

CHILEAN NEWS

Bulletin of the Anglo-Chilean Society

Editor - John Naylor

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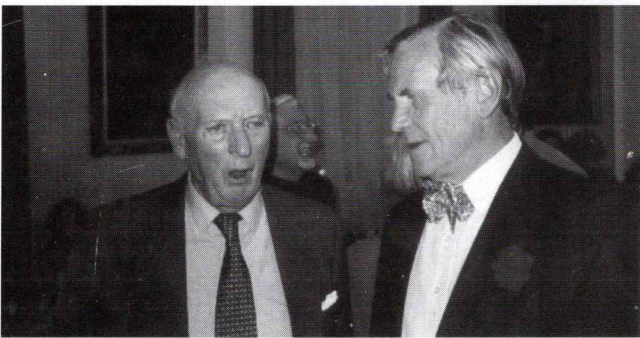
THE NITRATE STORY

Georgina Gubbins, visiting from Chile, gave an illustrated talk on 23rd April at Canning House on the events surrounding the rapid expansion of the nitrate industry in the Atacama desert, and its sudden collapse.

Since the 1700's the Spaniards mined nitrate on a small scale to make gunpowder, and guano, or bird droppings, was collected from islands off the coast of Peru to be used as a fertilizer. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that the use of nitrate as a fertilizer was fully exploited. The story goes that interest was sparked in the early 1800's when a four masted clipper docked in Liverpool with sacks of rock from the Atacama desert serving as ballast. While being thrown overboard some fell on the pier, and a few weeks later it was noticed that the grass growing nearby was unusually thick and lush.

Between 1879 and 1883 Peru and Bolivia were defeated by Chile in the War of the Pacific. Bolivia lost access to the sea and Chile gained possession of the Atacama desert from Peru, where the main source of the nitrate lay. By 1880 the major exploiters of the nitrate had moved in, 60% of whom were British and 40% German and other nationalities. At this time there were some 13,000 workers of all nationalities on the pampa.

The port of Iquique is some 1850 miles from Santiago and provided access to the centres of exploitation. These were known as OFICINAS and by 1890 there 300 of these. The railways were firmly established by the 1870's which enabled them to expand. Each Oficina was a self contained unit with its own plant and offices. Some of these were located up to altitudes of 7500 feet above sea level, where temperatures go down to below freezing at night and over 100 degrees F during the day. It has one of the lowest recorded rainfalls in the world.



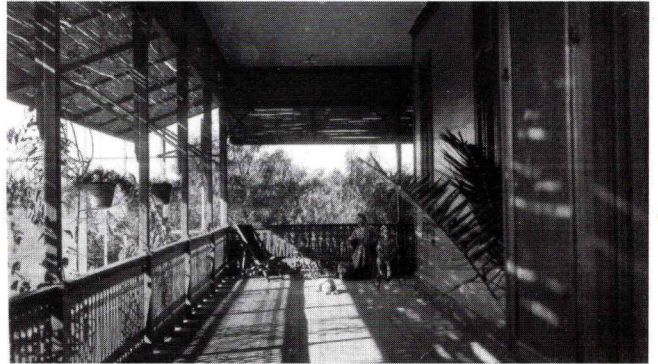
Viscount Montgomery & Roger Venables



Mary Michell, Lady Dora Pink & Maureen Monteith



The incoming and outgoing secretaries, Maria Teresa Lamarca & Valerie Buxton



A typical Oficina house with surrounding balcony

The nitrate deposits resulted from the accumulation by means of evaporation of the nitrate content of the underground waters of the region. Due to the almost non-existent rainfall it has not leached into the ground, but is found a few feet from the surface, the beds varying in thickness from about 8 inches to fourteen feet.

They were worked by the open pit method, and it was just a matter of removing the overburden to expose the pay dirt. It must have been one of the easiest mining operations in the world. A small amount was exploited in underground tunnels, and small boys were sent down to lay the dynamite charges, which puts one in mind of the chimney sweeps of Victorian times.

The nitrate ore used to be taken to the Oficinas by muleteers. They consisted of a huge workforce, and the job was carried on from generation to generation. The mules, in common with most working animals, were well looked after. They were the means of a livelihood not only for those who worked for the Oficinas, but also for the Indians who brought food down from the valleys and the fertile high plateaus of the Andes, and were also the means of transporting precious water.

The ore was then crushed by chancadoras and then thrown into wide open vats of boiling water, stirred and sifted. The concentrate, a thin white powder, became separated in the process and was then left to dry for 8 days out in the open. This process, known as the Shanks system, extracted up to 75% of the nitrate from the ore. The Guggenheim system was developed later, but used mostly in the Antofagasta area, and the recovery was up to 94%.

The night shift was the favourite as it was cooler for those working close to the vats. Evidently the safety factor was overlooked. Tired workers, not concentrating on the job were, horror of horrors, known to fall into the vats and boiled alive.

In 1890 the first general strike was to pave the way for many

uprisings by the exploited workers. A particularly bloody one took place in 1907 when hundreds of workers went down to Iquique with demands for better conditions, including education and the abolition of the token system among other things. They were treated harshly and some deaths were involved, but conditions did improve.

The token system was created by the owners of the mines to control the workers. They were paid in tokens which they could only exchange at the company store. Alcoholism was rife as wine was cheaper than water. This system prevented the workers from migrating to better paid jobs in competing Oficinas.

