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# Thistle Epistle

December 2024

## Burns Night



The Society's Burns Night Dinner and Dance is coming up fast, on January 25th, 2025. The arrangements for a great evening are well in hand. Tickets are selling fast, so if you haven't yet bought yours, don't delay too long. The number of tickets available is dictated by the space at Mukogawa, which has to accommodate dining tables and also enough space for the social dancing which is such a big part of the evening.

There are a couple of things I would like to clarify, based on some of the questions I have been asked:

- Drinks tickets may be bought in advance through the online ticket system in units of \$5, or they may be purchased at the event throughout the evening. Drinks tickets bought at the event come in units of \$1, \$5 and \$10. The reason we offer online purchases is that at the start of the evening, when people arrive between 5:00 pm and the start of the program at 6:00 pm, there is always a big demand at the bar. If you buy tickets beforehand, you can go straight to the bar without waiting in line to buy your tickets. If you need more tickets later, you can buy them at the event when the lines are much shorter.
- The online ticket system sends out an email confirming the purchase. In past years some of these emails ended up in the spam folder, so if you don't see yours in your inbox, check spam. However, the emails are not required to pick up your tickets at the Will-call: we have a list of names and emails which we use to check people in. The tickets you pick up at Will-call will be in an envelope with your table assignment and any drinks tickets you may have pre-purchased.
- The event is held at Mukogawa Commons, 4320 W Owens Ridge Rd, Spokane WA 99224. The Mukogawa campus is right next to Spokane Falls Community College, on Whistalks Way. To get there, follow Whistalks Way (from either the west or east) until you turn on to W Randolph Rd. There will be signs for Burns Night at the corner of Whistalks and Randolph, and signs along Randolph Rd directing you to the Commons, which is at the back of the campus.
- We are often asked about the appropriate dress to wear for the occasion. There is no formal dress code, but as a dinner-dance it is generally considered a somewhat 'dressy' event. A lot of the men will be wearing highland dress, with kilt, jackets and ties. If you don't have a kilt that's fine, but a jacket and tie are appreciated. Ladies generally wear formal or semi-formal clothing such as a cocktail dress, or something similar. With formal wear, it's best to have it stop at the ankle and not go all the way down to the ground if you are planning on joining in the social dancing (and we hope everyone will).

If you have questions or concerns about Burns Night, feel free to email us at [spokanescots@gmail.com](mailto:spokanescots@gmail.com).

I'm looking forward to seeing you there!

## Scottish Symphony Program



As reported in the last Thistle, the Spokane Symphony performed a Scottish program in October, highlighted by the Mendelssohn Scottish Symphony #3. Council thought this was a great opportunity to advertise the presence of the Scottish community in Spokane, and the Symphony kindly let us have a table at the event to talk to Symphony-goers about it.

Our President, Kenyon Fields, led our contingent. He reported that they had a great time and there was a lot of interest in our Society and the events the Scottish community puts on.

## Spokane Fall Folk Festival



The Angus Scott Pipe Band, Lake City Highland dancers and the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers put on an hour-long performance at the Spokane Folk Festival in November.

For the past few years our performance has been on the main stage in the auditorium, since the Festival was not able to use the small gym. This year we were back in the small gym. When we were on the main stage, we followed immediately after Floating Crowbar and the Haran Irish Dancers, who always were able to fill the auditorium - which of course provided us with a built-in audience. This year, there was a gap of 15 minutes between the end of the Irish program in the auditorium, and the start of ours in the small gym, so that people who wanted to go to both - including most of us performers - could move from one venue to the other. We were very happy to see that despite the disruption of moving from one place to the other we still had a packed crowd.

All three of our groups did an excellent job. The only glitch was in the communications. Our program started with the pipe band and highland dancers, then a set of dances by the country dancers, another set by the pipe band/highland dancers, another set by the country dancers, and a finale with the pipe band. After the pipe band marched off after their second set, many in the audience thought that was the end of the show and departed, so missing the last quarter hour. Note to self for next year - clarify how our program was scheduled!!

