



CHARTER



Volume 11 Number 1

The newsletter of the British Charitable Society

March 2006

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Timothy J. Hunt, MBE

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

No letter from an Englishman, or even conversation, would be complete without a discourse on the weather. Therefore, let us rejoice in the mildness of the winter so far, not only for ourselves, but for the various beneficiaries of the Society who have a hard time raising the funds to pay their heating bills in the best of times, but more so with the increase in energy prices. We all hear about the assistance programs for fuel for low income folk, but the bureaucracy can delay help until long after the oil tank is empty.

For those eligible for our help, this is where the Society can step in before the heat runs out. It is also a fact that people often do not ask for help until it becomes a crisis. Sometimes it's a matter of pride; sometimes it's a matter of poor planning, which of course may be why they are in financial difficulties in the first place. Then we find that these same folk have difficulty explaining their position so that we can understand how needy they really are. The ability to present a justified and well evidenced case is not a typical trait here. This is where the patience and compassion of our Executive Secretary, Susan Dugdale, come in. She translates these situations so well at our Executive Committee meetings that we can come to what we honestly believe is a reasoned conclusion.

Now to British Charitable Society plans that affect all of you. First is a Pub Night at Doyle's in Jamaica Plain on Thursday, April 27. A separate invitation will be (or has been) mailed. Fish 'n Chips will be available but a typical pub menu will give more variety to our previous get togethers. Hopefully, it is also more centrally located for most members. Second, the Harvard Club has been booked for the next British Charitable Society Ball on Friday, November 3. Save the date! Last year was a great success in so many ways and we hope to re-establish this pre-war tradition. Third, the Annual General Meeting has been set for Thursday, May 25, again at the Union Club. This will be an unusually important meeting for the Society, for reasons I cannot reveal at this time. Perhaps, this will titillate you to come and enjoy the company and the other (unspecified!) events.

Preliminary indications are that the Society was again able to dispense another record amount of charitable assistance in 2005. Thus we continue to broaden our mission. With your help, this can continue.

WWW.BRITCHARITY.ORG

Society Officers

President – Tim Hunt, MBE
 Vice-President – Kathy Tunsley, MBE
 Executive Secretary – Susan Dugdale
 Treasurer – Charles Platt
 Recording Secretary – Jackie McGrail

Executive Committee

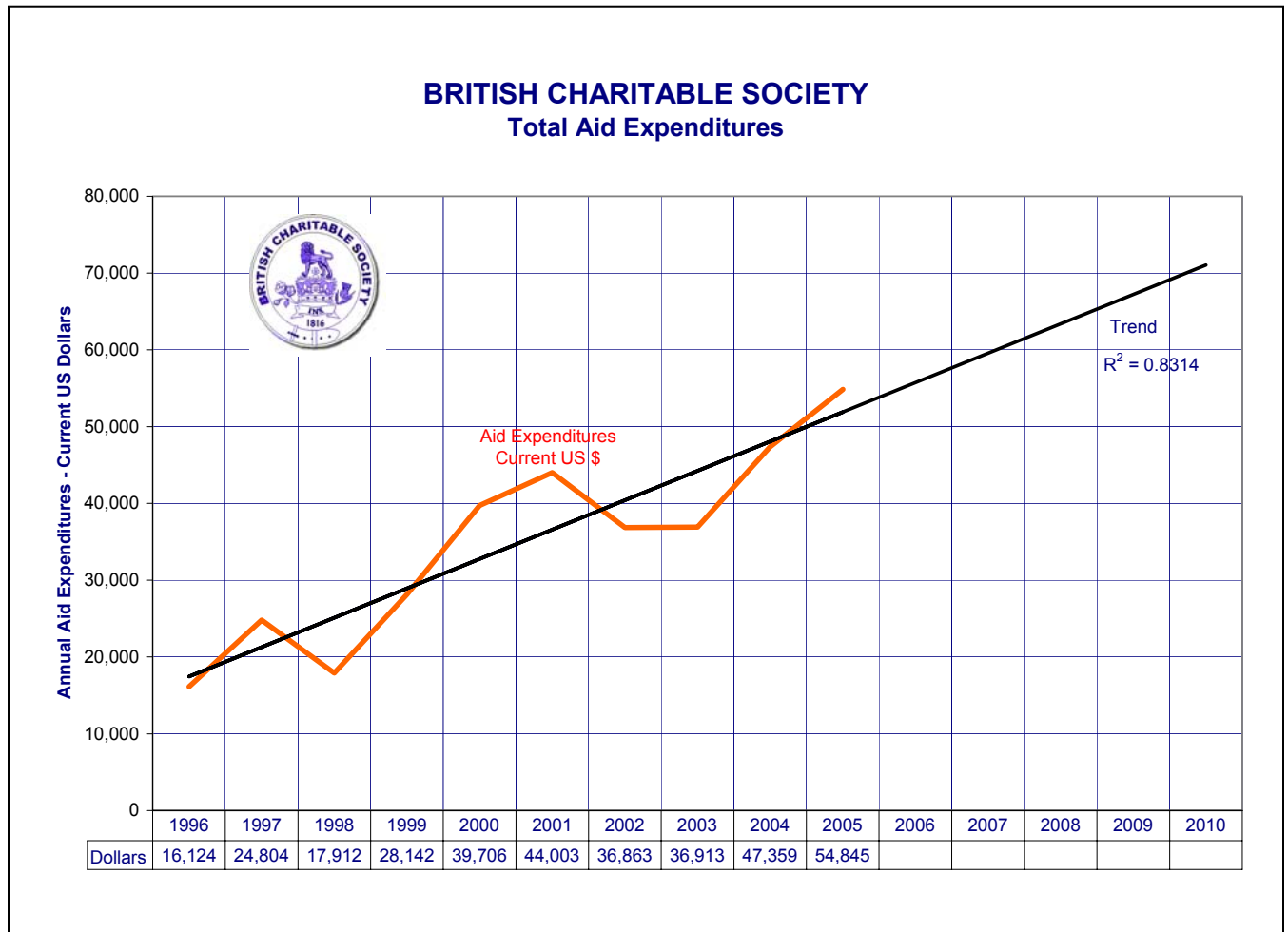
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Some Statistics

Tim Hunt’s lead article above highlights some of the events of the events coming up on the Society’s calendar, but it also reflects the feeling among the Executive Committee, and the membership at large, that we are doing things that we ought to be doing, and the results show it. We are more accessible and visible to those in need; we are more visible to the helping agencies and charities, so that they know they can refer eligible clients to us; we are on everyone’s database; there is more membership participation in events and in this newsletter; and morale is high.