The port of Visagua is 80 kilometres from Iquique and was one of the chief points of embarkation for nitrate exports. On arrival the sacks were loaded on to trucks and taken down to the pier. It was a bustling town like Iquique, and the size of the hospital is indicative of its importance. At its peak the bay was crowded with as many as 200 sailing ships, and lighters made of sealion skins scurried through the water carrying the sacks out to the ships, being careful not to let them get wet. Pisagua is now a small fishing village where a couple of hundred people eke out a living. The demand for nitrate and the urgency to deliver their cargo meant that the ship's masters often hoisted too much canvas and many ships foundered on the rocks of Cape Horn.

Between 1880 and 1914 the annual output was upwards of 2,000,000 tons valued at US\$100,000,000, from which the Government derived some US\$10,000,000 in export tax. The advent of the first world war slowed down production considerably for two reasons. There were shipping problems and at the same time synthetic nitrate was produced in Germany who required the substance to make explosives. Post war there was a slight recovery, but Chile's monopoly as the world supplier no longer existed. At its peak the industry gave employment to some 40,000 workers.

All this was run by largely British personnel, and there was a brilliant social life for the expatriate community..

There was an opulent theatre in Iquique built of Oregon pine brought down from the USA and Canada. John Thomas North was known as the king of Tarapaca because of the huge fortune he amassed from nitrate, and lesser fortunes were made by the managerial classes. The Oficinas had their own private theatres and life seemed to be one long party. Champagne was cheaper than water and easily available. Caruso and Sarah Bernhard were two of many famous performers who visited Iquique.

The British had their own sporting clubs and tennis was played both in Iquique and the Oficinas. The hippodrome was a popular meeting place. Thoroughbred horses were imported from the Argentine. There were hill stations to escape the oppressive heat, and children, when they reached school age, were sent away either to Valparaiso or England. It is interesting to make a comparison with life on the Atacama with that of the Indian Raj at its height. They were many similarities.

There was however a downside to all this. Health presented a problem. The doctor was never off duty, and he had to deal with pulmonary complaints, yellow fever, parasites and a particularly debilitating condition called "vichuca" with similar symptoms to malaria. There were even cases of bubonic plague. The English cemetery is a reminder of the numerous British who never went home.

Sadly the oficinas have been dismantled for scrap. Only a few old tanks remain, vestiges of a glorious time, and what is left of a once flourishing community. Ghosts wander through the windswept streets and the remains of corrugated tin roofs rattle in the ceaseless wind. The desert has swallowed up a complete historical era.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held at Canning House on 7th May. Committee members Peter de Bruyne, Valerie Buxton, John Naylor and Roger Venables, having served their three years,

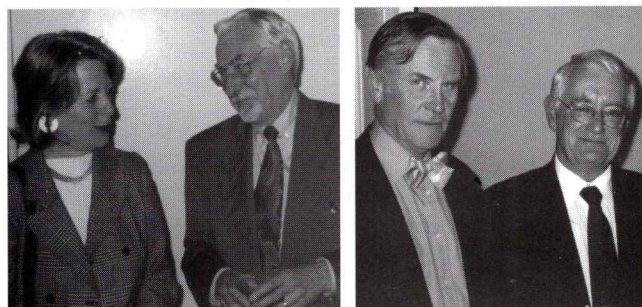
were replaced by John Fisher, Robert Hart, Maria Angélica Shaw and Georgina Roberts.

Roger Venables stepped down as Chairman and was replaced by John Fisher.

At the conclusion of the business meeting there was a wine and cheese party.



Professor and Mrs Malcolm Troup and Maria Luisa Echenique



Betty Makin & Michael Ogilvie-Davis

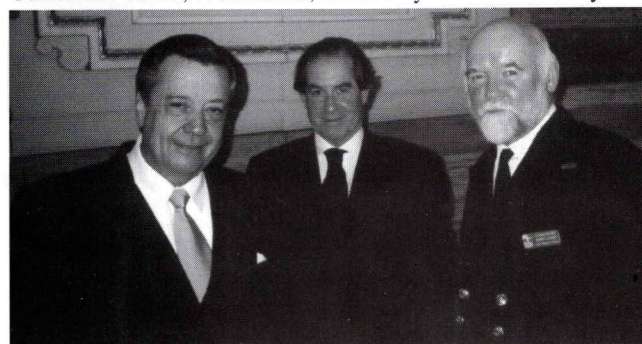
*The outgoing and incoming chairmen
Roger Venables & John Fisher*

CHILEAN NAVY DAY

The annual laying of the wreath on the tomb of Lord Thomas Alexander Cochrane took place at Westminster Abbey on 21st May.

The guests were greeted at the entrance of the Abbey by the Head of the Chilean Naval Mission Admiral Felipe Howard and Mrs. Howard. This was followed by the arrival of the Chilean Ambassador H.E.Sr. Mario Artaza who was welcomed by the Dean of Westminster. There was a one minute silence after the laying of the wreath and prayers were said by the Dean.

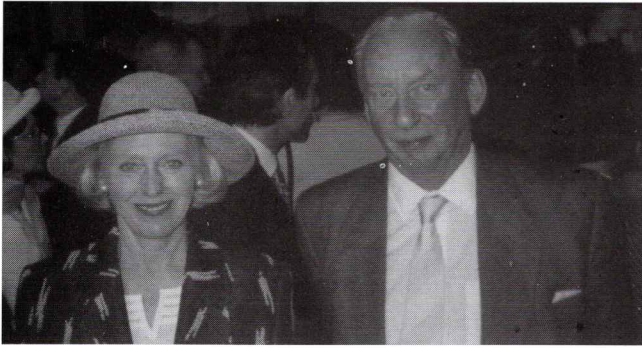
The usual brilliant reception was held at One George Street Conference Centre, Westminster, immediately after the ceremony.



