



The Chanter



Isle of Rhum, viewed from Gallanach Beach on the Isle of Muck

Newsletter

June 2022



The Nottingham Scottish Association

www.nottinghamscottish.org

Breathes There a Man

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!

.....

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me of all bereft,
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left;
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.

An extract from the poem by Sir Walter Scott

(see p19)

President's Page



It is hard to believe that it is now a year since I started my term of office!

In that time, we have had the delta variant, the omicron variant and various shades of lockdown. However, I'm pleased to say that the Association has been able to maintain a good spread of activities.

In spite of some trepidation, our two main dinners – for St Andrew's and Burns Nights were able to go ahead. Several members have led enjoyable walks, we had a varied and successful 'Zoom Evening' and a Quiz. Our weekly Scottish Dance Socials resumed in September and our dance team took part in the (very much delayed) 40th Anniversary Dance Festival of the ASCDS. To end the year, we celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a well-attended Garden Party.

Needless to say, none of these events happen without work from the Council and from other members. My thanks to all who have contributed to these activities.

The Council is working on a programme of activities for the coming year, with the aim of having something for everyone. Please, if you have an idea for an event you would like to see, let a member of the Council know – and particularly if you can offer help to organise it!

On a personal note, Andrew and I had the pleasure of a visit from our daughter and family from California for the first time in the best part of three years and finally caught up with a long-delayed holiday in Sicily. It may be tempting providence, but it feels as if we are back to something much closer to normal life than the previous two years! Let's hope it continues.

Sue Morrison

Salve

The Association is pleased to welcome Elaine Davey and Janet Blanchard as members.

From the Editor

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

Friday 3rd June: Final Scottish Dance evening and party night.

Thursday 16th June: Walk. Oxtun. Details from Sue Morrison and on the website.

Friday 8th July: Garden Dance. Details from Sue Morrison and on the website.

Tuesday 19th July: Walk. Details to follow.

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

Gaelic Lessons?

Have you ever felt the wish to know more about the language spoken across the Highlands for hundreds of years and still evident in the place names scattered over Scotland?

We now have a chance for you to follow this up! NSA member, Alasdair Baxter, grew up as a Gaelic speaker in Glencoe and is offering to teach the language to any of our members. **If you are interested, please contact Sue Morrison, in the first instance.**

North Sea Gas



North Sea Gas at the Boat and Horses has become an annual treat, so it was good to welcome them back after the Covid - enforced break. They played a mixed set of old favourites and new songs.

A large group of Nottingham Scottish and Beeston U3A members were there to sing along and get fully into the spirit of the occasion. Looking forward to their return next year!

Zoom Evening 12th March 2022



With the pandemic back for a third time (or was it more?) the Council planned for another Covid-proof Zoom entertainment! It featured contributions from our talented members, from Les Wilkinson and Higgs Bo'sun as well as a selection of Scottish music and poetry.

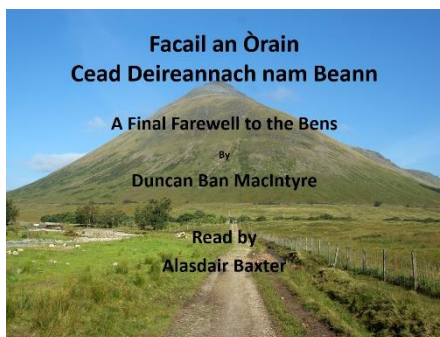
An Oban
Childhood

Margaret Barnes



Margaret Barnes remembered episodes from her Oban childhood – featuring a level of freedom that seems to be lost to today’s children. Tales of falling into burns and wandering the woods are the stuff of happy memories!

Alasdair Baxter is our only native speaker of Gaelic (we believe) and he gave us a poem by Duncan Ban MacIntyre written in the 18th Century which lamented his retirement from the hills around Glen Orchy. (*Alasdair is offering Gaelic lessons to members – see p4. Ed.*)



Bill and Jeanne Dall kept us amused – with Jeanne’s description of eating habits in the 1950s triggering a good few memories! Dave Chapman introduced us to “The Bonnie lass o’Fyvie” sung by the Corries.

