

Thistle Epistle

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Society AGM

The St. Andrews Society Annual General Meeting was held on April 25th, by Zoom.

Seventeen members attended, amply fulfilling the quorum requirement for the meeting. The Treasurer reported that the Society was still in good financial shape. Burns Night has been our main fundraiser for several years, and of course in 2021 it was not possible to hold it in person, so the Society's income has substantially disappeared. Of course, since we were not able to hold any other events, our outgoings have also been down. The only substantial expense is insurance, which is based on the number of members rather than on levels of activity. It seems a bit hard to be paying insurance when there is nothing to insure, and the meeting felt that we should look into other insurance options.

It was reported that the virtual Burns Night held in January went very well. Thanks particularly to Doug Malcolm and Clint Hill for their contributions.

The main item of business was the election of officers. Doug Malcolm was the Treasurer for several years, and then became the Vice-President. He has now reached the end of his term limit as Vice-President, so has to step down. Kathy Wiebers also decided to step down as Treasurer. In their places were elected Stacy Grimes-Hodges as Vice-President and Roger Grimes as Treasurer. Doug indicated his willingness to continue assisting with Burns Night, which has traditionally been the responsibility of the Vice-President.

In events and affiliate reports, it was noted that the Spokane Highland Games and the usual April 6 Tartan Day were both canceled because of the ongoing pandemic. It may be possible to hold a Tartan Day in November, in conjunction with St. Andrews Day. At this point, we cannot determine whether Burns Night 2022 will be able to go ahead in person, given its inability to provide social distancing. However, the Society does plan on going ahead with the annual picnic, of which more below.

The next meeting of Council is scheduled for July 25th at 7:00 pm. As always, members are encouraged to present any ideas they may have and to attend the meeting.

Marie Darling is now entering the second year of her second term as President, and will have reached her term limit next April. The Society will need a new President and

Secretary, and needs to start looking for candidates now. If any members are interested in either of these positions, please get in touch via the Society email: spokanescots@gmail.com.

President's Message

It has been quite the year with COVID and we hope that this reaches you all in good health. Our Scottish community has been pretty quiet this last year, but we are excited for the promising future. It feels as though we have all been on this COVID rollercoaster with constant changes to guidelines; however, we now have some events on the horizon.

First though, I would like to take this time to thank Doug Malcolm and Kathy Wiebers for their time and dedication for serving on our board. Doug has been on the board in numerous positions for quite a while and we are grateful for his longevity and love for our community. He has graciously agreed to still be the host for our summer picnic which is planned for August. Thank you to Kathy as well for her depth of understanding of numbers and keeping us all in order financially during this pandemic. We would like to welcome to the board our two newest members: Stacy Grimes (Vice President) and Roger Grimes (Treasurer). For those of you wondering, yes, they are related. Roger was the Pipe Major for ASPB for several years before spending some time up in Alaska. He moved back last year and is ready to serve. Stacy was a former highland dancer and is now the mom of two highland dancers. Welcome to both of you and we will be putting you to work this year.

As mentioned earlier, we will be holding our annual picnic. Please be on the lookout for another email closer to the event to share how we will follow COVID protocols at this event and the address. Regardless of any possible restrictions, we hope that we will be able to see some friendly faces and catch up from a safe distance.

Plans are underway to host our annual Robert Burns Dinner & Dance event in January of 2022. As COVID protocols change and seem to be getting more relaxed, we are hopeful that this will move forward. At this point, we are proceeding as if it will occur. More information will be provided in the fall.

Highland dance competitions are slowly starting to open across the United States. The Royal Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing in Scotland (which governs all highland dancing in the world) gave the U.S. the green light to start competitions on June 1st. There is a long list of do's and don'ts that must be followed and all competitions must be approved through ScotDance USA (which governs highland dancing in the USA). The first competition that is closest to us is in Salt Lake City, Utah. Right now, we do not have plans on when the first one will happen in Spokane, but we are hopeful to have one next spring. In these competitions you will see lots of changes. Dancers have to compete and stay inside their designated box which is outlined in tape, and then there is additional distance between each box. Others include limiting the number of spectators and competitors, no more handing out awards, etc. Implementing 6' social distancing rules is

quite complicated when running a dance competition, so we will see how this all goes. Dancers are allowed to remove their mask temporarily during their dance if preferred, but then must put it back on once the dance is finished. Wow, what a change in how dance competitions will look going forward.

As we continue to ride this roller coaster with turns, ups and downs, I wish you all a beautiful summer and hope that you can spend precious time with your loved ones and friends.

Cheers,
Marie Darling
President, St. Andrews Society

St. Andrews Society Picnic

Doug and Janet Malcolm have graciously offered to host the Society's annual picnic at their home: 13411 S Sherman Rd, Spokane, WA 99224. This will take place on Saturday, August 28th, starting at 4:00 pm. Doug expects to be able to hold the picnic in its usual format. He and Janet will provide meat dishes. Attendees are encouraged to bring side dishes and liquid refreshments, but they will be served out by designated servers rather than being self-serve. Social distancing will be observed as required, and if there are further restrictions required by the State at that time, they will of course be observed. The Society will provide a selection of single malt scotches. All members are encouraged to come and attend our first in-person gathering in over a year and a half.

