went with Sarit to a lookout post at Har Adir, overlooking Lebanon.



Har Adir, a lookout on the Lebanese border

l. to r : Bernie Kresner, Estelle Adamek, Eddie Adamek, Henry ben Ezra, Arie (Flapper) Bomzon,
Roz ben Ezra, George Berkovic, Geoffrey Williamson, Sarit Zehavi, Ros Williamson, Kaye Pearce,
Mick Price, Erica Keeda, Paul Gottlieb, Mia Price, Leo Regev, Peter Keeda, Celia Regev, Eddie Price,
Miriam Barasch, Dov Rosenfeld, Effie Jacobi
photographer: Illana Spanier (aka 'Flapperina')

From Tefen we drove to Horfeish, a Druze village, where we met Kasem Bader, a charismatic leader of the Israeli Druze Community. He took us to their meeting place ('hilwah') where he told us about the Druze community and, in particular, of the difficulties that they are facing as result of the recent 'Jewish nation-state law'.



Kasem Bader in the 'hilwah' of Horfeish village

The last stop of the day was a visit to the third century synagogue at Baraam. It was here that we noticed a group of youth packing up their gear and leaving after having spent the weekend camping at the site of the Maronite Christian villages of Baraam & Ikrit. We did not have time to speak with the youngsters but we were able to listen to the caretaker of the Maronite church there, who related the tragic (and, for us, extremely uncomfortable) tale of their attempts to reestablish their villages on the Lebanese border.



Maronite caretaker relating his story of Baraam & Ikrit

Leo organised the tour for the following day and, unsurprisingly, there were a number of surprises!! Magdala, our first stop, on the Kinneret, is the site of a Christian pilgrim hostel under construction where they stumbled upon a first century synagogue, including the 'Magdala stone' a depiction of the contemporary Temple in Jerusalem. Magdala is believed to be the birthplace of Mary Magdalena.

Just north of Magdala we visited the 'Jesus boat' but first were subjected to a talk (In Hebrew, ably translated by Miriam) by a young kibbutz girl who had been trained to teach Israeli kindergarteners the 'true history' of Yigal Alon and the Socialist Movement in the early years of the State ...

Effie had arranged that we meet up with Levav, a youngish Israeli who lives in Metula and is the president of the Israeli ice Hockey Association! He invited us to his house and from his back garden we looked over into Lebanon, about 100 metres away. Levav's family have been farmers in Metula for a number of generations; recently the exit of a Hezbollah tunnel was discovered in one of his orchards which, understandably, led to the destruction of about 1,000 fruit trees together with the tunnel.

From Metula we visited two lookout posts , Mitzpor Dado and Misgav Am, where we were delighted to be joined by one of the Regev granddaughters, Mai, who is serving in an intelligence unit keeping an eye on the Lebanese border (her twin sister, Roni, is doing a similar job on the Gaza border). As with most Regev stories, we were left to guess between the lines ...