

HUZOOR'S TOUR OF AUSTRALIA 2013

A Personal Account

PART 3

By Abid Khan

We had been in Australia for more than 2 weeks during which countless activities and events had taken place. During Huzoor's tours, almost every day is filled with activities, whether it is family Mulaqats, Huzoor's classes, Huzoor's addresses or various other engagements.

However, each week there is one day which is slightly different. Generally speaking, every Thursday morning and early afternoon is kept free from public activities so Huzoor can prepare his Friday Sermon.

I think in some ways the Qafila members look forward to Thursday mornings because it is the one part of the week where they can catch up with sleep or perhaps take permission to venture out to the local town or city for a few hours.

Personal Visit to Sydney

I hoped to visit Sydney city centre at least once during the tour. In my mind for a few days I thought perhaps the morning of Thursday 17 October would be a good opportunity and so the evening before I asked Bashir Sahib to request Huzoor's permission if I could go out for a few hours the next morning.

Very kindly Huzoor granted permission and so I arranged to go out with my friend Sohail Khan who had kindly offered to show me around the city.

Sohail had grown up in and around Sydney and so knew the city well. He picked me up at 9.15am and we drove towards the city. As we drove I took out my iPhone and tried to take photos and videos from the car but invariably they did not come out well as we were constantly moving.

We went first to Sydney's '*Olympic Village*' where the Olympic Games of 2000 were staged.

It was a thrill to visit the village because the Sydney Olympics were the first time that I had become truly involved in an Olympic Games. At the time I was in 6th Form College and so my classmates and I used to spend much of those days either talking about or watching the Games.



After spending some time at the Olympic Village we headed to the city centre. We went straight to the famous *Sydney Harbour Bridge* and *Sydney Opera House*.

The view from the Harbour was amazing and I would say that the images I had seen on TV did not justice to the reality.



Poor Sohail was having to act as my personal cameraman as every few seconds I would hand him my iPhone and ask him to take a picture.



We walked around the Opera House then went to the gift shop where almost everything on display bore the image of the Opera House – if I remember correctly there was even a bar of soap in the shape of the Opera House.

Visit to Australian shop

We also visited another nearby shop which sold traditional Australian boomerangs and typical Australia hats. I tried on a variety of hats and when I looked in the mirror I thought they looked quite good!

I was very tempted to purchase but I thought it unlikely that I would have much opportunity to wear it when I returned to London and so left it. I also did not buy a boomerang even though they had been carved very beautifully. Later on I regretted not buying either of the items.

An expensive coffee

Sohail had been asked by Khalid Akram Sahib to do some shopping for him and so whilst he did that I went and bought a coffee. I did not check the price and so I was a bit shocked when I was told the coffee cost 8.5 dollars! I think because we were right in the city centre the prices were seriously inflated.

Anyway, I took the coffee and went and sat on a bench facing the Harbour on my own. As I did so I could not help but be thankful to Allah for granting the opportunity to travel to such a beautiful place.

I felt so much love for Huzoor, who not only had given me the opportunity to witness countless spiritual blessings but had also given permission to visit the city and so see the local landmarks and to sample its culture.

Fish and Chips lunch

We then drove to *Bondi Beach* which was another place I had seen on TV and heard a lot about. It was not as vast as I had imagined but the sand was a perfect white colour and the ocean a beautiful shade of blue. We walked along the beach before stopping for fish and chips which were fresh and delicious.

By this time it was early afternoon and Sohail offered to take me to some further sites but Huzoor had an important interview at 6pm and so I wanted to leave to make sure we got back in good time.

Bushfires in New South Wales

As we drove back, I suddenly noticed that everything had become very dark and even though it was the middle of the day it appeared as though night had suddenly fallen. It was a very strange and sudden transformation which neither Sohail nor I initially understood.

When I returned to my lodge I switched on the news and saw that there was a sense of panic in Sydney and in other parts of New South Wales because suddenly bushfires had started to rage.

Whilst there had been reports of bushfires when we first arrived in Sydney a couple of weeks before, this time it seemed much more serious and so it proved.

Over the next few days the State faced a very critical emergency as many people's homes - particularly those who lived in rural or mountainous areas - became engulfed by the fires that spread rapidly and sadly a number of people also lost their lives.

Given that Huzoor was in Sydney at the time, naturally Ahmadis were concerned and I received emails asking if Huzoor was safe and well.

Thankfully and with the Grace of Allah, during those days Huzoor and the Mosque remained protected from the effects of those horrific bushfires.

Arrangements for Huzoor's interview with *Newsline*

About a week before Australia's Ameer Sahib mentioned to me that the very famous news programme '*Newsline*' wished to interview Huzoor.

Its audience was vast and spread across nearly 50 countries and so in terms of profile it was a great opportunity to spread Islam's true teachings.

However, I had one serious concern which was that *Newsline* wished to do a recorded interview with Huzoor whereby the interviewer would be in his studio in Melbourne interviewing Huzoor in Sydney by telephone.

I did not like this concept because, no matter how high profile an interview, I was not comfortable with Huzoor being interviewed via phone because Huzoor's status is such that I thought that if anyone wished to interview Huzoor they should be there in person or at least send their representative so that the interview is conducted in person.

I spoke to Private Secretary Sahib and one or two others and they also agreed. Thus, I suggested to Ameer Sahib and Australia's Umur-e-Kharija Secretary that they should ask *Newsline* to come in person and if they were unable to the interview should be declined.

When we left for Melbourne I was under the impression that the interview had been cancelled but Ramzan Sharif Sahib, the Secretary Kharija, quietly continued negotiating with *Newsline* over the next week and very surprisingly they agreed to send a representative to interview Huzoor in his office.

Thus in the late afternoon of 17 October Bill Birtles, the *ABC* news journalist who had interviewed Huzoor earlier in the tour, came back to the Mosque to interview Huzoor on behalf of *Newsline*.

He himself told me it was '*unprecedented*' that *Newsline* had agreed to send a journalist in person and that when they had interviewed Presidents and Prime Ministers in the past they used to do the interview by telephone.

Bill Birtles told me that because of the unusual nature of the interview he would request Huzoor to look at the camera rather than directly at him. Hearing this, I walked to Huzoor's residence to brief Huzoor about the format.

As Huzoor emerged from his home he saw me and as I was about to inform him of the unusual style of interview, Huzoor instead asked me how my day in Sydney had been. I said it had been wonderful and quickly narrated some of the places I had seen.

Huzoor's Newsline interview

It was left to Bill Birtles to request Huzoor to look directly at the camera during the recording. It was not ideal because it is more natural to look directly at the person asking you questions but nonetheless Huzoor dealt with this issue effortlessly and proceeded to give very beautiful and comprehensive answers to whatever questions Bill Birtles asked over the next 25 minutes.

During the interview Huzoor said his major objective in coming to Australia was to meet the local Ahmadis, to guide them, to help them and to ***“enhance their spiritual well-being”***.

Huzoor also explained in detail the differences between Ahmadi Muslims and non-Ahmadi Muslims and how Ahmadis believed that the Promised Messiah (as) had come in accordance with the great prophecy of the Holy Prophet (saw) regarding the latter days.

Huzoor very clearly explained that Ahmadi beliefs did not in any way break or counter the '*seal of prophethood*' of the Holy Prophet (saw).

The journalist raised various other issues such as the persecution of the Jamaat, the war in Syria and the issue of extremism. To each question Huzoor responded with answers filled with wisdom and knowledge.

Newsline's vast audience

As the interview concluded and Bill Birtles was leaving I asked him when and where Huzoor's interview would be broadcast. He said it would be edited in a way to make it seem that Huzoor was being interviewed by *Newsline's* anchor, the well-known journalist Auskar Surbakti.

Thereafter, it would be shown in at least 46 countries in the Pacific, Far-East and South Asia including Pakistan. He said that because *Newsline* was ABC's flagship programme its audience was in the millions.

When he told me that Pakistan would be one of the countries it was to be shown in I felt a great deal of satisfaction and gratitude to Allah.

Where Pakistan as a country had tried its utmost to block the message of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) reaching its people, due to Allah's Help the message of the Khalifa was still reaching the public in a way that Pakistan's Government and *Maulvis* were unable to control.

