



## The Charter

Autumn 2016

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### **Bicentennial 1816-2016**

We are celebrating 200 years of helping Britons in need in New England! The British Society is one of the most venerable British organizations in the United States of America. Under our original name of The British Charitable Society of Boston, we were founded on September 9, 1816, when twelve gentlemen met at Concert Hall, a building situated at the corner of Court and Hanover Streets in Boston, MA, for the purpose of organizing a Society whose object would be the relief of distressed British persons.<sup>1</sup>

At that time, British subjects were flocking into America and, as the war against England was but lately terminated, many of the new arrivals were not looked upon with favorable eyes. In addition, many of these newcomers were very poor. Such being the case, British residents of Boston were mindful of the need for benevolence and created our organization to meet the many cases presenting themselves. Two years later, the Society was incorporated by a special act of the Massachusetts legislature and has continued its work of extending assistance to persons of British birth ever since.

Our bicentennial starts on September 9, 2016, and we have recruited new Executive Committee members to help make this the most successful year yet in our long and illustrious history. Just for starters, we recently launched a [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishSociety) page ([www.facebook.com/TheBritishSociety](https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishSociety)) to provide you with quick and easy access to all the latest Society event information as well as sharing interesting articles for ex-pat Brits and Anglophiles in New England. "Like" us today and please "suggest" our page to your friends and family. The more Facebook followers we have, the more organizations and companies we can attract in partnerships to provide you with more services.

<sup>1</sup> From *Brief History of the British Charitable Society 1816-1991*

In addition to new social media initiatives, we aim to have an exciting series of special events throughout New England in the celebratory year ahead. If you have ideas for content or location, and especially if you are willing to host an event, please let us know. We are also recruiting volunteers to reach out to people who are new to the expat life. It's a great opportunity to connect, either by phone or over a cuppa, and make new friends. Contact: [volunteer@thebritishsociety.org](mailto:volunteer@thebritishsociety.org) and thank you!

## The People We Serve

It has often been noted that poverty's reach extends to all sections of the community. Most people who apply to the Society for help have previously enjoyed a normal lifestyle, which becomes interrupted by illness or accident or some other disruption to family income. Within a very short space of time they find themselves in debt and then in crisis. Help may not be available from the State or applications may not be processed in time and often the family faces the prospect of eviction or having their utilities shut off. Providing assistance in these times of dire need is at the forefront of our mission.

Here are some recent case histories where your membership dues have helped turn despair into relief. Please note, names have been changed to protect privacy.

- Ms. L. is a single mother living in New England with two daughters, one of whom is a special needs child. The pipes in the apartment above hers burst and water flooded her living quarters. She didn't have a tenant insurance policy, and most of her family's possessions were either ruined or severely damaged. The British Society's Relief Committee voted to send a Walmart gift certificate in the amount of \$1,000 to help her replace essential items.
- Mr. H. is a 32-year-old man, originally from Hertfordshire, who was laid off from his job in the US. He is married with two young children, one a newborn. He found temporary work, and was receiving some state aid, but his family were encountering severe financial problems when he contacted us. Our Relief Committee voted to help with rental arrears and utility bills.
- Mr. P. is a 36-year-old Wolverhampton man who is solely responsible for his 3-year-old daughter. To support her, he works two jobs in northern Vermont but unexpectedly became unable to get to either of his places of employment because of significant car repairs costing far beyond his means. One of our volunteers obtained an estimate from Midas in St. Albans, VT, and our Relief Committee voted to pay to get his vehicle back on the road, so that he could resume working.

Thank you to the dedicated members of our Relief Committee for their compassion and clear-thinking when reviewing the many complex applications for assistance that the Society receives each year, and for deciding on our behalf which of the many heartbreaking cases our funds can best help. Theirs is one of the most challenging roles any organization asks of its volunteers and we deeply appreciate their special skills.

## A Farewell from Consul General Susie Kitchens



Having spent the last four years as British Consul General in Boston, I am in no doubt of the importance of old-fashioned diplomatic representation. There is a huge amount that can be achieved through online searches, networking, and email—we see that all the time across political, business, and academic relationships—but I have also witnessed many powerful examples where the Consulate’s ‘on the ground’ person is invaluable.

When a LinkedIn request or a Google search won’t do, we rely on the personal touch: local relationships and knowledge, empathy and trust, and friendships really make the difference.

