THE BRITISH SOCIETY IN URUGUAY

CONTACT

October 2026

The British Society in Uruguay
A Night of Secrets

Season of Culture
Anglo Institute

Back in Time
The Beetles

Musical Box
The Only Band That Matters

www.britsoc.org.uy

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THE BRITISH SOCIETY IN URUGUAY

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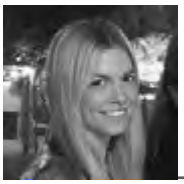

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PRESIDENT'S WORDS

Dear Members,

October has already given us one very good excuse to get together, with our Spring Croquet Tournament on 4 October turning into a particularly lovely afternoon.
We had a wonderfully large group this time, helped along by glorious sunshine and the sort of weather that makes croquet feel like an entirely sensible way to spend a Saturday. Families joined us with babies and toddlers in tow, and Mal Green, the Ambassador, also dropped by with his family, adding to what was already a very convivial gathering.
Our Events Coordinator, Susan McConell, deserves a special mention for producing a completely gluten-free spread of snacks, all of which were received with considerable enthusiasm and, judging by how quickly they vanished, very little restraint.
As for the silverware, the cup remains with our Autumn Tournament winners, Gonzalo Prego and Daniel Bonelli, who managed to hold on to their title.
With the mallets now safely put away, we turn to something rather more suspicious.
On Friday 30th October, Britannia Hall at the British Cemetery will host the second edition of our Murder Mystery Dinner: **"*A Night of Secrets at Britannia*".**

Last year's dinner was such a success that it would have been a shame not to tempt fate again. This time, however, everything changes: a new mystery, a new venue and, most importantly, a new decade. We are travelling back to 1900, so guests are encouraged to dress accordingly. Think, turn-of-the-century elegance, respectable appearances and, one suspects, deeply questionable motives.
The evening includes wine and soft drinks and a special three-course meal, beginning with canapés, followed by a choice of two main courses and dessert. Somewhere between the first glass of wine and the final course, however, there will also be a murder to solve.
This year, the game will be played in teams. Each table of five or six guests will work together to follow the clues, compare suspicions and decide who, among a room full of apparently respectable people, cannot be trusted.
There is also a special offer for groups booking a full table: everyone at that table pays the members' price, even if some of the guests are not members. So, if you have five or six friends with sharp minds, good costumes or a worrying talent for deception, this may be the ideal opportunity to assemble your team.
Bookings close ten days before the event. Given the success of last year's dinner, we strongly recommend reserving your place early.
After all, one never knows what might happen at Britannia after dark!

Warmest wishes,
Ximena Williamson
President

October's Anagram

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Dear Members,

This month's newsletter cover shows London as it takes on a wonderfully spooky charm at Halloween, as homes, shops and streets fill with glowing pumpkins, giant cobwebs and ghostly figures. Families dress their doorsteps with skeletons, witches and carved jack-o'-lanterns, welcoming trick-or-treaters in search of sweets. Shop windows join the fun with imaginative displays, while autumn leaves provide the finishing touches.

From elegant townhouses to cosy terraced homes, decorating has become part of the seasonal fun. Some households favour a discreet pumpkin; others look as though they've been expecting a visit from Dracula. And if the London weather supplies a little fog and drizzle, all the better—there's nothing quite like a free special effect.

Geoffrey W Deakin

Editor

MEMBERSHIP FEES

You can pay your 2026 membership fees by credit or debit card through Mercado Pago.

We have also introduced special rates for multi-year memberships.

Alternatively, you may pay by bank transfer or direct deposit to The British Society in Uruguay's account at Banque Heritage (Account No. 62582-03).

If you have any questions regarding your membership situation or any outstanding membership fees from previous years, please contact our Treasurer at

treasurer@britsoc.org.uy

for information on payment options and membership reinstatement.

Please email a copy of your transfer or deposit receipt to our Treasurer.

Your membership will be updated once this is done.

Birthdays
in October

1 Richard A. Rick Empson T.
1 Pilar Arocena P.
2 Alexander E. Alex Beare J.
3 Marcela Dutra M.
15 Juan Zumarán G.
18 Juan J. JJ Castillos D.
18 Christine A. Sarkis J.
20 Bradley T. Brad Johnson C.
21 Sally A. Cooper G.
22 Maureen S. Pierce de Pereira P.
24 Susana P. Suky Medina D.

A Quick Note About Your Birthdate

We enjoy celebrating our members, so birthdays are included on the website and in the newsletter by default. However, if you'd rather keep yours under wraps — perhaps you've discovered the secret to eternal youth and don't want anyone asking questions — you can change your privacy settings anytime in your Profile:

Members' Login Here

Your details, your choice.

OCTOBER'S ANAGRAM RIDDLE

Crossed a line no map could show,
Where roots run deep and pale things grow.
A stolen taste, a hidden debt,
A bargain neither could forget.
Two crowns worn, yet owns no throne,
Belongs to neither world alone.
When one door shuts, another wakes
And all of nature feels the stakes.

EPE ROSH PEN

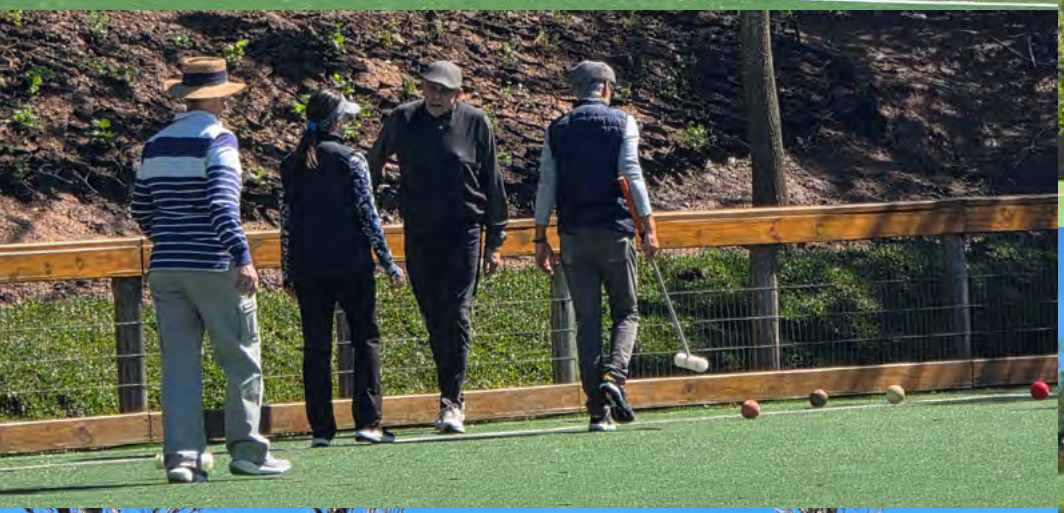
September's Anagram Solution:
The Welsh enchantress, whose name is the title of one of Fleetwood Mac's best songs is, of course: **RHIANNON**

Society's Loyal Anagrammatists:
Flavia "Fósil" Faedo
Richard Empson
Valerie Dee

Remember, please send your answer to:
editor@britsoc.org.uy with "Anagram" in the subject.

