



Heston Blether

www.hestonscottish.co.uk

Issue No. 75 - December 2008

BALL - 2009

Due to unavoidable circumstances our Ball in 2009 will clash with an RSCDS dancing weekend which will mean that our attendance is likely to be significantly reduced. In view of this we have decided to hold a Spring Dance at the Holy Angels Church Hall, Cranford, instead of a full Ball. We will still be dancing to George Meikle and the Lothian Band but the smaller venue should ensure that we can still have a successful event both from a financial and dancing point of view.

We will have a slightly easier programme than usual which we hope will encourage some newer dancers to come along; and we will also be able to keep ticket prices slightly lower. Please put a note of the date in your diary, come along to support your association and take advantage of being able to hear and dance to a top class band at a very reasonable price.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

31st Dec	Hogmanay
24th Jan 2009	Burns Supper*
21st Feb	Social
21st March	A.G.M./Social
18th April	Ceilidh
23rd May	Spring Dance - Holy Angels Hall+
27th June	Closing Social

* Tickets from Rosemary
+ Tickets from Denny

Club Night Thurs. 8th Jan. - 2nd April inc. & 23rd April - 23rd July inc. 8.15 - 10.15pm



WISHING ALL OUR MEMBERS
A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A PEACEFUL AND HEALTHY
NEW YEAR



Many thanks to everyone who filled shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. We were able to donate 12 boxes to the appeal.

CALENDAR DATES



Enclosed in this issue of the Heston Blether you will find a small new year gift with the compliments of the committee; a calendar with Heston Events highlighted. You will also find a sheet of stickers for Heston events which you can use with your own calendar so you never again (well at least for the next year) miss a Heston event because you didn't know the date.

We hope you find them useful and if they prove popular, we will produce them again next year.
(Thanks to Derek for designing and printing)



IVY

(Continuing our series on trees sacred to the Celts)

The Ivy is instantly recognisable. The Common Ivy is native to Britain and is an evergreen climber which is regarded as a tree because of the woody growth of its main stem.

It has a bad, and largely undeserved, reputation as a parasitic and damaging plant to other trees and buildings. In fact Ivy will not damage sound mortar and brickwork and will give walls protection against the elements. The reason it appears to pull walls down is that it often grows over buildings that are already partially ruined and weakened. Likewise, if it grows over a healthy tree it does not take any nutrients from the host. It takes all it requires from the earth via its roots and just uses the tree as a support. It is also called Lovestone and Bindwood.

It is an extremely useful plant for wildlife. Wasps, Bumble Bees, Hornets, Hover Flies and many varieties of butterfly such as Red Admirals, Painted Ladies and Brimstone's enjoy the nectar from the late flowers and use the plant to hibernate or lay eggs on. The dense growth habit of ivy makes ideal nesting sites for many birds and the late developing berries are an important winter food source for blackbirds, pigeons and many other over-wintering birds.

In the Ogham Alphabet Ivy is known as Gort. It is considered to represent the feminine and its 5-sided leaves represent the five aspects of the Goddess -birth, initiation, love, repose and death. Ivy's clinging habit is taken as a symbol of true love, faithfulness and undying affection in marriage and friendship.

It also represents eternity and resurrection being associated with both the Egyptian god Osiris and the Greco-Roman God Attis, both of whom were resurrected after death.

Medieval Christians, noticing that Ivy thrived on dead trees, saw it as a symbol of the immortal soul living on beyond the death of the body.

In Roman times it was associated with the God Bacchus who was always depicted wearing a crown of ivy. This may be why it has also been used as a hangover cure.

It does have a certain negative aspect also. While it is lucky to have ivy growing on the outside of your house (to ward off witchcraft), it is unlucky to bring it into the house unless it is paired with Holly which is strong enough to ward off its negative influences.

Ivy is thought to cause domestic strife and bad luck if brought inside on its own.



In combination with other plants however, it was used to give protection to flocks, milk and milk products. A wreath woven from ivy, woodbine and rowan was placed under milk vessels and in Ross-shire Ivy was used to gather the Beltaine dew, once again to protect the milk and the animals. Allowing pregnant ewes to eat Ivy is thought to aid lambing. A cap of ivy leaves is an ancient cure for baldness and crushed leaves are said to be good for corns.

Ivy was a sacred plant to the Celts. Growing in a helix, it represented the spiral of self-enlightenment and the souls journey, both inner and outer, towards spiritual nourishment.

Another Yule custom is that of the Ivy girls and the Holly boys who were opposed to each other, each one trying to gain precedence over the other through the singing of satirical songs at one another, representing the battle between masculinity and femininity.

In the past the Ivy has also been used as an antidote for poison, which may seem unusual in these days when it is itself considered poisonous.



A goodly crowd of members and friends gathered at a spookily decorated hall for our annual Hallowe'en party.

The stage was transformed into a woodland glade complete with witches, bats and other creatures of the night and the rest of the hall was resplendent with pumpkins owls and black cats. Wolves howling and owls hooting completed the spooky atmosphere.

The evening proceeded in the usual manner, one of controlled chaos, as we danced our way through some fun dances such as Barley Bree and Borrowdale Exchange.

After a few dances it was time to play a game. The children formed up into two teams, the contents of handbags were emptied onto tables in preparation and Steve and Derek took up position, with some trepidation, next to Niall and we were ready for a Treasure Hunt.

We have played this game for a number of years at Heston and I can only assume that this is the reason that Heston ladies handbags contain such a wide variety of contents. Not many women carry bags of sugar, spoons, holographic pictures, tartan ties, bits of elastic, bunches of keys large enough to warrant a ceremony by yeoman warders, bunches of dates and sets of teeth (some people take the clues rather literally and haven't quite got the hang of Niall's sense of humour yet!)

Everyone enjoys this game enormously and it's hard to say who gets more worked up - the children racing up and down the hall or the people sitting at the sides frantically waving bus passes and diaries for their team to hunt. Steve and Derek look decidedly worried as children, dragging a brace of ladies apiece, bear down on them at speed and, at the end, how amazing - it's a draw!

After lots more games, dances, fancy dress and tattie bogle competitions and delicious refreshments, it was time to say goodbye and pack the witches away until next year.

CHRISTMAS CEILIDH

Our Christmas Ceilidh was an extremely enjoyable and well attended event. Admittedly numbers were helped by the fact that we were joined once again by the Datchet Border Morris Men but, even so, a goodly number of members came along to join in the Christmas atmosphere.

The Morris Men danced a number of traditional and more contemporary Morris dances, with much clashing of sticks, banging of drums and whirling of bodies.

When they joined in the Scottish dances, which they did with great enthusiasm, the usual Scottish tunes were accompanied by the rhythmic jingling of the bells on the Morris costumes, adding to the Christmassy atmosphere.

During the evening the dances were interspersed with entertainment. Sheila sang a lovely lullaby and Niall and Derek sang "The Sweetie Song", a comic song about Rowntree sweets to the tune of the Rowan Tree (note the pun too!)

One of the Morris Men also sang a funny song about his Land Rover to the tune of the Wild Rover.

Derek told the story of the Three Kings in the Doric which gives a different, and for me more homely, twist to the story and Rosemary read a Joyce Grenfell monologue about the nursery school Nativity Play.



Superb refreshments provided by Barbara and helpers and a varied, interesting raffle compiled by Margaret completed a really fun evening and gave a good start to the Christmas festivities.