The graph below shows a ten-year history of our expenditures on aid to British people in New England. Note that it is in current dollars, not

constant dollars. If it had been in constant 2005 dollars, for example, the figures for the earlier years would have been higher, but the slope would have been less steep. You pays yer money and you takes yer choice. Note also the trend line which is a least-squares regression against time. The R^2 is the coefficient of correlation and measures how good a fit the trend line is. In this case it is .83, which means that 83% of the change in the value of expenditures can be explained by the passage of time. This is considered a fairly good fit, but not an extremely tight one. It does give us good enough evidence that we cannot afford to relax our fundraising efforts, particularly with the expected arrival this July of a fully manned 2-1-1 system in Massachusetts. More about this in our next issue.



Minimum Wages and Rentals in New England

The following table was compiled by Diane Bailey-Boulet of the BCS Executive Committee and is the first in a series of analyses of poverty in New England, which, in turn, is what brings many of our clients to us for help. The table shows the inadequacy of the minimum wage in making it possible to rent a typical two-bedroom apartment without exceeding the reasonable maximum outlay of 30% of your wages. In Massachusetts, for example, there would have to be 3.2 workers in the household in order to pay the rent by working a 40-hour week at the minimum wage. If there were only one wage-earner, he or she would have to hold over 3 jobs. Vermont is the best state for a low income person seeking to rent (high minimum wage, low rent), whereas New Hampshire is the worst (low minimum wage; high rent). The typical or “Fair Market” rent is simply not affordable for low income people.

New England Quick Facts: Minimum Wage & Rental Statistics

The British Charitable Society assists people who are resident within the six New England states. While this is an economically robust region, housing costs have spiraled. Many people, including those we assist through the Society, face real difficulty in affording shelter. Here are some numbers by state on what earnings are necessary to

- **afford a two-bedroom apartment at monthly Fair Market Rent (FMR) and**
- **not exceed the recommended *maximum outlay of 30% or less of wages for housing and utilities.***

State	Minimum Wage ¹	Monthly FMR + hourly wage needed	Number of work hours needed monthly at minimum wage*	Number of household minimum wage earners working 40 hours needed to afford FMR
Connecticut	\$7.40	\$1,004. \$19.30/hr	109	2.7
Maine	\$6.50	\$692 \$13.31/hr	84	2.1
Massachusetts	\$6.75	\$1,138 \$21.88	130	3.2
New Hampshire	\$5.15	\$914 \$17.58	137	3.4
Rhode Island	\$6.75	\$958 \$18.42	109	2.7
Vermont:	\$7.25	\$723 \$13.90	58	1.4

*Assumes wage earning for 52 weeks per year

Sources:

U.S. Department of Labor--wages

National Low Income Housing Coalition “*Out of Reach*” Report—based on 2004 housing statistics. For details see www.nlihc.org

¹ Note that the minimum wage in the UK is £5.15 or US\$8.96

Technology Rules!



Susan Dugdale
Executive Secretary

I don't know about you, but our increasing reliance on technology and its ominous influence in all aspects of our lives used to fill me with horror. Gradually I'm beginning to revise this view and it's largely

thanks to our friends in Connecticut! *An explanation!*

The purpose of the monthly meeting of the Executive Committee is to discuss any new or current cases, generally brought to their attention by the Executive Secretary.

A few years ago this wasn't too onerous a task; in fact most information on the few cases that did emerge, could have easily been kept in my head, and actually was! However, as the word got out and more and more agencies began to put clients our way, the need for a database became obvious. Nowadays it's hard to imagine how we would cope without it. Just to give a small statistical example: between 1999 and the end of 2001 we received a total of 39 enquiries. By contrast, since 2003 we have received 119. 46% of these were from Connecticut. If you like numbers maybe that information is in itself pretty interesting, but it's the conversations the Executive Committee are having which highlights just how different the cases and how we handle them are these days.

Early on it could be pretty much guaranteed that an applicant would be introduced to us via a contact already existing within our organization. Often this person would need help with a particularly large bill or maybe a flight to the UK, to attend to an unexpected crisis. Occasionally we met an individual who eked out a living on a small sum and we were able to improve their life by paying a small stipend each month. Whatever the circumstances, we would have a discussion about it around the Committee table and usually reach a positive conclusion.

Things seem to have changed rather dramatically in the last few years. ... The introduction of an emergency helpline in Connecticut ... 2-1-1 ... State agencies can't turn on a dime ... faxes and emails ... In some cases we have been able to turn a phone call for help into a rent payment in less than 24 hours.

Things seem to have changed rather dramatically in the past few years.

The introduction of an emergency helpline in Connecticut, whereby people can dial 2-1-1 in much the same way as they would dial 911 for Police etc, has exposed us to a completely different demographic. Typically, the family we now meet will be living a perfectly normal existence, often holding down 2 jobs, renting a good home, owning a car and all the other luxuries that now are standard household requisites. At some point something happens to upset this arrangement. Because the family will have been living from pay check to pay check and have no savings, the advent of an illness or lay off will have an almost instant effect on the household budget. Although everyone's precise circumstances are different, one thing always is the same; *they do nothing about the problem before it becomes a crisis.* Every conversation I have with a new referral from 2-1-1 Helpline starts with words

like 'we thought it would all work out' or 'we thought another job would come along before things got out of hand.'

So for the first few months of their 'problem' they juggle bills. Rent and utility payments become a little later each month until they are so overdue that nasty letters begin to arrive. Still

they imagine a miracle will happen. Eventually they are served with an eviction or a shut off notice and they realize something must be done and quickly. At this point they learn another lesson. State aid and agencies can't turn on a dime. Help is available, but the process is lengthy and cumbersome and the help they need now won't be available for at least 8 weeks, if indeed they even qualify. In desperation they phone 2-1-1.

