



The Chanter



Buachaille Etive Mòr, Glencoe

Newsletter

March 2022



The Nottingham Scottish Association

www.nottinghamscottish.org

Here Lies Our Land

Here lies our land: every airt
Beneath swift clouds, glad glints of sun,
Belonging to none but itself.

We are mere transients, who sing
Its westlin' winds and fernie braes,
Northern lights and siller tides,

Small folk playing our part.
'Come all ye', the country says,
You win me, who take me most to heart.

By Kathleen Jamie

Commissioned in 2013 for the 700th Anniversary
of the Battle of Bannockburn

The poem is reproduced by kind permission of the author.

You can hear a reading of the poem [here](#).

President's Page



It is a great pleasure to be slowly returning to normal activities.

We had a very enjoyable evening at our first Burns Night since lockdown, albeit with slightly lower numbers than usual. There was more space on the dance floor for the ceilidh dancing and, while there were fewer diners to cheer on the speakers, their enthusiasm made up for the numbers.

The resumption of Scottish Country Dancing has been a highlight for me. The music stirs the soul and gets the feet tapping. We do have the occasional “senior moment” and a lot of laughter.

For those of our members who are not able to join the dancing, there is fresh air and exercise to be had on the walks followed by excellent company at the accompanying lunches.

We have tried to include everyone in the Zoom evenings and have some excellent contributions coming up in the Scottish Entertainment Evening on 12th March.

As the days grow longer and warmer, we shall be out and about more. Events we have in mind so far include a Jubilee Celebration, Crazy Golf and a Treasure Hunt. If the programme of events doesn't include activities that interest you, the Council is always open to suggestions. Even better if you can help to organise it! We'll all benefit from your fresh ideas.

Don't forget that the Chanter relies on your input. You all have interesting stories to share.

With the AGM coming up in May, could you join the Council?

We need a regular supply of new members with energy and enthusiasm. No experience required!

I look forward to seeing lots of you, hearing your ideas and reading about what it is that makes Scotland so special to you.

Sue Morrison

Vale

With regret, we report that Jimmy More, President 1979-1980, passed away in May 2021.

Jimmy hailed from Wick and came to work in the Town Planning Dept in Nottingham. Like most Scots who arrived here in the 50s he found his way to St Andrews Presbyterian Church, because it was known as the Scottish Church back then. Jimmy helped to make many changes to St Andrews including the organ screen, new halls extension and the heating. He and Eleanor, his wife, were both choir members.

They were quickly “absorbed” into the Association as well and were founder members of the Drama Group and keen dancers. Jimmy became President in 1979 and was an active member until he and Eleanor and the boys, Ian and Graham, moved back to a farm in Loch Maben. His eldest son Ian now runs the farm. I have many fond memories of them all.

Jimmy passed away at 94 in May but will live long in the memories of those who knew him.

Bob Logan

Salve

The Association is pleased to welcome the following new members: Alastair Newton, John Kerr, Helen Beeby, Christine Hyndman and Ruth Watson

From the Editor

Welcome to this bumper edition of the Chanter!

Thanks to those who have contributed with words, photos and ideas. It is your Chanter, so please do continue to support it by continuing to contribute.

You can email them to me at chanter@nottinghamscottish.org.

Andrew

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 12th March: Zoom entertainment night: Details to follow.

Thursday 24th March: Walk. Details to follow.

Saturday 7th May: ASCDS Dance Festival.

Friday 13th May: AGM

Saturday 28th May: Jubilee Celebration. To be confirmed.

The programme is available to view at www.nottinghamscottish.org and will be updated when further details are available. Watch this space!

Did you know?

There is an Association of Past Presidents of local Scottish Societies or Associations (SPA).

I joined SPA more than twenty years ago when I was President of Banbury and District Caledonian Society in 1989/90 and 1999/2000 but I represent Nottingham as the President of S.P.A 2021/2022.

It would be really great to have some support from my Association at the Dinner and Dance which is on the 14th May 2022 at the Derbyshire Hotel, South Normanton just off Junction 28 of the M1. The price of the ticket is £34.00 and should you wish to make a special night of it you can stay at the Hotel for the special rate of £79.00 Bed and Breakfast for two.

