

BFES/SCEA Association Email Bulletin

March 2023



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

First thoughts:

We are experiencing the wintry weather at the moment at the same time as trying to save on energy bills! It is not easy, but fingerless gloves and thick jumpers are helping just a bit. So, we are hoping that you are keeping warm and like us, thinking ahead to meeting with friends and enjoying warmer weather.

Something to cheer you up maybe the thought of meeting members are the next curry lunch in Winchester in April. So check out the details on the next two pages:



**Join other members and guests at the
Association's 'Curry Lunch' at the Gurkha Museum in Winchester
On 22nd April 2023**



***For further details
about this event
please see Page 2***

***CLOSING date for
bookings is 7th April.***

Curry Lunch at the Gurkha Museum, Winchester

The lunch at The Gurkha Museum Winchester is set for the **22nd April**, and the Committee do hope that you will come along; you are welcome to bring friends with you to this event. This particular location has always been popular, because of the wonderful setting and the opportunity of meeting up with friends and other members, so do join us if you can.



Winchester Curry Lunch

12 noon: Tea and Coffee will be available on arrival

1pm: **Nepalese curry buffet** will include chicken, lamb and vegetarian curries, with all the accompaniments that you would expect. *(For members and guests who do not enjoy a curry, there is the option of a ham and cheese salad)*

followed by a mixed fresh fruit salad and cream and coffee/tea and mints.

The cost of the meal will be £45; this is higher than we would like, but unfortunately, like everywhere else these days, the cost of food and the room hire/staffing have increased in price. However, this remains a lovely venue, and we have been lucky to secure the booking, so the extra cost seems worth it. We hope that you think so too.

If you are planning to come along, 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.

How to book your lunch place:

1. **Complete the booking form** that has been sent with this Bulletin – it has space for you to indicate your meal choice and details of how to pay for the lunch.
2. **Send the booking form to Jane Tull** by the closing date of 7th April.
3. You can post the booking form to Jane OR email it to Jane or the Membership Secretaries to forward to Jane.
4. 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.**

Visiting Winchester:

The Gurkha Museum is sited at **Peninsula Barracks, Romsey Rd, Winchester SO23 8TS** and is one of six military museums grouped in the former barrack area. The buildings and general area are beautiful, and fairly close to the many other attractions in Winchester: the Cathedral, the Great Hall, various gardens and of course, shops! All this makes it a great place to visit for a day or longer to explore the area. There are several hotels in the area, and we certainly have enjoyed each stay we have made to visit and relax.

Spotlight on Members: Steve Tennant and more about Singapore & Hong Kong

Steve is an administrator of the RAF Changi Facebook Group and also a member of three other Facebook groups – RAF Seletar Secondary Modern, RAF Changi Grammar School and RAF Kai Tak (because of his Forces and Hong Kong connections). He is keen to promote the history of the places he enjoyed as a child and adult and indeed, he enjoyed it so much he still lives in Hong Kong. Read on to learn more of his personal experiences.

“I first went to Singapore in 1955 when my parents were posted to RAF Seletar. I was only about 2 years old at the time and I have to confess I do not remember too much about that particular posting, although I do recall some experiences from it and may or may not have started formal education. In particular I do remember the trip back home on the HMT (Her Majesty’s Troopship) Dunera in 1957. I have a vague recollection of having to do some school lessons on board the ship.

A more memorable experience was when my father was posted again to Singapore to RAF Changi and we flew into Paya ebar Airport in mid-December 1964 and I, as an 11 year old joined the 1st year of the RAF Seletar Secondary Modern School at the beginning of its 2nd term in early January 1965. I had a great time both at School and outside of it and can remember the names of some of the teachers including Mr Frank Storey. We completed our posting in the summer of 1967 when we flew back to UK. I remember at end of tour trying to negotiate with my parents for me to continue to live in Singapore at one of my friend’s houses, carry on at Seletar Secondary Modern, whilst they and my younger brother went back to UK. Oh the naivety of a 14 year old whose hormones were flowing!!!

The Secondary Modern School in Changi had relocated to the new Secondary Modern School at Seletar only a few months before I arrived in December 1964. The old school location on Changi camp was only about 100 yards from my own home on Changi but instead of having a 100 yard walk, I had a one hour bus trip from Changi to Seletar in the mornings and back to Changi in the late afternoon. When I started at Seletar Secondary Modern, we had 2 full school days, one half school day (Wednesday) followed by two full school days. I remember this changed to 5 full school days whilst I attended the School. I remember one of my teachers telling me that before the move to Seletar, the school had 5 half days and she would go water skiing every afternoon!!! With the exception of the last few Covid years, I normally get to visit Singapore & Malaysia several times a year to see old friends, attend board meetings and carry out business.

So far, so good. A fairly typical RAF kid's experience albeit with overseas postings experiences limited to Singapore only. But then things started to change.