Thankfully the people who answer their call are trained to ask, along with all the other questions, 'do you have any immediate connections to Great Britain?' If they say they do, it's a quick hop and a jump to my phone and a likely solution!

And here's where the technology comes in. The phone conversation leads to an application form being sent. In the unhurried days of yesteryear I could expect the completed forms and data returned

in a somewhat leisurely manner. Nowadays my fax machine spews out paper sometimes by return. We converse some more and more faxed information appears. Having determined I have everything we need I now realize I can no longer wait for the monthly meeting to come around, this must be dealt with NOW! With varying degrees of competence, (all superior to mine) your Executive Committee members leap to their screens when I present a new case electronically. Emails fly back and forth, questions are asked and answered by everyone and in pretty short order a decision is made.

In some cases we have been able to turn a phone call for help into a rent payment in less than 24 hours.

So I begin to warm to technology. I wish it were otherwise, inasmuch as the need for the quick decisions is only as a result of the urgency that delayed action provokes, but we're all glad that we have the ability to respond as we do. It's also comforting to adopt these skills gradually. When the other 5 New England states introduce 2-1-1 over the next 18 months, I think I shall be looking to upgrade my hard drive!

Susan Dugdale

Farewells from the Consulate Corner

From Kathy Tunsley

16 years of challenge and fun!



Kathy Tunsley, MBE

I can hardly believe it - I have been at the consulate in Boston for almost 16 years already, and I will be leaving in just a few weeks. My departure comes with mixed feelings as I have so enjoyed working at the Consulate, but I am so looking forward to moving ahead to the next stage of my life. For those who don't know, I am moving onto pastures new. Actually gardens new!! Being British I have a passion for gardening and, although I have been somewhat frustrated at the challenges of the short

I can hardly believe it - I have been at the consulate in Boston for almost 16 years already, and I will be leaving in just a few weeks. My departure comes with mixed feelings as I have so enjoyed working at the Consulate, but I am so looking forward to moving

New England growing season and various strange furry things eating my prize possessions, I have a stubborn nature and have not been thwarted. Seven years ago I started taking a certificate programme in landscape design at Harvard which I hope to complete next year. In the meantime I have launched a landscape design business from home and have been working with clients for almost a year on a very part-time basis. From April 1st this will be a full-time venture. I'm currently working on my marketing skills, so look me up at www.viburnumdesign.com!

My time at the Consulate has been very interesting. The job requires me to wear several hats - I have been involved in dealing with distressed British citizens (you may have heard of some of my more notorious customers), upkeep of the residences for the diplomatic staff including the wonderful Beacon Hill residence of the Consul-General, and generally managing the office and the budget.

I expect many will be interested to hear about some of the high profile cases involving British subjects that have happened in our region such as Louise Woodward, Richard Reid, and an even more recent ongoing case, but of course I cannot say too much about them individually. Our job at the consulate is to afford British nationals assistance as and where we can. When a British subject is imprisoned in New England, we do our best to ensure they are treated well and fairly, no matter what the accusations against them may be. It is the job of the consular officer to separate the crime from the person and deal with everyone impartially regardless of the circumstances. I have been involved with many people in dire straits over the years and it has been often frustrating, but more often very rewarding.

I have seen many changes and worked with five Consul's General, each with their own special peculiarities that bring a new dimension to the job. I started in June 1990 with two computers on my desk and not knowing how to use either. I remember going home one night and telling Roger that I had to load a disc into the computer but I had no idea which way up to put it into the machine. He thought I was joking!

The office has grown substantially over the years and its focus has changed from a largely political and representational office to one that is largely based on

science and commercial interests. Four years ago the consulate moved from Boston to Cambridge to be closer to the heart of the science and technology base. Administering the move was not an easy experience, but somehow I survived intact. The new location, as many will know, is spectacular with glorious views of Boston across the Charles River.

Apart from working with some great people at the Consulate, I have had many fun times. I have been 'arrested' at work by a fake policeman who promptly marched me to South Station and threw me in a fake jail with a phone and told to raise a load of money for charity or they would keep me there. Meanwhile my work colleagues just came by and laughed. We have had visitors to the office claiming to be Prince Charles, the Queen, or some distant relative of the royal family. We get phone calls asking for all sorts of information, including once a request for the recipe for Dundee cake!

So, as I said, I have mixed feelings. I have had a wonderful time at the Consulate, but I'm very excited to be moving on and starting a new venture based on my passion for gardening and design. I feel very lucky to be able to change my life's direction in this way. I'll miss the office, the experiences that I've had there, and the people that I've worked with, both in and out of the office. I intend to stay active with the British Charitable Society although I am moving on here also, resigning as vice-president, but remaining on the Executive Committee.

So wish me luck, and I hope to see many of you in the future in my new garb and up to my ears in compost and manure with a huge smile on my face.

From Terri Evans

In just a few weeks both Kathy Tunsley and I will both be leaving the British Consulate-General. It seems hard to imagine. With our collective thirty years of experience here, there are those who would argue that we are an institution. Others might note with a smile that perhaps that we belong in one.

When I joined the British Consulate staff as the press and public affairs officer in June 1991 – the only American for a time - I did not imagine that I would spend the better part of the next 15 years as a part of the organisation.

On one hand it can be argued that it has all passed quickly. To put matters into perspective, however, I must offer by way of example Boston's most interminable public works project. Construction on the Big Dig began officially about six weeks before I joined the Consulate in 1991, and is only now being completed. I leave it to readers to draw the comparison.

That said, the Big Dig has hardly been the defining element of my time here. Looking locally, the course of my work and that of the Consulate in the past fifteen years has been reshaped by a range of forces, most notably dramatic political changes in Northern Ireland, the relocation of the Consulate's offices from Boston's financial district to Kendall Square and with it a dramatic shift in the Consulate's orientation to focus on inward investment, the life sciences, and science and technology policy.

In that time have seen our share of challenges, including consular cases that have caught the media spotlight, as well as larger issues, including domestic events in the UK and larger global shifts, particularly those since 9/11.

