

## AGM REPORT

### Review of Season 2009

Thank you all for attending This past season, our 75<sup>th</sup> was a success with all our key objectives met

We started on May 30th, a gloriously sunny day enhanced, past all of our best expectations, by the departure of some travellers who had taken up residence on the old paddling pool and with a jolly opening ceremony performed by well-known local journalist and personality and staunch friend of the pool, Peter Mitchell. We were also blessed by the attendance of some special guests Isobel Stephen, Margaret Waldie, Sheila Brown, Maisie McManus, Veenie Henderson, Helen Donald and George Swapp who were present at the original opening day as very young girls – and boy – back in 1934. Thanks must go to Mary Gardiner for once again so ably organising the event.

Highlights of the season were

- the opening of the brand new childrens' paddling pool by Councillor Wendy Agnew
- A visit to the pool by First Minister Alex Salmond on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July which launched our Homecoming Weekend of special events especially supported by local entertainers and the Stonehaven Folk Club.
- The introduction of 'Splasher' our mascot who came to life and was a very big success with younger and 'older' kids alike
- A major primary schools' painting competition organised by William and Gwynne with some 200 entries which we were proud to display in our new covered area.
- The launch of our schools' initiative taking advantage of pre-opening with local schools building visits into their programmes
- A successful pool café operation with lessee Debbie Alexander
- Excellent, incident-free and consistent operational support from Aberdeenshire Council, Steve Welsh, Ludi Metelski and Barry McGillivray.

After a good start with excellent weather, you could be forgiven for thinking 'something would happen' and so it came to pass – we lost 3 days of potentially good trade as a result of a double pump failure. Without Alex, David Dobbie and their band of miracle workers – and not a little arm twisting – it could have been considerably worse. Thankfully the remainder of the season was trouble free and in fact we received a special commendation from Arthur Ingram, Head of Environmental Health Services for our efforts.

It would be more than appropriate to record our thanks to Alex and the workers who made this possible. 3560 hours of unpaid work, equating to a very conservative total of £28,500 in real money, made your pool as pretty as a picture again this year.

As mentioned earlier, our major achievement was the introduction of the new children's paddling pool. Paid for by the Friends contribution of £100,000

(which included an anonymous donation of £60,000) and supported by £20,000 of planning gain provided by our partners Aberdeenshire Council. Additional to this, we again received a huge amount of equipment and materials donated by local businesses. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Friends to thank George Bissett (main paddling pool contractor), Leslie Carpets, Neptune Deeptech, MacDougall and Masson, Enterprise Engineering, Alba Pools, Spencer Paints and Gemini Corrosion – dare I also mention the dolphin spout donated by, and worked on personally by, Jimmy Milne, Chairman of the Balmoral Group. These and many other anonymous donors consistently uphold the enormous affection the pool is held in by all parts of our community.

This past year we introduced a broader, more proactive and aggressive marketing plan. A major study was undertaken to establish our pricing strategy and all indications are that we pretty much hit each and every target with very little resistance, with revenue a third higher than last year. Linked to this we had major promotional, marketing and PR successes through TV, radio stations, newspapers, magazines and the internet. We are deeply indebted to Elma McMenemy who guided us through and gave such sound advice and David Lawman our Webmaster for designing and updating our new, bright and user-friendly website.

As our pool surveys consistently identify 60% of pool users are 1<sup>st</sup> timers, this presents an enormous challenge and with the help of Elma and David we have produced impressive results. If the message isn't out there – we won't get results.

Once again David Culshaw organised and co-ordinated a pool survey over 4 days with 513 people surveyed. This is invaluable as it identifies signposts for the future as well as evaluating the year's performance. The results can be viewed on our website; [www.stonehavenopenairpool.com](http://www.stonehavenopenairpool.com).

On top of this we have a Powerpoint Presentation prepared by Alex and John Airth detailing the history of the pool and a DVD record of the 75<sup>th</sup> season produced by Bruce Whitelaw. A commemorative 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brochure has also been produced by Mhairi Robins and is still available for sale.

Fundraising is a constant fact of life for us with activities including coffee mornings, bag packs, stalls at the Fein' Market, MRI Festival and the Conservative Association Christmas Fayre as well as a stand at the recent Heritage Fair. We are grateful for the help and support unstintingly given. However, a small grouse may be that it tends to fall on the same folks which brings me to an area that needs to be urgently addressed, our Register of Friends. Last reviewed, it appeared some 400 were listed but as we discovered during raffle sales and the promotion of the Anniversary Brochure, this needs to be overhauled and membership classified so that we are aware who is available to support us in specific ways, as well as updating addresses and e-mail addresses for the possible re-introduction of newsletters and information channelling. A challenging role, hopefully this can be accepted by

a Friend or Friends attending here tonight. So much to do, by so few, for the good of so many.

