

A note from the Eastern Chair



Colin Clarke
Chairman,
BBA (EP)

As we begin 2003 may I offer the best wishes from the BBA to all members of the RGBB and the BBG Jeddah. Having suffered some considerable verbal abuse over the past months, and not just from EP, I trust that the editor has remembered to insert my more "statesmanlike" picture to replace the scanned image from my student union rail card. I can assure you of no Peter Pan aspirations from my side and am confident that the Editor will accept his share of the blame for this oversight.

Sadly we begin the year, as we ended the last, with some significant regional tensions and I am sure you share with me the hopes that the issue of disarmament can be achieved without bringing to bear the awesome forces that are being built up around us.

In spite of the tensions of 2002 most businesses in EP had a good trading year and look forward to much of the same for 2003. Changes are afoot and we have seen the sale of STC shares as an interesting step toward the privatisation of government held institutions and a move toward the challenges that still face the Saudi government. These challenges will present significant opportunities for businesses in the Kingdom and beyond and I hope that we as the business groups can maximize those opportunities for our members and for other British Companies who are willing to overcome the reluctance to do business in the Kingdom. Similarly we wait (again) with baited breath to see if the rumours of some action on the Gas Initiative come to fruition and

provide a further confidence boost to the economic engine

I was fortunate to sit on the interview board along with colleagues from the British Council and the Embassy to select some of the Chevening scholars for the next academic year. I would say that I was pleasantly surprised at both the standard of most applicants and their eager enthusiasm to study in the UK. I know that both Mick Brown and Nasir Pasha have done the same in Riyadh and Jeddah respectively and the Business Group scholar should hopefully be announced shortly.

You may note (if you happen to read it that is) a few changes to our committees' page due to current workload commitments. We are currently revisiting the whole business side of the Association and hope over the next month or so to (inject/transfuse/cajole/threaten/blackmail /pressgang/encourage {delete as appropriate}) some new blood and ideas into the Association. Our thanks go, and have already gone, out to the sterling help and support of those resigning members and a welcome goes to those who, perhaps unbeknown to themselves as yet, are about to join us. Watch out for more in the summer edition!!

Kind regards
Colin Clarke
Chairman, British Business Association,
Eastern Province.

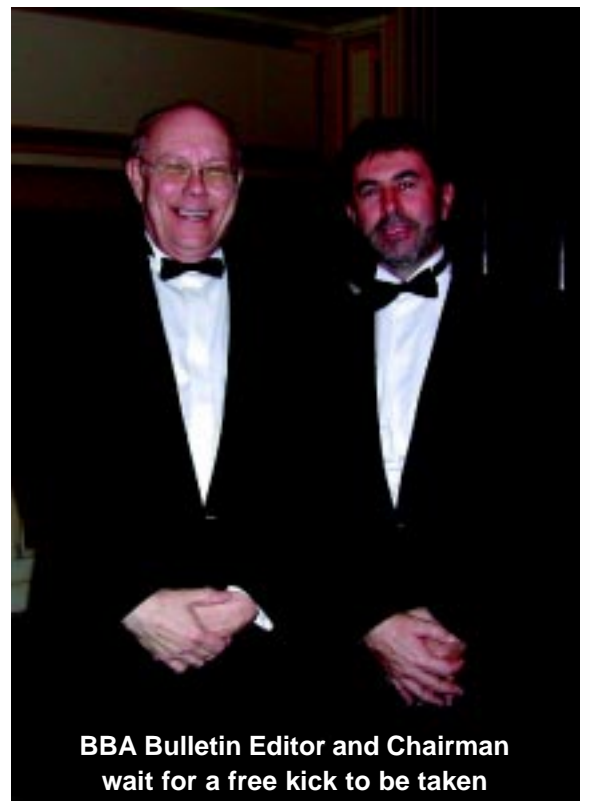
Eastern Province News

As the weather starts turning towards summer and the situation in the region remains fluid to say the least, the Eastern Province BBA has been doing its bit to keep morale up among members.

The social scene becomes even more important in these uncertain times. The recent highlight was our annual Winter Ball, held in late November. Members and their partners dolled up to the nines and enjoyed a first class reception, followed by a beautifully presented traditional festive dinner and the odd fox-trot afterwards (*for fox-trot read head-banging heavy rock music.* – Ed).

Our Chairman fooled all of us who make a traditional wager on the length of his annual speech. He is normally succinct and erudite – and never goes beyond ten minutes or so. But this year he read out a couple of wardens notices at the end which made his speech over seventeen minutes long (the timing being from the time he stands up to the time he sits down). Several of us have asked Ladbrokes for a steward's enquiry but we are not hopeful. Rumour has it that someone in high places got him to include these messages in his speech and then proceeded to place large bets (even up to SR.50.00 !) on the high teens minutes and made a huge killing. But being across the bridge (where else ?), the refreshments flowed and all was soon forgotten as the music swelled and the dance

floor filled. Our Events Secretary, Michael Nugent, organised a truly five-star occasion and if he's not careful, he will keep the job for ever after this success.



**BBA Bulletin Editor and Chairman
wait for a free kick to be taken**