

THE SPEAKER

Autumn 2025

Issue 113



Team-speaking:
how to piece
together a win

ROXIE COLEMAN
talks Equity,
Diversity and
Inclusion

HILARY DAVIS
on achieving a
life-long dream

A WORD

FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the latest edition of The Speaker. I hope you enjoy reading it and find something to inspire you within its pages! Jayne has stepped back from her editing role, as she takes on the role of Lady Mayoress of Cardiff alongside her husband, Adrian Robson, who is also a member of Cardiff Speakers Club.

On page 6, the ladies of Stockport Ladybrook Speakers Club tell us how they approached preparing for the Team Speaking competition at the Conference in Warrington in April. On page 18, there's further advice on the topic of team speaking from the president of Derby Speakers Club, Carrie Terry.

And, if all that's not inspiring enough, there's plenty more from Hilary Davis, on page 16, who tells us how she went about fulfilling her lifetime dream in retirement.

If you want to fulfil your ambition of writing for The Speaker, please send your submissions to: speakereditor@gmail.com

Deadline for submissions for the next edition is Saturday, 28th February 2026.

And on that note, let me share one titbit from the steep learning curve that I am ascending: when submitting images for the magazine file size matters. The bigger the better.

Happy reading!

Gillian Munday

Editor

Front cover image:
Verity Eunson-Hickey was worthy winner of the National Speech Contest in Warrington with her witty speech entitled, "A delay in the life of a procrastinator"

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LETTER FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT



My friends and fellow speakers,

Many speakers' clubs, including my own, break over the summer and this can offer time for reflection, other pursuits, or perhaps just a rest... unless of course you are a volunteer! The Strategic Leadership Team of the ASC has continued to meet every month over Zoom while working to drive forward the administration of the Association, implement decisions from the National AGM, and respond to requests for support and help from members.

Successes

Warrington 2025 was a wonderful national conference, and I would like to offer my thanks and congratulations to Past National President Jackie Mafi and her team for delivering a superb event. The contests were full of high-quality presentations from contestants who had clearly worked hard on their preparation. The venue and the food were excellent, and it was great to meet up with friends old and new from across the country.

The National Secretary, Michael Cox and I have begun the process of working towards charitable status for the Association after the motion related to this work was passed at the AGM held prior to National Conference. Achieving this would allow us to make use of Gift Aid, should allow clubs to get preferential rates on their venues, and has already helped us in renegotiating existing agreements such as **halving our CPD UK accreditation fee**.

We are also working on plans for two upcoming Zoom member engagement events on the themes of judging competitions and running successful clubs. I hope they will be... or perhaps by the time you read this, have been successful!

Challenges

Membership numbers have remained steady and there have been successful launches of new clubs and relaunches of existing ones, but we need more new clubs if we are to draw in more people to the Association. If you are part of a successful club that has members coming from parts of the country that doesn't yet have a club, please consider starting one with full and active support from myself and my team.

On that note, I would like to thank my team for all their hard work. For the whole of my term so far, I have essentially had half a standard SLT due to vacant posts and some SLT members undertaking two roles. Due to this situation, even those of us who only officially have one role are often covering the functions of another. This has meant that potential work on recruitment efforts and sharing newly developed resources across the whole membership has been slower than we would have wanted. If you wish to volunteer and help, even if you don't want a role as such, please get in touch. The SLT are already engaging in this way with a group of members who have marketing skills, and we are grateful for their time and expertise.

I look forward to engaging with you over the next year and on behalf of the whole SLT, I wish you and your club all the best for the upcoming year.

Tom Scott

National President



MEMBERS STORY

TARGET SPEECH AT CONFERENCE

BY LUKE BUTTERWORTH



When my club asked if I'd like to deliver the target evaluation speech at the National Conference, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. The concept was entirely new to me, but I believe any opportunity to practise speaking in front of an audience should be taken. What I didn't anticipate was just how much of a masterclass I was about to witness.

The conference seemed so far away to begin with—plenty of time to prepare. However, the day soon arrived. From the moment I arrived at the venue, I was put at ease and briefed on the morning schedule. The nerves kicked in when I stood in my position in front of rows of empty chairs, trying to get comfortable with my surroundings. Your mind can't help picturing the rows of seats filled by an audience, each member watching your every move. There's also a lot to think about: where to sit, how to enter the stage, remembering to turn your microphone on, where to exit, and not forgetting to switch it off again. That's before you've even thought about the speech.

The speech I prepared was actually the very first one I delivered to Wigan Speakers Club, back in November 2024. It was based on a book I'd

read just a couple of months earlier. The book, "Unreasonable Hospitality", follows a New York restaurateur on his journey to take a restaurant from relative obscurity to becoming the number one in the world. There are many great lessons in this book, not just for the hospitality industry, but about how to treat people. It taught me a lot and was one of my favourite reads last year, so writing a speech about it was a no-brainer.

I thought the speech went well, but as with every time you step off stage, it's easy to be critical of yourself. You sit down, ready for the onslaught about to come. The evaluators were surely about to rip me to shreds – but this couldn't be any further from the truth.

