

# GRACE NOTES

Vol. 25 No. 5

May 2009

## Time for a Picnic!

Who: You! (MSSI members)  
 What: MSSI Spring Picnic  
 When: Saturday, May 16, 2009  
 from noon to 4 p.m.

Where: Plum Nelly, (Agnes Stark's Pottery Studio, that's Plum out of town, Nelly out in the country) 12675 Donelson Road; Eads, TN 38028; 901-867-9240

How: In a good mood, set to get even better

Yep, it's that time. As we have for the last few years, we're holding our picnic (usually an outdoor event) in the more clement spring and our ceildh (usually an indoor event

– think a-i-r-c-o-n-d-i-t-i-o-n-e-d) in the sweltering summer. And the Sellmansbergers, who have hosted fabulous picnics at their impressive enclave near Williston the last two times, get the year off, as they, like the rest of us, get to enjoy Agnes's hospitality at Plum Nelly.

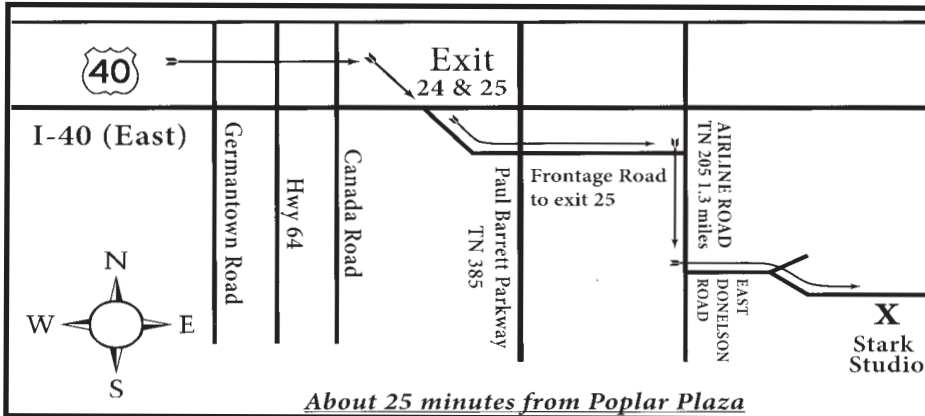
What is planned? A potluck, music, rest, conversation, mild-mannered games (croquet, horseshoes), the annual ice cream contest. What will you find there? Grills, charcoal, drinks, ice. What should you bring? Fav picnic foods, musical instruments (guitars, drums, pipes, penny

whistles etc), Celtic or Scottish CDs, maybe chairs/tables/pop-ups (though Plum Nelly has plenty of shelter & seating).

It's about a half hour from Poplar Plaza out there, and parking is a little tight, so arranging to drive out together is a good idea.

If you like guidance on what to bring for potluck, think A-J sides/salads, K-P meats/entrees, Q-Z desserts. Of course, ice cream contestants can be A-Z!

For more info, questions, or to volunteer, call Mary Ann Lucas 725-1879.



**Directions to Plum Nelly  
 the site of MSSI  
 Picnic.**

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## SCOTTISH CONNECTION

May 2009 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of one of Scotland's most illustrious sons, Arthur Conan Doyle, an eminently appropriate subject for this month's **Scottish Connection**.

Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859. He was sent to school in England but returned to Scotland to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Evidently, however, medical school was insufficiently stimulating to keep young Arthur fully occupied, because it was about this time that he published his first story, in Chamber's Edinburgh Journal. He was not yet 20. Stories notwithstanding, our scholar did manage to finish eventually, writing his doctorate on *tabes dorsalis* (a degenerative disease of the spinal cord).

Since Conan Doyle is far more famous as an author than as a physician, at this point we'll take a slight tangent to introduce another Scotsman you should know, who figures prominently in our hero's story. In fact, this Scotsman is the progenitor of ACD's own hero, namely, the English detective Sherlock Holmes. One of Doyle's medical professors, Joseph Bell came honestly by his philosophies of how to go about the enterprise of diagnosis – his own grandfather, one Benjamin Bell, was a forensic surgeon. Doyle served as Dr. Joe Bell's clerk at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Joseph Bell stressed the importance of close observation in diagnosis. He gained a parlor-game reputation from demonstrating this: he'd pick a stranger from the gathering and, after brief observation, would deduce that person's occupation & recent activities. Bell was a pioneer in forensic science, particularly forensic pathology. Nowadays, it's hard to remember that there actually was a time when science was not used in

criminal investigation, but Dr. Bell's methods were truly revolutionary in his time.

