



**Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act, 1984 (NSW)
Registered No CFN 15054 under section 16 of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991(NSW)
ABN 75 368 639 375**

Patron: Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, Governor of New South Wales

ANNUAL REPORT 2009



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BACKGROUND OF THE SOCIETY

The Society was formed in 1971 under the auspices of Sir Robert Menzies, former Prime Minister of Australia, to nurture and promote cultural links that both Britain and Australia shared through their common heritage. This was reflected by the British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home establishing a complementary sister society in Britain called the Britain-Australia Society.

The Society in Australia is made up of a Foundation and branches in Sydney, Canberra, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Perth.

The Australia-Britain Society Foundation is based in Canberra ACT and holds reserves of around \$260,000 being the proceeds of the former National body of the Society, wound up in 2007/8. The Foundation raises money in its own right directly and from investment earnings as well as contribution from Branches towards specific projects such as the Shakespeare in Schools programme. Members can make direct donations to the Foundation where a tax deduction is available. Branch Presidents are Trustees of the Foundation. Pooling of donations from branches enables the Foundation to make discrete larger contributions to worthwhile cultural activities that support our British heritage.

The majority of New South Wales members are based in greater Sydney or in the Southern Highlands where there is an active informal sub-branch. Most members are people born in Britain or who have lived there for some years. Conversely in Britain most members are Australians or British people with links to Australia.

The Australia-Britain Society is an independent non-political Australian organisation, whose role is to maintain, encourage and strengthen the numerous cultural links between Australia and Britain in a spirit of friendship. These bonding links are expressed through history, language, literature, education, sport and cultural events. The Society places emphasis on the role of youth in supporting a modern and evolving relationship between Australia and Britain.

The Society's aims are met through a range of events with an emphasis on fellowship and fun, which preserve occasions that both societies honour. These include Australia Day, and the Queen's Birthday as the flagship celebration events. Surplus proceeds enable grants to be made for a diverse series of programmes within the charter of nurturing our common bonds and with a focus on young people.

The committees of the various Society structures comprise a wide range of skills and energies given freely by their members.

NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

PO Box 647, GORDON NSW 2072 Telephone/Fax (02) 9449 7532

Email : absociety@idx.com.au

STRUCTURE

Our branch has 383 members. (See the Membership Report for more details). Most members live in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, North Shore and the Peninsula. Many members are retired and a large group is based in the Southern Highlands around Bowral, Moss Vale and Mittagong.

Function attendances range from 30-200 people, mainly members, guests and friends from collegiate societies including:

Anglo-Australasian Lawyers Society

Arthur Phillip Society

BBM (Big Brother Movement)

British Public Schools Alumni

Cook Society

Order of St. John

Royal Commonwealth Society

Royal Over-Seas League

Royal Society of St George

Scots-Australian Council

Sydney-Portsmouth Sister City Committee

The Society of the Friends of St George's and The Descendants of the Knights of the Garter

The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire Association

The Navy League of Australia (NSW Division)

The English in Australia Association ("T Club")

The English Speaking Union

By affiliating some functions a better patronage is possible. This enables us to provide entertainment at events and enables friends of various groups with kindred interests to meet periodically. A large number of our members are also members of these various groups and it is expedient for us to share one major event rather than compete for attendances against other societies with a common membership who are unlikely to attend every similar function.

2008-9 YEAR IN REVIEW

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

For the benefit of newer members and as a reference point, the Committee membership details are listed. It may be useful for members to know the Committee members' roles and other interests the Committee has outside the Society.

President

Richard Nott

Dip FS(UK); Dip FP; BSc(Hons) (Manchester UK); Grad Dip Insce (Deakin); MBA(Wales UK); MCom (Sydney); MIRM (Deakin); ThA(Hons); ANZIIF(fellow); FCII(UK); SF Fin; FCIB(UK); FPNA; FCIS; CAHRI; FCMI(UK)

14 Wallalong Crescent, West Pymble NSW 2073 tel (02) 9449 2694 mobile 0439 944 926 email rnott@optusnet.com.au

President for past eight years, and Committee member since 1996. Member since 1977 via Britain-Australia Society London Branch. Chairman of the Australia-Britain Society Foundation in 2008 and Cook Society member.

Banking, Finance and Insurance working career in Australia and Europe. Based in London for four years. Currently a director of various insurance and venture capital companies in Australia. Treasurer of Sydney Spring Festival of New Music for five years until 2001.

Supervises function programme and represents the Society at various kindred group events.

Vice President and Sail Training Co-ordinator

Commander Richard Tighe, RFD, RD, RANR (Retd)

Tel (02) 9948 3479 mobile 0407 941 399 email tighe@bigpond.net.au

Commander Tighe is the longest-serving member of the Committee having served twelve years as Honorary Treasurer before being elected Vice President in 2000.

A retired senior banker, Commander Tighe served for over forty years in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as a seaman Officer and Intelligence Officer, including a nine-year term as Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the former Governor of New South Wales, the late Sir Roden Cutler, from 1970-1979.

His prime function is chairing the Sail Training Selection Committee, co-ordinating the Sail Training programme awards and all the background work which goes in organising these awards. British awardees joining the *Young Endeavour* are provided with hospitality and local contacts by the Society. This is co-ordinated by Commander Tighe in conjunction with the Australian Sail Training Association and the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme. Mrs Barbara Tighe is a wonderful support in this Society work. It is a major task and the focus of the Society's awards programme.

Hon. Secretary

David Adams, LLB

Private Box 621 PO, Woollahra NSW 2025 Adams, Raves Marsh & Co, 9/219 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Tel (02) 9283 5121 email: djadams@unwired.com.au

Practising solicitor. Hon Director various boards and committees, who runs 23 retirement villages throughout New South Wales. David is a member of the Sail Training evaluation committee, and attends to secretarial and legal requirements of the Society.

Treasurer

Ken Bock BCom; ANZIIF(fellow); FFin; CPA

Tel (02) 9871 6869 Mobile 0411 705 036 Fax 9871 6841 email: kbandlb@optusnet.com.au

Ken Bock is a retired senior manager with AMP where he served throughout Australia and in London. He is an announcer with 2RPH radio, an actor in various suburban Sydney theatre productions, lay assistant of the Epping Anglican church, a member of the supervisory board of the Scripture Union Deposit Fund, and an active member of the Masonic movement and Royal Australian Historical Society.