I was simply blown away by how each speaker could construct a speech so quickly, based on one they'd only just heard. Though, what impressed me the most was how the feedback was delivered. The evaluators didn't just describe or regurgitate my speech; their praise was sincere, and their feedback extremely valuable. Even when commenting on things I could have improved on, it was done in such a positive way that I came away feeling energised and already wanting to deliver another speech immediately. Moreover, the evaluators didn't just tell me what to improve, but they explained why it should be done and how I could do it. People would certainly pay a lot for this personalised feedback, but I was getting it for free!

From what I've experienced so far, I have no doubt that the ASC's greatest asset is its people. From day one at Wigan Speakers, everyone has been so kind and willing to help—they genuinely want to see you succeed and improve. I'd like to thank Wigan Speakers and the ASC for the opportunity to deliver the target speech and for making me feel so welcome since joining the organisation. It was a fantastic experience, and I'd encourage anyone to take it if given the chance. What I saw from the evaluators that day was another level of public speaking, and I hope that one day I'll be able to reach it.

Luke is a member of Wigan Speakers Club

JIGSAW – STOCKPORT

LADIES PIECE TOGETHER A WIN IN THE TEAM SPEAKING CONTEST!



The message from the four of us is: “Get involved, be part of something special and HAVE FUN!”

“Winning was the icing on the cake”

We were absolutely delighted to win the national group speaking contest and have been asked to share our experience and observations for those interested in entering future competitions.

Chair – Kayley Wilson aka Miss Legg –

There were two decisions we made quickly. The first, we wanted the speech to be light-hearted and fun and the second, we wanted a theme with characters. We discussed which role and character each of us would play and how we envisaged those characters working together. This gave us the foundation to build upon, with the characters always in mind.

The speeches were then written in first draft and my job, as chair, was to write the opening, links and closing, which was trickier than I envisaged, as was choosing the theme! After a few attempts and discussions, we all agreed the theme would be set in a school with me as headteacher and the speakers as past pupils.

It was honestly easier to write my chair speech whilst in character. A school open- evening was the strongest choice as we could include the audience. They would be the parents and hopefully we would manage to create a stronger sense of participation from everyone in the room, at which the audience excelled!

The entire ‘process’ was an extremely happy one; from the WhatsApp messages talking about themes and our outfits, through to rehearsals at Penny’s with a glass of wine after work. It was the first time since becoming a member of the ASC I had worked closely with other members of our club and I would wholeheartedly recommend it.

Speaker 1 – Debbie France aka Mercedes –

The meetings with my teammates were highly productive and enjoyable. We collaborated effectively, exchanging ideas that led us to agree on a theme by our second meeting. With the theme established, I was then able to focus on developing a humorous character that aligned well with our chosen concept.

The prompt word I was given, ‘never,’ provided additional direction for shaping the storyline around the character. To incorporate humour, I explored how the character’s traits and experiences could be linked to the word ‘never,’ using it as a foundation for creating short, amusing anecdotes that supported the overall theme. All the time I was reflecting on the other characters in the team, ensuring the link between characters was maintained.

The subsequent practice sessions brought us, as a group of women, rather close which was an unexpected bonus of this competition and one I will treasure.

I would say if anyone was wondering whether to take part, go for it!

Speaker 2 – Penny Wrinch aka Harriet – When I first heard the three words, my mind went straight to war — and I suspected many teams would take a similar approach.

We met over fizz and crisps to brainstorm our theme, which ended up being a playful take on women returning to school after years of ‘successful’ lives. The bonding during those meetings was key to our success.

Each of us submitted a piece to Kayley, who skilfully tied everything together. My word was ‘give,’ and I created a character who’d once had a reputation for being cheeky behind the school bike sheds but was now known for her charitable work. I even wrote a poem using ‘give’ 15 times!

We stayed in character throughout, communicating subtly between parts, which made the performance feel cohesive and natural.

Despite limited rehearsals, our individual effort, teamwork, and creativity paid off. We had a blast!

Speaker 3 – Dawn Jarrett aka Patricia –

Taking part in the team speaking event was a valuable and enjoyable experience. The senior members of the club were instrumental in helping us focus our thoughts and understand the structure of the process. We had the freedom to create our own scenario around the given keyword, which allowed for creativity but also presented an initial challenge in getting started. Regular Zoom meetings and a couple of rehearsals helped us shape the story, while face-to-face sessions proved crucial in refining the flow and strengthening our delivery to the audience. Honest, trusted feedback within the team helped us improve, and working with Kayley, Penny, and Debbie was a real highlight – we built a great rapport and had a lot of fun throughout.

From the four of us, the take home message is, get involved, be part of something special and have fun! We all did, and winning was the icing on the cake.

ASC CONFERENCE 2026

THE CONFERENCE BY THE SEA

BY JEREMY RICHARDS, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WRITING ON BEHALF OF VERITY EUNSON HICKEY, NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT.



Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel
Friday 24 – Sunday 26 April 2026

You don't need to pack your suitcase just yet, but you might want to mark your diary in bold — the ASC Conference 2026 is making waves in Brighton! Set in the elegant Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel, a 4-star, Grade II listed gem with sweeping sea views, this year's gathering promises an irresistible mix of personal development, spirited competition, and a splash of seaside fun.

Steering the ship

At the helm will be our National vice-President, Verity Eunson-Hickey, who will serve as Conference Convener. Alongside her dedicated team, Verity is curating a weekend that will celebrate the skills, creativity, and fellowship that make our association truly special.

