

The Chanter
Nottingham Scottish Association Newsletter
January 2008

Of this faire volumne which wee World doe name
If wee the sheetes and leaues could turne with care,
Of Him who it correctes, and did it frame,
Wee cleare might read the Art and Wisedome rare?
Find out His Power which wildest Pow'rs doth tame,
His Prouidence extending euerie-where,
His Iustice which proud Rebels doeth not spare,
In euerie Page, no, Period of the same;
But sillie wee (like foolish Children) rest
Well pleased with colour'd velame, leaues of Gold,
Faire dangling Ribbones, leaving what is best,
On the great Writers sense ne'er taking hold;
Or if by chance our Mindes doe muse on aught,
It is some Picture on the Margine wrought.

Sonnet VI from 'The Booke of the World'
William Drummond of Hawthornden, 1585-1649

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Well, in another few weeks I will have completed my year in office. Isobel and I have enjoyed representing the Association at various functions. I am willing to stand for a second year, if you so wish, at the AG.M.

We have a proposal to change rule 3d to allow Associate Members to become President. As I am chairman of the AG.M., I must remain neutral in public but if you want to know my views please speak to me privately. Rule changes are never undertaken lightly and I think we all should consider this one seriously. If you have an opinion please come and voice it and vote.

In 2009 we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns. The council is arranging a special evening for us in January. The speaker whom we booked 18 months ago has had to withdraw due to ill health. In his place we have managed to entice the **President of the Robert Burns World Federation**, John Haining, down from Paisley to give our 'Immortal Memory'. Because of his commitments we have had to change the date to **Saturday 31st January 2009, so please make a note now in your diary.**

The smooth running of the Association's functions and affairs is down to my council and my hearty thanks for all their work over the past year. Especial thanks to Andrew Morrison for setting up our own website at www.nottinghamscottish.org.uk.

My good wishes to you all

Bob

BURNS NIGHT DINNER & DANCE, 26TH JANUARY

Once again the annual celebration of the birth of the National Bard was well attended, with eighty-nine of us sitting down to an excellent meal in the Ionic Suite at the Nottingham Masonic Hall. The speaker to the immortal Memory, Mervyn Ross, took as his theme Burns' three-week tour of the Highlands in 1787.

Mark Hodgson proposed the Toast to the Lassies and his wife Phil replied. Bill Dall as croupier managed to keep us all in order. The speeches over and the tables cleared, the dancing began with Graham Young as MC and a pleasant social occasion drew to a close shortly before midnight.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY IN NOVEMBER

November 5th felt like an odd time to be starting summer holidays but there we were, dressed for a warmer climate, standing in Broad Marsh bus station with our teeth chattering. Some thirty-odd hours later we were stepping off the 'plane in Hong Kong where the heat and humidity hit us. Perhaps I should explain – we were at last off to New Zealand, a holiday we had planned for some time.

Hong Kong was fascinating, to say the least. Our two-night stopover allowed time to sample the hustle and bustle and enjoy the sounds, sights and smells both by day and night. The view from the Peak is quite outstanding by day and beyond words at night. A walk along the main

street meant running the gauntlet of locals with well-rehearsed catchphrases such as *'Rolex watch, Sir'* or *'Suit made to measure, ready in seven hours.'* Although well warned before leaving home not to stop and look, we did. Rolex copy, #20. The suit offer was a two-piece suit, sports jacket, two pairs of trousers and two shirts, total price just a shade over #200. The quality of material and workmanship was outstanding, and had we had more time we could have been tempted. Jeanne would like to go back for a week-end of shopping.

Another twelve-hour flight and we had made it, New Zealand! A short ride from the airport to pick up our camper-van and we were ready for the off. The four-berth camper was about two years old, fully equipped with everything we could possibly need, including a heater and air-conditioning. From Auckland we set off southwards to Tauranga to visit a cousin, and her Kiwi husband, whom we had not seen for fifty years. We had a lovely afternoon and were given a few tips regarding things to do and see. After an hour's drive we were at Roturua, our first experience of thermal activity and one which you smell long before arriving...yes, rotten eggs! We could have been on another planet or a film-set for *'Lord of the Rings'*. We spent a day with the local Maori tribe and had a meal cooked over hot vents with the vegetables boiled in a hot pool. Thankfully it was not the same pool they use for communal bathing – in the nudi, I hasten to add, and before you ask, we didn't... In the afternoon we learned how to make a Maori skirt from flax leaves. When the leaves are dried and rolled they look and feel like bamboo canes, swinging nicely when dancing, but a devil to sit down in. We learned much about their culture and do you know, it is true, we really **are** *'all Jock Tamson's bairns'* at the end of the day. Thermal areas are like a different planet: the sights, sounds and colours are so hard to describe.

