

Letter from the Chair

Dear Fellow Members,

As you can see from our news on the front page, things have moved at an amazing pace since my last message to you.

The wheels are now in motion to establish a Chair in Scottish Studies at the University of Guelph and after 17 years of dedicated effort, it's hard for those of us on the Board to actually comprehend that our major objective is about to be realized!

All of this is due to the tremendous support from all of our members who, in raising the awareness of recognizing Canada's strong Scottish heritage, have been successful in attracting significant monetary pledges and donations from major donors.

Thanks to your support and the University of Guelph's faith in our ability to continue our fundraising efforts, Canada will now be in the forefront of Scottish Studies in North America.

In this regard, perhaps you might like to read this letter which I received from Jacqueline Murray who is the University of Guelph's College of Arts Dean:

Thank you again for the wonderful Tartan Day Dinner hosted by Scottish Studies Society. The evening was a grand success and served to enhance the profile of Scottish Studies in Toronto and beyond.

As you will recall, Dr. Rozanski announced that a generous gift from Michael MacMillan was helping to bridge the gap between the Scottish Studies campaign's goal of \$2 million and our current situation. We still need to raise approximately \$160,00 to fully realize the \$2 million campaign. Thanks to your efforts, and those of other volunteers, active campaigning continues with proposals to Canadian corporations, foundations and individuals.

Hitherto, the primary geographic focus of the campaign has been in Southern Ontario.



Jacqueline Murray

Recently, however, new contacts have been made with Scottish cultural groups, some of which appear to be promising. For example, we have had discussions with the St. Andrew's Societies of Montreal, Toronto, and Sarnia and with the 78th Fraser Highlanders (York Garrison).

Although additional funds are still required to complete the campaign, we believe that the time has now come to move forward and begin to recruit the Chair of Scottish Studies. To that end, the selection committee will be struck this summer with the goal to recommend an appointment for the 2004-05 academic year. The Chair will be funded temporarily from a combination of internal monies and endowment income until the endowment itself is able to sustain it. We are indeed appreciative of the University of Guelph's generosity in helping to support the Chair before all the pledges have been fulfilled in 2011.

The successful candidate for this position will be a recognized scholar of Scottish Studies, who will enhance Guelph's reputation as an internationally acclaimed centre in the field. We are confident the presence of the Chair will serve as a magnet for our Scottish Studies Program and enhance Guelph's profile as the premier centre for Scottish Studies in North America.

Once the endowment is fully realized, we will be seeking additional financial support to enhance further our renowned Scottish Studies library collection, to create student scholarships and travel grants, and to extend our community outreach initiatives.

All this activity would not have been possible without the generous support of benefactors such as you. The Scottish Studies Foundation gift will soon allow us to create the first chair in Scottish Studies in North America. Thank you for making this dream a reality.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Murray, Ph.D. Dean



Michael MacMillan, Alliance Atlantis CEO and Scot of the Year 1999—a key player in Guelph's decision to establish the Chair

So to celebrate this achievement, I do hope as many of you as possible will make it out on Sunday August 31 to our annual Tall Ship Cruise on Canada's tallest sailing ship the *Empire Sandy*. As I'm sure you all know, this event commemorates the arrival of the Scots pioneers in Pictou, Nova Scotia back in 1773 on the old ship *Hector* after a long and difficult voyage. So look out some tartan or plaid clothing and come down to Harbourfront in Toronto to help us recapture the pioneer spirit.

And to those of you in other parts of the country or around the globe, thank you again for your wonderful support – you have made a dream come true.

Have a pleasant and safe summer.

