

Thistle Epistle

September 2017

Upcoming Events

Folk Festival

The Spokane Fall Folk Festival will take place at Spokane Community College, 1810 N Greene Street, Spokane, on Saturday and Sunday November 11th and 12th. This is an entire weekend of music and dance from around the world, with continuous acts taking place on several stages and a fair amount of impromptu jamming by musicians in the halls.

As always, there will be the Scottish hour, which is usually held in the small gym, and will feature performances by the Angus Scott Pipe Band, the Highland dancers and country dancers.

Best of all, both the event and the parking are free!

The schedule has not yet been finalized, however the time for the Scottish performance is generally around noon on the Saturday. For more information, and to check the schedule when it becomes available, visit spokanefolkfestival.org.

Kirkin'

The Kirkin' o' the Tartan will take place on Sunday, December 3rd, starting at 11:00 am. As in past years, St. David's Episcopal Church, located at 7315 N Wall Street, will be hosting the event. Sally Nick, one of the Society's members, will be leading the ceremony. After the ceremony, there will be refreshments in the church basement, including a sampling of the Society's scotch. All contributions of finger foods would be greatly appreciated.

The Kirkin' derives from the time when the tartan was banned in Scotland after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Clan members would wear a piece of their tartan cloth to church under their other garments in defiance of the ban.

Burns Night

The Society's 2018 Burns Night celebration will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2018, at the usual place - the Mukogawa Commons, 4000 W Randolph Road, Spokane. Doors open at 5:00 pm for a social hour, and the program and dinner begin at 6:00 pm. Ticket prices remain unchanged from last year, at \$45 for those over 13 years old and \$30 for children.

Reservations need to be made by January 15th. These may be made by mail using the attached form or, after November 1, online at the Society's website inlandnwscots.org. There will be dinner, including a serving of haggis, and a no-host bar featuring a selection of scotch whiskies as well as beer, wine, other spirits and soft drinks. Entertainment will include piping and

drumming, the haggis ceremony, poetry reading and social dancing. This is one of the highlights of the winter season and definitely not to be missed.

Meetings

The next meeting of the St. Andrew's Society Council will be on October 29th, at 1.30 pm, at 1204 W York.

The Annual General Meeting of the Spokane Highland Games Association will be held at Conley's in the Valley, on Wednesday 18th October, starting at 6.30 pm.

Reports on Events

Highland Games

From Sean Pelfrey, Games Chair:

Despite this year's warm temperatures and smoky air, we had another great games. Our total attendance from our ticket count was 2187. We had 14 vendors and were able to welcome back Clan Campbell and glad to have Clan Buchanan join us.

The athletic event continues to grow and attract some of the top athletes in the nation and this year we had competing the #1 and #3 lightweights in the world rankings, the #2 women's master thrower and many others who have competed at the highest level.

Along with perennial competitors Angus Scott and Shadle Highlanders, we were joined by members of the Coeur d'Alene Firefighters, Border Highlanders, and the Columbia Regional Pipe Band. The mass band demonstration was once again a crowd favorite.

As always, the dance competition was a great success with dancers from across the region displaying the grand skills and amazing the crowds with their grace and poise.

As our games continue to grow and prosper, we need to acknowledge the great sponsors who have blessed us by helping us to keep spreading our beloved Scottish heritage to the community. The continued support of the St. Andrew's Society has allowed us to expand our exposure and bring in new members.

Some Thoughts on the Games, from the Thistle Editor

I have written on the Games in years past, but always from the official viewpoint: as Games Chair for four years and Treasurer for six years. Last year I was not able to continue as Treasurer, due to a family wedding in the UK (and anyway, six years is enough!), so I missed the Games that year. This year I finally got to go to the Games on Games day as a spectator - though still involved with set up and take down on the days before and after Games day.

My main impression is how much fun it was just to be able to wander about and enjoy everything. As an official, there is continuous stress on making sure everything is being done that needs to be done. There are bound to be problems and complaints in an operation of this size

and with so many people, so the Games officials get to hear about everything which is going wrong and not so much about what is going right. As a spectator one gets to see everything that is going right.

