

GRACE NOTES

Vol. 21, No. 12

December 2005

The Monthly Newsletter of the Memphis Scottish Society, Inc.

GET READY TO PARTY!

Mark your calendars for Monday, December 12th at 6:00 pm: instead of our regularly scheduled member meeting, we will gather in the Parish Hall of St. John's Episcopal Church, 3245 Central at Greer. (No reservations required this month, but remember to make them in January.)

The evening will commence with a pot-luck dinner. Suggested offerings by initial of your last name are A-D, side dishes or vegetables; E-J, breads or relishes; K-M, meats or entrees; N-R, desserts; and S-W, appetizers or salads. Of course, if a party just isn't a party without Aunt Jo's nut log or whatever your favorite dish might be, feel free to bring that along, too. The club will furnish tableware & non-alcoholic drinks; BYOB.

After the meal, President Bill Crump will conduct a brief business meeting, and then we will get down to the party, serious-like.

As did the wise men of old, we will bring gifts: new, unwrapped items to be given to the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys-For-Tots program and presents for us to exchange with one another. (See below for details.)

Entertainment will include instrumental & vocal music, for us to listen to and to join in; a story or two; some dancing; a game and some prizes. A form of entertainment new to our Christmas party, though certainly not to those from the Auld Country, will be a panto, short for pantomime, but unlike our American version, there's nothing silent about this art form. For more information, check out

wikipedia.org/wiki/pantomime_%28theatre%29

And like Scrooge's visiting Spirits, we will do "it all in one night". So, come prepared for a "right gude-willie waught" of fun, recreation, and diversion. See you there!

SINCE YOU ASKED. . . .

Have you been wondering, "What kind of gift can I get for the paltry sum of \$5 for the Christmas party exchange?" or "Where might I find such a gift?"? Rest assured that a whole lot of such gifts are out there.

A cursory survey of recent sales ads in the newspaper and scouting missions to local stores (like Tuesday Morning, Pier 1, & Macy's) netted the following suggestions: heritage-quality Christmas tree ornaments; gift-boxed fancy bath products; work or gardening gloves (everybody can use an extra pair); imported sweets, mustards, teas, coffees, jellies, nuts, or cocoas; novelty socks; angler's tools; note cubes; picture frames (needed in every household); decorative or scented candles; seasonal cups, mugs, or snack plates; decorative serving pieces, gourmet kitchen tools, or barware; stuffed or porcelain figures; holiday tea towels, potholders, or baskets; scented potpourri or pine cones; huge tins of popcorn or cookies; holiday gift packs of candy favorites; pocket knives; gift wrap sets; holiday CDs, DVDs, or videos; prepaid phone or debit cards; fast food gift certificates; smart key chains, radios, or flashlights; etc., etc. (A goodly number of these sported tartan designs or were from Scotland.)

With rebate offers, you can even get cordless phones, label printers (what's a label printer?), or CD wallets for under five dollars.

(Continued on next page)

YOUR MSSI BOARD

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Bill Crump..... 853-0958

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Secretary

Dena Warth.....662-890-7443

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Diane Wade.....382-1402

Iraq Battle Honours For Two Scots Regiments

"British regiments which fought in Iraq during the 2003 war have been granted permission by the Queen to display two new battle honours on their colours. The units, which include the Black Watch and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (RSDG), can include the battle honour 'Al Basrah' and the theatre honour 'Iraq 2003', alongside the names of other great battles that already appear on their colours.

"The Black Watch battle honours include such famous names as Waterloo, Balaclava, Sebastopol, the Somme, and El Alamein, while the RSDG, whose predecessors also fought at many of those battles, can count the first Gulf war in 1991.

"The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said the decision about which regiments should receive battle honours was based on their involvement in operations within the land territory of Iraq during the phase of major combat operations between 20 March and 1 May, 2003.

"A spokeswoman said the combat regiments and corps selected had 'contributed significantly to the successful coalition land operations, demonstrating the utmost steadfastness and gallantry in the face of hostile fire'.

"Adam Ingram, the armed forces minister, praised the units selected. He said: 'These honours represent a historic and traditional means of recognising the immense efforts British soldiers have made in bringing democracy to Iraq. Our soldiers and their families can be very proud of the role they have performed and the sacrifices they have made to guarantee a brighter future for the people of Iraq.'

"The decision to award the battle honours - a term which is used colloquially to cover both battle and theatre honours - was approved by the Queen in June this year.

"According to the MoD, battle honours serve 'as a permanent record of achievement of which past, present and future generations of service personnel can be proud.'