Conan Doyle wrote to Bell, freely acknowledging that Holmes was taken from the figure of the elder physician, but perhaps he needed not have done so. Robert Louis Stevenson, who by the 1880s had retired to Samoa for his failing health, read Doyle's stories in Strand Magazine and penned this bit of fan mail, "... my compliments on your very ingenious and very interesting adventures of Sherlock Holmes ... can this be my old friend Joe Bell?" (You may recall that Stevenson had gain a bit of fame for writing his own physician figure, one Dr. Henry Jekyll, who had something of a drinking problem.) For a more contemporary fictional descendant of Dr. Bell, look no further than Dr. Gregory House of Fox's House, whose producers acknowledge their debt to Holmes and Dr. Bell.

Incidentally, Joseph Bell was Queen Victoria's personal physician whenever she was in Scotland.

While we're on incidentals,

Conan Doyle, like many a goodly Scot, was an avid golfer; however, he made more of a reputation as a national-level cricket player.

Though having achieved phenomenal success in literature and lesser achievements in surgery, Conan Doyle was convinced that he had been awarded his knighthood in 1902 for having written a pamphlet in defense of the UK's role in the Boer War, "The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct".

That is plainly arguable: had none of the accomplishments mentioned so far been sufficient to have done so, it is likely that he would have been knighted for this next work alone. In 1906, Sir Arthur left the annals of crime detection fiction for the real thing. Using the techniques of Joseph Bell, made notable by Sherlock Holmes, he pressed for revision of cold case of George Edalji, a half-Indian lawyer. In so doing, he led to the establishment of Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, a venue for correcting miscarriages of justice.

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# GRACE NOTES

*Grace Notes* is the official publication of the Memphis Scottish Society, Inc. It is published monthly. Like the Society itself, the credo of *Grace Notes* is "to foster education and promote understanding of things Scottish."

If you have something of interest to readers of this newsletter, please submit a typewritten manuscript to the editorial staff. If the article or notice is very brief (30 words or fewer), e-mail or just use the telephone. *Grace Notes* will accept and publish good quality photographs.

The deadline for all submissions is the second week of each month preceding the month of publication. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope with each submission, if you want the material returned.

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(The resolution of this case was fictionalized in the 2005 novel Arthur & George by Julian Barnes.) Sir Arthur also sponsored the review and eventual overturn of another cold case, this one a Glasgow murder, in 1908.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle died in 1930. His epitaph reads:

STEEL TRUE  
BLADE STRAIGHT  
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE  
KNIGHT, PATRIOT, PHYSICIAN  
& MAN OF LETTERS

So, in this year of Robert Burns' 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this 2009 Homecoming Scotland, reserve some awareness for Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Joseph Bell, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and their **Scottish Connection**.

### MSSI Tidbits

There is an Irish Music Competition being held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at Whispering Woods Hotel and Conference Center in Olive Branch. Sponsored by the Memphis Irish Arts Foundation, it is in conjunction with Irish Dance Competition. Early registration deadline is May 9<sup>th</sup>. For more information and a brochure, call 624-1310.

Our long-time friends at Craigmont High took steps to renew a close relationship with the Memphis Scottish Society by inviting us to join them in their International Day on Thursday, April 30. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> school in recent months to have invited MSSI to come and share a bit of the Auld Country with them. Thanks to all who have participated – this is an explicit fulfillment of our goal to foster knowledge and appreciation of “things Scottish”.

The Lyon College 2009 Arkansas Scottish Festival was a rainy

affair, but well-represented by MSSI. Thanks to all who helped host the MSSI tent or who stopped by: Jim & Mary Ann Lucas; Sammy Rich and daughter Lottie; Lou and Jackie Garner; Sue McDoniel; Joe & Susie Lyle; David Corbett; and others.

Lou and Jackie Garner's daughter Katie is graduating from Lyon College this month. Congrats to Katie and her proud parents. Congrats also to the Garners who won the best decorated clan tent for their Clan Cunningham at the Arkansas Scottish Festival in Batesville.

