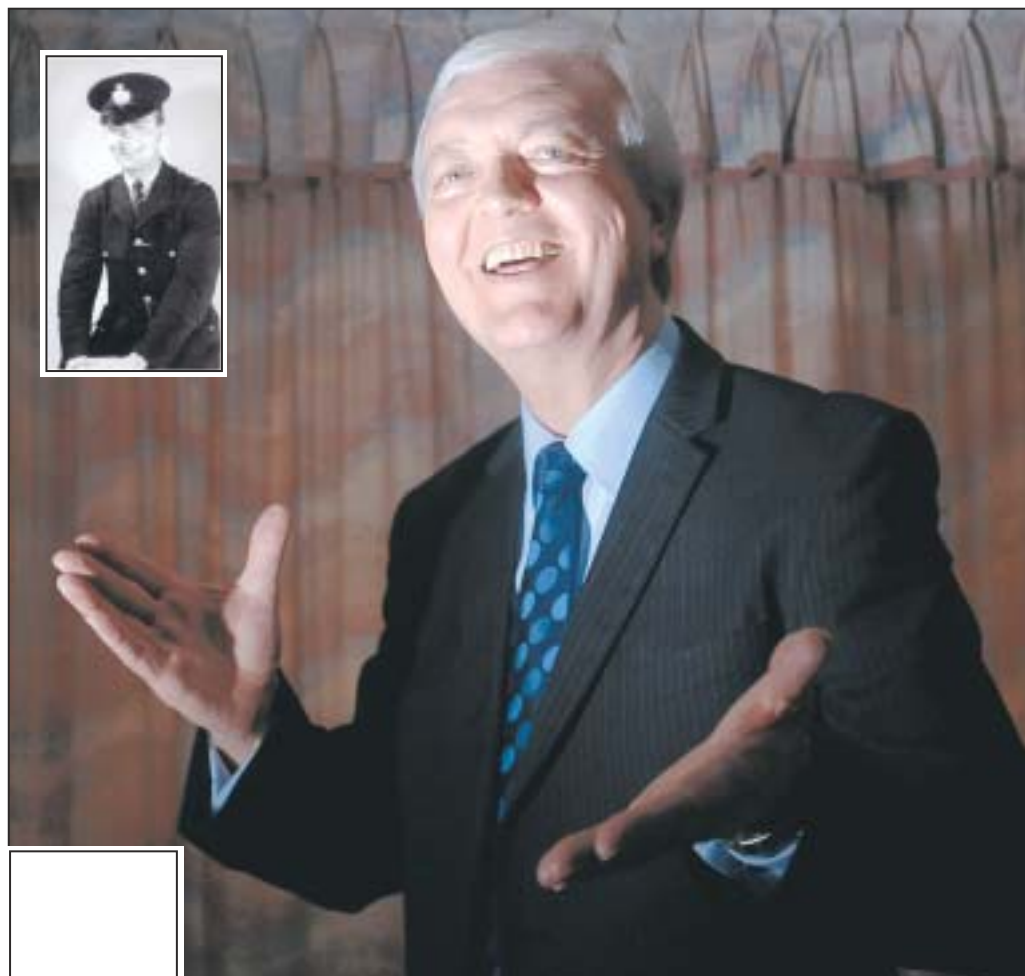


'Incredible': Ex-police sergeant sheds shackles of stutter

# Words now come easy to speaker



**ACCUSTOMED AS HE IS...** Alan Badmington, who is in the finals of a public speaking contest NM\_6049. Inset above: Mr Badmington in uniform. Inset left: Gareth Gates, who uses the same speech programme Picture: NICK MORRISH

By Jenny Brentnall

TEN years ago every sentence was an ordeal for retired police sergeant Alan Badmington.

But a lifelong stutter has not stopped him reaching the final of a prestigious public speaking contest this year.

On April 26, he will join seven other finalists in the Association of Speakers Clubs (ASC) national public speaking championships.

Mr Badmington, who lives with wife Babs in Abergavenny, explained his stutter started when he was three and a half.

"I couldn't use half of the alphabet," he said.

Now, hearing him recite verses of his own composition and discussing preparations for a raft of public speaking engagements, the crippling problems he describes are hard to imagine.

For most of his lifetime, speaking in public filled him with horror.

His stutter hindered his career in Gwent Police as well



**WINNING WAYS:** Mr Badmington with some of the trophies he has already won

as his personal life, and he was repeatedly rejected for promotion, solely on the basis of his speech.

He said: "I remember having a promotion board interview which the chief constable prematurely curtailed, shouting at me 'Get out, you're wasting my time. I will never promote you'."

Over the years he tried various techniques, including one where he wore a device in his ears which stopped him hearing his own voice.

But in 2000 his wife persuaded him to join the McGuire programme - the approach used by pop singer Gareth Gates - and Mr Badmington said this was "the last piece in the jig-saw".

"It was incredible," he said. "The debilitating shackles which had inhibited me since childhood had finally been removed."

Motivated by this, he decided to push himself and took up public speaking via a local Association of Speakers club.

Since then, both his confidence and abilities have soared. He has bookings for speaking engagements until mid-2009 and even helps others overcome their stutters as a mentor on the McGuire course.

Whatever happens in the competition later this month, Mr Badmington feels he is already a winner.

"I'm going there to enjoy it, and to have fun with my speech," he said.

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