

THE BRITAIN-AUSTRALIA SOCIETY

WEST COUNTRY BRANCH

BRISTOL - CORNWALL - DEVON - DORSET - GLOUCESTERSHIRE - SOMERSET - WILTSHIRE

20/07/2019

To West Country Branch Members of the Britain-Australia Society

BRANCH NEWSLETTER JULY 2019

Note from the Chairman - Keith Newton

Dear Members,

We are delighted that the "First Fleet Piano" restorer, Lucy Coad, has agreed to be guest speaker at this year's Admiral Arthur Phillip Birthday commemoration lunch at Bathampton on October 11, 2019. More details follow in this newsletter. Booking forms are available on the web site with the invitations to be distributed next month.

This newsletter contains a short update on the Branch activities over the past months and a reminder of upcoming events:

AUSTRALIA DAY SERVICE AND LUNCH - Bristol Cathedral - January 27, 2019

This year's Australia Day service was held at Bristol Cathedral followed by lunch at the Bristol Commonwealth Club. The beautiful service in the magnificent Cathedral was followed by tea and coffee in the Chapter Room hosted by the Dean, Rev David Hoyle, and the Cathedral congregation.

At our lunch we were pleased to have in attendance a number of officials from Bristol City including Alderman Colin Smith as well as our Branch President Sir James Tidmarsh and his wife Virginia. Our Guest Speaker, Commander Phillip Unwin RN (ret), from the SS Great Britain Trust, gave a most interesting talk about the SS Great Britain, its history and how it came to be berthed in Bristol. Given the ship's history of carrying thousands of immigrants from Liverpool to Melbourne during the period 1852 to 1882, the ship is extremely important to British-Australian history. Some of our members, and a guest at the lunch, informed me that their relatives originally sailed to Australia on the SS Great Britain.



Lunch Guest Lt Col Tony Evans, the speaker Commander Phillip Unwin RN (Ret) and Keith Newton at the Australia Day Lunch

The staff at Commonwealth House provided an excellent meal, while the club provided an excellent venue for the event. Thank you to Peter Leppard for organising the day.

HOSTING THE FIRST FLEET PIANO TOUR GROUP'S VISIT TO ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, BATHAMPTON, March 28, 2019

The branch was pleased to be able to host visitors from The Edith Cowan University (ECU) to Bathampton on March 28, 2019 as part of the First Fleet Piano Restoration project.

The Square Piano, which was taken by Surgeon George Worgan on the First Fleet to Australia, is now referred to as simply "The First Fleet Piano". It is in the possession of the Edith Cowan University (ECU) of Western Australia and has temporarily been returned to England, where it is being restored by the Bath district based piano restorer, Lucy Coad.



The First Fleet Piano

To celebrate the return to England of the piano, Professor Geoffrey Lancaster and a team from ECU held a recital at Australia House in London, followed by a visit to Admiral Phillip's Grave in St Nicholas Church, Bathampton as part of an Australian TV documentary being made about the piano's restoration.

Keith Newton, along with the Revd Jonty Frith and members of the St Nicholas congregation hosted the ECU team, together with Lucy Coad, at St Nicholas' to explain to them the significance of St Nicholas' as Admiral Phillip's burial place, and also explain the history, objects and memorials and plaques in the Bath Area commemorating Admiral Phillip as well as the strong relationship of Bath and the West Country of England, with Australia.

We are currently exploring if it may be possible after the restoration is complete, to hold a recital on the piano at either St Nicholas' Church or the Assembly Rooms in Bath.

BRANCH AGM - April 28 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the Branch was held before our ANZAC day lunch at the Warminster Infantry Officers Mess on April 28 2019. Mr David Leonard was appointed to act as chairman of the meeting.

[Minutes of the meeting.](#)

A special vote of thanks was passed to recognise David Leonard's contributions to the branch. David stepped down from the committee after many years active service. However he and Frances will remain actively involved in the society and hopefully he will be able to act in the returning officer's role again at next year's AGM.

ANZAC DAY SERVICE AND LUNCH, The Warminster Infantry Officers Mess and St John the Evangelist Church Sutton Veny - April 26 2019

This year's Anzac Day lunch was again held at the Warminster Infantry Officers Mess. Guests included Colonel Sue Graham, from the Australian Armed Forces and Major Michael Shannon from the New Zealand Defence Force. Our speaker was Rebecca Smith, Public Engagement Coordinator (South West) from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Rebecca gave a most interesting update on the activities and achievements of the Commission, the cemeteries and graves it maintains, and how it works with various community groups, schools and other associations in the region.



President Kay Pavitt, Keith Newton, Col. Sue Graham, Maj. Michael Shannon, and Rebecca Smith at the ANZAC Day Service.

After lunch we attended the service at St John the Evangelist church, Sutton Veny where our President Kay Pavitt laid a wreath on behalf of the Society at the memorial in the church cemetery where over 140 WWI Australian servicemen and nurses are buried. We finished the day with a very generous afternoon tea in the nearby village hall catered by the congregation of St Johns.



President, Kay Pavitt laying a wreath at the Sutton Veny Memorial.

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION VERSUS SUTTON VENY ANNUAL CRICKET MATCH - June 9, 2019

The annual cricket match between the Australian High Commission team and the Sutton Veny Village cricket team was held on June 9 2019 at the Sutton Veny cricket ground alongside St John's Church and the graves and war memorial in the church ground. Although it was very successful again this year, with many in attendance, I apologise for our omission to update the date of the match on the web site, which I know caused some of our members to miss the match. We will ensure that we get it right next year.

REMINDERS - NEXT EVENTS

ADMIRAL ARTHUR PHILLIP Birthday Commemoration Service and Lunch - St Nicholas', Bathampton and Bailbrook House Hotel - October 11, 2019.

The annual Admiral Arthur Phillip Birthday commemoration Service and lunch will be held this year on Friday October 11, 2019. The church service will be at St Nicholas Church, where Phillip was buried after living his final years in Bath, while the lunch will again be at the nearby Bailbrook House Hotel.

This year we are delighted to have Lucy Coad, the world famous piano restorer speak to us about her restoration work on the First Fleet Piano; the square piano that was taken to Australia on the First Fleet, and for some time was the only piano in the new colony of New South Wales in Australia.

Royal Commonwealth Society - Bath and District - Summer Event September 7, 2019. American Museum Bath

The Bath RCS are holding their summer event at the American War Museum in Bath. [More details and the booking form here.](#)

We will distribute separate emails with invitations to the upcoming events and reminders for membership renewals, but please refer to our Branch website <http://www.britozwest.org.uk> which has booking forms and details of our events as well as a lot of other interesting materials.

Keith Newton