Consular work, which is both etymologically and strategically at the heart of the Consulate’s mission, epitomises this representational value. Here in New England we are fortunate to have both an experienced Consular Officer (Jacqueline Greenlaw, recognised last year by Her Majesty the Queen with a British Empire Medal) and the crucial support of charitable organisations helping British nationals in their time of need.

Consular work is rarely the most glamorous or showy aspect of diplomatic representation. I am afraid a visit to a prison, a mortuary, or an emergency shelter rarely wins when pitted against the MIT Media Lab, Harvard Yard, or Kendall Square for a VIP visit! But for the people we help, Consular assistance can be a transformational lifeline.

Thanks to years of evidence-based modelling by the British Foreign Service, our global team of Consular Officers is well set up to deal with most incidents that can happen to Brits when overseas. Lost passports, stolen wallets, hospitalisations, arrests and imprisonment are dealt with efficiently under a mandate set out in parliament. We have earned the reputation of having the best Consular service in the world.

But with an estimated 65,000 Brits living across New England and some 700,000 tourist visits each year, Jacqueline is sometimes faced with cases that do not quite fit the model. These are the cases where our ‘on the ground’ person, and the allies she has around her, come into their own.

With its tangible, raw impact on people’s lives, Consular work is unlike any other aspect of diplomacy. The limits to what we, as an arm of government can do, can be frustrating.

Overseas, the British tax-payer's pound cannot be put towards someone's rent, missed due to unpaid sick leave. The Government cannot pay to repatriate someone whose final wish was to be buried "back home." Nor is the Consulate resourced to offer counsel on bereavement, divorce, mental or physical health crises. But thanks to a well-nurtured network of caring, generous individuals in New England, we always know people who can—and will—help Brits in desperate situations.

Sometimes the solution is a cash payment. Sometimes it is a referral to a shelter, institutional support or a way 'in' to an essential assistance programme. Sometimes it is a friendly ear and a shoulder to cry on until time heals and life is bearable again. Oftentimes this source of support comes from volunteers at the British Society.

The British Society is a highly valued partner for the Consulate, and its relief work is a much needed complement to our official Consular services. British Society members generously give charitable donations, volunteer in organisational roles, offer time and inspiration in establishing relationships and organising events, and step up themselves in times of crisis. They do it quickly, with minimal bureaucracy, without asking for recognition, and when it really matters. As I saw throughout my time in New England, the British Society changes people's lives. You give help when no one else can, with sympathy and from the heart. I reiterate my thanks and admiration for all that you do, and ask that you continue to do it.

*Susie*

## Welcome Harriet Cross

While we bid a fond adieu to Susie Kitchens, and wish her well in the next stage of her illustrious career, we are also delighted to welcome our new Consul General, Harriet Cross, to New England. Harriet's most recent posting was as Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, although due to the conflicts she spent much of her time in Saudi Arabia. Previously, she served as Second Secretary at the British Embassy in Morocco, as First Secretary at the UK Mission to the UN in New York, and has also worked in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London covering EU relations and human rights policy. Her husband Phil Saltonstall owns his own brewery in Yorkshire and looks forward to getting acquainted with the New England beer scene. Their cat, Claudius, a rescue from the streets of Harlem, NY, is also happy to be back stateside.



Our friends at the British American Business Council of New England (BABCNE) have arranged two exciting opportunities for you to meet Harriet Cross. Firstly, at a welcome event in the historic setting of the Old State House in Boston on September 15. Then, later this month, she will be one of the panelists for a special program about Brexit presented in conjunction with the British Consulate, Morgan Lewis, and PricewaterhouseCoopers on September 21. Tickets for both events are available online: <https://www.babcne.org>

## The Role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

In addition to issuing regular travel advices—“know before you go” information—for British nationals, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) offers many other important services which are summarized below. However, there are limits to the assistance they can provide so please plan your trips abroad carefully.

### *The FCO can...*

- Issue you with an emergency travel document.
- Provide you with information about transferring money.
- Provide help if you have suffered rape or serious sexual or physical assault, are a victim of crime, are ill or in hospital while travelling.
- Give you a list of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors, or funeral directors.
- Make contact with you if you are detained abroad.
- Contact friends and family back home for you in case of an emergency.
- Provide help to you in cases of a forced marriage abroad.
- Assist you if you are affected by parental child abduction overseas.