"Both the Scottish regiments were involved in the final assault on Basra on 6 April which led to the fall of the city and marked the start of the collapse of the Iraqi regime.

"A spokesman for the Black Watch welcomed the award. He said: 'The battalion is very pleased to receive the battle honour. It is the first since the Battle of the Hook in 1952 [in Korea] and it is apposite to receive it at this time of the year when we are remembering those of our regiment who have fallen.'

"The Irish Guards were granted the same battle honours in June this year to allow them to troop their colour, with the new honours emblazoned on it, at the Queen's birthday parade."

Gethin Chamberlain — *The Scotsman* Fri 11 Nov 2005 (Thanks Dan Irvin for this submission.)

(Since you asked from page 1)

And don't overlook hardware stores, nurseries, dollar stores, groceries, office suppliers, sporting goods stores, auto parts suppliers, or pharmacies as sources of thoughtful, but inexpensive gifts.

Home-made or hand-made gifts make extra special gifts: just remember to keep the cost of materials under \$5.

Finally, remember: Men, get a man's gift; Ladies, get a woman's gift. Enjoy this little holiday challenge!

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), just use the telephone. *Grace Notes* will accept and publish good quality photographs (preferably black and white; no Polaroids, please).

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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to foster education
 and promote
 understanding of
 things Scottish



SCOTTISH CONNECTION

Who can resist the fragrance & freshness of a live Christmas tree? Did you know there's a **Scottish Connection** to some Christmas trees?

Now, if you're thinking that Christmas trees have a German, not a Scottish, connection, you're mostly right: the custom of bringing a live evergreen tree indoors and decorating it for the Christmas season is indeed German in origin. But several of the most popular *varieties* of trees so honored have Scottish roots (pun intended), namely the Douglas fir, the Fraser fir, and the Scotch pine.

Considered the most popular species of Christmas tree is the **Douglas fir** – *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. Its needles, when crushed, have one of the best aromas among Christmas trees. It has good conical shape and can live for a thousand years.

Though Archibald Menzies of Scotland, physician and naturalist, discovered the tree now called Douglas fir in 1791 at Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, he did not survive his journey, and his journal was lost until after David Douglas, whose name the tree bears, rediscovered the tree in 1825.

David Douglas (1799 - 1834) was a Scottish botanist. The son of a stonemason, he was born in the village of Scone, north-west of Perth. He attended Kinnoul School, and upon leaving he found work as an apprentice gardener in the estate of the 3rd Earl of Mansfield at Scone Palace. Seven years were spent in this position before he left to attend college in Perth to learn more of the scientific and mathematical aspects of plant culture. After a further spell of working in Fife (during which time he had access to a library of botanical and zoological books), he moved to the Botanical Gardens of Glasgow and attended botany lectures at the University of Glasgow. The Professor of Botany there was greatly impressed with him and took him on an expedition to the Highlands before recommending him to the Royal Horticultural Society of London.

On behalf of Sir William Hooker of the RHS, the resourceful and intrepid Douglas undertook a plant-hunting expedition in the Pacific Northwest in 1824 that ranks among the great botanical explorations of a heroic generation. His journal is of historical as well as of scientific importance, because he was one of the earliest European travelers in the Oregon country.

The Douglas fir, which Douglas introduced into cultivation in Europe in 1827, is only one of his introductions, which include Sitka Spruce, Sugar Pine, Western White Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Monterey Pine, Grand Fir, Noble Fir and several other conifers that transformed the British & European landscape and timber industry, as well as numerous garden shrubs and herbs such as the flowering currant, Salal, Lupin, Penstemon and California poppy. Altogether, he introduced about 240 species of plants to Britain and Europe. Indeed, the massive re-forestation which has occurred in Scotland in the last decade is composed almost exclusively of species, predominately the Douglas fir, which were introduced by David Douglas. He died in Hawaii at age 35 when he fell into a pit trap and was trampled by a wild bull.

The Fraser fir – *Abies fraseri* – has dark green, flattened needles with good retention; it has a nice scent and pyramid-shaped strong branches which turn upward. It is named for Scottish botanist John Fraser who explored the southern Appalachians in the late 1700's.

John Fraser (1750 - 1811) began business life in London as a linen-draper near the Chelsea Physick Garden. He gave up his business to become a plant collector and crossed the Atlantic many times. Some of the best known shrubs of American and Cuba were introduced to Britain & Europe by him. Among these were *Magnolia fraserii*, *Rhododendron catawbiense* and *Pieris floribunda*. In his latter life, he was appointed Botanical Collector to the Czar of Russia.