Time to move on, south through Taupo and into Napier, a town devastated in 1931 by a 7.6 earthquake claiming 258 lives. The rebuilding work resulted in possibly the best Art Deco town centre in the world. A few days later we arrived in Wellington, the capital, and what a lovely city it is, with stunning Botanical Gardens, a wonderful old wooden cathedral built in 1886, and Te Papa, the National Museum. Three hours by ferry from Wellington and we were on South Island heading for Nelson and Abel Tasman Bay. This is a great water-sport area with climate to suit. We passed along Pelorus Sound and then through Lewis Pass to Hanmer Springs, a very up-market resort to take a dip in the hot springs. Visitors can play golf, jet-boat through canyons or ski in the winter months. South again, heading for Mount Cook National Park via Lake Tekapo, probably one of the most picturesque areas of our trip, and

we have the photos to prove it. Reluctantly we left the lake and entered the National Park. The grandeur of the snow-capped mountains made us feel that we were back home in Scotland enjoying a visit to Skye or Wester Ross.

Queenstown is just beautiful with something for everyone. Water sports, jet boats and bungee-jumping were just a few things we pair of fearties didn't do. We did risk a trip on the lake aboard the TSS *Earnslaw*, however. Next door to Queenstown is Arrowtown, where a gold rush started in 1862: some locals still pan the river with limited success. Turning east, we travelled through several wine-growing regions, and followed the Clutha River through Clyde and Alexandra before reaching Dunedin, a major centre for exiled Scots who are proud of their Scottish connections. Dunedin is Gaelic for Edinburgh. Dunedin Station and the old Town Hall have to be seen to be believed. The stonework outside along with the tiled mosaics and stained glass windows inside are a treat to see. Mind you, we thought the rest of the city could do with a bit of tidying. We spent a day at the Yellow-eyed Penguin colony and the Royal Albatross Centre before setting the compass for North. A stopover at Oamuru allowed us to watch hundreds of Little Blue penguins coming ashore just as the light faded. They can be heard calling to their mates on the nests, then they struggle up steep banks and over rough ground, not bad when you consider that they are only 30 cm. tall – about twelve inches in old money.

The last part of our journey brought us to Christchurch which is as English as Dunedin is Scottish. This is a university city with punts on the river and most beautiful gardens. We managed two nights' country dancing and again the dancers were keen to tell us where their families hailed from originally. It was here that we met Audrey, Margaret Morrison's sister – it's a small world! We spent a day at the International Antarctic Centre which is the stepping-off point for everything travelling to the Antarctic. This was a very interesting day which sadly brought our time in New Zealand to an end.

A two-night stay in Santa Monica, California, allowed us time to relax on the beach and to take a tour of Universal Film Studios to complete our wonderful holiday. It had been a long time coming but was worth the wait. Would we go back? Yes, if we were younger, and it was not just quite so far away, and we could have the same weather.

Jeanne & Bill Dall

HALF THE TICKETS HAVE ALREADY GONE!!...so book now for our Barn Dance and Super Supper at Papplewick and Linby Village Hall on 26th July, 7.30 - 11.30.

Tickets £10 each from Bernice Young...book now to avoid disappointment!

THE THIRTY-NINE STOPS...continued...

Looking behind me, I observed one of the shadowy figures rummaging furtively inside his waterproof overcoat. I fancied he must be clutching a pistol of some sort. And I knew for whom that first bullet was intended.

“For God’s sake, man!” I hissed to the ticket officer, “put your skates on! I’m in the most frightful hurry!”

“That’s Galway, is it?” said the ticket officer.

“Galloway!”

He looked back at his screen, and punched another button. “Galloway, Somerset?”

“Galloway, Scotland!”

“Ah! You’ll be wanting First Scotland with a Tartan Supersaver! Bear with me...”

A longer and longer queue was now snaking behind me. Behind the shadowy figures I saw more shadowy figures and behind them yet more shadowy figures, all of them queueing for tickets to Galloway.

“With or without a Network Railcard?”

“Eh?”

“Will you be travelling by train for leisure purposes within the next 12-month period? If so, for just twenty pounds you can save one third on rail fares and 60% on kids’ fares, PLUS a full 20% off a special TreatYourself Weekend Luxury Leisurebreak with two premium tickets for Mama Mia included.”

“Just the basic ticket! I’ve no time to lose!”

“No time to lose, sir? Ah! Bear with me....yes, as I thought! You could be eligible for our NoTimeToLose Card, which for just fifteen pounds enables the holder to access rail travel for most Standard and First Class fares in a fast and easy manner more convenient for today’s businessman or regular rail user. Are you a disabled person or persons?”

“No!”

“Young person?”

“No!”