### *The FCO cannot...*

- Help you enter a country if you do not have a valid passport or the necessary visas.
- Give you legal advice or translate documents for you.
- Investigate a crime or get you out of prison.
- Arrange for you to have better conditions, in hospital or prison, than those which are given to local people—but they will raise concerns if your treatment falls below internationally recognised standards.
- Pay any of your bills or give you money.
- Make your travel arrangements for you.

## Volunteer Opportunities

The British Society runs on a core group of dedicated volunteers. We are looking for members who are able to be active in aid of our very good cause. We especially need help arranging social events and establishing community partnerships. Please e-mail us at [volunteer@thebritishsociety.org](mailto:volunteer@thebritishsociety.org) for more information about the roles outlined below, and check our website and Facebook page for newly posted opportunities.

### *Event Managers*

Plan and run British-related social gathering and/or fundraising events for the Society in one of the six New England states. Event management consists of all aspects of planning and hosting; including finding speakers or arranging activities, booking dates and securing locations, promoting and advertising your events locally, writing descriptive copy and obtaining approval to use images for the marketing of your events in the Society's e-invitations and on our website and Facebook page. You'll either conceive the entire event or follow a theme chosen by the Executive Committee, who will help set the ticket price, and you will liaise with the Treasurer regarding ticket sales and acknowledgements and/or tax receipts as appropriate.

### *Outreach Managers*

As the Society's representative in either CT, MA, ME, NH, or RI, you will help raise the Society's overall profile as well as welcoming new members. You will regularly connect to that state's agencies regarding our relief work. For example, meeting social service groups such as the Salvation Army to explain "what" we do, "how" and "who" we can help. You will also research and actively review your state's British expat communities, stores, and events, plus monitor local on-line activity, and pass on relevant content for timely use in the Society's marketing efforts and membership communications. Outreach Coordinators will work independently in their state but will report to and share information with several Society committees by phone and email as appropriate.

### *Manager of Content Marketing*

Do you have the expertise and energy to develop and execute a content marketing strategy to take the Society from its early forays into newsletters and social media into the exciting world of tweets and blogs and personalized messaging? Working with the Membership and Communication Committee, you will plan, source, and prepare relevant and interesting stories—for example, interviews about uniquely Brits-in-the-US expat experiences—to enhance and expand our engagement with both our members and potential new supporters.

### *Membership Recruiter*

Must like people! Are you able to volunteer your time from mid-morning to late-afternoon on Friday, December 2, in Boston, MA, to promote the work of the Society and recruit new members at the 2016 BABCNE Christmas event? You'll need to take responsibility for transporting our marketing materials to the Harvard Club, setting up a stand, talking to event attendees, and distributing leaflets. You'll also dismantle the stand and return any leftover materials to the Executive Committee. This is an ideal volunteer role for a self-reliant, friendly, and outgoing person who wants to maximize their time in helping our very good cause on this one fun occasion.

## *Executive Committee*

If you are interested in participating in the management of the Society and leading a team of volunteers to work together for the benefit of our members, please contact our President, Charles Platt, at [president@thebritishsociety.org](mailto:president@thebritishsociety.org) to discuss how your experience and talents might fit with the responsibilities of taking our 200-year-old organization to the next level.

We appreciate that our volunteers give freely of their time and talent, and we commit to making your experience helping us as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible. All our Committee Chairs are volunteers too, so they understand exactly what is involved.

## **Calendar of Upcoming Events**

We are delighted to share with you a list of British-themed events being arranged by partner organizations around New England. Detailed information, along with links to purchase tickets, can be found on the events section of our [Facebook](#) page. Check back frequently as new dates are being added all the time. Several of these are also described in more depth on our website.

September 15 – Harriet Cross Welcome Reception (BABCNE)  
September 15 – Best of British (UK Dept. for International Trade / Boston Biotech Brits)|  
September 16-18 – The British Invasion Motorshow  
September 16-18 – The New Hampshire Highland Games and Festival  
September 21 – Brexit: What you need to know now (BABCNE)  
October 8 – Welsh Cheese and USA Wine Evening (WSWNE)  
October 20 – Harvest Festival (Boston Brits / Boston Public Market Association)  
November 19 – St. Andrew's Gala (The Scots' Charitable Society)  
December 1 – 2016 Solas Awards (IIIC)  
December 2 – 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Extravaganza (BABCNE)