## Highland Games



Plans are already afoot for next year's Spokane Highland Games. We have a solid core of committee chairs from past year's Games, but we are in need of more volunteers to help with the organization. In particular, two offices, those of Vice-Chair and Treasurer are vacant right now, and the two other officers will be stepping down early next year when their terms expire: our current Games Chair, Wendi Johnston, and Secretary, Catherine Hill.

Our survey of members shows a solid support for the Games, and it is the premier event in the region's Scottish calendar. However, it does need people to make it happen. If you like the Games and believe it should carry on as a major part of the Spokane cultural scene, please consider volunteering to help, at the event itself of course, but more particularly in an organizing capacity.

The Spokane Highland Games Association's Annual General Meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on Wednesday January 15, 2025 at Spokane Valley Library - East Room, 22 N. Herald Road, Spokane Valley, WA 99206.

The main business of the meeting will be the election of officers to carry the Association on.

There will be a further meeting at the same venue on January 29th, at 6:30 pm. This meeting will be an ordinary meeting of the Games Committee, concerned with the organization of next year's Games. These will be held, as usual, on the first Saturday in August, which is August 2nd.

## Poll of Members



First off, thanks to all those members who responded to our survey in November, which asked how the Society was meeting the needs of its membership, and whether we should be doing anything more, less or different.

We were pleasantly surprised at the response: 55 of you took the time to give us your views. Here is a recap of the results:

*What is your interest in Scotland?*

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • Come from Scotland or have lived there | 5  |
| • Have relations or ancestors from there | 46 |
| • Have visited Scotland                  | 24 |
| • Like Scottish culture                  | 44 |
| • Just generally interested in Scotland  | 27 |

There were several additional comments, including being a member of SAMS or a member of a pipe band, being a national officer of a Clan, and planning to visit soon.

The number saying they have relations or ancestors suggested a strong interest in genealogy and clan associations.

*Have you attended an event put on by the Society or one of its affiliates?*

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| • The Spokane Highland Games            | 49 |
| • Burns Night                           | 40 |
| • National Tartan Day                   | 27 |
| • The Scottish performance at Folk Fest | 17 |
| • The Society picnic                    | 15 |
| • None                                  | 4  |

The numbers suggest that this group of respondents are strong supporters of the Society.

*Are you willing to help with the Society or its affiliates?*

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| • Become an officer or member of Council       | 2  |
| • Be an organizer of Society/ affiliate events | 10 |
| • Help at events                               | 28 |
| • Become involved with one of the affiliates   | 11 |

We were happy to see the numbers who were willing to pitch in. We will definitely be in touch with them in the new year.

*Do you have any special interest in Scotland or its culture?*

- |                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| • Genealogy or history | 39 |
| • Scottish literature  | 27 |
| • Scotch tasting       | 16 |
| • Kilt making          | 14 |

There was also 1 person interested in each of: Gaelic, clans, learning Scots, and Scottish cuisine.

The strong interest in genealogy backs up the answer in Question 1. If anyone with the knowledge were willing to lead it, maybe we should try to organize a genealogical group in the Society.

Scottish literature was an interesting one. It would be good to know more particulars: are we thinking of Robbie Burns, Walter Scott, or maybe modern authors like Ian Rankin?

*Is the Society doing anything it should not?*

Happily, everyone said no to this one.

*Is there anything people would like to see the Society doing?*

There were 23 respondents. Most were happy with what the Society was doing, but there were some suggestions,

- Help with genealogical research.
- Provide an agenda prior to Council meetings
- Kirkin' o' the Tartan

- Story-telling
- Resources for members to buy and sell Scottish items
- Celebrate St Andrew's Day
- Have informal meet and greets to introduce new members to the Society
- Book club
- Events for young families.

