

## "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

Jeff LaValette

Reggie McNeill

#### Honorary Piper

John Sinclair

#### Email:

[enquiries@saintandrew.org.au](mailto:enquiries@saintandrew.org.au)

#### Website

<http://saintandrew.org.au>

## Book your tickets — it's Ball time

I hope you realise that it is only two months until we all gather together to celebrate Scotland's national day at the St Andrew's Day Ball.

The reason I mention this is because you will soon be running out of time to book your tickets for the best event of its kind in Perth.

I urge you to reserve your seats or your table as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

There are more details about the Ball on **page 6** of this issue of The Saltire, but I need to tell you that the Committee is pulling out all the stops to prepare an event to remember.

A few of us got in a bit of practice for the Ball at the Winter Ceilidh in August.

It was the first time we had held a Winter Ceilidh (instead of the previous Spring and Xmas in July ceilidhs) and it turned out to be great fun – I certainly enjoyed myself!

The Committee, led by Vice-Chieftain Doris LaValette, put in a power of work arranging and setting up the event.

And on the night, the Heel n Toe – ably assisted by MC Ken Suttie – kept the program moving along, whether it was dancing or singing.

Meanwhile, by the time you receive this the first pre-ball dancing class will have been held, but if you feel the need to brush up on your dancing or learn dances for the first time, you still have nine weeks to do so.

The next class is on Tuesday 2 October, with Reggie McNeill and myself looking after the tuition.

As we always say – the Ball is much more fun if you can do the dances!

Brian McMurdo  
Chieftain

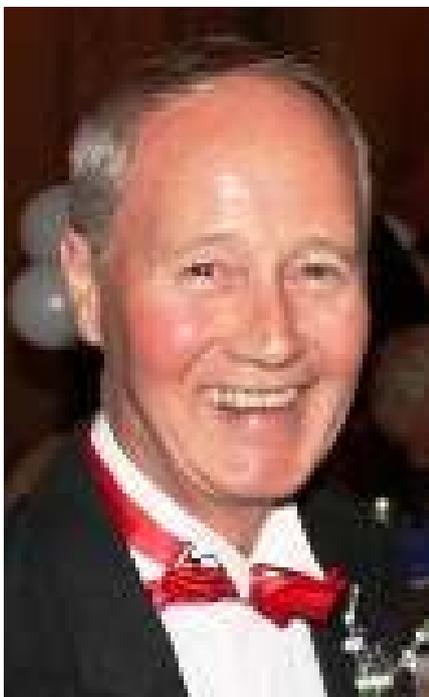
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Our commiserations go out to long-time member Jacqui Ulre, whose mother recently passed away in Scotland.



## MEET THE COMMITTEE

# The irrepressible Cameron Dickson



There would be few people in the Society who don't know of the irrepressible Cameron Dickson, one of the longest serving members of the Committee.

Cameron has been an ever-present on the Committee for seven years – in fact, only Immediate Past Chieftain Ken Suttie has been on the Committee longer.

In that time, he has also held the positions of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer

Born in Knightswood, Glasgow, which Cameron insists is a posh part of that great city, he left Scotland for Australia in February 1966 and went to live in Bondi, Sydney.

He then lived and worked in Brisbane and Melbourne, before moving to Perth in 1968 and taking up a job in the mining town of Goldsworthy.

He went back to Scotland in late 1969 and that was when he met the light of his life, Joyce, and they were married in November 1970.

But Cameron still had a hankering for Australia and the young couple came to Perth in 1971, with Cameron drifting back to the mining industry in 1973.

Joyce gave birth to two of their three children in different mining towns – Lisa in Dampier and Natalie in Karratha.

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Feel free to drop in and see  
a kilt "under construction"!



Actually, their eldest, Bradley, should have been born in another mining town, Parraburdoo, where they were living at the time, but instead he saw his first light of day in Perth!

They built a house in Greenwood at that time, living in it at different times over the years.

Fortunately, they didn't sell it when they went back to Scotland in 1985, because 18 months later the family was back in Perth and they have lived here ever since.

Cameron has worked for the WA Police since November 1993, mainly in the finance area.

