

President's Message

Dear Members,

Who would have believed that a talk on 16th century Scotland would have been so interesting. Maureen Meickle Ph.D., a visiting professor at Westminster College, did a great job of keeping us all entertained and educated us on the goings on of the Borders at the time of King James VI. She clearly demonstrated her depth of knowledge of the period and was able to talk amusingly about those difficult times, which were extremely tough for the common folks. Actually you might not know this but that area has had a long record of producing high caliber people (ahem... yours truly among them).



Many thanks to Denise for the arrangements, and to Country Day for the use of the facilities.

Our next scheduled event is a performance by our resident celebrity, Mr Alex Sutherland. He is to play a few nice little diddies on the guitar, and have us all a jolly good time. Hope to see you there.

Back in the early days...

In the early 1700's, castles became popular in Scotland, and some say it became a National art form. The other "pastime" in these medieval days was heraldry. In Scotland, it became widespread, and much less elitist than elsewhere.

According to Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, Lord Lyon King of Arms, by 1707, one out of every forty-five Scots was either of noble birth, or directly related to someone in the nobility!

Coats of Arms were everywhere and, at the time, had a wider significance than tartan. So, if you are of Scottish descent and can't find your clan insignia, don't worry, just keep digging and you'll find a fitting Coat of Arms!

Better get prak-ti-sin' for the Ceilidh, everybody knows what it's about now, and preparations are underway. Dig out the music, have a few more libations and get the vocal chords in order!

Aw-ra-best, Keith

How things have changed over the recent years.....

*Noo's the day, and noo's the hour!
Charge you BP drilling-tower!
Sod the Minister o' Power!
Hoots monopolie!*

inside...

Events Program

Burns Dinner Survey Results

Caledonia Corner

Toasts & Things

Other really good stuff!

Events Program. Come along and enjoy...

Those who attended the monthly meeting at Mary Institute/Country Day heard a very interesting presentation on parts of the "Borders", and the disputed city of Berwick-upon-Tweed, by Maureen Meickle.

March 27th, 7:30pm: At Mary Institute/Country Day School. Our monthly meeting promises to be very entertaining with:
"The Clan Lindsay" by Peter Geery
"Song (and guitar) of Scotland" by Alex Sutherland.

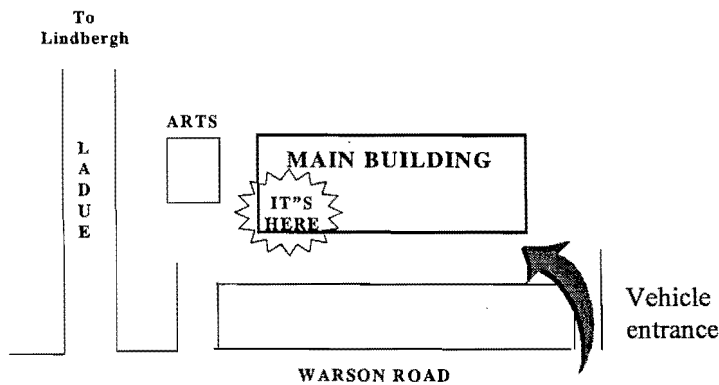
**We still need
volunteers to
help make this
exciting program
happen.**

Please call:

D. Duffy 532-7587

or

P. Gowran 968-5429



April 29th, 7:30pm: Mark your calendars for the **Ceilidh** of the year.
At Whispering Hills Club House.
See attached details and reservations form.

NOTE: we are looking for donations as raffle prizes for the Ceilidh. If you wish to help out with a donation then please call Denise Duffy, or send to a Board member. Or hand-in at the March 27th, meeting.

March in Scotland brings several "spring" festivals, including "Whuppity Scoorie", celebrated in Lanark. The related name "Whuppity Stoorie" is used as the name of a bad fairy in parts of Scotland. The festival involves children with tightly rolled balls of paper attached to a string or small rope. When the church bells peal six o'clock, they all swing the balls around, hitting each other, and run round the church three times. An odd custom, with uncertain origins - but the three times round relates to druid influence. The intent is to beat out the "devils" who may be lurking in the spring dust (as the fields are tilled), and ensure a good harvest for the year.

In more recent years, this festival has included rivalry between the youths of Lanark, and New Lanark. Some incidents resorted to stone throwing and a magistrates ban on such activities. There's a local poem that goes:

*Hurrah boys, Hurrah, We have won the day,
We've met the bold New Lanark boys,
And chased them doon the brae.*

Burns Dinner: Survey Responses

The Burns Dinner seems like a long way off (yes, next years'), but your hard-working Board members are already planning and taking actions to make it an even greater success than this year. Your responses to the survey which was mailed to each of you has helped greatly in better understanding the feelings of the membership at-large. As promised, the results are being reported here so that everyone can see what the general responses were.