During our fundraising activities Eric Auld Kindly donated a fine print of Stonehaven for our raffle as did Andy Hall his three magnificent atmospheric photographs showing aspects of the art deco pool. Subsequently Eric was persuaded by Allan Sutherland to undertake a free commission of a painting of the pool itself, to auction for pool funds. This was successfully completed and we are grateful to Allan for his organisation of the event. Thanks also to all Friends who donated prizes, produce, wine and supported these and our other events.

Roberta has again diligently managed our accounts and we are pleased to report that they remain relatively healthy. Our grateful thanks to her.

Special tribute must also be paid to William Downie who has doggedly pursued pool account anomalies so diligently that, if replicated by Aberdeenshire Council Finance Department themselves, would possibly go a long way to resolving their present difficulties.

Looking ahead we need a year of consolidation and a drive on sustainability. We have a vision for the future – to cut loose from our existing ‘hand to mouth’ ‘year on year’ battle for survival. We look to this plan to serve the needs of the Pool, Leisure Centre, Local Authority and most of all our community.

Alex Salmond during his visit to the pool on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, and subsequently, has pledged to support our efforts in achieving our 4 key objectives

1. Energy efficiency; we want to move towards a much more efficient and sustainable approach to our energy consumption. We will investigate modern gas boilers to replace our current heating system. These boilers would also allow us to consider Solar Power, linked to a new boiler system at the Leisure Centre, piped through to the open air pool. This would augment our traditional gas source (and introduce significant cost savings), for our season as well as a major energy support for the Leisure Centre for the other 9 months of the year.
2. Introduce new sea pumps and filters, a major operational factor that needs to be urgently addressed with the possibility of a major additional energy opportunity made available to us as new technology evolves from the changing nature of the Aberdeen oil industry.
3. The introduction of latest generation pool covers and heat exchangers to reduce energy heat loss and improve conservation.
4. To complement the beautiful, bright and clean-lined art deco look of the pool and take advantage of the improved hot water flows we envisage, we need changing facilities and plumbing that fits the needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> century clientele. Looking good is not enough – it has to work! A new village-style changing room plan is currently being trialled by Aberdeenshire Council which will maximise space and overcome issues relating to the disabled and of storage facilities. We need practical 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions to cater for the needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> century customers. The youngest, the oldest, family groups, social and fitness swimmers and every sector in between.

Alex Salmond as I have stated supports these objectives and through his representatives we are looking to identify specific areas of financial resource and with the support of our local authority partners, the guidance and professional assistance we need to make them happen.

Our partnership of volunteers and local government, working for the community through green and natural resources, achieves many central government objectives so we are pushing for quick and favourable support. We have re-thought the café facility to gear it to a more sustainable business and next year it will operate in tandem with the caravan park opening and closing ie March – end of October. The layout and equipment will be upgraded.

Prior and post season we will introduce the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary displays to make it a more desirable and interesting facility supporting the Leisure Centre as well as the caravan park and the town.

Additionally, we are looking to achieve charitable status as OSCAR the charity commissioners requirements make fundraising tougher and tougher.

As we move forward we are also re-structuring our own Friends Committee to further support Fundraising, Pool Maintenance, Marketing and Promotions.

We want to focus the time and talent of Friends to their strengths in sub-groups and in the process make the Committee more accountable for decision-making and speeding up some of the processes that in the past have diminished its effectiveness.

Finally we are sure that many a local authority would give their eye teeth to have such an amazing feature and attraction as our pool. When taking into account the value of local employment it provides and the hundreds of thousands of pounds of increased retail spend for the town to say nothing of the local enjoyment it provides, the negligible capital outlay from the Council turns into a considerable nett contribution to the community in real terms.

Committee members for the past year were as follows:

Chairman	Mike Robins
Vice Chairman	Alex Nicoll
Secretary	Mary Gardiner
Treasurer	Roberta Duncan
Committee	William Downie, David Dobbie, Mhairi Robins, David Culshaw, Gwynne Stewart, Allan Sutherland.

Mary, William and David Culshaw all step down from the committee as of now and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and support and also thank those members who are staying on for playing their part in the success of the last year. Special thanks go also to the incredible band of workers who give 'unstintingly' of their time and without whose dedication we just simply could not survive.

It may have been our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year but our 76<sup>th</sup> may be that pivotal one which will start for us a new era of success and sustainability.

By order of the committee  
Mike Robins  
Chairman