What's in store

While the final programme is still being fine-tuned, the weekend will build on the success of previous years, with events designed to inspire, challenge, and entertain. Expect:



- Friday Evening – The curtain rises with the fast-paced Topics Contest, followed by the adrenaline-charged Team Speaking Contest.
- Saturday Morning – For the adventurous, National Secretary, Michael Cox will lead an invigorating sunrise swim in the sea – a bracing start guaranteed to earn you your breakfast!
- Saturday Competitions – The Evaluation Contest kicks off the day's formal events, leading smoothly into the Speech Contest in the afternoon.
- Saturday Seminars – Thought-provoking and motivating sessions, designed to leave you buzzing with ideas.
- Saturday Evening Gala – The highlight of the weekend. Dress to impress and enjoy a sumptuous three-course dinner in the hotel's stunning ballroom – an evening of elegance, laughter, and celebration.

Easy Connections

The Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel couldn't be more accessible:



When you're not attending sessions or cheering on contestants, Brighton is yours to explore. From boutique shopping lanes to vibrant bars, acclaimed restaurants, and the famous pier, there's something for every taste.



- By train – Just 0.1 miles from Brighton Station, with direct routes from London Victoria, London Bridge, St Pancras International, and King's Cross.
- By plane – Gatwick Airport is only 25 miles away, a quick 30-minute train ride.
- By car – Less than an hour from the M25. Hotel parking is available (limited spaces) at £28 per night, with city-centre car parks 500m away (£30 per 24 hours).

The Brighton Buzz

When you're not attending sessions or cheering on contestants, Brighton is yours to explore. From boutique shopping lanes to vibrant bars, acclaimed restaurants, and the famous pier, there's something for every taste. And for those who like to keep the night going – a Popworld is just around the corner.

Why You Shouldn't Miss It

The ASC Conference 2026 isn't just another date in the calendar — it's a chance to connect with friends old and new, to showcase and sharpen your skills, and to soak up the unique spirit of our community. Add to that the charm of Brighton's seafront and the warm welcome of the Mercure, and you have a weekend that's set to be every bit as memorable as it is inspiring.

Stay tuned

The countdown to Brighton has begun! Keep an eye on your inbox, join the conversation on social media, and visit the ASC website often for breaking news, exclusive room rates, ticket information, and all the exciting updates that will make ASC Conference 2026 a weekend to remember.

MEET ROXIE COLEMAN

OUR NATIONAL INCLUSION OFFICER

BY ANNE TODD

Meet Roxie Coleman, a new recruit to the Leadership Team as National Inclusion Officer. But who is she, what makes her suitable for this role and, most importantly, what will she be doing?



I sit on several skills and employment boards and also train businesses across the country on inclusivity and neurodiversity awareness.

Roxie, could you please begin by giving readers a little insight into your professional and ASC background? Why did you want to take on this role?

Having been a military wife and after that a single mother, I have seen and done an awful lot over the years. I have run and now have my own education provision for neurodivergent young adults supporting them to gain independent, paid, sustainable employment. I sit on several skills and employment boards and also train businesses across the country on inclusivity and neurodivergence awareness. I am often called upon to share insights as a guest speaker on neurodiversity in the workplace.

My ASC background is quite short but I've been aware of the ASC for about 45 years. As a little girl I watched my father head out the door suited and booted once a fortnight to attend Speakers Club and I accompanied him to a few dinners as I got older.

I attended the Glasgow 2024 conference with him, where I talked about my job..... a lot! I am very passionate about seeing people progress.

Stepping into this role supports the growth and longevity of the organisation, while championing the nine protected characteristics in society – something I am deeply passionate about.

What do you see as the most important elements of your role?

Support and guidance. Supporting clubs and the SLT to be more inclusive and guiding them within legislation, regulations and societal boundaries.

What does inclusivity mean, in terms of the ASC?

Allowing everyone to be their own authentic self. Supporting each other to progress. Making reasonable adjustments where required. Remember reasonable adjustments are just that..... reasonable. Everything should be considered but if a request is not reasonable, then it is ok to decline.

How can you help clubs to achieve/improve inclusivity?

I am on email to answer questions no matter how big or small, I can provide ideas and solutions to overcome barriers. I will be giving regular updates on legislation or new support strategies as they are developed. I will be sending out occasional questionnaires to gauge the inclusivity and demographics of our clubs. I am happy to work with individuals or clubs to support inclusivity. I work closely with



the SLT and am always happy to take issues to them and challenge decisions that I feel sit outside inclusive boundaries. I don't always get my own way, but I will always make sure it's on the radar if I feel it's important.

Have you yet encountered a club that's getting it right? If yes, name them?

What good practice can we learn from this club?) I recently visited Cardiff regional competitions and there was a lot of great practice there but the one that stands out to me right now is Wimbledon. They are a supportive club, keeping it happy and kind, and it looks like a lot of fun is had. They post about their meetings and ways. From everything I have seen and any interactions I have had with them, they are very inclusive. Definitely a shining example of ASC in 2025.

Isn't it just a matter of courtesy and common sense?

Unfortunately, not. We all have unconscious bias and as such it can affect the way in which we respond to people and behaviours. Sometimes we all have to think a little bit more about the way we think and respond. Life moves on and research brings new things to the forefront. Unless we work or live within it, we are not

always aware and can be behind the times. This can lead to unconscious discrimination.