A cadre of MSSI members recently answered the call for volunteers to help WKNO take calls from bidders during the Action Auction. Many thanks to the following who represented us so willingly and so well: Sammy Rich, Melissa Gibson, new member Candis Lee, Sandy & Allen Simpson, Mary Ann & Jim Lucas, and John Schultz.

This year's Clanjamfry will be held September 25<sup>th</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup>. The gathering will include the Friday night Patrons' Reception and the Ceilidh, the Saturday Faire from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday night big-name concert, and Sunday Kirkin' of the Tartans with Dinner-on-the-Grounds.

Burns Night is scheduled for Saturday night, January 23, 2010 at Woodland Hills and will feature international favorite Ed Miller. You can count on our most favorite features of Burns Night to return, and a committee has already begun the preparations. There are plenty of tasks left to volunteer for.

### Homecoming Scotland

The Homecoming Scotland Leadership Conference, the theme of which is “Scotland and her Diaspora – Partners for the Future”, will be held on Monday, July 27, 2009, at

Queen Margaret University in Musselburgh, East Lothian, Scotland. The conference is an opportunity for Scots abroad to meet representatives of Scottish governmental and other bodies to exchange views, values, and experiences. It also gives native Scots an opportunity to interact with the Diaspora.

This year's conference is an outgrowth of six prior conferences that have been held by a couple of unnamed American-Scottish societies. The structure for this year's conference has been designed to offer attendees a variety of networking and information exchange opportunities.

In Scotland, invitations are being issued to representatives of organizations involved in the fields of Arts, Charity, Culture, Education, Heritage, Music, and Travel, to both attend and have representation in the Exhibit Hall. Elsewhere, invitations are being extended to Scottish Diaspora organizations with which the organizers are familiar that have a mission relating to the fields identified above, and may also have representation in the Exhibit Hall. Attendance will be limited as to the number of attendees who may attend from any particular organization.

Formal presentations and workshops will be offered throughout the day, including “Reconnect to your Heritage”, American Attitudes to Culture and Heritage”, and “Social Networking Sites to Facilitate Fundraising Strategies”.

This one-day event will end with an optional dinner at a neighboring restaurant and a post-dinner social at the University.



## SCOTLAND'S GOT TALENT! / AM FEAR LIATH MOR

If you haven't heard Susan Boyle's performance of "I Dreamed a Dream" from *Les Miserables* on Britain's Got Talent (the name of which surely must have caused all the British grammarians to drop their heads into their hands), don't worry: you can click on the link below

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PPIkOyaaQ>. (Thanks to Seldon Murray for sending it along). If you aren't connected to the Internet, don't worry: we'll play it at the May Meeting on Monday, May 11.

This 47-year-old woman from Blackburn, Scotland, recently appeared on their equivalent of American Idol. (Yes, they suffer from "reality shows, too; in fact, they started them.) She wowed the judges, who included the caustic Simon Cowell. She wowed the show's audience, who gave her a standing ovation. And she

wowed the public, who has fallen in love with her spunk, her humor, and her sweet, strong, and startling singing voice.

The spread of Susan Boyle's fame is a phenomenon itself: within 2 days of her performance, films on You-Tube, Tweets on Twitter, blogs, forwarded emails, phone calls and visits among family members, and so on had carried her story globally, scooping even wire services and broadcast news agencies. The fourth estate caught up swiftly, though, and now AP articles have appeared not only on Susan's singing and humble origins, but on which of her physical characteristics have already fallen to the make-over artists.

The press, in describing Susan, uses words like "dowdy", "never married", "frumpy", "never been kissed", "unemployed", and "chubby". They describe Blackburn with words like

"hardscrabble", "drab", and "Scotland's poorest".

Unkind comments can fall as they may—Susan Boyle could resemble the Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui (see page 5), and it wouldn't diminish the power, verve, and timbre of her voice. If Jean Redpath's voice is champagne and Jim Malcolm is richest scotch or bourbon, finest cream sherry is the analogy for Susan's singing.

Watch for more from the Scottish phenomenon, whose singing experience up till now has been limited to church and karaoke night at the local pub. We can only hope to hear more from her.

The eerie crags of Ben MacDhui, second highest mountain in Britain, second only to Ben Nevis, are more often than not covered in fog or mist so thick as to reduce visibility to less

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than the length of a man's arm. Its harsh parts are obstructed with massive boulders, tumbled about like toys across the precipitous inclines; its flat paths, covered in treacherous scree which gives way under the feet of unwary hikers. It is subject to blasts of wind, abrupt precipitation of both stinging rain and blizzard.

