



Founded 1877

LEICESTER CALEDONIAN SOCIETY BULLETIN

September / October 2010

THE LEICESTER CALEDONIAN SOCIETY

ARE HOLDING THEIR

QUIZ NIGHT

ON

FRIDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2010

AT

LEICESTER GENERAL HOSPITAL
SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

WOODBOROUGH ROAD,

OFF COLEMAN ROAD, LEICESTER

7.30PM TILL 10.00PM

GREAT FUN

The entrance fee of £4.50 includes supper

Pay at the door.

Teams of 4, but everyone will be accommodated

Please make a note in your diaries and notify

Mrs P. M. Moyce, on (0116) 2123312,

By Friday the 18th September to allow for catering arrangements to be made. For those of you that are coming by car there is ample parking space.

President

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Tel. 0116 2713717

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Mrs. V. Mackay (01530) 243770
Mrs. M. Thorpe (0116) 2674707
Miss E. Donaldson. (0116) 2312363
Mr. C. Wilkinson (0116) 2419679
Mrs. M. Yates (0116) 2730328

Honorary Piper

Mr. B. Yates

The Chairman Mr Andrew Kay

Warmly invites all members and friends to his

Long Alley Skittles Evening

On

Friday 22nd October 2010

At

The Wheatsheaf, Thurcaston.

*Assemble at 7.00pm for 7.30pm. It's a fun evening.
No experience required. Always good for a laugh.*

Price, which includes a hot supper, £10.00.

Pre-booked vegetarian option available.

Names to Mr A. D. Kay please on (0116) 2674707 by Monday 16th October '10

XX

Monday Night Dancing

**Monday night dancing commences on
20th September 2010,**

At the normal venue, Avenue Road School.

All enquiries please to,

Mrs. Doris Buchanan,

9, Alcester Drive, Evington,

Leicester. LE5 6LB. Tel. 241 5857

XX

A visit to Stirling – 2010

Local geography has often had a major impact on history and Stirling is a good example. With modern roads we have in the past tended to hurtle past Stirling on the M90 but this year we stopped for a couple of days on the way north to explore the Bannockburn battlefield site, the Wallace monument and Stirling castle.

Until relatively recently, most north / south and east / west travel through central Scotland had to pass by Stirling castle due to the River Forth, marshy terrain, high hills and a single Roman road nearby. This gave whoever controlled Stirling castle control over a much larger part of Scotland which in turn fuelled many of the disputes in this region.

The earliest recorded date for the castle is about 1115 in the time of Alexander I but it grew in importance, size and defensive structures after 1296 when Edward I invaded deposing John Balliol. Control of the castle and wider regions changed hands many times through the reigns of various Roberts, James, Mary, and Charles but declined after the second failed Jacobite rising of 1745 /46. Its last major military role was as the base for the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regiment from 1794. Queen Victoria visited in 1849 and considered the castle "extremely grand" and from then on, official and public interest centred on preserving,

Saved by the Bell

The Bell Hotel in Humberstone Gate, Leicester was the venue for many Dinner Dances over the years, hosted by the Leicester Caledonian Society, and on one such occasion was attended by my parents, John and Esme Hatfield and my Godparents, Russell and Della Taylor.

(In the photo from left to right :- Della, Russell, John and Esme). This photo shows the four of them sitting together in the ballroom on November 10th 1949, after enjoying a hearty dinner, within the hotel.

I, too, sampled the hospitality of the hotel during the 1960's, when the next generation of Leicester Caledonian members joined in the festivities. I remember descending the short flight of stairs onto the well sprung ballroom floor with my partner for the evening Allison Taylor, Russell and Della's daughter. In those days unless you wore a kilt, it was customary to wear a dinner suit and bow tie, which I duly did and Allison followed the fashion by wearing a long pretty evening dress.

Shortly after this momentous evening, I was saddened to hear that The Bell Hotel was to be closed and demolished, to make way for the modern Haymarket Shopping Centre.

I remember attending the sale of the contents in September 1969, with some friends who bought, of all things, the ballroom floor. They were planning to open a dance school in Florence Buildings, which is situated at the top of High Street, on St. Nicholas Circle. The wooden floor, at the Bell, had indeed been tried and tested by thousands of pairs of feet, over the years, so what better recommendation could there be?

I clearly remember one Sunday morning, along with a willing team of helpers, removing the flooring, strip by strip, and then transporting it to its new home. Whilst the first floor of the new venue had already been equipped with a newly polished floor, the second floor remained empty. As the stairway was so narrow and we were unable to turn the long pieces around the stairwell, we ended up hoisting the many pieces of timber from the pavement up onto the roof. From there we lowered it all through the trap door into the room below. The boards were painstakingly re-laid, piece by piece, until it resembled its original state.

If anyone has the good fortune to enter this establishment today and visit the second floor, just remember, you will be standing on a genuine piece of Leicester's history, in the shape of the preserved Bell Hotel ballroom floor. Whilst at the sale, I took the opportunity to wander around the numerous, warren like, corridors and during this meander, I bumped into a workman who was, at the time, removing the fittings from the various rooms. To my surprise, he presented me with a copper gas mantle and glass shade that he had removed from one of the walls. He said I could have it as a lasting reminder of this well known City landmark that was about to disappear forever. Needless to say, I still have this piece of memorabilia in my possession.

Thanks must go to the owners of the Bell Hotel for organising the sale of the contents because, in my opinion, they were indirectly responsible for saving that much loved ballroom floor from destruction.

The building was, however, eventually demolished in August 1970, but even though the hotel is no longer with us, the memories left behind of those wonderful Caledonian evenings, when we dined and danced into the 'wee small hours', will remain with us all forever.

Glyn J. Hatfield

Glyn J. Hatfield.



We thank Glyn for this most interesting article. Mrs P. Moyee, Editor

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