In Gear — If my body were a Car

If my body were a car, this is the time I would be thinking about trading it in for a newer model. I’ve got bumps and dents and scratches in my finish, and my paint job is getting a little dull. But that’s not the worst of it. My headlights are out of focus, and it’s especially hard to see things up close. My traction is not as graceful as it once was. I slip and slide and skid and bump into things even in the best of weather. My whitewalls are stained with varicose veins. It takes me hours to reach my maximum speed. My whitewalls are stained with varicose veins. It takes me hours to reach my maximum speed. My exhaust backfires.

Cash for Clunkers

I qualify.

How about you?

Anonymous.
Letter from Edinburgh
The Gathering 2009, Holyrood Park, 25/26 July

I attended the Highland Games and Scottish Festival opened by the Duke of Rothesay, as Prince Charles is known in Scotland.

It was sunny and pleasantly warm and joining the crowds entering the grass surfaced parade ground I headed for the clan village of over 100 square pagoda tents many with their own clan chiefs, some of whom wore eagle feathers in their bonnets. I visited my own clans of Stewart and then Sinclair where I purchased a copy scroll of the Genealogy of Prince Henry St. Clair, or Sinclair, the ‘Discoverer’ of America in 1398, and then called in at some others not forgetting Clan Currie, and the only St Andrew Society represented — Singapore!

I was too late to get a seat for the Deuchars World Highland Games Heavy Events Championship but could watch them on an enormous screen erected for the purpose.

I was amused to see that hundreds of people had climbed various hilly parts of Arthur’s Seat (Edinburgh’s ‘Mountain’) which overlooks the parade ground some distance away, presumably in the hope of seeing the event for free!

Later I saw youngsters take part in the Highland Dancing Competition, and in time I joined a crowd of folk in front of the Wee Stage for an hour long demonstration of Scottish country dancing including audience participation which was great fun and enjoyed by all.

As I approached the immense crowd in front of the main stage I heard the lovely Gaelic singing of Julie Fowlis, while I waited for the famous Red Hot Chilli Pipers.

I passed the Talisker whisky tasting tent (entry at £5 a ticket) because I have my own supply at home! At one point I had to move quickly to avoid (being trampled on by) the Lonach Highlanders a band of men from the Strathdon area (North of Ballater) Aberdeenshire.

Lonach Highlanders.

Many families sitting on rugs had quite sensibly supplied their own picnic lunch while others were forming long queues at the food outlets, but as it was too hot for me to do that, and having enjoyed my visit (well worth my £18 ticket money even though I could not attend on the second day), I reckoned that I had been on my feet for nearly six hours and seen all I wanted to see, I left the Gathering area around 4:30 to go home.

Passing the controversial Scottish Parliament building opposite Holyrood Palace on my way, I walked up the Canongate (the Royal Mile) for a welcome hot Turkish meal in my favourite Café Truva owned and run by a friend’s son-in-law, (very useful!), and afterwards to my bus, walking about the same distance and more than half the route later taken that evening by the Parade of the Clans.

Thousands of participants including many from outwith Scotland and the UK, led by pipe bands, marched up the very steep cobbled roadway of the Royal Mile to Edinburgh Castle Esplanade where a pageant entitled Aisling’s Children celebrating Scotland’s history was performed, thereby completing the City of Edinburgh’s contribution to the almost year-long Homecoming Scotland 2009.

Kenneth Sinclair Stewart
Secretary of the World Federation of Scottish Societies

Clan tents in the grounds of Holyrood Palace.
Scotland’s Influence in the United States

A series of articles prepared by David Cargill

James Porteous 1848–1922

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers rarely bestows a finer accolade than the International Historic Engineering Landmark. In 1991 Scottish Inventor, James Porteous posthumously received the award for his innovative Fresno Scraper an 1883 agricultural and civil engineering earth moving blade designed to construct canals and ditches in sandy soil.

Porteous was born in Haddington, East Lothian and in 1873, aged 25 he left Scotland for a new life in America. The Scotsman settled in California and formed his own company in Fresno producing wagons, but it all could have been so different! Back at the British ticket office, Porteous did not know where he should travel and the station master suggested traveling with the Shield’s family, who were going to Santa Barbara. Porteous eagerly agreed and after initially spending time in Santa Barbara, he travelled to Fresno where he spent the rest of his life working and bringing up his family.

Using the basic skills of a wheelwright and a blacksmith learned back in Scotland while working for his father’s business, Porteous provided the most modern equipment for local farmers. Initially, he produced buggies and wagons capable of carrying five to eight tons.

From his own designs and synthesizing elements of scraper models from other Valley inventors, Porteous carefully created an earth moving scraper transforming the way earth could be scraped, moved, dumped and leveled. Existing devices could scrape and gather soil, but the Fresno could also discharge soil at a controlled depth and scoop the earth up rather than push aside, thereby dramatically speeding-up construction of irrigation canals and ditches.

The horse drawn device was an instant success with farmers in central California. The Fresno Expositor of April 9th 1884 reported that Porteous had made over 350 scrapers in the previous 18 months and had shipped them to all parts of the state. Soon the device was shipped to South America, India, Australia and Europe.

The Fresno Scraper was sold across America initially for farming and then progressing to road and railroad construction and dam projects. The scraper played a critical role in the construction of the Panama Canal. The advent of the tractor replaced the horse, and by 1941 the Fresno Scraper was attached to the caterpillar tractor and became known as the bulldozer.

