

SCOTTISH ST. ANDREW SOCIETY OF GREATER ST. LOUIS



PRESIDENT'S EDITORIAL

Dear Members,
The "big" night is past but who doesn't have some great memories of a wonderful night of Scottish celebration. The Adams Mark hotel did a very good job in accomodating our needs and the dinner, following the Selkirk Grace by the Rev Thom Hunter, was excellent. The haggis was present this year —thanks to the efforts of our own special cooks —and Chris and T.J. Brennan did it proud with their duo Address to the Haggis. The Immortal Memory was presented in excellent fashion by Keith Parle. The other toasts were also just perfect: Jen Nicoll toasting the President, Peter Geery toasting the Queen, and Brock and Janet Moss in counterpoise with the toasts to the Lads and Lassies....and we had the MC of MC's himself, Peter Gowran to ochestraate the evening.



The atmosphere built to hair-raising level as the girls of Caledonia Dance put on a fabulous display, and the Invera'an pipeband filled the air with their outstanding piping and drumming. And then our guest performer Alex Sutherland was simply superb —had the audience laughing, singing, competing, and at times just listening to his Scottish folk music. Alex was well supported by Alan Richardson on keyboard and Vince Arter on bass guitar. Many thanks to all of the above people for making it a really memorable night.

It's relatively easy to recognise all the people in evidence on the night — especially when they did such a great job. However, events like that do not just

happen and we need to acknowledge all the people who worked so hard, behind the scenes, to make our Burns Dinner the best it could be. A big THANK YOU to each and every one.....and a special thanks to Denise Duffy who led these important efforts.

While I thought it was a great night, we remain committed to provide what the membership wants — so make sure you return the attached survey and let us know what you thought.

Aw ra' best, Jim

Back in the Early Days

At one time Agricola was the Roman Governor of England, which was called Britain at the time....just as nowadays people often refer to Britain as England!

One day Agricola set-sail to the North, presumably on a scouting trip prior to the planned conquest of Caledonia. Some say he reached the Faeroe Islands, or even Rockall, but he soon returned. Despite their mighty land armies, the Romans were not good sailors and a few Atlantic gales were enough to deter their warships.

Of course, they faired no better on land and had to build those walls to

inside...

Upcoming Events

Burns Dinner Pictures

The Legendary Haggis

Caledonia Corner

Toasts & Things

Upcoming Events

Next



Event

Historical Scottish clothing.

February 24th, 7:00pm. At Country Day/Mary Institute (Ladue and Old Warson)
— Demonstrations, display and outlines of the history of Scottish clothing.



the program for the rest of the year is:

March 24th: GAMES NIGHT: indoor games such as darts, dominoes, Scottish Trivial Pursuit and other fun events. We'll have some teams and kids of all ages are welcome. In the cafeteria at Country Day/Mary Institute School.

April 26th: Ceilidh. (place to be announced)

May: Picnic & Scottish BBQ June: Pool Party & Games

Boys of the Lough Concert is on March 8th, 8:30pm

— at Maritz Auditorium, 1400 South Highway Drive (off I-44 in Fenton). Tickets are \$16.00 at the door, or \$13.50 in advance from Music Folk, Webster Records, English Shop (St Charles).

**We welcome
Ideas, Volunteers
Contact
Marilyn Geery
Tel: 314 227 2785**

Our Burns Dinner at the Adams Mark Hotel was certainly a grand affair. The majestic lobby of the hotel was filled with the skirlin' o' the pipes, and the sway o' the kilt. Some 450 participants enjoyed the haggis "starter" and, after a super dinner, had a full night of Scottish entertainment. From clan tartans to shimmering evening gowns, the attendees added to the colorful atmosphere.

One of the memorable moments was the recognition of Winnie Shirreff, the bonnie lass originally from Tollcross, Glasgow. Winnie has been a central figure in the St. Louis St. Andrew Society for 25 years. She has made significant contributions to the Scottish culture, especially through her talented piano playing both at our party nights and formal



Winnie Shirreff received the title of Honorary Life Member, and says "thank you" to all her friends and members from over the years.

