



# BRITISH KOREAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Members of the International  
Federation of Korean War  
Veterans Associations

**Patron**  
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of the  
Anglo Korean Society

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## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE AGM OF THE ANGLO-KOREAN SOCIETY HELD AT THE CULTURAL CENTRE, NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, LONDON WC2N 5EJ ON TUESDAY 9 MARCH 2010**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am pleased that I am able to attend this AGM to present the BKVA report; it seems incredible that the year 2009/10 has passed so quickly. I would like to say how much we, the BKVA membership have appreciated receiving the Anglo-Korean Society newsletters; they are informative and keep us up to date with events.
2. Since my report to last year's AGM we have experienced a year of mixed fortunes.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

3. First among the highlights was an invitation from Ambassador CHUN to Major General Swindells and myself to join the President His Excellency LEE MYUNG BAK for breakfast, with others, on Friday 3 April. As you will remember the President was in London for the G20 conference.
4. This was a great honour, not only for General Swindells and me, but for the BKVA and the IFKWVA. There was a very limited attendance which included prominent politicians, financiers and businessmen, the Lord Mayor of London and other borough mayors and personalities from sport and other spheres. Lord Kerr, a leading diplomat, led the reply to the President's address and invited both the General and myself to contribute.
5. The breakfast was held in the plush surroundings of the Landmark Hotel, Marylebone Road, NW1 and speaking for General Swindells and myself we were most appreciative that we were able to meet the President and that he was able to find time in his very busy programme to host the occasion.
6. On 25 June 30 members of the BKVA were invited by the Ambassador His Excellency CHUN YUNG-WOO to a wreath laying ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral followed by lunch at the Korean Embassy; as always it was an emotional and meaningful commemoration to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Korean War.

7. Next, on 27 July, was the "BKVA Korean War Commemoration Day". This function takes place annually, on 27 July at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire. The guest of honour was Ambassador CHUN who addressed the congregation during the commemoration service; his comments were well received by our members. He then "reviewed the troops" and took the salute, with General Swindells, at the march past.

8. This was probably our most successful Commemoration Day yet; the weather was kind to us and over 1,000 members, wives, families and friends participated of whom approximately 500 marched to our memorial plot. We enjoy the pomp and ceremony of these occasions and we each grow three inches when marching behind a band; which on this occasion was the Minden Band of the Queen's Division.

9. This was the occasion we said farewell to Captain LEE, JIN-Kyu who attended for the last time in his official capacity as Defence Attaché; he was accompanied by his wife on this occasion. We were able to meet his successor, Captain CHOI, CHONG-Ho who attended in a non-official capacity; he too was accompanied by his wife.

10. It was a nice change to have Captain CHOI join the Embassy; all four of his predecessors had been Captains LEE, ROK Navy.

11. The Korean Festival was held at Kingston-upon-Thames on Saturday 15 August and although I was unable to be present it was reported to me as being most successful and was enjoyed by all who attended.

12. The BKVA's 28<sup>th</sup> AGM was held on 24 October during a weekend reunion held in Caernarfon; again, there were no changes to the official appointments.

13. Ambassador CHUN and Captain CHOI, together with their respective wives joined us for the weekend. During our working session on the Saturday the Ambassador and his party decided to climb Snowdon. They chose the wrong day for such a venture; the weather was deplorable - biting winds and driving rain - and they opted to climb on the exposed side of the mountain. They got halfway up the mountain but were defeated by the conditions and returned to the hotel bedraggled and windswept ..... they were sorry not to have succeeded but much enjoyed the exercise after being cooped up in London.

14. The Ambassador and his party joined us for our annual dinner on Saturday evening and attended our church service on the Sunday morning. The Ambassador took the salute as the veterans marched past the War Memorial in Caernarfon. The weather had improved and the Ambassador did not seem adversely affected by the storms of the previous day.

## **DOWNSIDE**

15. At our AGM our membership stood at 3491 which was down on the previous year by 184. We expect to lose members when one considers that the youngest of the veterans is 76 years of age and we are a finite organization. Even so we have been hit hard by the deaths of some notable members of the Association during the year under report.

16. Our first loss was Colonel the Reverend Sam Davies; he had been our Chaplain since the inauguration of the BKVA in 1981. He had been padre to the GLOSTERS and was a prisoner of war in Korea.

17. Soon after, we lost Major General Archie Birtwistle who had been our president for 9 years and a patron of the BKVA for the last 2. It is not unreasonable to say that with Reverend Sam and General Archie age took its toll as they were respectively 91 and 82 years of age when they died; that cannot be said of the next loss.

