

# THE SCOTS CANADIAN

Issue XIV

Newsletter of the Scottish Studies Society: ISSN No. 1491-2759

Fall 2002

## International Celebration of Robert Burns all set for January 18

*The Toronto Colony Hotel will be the venue for this event on January 18, 2003. Funds raised will support the Scottish Studies Foundation.*

If you attend only one Burns Supper, this should be the one!

The Scottish Studies Society promises you a full weekend of activities including the best of Burnsian entertainment and luxury overnight accommodation at an unbelievable low rate for those wishing to stay over.

The Supper will have an international flavour with guests from Scotland, England, the USA, and across Canada and will include none other than the President of the Robert Burns World Federation, Jim Robertson, and his wife Eileen who live in Yorkshire, England.

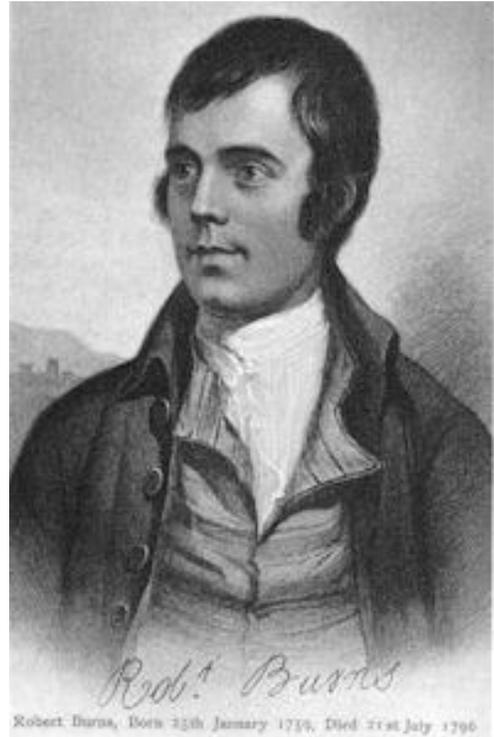
The Robert Burns World Federation is promoting a special 7-night package from the UK at the wonderful value of £468. And the Toronto Colony Hotel has an attractive package of \$260 per couple for overnight accommodation, two tickets for the event, two full Scottish breakfasts and all taxes and gratuities. Tickets for the Supper alone are \$80 each.

Arrangements for the weekend are under the direction of our own Gordon Hepburn. Back in the 1970s, under the auspices of the Burns Federation, Gordon organized a regular series of unforgettable Burns Suppers for about 400 Scottish and Soviet participants in the banqueting hall of the Moscow's Intourist Hotel in the then Soviet Union.

Gordon has great plans to make this a truly memorable evening with most of the players already in place. On the Saturday afternoon, there will be real homespun ceilidh-style entertainment.

At the actual Supper in the evening (reception at 6 p.m., dinner at 7), entertainment will be provided by the rousing pipes and drums of the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders under the direction of Pipe Major Sandy Dewar. The Tunnochbrae Dancers will delight us with their Scottish terpsichorean arts, Danielle Bourre will thrill us with Burns' songs, and music for dancing the night away will be provided by the incomparable Sandy MacIntyre Trio.

And, of course, there will be the traditional Toasts to the Haggis, the Immortal Memory and The Lassies. Gordon tells us he is planning a new format for delivering the Immortal Memory.



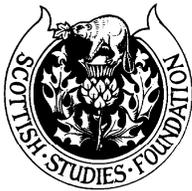
*Robert Burns, Scotland's National Bard*

Sunday morning will see a full Scottish breakfast table for those staying overnight and an approach has been made to the Reverend Malcolm Sinclair to see if he will conduct a Burnsian service at 11 a.m. at the Metropolitan United at 56 Queen Street East in Toronto (a 10-minute walk from the hotel.) Malcolm is currently first Vice-President of the St. Andrews Society of Toronto.

Come and enjoy the Burns Supper of a lifetime!

### *Scots Wha Hae*

*a desire to nurture and preserve  
their heritage in Canada  
are invited to join*



### THE SCOTTISH STUDIES FOUNDATION

*a charitable organization  
dedicated to actively supporting the  
Scottish Studies Program  
at*

*The University of Guelph*

Charitable registration  
No. 119253490 RR0001  
Website: <http://www.scottishstudies.ca>

### INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS

For the hotel package please contact Krystyna Bebee at the Toronto Colony Hotel (Telephone: 416-385-3160) or e-mail : [kbebee@colonyhoteltoronto.com](mailto:kbebee@colonyhoteltoronto.com).