Burns Dinner, January 25th, 1997



Surely, many memorable photographs were taken during the Burns Dinner.

— some of the above examples were kindly donated, courtesy of Margaret Rambo who covers the main society events in St. Louis. Her number is (314) 394 3523.

(The scanning process then black & white photocopying do not do true justice to the pictures, but hopefully you can see enough to capture a flavor of the night)

The Legendary Haggis

T HE ART OF HAGGIS HUNTING

A strange and eerie sound drifts slowly down the glen, *uisge beatha! uisge beatha!* The sun is peeping over the horizon but none can feel the warm rays through the swirling mist. The men are huddled by the traditional “siggah” rock, chanting and taking turns at the cask with the warm golden water of life.

Suddenly, a tracker appears on the heathery slope and calls “*haggi!aggi!*” In a flash, the men are up and running, spreading out in the ancient hunting pattern which each had learned as a boy. Catching a wild haggis, in these days of scarcity, would make a living legend of the team involved.

The most difficult part of the ancient art of haggis hunting is actually locating the beast and then chasing it in the right direction. The haggis has evolved to be just a bit faster than the fittest man and more sure footed than a mountain goat. It runs along the hillside using its two long legs and the one short leg to maximum advantage. Once it slips through the hunting line it can be gone into the gorse in a flash. The hunters must keep behind and on the uphill side so that the haggis is gradually driven down to lower ground. This can take over three hours, but once the critter is down on the glen floor the advantage swings quickly in favor of the hunters – because of its uneven legs the haggis can only run in circles when on flat ground.

As soon as the hunters see a haggis circling in this fashion they surround it, and bring up the cask for celebratory refreshment. Within about twenty minutes the haggis can be found lying flat out through dizziness and exhaustion. Soon after that the men are usually found lying flat out around the haggis, with an empty cask rolling amongst them!

T HE ART OF HAGGIS PREPARATION

The snowflakes flutter and crash against the kitchen window as the high pitched sounds of chattering women escape out into the white haze. Inside the stove gives warmth to the grizzly scene – hearts and livers being chopped up with gay abandon. At first glance a stranger might think they’d stumbled on a covey of witches practising an ancient craft. Of course, the knowledgeable Scot would know that this is the initial ritual in the ancient art of haggis preparation. Then comes more chop-chopping and in goes the suet and the onions...and what’s left of the sherry — no, the whisky goes in the haggis and the sherry goes to the cooks.

Then the aroma of roasting oatmeal wafts its way into the air and causes a few smiles as it replaces the previous odor. Along with some vegetable stock and seasoning, the strange mixture is packed into some unfortunate ewe’s stomach (or a sausage skin if the sheep were clever enough to avoid those nice ladies). After boiling for three hours the concoction begins to resemble a haggis and, at this point, a fresh bottle of sherry appears and disappears.....the women giggle louder and louder as they convince themselves that their spell has been successful. They actually believe that they spirited the creation of a haggis while the men were still out, bonding around the “siggah” rock.

How did this ritual come to pass? Well, ever since the redcoats came north and shot everything on sight, wild haggis have been almost extinct. Some clever women knew that it troubled the men to go on a haggis hunt and come back empty handed....so, the substitute was created. On those bleak, misty, hunting days the women would wait till the whisky cask was empty and then go and quietly place their “haggis” in amongst the snoring hunters.

Of course, for decades, it was a well-kept secret with only an occasional wink as the men returned triumphant... “haggis” in-hand, and ready for roasting. Tatties (potatoes) and neeps (rutabaga) would be taken from the special store and boiled just right, as the haggis roasted.....and the men would go in search of another cask.....so that the whole village could celebrate. Rabbie Burns knew better.....

Fair fa' yer HONEST sonsie face!

Caledonia Corner

The North Lanarkshire Council decided that a sculpture or two along the road between Bellshill and Coatbridge would do wonders for the local ego, and most people thought that this was a good idea. However, when it came to determining what such monuments might look like....well, it is local government in Scotland! Some of the prototypes included a 100ft steel tower studded with huge thistles in dustbin-shaped containers, a set of battlements, and a large neon light show. The piece which is being viewed favorably is a 34ft-high shopping trolley filled with sets of stars representing the various constellations!