Council will discuss these suggestions and follow up in the new year.

*Are members happy with the organization and structure of the Society?*

Generally yes. A couple of comments were to add a historian, and hold biweekly meetings.

*Is the Society providing enough information on Scottish events in the area?*

44 said yes, 4 said no.

*Do you want to continue on the email list?*

All 55 respondents said yes.

The question was put in there so that if we had people on the list who didn't want to be there they could just say no to this one question and ignore the rest of the survey.

*Do you have any other suggestions?*

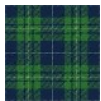
There were several suggestions, including:

- Providing information on scholarships;
- Expand the annual picnic with better ads and oriented to families with kids;
- Reach out more to people outside the immediate Spokane area, such as Idaho;
- More outreach in the Spokesman-Review and Inlander.

Council will discuss these at its next several meetings.

Overall, it appears members, or at least those who answered the survey, are happy with the Society. We will be following up on the several pertinent suggestions which were offered.

## National Tartan Day



The Society's National Tartan Day event will be held on Saturday April 12th at Shadle Library from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. There will be the usual celebration of the Declaration of Arbroath, which was signed on April 6th, 1320, as well as a full program of Scottish cultural information and entertainment. We will be serving tea, coffee and light refreshments. It is a free event, and all are welcome to attend. We are still finalizing the program: details will follow.

## Sons of Norway



The Sons of Norway invited us last year to their Annual Craft and Culture Fair in Coeur d'Alene. A group of us attended, and put on a pipe band performance, a talk on Norwegian rule in Scotland, and a table promoting the Society and its events. We in turn invited the Vikings to our National Tartan Day event and to the Highland Games. I am happy to report that we have been invited back to the Coeur d'Alene festival again this year. It will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025, 9am-3pm, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Coeur d'Alene. Last year those who went had an enjoyable time, and we are looking forward to this coming year's event. Attendance is free.

## Angus Scott Pipe Band



The Angus Scott Pipe Band (ASPB) was established in 1955 by two brothers whose passion and enthusiasm for Scottish culture and music came to fruition. The skirl of the pipes and complicated rhythms of the drum corps are unlike anything else in the world, carrying a highly distinctive sound all its own. That distinction is immediately recognized upon hearing it.

This music has transpired and transcended incredible moments over the years since Angus Scott's inception. Expo 74', Mt. St. Helens eruption, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Covid-19, to name only a limited few. Through these pivotal events, we have carried on with our tradition and have had so many spectacular people come and go, certainly grateful for their participation and commitment. Angus Scott Pipe Band will continue to have members come and go, and we welcome the change, but with that change comes the promise of continuing that realized dream of the Scott brothers by promoting Scottish heritage and traditions through the performance of the Great Highland Pipes & Drums.

ASPB recently performed at the Fall Folk Festival at the Spokane Community College. Angus Scott's more extensive performances range from 10-25 minutes, depending on the venue and associated performers. We had the continuing pleasure of performing with one of our long-time affiliates, the Lake City Highland Dancers. Their performances are poised, complex, and, most of all, very beautiful.

Angus Scott's next event will be at Burns Night on January 25<sup>th</sup> at the Mukogawa Center at the Spokane Falls Community College. The band will be playing nearly its entire repertoire for the evening. Every year is a packed house, so be sure to contact the St. Andrews Society for ticket information as tickets sell out quickly. Further down the road, Angus Scott will be performing for the St. Patrick's Day parade, along with nearly 2 days of performances at more than a dozen venues immediately following the parade. Then multiple university graduations in May and the Spokane Highland Games in early August. We will be on the road to Montana for the Bitterroot Celtic Festival in mid-August where the band will compete, so be sure to follow us on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