Supper tickets only (\$80 each) can be ordered from Gordon Hepburn, Scottish Studies Society, 1 Clark Avenue West, Suite 1003, Thornhill, ON L4J 7Y6 (Telephone: 905-881-5780). Cheques should be payable to the Scottish Studies Society.

## Letter from the Chair

Dear Fellow Members,

On behalf of the Board of the Scottish Studies Foundation, I would like to thank you, our members, for the wonderful encouragement and support we have received from you during the past year.

I'm sure you will be delighted to know that the combined funds raised by the Foundation, and those received directly by the University of Guelph's Campaign for Scottish Studies, is now in excess of \$1.7 million.

This, of course, means that we are still about \$300,000 away from the \$2 million needed to permanently fund the Chair in Scottish Studies at Guelph. Nonetheless it represents magnificent progress. It certainly means that, with concerted effort, our goal is within our grasp.

As I have mentioned in the past, we have a wonderful team working very hard behind the scenes for our cause. Our fundraising committee, spearheaded by Alistair Gillespie, Iain Ronald, Ed Stewart, Murray McEwan and Bruce Hill of the University of Guelph's Development Office, has done a magnificent job of raising the profile of the Scottish Studies program at Guelph.

They have been supported by key individuals such as John Cleghorn, Ian Craig, Dick Currie, Fraser Elliott, William Fatt, Nona MacDonald Heaslip, Donald MacDonald, Roy MacLaren, Michael MacMillan, Kathie Macmillan, Doug Reekie, Sir Neil Shaw, Red Wilson and others who, as well as providing significant personal support, have succeeded in persuading many influential people of the importance of keeping the Scottish tradition alive and well in Canada.

As I have mentioned before, one of the



Jack Jackson (Centre) Chairman of the Halton-Peel Burns Club and his committee at the Scottish Studies tent at the Georgetown Highland Games. The Club participated in the University of Guelph's Fall Colloquium, providing selections from Burns' poetry during lunch.

questions that members often ask is, "How can I help?" I think the best response to this to keep in mind the fact that we are so close to achieving our goal that the danger lies in losing

momentum. While not all of our members will have the wherewithal to donate substantial funds directly, they may be aware of businesses or other organizations that might be sympathetic to our cause. If so, please let us know. You may be pleasantly surprised at the support that can be forthcoming, often from the most obscure sources.

In closing, however, it is with great sadness that I have to let you know of the passing of Iain MacMillan, a key member of the Board of Directors of both the Scottish Studies Foundation and the Scottish Studies Society. Iain was born in Toronto of Scottish parents and was a Life Member of the St. Andrews Society of Toronto and a member of the Gaelic Society of Toronto.

Throughout his life, Iain maintained a lifelong interest in all things Scottish especially matters pertaining to Canadian Scots. We enjoyed his insightful comments, and his willingness to lend a hand to our cause. He will be greatly missed. Our condolences to his wife Mary and the rest of the MacMillan family.

David Hunter

## Scottish Studies on the Road

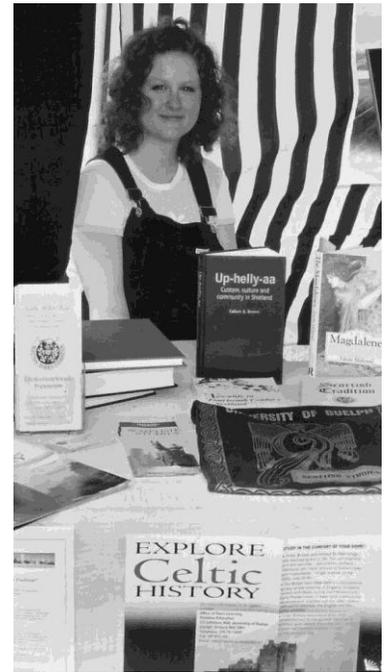
Guelph Scottish Studies students maintained a high profile at various Ontario Highland Games held throughout the summer. The Scottish Studies tent was well attended adding an academic dimension to the sporting and other events usually associated with the Games.

Interest in the Distance Learning programs offered by Guelph was especially gratifying and many attendees took out membership in the Foundation.

The exhibit also publicized the Fall Colloquium which took place on September 28. Entitled *Re-Inventing the Scottish Tradition* it explored symbols of Scottish nationhood, from William Wallace to the kilt, as well as the role of the Scottish Diaspora in developing Scottish ideas of nationhood, and related topics.

The Colloquium was well attended, with about 110 delegates.

Dr. Graeme Morton of the Department of Economic and Social



Janay Nugent on duty in the Scottish Studies tent at this year's Fergus Highland Games

History at the University of Edinburgh gave the keynote address. His recent book *William Wallace: Man and Myth* (Sutton Publishing, 2001), explores the making of the mythology of William Wallace.