Isn't it all just a passing fad, and a way of curbing free speech?

Absolutely not. Being kind, allowing everyone to be able to be their own authentic self is here to stay. There is nothing stopping speeches being varied in content and discussing up-to-date topics or historical topics. We should always be taking into consideration our audience and speeches should never be derogatory, discriminative or dismissive of others. The role of NIO is here not only to ensure clubs stay up-to-date with current inclusivity news, but also to support growth. The aim is to make the ASC a place that everyone feels psychologically safe so that everyone can enjoy membership and progress.

Imagine you could see into the future. Can you describe how all clubs and the National Conference could be epitomes of inclusivity?

A buzz of excitement and such a variety of styles and speeches. Confidence levels through the roof and the demographic varied.

NIO.speakersclubs@gmail.com

THE FRASER TROPHY 2025

BY JEREMY RICHARDS



The Fraser Trophy: Celebrating Outstanding Service

First introduced in 1978, the Fraser Trophy has long stood as a symbol of exceptional service within the Association of Speakers Clubs. Its very first recipient was the Matlock Club, recognised for its remarkable contribution to the ASC community. For nearly four decades, the award continued to honour outstanding clubs and areas across the organisation.

In 2017, however, the award's story took a new turn. For the first time, it was presented to an individual – the inspiring Gwyneth Millard. Since then, it has been awarded to seven more individuals, each recognised for their extraordinary dedication, hard work, and commitment to our shared mission.

This year, I had the immense honour of becoming part of that legacy.

My ASC Journey

My adventure with the ASC began in January 2017, when I joined Cardiff Speakers Club at the encouragement of my uncle, Brian Jones. Looking back, I can honestly say it was the best personal development decision I have ever made.

Since those early days, I have embraced every opportunity to grow. I completed my Diploma in Public Speaking and took on various club leadership roles – from Vice-President to President (serving two terms), and today as Immediate Past President and Club Publicity Officer. Each role has been a stepping stone in both skill and confidence.

From Local to National

My journey soon extended beyond the club level. I applied for and became Regional Coordinator for Southwest England & Wales, which led to one of my proudest achievements: serving as Conference Convener for the 2023 National Conference in Cardiff. Bringing the ASC's flagship event to my home city – vibrant, welcoming Cardiff – was an unforgettable experience.

That same year, I stepped into the role of National Development Officer, following in the footsteps of the incredible Lucy Pitts. Taking over from Lucy was no small task, but her seamless handover made the transition both smooth and inspiring.

In this role, I've had the privilege of supporting growth across the organisation, including the launch of Bristol Speakers Club in March 2025 – an exciting and rewarding challenge.

A Team Effort

I feel incredibly proud to serve on the ASC's strategic leadership team, surrounded by like-minded individuals who pour their time, energy, and passion into our association – often alongside demanding full-time jobs. Their dedication is inspiring, and I would encourage any member to consider stepping forward into one of our national roles. The opportunities are not only rewarding but deeply fulfilling.



I feel incredibly proud to serve on the ASC's strategic leadership team, surrounded by like-minded individuals who pour their time, energy, and passion into our association...

A Humbling Honour

It was at the National Conference in Warrington this year that I received the surprise of a lifetime: being awarded the Fraser Trophy Shield for Outstanding Service. To be recognised with such a prestigious award, and to join the distinguished list of past recipients, is truly humbling.

The Fraser Trophy has always stood for excellence, service, and commitment – values that I will continue to uphold with pride as part of this extraordinary organisation.



We have a Lord Mayor!

Longtime member of Cardiff Speakers Club, Adrian Robson, has been installed as Lord Mayor of Cardiff. His wife, Jayne Cowan, a former Lord Mayor, was the first woman to join CSC after it ceased becoming all-male a few years ago: and has just stepped down as joint editor of this publication. Adrian and Jayne agree that Speakers Club membership, in addition to fostering friendships, helps develop the communication skills necessary in public and political life.

I would encourage any member to consider stepping forward into one of our national roles

NATIONAL COMPETITION 2025 WINNERS AND PLACINGS

National Speech Contest

- 1st Place: Verity Eunson-Hickey, our National Vice President - South East
- 2nd Place: Joe James - Eastern
- 3rd Place: Tony Scott – Scotland

National Evaluation Contest

- 1st Place – Ian Parkinson from South East
- 2nd Place – Rob Waldron from Midlands
- 3rd Place – Anne Bouget from Western

National Topics Contest

- 1st Place: Stephen Dance – South West & Wales
- 2nd Place: Chris Clissitt – Eastern
- 3rd Place: Rob Waldron – Midlands



Front cover: ' Verity Eunson-Hickey, South-East Region, winner of the National Speech Contest Beware the pocket techno time bandit'
 Page 14: Joe James, Eastern Region runner up in National Speech Contest
 Tony Scott, Scotland, third in National Speech Contest
 Iain Parkinson, winner National Evaluation Contest



Centre span: Anne Bouget, Western Region, finalist in the Evaluation Contest
 Rob Waldron, Midlands Region, finalist in the Evaluation Contest
 Page 15: Nerys Jones, South West and Wales, finalist in National Speech Contest
 Stockport Ladybrook winners of the Team Speaking Contest
 Stephen Dance, South West and Wales Region, winner of the Topics Contest
 Chris Clissitt, Eastern Region, runner up in the Topics Contest
 Happy Judges
 Rob Waldron, Midlands Region, finalist in the Topics Contest
 Trusty Timekeepers

I HAD A DREAM AND HOW THE ASC HELPED ME TO FULFIL IT!

