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Coming Events

▶ Friday 11th May

- ▶ Mothers & Daughters Supper, 19:30 hrs. at Christ Church.
- ▶ 40th Anniversary of the Royston Grange Accident, 10:30 hrs at The British Cemetery.

▶ Saturday 12th May

- ▶ Il Shamrock Cup - Indoor Piping Competition, 16:00 hrs. at The Shannon Irish Pub (Bartolomé Mitre 1318).

▶ Saturday 16th May

- ▶ British Society Lecture Supper, 19:30 hrs. at The Anglo School in Carrasco (María Saldún de Rodríguez 2195).





President's Blurb

Dear members

The British Society's 95th Annual General Meeting (AGM) was as successful as it could have been. High attendance by members proves our Society is as vibrant as we can hope for, and though (as someone pointed out to me at the event) the amount of Next Generation members present was comparatively low, the many congratulatory phone calls and e-mails I have received from our younger members since then has shown me that the absence may have been mostly caused by busy schedules rather than lack of interest.

The AGM saw Madeleine Pool step down from her post of Vice-President and Thomas Gordon-Firing step in to replace her: thank you Madeleine for two years of hard work and welcome Thomas to the team. Ricky Medina was also voted onto the Executive Committee, officially adding the duties of Newsletter Editor to those of Webmaster which he has taken on a year ago. Susan McConnell was voted to stay on for a second term as Secretary, her brother Ian to keep on as our Auditor and Liz Cowley to continue to chair the Sir Winston Churchill and Benevolent Funds Committee, so the rest of our team will remain largely unchanged. The bad news is that you will have to put up with me as President for another two years, but you have nobody but yourselves to blame for that :)

We have continued the annual drive towards the nomination of Honorary Members of The British Society, whose aim is to recognize the outstanding service to the British Community over many years given by some of our members. This year's new Honorary Members – named by the Executive Committee and

acknowledged by the member at the AGM – were Linda Brady, Zena Hubber and Richard Cowley... congratulations to all three for this well-deserved recognition!

April also saw us through our first ever British Society football tournament. The event was greatly enjoyed by all and will become part of our annual schedule. I must thank Mark Teuten for having helped us set up this event and for having helped us interest the younger crowd in a Society event. You will find Mark's comments on the event in the Sports section of this Newsletter.

This month will see our second lecture-supper of the 2012 cycle, where Vivian Gepp will delight us with a talk on ornithology (see details in separate box). The cycle has gone from strength to strength, becoming the Society's most regular activity and providing a regular opportunity for our members to meet. I hope to see you all at one or another of these events.

As you know, The British Society now has its own website at <http://www.britsoc.org.uy>. Though there is still a lot of work to be done, I encourage you to take a look and let us have your opinion on what has been completed so far... all feedback is welcome.

Negotiations with the Board of the British Hospital with a view to handing over the running of the Sir Winston Churchill Home on a permanent basis continue. I will keep you posted on developments as they occur, but rest assured that everything is being done with the utmost care and the well-being of the residents in mind.

Sir Winston Churchill Home News

Thanks to the efforts of Virginia and Heather Campbell, the residents enjoyed a festive Easter luncheon complete with decorations and coloured Easter Eggs.

April also saw Millie celebrating her 96th birthday with friends and family enjoying a tea, along with the other residents. We are especially appreciative of the contributions made in her honour on the occasion of her birthday by her family and friends to the Sir Winston Churchill Home Fund.



Lecture Supper

The second lecture-supper of the 2012 cycle will be held on Wednesday May 16th starting 19:30 hrs. at The Anglo School in Carrasco (María Saldún de Rodríguez 2195).

Our lecturer will be Vivienne Gepp, who will talk to us about our feathered friends and teach us how to spot and enjoy the many and varied birds of Uruguay, an ornithologist's paradise. Vivienne is a Plant Pathologist for the Faculty of Agriculture of the Universidad de la República. Her love of wildlife in general – and of birds in particular – stems from childhood bird-watching outings with her father, Alfred Gepp, author of the first published guide to Uruguayan birds, "Aves del

Uruguay".

On this occasion we will be going Hungarian for dinner, serving a dish of authentic goulash with spiced rice as the main course and a delicious apple strudel for dessert, all prepared especially for the occasion by our excellent British Community cooks, will be served immediately following the lecture.

Tickets cost \$250 for members and \$350 for non-members. Seats are limited, so book your place now at britsoc.events@gmail.com or by calling Susan McConnell on 099267413.

Obituaries

Minna Morton

Minna Morton, who died in April at the age of 90, was a friend to many in the British community and outside. For years she lived in the Prado with her niece Patty, her sister Ruth who looked after her when she became frail, and a succession of much-loved dogs and cats.

