



NEWS FROM THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH : CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

2009 has been an interesting nine months.

Firstly the realisation, early in the year, that the current economic climate and the distances involved meant that attendance at formal functions of the Queensland Branch was steadily dropping and there was little or no chance of overcoming this situation.

In addition, 7012 Mike King finally decided that he needed to give up the responsibility of Secretary/Treasurer and, even though we had persuaded him a year ago to keep the position for yet another year, this year we accepted that the times and circumstances were such that we should regretfully allow him to secede.

Under these circumstances, with the agreement of the Committee, I circulated members to obtain their approval to hold the AGM by electronic means, which was unanimously approved by those who responded.

The main task of the AGM was to decide on the future format of the branch and the members approved my retaining the Chair but also taking on Mike King's roles as Secretary/Treasurer so, together with the aforesaid roles and my self inflicted role as Editor, it can be safely said that I have become the Administrator!

Fortunately 6604 John Gold was prepared to soldier on as Social Secretary and, since there was no point having additional committee members, as everyone can vote by email, I decided that a Committee of one plus John would be more than enough to run the Branch affairs, particularly, as Queensland is such a large state that encompasses an area greater than South Africa and Zimbabwe combined, so travel to one of our functions is more than 50% of the members can manage.

There was sympathy all around the world that Queensland seemed to be dying out, which was appreciated but, realistically, we are still providing the opportunities to stay in touch with members worldwide, without annual subscriptions, and concentrating on one major get-together during the year. According to the statistics being drawn up by Trevor Dutton in Natal, there are 165 ex-members of the BSAP in Australia, of which some 39 were identified as being members of the Qld Branch. However, I carried out some necessary research and having been unable to find the others, those that remain in touch numbered only 31, of which only 12 were within an hours drive of Brisbane, and

those who lived much further away have to rely on members close by to put them up for the night so, understandably, we couldn't expect more members to attend any function laid on in the Brisbane area. The Branch had done well in previous years because the Australian economy was strong, but 2009 was our undoing and some members have had to admit that they just can't afford to attend anymore.

Our major project of the year was an appeal by the UK branch to help pay for the building of a Memorial to the BSAP in a Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield in the United Kingdom. Twenty two members of the branch responded with donations, as did Debbie, (the widow of Tony Dawson), and an ex-Rhodesian and Springbok cricketer Goofy Lawrence one of whose ancestors was in the Force, also contributed. Nine members replied that they didn't wish to contribute, which was a little surprising and disappointing; one suggested that we used Branch funds on hand; one said he had paid via the Western Australia Branch and three did not respond at all.

By the end of the June, the Branch had collected \$2,275.00 and, by making up the small shortfall from membership funds to meet the request of the one member, was able to send One Thousand Pounds to the UK, as our share of the Eight Thousand Pounds costs, which I believe was a magnificent effort on the part of the persons who made a contribution.

I shall be attending the unveiling on the 1st August 2010, in my Administrator's cap, due mainly to the generosity of 7432 Will Keys and his private legal contacts, so no cost to the Branch; but I now have to find the funds to allow Rosemary to accompany me, partly to have a late celebration of her 80th birthday with her English family and friends, which occurred in July this year, and partly to be present when I have my UK re-union with old friends from my youth to celebrate my best friend's and my 80th birthdays in August; (my actual birthday is in November), as this is the only chance we will have to meet up again with all our other wrinklies, crumblied and wobblies from yesteryear.

John Gold continues to persuade Will Keys, myself and other ex-Rhodesians to meet for Coffee mornings, every one or two months and we usually meet at Toscani's at Garden City on a Wednesday morning. Goofy Lawrence is becoming a regular attendee too and we are all very up to date with matters of Rhodesian, Zimbabwean and South African cricket fortunes, past and present and even comment on Australia's fortunes in its bid to remain on top of the world.

We had hoped to hold a "brunch" to celebrate Christmas in July. but the numbers who were able to attend were less than expected and regrettably we had to abandon the project this year.

September 26th heralded the night we celebrated the Annual Dinner of the Regimental Association and twenty members and the following guests turned up for the occasion at the Wynnum-Manly Sports Club:

4727 Mike and Rosemary Edden; 5848 David and Jean Clinker; 6604 John and Mary Gold; 6278 Gerry and Wendy Dyer; 6694 Colin John and his guests Rob and Sandy Knights; 7012 Mike and Ginnie King; 7638 Gordon Hodnett and

Joan Fletcher; 25548T Simon and Jacqui Lucas; 10265 Mitch and Debbie Dove and Goofy Lawrence.

