



THE ST. ANDREW SOCIETY OF SÃO PAULO

Ian J Willcox

Ian was born in Banff, Banffshire now part of Aberdeenshire. As his father was a doctor in the Air Force, he spent his early life well south of the border but with regular holiday visits to his maternal grandmother and relations in Banff. He learnt to play the bagpipes at Strathallan School, which was useful later, on overseas assignments.

After school, he joined Richard Thomas & Baldwins, South Wales then read mechanical engineering at Nottingham University. After 8 years in the steel industry and a brief sojourn in the non-ferrous industry, he joined a consulting engineering group, WS Atkins. From 1973 to 1977 he was in Mexico and when not building a new steelworks on the pacific coast, he played the pipes for the St Andrews Society there. From 1982-1985 he was advisor to Cosipa in Brazil.

He joined the committee in 1983. In 1984 a few committee members were leaving, including the vice president, and like with all good democratic organisations, he was duly elected unopposed! At the Picnic the Tug o' War was a great success until the rope broke! This may have been the year when a fair amount of beer was consumed, the excuse being that thirsts had to be quenched due to tropical sun and dehydration in running races. As most members became more and more sedentary over the afternoon, and as the sun set over the yardarm, we might question this, but one result was a member driving through SPAC's gates – pity they were closed at the time!

After the earth-shattering vote to allow lady members to join the Society, Ian presented the ladies with a silver brooch displaying the Society's emblem of crossed flags. His was the first committee to include ladies – Barbara Thompson and Jan Garland who “were a tremendous asset”.

Also due to the change in membership policy, it was decided to rename Ladies Night the Caledonian Ball and in 1984 it was billed the Diamond Jubilee Ball. It was certainly a sparkling event because British Caledonian Airways flew in the Queen's Piper, Bruce Macrae. As the Canadians had insisted on providing a Canadian piper for the Queen's state visit, Brazil was the lucky winner. The piping at the Ball was magnificent and, for those who were luckily enough to be there, his rendering for the Eightsome Reel was spectacular and raised a hearty cheer.

St Andrew's Night dinner remained a male only affair and in 1984 it was held at the Hilton Hotel as usual. Ken Hunter gave an excellent and amusing speech with many a joke or anecdote.

The Burns supper at SPAC served 25lb of haggis which Ian brought back, together with 2 cases of malt whisky miniatures kindly donated by Macallan's Distillery.

As Scott Donald, Vice President, was transferred, so a very loyal stalwart of the Society was invited to the chair and Norman Munro took up the reins.