Minna was born in Uruguay and educated at the British Schools before working for Hugh Grindley at the railways and then for Sandy McDougall, the regional representative of de Havilland and then Hawker Siddley. She went on to be accountant at the British Embassy, where her kindness and approachability brought a constant stream of visitors to her office.

On retiring she became a very successful freelance translator.

One of Minna's best stories was how, as a girl, she had gone down to the seafront in December 1939 with her family to see the Graf Spee leave harbour. Her grandfather, who had been in the Royal Navy, lifted his arm towards the pocket battleship and uttered the curse "*Cruz diablo, devil blast ye black*". At that point, suddenly, the Graf Spee blew up. Minna said that her grandmother turned to him and said "*Now, Jack, see what you've done!*".

Christ Church News

The traditional Mothers & Daughters Supper will be held at Christ Church on Friday 11 May at 7:30 p.m. For tickets please contact Elaine Dee at 2619 1905 or Betty Gordon at 2600 4513.



British Embassy News

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and keep in the loop!

Olympic Countdown

The Embassy marked 100 days to the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games with an event attended by several Uruguayan athletes that will compete in London 2012. Manager of the Uruguayan football team, Maestro Tabárez, government and sports authorities were also present at the Residence to celebrate this landmark. The event attracted national and international media attention. After the speeches, athletes, including the national squad, got some practice in by participating in a volleyball game in the garden.



Poster Competition

Children from Escuela Gran Bretaña painted beautiful posters for a competition organized by the Embassy on "London 2012" and Olympic Values. The Ambassador, the Embassy's Head of Communication, the School's Headmistress and teachers had a hard time selecting the winners, who received official Olympics merchandise. The 10 best posters were shown at the Residence's 100 days event and reached a massive audience through wide media coverage. The Tabárez connection? He is an Escuela Gran Bretaña alumnus!



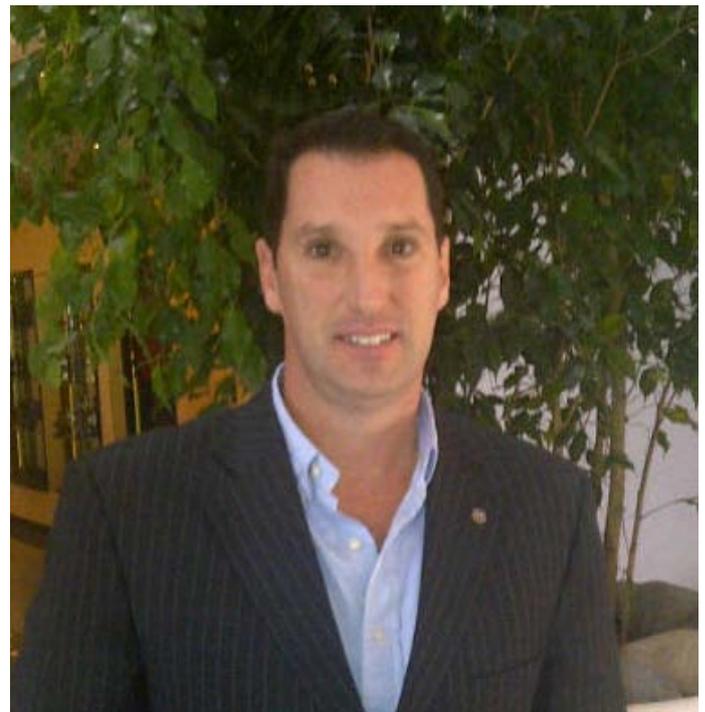
Consular News

Introducing Roy Davies, Consular Agent in the department of Colonia.

Over 50% of the 21,000 British Nationals who visit Uruguay each year enter the country through the port at Colonia. Roy is part of our consular network in Uruguay and our first point of contact in Colonia in the event of an emergency.

Foreign Secretary William Hague made a speech about consular diplomacy on April 4th looking at the role of British Consular services and where they are heading. Read his speech by clicking on the link below to find out what consular work is all about:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=749982782>



More news on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) pages



Featured Article

by David Rennie
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Falklands Visit

A few weeks ago, thanks to the support of the British Embassy I was able to make a short trip to the Falkland Islands to visit the Falkland Islands Community School to look for ways of rebuilding relationships between The British Schools and the islands.

Many years ago whilst I was studying in Glasgow University my cousin, Graeme, was in the Falklands as a young soldier in the Scots Guards. Until then the Falklands were relatively unknown to the majority of British people. Being fortunate enough to live in South America for quite some time gave me another vision of the islands but this short visit changed all of that.

During my stay I was fortunate to be hosted by the Deputy Head of Falkland Islands Community School, Helen Bell, who made sure that I was involved in all aspects of Island life.

The School was rebuilt in recent years and offers purpose built modern facilities for the youngsters; this is accompanied by a staff of teachers, many of whom are brought out from the UK, dedicated to provide for the widest range of abilities and interests. The result is an exciting school that exudes energy and enthusiasm, as its name implies it really is the centre of life for many teenagers.