The Society's involvement in the Armadale Highland Games over the years has, in a large part, been down to the commitment of Cameron, with Joyce lending a helping hand on the day.



## MEET THE COMMITTEE

# Bitten by the Scottish dancing bug

Cheryl Hill is part of a brother and sister combination on the current Committee . . . her brother Darian Ferguson is the Society's Honorary Secretary.

Cheryl first joined the Committee two years ago, after being proposed by her friend and former long-serving Committee-member Susan Bogie, who was also instrumental in getting her along to Society functions some years back.

"I had no idea what a Scottish ceilidh was, but after being asked on a few occasions to go along to one, a group of us finally attended a Chieftain's Ceilidh," Cheryl said.

"It was held at the Lathlain bowling Club, which is no longer in existence.

"When we arrived at the venue, it was a nice surprise to be greeted by the then Chieftain, Ken Suttie.

"We had never been welcomed to an event before!

"We had spent the day supporting the local wine industry at the Harvest Wines Festival, so we were a very merry group and we had a fantastic night.

"It was so good that all of that group are now members of the Society and regularly attend events."

Cheryl says she can still remember the excitement of being able to do some of the easier dances at the next Ceilidh she attended.



She then went to the Ball dancing classes and joined a Monday night beginner's class in Scottish Country Dancing.

Cheryl quickly caught the Scottish Country Dancing bug and is now part of a stalwart group who support all of the Society events.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Pre-Ball DanceClasses:** Every Tuesday  
25 September to 27 November, 7-9pm

Venue: Osborne Park Community Hall

**St Andrew's Day Ball:** 1 December

Venue: Kings Hotel, Perth

**2013**

**Burns Supper:** 25 January

Venue: Parmelia Hilton Hotel, Perth

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## Alloa Tower

One of Scotland's largest medieval towers, Alloa Tower is the largest surviving keep in Scotland and was built around 1368 by the influential Erskine family, the Earls of Mar and Kellie.

The Erskines were trusted aides to an unbroken line of ruling Stuarts, and guardians to the Royal children.

The name often crops up at pivotal moments in Scottish history – the First Earl of Mar was appointed Regent of Scotland; an Erskine accompanied the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to France for safety; and the 6th Earl of Mar played a role in the Act of Union.

Mary rewarded the Erskines by giving the family the Earldom in 1565.

There is reference to a "manor house" at Alloa in 1448, but it wasn't until 1495 that a defensive tower was mentioned for the first time.

Alloa was one of a string of fortifications along the River Forth, starting at Stirling Castle and running along the north bank of the river where ford crossings had been established.

One of the neighbouring castles - Clackmannan Tower - is visible from Alloa Tower's battlements, along with nine surrounding counties.

The tower rises to a height of 24 metres and the walls are 3.5 metres thick.

One of the earliest features that still remains is the dungeon, now visible through a portal in the floor; the roof is one of few surviving medieval roofs in Scotland; and at first floor level there is a well, which was sunk into the bedrock to bring water into the castle.

The well was blocked up during remodelling work carried out by John Erskine, the 6th Earl of Mar, in the 18th century.

The 6th Earl was inspired by the elegant villas he had seen on his Grand Tour of Europe, adding the Charter Room level with a new entrance, grand staircase and gallery.

Shortly afterwards, the tower became an annex to a much larger classical house, set in 17 hectares of gardens running down to the River Forth.



In 1800, the mansion was destroyed by fire, but the tower was saved when locals dug up the lawn and piled the turf in the doorways between the tower and the mansion to prevent the fire from spreading.

By the 1980s, the tower had fallen into disrepair, with the Erskine family living nearby in a newer house, and the tower passed to the Alloa Tower Building Preservation Trust, which reinstated it to its present state.

Fully restored and furnished, the Tower contains a unique collection of family portraits, artworks by Raeburn and Van Dyck, along with china, silverware, furnishings and period costumes on loan from the present Earl.

The building was opened to the public in 1996.

**By Ken Suttie**



## Scots villages in top ten embarrassing place names

Aberdeenshire can lay claim to two of the ten most embarrassing place names in the United Kingdom.