This leads in to a major commendation for the Games committee. The Games are a very complex operation, with lots of moving parts. Being only a one-day event, there isn't time to fix things, as there would be if it ran for a week. The list of things to be organized is staggering. The various areas to be taken care of include piping and drumming, highland dancing, athletics, heritage area, Celtic music, stage management, opening ceremonies, vendors, clans, setup and take down (and storage for the rest of the year, eve-of-Games potluck, sponsors tent, ticket and gate management, publicity, sponsorships, tug-of-war, signage, St. Andrew's tent, children's games, etc. Each of these areas has a list of tasks; to give one instance of what might seem a small item, the sponsors tent requires: organization of the seating and storage, provision of water, ice, and other drinks, getting the scotch from St. Andrew's Society, getting the lunches and the equipment to serve them, finding the coolers, plates, glasses, etc., having the sponsor badges made up from the list of sponsors so patrons can obtain entry, finding volunteers to look after the tent, etc. All of this has to be organized by the Committee, all of whom are volunteers - and probably none of whom are already experts in what they are asked to do. It is a rewarding job, being on the Games Committee, but it is definitely a commitment. Congratulations and thanks to this year's Committee for putting it all together.

Sean Pelfrey in his report above alludes to the numbers through the gate of 2,187. This is less than last year, but ranks around the highest for any other year. Last year had excellent weather - not too hot, and clear, and this makes a big difference to the numbers who attend: in particular, when it is very hot the numbers coming in the afternoon generally drop off significantly.

Sean also alludes to the smoke. I was at the potluck dinner on the Friday night, and the smoke in the atmosphere was terrible. At the dinner, I overheard the Shoot the English Knights guys saying they really couldn't come the following day. In good conditions the dress and armor they have to wear is quite onerous, and it would be too much in these smoky conditions. So, I left the potluck with some sense of foreboding about what the next day - Games day - would bring in terms of attendance. In the event, the atmosphere was better than the night before, though still smoky and hot. Given these conditions, which probably caused some people to decide not to come, the Games committee and particularly the publicity group are to be congratulated on generating such a good attendance.

Being footloose and fancy-free, I was able to spend some time just watching some of the events - there are so many throughout the day that it would be impossible to see them all. I particularly enjoyed Bruce Ridley's poetry slam in the main stage area. It is great that the poetry of Robert Burns takes center-stage. Bruce always does an excellent job promoting the poetry of Burns - helped as he is by having such a great poet with such varied poetic works to choose from. What impressed me was how many got up to recite: Bruce ran out of time long before he ran out of people.

I started getting involved in Highland Games with the piping and drumming area, so I always enjoy the pipe band exhibitions and competition. At the last Spokane Games I attended, the

Columbia Regional Pipe Band were in Scotland, so it was a pleasure to have them back at our Games.

I was also able to get around and chat to some of the vendors. Several, of course, are regulars at the Spokane games, but in previous years, I didn't have time to visit. The fact that they are in fact regulars speaks well of our Games. The feedback from them is that they enjoy coming to our Games; one said that after Enumclaw, which is quite exhausting, it was nice and relaxing to come to a smaller Games, particularly where everyone is so nice! They also find Spokane generous when it comes to plying their trade, and they do well.

The Games did miss the Shoot the English Knight group who were unable to come as explained above. Also, the sheep and duck herder, who had surgery just before the Games so, was unable to come. However, there were quite a few things missing, which was a blessing: no downpour on setup day such as we had a couple of years ago; and we certainly didn't miss the windstorm which a few years ago blew up just after the Games and resulted in most of our tents festooning the trees and the grounds - with the loss of several of them and a lot of work after the Games to rescue the others.

So, all in all, a very pleasant day and again, congratulations to the Games committee on putting the event together this year and keeping up the Scottish traditions in our area.

Peter Guthrie
Thistle Editor

St. Andrew's Society Picnic

The Society's picnic was held on July 22nd at the Greek Orthodox Church grounds on N Washington Street. About 25 members showed up and enjoyed the usual excellent potluck and a drop of the Society's scotch. Thanks as always to Doug and Janet Malcolm, who organized the event and provided the Society's contribution of BBQ meats to the dinner. Thanks also to Cliff Baxter and Paul Beebe who helped with the setup of the tents on the grounds.

During the meeting, Council planned to hold a Council meeting, which in the event turned into more of a general member's meeting. This allowed some new voices to be heard. Jenel Thew from Angus Scott told us all about the band's trip to Kimberley (mentioned elsewhere in this issue) from which they had recently returned. It sounded like a lot of fun, with 10 pipe bands in attendance. They were royally treated by the town of Kimberley.

Affiliates

Highland Dance

The United States Inter Regional championships (USIR) were held in July in Salt Lake City, Utah. These are the national championships of Highland Dance. In a previous issue of the Thistle Epistle, there was an article on the Regional dance championships, which were held in Spokane and which selected competitors to go on to the USIR. I am happy to report that three of the

dancers from our area who went to USIR placed in the top six of their respective classes: Meghan Palmer (4th overall) and Victoria Hawkins (3rd overall), both taught by Elizabeth Coyle; and Londynne Stratton (6th overall), taught by Marie Grimes-Darling. Congratulations to all three. Congratulations also to Kasey Hawkins who qualified at the Regionals and who is opening up a new dance studio in Coeur d'Alene. It is a pleasure to see such an important aspect of Scottish culture flourishing in our area, and a tribute to the teachers who have made this happen and are continuing to make it happen: Elizabeth Coyle, Marie Grimes, Kasey Hawkins, Brielle Balasz, Katie McLeod and Cassandra Humphrys.



Victoria Hawkins and Meghan Palmer with Elizabeth Coyle



Londynne Stratton with Marie Grimes-Darling



Kasey Hawkins new dance studio in Coeur d'Alene

Country Dancers

The group took September off since so many dancers - including both of the teachers - were away for most of the month. They are back in action now, dancing on Thursdays at the Greek Orthodox Church, 1703 N Washington St., starting at 6:30 pm. Members of St. Andrew's are invited to come and join in. It's a great way of getting exercise as temperatures drop, the nights close in, and the outdoors looks less appealing. Beginners are welcome, and you don't need a partner.

Just occasionally Church events take precedence over dancing, so check out the St. Andrew's website calendar to make sure we are meeting that Thursday.

Anna Guthrie
509-924-1284

Angus Scott

This summer the band participated in the 90th Anniversary Tattoo for the Kimberley Pipe Band in Kimberley BC. Our bands have always had a close relationship with each other because of brothers Hamish and Angus Scott. It was quite an experience and many Scott family members were in attendance.

At the Spokane Highland Games, the band honored Bill Thomas by playing "Flowers of the Forest" during the opening ceremonies. The rest of the day was spent preparing for our two performances, exhibition and our quick march set for the pipe band competition.

After the Games, the band took the rest of August off and resumed practice on September 11, working on music for the Fall Folk Festival.

During the hiatus, several members of Angus Scott joined with members of the Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums, and the Shadle Park Community Band, to participate at the Bitterroot Celtic Festival and Clan Gathering in Hamilton, MT. We enjoyed playing with these other bands under the name Spokane River Pipes and Drums.

If you know anyone interested in piping or drumming, we meet on Mondays from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Millwood Community Presbyterian Church.

Gillian Sayer, ASPB

Scholarships

Earlier this year the Society received a request for a scholarship from Cassandra Humphrys, to assist with the expenses of taking the test for a teachers certificate in highland dance. We were happy to oblige.

Cassandra has now taken the test. We received the following letter from her:

" It is with great honor and privilege that I have passed my Highland dance teachers exam in July at the United States Interregional championship weekend in Salt Lake City, Utah. I am so appreciative of the financial support that the St. Andrew's Society

of the Inland Northwest gave so generously to me. My exam grade is "Highly Commended", which is the highest level that one can achieve. I am also so grateful and appreciative to my dance teacher, Marie Grimes-Darling, for putting in so many hours with me to help me achieve that high level on the exam and my teacher's certificate. I am excited to announce that I have a brand-new dance school, " Mid-Columbia School of Highland Dance", which is in the Tri-Cities, and have a few new young dancers that I am teaching how to highland dance."

Cassandra has been driving up from the Tri-Cities to Spokane on a regular basis over the past few years to receive dance instruction. The Society congratulates her on her achievement, and commends her for her dedication to dance - that is a lot of driving! We are also very happy to hear that Scottish culture will be enhanced by her new school and were delighted that we were able to help.

As always, the Society encourages people interested in advancing Scottish culture in our area to apply for scholarships to help with the financial side.

Brexit

The last edition of the Thistle was published just after the snap election called by Prime Minister Teresa May had erased the Conservative Party's majority and necessitated a coalition with the 10 Ulster Unionists to be able to form a government.

That government is still in being, though Labor is posturing as the government-in-waiting. Labor's policies of nationalisation and tax and spend are those which made the 1970s such a miserable period in the UK, so mainly appeal to those young enough not to remember that era. However, when the Labor party is working out contingency plans for the run on the pound in the event they ever get elected, it doesn't bode well for the economy of the country.

May is still on course to accomplish Brexit, which with the two year notice period required would be finalized by May 2019. However, she has recently requested an extra two years during which the UK would continue to pay into the European Union. She has also promised fairly substantial amounts of payment. The EU negotiators are saying all this isn't enough; the Remainers still want another referendum to undo the decision to leave; and the Leavers are grumbling about any delay or any payments at all the EU. So, basically, things are pretty normal!

As far as Scotland goes, Nicola Sturgeon, the head of the Scottish Nationalist party, is still talking about another Scottish referendum on whether to remain as a part of the UK, but only once the terms of Brexit are known. Her clout has diminished after losing a good number of seats to Labor in the last election. The up-and-coming politician in Scotland appears to be Ruth Davidson, the head of the Scottish Conservatives, who did quite well in the election. She is even being touted as a possible successor to Teresa May, but at this stage, this is unlikely. In the UK, politicians need experience in the House of Commons, which she doesn't have. Not for the UK the shining knight riding to the rescue out of the wilderness!

As you have probably heard, the Catalans and Kurds have both just voted for independence from Spain and Iraq respectively, bolstering the movement of smaller entities to break away from larger countries. With Catalonia, there are some similarities to the situation in Scotland. The Catalans were joined with Spain by a union of the crowns in the 1480s, whereas Scotland and England were joined in 1603. However, Catalonia is the most prosperous region of Spain, and makes a net contribution to the Spanish treasury; this is not true of Scotland. Both regions share a feeling of having a cultural identity different from that of the larger nation to which they belong.

The Kurds have a better case for separation, since they were included in Iraq by a stroke of the pen when Britain and France carved up the Middle East after the First World War. However, Kurdistan is part not only of Iraq but also of Iran and Turkey, so there are three countries that would strongly resist a separate Kurdish state. The fact that Kurdistan has substantial oil reserves doesn't make it any easier.

Bill Thomas Memorial

A memorial for Bill Thomas was held on September 30th, at Millwood Presbyterian Church. There was a notice in the last edition of the Thistle announcing Bill's passing. He was a major figure in the Spokane piping community. The following is from the biography included in the Games program.

"Bill was born in Toppenish, Washington in 1931. He was the seventh of eight children. With Bill's passing, there are now only two brothers remaining.

Bill grew up in a musical household. His father, John Thomas, was a fiddler, who enjoyed winning prizes in regional fiddle competitions around the Northwest. Bill had regular exposure to the Appalachian music of the Ozarks because his father grew up in Arkansas. This familiarity planted the seed for his passion for Scottish music and the highland bagpipe.