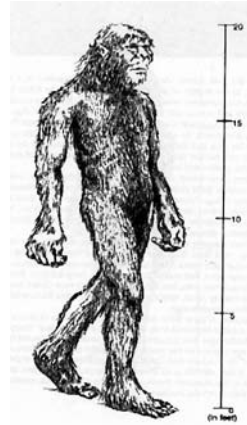
It is no wonder that rescue teams are called out almost unceasingly to retrieve new victims of its inhospitable environs.

But more causes than these call the teams to MacDhui.

Ben MacDhui is, after all, the habitat of Am Fear Liath Mor, Scotland's Big Grey Man.

This elusive figure has never been photographed nor definitively sighted by any official or governmental witness, but private individuals have reported sightings for decades. They report its height to be over ten feet, its shoulders broad and its arm span disproportionately wide. It is sometimes described as covered with fine grey or brown fur, some times as bare-skinned or attired in uneven skins or rags. Sometimes its foot falls

can be heard behind the hiker, keeping pace behind, but with only one step for each 3 to 4 steps of the stalked. Sometimes, it is said to sing or hum in an indescribable near-human voice. It is at times reported to be limned in



an unearthly light which sets the mists aglow, though they have shut out the sun.

But, most often of all, it is said to evoke in those who have perceived its presence, an

overwhelming terror, an irresistible panic which frequently drives the most intrepid to run pell-mell down the hostile slopes.

So, what is this? A Caledonian sasquatch? A thin place where the veil is thin or where ley lines cross? A remote enclave of space aliens bent on staying undetected? An unwarranted

fear evoked by lack of oxygen? No one knows.

And what do the local Scots say? Read the following account from a visitor who asked some of them that very question.

"Once I was out with a search-party on MacDhui; and on the way down after an unsuccessful day I asked some of the gamekeepers and stalkers who were with us what they thought of it all. They worked on MacDhui, so they should know. Had they seen Ferlas Mor? Did he exist, or was it just a silly story? They looked at me for a few seconds, and then one said: 'We do not talk about that.'"

Perhaps one hint comes from the name of the mountain itself. "MacDhui", as most Scots know, means "son of the black one". Now, this could be what one would call the son of a man with dark hair. But, "The Dark One" or "The Black One" is also one of the myriad names by which folks refer to Satan to avoid calling his name.

The Mountain of Satan's Son just might tell us better than most theories what the Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui really is.



The Wolf River Pipes and Drums step proudly at the Lyon College Games in Batesville, AR. The MSSI tent was pitched and made ready by Jim and Mary Ann Lucas and Sammy and Lottie Rich helped to man the tent the next day, with visits from many of the pipers and the Cunninghams who were set up right next door! This festival really is close enough to do in a day, so why not make plans to come and do it with us next year?

## Local Bagpipers take 15 medals, & 2 “pipers of the day” at Oklahoma Piping Debate.

4 Pipers from the Jonesboro based Northeast Arkansas Caledonian Pipes and Drums traveled March 27-28 to Oklahoma City for the 5th annual “Oklahoma Piping Debate” In these solo contests, each tune played is considered a separate event or competition.

The 4 pipers played 17 tunes in solo competition and returned with no lower than 4th place in any event.

Medals were awarded for the top 3 places in each event, and the quartet return with 14 medals.

In addition, two “piper of the day” awards were taken by NEAC pipers. These were won by Derek Reed (Jonesboro) Grade 4 Jr division, and David Corbett (Marion / Alicia) Grade 4 Sr division.

Mr Robert Gill (Kennett, MO) placed 4th in both events he played

in, his best showing yet, and Danny Vaughn (Hoxie) in his first competition, after having been upgraded to Grade 3, received a 2nd, three 3rd’s and a 4th place.

Additionally the foursome played as a quartet for the first time in front of a judge, received great comments and \$100 in prize money for the band.



Pictures are of Derek receiving his armful of prizes, for winning Grade 4 Jr, Piper of the day, and of the quartet displaying a portion of the medals and prizes received. The picture has from left to right: David Corbett, Danny Vaughn, Derek Reed, Robert Gill, and also a picture of a portion of the awards.



