

# HOW WE SPENT OUR SUMMER VACATION 2005

by The New York Scottish Pipes and Drums

We all arrived in “Auld Reekie” on August 18<sup>th</sup>. Some of us had just arrived in Scotland, others had been there as long as a week, but we assembled in the lobby of the Holiday Inn Express and greeted each other as if we had not seen each other for years (it was just a matter of days). Isn’t life strange to see familiar “New York faces” in Edinburgh! Everyone looked out of context except George Campbell and John Anderson, who looked (and sounded) comfortably “at home”.

We all had our own agendas. There weren’t many planned gatherings, although we did have dinner together our first and last nights in “Embura”. We missed Jack and Anna Blyth very much, but Jack had thoughtfully provided us with a map and a critique of all the restaurants in the area of our hotel. We were amazed at the comprehensiveness and accuracy of his report. John Anderson suggested that we visit the Scotsman Pub, just off the Royal Mile, where we met the Pipe Major of the Edinburgh Postal Pipe Band. Those members who attended the New York Caledonian Club’s Marie Curie/Gilda’s Club fundraiser in April 2002 will remember him and remember the wonderful performance the Edinburgh Postal Pipe Band gave at West Park Presbyterian Church. He was telling us that at one time he had been appointed the official instructor of the Omani Pipe Band and that he had stayed in Oman for about five years.

When we left New York, we had hoped to find cooler weather in Scotland, but that was not the case. In Edinburgh, the sun was out and it was hot; all of us got sunburned, and tried our best to adapt to a hot city with no air conditioning. The whole town swarmed with events—the International Jazz Festival, the Edinburgh Tattoo, the Edinburgh Fringe and more. The Royal Mile was a carnival. Edinburgh Castle grounds were a fairground during the day. On one street corner on the Mile, there were three men dressed in business suits. Their heads were enclosed globes that were painted to look like eyeballs--something like a cross between Hieronymus Bosch and the Twilight Zone. They were promoting a theatrical event. We saw them all over the town.

Many of us attended the Military Tattoo, which this year commemorated the Battle of Trafalgar and Admiral Nelson. Images were projected against Edinburgh Castle as Pipe and Brass Bands played. To say it was an exciting, interesting, and at times, moving, performance doesn’t do it justice.

Pipe Major Michael Bruce of the Hawick Pipe Band invited us to a Hog Roast and ceilidh that took place at the Cogsmill Hall, 50 miles south of Edinburgh, the night before the Pipefest parade. This was far out in the country in the rolling hills of the borders, just north of Hermitage Castle. We drove for miles down winding roads, but we knew we had arrived when we saw a big tent and the smoke rising from the roasting pit. It turned out that there were two hogs roasting. They were mounted on two steel rods diagonally (at about a 60 degree angle) “heid and doup” over a wood and coal fire. There was a man working hard turning the hogs and stoking the fire. He was covered with soot and only lacked horns to be a vision of Satan. As it turned out, he was the village undertaker and there were quite a few jokes going around about the “second hog” and whether anyone had passed away in the last few days or mysteriously disappeared and if the hog in any way resembled them!

We must add that the food was delicious and the roasted pork was the best we'd ever tasted. Faye Buckalew and Jean Smith can also attest to that! The whole village, from the very young to the very old, attended the ceilidh and everyone provided entertainment and danced. Again, we thank Pipe Major Michael Bruce for inviting us. It was the best ceilidh we've ever been to! There are photographs and Teresa Peralta took videos of the event if any one would like to see them. There are photographs of the hogs! And the undertaker!

On Sunday, August 21st, Pipefest 2005, a record-breaking 9,100 pipers and drummers and brass musicians and marched around Edinburgh's ancient volcano, Arthur's Seat. It was a proud moment for the New York Scottish, and our glengarries were decorated with small daffodils (supplied by Marie Curie Cancer Care) and, thanks to John Anderson, sprigs of heather and ribbon. We marched into Holyrood Park, next to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, for the Grand Finale mass band performance of "Highland Laddie, "The Black Bear" and "Amazing Grace". After the ceremonies were over, the New York Scottish played in an impromptu and rousing jam session with five other pipe bands, including the Moodiesburn Pipe Band.

If you have access to the internet, you can log into [www.pipefest.com](http://www.pipefest.com) and see photographs of the event. Thomas Grotian, who organized the Pipefest 2005 event, deserves hearty congratulations on behalf of the New York Scottish Pipes and Drums and the New York Caledonian Club. The New York Caledonian Club donated \$236, one dollar for every member.

To date, the New York Scottish Pipes and Drums have raised 749 Pounds Sterling. The goal is 1,000 Pounds Sterling and you can still help reach it. The Band's fundraising page is at [www.justgiving.com/nyscottish](http://www.justgiving.com/nyscottish)

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Band's Pipe Major, Patrick Duffy and our snare drummer, Jean Smith, the trip was (dare we say it?) a howling, smashing, success!