Other speakers included Dr. Ian Maitland Hume who spoke about the role that the tartan and the kilt has, and is still, playing in the Scottish identity.

Dr. David Wilson explored the degree to which Scots can be considered "Celtic" in his paper *The Celtic Myth In Scott's Waverley*.

Rob Falconer, at present a Guelph Scottish Studies PhD student, gave his thoughts on the royal perception of nationhood at the time of Robert the Bruce and Dr. Sarah Tolmie discussed the concept of Bruce as a "political animal."

With a view to providing a modern interpretation, Dr. Scott-Morgan reviewed *The Kingis Quair*, a poem written by James I in celebration of his love for Lady Jane Beaufort, daughter of the earl of Somerset, and niece of Henry VIII. ■



James I  
© National Galleries of Scotland

# The Lost Letters of John MacCrae

by Allan Levine

In the spring of 1900, a letter arrived at Treadwell, just up the lower Ottawa River from the village of L'Original.

The letter, marked Troopship Laurentian, Jan. 20, 1900. 9 p.m. read:

*My dear Laura:*

*Just ready to sail. This [letter] goes by the pilot and is just a last word to wish you goodbye. Perhaps by the time you see me back, you will have squared up the account with the man whom you told me about. If so, best of luck- but I dare say I shall come back and find the same old chum.*

*Goodbye and forgive the brevity. It looks as if it would be wild outside the harbour tonight; however it is all in a day's work*

*Bye bye,*

*Your old chum, Jack*

After surfacing in the early 1990s in New Jersey, roughly a dozen affectionate letters from Jack to Laura are back in Canada.

The letters give a tiny but invaluable snapshot of life among the privileged classes a century ago. But who was "Laura"? And who was "Jack"? And why were the letters returned?

Our story begins in the 19th century with Thomas Kains, who settled in Canada and married into the MacMillan clan.

Enter the "Paper Sleuth", Dr. Hugh R. MacMillan formerly of Guelph, now of Ottawa. Jack's letter is part of a collection of letters, postcards and other items found by MacMillan who is well known among historians and archivists for tracking and locating valuable documents for the Ontario Archives and other public institutions.

Over several decades of persistent research into his own family history, he discovered that Thomas Kains had married Mary McMillan (variant spelling noted), Hugh's ancestor.

MacMillan further identified Thomas Kains' descendent Archie and in doing so, discovered the letters between Jack and Laura.

Searching Kains-MacMillan connections, MacMillan located another descendent, Joan Ritchie of New Jersey who was in possession of the letters between Laura and Jack.

It is through Ritchie's generosity that these papers came to the John McCrae House in Guelph.

"Laura", the recipient of the letter, was Laura Kains (1873-1949). Archie's sister,

who was a descendant of Thomas, and later a federal civil servant in Ottawa.

"Jack" was none other than Lt-Col- John McCrae (1872-1918) Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, a soldier and surgeon but much more famous as the author of the haunting poem *In Flanders Fields*.

When McCrae wrote to his beloved Laura, he had embarked with the Canadian forces for the Boer War.

The first group of letters, written in the early days of McCrae's career, begin July 18, 1893, when he is training as an artilleryman at Royal Military College in Kingston:

*"...I have a manservant .. Quite a nobby place it is, in fact .. My windows look right out across the bay, and are just near the water's edge; there is a good deal of shipping at present in the port; and the river looks very pretty, Yours, Jack'*

The letters continue from Guelph, in August, where McCrae was at the Ontario Agricultural College.

On Oct. 3, from Toronto, where he had a fellowship at the university; he wrote:

*"...Rugby football is in full swing now, in consequence for which I have a black eye, and a sore thumb which does not permit very good penmanship on my part.. Well Laura be sure you write before a very long time elapses. I know you may think I require punishment, but don'.*

*Yours very sincerely, Jack"*

McCrae's final letter in the first series was dated Feb. 8, 1895, in Toronto:

*"...I have been living very quietly this term, very little gaiety of any kind ... I know ,there is nothing in this letter to tempt you to write again. I know, however, that if I could tell you the piece of news I got today just before I got your letter, you would not feel so bitter against . me as perhaps you do...My only reason for saying anything about it, is that perhaps if you knew of it you would not think quite so badly of your ... chum.*

*Yours, Jack"*

We do not have another of Jack's letters until his debarkation for the Boer War. He writes from Kenhardt, in Cape Colony (and a long distance northeast of Capetown) on April 4, 1900:

*"...We are camped here for a few days at the end of a march of 230 miles through the worst country you can dream of ... we have had a good many of our men sick chiefly from bad water. Personally, I have been in excellent shape ... on the while, it is a great life... we have taken quite a lot of prisoners..."*



Lt-Col. John McCrae.