Broadcast of *Newsline* interview and positive feedback

The interview was edited down to around 4 minutes and was shown on *Newsline* later that evening and the next day, whilst ABC also hosted the clip on its website.

I soon started receiving many messages from Ahmadis from different countries delighted to see how Huzoor's message had reached so many million people in so many countries.

After a few days I was also forwarded an email sent by Auksar Surbakti the *Newsline* anchor in which he said that he had received an overwhelmingly positive response to Huzoor's interview, particularly from countries outside of Australia.

He said that given the feedback he would be glad to have the opportunity of a further interview in the future.

Considering that the interview almost never happened the end result was truly amazing.

Alhamdulillah it really seemed as though the arrangements for this particular interview had been made with Divine Help.

A faith inspiring incident

During Huzoor's tours there are certain incidents that make your love for the Khalifa and your belief in Khilafat further increase. One such incident in Australia occurred when I spoke with a young Ahmadi married couple a few weeks after their Mulaqat with Huzoor.

Very emotionally they told how their elder son had been suffering from lactose intolerance since his birth so that he could not digest normal milk at all.

The mother, who herself was a doctor, said that during Huzoor's tour she had the opportunity to meet him for the first time in her life and so she took some honey which she asked Huzoor to give to her child from his own hand.

She narrated how since that day their child had been able to take normal milk without any problem whatsoever. The mother said that she considered what had happened to be "*miracle*".

It so happened that upon our return to London one day I was able to inform Huzoor about this incident and the feelings of the parents upon seeing their child recover. Upon learning of the improvement in the child's condition, very lovingly Huzoor prayed:

"May Allah grant the child permanent good health."

Friday Sermon delivered from Baitul Huda

On 18th October, Huzoor led the Friday prayers from the Baitul Huda Mosque in Sydney. Huzoor spoke about how there were many things that if used properly could bring people closer to Allah but if used inappropriately could do the exact opposite.

Huzoor gave the example of television saying that on many channels indecent programs were broadcast or things that took people away from God.

However, by establishing MTA, our Jamaat was using television in the best possible way – as a means to increase the spirituality and religious knowledge of those who watched it and to spread the message of the Khalifa to the corners of the world.

Huzoor said MTA was not only a great blessing for Ahmadis but also for non-Ahmadis and that many people had joined the Jamaat having been introduced to its teachings through MTA.

Huzoor also used his sermon to encourage the Australian Jamaat towards increasing its *Tabligh* efforts.

Huzoor mentioned how the Australian Jamaat had grown in the past two decades, but noted that the growth had mainly been due to Ahmadis immigrating from either Pakistan or Fiji.

Huzoor said that we should never exaggerate or fool ourselves and so to claim this was a great achievement on the part of the Australia Jamaat was wrong. Huzoor said that the Jamaat as a whole and also the auxiliary organisations had to make proper plans to try and increase the scope of *Tabligh* in the country.

Inauguration of the *Khilafat Centenary Hall*

On the premises of Baitul Huda, the Australian Jamaat had recently constructed a very large building comprising a vast hall and also some administrative offices.



The building had been named the '*Khilafat Centenary Hall*' and on the evening of 18 October 2013 Huzoor officially inaugurated the Hall by delivering the keynote address at a Special Reception held in front of more than 200 non-Ahmadi guests, including a range of local and national dignitaries.

Australia Jamaat's contribution to bushfire relief fund

As Huzoor walked from his residence to the Hall, he was requested by Naib Ameer Sahib to present a cheque of \$10,000 to a representative of the State Government towards the a relief fund set up by the *Premier* of New South Wales to help those people afflicted by the bush fires.

Huzoor immediately asked if this was enough and I think Huzoor's question was enough to encourage the Jamaat towards making a bigger contribution because when the presentation was made a few minutes later it was announced that the Jamaat was donating a sum of \$20,000 to the Premier's charity!

Just as an observer to this incident I really enjoyed how just a question from Huzoor was enough to inspire the Jamaat to double its contribution immediately.

Guest speeches at inauguration of *Khilafat Centenary Hall*

After *Tilawat*, a number of dignitaries gave short speeches in which they welcomed Huzoor and congratulated the Jamaat on the inauguration of the new Hall.

Whilst listening to the guests it became very clear that they felt a real sense of pride to be sharing the stage with Huzoor and considered Huzoor's visit to Australia to be an honour for the country.

A Federal MP, Phillip Ruddock, said he was surprised that so many MPs were attending and that this proved how valued Ahmadis were in Australia. He said that the Australian nation would ***“very happily welcome His Holiness back to Australia many, many times.”***



Another Federal MP, Ed Husic said that Huzoor’s visit would be ***“treasured for years to come.”***

John Robertson MP said it was an honour to share a stage with Huzoor because he considered Huzoor to be a person who ***“walks the world stage with a very powerful message of faith and peace.”*** He also called Huzoor ***“the voice of peace, of hope and of courage.”***

There were various other politicians who also took to the stage. One speech I particularly enjoyed was by a politician by name of David Clarke.

He spoke very passionately and also very earnestly about the Jamaat when he said:

“Ahmadi Muslims are good and Godly people and they are good because they are Godly.

In Australia there will always be full freedom for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Never will we tolerate even a single hair on the head of an Ahmadi being harmed.”

When politicians come to our Jamaat events it is difficult to assess who is sincere and who is only seeking political benefit. Yet, the Australian politicians that evening all seemed very sincere in their appreciation of the Jamaat and the honour they felt in meeting with Huzoor.

Huzoor’s address

Huzoor’s address was extremely inclusive and sought to dispel the fears of non-Muslims about Islam by giving examples of Islam’s true teachings and Huzoor also explained the objectives underlying the advent of the Promised Messiah (as).

Quoting the Promised Messiah, Huzoor said:

“One should love mankind to such a degree that he should consider the trials and tribulations of others as his own and should pray for them.”

Huzoor continued by saying:

“It is on the basis of these compassionate teachings that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community makes every effort to spread love, kindness, brotherhood and peace to every corner of the world.”



Huzoor went on to describe how the Ahmadiyya *Khilafat* had always promoted peace by saying:

“All of the Khalifas who have led the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have always advocated for peace, unity and a sense of mutual brotherhood.”

Huzoor cited the example of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) calling for justice after the *First World War* and warning that the *League of Nations* would fail if all parties were not treated fairly.

Huzoor also referred to the warnings given by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) at the time of the first Iraq War.

Huzoor said that history had proved the words of our *Khulafa* to be true and entirely accurate.

Huzoor then spoke about his own concerns for today's world by saying:

“For the past four or five years I have been warning that the world stands in desperate need of peace... Thus, I implore all relevant parties to come to their senses and act with wisdom. They should rise above their selfish ways and their personal interests.”

Huzoor concluded by offering his personal sympathies to the Australian nation and in particular those people directly affected by the bushfires. Huzoor prayed that Allah saved the people from any further losses or hardships. As Huzoor spoke those words I observed many guests nodding and clearly appreciating Huzoor's kindness and sympathies.

Huzoor's address was very persuasive and perfectly tailored for the audience which was filled with many national and state dignitaries and politicians. Just as in Melbourne, the impact upon the guests was huge and clearly visible.

Impact of Huzoor's speech

Rather than food being served at the table, a buffet system was used and so as people queued for their food I went and met with a number of guests and spoke to them about the event.

Each and every person I met with spoke of how much they had enjoyed the event and also that they had learned a great deal about Islam.

Some said their views had changed; others spoke about how welcoming the Jamaat was, whilst many spoke of how impressed they were by Huzoor's words.

Michelle Rowland was a State MP and when I spoke to her she said:

"I have seen the addresses and speeches of your leader (Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad) on YouTube and so it is very thrilling and exciting to meet him in person. Every point he made was sensible and because of his leadership the Ahmadiyya Community is respected by everyone and this is unique amongst religious groups here in Australia."

I also met a senior police officer, Superintendent Wayne Fox who said he had found the fact that Huzoor had spoken about 'loyalty' to one's country and to always be 'just' to be ***"extremely powerful"***.

One guest, Peter Barford, spoke of how he had observed that much of the Muslim world was fragmented. He said that Huzoor was a ***"uniting factor"*** at a time ***"when Sunni and Shia Muslims are only fighting amongst themselves"***.