In addition to being our valued Treasurer Ken acts as Master of Ceremonies at our major functions.

General Committee Members:

Mrs Janatha Adams

Janatha is a registered nurse who manages her own catering business and assists with Society functions.

David Miller, OAM

Tel (02) 9969 9663 mobile 0429 984 965 email dandpmiller@hotmail.com

Retired Commonwealth shipping surveyor and Federal Investigator with various Commonwealth departments. Initiated the Mosman Highland Gatherings, the Celtic Australia Day Festival and Games and the Scots-Australian Council in Australia of which he is Deputy Chairman. David was awarded an OAM for services to the North Shore community.

David has initiated new functions for the Society including the Australia Day buffet luncheon and Remembrance Day services.

Terry Rich, JP

Tel (02) 9880 2408/ 0412 205 809 email taurus1@optusnet.com.

Terry Rich has been a member of the Society for many years and has assisted on the Committee at various times. He brings a wealth of experience to the Committee. He is very active in the finance sector, processing housing securities all over greater Sydney. Born in England, Terry arrived in Australia in 1953. He has owned and managed, with his wife Diana, numerous businesses throughout Australia.

Mrs. Maureen Tegerdine

Tel (02) 99497001 email motegs@yahoo.co.uk

Maureen was born in Scotland and moved to England at age seven. She raised a family in England and since 1984 set up and managed a charity Crossroads Care that employed care-attendants. Maureen came to Australia in 2004 and has become an Australian citizen actively involved in charity work. Maureen assists with management of our functions.

Mrs. Delma Spencer

Tel (02) 9456 2433 email manddspencer@optusnet.com.au

Del Spencer has been on the committee as Minute Secretary since 2008 – she is a 5th generation Australian from far North Queensland. She met her husband, Michael, in London and they were subsequently married in Australia where they have lived for the past 40 years. She has been active in various sporting organisations in the upper north shore of Sydney and worked for many years at the University of Technology Sydney as an Administrative Officer in the Faculty of Business.

Acting Membership Secretary and Administration Secretary:

Mrs. Sue Labordus, BA

PO Box 647, Gordon NSW 2072 Tel/Fax (02) 9449 7532 email absociety@idx.com.au

Sue was born and educated in England, moved to South Africa where she had her own fashion agency business, thence to Australia where she has lived for thirty-five years. Sue has a degree in Modern Languages and has taught French and German on a voluntary basis at the University of the Third Age.

Since January, 2005, Sue has been the Branch programme co-ordinator, which involves running the Secretariat: collecting mail, receipt and banking of funds, and organising printing and despatch of newsletters and flyers. This role has a direct involvement with function planning, table plans and programme organisation. In addition, as Acting Membership Secretary, she is responsible for membership renewals and maintenance of the membership database.

The future of the Society depends upon the depth, interest and vitality of the committee to share the service load and offer worthwhile programmes and organisation to its members. New committee members are always needed and appreciated. Vacancies exist for function support, and for general roles to provide for natural succession planning. Additionally, we need members to assist periodically with selling and collating of raffles and organising prizes. Please advise any member of the Committee if you believe you can help at some of these functions in this way or by manning the reception desk at our functions.

Southern Highlands

Southern Highlands is an informal sub-group which organises its own regional functions, makes grants from the funds raised and adds to our general reserves. This has worked well for many years, and whilst licensing regulations may require some formalisation of its structure, the current arrangements work smoothly and strong communication channels exist with the main branch committee.

Southern Highlands Co-ordinator:

Miss Cynthia Parker, OAM

PO Box 997 Mittagong NSW 2575 tel (02) 4871 1267 fax (02) 4872 2921

Cynthia was born and educated in England. After holding a Royal Academy of Dancing scholarship for five years, Cynthia followed a career in education. Her teaching career started in the East End of London before joining the staff at Frensham, Mittagong in 1961. After five years at Frensham she returned to England and taught at a co-educational school in the dock area of London. In 1968 Cynthia was invited back to Frensham as Headmistress and remained in that position for twenty-six years until her retirement in 1993. She became a member of the Society and has co-ordinated the Society activities in the Southern Highlands since the inception of our activities there in 1995. Cynthia was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to education and to the community.

David Brown

David arrived in Australia in 1990 from New Zealand where his maternal great-grandparents had emigrated to in the 1840's. David manages a family business supplying processing equipment to the timber-based panel industry and specialises in the use of waste materials.

Mrs. Jan Bell

Mrs Bell returned to Australia in 1997 after thirty-three years in Singapore raising a family after a teaching career. In addition to the Society committee, Jan is actively involved with the Deaf and Blind Children's Society at North Rocks and other groups involving children with disabilities.

Ian Archer

Whilst born in Sydney, Ian spent his first fifty-seven years at Gundagai after being educated at Moss Vale and Sydney. Ian's interests and career work involves breeding sheep, cattle, stock horses and working dogs. A keen horse rider, Ian has had mounts throughout Australia, Europe, China and Tibet! Ian lived at Robertson until he moved to Sydney during the year.

Malcolm Stephens, CB, MA, Treasurer

Malcolm assumed the local Treasurer role from Mark Chiswell during the year and he has had a distinguished career in Britain, Europe and Africa; initially in the UK Diplomatic Service, with Barclays Bank, and Director of the UK Civil Service Staff College. He was Chief Executive of the Exports Credit Guarantee Department, a member of the Overseas Project Board, and Chief Executive of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Malcolm continues a busy Consultancy practise in retirement, including visiting scholar to the IMF, World Bank and numerous Governments. Malcolm was awarded a Companion of the Bath in 1991 and was educated at St John's College Oxford where he earned an MA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. He is married to Lynette Stephens and is both British and Australian citizen as well as a member of the Cook Society.

Mrs. Lynette Stephens, BA

Lynette has a BA degree in Psychology from Queensland University. Her career in the Commonwealth Public Service led to her being selected as an Australian Exchange Officer to the UK with the British Ministry of Labour. She met and married Englishman Malcolm Stephens, and they lived in Kent for twenty-eight years. They returned on regular visits to Australia, and permanently settled in the Southern Highlands in 2001. Lynette joined the local committee mid-2004.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past year continued to offer a range of function events to members that were reduced in number due to evidence of too many events in prior years with lower attendances. A full list of events and the financial outcomes are set out separately and commented on in the Treasurer's report, however it is evident with an ever ageing membership base, and the effects of a bad economy, members are more selective in events that they attend. We aim to run events close to cost and rely on raffle sales to fund the grants programmes. Despite this some functions are not worth the effort in running due to low attendances. Key events such as the Queen's Birthday luncheon and the Christmas party remain popular and well attended. Thank you for coming to our programmes when you can and we will continue to provide a range of casual, pay as you go events plus our stable core programme to consider members on fixed incomes.