*Thanks to the perseverance of Hugh MacMillan, one of the founders of the SSF, valuable letters from John McCrae have been recovered and returned to his hometown of Guelph.*

*we have had no fighting yet but a lot of very hard work.*

*Yours, Jack"*

The very last of his known letters to Laura Kains is dated Oct. 9, 1900, and written from South Africa:

*"My dear Laura, I have not written for, quite a while... it is so hard to keep one's correspondence up to the mark. At present we are setting in camp here - a miserable place full of dust and dirt- hot like a furnace. Since leaving Pretoria we have been on two marches .. We have been in action twice since coming here. Yesterday afternoon was the latter of the two: we fired about 40 shells into Brother Boer, who made tracks over the hills. We did not lose any men. I have been in eleven scraps now of various size and of various importance. With very best wishes old chum ... believe me!*

*Yours very fondly, Jack"*

McCrae never married, and the other man in the abbreviated note is not easily identified. McCrae, later a doctor with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, succumbed to pneumonia in January 1918 in Boulogne, France, in the final year of the First World War. His short poem *In Flanders Fields*, first published in *Punch*, is an indelible reminder of the brutality and horror of trench warfare. ■

*(Allan E Levine is a librarian and historian living in Ottawa.)*

# Shilling a Night

Inspired by an article by David McVey in the Scottish outdoor magazine "The Angry Corrie."

Many thousands of young people from all over the world, including Canada, were first introduced to Scotland thanks to the economical accommodation provided by the Scottish Youth Hostels Association, currently celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In recognition, we have reprinted this excerpt from Alastair Borthwick's 1939 outdoor classic, "Always a Little Further" which captures the essence of hostelling in its early days. Wonderfully evocative of a searching innocence, it describes how the hostellers while away a night with music and song after a wet day in the hills. It is all the more moving and poignant because most of those present were either Scottish or German, and some would not survive the savage conflict soon to engulf their respective countries.

The Scottish Youth Hostels Association, a society administered by its own members and designed to build as many hostels as possible in the Scottish countryside, was formed in 1932. I did not hear of it until the following year; but since then I have been a member, a privilege which has cost me -- the sum has varied with my age -- between three and five shillings a year. The number of hostels has grown slowly; but today my membership card entitles me to walk into any of sixty-odd hostels scattered up and down the more remote parts of the country, and there obtain a bed and blankets to sleep in, a kitchen and pots to cook in, and a common room to play, talk, sing, and argue in, all for the charge of one shilling a night.

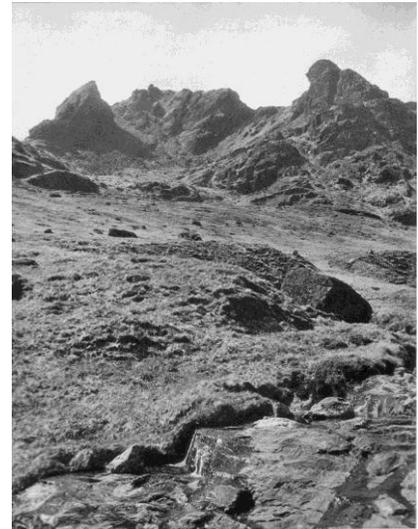
Being interested in such matters, I am biased in their favour; but, even when trying to think of them in a detached way, I cannot rid myself of the conviction that the youth hostel movement is one of the more

important social innovations of this century. It has opened up thousands of Scotland's deserted square miles; but that is relatively unimportant. What is important is that the Association numbers its members by the tens of thousands, and that the vast majority of these people have so little money that they could not, without the help of the hostels, spend their week-ends in the country and in the fresh air. What was once not even within reach of a summer holiday has become a weekend playground.

Throughout that year when I first learned of hitchhikers and caves, barns and bird-watchers, the Youth Hostels formed a solid core of experience. These other things were aspects of the truth that a new weekend society was growing up; but they were offshoots and perversions of the central fact that the hostels were the basis of the movement. During that year I slept in many hostels, meeting doctors and bank clerks, barbers and typists, students and labourers, office boys, grocers, insurance agents, shop assistants, engineers. There appeared to be no class of society to which the appeal of the hostels did not extend; and so they were, and, to my mind, still are, the greatest library of ideas and human experience in Scotland.

