

BFES/SCEA Association Email Bulletin

February 2022



From: Membership Secretary
Email: bfes.scememb@gmail.com

First thoughts:

We do hope that you are well and life is brightening up for you! We have been uplifted by our recent walks along Kent paths and byways, noting the profusion of snowdrops and early spring flowers – even daffodils in full bloom! We hope that you too, are able to enjoy the signs that better weather is on the way.



Winchester Gurkha Museum – “Curry Lunch” Saturday 2nd April:



The lunch at The Gurkha Museum Winchester is all ready for you on Saturday April 2nd. All you need to do to come to the event is complete the booking form (*sent with this bulletin*). This particular location and event has always been popular, because of the wonderful setting and the opportunity of meeting up with friends and members. The committee do hope that you will consider joining in the event and celebrating the return to some sort of ‘normality’.

Here are some details about the event for you:

- There will be tea/coffee available from 12 noon until the meal starts at 1 o’clock. The bar will also be open between these times.
- The Nepalese curry buffet will include chicken, lamb and vegetarian curries, with all accompaniments that you would expect. The main meal will be followed by a mixed fresh fruit salad and cream and coffee/tea with mints to round off the lunch.
- For members and guests who do not enjoy a curry, there is the option of a ham and cheese salad.

The cost of the meal will be £40; this is higher than we would like, but unfortunately costs of food and room hire/staffing have risen since our last curry lunch and are beyond our control.

We do hope that you will be able to come along, so if you are planning to come, please complete the attached booking form as soon as possible and forward it to Jane. An early response helps Jane to ensure the day runs smoothly.

If you cannot print out the booking form for any reason, you can **telephone Jane Tull** to reserve your place. **Details are included on the booking form.**



Website and Facebook up-date:

Our website (bfposchools.co.uk) continues to grow and develop, in particular, the area devoted to school locations around the world. If you have time to drop into the website and check the information about the school(s) that you were connected to, you might be able to add information or photographs – just click on the ‘sending information’ link to find the webmaster’s email. Don’t be put off by the tech rules – just send the information that you have. Thanks.

Facebook now has 298 members and several photographs and news from members and others connected to MOD schools in the past. Certainly worth browsing!



Subscription Refunds and Donations:

Thank you for being patient as we sorted out the receipts for members who decided to continue to pay their subscriptions by cheque this year and for members who requested a refund on their standing order. We are on top of the admin work now, so thank you.



Hub Locations and Activities:

Now that Covid19 and the Omicron variation seems (hopefully) to be lessening in severity, we are planning to work towards creating local hubs for members to meet together in small groups. This is an idea that has been mooted for some time with the aim of starting the Hubs in 2022 – so it seems right to aim for a Hub launch in May this year. We will keep you informed of progress in the Bulletins, but do hope that you find the idea interesting and encouraging.

The idea behind Hubs is to get members living fairly near each other together occasionally for an informal gathering. This will start probably start off small, but we do hope that you will want to enjoy meeting other members closer to your location and the idea will grow over time. It will be a chance to make or meet friends, chat and just get out and about again!

We would very much welcome more volunteers to come forward to be Hub Leaders – it should not be too onerous a duty - and hopefully, once a group of members gets together, the hubs should run themselves. Do please contact us if you would like more information on what the role entails.

Where are members living?

It is interesting to us to see where our members are living now, as well as the countries that they lived in under the BFES/SCEA schools banner. Here is the current breakdown of where our members are living at the time of sending this email and you can see just how widespread we all are:

North East: 11 members	Yorkshire & the Humber: 30 members
North West: 26 members	East Midlands: 36 members
West Midlands: 19 members	East Anglia: 49 members
South East: 65 members	South West: 61 members
Wales: 17 members	Scotland: 14 members
Ireland: 2 members	London areas: 9 members
Overseas: 40 members (<i>China, Cyprus, France, Portugal, New Zealand, USA, Australia, Germany, Netherlands, Canada, Spain</i>)	

Please note, this list counts households rather than individuals, so couples count as one!



Royal Memories:

Member Joan Pennie (nee Young) shared her memories of the Queen's Accession with us:

On this auspicious day, i.e. 70 years ago since the Queen's accession, I thought I'd share with you my memory of the day. I wasn't a teacher, but a 10 year old pupil and a Head Monitor at Gutersloh Primary School in Germany. (I was in Germany as an RAF child between 1947, first in Berlin and then Gutersloh until December 1953)

This day, at morning or lunch break, I was helping the Head Mistress, Miss May - a feisty auburn haired lady - hammer small squares of rubber bicycle tyre onto the bottom of chair legs to reduce the racket they made on the floor. The secretary came in and asked her to come to the office to take a telephone call. Miss May returned and asked me to lower the Union Jack to half-mast because the King had died. All BFES schools at that time had a flagpole at the entrance. Quite a moment! *(And somehow I can't imagine today's children being given a hammer and tacks to do such a job at the age of 10 years.)*



A rather fuzzy photograph of the Queen as she stepped off the plane to take up her new role after visiting Kenya. Do you remember this time/photo?