Paul Power was a representative of the 'Refugee Council of Australia'. He told me that he was a practicing Christian and so he had really

appreciated the fact that Huzoor had described all of mankind as ***“Creation of God”***.

With the Grace of Allah the evening had proved to be a great success and a very wonderful and historic way to inaugurate the *Khilafat Centenary Hall*.

Huzoor’s interview with SBS Radio

Early in the tour, Ameer Sahib Australia mentioned to me that a journalist, Mr Rehan Alavi, from *SBS Radio* - a national foreign language service in Australia - had expressed a strong desire to interview Huzoor.

As it was not in the original pre-approved programme, Ameer Sahib asked if I would request Huzoor’s permission for the interview and so I sent a request to Huzoor which was approved.

The interview was duly arranged for 19th October and took place in Huzoor’s office. The interview lasted around 20 minutes and was extremely comprehensive.

Huzoor very clearly explained our Jamaat’s beliefs and the status of the Holy Prophet (saw) as the *‘seal of the prophets’*. Huzoor explained the purposes underlying the advent of the Promised Messiah (as) and some of the great signs that supported his claim. Further, Huzoor explained about the institution of *‘Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya’* and the way in which the *Khalifatul Masih* was elected.

In response to a question about non-Ahmadis deeming that there could be no prophet after the Holy Prophet (saw), Huzoor said that many non-Ahmadi Muslims believed that Jesus was a prophet of God and was alive in heaven and destined to return the world in the latter days.

Huzoor said that if Jesus was to return, it would clearly be that a prophet had come after the Holy Prophet (saw). He said the non-Ahmadis were ready to accept this but were unwilling to accept the notion that a person from *within* the Holy Prophet's *Ummah* could come as a prophet.

As I listened I thought how logical Huzoor's argument was and that any fair minded person would have to admit that there was a clear contradiction in the views of non-Ahmadi Muslims – whereby they could accept a prophet to come who was not a Muslim but deemed that a prophet from amongst the followers of the Holy Prophet (saw) would break the seal of the prophethood.

Some time after the interview Huzoor mentioned to me how he was not even aware that he had an interview that day and so when he entered the office he was surprised to see the journalist!

I felt embarrassed when I heard this because clearly there had been a failure somewhere to adequately inform Huzoor.

Nonetheless Huzoor's composure and excellent answers were what I remember most of all from that day.

Broadcast of SBS interview

The journalist said that Huzoor's interview would air within a week but a week passed without broadcast. It had still not aired even by the time Huzoor's tour of Australia came to an end on 28th October.

I was actually beginning to think that the interview would not be broadcast but thankfully on 30 October, when we were in New Zealand, SBS did broadcast 10 minutes of the interview.

Pressing '*pause*' for no reason

One day after the SBS interview had been broadcast Huzoor called me for some work and so I mentioned that I had saved the audio of Huzoor's interview on my laptop in case Huzoor wanted to hear it. Huzoor said to play it and so I did.

After about 20 seconds, I pressed '*pause*' and immediately Huzoor asked me why I had done so. I responded by saying that I did not know why and apologised and quickly pressed '*play*' again.

Even now as I think back and cannot understand why I pressed pause!

The only explanation I can think of is that sometimes our love for Huzoor makes us so overawed that we can act involuntarily due to our nerves.

Anyway, Huzoor kindly did not seem to mind my mistake and thereafter I had the opportunity to sit with Huzoor as he listened to the interview for the next 10 minutes.

Upon its conclusion Huzoor mentioned that the journalist had presented Huzoor's words in a good way and that he had included quite a lot of the interview.

Feedback from Ahmadis

Apart from *SBS Radio's* thousands of listeners, many Ahmadis in different countries listened to the interview.

Quite a few commented that they had found the interview to be one of the very best they had ever heard and that the way Huzoor had explained the Jamaat's beliefs during those few minutes was truly exceptional. I could only agree with such sentiments.

A lot of confusion over day out

Australia's Jamaat had planned for Huzoor to be taken out for a few hours on 21 October. For many days certain members of the local Australian Jamaat had been discussing where to take Huzoor.

One of the Ahmadis, Dr Atta Sahib had repeatedly advocated 3 sites in particular. One was a famous tourist attraction known as the '*Kiama Blow-hole*' where, according to the sea conditions, it was quite common

for the blow-hole to spray water up to 25 metres in the air. The second place was a walk along a bridge near the *Blue Mountains*, whilst the third place was a restaurant called '*Panorama House*' from where a scenic view of Australia's coastline could be seen.

It so happened that on the morning of 21 October, the heat wave and bushfires in New South Wales had reached a peak. When I arrived at the Mosque I remember the gust of heat being as hot as anything I had felt throughout the tour. The local Jamaat had heard that some of the roads, particularly those towards the Blue Mountains, had been closed by the State due to bushfires and so it would not be possible to head to the blow-holes.

There was a lot of confusion over the next hour as the local Jamaat tried to discuss where to go. After some time Huzoor came to his office and he was informed of the fact that some of the roads were closed. It was quite apparent that the local Jamaat members were both confused and even a little panicked.

Huzoor's total trust in Allah

Huzoor responded very calmly and without any sense of worry said he would come out after some time and we would find somewhere to visit.

In contrast to the local Jamaat members, it was clear that Huzoor was not at all worried.

As Huzoor returned to his residence I thought of how Huzoor's countenance and style reflected an absolute and perfect trust in Allah.

On Huzoor's tours not only do you get to see Huzoor's perfect trust in Allah but you also see that Allah's special Help is always with the Khalifa. This is something that every person who has ever travelled with Huzoor is witness to.

Thus, around midday the Qafila departed and headed towards the *Panorama House* which had been suggested by Dr Atta Sahib. Although there had been reports that roads had been blocked and of huge traffic jams we drove without any issue or delay and arrived at the *Panorama House*. In fact during the drive I remember hearing on the radio that conditions were improving and so many roads had been re-opened.

Lunch at *Panorama House*

The *Panorama House* was a combination of various halls and dining rooms set alongside the New South Wales coast. It was commonly used as a wedding venue but also for general dining. Upon arrival Huzoor immediately led the Zuhr and Asr prayers in a hall that we had booked.

Huzoor and his family were seated in one part of the restaurant whilst the rest of us were seated in a room further down the corridor. I and quite a few others were very hungry and *Alhamdulillah* the food did not disappoint. It was a buffet with around 11 or 12 different dishes ranging from noodles, to beef in a mushroom sauce, to battered fish.

Whenever I have eaten at a buffet in the past I have generally found that 3 or 4 dishes are good but others are less appetizing. However, on this occasion the vast majority of dishes tasted very good. Both the food and the surroundings were with the Grace of Allah really wonderful.

A few days later I asked Huzoor if he had liked the food and he said that he had enjoyed the seafood dishes.

My ‘sweet-tooth’ getting me into trouble

After lunch had been served the catering staff put out some different types of cake at the buffet and each looked very delicious.

Amongst my family and friends I am well-known as having a ‘sweet-tooth’ and so when I saw the cakes I could not resist.

Along with Mubarak Zafar Sahib I walked over and grabbed a plate but could not decide which type of cake to choose as they all looked very delicious.

I was contemplating taking 2 slices so that I could try at least a couple varieties but the catering woman sensed this and so rushed over to where I was and said very sternly that:

“You are only allowed once piece! – We have calculated one piece per person!”

I felt like a criminal who had been caught red-handed!

Feeling rather humiliated I walked back with my single slice of cake and sat quietly eating it.

Later on I saw a number of our Khadim, who clearly did not know the '*one slice only*' rule, happily taking two or even three slices at a time.

By that time the catering lady had disappeared so they were left to eat their cake slices in peace. And even at the end when everyone had eaten there were still at least 7 or 8 slices left so I think she had been overly-strict!

After everyone had eaten lunch we went outside and after a few minutes Huzoor emerged and walked around observing the scenery.



Dr Atta Sahib asked Huzoor if he had liked the place to which Huzoor said that he had.

The sense of relief on Dr Sahib's face was very palpable and he then took the opportunity to recommend a further place for Huzoor to visit but Huzoor said there was no need and we should return to the Mosque.

Alhamdulillah given the threat of bushfires and the worries they had caused the local Jamaat earlier in the day, it had proved a very enjoyable few hours.