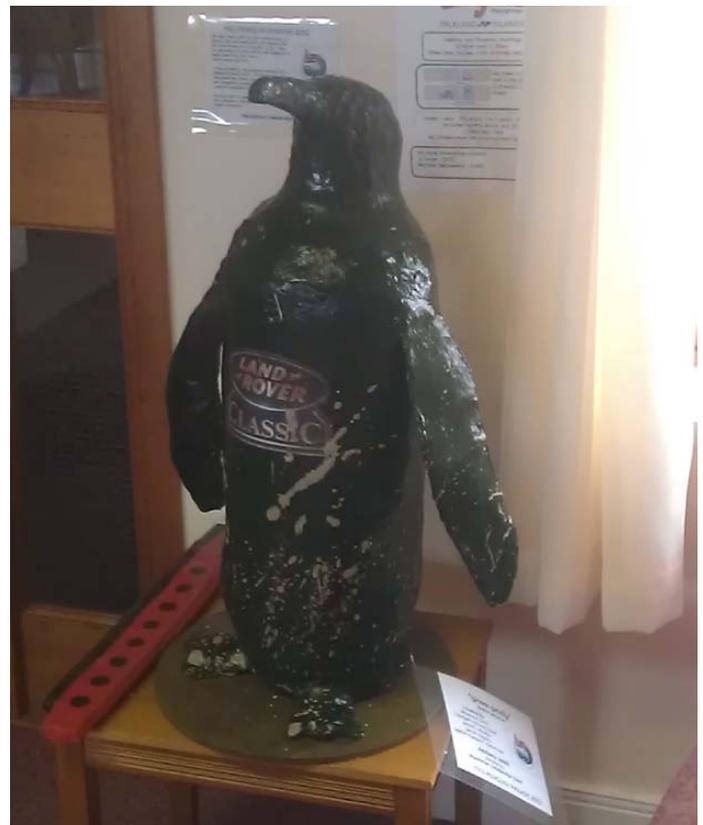
The Junior School in Port Stanley is equally well equipped working in parallel with “camp” schooling, which takes various forms ranging from small rural schools, boarding in Port Stanley, and also some teachers visiting and staying on farms for a few days at a time, with the backup of specialist staff back in Port Stanley keeping in touch with the children by phone until the teacher comes around again, following the policy of the Falkland Government to support families who live and work in the countryside.

After leaving the Community School there are various alternatives such as the Training Centre in Port Stanley which provides certification in many trades such a plumbing, computing, joinery, secretarial, central heating etc. under the guidance of Jock, from Paisley, Scotland and his team.

Quite a few school leavers are sponsored by the Falkland Island Government to go to 6th Form College in the UK, and then onto University. Although this is quite an investment, the returns are worthwhile with

many of these young men and women coming back to the Islands well qualified to take on an active role in the community.

During my visit the older students were putting the finishing touches to a dozen paper mache penguins which were distributed around town, rather like the “cow parade” that is to be seen in other parts of the world. There were penguins wrapped in brown paper (in the post office), or in the painted in Land Rover green, complete with the logo and muddy patches in the supermarket. Later they will all be auctioned for charity.



We are working on the idea of creating joint projects between the students here at The British Schools and those on the Island despite of the difficulties posed by the slow, expensive internet connection. There is a monopoly controlled by Cable and Wireless using satellite connections which is a determining factor in modernizing communications, on the other hand there are many islanders who do not want to “rush into” the 21st century. Nonetheless we are sure that we will be able to improve the links that we currently have with the School there to the benefit of all parties.



On the Sunday after my arrival we went for a short 16km cross country stroll with the Ramblers Club to visit the resting place of two sailors from HMS Beagle, it was hard going on the way out, and even harder on the return with a steady breeze from the South turning a “summer shower” into an icy nightmare. This wind seems to be present day and night, and is noticed only by visitors.

One evening after School we ventured out to Gypsy Cove to see real penguins. It is an amazing sight to see these curious animals building their nests in the hillside oblivious to the dangers of the mines laid by the Argentinians during the war 30 years ago below the shifting sand dunes. The truth is that they are much safer now that we heavyweight humans cannot get near to their nesting ground.

The pace of life and the atmosphere made it feel like being in some small town somewhere on the East coast of England, complete with a seaman’s mission, small Cathedral, teashops, and pubs. Locking cars and houses is not considered a necessity by most, and borrowing eggs from a neighbour to make a birthday cake was commonplace, given the current shortage.

Recent problems with Argentina have exacerbated the difficulties in importing fresh fruit, so the few kilos of nectarines that I bought in Punta Arenas were well received and shared amongst friends.

There is a real sense of community and family in the Island. The Union Jack was to be seen, but the Falkland Island Flag was clearly predominant. After 180 years of continuous occupation they feel that this is their home.