BY HILARY DAVIS, SANS SOUCI SPEAKERS CLUB



*I enrolled
with the Open
University to
study towards
a degree in
Language
studies
including
English, Italian
and French.*

Back in the 1970's, I wanted to study Foreign Languages and Business Studies post A level. However, universities back then didn't offer such vocational courses. Therefore, I attended Birmingham Polytechnic for 3 years and gained a Distinction, but I only got a Polytechnic Diploma rather than a degree. That has always niggled me!

Fast forward 50 years and on retirement I enrolled with the Open University to study towards a degree in Language studies including English, Italian and French. I have recently been awarded a BA Hons 2: 1.

Finally, I have got my degree.

But what has that got to do with the ASC I hear you ask? Well 20+ years of ASC membership



allowed me to improve my writing skills, taught me to express ideas and events descriptively, yet concisely and most important of all introduced me to effective evaluation.

My final assignment required me to take any creative piece of my own choosing and to explore how said piece was connected to identity. Well, I had to use a famous speech, didn't I? After much deliberation, I chose one of the most famous speeches of all time – Dr. Martin Luther King's 1963 "I have a dream speech". Yeah, I know maybe a bit clichéd?

On researching the 16-minute-long speech, I found that the first 428 words, as well as being the only fully scripted part of the speech, also formed a mini-speech within a larger speech. It's beautifully structured with an indication of purpose, excellent use of vocabulary, a good development and a strong call to action at the end. It was a "no brainer": my 3000-word essay needed to evaluate that first portion.

I focused on six main headings, which I gleaned from the OU module material: - Who, When, Where, What, Why and How. The How part being strongly influenced by ASC evaluation techniques. My tutor liked my approach, and

I scored 79% for the essay! So, the ASC really helped me to succeed in this assignment.

By way of a conclusion, I shall finish here with the final paragraph of my essay.

"It is a memorable, beautifully delivered creative discourse, an iconic speech from King, regularly listed as one of the best ever and a message that is still relevant today. A text in which how what was said creatively was as important to King and his listeners as what was said politically. It is my opinion that those first 428 words uttered in that auspicious place firmly established King's identity as a black man, as an American, as a civil rights campaigner, as a passionate advocate for equality, as someone in tune with the mood of the crowd and wider audience and as one hell of a public speaker."

Photo attributions:

Photograph of King and crowd 1963 - Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. addresses the crowd at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., where he gave his "I Have a Dream" speech on Aug. 28, 1963, as part of the March on Washington. Image from National Park Service - Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site. CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=110702085>. Full text of 'I have a dream' speech

Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C. 1963. Photo by Unseen Histories on Unsplash

ADAM'S APPLE

BY CARRIE TERRY



Culinary conundrums for Derbyshire's Dream Team

Despite being a member of the ASC for some years, team speaking wasn't something that I was even conscious of until fairly recently. It would seem that the year I competed in the national finals (Cardiff 2023) was the only time the team category did not feature and in the wilds of Warwickshire where I served my speaking apprenticeship, it was never 'a thing' as far as I'm aware.

Recruitment was slow

That was until I relocated to the home of team talk – North Midlands Area – where it's been a popular club diversion for at least thirty years. In honour of the region's mining heritage, there used to be a 'Gasses Lamp' contest and now the 'Adam's Apple' is the sought-after team trophy. When Area President, Martin Cox, put out a call for candidates, Derby dragged its heels at first and recruitment was slow. Trying to grasp the concept is not easy and trying to explain it to others, even harder. "You have four people, one of whom is a kind of continuity/MC sort of a guy and then three people with one word each that they have to include in their speech but not base their speech on. And there needs to be a unifying theme or narrative that has nothing to do with the three 'given' words". And that was one of my better attempts to elucidate. I still don't think it was particularly helpful. You can tell when someone is as perplexed in struggling to understand something as you are in striving to explain it to them!

Something magical

Eventually, everyone who was interested in this ingenious rhetorical conceit was on-board and we met on Zoom to consider our options. "Long, Days, Night" were our chosen words and rather aptly described the thought process preceding the meeting. However, when the dream team aligned - my husband Richard Terry, Sally Archer, Rebecca Shaw and me - something magical happened. I said "cooking", Rebecca said "TV show" and almost instantly, 'Derbyshire Kitchen Kaos' was born. Richard made such a plausible reality show compère that several people asked him if it was his day job after we won the coveted trophy and with our aprons on, Rebecca, Sally and I made compellingly authentic viewers sharing their culinary conundrums with the viewing public.

Familiar dilemmas

Rebecca was convincingly credible when bemoaning the fact that celebrity recipes



always take more time than they're supposed to (Long), Sally appeared disarmingly honest when recounting the tedium of having to conjure up daily meals for her family (Days) and the challenge of trying to eat healthily when you're working shifts (Night) was an accurate account of a familiar dilemma for me. Aren't we all tempted by fast food or ready meals when we know we should have planned a nourishing home-cooked dish instead?