Ansar-Khuddam football match

Later in the afternoon, upon our return to the Mosque, Huzoor came out to watch an exhibition football match between Australia's *Ansar* and *Khuddam*.

It was played on a field within the Mosque complex but a few hundred yards from the Mosque itself.

Huzoor was seated to the side of the pitch observing the match and I was seated a few feet to Huzoor's right.

As the match progressed I suddenly felt an urge to play myself!

When I was younger I used to play football a lot and was captain of one of the school teams. However, I had not played at all for at least 10 years.

At one point the ball was kicked out of play and came towards us at speed. For a split second I was worried that it was going in Huzoor's direction and so I jumped out of my chair and ran to block it.

To be honest there was no need for me to jump up because in reality the ball was actually heading a few yards away from Huzoor.

I think the reason for my haste was a mixture of genuine worry that Huzoor would be struck by the ball but also probably part of my inner desire to somehow be involved in the match!

As I turned round and returned to my seat, Huzoor said: ***"Tum baray josh mein aei huei ho!"*** – meaning I had suddenly become very enthusiastic and eager!

The match continued for some time without any goals and as the light faded Huzoor suggested that a penalty shoot-out be used to decide the match.

The *Ansar* team won and Huzoor then very kindly met individually with all of the players.

One player had been injured during the match and so Huzoor especially went to see him whilst he lay on the ground to see how he was.

A cause of sadness

During the next week it became apparent that Huzoor was suffering from quite a severe sore throat.

To see Huzoor in any form of discomfort always causes a great deal of pain. Yet Huzoor's activities did not slow down in any way and his schedule remained completely packed.

As I saw Huzoor work non-stop, in-spite of the sore throat, it made me feel even greater love for him. It was yet another example of Huzoor's selflessness that he did not care for himself but prioritised the Jamaat in every respect.

With the Grace of Allah Huzoor's health was fully restored after a few days but the pain we all felt during that week was far greater than if we ourselves had been unwell.

As I thought about this I recalled Huzoor's Friday Sermon of 2nd November 2007 a few days after he had undergone surgery in which he described the outpouring of love and concern from members of the Jamaat.

At that time Huzoor said he had received letters from Ahmadis describing the Jamaat as one body with the Khalifa as its beating heart and so where the Khalifa was unwell it affected the entire Jamaat. This was so very true.

Sadr Sahib talking about Huzoor's trip

As Huzoor's tour of Australia started nearing its final few days, I sometimes asked some of the local Ahmadis to reflect on the past few weeks.

One person who had the honour of spending a lot of time in close proximity to Huzoor was Rana Ejaz Sahib, Australia Jamaat's Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya. When I asked him what he felt the legacy of Huzoor's tour would be he said:

"In the past I had heard that there are so many blessings attached to Khilafat but they were all things I had heard but not seen or witnessed myself. But on this tour I have seen that everything I had heard was true and indeed much more.

When you see Huzoor on a daily basis it becomes so clear that Allah's Help is with him and that Allah guides him in all of his decisions. If Huzoor says something it invariably happens in the same way.

These days have been incredible and something that I can never do justice to with words. It feels like Australia as a country has been reborn during this month. Now when we pray in Namaz we enjoy it so much more. Our prostrations are so much more sincere than they were before and this is all because of Huzoor's visit. The impact of Huzoor's tour is that having seen him our love for Khilafat has increased so much."

Visit to Sabih's home

Since we had arrived in Australia, Syed Sabih Ahmad had invited me to his home on a number of occasions. I had spent some time in his company over the past couple of weeks and so we had become good friends. I also wanted to visit him because he was Waqas bhai's brother-in-law and Hibba's elder brother both of whom have been amongst our closest friends in London for a number of years.

Thus after the day's events had concluded on 21st October, Sabih and his wife Riffi took me to their home for an hour. His wife very kindly offered me some delicious cookies and *Ferrero Rocher* chocolates which were both delicious and a welcome change.

They told me about their new lives in Australia and one thing which made me laugh was when Sabih's wife told me how Australian schools were very much focused on promoting '*outdoor life*' amongst schoolchildren.

Thus once she had gone to pick up her young daughter from school and looked around but could not see her. In the end she saw that she was in the middle of animal enclosure playing with and feeding different animals. She was quite surprised that this was how children spent their school days!

Anyway, I really enjoyed my time at their home and they were both extremely welcoming and friendly.

Departure for Brisbane

On 22 October 2013, Huzoor's visit of Australia reached its final week and on that day Huzoor and his Qafila travelled to Brisbane where Huzoor was visiting to inaugurate the newly built Masroor Mosque.

When Huzoor had travelled to Melbourne earlier in the tour his car had been struck by a barrier at Sydney's airport and so as Huzoor's car crossed through the same barrier I was a little nervous.

Alhamdolillah this time there was no problem and Huzoor's car crossed without incident.

Very good coffee and my first experience of porridge

During Huzoor's tour we travelled from Sydney's airport on three occasions, once to Melbourne, once to Brisbane and finally to New Zealand.

After arriving at the airport there would generally be some time left before departure and so Huzoor and Khala Saboohi would go and sit in a private lounge, whilst the rest of us were able to pass the time in a large lounge used by a number of airlines.

I used to enjoy those 20 or 30 minutes a lot because they served really excellent coffee. The other Qafila members also had their own preferences.

For example, Private Secretary Sahib really liked the porridge and on one occasion he asked me to try it as well. I had never really eaten porridge before and so I was quite dubious but it turned out to be quite good. Private Secretary Sahib was certainly an expert as he explained to me which foods complimented the porridge well!

A faulty plane!

After some time we all boarded the plane. I was seated next to Majid Sahib and we were just a few rows behind Huzoor and Khala Saboohi.

Having been unable to travel to Melbourne because of his ill-health, we were all happy to see that Ameer Sahib Australia, Mahmood Ahmad Bengali Sahib was well enough to travel with us along with his family.

As it was a domestic flight, we did not expect any delays but we remained seated for quite some time waiting for the aircraft to take off.

After waiting for 20 or 25 minutes an announcement was made that there was a technical issue with the aircraft and so they were switching off the electricity and would reboot the entire system. This was done on a couple of occasions but to no avail.

A local Khadim, Rana Sohail Khan Sahib, who works for Qantas Airlines, went to ask the crew what the issue was. He was advised that it would take 2 hours for the aircraft to be fixed and so we could either wait or

we could move to another aircraft. Sohail Sahib briefed Huzoor and it was decided that we should move to another aircraft.

Thus after sitting in the plane for almost an hour we unbuckled our seatbelts and walked out of the airplane behind Huzoor.

An example of Huzoor's calmness

Sohail Sahib and other members of the Jamaat were quite tense because of the disturbance caused to Huzoor. However, Huzoor himself was extremely calm and relaxed and did not display any sign of frustration.

It was suggested to Huzoor that he and Khala Saboohi could return to the lounge but Huzoor said he was happy to stay in the main terminal.

Huzoor then spent a few minutes looking at some of the shops in the terminal.

As Huzoor entered a shop selling mobile phones he looked in my direction and called me over.

Huzoor asked if it was the first time I had been asked to disembark a plane before it had even taken off to which I said that it was.

Huzoor smiled and said that such things happen from time to time and there was no need to be anxious or concerned.

Huzoor's knowledge of technology

As Huzoor looked at a couple of phone handsets he happened to walk by the *Samsung* counter and so I pointed out the '*Samsung S4*' phone and mentioned to Huzoor that I had heard that this was an excellent phone.

Huzoor responded by saying:

"The iPhone is better – there is no competition between Samsung and Apple. The iPhone is much easier to use."

As Huzoor said this I smiled and thought to myself how Huzoor had knowledge of so many different things and was even up to date with technology.

Huzoor's 'unscheduled' time

After a few minutes Huzoor and Khala Saboohi walked towards the normal public seating at the terminal. Khala Saboohi sat with some Lajna members, whilst Huzoor went and sat next to Ameer Sahib Australia.

Huzoor spent the next 10 to 15 minutes talking to Ameer Sahib and it seemed as though Huzoor was quite relaxed.

Afterwards, a local Ahmadi mentioned to me how he had initially been worried that Huzoor was being delayed but in hindsight he was glad we had to switch planes.