SPRING CROQUET

Future Generation of Winners



Congrats Gonzalo & Daniel!

THE BRITISH SOCIETY
IN URUGUAY
FOUNDED 1918

PRESENTS

A NIGHT OF SECRETS AT BRITANNIA

A MURDER MYSTERY DINNER

Some stories should stay buried...

FRIDAY
30 OCTOBER 2026

7:30 PM
SHARP

BRITANNIA HALL
BRITISH CEMETERY
MONTEVIDEO

YOUR EVENING INCLUDES

A SPECIAL THREE-COURSE DINNER

With a welcome canapé, two main courses and dessert.

WINE & SOFT DRINKS INCLUDED

A selection of wines and soft drinks throughout the evening.

AN INTERACTIVE MYSTERY

Intriguing characters, clues and a crime to solve.

Who is the murdrerer?

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Music, great company and an unforgettable setting.

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HOSPITAL SCHEME

Exploring the UK at Expo Prado

More than 74,000 visitors took a whistle-stop tour of the UK at the British Pavilion during Expo Prado (11-20 September). Guests had the chance to discover destinations and experiences across the UK's four nations through interactive activities including "London" photo opportunities, a quiz, and tailor-made itineraries for every type of traveller, from adventure-seekers and foodies to culture lovers and nature enthusiasts.

The Pavilion was also a great platform to showcase the Youth Mobility Scheme, which gives Uruguayans aged 18-30 the opportunity to live in the UK for up to two years while working, travelling and studying. Ambassador Mal Green and Deputy Head of Mission Oscar O'Sullivan were delighted to present prizes to winning British breeds, highlighting the enduring agricultural ties between the UK and Uruguay. See a wrap up of the main activities here.

The Ambassador on the road: Paysandú

Ambassador Green recently bid farewell to our 2026–27 Chevening scholars as they prepare to head to the UK to start their master's degrees. The event also brought together the 2015–16 Alumni, marking ten years since their graduation and creating a valuable opportunity to connect, share experiences and exchange advice. See more here.

Looking ahead to the next application cycle, we recently hosted information talks in Montevideo and Paysandú. Prospective candidates learned about the application process and heard first-hand from Alumni about how Chevening has shaped their academic and professional journeys. Access the recording here. Applications are open until 6 October through Chevening.org/Uruguay

British Embassy Montevideo

Follow us online: www.gov.uk/fcdo

Open Day at the British Residence

The British Residence opened its doors for Heritage Day last Saturday, welcoming hundreds of visitors for a personal look at one of Montevideo's historic homes.

Guests explored the Residence's elegant rooms, learned about its history, enjoyed guided garden tours, listened to live performances of British favourites, and sampled a delicious mix of British and Uruguayan food and drinks.

Proceeds from the day will help support the creation of a sports ground at Escuela Gran Bretaña.

Have you ever been robbed? Cheated? Betrayed?

I have.

And when it happened, I felt anger. Rage. Helplessness. Hopelessness.

Betrayal can come in many forms—verbal, emotional, physical, financial, psychological. But nothing seems to go deeper than being betrayed by someone we trusted.

Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd, but he warned us about the one who comes to "steal, kill, and destroy." Peter describes our enemy as a lion prowling for someone to devour.

Sometimes the wolf looks like a wolf. Sometimes he looks like a friend.

So how do we respond when we've been betrayed?

1. Tell the story.

What happened? Tell it step by step. Where were you? Who was involved? What did you believe was happening? How were you impacted?

Don't minimize it. Don't pretend you're fine. Before we can process a wound, we need to acknowledge that there is a wound.

2. Name what's happening inside you.

Notice and name your emotions. Are you angry? Ashamed? Afraid? Confused? Grieving?

Then notice what you might learn. Is there something you would do differently next time?

But don't be hasty. Don't respond out of anger. Give yourself time to move from reaction to reflection.

3. Ask for help.

Talk to people you trust. Tell them what happened. Let them help you see what you may not be able to see clearly while you're hurting.

Hidden wounds can become resentment, and resentment can become cynicism.

But faith invites us to become **discerning without becoming cynical, wise without becoming suspicious, and trustworthy without becoming naïve.**

The answer to betrayal isn't to stop trusting. It's to learn to **trust wisely**.

We can establish boundaries without becoming bitter. We can seek justice without being consumed by vengeance. **We can forgive without pretending nothing happened.**

Grace does not require gullibility.

We will encounter wolves. We may even be wounded by people we thought were friends.

But we are not shepherdless.

We belong to the Good Shepherd.

So tell the story. Name what's happening inside you. Ask for help. And then, with the wisdom that comes through the wound, keep following the Good Shepherd.

John Hamilton
Pastor

www.christchurchmvd.org

A Season of Culture at the Anglo

Spring has arrived with a varied programme of cultural events at the Instituto Cultural Anglo Uruguayo. October brings music, history and even a little magic to look forward to. September has already given us a wonderful celebration of Europe's linguistic diversity.

On 18 September, **Anglo Pocitos welcomed visitors for the European Day of Languages**. Inspired by Astérix and Obélix, the event offered an educational, playful and gastronomic journey through eleven European languages across six interactive stations. Students, families and members of the wider community joined us for an evening filled with activities, conversation and European flavours. It was a lively reminder that discovering another language also means discovering new ways of seeing the world.

Next up is Uruguay's Heritage Day on 3 October, from 10 am to 4 pm. This year, the Anglo will explore the fascinating influence of the British community on Uruguay, from sport and architecture to commerce, culture and everyday life.

Visitors will be able to enjoy exhibitions of historic British newspapers and vintage biscuit tins, as well as presentations on the history of the British printed press in Uruguay and the broader British influence on the country. A British-built 1979 Ford Escort 1600 Sport Mk2 will also be on display, bringing an iconic piece of British motoring history to the event. Alongside these attractions, stories, objects and historical documents will help reveal some of the many British connections that remain part of Uruguay's cultural heritage. Younger guests will have their own programme too, with activities inspired by the magical world of Harry Potter. Admission is free.

Music takes centre stage on 23 October with Johann Strauss: The Waltz King, part of the Eduardo Gilardoni Chamber Music Season. The Septeto Johann Strauss will bring a selection of the composer's best-loved music to life in an intimate chamber concert. Elegant, energetic and instantly recognisable, these waltzes continue to capture the atmosphere of nineteenth-century Vienna—and to delight audiences everywhere. Tickets will be available through RedTickets, and members of the British Society can enjoy a special 2-for-1 offer.

