

SCOTTISH ST. ANDREW SOCIETY OF GREATER ST. LOUIS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members & Friends,

The Hogmanay festivities in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling were cancelled this year due to poor weather, which usually would elicit only a "what a shame!" from me. Oh, how one's view changes, though, when sitting in a Glasgow pub on New Year's Eve staring hopefully out at George Square, nursing a pint of Tennents, waiting for the rain to let up and watching crash barriers fly across the street in 80 mph winds!

Mind, missing the outdoor New Year festivities didn't put a damper on my trip to Scotland last week. To the contrary, few places seem designed to remind you of your mortality more than the barrenness of Glencoe, the stillness of Loch Morar, or the sheer remoteness of the Hebrides. Edinburgh was still bristling with Christmas excitement, Glasgow with ½ off sales, and Ft. William with the feeling of an out-of-season holiday town. While July in Scotland with it's 18 hours of daylight and seemingly endless blue skies is wonderful to the eyes, December is a treat to the nose. Peat smoke from a highland croft, the greasy smell of ferry machinery, the damp smell of a seldom-used close, wet wool from the drookit bagpiper on the corner, pungent odors of curry, fried haddock and chips; all combine to form a memory of Scotland that lasts far longer than the return flight home.

Happy New Year to you and your family- I'll see you at the Burns Supper.

Aw'ra best,

Chris Brennan

Welcome New Members:

Warren & Laura McClure, Union, MO
Ian Good, Rock Hill, MO
David & Mary Crawford, St. Louis, MO
Jenny Ladage, St. Charles, MO
Victor Brinkmann, St. Peters, MO
Joan Fox, Hazelwood, MO
Bill & Barbara Wolkoff, Jefferson City, MO
Sidney Katz, Louisville, KY
Hudson & Gayle Guthrie, St. Louis, MO
Scott & Lavanna Templeman, Eolia, MO
Michael Cole, St. Louis, MO
Barney & Eileen Combs, Arnold, MO
Richard & Deborah Unger, St. Louis, MO

(More new members on Page 6)



Quick SSAS notes:

Tom Forrester is recovering well from heart surgery- thank you for all the prayers!

SSAS Ceilidh will be held on Saturday March 3, 2007. Time and place to be announced.

JANUARY, 2007 EDITION

THIS TIME

Royal Mail Delivery

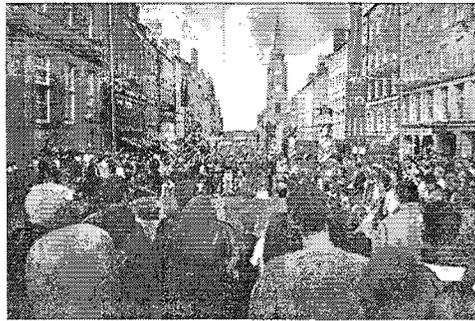


Royal Mail

A letter from our Edinburgh correspondent, Peggy McNulty*:

Happy Holidays from the Old Country.

It's been a remarkable 10 months adjusting to my new home in Scotland's capital. Few cities undergo such a transformation as Edinburgh in the summer. The normally cozy, historic city jolts to life as thousands of actors, artists, dancers, comedians, street performers, musicians, magicians, and revelers invade the city for a cultural binge known as the Edinburgh festival and fringe. The Royal Mile is mobbed with roaming gangs of thespians thrusting out fliers for their shows. Any and every open space is plastered with poster on "what shows have you seen?" equivalent in Edinburgh to that did you go to?" in good ol' Saint is the piping 'n' drumming Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

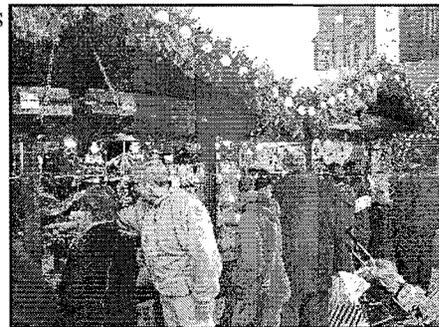


space with a roof over Every inch of wall top of poster, and becomes the of "what high school Lou. Last but not least, extravaganza of the Although I was

working long hours for the Edinburgh International Film Festival I saw a lot of good shows, and honestly, I've never experienced anything like a summer in Edinburgh; it is senseless, snarled and simply intoxicating.