He said the reason was that Huzoor's schedule was so non-stop and packed that Huzoor was always extremely busy, yet here for around 30 or 40 minutes Huzoor was able to engage in what he called "*unscheduled*" time and just sit and relax.

The Khadim later described observing this short period as one of the '*highlights*' of the entire month for him.

Arrival in Brisbane

After some time we were able to board another plane and flew to Brisbane without any further incident, arriving at 2.50pm local time.

The drive to the Masroor Mosque took just under an hour.

Rather than travel on the main motorway we took a more scenic route and drove through some country roads and saw some very beautiful farms and old country homes.

As a 'drive' it was probably the most picturesque journey of our entire stay in Australia.

Huzoor arrived at the new Mosque at 3.45pm and was greeted by hundreds of Ahmadis who had gathered to welcome him.

The Mosque was very beautiful both from the inside and the outside.



Huzoor soon went to his residence, whilst we all gathered in a small dining room for a late lunch.

The food in Brisbane proved to be extremely delicious not just on that day but throughout our stay there. The food prepared were normal *desi* dishes such as *aloo ghosht* but in terms of taste they were very good.

At 7.15pm Huzoor came out again and took a tour of the entire premises much to the delight of the local Ahmadis and this was followed by the Maghreb and Isha prayers at 8pm.

Later that night we were taken to our accommodation. Whilst, Huzoor was staying on site at the Mosque, Private Secretary Sahib, Majid Sahib, Mubarak Zafar Sahib and I were staying at a motel around 20 minutes drive from the Mosque.

A few moments with Huzoor

On the afternoon of 23rd October, I was able to spend a few moments in Huzoor's company in his office at his residence.

Huzoor asked me how I had found the last few days and also how everything was back at home in London.

Just over an hour later Huzoor was scheduled to deliver the keynote address at a formal reception being held with non-Ahmadi guests and yet Huzoor was entirely relaxed.

It reminded me of how when a military chaplain had asked Huzoor if he was nervous about having to address leading American politicians just prior to Huzoor's address at *Capitol Hill* in 2012, Huzoor responded by saying he was not at all nervous because whatever he said would be based on the teachings of the Quran.

In the same way here I observed that despite the fact that in an hour Huzoor would be delivering a speech to non-Ahmadi guests he was very calm and rather he was concerned to make sure that my wife and son were fine back in London.

Observing such moments makes a person feel ever greater love for Huzoor.

Reception marking inauguration of the Masroor Mosque

On the evening of 23rd October 2013, the Australian Jamaat hosted a reception to celebrate the inauguration of the Masroor Mosque in which they had invited dozens of guests.

I was told that many more guests wished to come but the Jamaat was forced to limit the invites because the Hall in the Mosque was relatively small and could only accommodate around 100 people.

Nonetheless the event itself proved to be extremely successful and it was clear that the non-Ahmadi guests were very excited and honoured to meet Huzoor and to listen to his address.

Pre-Meeting with dignitaries

Just before the reception, Huzoor met with a number of the main dignitaries in a room to the side of the main Mosque.

When Huzoor entered, he observed that the guests were seated on either side of Huzoor in quite a formal manner.

Upon this, Huzoor mentioned that the setting was more formal than was necessary.

Later in the evening, I met one of the dignitaries, Michael Latter who was a State MP and he commented on this particular point by saying:



“I agreed with everything His Holiness said this evening except one thing.

In the earlier meeting before the main event, His Holiness commented that they had made the room very formal – well the truth is for a man of such stature it had to be so formal.

For such a leader a small, informal setting would not be appropriate.”

This one incident encapsulated the entire evening, whereby on the one hand all of the audience were witness to Huzoor’s humility and grace, whilst on the other hand the guests were very much appreciative of Huzoor’s status.

Respect for natives in Australia

The reception began at 6.30pm and the first guest speaker was a representative of the Aborigine community known as 'Auntie' Robin Williams.



I had come to learn during our stay in Australia that generally the Aborigine community is now very well respected amongst the majority of Australians as the *natives* and *elders* of the nation.

Thus, rather than formal titles their leaders are known as 'Uncle' or 'Auntie' and in this way it reminded me a lot of our Asian culture, whereby when we are children we are taught to never call our elders by their name, but rather they are our 'uncles' or 'aunties'.

I remember when I used to be at school, my friends used to tease me a little because I used to proudly tell them that I had dozens of aunties

and uncles, whether they were ‘uncle Bill’, ‘auntie Christine’, ‘auntie Pam’ or many, many others!

An Aboriginal custom

Auntie Robin gave a short address in which she welcomed Huzoor and said she had brought a gift of a *didgeridoo* to present to Huzoor.

One Aboriginal custom is that their ladies do not give gifts to men directly and so she asked a local male politician to present the didgeridoo to Huzoor on her behalf.

As I saw this, I thought to myself that if a Muslim lady was not allowed to present something to a man, it would more than likely be used as a means to attack Islam as so-called ‘*evidence*’ that Islam treated women unequally (*God forbid*), yet where it was the custom of other people it was very happily accepted.

Seeing the didgeridoo in Huzoor’s office

The didgeridoo presented to Huzoor was very large and crafted very carefully and artfully. It so happened that the next day Huzoor called me to his office for some work.

As I was leaving Huzoor pointed to the didgeridoo and so I was able to get a closer look. I really felt like asking Huzoor if I could try to blow in it

to see what type of noise came out but I was not sure if it was appropriate and so I kept that request to myself!

Applause for Auntie Robin

When Auntie Robin had concluded her short address none of the guests clapped. I think they were perhaps unsure if it was appropriate to clap at an Islamic event. But this sense of formality was soon gone and by the time of the next guest speaker, the audience felt comfortable clapping.

Most people probably did not even notice this oversight, however Huzoor did notice it.

And so Huzoor began his address by saying:

“Before I go further, I would like to say that all of the honorable guests who spoke here were applauded after their speeches but only Auntie Robin Williams did not have that gesture and so now you should all clap for her.”

As Huzoor said these words the entire audience smiled and clapped heartily.

You could see how much they appreciated this gesture of kindness, whereby Huzoor had noticed that one of the guests had not been applauded and had asked for it to be rectified.

Auntie Robin herself looked quite overwhelmed that Huzoor had particularly asked for her to be applauded. It was such a kind gesture on Huzoor's part which encapsulated perfectly his loving and considerate personality.

It also had a great impact as afterwards a number of guests, particularly amongst the women, commented about how touched they were by this gesture and how it had shown Huzoor's great respect for women.



During the rest of his address, Huzoor spoke about Islamic teachings of showing love and compassion to one another. Huzoor also underlined the true purposes of a Mosque.

About the Mosque, Huzoor said it would become known as an ***'an outstanding symbol of love, brotherhood and compassion'***.

Impact of Huzoor's address

It was clear that the guests had been extremely impressed and reassured by Huzoor's words.

In fact, I spoke to an MP who said that when Huzoor was talking he was looking at the non-Ahmadis and saw that they were nodding their head repeatedly in appreciation and agreement with Huzoor's words. He said that it was clear that Huzoor's words had made a very positive impact.

Following the conclusion of the formal event dinner was served and during this period I was able to meet with many of the guests and learn their impressions of the event.

One of the people I met with was Michael Latter MP who had been one of the guest speakers.

He told me that he could not believe that he had been given the opportunity to speak at the same event as such a "**great leader and great man**" as Huzoor.

He said that a few days before the event he had called an Ahmadi friend to his office so he could be briefed about the appropriate protocol when meeting Huzoor. He said he had done so because he did not want to show any form of disrespect.

Speaking about Huzoor's impact he said:

"After listening to His Holiness I am emotional – what a powerful message he delivered. I was so impressed by his speech. It was a speech from the heart. It reassured everyone about this Mosque... His Holiness is a great, great man and I was truly anxious all week at the prospect of being in his presence."

Another man who I met was a local doctor called Roger Noakes. He said Australians greatly appreciated the fact Huzoor had come so far to meet them. He described Huzoor's message as ***"beautiful and filled with wisdom"***.

As a doctor his attention was immediately turned towards Huzoor's health and perhaps he had noticed that Huzoor still had a slightly sore throat. And so with a great deal of consideration he said:

"People like you, who are part of the staff of His Holiness, must look after him because the health of the world is dependent on the health of people like him."

