

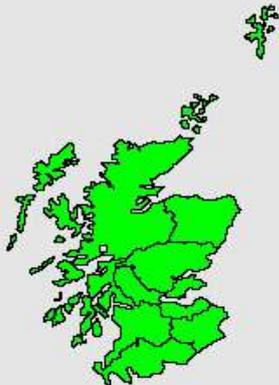


THE Saltire

No 5

Message from the Chieftain

February 2013



"Alba Gu Brath"

COMMITTEE 2011-2012

Chieftain

Brian McMurdo

Immediate Past Chieftain

Ken Suttie

Vice Chieftain

Doris LaValette

Hon Secretary

Darian Ferguson

Hon Treasurer

Diana Paxman

Members

Cameron Dickson

Mike Haines

Cheryl Hill

Eoin Kennedy

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Reggie McNeill

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Mutual appreciation!

The Society has had a great many words of appreciation from people who enjoyed our recent Burns Supper, on the Bard's birthday.

Even more pleasing was that so many of the folk who took time out to let members know how much fun they had were people who had been at their first Society event.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to give thanks, in return, to all the guests at the Burns Supper – without them, we wouldn't have been able to put on such an excellent occasion.

Robert Burns was well and truly remembered and honoured, with great toasts and welcome contributions from the floor.

Then the Heel n Toe band led us in dancing and singing, in the ceilidh part of the evening.

I think that the Society really has great expertise when it comes to putting together a Burns Supper and this latest event was a case in point.

We were helped in no small measure by the staff of the Parmelia Hilton Hotel, who worked very hard to ensure their contribution to the evening went without a glitch

Surprisingly, non-members outnumbered members (one of the disappointing aspects) but we've been told that we'll benefit through a few new members and many of those people attending other Society events.

Our next event is extremely important . . . the Society's Annual General Meeting . . . and I urge as many of you as possible to come along to St Peter and Emmaus Church hall, corner of Green and Banksia Streets, Joondanna, on Sunday, 17 February.

The AGM starts at 2.00pm and will be followed by a mini-ceilidh, which is always a bit of fun.

I hope to see you there.

Brian McMurdo
Chieftain



MEET THE COMMITTEE

Over the seas to Skye

Although his accent is distinctly Irish, it has been said that Committee stalwart Reggie McNeill is more Scottish than many Scottish people!

He is best known for his passion for Scottish country dancing, but his love affair with Scotland goes back to Easter 1974, when a young Reggie took his first trip out of Northern Ireland with the aim of walking the Isle of Skye's mountainous Cuillin Ridge.

"The ferry from Larne to Cairnryan, in Wigtownshire, was an experience, because I cannot swim and dread water," Reggie said.

"Then we had a long, breathtaking journey from Cairnryan, taking in Glencoe and its high rugged peaks, Loch Leven, the ferry from Kyle of Lochalsh to Kyleakin and finally arriving at The Sligachan Inn, in the heart of the Cuillins, where we camped by the river for four days.

"That journey will always remain with me."

After that, Scotland became Reggie's second home, with summer and winter trips taking in the Trossachs, Glencoe, Glen Nevis and the Cairngorms, which became his favourite walking and climbing areas.

However, his all-time favourite walk is The West Highland Way.

"I've walked it four times, but the pleasure I get from that walk will never wane," Reggie said

His association with the St Andrew Society started in 1996, when Reggie and his wife, Esther, were on holiday in Perth visiting family and friends, and were invited to the St Andrew's Day Ball.

"I was astonished at the dancing and how everyone was having such a great time," Reggie explained.

"At the time I thought this could be interesting and if I ever came back it would be good to be able to do at least one of the dances."

During one of his trips to Scotland, Reggie stumbled upon a little book called Scottish Country Dancing in a second-hand bookshop in Callander and he recognised some of the dances from that first Ball.



Esther and Reggie McNeill

"During our second trip to Perth in 1997 – and another Ball – Esther's sister planted the seed about us moving to Australia," Reggie said.

"After a bit of procrastination (Esther would say a lot of procrastination), we packed up and arrived in Australia in August 2003."

One of Reggie's first 'To Do' jobs was to get tickets for the next St Andrew's Day Ball.

It took him a bit of time, but with the help of some family friends he got on to long-time Committee member Cameron Dickson, who helped fix him up with tickets.

"The following year we attended some of the Society events, became members and signed up for the dance classes," Reggie said.

