



Clan Donnachaidh News

ROCKY MOUNTAIN *Branch*

DECEMBER 2006

FRAE THE PRESIDENT

By Nancy Bigley



The cold winter night of December 2nd was warmed by bright lights, St. Nicks everywhere (except the roof) and great conversation of old and new friends at our Second Annual Yule party. Mindy and Dennis Bolen gave us huge “Céad Mile Fáilte” (100 thousand welcomes) as this year’s gracious hosts. “Thank you” for so graciously opening your home and sharing your exceptional Santa collection and a beautifully lit tree.

Thirty three clan members were present from as far south as Parker (Doni & Dick Bond), as far north as Fort Collins (Brian and Jodee Robertson) and even from Ouray, our western slope Highlands, (Bill & Jane Collier). There were three past Presidents attending (welcome back to Colorado Becky) and most of this year’s newly elected officers and council members. To Rich Matthews and Alice Ward, I was remiss in mentioning it earlier but we all congratulate you on your engagement announcement.

The food and libations were in plenty and as always were diverse and so very yummy. Whew, no calories were consumed however. Our drawing included Scottish Santa’s, and other goodies. (Joel, you are forgiven for winning because of the photo taking). Those unable to join us, please know you were missed, thought of, talked about (positive things only we promise) and we sent you much good cheer.

Our youth enjoyed the dancing Santa’s, the pool table and movies. They are growing up so fast and were quite the young ladies and gentlemen. And Emma, dressed so elegantly, your enthusiasm was infectious (enjoy her picture)!!

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In many Celtic traditions the Winter Solstice/Yule is a celebration of the longest night of the year, when

the dark of winter gives way to the light of the sun. People and spirits are invited into the warmth of homes. Bonfires are lit in the fields and crops and trees are “wassailed” in preparation for the warmth of spring. It symbolizes an anticipation of growth. Our clan is growing and if this year’s party is any indication of the warmth and fun we share together, I look forward to our future gatherings with joyous anticipation. We hope to see everyone at the Robert Burns Dinner in January.

I wish each of you a safe and healthy holiday season filled with much love and cheer. Enjoy the magic of the season and Slainte n hath to all!

Nancy Bigley
President





*Come One, Come All
to the
Clan Donnachaidh/Robertson
Robert Burns Night
January 20, 2007
Radisson- Graystone at 120th and I-25
6:00pm to 10:00 pm*

We begin at 6:00 pm socializing with fellow clan members. Our piper will pipe in the haggis with a fabulous buffet dinner following about 7:00 pm. Our program will include toasts and stories about Robert Burns and listening to Celtic musicians. There will be a cash bar again this year.

We will hold drawings to help raise funds for our Memorial fund and clan activities which will include another great basket of Scottish goodies, a variety of handmade items and some fun door prizes. There will be a special area set up with a photographer, so come dressed in your Scottish finest. Remember to bring extra cash for thanking our piper, the musicians, for purchasing a special picture of the evening AND those drawing tickets!

We'll once again be at the Radisson- Graystone Hotel at 120th and I-25.

Why not make it a weekend by planning to stay the night at a special price \$92/night plus tax which includes breakfast the next morning?

Just call the hotel and tell them you are with the Donnachaidh-Robertson Burns Dinner and want to reserve a room at our special rate. (303) 451-1002.

Please join us for a fun, good food, and great conversation. We hope to see everyone there, so complete the reservation form below and send it to Mindy soon!

Anyone wishing to donate drawing items please contact Nancy Bigley, nabigley@msn.com or

Please fill out the attached reservation form and return it with payment by January 15, 2007



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HERE WE COME A WASSAILING...

Wassail is a traditional drink during the holiday season, shared among friends, family and loved ones to drink to their good health. The word 'wassail' is from the Anglo-Saxon "be of good health". Therefore to wassail [with] someone, meant to drink their health and a wassail bowl of hot ale, spices, sugar and roasted apples—to which eggs and thick cream were sometimes added—was often passed round at Christmastime. The Scottish version - the "Het Pint" (consisting of hot spiced ale, sugar and whisky) - was traditionally shared as soon as the clocks had ceased striking midnight on New Year's Eve, or Hogmanay.

Because Christmas was not celebrated as a festival and virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years, from the end of the 17th century to the 1950s, Hogmanay became the primary winter Celebration. Hogmanay family and friends gather for parties and exchange presents, especially for the children. An integral part of the Hogmanay partying is to welcome friends and strangers, with warm hospitality and of course a kiss to wish everyone a Guid New Year. The underlying belief is to clear out the vestiges of the old year, have a clean break and welcome in a young, New Year on a happy note.