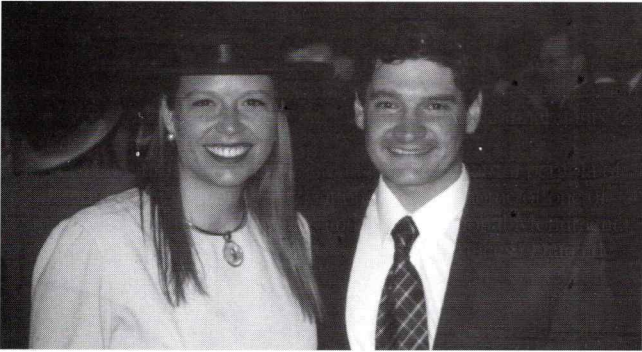
H.E. Sr Mario Artaza, José Luis Morales & The British Defence Attaché in Santiago



Rita Phillips & Henriette Subercaseaux



Baroness Hooper & John Hickman



Constanza & Alejandro Natho

RIVER THAMES CRUISE

A dinner/dance cruise, termed the flagship event of the year, was held on June 17th. The proceeds were in aid of the Calvo Mackenna Hospital for Underprivileged Children in Santiago.



Michael and Georgina Roberts & Arthur and Patricia Richardson



Harry Clements, Henriette Subercaseaux, Alan Macdonald & Peter and Gloria Heap



Peter and Muffi de Bruyne and Sam and Shelia Bell and Jennifer Hickman



Anna-Clare Vivian and other charming guests

The dinner, accompanied by excellent wines, was served buffet style and the guests sat at 10 tables. Dancing was to a Salsa band. It was indeed an excellent event and we have Michael Ogilvie-Davis to thank for organising it. A raffle was held at the conclusion of dinner.

The craft was "The Elizabethian", a perfect replica of an 1890's Mississippi stern-wheeled paddle steamer which reflects the style and craftsmanship of that bygone era. Concealed behind her Victorian facade are up to date facilities and truly elegant surroundings. With a sliding roof, two spacious decks and a unique upper deck promenade walkway, she is in a class of her own. The Elizabethian is one of the largest on the Thames for private charter, with a reputation for excellent cuisine and service.

The event was well attended, leaving Charing Cross Pier at 7 pm, reaching the Thames Barrier, and returning at 11 pm.

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIETIES GOLF DAY

This took place at the West Surrey Golf Club on June 18th hosted by The Anglo Argentine Society, who also provided the wine for the occasion.

The overall winner who was presented with the Ambassador's cup was Mike Smith of The Anglo Peruvian Society. The Punta Arenas cup was won by Sandy Hay and Janice Peters of The Anglo Argentine Society won the LAN Chile Trophy.

The next golf day will again be at the West Surrey Golf Club on Thursday 17th June, 1999.

DIECIOCHO PARTY

This was held on board the *Esmeralda*, the Chilean Navy training ship, on October 3rd. Our first sight of her was from the Docklands Light Railway, and very lovely the white lady looked with a large Chilean flag on her stern.



La Esmeralda

140 guests were received on board at the appointed time, and were served wine and pisco sours and excellent canapies and empanadas. What was immediately apparent was an atmosphere which more testimony to the super efficiency of the Chilean Navy.

John Fisher, Chairman of the Society, made a speech in which he thanked Rear Admiral Felipe Howard for kindly granting the Society permission to celebrate the Dieciocho in such magnificent surroundings, and paid tribute to H.E. The Ambassador and Mrs. Artaza for gracing us with their presence. He also mentioned that members of the Committee of the Anglo Chilean Society, in particular Claudia Munro-Kerr, Alasdair Grant and Maria Teresa Lamarca, had put in an enormous amount of work to organise the event.

Rear Admiral Felipe Howard then said a few words to welcome the assembled guests, and went on to say that the event was in aid of COANIL (Corporación Ayuda al Niño Limitado).

The *Esmeralda* was on her 43rd annual cruise of instruction to midshipmen graduates of the Naval Academy in Valparaiso.

Captain Percy Richter has a crew of some 352, made up of 22 officers, 95 midshipmen, 13 invited Chilean and foreign officers, 149 seamen and 73 seamen apprentices

The date of departure from Valparaiso was May 10th, returning to Valparaiso on December 13th. Her overall length is 113 metres and beam 13 metres with a maximum speed with engine of 9.5 knots and under sail 17.5 knots.

The name *Esmeralda* has been associated with Chilean Naval History since 5th November 1820 when Admiral Lord Cochrane captured the Spanish frigate for Chile. The sixth and present *Esmeralda* is a brigantine which was launched in Spain and handed to Chile on 15th June, 1954.



Michael and Cherida Cannon & Rear Admiral Felipe Howard



Mr and Mrs Sandy Hay and Peggy Hart



Jennifer Mitchell and Doris MacDowall



Sword of Honour recipient Midshipman Cristobal Green, and Helbecia & Geoffrey Larsson



Rex and Marta Price, The Countess Dundonald and Mrs Anita Artaza



Rear Admiral Felipe Howard making his address and Professor John Fisher

BERNARDO O'HIGGINS

On October 3rd a statue of Bernardo O'Higgins, Liberator of Chile, was unveiled in Richmond by H.E. Sr. Mario Artaza, Ambassador of Chile, accompanied by Rear Admiral Felipe Howard, Head of the Chilean Naval Mission and Captain Percy Richter, Commander of the training ship *Esmeralda*. The event was also attended by the local authorities of Richmond, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of the Armed Forces, Chilean and British organisations and Chilean community and members of the Chilean Embassy.

