

St. Andrews Society of the Inland Northwest

Thistle Epistle

March 2021

Burns Night 2021

Gatherings of any sort were not permissible this year because of the pandemic. In fact, one could hardly think of any greater super-spreader event than our traditional Burns, with the Grand March ensuring that everyone is in extremely close contact with everyone else, and with the often very lively social dancing resulting in lots of heavy breathing.

However, the St. Andrews Society decided that Burns Night had to be celebrated in some fashion, so it was held virtually using Zoom.

The event was well-attended, with over thirty households joining in. Many of the attendees were dressed for the occasion - at least their top half was!

St. Andrews Society President Marie Darling acted as MC. While the dinner and social dancing were not possible, the event managed to incorporate most of the other traditional parts of our Burns celebration:

- President's welcome, by Marie Darling.
- Since there could be no actual dinner, Christina Smith provided a traditional Burns dinner menu - featuring cock-a-leekie soup and of course, haggis - which was posted on the website for those interested in a do-it-yourself dinner celebration. Susan Ridley also provided a pot haggis recipe - which tasted delicious, as I can attest having made it myself.
- Jason Gordon's Address to the Haggis, which was recorded two years ago, was played and set the tone for the evening. It was followed by the Selkirk Grace.
- Gillian Sayer gave an update on the area's pipe bands - Angus Scott, Shadle, and Coeur d'Alene Fire fighters.
- The Angus Scott Pipe Band video made during the fall for the November virtual Folkfest was used for four tunes, including two featuring the Northwest Highland Dancers.
- Bruce Ridley gave a video recital of some of Burns' poems, including "My love is like a red red rose" and "Polly Stewart" - which I have included at the end of this Thistle for Burns aficionados. The video was appropriately enough recorded in Bruce's whisky room.
- Barbara Bley gave an update on National Tartan Day, and Cheryl McLean talked about this year's Highland Games - both of which are covered later in this Thistle.
- Stuart and Christina traded barbs - in the traditional fashion, and amicably - in their recorded toasts to the lads and the lassies.
- Doug Malcolm gave the toast to the immortal memory of Robbie Burns. While acknowledging the popularity of Burns' love and human-interest poems, he emphasized Burns wide range of subject matter and his interest in the politics of his day. His question - "what would Burns have made of it had he been living today" was certainly apt and food for thought.
- Since we couldn't actually do social dancing, a short clip of the Spokane Country Dancers was played, followed by a spirited Virginia Reel in which the whole assembly had participated at a previous Burns celebration.

- The evening concluded with a beautiful live rendition by Ann Fields of Auld Lang Syne. Attendees were encouraged to sing along at home, but with the mute on - apparently Zoom does not adapt well to choral singing.

Our Society was not the only one to put on a virtual Burns Night - they were held throughout the world, attesting to the enduring popularity and importance of Scotland's greatest poet.

Kudos to the Society for deciding to put the event on; to Doug Malcolm for organizing all the disparate elements; and to our webmaster Clint Hill for his compilation of the video and website components of the evening.

A Note on the Selkirk Grace

The Selkirk Grace is recited at every Burns Night dinner, and it is popularly believed that he wrote it. My trusty volume of Burns complete works does in fact include it as one of his compositions. However, it dates from sometime in the hundred years before Burns' time, though the actual date and author are unknown.

The reason it is associated with Burns is that when asked at a dinner to say a grace, this was the one he recited. The dinner was hosted by the Earl of Selkirk, hence its name.

The grace goes as follows:

Some hae meat and canna eat
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
And sae the Lord be thankit.

Most of the grace is readily understandable to the modern ear. Maybe the only tricky line is the second. A minor paraphrase makes its meaning clearer:

And some wad (like to) eat that (are in) want (of) it - "it" referring of course to the meat in the line above. So: "Some would like to eat but don't have any food".

Burns did in fact pen a poem, entitled " A Grace before dinner". It goes as follows:

O thou, who kindly dost provide
For every creature's want!
We bless thee, God of Nature wide,
For all thy goodness lent:
And if it please thee, Heavenly Guide,
May never worse be sent:
And whether granted, or denied,
Lord, bless us with content!

I think I prefer the Selkirk Grace.