The singing of Robert Burns' "For Auld Lang Syne" is a long standing Hogmanay tradition throughout Scotland.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind? Should auld acquaintance be forgot and auld lang syne. For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne, We'll take a cup o kindness yet, for auld lang syne."

As the clocks finish striking midnight wassail is served to drink to the health of all those present and may be carried to neighboring homes. Firework displays and torchlight parades also occur throughout the night.

Another tradition that remains to this day in Scotland is, "first footing" or the first foot in the house immediately after midnight.

To ensure good luck for the house, the first foot should be male, dark (which is believed to be a throwback to the Viking days when blond strangers arriving on your doorstep meant big trouble) and should bring symbolic coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and whisky.

These days, however, whisky and perhaps shortbread are the only items still prevalent (and easily available).

And it is worth remembering that January 2nd is a holiday in Scotland to give us all time to recover from a week of merry-making and celebration!



By Hope Charles

WASSAIL

- 12 small apples
- 6 pints ale
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 tsp Ginger
- 2 tsp Cinnamon
- 2 tsp Nutmeg
- 4 whole Cloves
- Lemon Zest from 2 Lemons
- 2 pints Red Wine

Peel, core and dry roast apples in slow oven until almost bursting.

Combine 1/3 of ale with sugar, spices and lemon zest. Simmer over low heat for 20 minutes.

Add remaining ale and wine and heat, but do not boil. Serve over apples.

Serves 12

By Hope Charles

CLAN HISTORY (AS I HAVE LEARNED IT) Pt 2

By DONALD ROBERTSON

We have now learned about Clan Donnachaidh. Next we will learn of some of the many battles our people were involved in over many years time. The highlanders have waged many battles not only with one another, but anyone who they disliked. These fights continued over all the years until 1745. Our people always respected and fought for the Kings of Scotland as well as protecting their own lands against anybody or thing.

One of the primary battle tactics of all Highlanders was to hold the higher ground against any enemy. They had one maneuver that they almost always used. They would be above their enemy. Many times they would shed their clothes, play the bagpipes and charge down the hill upon their enemies. This was always done while sounding loud shouting to distract their foes. They were positively fearsome to the enemy. This tactic was used throughout their history.

Remind me to play the song "On the Braes O' Killiekrankie" which is in our Clan country near the Clan Museum.

As the years rolled around, and with the English, called by the Highlanders "Sassenach", which means Southerners, seemingly always battling the Scots trying to retake Scotland for the King of England. There were too many battles almost to list. One of my favorite songs is "Flower of Scotland" which is about King Edward I trying to defeat Scotland for himself. I'll also play this song for you.

This all went on for an extremely long time finally ending upon the Field of Culloden on April 16, 1746. This ended Prince Charles trying to regain Scotland for his father King James who lived in France. The King of England as was the case with most Kings in Europe. The current King of England, George was of German birth and could speak no English and had to use translators to explain conversations. As all royalty in Europe were of royal blood, they could marry no one unless they also had royal blood, hence a German ruled.

The Kings son was the Duke of Cumberland and at this time he was fighting the French in France.

When Bonnie Prince "Cherly", (as the Scots pronounced his name) arrived in Scotland from France in 1745 with very few men, the Scots welcomed and several of the Highland Chiefs appeared as well. Eventually most all of the Highland Clans joined in as did Clan Robertson. At this time, we had a rather elderly Chief who did lead the Clan as they came from the east coast, defeating the English with little effort all the way to Edinburgh where Charlie was warmly received by all. He and the Highlanders were warmly received and welcomed.

From this point, the Scots started south to Prestonpans where General Johnny Cope led the English troops. The English were protected to the East by bogs and wet land. The English thought this would keep the Scots from attacking from this direction. The Scots found a loyal person who knew the area extremely well and led the Scots to just outside Prestonpans.

Toward morning the Scots advanced to the English outposts, overcame them and surprised the English forces putting them to route and totally winning the battle. Our Chief then saw the carriage of Johnny Cope and claimed it as his prize. Following Prestonpans the Chief returned home and was carried by the clansmen in Johnny Copes carriage back to the Highlands.

The old Chief lived very few more years, but everywhere he went, he was carried in the carriage.

What a wonderful story this is for Clan Robertson.

Next lesson will be about the defeat of the Highlanders at Culloden Moor.

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CHOCOLATE STOUT CAKE

By Tom Reed

The bubbles in the stout act as a leavening agent, so only a small amount of baking soda is needed for this rich, moist cake to rise.