One highlight was ‘Doddie’s Dream’ performed by a star line up of Scottish Musicians (including Blazin’ Fiddles, Nicola Benedetti, Ali Bain and Phil Cunningham). This was written to raise money for the Motor Neurone Disease charity set up by the well-known Scottish rugby player, Doddie Weir, who is himself a sufferer from MND.

The evening finished with ‘The Wild Geese’ written by Violet Jacob and sung by Jim Reid – a song of longing written by a Scottish exile in England. A very appropriate way to finish the evening!

Thanks to Les Wilkinson and all members who contributed.

‘A Walk in The Park’, 24th March 2022



It was a beautiful sunny day on Thursday 24th March, when fourteen intrepid walkers met at The Wheelhouse Pub/Restaurant in Wollaton. We set off, making our way to Wollaton Hall admiring this splendid mansion, built between 1580 – 1588, for the Willoughby Family.



Although this is a Deer Park, during the walk we came across only one lone deer, resting in the shade. The Walled Garden is now in the process of restoration.

Venturing through an ‘Alice in Wonderland’ door, led us to cross a busy road and enter Nottingham University Campus and grounds, immediately admiring beds of beautiful yellow daffodils and white narcissus.



Walking on, we passed the lake and sculptures, including two Chinese Lions guarding steps leading onto the Lake. The Lions were gifts from Nottingham's Sister City, Ningbo, China in 2015. Each Lion is approximately two meters tall, weighing 3.5 tonnes, and like the Lions guarding the entrance to the Forbidden City in Beijing.



The male lion has his paw on a ball representing supremacy over the world. Females often hold a ball or a cub. One Lion, appears to be smiling, has a ball in its mouth, which rolls about, but cannot be removed,

Nottingham City gifted to Ningbo a full-size statue of Robin Hood, similar to the one standing outside Wollaton Hall. Carrying on, we saw a clutch of baby goslings with Mum and Dad. They were cute. (Big Ah!) The Campus Grounds are impressive and very well kept. Our group stopped at a restaurant for a welcome drink and ice-cream.

We are incredibly lucky to have such local venues where families and children, of all ages, can stroll around and run about. Making our way back to The Wheelhouse, we enjoyed our lunch.

Big Thanks to Rosie for organising the day.

Jeanne and Bill Dall



ASCDS Festival Saturday 7th May 2022



After a two-year delay, the 40th Anniversary ASCDS Dance Festival finally happened! The effects of Covid meant that fewer teams than usual took part, but the event is still a highlight for dancers across the East Midlands and South Yorkshire.

The Nottingham Scottish team were proud to be there and all acquitted themselves well. A highlight was the performance at the festival of '20-20 Vision composed by Andrew Morrison. A video of the performance can be seen on [You Tube](#).

First Impressions of the Festival

Helen Beeby, a Festival 'First Timer', has given us her first impressions of the event:

As a fairly newcomer to Scottish dancing, I thought it might be an interesting experience to volunteer to dance at the Festival - if needed and if good enough - and thinking this would only be for one or two dances!

However, due to circumstances, I was required to dance in 10 dances! It was a daunting task to learn so many as when I learned two dances I had forgotten the rest!

I was advised to look on the Festival website and I was glad I did as I saw the numbers of dancers in the hall. It would have been overwhelming if I hadn't seen this. Everyone was so kind, lending me a dress, brooch, sash, pins etc. We all got ready in a buzz of excitement and anticipation with everyone helping to pin, gather and tuck our sashes into place.

When we assembled in the hall my partner and I were at the front behind the Nottingham Scottish Association banner and I felt like an Olympic athlete parading round the stadium!

An experienced dancer told me to look at the display of beautiful dancing but after a brief glance I was back to studying my dance notes. I thought I would get a brief reminder of the dance sequence but 'Oh No!' after the welcoming speeches we were straight to our first dance!

It all went fairly well and I could smile with relief as our last dance ended. The preparation and experience of dancing at the Festival has given me more confidence to dance in our weekly club sessions.

Helen Beeby

The Puddock



As a young loon of nine years, I recall learning a piece of Scottish Doric poetry while attending Balnacoul Primary School, in Mosstodloch, near Fochabers.

Although located on Speyside, in Morayshire, Doric was very much the local lingo amongst local bairns (mostly daughters or sons of farming folk) - Doric prevailed, despite our teachers' efforts tae get us tae spik proper!