I argued about the three-colour process in films with a cinema projector salesman in Glen Clova two years before the process reached the screen and the public knew anything of it, about the relative merits of Rangers and Third Lanark in Arrochar Hostel, about the poetry of Chesterton at Langholm in the Borders with two Edinburgh journalists. I was preached the Douglas Credit System at Inverbeg on Loch Lomond by a budding chartered accountant, and modern methods of road construction by a surveyor at Ledard Hostel on Loch Ard. I learned Boer folk songs from two South Africans in Glen Nevis; and at Arrochar, early in the year, four German girls taught me the most exquisite volkslied I know.

That was a night. We had all been caught in a downpour of rain which had started early in the afternoon and grown progressively worse ever since. By early evening, sixty drowned rats were crammed into Arrochar Hostel common room, with more arriving off



Ben Arthur, known locally as "The Cobbler" is located near the village of Arrochar, the site of the 1930s hostel described by Borthwick. The hostel movement's objective... "To help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love, and care of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple accommodation..."

the hills every few minutes. It was a big room with unvarnished pine walls, solidly built tables and benches, and, at one end, two kitchen sinks, shelves of pots and pans, and a vast array of pigeonholes where each person kept his or her food. In the centre of the room -- was a huge cast-iron stove; and above it, stretching from wall to wall, was a rope laden with a sodden, steaming, and fantastically mixed collection of garments. They were the clothes of most of the sixty.

We were all decently clad; but some had had a struggle to preserve an air of respectability. I, having been washed out of the Cobbler corrie and being blessed with a leaky rucksack, was wearing a kilt and a scarlet bathing costume; John, making the most he could of blanket and a pyjama jacket, had a bed-ridden look about him; and William, swathed entirely in brown blankets, looked like a cross between a Roman senator and a Franciscan friar. He appeared to favour the former part, for he was striding about declaiming the more popular sayings of M. Antony as reported by Mr. Shakespeare. And everywhere were people in coarse shirts and jerseys, short trousers, kilts, breeches, frying their sausages and ham, and making tea on the stove.

When we had fed, we were at that replete stage of tiredness when conversation lapses and the tendency is to stare at the stove and dream. Then a curious thing happened.



Loch Ossian Youth Hostel. Located in the wild Rannoch Moor, it is one of Scotland's most remote hostels. Other than by hiking in, it is accessible only by trains running on the famous West Highland Line.

A lad with fair hair and a very brown face was sitting on the floor near the stove with his back to the wall; and he started to play a mouth-organ very quietly to himself. No one paid much attention. Then he played a tune I had not heard before; and I noticed he was staring over his mouth-organ at a girl who was writing letters on the other side of the common room. And another thing I noticed was that, although she was obviously too busy to notice that a tune was being played, she was beating time with her foot.

The mouth-organist frowned and started the tune again, a little louder this time; and when he had played it half through the girl sat up with a jerk, stared at him for a moment, and then gave him such a smile as would have made a misogynist delirious. After which, she sang.

The lad must have discovered that she was German, for it was a German folk-song he had played; and she, hearing without hearing, had not realized immediately that the song, in Scotland, was unusual.

Now she sang, clearly, beautifully...  
"Wenn komm, wenn i komm, wenn i weider, weider komm..."

"...weider, weider komm" chimed in three other German girls who were with her, and the bumble of conversation in the common room hesitated and died. People turned round. Dirty dishes were left dirty.

". . . weider, weider komm kehr ich ein mein Schatz bei Dir..."

Song is so common in the hostels that it seldom interrupts the business of the day. One goes on with one's job, singing but not pausing. But this was different. The girl was beautiful, and sang like a lark; and so intense was the silence that the mouth-organist, who normally would have been blasting to make himself heard over the din of singing and small talk, was playing softly and well. I felt as if I were not breathing. She held those sixty people, cyclists, hikers, all sorts, to the last note; and then the cheering must have been heard halfway up the Cobbler. It was an extraordinary business.

They made her sing it three times, and gradually caught a few of the words.

"Wenn i komm, wenn i komm" . . . that was easy! "Weider, Weider komm," sang the girl. "Weider, Weider komm," bellowed the mob, enchanted by the thought that they were singing in German. They stamped their feet and roared at the rafters. It was a great success. "Wenn i komm . . . !" Marvellous!

That started it. Would we -- she smiled again -- sing some Scottish songs, please? Would we! And there was, too, a lad with a good tenor voice, the Gaelic, and a chest like a barrel. We sang all night. We sang "Die Lorelei" and "Banks o' Loch Lomond," "Stille Nacht" and "An t' Eilean Muillach," "The Cockle-Gatherers," "Die Wacht am

Rhein," "Deutschland Uber Alles" and "The Eriskay Love Lilt."

