



Birkonians Australia
Association

NEWSLETTER

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From the Editor

I do not intend to send emails at this frequency as we go on, but there have been some interesting replies by email, parts of which I am sure you would be glad to read.

WHY BAA?

By this time in our lives we have our own networks – professional, countries lived in, family, local, community – and connection with Birkenhead is a long way back. Judging from the number of responses I get, the BAA network is still a useful one for many of you.

CONTRIBUTIONS

You have all had interesting lives – teachers, doctors, scientists, in business, the services, or even peripathetic like yours truly. Small pen sketches, or anecdotes of things experienced, would all be of interest to us others – please think of sending them!

A start – Africa anecdotes

When I did the Kilimanjaro climb, back in 1969, I found that altitude sickness did not affect me, and I made it to Gillmans by 8am. I duly signed my name in the book and proceeded along the summit plateau to the actual top. On arriving I had an overwhelming need for a crap. I was just adjusting my dress afterwards when I saw another figure striding purposefully into view. It turned out to be a she, and her opening words were “Tony Moody of Bidston Avenue Primary, I presume?” It was Catherine Worrall who always beat me to top of the class – she was working in Nairobi. Beat you to this one eh, Catherine!

.....

When I lived on the shores of Lake Victoria I often travelled on the lake steamers (Victoria and Usoga) between Mwanza, Kisumu and Bukoba. The captain of the Victoria was Capt Sutcliffe, “Sooty” to one and all. Sooty never actually drove the boat as he was so alcoholic that at 6am he arrived in the saloon, where the waiter brought him 2 “Whitecaps”. The other boat was driven by Capt “Dirty George”, swarthy, hairy, and also a piss-artist, and a Liverpudlian.

Now Lake Victoria is big, as big in area as Ireland. One moonlit night there were only two boats on the lake, the Victoria heading east west, and the Usoga north south. The Victoria managed, nevertheless, to run into the Usoga at full tilt.

NETWORK NEWS – from the wires..

Dear Tony,

Many thanks for preparing & mailing me the March BAA newsletter. My wife & I tend to visit the Wirral every other year so don't notice the changes as much as I did when I first went back after 26 years in Oz. That was in 1994. I came from Heswall & that has changed a lot. Now very trendy & everyone talks with a Liverpool accent instead of the strong Cheshire accent that I remember as a lad.

The Ritz has gone now (I was there when Gracie Fields opened it in 1937) & the Plaza is due to follow. Also, the library on Borough Rd is closing. Still, BS & the surrounding area still look the same & you get a good welcome when you visit the Archives Dept., as I did a few years ago. I had lunch with Barb Baxter (BHS) last Friday. She's well but has MS & failing eyesight, as you probably know. Coincidentally, it transpires that she lived in the same street in B'head as my wife! Small world. I'm also in touch with Dave Hollins, John Lemon & Geoff Gardner, in case they are of your vintage.

Just to fill you in, I am Bhead School (1941-47) & used to live in Heswall & later, in Higher Beb. Arrived here in 1968 & worked in marine & general insurance in Melb but am long retired. Married to Christine--- also a Wirral girl

Peter Venour (BS 1941-47)

Hi Tony. Many thanks for the BAA's update by snailmail. Geoff Wollaston (BI) put me back in touch. So, good to "meet" you!! Your ears must have been burning last Sept., when your sister was telling Isobel and I all about you in Oz. John Macleod (your brother in law) is my nephew! It was an all too brief get together but it was an occasion for my wife Isobel (a Kiwi) to finally meet John's other half! I didn't get to visit BS; not enough time.

On a sad note I have say that Barbara (BHS) passed away in 2003. OK, so the Ferns lost - no comment. L'pool's looking good just now though.

Cheers, Ron Jackson

A brief background, I was demobbed from the RN in Feb 97 after service in various areas in SE Asia & Australia. I was born in Spore and was

fortunate enough to be posted there in 46 during which time I managed to get a job. So, after demob, I returned to Spore in June 47 and stayed there until 1999 when my wife and I came down to Oz, and been here in Tweed Heads, NSW ever since.

