

PAST PRESIDENTS DINNER 2002

In wintry weather and by varying modes of transport, members had made their way to the Hilton Dunblane Hydro Hotel in Perthshire for the Congress and AGM of the SASA to be held on Saturday, February 23, 2002. On the evening of Friday 22 February, at 7.30 pm, 34 of the more distinguished gathered in the Hotel's McLeod Suite to partake of liquid refreshment prior to the 45th Annual Dinner of the Past Presidents of the Association. There were present 18 presidents, 12 Spouses or Partners, 2 widows of former Past Presidents together with the President-Elect for 2002, Stewart Davidson who was accompanied by his wife Joan. The full list of those attending was as follows:-

Alex Spence	1967	Netta
John Neil	1973	Margaret
Leslie Turberville	1974	Ruby
Peter Heatly	1975&88	
Allan Robertson	1979	Sheena
Mae (Cochrane) Heatly	1981	
Jack Snowdon	1984	
Andrew Taylor	1987	Nan
Donald McGillivray	1989	Nancy
George Philp	1991	Agnes
Jill Cochran	1992	Gordon
Winnie Ferguson	1993	
Helen Brunton	1994	
William Black	1995	
Norman Grierson	1996	Myra
Robin Dale	1998/9	Jennifer
Ron Taylor	2000	Sheena
Sandy Brunton	2001	Lorna
	1978	Isobel Smith
	1997	Jean Hoare
Stewart Davidson	President Elect 2002	Joan

Although the Association had, this year, gathered near Stirling, the new home of Scottish Swimming, the East District were nominally the hosts – this being the first time, though previous attempts had been made, that the Central Region of Scotland had agreed (albeit temporarily) to secede from the West District.

As the sprightly junior past president of the East District, Ron Taylor presided, he having made all the arrangements for the evening. In welcoming everybody, he conveyed apologies for absence from John Gunning (Cataract Operation), Don Hawthorn (Study Course), Mary Black (synchro business abroad), Jim Thomson, Doug Cape, and George Ferguson (husband of Winnie). Ron gave a special welcome to Stewart Davidson the President elect for 2002 together with his wife Joan on their introduction to the rites of the Past Presidents Dinner.

George Philp gave the Grace and an excellent meal was enjoyed in pleasant surroundings with the company seated in the traditional form of a square table arrangement.

To start the customary formal proceedings, the Scribe (Les Turberville) was called upon to read his account of the previous year's Dinner which he did (well almost) without deviation, hesitation or repetition to the extent that the Minutes were accepted on the proposal of Andrew Taylor and seconded by Don McGillivray. The Scribe then intimated that having carried out this onerous responsibility for more than 25 years and as, in rural Cheshire, he was now somewhat remote from the scene of Scottish swimming activity, he begged that he might be relieved of the duties next year. Someone ventured the name of Alex Spence who appeared so taken aback that he neither confirmed or denied acceptance.

Peter Heatly in opening his toast to the Association commented that it was the first time that a District had been called upon to arrange the Dinner on alien territory and he congratulated Ron Taylor on adapting to the conditions and arranging the dinner in such congenial surroundings. He welcomed Sandy Brunton and Lorna as

the most recent additions to the hallowed ranks although Sandy had still to fulfil his final act at the AGM the next day.

In welcoming Stuart Davidson as the incoming president, Peter paid tribute to his dedication to the sport of swimming and particularly to his Club, Arbroath St. Thomas which had a long and proud tradition. He recalled some of his own experiences in the Arbroath Open Air Pool in diving events and in the 150 yards Backstroke Championship which seemed an interminable event in a pool 100 yards long.

Our involvement in Swimming had brought us all round the table. It was said that men with hobbies rarely go crazy. But, what about the wives!!

The Report and Agenda for the next day's AGM made good reading. The production of a five-year plan and the opening of the National Academy and new Headquarters at Stirling University augured well for the future. He congratulated Sandy on the Association's achievements during the past 12 months and looked forward to improved performances in the Commonwealth Games at Manchester later in the year.

The Association depended very much on the loyalty of individual clubs and members and Peter asked all present to join with him in drinking a toast to the Association and to the incoming president, Stuart Davidson.

Stuart, in his reply, traced his own interests and involvement in sport from his early days in Aberdeen. Rather barbaric learn to swim methods practised by a certain James Pirie in the Middle School, Aberdeen, an encounter with the legendary Jock Coutts, and watching a certain Peter Heatly give a diving exhibition in the Aberdeen Uptown Baths. However, in those days Stuart himself was more interested in Athletics although his father was a life member of Dee Swimming Club and Stuart's future wife, Joan, was a member of Thistle Ladies. Stuart claimed two distinctions in his youth; the first in athletics when he beat Ming Campbell (Olympic

athlete and politician) in a 100 yards handicap race; and the second in football when he captained a team containing Denis Law, a bespectacled schoolboy. Law who was only fourteen at the time, went on to become one of Scotland's greatest footballers.

Work and family meant moving first to Dunbartonshire and then to Dundee. Their children joined Arbroath St. Thomas Swimming Club and, as happens with so many parents, He and Joan were hooked on swimming!! Coaching, Teaching, Technical Officials and Administration followed. Even after the children ceased their involvement, the parents continued in Club, District and National activities.

Stuart reviewed certain current events in which he had been involved and, in looking to the future, hoped that the progressive changes which the sport had undergone would not be marred as he believed football had been, by too much emphasis on the monetary aspect. Where money could help was in the replacement or refurbishment of many of our swimming pools which are very old and badly in need of major investment.

The new premises at Stirling were exciting and the G.B. situation is ever evolving. He looked forward to the Commonwealth Games in Manchester and believed that Scotland would do well in the pool.

Stuart concluded by wishing Sandy Brunton a smooth and safe passage through his next day's final act as president. He thanked the Past Presidents and their spouses for the warm welcome which he and Joan had received and pledged his best efforts on behalf of the Association during the next twelve months.

The formalities completed, the chairman allowed the remainder of the evening to proceed on an informal basis. That is, apart from the obligatory collection of dues from the members present. A generous donation by the absent Don Hawthorn paid for the cost of the after-dinner liqueurs.

The Association's Congress and General Meeting would fall to be held in the Midlands District in 2003 and therefore it would be incumbent upon Winnie Ferguson and her fellow past presidents in the District to make timeous arrangements for the Past Presidents' function. Winnie was assured, however, that this would not include the handling of financial arrangements!!

As the time approached midnight, a vote of thanks was given to Ron Taylor for his organisation and chairmanship of the Dinner. This enabled those, whether by reason of responsible duties the next day, old age or other reason, to retire to bed while those of a more adventurous spirit could continue their reminiscences and refreshment into the small hours.

Footnote from the Scribe

I took over these duties from Jock Coutts in 1976 (two years after my installation as president). Apart from one year (1982) when my wife's illness prevented me, I have attended and tried to provide a record of the Dinners in a light-hearted way. It has been a pleasure to see the increasing support given by the past presidents and spouses and also the partners of some presidents sadly no longer with us.

To renew old friendships each year is a pleasure my wife and I have looked forward to, particularly since we now live in England. It is with regret, therefore, that we are unable, through my wife's present infirmity, to be with you all at Carnoustie this year. Particularly, since it was some 58 years ago that Ruby and I first met at the Royal Naval Air Station, Easthaven (HMS Peewit) and we spent much of our free time in Carnoustie and Arbroath. What memories we have of the Beach Dance Hall, Carnoustie, the Webster Hall in Arbroath and Green's Playhouse in Dundee!!

Have a great evening and we hope it will be possible to join you next year.