

THE PATIO HOTEL, ABERDEEN  
FRIDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2000

43rd  
The ~~44~~<sup>43</sup><sup>rd</sup> Past Presidents Dinner held in the year heralding the end of the second millennium, took place in the North-East of Scotland at the Patio Hotel, Aberdeen.

Co-incidentally, the only previous occasion that the event had been held on a Friday, had also been in Aberdeen in the year 1988 on the occasion of the SASA centenary. This was to accommodate a special reception given by the Aberdeen City Council on the Saturday night in recognition of the Association's Centenary.

The reason for the current change was the consequence of a somewhat arbitrary decision by SASA Council to introduce an Awards Dinner in the evening as a follow-up to the Association's AGM. The matter would be of some debate later but in the meantime the members gathered in the Balmedie Suite of the Patio Hotel at 7.30 pm to greet each other and have a pre-prandial drink. Seventeen past presidents were in attendance together with their partners, two widows (Isobel Smith and Jean Hoare) and the President designate for 2001, Ron Taylor and his good lady Sheena. The total attendance was 33 and a full list of those present is attached.

At the appropriate time, the company moved through to the dining room which was pleasantly set out in the form of a square so that all could see and be seen. Jill Cochran who, although furthest in residence from Aberdeen, had gallantly made all the arrangements for the function, was in the chair. In welcoming everybody she made particular reference to Ron and Sheena Taylor and also of the circumstances leading to the change to Friday evening. She spoke briefly of the sad death of Norrie Beattie - Past President 1986 and a short silence was observed in his memory..

By this time the members were ready for the meal and the Grace could not have been in better hands than those of the Reverend Don Hawthorn (1983) who contrived to mix humour and sincerity in his short address. After an excellent meal from a varied menu, the Loyal Toast was given by Jill who also intimated apologies for absence from Bill and Mary Black, Tom Nelson, Jim Thomson and Douglas Cape.

When the decks (or rather Tables) had been cleared for action and whilst the members were still reasonably alert, the Scribe (Les Turberville) read

his ramblings on the 1999 dinner held in Perth. Fortunately these were passed with a minimum of comment and no dispute, whereupon an animated discussion took place on the introduction of the Association's Awards Dinner. An informal approach had been made to the Past Presidents as it was recognised that the proposed function conflicted with the traditional Past Presidents' Dinner. A somewhat reluctant assent had been given since it was assumed that it was only to occur in the current year. However, it now appeared that it was to be a permanent fixture and that arrangements were already well advanced for a similar event in Glasgow next year. The majority of Past Presidents appeared to be in favour of the hitherto status quo situation of a Saturday night Past Presidents Dinner and the Scribe was asked to communicate with the President-elect, Ron Taylor, in order that he could raise the matter with Council.

For the information of those arranging our dinners in future, Jill Cochran said that this year she had been required to lodge a substantial deposit with the Hotel in order to secure a reservation. It was agreed that should such a situation present itself in future, the Association should be asked to stand security.

Allan Robertson was then upstanding to propose the toast to the SASA having been introduced as a world expert on Peat (spelt P.E.A.T.) Allan, however, recalled that in the Scribe's report, the other Pete (sorry Peter) had spoken about the early days of the SASA when Swim Meets had been subject to a Dress code and swearing was banned at Council Meetings. That, of course, was in the days of B.C. (Before Coutts). Allan referred to contributions made in the past by individuals without thought of recompense. One such Life Member of the Association who had recently passed away, was Jean Spence of Aberdeen who had given a lifetime to swimming and over 50 years of service to the Royal Life Saving Society. Sadly there were very few at her funeral.

The Association could, in some respects, be compared to a large family that anyone could join and become totally (if not literally) immersed in swimming. He welcomed all present to the Granite City, particularly the outgoing president (in more ways than one) Robin Dale, wishing him well in the conduct of the Meeting the next day. AGMs had been known to present Presidents with their problems. Allan then asked the company to drink to the continued health and success of the Association, coupling it with the name of the incoming president, Ron Taylor and his good lady.

Ron, in his reply, thanked the Past Presidents for the warmth of their

reception and for their promise of support. He felt a little daunted at the prospect of the undoubtedly busy year which lay ahead but he hoped that his actions would speak louder than his words confident in the backing he would receive from all concerned.

It was then thought appropriate to test the mental powers of the company by distributing a set of Quiz Sheets in which it was required by the clues to identify past presidents. These had been skilfully compiled by ex-headmaster Alex Spence. Would that it could be said that the answers were equally skilful. Just as well that Anne Robinson wasn't the Quizmaster!! However, it did lead on to reminiscences concerning certain worthies such as Ned Barnie and Jock Coutts.. The reference Allan Robertson had made to B.C. was considered very appropriate. It was certainly a watershed when Jock Coutts left the helm of the Association. A.C. has never been the same.

Peter Heatly then spoke briefly on the demise of Jean McDowell, a member of Warrender Baths Club, who had died recently at the age of 91. She had been Scottish champion and record holder as a freestyle swimmer at various distances between the years 1927 and 1934; competing at the Empire Games and also at the Olympics in 1928 when she was placed fourth in the 100 yards freestyle. Jean had been a guest at the Association's Centenary Dinner in 1988 and had continued swimming almost to the time of her death. She had passed on to Peter all her scrapbooks and jotters (19 in all) which make fascinating reading.

From then on it was time for the usual banter and chatter, which was not even silenced by the request from the chair for accounts to be settled. We were still fortunate in having the burden lightened by the George Prescott Bequest.

Projecting forward twelve months, Robin Dale undertook to make arrangements for the dinner in February 2001 when the AGM falls to be held in the West District.

Before lousing time (not bad for a Sassenach), Jill Cochran was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for her organisation of another successful and, as ever, eagerly anticipated occasion in the social calendar.

**Past Presidents Dinner**  
**Patio Hotel, Aberdeen. 25 February 2000**

John Gunning (1957)		
Alex Spence (1967)		Netta Spence
John Neil (1973)		Margaret Neil
Leslie Turberville (1974)		Ruby Turberville
Peter Heatly (1975 & 1988)		
<del>Mary Black (1976/77)</del>		
Allan Robertson (1979)		Sheena Robertson
Mae (Cochrane) Heatly (1981)		
Don Hawthorn (1983)		Carole Hawthorn
Jack Snowdon (1984)		
Andrew Taylor (1987)		Nan Taylor
Donald McGillivray (1989)		Nancy McGillivray
George Philp (1991)		Agnes Philip
Jill Cochran (1992)		Gordon Cochran
Winnie Ferguson (1993)		George Ferguson
Helen Brunton (1994)		
<del>William Black (1995)</del>		
Norman Grierson (1996)		Myra Grierson
Robin Dale (1998/9)		Evelyn Knox
	Isobel Smith	
	Jean Hoare	
Ron Taylor (President Designate)		Sheena Taylor