.....and these guys expect people to vote for home

Drule?!?!?

Did you know that there was some ruling in Scotland about politicians not using historical monuments as backdrops for their public speeches? Well, apparently the Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, has found a way to circumvent this ruling....leading to more than a few digs from the press. It has been suggested that any road improvements can only be announced in Ayr (birthplace of John MacAdam), all privatization proposals to be made at Kirkcaldy (birthplace of Adam Smith), all law and order rulings to be at Holyrood Palace (scene of the murder of Rizzio), and any mathematical announcements to be made at

Napier Castle (Napier invented logarithms). A final suggestion has been made for Michael Forsyth — his next speech should be made at the cairn at Loch Nan

Wha wad ken?

First to answer all three wins a Society flag pin.

1. Which University is “Marischal College” part of?
2. Who is “Oor Wullie”?
3. What is a “Capercaillie”?

All replies to Jim McLaren:

Phone: (314) 532 5986

Fast e-mail: mclaren@inverizon.com

Snail mail: 2214 Stoneridge Terrace Ct,
Chesterfield, MO 63017.

Congratulations to Winnie Shirreff who won last time. Answers were:

1. St Louis St Andrew Society first met in 1972 and was incorporated in 1973.
2. Hogmanay is New Year's Eve
3. There are 129 active distilleries in Scotland.

Looking forward to hearing from you: answers or interesting questions welcome.

Joke Box

Did you here about the cat that ate a ball of yarn?
— had mittens, of course!

Andy: she's away tae the Carribean to see her sister.

Jimmy: Jamaica?

Andy: Na! she decided tae go hersel'

Agnes Stirrat Memorial

The Board has approved that the St. Andrew Society will arrange to have a memorial erected in the name of Agnes Stirrat. We are thinking of a tree or a bench at the Webster Groves Presbyterian Church. The Society will donate appropriate funds, however, should any of the members wish to contribute personally, then please send a check to Anne McLaren (same address as on page 6) and make it out to St Andrew Society and attach a note mentioning Agnes Stirrat Memorial.

TOASTS & THINGS

The Toast to the President of the United States at our Burns Dinner was made by Jen Nicoll who, very cleverly, composed her toast along the lines of one of Burns' lovely ballads, "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw" (*Of all the directions the wind can blow*). Entitled "Frae a' the Airts":

*We are here frae a' the airts,
Frae a' the airts the wind can blaw.
Indeed, we're folk o' mony pairts,
Frae east tae west and far awa'.*

*We're here in these United States
We've grown tae love them mony a year.
We loo them still as life dictates,
Wi' mony a laugh, sometimes a tear.*

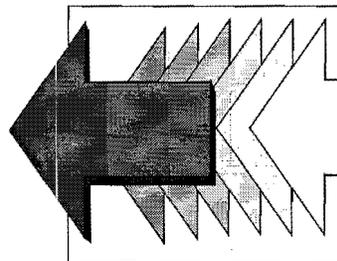


Now, that's what you call dressing up!
Every year on the last Tuesday in January, the festival of "Up Helly-Aa" is held in Lerwick. A replica of a viking ship is pulled through the streets and then burnt.

The costumes are fantastic and some have been handed down in the same family for generations. Visiting this festival is an experience — but not for the faint of heart!

At the last count we had a total of 169 memberships.

(which translates to over 300 people in the Society)
Know anyone interested in joining, send us their number.
Dues & Leads To: Peter Geery, (314) 227 2785.



Thank you for your participation and help...

Hope you all enjoyed reading our very own newsletter, the Thistle Times.
Comments, and new material to the Editor:
Jim McLaren, 2214 Stoneridge Terrace Court, Chesterfield, MO 63017
or call (314) 532-5986, or e-mail: mclaren@inverizon.com.
Website address is <http://www.inverizon.com/scotlink>