

The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire was instituted in 1917 by King George V for services in any realm of activity. Male Officers and Members wear the badge from a ribbon on the left chest; all females (other than Dames Grand Cross) wear it from a bow on the left shoulder.



Unfortunately, there was one lady 81 years young who was very very nervous. She stuck with me and was in front of me as we lined up in our batches of 15. Now, in my heels and hat I stand about 6 feet. she was 4' 11". (picture it)

As we waited in the wings of The Grand Ballroom I was talking her through the ceremony, telling her she would be OK. ...Approach the Equerry in Waiting, Commander Heber Ackland (another very charming man). ...Go forward when you hear your surname. ...Curtsy, walk towards the Queen - toes touching the dais - little conversation - shake hands - walk backwards - curtsy and turn right to walk slowly out of the ballroom.

As she was talking to The Queen, I took my place by the side of The Equerry waiting for my turn.

Then horrors... having 'been done' she turned left and was heading back towards me! So, in front of Her Majesty and all the guests I stepped out of place and caught her as she sailed past me and turned her round, trying to reassure her that no-one had noticed!

After the ceremony was over and we were leaving the Palace. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Ford and Commander Heber Ackland were in the reception line and I was hailed a hero. They said, " you saved our bacon there."

According to my husband, Her Majesty was quite amused at the whole thing.

So I am not sure if I will be remembered for my MBE or for being the person who broke Royal protocol at an Investiture.

We finished off the morning with official photographs and a champagne lunch at the Ritz, then dinner with friends. It was, quite simply the most amazing day of my life and it will stay with me forever.

The Royal Society of St George "Bubble and Squeak" Ball

On 26 April (St George couldn't make it any earlier this year – he does have a lot of countries to be Patron Saint of you know) the Riyadh Branch of the Royal Society of St George held their inaugural Ball by kind permission of Her Majesty's new Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, William Patey.

The Intercontinental Hotel provided the spread, and DJ Wobble the music, for what was to be a memorable night. With the St George theme spread right to the aprons at the tables, where the diners carved their own whole roasts and ate Eton Mess, the guests got a taste of what it means to be English in this most distant of lands. With scarcely a joke about the colonials or the "Northern tribes" the event raced from Chairman Simon Messum's opening speech through to the small hours, with the movers and shakers on the dance floor and the chillers and the smokers propping up the bar.

The award for happiest guy on the night was a toss-up between the chap prancing around believing his St George apron was Batman's cape, or Steve Clutton, the winner of the United Motors quad-bike in the raffle. Other contented punters took away electronics and jewellery kindly donated by Electro, Desert Diamonds, BAE Systems and Lust. Axa were generous sponsors of the night.

Not only was a great night had by all, but a sizeable sum was raised for Kids for Kids, Vanessa Patey's chosen charity, which helps displaced and disadvantaged children in Darfur. Well done to all for helping to make a difference. The painstaking preparation put in by Ali Messum and Michelle West was rewarded by cries of "the best night I have ever had"; "the most original night in Riyadh"; and "...God for England Harry and St George!"

Pictured below, RSSG Chairman Simon Messum, hands over a cheque for SR20,000 to Vanessa Patey, Patron of ICING, (International Children in Need Group). Turn over for more pictures of the Ball.

