



Notes on the de-brief meeting on the 2016 CBC Burns Banquet

In attendance were Paul Armstrong, Henry Cairney, Bill Laing, Bill Lawson, Gordon McCulloch, David Hood, Maurice McAtamney, Allan MacRae, Tommy Miller, George Muir, John Young, Ron Budd, Trevor Ramage, Ian Denness, Doug Forest, Stephen Nichol, Jim Little, Jim Hutchens, Ron Pratt, Bob Ferrier and Tony Grace.

Henry Cairney chaired the meeting.

1. The Pre-function and Intermission Bar

- Bar line-ups were shorter this year – lower number of guests and ticket selling started before the bar opened – good.
- Pre-selling of drink tickets worked quite well (\$1647 in transactions), but should be available earlier next year.
- Welcoming group at the foot of the escalators worked well and should be repeated but the individuals need to enforce the dress code more strictly – Full Highland Dress or at least a dark business suit with tie.
- There seemed to be a problem with contacting non-members who had attended the dinner in other years. The contact list needs to be reviewed and updated and cross referenced with the ticket requests list. Better use of the Club website should help in this regard as well.

2. The Venue

- The room worked well this year – with less people present there was more room and the table spacing was more spread out.
- There was quite a lot of criticism on the meal –
 - ✓ The soup was not always hot and shredded chicken was used rather than cubes;
 - ✓ The salmon course was recognized as the best course, good flavour and a generous portion;
 - ✓ The haggis received mixed reports with some finding it slushy although with acceptable taste. It was suggested that we should provide feedback to MacEwans as well as look into alternative sources.
 - ✓ The beef also was given mixed feedback with it not being hot enough and the helpings rather large. It should be suggested to the TCC that they use a good roast beef and slice it thinly.

- ✓ The TCC seem to have got away from the usual trifle recipe and should be encouraged to go back to it (far too much cream this year). How expensive would it be to go to individual servings?
- The tables need to be completely cleared by the end of the intermission.
- The Club selected wines were well received
- The selection of the wines for purchase received mixed criticism and it was reported that the staff were quite pushy in encouraging people to buy more of the house wine.
- The Scotch was deemed to be fine as were the commemorative glasses. The glasses should be made available in future providing appropriate donations can be found. There are some glasses left over and will be available to Club members.
- The Hospitality Suite was used by some members but access to it needs to be improved as a room card is needed for the elevator. Better communication to members is also required about how to access the Suite.
- The length of the evening needs to be shortened and one suggestion was to shorten the intermission. However this needs to be discussed with the TCC as they also are required to completely clear the tables in the intermission.

3. The Program

- Overall the evening went on too long and ways need to be found to shorten it without losing any quality from the event as well as giving the paying guests good value for their ticket.
- Some felt that while the Removes were “technically” good more jokes are needed. There was mixed support for this suggestion. The Removes need to strike the right balance for the audience – while the members had a better understanding of the dinner rituals, most of the non-members do not and want to hear light and humorous speeches with less emphasis on the “technical” side. This applies to all the speeches and the toasts.
- The MC did a good job of controlling the evening and keeping it moving along as well as keeping the audience engaged.
- As regards the entertainment –
 - ✓ The CPS Band was much enjoyed.
 - ✓ The Fiddlers did not seem to be as good as in other years. Recognizing they have more than one group it is important that we always get the ‘A’ team. However there were serious questions asked as to whether we should have the Fiddlers at all. They do have a long time slot (20 minutes, which they usually exceed, as well as set up time which incidentally was very well done this year) and leaving them out would probably shorten the evening to a more acceptable length.
 - ✓ During their performance, one of the Fiddlers tripped and fell. Henry has done an investigation into this and reported his findings to the meeting. The Fiddlers have accepted prime responsibility for the incident, but we can help by providing microphones at both sides of the stage in future in order to reduce the need for performers to completely cross the stage.
 - ✓ Ron Pratt was congratulated on his performance of Tam O’ Shanter, but questions were asked as to the suitability of such a long poem at this event, even when visual aides are provided to assist the understanding of the narrative. Possibly shorter and more “English” poems are better suited to the event. Putting the words on the large screens might help.
- Bob Ferrier and Ron Budd were congratulated and thanked for their performance of **There Was A Man.**

- Arranging the singers in two rows worked well although care needs to be taken to ensure people in the two “arms” are all facing forward and do not have their backs even partially to the audience.
- The Speaker was generally deemed to have been excellent, and it was noted that he used no notes.
- The slide show was well done and should be repeated.
- While the Program was attractive and well prepared, a few errors appeared and in future more “proofing” by several people was urged.

The Event.

- The number of attendees was down about 100 from last year and significantly lower than in some previous years. It was generally felt that it had been an excellent evening – probably one of the best which may have been partly due to the lower number of attendees making the evening more “manageable.” The smaller numbers allowed more room in the hall and hence less crowding of the tables and providing an improved “feel” to the hall.
- The audio and visual systems worked well – the sound in particular being an improvement over previous years. Putting the words of the songs on the large screens was a tremendous improvement not only for the Singers but it allowed the audience to follow along much better and even join in at times. This reduced the random ambient noise significantly as the audience was more engaged with the event. More use of these screens should be made.
- Getting the various people to the stage at the required times continues to take a big effort. All performers are given a detailed schedule showing when they are required but too easily get distracted and miss their cues and show up late. This is an individual responsibility. Getting the Head Table in place at the start the second half after the intermission is always a chore (although the piper was ready this year), and needs to be worked on as a late start only leads to a late finish.
- As always Shannon Duncan got top marks but we should understand better just how many photographs she manages to sell after the event. Does she have suggestions?
- It was felt that the behavior and crowd noise was much less of an issue this year. However as always there was one table that seemed to think they were in a bar on their own and paid little attention to what was going on, thus annoying adjacent groups. Attendees at tables 57 and 33 should be identified and any follow up action decided on by the BoD.