Sincerely,
David Hunter

Haggis in Moscow

The Logistics of arranging a Burns Supper in Moscow, USSR 1975

by Gordon Hepburn

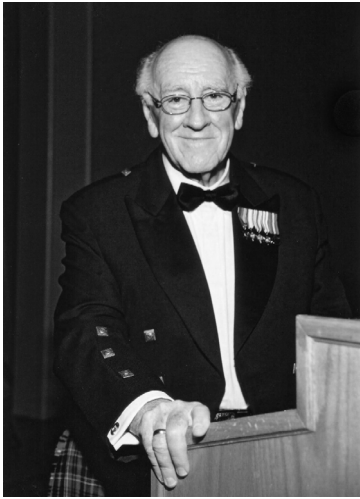
When I sold my travel agency interests in the early '70s to Nairn of Kirkcaldy, I accepted an appointment as marketing director of their travel group. From that moment on, I was always on the lookout for projects to get us maximum media exposure, especially if it was free.

I tried many promotions including highly successful golf groups to Spain with The Scotsman and Newcastle Journal newspapers. I even tried to bring to Scotland inbound golfing groups from Japan.

However, the P.R. generated by these events was minuscule compared to the jewel in the crown, my first Burns Supper to Moscow, in the then Soviet Union in 1975.

I was motoring to work in Kirkcaldy one morning listening to the radio when there was a programme on Burns and his popularity in the Soviet Union where his name was frequently coupled with that of Pushkin's. This sparked a flame of interest as it coincided with the time that Thomson Holidays introduced their winter city breaks for three and four nights including Moscow.

Within a week, I had provisionally reserved 150 places from Manchester, the nearest departure point, for a four-night package covering the 25th January, 1975. By then, I had made contact with Jock Thomson, general secretary of the Burns Federation, and George McAllister of the Scottish-Soviet Friendship Society. Both expressed great enthusiasm and proved to be



Gordon Hepburn, SSF Governor and organizer of the Society's Annual Burns Supper

towers of strength in their advice, counsel and cooperation.

By the end of the week I realised I had taken on a mammoth undertaking as I had no idea about the availability of haggis, neeps, tatties or the usquebagh in the Soviet Union.

Two weeks later I did an early morning interview with BBC Scotland radio and by the time I got to the office there was a phone call from Roy Bignall of Matthew Gloag & Sons Ltd. in Perth offering to sponsor copious amounts of the Famous Grouse. I almost hugged him over the phone. And within days, Bill Keith, master butcher and haggis-maker extraordinary of Dysart, Kirkcaldy came forward with an offer of 1 1/2 cwt of haggi, and a farmer friend, the infamous Bob Bell of Colinsburgh offered a similar quantity of "neeps". We had already established that the Soviet Union grew their own "tatties." At this time, I had not even considered the logistics of transporting these goods and getting them through Soviet Customs but I took the precaution of passing the good news along to George McAllister and Thomson Holidays.

Bookings started rolling in like wildfire. Within three weeks we had over 350 applications for 154 places. So many had to be put off for the first year and demand continued unabated for the next six years.

During the ensuing months while the media did us proud in terms of P.R., we had the interesting task of sorting out volunteers for the various toasts and entertainment functions, miraculously finding a wonderful piper in Pipe Sergeant Jimmy McCallum (of Prestwick Airport fame). Matthew Gloag of Perth laid on a fabulous send-off party and my overriding concern, which I kept pushing to the back of my mind, was how I was going to get all the Scotch, haggis and "neeps" past the Soviet customs.

At long last the big day arrived and we set off south from Glasgow to Manchester on

three packed coaches with all our baggage plus the haggis plus the "neeps". The Famous Grouse was delivered directly to the aircraft at Manchester Airport out of bond.

The coach and air journeys went very smoothly and uneventfully except for one thing during the flight to Moscow. With all the additional spirits we were carrying plus the haggis and "neeps", there was little room for duty-free spirits on board and we were limited to one drink each on the flight. Imagine our reaction on returning home to newspaper headlines in Scotland "Burnsians drink plane dry".

Before departing from Manchester, I was advised by the Thomson ground staff that the Scotch, etc. was all consigned in my name as my personal baggage. You can understand, therefore, that one Scotch on the plane did little to alleviate my concerns. However, I need not have worried.