Ageing membership is an issue that most organisations face in managing the organisation life cycle. Younger retirees are more in demand as baby sitters to grandchildren to keep both parents working in difficult economic times and active hardworking parents simply do not have the time or interest to attend our type of events. To date we have maintained our membership however we face a critical issue shortly with fewer members and less function support. On the positive side we have reduced operating costs by using emails and have a strong asset base that should sustain us for many years despite low interest earnings until rates rise potentially next year. To arrest these patronage issues we continue to try and get kindred groups to affiliate informally at least, or join in our events on a margin shared basis and not compete head-on with similar event programmes. Our members are often members of these kindred groups and it is ineffective for a number to be all providing similar attractions. Unless these groups combine in some form I believe it will be a *last man standing* outcome where those groups with the biggest bank balance will be effective and active longer.

During the year we managed with the help of our Western Australian branch to re-vamp the web-site that now is an effective medium for keeping events and details of the Society current throughout Australia and our sister group in Britain. If you have not seen the site, simply click on to the internet and key in www.ausbrit.org. This site cost was sponsored by the Australia-Britain Society Foundation. It will as well pay any maintenance costs.

This year to cut costs we have produced the Annual Report internally as most copies are sent out by email and fuller copies with photographs are available in a printed form upon request. The print run is kept to around 30 copies however we can always produce further non-photo type copies as needed. Most previous glossy printed copies were sponsored by the Committee.

The Committee needs some help with managing the *Membership Development* - finding new ways of attracting members from the 50-70 year age group preferably. If you have retired recently and not

consumed with baby-sitting could you consider taking on this role? I am happy to assist with sponsorship and membership when organising functions is delegated to other people on the committee who may have time to help further.

Next year the Sail Training grants for Tall Ships experiences in the UK will be reduced to one awardee as our grants policy is not to deplete our asset base and we require an operating surplus to protect our reserves. If function patronage resumes and we can get bigger support for events this may be re-instated at two awardees in 2010.

Glen Donnelly, an awardee in 2007, took up a scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music and has made outstanding progress. He has initiated a music festival on the Central Coast and become part of one of Britain's most prestigious quartets. He will give free concerts to the Society upon his return to Australia. His award is an excellent example of how the Society aims of supporting cultural links with Britain are working thanks to your support.

The Committee is heartened by the donations many life members send in to help cover our costs and remain more than a social club. Also to this end, thanks to Ken Bock's work, we have been formally accredited by the Taxation Department as a tax-exempt charitable body, whereas many similar groups remain as social clubs.

Governance issues in the finance sector during this year are well known and this has resulted in an increasing regulatory environment cascading to the Not-For-profit sector. We are required to observe various sectors of legislation and have in place all registrations and return lodgements, plus an internal set of Policies and Strategies as well as a detailed series of incorporation data that is available to all members subject to the Privacy Act restrictions on member information.

Our Committee is made up of a wide set of skills from busy people who not only give their time but skills and financial support to seek out raffle prizes, help with events, and liaise with other groups both in Sydney and the Southern Highlands. I thank them for keeping the Society as a well-managed, compliant and financially sound organisation. The Society is indebted as well to our hard-working Administration Secretary Sue Labordus who organises functions, collects all the revenue and manages the membership records (and curbing my literary excesses)

With continuing good wishes and my Chinese proverb *May the best day of your past be the worst day of your future.*

Richard Nott
President

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For the year to 30th June 2009 the following programme of events was held:

- . ***Victoriana!* Black tie dinner** and variety programme at St Paul's College, Sydney University
- . **Plain English Speaking Awards. NSW finals** at NSW Teachers' Federation
- . **Annual General Meeting and Cocktail Party with Sail Training reports** at the American Club
- . **Barbecue** at Royal Yacht Squadron Kirribilli
- . **Remembrance Day church service at St. James' Church, King Street and luncheon** at The Queen's Club, Sydney with speaker Admiral Ross Swan, AO CBE
- . **Christmas Party** at the residence of the British Consul-General at Vaucluse, Sydney.
- . **Australia Day Luncheon** at the Kirribilli Club with guest speaker Lt CMDR Desmond Woods, RAN
- . **Buffet Luncheon** at Icons Restaurant, Marriott Hotel, Circular Quay
- . **Young Endeavour buffet at Fleet Base, Woolloomooloo.** Hosted by the Royal Australian Navy with Commodore Geoffrey Geraghty, RAN and the 2008 awardees Arjun Bisen and Edward Farrell.
- . **Queen's Birthday Luncheon** at NSW Parliament House Sydney with our guests of honour General Peter Cosgrove, AC MC and Mrs. Lynne Cosgrove

In the Southern Highlands:

- . ***"The Importance of Being Earnest"*** by Oscar Wilde at the Playhouse Theatre, Mittagong
- . **Talk on Rugby World Cup Experimental Laws** by Stuart Dickinson, referee for his second World Cup Series, at the Bradman Museum, Bowral
- . ***"Are Zoos Relevant in the 21st Century?"*** Talk by Cameron Kerr, General Manager, Life Sciences and Environmental Education, Taronga Conservation Society of Australia

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Southern Highlands Committee continues to plan functions with a wide variety of interests for our local members and friends. We frequently use the Bradman Museum of Cricket for the functions. We are grateful for the generous help of the Museum staff in preparation of the technical and practical requirements needed for these occasions. In return, the Society gives a donation to the Museum.

Rugby was the focus on 29 August 2008, where Stuart Dickinson, referee for his second World Cup Series, gave us an interesting insight into the rigours of life as a referee, and into the 2007 competition. His further explanation about the new experimental rules being played in Australia, but not yet on the world scene, fascinated the real rugby fans, whilst less versed folk enjoyed the video clips.