The Brisbane Police Commissioner, Ian Stewart, was a very respected and influential figure within the State.

He told me that Huzoor's ***"message and vision"*** for bringing peace in society was exactly how he believed the police should conduct their affairs.

The local MP, Michael Pucci said that Huzoor's presence meant that the event had been ***"one of the biggest in the history of this area"***.

One lady, Laurie Konsaki was the President of the Chambers of Commerce. I had been seated at the next table to her during the event and had noticed how throughout Huzoor's speech she had been smiling and nodding. Thus as soon as I had the opportunity I went and talked with her for a few minutes.

She said she had found the part of Huzoor's speech where he had mentioned that praying in a Mosque was ***"worthless"*** if you did not fulfill the rights of other people and show compassion to have been wonderful.

She spoke very effusively of how the evening had been one filled with positive experiences.

As I thanked her and was about to move on she added:

"If His Holiness wants to move to Australia permanently then he is very, very welcome!"

I met a local doctor who was the son of African immigrants. He told me he had been extremely nervous at the prospect of attending an Islamic event because he was not sure how he would be received.

However he said that as soon as he saw Huzoor his ***“nerves had been wiped away in a second”***. He also said that if there was a way to describe Huzoor it was ***“absolutely honest”***.

There were many other people who I met and all spoke positively of the event and its impact.

Getting my hair cut in Brisbane

It had now been over a month since Huzoor had departed from London and there was something that was beginning to concern some of the Qafila members including me – we all needed a haircut!

Majid Sahib suggested that there might be a local Ahmadi who cuts hair and so we could collectively hire him and get a much needed trim one morning or afternoon. I did not think this a bad idea but as a couple of days passed by I began to think it was unlikely that we would find anyone.

Whilst the other members of the Qafila were fairly relaxed, I was getting quite irritated by my longer than normal hair! And so noticing a break of a couple of hours on Thursday 24 October, I asked our driver if he knew of anywhere I could get my hair cut to which he replied by saying there was a shopping mall near our motel.

He kindly offered to take me and Mubarak Zafar Sahib also said he would come to make sure that the barber did a good job!

The way I was escorted by both our driver and Mubarak Sahib as a form of '*haircut security*' made me feel like it was some kind of military operation!

Indeed when we arrived at the barbers Mubarak Sahib and the driver both asked if I wished for them to sit with me whilst I got my hair cut but I reassured them that I would be fine and that they should walk around the mall. For a few minutes they did but soon they came back to the barbers and were observing from the side how my haircut was progressing!

Alhamdulillah after a few minutes it was done and a disaster haircut had been averted and so we proceeded happily from the mall with mission accomplished!

Working next to Huzoor's office

In Brisbane, as was the case through much of the tour, I used to sit in an office with Majid Sahib and Mubarak Zafar Sahib.

During the first few days our office was directly next to Huzoor's office and the walls seemed quite thin. Thus whenever Huzoor was in his office we used to try to remain silent so that Huzoor would not be disturbed.

On the first day we were extremely disciplined and I found that I got a lot of work done.

Our discipline, however, made for a very tense atmosphere – indeed at one point I sneezed and felt extremely embarrassed to have been the one to break the silence!

Over the next couple of days our standards slipped a bit and we began to whisper and even talk very quietly amongst ourselves from time to time. Hopefully, Huzoor was not disturbed in any way.

Forgetting my words at the wrong time

On Thursday afternoon as we were seated at our desks, Private Secretary Sahib entered and said Huzoor had called me. I went to Huzoor's office and after a few minutes Huzoor asked me about the previous evening's reception.

I mentioned my own reflections and also some of the comments of the guests.

I then started a sentence by saying ***“Huzoor another comment which I wanted to share with you was...”*** and as I said these words I realised that within a second I had completely forgotten what I wished to share with Huzoor and my mind had gone completely blank.

Huzoor waited very patiently and as I racked my brain I felt myself becoming more and more embarrassed by the second.

After some time I was forced to say:

“Huzoor I am sorry I have completely forgotten what I wished to say.”

Always extremely patient and kind, Huzoor just smiled kindly and changed the subject.

A few moments later I left Huzoor’s office feeling very embarrassed and typically as soon as I left the office I instantly recalled what I had meant to say!

An interesting meeting

In the evening I met an Ahmadi in his 40s who had moved to Australia around 10 years ago from Pakistan and now lived in Brisbane.

As we were talking he asked my family background and so I told him who my parents were and some of my other relatives. Hearing my response he looked a little surprised and told me the name of his sister. When I heard her name it was me who was surprised because the name instantly rang a bell because many years before his sister had been very close to marrying a nearby relative of mine.

Neither he nor I knew any of this before we had met and so it was a strange coincidence how out of the hundreds of people at the Mosque on that day we had come into contact.

It reminded me of how our Jamaat is so closely-knitted together whereby Ahmadis have friends, relatives and contacts in all parts of the world.

Happiness of the local Ahmadis

Whilst a reception to mark the opening of the new Mosque had taken place a couple of days before, the official opening of the Mosque took place on Friday 25 October when Huzoor delivered the Friday Sermon from the newly built Masroor Mosque.

There was a great deal of excitement in the local Ahmadis who had waited a long time for the Mosque to be built.

A dedicated Tifal

One young Ahmadi boy, aged 13 or 14, told me that he had been doing duty morning until evening every day for the past couple of weeks. He said his parents used to drag him home each night because he just wanted to stay and keep working.

His spirit was extremely inspiring and it was clear that despite his young age he knew how historic the Mosque opening was and he did not want to miss a minute's opportunity of service.

A large plate of zarda

That day I also met an elderly lady who had been involved in preparing and serving food. As I walked past her that morning she asked who I was and if I had come from London.

I briefly responded and assumed that would be the end of the conversation but as I was about to walk on she told me to wait. She then proceeded to bring a very large plate of freshly cooked *zarda* (sweet rice) covered by a huge dollop of something that seemed like a mixture of cream and *mathai*.

I was not at all hungry and seeing the huge plate filled me with a sense of dread because I could tell she was going to make sure I ate every single last grain of rice in front of her! As I took my first bite she stared intently wanting to know if I liked it.

It was actually very delicious and so after swallowing my first bite I highly complimented the dish upon which she was very pleased. I think she was satisfied because she then walked away and I ate as much as I could although I was unable to complete it.

Inauguration of the Masroor Mosque

After unveiling a plaque to commemorate the opening of the Mosque, Huzoor proceeded to the Mosque itself at 1pm and thereafter delivered the Friday Sermon.

In his sermon, Huzoor said it was a great favour from Allah that the local Jamaat had been enabled to build a new Mosque but that now the responsibilities of the Ahmadis had increased.

Huzoor said that they had to spread Islam's true not just through their words but through their every act and deed.



Huzoor said that wherever Ahmadi Mosques were built they were a means of *Tabligh* because people were drawn to the Mosque out of curiosity or for other reasons.

Huzoor said the local Ahmadis should therefore ensure that their own conduct always remained of the highest standard so that people who came to the Mosque saw the true teachings of Islam being practiced amongst the Ahmadis.

Huzoor said:

“Do not become content or satisfied merely because you have built this Mosque. Remember that now your responsibilities have greatly increased – it is incumbent upon all of you to show the real beauty of this Mosque through your piety, your noble conduct and by raising the standards of your worship to the very highest levels.”

Huzoor meeting Ahmad bhai

Earlier that morning, Huzoor's head of security, Ahmad bhai returned from Pakistan where he had been for the past week following the passing of his mother Khala Mateen.

As soon as I arrived at the Mosque I asked where he was so I could go and meet him and was told he was already back on duty and was currently doing a security check of the Mosque.

Immediately after *Jumma* Huzoor called Ahmad bhai and met with him for a few moments. No doubt meeting Huzoor will have brought great comfort after what had been a very difficult week for him.

Visit to Mount Tamborine National Park

After Jumma we had a couple of hours free and so Ahmad bhai and I went on a short drive with a local Ahmadi called Ibrahim Malik Sahib.

He took us on a drive up a mountainous road and we ended up at the '*Mount Tamborine National Park*' which was a truly beautiful rainforest where we walked along a trail for 45 minutes.