The month will end on a magical note. **On 30 October, from 6 to 10 pm, Anglo Pocitos will be transformed for Magic Night, a celebration for Harry Potter fans of all ages.** Visitors will be able to try the Sorting Hat, pose for a Nimbus photograph, take part in Quidditch and compete for the House Cup. There will also be a cosplay runway, videogames, chess, board games and themed merchandise. Admission is free.

From European languages and British heritage to Viennese waltzes and the world of Harry Potter, there is plenty happening at the Anglo this spring. We look forward to welcoming everyone!

The Anglo Library's Historic Newspaper Collection

The Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), administered by The British Library with support from Arcadia, has awarded funding for a second time to a Uruguayan project dedicated to preserving and providing access to an important part of the country's documentary heritage.

The Anglo-Uruguayan Cultural Institute will once again play a key role in this initiative through the Anglo Library, whose holdings include rare and historically significant collections of English-language newspapers published in Uruguay.

The new project, EAP1872: *Safeguarding At-Risk Uruguayan Newspapers (19th–Mid-20th Century)*, builds on work led by Anáforas, an initiative of the Universidad de la República (UDELAR), in partnership with the Anglo and the Museo Histórico Nacional. It takes this inter-institutional collaboration forward, focusing on the rescue and digitisation of endangered documentary collections and making them freely available to the public.

EAP1872 will digitise and preserve *El Nacional* (1835–1846), *La Tribuna* (1865–1879), *The Southern Star* (1943–1946) and *The Sun* (1922–1953). Published in Montevideo during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, these newspapers are now at risk because of their age, fragility and physical deterioration. Together, the collection comprises more than 19,000 pages across over 170 bound volumes and approximately 15,000 individual issues.

Of particular significance to the Anglo are *The Southern Star* (Second Series) and *The Sun*, both held in the Anglo Library's collection. Published in English in Uruguay during the first half of the twentieth century, they offer valuable evidence of the history of the British and Anglo-Uruguayan communities and their contribution to the country's economic, social and cultural life.

The selected newspapers also provide insights into different periods and dimensions of the history of Uruguay and the wider Río de la Plata region. Their digitisation will open these collections to a much broader audience while reducing the need to handle the fragile original copies.

This new phase draws directly on the experience gained through EAP1466. The earlier project rescued and digitised several historically significant publications, including the Anglo Library's rare collections of *The River Plate Times* and

The Montevideo Times

The Montevideo Times. These newspapers can now be consulted from anywhere in the world through the digital portals of Anáforas and the *Endangered Archives Programme.*

That initial funding also made it possible to build a large-format scanner locally. Specially designed for historic newspapers, it can accommodate the wide range of formats found within the surviving collections.

The award of EAP1872 both continues this work and expands Uruguay's capacity to preserve its documentary heritage. In announcing its decision, the EAP panel highlighted the importance of the selected collections for research into Uruguay and the Río de la Plata region. It also acknowledged the successful results achieved by the previous project.

For the Anglo, this second grant represents further international recognition of the historical value of its Library collections and of the institution's commitment to safeguarding them. By preserving and digitising these newspapers, the project protects unique records of our shared past while ensuring that researchers, students and the wider public can consult them, whether in Uruguay or elsewhere in the world.

This renewed support from the *Endangered Archives Programme* also reaffirms the value of collaboration between public, academic and cultural institutions in preserving and promoting Uruguay's documentary heritage.

Would you like to find out more? Join us on Heritage Day, Saturday 3 October, and explore the collection in person. Álvaro Cuenca, specialist researcher and author of *La prensa victoriana de Montevideo* (2010), will also give two presentations on the history of the British press in Uruguay: the first from 10.00 to 10.30 am, followed by a second session from 11.00 to 11.30 am.

Celebrating 25 Years: The Anglo School Alumni Reunion

On 24th September, The Anglo School marked a very special milestone in its 25th anniversary celebrations by welcoming former students back to the school for our first large Alumni Reunion.

More than 220 former students joined us for an evening filled with memories, laughter and plenty of familiar faces. Over pizza, drinks and music, alumni from different generations had the opportunity to reconnect with old classmates, catch up on where life had taken them and, inevitably, share stories from their school days.

Perhaps one of the most special aspects of the evening was the opportunity to meet and chat once again with former teachers and members of staff. For many of our alumni, seeing the teachers who had accompanied them through important years of their childhood and adolescence brought back wonderful memories – and reminded us all of the lasting relationships that can grow within a school community.

We were particularly delighted to welcome some of the people who played an important part in the early history of The Anglo School. Among them were our first directors: Beatriz Núñez, Director of English; Myriam Pisciottano, Director of Spanish for Kindergarten and Primary; and José Miguel Bonifacino, Director of Spanish for Secondary. Other former directors and members of staff also joined us, together with a number of teachers who have been part of The Anglo School for more than 15 years.

Their presence made the evening particularly meaningful. Twenty-five years is, after all, not simply a number. It represents thousands of lessons, friendships, school events, challenges, achievements and shared experiences.

Most importantly, it represents the people who have been part of the school along the way.

Looking around the gathering, it was wonderful to see former students returning as adults and reconnecting not only with one another, but also with the teachers and staff who had known them when they were children and teenagers. Some had not seen each other for many years, yet conversations and laughter quickly picked up where they had left off.