The poem, *The Puddock*, is allegedly well-known (or weel-kent) as we'd say. The interesting part for me is that the writer, John Morrison Caie, was raised in Fochabers and attended the same school as myself, Milne's Institution (later changed to Milne's High School, because many people associated the Institution name with borstal or other punitive/corrective bodies!)

Mr Caie, originally from Banchory, was a son of the Manse and quite a respected poet and learned gent. He was also a high flying civil servant and died in 1949.

Translations available for a small fee - Scottish pounds only!
(Or see [here](#).)

Steve Sinclair

The Puddock

A puddock sat by the lochan's brim,
An' he thocht there was never a puddock like him.
He sat on his hurdies, he waggled his legs,
An' cockit his heid as he glowered throu' the seggs.

The bigsy wee cratur' was feelin' that prood,
He gapit his mou' an' he croakit oot lood:
"Gin ye'd a' like tae see a richt puddock," quo' he,
"Ye'll never, I'll sweer, get a better nor me.

I've fem'lies an' wives an' a weel-plenished hame,
Wi' drink for my thrapple an' meat for my wame.
The lasses aye thocht me a fine strappin' chiel,
An' I ken I'm a rale bonny singer as weel.

I'm nae gaun tae blaw, but th' truth I maun tell-
I believe I'm the verra MacPuddock himsel'." ...

A heron was hungry an' needin' tae sup,
Sae he nabbit th' puddock and gollup't him up;
Syne runkled his feathers: "A peer thing," quo' he,
"But - puddocks is nae fat they eesed tae be!

Cotgrave Walk, 11th May 2022



We have had a few wet walks this year and this was another! A group of eight hardy walkers gathered in Cotgrave fully equipped with waterproof clothing (and an umbrella).

The route took us through Cotgrave Country Park – the site of an old colliery which has been transformed into an attractive country park with developing woods and pond areas.



Our walk took us to the old Grantham canal which runs through the park, where we found a family of geese who clearly loved the weather! From the point of view of us humans, the paths, thankfully, were good!

The walk finished with an excellent lunch provided by the Manvers Arms.

Thanks to Dieter for organising and leading the walk.

The North Coast 500

In April 2021 as we came out of yet another long Covid lockdown the opportunity arose for myself to visit Scotland with a close friend, Mark Robertson, to drive the iconic NC500.



We had both taken voluntary severance from our employer, Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK, after 25 years of service. During Lockdown we had often discussed driving the North Coast 500 in Mark's VW camper.

If you are not already familiar with it the NC500, it was dreamt up as a marketing whiz by VisitScotland in 2015. Branded as the ultimate UK road trip, it has been spectacularly successful, some would say too successful, in attracting tourists to the far north of Scotland. Starting from Inverness the 500 mile, well actually 516 mile, route winds around some of Scotland's finest coastal scenery.

A boys' holiday of more than a week's duration was no small ask of our good ladies Sue and Helen. With our leave passes stamped we packed the van, popped our kayaks on the roof rack and made the run for the border on the 26th April, when the Scottish Government eased restrictions on travel.

We found roads very quiet and the imagined convoy of campervans heading north never materialised.

We planned an 8 day trip with 2 days to get to the start of the route, 5 days including a rest day in the middle to do the route and a day to drive back home. We wanted to be responsible visitors and booked campsites for all but one of our nights. We chose to do the route counter clockwise from Inverness heading up through Caithness to John O'Groats, then across the top of Scotland to Durness then south through Sutherland via Ullapool to Glencoe for our last night.

First stop was Linwood, the small town near Paisley where I grew up then off to the Cashel Camp site on the banks of Loch Lomond. On Day 2 we drove to Forres on the Morayshire coast to visit my cousin before starting the NC500 proper. We stopped off at the Falls of Falloch, drove across the rugged beauty of Rannoch Moor then through Glen Coe. Stopping off to visit the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge and Urquhart Castle before arriving at our campsite in Nairn.

Day 3 we set off on the NC500 proper with our first stop on the Black Isle to see the dolphins but none were to be seen. We met a Dutch lady who after years of holidaying in the Highlands had retired to the Isle. She explained the best chance to see the dolphins is when they follow the fish in on the incoming tide.