Hot faces yelled by the stove. No one heard the mouth-organist, swamped now by the crowd drawn in from distant draught boards and games of whist. The atmosphere was thick, a compost of cooking, bodies, and steaming clothes; but no one cared. Every one sang, so that dripping travellers arrived at the door and were amazed. Sixty people, far gone in song, can make a great deal of noise.

We were still writing out the words for each other at lights out that night; and I still have a postcard headed "Swabisches Volkslied" with the words of that first song scribbled on it in a curious spidery handwriting.

Next morning everyone had gone. ■

## *Raise a Glass to the Cape Breton Highlands*

by Rod Currie Canadian Press

GLENVILLE, N.S. - A modern distillery tucked away in this tiny community amid the leafy Cape Breton Highlands is producing an exotic amber-gold whisky that its creators think of as Scotch. Trouble is, they're not allowed to label it as such.

In the same way that the only true champagne comes from France's Champagne region, so real Scotch whisky is distilled only in Scotland. Thus the local product, although it follows the ancient Scottish methods, is marketed as Glen Breton Rare Canadian Single Malt Whisky, the only single malt produced in North America.

The distillery, a major component of the 120-hectare Glenora Inn and Distillery development begun in 1990, can't keep up with demand. This despite prices that range from \$74.98 for a 750-ml bottle in Nova Scotia to as much as \$99 in Ontario, where several posh Toronto hotels complain they can't get enough.

"We never really anticipated going into mass production," says master distiller Daniel MacLean, an engaging Cape Breton native who came to his job somewhat by chance.

"As a micro-distillery we're going to keep it at around 2,000 dozen-bottle cases a year," he says. "We couldn't really come out with, say, 10,000 cases and still maintain the quality."

But whisky is a chancy business, and the Glenora operation has gone under twice, the original owners bankrupt before it opened.

Now the distillery is supported by a complex that includes a modern, nine-room inn with cosy restaurant and adjoining pub, six hillside chalets in the Swiss style and convention facilities.

The setting, just off the famed Cabot Trail, is midway between the villages of Inverness, where a former railway station now houses a mining museum, and Mabou, the Celtic fiddling and dancing heart of Cape Breton.

Set in a highlands area a few kilometers from the sea and excellent beaches, the surroundings, which abound with ancient Scottish heritage implanted by immigrants arriving in the 1820s, also offers fishing, skiing, horseback riding and scenic drives.

Aside from overnight guests, the inn attracts many day visitors who take the modestly priced distillery tour, stop for a meal, taste the whisky to the accompaniment of local musicians or simply stroll around the charming grounds.

MacLean, who says the distillery business "is easy to learn but hard to gain experience in," still longs for his first trip to Scotland, hoping to pick up some valuable tricks of the trade, knowing only too well that the canny Scots might be a bit tight-lipped about it.

(Editor: Thanks to Christine Boyle for sending us this article.)

*How does the Glen Breton single malt compare to a Scotch single malt? For the answer, we called on our resident whisky expert, Ed Patrick, a long-time member of SSF and currently a member of the board of the Society.*

*He is also the founder of The Companions of The Quaich, Canada's premier Scotch single-malt whisky appreciation society with more than 700 members across Ontario.*

*Ed points out that while Glenora Distillery uses the same traditional methods and ingredients as Scotland's distilleries - malted barley, yeast, and water - the key difference lies in the water. Many countries have tried to duplicate the taste of Scotch, notably the Japanese, who even shipped water from Scotland to use in the production of single malts, but without success. Also, no other country can match the effects of the local Scottish atmosphere on the maturation of the spirit, so the distinctive "scotch" taste doesn't come through.*

*He says Glen Breton is a pleasing, flavourful single malt but at eight years is still showing its youth. It doesn't have the gentleness of a Lowland malt, the dry peatiness of the Highlands, the floral fragrance of Speyside, the robustness of Islay nor the briny seaweed of an Island whisky.*

*Enjoy it for its own, unique Cape Breton Highlands character. Slainte!*

# Enoch Kent's Scots folk reborn in powerful new album

by Greg Quill (Toronto Star)

"A bit of a break" is the way veteran Scottish folksinger Enoch Kent describes his 36-year absence from the recording studio.

