

President's Message

Dear Members,

What a grand affair, we really are gettin fair posh wi' the two rooms at the Christmas party. One for the food and an ither fur the Santa (costume intact) and our highly choral rendition. Good food (especially the expertly cut ham!) and good



company, plus the ambiance of guid auld Scottish weather, all for free - what a bargain! Thanks again Winnie for tickling the ivories for us, and keeping a sharp look-out for the sign language. A special thanks to Elaine Martin for helping Santa coordinate the gift givin' and, of course, to Santa for fitting us in on his tight schedule.

Get yer piggy bank out and get your tickets bought for the Burns Night. The reservation form enclosed with the Thistle Times has information on special purchase deals for members bringing guests. It is best to get your ticket order in as soon as possible so that we can make sure you get guid

seats. I am very much looking forward to seeing you all there.

Have a guid New Year and lang mae yer lum reek (wi' ither folk's coal)!

Aw-ra-best,
Keith

Back in the early days...

In 1296, the Kingdom of Scotland ceased to exist, and became subservient to that southern land. Now the Scots people had to put up with all sorts of harsh treatment - but when taxation was increased, to feed the southern purses....it created more National feeling and unification than the Canmores had ever done in the previous two centuries.

At the time an unknown Lanarkshire knight, fighting under the name of the discredited Balliol, emerged as a leader of the resistance. He formed an alliance with de Moray in the north, and the common people from all over Scotland rose to the occasion. That knight was called was Sir William Wallace.

The Art of First Footing.

On New Year's Day arrive at the door, with shortbread, coal and a bottle ("malt" is good). If you are short then take a stool, if fair then wear a black wig, and if not handsome... too bad! Have fun!

inside...

Events Program

Rabbie Burns, The Bard

Caledonia Corner

Toasts & Things

Other really good stuff!

Events Program. Come along and enjoy...

The annual Christmas party was another success, and wasn't McSanta just great. The carol singing was up to the usual high standards, as everyone followed Alex "the choir" and Winnie "the orchestra" in the traditional songs.

The next event is our annual, not to be missed, Burns Dinner which will be held at the Adams Mark Hotel, St Louis, on January 20th, 1996. Featuring Alex Beaton.

See the attached flier for details and reservations form.

Denise Duffy, and her various helpers, are working very hard to create another enjoyable year for all. More help is welcome! Call Denise: 532 7587

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!
Wha' for Scotland's King and Law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or Free-man fa'
Let him on wi' me!
Lay the proud Usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do or die!



We have had many a memorable night in St Louis celebrating the memory of Robert Burns. This year the event will be extra special:

- * First, it is the 200th anniversary of the death of the Bard.
- * Second, the venue for the great night has been changed through hard work, and a commitment by your Board to make this one of the best nights for all the people in St Louis who have an appreciation of Scottish culture.
- * Third, by your popular request, Alex Beaton will be back to entertain.

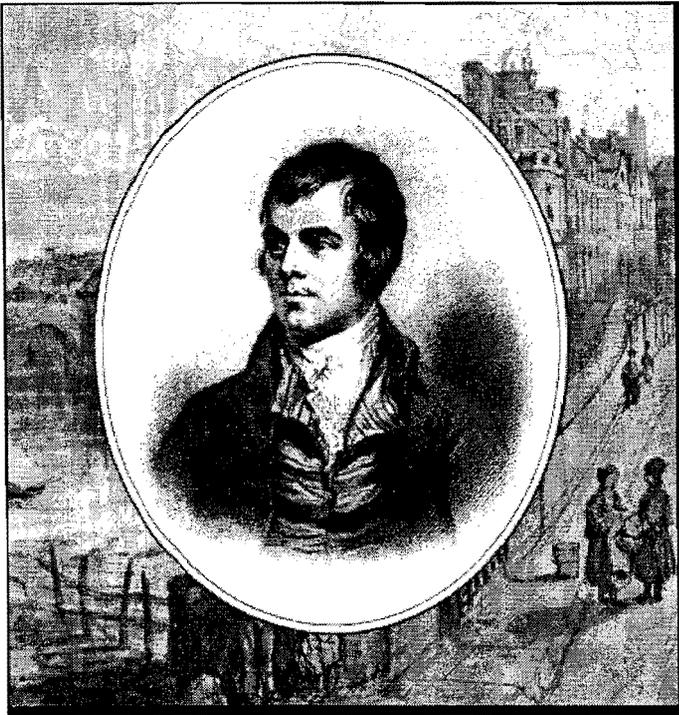
Book early, ye'll nae git anither chance!

FOR THE CURIOUS AMONG YOU: Go back to the November Thistle Times and look again at that beautiful Scottish view.... Yes, you just knew it was..... Plockton, one of the fantastic scenic spots on the west coast of Scotland.

I was just astounded! The letter was from Italy, and it started by saying... "there's nothing better than sitting reading the Thistle Times...." Yes, it was from Jennifer Fulton, and I'm happy to pass on her best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to her sister Grace, and John Teal.

