

The Watsonian Club open Meeting held on Thursday 5 March 2015 at Myreside.

Apologies

Brian Adair, Jim Raitt, Douglas Stewart, Dennis Carmichael, Liz Smith, Douglas Buchanan, Bruce McPherson, Gavin Gemmell, Lindsay Walls.

Present

Marion Davison, Roy Mack, Robert Heatly, Melvyn Roffe, Lesley McKean, Lorna Baird, Inez Forbes, Euan Kennedy, Pat Scott, Donald Scott, Rod Slater, James Brass, Robin Morris, Martin Macari, Neil Patrick, Darren Love.

President's report

Introduction

Accepting the Presidency a year ago was indeed a great honour and privilege and one which I have thoroughly enjoyed. How could one not enjoy the friendship and wonderful hospitality extended to myself and my husband. The year has simply flown by and we now have special and very happy memories of the many events we have attended and the numerous friendships we have renewed and those we have made.

Branch Meetings/Dinners

I have been fortunate to be able to attend meetings of branches in Aberdeen, Cape Town, the Borders, Hong Kong, London, South West England (Bath), Yorkshire and Perth Ladies as well as here in Edinburgh. Hong Kong was amazing as the dinner was held in the Gun Room of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club.

I also had the opportunity of visiting the HK Football Club founded by Stewart Lockhart – a Watsonian. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the Highland and Moray dinner or the London dinner owing to prior engagements but was particularly pleased that Roy Mack represented the Club at Inverness. It is inevitable that a number of events will clash and it is good to be able to share the load with the Vice-President so that the Club is represented as much as possible. It is pleasing to note that those attending our Dinners numbered 359.

My first engagement was Chairing the annual dinner at Myreside where the guest for the evening was Gareth Edwards who gave an address entitled 'A matter of Principal' recounting some of the many experiences he had during his thirteen year tenure as Principal of the school. During the evening Gareth and Jane were presented with a splendid crystal bowl which had been suitably engraved by former pupil Alison Kinnaird. Contributions were made by Head Boy, Philip Bryans, and Head Girl, Kirsty Cameron, and to mark Gareth's retirement all those who had been Head Boys or Head Girls during Gareth's time at Watsons were invited to attend as well as all Branch Presidents. The evening was enhanced with music by the GWC Big Band and the excellent catering of Darren Love.

During the year I was able to attend the annual dinners of our sister clubs, the Stewarts Melville Club and the Mary Erskine Guild, where it was a pleasure to renew old friendships from the hockey field. Roy attended the annual Heriots dinner as I was unable to attend.

The Merchant Company Guild Dinner with the new Master, Ian Watson, was a splendid occasion with the opportunity of meeting numerous well know faces in the City and many interesting guests from the London Guilds. The only drawback was the very early flight the following morning to be able to attend

the well supported South West lunch in Bath where it was a pleasure to meet the members and to see Sir Roger Young looking so fit and well.

School

Many events at school have demonstrated the wide expertise and interests of the pupils. The Art Exhibition included works of many styles and a wide variety of media. The production of Phantom of the Opera was so professionally done both with respect to the music and singing but also with the technical expertise of the production. The senior school prize-giving brought home to me the wide range of achievements of the pupils and the varied opportunities of which pupils may take advantage – a vast and welcome change since I was at school! I presented the many prizes to the Rifle Club and also with over 900 attended the Caritas Lecture. Attendance at the annual carol service in St Giles at Christmas is something not to be missed and this year was of the usual high standard.

The Watsonian Award

The Watsonian award this year was given to Marie Cecile Murphy as the committee was much impressed with her attitude and enthusiasm towards the film she proposes to make about the 'Razeteurs' in the Camargue region of France. This is a festival where men try to pick ribbons from the horns of the local Camargue bulls which are well known for their speed and bravado. We wish her well with her project.

New Principal

In September it was a pleasure to meet with Melvyn Roffe, our new Principal, and his wife, Catherine, and to introduce them to many of our Past Presidents. It is particularly pleasing to see the great interest he has taken in the Club and to meet with him in Aberdeen, Bath, the Borders and London. I and the Past Presidents were pleased that Melvyn and Catherine were able to join in the recently held Past President's lunch here at Myreside.

Remembrance Day

A particularly poignant moment during my term was the annual Armistice service as my father's name appears on the memorial. I thought the whole event was particularly well done by all pupils, especially those who contributed at the service by providing brief accounts of the school careers of some of the fallen. A most moving occasion.

In January there was the annual laying of a wreath at the Cenotaph in Whitehall to commemorate the Watsonian fallen of the Great War – an event arranged by the London Club and which is followed by a lunch at the Caledonian Club. This was the first time that the Principal and the Club President have been able to join the London President and members for this event. The London Club is to be congratulated for their continuing support of this annual event which takes considerable organising.