I can promise you a lively evening and assure you that a warm welcome will await you if you join us The Dance Programme is a mixture of easy Scottish Dances and Ballroom Dances.

Please contact me for more information. Tel.: 0115 8401701.

Norma Smith

St. Andrew's Night Dinner and Dance 2021



After a Covid-enforced break in 2020, it was a treat to be back celebrating our patron saint at the end of November.

There was inevitably some trepidation beforehand with a smaller than usual number opting to attend. Would there be a sufficient number of people to create the atmosphere we are used to?



In the event, we need not have worried – the number may have been small at just under thirty but everyone was determined to enjoy themselves and so it turned out!

The Loyal Toast was followed by the singing of the national anthem – splendidly led by Dave Chapman.

Don Pringle gave the toast to Scotland and his excellent talk focussed on St Andrew himself.



And so we reached the cèilidh, led by Schuggie Macinnes. The company may have been small in number but was large in spirit. They took the floor enthusiastically in a range of dances – including a long and splendid ‘Strip the Willow’!



Thanks are due to all members who made this happen and, also, to the staff of the Belgrave Rooms who gave us excellent and friendly service all evening.



The President and Guests, Alec and Joyce Stalker



The President and Past - Presidents.

Christmas Walk and Lunch Wednesday 8th December 2021



The last few walks seem to have followed the same pattern: a dire weather forecast the night before followed by surprisingly good weather for the walk! Fortunately, this one followed the pattern!

The group began to assemble at the Toby Inn at around 10.00 to start walking at 10.15. Dave and Jan then led us into Colwick Park along good footpaths and alongside the lakes. While we were posing for a group photograph, we were joined by a group of hungry swans. The day stayed fine and we enjoyed the scenery and the conversation as we worked up an appetite for the coming meal.



We arrived back on schedule to be joined by those who, for various reasons, were not walking – making a party of 26. The crackers were pulled, the jokes were read out (*“What do you get when you cross a vampire with a snowman? Frostbite!”*) and the hats went on!



The plates and glasses were filled and - eventually – emptied while we enjoyed each other's company. Thanks to Mick, we had a mystery raffle to amuse us – prize: a meal for two at the Toby Inn! Well done, Teresa!



The winner!



After missing out last Christmas, it was good to be back! Thanks to Dave and Jan for the walk and to Mick and Sylvia for arranging the meal.

Sue and Andrew

New Year Walk Tuesday 4th January 2022

After what seemed a long damp dark December we were very fortunate that the New Year walk that Andrew arranged for us at Attenborough in advance, turned out to be such a beautiful morning with a blue sky and sunshine.



Eleven of us met together at the Attenborough Reserve Cafe to have a catch up after Christmas before we set out for our walk, bit muddy at times but so much bird watching with lots of little birds to identify, and numerous swans to see, all looking very white in the sun. A skein of geese caught the eye and some of our number had the pleasure of spotting a kingfisher in all its glory.

The river was very high and wide, no wind, so not too cold. Spotting new green shoots to show that the new year is on its way. Although this is a walk we have done before it did look a little bit different as we did our route in reverse!



After our most enjoyable walk we had a very nice lunch at the Corn Mill and a further chat together.

Altogether a very good start to 2022!

Thank you, Andrew.

Isobel Logan

Burns Night Dinner and Dance 2022



It was a great relief to be able to welcome members and friends to a 'real life' celebration of Burns Night! In the event it was as if we had never been away.



After Sue Morrison had welcomed us all, the proceedings began with piper Kevin Haig leading in the haggis for Bob Logan to address – which he did in his customary great style.

The Masonic Staff provided an excellent meal – served with efficiency and a smile - to lead us into the toasts with Highland Honours. Jan Chapman on piano accompanied our singing of the National Anthem before we moved on to the Immortal Memory.



Andrew Morrison started by taking us back to the origins of Burns Night celebrations which started soon after Burns' death. Many aspects of that early supper were recognisable – although he pointed out that the roasted sheep's head which adorned that early table was missing from our modern dinner!

He went on to quote from a report of an Association dinner of 1913, in which the guests developed 'an abnormal thirst' and left in full voice after many toasts. He finished by referring us to Burns' love of life and led us in silent toast to the Immortal Memory.

