

Nottingham Scottish Association The Chanter March 2011

Many things are unspoken
in the life of a man, and with a place
there is an unspoken love also
in undercurrents, drifting, waiting its time.
A great place and its people are not renewed
lightly.

The caked layers of grime
Grow warm, like homely coats.
But yet they will be dislodged
And men will still be warm.
The old coats are discarded.
The old ice is loosed.
The old seeds are awake.

Slip out of darkness, it is time.

From 'The Second City' by Edwin Morgan.

From the President

I suspect that all Past Presidents have commented on how short a time their spell in office seems to last. I'm no exception. It has been a very short two years, but we seem to have packed a lot into them!

Highlights have included our formal (and sometimes not so formal!) dinners, rambles, outdoor theatre visits and much more. I'd like to thank the Council for all the work they have put in to run such a large and varied programme – and to thank you, the members, for your support.

Recently we have enjoyed our Annual Burns Night, a fascinating trip round the borders with Dennis Willey and two rambles. Coming up are more rambles, our annual dance... and the AGM.

We will have vacancies on the Council, and would like to encourage members to consider putting themselves forward for election to the Council - if you are not sure what that would involve, please ask any member of the Council. I will hope to see you there.

It has been a pleasure to act as your President and I wish my successor the same enjoyment as I have had.

Andrew

Reminder: There will be no dancing on Thursday 21 April
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Let the Train take the Strain

Although the former Great North of Scotland branches to Macduff and Banff saw their last passenger trains in 1951 and 1964 respectively I didn't realise, until I delved into my 1910 'Bradshaw', just what a pilgrimage awaited those wishing to travel from one to the other by train.

In fact there were then two opportunities to get there and back each weekday but no Sunday service. Leaving Banff at a quarter past nine for the twenty-minute run to Tillynaught, we must possess our souls in patience there for almost an hour and three-quarters until rescued by an Elgin-Aberdeen express which will take us ten and a half miles in a respectable thirteen minutes to Grange. Here, hopefully, a stroll into the village might reveal a place of refreshment since we've to wait until twelve minutes past one for the Keith-Aberdeen 'stopper', as the express doesn't deign to look in at Inveramsay, junction for Macduff. Lastly a slick twelve-minute connection sees us boarding the 2.25 p.m. for Macduff which will do the final 29 miles in a reasonably sprightly hour and a quarter, with eight intermediate stops.

We'll have only forty minutes at workaday Macduff, for the last train of the day pulls out at 4.20 and, apparently reluctant to leave Turriff (*Turra, Turra, whaur the de'il ither?*) takes an hour and three-quarters to Inveramsay. After almost an hour of sightseeing there we board the 6.42 p.m. train from Aberdeen but we'll have seventeen minutes to change at Huntly into the following express for Elgin, whose elegant green 4-4-0 hustles us through to Tillynaught at 8.17; a quarter of an hour later the last train of the day will pull out for Banff and set us down at ten past nine. Our express trains may well be lit by electricity, although on the branch lines there'll more likely be old-fashioned oil-lamps, but one thing is for certain; the little Great North shunned oil-gas lighting lang syne and before the year is out, passengers on an overnight Midland Railway Scottish express will have dreadful cause to regret that the mighty Midland, among others, still clung to it.

What if we choose to get up at skreigh o' dawn and leave Banff on the 7.25 a.m.? Well, the same sequence of outbound stops and changes would see us into Macduff four and three-quarter hours later. Since there will be non-corridor carriages on the branches we'd be as well to *make sure* in the station ablutions at Macduff, and will have just ten minutes in which to pay a flying visit before leaving on the 12.20. Yes, I *know* there's a train at 3.15 but if we wait for that we'll arrive at Inveramsay three minutes after our connection for Tillynaught has left,

and what's more, that connection, even though it's only an all-stations stopper after Inveramsay, will only call there *on notice being given to the Stationmaster*. So now, having made our request to that august personage, we pace his platforms for two and a quarter hours before that dilatory Elgin stopper takes an hour and thirty-six minutes over the 37¾ miles to Tillynaught. There we'd better look slippy, for we've just three minutes in which to catch the 5.55 p.m. train and arrive in Banff, breathless but triumphant, a quarter of an hour later.

Did the GNoSR or the LNER ever print card tickets between the two, and how much would it have cost? At that date, maybe 1½d per mile third class – the Great North wasn't the cheapest – so about nine bob each way for the 72¾ miles; the return trip, including a bite to eat and lavatorial pennies, making rather a big hole in a sovereign. Undoubtedly the booking-clerk would have given us some *very* peculiar looks, and with some justification, because as many of you will know, you can **WALK** from Banff to Macduff in about twenty minutes!