We drove north through Caithness stopping to see the Mermaid of the North on the shore in Balintore, Dunrobin Castle and the moving Emigrants Statue at Helmsdale, commemorating the families who left for America and Canada during the Highland Clearances.

Sadly, we could not climb the famous Whaligoe Steps near Wick as they were closed for maintenance.



That evening we wild camped in the carpark of Duncansby Head Lighthouse. We learnt the hard way it is not a good idea to park a campervan with a pop up tent roof facing out to sea with an onshore wind!

It was a wild and windy night but the views across the Pentland Firth towards the Orkney Isles were worth it. We were able to count over a dozen light houses blinking against the night sky!

Day 4 started with a short but bracing walk to see the famous Duncansby Head Stacks, bacon butties at John O'Groats and another walk to Dunnet Head, the most northly point of Scotland, followed by a scenic drive across the very top of Scotland to the fabulous Sango Sands campsite at Durness.

We visited the famous Smoo Caves and then the grave of the 17th century Irish pirate and bandit, Donuill Mac Morraichaid, in the ruined Kirk. Allegedly, he dispatched his victims by hurling them to a grisly death down the blow hole of Smoo Cave. Visiting the Cave and going inside in the little raft was a real high light of our trip.

Day 5 we started to head south on the rapidly narrowing, twisting road through the wild and rugged countryside of Sutherland with its mountains and sea lochs. Suilven, the lonely mountain, was a highlight for me as was the scenic Kylesku Bridge, where we found a monument to the brave X Boat sailors who trained there before setting out in miniature submarines to try to sink the Tirpitz. We spent that night at the Gruinard Bay campsite with views out to sea of the famous island just off the coast where biological warfare experiments were carried out in WWII.

Day 6 we visited Loch Ewe, the assembly point for the artic convoys to supply Russia in WWII, on our way to Loch Maree. It was a beautiful clear cold day for a paddle on this most scenic of Lochs with its myriad small islands, some with beautiful sandy

beaches. We took care to avoid the islands which were out of bounds to kayakers to protect the nesting sites of the rare black-throated diver birds.



In a change of plan we decided to cut our trip short by one day and not have a rest day as planned at Gruinard and kept on the move. Something had to give so we decided to leave the drive through the Applecross Pass for a future trip. We headed south through more spectacular scenery, stopping off at Eilean Donan Castle on our way to our final overnight campsite at Glencoe, where we enjoyed a long walk in the darkening evening dusk through the dramatic pass musing on the sad fate of the MacDonalds there so long ago.

The next day we set out on the long drive home to Nottingham after a memorable trip which we would love to return to one day. If you are thinking of driving the NC500 we'd recommend allowing yourself more time than we did with some non-driving rest days. Go early or late in the season to avoid the crowds and the dreaded midge! If possible do it in a car and treat yourself to some traditional Highland hospitality in the many bed and breakfasts or small hotels along the route. A huge thank you to Sue and Helen for our fabulous boys driving holiday!

Ian Law

Platinum Jubilee Celebration



The Association paid its respects to Her Majesty on Sunday 29th May by gathering for – we hoped – a garden party.

On a distinctly cloudy and cool afternoon 27 members met in the garden of the President's house in Bramcote for afternoon tea. The tables were set and the guests were seated. Then it rained...

Fortunately, our members are nothing if not resourceful – everything was quickly whisked indoors. While the tea brewed Andrew presented a quiz covering the 70 years of the Queen's reign which evoked some nostalgic memories of time past. After that a splendid tea was provided from the food supplied by all the guests.

By then the rain had stopped and the sun was shining so at last we could return to the garden to continue our conversations!



Thanks to Sue and Andrew Morrison for the use of their house and garden.

Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832



One of Scotland's most famous literary icons, Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh where he studied at the Royal High School and Edinburgh University.

He began his career as a lawyer, but his interest in, and knowledge of, the Borders led to the publication of his first work: 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' (from which this edition's poem is taken) which was an enormous success.

He followed this by further best-selling narrative poems and the succession of historical novels - the Waverley Novels.



Abbotsford House – the home of Sir Walter Scott

THE COUNCIL 2022/23

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Vice President	Dave Chapman
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