Elsewhere, Brisbane's climate had been very hot and dry but as soon as we entered the forest it was much cooler and the greenery was amazing. It really was like a hidden treasure in the city.

We even got to see a traditional Australian wallaby that was hiding amongst the trees.



Visit to Tropical Fruit World

On 26 October 2013, the Brisbane Jamaat took Huzoor to the '*Tropical Fruit World*' farm located on Australia's famous Gold Coast.

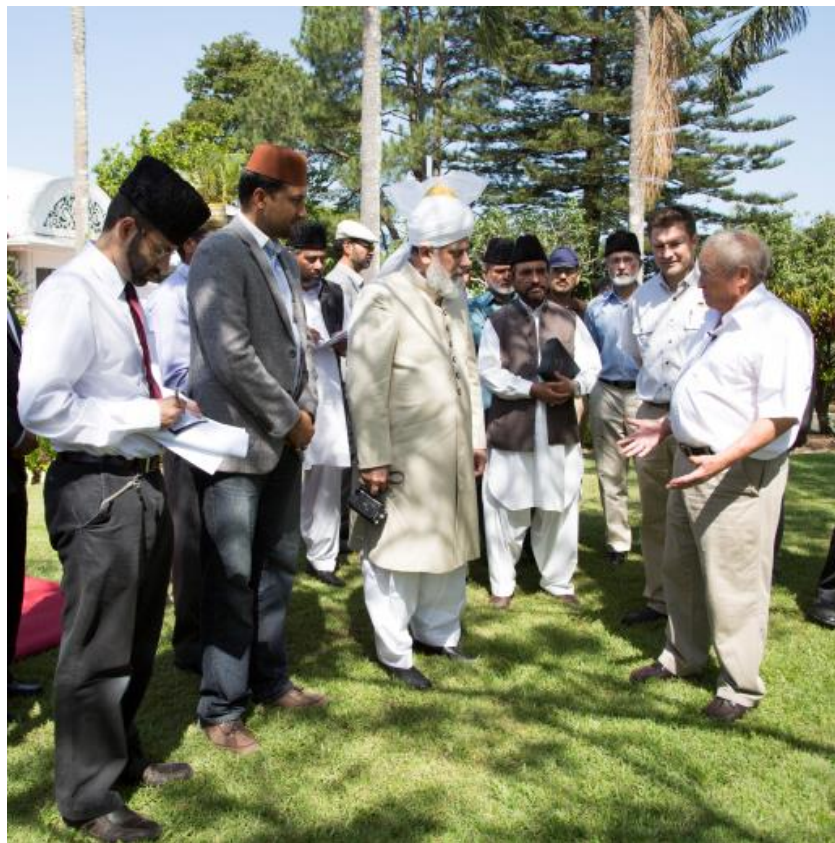
It was the third time Huzoor was able to view some of the local sites during his stay in Australia.

Whilst the half-hour spent at Melbourne's bird park was certainly a personal highlight, the trip to the Tropical Fruit World came a close second.

Huzoor and his Qafila left the Mosque at 12.15pm and arrived at the *Tropical Fruit World* about half an hour later.

The *Tropical Fruit World* was actually a vast farm set on hundreds of acres of land where the owners had cultivated more than 500 types of fruits over the past 40 years. It also included rain forest trails, landscaped waterways and native animals.

Although, quite close to the Mosque by the time we reached the *Tropical Fruit World* we had crossed back into New South Wales and so the local time had gone forward an hour.



As Huzoor arrived he was welcomed by the owner of the farm, a gentleman by the name of 'Bob' who briefed Huzoor about the park.

Traditional Aboriginal Welcome

After a few minutes Huzoor was then given a traditional Aboriginal welcome by 3 Aborigines – a father and his 2 sons. The welcome lasted around 15 minutes and was truly fascinating.

The Aborigines, who were dressed in traditional 'skirts', used didgeridoos and different instruments to make music to which one of the sons danced whilst the father chanted and sang.



Between each dance the father would explain what the next song was about and their customs and traditions.

He particularly explained that their songs and dances were a means to convey a message of peace and a rejection of crime.

At the end the father then presented Huzoor with a gift of a traditional colour painting.



I found the welcome to be very fascinating. The ‘dance-moves’ were quite strange but well-intentioned as they believed their dances and songs to be a means of bringing about peace.

Whilst watching the welcome I glanced in Huzoor’s direction a couple of times. Huzoor had sought permission to video the welcome which the Aborigines had granted and so Huzoor held up his video camera and recorded their native dance. Huzoor seemed to enjoy the welcome.

Upon the completion of the Aboriginal dance, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi were escorted to one room in the complex, whilst the rest of us went to a large hall where there were a number of different and interesting fruits on display.

Tropical fruit tasting

Seeing all the delicious fruit certainly made my mouth water but we were unable to try it straight away as one of the workers at the park insisted on giving us an in-depth talk about each and every fruit individually. With each minute that passed I think we all wished that her briefing would end so we could finally try the fruit!

After some time she asked if anyone had any questions and upon this Sakawat Bajwa Sahib said that he had only one question and that was *when* could we actually taste the fruit?

We then tried each fruit and many of them were extremely tropical and rare, including a '*chocolate fruit*' which I thought I would love but as it turned out I did not like all that much. But some of the fruits, including the dragon-fruit, were really exquisite.

Tram ride around farm

After some time we were told that the next part of the visit would now commence where we would take a tour of the farm itself on a tram.

As we came out, I realised that Huzoor and a few members of the Qafila and Australia Jamaat had already gone ahead and we were to travel in the second party.

I was quite sad to not have the opportunity to travel that part of the tour with Huzoor and so even though I enjoyed the tram ride I was throughout missing Huzoor.

The farm itself was absolutely beautiful and filled with so many different types of fruits. It was quite inspiring to see how the fruits had been cultivated and I remember thinking during those few minutes how wonderful it would be to be a fruit farmer – something I had never thought before!

Cracking fresh chestnuts

We stopped for a few minutes in the shade and grabbed chestnuts directly from the trees. At first I tried cracking them using a device that was designed to pressure the covering of the nut to crack. But I then saw one of the people who worked at the park throwing the chestnut extremely firmly on the ground. He then picked it up and peeled away the covering. I tried to do that as well but it did not work and so I went back to the device to crack a few more nuts.

Feeding kangaroos

As we got back on the truck, I saw Faisal Ahmedi Sahib, a local Khadim, coming towards us in a Jeep. As his car stopped he pulled down the window and said ***“Is Abid Sahib here?”*** I waved in his direction and he said to come with him as Huzoor had called me.

I switched immediately to the jeep and drove alongside Faisal Sahib until we reached an animal enclosure where Huzoor was feeding some small kangaroos.



I rushed over and when Huzoor saw me he asked where I had been. I explained that we had been put in the second group and so had been a few minutes behind.

Huzoor told me to get some grain and start feeding the kangaroos and so I grabbed the grain and crouched down.

I have to admit feeling a little nervous as I did not know if the kangaroos would bite and they were known to be quite jumpy but *Alhamdolillah* they started feeding off my hand quite easily and although it tickled slightly it was nothing worse than that.

As I started feeding one kangaroo, Huzoor also crouched down and started feeding another.



It was a really wonderful and unique moment being able to feed a kangaroo beside Huzoor as he did the same.

Huzoor of course was much more confident at feeding the animals and it seemed like second nature to him.

As we got up and walked out of the enclosure, the second party also arrived.

As Private Secretary Sahib, Majid Sahib and Mubarak Zafar Sahib got off the tram Huzoor told them to also go and quickly feed the kangaroos.

As I dusted off my own hands I remember thinking that Mala will be shocked that I had willingly and happily fed the kangaroos!

Those few moments showed how Huzoor encouraged those travelling with him to try new experiences.

Certainly, I had never imagined I would one day be feeding kangaroos in an Australian park but due to Huzoor's kindness I and others were able to share that new experience.

Sakawat Bajwa Sahib later told me that Huzoor had waited at least 10 minutes for me to arrive so that I would have the chance to feed the kangaroos in front of him.

When I heard this I felt so much love for Huzoor and also a great deal of personal embarrassment that on my account Huzoor had waited for some time.

Travelling on Huzoor's buggy

As we moved on, Huzoor very kindly told me to sit in his buggy for the rest of the tour.

