

Notes from the Eastern Chair



Brian Willey
Chairman, British Business Association Eastern Province

I am pleased to report that after a, thankfully, quiet summer the BBA in the Eastern Province is alive and well. The tragic events on 29th May prompted an early departure of many members and their families, some back to UK and others to more local locations. It was only after a check round our membership in September that we were pleased to discover that our membership numbers were almost the same as the previous May. Some people departed for good but new members have replaced their numbers to a large extent.

We mourned the loss of Michael Hamilton who so tragically lost his life on 29th May. He was a stalwart BBA member for many years as well as serving on other local community and charity committees. Saudi Arabia has lost a real friend.

The economy is booming and the more astute companies realise that there is much business to be gained in Saudi Arabia. The security situation is the main concern of UK companies and it is very much an individual or corporate choice whether to make the journey or not. Those of us still here know that it is worthwhile and are trying to offer a secure and safe environment to those who do visit us.

The intrepid Lawrie Walker of the Middle East Association brought a small group of British companies to the Kingdom in October and plans more for the new year. There is no keeping Lawrie away whatever the situation.

Mike Hurley also persuaded a delegation of training experts in the oil and gas sector to visit the Eastern Province where they were given a warm welcome by the EP Chamber of Commerce who entertained them to lunch after their presentations.

We also welcomed our Ambassador to the Eastern Province on 19th October where he gave his customary frank and open review of the current economic and political situation to our members at a special Iftar Buffet organised for the occasion. This was much appreciated by all who attended and our thanks go to Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles for taking time out of his busy schedule to visit us.

For those of you who may be in the Eastern Province during the second week of December, we are holding our annual winter ball, across the bridge of course, and you will be most welcome to join us. Contact Michael Nugent or myself for details.

Finally, I look forward to meeting my colleagues from Riyadh, Jeddah and the other GCC British Business Groups again at the beginning of December when we all meet in Oman for InterGulf 2004.

With all good wishes

Brian Willey – Chairman



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