Music, under the baton of Sir John Barbirolli, was to have been the focus of our November session. Sadly, our guest speaker was taken ill, and so our "Talking Heads" theme had to be postponed,

"Are Zoos Relevant in the 21st Century?" was the topic and challenge given on 24 April 2009 by Cameron Kerr, General Manager, Life Sciences and Environmental Education, Taronga Conservation Society of Australia. This enthralled the audience as Cameron took us from prehistoric times to present day, with his enthusiastic and detailed accounts. The zoos of the world are certainly doing all they can to ensure survival of threatened species. In return, with our mission to help the community by networking, we hope some in attendance have become Friends of the Zoo, or will be inspired to visit Taronga and Western Plains Zoos. Instead of a raffle that evening, there was a lucky door prize of a beautiful book on the zoo, donated by Cameron,

After this function, we farewelled committee member, Ian Archer. Ian's wealth of contacts and ideas for guest speakers and topics has been amazing. He and wife Cherry are now living in Sydney. We thank them both for their contribution to the Society, and their hospitality at "Eden Park" for two bush picnics will long be remembered.

Financially the Southern Highlands functions have been most successful. We continue to support the Bell Shakespeare Company program for regional schools throughout Australia. This year, a donation was given, also, to the local Berrima District Museum. It received the 2008 Southern Highlands Business Award for Excellence as an Attraction. This small country museum is well worth a visit, and it is open every weekend.

We appreciate visits from Sydney members to attend some of our functions. We especially appreciate the contact and support from Richard Nott, NSW President, and several members of the NSW Committee.

Cynthia Parker,
Southern Highlands Co-Ordinator

GRANTS MADE

The level of awards made is largely determined by the operating surplus from functions during the year, to preserve the society's capital and provide for some asset growth. Functions are held at a nominal surplus to give members value and provide a varied entertainment calendar at a low cost. If we can attract more corporate or private donations, these grants can be increased.

This year grants totalled \$8,157.77 (versus \$14,260.20 in 2008) and were made to support our main programme of Sail Training (see separate report), and the Plain English Speaking NSW awards. The Southern Highlands group made grants from its own income of \$1,000 to the Bell Shakespeare Company, \$500 to the Berrima District Museum and \$200 to the Bradman Museum.

The Plain English Speaking Awards comprise \$100 to each NSW State finalist and a further \$250 to the NSW State winner, in all \$850. In itself this is a small contribution, but it is part of a collegiate award in conjunction with the BBM (Big Brother Movement), The English Speaking Union and the Sydney Morning Herald. This award enables the NSW State winner to compete nationally and the Australian winner to compete in the global awards programme in London. Our members are invited to attend the State finals at which our awards are made. It is a marvellous morning hearing young potential leaders arguing a sound case in such a spirited and decisive way using the English language at its best. In an age of truncated speech and communication via SMS and email messages, these presentations are a delight to attend.

The Bell Shakespeare Company actively brings its art to outback NSW schools. Smaller donations to local Southern Highlands museums are as well small reciprocal grants for making facilities available to the Society at a nominal cost.

This collegiate approach has been expanded via the Foundation of the Society that can give a tax deduction for donations and make larger grants that promote cultural links with Britain. It has reserves of around \$260,000 and in 2010 it will be actively aiming to seek donations and make grants largely directed through the Branch networks.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

During the year 2008-2009, we welcomed 9 new members to the Society. We look forward to meeting them at our various functions. We lost 11 valued members due to their passing away, or resignation due to age and inability to attend functions.

A further 40 members did not pay their subscriptions for the year, despite a reminder, and we have reluctantly removed them from the mailing list. As a number of our members are life members, from whom we receive no annual subscriptions, the question of renewals is therefore a very important one so as to sustain a cash flow which is used for our grants scheme. Our membership fees have not increased for many years in order to encourage early renewals, but at the time of writing this report, there are many subscriptions outstanding for the coming year. We urge you, if you have not already done so, to renew in order to remain on the membership list. Rates for 2009-2010 remain unchanged, at:

General (under 65 years of age)	:	\$ 35.00 p.a.
Senior (65 years and over)	:	\$ 30.00 p.a.
Family (includes partner)	:	\$ 60.00 p.a.
Corporate Life	:	\$500.00 for 5 years

For new members joining after 1 March, the annual payment covers the last quarter of that year and the whole of the next year to 30 June.

Membership numbers as at 30 June 2009 were:

General	:	21
Senior	:	73
Family	:	84
Life	:	123
Corporate	:	1
Complimentary	:	30 (including Sail Training winners, various states and other bodies)
TOTAL	:	<u>332</u>

If you have changed your address, would like to be added back on to the mailing list, know of someone who has moved and would like to be re-included on the list, or someone who would like to join, please contact me on (02) 9449-7532, or email absociety@idx.com.au. I will arrange to send you an application form. Furthermore, if you would like to receive communications, including the newsletter, by email instead of in hard copy, and you have not as yet advised us of your email address, please get in touch. It is interesting to note that well over half of our members are on email and the number is increasing; email

communications save the Society printing and postage costs and are much quicker than by Australia Post. So, for those who feel they are now sufficiently computer literate to receive emails, please get in touch!

A special “thank you” to those Life members who send in donations. These are greatly welcomed, as they go towards helping the Society run effectively and help bolster our Grants Scheme.

Sue Labordus
Acting Membership Secretary

SAIL TRAINING REPORT

The winners of The Tall Ships Award 2009 were Arjun Bisen, 21, a Board Secretary of Wattle Grove, NSW and Edward Farrell, 22, A Network Engineer of Neutral Bay, NSW. Both of the winners sailed aboard the barque Tenacious, operated by the Jubilee Sailing Trust, from Gran Canaria to Southampton in March/April 2009.

The Tall Ships Award, which is the Society’s major sponsorship, is part of the Australia Britain Tall Ships Exchange Program under the auspices of the Australian Sail Training Association, inaugurated by the Prime Minister in 2001. The Exchange Program is administered by the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme who also provide exchange berths for young Britons coming to Australia. The Society acknowledges the support of the Association of Sail Training Organisations UK in sponsoring a young Briton to sail aboard Young Endeavour.

The Jubilee Sailing Trust UK continues to support the Exchange Program by providing a berth free of charge to one of our Awardees. For the past two years, since the withdrawal of the Tall Ships Youth Trust from the Exchange Program, the Society has met the berth costs of the second Australian Award winner pending alternative arrangements being made.