Book Tip

by Cynthia Myers Dickin
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“Quiet Endurance” by Frances Evans Bengtsson, MBE

“Born, Christened in German Camp”... The true story of a young English couple who got caught up in the terror and intrigues of the Second World War, written by their only daughter. The cover of the book, shows them in January 1941 just before they boarded the ill-fated “Afric Star” in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Frank’s words at the time: *“I wonder if she’ll make it”*.

The author, who was the first British baby born in a German prison camp during World War II, writes about the events that have left a deep imprint on her life. She lives in the hills of Córdoba, in central Argentina, the country she was brought up in after returning from imprisonment. A great lover of animals, she has always liked writing, piano-playing and painting. On writing the book, she recalls:

“Towards the end of 2009 I looked out a small metal plaque I had kept safely in a jewellery box. It was my mother’s prisoner identification which she was made to wear at all times in the last German prison camp she was taken to in 1941, after going through at least ten jails both in occupied France and Germany. The prison camp was Liebenau in Ravensburg, Germany where she gave birth to the “first British baby born in a Nazi prisoner of war camp” – namely me. I decided it was time to let the plaque see the light of day again and to have it framed together with photographs of my parents and a roughly sketched itinerary with the sequence of events that started in Buenos Aires when they boarded the ill-fated “Afric Star” in January 1941, her sinking by the German raider “Kormoran”, being taken prisoners and transferred to two other German vessels, first to the “Nordmark” and later to the “Portland” on which ship my father was killed as they arrived in Bordeaux. At the time, my parents had no idea I was on the way.”

--“Frances Evans has written this exciting book, showing courage and sensitivity within the framework of the tragedy of the Second World War. A moving testimony of the past, evocative of the best novels on the subject”.
–Vlady Kociancich, Writer and Literary Critic.

If you would like to purchase a copy of the book, please contact Ian Dickin at ian dickin@adinet.com.uy, 095951004 or 27099392, or Cynthia Myers Dickin at cynthiadickin@gmail.com, 094013222 or 27099392.



Featured Article

by Ian Dickin
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M.V. Royston Grange

Many of you who are today in your mid-50's or over and who were living in Uruguay or across the river, in Argentina at the time, will recall the tragic accident of the British flag m.v. *ROYSTON GRANGE*. The vessel was owned by Houlder Bros. London and collided on 11th May 1972 in the River Plate around 0540 hrs. with the m.t. *TIEN CHEE*. Both vessels were transiting the Canal Punta Indio; the former heading for Montevideo, about 35 miles from her next destination and the other vessel heading towards the YPF La Plata oil refinery.

Although no exact details as to how the accident actually happened are known, the limited findings of the investigation point to the fact that the *TIEN CHEE* most likely veered towards the British vessel and in turn this vessel took evasive action by turning to starboard (to her right), bouncing off the South edge of the channel and back into the path of the tanker, with the resulting collision occurring.

The result of the contact of both vessels, caused the cargo of oil in the *TIEN CHEE* to ignite and the pressure of the tanks to burst, enveloping the *ROYSTON GRANGE* in a ball of oil and flames, which completely destroyed the ship and burned all aboard beyond recognition. The fire, being aided by the cargo of frozen butter and other similar cargo of a perishable nature, on board. A total of 73 persons: crewmembers, passengers and the Argentine River Plate Pilot on the *ROYSTON GRANGE* were lost and 8 Chinese crewmembers of the *TIEN CHEE* also perished.

A funeral service was held in Montevideo, on May 20th. 1972 at Holy Trinity, Anglican Church and at the British Cemetery, with the presence of 130 family members who were flown out from the U.K. for that occasion. A memorial service was held on June 8th of that year, at "All-Hallows-by-the-Tower", London – where a stained-glass window can be seen, in memory of all who were lost.

The *ROYSTON GRANGE* was subsequently towed to Montevideo and eventually to Spain for demolition and the *TIEN CHEE* was scrapped in Buenos Aires.

The 40th anniversary of this tragedy will be remembered on 11th May 2012, with the presence of relatives of some of the crewmembers arriving from the U.K. for this most special event.

The formal notice thereof is appended hereto, and we look forward to as many as possible of the Community, attending this service of remembrance and thanksgiving.



M.V. "Royston Grange"

A service of "Remembrance & Thanksgiving", in memory of the Crew, Passengers and River Plate Pilot who perished as a result of the collision in the River Plate, between this vessel and the M.T. "Tien Chee", 40 years ago, will be held at the British Cemetery, Montevideo on Friday 11th May 2012, at 10:30 a.m.

Family members of the deceased will be present at the ceremony.