Member spotlight. Meet Debbie Cole. Debbie started her path to bagpiping at the age of 14 under the direction of Mary Alward-Myrhe. She recalls her instructors "diligence keeping her fingers straight and on the correct notes". Debbie's love and devotion to highland music ultimately led to her joining the Angus Scott Pipe Band, where her commitment extends to volunteering as band manager. Her attention to detail and tenacity make her the ideal member to take on the Herculean task of coordinating events, contracts, schedules, messaging, and a host of other matters crucial to the ASPB's overall continued success. Debbie recently returned from Scotland with her husband Bob and was able to attend the World Pipe Band Championship in Glasgow. Exposure to this class of elite musical performance highlights her passion for pipe band music and brought back both the experience of a lifetime and some exciting and intriguing performative observations. Be sure to contact her for more information about beginning bagpiping, intermediate lessons, scheduling solo or band performances, or even membership if you are already a musician.

As we look to the future of the Angus Scott Pipe Band, we rely completely on our ASPB family for the continuation of its heritage and legacy. It is because of this family that we are proudly announcing, in 2030, the Angus Scott Pipe Band will be 75 years old, and we are in the development stage of celebrating this tremendous milestone by honoring its foundation and its member contributions over the last  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a century by hosting its 75th-anniversary performance. Please reach out to us if you are, were, or know a former Angus Scott Pipe Band member. This collaboration will be a tremendous undertaking and bring back many memories that we are excited to share with the Spokane community that has supported us for so long. We will honor and commemorate our past, perform in the present, and anticipate melodic adventures in our future. Thank you from ASPB and we look forward to many years of exciting music.

[www.aspband.com](http://www.aspband.com)     <https://www.instagram.com/angusscottpipeband/>

<https://www.facebook.com/angusscottpb>     [aspbpipesanddrums@gmail.com](mailto:aspbpipesanddrums@gmail.com)

*P/M Seth England*

President, ASPBA

## Highland dance



Lake City Highland Dance has been spreading lots of Celtic Christmas cheer in the Inland Northwest this December. LCHD dancers performed at multiple senior centers around Coeur d'Alene and Spokane Valley, along with two shows at the Northwest Winterfest at the Spokane County Fair & Expo Center. The studio also had 28 of their dancers perform at a very exciting Christmas show on December 14th.

The Missoula Highland Dancers over in Montana have also been busy with performances at senior centers and their own Christmas show. Going into the new year, they expect multiple of their dancers to begin competing and one of their teachers to take a certification exam. Megan, one of the assistant teachers at LCHD, is also training for her certification in the Spring, and several of the older dancers are training for future exams. After the Highland teacher in the Tri-Cities unfortunately moved away, LCHD remains as the only Highland dance studio in the Inland Northwest with a certified teacher.

Lake City Highland Dance has been working hard to build back up the Highland dance community though, as they opened a new location in Coeur d'Alene after almost three years of renting space from other studios. Located at 3650 N Government Way, near the Coeur d'Alene Costco, there is now a brand new 1,200+ sq. ft. dance studio with one of the only high-impact sprung dance floors in the area. With white and blue walls for the Scottish flag, 6ft mirrors, barres, and trophies covering the walls of the studio, all the dancers have been raving about the new space and training hard for the 2025 competition season. To help with the cost of the sprung dance floor, LCHD dancers participated in a dance-a-thon to raise funds. Everyone was blown away with how much support the dance-a-thon received, over \$4,000 towards the new studio!

Don't miss some of LCHD's highest-level dancers performing at the Robert Burns Night Dinner and Dance in Spokane on January 25th!

## Spokane Scottish Country Dancers



After a successful and enjoyable performance at the Fall Folk Festival, the group is looking ahead and preparing for our next performance, at Burns Night on 25 January 2025.

In the meantime we have had fun celebrating the season and ended up with not one, but two, Christmas parties on successive Thursdays so that no one would miss out on a celebration of the season. A fun mix of dances, delicious finger foods and Christmas decor made for two enjoyable evenings.

