

verses for a Christmas Carol

This endyír starnacht blach and klar
As I on Cathkín-fells held fahr
A snaepuss fussball showerdown
With nezhny smírl and whirlcome rown
Upon my pollbare underlíft,
And smazzled all my gays with sríft:
Faroer fieldswide frosbloom strayflíng,
Floral brookrímms hoartrack glasslíng,
Allaírbelue beauheaven ablove
Avlanchbloomfondshowed brrumalljove.

O angellíghoused harbourmoon,
Glazegulfgalaxeval governoon,
Jovegal allcapellar jupíterror
And you bríghdsun of venusacre,
Respour this leídyear Phoeníxmas
With starphíre and restoryíng dazze
Bejeweleaveníng cínderíll
To líftlíke pace and goodquadrílle.
All men reguard, from grace our fere,
And sun on us to kínd and chere.

Edwín Morgan

From the President

As the days get shorter the association seems to get busier, with our Hallowe'en Cèilidh and the St. Andrew's Night Dinner being the highlights. The Cèilidh was again a great hit with those attending although it was difficult to tell from the photographs who exactly they were! Certainly some very ingenious costumes were on display.

The annual St Andrew's Night dinner and dance took place on Saturday 27 November and we enjoyed an excellent night with members and their friends. Bill Dall's 'Tribute to Scotland' was delivered with his customary humour. A lively programme of dances completed the evening's entertainment.

The Thursday Night dance class goes from strength to strength. We continue to welcome new dancers and have enjoyed some great evenings. We look forward to our pre-Christmas Party Night on Thursday 16 December.

Our walks programme continues and will finish for this year with a Christmas Lunch on 6 December. We have a full programme of walks for next year starting on Wed 5 January 2011. Dates for further walks are listed elsewhere in this Chanter.

Coming up on Saturday 29 January is the annual Burns Night celebration and we look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible. Please book early using the flyer enclosed with this Chanter.

In the meantime, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Andrew

One way to celebrate fifty years of marriage.

We had a wonderful and ever-changing view from our balcony on the ninth floor of our `hotel'. We would dawdle in the atrium to listen to the string quartet, on our way to the restaurant on the fifth floor. The food was excellent and the Italian waiters very attentive, giving Anne an opportunity to brush up her Italian. After dinner we were able to enjoy the hotel theatre, which seated one thousand. Sometimes we would use the restaurant on the thirteenth floor for breakfast or lunch, with views over the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea. On one occasion we played tennis on the sixteenth floor as a change from the two swimming pools, one outside and one with a retractable roof. However, on most days we explored the town – a different one each day.

Did I mention that we were on the cruise ship `Magnifica', calling at a different eastern Mediterranean port every day?

After a comfortable flight to Venice, with a complimentary glass of champagne from BA to celebrate our golden wedding anniversary, we were soon steaming down the Grand Canal in our floating hotel. Each day a news-sheet listed entertainment on the ship and gave information on the boat's itinerary and on what to explore from that day's berth. Most importantly, it stated the deadline for returning to the ship! Our first stop was Bari in Southern Italy and we spent the day walking round the Old Town in brilliant sunshine. They strongly encouraged you to sign up for an expensive excursion each day but we preferred to do our own thing. This decision was reinforced when, frequently, we met fellow-passengers in the town, walking the same streets but paying through the nose for the privilege!

The weather on the following days was more mixed, although it didn't seem to matter very much. The next day, we wandered around Katakolon in Greece and enjoyed a coffee at a waterfront café. This was followed by calls at Izmir and Istanbul in Turkey. Istanbul's Grand Bazaar is the biggest in the world and dates from 1481. It is a fascinating labyrinth of five thousand small shops, concentrating mainly on jewellery and leather goods. One owner offered to sell us his shop, but we managed to avoid committing ourselves to this!

We spent 15th October, the actual day of our anniversary, in Dubrovnik. We enjoyed exploring the Old City and were astounded to see how well the war damage had been restored. We returned from our week away with some very good photos and many happy memories, feeling it to have been a very special experience.

Anne & Alan Willott

Hallowe'en

In his article about last year's Hallowe'en Ceilidh Alan said it would be a hard act to follow. Well, I think we may even have surpassed last year's event, especially in the costume department. We had the usual band of witches, but the most magnificent had to be Jan in a wonderful orange and gold ensemble with a huge fantastic witch's hat decorated with orange feathers and tinsel. She was more regal

than scary and I almost felt the need to curtsy when she made her entrance. We had Alan in the guise of Phantom of the Opera (but he thankfully didn't offer to sing), Dave as a headless wonder, carrying his bloodied head under his arm and Shuggie as Burke & Hare's doctor in a white coat and some strange-looking furry creatures about his person. There were several pumpkins, the most impressive being Bernice in a well-stuffed and rather short outfit! Mark was a pirate, complete with cutlass and buckled shoes, but didn't quite cut it as well as Johnny Depp. I did hear someone make a comment about Captain Pugwash! Sorry Mark, I thought you looked great, anyway. We had Goths and vampires and Dennis was very fetching in his wizard's hat, looking rather like a benign Merlin. Nearly everyone had made a fantastic effort to join in the "spirit" of the evening by dressing up. The hall was decorated with an array of tartan ghoulies, a skeleton and a witch on her broomstick along with other Hallowe'en paraphernalia just to put us in the mood.