It was a quick transition from the sunny summer months to the shorter, windy autumn days. For my birthday in October, Jerry, my boyfriend, took me on a holiday touring the Scottish Borders. From Edinburgh to Kelso, we explored the various abbeys and castles. The historic struggle for this region between England and Scotland has provided us touristy types a plethora of entertainment. Not to mention, we are both avid mountain bikers and The Seven Stanes stretching across the Borders provides some of the best trails in the world.

At times I think I've seen more of Scotland Scots. I spent some time the past month in western isles, shooting documentary footage colleague. It's astonishingly remote. The treeless landscape, similar to that of Orkney with many craggy hills, made for fantastic making. Despite the sick-making ferry rides, were obliging and pleasant, albeit watchful people with marvelous rhythmic accents.



than most The Hebrides, with a Mars-like, up north but film the locals

Now we're into full-blown winter and although the very dark evenings were daunting at first, Edinburgh has come alive again with seasonal thrills. Glittering with choices of festive celebrations, fun fairs and markets, there's no shortage of things to see and do. The Traditional German Christmas Market, the Edinburgh (Ferris) Wheel and Winter Wonderland Skating fill up Princes Street Gardens and waft Christmas Spirit through the city streets. Going to see a traditional British Christmas Pantomime, Cinderella, will be a first for me and I can't wait. All the best to you and yours for a joyous New Year!

Nollaig chridheil huibh!

* Peggy McNulty moved from St. Louis to Edinburgh in early 2006 to work for the Edinburgh Int'l Film Festival.

A wee bit daft?



Begun as a gag get-together among university friends in Vancouver's Chinatown, **Gung Haggis Fat Choy** is an annual event where Chinese don kilts, Scots try haggis wonton, and all enjoy an evening of Burns poetry set to sitar, bagpipe and mandolin music. Peculiar? You bet. Popular? Well- over 700 attended the event last year, and the event has garnered increasing attention since the first dinner in 2001.

That first Gung Haggis Fat Choy dinner was held to celebrate the fusion of two cultures- Rabbie Burns' birthday happened to fall at the dawn of the Chinese New Year, and the organizer, Todd Wong, decided it would be irreverently cheeky (and a good amount of fun) to cook traditional Scottish dishes Chinese-style. Hence, the haggis wontons. Since then, the menu has been expanded to a 12-course feast including everything from chicken feet to sweet and sour haggis cakes. Several musical acts perform, folk stories and poetry are recited and dance from both cultures is celebrated.

Wong (who goes by the name 'Toddish McWong' the day of the event) explains that "this is what Canadian society is all about, introducing each other to our cultures and celebrating more holidays."

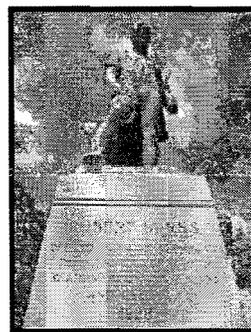
For more information, visit gunghaggisfatchoy.com. And if you do go, the Thistle Times editor would appreciate an order of haggis wontons, plum sauce on the side...

SSAS Rabbie Burns Night

January 20 – Frontenac Hilton Hotel

Tickets still available, but going fast. This event will sell out! Don't wait 'til the last moment- in the words o' Burns:

**"The best laid plans o' mice an' men gang
aft agley- an' lea'e us nought but grief an'
pain, for promis'd joy!"**



Statue of Robert Burns (at the corner of Forsyth and Skinker on the campus of Washington University)

Ticket price: \$65.00 Members, \$60 Senior Members (62+), \$70.00 non-members

Checks should be sent to: Vicki Dohrmann, 611 Painted Vista, Ballwin, MO 63021-7712

For more information call Vicki @ 636-230-0708.



The SSAS Board has recommended a donation of \$800 to Dance Caledonia for their yearly dance workshop held later this month. This action, as in years past, requires membership approval. If you are opposed to this recommendation, please send an email to cdmbrennan@yahoo.com by January 31st (No need to reply if you are in favor of the recommendation).