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Blasts from the Past...

It is several years since any records were added to our archive boxes. During the next few weeks, we plan to sort through more recent items for storage, for example, accounting records, Charters, Minutes, programmes, photographs etc. As part of this preparation, I arranged a visit to The Nottinghamshire Archives and took the opportunity to briefly look through some of the earliest records. It is my intention to spend time sifting through more files, and will pass on to you, by means of The Chanter, any interesting items. Staff at the Archives Office recommends that we submit only original materials. Here is your opportunity to de-clutter and add any items you may have relating to any past events of the Association. Please ring me or send any suitable materials. See page 7 for two excerpts. Thanking you in anticipation,

Jeanne Dall
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Nottingham Scottish Walking Group

As Bernice was away, the March walk was led by Andrew and Sue, who were a bit concerned that as the starting point was at Bramcote, the members from the Linby area wouldn't be able to make it, but happily eleven of us gathered at Arundel Drive, kitted out and rarin' to go. First things first though - coffee in the kitchen, accompanied by a short picture show on Andrew's laptop showing some stunning winter scenes from the Scottish Highlands.

Fuelled up, we set out through the estate, admiring the gardens which were showing the first signs of life after a long hard winter. We crossed Thoresby Road in to a small woodland area and were delighted to see some clumps of snowdrops and daffodils. Whether they had been dumped with some garden rubbish or whether some kind soul went to the trouble of planting them, we don't know, but they were a delight to see.

We then headed for Wollaton Park, enjoying the fact that, being a weekday, it was very quiet and peaceful. Our path was criss-crossed with squirrels darting about, completely unfazed by the human interruptions to their daily routines. We could hear a woodpecker, but couldn't figure out where he was and there was quite a gathering of water fowls bobbing about on the lake. A solitary magpie was strutting about on the path, but thankfully he didn't bring us any sorrow.

Andrew decided that Bernice would never forgive us if we didn't take a photo or two, so with the lake in the background we bunched together and posed to record the moment. We then headed towards the Camelia House, which we were delighted to see was open and we had yet another photo call with red, pink and white camelias as our backdrop. In the gardens outside the Camellia House, it was good to see the beds showing signs of Spring colour.

Next stop was the coffee shop, where we enjoyed a welcome cuppa and then, donning our jackets once more, we set off toward the Derby Road end of the park, passing a herd of deer in the field. Most of them were lying down and showing no interest in us at all. We came out of the park and risked life and limb crossing the busy roundabout near the QMC before hopping on a bus, which arrived after only a few minutes'

wait. We were greeted by a very pleasant lady driver, who cheerfully printed off our eleven tickets as we waved our bus passes in front of her. We hopped off again at the Sherwin Arms, where we enjoyed a hearty lunch and lively chat. We returned to Andrew and Sue's, said our thanks and goodbyes and headed for home. We were very lucky that in spite of grey skies, the rain held off and the temperature wasn't too cold. We felt it had done us all good to be out in the open again and although there were no rope swings to test our Tarzan skills this time or children's adventure playgrounds to have a go on the slide, we had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

If anyone would like to join us on the next walk, we will be delighted to see you. The walkers are all very friendly and there is always someone to talk to as you walk. The walks are usually easy to suit all levels (except when Bernice decides to take a shortcut through thick undergrowth, but fortunately that doesn't happen too often!)

Margaret Barnes

Coming Soon!

**Rambles: Tuesday 5 April, Monday 2 May and
Wednesday 1 June 2011:**

Information from Bernice Young (Tel: 0115 9637228)

Thursday 14 April 2011: Annual General Meeting

St Andrews with Castle Gate, 7.30 pm

Details enclosed.

Saturday 16 April 2011: Annual Dance

St Andrew's with Castle Gate, 7.30 pm

Tickets £5.00

Saturday 11 June 2011: Treasure Hunt

Watnall, 10.30 am

Information from Jeanne Dall (Tel: 01773 765896)

Burns Night Dinner and Dance 2011

On Saturday 29 January, we gathered again to celebrate our National Poet. The Nottingham Masonic Hall made us very welcome and looked after us well. Over 100 members and their friends attended, including a fine mix of youth and ...the less youthful.

David Page, our erstwhile secretary, spoke to the Immortal Memory, drawing on a comparison between Burns and his near contemporary Thomas Telford.

Our current secretary, Schuggie MacInnes, gave the Toast to the Lassies – to be answered in fine style by Bernice Young.

Bill Dall controlled proceedings – and kept us amused as ever - and Bob Logan addressed the haggis with his customary style.

All that was then left was to end with an energetic cèilidh, called by Bernice Young. We look forward to next year's event!