“Senior?”

“No!”

“Will you be taking up to four adults and/or four children aged between 5 and 15 along with you?”

“No!”

He stared long and hard at his screen.

“I make that None of the Above” he said, clicking on his mouse. “So let me get this right. You just want an Adult Single to Galloway for today?”

“That’s it!” I exclaimed jubilantly. A group of uniformed police officers had joined the back of the queue, and behind them a task force of undercover operatives from a top-secret government agency, recognizable only by their balaclavas.

“Open?”

“Eh?”

“Without an Open, sir, your ticket may only be used on the date shown on that ticket.”

“But I need to travel this minute!”

“Then you won’t be needing the Open. Bear with me, sir, I’m only trying to help. If you don’t require an Open, you may be eligible for a Reserved, a facility we highly recommend on our more congested services,” he said.

“Quick, man,” I said. “Can’t you see that I’m being chased by international criminals who will stop at nothing?”

“Bear with me, sir,” he replied, turning to his screen.

“As I thought, sir. As a fugitive you could be eligible for our Speedy GetAway offer, on production of just 4 Tesco vouchers from today’s ‘Daily Mail’. This entitles you to [a] kiss an attractive stranger when the inspector comes calling, [b] to climb out of up to three separate windows, and [c] to run along the roof of the train between Carlisle and Dumfries.”

“For pity’s sake, man!” I blurted, noticing five devilishly queer men, each of them missing the index finger on his left hand, joining the back of the queue. “I’ll take every ticket you have!” **to be continued...yet again...**

RETURN TO AOSTA

Well, I did it! What is she talking about? you may ask. Some of you who read my article last year on the “wrinkly beginners ski trip,” may remember that I mentioned that I had difficulty skiing off the chair lifts without falling in a heap. I had decided when I signed up for the 2008 trip to Aosta that I was going to master it, by hook or by crook. This year I didn’t fall once (although I did get some help from Marie on the first

attempt and have the bruises on my arm to show for her vice-like grip!) Next time I managed it myself and cannot believe it held such terrors for me – now I know the knack, it is so easy and I can't believe I had such a problem with it.

Once again, we have all had a fantastic time in the beautiful Aosta Valley and those of us who went on the "Learn to Ski Week" last year actually feel we can ski now – perhaps not to Olympic standard, but we know how to snowplough turn, parallel turn and most important of all, we can stop without falling over!

This year's beginners made terrific progress – much better than we did last year. I am not sure whether this was due to the group being half the size (only four of them) or simply that they were better. Whatever the reason, their progress was amazing and I take my hat (or rather my helmet) off to them.

For those of us who were last year's beginners, it was great to be able to ski higher up and enjoy the breathtaking scenery even more. It is a stunning area and just being there is a joy. The wide piste at Grimod gave us everything we needed to become more adept at this very satisfying sport. I found I no longer went into panic mode when I speeded up and actually enjoyed going faster this time, especially as I now felt I was in control – no Bridget Jones moments, except when an out-of-control snowboarder took me out when he went over the back of my skis without warning. As most of you know I am somewhat accident prone, but this year the only time I actually fell over was on the first morning. I did make a good job of it, though – my ski came off and I crashed down on the binding. The result was a very painful and colourful bruise on my back. I was helped up by a very charming Italian who gave me an arm to lean on while I got my ski back on and set me on my way with a smile and a wave.

Waling in the boots and carrying the skis was less of a trial this year, but it still took a lot of energy. Getting in and out of the gondola was also less hassle as we now realized that we had plenty of time to get in and out. Some of the group were a bit nervous of heights and were slightly uncomfortable on the last day when the wind got up and the operators stopped the gondolas every few hundred yards. Swinging about in a gondola can be a bit nerve-wracking, but none of us felt in any danger as the machinery is well maintained and the operators are very capable.

The joy of being in such beautiful surroundings and the great feeling of whizzing (well sort of) down the mountain are indescribable and everyone agreed they had had a fantastic time. After our two hour morning lessons we had the afternoons to practise our skills and it felt great to be able to do our own thing and each day we came down the mountain feeling on top of the world.

One of the real pleasures of this holiday was the fact that absolutely everything is taken care of. All we had to do was turn up with our luggage and passports. Flights, coach, equipment hire, ski passes, luncheon vouchers, accommodation, insurance, ski lessons and après ski were all arranged for us. The biggest decisions we had to make were whether to have our bombadinos with or without cream and which delicious flavours to choose at the ice cream parlour. For the uninitiated, bombadinos are wonderful drinks of hot advocaat and brandy, topped with cream, which went down a treat when we were having a break from the exertions of skiing.