This species is sometimes called the southern balsam or the balsam fir. Occasionally, the Fraser fir is known as the "she balsam". The Fraser fir grows naturally only in the southern Appalachians of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, above 3,000 feet. It has been adopted as the state tree of North Carolina.

The Scotch pine – *Pinus sylvestris* – is the most common Christmas tree because it holds its needles for four weeks, even when the cut tree is dry. Its stout branches support stiff, dark green needles one inch long.

(continued on page 4)

The Original Spider Man?

The most famous story of a spider influencing human history is perhaps the story of Robert the Bruce. He was involved in a war with Edward I of England who was trying to conquer Scotland. In 1306 Bruce was hiding out in a cave, (or a barn depending on which version you believe), he had already fought six battles against the English and had been beaten back six times. While he was taking his rest, he watched a spider trying to set up the support lines for its web. The spider tried and failed six times. He said "Now shall this spider teach what I am to do, for I also have failed six times." The spider made its seventh attempt and this time succeeded. Inspired by this, Robert set about rallying his troops, and in 1314 he defeated Edward and drove him out of Scotland.



Scottish Universities 'Among Best in World'

"Two Scottish universities have been recognized as being among the top five institutions in the world to work for, according to a world-leading life sciences magazine. (Life sciences are defined as all sciences relating to organisms, such as plants, animals and human beings.)

"Both the universities of Glasgow and Dundee beat the likes of Oxford and Cambridge to become the only UK institutions to make it into the final five of *The Scientist* magazine's survey of the world's life science institutions. Dundee was given fourth place, while Glasgow was rated fifth.

"More than 2,600 academics from 135 institutions were questioned on what they considered were the ingredients for a great workplace, including relationships with their peers, a sense of accomplishment in their work and access to research resources.

"Glasgow's Institute of Biomedical & Life Sciences is the biggest of its kind in Europe, with approximately 500 researchers studying areas such as biochemistry, infection and immunity, and molecular genetics.

"Dundee University was recently awarded £8.1 million to discover new drugs to treat rare tropical diseases.

"Graeme Milligan, professor of Biolife and Molecular Biology at Glasgow University, said: 'I think it does both the department and faculty great credit, especially given the results came from those who are at the sharp end doing the research.'"

Craig Brown — *The Scotsman* Sat 5 Nov 2005 -- Thanks again to Dan Irvin.

(continued from page 3)

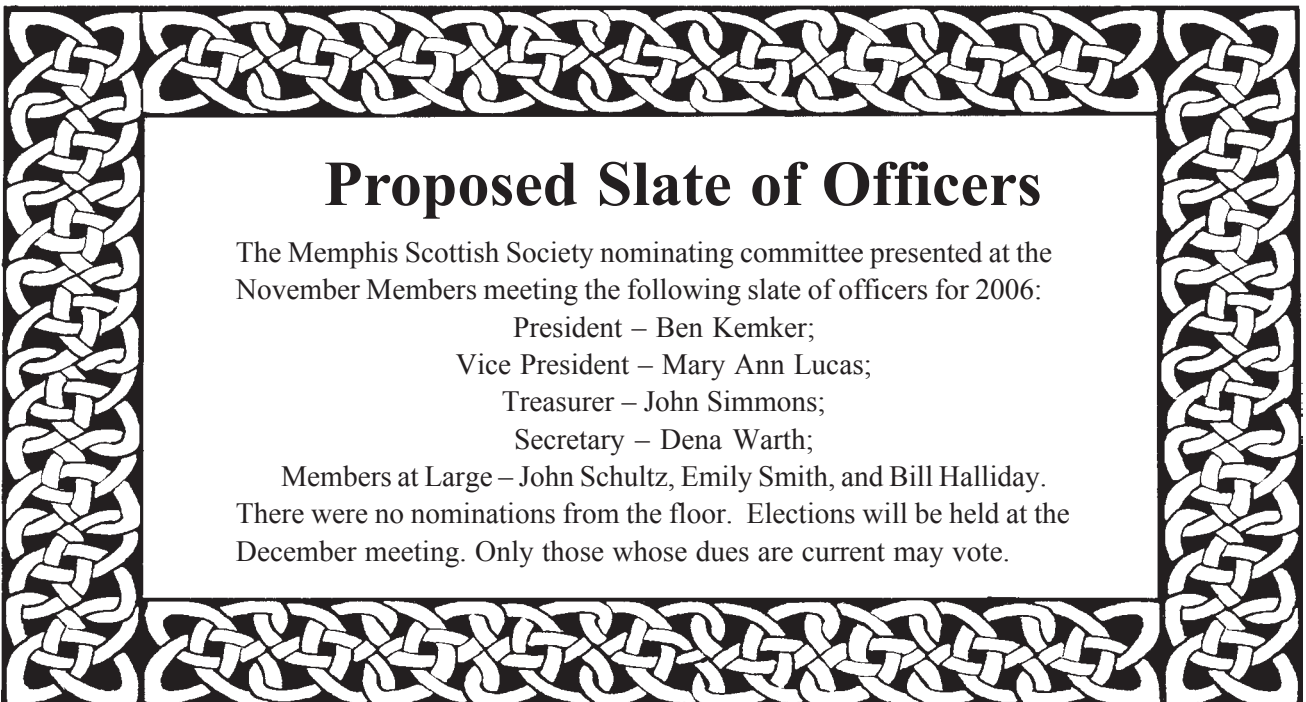
Valued for an open appearance, it has more room for ornaments than some other Christmas species. Scotch pines keep their aroma throughout the season.