James Porteous married Jenny and the couple had six children, three boys and three girls. He died on March 29th 1922 leaving behind an impressive body of work covering over 50 patented inventions.
Committee News

The Board of Trustees met July 11 at the home of Jack Dawson. Minutes will be posted on the website.

The Communications Committee coordinates production of The Thistle and other related outreach projects. The committee coordinated editorial content for the Fall 2009 issue via email.

The Membership chair has reported no new members since June 2009.

The Finance Committee meets regularly under the chairmanship of treasurer Dave Moffett.

All members are welcome to attend committee meetings and Board of Trustee meetings. Dates are posted on the website.

Scotch Corner

How to taste single malt scotch whisky... as if you didn’t know!

1. Remember, it can ONLY be called scotch if it is distilled in Scotland.

2. Use a good glass. The tulip glass is the preferred style because it focuses the aromas and splashes the spirit onto the tongue in a wide fashion. Riedel make this style.

3. Pour yourself a dram, anywhere from half an ounce to two.

4. Tilt and turn the glass. Let the whisky coat the glass. This increases the surface area, enhancing the aroma.

5. Nose the whisky. Place your nose a few inches away from the glass. What do you smell? Keeping your mouth slightly open as you nose the whiskey will help you to better discern and ‘taste’ the different aromas.

6. Add water, as much as half-and-half or as little as a few drops. Adding water depends on the strength and style of the whisky and the taster’s preference. Regular bottles contain 40% to 46% alcohol by volume (ABV) and are diluted using the distillery’s water source. “Cask strength” whiskies are stronger (generally 46% to 60%) and require more water. Avoid tap water, because the chlorine and/or dissolved minerals will interfere with the taste.

7. Gently agitate the whisky. Nose the whisky again. Change the angle and distance of the glass to pick up all of the subtle aromas. Continue this for a few minutes while the water marries with the whisky and releases additional aromas you may not have noticed at first.

8. Take a sip. Take just enough to coat your mouth and begin to slowly swirl it around your tongue. Try and coat your tongue so that the whisky touches all of your taste buds.

9. Taste the whisky. Try to hold the whisky in your mouth as long as it takes to notice all of the different flavors.

10. Swallow. Try not to open your mouth or close your throat. Let in a tiny amount of air through your mouth and breathe through your nose slowly as the fumes rise up into your sinuses.

Slainte mhath!

For the first time in its history Clan Currie will be represented on clan row at the Seaside Highland Games October 10–11.

To help celebrate its fiftieth anniversary year the clan commander, Robert Currie will be present at the opening ceremonies and throughout the weekend. Please come and visit. A real Scottish welcome awaits you!

Good mile faite

Contact Ian Skone-Rees via email at: rees1@mac.com
September 12, 2009

pronounced kay-lee – gaelic for party or gathering
We are dependent on the growth of our membership. Please spread the word about your Saint Andrew’s Society and encourage your friends to join us in preserving Scottish identity and culture.

with an opportunity to explore placement possibilities in Chinese universities for a semester or an academic year in the religious studies section, a philosophy department, where the academic study of religion is taught in China.

We visited Beijing, Tianjin, Tai’an, Ji’nan, Wuhan, and Shanghai, and I met with the heads of departments and scholars from among the most prestigious academic institutions in China: Peking, Renmin (People’s), and Tsinghua Universities, and the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing; Nankai University in Tianjin; Shandong University in Ji’nan; Wuhan University in Wuhan; and Fudan University in Shanghai.

One of the great joys of the trip was in Tai’an. Two of us went up Mt. Tai Shan — over 5000 feet and the holiest of five holy mountains in China — where new emperors would make a pilgrimage to ensure the success of their reign. We hiked half-way up with a group of young scholars and took a cable car from there, gliding up over beautiful views of the mountain, valleys, and the plains below. On top there were several temples, hotels and restaurants. We then flew by cable car back down to the midway point and took a bus the rest of the way. It was a wonderful day!

This brief article is a synopsis of a much more detailed report prepared by Chuck on his return from China. The full version is full of interesting detail that makes fascinating reading which I am sure he would be happy to share with anyone who asks. Ed.

For those of you who ventured south to the Costa Mesa Games in May you will have seen a new tent on clan row — ours. Yes for the first time the Saint Andrew’s Society of Los Angeles was represented at a highland games with their very own tent, staffed by member volunteers. The presence of our tent was such a success that it was decided to purchase (rather than rent) our own tent for the Seaside Games in October. We learned quite a lot at Costa Mesa and we hope we have learned lessons that will allow us to improve our showing and be more useful and informative to prospective members when they stop by. Volunteers are needed to staff the tent, normally a two hour shift, so please contact the editor, Dave Moffett, or Dave Macpherson for information on how you can help. There’s single malt in the tent for those of you who require additional incentive! See you there! Ed.

Contact Ian Skone-Rees via email at: rees1@mac.com

Chuck Robertson (center) with fellow scholars rest on their climb up Mt. Taishan.

Chuck with a group of Chinese scholars at the top of Mt. Taishan.

New Members

We are dependent on the growth of our membership. Please spread the word about your Saint Andrew’s Society and encourage your friends to join us in preserving Scottish identity and culture.

Highland Games Calendar – 2009

Please refer to the SASSLA website www.saintandrewsla.org for a comprehensive calendar of Highland Games and Scottish celebrations.