



CENTRAL BRANCH NEWS LETTER – JULY 2024

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Ass. Sec. - Bill McLauchlan
Committee - Bill Culbard
Les Robertson

A Greeting from Moira Dunn - Chair

Hi All,

No doubt we are all thinking of sunnier climes but must make the most of what we've got. Speaking to various visitors from abroad they are actually enjoying the rain having come from places too hot to go out!

I've been forced inside AGAIN as the rain comes down once more. Being a fair-weather gardener it doesn't take much to have me scurrying inside. I also have plants still in plastic trays because it was still too cold here to plant them out and those I took a chance on, withered and died. Welcome to the 'Summer' Newsletter!

That said, I sincerely hope you all have a good and healthy summer. It would be so good to hear what you get up to. Mine includes a fair involvement with Guide Dog Pups and a week in Menorca with grandchildren (and a week to recover when I get back!)

Association fees will be due again soon and so can I please ask you to check that your standing orders reflect the change made a couple of years ago to increase these to £15. Many thanks to all those who have done so but we still have a few coming in at the old figure of £12 which means a wee reminder might be coming your way, apologies in advance.

Best wishes to all.

Moira

Branch Secretary's Report

Hi Folks,

I hope you are all ready for Summer time (whatever kind of Summer we are experiencing).

As a Branch we have had some successful activities in the first part of the year, despite the weather and hope there will be quite a few more. Some of our 'non-professional' photos are here to show these events. Perhaps some of our retirees might be recognised by former colleagues?

The Committee does experience difficulties in determining what our members want as activities and any suggestions from yourselves would be welcomed. Our Historical Walk was well attended and other similar walks are anticipated. Non-members to these walks are encouraged.

Our thanks also extends to our Honorary Committee members - Dave Jones who has been instrumental in the organisation of many of our events and also to our other stalwart member Ian Harper, whose expertise in Newsletter composition knows no bounds.

I cannot finish without shouting out for some of our members to offer a helping hand in our activities, even just for suggestions. In this publication several of our members have sent me a number of photos and items of interest which I have entered. It would be interesting to have a section in our Newsletter where old memories or requests are displayed. Please send me any snippets or photos you might think are of interest to our members.

Our AGM will be held in October and while this is early days, I do hope that it will be well attended. My days as Secretary are numbered and our Committee would like to see some of our younger members involving themselves. These members will know the recent retirees, unlike us "ancient" ones who are failing to recognise even some of the names?

I wish you all a pleasant and safe summer.

Mike

NEW MEMBERS TO CENTRAL BRANCH

A warm welcome to three new members to our Branch: Andy McKean, Alyn Blyth and Abby Philliben. We hope you enjoy your experiences with us and perhaps participate in activities.

ANNUAL FEES JULY 2024 TO 2025

Members are reminded that the Annual RPOAS Branch fees are now at £15 and normally due in July, although some of our members may be paying at different times. A Standing Order is a useful payment method as it saves remembering annual fees and acts as a receipt. Forms for this method of payment can be obtained from the Branch Secretary. This Annual fee should not be confused with the RPOAS Lottery fee of £12 which is payable each December.

PROPOSED EVENTS FOR THE COMING YEAR

It is anticipated the Branch will organise a number of events during the year. Hopefully these will include visit(s) to local distilleries/whisky tastings. Following our successful historic walk in May of this year, we anticipate further walks and talks with Dr Murray Cook. Our annual golf competitions and a seniors' lunch were well attended and welcomed. Other events are also being considered and any member who can venture a suggestion should contact the Branch Secretary or any Committee member. I also hope to take up an offer of a trip on the Sir Walter Scott steam ship on Loch Katrine should any of our members be interested. Members and their family and friends would be welcome. I will try and obtain more details for circulation.

The National Police Memorial Day 2024 will be held at Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday 29th September 2024 and applications for attendance can be made online.

THE POLICE TREATMENT CENTRES (PTC)

I make no apologies for highlighting the benefits of the PTC for those members not contributing.