My tenure at the Consulate has spanned four Foreign Secretaries and seven Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland. From the five Consuls-General for whom I worked – Philip McLean, John Owen, Jim Poston, George Fergusson, and John Rankin – I have learned much.

It truly has been a privilege to be a part of this organisation and to represent the British government as a bridge between the UK and New England.

Perhaps most gratifying, however, has been to witness the personal commitment of those in voluntary organisations (the British Charitable Society foremost among them) to assist, support, and promote the interests of the UK and members of the British diaspora in New England.

To you, I offer my respect and my thanks. The generosity of spirit of the British community in New England has made this a warm spot in which to bask.

From Our Members

Bruce Rogers at the Black Watch and Welsh Guards Concert in Worcester

The Pipes, Drums and Highland Dancers of The Black Watch and The Band of The Welsh Guards
Mechanics Hall, Worcester Jan. 30th, 2006.

Theatre and ceremony are integral components of most military bands' performances. If it were not so, there would be no need for colourful uniforms, mace whirling and bearskin hats. So it was at Mechanics Hall where The Black Watch and The Band of the Welsh Guards recently performed splendidly to a full House. Mechanics Hall itself

(www.mechanicshall.org) is beautiful to view and is an under-appreciated treasure in downtown

Worcester just an hour's drive from Boston. If you



The Welsh Guards

have not been there you have missed out on seeing one of the country's loveliest concert venues and the acoustics are reputed to be superlative.

The evening's musical event was opened by the piping to his seat of our own BCS President, Mr.

Tim Hunt, OBE. In this case, he was given this privilege in his capacity as President of the British Officer's Club.

The stage, large as it is, presented some challenges with regards to the tight turns required and limited marching space. One can imagine that the open space and spectacular backdrop of the Edinburgh Castle Esplanade sets off the Band's marching prowess much better than a concert stage. Nonetheless, The Band masterly pulled it off and kept appropriate perpetual motion and sharp precision throughout.

The uniforms were a feast for the eyes with scarlet doublets (jackets), kilts, glengarries, bearskin hats, swords, badges, ostentatious belts and sporrans all adding to the fun. The tiger skin apron worn by the drummers added some exoticism. A key aspect of the performance is outreach to the community; hence, several of the drummers and band members were available at intermission and were gregariously responding to questions concerning their

paraphernalia. One young Scotsman was quick to point out that the materials for the bearskin hats were recovered from bears that had died of natural causes and was emphatic that no bears were hunted or killed in the process. Similarly, he also made clear the "tiger skins" are made of synthetic materials. In this sense, we do live in a more sensitive age. Consider the hordes of tigers and elephants felled by King Edward VII (when Prince of Wales) during his hunting escapades on his tour of India in the 1870's. Should Prince William shoot a quail today it would elicit outrage, at least in some quarters.

All the sartorial accoutrements in the world would fail if the quality of the music were not up to standard. However, they delivered. The music programme was largely traditional with well-known tunes from each region; Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales, including staples such as "Scotland the

Brave", "Jerusalem", "When Irish eyes" and "Men of Harlech", to name just a few. I suspect everyone has a favourite and the pleased look on the faces in the audience indicated the music found its mark. The quality musicianship and flawless execution of The Pipe Major, Warrant Officer Scott Taylor,



Major David Cresswell

and the Director of Music, Major David Cresswell, deserves special recognition. The Regimental Dance Team added to the thrill by a robust display of dancing to the pipes and band. There was a standing ovation at the end of the concert and a fitting and enthusiastic encore to wrap up the evening.

One departure from the evening's written programme was a spontaneous standing ovation upon the announcement that two pipers of The Black Watch had received Queen's Gallantry Medals for recent actions in Iraq. Whatever one's private thoughts on the merits/frustrations of this war, there is no doubt that the recognition given was genuine and heartfelt. It was also a poignant reminder that the colourful performers on the stage are also real soldiers, and professionals of the highest quality at that.

The Circle of Life at Christmas

From Thomas Keown

It's not often that a Christmas voyage home from Boston to Northern Ireland sparks memories of sunburn in Belize. In fact it has only happened to me once and I suspect that that is above average.

It all started in March of 2003. With time on my hands, a modest sum of money in my pocket, and a hostile aversion to New England when it's cold, I booked an absolute bargain of flight to Belize City and raced off to buy a 'Lonely Planet' guidebook in order to find out exactly where it was. Knowing some vague facts about its once being British that people conserve the environment there, I wasn't completely in the dark -- but well in the dusk and feeling I owed it to myself to find out a little more.

As it turns out Belize is about the size of Wales, was British Honduras until 1981 and has English as its official language.

In a phone call home, I shared with my good friend David the details of my destination. Something of an environmental conscience, he exploded excitedly telling me that he sponsors a square foot of rainforest in Belize and that I could stay there if I wanted to. Of course he didn't know exactly where his square foot was but was pretty certain that the folks down there would have it signposted or would at least know it if I asked. I promised to keep it in reserve.

Arriving in Belize City from the U.S. is very like arriving in any Central American country. Security somewhat lax by comparison to the rigidity of a Logan or a JFK, and immigration a little more informal. So informal in fact it was difficult to spot. But for two middle aged ladies in matching blouses shouting at me as I passed the folding table they were seated behind, I would have missed them altogether and been robbed of a prize passport stamp.

The endearing hustle and bustle of Belize City was just what I hadn't come for, and so after a brief scout about – and the delight of discovering the Queen's head on the currency – I made for the dock to book

passage to the less touristed of the islands off the mainland for the next morning. A delightful little refuge called 'Caye Caulker'. A few hundred residents, one car, a handful of golf carts, an Italian restaurant brilliantly named 'Rasta Pasta' and four dusty parallel streets was just the ticket.

Actually in years not too long gone by there were but three streets there. Front Street, Middle Street and Back Street. But with the tourist trade picking up, a fourth was laid on the shorefront. Given its location, it had to be called Front Street and some hasty renaming was necessary. What was previously Front Street became Middle Street, Middle Street became Back Street, and Back Street became, yes really, Way Back Street.