"And the wee dance book I bought in Callander connected me to the dances.

"I would even read the book on the bus to and from work.

"And each Saturday night, between dance classes, Esther and I would get together with friends David and Rosemary Harris to walk through the dances.

"We started to attend all the society events and met many friends along the way."

In 2007, Cameron Dickson suggested that Reggie should think of joining the Society Committee and he has been a mainstay of the Society ever since.



MEET THE COMMITTEE

He'll always be a Borders lad

Eoin Kennedy is very proud of the fact that he is from the Scottish borders

He was born two days before Christmas 1947 in a cold farm cottage in the remote Manor Valley, in the Scottish border county of Peeblesshire.

Times were hard for most people then, as the Second World War had only just ended and many items were still rationed, but in spite of the hardships Eoin says he had a wonderful childhood in comparison to city kids.

"The whole of Manor Valley was my playground," Eoin said.

"The Manor River ran past our house and we could always catch a trout, or even a salmon in winter.

"The farmer bought and sold cattle and sheep, which my Dad carted around in a cattle float, and he would sometimes take me with him on his trips.

"So even as a child I saw a lot of Scotland."

After leaving school, Eoin worked on the farm for a couple of years, then got a job as a Poultry Advisor with an animal feed company, covering the area from Carlisle to Stranraer and up to Ayrshire.

This, of course, is the real Robert Burns country and many of the farms he visited had a connection with the Bard.

Eoin then worked for a farm machinery company, based in Kinross, Perthshire, with an area that covered all of Scotland and Northern Ireland, which brought him into contact with fascinating people in almost every corner of Scotland.

"I came to Australia on holiday with my first wife, Marie, in 1985," Eoin said.

"After our holiday, we decided emigrate and we set up house in Mandurah, in 1990.

"Six years later, I was offered a business opportunity in Perth, Scotland, so we upped sticks and went back, settling in Kinross again.

"Soon after that my wife and I split up."

Eoin had been friends with his current wife and



Agnes and Eoin Kennedy

Society member, Agnes, since high school and fate brought them together one day when Eoin was in Edinburgh on business.

On a whim he popped into the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop in George Street, where he knew Agnes worked, just to catch up.

He was surprised to find that she was also divorced and their friendship became stronger.

It was only two years later that they married in the local church in Eoin's beloved Manor Valley.

In 2008, the Perth business was taken over and the couple decided to come to the other Perth, with the aim of work with Eoin's son, Justin, for five years before retiring.

Shortly after arriving in Perth, Eoin got talking to another Scotsman in a pub . . . who turned out to be Ken Suttie, then Chieftain of the Society . . . and he persuaded Eoin and Agnes to come along to the next event.

"We joined the Society that evening," Eoin said.

"Since then we've had many great times and made lots of good friends.

"My aim as a Committee member is to increase the number of younger people coming along to events and joining as members, so that this great organisation can continue to thrive."



Dunnottar Castle

Dunnottar Castle (Scottish Gaelic: *Dùn Fhoithear*, "fort on the shelving slope") is a ruined medieval fortress situated on a rocky headland on the north-east coast of Scotland, about three kilometres south of Stonehaven.

The rock on which Dunnottar Castle stands might have been designed especially for what was the most impregnable fortress in Scotland.

The castle is spread over 1.4 hectares, surrounded by steep cliffs that drop to the North Sea, 50 metres below, and the rock is joined to the mainland by a narrow, steep fin of land.

There were only two ways in or out of Dunnottar Castle in its heyday.

The first was via the strongly defended main gate, set in a cleft in the rock where attackers would be vulnerable from all sides.

The second was via a rocky creek leading to a cave on the north side of the rock, from where a steep path led up the cliff to the well defended postern gate.

Dunnottar has been a fort in one form or another for most of the past two thousand years.

The first reliable mentions of Dunnottar start in the 1100s, when William the Lion used it as an administrative centre.

In the late 1300s, Dunnottar was taken over by the Keith family, which replaced the earlier wood fortifications with the core of the stone keep still visible today and much of the stone defences.

In 1531, Dunnottar was granted to the Earls Marischal of Scotland by James V.

Between 1580 and 1650, the Earls Marischal converted the forbidding castle into a mansion, building ranges of buildings around a quadrangle that offered some of the most luxurious accommodation in Scotland at the time, yet all behind those formidable defences.

By May 1652, Dunnottar was the only place left in Scotland holding out against Cromwell's forces under the command of General George Monck.