Highland Games

The Spokane Highland Games Association held their Annual General Meeting on January 20th - by Zoom, of course.

The official business consisted of the election of two of the four officers, the President and Secretary: the two-year terms of the officers are staggered so that two are elected each year, thus providing continuity. Cheryl McLean and Sondra Willmann were duly elected as President and Secretary, continuing in the offices they have held for the past two years.

There was also the suggestion that the Bylaws be amended to allow for Zoom voting, since as written they presuppose an in-person meeting.

The main topic of the meeting was naturally what to do for this year's Highland Games. August is still some time off, so some sort of an actual Games may be possible. However, the organization of all the parts, including the Fairgrounds, the vendors, clans, athletes, pipe bands, dancers, musicians, heritage events, etc., requires a fair amount of lead time. In addition, there is a "Games season" in our area, running from around early May to late September, in which a Games is held on just about every weekend. Our Games may be later in the schedule, but vendors and clans tend to so organize as to attend Games each weekend, so if the early Games don't take place, it is less likely that later ones will attract the interest they usually do. Also, of course, pipe bands require practice time to perfect their sets for competition, and there has been very little practice over the past year.

The Treasurer, Clint Hill, put together a budget of what might happen if we went ahead with an actual Games. Of course, these are only estimates, but it was fairly clear that there would likely be a substantial loss by going ahead - though fortunately, SHGA is in good financial health.

It was decided that there was too much uncertainty in the current situation to make a decision, so the question needs to be taken up at a subsequent meeting. However, at the AGM it was decided that the chairs of the various committees should contact the participants who normally come to the Games to gauge their interest.

At the monthly meeting in February, the chairs reported that if there were an in-person Games:

- A lot of athletes are keen to come.
- Several vendors would like to come, though some said that it would depend on whether other area Games held earlier in the year took place.
- Individual piping and drumming competition should cause no problem, since by the nature of the event spacing has to take place. Band competition would be very difficult if social distancing has to be observed.
- The Fairgrounds has the first Saturday in August reserved for the Games; however, the current Fairgrounds attendance limit is 200. A full Games attendance, including spectators and participants, is well over 2,000. We don't know what limitations might be in place in early August. Apparently, some form of State Fair is planned, but the Fairgrounds personnel indicated it would probably not be the traditional Fair that we are used to.

So, there is hope for some level of in-person Games, but it is still too early to say. The Games Committee will decide at the next meeting in March whether and how far to go ahead.

Cheryl, the Games Chair, did however say that this year there would be some sort of Games, even it has to be held virtually.

Where is Brexit at?

At the time of the last Thistle, the negotiations between the UK and the EU did not seem very promising. The UK had formally left the EU as of January 31, 2020. However, the details of the relationship had not at that time been determined, so the UK was abiding by EU rules until an agreement was reached, which was to be accomplished by December 31, 2020. Until then, everything carried on as it had before.

As always seems to be the case, nothing ever seems to get done until the last minute. So, with 11 months to come up with a deal, it was not until Christmas Eve that an agreement was reached.

The main terms of the agreement are:

- **Travel**

As a member nation, UK travelers were able to enjoy unrestricted travel within the EU. Now that the UK is no longer in the EU, a visa will be required for stays over 90 days, UK travelers will be required to have travel insurance with health cover, and they will no longer be able to pass through the EU passport control lanes. Instead of being allowed to bring any amount of alcohol and tobacco from EU countries, now there will be limits and the return of duty-free shopping. UK nationals working in the EU will require work permits, and visas will be required for longer visits such as studying abroad, or retiring in an EU country.

- **Immigration**

Within the EU, a person from any member state has the right to move to or work in any other member state. This was one of the UK's major beefs with being in the EU. Now the UK will have a points-based immigration system, aiming to attract people who can contribute to the UK economy.

- **Trade**

Previously goods could freely cross the borders from the EU into the UK and vice-versa. Now, although no taxes will be imposed on trade goods, customs declarations will have to be filled out. Also, some goods such as meat products will be restricted; a truck driver from the UK had his ham sandwich confiscated at the French border! However, if either side moves too far from current rules around product standards this could lead to tariffs being imposed.

- Professional qualifications from other countries will no longer be automatically accepted.
- The UK can now negotiate its own trade deals with other countries; previously it was bound by the treaties negotiated by the EU.

- **Ireland**

The problem of Ireland being split between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland - which is part of the UK - has long been a bone of contention. During the troubles, there were border checkpoints between the two entities. Once the situation in Northern Ireland settled down, the border became open, since both countries were within the EU. The border is not a nice straight line: it is very irregular, and the roads in the border area are also irregular, so when driving around, one may cross the border several times. The only way of telling which country one was in was that the speed limits suddenly changed from kilometers to miles, and vice-versa.

With Brexit, the UK and the EU have agreed to keep an all-but-invisible border, without

checkpoints. Northern Ireland will follow many of the EU's rules, allowing goods to freely cross the border. However, food products coming into Northern Ireland will have to be checked to ensure they comply with EU standards. For now, there is a three-month grace period, but what happens in the longer term remains to be negotiated. Certainly, more paperwork will be required.

- **Fisheries**

This was another bone of contention. Any EU country can fish in the waters of any other EU country. Now the UK will over the next five and a half years gain greater control over the fish in its waters. If the UK bans EU fishing boats after that period, the EU could impose taxes on British fish.

- **Justice**

Under the EU, the European Court of Justice is the ultimate court of appeal, so cases could be appealed to it from British courts. Now in the UK the highest court of appeal is a British court. Disputes between the UK and the EU, which would formerly have been adjudicated by the European Court of Justice will be referred to an independent tribunal.

- **Security**

The UK will no longer be a member of Interpol, and will no longer have automatic access to EU security databases. However, it is anticipated that there will continue to be easy cooperation between the intelligence services of the two entities.

Probably the biggest items which caused the decision to leave the EU were those relating to immigration, justice, and the requirement to adhere to EU bureaucratic rules. The agreement reached does appear to have generally satisfied those issues as far as the UK goes. The long-term effect of the trade dislocation remains to be seen.

Brexit Effect on trade

One of the main attractions of membership of the EU was firstly the free trade within the EU member countries; and secondly, the treaties between the EU and other countries which automatically applied to all EU members. One of the worries with Brexit was having the UK left out in the cold - though, the Brexit proponents saw the ability to make separate deals as a distinct advantage.

The Christmas Eve deal laid out the terms of trade with the EU. As far as the rest of the world goes:

- The EU has 40 trade deals covering over 70 countries. The UK is continuing with 63 countries on the same terms as were in the EU treaties.
- Four countries, including Canada, have treaties not yet in force.
- The UK has made a separate deal with Japan.
- The UK is also applying for membership of the TransPacific Partnership, a trading bloc based on nations in the Far East (this was the treaty which Trump withdrew from in his first days in office).
- The UK is working on deals with the US, Australia, and New Zealand.

So, the situation is not that dire. However, one of the UK's major assets is its financial services industry. When a member of the EU, London became a hub for financing for the EU itself as well as for other parts of the world. This may change if the UK is outside the EU, both because of

regulatory hurdles and also increased transaction costs, but it is too early to tell. However, the UK pound has recovered against the USD and is not that far off its pre-Brexit levels.

What does Scotland think about the Brexit deal?

The reaction to the Brexit deal has been unfavorable. Scotland feels that its particular interests, such as fisheries, have not been sufficiently taken into account by the UK negotiating team. Scots economists have calculated that Scotland's GDP will be lower by 6% in 2029 than it would have been by staying in the EU.

Polls show that the majority in favor of independence from the rest of the UK is now up to 58%. The majority of Scots voted to stay in the EU when the Brexit referendum took place, and that feeling has not changed since. The Scottish government put out a release saying, "the UK government's damaging Brexit trade deal does not have the consent of the Scottish parliament."

The SNP (Scottish Nationalist Party) has increased its popularity, and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has won praise for her handling of the COVID pandemic: making the Scottish government appear a lot more competent than its UK counterpart.

Parliamentary elections for the Scottish Parliament are coming up in May. It is widely expected that the results will favor a renewed push for Scottish independence.

Scotland and COVID

An article in the last Thistle outlined the situation of COVID in Scotland, which was better than that in the UK as a whole, and considerably better than the US. However, at that time there was considerable anxiety that the holiday season would have a major impact, and the Scottish government undertook quite stringent guidelines to control any outbreak.

The result has been excellent. In the UK, there was a sizeable spike in the number of cases over December and January. In Scotland, only a minor bump. So far over a million people in Scotland have received the first dose of the vaccine - close to 20% of the entire population. Since the onset of the virus there have been 197,000 cases, and just under 7,000 deaths. This compares with over 4 million cases and 121,000 deaths in the UK. On a per capita basis, Scotland has done nearly twice as well as the UK as a whole.

70th Wedding Anniversary

Very hearty congratulations on their 70th wedding anniversary to longtime members of the St. Andrews Society, John and Geraldine Wiess.

I met John when I was involved in the Spokane Highland Games, and he was the leading figure in the Spokane chapter of SAMS - the Scottish American Military Society. They regularly had a booth at the Spokane Highland Games, and organized the color guard. However, they have not been present for several years, and I heard they were no longer in operation. I knew very little about SAMS, so I went to talk to John about that organization, and also his connection to all things Scottish and his military service.

SAMS is a fraternal society founded in 1981, with membership open to any veterans of the armed services who have a Scottish background or particular interest in Scotland. John and Geraldine

enjoyed the social connections in SAMS and during his tenure as the leader of the Spokane chapter of the society they got to travel to several SAMS meetings in various states. However, he had to relinquish the charter of the Spokane chapter because there simply were not enough members even to furnish the officers necessary for such a society.

With a distinctly un-Scottish name like Wiess, I asked John about his Scottish connections. It turns out he was actually born a Forbes: the name Wiess came when he was adopted very early in life by a couple named Wiess. He became interested in his Scottish roots after he retired in 1984, and has been to visit Scotland four times, the last in 2010. He has also been very involved in the Masons, so his trips to Scotland always included visits to Rosslyn Chapel, outside Edinburgh, founded by the Sinclairs, which has connections to the Masons.

Although he retired in 1984, two years later he was rehired and assigned to Panama City, Panama. He completed his assignment in 1989, and that year he and Geraldine permanently relocated to Spokane.

John's military service started in 1945, in the navy, where he played trumpet in the band. He was released from active duty in 1946, but remained in the naval reserve until his junior year at WSC in Pullman, at which time he enrolled in ROTC. After graduating in 1950 with a commission as a 2nd lieutenant in 1950, he and Gerry decided to get married, on February 9th, 1951. While on their honeymoon he was called up for active duty. After completing the advanced training course at Fort Benning in Georgia, he received orders for assignment with the 3rd Infantry Division in Korea, and remained active in the US Army Reserve until separation in June 1975.

John has continued his musical interests, playing in bands while in Pullman, Spokane, and other places he has been. He is also a lover of automobiles: his favorite was a late 1940s Riley, but he still owns a 1967 4-door Thunderbird in immaculate shape.

One wonders if there are enough ex-military members of St. Andrews Society who might be interested in restarting the Spokane chapter of SAMS?

The Scots Language Society

We periodically receive emails from the Scots Language Society, with the latest edition of their magazine "Eiks and Ens". The magazine has a variety of pieces written in the Scottish dialect, some poems, some prose pieces, and with news of the society. The latest edition brought news of their AGM, which starts:

"Weel, is this nae juist the worst of times, tae paraphrase ae wee screiver doun in Lunnon frae ae whilie lang syne. Hooiniver, life gings on an sae div we in the Scots Language Society/ Scots Leid Associe. Acaus o the Covid we cuidnae hae wir annual collogue an AGM so we haed a Zuim AGM an that wis fell guid. We haed memmers jyne us faw haednae been able to come tae Perth, but cuid mak thair presense on line."

A sample of their magazine included in its latest edition is this one - "A Nae Sae Fond Kiss", by Bill Cox.

I couldna believe at Jack wis leanin in tae kiss me. It wisna like I headna thocht aboot it aften eneuch and we haed been exchangin wee keeks aw nicht. Jennie an the queans kent at I fancied him so mebbe ane of them haed telt him.