I attended the PTC after some knee surgery and saw the extensive range of equipment and facilities available and would urge all members to continue subscribing or if not already a member, then I would encourage you to join. Ageing does not come without some bodily ailments and indeed many of our younger serving members are not invincible. The Police Treatment Centres (PTC) continues to welcome Retired Officers for treatment at its locations in Harrogate and Auchterarder.

During my recent visits to Castlebrae in Auchterarder, I saw several of our own members along with the many others from across the UK.

For those existing members, the monthly Direct Debit fee is £4.50 (the price of a cup of coffee). Those members who are not participating at present can still sign up and contribute although a 12 month waiting time will apply before they are eligible to come for treatment. Although this restriction appears off-putting, one only has to consider the cost of current physiotherapy, consultancy and treatment fees to see the benefits of membership. Anyone interested should contact the Branch Secretary for information or the following website: www.thepolicetreatmentcentres.org

RPOAS WEBSITE

Members are urged to visit the RPOAS website – www.rpoas.org.uk – where they will find up-to-date information on discounts, welfare support and many other interesting topics. All you need is a user name (your RPOAS membership number) and your password (your surname starting with a capital letter). If you have forgotten your membership number, please get in touch with myself or Moira.

RPOAS CENTRAL BRANCH GOLF OUTING

The Jim Hannah Memorial Invitation Pairs

This event took place at Falkirk Golf Club on the 30th May with 28 golfers taking part. The weather was in our favour and a very enjoyable day was had by all. Some great scoring particularly from our winners Hugh Louden and his partner Forbes Wilson who returned 48 stableford points.

Thanks to our hosts Falkirk Golf club, particularly Julie and her team who provided us with an excellent meal after play. Thanks also to our association for contributing to the prizes and to all who donated prizes so we could have a nearest the pin prize on all five par 3s.

Jim's family were in attendance for the prize giving and Euan, Jim's son presented the winners with the trophy.

Great to see so many former colleagues and the RPOAS golf section continues to grow. Everyone is welcome to come along to these outings which really are a great day out.



The Assembled Company



The Winners - Hugh Louden and Forbes Wilson receive their trophy from Euan Hannah

HISTORICAL WALK

On Wednesday 8th May, Central Branch Members and friends set off on a Historical Walk around some of Stirling's forgotten history. Guided by Stirling Council's Archaeologist, Dr Murray Cook, our group visited Stirling's old port facilities, the abbey in Cambuskenneth and many other historical features.



Dr Cook (centre) with our members.

MEMBERS' SNIPPETS & MEMORIES

Retiral Presentation to Chief Inspector Sam Middler (late 70's)

Sent by Ian Cameron - Many old faces here.



Left to right - Peter Norman, Bob Forsyth, Neil Cunningham, Gordon Smith, George Scott, Bill Brunton, Malcolm Miller, Andy Reid, Hector Nicolson, Jim Paton, Dougie Thomson, ?, Jimmy Rose, Me, Sandy Archibald, John Adams, Sheriff Clerk Depute?, Jim Hendry, Bob Kerr, David Burgess, Alex McGregor, Henry Stark. Fiona MacPhee, Marion and Hazel from PFs office, Bob MacLeod, Sam Middler, Typists, Can't remember, Elizabeth Halbert and Bill Duncanson.

The Central Scotland Police Concert Party

Dorothy O'Donnell, Bert's wife, kindly sent a picture of the Police Concert Party. Some well know faces shown here. It had changed a lot since I used to run the 'B' Division Police Concert Party but the progression was impressive as shown in the photo.



Bob Crawford Captured Wildlife Activity in his Garden



Member and Author - Tom Reid

Member Tom Reid is attempting to write a book about the 'Glesga Polis' in the 1970's. He is also looking for any anecdotes, humorous or otherwise, about characters and incidents in the service. If anyone would like to submit them to him, he would ensure full acknowledgment if their contribution is used - albeit he would reserve the option to amend the submission to suit the character of the book. Below is a small sample from his book so far. (Names and locations changed to protect the parties concerned).....