The 'Lads and Lasses' featured a re-run of previous clashes between Dave Potter and his niece, Fiona Shore. As Don Pringle pointed out in his introduction, the current score stood as 2-0 to Fiona!



Dave regaled us with some anecdotes and a story about a woman who preferred an upgrade to her kitchen to an upgrade to her husband (in a family newsletter the detail of the upgrade must be left to the reader's imagination!)

Fiona's response was well-directed and effective. She finished with an appreciation of how far women had progressed in taking their place in society but also that further progress is still needed. The audience probably felt that the score was now 3-0...



After the toasts, the floor was cleared for us and for Schuggie MacInnes to lead us in a set of well-known dances which brought us to our feet.

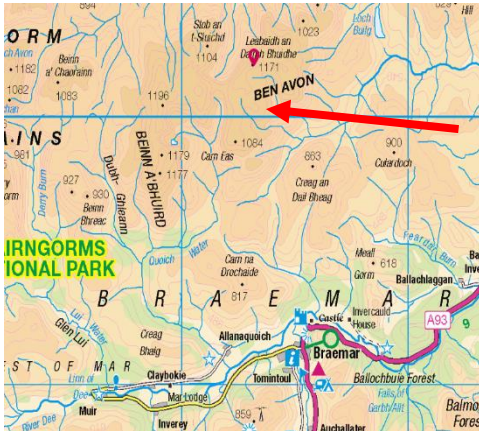
The evening finished with Auld Land Syne and we went on our way just as happy as our forefathers - but maybe not as noisy! Thanks to all who helped make this such a great occasion.

(Photographs courtesy of Alastair Newton)



The Mystery of the Headless Man

The mystery of a headless body found in a remote Scottish beauty spot in September 1938 is a baffling tale.



High on the upper slopes of Ben Avon in the Cairngorms by the side of a stream, a man's torso and head were found 10 miles from Braemar and the nearest road. It is remote now and would have been even more remote then.

Police officers were forced to trudge across peat bogs and moors for four hours to reach the spot. They found the victim - thought to have been dead for six months - wearing a dark, city-style business suit with smart polished shoes.

A gentleman's city hat and a leather briefcase lay beside the body. Inside was a pair of pyjamas, two stiff white starched collars, a shaving kit with a razor, a pair of scissors and some personal belongings. But the dead man had no identification on him and, despite a nationwide appeal for relatives to come forward, nobody ever identified his body.

"Just how did a man dressed for the city come to die in the hills so far from civilisation?"

"He was definitely not a hill walker and the items in his briefcase were what a man would take with him for an overnight stay in a hotel. But no one was ever reported missing from any hotels. There are so many unanswered questions."

The only document detectives found on the victim's body was a receipt in his pocket from Aberdeen bus company, Simpson Motors of Shaw Street, Roseharty, for a two-day coach tour dated March 14, 1938.

But nobody had been reported missing in the area. Extensive nationwide inquiries were made to see if the description of the dead man matched

any other missing person file - but without luck. Every local hotel and guest house was checked, but no guests had failed to return.

Police were mystified as to how the man had been decapitated, but with the lack of forensic investigative techniques at the time, concluded that the head had been taken from the body by wild animals, possibly foxes.



"Why was he taken to Ben Avon and murdered and his body left in a place, which was in the 1930s, almost inaccessible? It was and remains a complete mystery."

Thanks to Rosie Allen for bringing us this mystery!

The Cairngorms are home to other mysteries - including the **Great Grey Man of Ben Macdui!** Professor John Norman Collie, a distinguished scientist, encountered him in 1925: *"Every few steps I took I heard a crunch, and then another crunch, as if someone was walking after me but taking steps three or four times the length of my own. I said to myself, this is all nonsense. As I walked on and the eerie crunch, crunch sounded behind me, I was seized with terror and took to my heels nearly down to Rothiemurchus Forest. Whatever you make of it, I do not know, but there is something very queer about the top of Ben Macdui and I will not go back there again."*



A Brocken Spectre is a plausible explanation for some mystery sightings.

Doon the Caley!

Inverness to Fort William via Raigmore Hospital

Summer 2021.

Sue and I are used to watching fishing boats, yachts, cruisers, canoes, kayaks and other assorted marine flotsam traversing the Caledonian Canal. So, when our friends offered us the chance to join them on their yacht, the Sally T, in Inverness and sail with them to Loch Linnhe at the other end, we jumped at the chance.