Scotch pine, also known as Scots pine, is native to northern Europe and northern Asia, from Scotland to Siberia. It was introduced into United States by European settlers (guess where from!). It has been widely planted and naturalized throughout northeastern and mid-western North America. It is commonly found in Ohio, where it is grown in urban areas as an ornamental evergreen tree, in rural areas of poor soil as a tree for erosion control or for primary establishment, or on Christmas tree plantations. It is logged at maturity in Europe as an important timber tree and in America cut in youth as Christmas trees.

So, this holiday season while you're decorating your Douglas fir, Fraser fir, or Scotch pine, take a moment to relish your tree's **Scottish Connection**.

Calendar of Events

- Mondays..... Caledonia Chorale 7:00 p.m. - Church of the Holy Communion, Walnut Grove at Perkins, 725-1879 for more info*
- Fridays DANCING: 7:30 til 10:00 p.m. Idlewild Pres 1750 Union Ave. West entrance. 1st,3rd & 5th Friday -- Contra Dancing. Contact Martha Phillips, 278-1216 2nd & 4th Friday -- Scottish Country Dancing. Contact Brenda Maguire, 274-1889*
- Dec 12..... Regular membership mtg. to be held at St. John's Episcopal, Parish Hall, 3245 Central at Greer
PROGRAM: MSSJ Christmas Party, Joe Lyle - Chairman
Social Hour at 6:00pm . Please wear name tags and tartan, if you can.*
- Jan 21, 2006 Burns Nicht*



Proposed Slate of Officers

The Memphis Scottish Society nominating committee presented at the November Members meeting the following slate of officers for 2006:

President – Ben Kemker;
Vice President – Mary Ann Lucas;
Treasurer – John Simmons;
Secretary – Dena Warth;

Members at Large – John Schultz, Emily Smith, and Bill Halliday.

There were no nominations from the floor. Elections will be held at the December meeting. Only those whose dues are current may vote.

Burns Nicht
tickets are on
sale now!

Contact
Treasurer
Faye
Dalrymple
for yours.

Thistle and Shamrock

December 8 | Maggie MacInnes - Gaelic singer and harper makes a welcome return to Thistle as we feature songs from her *Spirit of Life* release, along with other music from the Western Isles with Tannas, Dougie MacLean, Martyn Bennett, and Capercaillie.

December 15 | Raise Your Voice - Solo singing is revered in traditional circles, but layers of harmony and massed voices create stunning arrangements of traditional and folk song. Add your voice to the choruses with choirs from Scotland and Brittany, and some of your favourite bands in fuller voice.

December 22 | Season's Greetings - Snuggle up to the radio, a steaming mug in hand, and warm your festive heart with our blend of Celtic music and readings.

December 29 | Ring in the New - Celebrate the year ahead with a stack of new recordings paving the way into 2006.



OOT 'n' OOH

Please submit nominations for the third annual OOT 'n' OOH awards to the President or your Grace Notes staff for consideration. Last year's winners were Gordon Abernathy for the Order of the Thistle and Bud & Lore Hisky for the Order of the Heather.

Order of the Thistle – This award is given to relatively new members of the Society who should be applauded for their efforts.

Order of the Heather – This award is given to long-term members who have displayed a willingness to share their knowledge and information and helped to further the goals of the MSSSI.



**Next Regular Monthly Meeting - Dec 12th - St. John's Episcopal
Parish Hall - 3245 Central at Greer
Membership Meeting, Pot Luck Dinner @ 6:00, Program @ 7:00
Board Meeting, Dec 8th at 5:30 Shoneys at I-40 and Summer**

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