We should have been twenty one but one member, 6969 Billy Budd, who is usually very reliable attending from some 700 odd kilometres away, failed to make it this year, because of the unexpected arrival of a grandson and, as we had to order dinner for a set number in advance, the Branch had to pay for his meal even though he wasn't present.

At previous functions, the Branch has complied with Dress Order No 1, but it really isn't a suitable mode of dress in the Queensland climate registering 33C so, it was not much of a surprise when over 50% of the men turned up in rather more suitable casual dress, which I and the others more formally attired would have preferred and will be the dress of the future.

I took the opportunity to finally take over the books of Account from Mike King and can report that our finances were always in safe hands and he has to be congratulated for the way he kept our finances ticking over.

For at least half an hour before the dinner started, the guests were treated to some excellent hot and savoury snacks served by the Club's waitresses and then close on 7.30pm Gerry Dyer acted as MC and opened the formal proceedings with "The Toast to the Regiment".

A hot buffet was provided serving Traditional Roasts and vegetables; Fish fillets in a wine cream sauce or sweet lamb curry and poppadums. The cold buffet consisted of a cold meat platter of cured meats, ham and marinated chicken with mixed garden salad, Caesar salad and Rainbow coleslaw. Most of us expected to go back for seconds but, in fact, only three did so. Once again the Club had provided an excellent repast for the \$40 per head. I personally have reservations over the cost, but then I am just a Rhodesian pensioner having had my Zimbabwe dollar nest egg wiped out and, like many of us, can't get a pension there; or even here for another 5 years and, with the Pound weakening and the Australian Dollar hardening, I have seen our 39% of a UK OAP diminish. Still we manage to survive with the help of our two daughters here in Logan City.

After the main course, Gerry welcomed everybody to the dinner and made mention of the fact that here in Queensland the presence of the ladies at all our functions is what keeps us all together; he then introduced me to say a few words on the occasion.

I brought the gathering up to date with the Memorial and advised everyone that I would be attending and was selling mint 10 Trillion Dollar Zimbabwe notes at \$10 each to help raise money for Rosemary, there were a few takers, thank you. It is hoped that Will Keys, Dave Clinker, Gordon Hodnett and their partners will join me and Rosemary to attend the unveiling

I called for a show of hands to change the Annual Dinner to an Annual Lunch, in keeping with other branches, and in the hopes that a few more members would be able to attend without the night drive home. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

I reminded members of the forthcoming sale of the History of the BSAP (3) and that Nick Russell, one of our members now living in Victoria, would be responsible for sales in Australia.

I referred to the death of John Stanyon earlier in the year and that Mike King and John Gold had attended the funeral on behalf of the Branch.

I brought everyone up to date with the journey of Will Keys and Jacki who are currently touring the United States of America.

Finally I surprised everyone by making a presentation to Mike and Ginny King as a thank you for their long, hardworking and loyal service to the branch.

For two years now we have decided against a guest speaker but, this year, Rosemary brought us up to date with her recent visit to South Africa and Zimbabwe and the conditions she saw at first hand in Harare. If you have foreign currency you can live well; if you haven't, you have a serious problem and it is only thanks to the various association looking after Zimbabwe Pensioners that any of them are still alive. Traffic lights are few and far between and not many of them are working. If the electricity goes off you either switch on a generator or solar electricity; if the water is cut off you use the supplies that have been deep-frozen or help your neighbours with your bore hole. If milk is in short supply, then again you raid the deep-freeze; pot holes are still supporting Giraffes not Rabbits and in spite of what Morgan claims about the economy the few remaining farmers are still being burnt out and chased off their farms. The population, black and white are coping, just, with a light now showing at the end of the tunnel and what to us is an abnormal way of living, to them is normal and they just get on with it. She loved being back there, even though it isn't the same anymore.

Gordon Hodnett, in conversation, passed on news of a function in Toowoomba recently held by ex-Rhodesian/Zimbabweans to raise funds for the unfortunate Zimbabwe Pensioners. It was an excellent fund-raising occasion and suggests to me that the next function we hold, perhaps an early Xmas occasion, we should head up to Toowoomba for a change. Perhaps Gordon can give some thought regarding a suitable venue where we can meet for no cost?

The dinner closed at 10pm and everyone went home during the second major dust storm of the season. Ayers Rock was guilty of the first storm!

It continues to be my pleasure to keep everyone in the Branch up to date with all that happens worldwide and, although we have been treated in the past as a poor second cousin to Western Australia, we actually have nothing to do with them, being at least two time zones away, but I am grateful to John Seward in Perth and Andy Field in Harare for passing on details of any other ex-members living in the Sunshine State.

Mike Edden.