The Caledonian Canal begins with a sea lock in Inverness and runs through the Great Glen for about 60 miles incorporating 3 lochs, 29 locks and 10 swing bridges.

Having travelled up the previous day, we joined Sally T early the next morning as she came through the Inverness sea lock. The first day was to take us on to Loch Ness – events turned out differently.

Our first task was to go up through the first two locks – both successfully accomplished after a short tutorial on the best nautical rope-throwing techniques. Unfortunately, the next step was a step too far or possibly not far enough – I'm not sure which. At any rate, on taking a line (that's a rope to you!) ashore I somehow missed my step and ended up on the ground with my head split open. Hence the trip to Raigmore Hospital.

Thanks to the NHS I was soon patched up in A&E in surprisingly quick time. It was so quick, in fact, that if you're injured in Nottingham it might be quicker to get to Inverness than queue up at Queen's! Fortunately, no major harm was done and I merely added to a lifetime's scar tissue.

The next day saw us cruising through Loch Ness on a beautiful summer day. It is 23 miles long, deeper than most of the North Sea and contains more freshwater than all the lakes in England and Wales combined! The views included Urquhart Castle, a picturesque ruin, and many miles of steep, wooded slopes. No sign of Nessie, though!

An overnight stop at Fort Augustus allowed time to stretch the legs with great views of the Loch.



Loch Ness

The next day took in the first flight of locks and a gentle cruise through Loch Oich to an overnight mooring at the Eagle floating pub at the north end of Loch Lochy. Very conveniently placed for a good meal and a stroll in the surrounding countryside.



The Eagle Barge: Floating Pub

The final stage goes through Loch Lochy and ends at the top of Neptune's staircase at Banavie.

At this point we jumped ship, picked up our car from where we left it and re-joined the boat to help navigate 'Neptune's Staircase' – a ladder of 8 consecutive locks. This is always a great occasion and in normal years before the pandemic there would be a coach load of appreciative tourists to watch you through. It was a little quieter this time!



Sally T on Neptune's Staircase

The last we saw of Sally T was as she sailed through the sea lock at Corpach en route to the Western Isles. We were sorry to see her go!

Andrew Morrison

Bramcote Walk

Tuesday 15th February

A dreadful forecast followed by the pleasant surprise of a relatively dry walk has been something of a theme for recent outings. It, therefore, came as no surprise to read the forecast for Tuesday 15th February – it was dire. And so the weather turned out to be! I suppose our luck was bound to run out some time...



Six Drowned Rats?



Did the weather put us off? Well, six intrepid members gathered for a walk taking in Bramcote Hills Park, Stapleford and Bramcote Village.

Good conversation sustained everyone until the end of the walk – by which time the rain had eased and the walkers tumbled in to the Sherwin Arms for a welcome lunch – complete, of course, with pudding!

Quiz Night

Saturday 19th February

This was the latest round of the contest between Sue Pringle and the assorted brains of the Nottingham Scottish Association!

'This will be a lot easier than last time' she said. Aye, right.

The questions were as tricky as ever. Can you tell your 1603 from your 1707? Both are dates of union, but which one unified the kingdom? Answers on a postcard, please...

Much discussion followed but as ever the referee's decision was final – although hotly disputed!



Can you tell your Edinburgh Castle from your Stirling Castle? (See below for answer. Ed.)

Fortunately, Bill and Jean were on the case (after successfully wrestling with Zoom) and walked out comfortable winners.

Congratulations to them and thanks to Sue and Don for hosting such an enjoyable evening.

(The one on the left is Stirling... or is it Edinburgh...no I'm sure it's Stirling. Maybe. Ed)

Kathleen Jamie



Kathleen Jamie is a poet and essayist. She was appointed as the fourth Scottish Makar in August 2021.

Raised in Currie, near Edinburgh, she studied philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, publishing her first poems as an undergraduate. Her writing is rooted in Scottish landscape and culture, and ranges through travel, women's issues, archaeology, and visual art. She writes in English and occasionally in Scots.



“Here Lies Our Land” was chosen by popular vote to be inscribed on the national monument at the site of the Battle of Bannockburn.

THE COUNCIL 2021/22

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