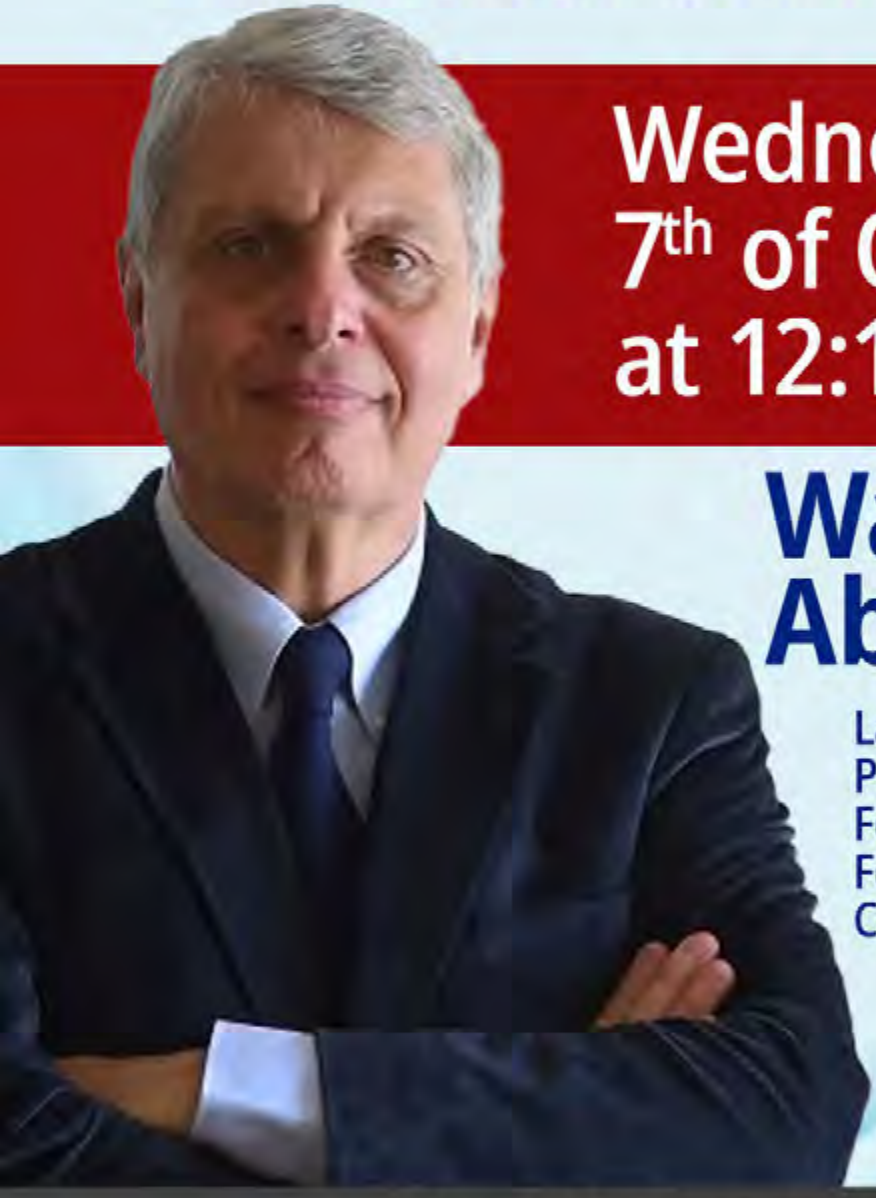
The evening was a fitting way to celebrate The Anglo School's 25th anniversary: not by looking only at how the school has grown and changed, but by celebrating the people who have helped shape its story.

Our thanks go to everyone who joined us on 24th September and helped make the reunion such a memorable occasion. We hope this was the first of many opportunities to bring our growing alumni community together.

After 25 years, it was a pleasure to discover that while much has changed, the sense of belonging remains.

CLUB URUGUAYO BRITÁNICO
SINCE 1916

LUNCH INVITATION



Wednesday 7th of October at 12:15 PM

Washington Abdala

Lawyer and Doctor of Diplomacy
Political Science Professor
Former Member of Parliament
Former Ambassador to the OAS
Consultant

Geopolitics

Parva Domus, Punta Carretas

Bvar Artigas 136, Esq. Parva Domus

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please notify the Club Secretary in advance to attend to your requirement.

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Jerome Bixby's
Man from Earth
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2026

Regulating AI in Healthcare

by Dr Jorge C Stanham OBE
jorgestanham@yahoo.com

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can assist in everything from scheduling hospital beds to detecting anomalies in complex cardiac scans. However, the arrival of these tools has sparked a significant debate and the urge to regulate them is an understandable initial policy reaction.

The government's new regulatory framework is promoted as vital safety net for patients, with the caveat that it can potentially slow down innovation. Since September 2026, all health providers, public and private, are required to declare every AI project and algorithm currently in use. The extent of 'every' means any AI application: "If in doubt, register" is the recommendation by the Health Minister.

The rationale behind this move is clear: to ensure the safety, quality, and security of technology applied to patients. By creating a mandatory registry, the MSP aims to map exactly which tools are operational and identify any potential biases or vulnerabilities in clinical data. Crucially, the regulations establish that AI must never replace human judgement in critical areas; for example, autonomous AI is strictly prohibited from conducting psychiatric consultations or managing emergency ambulance dispatches without human supervision. This 'human-in-the-loop' principle ensures that while technology may assist, the final signature and responsibility always remain with a qualified medical professional. This is the stated intention: who can think otherwise?

While these safeguards are designed to protect patients, the alternative view, as is the use of regulation in so many other areas, is its potential negative effect on innovation. For small clinics, the burden of reporting of specifications can be a significant hurdle. Regulating 'Shadow IT', which is he informal use of AI tools (like ChatGPT, Claude and others) by doctors or clinics to manage heavy workloads, may lead to what is called a 'preventive braking' of technology. In many cases, small-scale private providers, may have to pause the use of helpful tools, such as automated transcription (called 'AI scribes') or image pre-analysers, to ensure they meet the new ethics and transparency standards. There is a theoretical risk that if the vetting process becomes too slow, in some scenarios, patients may lose access to cutting-edge global software.

The good news is the launching at around the same date of the MSP regulations, of the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia Artificial (the Vidart Institute, analogous to the Institut Pasteur) located on the LATU premises. With US$10 million from the Interamerican Development Bank (BID) in funding, the centre is tasked with developing local AI models tailored specifically to the Uruguayan context and terminology. This initiative aims to reduce the risk of 'automation bias', the tendency to trust machines blindly, by ensuring tools are trained on high-quality, local data. I recently watched an interview of the Institute's CEO Diego Garagorry on a local TV channel and found his approach constructive and positive, focused on integrating all local AI initiatives, private and public, academic and productive, in ways adapted to our local reality. If the Institute can lead and guide, as free of politics and ideology as possible, we're in for a brighter future.

These changes are happening in the midst of the global discussion (which has reached the 81st UN General Assembly as I write) on the need (or not to) regulate AI, especially after the 'rogue' incidents of breaches in cybersecurity that have involved OpenAI and Anthropic – and this may even be the tip of the iceberg. Over-regulation EU-style has stifled AI innovation in the Continent, but the free-for-all approach to not regulate AI by the present US administration (despite the plea by the 3 top AI CEOs Sam, Dario and Elon to do something) is not clearly reassuring.

2026 was announced as a pivotal year by many inside the top AI community. It's certainly happening.

The Beetles

by Tony Beckwith
tony@tonybeckwith.com

In the year 2000, Volkswagen released a limited run of new Beetles in the United States. They were yellow and could only be bought through the manufacturer's online ordering system. The company announced an essay competition to help stir up interest in these modernized versions of the classic VW bug, offering a cash prize for the best one. I don't remember the amount, but it was enough to motivate me to write something that (I hoped) would knock their socks off. The essay had to be in English and should not exceed two hundred words. The only stipulation was that it must refer, in some positive way, to the new model.