Hogmanay an' Auld Lang Syne

Hogmanay - the Scottish term for New Year's Eve- is a grand celebration of a new beginning which happens in the days following the Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year). This is the time of year when the days thankfully, gradually, begin to grow longer. In the summer months, Scottish days are so long that sunset can be as late as 10:30 pm, and the night's sky is more a navy blue than actual black. In winter though the days are very short, with sunrise about 8 am and sunset at about 3:30 pm. The lengthening of the days would have been a good deal more exciting back in the times of candlelight and no television, so perhaps this is why Hogmanay is so well loved (well, that and the amount of alcohol that is consumed!)



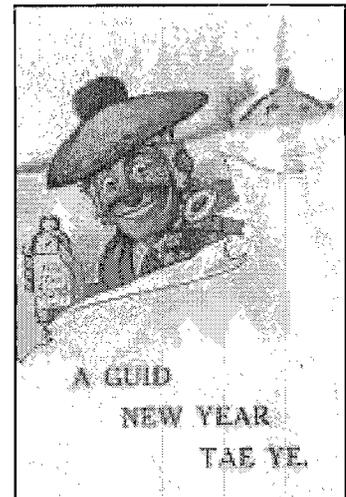
Edinburgh Hogmanay – whit a party!



Stonehaven Fireball Procession

The origins of the word Hogmanay are the subject of a great deal of debate. Some believe it comes from *Haleg Monath*, meaning Holy Month in the Anglo-Saxon language, and others claim it's derived from the Gaelic *oge maidne*, meaning New Morning. It may also have been a variant of the Scandinavian words *Hoggo-nott* and some think it is a French phrase inherited from the days of the Auld Alliance: *Homme est ne'* (meaning "man is born"). The festival could have been brought south by invading Norsemen, may have its origins in Celtic religion, or may date back to the Picts. What is known is that it is a New Year's celebration which has remained an integral part of Scotland's culture for centuries.

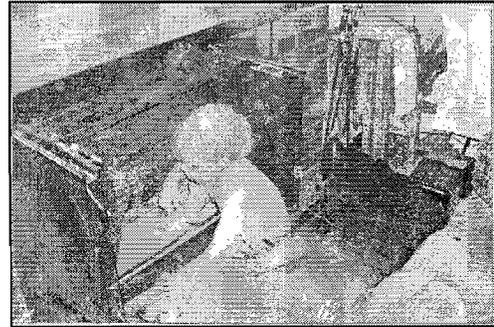
Until the 1960s, Hogmanay and Ne'erday (Netherday, or New Year's Day) in Scotland took the place of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in the rest of the UK. Although Christmas Day held its normal religious nature, the Presbyterian national church (the Church of Scotland) viewed Christmas as a decidedly Catholic holiday. After the many changes brought about by the Protestant Reformation in the 17th century, celebrating Christmas was actively discouraged for over 300 years. As a result Christmas Day was a normal working day in Scotland until the 1960s (and even into the 1970s in some areas). The gift-giving, public holidays and feasting associated with mid-winter were held between the 31st of December and the 2nd of January rather than between the 24th and 26th of December.



A wee deoch an' doris?

With the fading of the Church's influence and the introduction of English cultural values via television and immigration, the transition to Christmas feasting was well-nigh complete by the 1980s. However the public holidays associated with Ne'erday and the day after have remained despite the addition of Christmas Day to the public holiday list.

There are many curious customs associated with Hogmanay. These include preparing for the New Year by cleaning the house (a guid spring cleaning of sorts -- also know as a "redding."), paying off all debts, and making certain to clean all the ashes out of the fireplace (it was believed by some that you could foretell the future in the old ashes) -- all symbolic of starting anew.



A true Scot dis naethin' 'alfhearted!

