

ANNAN HIGH JINKS

Chairperson's Report 2008/2009

High Jinks has had a busy year, having taken the decision early in 2008 to host Annan's very own Homecoming Celebration in 2009. The focus for our event was "Bums the man who loved women", so when we met with Blachere to discuss the design of a set piece light for the High Street, the red rose was the only logo to choose. On Friday, January 23rd Alan Thomson from DGAA switched the light on, serenaded by a piper from the Juvenile Pipe Band.

Saskia Holling from Annan Initiative designed Robert Bums pages for the annan.org website. Joyce took the lead role in planning and organising the Annan Bums Festival, which was a great success and the weather held - thank: goodness!!

On June 19th Emily Smith performed at the Ex-Service Club, supported by her band and husband on the fiddle. Local lad, Dave Gibb, performed two sets, whilst I found myself acting as compère! On the Saturday, a Craft Fair was held at the Market Halls with a coffee morning upstairs. We were lucky to have Alex McQuiston play on his cello as entertainment. The Galloway Boys performed at the Blue Bell in the evening. The final events of the weekend were the walk covering the historical sites and places, ending up at the Caim for refreshments. Joyce sang and Jim Hawkins gave us a mobile history lesson. These events gave us the opportunity to work with other Voluntary Groups, mainly the Walking Group, Solway Burns Club and the Initiative. The whole thing was rounded off with a performance of Just Jim at the Blue Bell.

The end of June saw the planting of the Battery Street Garden with a Bums motif and plants, so visitors could see it as they came into town. Hopefully, there is one more event to complete Annan's Homecoming Year. A Mrs Sloan has been commissioned to write a copy of the poem - written in the town - "The di'els awa". This will be mounted and framed and hung in the museum as a permanent reminder of the 250th anniversary.

But lets travel back to December 2008 and the Christmas Light switch on ceremony. It came down to Joyce and I, making sure that it happened. That included the shopping for gifts for Santa to give out. A mad dash in early December. Santa travelled down the High Street in a horse and carriage, the teletubbies as guards of honour! The Juvenile Pipers piped all the way, with the local dignitaries and colours marching as well. Daffy Dill and Douglas the Clown entertained the children outside the Annandale Observer. Whilst John Ramage and son played seasonal music and acted as "Annan's Town Crier" at the Town Hall. Combined Services did a splendid job of decorating the High Street with lights - it looked great! We did not make any major purchases of lights in 2008; we concentrated on buying plenty of replacement LED bulbs for the festoons.

High Jinks has its own pages on the town's website, including pictures. We also have our very own logo and a set piece light as well - progress.

Our continuing aims:

- To expand the event to attract visitors to the town.
- Encouraging shopkeepers and catering to stay open.
- Encourage shopkeepers and businesses to become more involved - we keep on trying.
- For the last two years we have had a sound system in place and it makes a difference.

Concerns:

- The electrics
- Costs: purchasing - installation - repairs and maintenance, especially electrical contractors - taking down and storage.
- Changes in Council policy and funding provision.
- Health and Safety requirements.
- Fixings on the buildings on the High Street.
- Lack of support from many business owners.

- Crowd control.
- The requirement for a licence to hold a procession. Have asked a question of the Scottish Government - July 28th - waiting for a reply and will keep you all informed.

In conclusion, AHJ continues to work hard to promote the town, to be a voice and point of reference for the concerns of businesses and residents alike. To offer fun and entertainment that is inclusive.

Thank you.