It was a great honour for me as Huzoor sat in the front of the buggy with the tour guide, whilst I sat behind sandwiched between Ahmad bhai and Khalid Akram Sahib.

I listened to the tour guide explaining about the various projects being undertaken at the farm. He was very respectful and friendly and answered Huzoor's questions very well.



Whilst riding on the buggy I saw some of our MTA team running with their cameras trying to keep up.

It was quite a funny scene and later on they told me they were running like crazy to try and keep up but that they had actually enjoyed it!

Salat at the Tropical Fruit Farm

After some time we returned to the main hall where we had done the fruit tasting earlier. It had been arranged for Namaz to be offered there and so on one side arrangements had been made for the men and on the other for the Lajna.

The Jamaat had put up a barrier in between to make a partition between the two sides.

As he entered Huzoor checked the ladies side and said that it was unlikely they would be able to hear and because the ladies were in full Purdah the barrier could be removed.

Huzoor then moved to the men's side and we gathered in rows for *Salat*. Huzoor enquired if everyone from amongst his Qafila had arrived.

I looked around and thought that we had all arrived and so I nodded. A couple of other people also responded by saying that everyone was present.

However, Huzoor himself noticed that Private Secretary Sahib had not yet arrived and was still doing *Wudhu*.

Therefore, Huzoor stood waiting until Munir Javed Sahib had returned and then turned to lead the prayers.

Although, a seemingly small incident the fact Huzoor waited illustrated not only his consideration for Private Secretary Sahib but also highlighted the importance of *Salat* in congregation, whereby Huzoor did not want any member of his Qafila to be deprived of offering their prayers by *Jamaat*.

Nandos for lunch!

The Jamaat had organised “*Nandos*” for lunch at the fruit farm. I had been quite surprised how popular *Nandos* was both in Singapore and also in Australia. However until that day I had not had the opportunity to taste and compare it with the UK.

In London, if we ever get food from outside it is generally from *Nandos*, as we have found it to be the best value in terms of taste and cost.

The *Nandos* we ate in Australia was also very good but I remember thinking the UK one perhaps was a bit better. Perhaps my loyalty to the UK was blinding me from the reality!

Nevertheless, lunch was very delicious and we all enjoyed a great deal, Masha’Allah.

Brisbane city drive

The day had proved very enjoyable and we were even more delighted as we left the farm to learn that we would take a slight de-tour on our way home so we could take a drive through the city of Brisbane.

As we drove it began to become dark and so the city lights were switched on.

The city looked extremely beautiful and some of the architecture seemed rich in culture and beauty.

We drove across some bridges and saw the night sky. We did not stop but just the drive itself was very memorable.



Departure from Brisbane

On the morning of 27th October Huzoor and his Qafila departed from Brisbane. Not only was Huzoor's tour of Brisbane coming to an end but also his tour of Australia - as the next day he would be flying onwards to New Zealand.

We had been told that the departure time from the Mosque was 10.45am however at just after 10am Huzoor emerged from his residence where he waved at all of the Ahmadis who had come to see him off.

Another example of Huzoor's kindness

At the same time I saw that Huzoor's security guards were suddenly removing Huzoor's entire luggage from his normal car and placing it in a different vehicle.

I wondered if there was something wrong with Huzoor's car which was why they were so urgently switching everything.

However, later on I learned that a sincere local Ahmadi had purchased a brand new *Mercedes* with the hope that Huzoor would travel in his car during his visit to Brisbane.

Huzoor had not been informed of this gesture and it was only on that morning that Huzoor somehow became aware. The car that Huzoor normally travelled in was a bigger *Mercedes* than the new car and perhaps for this reason the local Jamaat may have decided not to use the new car.

The Ahmadi who had purchased the new *Mercedes* especially in the hope that Huzoor would sit in it was extremely upset.

As soon as Huzoor found out he instructed that he and Khala Saboohi would sit in the new *Mercedes* and that the person whose car it was would himself be the driver.

This was yet another example of Huzoor's kindness, whereby having become aware of the sincere gesture Huzoor immediately instructed that he would change cars so that the desire of the local Ahmadi would be satisfied.

Huzoor's concern for local Ahmadis

We ended up leaving the Mosque at 10.15 ahead of schedule and so later I asked Majid Sahib why we had ended up leaving early. He said Huzoor had come out early after seeing that so many Ahmadi men and women were stood in the searing heat.

To prevent them having to wait in the heat any longer, Huzoor brought forward his own departure by 30 minutes.

Return to Sydney and Huzoor's meetings

Huzoor's flight back to Sydney was in the early afternoon but given the one hour time difference by the time we returned to the Baitul Huda Mosque in Sydney it was 4.30pm.

We were leaving for New Zealand very early the following morning, however it was not the case that the evening would be spent in rest or getting ready.

Rather even on that final evening Huzoor held a few meetings and Mulaqats.

In particular, Huzoor met the Sadr Jamaat Melbourne for a detailed meeting in which the Sadr Jamaat presented some architectural drawings regarding the development of Melbourne's *Baitul Salam* for Huzoor's approval.

Reflections of local Ahmadis

Over the past month I had made many new friends and so that evening I also took the opportunity to meet as many as I could and say a final *salaam* to them.

It was very clear that the Ahmadis were feeling extremely sad at the prospect of Huzoor leaving the next day.

Khilafat is such a great blessing that the more a person is able to see and observe the *Khalifa-Waqt* the more he or she desires to spend time with him.

This is something I have felt myself and seen in so many others as well.

And so after having had the blessing and privilege of hosting Huzoor for an entire month, the local Ahmadis were now feeling a sense of loss and grief.

One Ahmadi explained his feelings to me by saying:

“I am so sad that Huzoor is leaving. But during each day of his visit my faith has become stronger. I will try to show real obedience to the Khalifa and follow his every instruction that I have heard whilst he is here or those that I hear in future.”

Another person said that ***“after a month of happiness it now feels like someone is stealing that happiness from my heart.”***

A few weeks later, Faisal Ahmedi, with whom I became good friends wrote to me and said that after Huzoor’s departure he had felt completely ***“listless”*** and ***“a huge sense of loss”***.

He said that over time he had been able to control his feelings but he found himself thinking about Huzoor and *Khilafat* more than ever before.

Faisal, who has grown up in Australia and is now a State police officer added:

“God Almighty blessed me by keeping me so close to Huzoor for the time he was here. The things I saw and the events that I was involved in really brought home to me the truthfulness and legitimacy of the institution of Khilafat. Without a shadow of doubt the Khalifa is the representative of God on earth.”

Concern at suitcase weight!

I returned back to my lodge late at night and emptied my suitcase before repacking each item one by one. As I did I realised the weight of my suitcase might have become a kilo or two overweight.

I had always been very conscious of the weight of my suitcase because I did not want for the Qafila to ever be delayed or embarrassed because of *my* luggage.

Thus I took out a couple of my old clothes and a few papers that I did not need anymore and then re-zipped my suitcase. However I was still unsure if I was within the 23kg limit.

Anyway, the next morning when we reached the airport I watched as my suitcase was placed on the airport scales and saw that it weighed 22.4kg to which I happily breathed a sigh of relief.

Departure from Baitul Huda

On the morning of 28th October I left early for the airport along with Majid Sahib and Sakawat Sahib. Their routine was always to leave early for the airport but on this occasion I also joined them because my flight to New Zealand was different to Huzoor's.

Therefore, I did not see Huzoor depart from the Baitul Huda Mosque for the last time but I was told later that people were extremely sad and emotional as they waved goodbye to their beloved Imam.

Huzoor's departure from Australia

I was flying on *Jetstar Airways*, whilst Huzoor and the other members of Qafila were travelling on *Qantas*.

As I waited for my flight, I saw Huzoor, accompanied by Ameer Sahib Australia, arrive at a nearby gate.

I watched from the side as Huzoor met Ameer Sahib for the final time before walking towards the aircraft.

As I waited for my own flight I reflected upon how after such a blessed month the tour of Australia had finally reached its conclusion.

Over the course of a month it seemed as though day by day, hour by hour, the love and attachment of the local Ahmadis towards *Khilafat* had increased and in return the love and guidance of Huzoor had spread throughout the country.

It truly had been a very historic month that would be remembered for years, decades and even centuries to come, Insha'Allah.