

Notes from the BBG in Jeddah



**Captain
Steve Thomas**
BBG Jeddah
Chairman

The 2011 BBG Committee bowed out at the 33rd AGM in mid-February and the new committee duly assumed the mantle. So the guard has been changed; not quite with the precision of Buckingham Palace but, in our defence, they have been doing it for a mite longer than us. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the outgoing committee for their efforts and achievements, in particular my predecessor Edward Ogilvie. As they say in show business, it's a tough act to follow but I will give it my best.

For the second year running BBG membership has fallen and for the second year running we were unable to attract sufficient candidates for the committee to hold a contested election. For the first time in recent memory the majority of the outgoing committee did not stand again. These things matter because the BBG is a membership-based organisation and the committee administers the group for the benefit of the membership. It is clear that we are at a crossroads. I am sure there are many reasons why we are at this crossroads but the one that most readily springs to mind is simply that we live in a different age. Change is undoubtedly coming and like so much in life, and especially

here as ex-pats in Saudi Arabia, how we manage that change will define us. If we get it wrong we will wither but, if we get it right, we will grow and prosper.

It is important to acknowledge the efforts and successes of those that came before us. The BBG is now in its 34th year and a vast number of people have nurtured, guided (and cajoled) the group throughout its existence. It behoves us to build on their efforts and achievements. Our intent is to strengthen the BBG and to develop it so as we can continue to be true to our objectives for the benefit of the membership as a whole. The world we live in now is more interactive and more connected than any of us could ever have imagined even a few years ago. We must look at how best to harness these forces to ensure we prosper. In business today the emphasis is more and more on the exchange of information. Within the BBG we're hoping to reflect this in the interaction between the committee and the membership we serve.

As a committee we've started canvassing our membership for their views and suggestions. Its early days yet but I am already starting to see some common themes develop. At the top of the list there is a strong desire for improved networking opportunities across the whole spectrum of business connections; within the British Business community here, with the members of the other British Business groups here in the kingdom, with Saudi businesses and, of course, with the exporters in Britain who wish to do business here in Saudi Arabia. In respect to the latter, we have had discussions with our friends and colleagues at the British Consulate-General here in Jeddah with the aim of improving the interaction between the BBG and themselves for the mutual benefit of both. I'd like to thank all at the Consulate-General for their support, particularly Her Majesty's Consul-General Mohammed Shokat and the Deputy Consul-General, and Head of UKTI, Michael Cockle.

With only three members staying on from the 2011 committee and with just seven committee members, instead of the usual eight, something of a reorganisation had to be carried out. We agreed the following committee roles and responsibilities:

Chairman **Steve Thomas**
bbg.chairman@bbg-jed.org

Treasurer **Gordon Atkinson**
bbg.treasurer@bbg-jed.org

Business **Sam Thanvi**
bbg.business@bbg-jed.org

Communications... **Bruce Jones**
bbg.comms@bbg-jed.org

Events **Simon Messum**
bbg.events@bbg-jed.org

IT & Website **Vik Paw**
bbg.itman@bbg-jed.org

Membership..... **Helen Mack**
bbg.membership@bbg-jed.org

Our Secretary is Anita Wright and she can be contacted on 0541386108 or, preferably, by email at: bbg.office@bbg-jed.org. Transferring in from Riyadh, Simon Messum has assumed the events portfolio and is hard at work planning a varied programme of business and social events for the forthcoming year. All our meetings are open to members of the other British Business Groups here in the kingdom. If you are visiting Jeddah please contact Anita Wright if you are interested in joining any of our events.

It's springtime and for us here in Jeddah that means the Sports Challenge against our old friends at the American Business Group is now getting into full stride. Under the leadership of Dave Wheen, our teams have practiced hard and one or two have played the first matches in their competition. We wish them every success; win or lose though, the opportunity to socialise and network with the ABJ is a welcome one. The competition comes to a close with the annual Survivors' Ball which this year will be hosted by the ABJ. Special mention is due to Bupa Arabia and to Arabian Homes for their generous sponsorship.

Finally, we acknowledge the breadth of experience and knowledge available within the community both here in Jeddah and within the associated British Business Groups in other parts of the kingdom. I hope that we can develop these contacts for the benefit of all our members.

Best wishes to all for a prosperous 2012.