There was a naval detachment and band from the *Esmeralda* who played the British and Chilean national anthems, followed by speeches from the Ambassador and Mrs. Mary Weber, Mayoress of Richmond.

The plinth of the statue records the contribution of the Anglo Chilean Society, especially that of Dr. Edward Haughey, a Vice President of the Society, and of Marcial Echenique who designed the site. The square upon which the statue stands has been renamed O'Higgins Square.

The Ambassador's speech was as follows;
 Your Worship the Mayor Councillor Mary Weber
 Deputy Lieutenant Mr. Nigel Clark
 Your Excellencies
 Honoured Guests
 Ladies and Gentlemen
 Today we unveil, in Richmond upon Thames, a monument

honouring the Liberator of Chile, General Bernardo O'Higgins

Today, we hand it over to the authorities of the Borough and its residents, as a testimony of the links between Chile and the United Kingdom and in memory of a student from a far away country that boarded during 4 years at the Academy of Mr. Eeles in Richmond, and who was destined to have a historical role in the birth of a new sovereign nation.

This student of just 16 years of age arrived in Richmond in 1795, thanks to the vision of his father, an Irishman from County Sligo who was serving the Spanish Crown, firstly as Governor of Chile and later as Viceroy of Perú.

O'Higgins had started his education at the Franciscan School of his native Chillan, which he continued in Lima, Peru, at the Colegio de Estudios and, later, de San Carlos. The Academy of Professor Eeles was located in what today is called Clarence House, in the Vineyard, less than half a mile from here. He remained in Richmond until 1798 and his curriculum covered a full academic education for this time, including subjects such as Maths, Geography and History, Navigation and Fencing, besides Greek and Latin.

After finishing his studies in Richmond, O'Higgins lived in London for a short time before returning to Chile to fulfill his destiny, forever linked to a new nation.

When he left, this 21 years old young man was carrying more than what his modest luggage revealed.

In the 5 years that he remained in Richmond and London, O'Higgins was able to appreciate what it was like living in a world free from oppression, open to international trade, with a profound maritime vocation and with greater religious tolerance. Years later, in his letters, he would refer to Britain as "the sister island".

It was in London that O'Higgins met the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda, the great precursor of America's independence. It was Miranda who, according to O'Higgins' own words "made him taste the sweet tree of freedom", introducing him to the political reality of the Spanish colonies of America and advising him on how to achieve the longed for independence. A well known letter of his to O'Higgins would condense his ideas into saying "the alpha and omega of my advice is Love your Country.

O'Higgins always acknowledged the influence England had on his education as a man and as a statesman and also emphasised what Miranda represented, who in his opinion had been called to have the "first place in the Independence of America"

While in power, O'Higgins had the chance to put into practice some of the lessons he had learnt. He introduced the Lancaster system of education, where the oldest tutored the youngest, and he asked Lord Cochrane and other English sailors to help in the formation of our Navy, which today is honouring him with a squad from the training ship "Esmeralda". The name of the ship comes after a glorious action by Cochrane, who captured the first "Esmeralda" in the bay of Callao, Peru.

In 1817, O'Higgins wrote to the Prince Regent: "One of my first concerns after taking over the Government of Chile was to pay homage to his Royal Highness as appropriate of someone who has the glory of leading the most independent and powerful country in the world". In consecutive letters to a friend, Sir John Doyle, he reiterated his admiration for the country that had assisted in his education. In one of his letters from Peru, country that had welcomed him with open arms and that had bestowed on him the honorary title of Marshal of its Army for his role in support of its independence, O'Higgins wrote and I quote:

"The more I think and reflect upon the British Empire and the circumstances that have given it an unprecedented place in modern history, the more I become convinced that Great Britain has been chosen by the Divine Providence to be the efficient instrument that leads human race to the maximum progress and happiness."

Thus, O'Higgins sets the basis of a very special relation between the United Kingdom and Chile, a relation that has become stronger with time and that is highly valued by our country.

O'Higgins is an essential part of the history of our independence. As a father of our nationality, his name is on the lips and minds of all Chileans. But the deep roots of his ideas of freedom are here, in Richmond upon Thames.

That is precisely what this monument represents. Its bronze and stone message is to remember the young man who lived, studied and kept his eyes and mind open in this country and who was the first among Chileans, when Chile became a nation. The fact that he is here today is thanks to the efforts and generosity of many people and institutions. We are indebted to them and we will not forget their generosity.

O'Higgins could not be away from Richmond any longer. After exactly 200 years, as he had always wished but never could, he is back again in this town.



H.E. Sr Mario Artaza, Mrs Mary Weber, Mayoress of Richmond, Rear Admiral Felipe Howard and Captain Percy Richter Captain of the Esmeralda



Maria Teresa Lamarca, John Fisher, H.E. Sr Mario Artaza, Georgina Roberts, Alan MacDonald and Claudia Munro-Kerr with the statue of Bernardo O'Higgins in the background

GEYSERS AND GLACIERS

By Georgina Roberts

It was a hot summer day when we left Santiago at the start of a twenty two hour trip by road to Calama, en route to San Pedro de Atacama. The next day a further two and a half hour drive from Calama took us across the desert with its extinct volcanoes and ghost towns, which once housed the nitrate mining population, before reaching the oasis of San Pedro late in the night. It was 11.00 pm. The town was deserted and almost in total darkness save for an occasional dim street light. In San Pedro all electricity is cut off at midnight!

