

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FEDERATION OF INLINE SPEED SKATING

1879

James Drake-Digby, a journalist from Walsoken, Cambridgeshire, feels that the Fen ice speed skaters deserve recognition. He also believes that without governance the sport is suffering from uncontrolled betting and subsequent cheating, as well as competitions over undefined distances. He believes standards should be established and so forms the NATIONAL SKATING ASSOCIATION (NSA). The first President of the Association is Charles Watson Townley, Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, who presides over the NSA until 1891.



James Drake-Digby

Founder of the National Skating Association

1880

As well as ice speed skating the scope of the NSA is broadened for the first time to include ice figure skating.

1892

Roller speed skating has been very much in the public eye in recent years and the Metropolitan Branch of the NSA decide to draft a set of rules should the sport come under the auspices of the Association.

1893

By December James Drake-Digby believes it was now time that the NSA should also encompass roller skating as well as ice skating. On 29th December the first NSA organised event takes place at the West Brompton rink in London. Declared a Championship, albeit a regional Championship, the event is a team event where team members individually skate a distance of one mile. An aggregate time for each team is then established by adding the individual times together. The winning team (Ravensbourne) are awarded the Benetfink & Co. Challenge Cup. The following day the rules for roller speed skating that had been drafted a year earlier are incorporated into the NSA rules. Immediately afterwards a ROLLER COMMITTEE is formed and Guy M. Campbell is elected as its first Chairman.



Guy M. Campbell

First Chairman of the Roller Committee

1894

The ROLLER COMMITTEE establishes a series of time standards and tests. In January and February skaters take to the various rinks aiming to achieve the newly established standards for either gold, silver or bronze awards. On 6th February, Charles J. Wilson of the Wandsworth St. George club skates the fastest time on his home rink. Whilst the time is only good enough for the NSA bronze award, he is declared the fastest skater and awarded the Benetfink & Co. Challenge Cup in recognition of this. This makes Wilson the first official individual British roller speed skating Champion.

1907

Figure and dance (artistic) roller skating is also taken under the wing of the ROLLER COMMITTEE. Both speed and artistic are now governed by the ROLLER COMMITTEE.

1930

On 23rd July the ROLLER COMMITTEE is split into two separate sub-committees, the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE (RSC) and the FIGURE AND DANCE COMMITTEE (F&DC). The over-arching ROLLER COMMITTEE continues to oversee the two disciplines where matters that affect both are addressed. Being the older of the two disciplines it is agreed that the Chairman of the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE will also be the Chairman of the ROLLER COMMITTEE. The first Chairman is declared as Thomas W. C. Allworthy.

1936

Despite not yet being affiliated to the world governing body of roller skating, the Federation International de Pattinage Roulettes (FIPR), invite Great Britain to send a delegation of speed skaters to take part in the first ever European Track Championships in Stuttgart in the heart of Nazi Germany. Between 2nd and 5th April all three British skaters are victorious and win five of the seven events – Bill Ross (500m, 10000m), Harold Wilkinson (1500m, 2000m) and Jimmy Reed (5000m).

1938

The NSA becomes officially affiliated to the FIPR and are asked to organise the first ever World Track Championships at Wembley, London. The ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE is instrumental in organising and supporting the event with officials. The event is held between 18th and 20th April and is a resounding success. Again, all three British skaters are victorious winning four of the six events – Harold Wilkinson (500m), Bill Ross (5000m, 10000m) and Arthur Cooper (20000m).

1939

Major Kenneth M. Beaumont CBE DSO is now the Chairman of the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE and by default, the ROLLER COMMITTEE, when the sport takes a hiatus for World War 2.

1947

The sport recommences and the ROLLER COMMITTEE is no longer an existence. The two disciplines of ROLLER SPEED and ROLLER FIGURE & DANCE are now separate entities and become affiliated in their own right to the recently restructured NSA Council. Major Beaumont becomes the first Chairman of the NSA Council, the NSA President (in this case Viscount Templewood) becoming ex-officio.

1984

A group of active speed skaters disgruntled with the administration of the current ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE, investigate how they might be able to influence future decisions for the benefit of the sport. It transpires that despite popular belief to the contrary, there is nothing written in the Articles of Memorandum that prevents an active skater sitting on the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE even though that eventuality has never occurred. Previous committees had simply nominated those who they want to sit on the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE and the motion was always passed without question.

Being election year John E. Fry and John Mullane, both still active skaters, put their names forward for inclusion onto the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE at the NSA AGM. The move is unprecedented and at the AGM both garner enough membership votes and are elected onto the new committee. The previous committee members who are 'ejected' in favour of Fry and Mullane complain to the recently elected President of the NSA, Courtney Jones OBE, saying that "active skaters are not allowed on the committee". Jones replies by telling them "I suggest you read and digest the rules of your association".

1985

On 24th May the NATIONAL SKATING ASSOCIATION becomes a limited company and now becomes officially known as NATIONAL SKATING ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN LTD.

1989

An EGM is called for 27th May and as part of the ongoing restructuring of the NSA the NSA Council is disbanded and the NSA decide to adopt a Federation structure for the affiliated disciplines. The roller skating disciplines are once again bought under one governing body affiliated directly to the NSA.

The FEDERATION of ROLLER SKATING (FRS) is formed comprising of both the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE and the COMMITTEE for ARTISTIC ROLLER SKATING (formerly the ROLLER FIGURE & DANCE COMMITTEE). The first Chairman of the FRS is the CARS Chairman, Margaret Brooks. Chloe Ronaldson remains as Chairman of the RSC.

