

Honouring the Scots bard

Bagpipes, haggis, oatcakes and a few mashed neeps

by Ruth Forrester

**"Let Kings and
Courtiers rise and
fall,
this world has many
turns,
but brightly beams
abune them all,
the Star o' Rabbie
Burns."**

Every year around Jan. 25, this song is sung with great gusto by people all over the world who gather to celebrate the birth of Robert Burns; 233 years ago.

For those who have never been to a Burns Supper, here is some idea of what takes place. There is a ritual which has been followed for many years and is still continued faithfully right here on the Sunshine Coast. The Sechelt Legion Pipe Band host the event, one of the highlights of their year, where they play to appreciative audiences who love to hear the band in all its glory.

Generally, the master of ceremonies welcomes an acknowledges all present. This is followed by 'Piping in the Haggis', when a piper marches towards the head table together with the haggis bearer. The tray on which the haggis is set is then placed on the table, and it is at this point that a speaker will give 'The Address to the Haggis'. This is a poem written by



"Some ha'e meat, and canna eat; some nane, and want it. But we ha'e meat and we can eat, soe let the Lord be thankit." Robert Burns

Burns in praise of this delicious, nourishing culinary delight, which is served together with roast beef, mashed potatoes and mashed turnips, better known as neeps. There are oatcakes, scones, cheese and pickles, followed by dessert which, locally, generally comprises 'Tremblin' Tam', - jello pudding.

After dinner, it is toast time and there are several, starting off with the toast to the Queen, toast to Canada, to Scotland, then comes the 'Toast to the Lassies.' The later is the one toast to which

a response is given by one of the ladies present.

Then comes the highlight of the evening - The Immortal Memory. The speaker has to be one who is familiar with Burns and his works as he speaks of the life of this much-loved man, and who, throughout his talk, recites lines from some of the better-known poems. He then asks the people to stand up and drink a toast to this Immortal Memory.

Once these ceremonies are out of the way, tables are cleared and the fun begins.

The pipe band appears and presents a selection of music which sets toes a-tapping and cheers from the listeners. There are generally some Highland dancers to delight the audience, then the dance band appears to play for the rest of the evening, interspersed with appearances by the pipe band.

This is always a great evening, not only for those with a drop of the Scottish blood in their veins. Folks of all nationalities get a thrill out of such an evening.

Long may this great tradition continue.