Team cohesion

Public speaking is a solo, individualistic craft and even if you try to make your speeches 'conversational' and reach out to your audience with rapport building rhetorical questions, expansive gestures and captivating content, you still stand alone at the lectern. Working together is a quite different experience because team cohesion depends on close collaboration and mutual support. For new members, this can be especially encouraging and motivating; a more

accessible and achievable entry point into the art of oratory, and much more user-friendly than the lonely walk to the podium.

Creative process

And the benefits of partnership don't end there. It's not only your speaking skills that improve, as attentive listening and time-keeping is pivotal both during the creative process and when performing and as a bonus, you get to know your partners better as individuals.

Rare opportunity

I'm sure my colleagues, the hapless 'Kitchen Kaos' cooks and their smooth-talking host would testify that the experience was both uplifting and educational. And whilst our competence in the gastronomic arts may not have improved dramatically, we relished this rare opportunity to deliver a collective performance.

WITHER THE ASC – A SMÖRGÅSBORD OF PARTLY-BAKED IDEAS

BY MIKE DOUSE



In 2024-25 there were 66 Speakers Clubs with a total of 784 individual members, a drop of around 3.5% on the previous year. When the ASC broke free in 1980, there had been 182 Clubs (132 Men's and 50 Ladies') with some 3,200 individual members. Doubtless the quality is ascending exponentially but, in terms of quantity, we are rather more dodo than rabbit.

Does it matter? Maybe not to the club member who is steadily becoming a better speaker in a friendly setting. Maybe not to a club like mine that doesn't really require other clubs, let alone a national organisation, in order to survive and thrive. But what is lacking, in my opinion, is the opportunity for the tens of thousands of people who need and desire to improve their communication skills but have nothing other than possibly the Caymen Islands-registered Toastmasters within their reach.

Judge, dear reader, the ASC website for yourself. Certainly 'Find a Club' works well and there are some good resources. However, much of it is far from up-to-date. For instance, the National Conference section presents a video from 2017. I get through to a section entitled "The times they are...", I think that looks good, and that I'd like to contribute, before reading that "the consultation on the proposals will run from September to December 2018".

The Speaker magazine is always excellent, for a quarter of a century, I have enjoyed reading, and regularly contributing to it, but I sense that members do not study, enjoy, share or, indeed, cherish the online version as they did the hard copy issues of bygone times.

I try to sign on to something called *Hivebrite* but it doesn't cater for members who obtained their certificates last millennium. I try again the next day and get even more angry with it and, unusually for me, I give up. Has the ASC really squandered so much of its treasure in this unpiloted, user-unfriendly abracadabrisms or am I getting them confused with Thames Water?

Of these six **Only Connect** questions:

1. William I George II Charlotte III
2. Birmingham Lytham St Annes Cardiff
3. Rutland Clackmannanshire Flintshire
4. Green Amber Red
5. Millard James Grainger
6. 7 in Ireland 6 in Russia 5 in France

no-one scored more than four. Please note that 4 is not about traffic lights and 5 is not about ASC Presidents!

I was eager to set up a similar foray on Only Connect – and to talk on air about Speakers Clubs with Victoria Coren – but the response to my earlier invitation was limited

Over the decades I have watched National Development Officers come and go – I was one myself – each upon arrival brimming with fresh enthusiasms, few bothering to understand, let alone build upon, what had gone before. For instance, for years there were ASC Speakers of the Year (Harvey Jones, Tony Benn, Simon Weston, Betty Boothroyd, Esther Rantzen, Archbishop Sentamu...) which, with inspired handling, could generate good publicity as well as a jovial dinner. Why were they phased out and should something similar – with a clear long-term publicity plan – be established now? We need an attractive annual public event.

There were attempts to set up ASC online activities (and I still have the scars on my back to prove it). The Virtual Speech Contest ran for three years - with South Wales contestants winning each time - before it disappeared. Perhaps it is opportune to make some fresh approaches in this area: such contests work very well elsewhere, especially post-Covid.

About a decade ago, we attempted to select and publicise the 'Speech of the Year' but, inevitably, the winner was a politician and the rest is hysteria. It might be opportune to resurrect this initiative, our equivalent of Time Magazine Personality of the Year, if you will.

One fun thing that did get widely watched was our members' two appearances as 'Speakers' on Eggheads – and also to have an actual Egghead with us at a Conference (and defeat

him there). I was eager to set up a similar foray on Only Connect – and to talk on air about Speakers Clubs with Victoria Coren – but the response to my earlier invitation (see Box) was limited. Moreover, my interesting afflictions now inhibit my answering tricky questions such as "What is your name?" so it is, I fear, time for someone else to take the lead. Or the collar.

I lived for a decade in a country where something akin to our Speakers Clubs was front-page news: national organisers were pursued by journalists, contest finals were televised, winners made headlines and were interviewed on popular media at peak times, our important role with schools was widely recognised, there were international events with much local support, and just about everyone knew about us. Alas and alack, the ASC and its clubs are, in comparison with that, a secret society. But, as I say, that may not matter, unless you want it to.

Cardiff Speakers Club

MEET THE CLUB

GLASGOW SPEAKERS CLUB

BY GRACE HENDRY-NASH



Once known as the “dear green place” because of the amount of green spaces it had, and as the “second city of the British Empire” in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Glasgow can no longer claim the truth of either of these statements. Glasgow Speakers Club can, however, claim to be the oldest, continuous, speakers club in Britain, having been granted its original charter in 1937.