Lazy days spent snorkeling and diving the world's second longest reef, and nights spent reflecting on how the Queen's head really does afford the coinage an air of legitimacy somehow lacking in the dime or quarter, gave rise to a hitherto undiscovered desire to visit the ancient Mayan city of Tikal in Guatemala.

"... Belize is about the size of Wales ..."

"... the Queen's head really does afford the coinage an air of legitimacy ..."

"... the indescribably spectacular ruins of Tikal ..."

A boat to Belize City and a retired yellow American school bus voyage to the border town of San Ignacio left me sleepy and stumbling through the first doorway that looked as though it might have someone behind

it willing to rent me a bed.

My relationship with the hotelier blossomed. He recognized my accent as that of a fine Ulsterman and shared with well-warranted enthusiasm that he had been a British soldier stationed in Belfast in the 1970's and 1980's. My respect soared. A tough time to be a soldier in that most special corner of the Kingdom. We shared stories. We shared anecdotes. We shared a sense that it would be rude to be the first one to say goodnight and so kept talking until boredom made it polite.

On the bus to cross the Guatemalan border at the crack of dawn brings us to the point of this tale. Sorry about the delay.

Crossing the border requires getting off the bus in light jungle, walking across 100 yards of no man's land, paying a small fee through the window of a smaller hut, dodging an incomprehensible number of

helpful money changers and boarding another bus in your new land. Having done, so I found myself seated in front of another lone traveler. An American chap by the name of Aubrey, resident in San Francisco, and a conversation we struck up.

We passed two days amidst the indescribably spectacular ruins of Tikal, draped as they are in jungle splendour against the distant sound of howler monkeys, and said our farewells.

Fourteen months later I hadn't spoken with him again. Until a desire to visit the home of my grandmother's birth, and an economically unwise special offer from American Airlines coincided, and I was off to San Francisco. Checking hotel prices was a frightening 17-minute experiment I quickly abandoned. Paying lots of money to sleep always troubles me. It just seems like bad stewardship. Being relatively unburdened by shame or conscience, I dug Aubrey's phone number out of the recesses of my filing system and telephoned him.

"Ah hello, Aubrey?"

"Yes"

"Aubrey it's Thomas."

"Thomas?"

"Yes, remember. We met once early last year on a bus going from Belize to Guatemala."

"Oh yeah. I remember. You're that Irish dude, right?"

"Well, Northern Irish. But yes. That's right"

"Good to hear from you man. What's happening?"

"Well listen. I know we haven't talked in a while but I'm coming to San Francisco next week and I wonder if you know of anywhere I could stay."

I stayed on his couch.

On December 28th 2005 I was visiting home for Christmas and was nestled upright on my Northern Irish couch between my grandmother, my father and one of the fattest cats in the universe when the telephone rang.

"Hello can I speak to Thomas please."

"This is Thomas"

"Oh, Thomas, hello, it's Aubrey."

"Aubrey?"

"Yes, remember. We met a couple of years ago on a bus going from Belize to Guatemala and then I saw you in San Francisco last year."

"Oh yes of course! Good to hear from you sir. What's happening?"

"Well listen. I know we haven't talked in a while but I'm coming to Belfast tomorrow and I wonder if you know of anywhere I could stay."

Granny, father, fat cat – sorry but you have to move I'm afraid. Life is full of funny circles and it requires the couch tomorrow.

Remembrance of Things Past

Farewell to the Routemaster



**Who can identify the background?
(Photograph from the BBC website)**

Last December, after fifty years of service, the familiar, much-loved double-decker disappeared from the streets of London. There are still small pockets left in the country where they hang on, but, basically, they are gone. We will now have to go abroad to find them, and we understand that there is a brisk market for them in the East.

One of the pleasures of using these busses was the ability to hop on and off while the bus was in motion. There was a feeling of nonchalance and showing off about this only slightly dangerous custom. On the new busses the rear platform is enclosed; however we have read that it is still possible to hop off, if not hop on, through the rear emergency exit door, and that it is not illegal to do so. Has anyone tried it?

And can anyone quote the song that Flanders and Swan sang about these busses in *Beyond the Fringe*? We were not able to find it anywhere, so please send it in if you have it on an LP or in your head.

June the 2nd, 1953



Looking through some things that had belonged to her mother, the Society's popular Clerk, Peggy Hunter, found the programme for the celebration in Boston of the Queen's coronation. After having recently congratulated ourselves on the splash made by our ball last November, we faced a reality check by reading the following:

- Twenty-four British Commonwealth Societies, including our own Women's Auxiliary, organized the event
- There were 159 sponsors, including Christian Herter, Governor of Massachusetts, Leverett Saltonstall, John B. Hynes, John F. Kennedy
- They not only hired Symphony Hall for a dinner dance, but also Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops. In its pops concert configuration Symphony Hall holds 2,306 guests!
- The Governor addressed the gathering during the intermission.

Perhaps we should raise our sights for our next ball. Does anyone know the capacity of the Fleet Center? Can we find out if Prince Charles is free?

Book Reviews

DC CONFIDENTIAL

by Sir Christopher Meyer

£20 Weidenfeld & Nicholson 2005 pp.301

Sir Christopher Meyer was the British Ambassador to Washington from October 1997 to February 2003. Thus he was there at the beginning of the Blair premiership, the last three years of the Clinton



Sir Christopher Meyer

presidency, and the first two years of the Bush presidency. He returned to England in February of 2003, although the Foreign Office had asked him to extend his time in Washington for another six months. However, health reasons, his own and those of his parents, forced him to come back to England. This meant that although he had been in Washington throughout the run-up to the Iraq war, he had left Washington by the time Iraq was invaded in April.

I found this to book to be a terrific read and one which I found hard to put down. It is part gossip and part a thoughtful analysis of how to manage Britain's relationship with America. The book caused a colossal stir in the UK when it came out there last autumn. One British magazine published an article saying that Meyer's knighthood should be removed, and meditating at length on whether he should most accurately called a "cad", a "rat" or another, but unprintable, word. His sin, apparently, was that he had betrayed the confidence of the Prime Minister. But how many politicians break confidences the minutes they are out of office?