On arrival at Moscow Airport, I am singled out as "THE MAN" and introduced to my Intourist guide -- a beautiful but unsmiling girl. We enlist five porters, pick up my baggage, the cases of Scotch etc. and whiz through a special immigration and customs area, with only a cursory glance at my passport and NO QUESTIONS at all about my extraordinary load of personal baggage! I was "dumfooned." Where else in the world could something like this be facilitated at a major world capital?

In due course, we arrived at our hotel by which time I had prompted my guide that a secure place was required to house my "extra luggage" until it was needed two days later. The question was asked at reception and even I knew what a repetitive "niet" meant. And so I had to take everything up to my small but functional single room where there was little room to swing a cat before we got everything in. My next problem was how to tip the five hotel porters as I had more or less used up my small US bills at the airport but, having learned that a bottle of Scotch had a black market value of just under US \$100, I opened up a case and handed a bottle to the lead man.

The bottle totally disappeared into his voluminous trouser pocket and then he proceeded to point to his other four colleagues, clearly indicating that I should produce another four bottles. In the end, I had to shoo them out the room with little grace.

My sense of relief at getting everything safely stored away, particularly the Scotch, was quickly dispelled when I went up to bed after dinner and a drink and the smell of turnips was so overpowering that, after two nights, I'm sure I smelt like a "neep."

Over the next thirty six hours, while our party enjoyed the sights and thrills of Moscow, George McAllister, my Intourist guide and, with the occasional help from

Tom Campbell, a wonderful man from the Kilmarnock Howff Club and a fluent Russian speaker to boot, I dotted the I's and crossed the T's for the forthcoming event. The cooperation from the Soviets was outstanding and there was only one incident of record.

With my guide I had gone to see the chef, who was in charge of the supper, to ensure that he had the know-how to prepare the haggis. There appeared to be a degree of difficulty in translation and I reckoned a softening-up process was called for. And so, I told my guide that if he got it right, the chef would be the happy recipient of a bottle of the "Famous Grouse". Instantly the atmosphere changed, the wee chef turned to me, put his hands together in supplication and said something to me which caused my guide not only to smile but actually laugh for the first time. He had said, "Master, I will be your slave. I will sweat for you". And that he did. The haggis on the night was cooked to perfection!

The big night arrived and it was a Burns Supper of great distinction. The supper was a banquet extraordinaire with many "worthies" contributing to its success. Provost Robertson of Dumfries, President of the Burns Federation chaired the evening and John Kidd, President of the jolly Beggars Club, Kinross, addressed the haggis.

The Immortal Memory was superbly proposed by the Secretary of the Federation and Tom McIlwraith, President of the Edinburgh District Association of Burns Clubs and Mrs. Peggie Thomson of Kilmarnock exchanged insults and compliments in the toast of, and reply to, The Lassies.

In his toast to the guests, Tom Campbell of the Kilmarnock Howff Club, outlined, in both Russian and English, Russia's interest in Burns from 1830, when the sixteen-year-old Mikhail Lermontov translated the haunting refrain of "Ae Fond Kiss".

The evening was graced with a number of prominent Russian Burnsians, including Immanuel and Nasha Marshak, Professor Rita Rait Kobelova, Dr. Gabriel Feldman and Alexi Surkov, himself a distinguished poet, who got a stirring response from the guests.

This unforgettable occasion came to a reluctant end when Anatoh Masko, invited us to witness the midnight changing of the guard at the Lenin Mausoleum. Regrettably valedictories and parting toasts caused us to miss the ceremony but we had a fitting ending to the evening with my dear friend, Pipe Sgt. Jimmy McCallum, rendering "Lochaber No More" and "The Flowers of the Forest", all the more surprising as music was not then permitted in Red Square; a most dignified occasion visibly affecting both Russians and Scots.