### NEAC NOW RECRUITING

## Spend the summer learning to play the Highland Pipes & Drums

The Northeast Arkansas Caledonian Pipes and Drums are beginning their 2009 Summer recruiting drive.

We are looking for new Pipers, Drummers (snare, tenor, bass), potential Drum major(s) and non-playing team members.

We are a highly motivated, active group with members of all ages.

[www.neacpipes.com](http://www.neacpipes.com) | [fireham@yahoo.com](mailto:fireham@yahoo.com)

901-233-2903 | 870-886-6583

# Calendar of Events

## Mondays

Caledonia Chorale 7 pm  
Church of the Holy Communion,  
Walnut Grove at Perkins,  
272-7159

## Thursdays

### **Sgt. W.K. Singleton Pipes & Drums**

6:30-8:30 at Bethel Pentecostal  
Church, Stage Road in Bartlett;  
call 386-2052 for info.

### **Wolf River Pipes & Drums,**

6:30-9:30 at  
St. Luke's Lutheran;  
Germantown Parkway.  
753-9494

## Fridays

Dancing: 7:30-10 pm,  
Idlewild Presbyterian;  
1750 Union Ave,  
West Entrance - 274-1889  
2<sup>nd</sup>, & 4<sup>th</sup> Friday:  
Scottish Country Dancing.

## Sundays

NEAC Pipes and Drums  
1:30-4:00  
First Presbyterian Church;  
Southwest Dr  
Jonesboro, AR exit 45

## Monday, May 11

MSSI Monthly Meeting  
Jason's Deli @  
Poplar & Highland  
For directions call 757-4200 or  
**memphisscots.com.**  
6:00 pm Dinner  
7:00 pm Program:  
Bill Crump "Contemporary  
Scots Artisans"

## May 16

MSSI Picnic @ Plum Nelly  
Agnes Stark Pottery Studio  
12:00 - 4:00

## Thursday, May 29

Board Meeting at 5:45  
St. Lukes Lutheran  
2000 N Gtown Pkwy

**May 7: Little Windows** - Meet Julee Glaub and Mark Weems who mix Appalachian and Irish music and relish the beauty of two unaccompanied voices in close harmony. Hear them weave their timeless harmonies and talk about the power of communal song.

### **May 14: Digital Imperfection**

Studio technology has vastly improved standards in music recording and performance. Some artists offset all the digital imperfection by mixing archive vinyl, complete with clicks and pops, into their own tracks, while others resist any dependence on overdubs and re-takes. More than a gimmick, it all helps us stay connected to the authentic roots of today's music.

**May 21: New Releases and Debuts** - The flow of music is never-ending. A mountain of new recordings doesn't translate into the same volume of great music, though, so rely on Fiona to hand-pick the best new sounds from rising artists along



with the latest from some of your favorite artists.

**May 28: New Releases and Debuts** - More handpicked new sounds from rising artists along with the latest from some of your favorite artists.

**June 4: Reunion** - The ten-day Perthshire Amber Festival always brings together musicians from across the world that have connections with Dougie MacLean. Fiona Ritchie hosted a festival gathering between former members of legendary bands Ossian, Silly Wizard and the Tannahill Weavers. Enjoy their memories and the music they share.

## Scottish - Celtic RadioShows

Sundays, 6-7 p.m.  
"The Thistle and Shamrock"  
WKNO-FM 91.1

Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1  
p.m. "Strands of the Celtic  
Knot" Robert Campbell, host  
WEVL-FM 89.9

Sun and Mon 6 p.m. and  
Fridays, 7 p.m.  
"The Thistle & Shamrock,"  
WMAV-FM 90.3



From L to R, Sammy Rich, Melissa Gibson, George Malone and David Corbett(not pictured) represented MSSSI well at the CSWT picnic on the front lawn of the Lambuth University campus in Jackson, TN. Wish you could have been there. I learned that George is woodcarver and is currently working on a flying bat with a grasshopper in its clutches! Now how cool is that! Thanks George and Melissa for the help.

Next Monthly Meeting - Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>  
 Jason's Deli - Poplar and Highland  
 Dinner at 6:00, Program @ 7:00 Bill Crump "Current Scots Artisans"  
 Regular Board Meeting, May 28th at 5:45 St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran -  
 2000 N. Germantown Parkway

GRACE NOTES

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