## Genealogy books



Barbara Bley was our genealogy guru, but alas, she has moved away to the other side of the State to be closer to family, and has taken her reference books with her. The Society has now purchased its own set, including a comprehensive "Find your tartan" book, which shows tartans associated with particular surnames, and a three-volume set of tartans. With the interest in genealogy referenced elsewhere in this issue, we are hoping some person or persons will step up to become our new genealogy resource.

## **COSCA**

The St Andrews Society belongs to the **Council of Scottish Clans and Associations**, which sends out a monthly newsletter with a lot of good information and advice on Clan affairs, and resources for Scottish groups or families to find out about their ancestry. Below are a couple of extracts from their November and December issues which may be of interest to members:

### **Creating community through your family history**

Sharing stories from your clan or family history creates a virtual community where people can discuss, share, and contribute their own stories and memories. One great way to deepen and broaden your heritage is by delving into books of Scottish history, collections of memoirs and historical documents, and specific family genealogies. Here are the steps:

*Read and Copy:* Start by reading the original texts thoroughly. COSCA has compiled a research library of over 70 primary resources that can get you started. These are located in the Members Section of the website.

*Identify Your Angle:* Decide on the specific angle of your article. Do you want to create a brief biography, explore the history of a specific castle, or share your family's involvement with a battle?

*Outline:* Create an outline to organize your thoughts. This should include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

*Write:* Start with a compelling introduction that grabs the reader's attention. Use your notes and annotations to build the body of your article and ensure each paragraph flows logically to the next.

*Cite Sources:* Always cite your sources, both primary and secondary, to give credit and add credibility to your work. As a non-commercial educational organization, you may use some copyrighted material under the "fair use" provision of the U.S. Copyright Act.

*Graphics:* If applicable, include images, maps, or other graphics to enhance your article. Ensure they are properly attributed and add value to your content.

Learn more here: <https://www.cosca.scot/post/researching-heritage>

### **Clan map of Scotland**

You can find your clan or family on an interactive version of the "Scotland of Old" map first published in 1956. The map includes over 280 surnames which are now listed alphabetically. You then just click the grid quadrant (such as "B3") to see a detailed version of that section of the map.

This is the most accurate "clan map" even though the word "clan" is not used. This map was crafted by Sir Iain Moncreiffe of That Ilk, Bart., (1919 –1985) Albany Herald and Don Pottinger (1919–1986), Unicorn Pursuivant of Arms. This version was also approved by the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs and the Lord Lyon King of Arms. The map notes that the lands indicate "general spheres of influence, usually about the time of King James VI but taking the history of each district or family as a whole."

See the new version of the map at: <https://www.cosca.scot/clan-map>

## Coats of Arms

Most clan and family societies proudly display their crests, which are based on the Coat of Arms of their current or past chief. However, the full Coats of Arms of these chiefs are the specific property of the current chief. They may not be used by any other individual or organization, without express permission.

Today, anyone can create and register his or her own personal or corporate arms. In fact at least five clan and family societies have registered their corporate arms. The first clan and family society to be granted its own Coat of Arms was the Buchanan Society of Glasgow, Scotland. This society was founded in 1725 as a charitable organization. The group successfully petitioned Lord Lyon King of Arms in 1917 for its own corporate Coat of Arms.

In 1997, Dr. Johnnie Little, founder of the Clan Little Society of North America, secured arms for the Society. Also in 1997, the Clan MacNicol Federation was granted a coat of arms by The Court of the Lord Lyon. In 2006, the Court of the Lord Lyon granted corporate arms to the Clan Currie Society, also known as the Learned Kindred of Currie. In 2012, the Clan Crawford Association was issued Letters Patent from the Court of the Lord Lyon granting a coat of arms that integrates the designs of the two main branches of the House, Crawfordjohn and Dalmagregan.

Learn more here: <https://www.cosca.scot/post/clan-and-family-society-coats-of-arms>

## The Old Rugged Kirks Project

Here is an email we received from Les Taylor, of Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland:

I wonder if you might be kind enough to pass the word around your members about the Old Rugged Kirks project.

