



CHARTER

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President - Tim Hunt
Vice-president - Kathy Tunsley
Executive Secretary - Susan Dugdale
Treasurer - Charles Platt
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Executive Committee

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Alastair Drummond
Simon Eccles
Henry Flory (Past president)
Bob Groom (Past president)
Geoffrey Hall
Geoff Mullis (Past president)
Simon Sherrington
Paul Stanislas
Roger Tunsley
Enid Wissa

Presidents Message

by Tim Hunt

I write this looking forward to Thanksgiving, but you will likely be reading it afterward. I hope you had a joyous event with family and friends. It all seems a bit remote from the Harvest Festivals I recall celebrating of yore, but, as far as this Society is concerned, we can give thanks that a few beneficiaries in the past have provided the funds which we can use to help those in need today. Now, we anticipate another and different celebration - Christmas. For my part, and for the other Officers and Executive Committee, may your Christmas be everything you hope, and may the year 2001 be successful for all.

The year 2000 has been successful for the Society, in that we have found deserving individual cases for more dollars than we need to give away, according to IRS rules. The previous year we did not quite make this goal, but now we have done so in two of the last three years. This is the result of conscious effort on the part of your Committee. We do not hand out money to all comers, but examine and debate cases brought to the meetings. If the individuals fit our parameters for assistance, we want to give enough to make a difference and truly answer the need, but not more than that. With about \$35,000 available each year, we have no pot of gold, anyway.

Sometimes, advice is worth more than money and two recent cases come to mind. A lady presented a case of financial hardship. One of our members spent time with her working on her budget and suggesting cost savings. After it was all done, she saw her situation in a different light and said "I guess I don't need any help after all. Thanks."

Another situation is an elderly couple with various physical and other ailments for whom their financial affairs are a mystery. Our Executive Secretary, Susan Dugdale, has been working with them to simplify and explain their situation so that our modest financial stipend and their other resources will give them peace of mind.

While each of our Committee members bring their own individual talents and contributions, Susan, who is newly elected to this position this year, has brought great vitality and enthusiasm to the job. We could not carry out our mission without the contributions of all the members, which I want to recognize herewith and give them thanks from the whole Society. (continued)

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Our work is never all peaches and cream. There was one poor soul with two children who needed to return to England, but could not overcome her fear of flying to get on a plane. Then there are those library resources which include the name of the British Charitable Society as if we could help almost anybody. The result is two or three letters a week for every need and amount imaginable.

Currently, we have 5 cases with monthly relief stipends, which are reviewed at least annually. One person we had been helping for some time was able to become self-sufficient and asked to be removed from this list. We think the Society made a difference for her. It is interesting that some of those really in need are often those least willing to ask for it. We often come across people who are proud, "never had to ask for help", "surely others need it more than we do", and they might be in clearly difficult circumstances. So, we help. We have had the usual number of folk being stuck away from home for one reason or another and we get them a ticket. One tragic case was a young man here on his honeymoon, killed in a car accident. We covered funeral home expenses and got the casket transported home.

All of these cases require energy on the part of your Committee and the resources of those benefactors who have gone before us. And, once again, I give thanks for all of this.

Book Reviews

Notes from a Small Island - Bill Bryson

Tim Hunt



Its not new, but I came across an amusing volume the other day that can give you a chuckle before falling asleep or waiting on a subway platform. *Notes from a Small Island* by Bill Bryson. He's a well published author who lived in the UK for nearly two decades and you should be able to find it in your local library. To quote: " Suddenly, in the space of a moment, I realized what it was that I loved about Britain - which is to say, all of it. Every last bit of it, good and bad - old churches, country lanes, people saying 'Mustn't grumble' and 'I'm terribly sorry but,' people apologizing to me when I conk them with a careless elbow, milk in bottles, beans on toast, haymaking in June, seaside piers, Ordnance Survey maps, tea and crumpets, summer showers and foggy winter evenings - every bit of it." Read it yourself and pick out a few of the extra funny bits to read aloud to whoever is next to you. I think you'll like it.

The Poisonwood Bible - Barbara Kingsolver

Roger Tunsley

The Poisonwood Bible is a single story told from five different viewpoints - all female and all different. The central theme is of an American missionary who moves with his wife and four daughters to the Belgian Congo in the 1950s to do "God's work" with the local population. Against a background of the political upheaval of the fight for Congolese independence they try to make a life in Africa. They quickly discover that the home comforts they brought with them - staples of life in the US such as Betty Crocker cake mixes and a knowledge of genteel Southern gardening - are rendered irrelevant by their struggle to cope with the alien society of Africa. The missionary also discovers, at a much slower pace, the irrelevance of his Christian message to the local population whose spiritual needs are already fulfilled by their own priests and gods.

The story unfolds from the narrative of the four daughters and his wife. The reader quickly gets swept up into the different personalities of the girls. I found that I developed a liking for one particular daughter and those I have spoken to who have also read this book developed the same affinity but not necessarily with the same girl. This is a tribute to the author who remains consistent to the different personalities throughout the book. I have recommended this book to many and all who have read it so far have enjoyed it. I hope you do as well.

The American Foundation for Suicide Protection

by Jane Hunt

Some time ago I was asked to write a piece for The Charter on some volunteer work I have been doing, and I agreed. However, due to the subject matter it was very difficult to put it all into words which would interest you and also transmit to you just why I became involved with this group. Following a wonderful Advent Fiesta at our church this evening I had a need to try.

