

A Greeting from the East



Colin Clarke
Chairman, British Business Association Eastern Province

On behalf of the British Businessmen's Association (BBA) may I offer our good wishes to members of the RGBB and the JBBG for a prosperous and peaceful 2004.

The last year has made the normal whirlwind that is the BBA social calendar a mere shadow of its former self, and with fewer visitors to the region, has contributed to a very subdued year for the Association.

However, in spite of the uncertainties that events brought to 2003, it appears for many to have been a very buoyant year for business and I think it is a testament to the Saudi Business community, and I include ourselves in that, that this is the case. It underlines their confidence in the government's ability to contain the situation and provide a stable platform for future economic prosperity. I hope that many of you will stick around to share, and help UK plc. to

share in that future and all the opportunities that it may bring.

As we begin 2004 it is good to see some visitors once more dipping their toes into our regional waters and we remain hopeful that this year will continue to be a good year of further solid business growth. With many projects moving toward fruition in power, oil and petrochemical sectors and the gas initiative moving forward, albeit in a slightly different guise, the omens are good.

As we move towards April and our own Group's AGM, expect to see some changes in the committee; at last I hear some say. I will take this opportunity, my last as Chairman, to thank the collective committees of both the Riyadh and Jeddah groups and my own in Al Khobar and Jubail for their help, support and friendship during my 3 years in the Chair in EP.

KHOBAR KALLING



Brian Willey

Where has the time gone since 1st January? Here we are in March already and time for another edition of the RGBB News.

Festive and Eid holidays have come and gone. We had an excellent Winter Ball in December, courtesy of the Gulf Hotel across the bridge. Chairman Colin and your correspondent attended the annual InterGulf meeting of all GCC BBGs/BBAs, hosted this year by The Dubai and Northern Emirates BBG. It is always interesting to hear how our neighbouring Groups are doing, both on the business and membership fronts. There was also a moving presentation by Graeme Thomas from the British Embassy in Tehran on the earthquake in Bam with stark photos of the devastation that really brought home to all of us.

Despite the FCO travel advice we had The Middle East Association's Lawrie Walker and a brave little mission of five companies visit us in January. Then a Saudi European Trade, Investment and Financial Services Delegation of senior industry executives in February led by Sir Jeremy Hanley. Nice to see business people returning to the Kingdom.

We said goodbye to Bob and Maria Jackson. Bob was number two at the British Trade Office and a tremendous help to local and British business in the Eastern Province, as well as being a stalwart on our committee. We wish them well on their new posting to the British High Commission in Cyprus (lucky devils!)

We said hello to Bob's replacement, Richard Wood, and his wife Frances. Richard has already done three years at the Embassy in Riyadh some time ago and so is no stranger to Saudi Arabia. We look forward to working with him and the BTO team as before.

As you will have read in our Chairman's message, we will also be saying goodbye to Colin Clarke at our AGM in April – but only from the committee. Colin will still remain a member and his valuable contribution to the Eastern Province BBA will not be forgotten, particularly his sense of humour. Whoever steps into his shoes will have a hard act to follow.

That's enough for this edition. Let's hope 2004 is peaceful and prosperous for us all.



Picture Left: East meets West. (L-R) Jeddah Chairman Nasir Pasha, Colin Clarke and Brian Willey enjoying the hospitality of HMCG Simon Collis at the InterGulf Dinner in Dubai in January.