

Speech by Brigadier Peter Sincock MBE at the Bahrain British Business Forum in the Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel – 11th May 2016

My grateful thanks to the Bahrain British Business Forum for inviting us to this luncheon to celebrate 200 years of Bahrain/British friendship. I would like to thank, particularly, the Chairman, Khalid Rashid Al Zayani.

This is a wonderful trip for 37 members of the Bahrain Society, many of whom have not been here for many years. Many have been long term residents and some were even born here.

I would like to tell you a little about the Society which numbers about 350 members. Nearly all have been resident in Bahrain with some here for their entire working lives.

We have a variety of activities in London. We have lectures on subjects of interest about Bahrain and visit places of interest in London. The Bahrain Ambassador kindly holds a reception for us in the Summer. Each year, in November, we hold an Annual Dinner which is normally attended by a Bahraini Minister and a British Minister as our guests of honour.

All these meetings present opportunities to meet old friends and acquaintances. Most of these activities are, inevitably, in London as many members live within reasonable reach.

I first arrived in Bahrain in 1968 to work in the old HMS Jufair headquarters. This was before the days of efficient air-conditioning and the flat roof of our house leaked everywhere.

My job for those two years was to advise Rulers up and down the Gulf on the formation of their own armed forces prior to the British withdrawal from the region in 1971. I worked closely with the, then, Crown Prince, now King Hamad, and had much to do with the formation the embryo Bahrain Defence Force. My goodness! How it has progressed since then!

A few years ago I visited the building in old Jufair to call on the United Nations chief for the Gulf area. He was sitting in some splendour in my old General's office. He took me to find my old office. When I opened the door I found that it had now become the building's prayer room!

Later, I was Defence Attaché in Saudi Arabia with accreditation in Bahrain. Coming back to Bahrain from Riyadh was always a pleasurable escape!

My period in Saudi Arabia covered the time of Saddam Hussain's unwise invasion of Kuwait and his removal from it. They were exciting times.

All of our members, here today, marvel at Bahrain's development since the time that most of us were here. I can well remember taking my small sons to watch the dhow building and, if lucky, see one rolled across the road and into the water. That place is now 2 miles inland.

This, of course, is the 200th anniversary of our 2 countries first treaty. It is interesting to see how our friendship has grown over that period. We are very much bound up together. The Bahrain British Business Forum is very much part of this ongoing process.

I cannot end without a recruiting plea for new members for the Society. As WE all get older, we need new, younger blood so please consider membership when your time comes to leave this wonderful island.

Thank you to all of the Bahrain British Business Forum for a most excellent lunch.