If you ever come to Glasgow, on business or pleasure, between September and April, please visit our club. Several attendees at the national conference in 2024 said that they would like to return and spend time in the city. The conference was dubbed, “the friendly conference” and we are a friendly club!

We meet in George Square in the centre of the town, every second Tuesday for a 6:30pm start,

finishing at 8:30pm. This is not a late evening, and it is still possible to catch a bus or train nearby. The requirement to vacate the building early may seem a disadvantage, but it has made us work to a strict schedule. Something all speakers should practise.

I was asked to write this article because of a photograph on Facebook. I did not know which event it was and so I’m taking the opportunity to tell you about the type of events we hold. We have 16 active members who enjoy making speeches and like to be on the Programme. We meet in a large committee meeting room in Glasgow City Chambers. For the last few years, I have been granted the use of the Council Debating Chamber for one evening each year, which I use for an educational event.

The Council Debating Chamber is not our normal room, so we are out of our comfort



zone and, as many speakers do not have opportunities to use microphones regularly, we use them on these nights. These events provide ideal opportunities to encourage inter-club activities. I am delighted with the response from other Clubs and their members, taking time to travel and take part. The Debating Chamber is a beautiful, ornate room with tiered seats in semi-circles facing a dais with the original Chair on which Queen Victoria sat when she opened the building in 1888. Even if you only want to see the inside of an impressive building: visit us!

Inter-club nights

Examples of these inter club nights are:

- **Mini-Speeches:** This year, all those who wished to speak, delivered a mini speech. I did this to include as many people as possible.
- **Balloon Debates:** The previous year we held a Balloon Debate involving speakers from different clubs with plenty of audience participation.
- **Inter-club evaluation:** Another event focused on both evaluation and on topics. Topics were assigned and the evaluators were asked to concentrate on just three or four Topiccees*. The benefit here was getting to hear evaluators from different clubs.

Outreach and training

We have a long history of organising an annual School Speech contest for upper secondary pupils and a Debating Contest for younger secondary pupils. We have trained some club members to take part in judging these contests, thus further developing their skills.

For some years, a small team has delivered short, focused Public Speaking Training to



elected Council Members. Those involved in the delivery of these Courses have developed their own training skills. In partnership with RNIB Scotland we have twice provided similar training to groups of visually impaired people.

Engaging in these different types of training requires a deal of flexibility on the part of those members involved. It takes time to develop specific approaches and then to review what works, or not, after each session. This is hard and time-consuming work, but it is a way of giving back to the wider community. While the participants developed their speaking skills, we learnt about inclusion and overcoming disabilities.

Increasing membership

ASC members rightly talk a lot about membership and attracting new members. People have found us online and come along particularly looking to improve their presentation skills for their careers or sometimes for a special event, e.g. a wedding. They tend to stay for one or two years until they have achieved their goal and then leave.

We are happy to help, and they provide a new face in an audience and a new voice in our programme, after all there is nothing worse than speaking to empty chairs. However, those who have been told about the club by a member, tend to be the ones who wholeheartedly embrace it and become very dependable, active members.

There is one last event which I feel is worth mentioning. It is the least glamorous or ‘exciting-sounding’. In the past, I had once scheduled a ‘bring a friend’ night into our programme, which sadly did not take off, with few members bringing anyone. The year before last, I was delighted to see our President pick up this idea again, championing my initiative by reminding us at every meeting of the future date and

For some years, a small team has delivered short, focused Public Speaking Training to elected Council Members.



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threatening us that “we had time to find a friend if we did not already have one!” We had about 33 people in the room, more than double our average attendance! We delivered a normal club Programme to let visitors see what we do. It was a lively, friendly, enjoyable evening with a packed room, and a testament to effective team work.

The real success though was that, although some visitors said they would not join a speaking club because “it wasn’t their thing”, they would certainly be happy to return as visitors to provide us with an audience on occasion. Some said it was much more enjoyable than they expected.

Perhaps we should consider that not all supporters can be on the park or playing field and that there is a place for the spectator.

**this is a technical term for someone taking a topic. Some clubs may know this as a ‘topic-taker’. Ed.*

Grace Hendry-Nash

Glasgow Speakers Club
Education Director
Scottish Regional Coordinator

WRITE FOR THE SPEAKER

The Speaker wants to hear from you!

We are always keen to receive your news, articles, opinion pieces, and letters. Here are some guidelines for aspiring authors. If you follow them, you have the best chance of being published.



Similarities between speaking and writing

As a speaker, you already have a head start. There is an overlap between speaking and writing.

- A double-page spread of 800-900 words is roughly the same length as a 6–8-minute speech.
- Both speech and article benefit from a strong opening, memorable ending, solid structure, and the inclusion of stories or anecdotes.

Guidelines

It is best to let me know beforehand if you want to write an article so I allocate space for it in the next issue. I can also let you know the deadline. Here are the details you should know:

- Full double page article: 800 – 900 words + photograph/s.
- Short one-page article: 300 – 500 words + photograph/s.
- Submissions of more than 500 words should be agreed with me beforehand.
- Member's story: Submit anytime. Not more than 500 words + photograph, unless previously agreed that you write a longer one.
- In Memoriam: Submit at any time, preferably accompanied by a photograph of the deceased and, ideally the date of death.