Bob Bell

Look forward to hearing more about your wine efforts. The nearest I ever got to wine making was using a Boot's wine making package to make an almost undrinkable red for my (then) students at the University of Liverpool. I, of course, put the stuff into "used" claret bottles. All of this was at the time of the Great Wine Price Crash of the early 70's, so there were plenty of prestigious empty bottles around. The students were delighted to receive glasses of Ch Latour from a lecturer.

But I digress

Phil Ley

News from the 'old country' is always welcome.

I left the UK in 1953 from New Zealand and apart from a few recent visits have lost touch with old friends. I still have a brother, also an old B.I who lives on the Wirral so have a sofa to sleep on when over there. I visited the UK last year, was not impressed and found the value of a UK passport to be of little value.

If there are any old members visiting New Zealand they will always be welcome. My hobbies are natural history - geology, mineral collecting, bird watching and tramping (what they call bush walking I believe – Ed). Still do a bit of marine surveying when called upon.

Alun Baines

Knew you were up there, just haven't been your way for an age.

Have retired after working in the Victorian public service since 1969 (Dept of Environment and Conservation). Went to Swansea for BSc and Monash for PhD. Married with 1m 1f children.

Cheers

Ian Norman

Still swimming in the sea here (Albion Park, NSW), the temperature of the water is 22degC. It's warmer in than out!!!

Regards

Ron Simcock

Thanks for the e-mail, Lovely to hear the verse about the 2 and the 6 buses. I am a medic in W.A. but also run a small hotel. We just had a guest from Oxton and reminisced about times past. His young boy is just

applying for a place at BS - but it seems things have changed hugely. No boarding house, No Ted Smailes, George Gilliland, Fred Wakelin, No K D Robinson or J Gwilliam...the place is clearly going to the dogs.

Kind regards,

David Cooke (1957-70)

MORE POEMS FROM THE BARD, Barry Youde, to whom saying “I like your poems” is like showing a shark a bloody fish head

THE DIGGER

He left his heart in Birkenhead. It seemed a good idea.
Well educated and well read, he could not have been
freer.

The world was at his feet, that day. He knew that he
would march:

Though not for him A41, Woodside to Marble Arch.

The Capital had no appeal. He wanted something bigger.

He'd head for the Antipodes. He'd be a dinkum Digger.

The Sunshine Land was calling him away to pastures new.
No future could he see at home. He knew what he must do.
He wouldn't miss the dereliction, accent or decline,
The poverty, the history which is both his and mine.
And so he went to Aussie-land. He made no ifs nor buts.
He took his future in his hand. Wisdom. Strength. And
guts.

He lives his life by acumen beyond the Capricorn;
And far beyond the limits of where he was bred and born.
He misses the frivolity, the recklessness of youth:
But knows how many beans make five. He knows the human
truth.

These things he learned in Birkenhead. And thus he thanks
the place.

He regularly keeps in touch. His friends return the
grace.

The brewery is long since closed. There's nothing left
but hope:

Which springs eternal in the breast, with yet a virile
scope!

Come back! Young man, you're welcome in this godforsaken
place!

Come back! And let us see the smile which once was on
your face!

No more we have a brewery - but restaurants are great!
Where once you shifted pint-on-pint, good grace will
serve your plate!

The Birkenhead Australian. He knows each hemisphere.
Come back! Young man, you're not forgot! You are most
welcome here!

The next verse arose because, pre-WW11 my grandparents were
wholesale grocers in Oxton Road (RT Evans & Co).

THE GROCER

At Oxton Road in Birkenhead a family-grocer stood;
And here was bacon, cheese and ham and eggs and God and
good.
The Grocer had descended from the rugged hills of Clwyd;
His wife a Meirioneth child and daughter of a Druid.
The loins of this pure Cymric pair produced their
children, six,
Who led a life of daily prayer and music, fun and tricks.
The Mother was a beauty and the Father was a Deacon,
Awash with Chapel-righteousness, here was a shining
beacon
Of industry and commerce and economy and thrift
And temperance and Celtic tongue - all held within their
gift.
And to their urban premises came custom, far and wide,
To deal with Grocer and his Wife - who were my Nain and
Taid.

