

APS 50th Anniversary Dinner/Dance Speech
Thursday 29th September 2011 at The Residence
given by Chairman: Hallam Murray

Thank you Your Excellency!

May I begin by thanking you, and your wife Sonia for hosting this splendid event this evening, and for your wholehearted support of our Society in so many ways.

Personally, I don't think there can be any finer venue for a celebration of this kind and the proof of this is the capacity turnout this evening.

And so we are celebrating 50 years of the Anglo Peruvian Society. But what is 50 years? It's a strange number, a good deal less than a normal life span (in fact exactly half my mother's), and yet, 1961 could almost be pre-history when compared with the way we live and work and play today.

NO internet

NO email

When a Big Mac was an oversized raincoat and man had not yet landed on the moon.

And

NO Digital Projection! (some would say that 35m slides were SO much better!).

Whilst looking back at the history of The Society, I was lent by Morven Hutchison (who is here this evening) a 1971 Anglo Peruvian Society invitation for a Ball at the Savoy to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Peruvian Independence. This was ten years AFTER the founding of the APS, but it does give a feel of just what the early days were all about and how many very distinguished people were involved. Incidentally, the Invitation was beautifully printed by letterpress and distributed by conventional post. It is hard to see how in 50 years time all the present-day electronic clatter will be preserved for those who will be researching the early 21st Century of the Society for its 100th Anniversary.

But back to The 1971 Ball for a moment. The ticket price was five guineas and amongst the Committee were Michael Bentine of The Goons fame (a Peruvian himself) Sir Barclay Gage and, the Secretary was none other than Morven! There must be quite a number here tonight who were present at this prestigious Ball, with the guest of honour Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma who, not many years later, was tragically blown out of his boat on the West coast of Ireland by the IRA. Can those who were at that Ball give a show of hands? The invitation asked members to consider sponsoring the cost of a ticket for a Peruvian student studying in London . . . a precursor to our successful addition of the Young Members to the Society.

By the 70s, the Society, which was founded by the then Peruvian Ambassador Dr Ricardo Rivera-Schreiber and Sir Leslie Bowes (who together with his wife played a major part in the early years), had become well established. Thanks to a very active Ladies' Committee, set up about this time by Meriel Larken, Alexandra Morgan, and others, considerable sums were raised for charity.

Since then, the Society has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for our charitable causes. There is of course a great danger in quoting names for it is inevitable that someone really important will be left out. If so, as a veritable newcomer, may I apologize in advance! But in recent years, in addition to Terry Browne whom I will return to later, the names that deserve very special praise include Alexandra Morgan, Beatriz Puyo-Perry, Yolanda Williams, David Dell and Beatrice Barclay who, last year, together with her extremely professional and hard-working Committee, raised over £150,000 for the SOS Children's Village in Juliaca.

We are extremely proud to have supported so many good causes over the years and these charities are all carefully monitored by members of the Society so that not a single Nuevo Sol is wasted!

This year, our main fund raisers are the Tennis Tournament, so beautifully organized earlier this month by Yolanda Williams, Helen Stanbridge, Monica China and Sue Bailey from the Sigi Club, and the second Latin American Bridge Cup Tournament, organized by Narda van der Mast whose enthusiasm for helping the poor of Peru shows

no bounds. This will be held at the House of Lords in November, thanks to Baroness Henig and Lord Lamont. And thank you Sonia de Couturier for accepting the position of Patron and for all the help you have been giving the Committee.

I believe that it was Meriel who persuaded John Hemming to become Chairman in the mid 1990's and what a coup that was! John, who was Director of the Royal Geographical Society for over 21 years, and whose book 'The Conquest of The Incas' remains the definitive work on the subject, had all the contacts that any Peruvian Society could need. His contribution to Peru and to our Society must be as great as that offered by anyone in the Society over the past 50 years. And you will remember that in 2009 he was presented by Ambassador Luna, Peru's most distinguished 'La Orden del Sol del Peru' for his promotion of Peruvian culture research and his ability to strengthen the links between the UK and Peru.

It is as Lecturer Organiser Supremo that John has really excelled. Few big-name speakers have escaped his grasp and the range of lectures has been extraordinary. Last week we had a passionate lecture on potatoes next Spring we have Professor John King speaking on Mario Vargas Llosa, who may himself be present. What a range of subjects we cover and this has to be the best possible way to encourage new members!

Thank you John for your fantastic contribution and may you remain our Lecture Guru for many years to come!

And an important post script for the Lecture Evenings: Hard work goes into the preparation of the canapés and wine for these events and Maria Varela, and her team of supporters – especially Sophie Bell - deserve great praise. This is not an easy task!

Talking about praise, Maria, and Yolanda before her, have been exemplary secretaries. It was not until I took over as Chairman from Richard Ralph (a very fine Chairman of far too few years!) that I realized just how important it is to have a good and reliable Secretary.

And here I have mentioned Richard, I think our only ex-Ambassador present this evening. It is always best if an ex-Ambassador can take on the mantle of Chairman. Richard and Jemma have such a great

love for the Country and I have heard many speak of his fine career as a diplomat. It was with the greatest sadness for all of us on the Committee when he stood down. We wish him well. . . . as a born again father!

John's predecessor as Chairman was John Illman, another diplomat with a passion for Peru. John was the most supportive of trustees of the Yavari, the Victorian ship on Lake Titicaca so gallantly rescued by Meriel Larken all those years ago. It was John who inaugurated the Ship as a museum in 1998. Our hearts go out to his widow Liz and to their three children.

Now finally back to dear Terry. I worked out the other day that he has been Honorary Treasurer for more than a third of the life of our Society and a member for much longer. Words simply cannot express the fine and utterly professional job he has done for us all. But not only has he been an exemplary Treasurer, he has also had his hand on the pulse of virtually all the charities that we support. One of our most rewarding AGM's of a few years back included a passionate illustrated talk by him on some of the charities that he and Nelida have been involved with. Not only do we ask you to continue in your capacity as Charities Supremo Terry, but do please give us another talk at next year's AGM.

We wish Julio Obeso, who has just taken over from you, every success with the future of this very exacting task. The fact that you Terry have such confidence in him is a great accolade for Julio as he begins in this post.

Terry as a token of our heartfelt thanks for your contribution to the Society, Maria is going to present you with a gift that may not be entirely a surprise to you! (A tennis racket)

Before I close, could we just raise our glasses to those extremely hard working members of the Committee who have been responsible for tonight's extravaganza - Silvana Centty, Monica China, Daniela Jones. Beatriz Barclay and Sophie Bell.

Finally, a further thank you Your Excellency and may we all enjoy this glorious evening which is still young.