There are some interesting vignettes: who fell on his face at the end of an embassy party and needed stitches? who told a loquacious Margaret Thatcher, "Enough, woman, enough. Sit down"? how do you behave when, as a junior, your ambassador breaks wind "loudly and repeatedly" when you are in his office? The FO manual, unlike the ambassador, was silent on the subject.

There is much chat about the social side of the big beasts of Washington: what is it like to partner Condoleezza Rice in a tennis doubles? How can you persuade neighbour Dick Cheney to quiet his waiting helicopters, and can he really be avuncular? Whose remark left Donald Rumsfeld speechless? Did Colin Powell really say that he was "only just a Republican"? And did Mo Mowlan really raise her two fingers in a rude gesture to a congressman at an Irish Committee hearing, and did they then become good friends? "I always found that a debate with

Wolfowitz or Perle or Kristol was the intellectual equivalent of standing in a wind tunnel”.

As for George Bush: “Catherine and I liked from the first handshake. The more we met him over the next five years, the more we liked him — and his wife Laura. It was not just the easy affability and charm. There was a complete lack of pretentiousness or standing on dignity. His office was modest. ... Bush was one of the very few to have the confidence to admit to what he did not know.” Well, well.

The temptation is to go on and on, but all this social fol-de-rol is simply the froth on top of the very serious business of furthering British interests in America. Christopher Meyer has a lot to say about how to do this effectively, and he was extremely good at this difficult job. It is difficult, for one thing, because American foreign policy has many foci, with many competing bureaucracies and domestic pressure groups. And there is pressure from other international interests. For example, up until recently most American sympathy was with the IRA over the Irish question, but even the Irish had to play second fiddle, in terms of influence, to the Israeli lobby, which “had Washington’s body politic in its grasp” over Palestine. Meyer’s job was made even harder, he says, by the lack of attention given by both Downing Street and the Foreign Office to the careful analyses he used to send them.

In terms of the tenor of the approach which is successful in dealing with the Americans, Sir Christopher feels that the British side could be much firmer, much tougher. America may be, as Colin Powell said, the one indispensable country, but the British are America’s one indispensable ally. And “... the quality of British intelligence is such that it balances to a degree the enormous superiority in resources available to American intelligence agencies”. Sir Christopher believes that the British Government has lacked the will to exploit these and other leverages.

In the last months leading up to the invasion of Iraq, it was the British position that it should be delayed six months, until autumn of 2003, after the summer heat had subsided. But the build-up of men and equipment had started, and you couldn’t leave them all there in the desert to twiddle their thumbs till fall. If only Hans Blix would find some weapons of mass destruction! But, alas, there were none there.

As for the conspiracy theory, “... on the central accusation — that together (Blair and Bush) conspired ... to mislead their publics ... they are, in my view, innocent.”

Michael Dawson

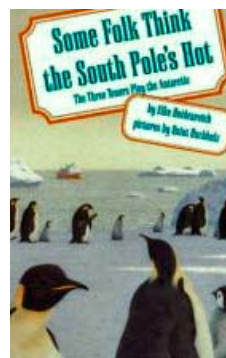
*SOME FOLKS THINK THE SOUTH POLE'S HOT -
THE THREE TENORS PLAY THE ANTARCTIC*

By Elke Heidenreich

Pictures by Quint Bucholz

David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc. Cost: \$17.95

Greetings to each of you:



I can't believe this! Yesterday, being the day when we had a dusting of snow in New England, around 15 to 20 inches, Anne and I were not going anywhere so I looked around for something to read, cozily, at home which was a bit unusual. On Anne's bed table I found a book that provided me with a long, long, smile. It is a small colorful book that I don't remember ever seeing before and, as frankly I think we need all the smiles we can get these days, I'm so happy to pass along this one to you, should you not have read it already. For children young and old, it took me a bathtub's time to read and view and I loved every page! Please borrow, or buy, it!

Some may know that Annie and I went to the Antarctic on the maiden voyage of the Lindblad Explorer while I was at the New England Aquarium, in 1970, consequently our marriage-long love for penguins. They're there on every page, in color, and the story is in delightful, and remarkable, rhyme, e.g.: “All penguins, as I said, wear tails, (Or evening dress) not just the males....”

Summary: The penguins of the South Pole, all dressed up and with no place to go, invite the Three Tenors to come and perform an opera for their amusement."

I so hope that you, and all the family, enjoy this as much as I just did!

All the best,

Michael Wynne-Willson

Errata

The picture of the noble beast on page 9 of last December's issue, sent to us by Mr. Michael Wynne-Willson, is actually a cheetah, and not a leopard as our caption shows. We apologise to both of them and plead guilty to the charge of being zoologically challenged.

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

Mr. Steve Clark
 Ms. Alison Farquar
 Mr. & Mrs. Alex and Ann Smith
 Ms. Joan Wheeler

Coming Events

From the Consulate-General's Website

ART EXHIBIT: John Virtue, *London Winner of a Grant for Artists award for the November 2005 cycle from the UK Visual Arts Department and the British Council USA.* This extraordinary exhibition will draw together approximately eighty recent works by John Virtue (b. 1947) while he was Associate Artist of the National Gallery, London, from 2003 to 2005. In his work, Virtue creates a new vision of contemporary London, in which he seeks to provide viewers with an intense visualization of his remembered experience of each building, of the visual relationships between structures, and of the overall topography of the city. Above all, the artist captures the vitality of London as he trains his pencil and brush on its abstract, visual patterns.



02 February – 23 April 2006

**Yale Center for British Art
 1080 Chapel Street**

New Haven, CT 06520

203-432-2800 ycba.info@yale.edu

<http://ycba.yale.edu/index.asp>

**The American Repertory Theatre presents
 William Shakespeare's**

PLAY: Romeo & Juliet *directed by János Szász*

An ancient feud between rival families shatters Verona until, against the odds, two teenagers from opposing factions meet and fall in love. Hungarian director János Szász (*Desire Under the Elms, Uncle Vanya, Mother Courage*) returns to stage the best-known love story of all time.