This was an hundred years ago, when Edward was the King,
When few had heard of Sainsbury - and Tesco not a thing,
When from the shop in Oxton Road in colours gold and blue
A living was provided and the bills were paid when due.
But much the greatest produce was the fun and laughter,
then.

I saw it in my childhood and I see it yet again!
The talents of my Nain and Taid were music, song and jest
-

No finer virtues ever could a family invest.
My cousins all amuse me and to hear them is delight -
For all the Grocer's righteousness I know that he was
right.
So, thanks I give to Oxton Road for giving me my life,
-In wicked alcohol I toast the Grocer and his Wife!

DOWN UNDER

From the shores of Sydney Harbour to the rollers of Cape
Bluff:
With a toffee-nose in Melbourne, or in Darwin where it's
rough:
If you have NZ reserve or if you wear a T-shirt jazzy:
If you're farming in the outback or you're screwing sis
in Tazzy:

If you're mining in Kalgoorlie or you dine in Sydney,
Queens:

If you're shearing sheep near Christchurch then you'll
know just what it means,
To hear the magic calling chant of "How're you doing,
Cobber?"
Which once you knew as, "Ubi fides ibi lux et robur."

One night, in the Caernarvon, I was standing in the
Gents.

'Twas long ago. No matter. There's no dull of sentiments.
As, next to me, two fellows stood, as fellows ought to
be,

Attending needs of nature with a pure civility.

Said one, " I'm just back from Siam. I'll tell a wondrous
tale."

The other said, "Don't bore me. Just relate. How was the
ale?"

And so Birkonians travel, with goodwill. Good on yer,
Cobber!

Which once you knew as "Ubi fides ibi lux et robur."

Today your home-town honours you, you better-travelled
folk.

Return to see us, please, at least one day before you
croak.

Though fortune now has vanished, worthy memories are
left.

There still exists full spirit. Love and hope are not
bereft.

You knew the days of youth and fun; prosperity and
laughter.

The party's not yet over. It's not yet the morning after.
Recall , perhaps, the "UBI FIDES IBI LUX ET ROBUR",
When next somebody hails you with a "How're you doing,
Cobber?"

BIRKENHEAD INSTITUTE NEWS

I am afraid I have been a bit slow to add this to the newsletter, John
Jordan sent it to me back in February, and I forgot to include it then, but
here it is:

Birkenhead Institute Old Boys Association Annual Dinner

The annual dinner of the Association was held at the Caldys golf Club on
Friday 3 October 2008 with about 60 Old Instonians in attendance. This
was disappointingly down on the previous dinners I have attended. Age,
health, and distance all no doubt contributed. Disappointing too that I

understand all present were from Whetstone Lane days, with none from the Tollemache Road times.

The evening began with an hour or so's gathering in the bar area where many friendships were renewed and anecdotes told. In due course Harold Burkett managed to get everyone seated, roughly in year groups, and Arthur Rixen (1941/47) said Grace. During the meal Tom Horton proposed the Loyal Toast and later that arch-Old Instonian and pliar of the school, Len Malcolm, gave an address which set everyone thinking about old times. I am hoping to receive from Harold a complete list of diners.

Those on my table were: Tom Hodgson, John Creek, Ron Coburn, Phil Robinson, David Moore, Graham Edwards and David Lee. The formal part of the evening ended with the charity draw, and I drew the tickets, with 25% of my table benefiting! I left at 11pm, but I suspect it continued long after.

For anyone planning to head that way this year, the next dinner is on Friday 2 October. Please check with Harold Burkett, I know you will be welcome (harry_burkett@btopenworld.com – I think, Ed.)

I have a brand new OI tie for sale, visors on yellow stripes, for \$15.

John Jordan, Tasmania

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