

Halfway between Abu Dhabi and Dubai on the Sheikh Maktoum / Sheik Zayed highway, you pass a turning marked Semeih. There's not much there – a camel-racing track, a few farms, some plantations of trees, a lake (it's formed by runoff from irrigation).

That belies its significance, for this is where Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi and Sheikh Rashid had the meeting on 18th February 1968 that laid the foundations of the UAE. They had just been informed that Britain would be pulling out of the Gulf and leaving them independent in 1971; the two rulers roughed out the basis of a union of their two emirates. As well as a common approach to foreign affairs and defence among other issues, they settled some long-standing border disputes and agreed to invite other Emirates to join them. The rulers of nine states met in Dubai a week later and agreed to form a federation called the UAE (though Qatar and Bahrain later decided not to take part).

All of which begs the question: why isn't there a monument of some kind at Semeih to mark that momentous day 41 years ago?