Our hotel was excellent – good food, great service and for Bernice and Angela, Doreen and myself, our rooms were quite special – two bathrooms, two T.V.'s, and lots of space. These two rooms provided great venues for pre-dinner gatherings. The only thing that could have been improved on was the size of the bath – see Bernice's photos.

We also managed to fit in swimming and bowling, which was included in the price and some of the party went out on a Pizza night. The remaining eight of us dined in the hotel that evening, amid a great deal of laughter, jokes and silly games. I am sure the staff were glad of the peace the following week.

Quite a few of us have already paid our deposits for next year, which is a great indicator of the success of the trip. Thanks once again to Marie and Interski – you did us proud. See you on the slopes in 2009.

Margaret Barnes.

*

Jock and Tam had maybe spent too long in the pub. They bade each other goodnight, then Tam said to Jock "Jock, man , when ye gang oot the door ye'll see twa cabs. Tak' the first yin - t'ither ane's no' there!"

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING IN SPAIN

George Shepherd organised seven days of Scottish dancing with walking and sight-seeing in Calpe near Benidorm at the end of February.

We stayed in a four-star hotel close to the sea, in the fast growing summer holiday area of Calpe. The old town, within walking distance from our hotel, had a few historical places of interest. The hotel was really good and well managed. The buffet-style food was well prepared and varied, with four-star service.

As dancers, perhaps the best thing of all was the large ballroom with a wooden floor. All the dancing and activities were led by Leicester branch, with dancers also from Bedford, Corby and Notts. Special thanks go to George Shepherd the team leader and organiser. We danced for seven nights to CD's played on the very good hotel sound system, with several teachers taking turns on instructions with walk-throughs or talk-throughs as needed. From what I could see, everyone had a great (if exhausting) time, with a good friendly atmosphere.

We were fortunate to have good sunny weather for the end of February. Two hill walks were arranged during our stay, as well as two days of coach trips into the surrounding countryside, with an exceptional local guide getting us through the days with knowledge and humour.

The cost was about half the price of a band- or musician-led holiday using main airlines. We enjoyed flying with EasyJet, having a friendly and fun crew in each direction. Fiona and I would certainly join another venture like this in the future.

Brian Slatcher

THE A TO Z OF COARSE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING ...CONTINUED...

F is for Fans..., no, spare us the image of groupies pursuing the band off the stage or pelting the MC with underwear...I mean the other sort, deployed when the ambient temperature reaches the point at which horses sweat, gentlemen perspire and ladies...well, glow... and then out comes the fan from its neat little box.

All very well for the horses...always assuming that the rituals of tying up, rubbing down and rugging up haven't caused the riders to miss the first half-dozen dances...well, with petrol being somewhat dearer than feed, you never know... but ***what about the gentlemen?*** There they sit, sizzling gently, jackets and ties long abandoned and sleeves rolled up, desperately wafting a damp and tatty crib-sheet in a desperate attempt to cool off whilst the ladies delicately retreat to the eighteenth century...*is the art of fan language dead?*...

Perhaps there's scope for a Man Fan – no flowers or oriental decoration but a saltire, a Lion Rampant or perchance the logo of a fitba' team...anything but one of those little electric horrors... And another thing...you can bet that wherever a nice, cool breeze can be tempted inside through door or window, it won't blow down the men's line... if you ever see me dancing lady in the second half at West Park, you'll know why!

For some time the association has been sending out greetings cards to members celebrating special birthdays and anniversaries.

We also send out cards to anyone who is, or has been ill. If members know of anyone they would like to receive a card please talk to one of the council members so that this can be arranged

**Many thanks.
Kate Potter**

FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT...DATES FOR DIARIES



Saturday 5th April Waltham on the Wolds Scottish Country Dance Group Spring Dance, recorded music, bring & share supper, dancers £5, spectators £2. **7 p.m. start** until 11 p.m.

Saturday 12th April Leicester Branch RSCDS social, Avenue Road School, 7.30 p.m., **Ian Slater**, bring and share supper, dancers £6, spectators £3.

Saturday, 19th April **Our own Annual Social**, St. Andrew's with Castle Gate Church Hall, 7.30 p.m., recorded music., supper included, dancers £5, spectators £3.

Thursday, 24th April **Our Annual General Meeting**, St. Andrew's with Castle Gate Church Hall, 7.30 p.m. **All advance documentation enclosed with this issue.**

Saturday, 26th April Galloways' Social Dance, Grange Hall, Radcliffe on Trent, 7.30 p.m. , band. Details from Julia Varney on [01332] 757177

Saturday. 19th May ASCDS Festival, Dukeries Leisure Centre, Ollerton: massed and demonstration dancing in the afternoon session followed by an evening social.

The next issue will be a gey thin one unless some kind souls are inclined to put pen to paper...PLEASE keep those articles coming!!