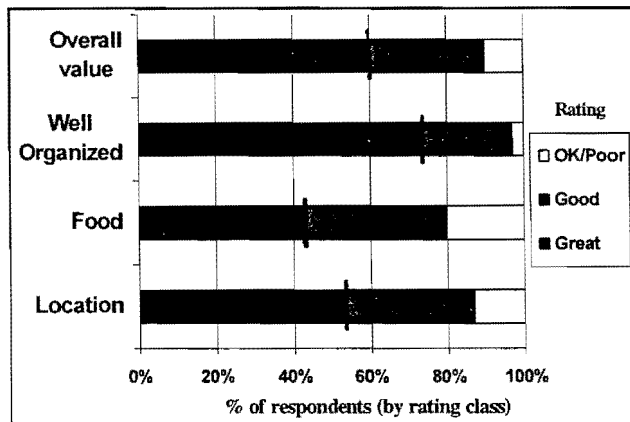
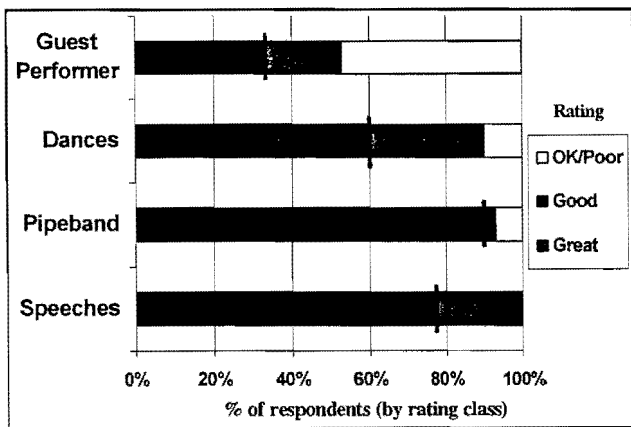
The survey was mailed out to 150 people, and we received 42 replies which is a return rate of 28%. This magnitude of return is about average for a mail-type survey, so the results are reasonably representative.

Overall value was very good. Some improvements can be made....

Of the people who *did not attend* this year, 43% said it was because they were out-of-town, 25% said they had a schedule conflict, and 25% said it was because it was too expensive.

For the people who *did attend* there was a series of questions to allow a rating for selected aspects of the evening. The responses were:

[In the charts, more solid black means a more favorable response]



SUMMARY



JUDGEMENT

- ☺ Overall value was very good.
- ☺ Organization was excellent.
- ☺ Dancers were very good.
- ☺ Pipeband was outstanding.
- ☺ Speeches were excellent.
- ☹ Guest performer not so good.
- ☹ Food needs to be better.
- ☺ Location was reasonable.

Many thanks to those who responded and made their feelings known. The appropriate actions can be developed to make the next Burns Dinner even better than ever.

CALEDONIA CORNER

Glasgow! One of Scotland's great cities. Home of the magnificent ocean-going liners, like the "Queen Mary" and the "Queen Elizabeth" - as the Corries sang, they went forth "...with a Nation in their hold...". Home of the great fitba' (soccer) teams, Rangers and Celtic. Home of some of the first high-rise flats (apartments), and housing-schemes (subdivisions with a difference), the most infamous of which were the "Gorbals". Home of "Barlinnie" (if you know what that is then I won't tell, and if you don't then you'll have to find out). Home of the most clever humour in the world. Although I lived in different parts of Scotland, my grandparents were Glaswegian and I always remember the extremely funny, but subtle jokes that are characteristic of the area.

Not just in their jokes, but in everyday life there's a certain humour about the Glaswegian way. Perhaps, it's because of the relative lack of human discrimination (class or creed) of the Glaswegian - there's something endearing about their attitude. Only in Glasgow do you see a truck driver lean out of his cab and shout at a well-dressed city office-dweller "Am a' oan the richt road tae Auchtenshuggle, Jimmy?", or where else would a wee lad run up to you and say "you goat the time oan ye, big yin?" Then there was the Glaswegian who went up to the ticket counter at the railway station and asked for a "second-class tae Aberdeen." "Change at Aberdeen," asked the clerk. "Na na, I'll tak ma change here - a've bin tae Aberdeen afore!"

**..there's a certain
humour about the
Glaswegian way..**

Or the English player who, after his first shot, said to the Glaswegian caddie "I'm afraid that I am a rather poor golfer." "Ye're no that yet," came the reply!

Remember back in October, 1994, we published part of an interesting letter from an exchange student, J. Kehoe - who had been to Glasgow University, School of Architecture. Our Society helped sponsor that educational visit. While there, he also made some sketches: shown is a view of the University Tower, from the Kelvingrove Park side.



Wha wad ken?

First to answer all three wins one of the Society flag pins.

1. What happens at "Murrayfield"?
2. What is the "Black Watch"?
3. Where would be going if you went "doon the waater"!

All replies to Jim McLaren
2214 Stoneridge Terr Ct,
Chesterfield, MO 63017
or phone: (314) 532-5986

Sorry, no one had all three correct:

1. "Ailsa Craig": granite for curling stones.
2. "Arbroath smokie": smoked haddock.
3. First N. Sea oil pumped: June 11th, 1975

Please send in any interesting questions, with your name / phone number.