A number of members of the Society attended a luncheon aboard Young Endeavour on 21 May 2009 at which Award Certificates were presented to both the 2009 Award winners by Commodore Geoffrey Geraghty RAN. We record our thanks to Mr Murray Henstock of Young Endeavour Youth Scheme for facilitating the luncheon on board and to the Commanding Officer, LCDR Gavin Dawe OAM RAN.

The Australia Britain Society is strongly committed to the Tall Ships Award program as a part of its objective to foster relations between Great Britain and Australia with an emphasis on youth. It is encouraging that past winners of the Award continue to support the Society and have ongoing contact through various events during the year.

A number of our Award Winners have been invited back to the ships on which they sailed to serve on later voyages as volunteer crew and watch leaders. This is testimony to the very high standard of our Award Winners and is an indication of their commitment to sail training and its value for ongoing personal development.

To enable our members to hear more of their experience at sea, Arjun Bisen and Edward Farrell have been invited to address members at a reception following the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 20 October 2009 at the Kirribilli Club. They will be happy to meet members and answer their questions.

The ongoing viability of the Tall Ships Award Program is dependent upon the Society's fund raising activities throughout the year. Members are again encouraged to support our various fund raising functions which will enable us to continue our support of the program.

Richard Tighe

Vice President and Sail Training Co-ordinator

REPORT ON SAILING ABOARD THE BARQUE "TENACIOUS"

By ARJUN BISEN

The story of our tall-ship adventure begins on 23rd of March when Ed and I boarded our flight to Gran Canaria after two adventurous days in London. We were in holiday mode after walking across Abbey Road several times, visiting Lords, the home of cricket, walking through markets, meeting friends and experiencing several other touristy attractions. Neither of us was sure what to expect, Tom Carr, a previous scholarship winner, had described the journey as far more relaxed compared with the rigour of the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme.

On board I spotted an elderly gentlemen a few seats away from me with a JST (Jubilee Sailing Trust) polo shirt on. I proceeded to introduce myself, hoping to discover more about the journey that lay ahead. David explained that the voyage generally contained a mix of ages and abilities, describing it as being quite difficult. There was another crew member on board our flight, a blind man, who as fate would have it, turned out to be my bunk buddy and an important figure throughout my journey. His name was Tony Lawton and he lived in Reading. This report is largely about my time with Tony, Iain and Marcia sailing on STS Tenacious. The voyage took us from the Canary Islands through the Azores towards Ireland, coming back to eventually finish in Southampton. It spanned 24 days. There was much that can be written about but I have tried to report on my core experiences only, particularly as Edward's report chronologically documents most of our voyage's key events and progress. I hope that by focusing on a select few moments, the profoundness of the voyage can be comprehended.

A bus picked us up from the Airport and as we approached and boarded the Ship, or Barque as it is technically known, many of our expectations had to be modified or discarded. We were by far the youngest

crew members and a real holiday feel filled the air; some of the crew had already cracked open beer cans. The ship was breathtakingly beautiful and much larger than STS Young Endeavour. I was taken to my bunk where I had my first conversation with Tony. Not only was Tony blind, but also deaf, I hadn't noticed his skin-coloured hearing aid in the flight. His hearing aid allowed him to hear quite well in a quiet environment. He was a charismatic man whose spirit about him which made him instantly likeable. Later I discovered that he was originally born deaf with full eye sight. He had a condition known as Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) which gradually caused his eyesight to deteriorate. With the invention of the hearing aid and newer education methods, he was able to learn to speak with almost perfect annunciation by age 9.

Tony operated in a very interesting way. As I led him to our room, he pointed out all the side rails and bumps that were helpful to him. He was counting footsteps to work out vague distances and requested that directions be communicated like a dial on a clock with straight being 12 o'clock and slightly to the right of that being 1 o'clock etc. To create a floor plan of the ship in his mind he asked me to take him around the ship bit by bit over the first 3-4 days till he understood it better.

First, I clumsily led him to the mess where we met the rest of our large crew. Tony had no problems with communication and conversation, very quickly becoming the center of attention with his sharp wit, sense of humour and gentle nature drawing everyone near. It was a wonderful contrast from earlier when people were slightly hesitant in introducing themselves. That night I also met the rest of my watch and felt right at home from the start. It was comforting to know I would be spending the voyage with such polite and fun loving people. Our watch seemed to have the most number of physically disabled crew. Along with Tony, there was Marcia, a paraplegic, and Jeff, who was almost fully deaf. They would light up every room they entered and were able to bring out the best side in everyone. One of the first things I noticed about the English were just how polite, courteous and well mannered they were.

Retiring to my bunk on the first night I realised how nice it was to sit back and take things in. As I lay there chatting to Tony, I began to realise how profound this journey was likely to be, not only because it placed me in a new and challenging environment with people who had a much to teach, but also because it gave me a lot of time to soak everything up and meditate on moments to uncover their importance or their true meaning.

The next morning I witnessed something that blew my mind. Iain, an elderly gentleman with the same eye condition as Tony, climbed the main mast (approximately 150 ft high), without been connected to anything most of the time, guided only by feel and vague instructions shouted by a crew member. He too was partially deaf. I wondered how much he heard in the gusty air up there. It was a champion and inspiring feat which was done with a great deal of independence and good humour. At one point it was fairly crowded on the first platform and Ally, one of the permanent crew, asked 'can everyone see me from there?' to which Iain quickly replied 'No, can you move to the left'. A burst of laughter ensued from the crew. This sense of humour continued to amaze me. Another example came later in the day while the ship was rocking and rolling; Marcia adjusted her wheelchair to counter the ship's tilt and exclaimed 'I think I'm getting sea wheels'. The rest of the day we motored along and there was relatively little to do. In an

attempt to impress, I rushed up to the galley awaiting mess orders causing the cook's assistant to insist there was no need for such urgency, 'relax, you're on holiday'.

