Australia-Britain Society (W.A. BRANCH) INC.

February-April 2010

NEWSGRAM

PO Box 7039, Karawara WA 6152 Web: www.ausbrit.org Email: admin@ausbrit.org

From the President

Just as I ended the last 'Newsgram' of 2009, wishing all members a Happy Christmas, let me begin this first print for 2010 by sending each and every one of you belated New Year Greetings and hope you have a very fulfilling, happy and healthy year ahead of you.

Two dozen members and friends attended a pre-Christmas Lunch on Sunday 20 December at the Old Barnyard Restaurant, Baldivis. Those who travelled on the hired bus were treated to a free inspection of a section of the Bunbury freeway extension until our driver realized that he had gone well past the Baldivis turnoff and headed back.

Thanks to May McInnes for sending in some suggestions for creating interest in the Branch. One idea of May's that some of you might like to take up is to write a few paragraphs about your life which can be put in The Newsgram.

Member Carroll Brown has written to support the idea of joining in with events staged by other like minded organizations. We will do this where prior agreement has been reached with another group willing to let us join in. Sometimes our awareness of these events may be at short notice requiring details to be sent by email to those members with internet connection.

Barrack Square is a lovely place to sit and have a morning coffee, observing the continual flow of people, many of whom can be recognized as visitors to Perth. On my most recent visit there in December to ride on The Wheel of Perth I was reminded of national service days in Catterick Camp Centre when all we young fellows could afford for entertainment was having a cuppa at the NAAFI club while watching the passing scene.

The Wheel of Perth is located to the west of Barrack Square (that's where the ferries ply, near The Bell Tower). The giant observation wheel offers a 360 degree panoramic view of Perth City. The brochure I am quoting from reads "the view is an uplifting experience that will take you almost 50m above the ground in the safety and comfort of a fully enclosed air conditioned capsule". There are eight wheels operating in UK and two in Europe. The Wheel of Perth will end its stay here at the end of 2010 so take a ride while you can.

I explained in the last Newsgram my ideas for some casual outings this year. By casual I mean that very little or no organising will be needed and no costs in advance. I hope they will bring members together more often, more informally and be a way of meeting during the day between 9.00 am and 3.30 pm thus fitting in with the free public transport for Seniors. I will send details around by email and they may be at short notice.

Social Scene. The casual outings described above in no way take away the important role that Mary Edwards plays as Social Coordinator, ably assisted by Gina Dawson, in the many hours of work which is involved in putting together the myriad of things which need coordinating for the big events.

These will continue to be listed on the yellow sheet **Social Page** accompanying this Newsgram. The first get together this year will be a Breakfast at the *George Street Bistro* in East Fremantle where we will hear Sam Scaife, a student at Perth Modern School, repeat for your special attention, his winning speech in the 2009 Plain English Speaking Awards competition. Please come along to support Sam on his way to London in May.

Queen's Birthday Dinner Friday 23 April 2010.

The second event being organized is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Birthday Dinner. We will have as Guests of Honour the Head of Post at the British Consulate in Perth our Vice Patron Mr. Phil Orchard accompanied by his wife Isabel.

Please use the booking slips at the bottom of the Social page to reserve your place and do so early as seating in the Wings Restaurant at RAAFA Bull Creek is limited. So hurry.

Patron Saints Days for 2010.

I mentioned St. Andrew's Day in the last Newsgram. So as not to upset the other three Saints who keep their constant eye over the British Isles and their inhabitants I'll set out all four dates for 2010. Your branch committee have no special plans to celebrate any of these although it just so happens that the Queen's Birthday Dinner this year is being held on Friday 23 April which is St. George's Day.

St David, patron saint of Wales. Monday 1st March.

St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. Wednesday 17th March.

St. George, patron saint of England. Friday 23rd April.

St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland. Tuesday 30th November.

Your branch committee would like ideas or suggestions from you as to how these distinguished and early Christians could be celebrated by the Society.

Welcome to New members.

Apologies for the name shortening when welcoming Ms Deborah McMillan in the last Newsgram.

Mrs. Ann Mudge & Mrs. Elizabeth Preston

Mr. Neville Pringle

We are especially pleased to welcome back into Society membership previously long time members Mr. and Mrs. Perkins and Mr. and Mrs. Lee.

Resignation

The Reverand Bill Hawley has resigned from the position of Honorary Membership Officer due to work commitments. I thank him for his efforts and hope we will continue to have the pleasure of his and Georgina's company at our social events.

Welcome to new Membership Officer.

To fill the onerous task of Membership Officer I have been very fortunate to recruit member Helen Cope to replace Bill and thank her for stepping into this important position.

The Australia-Britain Society Foundation.