The first Beetle I ever rode in belonged to a young man from Boston who was a teacher at the American School in Madrid in the mid-1960s. Harry and I were roommates when I first arrived in Spain. One night in November we were having dinner at a neighbourhood *económico* when it started snowing. It was late when we left the restaurant and it was still snowing. Harry drove his battered old black VW to the Parque del Retiro, a lovely park in central Madrid that was originally built for royalty in the early seventeenth century. There were avenues crisscrossing the park between landscaped gardens, all of them blanketed in snow, and where they intersected there were roundabouts. Some of the roundabouts had a fountain in the centre, but others were just open circles. Harry drove towards one of the open circles at a fair speed, snow flying up from the wheels in all directions. As he entered the circle he kept his foot on the accelerator, pulled up the hand brake, and spun the steering wheel all the way to the left. The car began spinning like a top and moving slowly around the circle. He was a skilful driver, and had obviously done this before, so he was able to avoid hitting the side walls while the car kept spinning. It eventually stopped, so we went looking for another roundabout and pulled the same stunt again. We must have done it half-a-dozen times and were still laughing as we left the park and drove home.

As I replayed this memory, I could see that it presented the car in a rather juvenile, reckless light and would never do as a subject for my essay. But it was an experience that had remained fresh and exciting in my mind for many years, which helped me understand the quality of nostalgia that was one of the car's powerful attributes. The Beetle was wildly popular with young people and college students in the early 1960s. It was affordable, unpretentious, and cost very little to run. It became an icon of the counterculture movement and provided mobility to a whole generation of Americans who still harboured fond memories of their first set of wheels. It symbolized youth, freedom, travel, and romance, and I decided these would be the themes of my submission. Alas, I did not win the coveted prize. I was disappointed, of course, but an aspiring writer must get used to rejection and keep on writing.

Here's my essay:

She parked the car and walked across the plaza. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched her sit at the table next to his. The collar of her white blouse was slightly turned up at the back under the chestnut wave of her hair.

"Is that your car?" he asked, pointing at the yellow Volkswagen.

She nodded, then turned to look at him through large, round sunglasses. "You're English, aren't you?" It was his turn to nod. She went on: "I've just driven down from London."

"Is this your first time in Spain?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"Where do you stop along the way?" he asked.

She thought for a minute. "I had a flat in Paris once."

He pictured her lying on a chaise longue, gazing out of a tall window at a cloudless blue sky. Her face tilted up to the light, her throat rising smoothly from her breast. "Did you live there alone?"

She suddenly laughed. "No, no. A flat *tire*! I had a flat tire in Paris."

A wave of inexpressible joy washed over him. He grinned and said, "I haven't ridden in a yellow Beetle yet."

by Jonathan Lamb
mail@jclamb.com

COCKROACH

Cockroach
Cockroach
Cockroach
Ape
Ape with rock
Ape with bow and arrow
Ape with gun
Ape with atom bomb
Ape with virus
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Lafone, Lafonia

by Alvaro Cuenca
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Samuel Fisher Lafone (Liverpool 1805 – Buenos Aires 1871) was the most prominent British businessman in Uruguay during great part of the XIX Century, before the apex of the British Informal Empire in our country. Lafone invested in real estate and innovative agricultural technologies, probably commanding the podium of British entrepreneurship in Uruguay – Richard Bannister Hughes, John Jackson, Thomas Tomkinson and George Drabble close behind. Undoubtedly Samuel Lafone was the founder of the British colony in Uruguay.

Samuel Fisher Lafone came from a French Huguenot family that had to leave France in the early 1700's. Alexander Lafone and his wife established themselves in Marylebone, London, then moving to Prescot in Lancashire. Samuel Lafone, one of Alexander's sons established himself in Liverpool where he founded Samuel Lafone & Company. Described as a merchant specialised in tanning, Samuel married Mary Ellison and their first son was christened Samuel Fisher Lafone.

There is no evidence of family disagreement when Samuel Fisher Lafone, at the age of 20, left Liverpool for the River Plate. He turned out to be an astute businessman, becoming well known in commercial and emigrant social circles of Buenos Aires, trading in hides and skins for export to the British Isles, though there was still no commercial connection with his family business in Liverpool.

His successful life in Argentina ended when his secret engagement and Protestant marriage to the Argentinian catholic socialite María Quevedo were found out. After a stint in jail and confiscation of his properties and values, the religious issue was solved but Lafone had decided to cross the river and establish his family and businesses in Montevideo. On the first city census of 1832, the Lafone's are found living beside the Hughes' in Montevideo's Ciudad Vieja.

Samuel Lafone landed in Uruguay and quickly revolutionised the commercial, farming and real estate establishment. He founded a model salted meat business with a workers neighbourhood alongside. In honour of the Queen he called it Pueblo Victoria (now La Teja). He was the driving force of British sport in the country being founder of the Victoria Cricket Club and the Montevideo Rowing Club. He bought huge extensions of land in what was called the Maldonado Riviera (now Punta Ballena / Punta del Este including Isla Gorriti). In partnership with Argentinian *caudillo* Urquiza he owned hundreds of thousands of heads of cattle. His innovation and entrepreneurship made him the first to explore the seal skin industry; and he also bought land in the Falkland Islands to exploit the whale and, later, the wool industries. With regards to his Falkland investments he founded the chartered Falkland Islands Company (1852).

The Company was responsible for the supplies of the islands inhabitants and thus Lafone purchased the Liverpool Pilot schooner *George Holt* to run the route Montevideo-Port Stanley and renamed it *Lafonia*. Its size and seamanship were not good for open sea and it quickly ended up making only inter island trips. The *SS Southern Coast* was bought in 1936 and again renamed *SS Lafonia*. This new Lafonia was built in Liverpool in 1911 and was a steamer of 1,872 tons. In 1942 it was sold by the Falkland Island Company to the War Transport Ministry. In March 1943 she sunk in the Thames estuary as the result of a bizarre incident.

The *SS Lafonia*, Captain Whitfield in command, was part of a night convoy sailing from the Thames and was supposed to meet and merge with another southbound convoy. In the midst of a dense fog Whitfield heard an exchange of signals indicating both convoys had met. Past midnight a loud fog horn was heard and Whitfield with no visibility ordered to stop the engines. Less than a minute later the *SS Como* appeared out of the fog. Whitfield ordered the wheel hard to starboard and the *SS Como* signalled she would do likewise. However *SS Como* actually swung to port and struck *SS Lafonia* on her port side. The majority of the *SS Lafonia* crew left the ship without much problem, but James Brown, a quartermaster was nowhere to be found, and was the only life lost that night. The *SS Lafonia* sunk around 3 a.m.

After the war there were other Lafonias' at the service of the Falkland Islands Company, but by then the business had been taken over by other holdings and the meaning of the name was altogether lost.

The Only Band That Matters

by Richard Empson
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Few bands in the history of popular music have managed to combine artistic ambition, political conviction, musical innovation and raw energy as successfully as The Clash. Emerging from the explosion of British punk in the mid-1970s, they quickly transcended the limitations of the genre to become one of the most influential rock bands of all time. While many punk groups focused on rebellion for its own sake, The Clash used music as a vehicle for social commentary, cultural exploration, and political engagement. Their songs addressed unemployment, racism, class inequality, war, and urban decay while remaining intensely exciting and accessible.