He immigrated to Canada in the late 1960s working as a schoolteacher, then a graphic designer, but never stopped writing, never stopped playing guitar, never stopped singing

## The Farm Auction

by Enoch Kent

A rusting tractor on the hill  
The fence post with the printed bill  
That said the sale was on until  
Everything was gone

Chorus:

The auctioneer comes here today  
Privacy upon display  
The highest bidder takes away  
But they can't take it all

The letter came on a Wednesday  
The bank said that we'd have to pay  
Or else they'd take the farm away  
And they said they'd take it all

There's bone and silver napkin rings  
Elastic bands 'round spoons and things  
Tiny fingers held the strings  
Of that fiddle in the case

And there's coffee pots we never used  
Silver frames a little bruised  
Around the portraits that amused us  
In the parlour and the hall

Like fireglow and favourite songs  
And laughter, they're the things among  
The memories that still belong  
Within those empty rooms

O remember when the lights were low  
Pies, balloons, and mistletoe  
Morning sunlight on the snow  
Who will buy a broken sleigh?

There's a jar of nails and a box of tacks  
The dining chairs with the wicker backs  
They're in the garden piled and stacked  
And being spotted by the rain

The auctioneer comes here today  
Cars line the sidewalk black and grey  
Children watch the odd display  
While their mothers touch the lots

That are numbered now with coloured tags  
Books and clothing sold in bags  
Bought for learning. Bought for rags  
Everything must go

for himself in his Etobicoke home.

"If it hadn't been for a handful of people badgering me to get some songs onto a record, I'd probably not have done it," Kent explains in a rich and raspy, full-throated Glasgow burr. "I kept asking them, what's the point?"

He's talking about *I'm A Workin' Chap*, a collection of 15 powerful, evocative and quite beautifully performed ballads - some from the traditional Scottish repertoire, most of them originals, or original lyrics paired with ancient folk airs, all of them squarely in the Extreme Folk mold, but far from mouldy.

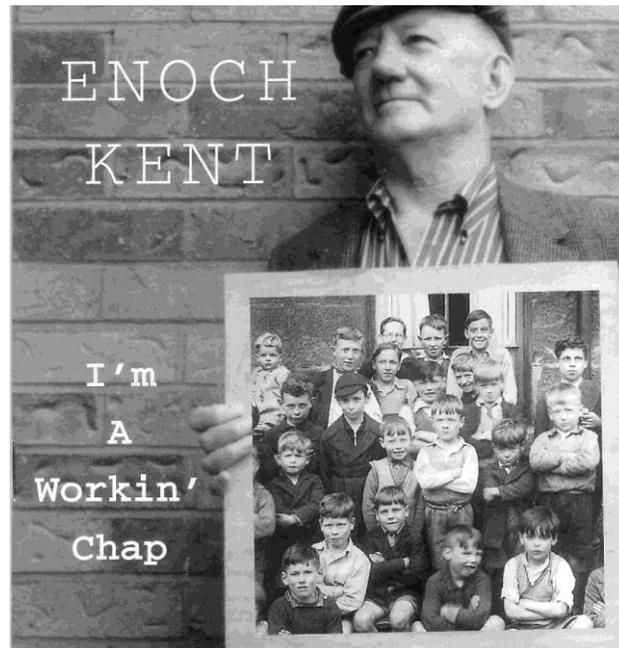
The album is an instant classic, an all-but-flawless exercise in folk art and craft, combining perceptive, brave and often provocative lyrics. Kent's political faith is as strong as his love of a wry

and ribald ditty - with graceful melodies, sparsely embellished with guitar arpeggios, some fiddle and flute, and a seasoned singer's unwavering commitment to conveying the full meaning of what he knows are songs of the very highest quality.

Now retired, and a good 20 years after he last performed at the Mariposa Folk Festival, Kent has recently rediscovered the joys of public performance. Earlier this year he was invited to sing at the Edinburgh Festival, where he was welcomed at half-a-dozen performances by admiring young fans, many of them singers and writers inspired by Kent's own early work.

"I was astonished that they knew me at all, but when they started quoting songs and singing bits and pieces of The Exiles' repertoire . . . weel, who'd have thought? And what they're singing and writing about are the same things we were doing, back in the CND (Committee for Nuclear Disarmament) and anti-apartheid marches, when they called us pinkos and commies - big things, big ideas about political and social systems and war and greed, the stuff that can change the way people think.

"Maybe they were the children or the grandchildren of the people back home I used to know. . ."



"I was waiting for a reason to make a record," says Kent, the 70-year-old singer and songwriter, founding member in the 1950s and early '60s of folk revivalist stalwarts *The Reivers* in his native Glasgow, and then *The Exiles* in London. Kent is also the founder of the "Hour Club" which supports the Scottish Studies Foundation. His CD is priced at \$20 with \$5 going to the Foundation. For information call Second Avenue Records, toll-free at 1-888-923-3879 or e-mail: [info@secondavenue.ca](mailto:info@secondavenue.ca)

His wellspring is still the stories of the working people and hard-minted ideals of the hometown Kent says he occasionally visits, "but not often enough."

