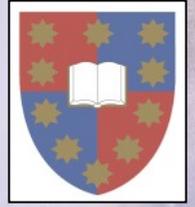




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The monthly  
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of the Public  
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## Australia Day at the Club



A jar of Vegemite graced the Club's luncheon smorgasbord on Australia Day, as forty Members and guests celebrated the return of our iconic spread into Australian ownership.

This naturally led to the raising of charged glasses and the toast to "Australia", followed by an impromptu rendition of *God Bless Australia*, to the tune of *Waltzing Matilda*.

That song, which closed the daily transmission of ABC television until the mid-1970s, was performed with tremendous gusto by the Public Schools' Choristers, featuring Nina Tschernykov, Jonathan Bligh and Karina Jay.

The Australia Day convivialities continued as **Mark Angus** (Deputy Chairman of Committee) gave a short speech:



*Although I spent much of my childhood in Adelaide, I have actually spent most of my life living abroad. Consequently I've been fortunate to have spent Australia Day in a variety of interesting locations and, at times, with a fairly motley collection of Aussies from all over the country.*

*The tone of celebrations has varied considerably, from the terribly high brow, to the rather down at heel, to the downright exotic. What has always been there, however, is the strong desire of Australians to recreate something of home when they're in a foreign land on January 26th.*

*At the high culture end of the scale, I spent a very pleasant Australia Day afternoon many years ago in St Mary le Bow Church in London, listening to the music of Malcom Williamson, Peter Sculthorpe and Carl Vine performed by Australian students.*



Karina, Jonathan and Nina,  
with Robin St John-Sweeting



Chef Michael Crossley PTO ...





*St Mary le Bow has close links to Australia. There's a memorial in the Church to Admiral Arthur Phillip, and the Rector is the Chaplain to the Britain-Australia Society. I took along some friends and I think what surprised them most was to discover that it's not actually against the law to celebrate Australia Day without a barbecue!*

*Through the Britain-Australia Society, I also had the great pleasure of attending a reception on the Terrace of the House of Lords, hosted by the Chairman of the Society. It is probably fair to say that the average age of the Society is a bit on the senior side, and so it was a very restrained and refined affair, and only become a little raucous when several of the throng burst into an impromptu rendition of the national anthem, albeit in fairly measured tones given the surroundings.*

*On a similarly grand scale, I was invited on a couple of occasions to Australia Day celebrations at Australia House.*

*A number of years ago I was visiting a friend who lives in the west of Ireland and hadn't really given Australia Day much thought. My friend and I were enjoying a quiet pint of Guinness or two in his little local pub out in the middle of nowhere. There was a band playing traditional Irish music.*

*Someone realised it was Australia Day and the band burst into a rendition of 'The Wild Colonial Boy', followed by 'Waltzing Matilda'.*

*I was dragooned up onto the stage, but when I admitted I didn't actually know all of the words, I was roundly booed and sent packing.*

*In fact, the landlord, who had spent a couple of years working Australia and loved it, threatened to phone the embassy in Dublin and have my passport revoked.*

*These were hugely popular events that tended to start off fairly quietly, until the formalities were over and dignitaries had departed. Then the crowd would certainly loosen up. Despite the rather opulent surroundings, I seem to remember that it was always the Villi's pies and pasties that were the main culinary highlight of the evening.*



*Perhaps the most unusual Australia Day I ever spent was in 2008 in Shanghai, with snow falling for the first time in living memory. Apart from the childlike joy of my Shanghainese friends at making snow men for the first time, my other memory is of standing around with a group of Aussies and others, watching a Chinese chef cooking BBQ sausages, while he drank a Cooper's Pale Ale.*

*To me, those experiences demonstrate the determination of Australians to express their identity on Australia Day. However, I don't pretend for a moment to be able to define with any clarity or certainty what that identity is.*

*Aussies abroad will always seek each other out and find a way to remind each other of home. And in the end, perhaps that's what is most important about the day, after all.*