

For Britons at home and for British communities worldwide November every year is a time for Remembrance. In ceremonies across the planet we remember all those who have fallen in war so that we may enjoy freedom. Much attention is rightly given today to the sacrifice now being shown by our soldiers, sailors and airmen and fantastic efforts are being made to recognise and support them and their families in very difficult times. For all those who enjoy life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia it seemed appropriate, therefore, to add our support by way of raising funds for Service charities; it seemed doubly appropriate that, in doing so, we remember the massive contribution of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations in past wars. In the Second World War more than five million men from the Empire and the Dominions volunteered to fight and those who survive to this day, their widows and their families, rank among those least able to help themselves. The Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League, founded in 1921, aims "To ensure that no Commonwealth ex-Serviceman or woman is without help if in need" and it was to support this aim that the Poppy Dinner was organised. The League has 57 member organisations across 48 countries and helped more than 20,000 beneficiaries last year. Demand for help is set to increase five times in the coming years.

On 6 November the British Military Mission to the Saudi Arabian National Guard hosted the Poppy Dinner in the Residence Gardens of Her Majesty's Ambassador. The support and assistance given so

generously by William and Vanessa Patey and the staff of the Embassy ensured a very successful evening and despite the very last minute change of venue due to the wet weather. The Intercontinental Hotel worked wonders to move everything in two hours flat and still produced a fantastic meal. With 270 guests attending this was always going to be a challenge but everyone agreed that it was not just a seamless event but one of the most enjoyable in Riyadh for many years. It was all done in a traditional British Army style, topped off by the presence of a very fine quintet of musicians from the Band of the Blues and Royals. They appeared for no fee and huge thanks go to bmi for providing their flights to the Kingdom.

The splendour of the evening was made possible by the presence of so many people and by the fantastic generosity of those who had sponsored the event. Extremely welcome donations were received from Al Misehal, Axa Insurance, BAe Systems, Paradigm, the RGBB, SABB and the Saudi Establishment for Safety Equipment, and Vinnell Arabia worked tremendously hard behind the scenes to provide so much of the graphic material and displays. Through all of their efforts and the sale of tickets around £15,000 was raised for the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League. This is a superb figure. All those who attended and were involved can feel justifiably proud of their contribution and the help this will provide for Ex-Services people in need in the Commonwealth. Truly the spirit of Remembrance was shown in Riyadh that night.

## The Poppy Dinner



Clockwise from left:

Brig Gen Tanner and Mrs. Tanner greet Col Pete Bond (ret) and wife Laurie Bond

Brig Gen Tanner greeting the Chinese Ambassador and his wife.

Bruce Kendall, Poppy Dance Graphic Designer and Photographer, with his wife Jai Kendall



Mrs. Julia Barnett greeting guests along side one of the many exhibit boards about the RCSL.

All Photos by Bruce E. Kendall

A sincere vote of thanks go to the sponsors of the Poppy Dinner who included these companies and organisations:

