



The Chanter



Newsletter

March 2021



The Nottingham Scottish Association

Honorary Patron Sir Andrew Buchanan Bt. KCVO KStJ

www.nottinghamscottish.org

President's Page



Feeling a little sad, as this is my last contribution to the Chanter as President, 3 years in total, 2 perfectly normal years with the last one far from normal.

This last year has been very interesting, we have developed a new way of communicating and keeping in touch. The Council has met regularly using Zoom, we were a bit shaky to start with, but now, are almost professional in the way we hold our meetings. Hopefully our last Zoom meeting will be the AGM at the end of this month on the 29th of April.

Through the year we held a Virtual St Andrews Night, a Virtual Burns Night, several quizzes and an excellent talk about St Kilda. Further into this issue you will see the write-ups for the last 3 events held.

Normally at the end of their term the President hosts the President's night. We discussed this at the last Council meeting and decided we would hold it later this year. I have the indoor curling stones booked, but need to confirm a date, which we cannot do until the Church Hall is functioning fully. So, we have decided to hold it later in the year, possibly a Saturday Evening in October. I'm looking forward to seeing everybody there already.

As the year progresses, things are beginning to look better, Sue and I are booked in for our second vaccination, the weather is improving and we will soon be able to attend events in person.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my Presidency and look forward to many more years of enjoyable membership of our Association.

le meas coibhneil

Don

Vale



Sadly, in December last year we lost Christine Oldfield a stalwart of the Association.

She soon after joining the Association took over the Editorship of the Chanter, and did a fantastic job, editions were full of interesting articles, keeping us up to date with events held, With, many a story from contributors she had coaxed into writing articles.

She also along with Andrew managed the Thursday night dancing, they were very enjoyable nights with a regular group of attendees.

She is sorely missed by many within the Association and will always remain in my memory. I personally miss her reminders for my page in the Chanter.

Our thoughts and best wishes go out the John and their family.

Don Pringle

An appeal for a new editor

This edition of The Chanter may be the last!

The Chanter has been our newsletter for many years. The style has changed as many editors have brought with them fresh ideas. We are very sad to have lost Christine, but the show must go on.

If you think that you might enjoy being our new editor, now is the time to come forward. If you can source the articles and decide on the layout, but are not sure how to turn it into a booklet or format it for the website, we can help. You can talk to one of the Council to find out what is involved or send an email to chanter@nottinghamscottish.org.

An appeal to all our members.

Please keep sending us articles so that our new editor will have something to work with. It can be anything with a Scottish theme. Introduce yourself, tell us about a holiday or a childhood in Scotland, share a Scottish recipe or an article that you have seen somewhere else.

We would love to see your pictures, songs, poems, wildlife encounters, puzzles and so much more. The Chanter is what YOU make it (with a little help from the editor).

Burns Night. 23rd January 2021



The Nottingham Scottish are an intrepid bunch. Covid-19 was not going to stop us from celebrating our national poet, so on January 23rd we cooked our haggis, poured out a dram or two and gathered by Zoom!

We have to thank Christine Oldfield for the programme she had planned for us and, appropriately, this evening was dedicated to her memory.

The first half was all about Burns, with poems, songs and readings. Dave Potter considered the origin of the Haggis and wondered was it really Scottish? A question to which there can surely be only one answer! Bob Logan addressed the haggis in great style and Sylvia Hale gave us the immortal memory. The second half had more of a ceilidh feel with a mixture of Scottish folk songs, dance and humour. An undoubted highlight was Les Wilkinson's performance of 'The Kelty Clippie', 'Pittenweem Jo' and, with Higgs Bo'sun, 'Lochboisdale'. A real tour de force. Humour was provided by the inimitable Stanley Baxter with his sketch 'The Scottish Country Dancer' and by 'The Dancer's Lament' from Teresa Allen. The evening finished with 'My Heart is in the Highlands' by Margaret Barnes. Thanks to all those who made this such a memorable evening in these strange times.

An Evening on St Kilda. 20th February 2021

Dave and Jan Chapman kept us spellbound with their stories and pictures of the time they spent as volunteers on St Kilda. We may not have been able to travel through space and time to see the island as it was when they were there, but they were able to paint for us a vivid picture of the hard work, spartan sleeping quarters, friendship and fun.

The beautiful and dramatic scenery brought memories of our own visits to Scottish islands flooding back. As we shared our stories, we were reminded of why we love Scotland and how much we look forward to being able to return.

Thanks to Dave and Jan for such a lovely evening. They have followed their talk with this piece about St Kilda for The Chanter. Sit back and enjoy the trip.

Reminiscences of a working holiday on St. Kilda

Hirta Bay, St.Kilda, August 13th 1978. That morning we stepped gingerly down into the army dinghy that would bring us back onto terra firma (on Hirta, the main island) after a seasick night out on the Atlantic. Our National Trust for Scotland work party leader, John Barry, had warned us that the 22-hour voyage from Oban could be uncomfortable and hoped that we had 'a good head for heights' (Why that? we thought – we'd soon see!). But he'd also written that if we were prepared 'to live and work together with a strange assortment of people, you'll have the finest holiday of your life and find that St.Kilda is a magic island.' He was spot on about both things, and our subsequent experiences during our two weeks there left us enchanted by the islands' natural beauty, by the village and its omnipresent reminders of the St.Kildans' way of life, and by the seabirds and the wild Soay sheep.

I'll try and convey this by means of a few verbal 'snapshots':

*Spectacular sea cliffs: When we stepped out of the restored cottages that accommodated us, we were greeted by a view of the steep green hillside that rises above the Bay to the heights of the Conachair seacliffs, the UK's highest. On approaching the summit, we remembered John's advice to be cautious when on the island's high places. Sure enough –

one more step and the cliff-face fell abruptly away beneath our feet. We felt safest when we were lying down at the cliff edge, admiring the lines of fulmar nests and listening to seals bellowing from the ocean shore.

*Cleits (dry-stone [granite] storage 'huts'): Another opportunity for enjoying the scenery of St.Kilda's cliffs and sea stacks came when we hiked across Hirta with a view to spending the night in a picturesque and (we hoped) structurally sound stone cleit. No sign, thank goodness, of the cleit's previous contents of, perhaps, seabird carcasses or cured fish. Our reward for that sleepless night was the glorious dawn vision across the waves of the islet of Boreray, home to thousands of gannets and to the UK's rarest breed of wild sheep, the Hebridean Blackface.

*A view from sea level: Thanks to the kindness of some army lads that we'd got to know, Martin and I could borrow a pair of canoes and paddle around the edge of Village Bay to take a closer look at the puffins. The expedition's highlight was our passage on a lively swell through the broad sea arch beneath Dun, the island with the main puffin colony.

*Our daily working routine: At supper times when the twelve of us sat by the village's main street and discussed our work schedules we'd recall the photographs, taken in the very same place, of the St.Kilda 'Parliament'. That was how Victorian visitors dubbed the morning meetings at which the day's tasks were divided up among the members of that super-egalitarian/-mindful island society. Our 'finest holiday' assessment is largely due to the immersion in some aspects of traditional St.Kildan life that the physical work gave us and the sense of privilege that came from being able to help conserve their village. I recall my excitement at coming across a snipe on its nest while I was digging out the weeds blocking a drainage burn. Not quite the rock climbing skills or the daring of a native St.Kildan guy, but seabird harvesting wasn't in our job description for that August! Jan helped to cook for us a meal from fish (an enormous pollock) that had been freshly caught by another kind soldier lad. She also made a cake in the form of a cleit with many 'corbelled' (overlapping) slices; it vanished in no time!

*Getting close to some rare seabirds: One evening, the Nature Conservancy warden guided a group of us up through the boulders to the heights of Mullach Bi seacliff. On the way we passed the Lover's Stone, perched high above a cliff, where (apparently) 'young St Kildan men had to prove themselves worthy of marriage by standing on one foot above the precipice, holding their other foot in their hands'. With darkness falling as we crouched down quietly among the rocks, the warden indicated the sounds made by Manx shearwaters and storm petrels as they flew into

their roosting places nearby. We returned carrying a lost fledgling puffin, which we released the next day (for a safe homecoming, we hoped).

These were some of the ingredients of a holiday that turned us into devotees of St.Kilda. If you would like to read an engaging, highly readable novel that is based on a profound knowledge of the islands and their culture, I strongly recommend the recently published 'The Lost Lights of St.Kilda' by Elisabeth Gifford (Corvus, 2020).

David Chapman (with help from Jan)

Quiz Night Saturday 20th March 2021

Following the success of our pre-Christmas Quiz Night, Sue and Don kindly agreed to a follow-up session.

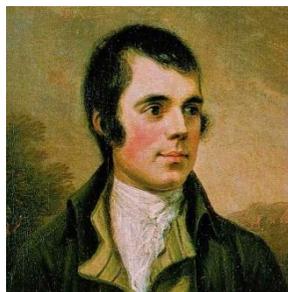
We started with the picture round – could we identify 10 eminent Scots from their photos? Evidently not!



Robert Louis Stevenson?



Flora MacDonald?



Robert Burns!

The following rounds continued to test our knowledge of Scotland. Some questions we could do – which city is famous for Jam, Jute and Journalism? Some we thought we knew, but didn't – who brought Protestantism to Scotland? No, it wasn't St. Columba! Others were just impossible – except not to everyone.

In the end Margaret Barnes ran out the worthy winner, having displayed an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Scots. Second place was shared by Andrew and Sue with Gail and Steve.