The Borders: An Old Love Affair

After last year's tour of Skye, we persuaded Dennis Willey to act as our guide to a different part of Scotland – the Borders.

Dennis has been visiting the Borders for many, many years and his photographic record is comprehensive. I think we all learned a great deal about the difficult and violent history of this rugged landscape. For some of us it brought back memories of our own visits – and showed us places new to us. No doubt it will spur us on to further visits.

It was a great evening again and our thanks go to Dennis for his expert photography and interesting and informative commentary.

Andrew Morrison

Out of the mouths...

The late Doug Pratt, a journalist, used to tell the story of interviewing a farmer round about Pitmedden during the great snowstorms of 1947 and 1948. It was late morning, the farmhouse door opened and a boy of about nine wandered in, obviously having been sent home from school because of the bad weather.

"Ye're hame fin ye've hardly been awa'" said his father. "Ye winnae hae learned muckle the day."

"I learned foo ye mak babies" said the boy. Doug saw mild alarm in the farmer's eyes.

"Oh, I see. And foo wid that be exactly?"

"Ye tak aff the Y and add I-E-S."

Did You Know?

In 1928, 280 dancers attended The Nottingham Scottish Association's 'Caledonian Ball' held in the Palais de Danse Nottingham. In 1910 The Nottingham Scottish Association had a bank balance of £1.5.2, this led to the employment of a debt collector being sent to collect outstanding subscriptions - for this he was paid 5/- (25p to you youngsters). Later that year the balance reached the grand sum of £3.19.6. However in 1911, with a deficit of £7.13.11 Mr Crawford resigned as debt collector. How do we know this? It is all there in black and white among the Association's records stored in The Nottinghamshire Archives; minutes, Year Books, newspaper-cuttings, photographs, menu cards and membership lists and many other bits and pieces going back as far as 1876. The item below is taken from a newspaper-cutting dated January 1913.

The Nottingham Scotsmen Honour Burns

The gathering held at Victoria Station Hotel included on the menu, Cockie-Leekie Soup, Burns Pudding and Auld Yule Cakes and lastly, sandwiched between two appropriate quotations, "Aye anither wee dram" and "Na Na Nae mair I'm gey far through". There followed Scotch Haddie on Toast which created an abnormal thirst for the after dinner proceedings. The main event of the evening was the arrival,

mid-way through the menu of The Royal Scotch Haggis, it was borne in Right Royal fashion heralded by the skirling of the bagpipes whilst being held aloft by the cooks, followed by the indispensable National beverage.

The evening passed in joviality which was hushed only when The Immortal Memory was reverently drunk in silence. Quaint Scottish recitations were then given and cello solos played. Other toasts included, 'The City of Our Adoption' 'The Land o' Cakes' and 'The Visitors'. Greetings were announced from 40 other Scottish Associations. A merry evening was had by one and all, and quite a few songs were heard as guests wound their way homewards.

Footnote: **'The Land o' Cakes'**.

Burns used this expression to describe Scotland in the opening lines of his poem, 'On the Late Captain Grose's Peregrinations Thro' Scotland. Robert Fergusson had already used this expression in his poem, 'The King's Birthday in Edinburgh'

"Oh, soldiers! For your ain dear sakes;
For Scotland's alias, Land o' Cakes"

Annual Membership Renewal & Records Update

Annual membership renewals for 2011 – 2012 are due on 1st April 2011. Your Council has decided not to increase the annual subscription; we can only do this if members continue to support our functions throughout the year. We may be unique in the Country, having held our subscriptions at the same level for the past fifteen years.

Enclosed is a renewal form which we ask **all members** to complete, and return as soon as possible without us incurring additional costs, chasing late payers yet again. Completing all parts of the form will help us keep our records up to date. Take extra care when entering your e-mail address. During the past year we contacted some members by telephone or e-mail as a reminder of functions and also when we cancelled the dancing owing to bad weather.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their help and support in my role as Treasurer during the past eight years. I will be handing over my duties to a new person at the forthcoming A. G. M. and ask that you help and support your new Treasurer in the same way.

Jeanne Dall

A Note from the Secretary

You may be aware that The Chanter is available on our web-page. We are increasingly being asked to e-mail Chanters to members rather than sending them by post. Therefore, I ask that if you would like to receive your copy of The Chanter electronically, rather than through the post, please tick the appropriate box on the membership renewal form.

Regards

Schuggie (Dougie MacInnes)

New Members

The Association is pleased to have welcomed the following new members during the past year:

Pauline Tarrington
Pamela Murphy
Rosemary Allen
Sylvia Hale
Diana Dainton
Sara Vance
David & Christine Vincent
Alan & Anne Willott
David & Marie Wayte