Scotland's abandoned old churches are more than just former places of worship, they represent an important part of the essence of our global Scottish identity, yet they are now being closed down all across Scotland at an alarming rate.

So the aim with this project is to visit, photograph and catalogue these churches in an online reference guide before they are lost for ever.

I hope you'll therefore forgive me for 'rattling my tin' to help fund this project.

You can find full details here at: <https://oldruggedkirks.com>



The Old Rugged Kirks Project

As a personal afterword from the Thistle Editor, COSCA (see the article in this issue) has reported that there is a project to rescue the old Guthrie Kirk, in the village of Guthrie in Angus, near Guthrie Castle. Even more interesting: Chateau Guthrie in Napa Valley is planning to contribute \$5 to the project out of each bottle sold.



## Other email

The Society also received two other emails which may be of interest to members. One is a resource for Scottish items and the second is a musical group.

## ScotlandShop

“We run ScotlandShop, offering a range of custom-made tailored garments and accessories in over 500 tartans woven in Scotland, available online and in our stores in Albany, NY, Edinburgh, Crieff & Duns, Scotland. We also stock a lovely range of accessories including Bow Ties and Sashes perfect for Burn's Night events”.

If you are interested, contact [info@scotlandshop.com](mailto:info@scotlandshop.com)

## Skyrie

I am writing to introduce Skyrie and our new release Hunger Road, currently being played on Radio Stations across the USA, Canada and Europe. Hunger Road features our song **Exiled** depicting the most infamous episode in the Highland Clearances and the title track **Hunger Road** portraying the forced labour of starving famine victims in Ireland (and to a lesser extent Scotland) in the 1800's.

We are based in St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, and have just completed our first US tour and having secured O1 visa's will be touring periodically in the United States over the next 3 years. Skyrie performs Worldwide with original and traditional songs and tunes for concerts and dancing.

**Web:** <https://www.skyrie.co.uk/>

**Media:** <https://www.skyrie.co.uk/media>

**Spotify:** <https://open.spotify.com/artist/1ozYbS80HQi31W6mb82jI3>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/skyrieband/>

**Press Release:** <https://www.skyrie.co.uk/press-release-hunger-road-album-launch>

## Scottish politics



Things have settled down a bit after the elections and ministerial changes of 2024. The Scottish National Party (SNP) appear to have regained some confidence, after the shellacking they took in the British parliamentary elections and Scottish local elections this year - certainly not out of the woods yet, but not feeling in such dire straits. John Swinney, the First Minister, has come up with a list of priorities which address the issues which were bothering Scottish voters, and his government has issued a budget proposal which supports these priorities. The four priorities, from first to fourth, are:

- **Eradicating child poverty:**  
This is to be achieved by direct means, such as increasing child payments, and by indirect means aimed at tackling the causes of child poverty, such as increased support of those in special need, such as people with disabilities; improving access to child care which would enable more people, particularly women, to join the workforce and make a living; providing better access to and more integration of support services; and tackling the housing emergency to make homes accessible to lower income people.
- **Growing the economy:**  
Attracting investment through incentives and vehicles such as the Scottish National Investment Bank; promoting entrepreneurs; improving government/ business interactions; improving infrastructure to assist business; and remove barriers to unemployment.
- **Tackle climate change**  
Exploit Scotland's renewable energy potential; support households and communities in reducing

emissions; and reducing vehicle emissions by promoting electric cars, improving access to public transport; and assisting non-vehicular transport such as bikes.

- Ensuring high quality and sustainable public services:  
Make it easier to navigate services available;  
Improve the National Health Service.

Note what is missing from the list: Scottish independence. As remarked in earlier Thistles, Scots have shown that they were disillusioned by the SNP partly because they were concentrating on the independence issue and not paying attention to good governance.

