



Österreichisch-Britische Gesellschaft Austro-British Society

Open most Thursdays, 7 pm onwards at Karfreitstr. 6/1.

Club Tel: 0650 5668278 & 0664 4506196.

www.austrobritish.com

Sep 2022

Dear members and friends of the society

We are deeply saddened with the news of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Her Majesty was a truly great woman, an enlightened statesman and an internationally esteemed monarch. Our condolences go to her family, her country and the Commonwealth. We welcome and honour King Charles III.

We have been very busy with activities during the spring and summer. Highlights included Chris Neugebauer's captivating talk on Major Hesketh-Pritchard, a member of the British Special Operations Executive during the Second World War; the Stumbling Blocks, a tour to remember some of the Jews who lived in Klagenfurt during WW2 but generally did not survive the war; a most successful and boisterous Queen's Jubilee Party with much out of tune singing; the summer party, as always the best attended event of the year; and our bus trip to Spilimbergo, Italy whereby thanks go to Peter Ross for organising it.

After the club closed for the summer, the meet ups we had at various locations around Klagenfurt were generally not so well attended but that was probably due, in large part, to the heat.

We welcome all our new members, of which there are a few. Don't forget to check out our Facebook site [Austro-British Society Carinthia](#) and check out copies of photos on our website www.austrobritish.com

Helen and Australian Susan



Jubilee Party



Summer Party



Spilimbergo



Stumbling Blocks Tour



Spilimbergo

Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise notified the club rooms will be open. In the event of queries or further information, please phone Helen 0650 5668278. Where the location of an event is not mentioned, just watch your emails. We reserve the right to change the events below.

Sep 22



Facebook for Dummies / Social Media Basics, Presented by Paul Brazell

Starting at around 8pm, Paul will give a short talk on our social media activities, primarily Facebook and will also help members with any problems they may have using their smart phones.

Sep 29

Club Night Out at Augustin's, 6.30 pm onwards.

Venue: Augustin, Pfarrhofgasse, Klagenfurt. Table booked under British Society.

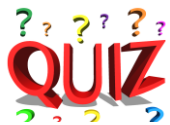
Oct 13th



Book Reading by Walter Ludescher, start 8 pm

From James Thurber (American humorist) as well as a reading of one of his most famous short stories "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty".

Oct 27



Quiz Evening at McMullens, Starts 8pm

Arrive 6.30pm onwards for chats and refreshments and especially if you want to indulge in your fish and chips. We have booked two tables so approximately 12 people could be seated in 2 teams.

Nov 11

Remembrance Service, 10.30am

Klagenfurt War Cemetery, Lilienthal Str (just off Villacherstrasse).

Nov 17

Club Night Out, 6.30pm onwards

Venue: Portuguese restaurant RICARDO, Tabakgasse 3

Dec 15

Christmas party, 6.30 onwards

We are still deciding on a venue but be prepared - it may be at the club premises, all squashed up together. Very cosy!



Clubrooms closed 29th Dec and 5th Jan. Club re-opens 12th Jan.

Jan 19

Games Evening, start 8pm or thereabouts

Jan 26

Club Night Out, 6.30pm onwards

Venue: Thai restaurant Sukothai, Domgasse 18, Klagenfurt

Feb 23rd

AGM at the Rokohof, starts 7.30pm

AGM

If you want to chat and share early refreshments then come along from 6.30pm. Any agenda items? Please send to Helen.

Another activity may be added for March, so keep an eye on your emails.

BAGEHOT: Of Them Lords and The Ladies

(A short summary of an article appearing in the Economist, Aug 22nd)

As Boris Leaves Downing Street he Seems Set to Make the House of Lords Worse.



The toilets in the House of Lords are telling. Push open the heavy oak door marked “ladies” - for once the word is being used with precision, not mere politesse - and you find yourself in magnificent, ornate rooms. A chaise longue stands against one wall; an oriental screen against another. Each of the massive marble washstands (such creations resist the mere word “sink”) has a tiny portcullis crest between the taps.

Turn and peep into the cubicles, however, and the picture changes. Some are fitted with grab handles on the walls; one is all but encrusted with mobility aids. In the halls outside, moth traps dangle from grand gothic furnishings. This, then, is the House of Lords: an odd blend of the genteel and the geriatric; of past grandeur and present decay; a place that is one-part opulent palace, two-parts eccentric old-people’s home.

The House of Lords, as every Briton knows, is ridiculous. Westminster’s second chamber has variously been described as “absurd”; an “anachronism” and as the “best day-care centre for the elderly in London”. Its members have not always helped to dispel such attitudes. In the 1980s one lord argued that mere insanity should not bar peers from taking part. Read transcripts of debates and it is clear that it often didn’t. During a debate in 1974 on aid policy for victims of crime, the fourth Earl Russell stood to explain that the House of Lords was the true heir to the Soviet Union and that “naked bathing on beaches or in rivers ought to be universal”, before going on to add the engaging observation that Britain was currently governed by “spiritless papal bum-boys”.

Perhaps this is why, after it was reported that Boris Johnson is intending to ennoble 30 of his chums when he at last departs from Downing Street in September, the news was greeted less with unbounded outrage than a shoulder-shrug of indifference and an aura of what-does-it-matter-anyway?