Parliamentary forces were keen to take the castle, because it was being used for the safe-keeping of the Honours of Scotland, the Crown Jewels.



But when the castle surrendered after an eight-month siege, Cromwell's men found nothing.

The Honours had been lowered down the cliffs to a local woman pretending to be collecting seaweed.

These irreplaceable treasures were hidden under the floor of the nearby Kinneff Old Church until the Restoration of the Monarchy.

Dunnottar's darkest moment came in May 1685 when 167 Covenanter prisoners, 122 men and 45 women, were locked in the Whig's Vault below one of the buildings in the Quadrangle.

Some died of starvation and disease, others were killed trying to escape and the rest were sent to the colonies after two months in the castle.

The tenth Earl Marischal had his estates forfeited after being convicted of treason for his part in the Jacobite rising of 1715 and everything that was transportable and usable was removed from the castle.

The castle was largely neglected until 1925, when the 1st Viscountess Cowdray embarked on a systematic repair program.

Today, a visit offers an insight into one of the most fascinating castles in Scotland . . . it's certainly worth the long walk and climb!

By Ken Suttie



Your Society needs YOU at the AGM

Just in case you hadn't caught up with this vital bit of news yet . . . the Society's Annual General Meeting will be held this week.

The Committee is appealing to members to come along to the St Peter and Emmaus Church hall, on the corner of Green and Banksia Streets, Joondanna, on Sunday, 17 February.

The Society needs your support.

As always, the AGM will include the reports from the Chieftain and the Hon Treasurer, and matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

And then there's the all-important election of the Committee for 2013.

(Remember that only financial members may vote at the AGM, so please ensure that your subscriptions have been paid to the Hon Treasurer before the meeting.)

After all the business has been completed, we will have a mini-ceilidh, with dancing to recorded music.

All we ask is that you bring your own drinks and nibbles.



Scottish writer a big hit

A Scottish writer from the Western Isles has had his debut novel snapped up in a £100,000 deal.

Malcolm Mackay, 31, only started writing as a hobby in his 20s, but his first effort has been bought by publishing giant Pan Macmillan.

The crime thriller *The Necessary Death of Lewis Winter* has been translated into five languages and has won rave reviews around the world.

Mr Mackay's deal is for three books – the other two have already been completed.

He said the next step would be a TV or movie version of the Glasgow-based novel, which features the central character of anti-hero hitman Calum Maclean.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2013

Chieftain's Ceilidh: 4 May

Venue: RAAFA Club, Bullcreek

Winter Ceilidh: 17 August

Venue: Stirling Bowling Club, Stirling

St Andrew's Day Ball: 30 November

Venue: To be decided

2014

Burns Supper: 25 January

Venue: Parmelia Hilton Hotel, Perth

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Blogmanay Scotland reaches 80m people

A £50,000 project to bring a group of international travel bloggers to Scotland at the beginning of the new year has proved to be an international success.

Pictures, tweets and blogs generated over a two-week period, which saw the group take in Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations then head off on tours of the Highlands, is said to have now reached more than 80 million people around the world.

Almost four million people are said to have been posting, or sharing material, since the campaign – instigated by the organisers of the capital's celebrations and an Edinburgh-based tour company – started.

Now the "Blogmanay" initiative – which generated spectacular pictures of the Highlands during unusually mild weather – is set to be repeated to coincide with other major events and campaigns, including Edinburgh's summer festivals.

More than 9000 tweets were generated over the course of the four-week campaign, which also included 70 separate blog posts and 1300 pictures posted on Instagram.



A blog photo of Edinburgh Castle exploding with fireworks at the 2012 Edinburgh Hogmanay party

Some of the bloggers stayed in Scotland for up to 12 days, visiting various parts of the Highlands, including Skye, Culloden and Glencoe, as well as St Andrews.

Tourism experts believe the project provided the perfect start to the Scottish Government's "Year of Natural Scotland" campaign, on which at least £5.4 million is being spent.

Society's help appreciated

The Society has received a mention in *Air Mail*, the international newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association, based in the UK.

For many years, members of the Society have supported the RAFA WA Branch's Battle of Britain Lunch and the Royal Marines Association lunch.

This support has enabled the two Associations to continue to hold their events in the face of falling numbers.

However, last year they were forced to have a combined lunch, and a large group of Society members were there, once again, to help ensure that the lunch went with a swing.

The lunch was great fun, just as the previous lunches have been.

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