1992

After 113 years it is announced that as of 31st March the NATIONAL SKATING ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN LTD will shortly cease trading and cease to exist in its present form. This requires both ice and roller federations to be recognised independently by their respective world governing bodies such as FIRS (in the case of roller skating) and the INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC).

On 25th February and in preparation for this eventuality the FEDERATION of ROLLER SKATING becomes officially recognised as the BRITISH FEDERATION of ROLLER SKATING LTD. The Chairman continues to be Margaret Brooks with Chloe Ronaldson still undertaking her role as Chairman of the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE. The BFRS becomes directly affiliated to FIRS as the governing body for British roller speed and artistic skating activities.

1993

A period of instability is created within the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE when over the course of a few weeks in August and September a number of factors leads to the majority of committee members to resign.

On 21st November an EGM is called by the roller speed membership to undertake a vote of no confidence in the remaining members of the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE, and if that resolution is passed to elect a new committee.

Prior to the EGM all remaining members of the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE resign and the EGM is used by the membership to elect a new committee so that the sport can continue to function. The new committee comprises of just five members who are then elected to office – John E. Fry (Chairman), Brian Hartley (Vice Chairman), Ruth Fry (Secretary), Brian Wood and David Kelly. Dawn Burkitt would later be co-opted to become the Finance Officer.

1998

After allegations by the ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE of misappropriation of funds and misleading statements regarding the handling of NSA shares by the CARS membership who sit on the Board of Directors of the BFRS, relationships between the two disciplines becomes untenable. On 13th July and in anticipation of a split CARS forms another federation, the FEDERATION of ARTISTIC ROLLER SKATING LTD (FARS). On 17th July CARS calls and EGM to have a vote on the dissolution of the BRITISH FEDERATION of ROLLER SKATING LTD. The motion is carried.

The BFRS is dissolved and two separate roller skating federations are once again formed. The FEDERATION of ARTISTIC ROLLER SKATING LTD is already in existence and on 12th August the FEDERATION of INLINE SPEED SKATING LTD (FISS) is incorporated. Brian Wood becomes the first Chairman of the newly formed FISS who subsequently become recognised by FIRS as the official governing body for roller/inline speed skating in Great Britain.

1999

Sport UK fails to recognise individual roller skating federations as governing bodies and so withholds any funding that may be apportioned to any roller skating discipline.

On 3rd August the umbrella body, the BRITISH ROLLER SPORTS FEDERATION (BRSF) is formed. FISS are one of five founding members, along with the FEDERATION of ARTISTIC ROLLER SKATING, NATIONAL ROLLER HOCKEY ASSOCIATION, BRITISH INLINE SKATER HOCKEY ASSOCIATION and the BRITISH INLINE PUCK HOCKEY ASSOCIATION. Sue Morrison is the first FISS member to sit on the Board of Directors of the BRSF. The first President of the newly formed umbrella body is FARS Chairman, Margaret Brooks.

The BRSF are now formally recognised by FIRS as the governing body for roller sports in Great Britain.

2000

Sport UK finally recognise the BRSF as the umbrella body for roller sports in Great Britain and possible funding channels are reopened to all disciplines.

Brian Wood is formally recognised by the FISS Committee as the first (and to date only) Honorary President of the FEDERATION of INLINE SPEED SKATING LTD.

LIST OF CHAIRMEN

ROLLER COMMITTEE

- 1894 – 1922 Guy M. Campbell
- 1922 – 1924 Robert Muirhead Hewett JP
- 1925 – 1926 Captain Robert Scott Hewett
- 1927 – 1928 Roger W. Marsh
- 1929 Roger W. Marsh (pro-tem)
R. H. White (pro-tem)
- 1930 J. L. Pitcher
Thomas W. C. Allworthy

ROLLER SPEED COMMITTEE

- 1931 Thomas W. C. Allworthy
- 1932 – 1934 Sidney B. Cole
- 1934 – 1936 Roger W. Marsh
- 1937 – 1948 Major Kenneth M. Beaumont CBE DSO
- 1949 F. G. Bennett
- 1950 – 1961 Albert E. Lamb
- 1962 – 1964 Henry Crystall
- 1965 – 1967 Ernest J. Matthews
- 1968 – 1969 Henry Crystall
- 1970 Ernest J. Matthews
- 1971 Anthony L. Wilson
- 1972 – 1977 Henry Crystall
- 1978 – 1982 Mrs. Miriam Cooper
- 1983 Ernest J. Matthews
- 1984 – 1987 Ms. Chloe Ronaldson

1988 Michael McGeough
1989 – 1990 Patrick Feetham
1990 – 1993 Ms. Chloe Ronaldson
1993 – 1998 John Edward Fry

FEDERATION of INLINE SPEED SKATING

1998 - 1999 Brian Wood
1999 Christopher Wallis (pro-tem)
1999 – 2000 Frank Clark
2000 – 2001 Christopher Wallis (pro-tem)
2001 – 2003 Brian Wood
2004 John Charles Fry
2004 – 2007 Alan Moore
2008 – 2010 Richard Johnson
2011 – 2013 Ben Severs
2013 – 2015 Thomas Fell
2015 – 2018 John Edward Fry
2018 – 2019 Gareth O'Reilly
2020 - Paul Gilbert