Some, it is true, balked at the sheer number on Mr Johnson’s alleged list. The House of Lords is already far too big: with 800-plus members it is one of the largest legislative assemblies in the world. As many point out, only China’s National People’s Congress is larger. And 30 new peers is a lot. Margaret Thatcher ennobled only seven in her leaving list; Harold Macmillan a minimalist one. Others expressed alarm at the quality. The idea that Nadine Dorries - culture secretary, cabinet toady and author of soupy historical sagas (“Lord FitzDeane of Ballyford falls deeper under her spell...”) - might become a peer of the realm distressed many. But generally, the reaction was apathetic.

This is certainly not unprecedented. In the 1970s Harold Wilson’s infamous “lavender list” of appointments (so called as it was allegedly drawn up by his political secretary on lavender notepaper) ennobled his raincoat-maker. In the 1920s David Lloyd George flogged honours so openly that an unofficial tariff was recognised: £10,000 for a knighthood; £50,000 (£2m, or \$2.4m, today) for a peerage. Baronetcies, as one P.G. Wodehouse character noted despondently, “have gone up frightfully nowadays”.

But that doesn’t mean that another scandal doesn’t matter. It does. Compared with those that have gone before, Mr Johnson’s appointments are likely to be worse both quantitatively (if he adds 30, he will have created peers at a faster rate than any prime minister in the past half-century) and qualitatively (he has previously elevated his own brother, generous donors to his party and the son of a former KGB officer).

Moreover, the Lords is far more valuable than it is often given credit for. True, it contains some silly appointments. But it also contains incalculably good ones. Sitting on its tiered seats are former heads of MI5, the army and the police; veteran politicians, QCs and academics; and the nation enjoys their expertise for £323 a day, a fraction of the fees that their Lordships might earn elsewhere - and some don’t even claim it.

Undoubtedly, the Lords is easy to mock. Its traditions date back to Norman times; its ceremonies feature robes that date from 1850 and flunkies in tights. Its operation involves an unconscionable number of wigs and far too many ruffles.

But tradition, slowness and even stasis can be invaluable. It has been said that one of the most malevolent constitutional instruments in the country is the Downing Street removal van, which arrives the morning after an election to transport the new prime minister to their official residence. There, they must make decisions of national import while their blood is still filled with adrenaline and removal boxes are still filled with their socks. Democracy is chaotic and dramatic. That is its job.

The House of Lords, by contrast, is stable to the point of staid. Step through the peers’ entrance, just off the main street outside Parliament and you find yourself in yet another grand room, with vaulted ceilings and mullioned windows. This is the Lords’ cloakroom and in it stand rows of coat racks with names in brass holders: here is “Baroness Redfern”; there is “Lord Taylor” and there, by that brolly, “Lord Tebbit”. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet order: this day-care centre takes good care of its inmates.

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Such coziness might be mockable: it is also powerful. Peers are protected by their lifetime employment: they cannot be as easily bullied as MPs into agreeing to legislation they dislike. In recent decades the Lords has defended trial by jury and opposed infringements of civil liberties. And peers are far less cosseted than their fancy surroundings might make you think. Inspect the loo roll in those toilets and you find that it is, as it were, bog-standard.

The House of Lords is without a doubt odd. That does not mean it is worthless. One of the greatest dangers of the miasmatic Mr Johnson is not merely that he taints all he touches. It is that he makes everyone believe that what he spoils wasn't worth very much in the first place. But the House of Lords was, and still is.



North Terrace, Adelaide, 1963
where I saw the Queen

The Queen, my mother and I



1963, Australian
postage stamp

A true story by Australian Susan

I remember the first and only time I saw Queen Elizabeth in person. It was the 20th February 1963. I was five years old. That morning my mother dressed me in a new dress she had bought especially for the occasion. She took a lot of time dressing me, making sure the bows in my hair were perfect and she herself looked so beautiful and was even wearing a hat. I knew something very special was happening. I was going in to the city, also for the first time and alone with my mother, without my father, brother or baby sister.

We took the train, another first. On the train my mother explained that we were going to see the Queen and that the Queen had come all the way from England, my mother's homeland, to see us. I had heard about England, my mother telling me that England was so green and that I would never truly know the colour green until I was to visit England. We alighted at Adelaide station and I was captivated, taking in the glory, of what I later learned to be, the first neoclassical building I had ever seen and it was huge!

As we emerged from the station, I could hardly take in what I saw. Buildings so tall, adorned with pillars, wildly decorative ornamentation and sculptures and if I looked up higher, the brightest summer blue sky: but so many people, people everywhere! I clung to my mother's hand tightly as we hurried to our destination. My mother chose a spot for us under an enormous tree because it was hot that day, very hot. In front of us were rows and rows of people all bustling to get to the front: all I could see were legs but slowly my mother inched us forward until we were in the very front row.

I could hear music that seemed to come from everywhere and as I looked through the barricade, my eyes opened wide in awe at the passing parade. Horses, motor bikes, shiny cars and so many uniforms in so many colours. My mother was standing behind me, with her hands held firmly on my shoulders and I could feel her excitement as she leant to my ear, telling me what it all meant. And as I looked up to my mother's face, I could see the sun shining through the wide leaves, making them a luminous green, just like I would see in England.

Suddenly the crowd got louder and started cheering. My mother picked me up in her arms, pointing to a huge black car with an open top and told me to wave to the Queen. The Queen was coming, she was nearly here and I waved with all my might. Then I saw her and my child's heart is sure that she looked at me, smiled at me and waved back to me. I was so close to her that I saw her eyes to be as blue as the summer sky. As the car passed my mother wept and held me even closer and I wept with her. It was the most beautiful and exhilarating moment of my little life. A moment so special, made of magic and fairy tales, shared between my mother and I and surely blessed by the Queen herself.