

Paisley Burns Club

Annual Outing 21st June 1990

Only a few anti-rain devices were visible when we met at Bridge Street at 9.30am, they were quickly stacked away in an extremely spacious coach. There were 53 seats for the 23 of us - plenty of room for strategic spacing.

The sun was shining, the clouds were few and high -, as were our spirits, as we moved off.

Aboard were 15 members, two Honorary members and six guests. In order of seniority these were: Jimmy Pearson, Jim Graham (lonely without Alastair), Lawrie Morton, Bob Corbett, David Osbourne, Archie Crawford, with Ian Hamilton, Bob Wilson, with Alexander Wilson (a faithful supporter), Sydney Harrison, Jimmy Young, (bereft of Hector Munro who was ill). President Drew Moncrieff, David Wright, John Armit, Jimmy Kerr, with Frank Reeves, Bobby Erskine and Denis Meney.

Hugh D-M. McCutcheon was up from Troon and Michael MacRobert was over from Colintrave bringing with him David Muir.

John Barbour sent not only his apologies for absence, but also two guests, the perennial Bob Martin accompanied by Hugh Goudie.

The coach may have been large but it was also smooth and fast.

Members and guests enjoyed the – for most of them – unusual pleasure of sitting high and watching the world go speeding by. At Ingliston, we viewed the long-tail back of cars with not a little smugness. We were hammering east and south in the opposite direction. Happily our driver was a native of Dalkeith and therefore knew the route intimately. Dead on 10.05a.m, we were deposited in the yard of the Justin Lees Inn where we had coffee, biscuits and a chance to stretch our legs.

At 11.15a.m. the President gave us our embossing orders – and away we went towards Coldstream on the A68, a delightful scenic route.

Undulating hills interwoven with luscious green fields, heavily cropping well-stocked with sheep and cattle – the Scottish Borders looking their best.

Coldstream is a smallish, attractive town and beyond it, a handsome bridge. This we crossed, as did Burns on The 7th May, 1787: he re-crossed soon with a prayer for a blessing of his native land. We did likewise but without a prayer: the photographers were out in force however. We made Kelso in good time, arriving at the Wagon Inn about 1.00p.m. President Drew had booked a private room into which we trooped, once we had collected the appropriate libations; certain members were observed carrying a long in the left and a short in the right; they were miscalled – and envied! The service was good, even if certain choice items were already “off”. The trout eaters affected a measure of superiority over the common-or-garden steak pie eaters.

Happily, on this occasion those members who had coffee remembered to pay for it. Such was the generosity in gratuities that our treasurer had “a pooch o’ surplus siller.” Sadly, however, on our departure the sky was overcast and the clouds opened.

By 3.00p.m. We had navigated our way to Scott’s View along a latterly extreme narrow road. The Eildon Hills were slightly shrouded in misty rain and the valley below was blurred in evaporating rain.

Our driver had difficulty in turning out transport – he had to use hydraulics to get us out of a dip.

Our next stop was Dryburgh Abbey, again difficult of access for our tank. The rain persisted. However, Paisley Burns Club members are nothing if not resolute – and most of them hied themselves into the Abbey grounds – to their satisfaction. Newcomers were intrigued and second/third time visitors still found much of interest. The burial place of the Haigs of Bemersyde and the masses of Erskines took up a lot of attention. Bobby Erskine was so taken up that he lost all sense of time – with the result that we were leaving Dryburgh Abbey when we should have been at Abbotsford, which we didn't get till 4.30p.m.

Mr. Gavin, our guide, was sympathetic, understood the problems of travelling to a tight schedule and proceeded to give us a brief, but illuminating tour of Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott. We toured the Study, the Library, the Drawing Room, the Entrance Hall with its miniature armoury. We were regaled with anecdotes about Scott and his money troubles; we looked at the painting of Scott's meeting with Burns, where the intelligentsia of Edinburgh figure – Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart, Joseph Black, David Hume, Adam Smith. We saw a copy of "Tam O' Shanter" presented to Scott by Robert Ainslie with corrections in Burns' own hand. At the end of the tour, David Osbourne presented Mr. Gavin with a copy of our Club's proceedings for 1989-90.

We left Abbotsford at 5.15p.m. and set off to Rosebank. We meandered at a rate of knots along the A72, the A721, thro' Carnwath via Lanark, down into the Clyde Valley. We may have missed the odd Garden Centre but not many and finally arrived at the Popinjay Hotel, Rosebank at 7.30p.m. ready for a wash and a drink in reverse order!

By now, 7.45p.m. we were back to normal and had warmly welcomed Hugh Crawford with his two guests, Professor John McIntyre and Professor Charles J. Taylor, both emeritus eminences of Edinburgh University. Along with them sitting steadily imbibing (having sent for chauffeuse home) were Tom McCool and David Aaron. The company was therefore complete and went into dinner at 7.50p.m. in a room of our own.

President Drew formally welcomed members and guests; the Secretary said the Selkirk Grace, and we engaged in the satisfying past time of eating and drinking. Tongues were loosened, topics galore were tossed about, analysed and never decided on e.g., should the "Wagon Inn" have one or two g's?

Was Pavarotti worth the money some members spent to hear him? – or was he a gigantic con?

Was / were Egypt really worthy of a draw with England?

(That the state of play at 9.30p.m.).

The service by the hotel staff was arguably slow, though the quality of the food was high – and the wine plentiful.

Our President, on the other hand, was the fastest proposer of toasts we've had for some time. We had three in the space of five minutes.

firstly to the Queen....

secondly to Andy Roxburgh....

thirdly to the "Immortal Memory".

These were followed by three speeches in the space of seven minutes.

The President advised that his first summer outing had been to the Queen's Hotel on the lower reaches of the Clyde – today we were in Rosebank on the upper reaches of the Clyde. He had guided us in the footsteps of two megastars of Scottish literature – Scott and Burns.

He had thoroughly enjoyed jaunting in June. He then invited us to respond to his final toast "To Travellers All".

Alex Wilson, on behalf of the guests, most of them perennials thanked the President and the members for their continuing hospitality.

Jimmy Pearson, senior member present, thanked Drew for his unstinting labour in preparing, in reconnoitring and in guiding us through the day. He forgave our treasurer his scrooge-like stance in his collections. He disliked having nothing bad to say about the Secretary. Jimmy, it has to be recorded, had to stand up to make these remarks: apparently this – or he – was not terribly evident at the other end of the room!

At 10.25p.m. we made our way, bests we could, out to the bus and after a very speedy but eventful journey, were deposited at Bridge Street at 11.00p.m.