Use an 8" x 3" ovenproof ring mold or a 6 cup capacity bundt pan

1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter - plus 2+ melted tablespoons for greasing the pan
1/2 cup stout (like Mackeson or Guinness) pour beer slowly into measuring cup – don't measure foam
1/2 cup packed soft pitted prunes (6 oz), chopped
3 1/2 oz fine-quality bittersweet chocolate, chopped (NOT unsweetened or extra-bitter)
1 1/4 cups all purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 large eggs
1 cup packed dark brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350F.

Lightly brush the pan with the 2 Tbs melted butter and chill 2 minutes, then brush another layer of butter and chill while making the batter.

Bring beer to a boil in a small saucepan and add chopped prunes. Remove from heat and let stand until most of the liquid is absorbed.

Meanwhile, melt chocolate with the stick of butter together in a small heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly.

Sift together the flour, baking soda and salt into a bowl.

Beat together eggs, brown sugar and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer at high speed until thick (about 2 minutes). Add chocolate/butter mixture and beat until just combined. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, mixing until just combined (don't over mix). Stir in the prune mixture until combined well.

Spoon batter in the ring mold/bundt pan and bake 35-40+ minutes until a wooden skewer or toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean.

Cool cake in mold/pan on a rack for 10 minutes, then invert onto your serving plate to cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar if desired.

Serve with Stout Crème Anglaise sauce - optional
Makes 8 to 10 servings

STOUT CRÈME ANGLAISE

By Tom Reed

The malty flavor of stout lends welcome contrast to this sweet, creamy dessert sauce. Try it over a bowl of vanilla ice cream or fresh fruit

You will need an instant read thermometer (line a candy thermometer)

1/2 cup stout (like Mackeson or Guinness) pour beer slowly into measuring cup – don't measure foam
5 large egg yolks
3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla

Bring beer just to a boil in a small, heavy saucepan then remove from heat.

Whisk together egg yolks, brown sugar and a pinch of salt in a medium bowl until combined well. Whisk in cream and vanilla, then add hot beer in a slow stream, whisking constantly.

Transfer to heavy saucepan and cook over moderately low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until custard is thickened and registers 175F on a thermometer that does not touch the bottom of the pan. Do not let it boil. (takes about 5 minutes - be patient, it is worth it).

Pour custard sauce through a fine-mesh sieve/strainer into a small metal bowl, then set the bowl in a larger bowl of ice and cold water and stir until cooled. Remove from the ice bath and refrigerate, covered, until cold - at least 1 hour. Sauce can be chilled up to 2 days for later use
Makes about 1 1/2 cups.

HOGMANAY

Hogmanay's origins date back to pagan rituals that marked the end of the winter solstice. Roman celebrations of the winter festival of Saturnalia and Viking celebrations of Yule (where we get the 12 days of Christmas) contributed to celebrations in Scotland around the New Year. These celebrations and other ceremonies evolved over the centuries to become the Hogmanay holiday celebrated in Scotland today.

For many centuries in Scotland, Hogmanay was a far more important holiday than Christmas. Historians suggest this may have been a result of the Protestant Reformation, after which Christmas (with its close ties to the Roman Catholic Church) was seen as "too Papist". Others scholars point to the fact that the harsh work schedules during the Industrial Revolution simply didn't allow for time off during the Christmas holiday.

A custom known as "first footing" dictates that the first person to cross a home's threshold after midnight on New Year's Eve will determine the homeowners luck for the new year. If that is true then it would behoove one to be a bit selective about who walks in the door of the house!! The ideal visitor bears gifts – preferably whiskey (that's a no brainer), coal for the fire, small cakes, or a coin. Oh, and it should be a man with dark hair. "Why" you ask? Apparently the answer hearkens back to the 8th Century, when the presumably light-haired Vikings invaded Scotland: a blond visitor was apparently not a good omen. However, I was unable to find any information about a bald visitor....hmmm.

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Another custom is to clean the house thoroughly and burn juniper to rid the house of evil spirits in the coming year.

Many Hogmanay traditions involve fire, again hearkening to Viking times. It is believed that the fire symbolized the sun's return after the winter solstice or was used to ward off evil spirits. The small town of Biggar, in southern Scotland has built a bonfire every Hogmanay for hundreds of years.

I think I will begin celebrating Hogmanay this year, especially the practice of first footing, although with a few changes. I will gladly let you in regardless of hair color – just don't forget the whiskey!

by Ray Ward



<http://www.thistle-shamrock.com>



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Bob Robertson,
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UP COMING EVENTS

January 20, 2006 – The annual Robert Burns supper
at the Radisson Graystone Castle.

83 E 120th Ave
Thornton, CO
303.451.1002

See attached reservation form.

More will follow after the first of the year!!!