San Pedro de Atacama is an oasis village situated at 2440 mts. above sea level with quaint adobe houses and cobbled streets. The plaza Pedro de Valdivia receives its name from the Conquistador, who stayed here with his entourage. Standing in the plaza is the restored adobe house that he ordered to be built for his arrival in San Pedro in 1540. The other architectural link with the past is the colonial church, built with local wood and adobe. It was in this church that Juan, principal chief of Atacama and a group of indigenous people attended mass in 1557. Although now a National Monument, the church is still the functioning parish church for San Pedro.

Only a stone's throw away from the Plaza is the Museum of Father Le Paige, one of the most important archaeological centres in the world. It charts the evolution of the Atacamenian culture from prehistoric times to the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores. Thousands of years of history are displayed in glass cases. Beautifully preserved mummies, artefacts, tools, textiles, colourful pottery and stunning gold and silver jewellery are presented in clear and chronological order.

It was with some apprehension that we awaited the much-hyped trip to the El Tatio Geysers. I was confident that if I had endured life in La Paz, Bolivia at an altitude of almost 4000 mts. then I had nothing to fear - provided that the oxygen cylinder was safely in the back of the minibus! I also decided to put to the back of my mind the horrific stories of tourists stepping too near the boiling fumes and falling through the thin crust into the scalding hot water.

An early night was necessary, as we would have to leave for El Tatio at 3.30 am. After a three hour journey across the desert we witnessed an unforgettable sunrise. The whole area was covered with columns of steam, swirling and rising in the rays of the ascending sun. At 7.30 we were served coffee and cheese sandwiches, with the option of eggs boiled in the steaming fumaroles! On our way back we stopped off at a disused salt mine that had been used to supply the Chuquicamata copper mine with salt. Suddenly, in the vastness of the desert, there was an old man selling crystals of salt which he had displayed on top of a small crate!

Again, the time of day was essential for a tour of the Valle de la Luna (Valley of the Moon) and in this case it had to be at sunset. Around 6.00 pm we climbed to the top of an enormous sand dune, where there was a vantage point to view the sunset painting the hillsides opposite in a kaleidoscope of colour. By 8.00 pm everybody started back down the dune feeling cold, tired and disappointed. The sinking sun had failed to produce the anticipated variation of colour and all was now just darkening shades of brown..

We returned to Saniago for a much needed rest before taking the three and a half hour flight to Punta Arenas, the southern-most city in the world, and springboard to Antarctica. A bus took us from the airport to the city along the coast of the Straits of Magellan. It was 11.00 pm and a full moon had turned a calm sea into a sheet of silver.

The following morning I made my way to Plaza Muñoz Gamero and stood in front of the splendid bronze sculpture of the navigator Hernando de Magallanes surrounded by native Indians. Local folklore says that if one kisses the toe of the Ona Indian one will return, and two years previously I had kissed the toe. Now, against all odds, I was back! My first meal was at the highly recommended Sotito's Bar. There was no "marea roja", a toxin that is sometimes found in the sea, so seafood was in abundance. When my "centolla" (king crab) arrived, I contemplated it in admiration. That pile of coral placed on a bed of lettuce looked almost regal. A superb "caldillo de congrio" served in an earthenware bowl followed, and by then I had had more than enough. An expensive but memorable lunch, before boarding the Bus Fernandez that would take us to Puerto Natales, the entrance to Torres de Paine.

An hour into the journey the first snow-capped mountains appeared on the horizon, and two hours later the sight of white swans with black necks and red beaks welcomes us to Puerto Natales. The view from our waterfront hotel was inspiring. The Señoret Channel was encircled by snow-covered mountains and not far away a colony of cormorants rested on what used to be a pier.

Next day at 8.00 am we started the journey to Torres de Paine. I am pleased to report that some improvements had taken place since my previous visit. The road service, although still gravel, had been improved making the twelve hour trip much less tiring. At the Milodon Cave there is a newly built museum that will eventually exhibit the complete history of the Milodon, a prehistoric animal that became extinct 10,000 years ago. The tickets to visit the Cave are still sold by Sr. Perez who had reprimanded me two years ago for living in Britain a country that, by having the Milodon in one of its most distinguished museums, had unfairly claimed it as its own!

We stopped off at the Hotel Tres Pasos, a large house whose English architectural style remains untouched. Gabriela Mistral used to spend her holiday here. A photograph shows her in the company of those other two great South American women of letters; Alfonsina Storni and Juana de Ibarburu. On the walls are

copies of some of the poems that won her the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945.

Carrying on along the winding road we passed Sierra Baguales, named after the "baguales" or wild horses found by the pioneering ranchers at the end of the nineteenth century. As we approached Sarmiento, the Andes began to disappear behind the massive wall of rock and snow formed 12 million years ago, known as the Torres de Paine.

We entered Torres de Paine National Park driving around the ultramarine blue waters of Lago Sarmiento and we soon reached Laguna Amarga, which takes its name from the bitterness of the water, produced by a high mineral content which gives the lake a pale green colour. Around these two lakes there is an abundance of fauna. In this area, and now in danger of extinction, is the huemel (hippocamelus bisuicus) which, together with the condor, appears on the Chilean coat-of-arms. Also found here is the Colo-Colo cat (pelis colo-colo), similarly in danger of extinction.