The games proved a great hit with the contestants giving it their all, but Bernice's Hallowe'en Charades really seemed to baffle some people. She was obviously on a different wavelength, but it provided a lot of laughs and the highest score of seven out of twelve wasn't too bad, all things considered. After some strenuous dancing, everyone seemed ready for their supper and there was great feeling of camaraderie in the dining hall. We started off with some seasonal pumpkin soup, followed by an appetising selection of finger food. Replete and rarin' to go again, we had another game and an exhausting Orcadian Strip the Willow just to make sure we burned off all these calories.

The pumpkin carving competition produced some great sculpture talent and it was a hard task for our newcomers Dave and Marie to pick out a winner. Our thanks to Dave, who donated the pumpkins and didn't even get one to carve, due to a mix-up with the tables. We apologise, Dave, and we will make sure you get to show your carving skills next year! Chris improvised very well with a little display of rats stolen from their Hallowe'en costumes.

The evening proved a great success, due in no small way to all the helpers who had given their time and effort with preparing and serving the food, decorating the hall and organising the games and

dances. Thanks to Shuggie for calling the dances in his own inimitable way, even if some of our guests appeared to be doing something quite different from the instructions! Finally, thanks to everyone who joined in so wholeheartedly to make Hallowe'en 2010 a night to remember.

Margaret Barnes

Walks Programme

For all walks, meet at 10.00a.m. for a 10.30a.m. start. Most will start at Tommywoods Cottage in Linby and will finish with lunch, but please contact Bernice Young on 0115 9637228 to confirm arrangements. Walk dates for the first half of 2011 are below:

Wednesday 5 January

Saturday 5 February

Friday 4 March (details from Andrew Morrison 0115 9164691)

Tuesday 5 April

Monday 2 May (6.00pm start)

Wednesday 1 June

Coming Soon!

Saturday 29 January 2011: Burns Anniversary Dinner
Masonic Hall, Goldsmith Street, 7.00pm
Details and an application form enclosed.

Friday 18 February 2011: The Borders - an Old Love Affair
St Andrews with Castle Gate, 7.30pm
Illustrated talk by Dennis Willey

Saturday 12 March 2011: President's Night
St Andrews with Castle Gate, 7.30pm
An evening of music, readings and dancing.

A Speyside Scottish Christmas in 1813

The great event of the Christmas time was the Floaters' Ball. All engaged in the wood manufacture, their wives and families were invited. The amusements began pretty early in the day with a game at the ba', the hockey of the low country, our Scottish substitute for cricket. It is played on a field by two parties who toss a small ball between them by means of crooked sticks called clubs. The Highlanders are extremely fond of this exciting game, and continue it for hours on a holiday. There were always crowds of spectators. Our people kept up the game till dark when all the men – above a hundred – went to dinner in the barn, a beef and some sheep having been killed for them. The women were taken into the grieve's house for tea.

We delighted in the Floaters' Ball, so large a party, some splendid dancers from Strathspey, the hay-loft, the straw-loft and the upper floor of the threshing mill all thrown open *en suite*; two sets of fiddlers playing, punch made in the washing-tubs, and illumination of tallow dips! It is surprising that the floors stood the pounding they got; the noise of the many energetic feet could have been heard half a mile off. When a lad took a lass out to dance, he led her to her place in the reel and '*pree'd her mou'*' – kissed her – before the beginning, she holding her face up quite frankly to receive the customary salute, and he giving a good sounding smack when the lass was bonnie.

Condensed by Iris Dale from 'Memoirs of a Highland Lady' by Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus. Elizabeth would have been sixteen in 1813.

Saint Andrew's Night Dinner & Dance

The build-up had been going on since August. Prices of tickets, what do we eat, veg., no peas, please...and various communication issues – well, non-communication issues, to be more exact. Numbers are always a concern on this sort of occasion. Will we get enough people wanting to come along? Well, yes, we did. Even Billy Davis bombing us out and the fire next door didn't dent the enthusiasm for our blue and white.

So on a cold Saturday night seventy hardy souls made their way into Nottingham city centre for a great night celebrating our Patron Saint. William Dall gave an eloquently delivered toast to Scotland, followed by some great birling on the dance floor with very few feet trodden on. A sign of a good caller or not enough wine drunk before hand, who knows?

The meal was enjoyed, several risqué photo opportunities were had; these may find their way onto the activities board and our website, so keep your eyes peeled. New friends were made and old acquaintances caught up with; the new bar in the Belgrave Rooms was given a thorough work-out. When the carriages arrived at midnight, more than a few watches were scornfully rebuffed with "It's no' that time already!".

I hope you all enjoyed the night as much as I did and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 29th January for our annual Burns Dinner & dance.