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Lamb Chops

by Jonathan Lamb
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This column will be the last for a few months because its author will be in the UK auditioning directors for next April's visiting British theatre extravaganza, an 80-minute adaptation of the much-loved period comedy *She Stoops To Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith. For year 5 of the non-profit venture (see www.actorstouruguay.com), some of the best laureates from past years have been approached: we are pleased to report that the idea of returning to Uruguay has been enthusiastically received by Robert Rowe, the judge in *The Drama of the River Plate* (2009) and by the stars of *Brief Encounter* (2011), Adrian Metcalfe and Sonia Beck. As a fallback for the male lead in this the original sitcom (about a suitor who mistakes his prospective father-in-law for an innkeeper) we hope to have the excellent Chris Anderton, seen here doing a British Embassy-sponsored workshop at the Escuela Gran Bretaña.



At last, a decent Chinese restaurant in Montevideo. Tucked away just south of Rivera, not far from the Zoo, at 2 de Mayo 1367 (tel: 2628 7794) is Asia, where beaming Chinaman Mr Chengwo and his team of agreeable assistants serve up generous and reasonably-priced portions in a décor pleasantly devoid of dragons and paper lampshades. The restaurant also delivers to places as far away as Punta Carretas. We can particularly recommend the tofu with vegetables in ginger sauce, served on a square plate with a display of fresh tomato and coriander. The best news is that

Asia also does the Chinese ravioli that used to be so good at the Tio Chef downtown. Known as something unwritable pronounced Chow Tzuh, which sounds like an electrician committing suicide, these dumplings apparently have various fillings and are not unlike Dim Sum. If the Tio Chef's are anything to go by, they should be delicious, but be warned: they need to be ordered 24 hours in advance.

Also surprisingly good are the pasties from Empanadas San Juan, Williman 532 esquina Montero (tel: 2711 7489). Best to get a delivery from here as the place itself is small and basic, but it seems to be doing a roaring trade. The takeaway empanadas come in a smart box and have nice flaky pastry: we particularly enjoyed the caprese and the oriental chicken with beansprouts.

Not so enjoyable, however, were this season's prices at most establishments in Punta del Este. For a cheese fondue at Bungalow Suizo in Avenida Roosevelt: 1400 pesos? We went to the supermarket and made our own – itself not so cheap when a small piece of Uruguayan gruyère costs the equivalent of £5.50. Even at the other end of the restaurant scale, a snack of pizza and faina with two soft drinks at La Pasiva in Gorlero cost £12. Although many things in the UK are prohibitive, eg hotels, private dental fees and anything that involves manual labour, it will be nice to go to a pound shop and buy three packets of paracetamol for 30 pesos, or 40 pencils at less than one peso each.

Stop press: This coming weekend will be the last chance to see *The 39 Steps* at the Montevideo Players, revived due to popular demand and one of their best shows for years, partly because it's very funny and also because the whole cast speak really good English. If there are any seats left (several nights have already sold out), go to Abitab while you still can!

Community Outreach

We are looking for gardening tools and fabrics (old sheets, curtains, clothes and remnants for example) for Escuela No. 235 which is in a disadvantaged area of Las Piedras, where they have a vegetable garden and teach sewing and other useful skills. Please contact Susan Drever at 2712 2269.



Back In Time

by Tony Beckwith
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Wake Up!

Soon after I arrived in Austin, Texas in the early 1980s, Lillian took me to a drive-in movie. As we watched the screen, holding hands, with the speakers hooked onto the side of the car, I experienced an epiphany. These days we call it an 'ah-ha!' moment, but it's the same thing.

Until that moment, my movie-going experience was limited to the traditional indoor theatre. There were no drive-in movies in Montevideo in the 1950s. But there certainly were radios and records, and the music of the Everly Brothers who sang the memorable hit, "Wake up, little Suzy." The action in this musical story takes place at the movies, as explained in the lyrics:

*We've both been sound asleep
wake up little Suzy and weep
the movie's over, it's four o'clock
and we're in trouble deep.*

As a teenager I memorized the lyrics of virtually every song I listened to. I always assumed that everyone did, and didn't discover until many years later that I was wrong. But then, perhaps not everyone listened to a favourite song, or all the tracks on a favourite album, over and over and over and over and over and over again. After a while those lyrics were burned into one's mental hard drive, never to be forgotten. Anyway, after listening to "Wake up, little Suzy" a few million times, I still couldn't understand how someone could fall asleep at the movies and not wake up until four o'clock in the morning.

*Well, we told your mama that we'd be in by ten
Suzy, baby, looks like we goofed again!*

That just couldn't happen in any movie theatre I'd ever been to because the ushers would usher everyone out of their seats after each performance. It would have been impossible to snooze on uninterrupted until the wee small hours of the morning. What was the song talking about? Unable to solve the riddle, I put it aside and forgot about it. Decades went by and then, that night at the drive-in movie, the answer suddenly hit me like a thunderbolt and I cried out, "ah-ha!"