At Refugio Pudeto, rest station for backpackers, we had a twenty minute walk up a slope in the teeth of 70 km. per hour winds to Salto Grande, a beautiful waterfall formed by the waters of Lago Nordensjold emptying into the serene turquoise waters of Lago Pehoé

We stopped for lunch at the Hosteria Pehoé, situated on an island in the middle of the lake. The Hosteria faces Torres de Paine across the lake where the sheer rocks of granite and snow are reflected in the water, making it a photographer's dream. However, the lunch proved a very sad experience as it was uneatable and expensive. One has to pay in cash here, because, as in most hotels in southern Chile, credit cards are not accepted, despite the fact that the nearest bank is in Perto Natales, almost 400 kms. away.

By 2.30 pm we crossed the Lago Grey. We were on the road to the glaciers. We had to cross the rope bridge over the Rio Pingo and after a 20 minute walk through a forest we arrived at a pebble beach on the seashore where white and turquoise icebergs that had broken off from the glacier had gathered.

On our return to Puerto Natales, while skirting Laguna Amarga, we saw a group of flamingos. Unfortunately they took flight as we approached them. They flew over the lake in a graceful movement of coral pink wings. What a gem of a sight!

We arrived back in Puerto Natales just in time for dinner. We went to what was considered by many as the best restaurant in town. It turned out to be less than satisfactory. I am talking about a piso sour straight out of a bottle, which I imagine must have saved them the expense of having a barman, and a starter of 3 medium sized "locos" at almost 100 Chilean pesos per loco! If the locos had been the main course seven of them would have cost 7000 Chilean pesos, the equivalent of £11.90! The following morning things did not get any better when our hotel presented us with a most disappointing breakfast. It consisted of a sachet containing something like barley with the brand name Monterrey and used as a very poor substitute for coffee. Next to it a jug of diluted powdered milk. That day a boat trip to the majestic Balmaceda and Serrano glaciers completed our stay in Puerto Natales.

Back in Punta Arenas we did not waste any time in organising some tours of the area.

Being driven along the coast we saw hulks, like the Frigate Lord Lonsdale, which had been beached as a homage to the seamen who made possible the colonisation of the region. It was a cloudy and rainy day and we were heading to Puerto Hambre (Port Famine), an attractive bay that was, together with Puerto Bulnes, the first attempt at colonising the Straits of Magellan. We passed a monolith indicating that we stood at the very centre of Chile. It highlighted the fact that we were equidistant from Arica and the South Pole;

A megallanic forest took us to Fort Bulnes, 56 kms. south of Punta Arenas and at the end of the road on the South American mainland. Across the Straits we could manage only a glimpse of Isla Dawson.

Near Fort Bulnes we saw a small cemetery on the side of a hill facing the sea. In this "cementerio de los Ingleses" lies Captain Pringle Stokes, commander of HMS Beagle, who died while the vessel was carrying out hydrographic studies in the area between 1828 and 1832.

We could hardly wait to visit the penguin colony at Otway Sound, situated at only 12 kms from Punta Arenas. It was a glorious sunny day. Soon we saw the penguins coming out of

their burrows, and, further on, hundreds of others were rushing towards the sea. At only 71 cms in height, the megallanic penguin (*spheniscus magellanicus*) cannot be described as an imposing creature, but they are certainly a striking study in black and white.

One would never consider a cemetery a main tourist attraction, but this was what the municipal cemetery of Punta Arenas turned out to be. One has to buy a ticket to enter, and as we did so were invited to "have a nice day"! We strolled along the avenues lined with 80 year old pine trees trimmed in the shape of cones, 5 mts. high. The impressive marble mausoleums are a sight to behold, especially those belonging to the pioneer families of Patagonia. On our way out I congratulated the security guard on such a remarkable place, to which he proudly replied that this was one of the three most stunning cemeteries in the world - and he could be right!

The Museo Regional Salesiano is something not to be missed. This exiting museum of natural history was founded by a Salesian priest and housed the material collected by the missionaries and scientists of the Salesian order. Outstanding is the zoological section and also the amazing life size models of the primitive inhabitants that occupied the Straits.

We spent our last moments relaxing in the beautiful pergola of the splendid José Nogueira Hotel, at one time the home of one of the most powerful pioneer families and now a National Monument. On reading the dessert list we came across the "Princesa Diana de Punta Arenas"! A splash of colour in the form of a flower whose petals were papayas centred around a generous portion of pistachio ice cream, sprinkled with chocolate shavings. However, at about £6.00 it was a dessert to be enjoyed slowly! I wrote to the Princess about our experience only a month before her death and she replied saying how amusing she found my culinary discovery at the tip of the South American continent. A rather funny episode to end a trip of 8000 kms that took us from the arid region of the North to the lakes, rivers and glaciers of the far South.

BOOK REVIEW

John Hickman's book *NEWS FROM THE END OF THE EARTH; A PORTRAIT OF CHILE* (Hurst and Company, London; St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998) xxiv+250 pages £19.95
By John Fisher

One of the traditional opening gambits of an experienced reviewer of books is to welcome a new work as a useful contribution to a neglected field of scholarship (usually arcane), before going on to provide a description of its contents, pick a few holes here and there, and point out some glaring typographical errors; the closing tactic usually consists of qualified praise, coupled with a call for further research. This traditional strategy is unhelpful in this case, not least because John Hickman is at pains to point out, with disarming frankness, that his historical narrative - as he describes it - of events in Chile in the long period from early-sixteenth century until 1980 'relies entirely on he recent published work of recognised Chilean and other historians'. That disposes of about half the volume, although it is important to recognise that being able, as John Hickman clearly is, to provide a succinct, coherent and persuasive analysis of some 450 years of complex developments is no mean achievement. Not because of the paucity of accessible material, but precisely because of its abundance: he reminds us, for example, referring to the period 1970-73 that 'more than 1,000 books, one for everyday of the Allende Presidency, have already been published about the Unidad Popular.....'. As somebody who has read perhaps 1% of the 1,000 - and a rather higher percentage of those written on earlier Chilean history - this reviewer found the narrative admirably accurate and readable.