Brokenwind, near Newmachar, finished third in the survey conducted by family history website [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk).

And Backside, between Dufftown and Huntly, came eighth in the poll, which was topped by Shitterton in Dorset.

Scratchy Bottom in Dorset, Crapstone in Devon and Golden Balls in Oxon also made the top ten.

Earlier this year the Perthshire village of Dull showed it had a sense of humour by twinning with the US town of Boring.

Debra Chatfield, a family historian who carried out the survey, said that in the course of researching their family history, people can discover that their ancestors came from somewhere with an unlikely, unfortunate or downright embarrassing name.

"It's not the worst thing you might unearth when tracing your ancestry," she said.

"But some people are unsettled to discover that their forebears came from Crackpot, Ugley or Happy Bottom, and it can puncture the magic of a genealogical discovery."



## Glasgow thriller named year's best crime novel

A gritty Glasgow-based thriller has been named the best crime novel of the year.

Denise Mina picked up the Theakston's Old Peculier award and a cash prize of £3000 for *The End Of The Wasp Season*.

The Glasgow-born writer's ninth book sees heavily pregnant detective DS Alex Morrow investigating the brutal murder of a woman in an upmarket part of the city

Simon Theakston, executive director of the brewing firm which sponsors the award, presented Mina with her prize at a ceremony in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

"Denise Mina is a fantastically talented writer and *The End Of The Wasp Season* is a thoroughly deserving winner and a great example of tartan noir," he said.

"It was a very tough decision this year, as all the books on the shortlist were outstanding in different ways.

"But I'm delighted to be able to hand the trophy to Denise, the first woman to have won since 2008, for this hugely atmospheric and haunting book."

The award, which was founded in 2005 and is formally known as The Theakston's Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year, is decided by public votes and a panel of experts.

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## Life Support

Morag McMurtrie was visiting one of her relatives in Glasgow's Royal Infirmary.

She hadn't been in a hospital for several years and felt very ignorant about all the new technology.

A technician followed her into the lift, wheeling a large, intimidating looking machine with tubes and wires and dials.

Being a typical, friendly, talkative Glaswegian, she remarked to the technician, "I would hate to be hooked up to that thing."

"Aye, so would I," replied the technician. "It's for sweeping the floor."



## Getting ready for a great Ball

The Society's St Andrew's Day Ball will be a bit different this year, mainly because it will be held in the Kings Perth Hotel for the first time.

The Kings is very keen to put on its best show for the first time there and the Committee is also pulling out all the stops to make it a night to remember.

Our annual celebration of Scotland's National Day will be the usual value for money.

For the very reasonable ticket prices of \$140 for members and \$150 for non-members, guests will receive a great deal

There will be a quality four-course meal (with haggis one of the courses), all that you need to drink – wine, beer and soft drinks – and entertainment.

Leading the entertainment will be our friends in the Heel n Toe band, providing the music to get us dancing.

There will also be a spot for the Perth Scottish Fiddlers . . . something new at the Ball, but everyone loves fiddle music, don't they?

The program is set and now it just needs you to book your tickets or put together a table of friends.

Get the ticket application form at <http://saintandrew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Ball-Flier-2012.pdf>

### Dinner Menu

The menu at this year's Ball should be enough to satisfy every taste.

#### *Entree (alternate drop)*

Classic Italian Antipasto Plate

Roma Tomato and Goat Cheese  
Bruschetta

#### *Main Course (alternate drop)*

Roasted King Snapper

Grilled Rack of Lamb

#### *Dessert*

Honey Pannacotta

Freshly Brewed Coffee and Tea

### Staying over?

If you want to stay over at the Kings, to avoid having to catch a taxi or drive home, the hotel has created a Special Client Booking Facility for Society guests.

Just log into <http://www.kingshotel.com.au/index.site.bookings.html> using the user name and password below and you can book your accommodation at special rates.

Client User Name: Andrew

Password: co6ha6

A Superior Room will cost \$169, a Superior Room with balcony \$177 and a De Luxe Room \$218, all including breakfast.

Also, the hotel has an offer of \$12 for 24-hour parking at the car park next door.