A NARROW ESCAPE by TOM REID

There was an almost satisfying 'crump' sound as his 'Doc Marten' clad feet made his way steadily through the newly fallen snow. His eyes fixed on the path ahead, and being extra careful not to slip, Maxwell listened for any other sounds on this still and crisp night. It was often said in the station mess that snow was the best policeman you could get. Let's face it, when you can tell who is going about by the tracks in the snow it was like having extra pairs of eyes on the 'neds.' The twinkling of the Christmas tree lights in the occasional tenement window heralding the approaching season of goodwill, made Maxwell smile with happy recollections of childhood.

It was approaching 1.00am and Maxwell had pounded his beat for almost two hours with hardly anything to hold his attention. The streets were deserted aside from the odd car, taxi or van that dared venture out in these conditions.

Suddenly the two piece radio set he carried sparked into life. 'Go ahead Charlie 17,' the controller announced. Maxwell always found it interesting that you couldn't hear the two way conversation on the police radio. The controller was the only constant, acknowledging or relaying messages. The radio popped again. 'C Charlie Control to Charlie 16 come in.' Maxwell fumbled for the transmitter with his bulky gloves and pressed the transmit button and the small antenna shot out. 'Charlie 16 here, over.'

'C Charlie Control to Charlie 16 your position for a meet with Charlie 17 for a warrant check, over.' Maxwell recognised tonight's code from his neighbouring beat partner 'Faither Joe' and smiled. Hot tea was waiting somewhere for him nearby and a chance to get out of the cold wind and warm up for ten or so minutes. 'Charlie 16 Approaching Westlands Avenue at Barnton Street, over,' replied Maxwell. The message was relayed - 'C Charlie Control to Charlie 17, that's Westlands Avenue at Barnton Street, over.'

Maxwell looked across Barnton Street towards the neighbouring beat and saw the torch light flash twice. He flashed once back and, checking nothing was coming crossed the road. He knew the signal meant meet at the rear of the Bingo Hall so he made his way over across the vacant lot to the rear door of the hall. There were already two set of footprints in the snow at the door and Maxwell turned the handle and went inside. It was a relief to get into the warm air of the hall and as he made his way to the canteen he could hear the familiar voices of the 'Faither' and the night watchman chatting away in the background.

'Is Jock in Faither?' asked Maxwell. 'Aye, he's getting kettle on, gie him a hand.' Maxwell walked into the canteen area where Old Jock was brewing up. Maxwell was still a bit in awe of Jock, more due to his impressive size than anything else. Jock was 6'3" and built like the proverbial brick sh**house. He had a quiet confidence about him, no doubt borne out of his impressive physique but the thing that always drew Maxwell's eyes were the size of Jock's hands, they were massive, like shovels almost. What amazed Maxwell even farther was how Jock could stir tea so daintily, the tiny teaspoon held by those long thick fingers. 'Right lad, that's yours and that's Faithers,' Jock stated as he walked out of the canteen with his own mug, dwarfed in his massive hand. He referred to Maxwell as 'lad' on every occasion and Maxwell felt it prudent to just accept the moniker. He didn't fancy a cuff round the ear with those shovel-like hands should he object.

To be continued.....

Islay Music & Malt Festival by Member - Lewis Allan

I have read that there are over 790 islands in Scotland, my favourite however has to be Islay, which is the subject of this article and one particular festival.

There will be many of you that may not have heard of the Islay Festival or “Feis ile” yes, it’s the correct spelling.

For 10 days every year however at the end of May, since 1986, the festival has run on the Inner Hebridean Island of Islay.

For such a small landmass with a population of only three and a half thousand people, there are TEN working whisky distilleries, with a new one currently being built, as well as another working distillery on the adjacent island of Jura.

For a whisky lover like myself this is pure heaven, although my liver can often disagree!

