

The Chanter

Nottingham Scottish Association Newsletter
August 2009

A Work for Poets

To have carved on the days of our vanity

A sun

A ship

A star

A cornstalk

Also a few forgotten marks

From an ancient forgotten time

A child may read

That not far from the stone

A well

Might open for wayfareres

Here is a work for poets

Carve the runes

Then be content with silence

George Mackay Brown

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This is the first Chanter of my presidency, and I'd like to start by thanking Bob Logan for his work over the past two years, particularly as he took on the role of president at short notice when there was a vacancy to fill. Bob and Isobel have given great service to the Association (and will, no doubt, continue to do so) and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

As a fairly new member of the Association, some of you may not know me and, likewise, there are some of you whom I don't know. While I hope that we will be able to remedy this over the next two years, a brief introduction may be in order.

Although my family have deep roots in the East Neuk of Fife, my parents spent (like many Scots) much of their lives overseas – in their case, in Singapore. I was born and spent my early childhood there before being sent to boarding schools in St Andrews and Edinburgh - where I played a lot of rugby and spent a lot of time at Murrayfield. After University, I moved to British Columbia, returned to London, got married to Sue, worked in Brunei, had two children and eventually washed up in Nottingham as Vice Principal of High Pavement College - from which I have now retired. (I did promise brevity!) Currently I work part time for the Institute of Physics supporting science teachers in local schools, do as much walking and dancing as my legs will put up with, and spend a fair amount of time on the road to Edinburgh to visit my daughter and rapidly-growing grandson. Enough about me...

As those of you who were there will know, the AGM in April had no candidate for the post of Vice President and also left a vacancy for a Council Member. I'm glad to say that, since then, Margaret Barnes has agreed to take on the role of Acting Vice-President and we have co-opted Gina Rose on to the Council. My thanks to both of them for agreeing to this.

On the topic of the AGM, I'd like to apologise on behalf of the Council that the changed date was not satisfactorily communicated to all members. That was an oversight on our part and we are sorry for any inconvenience caused.

You will find a programme of events planned for 2009-2010 listed in this Chanter. A couple of highlights to mention are the Hallowe'en Cèilidh (on 31st October, of course) and the annual St Andrew's Night Dinner and Dance on 28th November. I hope you will be able to support these events – and bring your friends. We need a good attendance to keep these viable.

We will be planning other events during the year – and these will be announced in the Chanter and also on the web at

www.nottinghamscottish.org.uk. If you haven't seen our website yet, and you have internet access, please do have a look and bookmark it for future use – you will find all up-to-date information about the Association there. The Chanter will contain a current list of upcoming Nottingham Scottish Association events as well as other events with a Scottish flavour that may be of interest to members.

We have tried to arrange a variety of different social activities. In 2008-2009 it included visits to a folk evening; the Presidents' evening of poetry, song and dance; a ramble and open-air theatre visit as well as the St Andrews and Burns Night dinners. If you have suggestions for activities you would like to see, please pass these on to me or to any member of the Council – what would you like to see the Association doing?

Our membership has remained fairly stable in recent years but, if the Association is to continue to flourish, we need to keep attracting new members. We need your help in this – please spread the word about the Association. There must be many Scots (and friends of Scotland) in Nottingham who may be unaware of our existence. It would be good to reach out to them.

The Chanter is your newsletter. It is our regular channel of communication and also a good read on matters Scottish. Thanks to David Page for his continuing work on this. If you have suggestions for what you would like to see in the Chanter, praise, criticism - or, even better, contributions to it - please do contact David (secretary@nottinghamscottish.org.uk or 0115 981 3215) directly. We would welcome letters to the editor.

Finally, I hope you have all enjoyed the summer (such as it was) and I look forward to seeing you from September onwards.

Andrew

ASCDS Festival 2009

It's that time of year again! The May blossom is in full bloom and it's time to sponge and press the kilts, wash and iron the white dresses and look out the tartan sashes (along with at least a dozen safety pins!) The Nottingham Scottish once again got together a dance team to take part in the Festival in Ollerton and about six weeks before, we got down to some serious rehearsing. Getting everyone together proved extremely difficult as diaries seemed to be pretty full with all sorts of events and holidays etc., but most weeks we managed it. Learning 12 dances is quite taxing and some rehearsals were a bit ragged, but we recuperated with supper and wine at Bernice's afterwards.

The day of the Festival dawned dry, sunny and windy, but thankfully not as hot as last year (that must have been one of the few hot days we had in 2008), so it was a bit more comfortable for dancing. Sixteen teams of enthusiastic Scottish dancers generate a lot of heat! The first dance was Jennifer's Jig and we were confident we knew it pretty well, but we almost added "right and lefts" which weren't supposed to be there (wrong dance!) However we made a good recovery and I am sure no one noticed. Apart from that slight blip, we felt we performed pretty well and everyone settled down and enjoyed the afternoon programme. There were some really impressive demonstrations from various teams throughout the afternoon. How on earth do they remember all the demo dances and the twelve massed dances? I am full of admiration for them. After the afternoon's events were over, we all enjoyed a picnic tea and a lot of chattering went on between dancers who had not seen one another since the previous year.