For a number of years the British Charitable Society helped to support the work of the Samaritans in Boston. This, as you all know, is a fine group of people who are always ready to talk to people who are in a desperate place in their lives. It is always difficult for those whose lives have not been touched in some way by suicide to hear about, let alone discuss the subject. Indeed, I would have said that very thing until about ten years ago. Unfortunately, that attitude in our society has made suicide a serious national health problem. There is a frightening statistic which backs up this statement: in 1999 there were approximately 20,000 homicides in the U.S. and in the same time period 30,000 suicides.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention was established in 1987 with the express purpose of funding research, education, and treatment programs which can prevent the loss of life from suicide. It also sponsors workshops for survivors because it is estimated that for every life lost to suicide there are at least six people intimately affected.

Since 1987 the Foundation has grown from one small national office to 13 affiliates across the country. Each regional presence is dedicated to local education efforts such as workshops for school personnel, the medical community as well as those people intimately connected to faith communities. It is vital to change public knowledge and perceptions about suicide and its possible medical causes. Serving on the board of the New England affiliate and doing volunteer work in the Boston office is a very small contribution to the cause, but it gives me the opportunity to talk to people about the subject which few people want to hear about - a very dangerous attitude. It might just surprise you how many people you know have been affected in some way by suicide.

While my brother was 51 years old when he took his life, many people who do so are those who are teens or just beginning their adult lives. Why was it that tonight when I returned from this wonderful evening of sharing a meal with our friends in our church family and then singing all the old familiar Advent and Christmas carols I could sit down and share my experience with you? Perhaps it was the sadness which came over me that my brother gave up the opportunity to have such an evening as this. Please understand that it was not his choice, suicide is not a choice, it is the only option open to the person in that moment. And the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is working very hard to find out how to change that.

WWW.BRITCHARITY.ORG

The British Charitable Society now has a web site on the Internet - www.britcharity.org. The site outlines the purpose of the society and gives readers the contact email and postal addresses for the society officers. It is another example of the continuing outreach efforts from the committee. Take a look and tell us what you think.

Help us to get in touch with people - if you have access to or control of another web site, consider adding a link from your site to the [ritcharity.org](http://www.britcharity.org). The more publicity we get, the more we can successfully achieve our mission

UK Government Gratuity to Former Far East Prisoners of War

The Royal British Legion, which has been campaigning for this payment since January last year, warmly welcomes today's announcement that the Government are to give a special gratuity of £10,000 to all surviving former prisoners of war of the Japanese or their widows, in recognition of their suffering undergone during and after captivity.

Ian Townsend, the Legion's Secretary General said: "This is a very satisfactory end to what has been a long struggle by the FEPOWs for recognition of what they went through while in captivity. The £76 compensation originally awarded was pitiful and the attitude of successive British Governments has meant that many of the 37,000 who came home at the end of World War 2,

who have since died, cannot receive that recognition. I pay tribute to the many supporters of our campaign, especially the 328 MPs, without whom the Government might not have seen the strength and justice of our case. Now the Legion will do all in its power to ensure that all those eligible make their claim for payment of the gratuity and that it is paid as quickly as possible. We launched this campaign in the hope of removing a major remaining obstacle to UK/Japanese relations and in the furtherance of reconciliation between our two countries. I do not know what plans JLCSA and the civil internees have for their legal action in Japan, but for the Legion, the aim has been achieved".

The Legion launched its campaign in January 1999 after approaches from the National Federation of Far East Prisoners of War Clubs & Associations and the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association, in the light of the continuing rejections of their court actions for compensation against the Japanese Government and of the Canadian Government decision in 1998 to pay their "Hong Kong Veterans" a sum equivalent to £10,000. The campaign has had the support of 328 MPs, 37 members of the new House of Lords and almost three quarters of those polled in a national opinion survey.

For further information regarding eligibility, etc, visit the War Pensions Agency Website.

Dual Nationality

When the British Nationality Act 1948 came into effect on 1 January 1949, citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies who subsequently became naturalised citizens of other countries no longer automatically lost their British nationality. Since that date, citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies who became naturalised citizens of a foreign state retained their status as British subjects, citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, unless they made a formal declaration of renunciation in front of a British Consul or other British official authorised to accept such declarations. A declaration made before a foreign official for the purpose of acquiring another nationality or for any other purpose did not affect the position in United Kingdom law. With the enactment of the new nationality law (British Nationality Act, 1981) which came into effect on 1 January 1983 the provisions for the recognition of dual nationality and the procedure for renunciation of British citizenship have been retained.

Although acquisition or use of US citizenship does not of itself jeopardise retention of British citizenship, and there is not objection on the part of British authorities to a dual citizen using a US passport, it should not be assumed that the reverse is also true. A US citizen voluntarily acquiring British citizenship may lose his US citizenship; and a dual citizen who makes use of his British citizenship in certain ways, for example joining HM Forces, taking an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty and in certain circumstances exercising other rights or privileges of British citizenship, may jeopardise his US citizenship. The US authorities expect dual citizens to travel out of and into United States territory only on US passports. British citizens who are also US citizens are

therefore advised to consult the US State Department (or if overseas a US Consul) before taking any action which might be regarded as inconsistent with their status as US citizens.

A British citizen may return and resume residence in Britain at any time, regardless of being a dual national, provided that he has not made a formal declaration of renunciation of British citizenship as described in paragraph one above. Such persons may in British law exercise any right possessed generally by British citizens, but of course it is their own responsibility to ascertain from the appropriate US authorities what effect, if any, their action may have on their status as a citizen of that country.

Children born in the United States whose fathers (and for those born after 31 December 1982 either of whose parents) are British citizens become United States citizens by birth and may also be British citizens by descent.

British citizens who are also citizens of another country are advised that they cannot be accorded official British protection when they are in the territory of the other citizenship. If, under the law of that country, they are liable for any obligation (such as military service) the fact that they are also British citizens does not exempt them from it.



**Merry
Christmas**