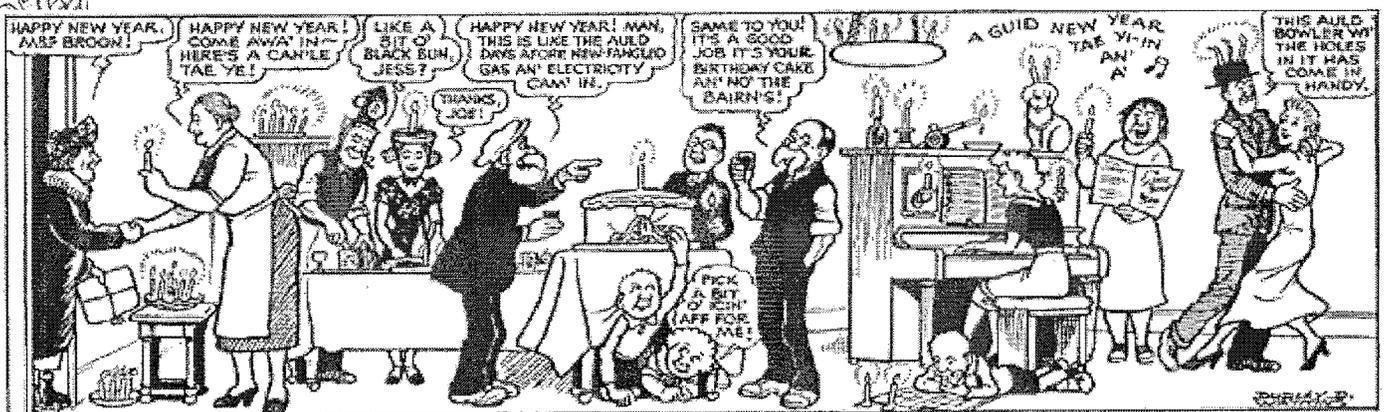
In Stonehaven (birthplace of R. W. Thompson, inventor of the pneumatic tire and the fountain pen) a local Hogmanay custom is the procession of swinging fireballs. Locals make up balls of chicken wire, tar, paper and other flammable material to about a three foot diameter. Each ball is attached to six feet of wire, chain or non-flammable rope. The assigned swinger then swings the ball around their head and body by the rope while walking through the streets of Stonehaven from the harbor to the Sheriff court and back. At the end of the ceremony, any fireballs which are still burning are cast into the harbor.

On Hogmanay it is believed lucky if the first person to cross the threshold of your home is a tall, dark, handsome lad. This person, known as a "first footer" arrives after midnight bearing gifts which include a lump of coal, black bun, shortbread and, of course, an ample supply of whisky...



Snow White and seven not-so-ideal "first footers"

*Lang may yer lum reek, may
the best ye hae ivver seen be
the warst ye'll ivver see, and
Bliadhna mhathùr!*



No greetin' allowed...

Burns wrote good poetry -
McGonagall bad poetry.



**But truly
horrible
poetry?:**

*Upon a hill, there stood a coo'-
It must have moved, 'cause it's no' there noo'.*

Welcome New Members:

(continued from Page 1)

Ken & Lisa Stephens, Ballwin, MO
David Story, Ballwin, MO
John & Beth Hall, St. Louis, MO
Charles & Sally Branson, Wildwood, MO
Georgia Streett, St. Louis, MO
William & Suzanne Ford, St. Louis, MO
Will Rainbolt, St. Louis, MO
Steven McKlin & Kelli Gibbar, Olivette, MO
Marvin & Judy Berkowitz, Olivette, MO
Joan Elders, Affton, MO

Here's your chance to be involved ...

We are still in need of an editor for the Thistle Times. Also a website creator and/or manager. **Thistle Times Newsletter Editor.** The new editor ideally needs to have a knowledge of how to obtain information on current and historic events in and about Scotland. Society members are encouraged to contribute articles, photos, etc, to the editor for inclusion in the Thistle Times. The "editor" could consist of a team of members working together.

Website Manager: We need a person (or persons) to set up and then run the Society website. This set-up person would need to be someone with a working knowledge of setting up websites, though the person who maintains the website (if different) would just need to be able to change and input information as it comes in.

For more information on either of these positions, please reply by email to ssasmail@sbcglobal.net.

Thistle Times by Email ...

Thistle Times by email in PDF format: We are now able to send out the Thistle Times in PDF format. If you would like to receive it by email and not snail mail, please send an email to ssasmail@sbcglobal.net with Subscribe in the subject line. Then when the next Thistle Times comes out you will receive it this way rather than in the mail. If you would rather receive it in the mail then you don't need to do anything and it will come in the mail as usual.



**Know Anyone interested in
joining the Society or need to
renew your membership? Call
Alex Sutherland at (314) 771 -0119**