CALEDONIA CORNER

This story is written in absolute fear! Some know that there's a wee conspiracy in Scotland, and promised never to tell. Others know that to let the secret out is to flirt with the worst tortures the Scottish Tourist Board can resurrect in the darkest dungeons of Edinburgh Castle. Holiday guides to Scotland are banned from mentioning this subject. The Romans didn't have an answer, and Hadrian's Wall was useless in stopping them. Yes, I'm going to do it - the recent warm weather in St Louis has brought back the terrifying memory - I'm going to write about the demon of Scotland, the mighty midge!

They say there are plagues of midges in the Canadian outback, and on the Siberian steppes, but zoologists all agree that the Scottish variety ranks top in ferocity and determination to feed on human blood. The "magnificent midge" can be considered the guardian of some of the most beautiful and unspoilt areas of Northern Europe - the Scottish Highlands. Or, more likely, you remember them as the "mischievous midges" who played havoc with your well planned picnic among the romantic glens, strewn with bonnie purple heather.

Midges are two-winged flies, a smaller (in size but not in bite) relative of the local St Louis mosquito, and not all species bite mammals. In Scotland, there are about 34 distinct species of midge (Latin genus: *Culicoides*), and 5 of these species are persistent human-biters. *Culicoides impunctatus* dominates and some say that the Scottish version of this species is a different strain - which would account for its ferocity. The males appear to feed on nectar, and plant remains. It's the female who does the biting (no comments to the editor, this is a verifiable fact of life!). She has a scissor-like mouth which penetrates the victim, and sucks up blood. The human immune response to this act is somewhat complex, but for those of you not scientifically inclined we can say it causes severe itching! Well, enough biology for now, and you can see why it's a well kept secret.

For thousands of years humans have lived in Scotland, and learned to adapt to the critters. Apparently, smoke hinders the ability of the midge to detect human presence. Some 19th century manuals on salmon fishing suggest pipe-smoking as a deterrent. It's only when you've experienced a midge attack that you can really understand the practicality of the "black hoose" - that wee butt and ben full of reching peat smoke. The tears in your eyes from the smoke were more tolerable than the tears from the midgy bites!

So, having leaked the secret, let me try to recover some points with the tourist industry. During the season, midges appear in late-May and last through till early-August, with the worst biting time being June and July. Whether you go to Scotland for the great fishing, the superb golf, to sample the unique golden liquids, or just to take in the best scenery among the most hospitable people in the world, this makes August a great time to visit Scotland. At this time of year, the weather's also reasonably good, the heather is in full bloom, and the sunsets are fabulous. You know, there's a canny reason why August the 12th is called the "glorious twelfth" - and it may not all be connected with grouse!

*..the tears in
your eyes were
more tolerable
than the tears
from the...*

TOASTS & THINGS

*I am going down to Scotland, to the country of the kilt,
For a little salmon-stalking in a place they call Glen Tilt;
And as I always like to be a Roman when in Rome,
I've purchased the correct costume and it has just come home.*

*The kilt is most becoming, and it hangs with grace and ease,
Though perhaps a little draughty in the region of the knees,
And if there should be midges - but no doubt the Scots are drest
In the clothes Experience has found to suit the climate best.*

**The kilt is most
becoming...**

Far awa hens hae fair feathers.

Further away, and more unattainable, always seems better!

His head will never fill his faither's bonnet.

He will never be as clever as his father!

It's a lang loanin' that has nae turnin'.

Things are bound to change!

Kindle a can'le at baith ends an' it'll sune be dune.

Burning both ends of the candle is not good for you!

Membership in our Society has improved this year, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Peter Geery, and your assistance in bringing the Society to the attention of friends and relatives. However, we do need to continue this effort. The Burns Dinner at the Adams Mark hotel was attended by some 350 aspiring Scots! The majority of these people are not members of our Society, but seem to have an interest in things Scottish. Do you know any of these people, or do you have any ideas as to how we can attract them to our Society. Remember that the more members we have the more dues will be available to cover the cost of overheads, and promoting Scottish events in the St Louis area (ie. fewer price increases in the events which we run, and all enjoy attending).

Enroll a friend, or Neighbour: Contact Peter Geery, (314) 227 2785.

Thank you for your participation and help...

**You're making
a difference...**

Enjoy reading our newsletter, the Thistle Times? We need you to continue sending in stories or jokes or even printed material of interest. Suggestions and ideas are also welcome — we want to do the best job possible for everyone!

*Jim McLaren, 2214 Stoneridge Terrace Court, Chesterfield, MO 63017
or call (314) 532-5986.*

*Many thanks to those who've already sent me some excellent material,
and please keep up the active involvement.*