George Watson's Family Foundation

The George Watson's Family Foundation continues to thrive and support those less fortunate or experiencing difficult times. Currently there are 162 Foundationers of which 34 receive 100% grants and an additional 11 are on short term support. This is a great achievement of which the Club can be justly proud but one which requires our continued support to enable it to develop further.

The Watsonian Family

The Watson's family is a hard working group that benefits the school and the club. At the club dinner in Cape Town I was delighted to hear Robert Lind refer to the family and I quote "we are envied as a family because others cannot understand why such a large school feels like a family". Currently Robert is our Wynberg exchange student and it was a real pleasure to meet with him at the dinner. Robert's presence at the dinner significantly reduced the average age of those attending!

The family consists of various branches and recently two meetings with the Watsonian sports clubs have been held, the first to introduce representatives to Melvyn at which 18 attended and he expressed how grateful he was for those attending and was pleased with the wide range of sporting activities being supported. The second was to introduce the new Director of P.E, Alan Campbell, who is taking up the post in April.

In addition there is the Benevolent Fund with Roger Smith, Alan Hartley and their team quietly helping those of our family most in need. There was one resignation from this group at the last meeting. This is a very important part of the club's activities and is much appreciated by all beneficiaries.

My experience during the past year has demonstrated to me that the club is in good heart and is contributing significantly to the life of the school and it's former pupils. However, I am conscious that there needs to be sustained efforts to recruit new active younger members to the club.

I was pleased to be able to attend the Open Day and meet some of those attending reunions of the years 1964, 1994 and 2004 to which some 379 FPs attended, some from Canada and Europe. This year the reunions in October will be for the years, 1965, 1995 and 2005. The Development Office are to be thanked for all they do to make these reunions such a success.

During the year 9 pupils participated in the Commonwealth Games one James Heatly is currently in S6. On behalf of the club I sent congratulations to them all.

The sudden and untimely death of Iain Brown was marked by the unveiling of a plaque in the sports centre and also a rugby reunion group presented a rugby Captain's board in Iain's memory.

Thanks

I must mention how grateful I am for the support provided to me by the Council – Roy Mack, Lesley McKean, Melvyn Roffe, Martin Macari, David Meiras, Bruce Macpherson and Inez Forbes who, unfortunately, is leaving the Council and returning to Paris. Council will replace her and would like to invite some younger Watsonians to join them. Sadly I have to report that Dr Margaret Langton a Past President in the early 60s passed away two weeks ago and the club was represented at her funeral.

I am also grateful to all in the Development Office who have been unstinting in the help they have provided. Without their support it would not have been possible to undertake so many of the year's activities.

I now want to share with you one plan for the coming year. We will shortly be circulating a questionnaire to former pupils to seek views on how we as a club develop and move forward. I would urge that you respond to this and give us your suggestions which will be carefully considered.

Finances

WATSONIAN CLUB FINANCES 31st July 2013 to 31st July 2014

BALANCE B/F 37,572.99

INCOME

MURRAY INTERNATIONAL 1,173.47

BAILLIE GIFFORD 352.60

BANK INTEREST 14.31

TOTAL 1,540.58

EXPENDITURE

WATSONIAN DINNER 76.00

ALISON KINNAIRD 750.00

BURSARY 4,000.00

TOTAL 4,826.00

BALANCE C/F 34,287.57

Conclusion

In conclusion what are my lasting memories:

A thoroughly enjoyable year made possible because of outstanding support by everyone but also the pleasure in having intensely mature pupils welcoming and assisting me at various events particularly Head Boy, Andrew Cockburn, and Head Girl, Susanna Hawes.

Being Watsonian President has been a truly remarkable experience!

Finally I wish Roy all success in his year and I trust he will have as enjoyable and fulfilling a year as I have had.

Ex Corde Caritas

The Handover of the Presidential Chain of Office.

Marion Davison handed over the Presidential chain to Roy Mack who gave a short acceptance speech, who in turn presented Lorna Baird with her Past President's medal. Roy then handed over the new Vice President's chain (which had been presented to the Club by Marion and Sandy Davison) to Robert Heatly.

Watsonian Council

Marion Davison (Class of 1958) is replaced as President by Roy Mack (Former staff).

Robert Heatly (Class of 1976) becomes Vice President and sadly Inez Forbes (Class of 1964) has tendered her resignation from Council as she is returning to France.

The remainder of Council is the same, with Martin Macari (Class of 1987), David Mieras (Class of 1956), Inez Forbes (Class of 1964), Lesley McKean (Director of Development, Class of 1981) and Melvyn Roffe (Principal), with Council charged with finding a replacement for Inez, some younger representatives and pupil representation.

Questions

Donald Scott asked if there were any plans to develop Myreside and if the Club would be in a position to help. With Club funds being what they are, RM suggested that it was unlikely that the Club could make a significant impact on the work needing done. The School is developing a campus masterplan and this may throw light on any plans for Myreside.