18. The Venerable David Brierley, who succeeded Reverend Sam Davies as our Chaplain, was only 55. At the time of his death David was Archdeacon of Sudbury; he had been associated with Greater Manchester Branch for many years and was a natural successor as our Chaplain, an appointment he assumed, with the blessing of his Bishop, in April 2008. He conducted the service at the BKVA Korean War Commemoration Day on 27 July and it was a great shock to us all when we learned that he had died on 1 August. His last official function was at Alrewas.

19. Another stalwart who passed on recently was Charles Bogart, A&SH, who was our National Piper from 1981 until 1999 when his health curtailed his activities. I understand that when playing the pipes in Seoul he gathered around him many children which earned him the nickname of "The Pied Piper of Seoul".

20. George Lakey was next to go. He died in November. At the time of his death he was a member of the BKVA Executive Committee and a trustee of the Samsung/BKVA/RBL Scholarship Fund.

21. Maurice (Mick) Geoghagan was one of our founder members, he was president of North East London Branch and a BKVA trustee; his funeral service was held on 23 February. The Koreans have also lost prominent personalities who have been good friends of the BKVA; two former Presidents of Korea, their Excellencies KIM, DAE-JUNG and ROH, MOO-HYUN and Major General PARK, SEH-JIK former Chairman of the Korean Veterans Association in Seoul.

## **SAMSUNG/BKVA/RBL SCHOLARSHIP 2010**

22. Now to a brighter subject when we can look to the future rather than dwell on the past. The interview panel met at HQ RBL (199 Borough High Street, SE1 1AA); there were 5 candidates for this year's scholarship.

A. The successful candidate who was awarded a 2 year scholarship is:

Miss Claire O'Connell.

She is a graduate of the University of London having gained a BA in History. She qualified as a Solicitor at the College of Law, Guildford and the University of Exeter. She is a practising solicitor with a firm in Epsom. Her service connection is her grandfather who was a sergeant in the RAF during World War II. Her chosen subject will be International Cooperation which she will study at Seoul National University. Claire has experience of Korea; in 2005/06 she taught English for 8 months at the IPPT Foreign Language Institute in Osan City. She is a member of the A-K Society; in fact it was at the AGM here last year that I first met her and suggested she consider applying for the scholarship.

B. The panel also decided to award a year's scholarship to:

Mr Simon Hathaway.

At 41 years of age he is above the normal age of candidates awarded scholarships. He impressed the panel. He is an ex RAF officer with 16 years service but was medically discharged in 2007.

He is a graduate of Manchester Metropolitan University with a BSc (Hons) degree in Physics and Computer Science. His chosen subject is photography which he will study at Yonsei University.

23. The scholarships were presented to the successful candidates at a lunch held in the Officers Mess in the Tower of London on 8 October. Ambassador CHUN was to present the scholarships but was called away at the last minute; General Swindells did the honours. The scholarship is worth £15,000 a year to a successful candidate; we also award £5,000 a year in bursaries, the latter under the auspices of Professor James Grayson and the British Association for Korean Studies (BAKS).

#### **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATIONS (IFKWVA)**

24. As I advised at the last AGM I was to visit Australia with the then Secretary General, Major General JEONG, KOOK-BORN; the purposes of our visit were goodwill and liaison. General Park, Chairman of KVA, who sponsor IFKWVA, asked if when there could we organize a degree of unity among the various Korean War Veterans Associations in Australia of which there are upwards of 30 .... who do not talk to each other.

25. We were there for 7 days and were extremely busy with meetings, talks, functions, dinners and the like and to cut a long story short, the Australian veterans resented our intrusion; there was no move to unity and they still don't talk to each other!

#### **CONCLUSION**

26. In closing I would like to say how very sorry we were that Ambassador CHUN was short-toured but accept that he returned to Korea to take up a political post. We were represented at his farewell reception at which we made him an Honorary Life Member of the BKVA and presented him with a certificate to that effect together with a BKVA plaque and a tie. He was a good friend to, and very supportive of the BKVA.

27. Finally, I have to advise you that Frank Ellison resigned as our General Secretary after 13 years in the post. He was an excellent secretary and will be missed. He remains on the Executive Committee in a lesser post. His successor as General Secretary is Mrs Susan Hurst who has settled into the post extremely well.

28. We have had our problems this year but as an association we are active and vibrant. If you have any questions I will be pleased to answer them now or, possibly, later if that is more convenient.

9 March 2010

George Gadd  
National Chairman BKVA