Contact me at speakereditor@gmail.com

IN MEMORIAM



JAMES DOUGLAS

Little did anyone realise when James was persuaded by a fellow Phillips employee to join Blackburn Castle Speakers Club on 10/09/1984, that he would be an active member for over 40 years. And what years they were! An ASC stalwart indeed.

I can verify how, when he undertook office (Club President, Secretary, Treasurer, Area and District President) James was incredibly conscientious. It perturbed him when others were less so.

Quite competitive (perhaps more to help make up the numbers than for the love of winning), James reached District level competitions several times. His particular strengths were his evaluations and his chairing.

He must have taken the Speakers Guide seriously for he progressed through it; his 1993 Certificate of Achievement bears the signatures of National President, Ron Rob and Education Director, Terry Kinsman.

It is debatable whether the greater love of James's hobbies was for golf or the ASC, but no one can deny he made an impression on the lives of many ASC members.

Tributes at James's wake spoke glowingly of his "amazing" evaluations. In that respect, James never failed to give advice and, (dare I say it) privately despaired of those who didn't. "Supportive", "meticulous but precise minutes", "a faultless rendition of the Address to the Haggis", "modest, insightful comments, glad to have met him", "a great speaker" – just a few of the homages written by mourners.

He was a meticulous Chair and expected the same of all in that position! His past notes (of when Chair) list timings for every part of a programme, be it an ASC meeting or perhaps MC at his beloved Blackburn Scottish Society Burns' Night.

As a newly graduated mechanical engineer from Glasgow University's College of Science and Technology, James left his hometown of Stevenston in Ayr to live in Wales. He often spoke of the need to adapt his Scottish accent, but the rich tones of "his unique voice" never left him and people always recognised him as being a Scot.

James and I, both being single, were often paired up at sundry ASC events and we married in 2008. As you can imagine, the ASC featured in many a conversation within our home.

I thank ASC members for so many messages and cards of condolence. The tens and tens of sympathy cards sent to me included the phrase, "what a lovely man." I endorse that. James is, and will be, greatly missed. Oh yes.

Diana MP Douglas, South Lancashire Speakers Club



MYRA HUNTER

"If she's not playing tennis, she's playing golf. If she's not giving a talk about the QE2, she's giving people a guided tour of Glasgow Cathedral."

That is how I introduced Myra at a joint club meeting of Renfrew Ladies Speakers Club (as it was named at that time) and Renfrew Speakers Club in January, 2011. On that occasion, Myra was to evaluate two speakers who had each given a topic, a brief impromptu speech.

After the deadline for submissions for the last edition, we received a further 'In Memoriam' entry for Phil McCaffrey, which is now printed below. The writer does not wish to be credited.

PHILIP MCCAFFREY



Myra joined Renfrew Ladies Speakers Club during the early 1990s and soon enjoyed taking part in club evenings: making a speech; evaluating how a speaker had performed; or speaking to a topic.

Myra was one of a number of club members who were Club President several times. She was active beyond club level, too. In 2001 – 2002 she was Greater Glasgow Area President. In 2005 – 2006 she was North-West District President. She enjoyed visiting other clubs and was enthusiastic about Area and District events.

Myra enjoyed attending ASC conferences at all levels. Attending the National Conference was a chance for Myra and friends to explore cities in different parts of the UK. In 2006 Myra was Convenor of ASC National Conference in Carlisle. It was a very well-attended and successful conference.

In 2003 Myra won the Evaluation Contest at Greater Glasgow Area and then at North-West District to become a National Finalist. She was a National Finalist again, in Evaluation, in 2011.

Alongside her many interests, Myra was a happy and successful participant in the activities and events of the Association of Speakers Clubs.

Joan Milburn, formerly of Renfrew District Speakers Club

Hailing from Enniskillen, Philip retained not only his distinctive Fermanagh accent but also an Ulsterman's wry humour which characterised his speeches, evaluations and conversations. A keen Cardiff Speakers Club member for three decades, Philip had been its President in 2001, 2013, 2019 and 2020, and was once more its President at the time of his death earlier this year.

A regular participant at ASC national conferences over many years, he was a most conscientious South-West and Wales District President through 2016-18. Philip had a great love of language, endeavouring to work at least one obscure word (such as 'pantagruelian') into every speech. Another interest was public speaking in schools and, for his longtime work in coordinating and judging student speaking competitions across South Wales, he was awarded the Brian Driscoll bowl.

Apart from a six-week stint as a Radio Caroline DJ, Philip's vocation and life's work was in nursing, in Northern Ireland, and then in increasingly senior posts in and around London, including the Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge. In 1989 he became Director of Nursing Services at the University Hospital of Wales in The Heath, where he stayed until his retirement in 2001.

Philip was a highly committed member of the Royal College of Nursing, and chairman of its Cardiff and Vale branch for many years. As one of many tributes by RCN members, he was described as "a character, a gentle man, an orator extraordinaire, and populist of the podium". To his own natural talent, his commitment to Speakers Clubs enabled him to become a memorable and convincing communicator. A Philip, a chara, tá brón orainn uait. Codladh sámh!

*enormous

BECOME A BETTER
SPEAKER, BETTER
PRESENTER AND
BETTER LEADER