An here he wis, his bonny physog an bricht reid lips bearin down on my plouky face an thin lips (I'll get thaim puffed oot a bittie fan I win the lotto) tae kiss me. Ma hert wis aw a flutter, juist like in ane o Maw's soppie Mills an Boon beuks. But I couldna gang throu wi it.

I thocht back tae an oor aby. whan we'd aw met up doon aside the Copie, wir uisual haunt. I'd gien Jenny a bosie whan her gypit face crinkled in a shevel.

"Did ye hae fish for yer supper?" she askit.

"Aye, how dae ye ken?" I'd replied.

"Cos yer breath is honkin!" she laucht.

I juist laucht an aw, even tho I'd wantit tae slap her; noo, tho, wi Jack's bonny face (sae bonnie!) hingin ower mines, it aw came back tae me. I couldna let him snog me and then clype tae awbody at I haed 'death breith'. I wouldna live it doon.

Sae I had no choice but to pou awa frae Jack. He was obviously conflummixt, an, I like tae think, muckle maist disappyntit as weel! For masel, ma face wis lit up wi a reidie. I heard ane of the queans geiglin ahint me, maist like at bowsie moo Nellie.

I hummerit something aboot hivin tae get hame an walkit awa, wi ma heid doon an ma metaphorical (aye, it seems I did hearken in the mannie Potter's English class the day!) tail atween ma shankies. Gie the boy his due, I'd anely walkit a puckle o hunder metres whan he catchit up wi me. He was aa apologetic, but I telt him it wasnae him, it was me. He wis so nice tho at I decidit 'whit the hell' - even if I anely got ma tongue doon at throat ance (an it was sic a bonnie throat) it would aye be wirth it. Sae I smiled aw skeich-like an muived in close tae him. He gat the hint an for the seicont time at evenin I watcht his lips approach mines, like twa reid balloons leukin tae jyne the pairty - Aricht, mebbe I didna pey at muckle tent tae the mannie Potter the day!

The kiss was aw richt, ay but at boy's breith - the term 'badger's bum' disna shuirly dae it juistice. It wis like somethin haed crowlit intae his mooth an dee'd, keechin its breeks afore an efter it depairtit. For the seicont time at nicht I pullt awa. It was aw I coud dae nae tae cowk! Bit i gied him ma best smirk, decidin thare an then at we wad juist be freends an at bein eesome wisna the be aw and end aw o romance. Efter a few meenits I telt him at I really haed to get hame 'cause ma maw wis expectin me.

An wi at I turnt on ma heel an walkit back throu the quate neon-lit streets, reflectin on ma nicht an leukin forrit tae ane sma pleisur in parteeclar: some moothwash an a minty fresh end tae ma day.

If any members of St. Andrews would like to receive Eiks and Ends, we would be glad to forward it when we receive it.

National Tartan Day

Barbara Bley presented an update on National Tartan Day, which is April 6th, the anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath. She talked about the St. Andrews Society's normal celebration.

The event has been held in Shadle library, and included performances by pipers and drummers, highland dancers, and country dancers; readings of the Declaration of Arbroath; explanations of the significance of tartans and clan crests; displays of tartan-weaving and Scottish weapons; and genealogical exhibits, with particular emphasis on the Scottish clans.

Last year everything was organized for it, but of course in March COVID reared its ugly head and the event had to be canceled. Barbara said that at this point it was unclear if it could in fact be held this year, and if so, what form it might take. The St. Andrews Society Council will have to decide at their next meeting.

For Burns Aficionados

Here are a couple of the poems Bruce Ridley recited at Burns:

My love is like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
My love is like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

So far art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
And I will love thee still, me dear,
While the sands of life shall run.

And fare thee well, my only love,
And fare thee well awhile!
And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

Lovely Polly Stewart

Bruce gave a short introduction to this poem: Burns sat next to Polly at a dinner, was duly smitten, and may have had an affair with her.

O lovely Polly Stewart,
O charming Polly Stewart,
There's ne'er a flower that blooms in May,
That's half so fair as thou art.

The flower it blaws, it fades, it fa's,
And art can ne'er renew it;
But worth and truth eternal youth
Will gie to Polly Stewart.

May he, whase arms shall fauld thy charms,
Possess a leal and true heart;
To him be given to ken the heaven
He grasps in Polly Stewart.