Fully charged up again, we were ready for the evening dance and this proved a great success. The programme was fun and varied and consisted of lots of familiar dances, which was a relief after taxing our brains all afternoon. By the end of the evening we were all exhausted, but everyone agreed it had been another successful Festival and we are already looking forward to next year.

This year's event was hosted jointly by the Nottingham RSCDS Branch and The Galloways and they did a fine job. The music was provided by Scottish Measure and the MC duties were carried out ably by Godfrey Cozens, so once again a big Thank you to everyone involved in organising this very enjoyable occasion. Long may it continue.

Margaret Barnes

Summer with the Nottingham Scottish Association

10th July Another perspective on `the Dream'...“I know a bank where the wild thyme grows” – well it wasn't exactly a bank, just a large grassy area in the grounds of Newstead Abbey. A group of NSA “worthies” gathered together, each of us carrying a chair, to watch an outdoor performance of “A Midsummer Night's Dream.” We began with a picnic in the early evening sunshine and then settled down to watch the play. Everyone agreed it was a great performance and we were amazed at the fantastic memories of the cast as each one had to play several different parts. However, it did stretch the imagination somewhat when Titania and Oberon appeared on stage with what looked like miniature pylons strapped to their feet to give the appearance of walking on air and each step produced a rather un-fairylike clunk! Once again the weather favoured us although it did get quite cold towards the end of the evening.

11th July Hardly time to recover and we were out to another NSA “do.” This time it was the Annual Barn Dance and Supper at Papplewick. We had a record turnout and in spite of fairly frequent walking or trotting in the wrong direction we had a great time. The supper, provided by Bernice and Jeanne once again was fantastic and we just about managed to get back on the floor for another few dances before staggering home.

6th August Garden Dance at Andrew and Sue's – CANCELLED – weather was dreadful!

14th August 6.30 a.m. and bleary eyed we made our way to Nottingham Broad Marsh Bus Station where David picked us up for our special trip to Burns' country and the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. We picked up passengers along the way and finally set off in earnest for Dumfries. The weather got steadily worse as we travelled north and it was `coming down in buckets' in Dumfries. However, undaunted, we set off on the Burns' Historic Trail and in spite of the rain we really enjoyed it. We did have to stop off for a `wee refreshment' before joining the coach to continue to the Erskine Bridge Hotel where we were staying for the next two nights – it was still raining!

Next morning some of us managed to get up early enough to enjoy a swim in the hotel pool and after a hearty breakfast we set off for Alloway – it was still raining. However, by the time we reached our destination the sun had broken through and stayed with us for the rest of the day. We visited the cottage where the Bard came into the world and then headed off to have a look at the Brig o' Doon, followed by The Tam O' Shanter Experience Film Show at the

Visitor Centre. After lunch we boarded the coach again and set off for Edinburgh. The capital was bathed in sunshine and we had some time to enjoy a wander around before David collected us to take us to the Tattoo. We were dropped at the bottom of the hill and joined the crowds heading for the great event – and great it was! The whole show was fantastic and of course everyone had their favourite performance. Apart from the massed bands which always stir the blood, my favourite was the Top Secret Drum Corps who put on an amazing display – swapping drumsticks, beating one another's drums and playing some great music. The most colourful event was staged by the She Huo Cultural Troup from Edinburgh's twin city of X'ian in China. There was a Burns' 250th Anniversary Tribute from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama and Canada's Calgary Burns Singers. We also enjoyed a fifty-strong group from the Island of Tonga who entertained us with their own particular brand of South Sea Island music. The Massed Military Bands, Massed Pipes & Drums RAF Bands, together with the rest of the cast provided a fantastic Finale, especially the stirring rendering of "Going Home" and "Amazing Grace," followed by a selection of Burns' songs, the Lone Piper playing on the ramparts of the castle and finally the March Out to the traditional military tunes of "Scotland the Brave," "We're No' Awa' tae Bide Awa,' "Highland Laddie" and "The Black Bear." If this show doesn't stir your Scottish blood, nothing will.

The next morning, packed, breakfasted and ready to go, we set off in the pouring rain for Culzean Castle and Gardens. By the time we arrived there the sun was shining again and we had a lovely time strolling round the wonderful walled garden and extensive grounds. We hopped on the little visitor's bus and made for the Castle. It is well worth a visit and if any of you are in that part of Ayrshire, do pay it a visit. The Castle has a lovely lived-in feel about it and the staff were extremely knowledgeable and helpful. Aboard the coach again we headed south, calling at Gretna Green for shortbread, and then it was the final long trek to Nottingham. It was a fantastic weekend and I would like to say 'Thank you' from all of us to David and Rhona for looking after us so well. Hopefully we will be able to do another trip next year.

Margaret Barnes

News from Lochmaben. News of interest to longer serving members, we hear that Jimmy More (President 1979) has had an aortic valve and a double heart bypass operation. He is home now and is recovering well, doing as Eleanor, his wife, tells him. We send both Eleanor and Jimmy our best wishes.

