

The story of our Bussin' Ribbons and the efforts to safeguard them

In 2015, at the AGM, the secretary Ian Clapperton pointed out to the members that the Bussin' Ribbons needed considerable attention otherwise some would be lost forever. Members concurred and agreed the suggestion by the secretary that we should place all the ribbons in sealed units, once repairs had been made, and that these units should be sealed.

Lewis and Christine Brydon offered to take the project forward with Lewis in charge of construction and Christine looking after the ribbons. Ian Clapperton took on the role of fund raising and administration.

Contact was made with all members, at home and abroad, and an appeal, as per below, made to everyone.

'The Society has now been in existence for over 100 years and our banner has been carried in every Common Riding since 1911, with the exception of war years. Each year the Society holds the Colour Bussin' Ceremony with the Lady Busser attaching the Colonial Standard Bearer's choice of ribbon to the banner. These Bussin' Ribbons are then retained by the Society and displayed annually (on an uncovered frame) for members attending the Overseas Visitors Reception which follows the Bussin' Ceremony. It is with the Bussin' Ribbons in mind that I am writing to you.

Despite our best efforts the ribbons are now deteriorating to an alarming extent. Some ribbons have actually disintegrated and it has only been possible to save the end pieces with the Standard Bearer and Lady Busser's embroidered names, and these we have managed to sew onto new ribbons. Others have been repaired where possible. However the Society clearly needs to take a more proactive approach to saving/preserving the ribbons.

Our view is that the ribbons need to be placed within sealed frames (much like a very large picture frame with a clear, non-glass, screen) and that the ribbons would never be removed. We would then be able to safely display the ribbons at any Society function and the viewer would be provided with a full chronological history of our Bussin' ribbons with Standard Bearer and Lady Busser names together with the country. This suggestion does mean that the current arrangement, where a Standard Bearer can ask for an ancestors ribbon to be affixed to the banner would have to be withdrawn. It is felt that this change is a minor one especially if it means that the ribbons can be preserved.

You are all probably wondering where I am going with this.

We are a small Society with a handful of local members (only 30 or so) who aim to ensure that the arrangements for each Common Riding are in place, that a Standard Bearer is appointed and then guided through the formalities, that we welcome returning exiles, their descendants and visitors, and that Colonials and friends from across the world are kept informed of all things Common Riding. Local members pay an annual membership and we make some money from our two main Common Riding functions. Our income is therefore relatively small and we hold an amount in the bank equivalent to one year of expenditure. You can view the accounts in the web site (the member's area).

We do not collect annual subscriptions from our overseas members – it would be a bit difficult to collect, although to be fair we do benefit from generous donations kindly made by

some Colonials overseas.

As a Society we are keen to preserve the ribbons of our former Standard Bearers/Lady Bussers, but this will take quite a bit of capital investment, much more than we currently have available in our funds. We estimate somewhere in the region of £2000 to encase all the ribbons on the basis of about £200 for each display unit.

Would you be prepared to make a donation to our Bussin' Ribbon Fund?

These ribbons were initially purchased by each Standard Bearer/Lady Busser and it would be highly appropriate if the former Standard Bearers/Lady Bussers, or their descendants, were able to contribute to their preservation. In so doing the Society would be able to proudly display all the Bussin' Ribbons to our visitors at each Common Riding, something which the family of a former Standard Bearer/Lady Busser would be able to appreciate in years to come.

The Society is determined to complete this exercise and have already commissioned the first display unit – each will hold an average of 10 ribbons. Without support the task will take us many years, with support it will be completed much quicker, and hopefully before any more ribbons are lost/severely damaged.

I hope that you feel that our aim of safeguarding the Bussin' Ribbons is with merit and worthy of your support. If you do agree and are in a position to help, then I would be delighted to hear from you, at which time I could advise on the Colonial banking arrangements."

Within hours of the letter being sent, the Society was overwhelmed with support and financial contributions from across the globe, so much so that we had sufficient to pay for the entire project with a hefty amount being kept in reserve (in a separate account) for future regalia needs. The Society was, and is, truly grateful for the support, and will make sure that those who have donated are recognised with appropriate acknowledgement being recorded on the finished display units.

By the Common Riding of 2015 the Society had managed to complete the work on 80 years of ribbons leaving just the final 20 years to complete. This will take us to 2009. The next board will cover the period to 2019 and therefore it will be around 2025 before these current ribbons are displayed.

In the work to safeguard the ribbons we identified many in tatters however we managed to piece them together, saving the CSB and LB names, and these were then affixed (not sewn) to new ribbons – we used mainly yellow ribbon rather than trying to find matches for old, faded, ribbons. In other words we opted to make it obvious just how bad some of the ribbons were. We are pleased to report that out of the first 100 years, we had actually only "lost" one end of one ribbon containing the name of a LB. This we have replicated for display purposes.

By the Common Riding of 2016 all will be complete and members & visitors alike will be able to view them at the Reception. The Society however may opt to let the public & press view our work at an open day later in 2015.

To complete the project we have also agreed to preserve the original Society Flag in a similar manner so as to ensure that it is not lost through age.

The Society wishes to record our thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project both in terms of time and money. Below you can view images of our progress as pictured at the 2015 Reception.

