

old friends renewing acquaintance and reminiscing, including some who are no longer dancing. Photo albums were a point of interest. Hot savouries and nibbles from colourful platters were served and Colin Robson and daughter Brianna were on hand to serve the bubbly and orange juice. Marjorie Finn lent her stock of wine glasses which were ideal for this occasion.

The club thanks all these people for their contributions and also all dancers who joined us to make this a very special and happy celebration.

Hogmanay 2008

from the Hogmanay Committee

What a great night! Onslow College Hall was filled with dancers and spectators for a wonderful Hogmanay celebration. It was exciting to see so many people attend from the Region but we also had many dancers from beyond our shores as well.

Peter, John and Lynne played some wonderful non-stop music adding a special flavour to the night for all to enjoy whether dancing or watching from the sidelines. Carlton joined the musicians for many dances.

The dance programme devised by our MC Rod Downey was very interesting and made for a fun night with not too many mistakes made during the evening and our energy levels were restored after a delicious supper to carry us through to midnight. On a more serious note, we danced *Seton's Ceilidh Band* in memory of Peg Hutchison with a dedication before the dance by our Region President, Bernice Kelly.

Of course it would not be Hogmanay without our New Year celebrations and after some rousing Scottish songs we swept out Father Time, heard Big Ben strike the hour, welcomed baby Caitlin to 2009 and enjoyed some refreshments after our First Footer had visited us. The skirl of the bagpipes did not bother our wee baby who blithely slept through the whole celebration!

Finally, a big thank you to all who attended and to the many willing helpers who contributed their time and energy into making it a wonderful occasion. We look forward to another successful Hogmanay this year.



Photo: Lorelee Hyde

Connections

from the *Spurgle-wielder*

Before the Imperial measurements fade from people's memories entirely, it seems a good idea to pose the question "How many inches are there in the Firth of Forth?" The answer is four. You have no doubt jaloused an inchtape is not required, these 'inches' being a corruption of the Gaelic word *innish* meaning *island* as in Inchkeith, Inchcolm, Inchgarvie and Inchmickery. Inchgarvie provides a foothold for one of the cantilevers of the Forth Bridge; its name has a Gaelic derivation, but folk tradition records it as a place to find shoals of *garvies* – young herring; its castle sometimes housed a prison, and, as with other islands was a place of 'compulsory retirement' for people afflicted with various plagues e.g. 'Grandgor' (syphilis). 'Mickery' may come from Gaelic 'vicar' – small islands like these were frequently chosen by Culdees and such people as hermitic cells: oyster beds provided Edinburgh with a very popular delicacy - it is now a RSPB bird sanctuary.

You may have noticed in the Branch's Record Shop's latest letter, a CD track bears this name. Slightly downstream from the Bridge and off the Fife coast, Inchcolm has the most complete surviving monastic house; promised in gratitude by Alexander I for the inhabitants' kindness to him, it was actually built by his successor David I for the Augustinian Order and dedicated to St. Colm/Columba (it is said he had visited in 567) like an east coast Iona, it too was a high-ranking burial place: having now been cleared of stoats and hedgehogs, it also is a wildlife haven.

Four miles or so nearer to the mouth of the Firth, is Inchkeith (*wooded island*) with its fine lighthouse; a compressed air foghorn was installed in 1899. All these islands had fortifications, being of strategic importance as the Firth narrowed, particularly in recent wartimes when Rosyth, just above the Bridge, was a naval dockyard and base. But in earlier years protection was also required as the River Forth was a waterway which gave access into the heart of Scotland, going up to Stirling. [You may have come across another un-measurable 'dancing' inch – The *Inch of Perth*, an island in the River Tay in the middle of that city.]

On the Firth's Edinburgh side, opposite Inchcolm, is yet another small island (reminds me of Island Bay) – Cramond Island, at the mouth of the (small) River Almond. At low tide one can easily walk to it on a causeway. Evidence of pre-historic living has been discovered there; on the mainland near the river the foundations of Roman buildings are visible (can be visited); a fort was established in AD142. Inevitably legends appeared: That Pontius Pilate was born in Perthshire – Roman father and Hibernian mother? (the MacLaren Clan claims a family connection). Did his men in Jerusalem include Hibernians - locals recruited for the fort at Cramond made to house the builders of Antonine's Wall?