

## DGASS 50 Years

the speech given by Robin O'zóg  
at our 50th Anniversary tea on Saturday 22 April 2023

This length of this wee speech is inspired by the words of Henry the Eighth to his six wives: "Don't worry, I shan't keep you long"!

"Is life a boon?" asked Gilbert in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. I profess that DGASS being part of my life contributed to making it so. Let me explain ...

As you know the first meeting of what was to become Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society took place in Abbot House on Sullivan's birthday, not in 1842, but in 1970. It was the brainchild of, amongst others, Richard Galloway, Head of Music, and Douglas Ostler, Head of History, both at Dunfermline High School.

I was at that meeting, but I had no idea how much the result of it (the formation of DGASS) would impact on my life – or on your lives either for that matter – but impact it did.

So what did it do? Well, firstly, it re-enforced my belief that singing is good for the mind, the body, and the soul. I had never doubted that. and I don't doubt it still. and I don't doubt that you don't doubt it either!

Then it taught me how to better interact with other people of all ages. I was young then and not the best at social interaction, especially with those older than myself, but it's difficult to be on your own in the chorus! DGASS was and is a friendly place to be.

Next it made me appreciate the value of the support and encouragement which was given to me by fellow members, and how later I could then offer support and encouragement to others myself.

It gave me an understanding of stagecraft and stage presence which would become really important in my professional career as running restaurants and events is pure theatre, as is interacting with and training students in the College environment. It gave me, and it gives you, the confidence to step into non-comfort zones, and it lets you become another believable character in another believable setting.

It taught me all there is to know about teamwork, one or two individuals do not make a show, we need lighting, stage crew, actors, singers, players, sewers, set builders, sound engineers, webmasters, tea makers, front of housers, fund raisers, directors, publicists, financial controllers, a leader, a committee, etc., etc., etc.! And just like the PARS up the road today, what a winning formula team DGASS has!

What else did it do? It excited me, it motivated me, it made me work, it terrified me and it gives me still, at the end of a show or even at the end of a rehearsal, a great sense of achievement – unless, of course, I've been working with the Men's chorus!!

All from that one meeting ... how different would my life have been had I not attended it and subsequently joined DGASS? How different would yours have been without the Society in it? Take a few seconds to think about that ...

The Society has had its ups and downs – every society does – but what kept it together in the difficult times and what keeps it together today is camaraderie: the desire to be with people who share your own enthusiasms, who want to perform, no matter in what discipline, to the best of their ability, who you care about, who you cuddle and embrace literally and metaphorically (especially if you're Jack Archibald!!), and who all love the works of the two geniuses that were William Schwenk Gilbert and Arthur Seymour Sullivan.

Then of course there is that long-standing member (sorry, that just doesn't sound quite right) who has been a partner to many and whose company is always sought, if not fought over. Joining in 1993 and becoming instantly popular and now due the 30-year NODA Badge. I am, as you may have guessed, referring to ... Frank! Everybody wants Frank but no-one more so than Clare! So in honour of DGASS's 50th, Frank's 30th and Clare's ... I would like to award this very special, limited edition (very limited, there's only one) life-time Frank to the aforementioned Clare!! This means, of course she can't beg, grovel, offer favours, money or services in the future to gain another and believe me that's a relief!!

I think that for us all, new members, old members. and very old members. the Society means we have a place of refuge from our day-to-day lives and a place where we can just relax and be ourselves, in company we enjoy; and I thank our founding fathers and mothers for their foresight in putting their joint thoughts forward to establish the Dunfermline Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Before I propose a toast to DGASS, let us pause for a short while to remember our friends from the Society who are no longer with us and who enlightened our lives with their presence in them.

My toast is this, not original to me and not Gilbertian but an Irish one

There are tall ships, there are small ships, there are ships which sail the sea, but the best ships are friendships and may that ever be.

Ladies and Gentlemen I give you – The Dunfermline Gilbert and Sullivan Society.