It had finally dawned on me that Don and Phil Everly were telling a story set in a *drive-in* movie! At a drive-in, Suzy and I could indeed have fallen asleep and slumbered on into the night. Every time I thought about it, the Suzy in my mind's eye looked like someone else, and more details of the incident emerged, as from a fog. Or steam.

*Whatta we gonna tell your mama?
Whatta we gonna tell your pop?
Whatta we gonna tell our friends
when they say, "ooh-la-la!"*

Now, at last, my ancient quest was at an end; I had finally found the solution to a puzzle that had long challenged my reason, and the answer had provided a most satisfying cultural insight as well. I had been unable to solve the riddle of the song because there were no drive-in movies in Montevideo at that time. But there were plenty of regular ones.

During my teenage years I would often join my gang to attend marathon Saturday or Sunday movie sessions that were cleverly scheduled to begin just before lunch at 1 p.m. and end at about nine o'clock at night. We'd go to the Casablanca, the Biarritz, or the Cine Carrasco. We'd see four full-length movies, interspersed with cartoons and newsreels and advertisements. There were concession stands of the old, entrepreneurial variety: vendors with trays on stands or carts on wheels, offering gum (*¡chicle!*), cold soft drinks (*¡Pessi Cola bien helada!*), hot dogs (*¡frrraaanfrrutee!*), sweet and salty popcorn (*¡el pó, el pó acaramelado!*), hot roasted peanuts in a newspaper cone (*¡calentito el maní!*), cigarettes (*¡cigarillos!*), sandwiches (*¡sánguches!*), and ice cream (*¡vasito, barrita, bombón helado!*). Did I say cigarettes? Don't tell my parents!

My favourite place to be on a cold and rainy Saturday afternoon was the Casablanca. For one thing, most people in the audience were about my age. It wasn't until years later, when I went to the movies at night as an adult, that I understood just how totally those weekend matinees were geared to the kids. And I appreciated them enormously. They were a snug, exciting, safe place to be away from home and surrounded by friends and peers. Not that there was anything wrong with life at home; on the contrary, I was lucky enough to grow up in a very loving and easy-going family. But when the boys and girls in my gang were at the Casablanca, that's where I absolutely had to be. Which movies were actually being shown was of no importance whatsoever. I doubt I ever even looked it up in the paper. That certainly wasn't why I was there. Not by a long shot.

*The movie wasn't so hot
it didn't have much of a plot
we fell asleep, our goose is cooked
our reputation is shot
wake up, little Suzy
wake up, little Suzy
we gotta go home.*



La Bayadère: Exoticism Comes to the River Plate

The Ballet Nacional del Sodre's second season under the artistic direction of Julio Bocca was launched with the premiere of *La Bayadère*, a historic classic set in royal India newly staged by famous former American Ballet Theatre prima ballerina Natalia Makarova.

La Bayadère is a dramatic ballet of eternal love, mystery, fate, vengeance and justice intertwined to tell the story of Nikiya, a temple dancer, her lover Solor, and the vengeance that keeps them apart, at least in this life. It successfully blends exoticism, venomous snakes and opium with white tutus. The scenic design is like looking through an old picture book from western culture with a romanticized view of India.

The choreography for this ballet's famous Kingdom of the Shades section was left intact in Makarova's staging, as the third act of the production. This world-renowned part of *La Bayadère* showcases 24 female dancers in white tutus, executing 38 synchronized and seamless arabesques while descending onto the stage, and is one of the purest forms of ballet-blanc. The Kingdom of the Shades is a challenging segment because it requires such control and precision from the corps; few works in the classical repertoire are more demanding. It is so popular that it is often performed on its own.

La Bayadère's original production was set to the music of Viennese composer Ludwig Minkus (1826-1917). The only original score of *La Bayadère* exists in Russia, but has never been available in the west. For her staging of the ballet, Makarova commissioned John Lanchbery to reconstruct the original Minkus score.

Although the exact origin of the story of *La Bayadère* is unknown, it is a prime example of a 19th century Romantic ballet, set in an exotic location and involving a fascination with the Orient, spiritualism, triangular relationships, ethereal beings and melodramatic plot

lines. Despite the ballet's setting in ancient India, Ludwig Minkus's music and the original choreography barely made any gesture to traditional forms of Indian dance and music, as the ballet was a vision of the Orient seen through 19th century European eyes, particularly since it was produced during the height of the British Raj (Queen Victoria of England took the title Empress of India in 1877).

Regarding the Sodre's version of *La Bayadère*, the choreography for the Shades follows the arabesque in profile. The third act with its tempest is very well resolved, overthrowing even Buda's statue. The dancer representing Nikiya, in particular, offered a performance to which she dedicated every corporeal resource and an entire repertoire of treasures from her inner life. The dancer performing as prince Solor was perfect in his balance and strength, and was strongly applauded by the audience. The dancer acting as Gamzatti was clearly a crowd-pleaser as well. Overall, it is a performance spiced by full-out brilliant dancing.