Membership Subscriptions Member subscriptions for 2009 – 2010 were due to be paid on April 1st. Alas, I am still waiting for quite a few. Are you one of the few? It would be most helpful if you would send your subscriptions without the need and cost of additional reminders.

Thanks - **Jeanne Dall, Hon Treasurer.**

Nottingham Scottish Events

Coming Soon!

**31 October 2009: Hallowe'en Cèilidh
St Andrews with Castle Gate, 7.30 – 11.00**

A seasonal mix of dance, music and games with a Hallowe'en flavour. Come and let your hair down – and bring your friends. Information and tickets (£5) from Bernice Young (Tel: 0115 963 7228)

**28 November 2009: St Andrew's Night Dinner
Masonic Hall**

The annual St Andrew's Night Dinner and Dance is one of the highlights of the year. Details and an application form for tickets will be in the next edition of the Chanter, but please book it in your diary now!

Bernice Young has an established walking group and invites NSA members to join her for a ramble on 8th September; for further details telephone [0115] 963 7228.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Well, it was at least close to Midsummer on Friday 10 July, when eleven of us went to see 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in the glorious surroundings of Newstead Abbey. For once in this so-called 'barbecue summer' (© Met Office) we had a fine and sunny evening for it and were able to start the evening in fine style with a glass of wine and a picnic on the lawn.

Illyria, the company who performed the play, gave us a rousing performance of one of Shakespeare's lighter comedies which kept the audience laughing from start to finish. With only a small number of actors in the company, most had to play two or three rôles each and quick changes and reappearances

were needed to keep the play moving. The cast used these to great effect, giving the play the atmosphere of a traditional farce almost in the Brain Rix mode. Terrific stuff – and guaranteed to bring a smile to the face.

This was a lot of fun and we'll hope to repeat this next summer.

Andrew Morrison

A Summer Ramble

Saturday 20 June saw a number of members meeting in Newtown Linford for a ramble in Bradgate Park near Leicester. We were fortunate to have a sunny day for it and had a very pleasant stroll past herds of deer, Cropston Reservoir, the ruins of Bradgate House and the Old John Tower. Having worked up an appetite we walked back to the Bradgate Inn for a well-earned and substantial lunch. Readers won't be too surprised to learn that we spent rather a long time over this part of our day.

After lunch most made their way home, but Marie and Dieter Hecht, Sue and I headed for an ice cream and went back to the ruins of Bradgate House, the childhood home of Lady Jane Grey, for a more detailed look. Lady Jane Grey was the 'Nine Days Queen of England' following the death of Edward VI and there is a small exhibition there dealing with her life – and later execution for treason under Queen Mary of England in 1554 when she was still only 17 or 18. Had she maintained her hold on the throne of England then the whole history of England (no Elizabeth) and Scotland (James VI would probably not have become James I of England) might have been very different... A good walk, good food, good company and a bit of history too!

Andrew Morrison

REVIEWS

Two new books from Christopher Rush, the acclaimed author of *East Neuk* provenance, have recently appeared on the shelves, and both are available from the local library without the need to resort to costly inter-library loans. **'Sex, Lies and Shakespeare'**, drawing to a certain extent upon material from his earlier work *'Last Lesson of the Afternoon'*, is a lively account of the author's gradual emergence, fuelled by colourful and inspirational teachers, from what must, by reference to his earlier works, have been a difficult childhood in St. Monans, **'Will'** is a remarkable work, an intimate biography of Shakespeare in a succession of reminiscences as his lawyer attends his death-bed to write the great man's Last Will and Testament. **Caveat lector,**

however; the language and episodes in both works do occasionally reflect the lusty spirit of both the age of the first Elizabeth and of the nineteen-sixties! (And as a railway historian, I can assure the reader that there were no tunnels of any description on the St. Monans – Anst'er line!!) **DP**

All right, call me an anorak if you like, but the two-part DVD '**Glasgow Trams**', apart from delighting those of us with a soft spot for 'Coronations' and 'Cunarders' - and how many vehicles of any kind have given sixty years' public service as did many of the evergreen 'Standards'? – refreshes the memory with a series of street scenes showing just how much has been lost forever, some of it with regret and some of it not before time. Polises on point duty, conductors and clippies, horses and carts, the gaunt cañon of New City Road, route 3 alias the '*Road of the High and Mighty*' - usually allocated the best cars! – and the wild lurch and roll as a motorman winds up an ancient 'Standard' on worn track in pursuit of the terminus and a crafty fag...it's all there. A special plaudit to the guy who times his run perfectly, races across wet setts in the midst of a busy street and JUST manages to grab the handrail and get on board a departing 'Coronation'...Available from all good transport museums. **DP**

Dunesslin Pudding

Those fortunate enough to have a copy of the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes Cookery Book will doubtless be unaware that our President's Grandmother contributed a recipe. She was living at 'Dunesslin' in Hepburn Gardens, St. Andrews at the time, and the recipe in its original version is enclosed. Click [here](#) for the recipe!

I'd be delighted to publish tried and tested traditional Scottish recipes from our readers!