Having failed my 11+ before we went to Singapore in 1964, my return to the UK saw me enter a school called Swavesey Village College in Cambridgeshire. I understand that the Village Colleges system in Cambridgeshire is different from many other schools in Britain. They were not Secondary Modern Schools, nor were they Comprehensive or Grammar Schools. Anyway, it was certainly a school in which I thrived, perhaps I was a late developer, but I ended up achieving sufficient grade 1 passes at CSE to be offered a place in the 6th form of the Cambridge Grammar School for boys. Then of course, the RAF stepped in again and I ended going to three different Grammar schools during my 6th Form. From there I went on to study quantity surveying at Bristol Polytechnic, as it then was. It is now the University of the West of England. I am now a Chartered Quantity Surveyor and a Fellow of the RICS for my sins

Following my return to UK in 1967 from Singapore, I had never really settled back into life in Britain and so my parents were not completely surprised when I told them I had been offered a place, following graduation from Bristol Polytechnic, in the management training scheme of a British construction company called Taylor Woodrow International. As its name may suggest, it was the part of the Taylor Woodrow group that managed construction projects outside of the United Kingdom and having done a one-year spell in the London head office, I was sent overseas, first for some 2.5 years to the Sultanate of Oman in the Middle East and then from there to Nigeria, in West Africa.

In late 1979, I was headhunted from Taylor Woodrow International to come to Hong Kong for an 18 month tour with a Hong Kong-based construction company. I have now been based in Hong Kong for over 42 years and about 22 years ago gave up being an employee (and retired at 47?) and started up my own consulting business. I now have, with my partners, very active businesses in several major markets within Asia and elsewhere, whilst I personally provide services as an expert testifier on a global basis relating to construction disputes in arbitration and litigation as well as sitting as a mediator, adjudicator and a number of other dispute resolution roles. Over the last year, since 2022, I have been in the process of stepping back from my executive director roles in the various businesses in which I'm a shareholder (retirement again at 69?) and am studying a non-executive director diploma with a view to offering my services, again on a global basis, as an NED to companies who require a non-executive director with a particular expertise in project management of large-scale CAPEX as well as an expert testifier for construction disputes in Arbitration and Litigation.

Whilst in Hong Kong, I have had many friends who were involved with the UK Forces, although as 1997 approached many of them left Hong Kong. I saw the St Georges School (British Army) premises resurrected as the Australian International School. My own children went to the Chinese International School here in Hong Kong, which suited our multi-cultural family as my wife is Chinese from Shanghai. That said, she went to school in Australia when she was about 8 years old and left Australia in her early 20s and was very different from the other Chinese Females in colonial Hong Kong. Both of our Eurasian daughters speak read and write English, Cantonese with traditional Chinese characters and Mandarin with simplified Chinese characters and having been brought up tri-lingual, find picking up other languages very easy. Both went to University in UK having done the IB at Chinese International School. One is a teacher at an international school, here in Hong Kong, whilst the other is a solicitor, again here in Hong Kong and both have also married Eurasian men. We are blessed with one granddaughter who, much to our surprise and that of my daughter's doctor and notwithstanding that she has 50% Chinese ethnicity is a blue eyed, blonde haired 4 year old sweetheart (her two English Grandfathers are quietly proud that the normally dominant Chinese gene has been suppressed) who speaks native English, Cantonese, Mandarin and has conversational Spanish, French and Tagalog (Filipino). Her kindergarten teachers say she has an innate aptitude for languages which she does not learn, but simply absorbs. Please excuse a proud grandfather who struggles with spoken Cantonese as a poor second language.

Well I suppose it's time for me to do some fee earning work. I am working from home today, which I do as much as possible, in my home office. I am looking up to Victoria Peak on Hong Kong Island, if you know Hong Kong. It is 26C, light winds and humidity of 57%. Really rather pleasant, hence the shorts and T shirt that I wear."



Answers to last month's Quiz:

- | | |
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| 1. A humanoid blood sucker (Vampire) | 2. Isaac Newton watched this fall (Apple) |
| 3. A leaning butler perhaps? (Lurch) | 4. Could be a relaxing flight! (Easy Jet) |
| 5. Movies might get stuck here (Netflix) | 6. Double the chat perhaps? (TalkTalk) |
| 7. Sixth colour of the rainbow (Indigo) | 8. Hazy, cloudy or vague (Nebulous) |
| 9. Listen surreptitiously or wear it? (Earwig) | 10. His name fits hearts and flowers (Valentine) |

Did you spot that the first letter of each answer spells Valentine along with the last answer?

And so, goodbye:

Does anyone have contact with **Chris Rhodes** and his wife, Jill? Chris was a deputy head at Cromwell School in Osnabruck, in the early 70s. One of his former colleagues would love to get in touch with him. If you do know Chris, ask him to contact us and we will match them up!

Best wishes, Hugh and Christine Ritchie - Membership Secretaries