Schuggie

Home thoughts on the Day

Look up to Pentlands tow'ring tap,
Buried beneath great wreaths of snaw
O'er ilka cleugh ilk scar and slap
As high as ony Roman wa'.

Driving their ba's frae whin or tee
There's no ae gowfer to be seen
Nor douser folk wysing a-jee
The byas bouls on Tamson's green.

Then fling on coals and ripe the ribs
And beek the house baith butt and ben
That matchkin-stoup it hauds but dribs
Then lets get in the tappit hen.

Guid claret best keeps oot the cauld
And drives away the winter soon
It makes a man baith gash and bauld
And heaves his soul beyond the moon.

Allan Ramsay 1686-1758

Gash, talkative; *matchkin-stoup*, pint jug; *tappit hen*, a large bottle of claret;
wysing a-jee, guiding awry (the bowls on the green); *beek*, to warm: *ripe the ribs*,
clean the fire (of ash and cinders)

*

A young Glaswegian...

... is hired by Jenners and reports for his first day at work. The manager greets him with a hearty handshake and smile, hands him a brush and says "Your first job will be to sweep out the store."

"Sweep out the store?" replied the young man indignantly. "Do you realise I'm a graduate of Glasgow Caledonian University?"

"Oh, I'm sorry – I didn't know that" said the manager. "Here, give me the brush – I'll show you how."

We Three Kings

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star.*

Whilst the gift of gold is still considered acceptable - as it may be redeemed at a later

date through such organisations as 'cash for gold', etc., gifts of frankincense and myrrh are not appropriate due to the potential risk of oils and fragrances causing allergic reactions. A suggested gift alternative would be to make a donation to a worthy cause in the recipient's name or perhaps give a gift voucher.

We would not advise that the traversing kings rely on navigation by stars in order to reach their destinations and suggest the use of RAC routefinder or satellite navigation, which will provide the quickest route and advice regarding fuel consumption. Please note as per the guidelines from the RSPCA for Mr. Donkey, the camels carrying the three kings of Orient will require regular food and rest breaks. Facemasks for the three kings are also advisable due to the likelihood of dust from the camels' hooves.

Little Donkey

*Little donkey, little donkey on the dusty road
Got to keep on plodding onwards with your precious load*

The RSPCA have issued strict guidelines with regard to how heavy a load that a donkey of small stature is permitted to carry, also included in the guidelines is guidance regarding how often to feed the donkey and how many rest breaks are required over a four hour plodding period. Please note that due to the increased risk of pollution from the dusty road, Mary and Joseph are required to wear face masks to prevent inhalation of any airborne particles. The donkey has expressed his discomfort at being labelled 'little' and would prefer just to be simply referred to as Mr. Donkey. To comment upon his height or lack thereof may be considered an infringement of his equine rights.

Pumpkin Soup

Margaret Barnes is often complimented on her PUMPKIN SOUP and now the recipe can be revealed...serves 4-6 people...

1 tblsp Oil (vegetable or sunflower)
1 oz butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 1/2 to 2 lbs pumpkin flesh roughly chopped
1 lb potatoes, cubed
1 pint vegetable stock
a good pinch of nutmeg
1 tsp chopped tarragon (fresh or dried)
1 tsp mixed herbs or oregano
curry powder (to taste - try a little first and add more if you wish -
pumpkin is quite bland so it needs this to give it a bit of a kick)
1 pint of milk
1-2 tsp lemon juice
salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Heat the oil and butter in a large saucepan and fry onion till softened.

Add pumpkin and potato, salt and pepper, cover and "sweat" over a low heat till vegetables are almost tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in stock, nutmeg, tarragon

and other herbs, bring to boil and simmer for about ten minutes until vegetables are completely tender. Allow liquid to cool slightly, then blend till smooth. Pour into a clean pan and add milk and curry powder, lemon juice and extra seasoning if necessary.

Temperature Scales

- 50°F** People in Southern England turn on the central heating. People in Edinburgh plant out bedding plants
- 40°F** Southerners shiver uncontrollably. Glaswegians sunbathe on the beach at Larg
- 35°F** Cars in the South of England refuse to start. People in Falkirk drive with their windows down
- 20°F** Southerners wear overcoats, gloves and woolly hats. Aberdonian loons throw on a t-shirt; quines start wearing mini-skirts.
- 15°F** Southerners begin to evacuate to the continent. People from Dundee swim in the River Tay at Broughty Ferry.
- 0°F** Life in the South grinds to a halt. Inverness folk have the last BBQ before it gets cold.
- 10°F** Life in the South ceases to exist. People in Dunfermline throw on a light jacket.
- 80°F** Polar bears wonder if it's worth carrying on. Boy Scouts in Oban start wearing their long trousers.
- 100°F** Santa Claus abandons North Pole. People in Stirling put on their 'long johns'.
- 173°F** Alcohol freezes. Glaswegians get upset because all the pubs are shut.
- 297°F** Microbial life starts to disappear. The cows in Dumfriesshire complain about farmers with cold hands.
- 460°F** All atomic motion stops. Shetlanders stamp their feet and blow on their hands.
- 500°F** Hell freezes over. Scotland will support England in the World Cup.