Approximately half the volume is dedicated to the last two decades or so of Chile's political and economic history, a period in which the author was able to observe matters from, as he describes it, a 'ring-side position', especially during his five years as British Ambassador in Santiago in 1982-1987. Like others before him no doubt, this reviewer paid particular attention to the chapter entitled 'Friends, Foes and Foreign Quarrels', and was fascinated by the taut, extremely carefully-worded, and incisive analysis of Anglo-Chilean relations during the period. Although John Hickman describes the book as being 'addressed primarily to gringos..... armchair travel-

lers, business people and tourists, one hopes that Chileans, too, will read it, and will appreciate its fair, balanced, but ultimately sympathetic analysis of their country's problems - and achievements - during the last 25 years, and the shrewd assessment of its prospects for the first decade of the next millennium. The optimistic suggestion on almost the last page (233) that the country's destiny may be to become a Latin American version of 'Singapore, Taiwan or even South Korea' can be read in more than one way, but a lot has happened to the global marketplace in the last six months.

One of the benefits is being g Chairman of the Anglo-Chilean Society is that visits every few weeks to London (nearly three hours each way on the train, plus the time spent waiting at Euston for the incoming train to arrive for the return journey) provide plenty of quality reading-time. During the last few weeks, *News from the End of the Earth*, has had to compete with several best sellers for this reviewers's attention: he found it more plausible than *The Horse Whisperer*, better written than *A Walk in the Woods*, easier to understand than *Enduring Love*, and more interesting than *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. It is thoroughly recommended to all who seek a clear, concise, comprehensive analysis of Chile's recent history.

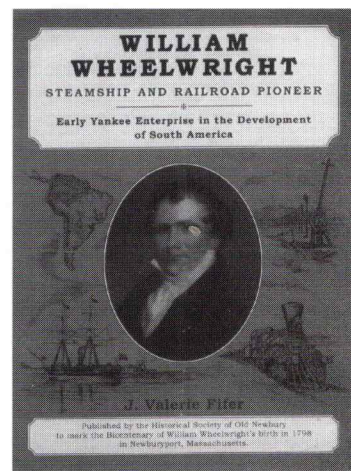
THE WILLIAM WHEELWRIGHT COMMEMORATION 1998

William Wheelwright, born in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1798, became internationally famous as one of the most enterprising and successful pioneers in 19th-century South America, particularly in Chile and Argentina. In June of this year, one of our members, Dr. Valerie Fifer, was a guest at the civic reception held in Newburyport to celebrate the Bicentenary of Wheelwright's birth. The Bicentenary was also marked by the publication by the Historical Society of Old Newbury in Newburyport of Valerie Fifer's latest book *WILLIAM WHEELWRIGHT (1798-1873): STEAMSHIP AND RAILROAD PIONEER. EARLY YANKEE ENTERPRISE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AMERICA* - a richly illustrated study which brings together for the first time a wide range of material from sources in Chile, Argentina, Britain and the United States.

Wheelwright's astonishing vision and energy accomplished what many dismissed as impossible in 19th-century South America. Indeed his whole life was one of challenge and adventure. Determined from boyhood to go to sea Wheelwright had served his apprenticeship by the age of 19, and been given his first command. After six years of successful trading in and around the Caribbean however, disaster struck. In 1823 he was shipwrecked in the River Plate as his vessel approached Buenos Aires, an event which was to change the whole course of his life. Vowing never to return to Newburyport until he had made good the loss of both ship and cargo, the young sea captain worked his way around Cape Horn and along the entire west coast of South America seeking new business opportunities. He soon made good the loss and then went on to build a future closely bound to South America for the next 50 years. He settled first in Guayaquil and then in 1829 moved to Valparaiso, where he started his own line of sailing packets serving the West Coast.

*FROM SAIL TO STEAM
WHEELWRIGHT FOUNDS THE PACIFIC STEAM NAVIGATION
COMPANY*

If business was to expand, faster communication would now be needed along the entire 5000-mile coast from Chile to Panama. In 1833, Wheelwright began to plan an extraordinarily ambitious project - the introduction of commercial steam navigation into the Pacific. Having gained local support for the idea, Wheelwright travelled to



London to publicise the scheme and raise funds. After lecture tours and energetic promotion, his efforts were rewarded; the Pacific Steam Navigation Company was founded in the City in 1838, and in 1840 a Royal Charter was granted by Queen Victoria. During Wheelwright's lifetime the PSNC went on to become one of the largest and most successful steamship companies in the world.

NEW RAILROADS AND TELEGRAPHS

Meanwhile the Yankee entrepreneur was busy developing new projects. In 1850-51 Wheelwright built a new port at Caldera and from it, a new railroad to the mining centre of Copiapó in the Atacama Desert. This was not only the first railroad in Chile, it was also the first substantial length of track in the whole of South America. He planned a new railroad to link Santiago and Valparaiso, opened coal mines, introduced the first telegraph, and initiated many urban improvements such as gaslighting and piped water supplies. Moving later to Argentina, Wheelwright built a major new railroad across the Pampas, the Central Argentine Railway, and another line linking Buenos Aires to new outpost at Ensenada.