Rabbie Burns, The Bard

Robert Burns was born in 1759 on the Carrick border where singing songs and writing new ones were part of the local tradition - it was a great diversion to the drudgery of hard farm work. As his fame as National Bard became established, Burns continued to write in his own Scots dialect, defying those who governed and saving a National heritage. In searching for the roots of a poetry deep in the hearts of the people of Scotland, Burns introduced something startling and daring into the literature, at a time when Scots was no longer regarded as a central literary language.



His genius created a style which combined the venacular with the literary standard to express the manners and emotions of kinds of people.

“Lallans” was a dialect of Scots spoken and written in the Lowlands, and considered a worthy literary language. Despite many attempts to have him change, Burns persisted in writing in what was referred to as the “Doric”. On the few occasions when he did write in stylised English, as for example his “Address to Edinburgh”, Burns felt that he was acting a part and never felt secure in those works.

Burns was ahead of his time, and his true interest lay in the metric irregularity of Scottish folk-song - which he also used very effectively to promote nationalistic sentiments. These poems represented a turning back to the period when Scottish literature was both Scottish and literary, and to folk tradition which was able to survive a temporary eclipse in the 17th century. Perhaps no

song exemplifies this more than the beautiful lyrics of “Ca the Yowes tae the Knowes”:

*Ca the yowes tae the knowes, Ca them whaur the heather grows,
Ca them whaur the burnie rowes, My bonnie dearie.*

*Hark the mavis' evening sang, Sounding Clouden's woods amang;
Then a faulding let us gang, My bonnie dearie.*

*Fair and lovely as thou art, Thou hast stown my very heart,
I can die, but canna part, My bonnie dearie.*

Burns was the parochial poet who started rhyming for fun, and a man of independent mind who defiantly wrote in the Doric. Ultimately, he attained the universal admiration that his great work deserves. Robert Burns died in 1796, two hundred years ago.....and left behind a revitalized cultural heritage that we are all still proud of today.

CALEDONIA CORNER

There's no a single person who turned up at the November Scottish dance night, that didn't enjoy the evening. No doubt we'll have more of those, and if you want to learn more and participate more frequently, read on...

If you like great music, great exercise, and great fun then Scottish Country dancing is for you. The combination is a powerfully stimulating dance form that is social, energetic, graceful and above all, thoroughly enjoyable.

Today dancers in over 35 countries dance from a repertoire of over 8000 old and new dances. Branches and affiliated groups of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society are scattered throughout North America and the world. Weekend workshops, dances, and formal balls are held annually in regional places like Chicago, Cincinnati, Little Rock, and Nashville.

Experience the joy of dancing with "controlled abandon"! Please join us for Scottish Country Dancing in St Louis on the first, second, third and occasional fifth Wednesday nights. We dance from 7:30 - 9:30pm at the Focal Point Traditional Arts Center, located at 8158 Big Bend in downtown Webster Groves. Loose fitting clothing and low heeled comfortable shoes are recommended. Ghillies or ballet slippers are ideal. All figures, footwork, and dances are taught beforehand. Beginners and experienced

dancers alike are very welcome. Partners are not necessary (on arrival). Cost is \$3.00 per person. For more information call Peter Wollenberg, 314 361 6078.

**..from a repertoire
of over 8000 old
and new dances...**

Wha wad ken?

First to answer all three wins a Society flag pin.

1. Who was Flora McDonald?.
2. What's a half an a wee half?
3. Apart from fitba', what's Clydeside famous for?

All replies to Jim McLaren:

Phone: (314) 532 5986

Fast e-mail: JamesM66@aol.com

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

No one had all the correct answers last month:

1. "Buick" was founded by a Scot.
2. 48 Scotitish Kings are buried on *Iona*.
3. Ben Nevis is *4406 ft*, the highest moun-tian in the UK.

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

COMING SOON: *M&M Stroganoff and Baked Milky Way au Gratin.....*

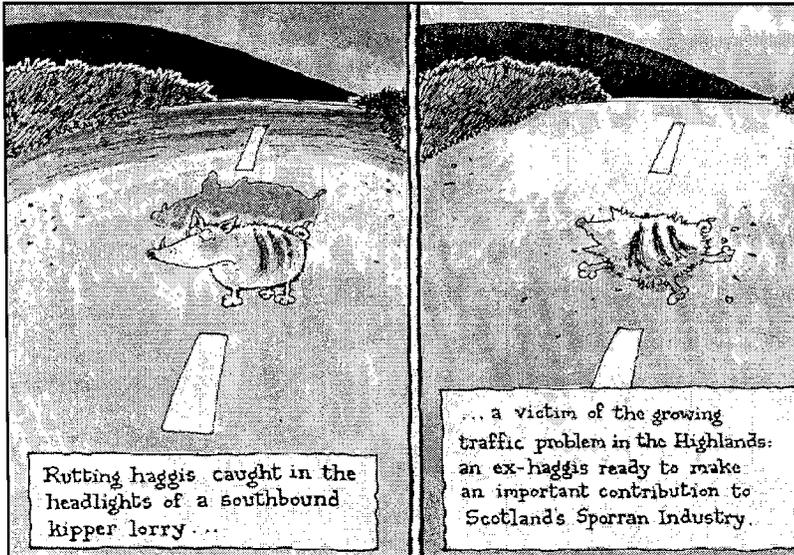
Can you believe it! The kids love it. So ye'll jist hae to gie it a go!