Classified Ads

I'm looking for a second-hand croquet set. Please contact Daniel Pereira at 099 118019 or dpereira@ieee.org



Harming With Healthcare

Two months ago, we were shocked to have discovered that two male nurses had been serial-killing patients in a public and a private hospital and that this had probably been happening over a few years. The public was also appalled at the way the hospital and public authorities had handled the problem, which had been suspected for at least a few months. In the second half of April, news about sexual abuse of a female patient by a male nurse hit the headlines. The response of the private hospital which employed the nurse was immediate: he was fired. Unfortunately, the public authorities fell short of their responsibility to respond adequately when the mother of the abused patient reported the problem. These cases are isolated and fortunately do not represent the general situation of health care. Nearly all health care providers and professionals are caring and vocational and have been unjustly shamed by the behaviour of less than a handful of individuals. What happened could certainly be a plot for the series *Criminal Minds*. We must understand that certain human beings have severe personality disorders that put them at odds with society's values and no field or profession is free of having them within, be it paedophile clergy, abusive schoolteachers and elder caregivers and perpetrators of the nonviolent crimes of corruption, stealing and fraud. What happened should have been framed in this context: bad people as insiders, can do much harm, before we are able to detect them. If we identify them, our obligation is to report them to the authorities, the police or the judicial system or even blow the whistle, overcoming a generalized culture of false collegiality with a co-worker who is acting criminally.

Unfortunately, this criminal issue has been confused with the real fact that health care organizations can cause harm, even if there are no criminals within. The criminal acts are *voluntary* and clear examples of *wrongdoing*. This should not be confused with the potential harm that health care delivery can inflict *involuntarily* on patients; I would call this *wrong-happening*. More than a decade ago, the Institute of Medicine in a report called *To Err is Human* (1999) estimated that up to 98,000 patients may have died every year in hospitals

in the USA, due to errors during the provision of their care. These errors happened because the system and workplace design were in many cases *set up* so as to make errors go undetected until a severe or fatal event happened. The usual reaction has been to find a culprit and ride the *naming-shaming-blaming* route, which leads nowhere: whenever an error is detected it'll be covered up; no employee wants to be in harm's way... so just keep your mouth shut! Since then, in most of the world, health care organizations have set up patient safety committees, who investigate all reports in a nonpenalizing way; employees are encouraged and congratulated to identify a potential for mistakes or near-misses. Simple things like similar-sounding medication names, containers that look alike, illegible handwriting so typical of many physicians and switching to less reliance on memory and establishment of checklists for standard procedures, weeding out unnecessary administrative and bureaucratic tasks, have done a great deal to create progressively safer systems.

Much of what followed the public knowledge of the criminal acts has focussed on this issue of error, which I dubbed *wrong-happening*, which is framing the original problem in the wrong setting. The poor accountability of the public authorities to confront the suspicion of the criminal acts, did little to improve their role in separating the two issues. In public hospitals which are understaffed, with overworked employees prone to burnout and frequent sick leave, plus the perceived lack of accountability of their managers and authorities, the potential of error is rampant and the risk of political opportunism to keep the problem of *wrong-doing* and *wrong-happening* undifferentiated, will do little to improve the already deteriorating relationship between the public and those who work in health care organizations.

Shortly after the news of the serial killers came out, I met with a colleague doing rounds at the hospital. He said: "*George, there's going to be before and after in healthcare in our country after this. Nothing's going to be the same anymore*" I didn't think so at that time. Now I believe my colleague made a good point...



British Hospital Schemes To Victory

On the basis that if there is no news to report then you have to make your own, the Society held its inaugural 5-a-side football tournament on Sat 21 April. Fortunately the weather was good, but we had booked that as well as the pitches. The winning team was the British Hospital. Undefeated in the group stage they then “vaccinated” all opposition in the elimination games. As the largest organisation in the British Society this proves that in football, as in other areas of life, size really is important. Other teams who are size challenged will have to review their tactics for next year to have any chance of victory or just take on a whole load of new employees. In this context it should be noted though that the losing finalists, Jon Prentice’s Eureka, had a much-reduced pool of players – so many congratulations to them for getting that far.



Although Lloyds couldn’t get a team together, they did come up with some very good prizes for the winners and finalists – thanks for that!!



Moving on from local events, our readers will have seen that Uruguay have been drawn to play against Team GB in the men’s Olympic football. They play at Cardiff on 1 August. Since it is the last game of the group matches it could well be a crunch match – at least for Team GB.

Fortunately all the matches were placed in a good spirit and there was no resort to casual diving or knees in the back of legs when the ball was the other side of the pitch. So many thanks to all those who participated – many of whom came out of retirement to do so. Next year hopefully we will have more teams – Lloyds Bank and the Women’s Guild have confirmed that they will be there: Betty Gordon has advised me that she was upset that we just didn’t give her enough time to get her team trained up. Please take note, particularly those other institutions that didn’t play this year.