The band's roots can be traced to several corners of London's underground music scene. Guitarist Mick Jones had played in proto-punk band London SS. After the band folded in early 1976, Jones saw the Sex Pistols perform for the first time and decided to set up another band following their example. He recruited Keith Levene on rhythm guitar, Paul Simonon on bass, Terry Chimes on drums and Billy Watts on vocals. However, when Jones saw John Mellor (who had adopted the stage name Joe Strummer) perform as singer and rhythm guitarist of pub rock band The 101ers he decided to invite him to join the new band, telling him they would soon rival the Pistols. Legend has it that after seeing the Sex Pistols perform, Strummer realized that music was changing and decided he needed to change with it. According to several accounts, Jones gave him little time to decide; fortunately for music history, Strummer accepted.

When Strummer accepted, Watts was dismissed and the new band's initial lineup was complete. Their name was suggested by Simonon, who saw the word 'clash' appear repeatedly in newspaper headlines of that time and thought it would make a good name for a punk band. After rehearsing for less than a month, The Clash made their debut performance in July 1976, supporting the Sex Pistols themselves at the Black Swan nightclub in Sheffield.

One of the great ironies of punk history is that Joe Strummer was hardly a stereotypical working-class rebel. Born in Ankara, Turkey, where his father worked as a British diplomat, he spent part of his childhood moving between countries and attending boarding schools. Yet he went on to become one of the most authentic voices of social protest in British rock music. Strummer's charisma, intelligence and passion quickly made him one of punk's defining figures. He was politically engaged without being dogmatic, idealistic without being naïve, and rebellious without becoming cynical.

After their debut, band manager Bernard Rhodes insisted The Clash should not perform live again until they were much tighter, so they rehearsed intensely the following month. According to Strummer, the band devoted themselves to creating a distinct identity, something that set them apart both in attitude and musically from their role models, the Sex Pistols. Around this time, Levene quit.

The band's self-titled debut album, *The Clash* (1977), was an immediate statement of intent. Songs such as "Career Opportunities" and "London's Burning" captured the frustrations of young Britons facing limited opportunities and social stagnation. The album mixed anger with intelligence, distinguishing The Clash from many of their contemporaries. One of the most remarkable aspects of the album was the band's willingness to incorporate reggae influences. Their cover of Junior Murvin's "Police & Thieves" demonstrated a musical openness that would become one of their defining characteristics. At a time when many punk bands were focused on speed and aggression, The Clash were already looking beyond genre boundaries. Around this time, Chimes was replaced by drummer Nicholas 'Topper' Headon.

The Clash soon became central figures in the first wave of British punk. Their live performances were explosive, earning a reputation for intensity and unpredictability. But unlike most punk bands, The Clash refused to remain confined to a single style. Their second album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* (1978), expanded their sound while retaining their political edge. However, it was their willingness to embrace reggae,

Continued on next page

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ska, rockabilly, soul, funk, pop and other genres that truly set them apart. London itself played a major role in this musical evolution. The city exposed the band to a diverse range of cultural influences, particularly through immigrant communities that brought Caribbean musical traditions into Britain's urban landscape. This openness sometimes angered punk purists. Yet it was precisely this refusal to obey genre rules that made The Clash so influential.

The Clash next released *London Calling* (1979), widely regarded as the best punk album ever recorded. The double album represented a dramatic leap forward in songwriting, musicianship, and artistic ambition. The title track captured Cold War anxieties and social unease while simultaneously functioning as an epic rock anthem. What made the album extraordinary was its balance between experimentation and accessibility. The album's memorable cover emerged almost by accident: a photograph taken by Pennie Smith showing Simonon smashing his bass guitar on stage during a concert. Ironically, Smith disliked the image because it was blurry, but the band disagreed. It became one of rock's most iconic images, symbolising the energy and frustration at the heart of punk.

The Clash's political engagement distinguished them from many rock bands. Their songs addressed racism, police brutality, imperialism, unemployment, and social inequality. Importantly, their politics were not limited to lyrics. They often attempted to align their actions with their beliefs, whether by controlling album prices, supporting activist causes, or playing benefit concerts. Yet they avoided becoming purely ideological and their songs remained rooted in human stories.

If *London Calling* expanded punk, The Clash's next album, *Sandinista!* (1980), exploded it entirely. Released as a triple album, it incorporated dub, gospel, jazz, funk, children's choirs, early rap influences, and experimental soundscapes. The sheer scope of the project shocked audiences and critics alike. Many artists would have released such material across multiple albums. The Clash instead presented it as a sprawling statement of artistic freedom. Though initially divisive, the album later gained recognition as one of the most adventurous ever released by a major rock band.

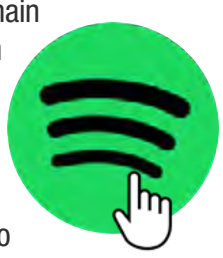
While Strummer and Jones received the most attention, Topper Headon was crucial to The Clash's success. An exceptionally versatile musician, he could move effortlessly between different rhythms. His drumming enabled the band to explore musical territory that many punk groups could never have attempted. He also contributed significantly as a songwriter. Unfortunately, Headon's growing heroin addiction became a major problem and in 1982 he was dismissed from the band, replaced by the returning Terry Chimes. His departure removed an important stabilizing influence between Strummer and Jones. Many observers believe the band's decline accelerated when he left.

The band's next album, *Combat Rock* (1982) became their most commercially successful. It featured two of their most enduring songs: "Rock the Casbah" and "Should I Stay or Should I Go". The album brought the band unprecedented international recognition, particularly in the US. Ironically, commercial success arrived just as internal tensions were reaching a breaking point. Creative disagreements, exhaustion, and personal problems increasingly strained relationships within the band. Chimes left after the album tour and was replaced with Pete Howard.

The relationship between Mick Jones and Joe Strummer formed the creative heart of The Clash. Together they wrote most of the band's greatest songs. Yet their partnership was also marked by tension. Jones often gravitated toward experimentation and innovation, while Strummer focused more on maintaining the band's political identity and collective spirit. As pressures increased, disagreements became more difficult to manage. Finally, in 1983, Jones left the band. For many fans, this effectively ended The Clash. Without Jones, Strummer and Simonon attempted to carry on recruiting Nick Sheppard. But their next (and last) album, *Cut the Crap* (1985), was poorly received – despite including "This is England", one of the band's best songs ever – and lacked the chemistry that had defined their classic lineup, so after the album tour the band officially dissolved in 1986.

Following The Clash's breakup, Joe Strummer pursued various musical projects, acted in films and eventually formed The Mescaleros. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, his reputation experienced a remarkable resurgence. Younger generations discovered The Clash, while older fans reassessed the band's importance. Tragically, Strummer died suddenly in December 2002 from an undiagnosed heart condition at the age of fifty. His death prompted an outpouring of tributes from musicians around the world. For fans, he had represented a rare combination of integrity, intelligence, and artistic courage.

