

INTERVIEW

William Patey CMG took up his appointment as Her Majesty's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in April 2007 just in time for a whistle-stop tour of the Kingdom for the Queen's Birthday Parties. Mr Patey joined the FCO in 1975 and has served in an assortment of posts around the world including HMA in Khartoum and Baghdad.

Catching him in a rare moment of calm, The RGBB took the opportunity to ask a few questions about the new man at the top of the British Embassy in Riyadh.

Q. I see that you have been with the FCO for over 30 years, so we must assume that you enjoy what you do. Has there been one position though that has given you more job satisfaction than any other?

So far the best job I have had was as Ambassador to Iraq. Really challenging and outside the normal scope of diplomatic work. I was there at the time the constitution was being drawn up, the referendum, elections and formation of the new Government so a fascinating time.

Q. I believe you have two sons. Would you recommend that they follow in your footsteps to a career in the FCO?

It depends. If they show a real interest in international affairs and politics I would suggest they consider it an option but I would want the initiative to come from them rather than me.

Q. In the last 30 years you have lived in many places and must have seen a large part of the world. When the time eventually comes to 'settle down' where will that be?

London. It is my favourite city in the world. It has everything I want and when retired the time to enjoy it. Although I was born in Scotland I regard myself as a bit of a Londoner. Vanessa my wife is from London and I reckon I know London better than she does.



Catching up with old friends in the Eastern Province



Above:HMA meets with the staff at the British Trade Office in Alkhobar

Q. I'm sure you've heard of the Radio Show, Desert Island Discs. Would you be able to identify three pieces of music that you'd take with you to that famous island?

Walk on the wild side by Lou Reed to remind me of my student days.

Its raining men by the Weather Girls so even though I was alone I would be able to party.

Hunky Dory by David Bowie just because I love his music.

Q. In addition to the 'Day Job' I believe you have become involved with at least one Charity that cares for children in the Sudan. What is it about Kids for Kids that persuaded you to become involved?

I visited Darfur nearly 20 times during my time as Ambassador so I saw for myself the extent of the needs of children in Darfur. I must say that the energy and persistence of the founder of Kids4Kids, Patricia Parker has something to do with it.

Q. We know that you previously worked in Saudi Arabia between 1995 and 1998 as DHM. Now that you have had a few months in this second posting what changes, if any, have been most apparent to you?

I suppose the skyline is the first thing. Kingdom Tower and Faisaliyah are striking new additions. There is much greater debate in the media on social and economic issues, the Majlis Ash-Shura is playing a more prominent role in holding the Government to account and scrutinising new laws. Security of course is much greater around compounds and public buildings. But there is a lot more that is familiar.