During the Feis ile, each distillery holds an open day normally accompanied by music from well-known groups such as Skerryvore, Skipinnish, Tidelines & Manran. If you don’t know these names, try a search on the internet and have a listen to their magical tunes and lyrics.

Local musicians and dancers also feature during the ten days of Feis ile celebrations, with a great deal of emphasis on the island community itself integrating and welcoming the many thousands of visitors, from mainland Scotland and abroad.

I have been lucky enough to have been involved over the past few years with the festival on a voluntary basis, pouring drams for the many visitors from who come back year after year to listen to chat and nonsense that I utter about my passion for the water of life (*uisge beatha*) before being given a free dram or two. (The visitors that is).

The population on the island can swell to fifteen thousand over the course of the

Feis ile, and booking accommodation at least a year ahead is the normal practice for most.

Visitors to the island get a very warm welcome and the scenery, history, wildlife and food are second to none. If you are a seafood aficionado you can expect and will experience locally produced gastronomy on a plate, in jig time.

Islay has been called the home of peated malt whisky, but there are many unpeated drams being distilled on the Island. One of the larger distilleries there supply a great deal of spirit, which is transferred to the mainland and incorporated into many well-known blended whiskies.

You will also find well known names of Gin, Islay Rum, and Islay Ales brewed locally on the island.

Getting to Islay from the Central Belt only takes a few hours. A lovely drive up to Inveraray and then south towards Campbeltown, where you pick up the ferry at the Kennacraig ferry terminal.

Just over two hours on a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry will then lead you to discover the delights which this gem of an island holds for you.

If history is your thing, then Islay has this in abundance. In Bowmore, you will find the “Round Church”, built as its name implies so that there were no corners for the devil to hide!

In the graveyard adjacent to the church there are many war graves and one such which stands out is that of Donald Caskie, the local minister also known as the Tartan Pimpernel, for his

work during the second world war, whereby he helped up to 500 soldiers and airmen escape from occupied France.

Just outside Bowmore is an area known as Finlaggan which was the seat of the Lords of the Isles and of Clan Donald.

Two of the three islands that lie in the expansive scenery surrounding Loch Finlaggan, Eilean Mòr ("Great Isle") and Eilean na Comhairle ("Isle of the Council"), were the administrative centre of the Lordship of the Isles during the 13th to 15th centuries, until 1493 when the lordship of the Isles fell to James IV of Scotland, who administered the territory via a tenant in chief.

History on the island extends further back to 800 AD where in Kildalton you will find the Kildalton Cross.

The Cross was carved probably in the second half of the 8th century AD, and is closely related to crosses of similar date on Iona. It is often considered the finest surviving Celtic cross in Scotland, and is certainly one of the most perfect monuments of its date to survive in western Europe.

The cross and the adjacent roofless medieval parish church are in the care of Historic Scotland and are jointly a recognised scheduled historic monument.

On route to the Kildalton cross keep your eyes peeled for the seal colonies which tend to bask in the sunshine (yes there is in Scotland) on the quiet isolated beaches of the island's east.

I started off this narrative on Islay Whisky Festival and finish it on history, something for everyone on this beautiful Hebridean Island.

If not able to visit during the Feis Ile, why not consider going there on alternative dates? I can assure you that the Island and its people, history, wildlife and scenery will not disappoint you.

Can you name all the whisky distilleries on the island?



On that note I will sign off and maybe have a wee dram.

RPOAS FUTURE CHANGES

Talks are underway to make the RPOAS, in its present form, a limited company. This is to protect members from falling foul of litigation. Nationally, other Associations have taken this route and it is anticipated that the Scotland Association will follow. Further details will be made available to members as this progresses.

Discussion at RPOAS executive level is progressing to determine the position of Police widows/widowers within the Association. While they can be Associate/Honorary members, their access to the many activities/benefits offered by the Association is not clear. Efforts are being made to clarify their position within the Association.

OBITUARIES 2024 – Central Branch

I am delighted to record that I have received no notification of the demise of any of our members since my last Newsletter.

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