Over the next few days I realised that the ship was, in many ways, a refuge for its crew. Tony came on *Tenacious* because he felt that normal social barriers collapsed under the intimacy of the ship and people were made to feel accepted. When I asked Tony how Iain, Marcia and he were so dignified and confident when tested in such circumstances, he told me his family were the most important source of support that helped him cope with his disability. He gave me some perspective by explaining how crew on *Tenacious* were exceptions rather than the rule. In his opinion, most physically disabled people he had encountered were quite angry and frustrated. They needed a great deal of support and strength of character to reach the level of comfort and independence that Tony, Marcia and Iain possessed. Tony lost his eyesight 10 years ago, before which he could see with the help of glasses. He said the ability to see was very important for his recovery as he already had an understanding of the world, making it easier to adapt when his sight eroded. In very low light, he is able to see an area roughly the size of a dollar coin. To keep himself busy, he played chess on the computer creating a mental map by scanning each square. He also sailed and was working on a GPS system that would help the blind sail and race without constant supervision from another passenger.

Our watch leader, Bill, said he came on the boat to help him deal with his wife's death. Working with the disabled and meeting new people provided him with a sense of meaning. He said something quite profound to me which explained his attitude on life, 'if you are contributing positively to the world, making others happy and never consciously harming others or the environment then you will never struggle to find meaning in your life'.

That night during our watch, while we were mesmerised by the glowing of plankton, Tony asked me what seemed to be a simple question. "If you had to choose, would you rather keep your sight or your hearing?" He asked me this in the context of my upcoming challenge where I would be blindfolded for a day. Judging the question superficially, I answered that I'd rather keep my sight and lose my hearing. After all, 80 percent of information comes through the eyes and I saw how difficult it was for Tony to sail and carry out some basic tasks which Jeff manoeuvred relatively comfortably. However, something told me that there was more to this question than I had first thought so I kept it in the back of my mind. Later that night as I was lying on my bunk, I recalled a moment when Tony enjoyed a joke with Ray, another member of our watch, and I remembered the huge smiles on both of their faces. Jeff looked on, completely unaware and unattached to anyone during our watch. It was then that I knew the real lesson that Tony was trying to impart to me- I had to change my answer to his question. The most difficult part of our voyage was the constantly changing sleep times due to the watch system. That morning, however, we were quite free to roll out of bed at our own pace so I decided to bring it up straight away.

"Tony, I'd like to change my answer to your question"

"Ah you've been thinking about it have you?" A cheeky grin lit his face.

"I think I'd like to keep my hearing instead, I wouldn't feel alone that way, and I saw how much joy you felt over a simple conversation."

I could tell Tony was quite impressed. “You’re quite a deep thinker aren’t you?” he beamed and proceeded to share a poem that was apparently written by a deaf and blind girl.

*“Blindness cut off from things,
Deafness cut off from people”*

What Tony explained to me that day taught me a lot of things, some of which I’m yet to fully comprehend. It was one of those really sacred moments, where I was able to drill down to the true meaning of the event. I came much closer to learning how it felt to be blind. I realised the true value of communication and interaction with others and how much joy a simple conversation can bring. Conversely, how damaging isolation can be to the human spirit. Even Bill, our watch leader, came on the ship to avoid the loneliness he felt when living alone without his wife. It seemed to be particularly acute for the physically disabled. Tony explained that isolation can often be a product of dependence, which is the case for most people with a disability. He insisted that he only found happiness and dignity when he moved towards independence. It was then that he stopped fighting his disability and worked with it to achieve some sort of contentment. He said technology, employment, transport and support from friends, family and sometimes strangers, all helped him achieve levels of independence. Of course, I don’t mean to say this rings true for everyone and every situation but it certainly seemed to be the case for the physically disabled on board our ship. This notion shaped many of the lessons I learnt later in the voyage. Throughout the voyage it seemed like my daily debriefings with Tony uncovered and transferred some gem of wisdom for me to consider.

Off watch, I spent the majority of my time socialising with the crew. There were 49 people on board the ship so there was always a story to be told. I learnt about Lord Nelson and the battle of Trafalgar; played guitar with Betty and Iain; had conversations about molecular physics; practised photography; played chess and sudoku with the blind; spoke to crew who were alive during the Battle of Britain; others who had worked on Lancaster bombers; and some who had seen legendary icons such as The Beatles, The Who and Led Zeppelin. It was really exciting for me to learn about a whole gamut of topics and meet people with such amazing experiences. It is rare that someone as young as I would have an opportunity to sit and spend time with people who have seen and done so much across a lifespan. They had a lot to share with me; information, stories, and advice. It was one of the most enjoyable parts of the voyage. Through our conversations and my experiences in the UK, it was clear how much the English valued their past. The pride and identity derived from the richness of their civil society made me realise just how important it is for socially valuable things to remain in the hands of civil society.

As our voyage went on, I had more opportunity to learn about Marcia’s life. She was an ex-marathon runner which must have made living in a wheelchair all the more difficult. She explained that those who experience any form of disability subsequently experience some form of depression. The biggest challenge is to get past it. Things changed for her once she realised that being in a wheelchair didn’t mean that she had to be a vegetable. She was incredibly independent on board. Watching her move around the ship in her wheelchair, sometimes in the harshest of conditions was amazing. She pursued her interests of photography and athletics by taking up a course and starting a sports club for the physically disabled. Similar to Tony’s

sentiments, she felt that independence is the key to building up one's overall confidence. All of the disabled crew mentioned in this report pursued their interests and kept themselves busy in a challenging way. Iain too played guitar, went kayaking and stayed active.

As a part of our 'leadership at sea' program we were to replace our watch leaders for three separate watches. The value came from its stark difference to any other leadership situation I had experienced previously. Captaining the *STS Youth Endeavour* youth crew was far easier in some ways as the crew were full of energy and keen to get things done. On board *Tenacious*, there was very little to do during a watch aside from helming and completing regular logs. The crew was much older and three of them were disabled. Our ship would hold a course for days with very little tacking required and the weather was much colder than my balmy *Young Endeavour* experience, especially when we moved further north near Ireland. I learnt a lot from watching Bill operate. At any given time, only 4 of the 8 people in our watch needed to be on deck allowing the others to go downstairs for warmth. He rotated us around every 20 minutes or so and kept us engaged by constantly chatting. The 20 minute system was also variable depending on the conditions. For example, if it was really stormy and if Danny felt tired after 10 minutes then Bill would quicken the rotation. I employed this same flexible, people-focused approach when I led and my watch mates seemed to be quite happy with my performance earning me the title of 'Better Bill'. I was really fortunate to have Bill as a watch leader after hearing complaints from other watches about not being allowed downstairs to warm up and strict routines for duties. Bill knew that managing people required adapting to the situation and was able to teach me this principle in a very practical way.