Fans and critics often referred to The Clash as "The Only Band That Matters", a nickname that reflected both admiration and the extraordinary expectations placed upon them. They occupy a unique position in music history. They began as a punk band but refused to remain one. They embraced political activism without becoming preachy, experimented with musical styles without losing their identity, and achieved commercial success without completely abandoning their ideals. In an era when many bands were content to follow trends, The Clash consistently challenged themselves and their audiences. They remain one of Britain's greatest bands.



Back to the Future XXXIX

by Carl Sloth Knudsen
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Baby Dan was thriving, and Anne had returned to work teaching at the British School in Carrasco. Having completed her studies at Anglo and passed an examination in England on teaching children with learning difficulties, her role extended beyond traditional classroom instruction. She was dedicated to helping children overcome anxiety and gain the confidence needed to absorb and enjoy learning. From that point on, she devoted herself not only to her profession but also to keeping our family together.

Sometimes, I ask myself how she managed to do both. In many ways, it seems almost miraculous. I left home for the office at seven o'clock every morning and usually did not return until around eight in the evening. During my term as President of the Rotary Club in Paso Carrasco, our meetings took place every Wednesday night and often continued until midnight. At one stage, I was also invited to join the Masons, but I declined because it would have taken yet another evening away from my family.

Despite the demands on our time, I was delighted that Anne enjoyed her work so much. She loved the school, the children, the teachers, the teaching methods, and the educational system as a whole. The friendships she developed there remained strong long after retirement. Several of the former teachers formed a group called "The Golden Girls" and continued meeting every year at the home of Dick and Christine Ferrand in Solís.

Whenever I went to collect Anne before sunset after one of these gatherings, I could sense the joy in the air. The warmth of old friendships and shared memories was unmistakable. Seeing them together somehow made everyone feel younger. It may sound strange, but that is how life works. Time moves back and forth, carrying us along until we reach a stage where opportunities to meet become less frequent. We stay connected through the marvelous invention of Alexander Graham Bell, the telephone, which today has evolved into something that is almost a computer, or perhaps a computer that also functions as a telephone.

Communication has become one of the most important aspects of modern life. Without communication, we cannot learn, and without learning, we cannot teach. The two are inseparable. The British Schools has undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping many remarkable individuals. Among its former students is the former President of Uruguay, Luis Lacalle Pou. Both he and his teachers have every reason to be proud of one another.

Although I never met Luis Lacalle Pou personally, I remember his father, former President Luis Alberto Lacalle, very well, despite never having met him either. However, I do have an anecdote connected with him.

During his presidency, I was living and working in Brazil for United Merchants and Manufacturers (Sudamtex S.A.). When the company closed, I requested a transfer back to Uruguay. At the time, my mother was travelling in Denmark and kindly lent us her apartment in Pocitos, on the corner of Lorenzo Pérez and 26 de Marzo.

Anne and I had two dogs, and every morning we would take them for a walk along the Rambla de Pocitos. We had great fun together, running, jumping, and embracing one another while the dogs played. At that early hour, the beach was nearly empty, although the traffic coming into Montevideo from Carrasco was already heavy.

The following day, I received a call from our friend Alicia Behrens, née Mederos, who was serving as secretary to the President. She told me that while driving to work, the President had suddenly looked out the window and remarked, "Look at those happy people with their dogs. How nice."

To his surprise, Alicia replied, "I know them."

"You do?" he asked. "Who are they?"

"They are my Danish friends. Carl was born in Uruguay, and his wife Anne is Danish. Carl is my husband Olaf Behrens' best friend. He met them in Denmark, where they married before moving to South America."

The story may seem insignificant, yet it reminds us how small the world can be. We travel farther and faster than ever before, yet time remains our one unavoidable limitation. What makes the anecdote memorable is that it captured a spontaneous and very human moment. Uruguay had faced significant challenges during those years, and the President was undoubtedly on his way to address matters of far greater importance. Yet, for a brief moment, he noticed a family simply enjoying life with their dogs on the waterfront and took pleasure in seeing their happiness.

That, I believe, is a story worth telling.

Are the Bearskins Headed for Retirement?

by Geoffrey W Deakin
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Few images are more instantly recognizable around the world than the King's Guard standing outside Buckingham Palace in their scarlet tunics and towering black bearskin hats. Visitors flock to photograph them, children stare in amazement, and at least one tourist every hour wonders aloud whether the guards are allowed to blink.

Yet one of Britain's most iconic traditions is now at the centre of a lively debate. According to recent reports, a group of British lawmakers has called on the government to replace the famous bearskin caps with synthetic alternatives, arguing that the continued use of real bear fur no longer reflects modern ethical standards.

The controversy focuses on the fact that the ceremonial hats worn by the Foot Guards are traditionally made from the pelts of Canadian black bears. Animal welfare organizations, including PETA UK, have long campaigned against the practice, arguing that modern materials can provide the same appearance without requiring animal products. Supporters of change point out that synthetic alternatives have improved dramatically in recent years and could preserve the visual tradition while addressing ethical concerns.

Those arguing for replacement have gained momentum. Cross-party members of Parliament recently urged the Ministry of Defence to stop ordering new bearskin caps and to accelerate the development of suitable faux-fur versions. They contend that maintaining a centuries-old tradition is not, by itself, sufficient reason to continue the use of real animal fur.

As with many British debates, however, the issue is rather more complicated than it first appears.

The Ministry of Defence has indicated that it supports finding a synthetic replacement, but only if it can meet several demanding requirements. After all, these hats are not costume-shop accessories purchased on a rainy weekend. They must withstand years of ceremonial use in the famously unpredictable British weather. A replacement material must match the appearance, durability and practical performance of traditional bearskin.

And therein lies a very British dilemma.

Britain has always excelled at preserving traditions that appear delightfully eccentric to the rest of the world. We continue to hold ceremonies that date back centuries, maintain customs whose origins nobody fully remembers, and queue with such dedication that it occasionally seems capable of qualifying as an Olympic sport.

The bearskin cap itself dates back to the early nineteenth century, when British soldiers adopted the style after victories against Napoleon's Imperial Guard. Over time, the towering hats became a symbol of prestige, discipline and military heritage. For generations, they have been as much a part of London's landscape as double-decker buses, black cabs and conversations about whether summer has already ended despite only having started three weeks earlier.

Yet traditions do evolve.

The British monarchy and armed forces have successfully adapted to changing times before, often balancing respect for history with contemporary expectations. The current discussion reflects a broader question faced by many institutions: how do you preserve heritage while responding to modern values?

For members of the British community abroad, including us here in Uruguay, the debate offers an interesting reminder that British identity has never been frozen in time. The traditions we cherish today are themselves products of change, adaptation and occasional compromise.

