

Notes from the Eastern Chair



Colin Clarke
Chairman, British Business Association Eastern Province

Difficult to know where to start when such tragic events have dominated our thoughts for the past weeks. The sympathies and condolences of our membership go out to all who have lost loved ones, and particularly to the family and friends of Cliff and Jayne Hoban who were members of the BBA in Al Khobar, prior to their fairly recent move to Riyadh.

There is, I hope, some comfort to be had from the robust response of our hosts to our security. However the down side to the increased security is the willingness, or otherwise, of people to continue to live under such security, necessary as it is, and how their long term plans may be re-visited. The impact is similarly critical in attracting foreign investment, while such issues maintain such a high visibility.

As we go to press the Gas initiative is still not forging ahead with the pace that we would all like to see. Both parties are I am sure making their individual assessments of "who needs who most" and with the added complication of potential developments emerging in Iraq, it is difficult to anticipate the oil majors wishing to rush to meet any deadlines.

On a more parochial note our AGM came and went and the Committee's page will show the dramatic changes that have taken place. Well, OK, not too dramatic anyway. We hope to be able to maintain

some sort of momentum to our activities against a backdrop of dwindling members and presumably fewer new recruits to the area.

It was good to see the ITIM delegation recently maintaining something of a stiff upper lip and showing that the British resolve is not just something that comes to the fore when times are good, but equally when times are not so good.

Recent news has confirmed the imminent departure of both HMA Sir Derek Plumbly and shortly after the Director for Trade and Investment Promotion at the Embassy, Philip Parham. On behalf of the Association I would like to thank them both of their continued support of the BBA and their frequent visits to the Eastern Province, which I trust they have found to be both useful and rewarding. The best wishes of the Committee and members go to both in their future postings.

It only remains for me to wish all members of the British Business Groups across the Kingdom and their families a happy, relaxing and peaceful summer and a sincere hope that we can return to something approaching normality as the year progresses.

Kind regards
Colin Clarke

KHOBAR KALLING



Brian Willey

It's been a strange few months to say the least – a sort of stop-go on both the business and social sides of our activities. On instructions from our chairman, we all adopted a 'business as usual' attitude wherever possible but circumstances forced us to curtail some of our more public events.

A few of us joined the ABA at their annual ball (across the bridge of course) at the end of January with their usual delightful 'black and white' theme, with their president, Dave Cantrell, on good form as usual. The BBA/BISAK joint quiz night was a sell-out with head teacher Chris Spedding doling out lines and detention to any contestants querying answers. Also, DHL sponsored a race night in March which was also well attended by members and wives.

As Chairman Colin says, our AGM at the end of April saw little change in the committee. We welcome Peter

Thompson as our new Business Liaison Officer and Carl Gordon as our new Treasurer.

The conflict in Iraq, followed so soon after by the tragedy in Riyadh on 12th May brought things a bit too close to home for many of us and the much-heightened security in evidence around all compounds in the Eastern Province has slowed local travel down considerably. The early closures of the western schools prompted an early departure for many families and the FCO travel advice has forced many of our British business visitors to postpone their trips to the Kingdom. Let's hope life returns to something like normal after the summer, although the local view is that the heightened security and the proliferation of red and white concrete blocks everywhere will be more long-term.

The EP wardens did, as usual, an excellent job of keeping the British community up to date with events and information as more wardens notices than usual needed distributing – and The British Trade Office did a sterling job coping with all the extra registration forms from Brits suddenly realising they ought to register.

Wherever you are going, have a good summer.

**Please amend your e-mail address books
The BBA hotmail address is no more!
The new address for Carole Hurley and the
BBA office is: bbakhobar@atheer.net.sa**



I note from the BBA Bulletin that October 1st will be Frog Racing Day - Have I missed something or have fairies been discovered in the Eastern Province? - Ed.