Another part of the program required me to wear a blindfold for a day. I was told that being blindfolded would be very hard in terms of moving around the ship and eating but I already knew the layout of the ship so I never felt a sense of unfamiliarity, nor did I find eating terribly difficult. Instead I noticed the immediate sense of dependence quite confronting. Suddenly my world became a lot smaller and I was only aware of things occurring in my immediate vicinity. I paid more careful attention to information from senses that would usually be ignored and had to constantly think and work out what was going on around me. This became quite mentally tiring after a few hours. Overall, the experience was really enjoyable and people were purposely playing tricks on me. I guess it was fun because I knew it was temporary but the sense of dependence and the shrinking of one's sphere of consciousness would be very frightening initially for those with permanent blindness. I was even able to helm blind thanks to the talking compass that voiced the direction of the ship. Strangely, I helmed with much more accuracy since I wasn't distracted by other senses.

The next exercise was to move in a wheelchair for an entire day. The wheelchair experience was very challenging and tiring on my arms. I found myself using muscles that hadn't been used since my stint as a fast bowler in under 14s cricket. It was more frustrating than being blindfolded; I guess because of the physical effort I had to put in. Even though being blindfolded meant that everything took at least twice as long. Over the day I noticed several changes in my behaviour. I had started avoiding activity because it was far more effort than it used to be. For example, instead of going to the mess to socialise, I went back to my bunk and read a book. I could see that this kind of reluctance could lead to inactivity and stagnation; a kind

of downward spiral. It became clear how staying active and engaged was very important for Marcia's confidence. Both Iain and Marcia told me 'well, you just get on with it don't you?' I couldn't grasp the enormity of that statement. Simplifying it to that level made it seem unrealistic. When I put it to Iain he laughed and said 'well, what's the alternative? It may sound difficult but it's the only real choice'. This helped make sense of it for me; it was then that I stopped seeing them as superstars but as humans with a heightened human spirit because it was that spirit that pulled them through. Even in the two days I spent with a mock disability, I wasn't helpless, I was able to use my mind to solve problems and adapt. Of course, I could never completely understand where Iain and Marcia were coming from but the exercise definitely helped me get closer.

As I mentioned before, I could almost write another thesis on this experience and it still wouldn't do justice to the impact of this journey. I have tried to portray the nature of the lessons I learnt and it pains me to leave out so many amazing experiences. I would like to thank the Australian-British Society and all its supporters for giving me the opportunity to sail on board *Tenacious*. I hope to apply what I have learnt on the significantly longer journey that lies ahead of me.



Ed and Me at Abbey Road



Gran Canaria



Sunrise



Tenacious at Horta, Azores Islands



Helming in a wheelchair



My watch



“Tenacious” at night



On the ocean wave

REPORT ON SAILING ABOARD THE BARQUE “TENACIOUS”

By EDWARD FARRELL

It was on the 23rd of March that Arjun and I arrived at the STS Tenacious in Gran Canaria. We had spent an excellent two days in London. My fellow traveller, Arjun was as resourceful as Indiana Jones - he knew everyone and everything and could really get us places and get a good time going. Every day was the best day of his life and he made sure you knew it and shared it with him. He was definitely the sort of person you would like to be stuck on a ship with for the next few weeks. This came in handy, as late in the evening on the third day, still jetlagged, mildly sea sick and getting my bearings, I was really wondering what this next adventure of mine would have in store. I think Arjun was wondering the same.

It was probably around this time I started to really get to know my watch. Donald, my bunk buddy, was a retired Royal Navy doctor from Ireland, who spent his early years in Tasmania and certainly had a few stories to tell. Cath and Chris were a pair of adventurous paramedics from Wales and Betty was a 73-year-old Jazz singer. Clive was a former merchant marine who was humble, wise and had a wealth of knowledge. Bill was a man about my father's age who like my father, refuses to get old and is still living life to the full. Jack was a former RAF pilot, and shared my enthusiasm for inappropriate clothing on watch. This rag tag watch was led by Roger, an ex British army warrant officer, who will remain a mate of mine for life.

I feel that we really started to ‘break in’ as a watch during an evening south of the Madeiras. There was a gentle breeze and swell, the stars were shining, a turquoise phosphorescent glow came off the water as dolphins broke through, and there was something in the solace of such a quiet evening that brought about an indescribable sense of camaraderie and purpose. We all talked and learnt about each other, and in the background, the silence of the Atlantic gave a feeling of peace amongst it all. There was something magical about that evening, I will never forget it.

Day 6 was the beginning of the leadership at sea program. I had taken on the role of watch leader for the day, and I feel I kept the watch okay; with a team like this very little is needed in the way of instructing or ordering; everyone knows there's something to do and if past experience has taught me anything, it's the role of the watch leader to maintain this attitude. The program, which ran for the whole voyage, featured a number of activities and challenges such as research exercises, undertaking a talk, getting a bucket of water from one point of the ship to the other, steering around in a wheelchair and more. My favourite part of the program, and the one where I got the most out of the exercise, was blindness. Having tied a blindfold around me, I was required to steer the ship, make my way to the galley for dinner and to consume a meal blind. This was rewarding not only because it enhanced my other senses, but because there were several tasks that I could not perform, such as log keeping, that really made me feel like I was not being particularly active as a team member. The program consolidated a lot of my skills as a leader, and the most valuable point I got out of it was the qualities of inclusion and leveraging of skills amongst team members.

The Azores were amazing. Arriving on day 8, or shortly thereafter, I set about exploring. The islands are one of the few places budget airlines are yet to fly to, they are yet to be corrupted by package holidays and like sailing ships with rope and timber, are the genuine article. Sailing into the port of Horta would have been enough; a pod of thirteen dolphins squealed away as we entered port giving us a warm welcome. Upon walking around the cobblestone streets, Arjun once again exclaimed,

“Ed, this is the best day of my life.”

It was amongst everyone at the one and only bar in the town that, like several evenings before, something quite profound overcame me. Holding her walking stick in one hand and a middy in the other, Betty in all her wisdom I think summed it up:

“We don’t know what’s next, so we enjoy the now.”