4 February - 25 March 2006

Loeb Drama Center

64 Brattle Street

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Tickets: \$37-\$74. Purchase discount tickets online or call 617-547-8300 for regularly priced tickets

ART EXHIBIT: Mr. Whatman's Mill:

Papermaking and the Art of Watercolor in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Organized by the Yale Center for British Art, the exhibition is

jointly curated by the institution's Chief Conservator, Theresa Fairbanks-Harris, and Curator of Prints and Drawings, Scott Wilcox.

In 1794 the papermaker James Whatman, the younger, commissioned Paul Sandby, Royal Academician and one of Britain's foremost watercolor painters, to record Whatman's home and his celebrated paper mill in Kent. The watercolor of the Whatman estate and Turkey Paper Mills is the focus of an exhibition at the Center, which places the painting within Sandby's work, examines the role of the Whatmans and Turkey Paper Mills in the history of papermaking in Britain, and explores how the developments in the technology of papermaking both contributed and responded to the distinctively British development of the art of painting in watercolors. The exhibition features approximately thirty works from the Center's Department of Prints and Drawings (including two important loans from the British Museum and a private loan of Humphrey Repton's



"Redbook" for Vinters), along with forty works pertaining to the history of papermaking in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England.

22 February - 04 June 2006

**Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, CT 06520
203-432-2800 ycba.info@yale.edu
<http://ycba.yale.edu/index.asp>**

ART EXHIBIT: David Hockney Portraits
Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Portrait



Gallery, London, this exhibition will focus on one of the most significant aspects of David Hockney's work: his portraits. Throughout his life, he has been fascinated by people – their expressions, clothing, posture, and the settings in which they live. This exhibition, which will include about 100 paintings and works on paper, will also bring together a selection of his 21st century works that reflect the artist's innovative techniques as he probes the world around him. Exhibition organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Portrait Gallery, London, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This project is funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services by and Act of Congress, in accordance with the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Bill.

26 February - 14 May 2006

**Museum of Fine Arts Boston
Avenue of the Arts
465 Huntington Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115
617-267-9300 webmaster@mfa.org
www.mfa.org**

FILM: You Be Mother
Directed by Sarah Pucill, UK 1990
Sarah Pucill questions the traditional female role as provider in society in this experimental work in which she creates a collage of domestic objects to reflect her modest heroine's interior struggle. This is the last movie in a series of five, which is

being co-presented with the Thread Counts Project, coordinated by Luane Stovall and Leila Lee Mitchell for Gallery Artists Studio Projects.

Tuesday, 28 February 2005 7pm

**(Note: the series of movies begins at 7pm and this is the last movie)
Harvard Film Archive
Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
24 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-4700
www.harvardfilmarchive.org**

CELEBRATION: St. David's Day
Join the Boston Welsh in Celebrating St. David's Day. Networking event, reception, and Welsh themed dinner. Prize to the person who brings the 'longest leek!' (the national emblem of Wales) and a Welsh 'did you know' quiz. Feel free to wear the Welsh National Costume. Cost: \$35.00

Wednesday, 01 March 2006, 6:30p.m.

**Laurel Grill & Bar
142 Berkeley Street
Boston, MA**

**To RSVP and for further details, contact:
DewiSantBoston@yahoo.com**

MUSIC AND THEATRE: Monty Python's Spamalot
The Tony Award-winning Best Musical of 2005 will begin its National Tour with a six week engagement at the Colonial Theater. Lovingly "ripped-off" from the comedy team's most popular motion picture, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Spamalot tells the legendary tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and their quest for the Holy Grail including dancing divas and knights, killer rabbits and one legless knight.

7 March- 15 April 2006

**The Colonial Theatre
106 Boylston Street (near Tremont Street)
Boston, MA 02116**

**617.426.9366 info@broadwayinboston.com
The Colonial Theater**

PLAY: Talking to Terrorists
The third play in the Sagan Theatre Company season, this controversial play by Robin Soans travels in to the mind of 'the terrorist.'
17 March – 8 April 2006
**Plaza Theater, Boston Center for the Arts
539 Tremont Street**

Boston MA

T: 617 497 5134; E: info@sugan.org
www.sugan.org

ART EXHIBITION: A Single Form: Jugs by Phil Rogers

The Pucker Gallery presents Phil Rogers and his 76 new works devoted to the single form: jugs. "For British people the 'jug' is synonymous of a vessel with a single side handle and a pouring lip. We pour milk on our cornflakes from a jug, we serve beer from a jug, to the amusement of Americans we add milk to our tea from a jug and, in the absence of a vase, we sometimes place flowers in a jug. The 'jug' in America means something else - to Americans a jug is what we British would call a 'jar' or a 'bottle'." (An excerpt from an essay on his own work, the following is a discussion on the jug form by Phil Rogers.)

18 March - 20 April 2006

Pucker Gallery

**171 Newbury Street
 (between Dartmouth and Exeter Streets)
 Boston, MA 02116**

**Telephone: 617 267-9473,
contactus@puckergallery.com
<http://www.puckergallery.com/>**

MUSIC: Bank of America Celebrity Series presents the London Philharmonic Orchestra **Celebrated for its versatility, artistic excellence and thrillingly lucid performances, the London Philharmonic, under the direction of Principal Conductor Kurt Masur, has earned its place among the world's most respected orchestras. Winner at age fifteen of the 2000 International Jean Sibelius Competition, violinist Sergey Khachatryan is distinguished by an incisive musical intelligence that is rare in so young a musician. London Philharmonic Orchestra Kurt Masur, conductor Sergey Khachatryan, violin.**

Friday, 24 March 2006 8:00 PM

**Symphony Hall
 301 Massachusetts Avenue
 Boston, MA 02115
 617-266-1492**

For more information contact:

www.celebrityseries.org **or** www.bso.org

CURLING: World Men's Curling Championships **A twelve-team round robin event, which will include teams from around the world. The event is hosted by the Grand**

National Curling Club of America (GNCC).