## **Reviews of Recent Events**

### *USA vs. UK Polo Match*

Serious polo has been played in America for 140 years, the local foci being the Myopia Club in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and Newport Polo at Newport, Rhode Island. International matches are played at Newport and the English flag is always flown at centre field in honour of the Westchester Club's heritage. Long-time polo devotee Peggy Hunter keeps us updated about the friendly rivalry of



the annual USA vs. UK match; always one of the high spots of the season. This year's players continued the very high standard of horsemanship and sportsmanship. Even though the USA was victorious on September 3, the Brits in the crowd gladly cheered both teams and were delighted when our new Consul General, Harriet Cross, presented the winning prizes. (Photograph from Melissa Barker, Newport Polo Weekly)

### *Historic Concord*



On July 30, we enjoyed a wonderful event combining American history and British tradition. Our private tour of The Old Manse, a National Historic Landmark, led by historian, and Yorkshireman, Tom Beardsley from the Trustees of Reservations,



was followed by a delicious afternoon tea at the Colonial Inn in Concord, Massachusetts. The Manse was built in 1770 as the home for the pastor and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, and was later the home of author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Guests to the property can see the built-in desk used to pen some of the most famous lines in American literature. Thoreau used to walk to the Manse from Walden Pond to visit his friends, enjoy good food and conversation, and take a bath. In return for their hospitality, he dug them a vegetable garden which is being restored to its former glory. The Concord Inn was built in 1716 and served as a storehouse for weapons in preparation for the battle at the nearby Old North Bridge. We are happy that now it stores nothing more menacing than brightly painted china teapots ready to refresh thirsty history seekers.

### *The AGM and the Ambassador*



On the afternoon of May 23, the British Consulate in Boston, along with the British, Scottish, and Irish Charitable Societies, held a reception at the Harvard Club for the new—since January—British Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Sir Kim Darroch, KCMG (2008 Birthday Honours). Sir Kim was born in County Durham in 1954, was educated at Abingdon School in Oxfordshire, and got his BSc in zoology at Durham University. He joined the Foreign Office in 1976 and was appointed to the Diplomatic Service in 1980. His various postings have included Tokyo, the Channel Tunnel project, the European Union, Downing Street, Brussels, and as National Security Advisor. Although he was born and educated in England, Sir Kim's lineage is Scottish. There is even a Clan Darroch. The British Society's Annual General Meeting followed the reception. The main item of business was to approve changes to the structure of the Board and the Executive Committee which had been adopted at the 2012 AGM.

## Invictus Games 2016



In 2014, Prince Harry organized the first international Invictus Games in London where teams of wounded service men competed to “aid in holistic healing throughout the recovery and rehabilitation process.” Michelle Obama sent those contestants the following message:

*"Some of the most inspiring moments I have had as First Lady have been when I have met with wounded warriors like so many of you. You tell me how you are not just going to recover, but you are going*

*to thrive. While I can't hide that I hope Team USA brings home a few golds, I want you all to know how proud my husband and I are of you and how humbled we are by your example".*

The USA was so impressed by what was being achieved through the competition that they stepped up to host the second Invictus Games in Orlando, Florida, in May 2016. The British Society applauds His Royal Highness for his compassion and forward-thinking in creating such a powerful and productive new annual sporting event.

## Our Charter's Charter

*"The more things change, the more they stay the same."*<sup>2</sup> Early in the new millennium, Society member Roger Tunsley decided we needed a newsletter, and that an appropriate name for it would be *The Charter*. In the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the earliest meanings of “charter” is “contract”, as in the Magna Carta—the contract between King John and his barons, and including all free men. That document set forth the fair legal responsibilities of the king and, in turn, the fair obedience of his people.

For a modern day newsletter, using the word “charter” implies dealing fairly with you—our audience and community; mostly readers with a British lineage—and presenting you with truthful, interesting, and useful information. We are always on the look-out for news stories. If any Society members would like to write an article they think would entertain other ex-pat Brits, please contact us at [membership@thebritishsociety.org](mailto:membership@thebritishsociety.org). Also, if you feel we have not been “faithful to our charter” let us know about that too! You can make a big difference in the way we communicate with you by giving your feedback.

If you are receiving this edition of our newsletter by snail mail, please consider providing the Society with your email address and help save our little non-profit from spending big money on printing and stamps, so we can instead use those funds to assist fellow Britons in need. Contact [membership@thebritishsociety.org](mailto:membership@thebritishsociety.org) to sign up for our e-communications program. We now send all our event invitations electronically to be both “green” and fiscally responsible. Don't miss out! Share your email today!

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<sup>2</sup> Alphonse Karr, French novelist and journalist, in his *Les Guêpes*, 1849 (6th series, 1859)