Invented in the Haven Chip Bar in Stonehaven, the latest craze is the "Mars Bar Supper". Of course, in America, a mars bar is a milky way, and a milky way is a musketeer, and well never mind, the point is that you start with a regular candy bar. Then you dip it in the best Scottish fish batter, and deep fry till the batter is well done. Add a side order of chips (well, fries really) and voila, you have the latest in Scottish delicacies.

The craze has spread from Stonehaven, throughout Scotland, and is even showing up south of the Border. Mr Mowatt, creator of this original dish, is quoted as saying "I'd rather have a good piece of fish"! But apparently the kids love it. I suppose there's no much difference between eating it at one time, and having fries followed by a mars bar!

CALEDONIA CORNER

Avid readers of the Thistle Times will no doubt remember that this time last year, we ran a story about the real secrets behind the haggis. Being that time of year when that natural delicacy is enjoyed most - it's the cold weather that makes the meat so tasty, especially the males (who suckle on the right when they're still "wee yins" but we won't get into that sex thing again!). Well, we've been doing an enormous amount of research and have come up with a new twist of the haggis. Dr. Hamish McTaggart of the "Haggis Research Institute" in outer Skye, has discovered a new sub-species of haggis. (It's amazing what these scientists keep coming up with!). It turns out that he has irrevocable proof, not just your everyday DNA fingerprint of this new haggis, but an actual picture (reproduced on the left).



Notice the species resemblance to the type of haggis we wrote about last year - the three markings on the body are the appendages that the critters use to mimic the pipe drones - and scare away any predators. As you can see, this elegant natural defense does not work on kipper lorries travelling at great speed.

Instead, the poor haggis, never having evolved to deal with a fast moving chunk of metal just "freezes" on the spot (of course, the wee beastie is making a horrendous noise through those drone-like appendages, but lorries don't hear it). The next unfortunate event is also depicted in the picture (captured by a special laser light on front of a test lorry - those clever scientists again!).

So, what's so special about this new haggis species. Well, first of all you can clearly see that it's not a traditional haggis because all its legs are the same length. Obviously, a new evolutionary development brought about by the expansion of roads throughout Scotland. The traditional haggis that ended up dizzy from running in circles on the flat road surfaces (due to the three uneven legs) was destined for evolutionary change the moment that MacAdam made that clever invention.

Second, those of you who have been lucky enough to have sampled a true traditional haggis will have noticed that this haggis type is different because it is covered with a hair, or really a short type of fur, similar to that on a west coast seal. It's still unknown whether this helps it maintain body temperature while swimming in the cold water of the lochs, or not.

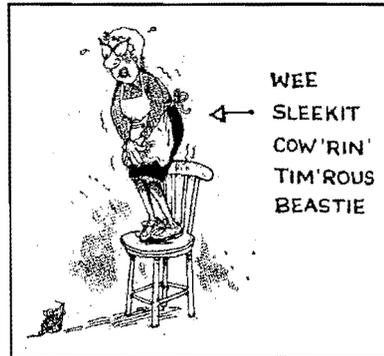
We have it on good authority that certain small entrepreneurial companies in Scotland have known about this type of haggis for several years. These companies have been collecting "road-kills" and selling the skins to the sporrans companies, who passed these on as best quality seal-skin sporrans. The environmentalists also knew about this, but kept quiet since it didn't involve clubbing any seals. The world is full of surprises!

TOASTS & THINGS

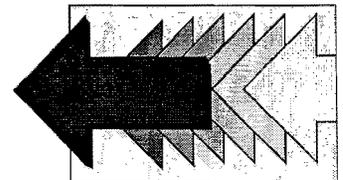
Here's tae him, the bard: what a picture he could create in a few lines —

*Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed, The spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie;
Willie was a wabster gude, Could stow a clue wi' ony body:
He had a wife was dour and din, O Tinkler Maidgie was her mither;
Sic a wife as Willie had, I wad na gie a button for her.*

*She has an e'e, she has but ane, The cat has twa the very colour;
Five rusty teeth forbye a stump, A clapper tongue wad deave a miller;
A whiskin beard about her mou', Her nose and chin they threaten ither;
Sic a wife as Willie had, I wad na gie a button for her.*



Please try to find someone who may enjoy becoming a member, and encourage them to join, or come along and find out what we have to offer.
Enquiries 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: JamesM66@aol.com.*

Many thanks to those who contributed all the excellent material, it does help!

Best Wishes for the NEW YEAR!

Lang mae yer lum reek!

**You all made
a difference...**