Bill was about 19 years old when he first heard bagpipes. A pipe band had come to Toppenish and marched in a local parade. From that day, Bill was determined to learn the pipes. First, he bought a practice chanter and a vinyl LP to teach himself. Having already learned to play the guitar and banjo to accompany his father's fiddle-playing, the melodies of the traditional piping tunes came easily to him, but the intricacy of the fingering did not. He knew he had to find a teacher. He enlisted in the army, and there he heard of an army piper named Frank Mathison who retired to Yakima. After Bill finished his army service, he sought out Frank. Bill was thrilled to have a career Scottish soldier teach him the pipes. Because of Frank, Bill became an accomplished player and enjoyed winning a few prizes at Regional and Canadian highland games as a solo competitor.

It was not until Bill moved to Spokane that he became involved in pipe bands. Frank Jenkinson, the bass drummer for the Angus Scott Pipe Band was involved with Shadle Park High School. The school wanted a highland theme as their identity. Frank had met Bill at a highland games, and thought he would be a good fit to start a pipe band at Shadle. At the time Frank and Bill met, Bill was completing a teaching degree at Ellensburg. So Bill took a teaching position at Westview Elementary, and in his spare time started the pipe band at Shadle in 1958. His first

piping student was Steve Brown, who played Flowers of the Forest at Bill's private graveside service. Bill was director of the Shadle Pipe Band from 1959 to 1988, when he retired from the school district.

The Shadle Park Pipe Band was only one of the bands with which Bill was involved. When Bill and his family moved to Spokane, they lived across the street from Sandy Jones, who was the director of the Citadel Bagpipe Band. Sandy was a positive influence on Bill and introduced him to the pipers of the Angus Scott Pipe Band. Sandy and Bill remained lifelong friends.

Not only did Bill play with the Shadle and Angus Scott pipe bands, he also created a third band, the Lilac City Pipe Band; however he realized that being in three bands was too much strain on the family, so dissolved the LCPB. He eventually became the Pipe Major of the Angus Scott Pipe Band and served for more than 25 years. He took the band to regional highland games competitions, where they placed first many times. He stepped down as Pipe Major when his health declined. He competed with the band for the last time in August 2016.

Bill's involvement with piping was not limited just to pipe bands. He was an active member of the St Andrew's Society - who presented him with their highest honor, the Order of the Thistle. He was on the Highland Games committee during the years when the games were held in Coeur d'Alene. He was the committee who introduced the "medley" as a competition selection. The medley concept took off, and is now standard at the World Pipe Band Championships.

For many years, Bill was guest piper with the Spokane Symphony, playing the pipes for Peter Maxwell Davis' piece "An Orkney Wedding". He was also guest piper with the British Brass Band when they toured the northwest, and integrated bagpipes into the local Spokane Folklore Society's repertoire. That relationship was further cemented when the founding president of the Folklore Society, Paul Kinderman, married Bill's daughter Kathy.

Under Bill's influence, his family became accomplished in the Scottish arts. Bill and JaDean were in the Scottish country dance group, the Heather Hoppers. His eldest daughter, Pam, became a skilled highland dancer and bass drummer. His second daughter, JaAnn, became a talented tenor drummer. His third daughter, Kathy, is involved in piping and judging. His son, John, became an accomplished piper, and his youngest daughter, Laurie, became a highland dancer.

Over the decades Bill had many piping students in Spokane: Steve Brown, his first student; many of the members of the 5 Scott Pipe Band; Brad Wakefield, who has become internationally known in the Northumbrian piping community; and Dough Safranek, who enjoys engaging in piping folk sessions in New York with the likes of the Bothy Band and the Tannahill Weavers. So, as you can see, Bill's time on earth created many ripples in the Scottish musical pond. While he may not be with us today, his influence can still be heard in the music that we hear throughout our region."

As mentioned in the ASPB article, Bill was honored by the Angus Scott Pipe Band, who played "Flowers of the Forest" during the opening ceremonies at the Games, where he was also honored as Chieftain of the Day - the second time he was given this honor.