

OMAN

Mirbat, Heritage at Risk

Mirbat, like most of the sea towns in the province of Dhofar, South Oman, was involved in the frankincense trade. It took over the port tradition from al-Balid in the 17th-18th centuries and became a well-known port, trading also with Hadramaut. Today, almost the entire historic city has been abandoned in favour of a new centre built in concrete. One of the largest structures, the Bayt al-Siduf, a merchant's house, has almost collapsed, but still shows the former beauty of the traditional architecture. The decay of the abandoned historic buildings illustrated in the first issue of *Heritage at Risk* (see H@R 2000, pp. 146/147) has in the meantime become even worse. A heavy rain storm in 2007 accelerated the decay.

Mirbat, like Taqah and Salalah, are witnesses to Oman's glorious past as a seafaring nation. Therefore, the old quarters of these cities should at least be documented and, if possible, be preserved for the coming generations.



Mirbat, castle with collapsed walls and roof, 2007 (Photo: M.Pz.)



Mirbat, abandoned houses (Photo: M.Pz.)

Mirbat, decaying entrance door (Photo: M.Pz.)





Mirbat, damage caused by a rain storm, 2007 (Photo: M.Pz.)

Mirbat, collapsed house of a rich merchant, Bayt al-Siduf (Photo: M.Pz.)

