

## Distinguished Service Award presentation

On a wet and windy day in November 2010, I arrived at the Hotel Russell in London for the annual Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) awards ceremony. This is the opportunity for the CSP to confer its Fellowships, Distinguished Service Awards (DSAs) and Awards for Excellence. I was there to receive the DSA and had invited my husband, Paul, to be my guest (Fig. 1).

Two welcome glasses of champagne were thrust into our hands as we took in the grand surroundings. The enormous room gradually filled with previous awardees – both Fellows and DSAs – and many familiar faces whom I soon realized were CSP staff more usually seen looking out from the pages of *Frontline*.



**Figure 1.** Ros Thomas and her husband, Paul, at the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy awards ceremony in London.

We progressed into the Victorian Woburn Suite, where the banquet was to be served to 120 staff and guests by the light of giant candelabra (Fig. 2). Fellows and previous DSA recipients were interspersed with those about to be conferred with their awards. Everyone was welcomed by Baroness Finlay, CSP President.

After lunch, the Fellows and DSA awardees were whisked off to don gowns in the CSP colours. There were six Fellows and two DSAs. Each of us was called up individually. Anne Thomson, Chair of the Professional Awards Committee, read the citations, the award was conferred by Sarah Bazin, recently elected as the first Vice-chair of the European Region of the



**Figure 2.** The Woburn Suite of the Russell Hotel before the awards ceremony.

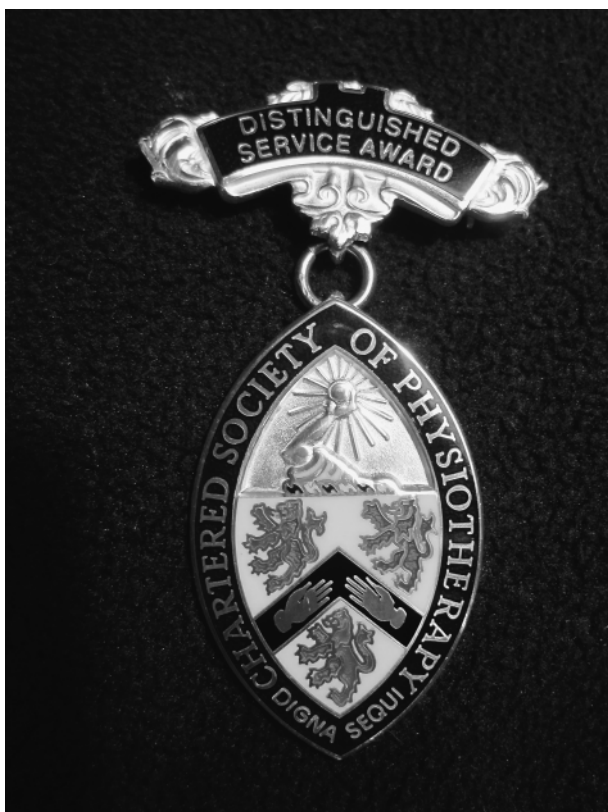
World Confederation for Physical Therapy, and congratulations offered by Ann Green, Chair of Council.

The winners of each category of the Awards for Excellence were presented with their honours and then an overall winner was announced. After photographs (Fig. 3) and an interview for *Frontline*, we were free to talk to the other awardees.

I was very honoured to receive my DSA for services to women's health (Fig. 4) and lost no opportunity to promote the work that we all do. Interestingly, five out of the six Fellows received their medals for work relating to neurology, and therefore, I was delighted to be able to raise the profile of ACPWH. I was told by more than one



**Figure 3.** (Left to right) Ann Green, Sally Roberts, Ros Thomas and Helena Johnson.



**Figure 4.** Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Distinguished Service Award medal.

person that the Association has been very active in nominating its members, and so I decided to research how many Fellows and DSA winners ACPWH has on my return home.

The first Fellowship was awarded in 1950. Fellowships were originally awarded only for research and were automatically given for the submission of a thesis. The criteria were then extended around 30 years ago to include “distinguished service to the advancement of physiotherapy”. Approximately 170 Fellowships have been awarded since then. Our Association can

boast six to date: Dorothy Mandelstam (1992), Jo Laycock (1993), Jill Mantle (1997), Margie Polden (awarded posthumously in 1999), Grace Dorey (2004) and Ruth Hawkes (2005).

This is the twelfth year that DSAs have been conferred and there have only been 30 awarded in total. Nearly a quarter of the recipients (seven) are members of ACPWH, which I find a very satisfying statistic. They are: Jeanne McIntosh (2001), Jeanette Haslam (2001), Margaret Bartaby (2002), Eileen Brayshaw (2003), Jane Goudge (2006), Gill Brook (2007) and now myself in 2010.

The CSP has endorsed our nominations over the years, and I see this as a testament to the wonderful and very important work undertaken by all women’s health physiotherapists, often in the face of adversity, whether from reduced budgets, reduced staffing or lack of managerial support. Indeed, the old taboo surrounding the subject is still experienced by some, lowering our profile amongst co-workers and colleagues. I see my honour, although awarded for my own contribution, as a unique opportunity to inspire others and raise our profile, both within the profession and also among the general public. I hope it might also persuade younger members to demonstrate their enthusiasm for our work more openly. This should encourage the next generation to emulate the same passion and commitment to our specialty, thereby ensuring the promotion of *all* aspects of physiotherapy in women’s health well into the future.

I hope that our sterling efforts so far will be recorded in the CSP archives and the honours list will see the inclusion of many more members of our Association.

**Ros Thomas**