Whatever the outcome, visitors to Buckingham Palace are unlikely to notice any dramatic differences in the near future. Whether made from real fur or advanced synthetic materials, the guards will still stand proudly on parade, tourists will still attempt to make them laugh, and someone will still ask whether they wear the hats while off duty at the supermarket.

The great British hat debate may continue for some time yet. But perhaps that is fitting. Britain loves few things more than discussing tradition, except maybe discussing the weather. And when both subjects can be debated at the same time, preferably over a cup of tea, the nation is usually at its happiest.

Over 150 Years of Wirgman History in Uruguay

by Nicolás Wirgman
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This year marks 161 years since George Ferdinand Wirgman arrived in Uruguay, offering an opportunity to recall a family whose history has been intertwined with the country's development from the nineteenth century to the present.

Born in London on 12 October 1845, George Ferdinand came from a Swedish-origin family established in England since the eighteenth century. He was the grandson of Sir Thomas Wirgman, a London merchant who built a business in St James's Street. After retirement, Thomas became active in intellectual and philosophical life and was an early advocate of Kantian philosophy in the English-speaking world. He also supported the Bourbon Restoration and received the distinction of *Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Fleur-de-Lys* from King Louis XVIII of France.

In 1865, aged twenty, George Ferdinand travelled to the Río de la Plata, joining the British migration that contributed to Uruguay's economic and social development during a period of transformation. His siblings were Charles Wirgman, artist, caricaturist, pioneer of illustrated journalism in Japan and founder of *The Japan Punch*; Theodore B. Wirgman, British painter and illustrator trained at the Royal Academy Schools; and Helena A. Wirgman, known as "Wirgie", who moved in British cultural circles and was a friend and influence on poet Siegfried Sassoon.

George settled in Durazno, between the Río Negro and the Carpintería and Chileno streams, an area that attracted British immigrants engaged in cattle farming. He spent his early years connected with Estancia San Jorge, established by Scottish pioneer Thomas Fair, gaining experience in rural work. He eventually established his own estancia and became a landowner and cattle farmer within the British community.

On 29 August 1870, he married Celedonia del Carmen Guerrero Muñoz, a member of a long-established criollo family. Their marriage connected the Uruguayan Wirgman branch with families whose roots extended back to the colonial period.

Links with Britain remained strong. George maintained a friendship and correspondence with Sir Ernest M. Satow, then Secretary of the British Legation in Montevideo and later a distinguished British diplomat. Theodore B. also visited the family at Carpintería in 1919.

The children born at Carpintería established a Wirgman branch fully integrated into Uruguayan life. Of George and Celedonia's fifteen children, three sons continued the surname. Jorge F. Wirgman participated in the Revolution of 1904 and helped found the *Asociación Rural de Durazno*. Alfredo I. Wirgman served as a cavalry officer in the British Army during the First World War and later joined Freemasonry in Montevideo. Eduardo A. Wirgman worked as a bilingual bookkeeper at the Liebig's Extract of Meat Company in Fray Bentos.

Over more than 161 years, the family has participated in Uruguay's rural, political, commercial, professional and social life. The 150th anniversary, celebrated in 2015, brought together descendants from different branches to share memories, photographs, documents and stories.

More than a century and a half after George's journey, the Wirgman story continues to connect England and Uruguay: from Sweden to England, from England to Durazno, and from Durazno to the rest of Uruguay, a family history still being written…

Nicolás Wirgman
6th-generation descendant of the Wirgman family in Uruguay
Researcher and family historian

by Phillip Berzins
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Whole Grain Seeded Bread

This month's recipe of wholemeal bread with mixed seeds produces a crispy, nutty flavoured loaf and while it is not my intention to go into too much technical detail, there are two elements related to bread making which I need to explain to help understand the process of panification.

The first one is related to how cereal grains, generally wheat, used in bread making are structurally made up.

The endosperm is the largest part of the grain making up between 80 to 86 percent of its total weight and is made up of mainly starchy carbohydrates and proteins and represents what we know as white flour.

The bran is the outer skin of the cereal grain, and it represents between five and 13% of it. It is rich in dietary fibre, B vitamins, minerals and healthy fats and antioxidants.

The germ is the embryo and represents two to six percent of the grain and contains high amounts of proteins, vitamins B and E, essential minerals and healthy fats.

When we purchase wholemeal flour normally the labelling does not inform us the proportion of bran included and whether it contains any germ at all. As the germ is packed with healthy unsaturated fats and oils which oxidise and go rancid quickly, most wholemeal flours do not contain any germ at all, hence my reason for making up my own wholemeal flour for bread making.

Another important element of bread making is the fermentation process. This recipe uses a poolish, a type of pre-ferment which will help enhance the flavour, texture and structure of the bread. Generally speaking, the longer it takes for your poolish and the finished dough mixture to ferment allowing the yeast and bacteria to create complex sugars, acids and aromatic compounds, the better the results.

INGREDIENTS

For the Poolish:

250 g white flour
250 ml filtered or bottled warm water, still (no gas)
½ tsp dried yeast

For the final dough:

500 g white flour
75 g wheat bran or oat bran or mixture of the two
25 g wheat germ
50 g mixed seeds
1 tsp dried yeast
2 tsp salt
250 ml warm water (approx.)
All remaining poolish

METHOD

To make the poolish, mix the flour, water and yeast together in a small bowl, cover and allow to ferment for around eight hours at room temperature, or up to 72 hours in the fridge. The mixture should bubble up and increase in size.

For the final dough, mix all the dry ingredients together in a large bowl or stand mixer and add the water and poolish while continuously mixing until the dough comes together.

Knead for a couple of minutes if hand kneading and if using a stand mixer with a dough hook keep beating on low speed for a further two to three minutes. If the mixture is too dry add a little bit more water.

Cover the dough with a damp cloth and let the dough bulk ferment for between eight to 24 hours depending on the temperature of the surroundings. If it is a warm day the dough will probably take around eight hours to double in size. But if left in the fridge, it could take up to 24 hours or more. Remember: the longer the ferment, the better the results.

Punch down the risen dough to remove some of the air and place into a well-oiled bread mould or, alternatively, shape the dough into your desired form and place it onto a baking tray. Cover with a damp cloth and allow to rise once more until nearly double its original size, once again in a warm atmosphere or inside the fridge for a longer ferment.

Bake in an oven at 180ºC for 40 minutes or until it forms a nice crust and a sharp knife inserted into the centre of the bread comes out clean and shiny. Remove the finished bread from the mould or tray and cool on a wire rack.

NOTES:

The recipe uses relatively small quantities of yeast to allow for a longer ferment

Use 00 white flour, which has a high protein content, making for a stronger dough.

COLOURING TIME
pumpkin patch
corn maze
OCTOBER

Skeleton crews or Dracula's welcome committee? Households in London during Halloween