Finally Chelsea, for whom the writer has a certain soft spot, defied the sporting gods and odds to defeat Barcelona in the semi-final of the Champions League. What a match it was! It was a typical British rearguard action – worthy of Dunkirk – against a technically far superior opponent (and there were at least 2 British players in the Chelsea team). This really was an Escape to Victory. And the best part of it was that John Terry got sent off after a totally cynical and senseless “paralítica” on a Barca player when the ball was miles away and now can’t play in the final. So we don’t have to have that eedjit representing us – to think that this guy was also England captain and Dad of the Year not so long ago. Football eh. Bloody hell.



Crossword Puzzle

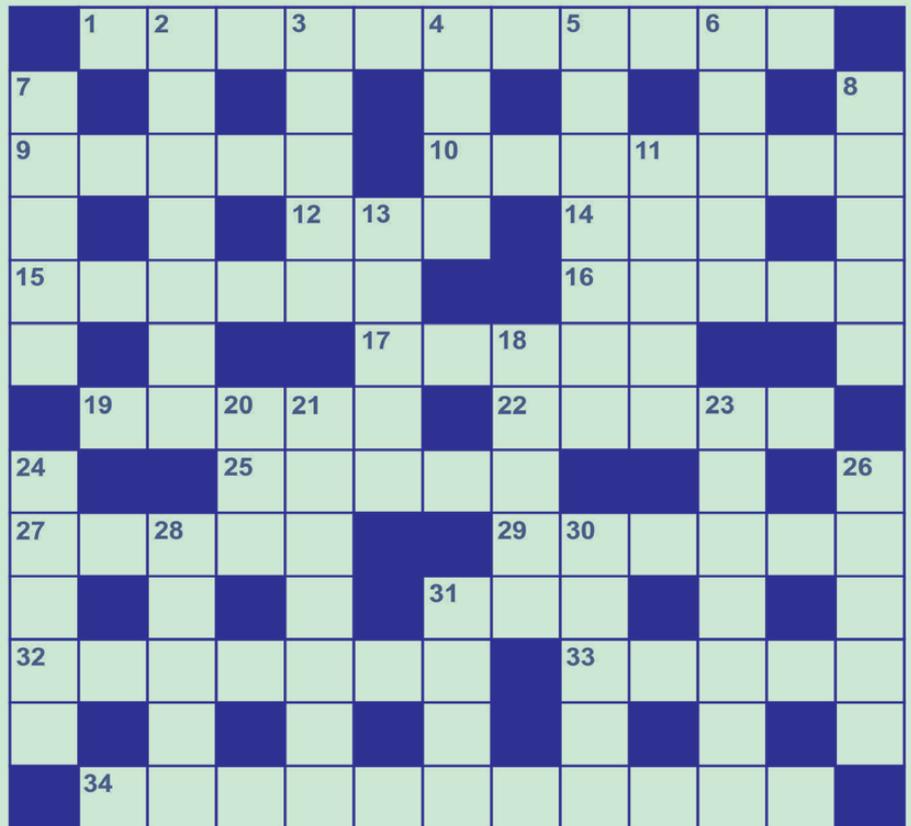
By **LEONARD THANE**

#16

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1) Rosary (6,5)
- 9) Course for racing.
- 10) Ancient Persian governors.
- 12) Devour.
- 14) Come up first.
- 15) To praise highly.
- 16) Empty, insubstantial.
- 17) **Jeremy ...**, British actor, Oscar winner in 1990.
- 19) Small fragment of bread.
- 22) Tree related to elms.
- 25) Awaken, stir up.
- 27) Mr Gordon Sumner's stage name.
- 29) Meager.
- 31) Slippery fish.
- 32) Decorated, beautified.
- 33) Eye socket.
- 34) Very large, carnivorous dinosaur.



Down

- 2) Dealer in real estate.
- 3) Rude, naive or gullible person from the country.
- 4) Freedom from activity.
- 5) To twist together.
- 6) Roman huntress goddess.
- 7) Aquatic fish-eating mammal.
- 8) Cricket trophy contested between England and Australia every 2 years.
- 11) Cleanse by clear water.

- 13) Plea of having been elsewhere when a crime was committed.
- 18) Excessively fat.
- 20) Vessel for ashes.
- 21) Deep purplish red.
- 23) Large North American stag, related to reindeer.
- 24) Academy award.
- 26) A place to sleep on a train or ship
- 28) Dentine from elephant's tusks.
- 30) Machinations, intrigues.
- 31) Paradise.

Crossword # 15





Link Of The Month

We know about one-man bands, but what about a one-instrument band?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9NF2edxy-M>



The Far Side

by Gary Larson



“A cat killer? Is that the face of a cat killer?
Cat chaser maybe. But hey—who isn’t?”

The Society At A Glance

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