

Britain-Australia Society, West Country Branch
Chairman's Report - AGM 2017
23rd April 2017

I am pleased to report the branch had another successful year in 2016 in terms of supporting the objectives of the Society by holding a number of events for our members, supporting West Country activities that relate to Britain-Australia relations, and in general furthering Britain-Australia relations in the West Country of England.

Sadly our President, and former Branch Chairman, Richard Pavitt passed away in November. Richard was very much the life and soul of the branch and although it will be a challenge to continue without his leadership, the committee is determined to carry on. Richard's estate made a generous financial gift to the branch and the committee is exploring options of a suitable memorial, possibly as part of the Arthur Phillip Education Trust.

We are very pleased his widow Kay has agreed to accept the position as President of the branch and we warmly welcome her into the role.

Major events held for our members during the year were:

- Australia Day – Wells Cathedral and the Swan Hotel Wells– Speaker Lord Howell, President RCS
- ANZAC Day – Warminster – Speaker Major Campbell, Australian Defence Forces
- Annual Cricket Match – Sutton Veny cricket ground
- Arthur Phillip Birthday memorial Service and lunch – St Nicolas Church Bathampton and Bailbrook House hotel. Speaker Prof. Frewer
- Also in January 2017 we held our Australia Day service and lunch at Downside Abbey with guest speaker Lord Julian Fellowes

We also supported the:

- Unveiling of a new plaque to Admiral Arthur Phillip at 19a Bennett St. Bath organized by committee member David Leonard. It was funded and unveiled by The Australian High Commissioner, Alexander Downer
- Formal Attendance at the unveiling of a memorial at Bishops Knoll, formally the home of the prominent Bristol and West Australia Bush Family, who allowed Bishops Knoll to be used as a military hospital in WW1 for the Australian military.

This year the Branch Boomerang Award for outstanding contributions to Britain-Australia relations in the West Country was presented to the Mayor of Bath's Office. The Mayor, Councillor Paul Crossley, graciously accepted it at the Arthur Phillip Birthday commemoration lunch.

The Committee held a number of formal and informal meetings, a quarterly Branch newsletter was published, and the Branch web site maintained.

Membership of the Branch at the end of the year stood at 65 paid members (both joint and single memberships) plus 15 honorary – a total of 80. This is down from last year's which stood at around 90. We need to work on replenishing membership to keep the branch moving forward.

The financial position of the branch is healthy (see the Treasurers report).

The Branch supported the BAS National Office with our members enjoying attendance at National and other branches' events. I continued on in my role on the National BAS Committee.

I wish to sincerely thank the committee members, especially our long standing Treasurer Alan Cox, the Administrator Kath Lilley, and especially David Leonard for acting as returning officer and organizing the new plaque at 19 Bennet St. Bath

I look forward to 2017 and to helping the branch to continue to support the goals of the Society.

Keith G Newton
Chairman