Betty’s words couldn’t have had more truth to them - it was less than a week after the Azores that she and other crew members succumbed to injuries. By day 14 we were in the roaring 40’s, and although the ship’s permanent crew described the conditions as a bit weak, the conditions were enough to get the adrenaline going. If there is any indication as to the conditions, by the 7th of April, the day our watch was reduced to only four, I have only written down the captain’s words:

“If you go overboard, we may not be able to save you”

Followed by:

“...sobering.”

This all really was in one sense overwhelming, and yet another, strengthening. I found a light in the stoic approach Clive, Donald & Jack, who stood out to me, as we fought through the last two days to Cobh. It was about this time I recalled my interview for the trip. I had I said one of the greatest attributes of Commonwealth nations is a toughness to fight through, no matter what - the Depression, the Battle of Britain, natural disasters and terrorism. A recurring theme exists - that there is a common valour we all share in the face of adversity, and we as a crew manifested this in these few days before port.

Cobh was a different matter; I don’t know what I stressed me more, stranded for eight hours because the conditions weren’t right to dock, knowing that I would only have eight hours on shore, or the last two days at sea. Although one of the lighter stories came out of our arrival in Ireland, in the earlier part of the day, Arjun, obviously craving something, turned to me and said:

“Ed, this would be the best day of my life if I could find a curry”

It was at this point I pointed out the only Indian takeaway in town, some one to two kilometres up the road from where we were to berth. We came ashore, a few hours later and ran towards the Indian takeaway, only to find out that it had been burnt out. We had to laugh, and settle for some quality food at a quiet bar.

On Good Friday we headed back out to sea. It was peaceful, there was a full moon and a warm feeling among the crew. So much has been accomplished and we wrote a message on the Jubilee Sailing Trust blog. There was a sense of relief and achievement at the same time. At midnight, just as we were to come on watch, Clive was evacuated by RAF helicopter due to an ongoing medical issue. It was about then that I learned two things; one was the need for vigilance and the other was a need to “live the moment”. It was unfortunate that Clive had to be evacuated. I felt that I had gained so much from our discussions on watch, and I certainly felt his absence on the watches that followed.

The remainder of the voyage was relatively uneventful, however sailing through the Needles and up the Solent had a comforting feeling about it. The final drinks and auctioning of items condensed all the emotions of the previous three weeks into one evening, Arjun and I handed over a signed Young Endeavour shirt, and Roger outbid me for the ship’s standard in the auction, only to hand it over with the quote:

“Edward, I’d go to war with you any day!”

If you knew Roger, what he has been through in the past few years and you were a member of the Army as a reservist, you knew how serious he was with that one line. I will never forget that evening.

Following our jubilant final days off the Isle of Wight, it was time to bid farewell and move on. As had been for the past twenty-three days, we had to get on with the task at hand - there were not a heap of tears and emotional moments.

Earlier, I discussed the need to “live the moment” and after saying goodbye to Arjun at Southampton, I did just that. My adventures in Europe after disembarking were all about there and then, not about following a lonely planet guide or following the tour operator with the silly uniform and flag. I climbed Ben Nevis without notice, took a Bush Bash through a Glen following only my sense of adventure and took a bike ride because it was there to take! I feel as if I have found a new lease on life, a new appreciation for everything, there is nothing I could not accomplish.

I added the final touches to this report on a recent Saturday morning upon my return to Sydney; the first free Saturday I’ve had to myself since December where I could relax and not worry about work, the Army Reserve, Surf Life Saving and a dozen other commitments. I went for my regular 2 kilometre swim at North Sydney pool, had my coffee and started a new book. After a brief shower I looked into the mirror and realised how wonderful life is. I began to think through the stage I was at in my life, where I have come from, where I am going, and what life’s next adventure may be...

The pleasant life is motivated by hedonism - the desire to maximise the number of emotional and physical highs that is the signature of modern consumer capitalism.

The good life is devoted to developing and refining ones capabilities and thereby fulfilling one’s potential.

The meaningful life is similar to the good life in that it requires the development of one's signature strengths, but where the pursuit of the good life can be self-centred, the meaningful life entails a commitment to something greater than oneself, a higher cause. - Clive Hamilton



Now hanging in the bar of the "Tenacious" ... a "Young Endeavour" T shirt



Steering blind

TREASURER'S REPORT

It is pleasing to report that, for 2009, the Society was able to reverse the deficiency of \$4,420 incurred for 2008 and achieve a surplus of \$1,830. This improvement represented almost the exact saving of the one-off grant of \$6,000 made during 2008.

However, we had mixed results in other areas of our operations:-

- Our Sydney social functions achieved gross revenue of only 75% of the amount for 2008 and this was accordingly reflected in the reduced net result as shown in the financial statements. Our Southern Highlands members, however, achieved higher net income from their social functions.
- Members' Subscriptions were slightly lower reflecting the static level of our membership numbers.

On the positive side, Donations were higher and Interest income also was higher, although this latter result arose mainly from the timing of the receipt of Interest earned from our bank fixed deposits. We account for these earnings on a cash received basis and individual receipts occur at various times depending on the term selected for each renewal.

Also on the positive side, overall operating expenses were largely contained, again by the use of electronic communications in issuing Newsletters and other documents.

In general terms, we had a satisfactory financial result for the year but, as the President has reported elsewhere in this 2009 Annual Report, we need to recruit new members. Not only would this increase income from Subscriptions, but we could expect that the social functions revenue would also benefit from increased patronage.

Finally, I thank our Honorary Auditor, Mr. Keith Salt for his very expeditious attention to the performance of his audit.

Ken Bock,
Treasurer

BRANCHES OF THE SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

Whilst branches operate autonomously within a common charter, there is warm welcome awaiting our members wishing to attend functions held by other branches of the Society. For members travelling interstate, details of the local offices are listed here and the Secretariat can assist in advising forthcoming events in that centre. In reciprocation, the New South Wales newsletters and programme is issued to other states in the event that visitors to Sydney are able to join our functions.

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Branch event diaries can be accessed on the Society website: www.ausbrit.org

BRITAIN–AUSTRALIA SOCIETY IN THE UK

Members visiting Britain are extended an open invitation to attend functions of our sister society in England and Wales. Members with family working and living in Britain may have an interest in joining the British body.

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Ms June Mendoza, AO OBE RP, Mr Rupert Murdoch AC, Sir John Swire CBE DL,
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Honorary Chaplain: The Revd. George Bush

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