Thanks again to Sue and Don for setting up and hosting the evening. It was great to see old friends and it brightened up our lockdown. **Andrew**

A big thank you to **Dave Potter** who has done such a sterling job in keeping us all informed and amused by his regular emails. Please send Dave any new cartoon or jokes so that we can all share them.

A visit to Mull and Iona

In September, four of us sailed from Oban to Mull, where we stayed in Craignure in the only two rooms still available. The island was even more popular than usual. Once we had passed the temperature test, we settled in and planned our outings for following days. Tobermory was an obvious destination and we managed to have lunch and a short walk before the heavens opened.

Nearer to home, we tackled the narrow and, at times, hair-raising private drive of Duart Castle. The castle is an impressive fortress and the views are lovely. The castle is a landmark on the ferry crossing from Oban.

The highlight of our short stay was a trip to Iona. The long drive to Fionnphort was an adventure in itself. We were well on the way along the single-track road when a workman flagged us down. The road was being closed for resurfacing. Cars quickly stacked up behind us, all headed for the next ferry. With some difficulty, we were directed off the road onto a very muddy track to a graveyard. We were, eventually, allowed to continue to find that the ferry had sailed. An extra sailing was arranged and after another soaking on the crossing, we were greeted by a warning that remaining sailings for the day might be cancelled due to stormy



weather. Not wishing to be stranded on the island, we had a quick walk around the abbey and headed back to the ferry. The location of the abbey is stunning, the sun shone and the ferry was still sailing on our return. It was a memorable day.

Sue Morrison

Future Events

The 2021 AGM will be held on Zoom on 29th April 7 pm for 7:30 pm.

We are not yet able to use the church hall. If you can't join us on ZOOM for the AGM and have any issues you would like us to discuss, please tell Margaret or one of the Council. We 'll get back to you with the outcome.

Dave Potter is sending membership information **by email** with Membership and GDPR forms as attachments. He is also sending:

- Minutes of the last AGM (held in 2019)
- The call to meeting for this AGM
- Nomination forms for officers and members of the Council.

For members without access to email or for whom we do not know your email address, the information and forms will be sent by post. Please remember to renew your membership by 27th April. Bank details are on the Membership form.

Please let us know if you do have an email address but haven't yet given it to us.

Now that we can start to plan outdoor events, Dave Potter has offered to lead a walk on 19th May. Details will be in Dave's emails. You can ring Dave for details if you do not receive emails.

Other events are being planned and are likely to include a BBQ and a garden dance/social. Details will be announced later. Let a Council member know if you have a great idea for a future event.



If you're not already a member, why don't you join The Nottingham Scottish Association Facebook group?

Lochnagar

Away, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses,
In you let the minions of luxury rove,
Restore me the rocks where the snow-flake reposes,
Though still they are sacred to freedom and love.
Yet Caledonia, beloved are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war,
Though cataracts foam 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Lochnagar.

Ah! there my young footsteps in infancy wander'd,
My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid.
On chieftains long perish'd my memory ponder'd
As daily I strode through the pine-cover'd glade.
I sought not my home till the day's dying glory
Gave place to the rays of the bright polar star,
For fancy was cheer'd by traditional story
Disclos'd by the natives of dark Lochnagar!

Shades of the dead! Have I not heard your voices
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale?
Surely the soul of the hero rejoices,
And rides on the wind o'er his own Highland vale.
Round Lochnagar while the stormy mist gathers,
Winter presides in his cold icy car.
Clouds there encircle the forms of my fathers;
They dwell in the tempests of dark Lochnagar.

by George Gordon, Lord Byron

Lochnagar



Lochnagar, also called Beinn Chiochan, is a mountain in the Grampians. At 1155m, it is a 'Munro' and lies about five miles south of the River Dee near Balmoral.

The Scottish Climbing Archive describes the mountains:

“Situated on Royal Deeside, the mountains of Lochnagar stand guard over Balmoral Palace and the towns of Ballater, Braemar and Balmoral. The mountains are popular all year round with walkers, rock and ice climbers and mountaineers.

The open countryside here is idyllic and the mountain views are expansive, however, to appreciate these views you need to ascend to the summits! From the ground you'll see lots of green hillside and perhaps the odd cliff - from the summits you'll see mountain ridges, rivers, lochs and if you ascend to Lochnagar, the impressive cliffs that are so appealing to rock and ice climbers.”

Byron's poem was set to music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop. Many of us know the song from recordings by The Corries. One can be found on YouTube with a slideshow of beautiful photographs of the mountain.

THE COUNCIL 2019/2021

Office holders

President	Don Pringle
Vice President	Sue Morrison
Past President	Dave Potter
Secretary	Margaret Barnes
Treasurer	Sylvia Hale
Membership Secretary	Rosie Allen

Members

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Lyndsey Lyas
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