I recently attended in Canberra my first meeting as a Trustee of the Foundation. I will be reporting on this visit to the branch committee at its next meeting on 10th April. A summary of the report will be included in the next Newsgram.

Website – www.ausbrit.org

I have to thank Malcolm Allen for providing me with a short and concise report on our own Website to take with me to The Australia-Britain Society Foundation meeting in Canberra last weekend. In this Malcolm pointed out that the computer technology we have today (he was referring specifically to websites although the same can be said about computers and communication technology in general) "…are an inevitable part of our lives today and offer a great way of communicating..." He makes the point that websites are "much better when they remain relevant, fresh and up to date. That's the challenge for us all going forward!"

For members still without a computer I recommend you seek help from your local public library. If you do nothing else with your latent computer skills learning to stay in touch with family and friends can be a wonderful experience. You are not alone in fearing that pressing the wrong button will end everything. There is no guillotine hanging over you, just an electronic instrument which you control and which with increased use over time will become second nature to use. Go on, dip your toes in, feel the fear and do it anyway.

Executive Committee

President: Richard Savage

13 Chartwell Place, Leeming WA 6149

(08) 9310 6365

Email: richardsavage@bigpond.com

Vice President (1) Malcolm Allen

Vice President (2) Position vacant.

Honorary Secretary: Sue Allen

Publicity Officer: Position vacant.

Social Coordinator: Mary Edwards

Honorary Treasurer: Swain Thambyappah

Asst. Social Coordinator: Gina Dawson

Committee member: Rajini Shannon

Membership Officer: Helen Cope, (08) 9446 5574 Email: cope_helen@yahoo.com.au

(There is an underscore dash _between cope and helen in her email address).

Postal mail (except to me) should be noted 'for the attention of' and addressed to:

The Australia-Britain Society WA (Inc), PO Box 7039, Karawara WA 6152.

Please contact me with any comments at all. All communications will be read and acknowledged. Ideas or suggestions will be placed before the branch committee.

Communication from overseas.

Past President David Shannon is currently residing in England. At my request David has kindly agreed to contribute to each issue of The Newsgram by submitting a short article.

Thank you David.

"A Letter from England" (No.1).

There was a time when British roads were the envy of the world and for that you can probably thank the Romans. But it took 2000 years before the country's first motorway was built. 1959 saw the opening of the dual-carriageway M1 motorway between London and the Midlands and a Pathe News feature film was made at the time and screened in cinema intervals to show drivers how to use it. Overtaking was actually encouraged (but one had to stick to one's lane, be very cautious and courteous, and indicate correctly with those funny little orange fingers that popped out). The film's narrator also kindly pointed out that stopping for a picnic on the motorway grass verge was frowned upon and that a passing bobby on his Velocette would probably stop and ask you to eat your scotch eggs elsewhere. Such innocent times.

By contrast, just 50 years later, the most recent British asset, London's circular motorway the M25, is frequently described as a car park, because the traffic is so heavy. Heavy in vehicle numbers that is, and also heavy in weight – European lorries now thunder through our leafy lanes with their vast cargoes of cabbages and car parts (naturally, you can't get British cabbages and British car parts any more), shaking our buildings and knocking over our cyclists. British lorries are much smaller of course and built for British roads, so any thought of our chaps returning the favour and shaking French buildings to pieces or knocking over the occasional onion-seller is out of the question. In any case their roads are much better. And thereby hangs a tale.

British roads are now in such serious disrepair through bad weather and lack of funding it is estimated that £6 billion is required nationwide to bring everything back to an acceptable condition. The recent cold snap has ruined the roads. The slightest crack admitted water which when frozen expanded and hey presto a bigger crack emerged until after a few nights and several hundred European juggernauts have passed you have a fully blown pot-hole which just gets bigger and deeper by the hour. It doesn't seem to occur to anyone that cold snaps happen here with some regularity (surprisingly it's an annual event). So any talk of 'we weren't prepared' is frankly foolish. As for the government's response, well let's just say that it is widely acknowledged in Whitehall that by deliberately under-funding road maintenance, and therefore keeping the pot-holes unfilled, drivers are more cautious. Result: lower average vehicle speeds (a government objective anyway) and huge savings (yet another government objective!)

For heaven's sake, let's get the Romans back!

David.

President's postscript.

For me that's an interesting subject and brings back memories. I was actually surveying on the M1 motorway in 1958. I stood on a bridge constructed over the motorway nearest the Welton site office in Northamptonshire in late 1959 to watch the first traffic pass under which had roared up from Luton, 75 km south, after the then Minister of Transport, Mr. Peter Thorneycroft, had officially opened the road. If any other members remember this occasion or any other significant event please write it down and send to me for the next Newsgram.