April 1-9, 2006

Lowell, Massachusetts

Tickets, from \$15 to \$35 and children under 12 years are free, may be purchased at the Tsongas Arena Box Office or through Ticketmaster 617-931-2000 or online at Ticketmaster.com
For more information, visit the Championships website

EXHIBIT: Britannia and Muscovy: English Silver at the Court of the Tsars

This is the first U.S. exhibition of the superb collection of English silver from the Armory Museum of the Kremlin—the greatest surviving group of English sixteenth- and seventeenth-century silver in the world. Almost all of the silver from this period that remained in England was melted down during the English Civil War, making the examples at the Kremlin exceedingly rare and historically important. The exhibition features nearly thirty-six pieces of silver from the Kremlin collection. The exhibition charts the development of diplomatic, trade, and cultural ties between England and Russia from the time of Queen Elizabeth I through the reign of Charles II.

Organized by the Armory Museum of the Kremlin in association with The Gilbert Collection, London, and the Yale Center for British Art. The exhibition has been curated by Natalya Abramova with Yelena Yablonskaya from the Armory Museum of the Kremlin. The organizing curator at The Gilbert Collection is Director Timothy Stevens. At the Yale Center for British Art the organizing curator is Cassandra Albinson, Assistant Curator of Paintings and Sculpture.

25 May - 10 September 2006

**Yale Center for British Art
 1080 Chapel Street
 New Haven, CT 06520**

**203-432-2800 ycba.info@yale.edu
<http://ycba.yale.edu/index.asp>**

BALLET: The Royal Ballet – Manon with Full Symphony Orchestra **75 Anniversary Celebration! Following its triumphant Boston presentation of *Swan Lake* in 2001, The Royal Ballet returns with one of Kenneth MacMillian's best-known and much-loved works, *Manon*. The**

Royal's *Manon* is a work of engrossing narrative and touching sadness that soars to romantic heights before plunging to its climax of despair and death. Tamara Rojo, who dazzled Boston audiences in *Swan Lake* returns in the title role of *Manon*.

15 June - 17 June 2006

**The Wang Theater
270 Tremont Street
Boston, MA
617-482-9393**

info@wangcenter.org
www.wangcenter.org

ART EXHIBIT: Searching for Shakespeare In 1856, the first portrait presented to the newly founded National Portrait Gallery in London was a work believed to portray William Shakespeare (1564–1616). How England's most famous poet and playwright actually may have looked had already been a matter of national interest for two hundred years. *Searching for Shakespeare* will examine the representation of Shakespeare, bringing together for the first time in this country all six "contender" portraits. Originating from the National Portrait Gallery in London (on the occasion of that institution's 150 anniversary in 2006), the display at the Center will present the results of the latest technical analysis and research on several of these pictures, casting new light on the search for Shakespeare's authentic appearance. Organized by the National Portrait Gallery, London, in association with the Yale Center for British Art. The exhibition's guest curator is Tarnya Cooper, 16th Century Curator, National Portrait Gallery, London. Elisabeth Fairman, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale Center for British Art, is the in-house organizing curator.



23 June - 17 September 2006

**Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, CT 06520**

203-432-2800 ycba.info@yale.edu
<http://ycba.yale.edu/index.asp>

HIGHLAND GAMES: New Hampshire Highland Games

The games will be held at Loon Mountain in Lincoln New Hampshire. The NH Highland Games are one of the largest Scottish Games in North America and they have been held at Loon Mountain for twenty-seven of the past thirty years. The Games are known for their artistic, cultural and athletic signature and have often attracted over 20,000 spectators in a single day.

22-24 September 2006

The New Hampshire Gathering of the Scottish Clans is a not-for-profit New Hampshire Corporation dedicated to the furtherance of the dance, music, athletics and customs of the Scottish people - and to the continuance of the Gaelic culture. The organization's headquarters will remain in Concord. For more information about NHGSC and the Highland Games visit www.NHSCOT.org.

ART EXHIBIT: Canaletto in England: A Venetian Artist Abroad, 1746–1755 **The fame of the great eighteenth-century Italian artist Giovanni Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto (1697–1768), rests on his views of Venice, where he lived most of his life. However, Canaletto's popularity with English grand tourists and patrons led him in 1746 to travel to England for a period of nearly ten years. This exhibition features nearly eighty objects and is the most ambitious survey ever mounted of Canaletto's time in England. Co-organized by the Yale Center for British Art and the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. The exhibition's guest curator is Charles Beddington, an independent scholar. The organizing curator at the Yale Center for British Art is Angus Trumble, Curator of Paintings and Sculpture.**

19 October - 31 December 2006

**Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, CT 06520**

203-432-2800 ycba.info@yale.edu
<http://ycba.yale.edu/index.asp>



Informal Welsh speaking group
8.00 pm every Wednesday:
informal Welsh speaking group meet in the Cambridge Common Pub (Massachusetts Ave). For more information contact Dr. Eirug Davies, telephone: 617.492.9838; e-mail: Eirug@msn.com

Television: Premiership Soccer & British Sport on TV in New England

Looking for a place to watch Premiership Soccer, or other British sports and sporting events in New England? Please visit the Consulate's website, [British Radio, TV and Media](#) page for information on television and radio networks that cater to fans of British sports. (Go to the Consulate-Generals home page <http://www.britainusa.com/boston/>, click on "Arts and Entertainment in New England" under "Regional Events", go to bottom of page and click on [British Radio, TV and Media](#)

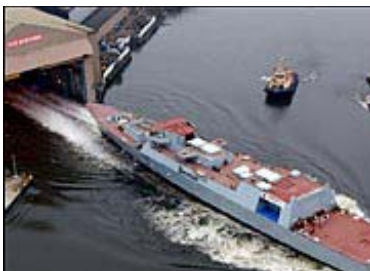


A Bottle-Nosed Whale at the Houses of Parliament Last January
 (The Editor had a lot of clever, but tasteless, ideas for comments on this picture, along the lines of "of course this is not the first time that a lot of blubber has shown up at the Palace of Westminster". But this is a family newsletter, so he restrained himself.)
 Photograph from the BBC website

... Daffodils
 Which come before the swallow dares
 And take the winds of March with beauty.

A Winter's Tale

Miscellany



HMS Daring, destroyer, launched from Clydebank
 February 1 by Countess of Wessex
 (Photograph from BBC website)



Leeds Castle
 (Photograph from *Realm Magazine*)