In one song, "My Father's Cause," he laments not being able in the new millennium to explain to his grandchildren the reasons for acts of terrorism and of the murderous retribution of the wealthy and powerful.

"It's a different world, but the same things still make my blood boil. When I read in the newspaper that the Singer company, which made the sewing machine my mother made all our clothes on, was now making guidance systems for nuclear weapons... I had to write a song."

The same thing happened when, a few years ago, Kent witnessed the sad finality of a bank-enforced farm auction.

The song that tells of that experience, "The Farm Auction," has been recorded by half-a-dozen other artists - never till now by Kent himself -and is well established in the traditional song repertoire.

"People pass it along as if it were a folk song, as if it was always there," Kent chuckles. "That makes me so proud ... knowing that there's something out there, something I made, that someone else finds useful." ■

## From the Mailbox

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### Scots Law

Congratulations on another fine issue of the newsletter. I particularly enjoyed the article on Scottish Law by Angus MacCulloch, something not well understood by many people. It was explained to me by an advocate from Peterhead when Marie and I had the unique experience of attending a Burns dinner at the Royal Northern and University Club in Aberdeen on 27 January, 2002, while we were there to attend the memorial service for Captain Alexander Ramsay of Mar, late husband of The Lady Saltoun, Chief of Clan Fraser, on the following Monday in Fraserburgh. We stayed at the club for five days and, when I asked about a reservation for dinner on Saturday evening, I was told that there was a private function that evening and we would have to find dinner elsewhere.

By coincidence, the club president was passing the desk at the time, and invited Marie and me to sit at his table for the Burns Night on Saturday. The evening began when he placed a bottle of The Macallan on the table (followed by a few more), and all the participants in the dinner programme were at our table. An advocate from Peterhead, who gave the Immortal Memory that evening, gave me an overview of Scottish Law, much of which I still remember (The Macallan, notwithstanding). In addition to the normal presentations, the man sitting next to me recited *Tam O' Shanter* entirely from memory. He had a brief memory lapse toward the end, but recovered, and told me he was greatly embarrassed at the slip. For once, Marie and I were the only ones at the dinner with the "funny accents", which was pointed out to me when I was asked to say a few words. The advocate from Peterhead was very fond of Captain Ramsay, who was a charter member of their Burns Club, as well as one of only 20 elite members of the William Macgonagall Club of Peterhead.

Neil and Marie Fraser,  
Toronto, Ontario

Ed: Thanks for your comments -- much appreciated. I enjoyed your story. What an interesting way for you to find out about Scots law!

### One Came Back

I enjoyed reading the article *One Came Back* in the last issue. My father was in the RAF during the war [WW2] and often spoke of the camaraderie and bravery of the young Canadian pilots. Since taking a keen interest in my Scottish heritage it now seems that wherever I go, I come across some reminder of the connection between Scotland and Canada. It's either a street name, a historical plaque or something in an antique shop! Thanks again for keeping my interest going.

Margaret Brown  
Vancouver, BC

Ed: I agree! Scots-Canadian connections are everywhere!

### *Empire Sandy Cruise: Great weather—great company!*



The Empire Sandy out on Lake Ontario

Perfect weather with glorious blue skies and light cloud made the perfect day for the 10th anniversary of the Society's Sailing Cruise on the Empire Sandy on September 1. Once again, both morning and afternoon cruises were filled to capacity.

Attendees on the morning cruise were strategically placed to witness spectacular close-up displays of aircraft participating in the CNE Air Show. Those on the afternoon cruise were treated to a spontaneous informal singalong with former Foundation Chairman Bill Somerville serving as impromptu Master of Ceremonies.

In keeping with tradition, the stirring sound of the pipes of Bill Cockburn and John Wakefield added to the Scottish flavour of the event, as did the intricate steps of the Georgina Finlay Dancers.

The event raised over \$2,000 for our cause so a big round of applause is due to all members and friends who came out to give support.

The annual cruises commemorate the arrival of the "Hector" in Canada in 1773.



*Dancing the Highland Fling on board the Empire Sandy*

The "Hector" carried the first wave of Scottish settlers to Pictou, Nova Scotia. In later years, that first wave became a flood of Scots to Canada. ■



*Above: thanks to the continuing support of Georgina Findlay, her Scottish Country Dancers entertained those on board. (Some were even "volunteered" into joining in.)  
Below: a hazy warm summer sun silhouettes the ship on the way back to port.*





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