Wheelwright's skill and persistence in overcoming difficulties and delays became a legend in his own lifetime. The Wheelwright statue, paid for by public subscription, still stands in Valparaiso. By introducing the new technology needed to turn hopes and dreams of progress in South America into practical reality, Wheelwright stands in the great tradition of the tough, resourceful Yankee pioneers, a lasting symbol of what individual effort and determination can achieve in pushing forward the frontier and developing new lands.

ARE YOU A GOLFER?

Some of you will have participated in the Latin-American Societies Golf day which is an annual event held in June. This year for the first time we raised a scratch team from several of the Latin-American Societies to play a match against the West African GS, and the day was a great success. This was quite separate from the annual golf day.

It was suggested that we might consider forming an Anglo Latin-American Golf Society (ALAGS) comprising of members of various Latin-American Societies. We could then play matches against other overseas Societies whose members are based in the UK. There is also an inter-Society golf Tournament held annually involving teams from West African, Singaporean, Hongkong, Malaysian, Chinese et al Golfing Societies.

Anyone interested in this concept should write to, or telephone: Ian Peters, Dagley Farmhouse, Shalford, Surrey GU4 8DF. Telephone 01483 566114

NEW CHAIRMAN

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held at Canning House on 7th May, 1998 John Fisher was elected as Chairman for three years in succession to Roger Venables.

John is Professor of Latin American History and Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Liverpool. Following undergraduate and postgraduate study at University College London (B.A. 1964, M.Phil 1966) he joined Liverpool University in 1967 as an Assistant Lecturer in Latin American History. In 1973 he gained the degree of Ph.D. for a thesis on silver mining in colonial Peru. Two years later he received recognition for his work both by a promotion to Senior Lecturer and by his election to a Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society. He was appointed Reader in 1980 and Professor in 1987.

John is also well known for his participation in the administration of the University. He served as Dean of College Studies from 1980 to 1984, as Dean of the Faculty of Arts from 1986 to 1992, and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor from 1995 to 1998. Nationally he is a long-standing member of the Committee of the Society for Latin American Studies (which he served as Secretary 1979-1981, Vice-Chairman 1983-1987 and Chairman 1987-1989). He is well known internationally in the field of Latin American Studies; currently he is President of the European Association of Historians of Latin America, Vice-President of the Permanent Committee of the International Congress of Americanists - which hopes to hold its 51st congress in Chile in 2003 - and a member of the Editorial Boards of journals published in

Lima, Madrid and Seville. International honours include election as a member of La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana (1991), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (1994) and as a Fellow of the Instituto Riva-Agüero of Lima (1998)

In terms of research, John is best known as a historian of colonial Spanish America. Last time he counted he had published 20 books - including The Economic Aspects of Spanish Imperialism in America, 1492-1910 (1997) - and over 80 scholarly articles and contributions to books. He is currently writing a History of Bourbon Peru, which will contain many references to Chile, given that until the late-eighteenth century the viceregal government in Lima was ultimately responsible for the administration of the territory which eventually became the Republic of Chile. He has travelled widely in Latin America and in 1992 delivered the keynote lecture - la conferencia magisral - at the Congress of Historians of Latin American Mining held in Santiago. Three of his colleagues at the Institute of Latin American Studies in Liverpool are Chilean-born - they include Professor Benny Pollack, Honorary Consul of Chile in Liverpool - and each year several undergraduate students from Liverpool spend their "Year Abroad" in Chile. Prominent Chilean alumni from Liverpool include Dr. Eduardo Ortiz, currently Director of the Diplomatic Academy of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

John looks forward to strengthening even further his links during the next three years, and is conscious of the honour done to him by the Anglo Chilean Society in electing him as its Chairman.

PROYECTO MUSEO INTERACTIVO MIRADOR

Sr. Eugenio Parada Reyes, Chilean Consul General, has passed on the following information:

Among the programmes which are presided over by the First Lady of Chile, wife of the President of the Republic Sra. Marta Larraechea de Frei, is the Proyecto Museo Interactivo Mirador, whose object is to permit the Chilean public, especially its younger members, to adopt a new form of education in the field of science, arts and nature, using the most modern technologies.

Its finance will be provided by both public and private sectors and it has been programmed to start in the second semester of 1999

Chilean subjects resident abroad will also be included through the Chilean Consulates.

Should members of The Anglo-Chilean Society be interested in this project they can make contributions by cheque to:

"Chilean C.Fund" No.31133357
Midland Bank PLC, 19 Marylebone High Street
London W1M 4BD

NEW MEMBERS

Mr & Mrs. Barbara Valencia
Mr. Pedro Morales
Mr. Pedro Eduardo Muzzio
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony John Robinson
Mrs. Elizabeth Martinez
Professor and Mrs. John Fisher
Ms. Adrienne Brown
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Gilbert White
Mr. & Mrs. William Page
Mrs. Françoise Caldet
Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Izurieta

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The talk by HALLAM MURRAY on his cycling adventures in Chile which was to take place at Canning House on Thursday 12th November has been postponed and will now be held at Canning House on 18th March, 1999 at 6.30 pm.

CHRISTMAS PARTY at Canning House on Thursday 17th December.

Dates for the AGM and Asado al Palo have yet to be set.

The Sir Leslie Bowes Memorial Lecture by Alex Hurst on "Thomas Somerscales - Marine Painter" took place at Canning House on October 15th and will be reported in the next issue.