Then, later, in 1953 we (my family) watched the Coronation in the Officers' Mess in the first live TV broadcast to Europe. It was on a tiny (probably 9") screen with a large magnifier in front. We were given a bag of crisps and ice-cream soda to celebrate and a Coronation mug and pencil as a memento. Such memories!



Spotlight on Members:

This month's contribution is a story about Hong Kong from Jo Vestey (nee Eyre):

These days, I am very hesitant about mixing or travelling which is ironic for a world traveller like me. But here is one of my experiences from the more recent past:

My last big adventure was in Hong Kong during the civil disturbances in November 2019. Having lived and taught there for nearly twenty years it was shocking to see the damage caused by frenzied rioters: ticket machines in underground stations totally useless; railings torn up on major roads and barriers built across major highway from anything and everything. From our window of the YMCA near the Famous Star Ferry we observed the young turn up with back packs stuffed with pavement tiles dug up from their home districts which were destined to be used as missiles. Some carried ladders. We watched young women climbing up them to the first floor sun deck, then grab the furniture and throw it to friends who within ten minutes had a barrier built across the major road beneath us. All this happened after a call had gone out to march after work. We had been on a ferry ride to an outlying island and were amazed to find all these people following us from the ferry to the YMCA. Upon arrival at YMCA we found several doors locked and barred but at a third side of the building we were able to gain entry. A young porter opened the door for us and in a quivering voice asked us if we'd seen the fire on Nathan Road - the Oxford Street of Kowloon. We replied that we hadn't seen the fire, but we were pleased to get into the building and thought to relax and calm the situation. My friend and I had both experience civil unrest in other countries, in my case in Singapore, Thailand, Bombay and Sikkim. From our experiences we realised that fear was not an appropriate reaction and knew that the best course of action was to stay alert and calm and be ready to move out of harm's way, speedily if possible! Quite frankly, rather than being frightened, we found the situation interesting.

The local council suspended all bus and tube services for several days. Mainland banks and businesses were boarded up by owners. We knew that we would be OK if we remained vigilant and inside the YMCA, although

we missed going to our favourite watering hole just across the street – namely, the world-famous Peninsula Hotel!

Soon, the Chinese mainland Army Special Services emerged from the barracks where I had once lived and taught in Kowloon Tong and cleared the bricks and debris from the street and slowly things got back to normal.

Once things opened up again I had occasion to visit many banks as I was executor to a HK friend's estate. I would say people were very nervous of losing their funds as there were queues at every bank and stock brokers with people clutching bank books or share certificates. I and my former pupil, a St Georges school teacher's son, were the only gweilos (Foreign Devils!) around, which in itself was a bit intimidating, although not really threatening in any way. The tourists were obviously staying away. The punch line to this part of the story is that my 50 year old ex-pupil needed to use the facilities in McDonalds which was just across the street so while I waved my walking stick and asked for a seat at the bank he went across the road and then joined the queue for a burger. As he waited up sidled a lady of the night and said, "SIR could I be of service to you? There has been no trade recently. Cheap price!" This certainly made us smile when he recounted what had happened when he returned to my side. Life was certainly back to its usual brightness!



This month's Quiz:

The quiz is based upon famous names of people and places that were used for schools across the service children's school world. Many names were used more than once, but we have just picked one area for each clue. See how many you can get – answers next month.

1. The names of two schools in Munster, Germany might be regarded as fierce competitors like their counterparts when on the river Thames.
2. A mythological flying horse gave its name to this school in Wildenrath, Germany.
3. Dick Whittington turned back down this hill when he heard Bow Bells - but this school of the same name is in Malaysia, not London.
4. For those of you who like film thrillers, you might find Matt Damon getting into character as Jason at this school in Singapore.
5. A Brugen school used the full name of the inventor of the bouncing bombs that rocked the Möhne Dam in WW2.
6. The surname of two famous brothers, one in films and the other interested in nature is the same name as this school in Sennelager.
7. If lucky, you might see daffodils and read the work of this poet in this school in Sennelager.
8. With a bad brother called John, this King might be forgiven for rushing off to a crusade. (Cyprus)
9. This school shares the name of a famous pilot from WW2, with a film of his story "Reach for the sky" spreading his fame. (Bruggen, Germany)
10. This school in Fallingbostal carries the name of a great hero and explorer of the Antarctic regions of the early twentieth century. His ship was called the Endeavour.



And so, "auf Wiedersehen und danke",

We would like to offer our appreciation to the members who emailed/wrote to us letting us know that they are enjoying receiving the bulletin and have also love reading the Journal/Newsletter. It is a plus for all of us on the committee to know that our efforts are worthwhile, so thank you.

Best wishes to you all, Hugh and Christine Ritchie Membership Secretaries