Highland Games

The Spokane Highland Games Association met in April to discuss how we were going to proceed with the Spokane Scottish Highland Games. We had athletes, vendors, a few highland dancers, and bagpipe bands interested. There were several events we wouldn't have been able to move forward with because of Covid 19 restrictions. We discussed the financial losses we would incur and being a non-profit, we can't afford to take large financial losses.

Another issue was the enforcing of the Covid requirements and the number of volunteers needed to ensure mask-wearing, social distancing, and sanitizing. There was a real concern about possible confrontations with participants and guests when trying to apply the Covid requirements. The biggest concern was that our event could turn into a Super Spreader event, we would never want our participants or guests to get exposed at our Games or anywhere else. The damage to our events reputation would have been tough to come back from.

The Spokane Highland Game Association appreciates everyone's understanding and support. Please plan on joining us on August 6th, 2022, for our next Games; we are coming back strong!!!

There were many game cancellations such as Seattle Scottish Highland Games, Prosser Scottish Festival, Tacoma Games, Portland Games, and Skagit Valley/Mt. Vernon Games.

Several Highland Games and festivals are moving forward, here is a list of games that you may enjoy attending:

- Kootenai Highland Games - Libby, MT- July 16 &17, 2021
- The Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering - Hamilton, MT - August 21 & 22, 2021
- Douglas County Highland Games - Umpqua, OR - August 28 & 29, 2021
- Albany Scottish Festival & Highland Games - Albany, OR - September 18, 2021
- McMinnville Scottish Festival - McMinnville, OR - October 9 & 10, 2021
- Kelso Highlander Festival - Kelso, WA - September 11 & 12, 2021

Cheryl A. McLean
Chairperson, Spokane Highland Games Association

Piping and Drumming

Angus Scott Pipe Band

We have been meeting each Saturday at Millwood Park for an hour-long practice now that the weather is nicer. We performed at the Gonzaga Graduations (Law School, Graduate School and Undergraduate School). We also performed for Whitworth University graduation and for St. George's School at their graduation ceremony.

Coeur d' Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums

We have continued to meet via Zoom on Thursday evenings. We are getting closer to meeting in person and might go to the Bitterroot Celtic Festival in August.

Shadle Park High School and Alumni Band

I don't have an update for either of these groups.

Gillian Sayer

Covid in Scotland

Cases in Scotland decreased throughout April, from 400 down to 200, which is a very low rate for country of 5.5 million people. However, in May cases increased to the 500 level, partly due to the Indian strain of the virus. Total cases in Scotland to date are 236,000, less than 4% of the population. By comparison, the entire UK has 4,490,000 cases, around double the Scottish rate per head of population.

The low levels of infection were a result of stringent restrictions on gatherings and travel. My contact in Edinburgh told me that a couple who drove from Edinburgh to Musselburgh, about 6 miles, were fined for traveling beyond the 5-mile radius allowed! In addition, the UK provided a fast rollout of the vaccines. 38% of the Scottish population has been fully vaccinated. 5.3 million doses have been administered, with 2.0 million people now fully vaccinated. So, in addition to the 38% fully vaccinated, nearly 25% of the population would appear to have received one shot, which appears to provide a substantial level of protection.

The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has announced that as of June 5th most of the country will move to Level One, still with some restrictions, but considerably more relaxed than Level Two in terms of the ability of people to meet and congregate. However, the central belt from Glasgow to Edinburgh will remain in level 2. There was hope for greater relaxation, but the increase in cases in May has prompted a more cautious approach. However, Nicola Sturgeon says she hopes to further ease restrictions later in the summer as more people become vaccinated.

Scotland has instituted three levels of requirements for visitors from abroad. Green requires a PCR test within three days of arrival, but no quarantine. Amber requires two PCR tests and 10 days of self-quarantine. Red level requires quarantine for 10 days in a designated quarantine hotel, at a cost of UKL 1,750 (approximately \$2,500), with PCR tests on days 2 and 8. The USA and Canada are currently in Amber level.

Scottish Parliamentary Elections

Elections to the Scottish Parliament took place on 6 May, 2021, for all 129 seats. The results were as follows (number of seats won, followed in brackets by the change from the previous Parliament):

Scottish National Party (SNP)	64	(+1)
Conservative	31	(0)
Labor	22	(-2)
Green	8	(+2)
Liberal Democrat	4	(-1)

The other parties running for seats were Alba, All for Unity, Scottish Family Party, Freedom Alliance, Independent, Reform UK, and UK Independence party. All had no seats before, and got no seats at this election.

This was the fourth win in a row for the SNP.

Turnout was 63% of the nearly 4.3m voters. 58 of the seats in Parliament (45%) were won by women.

The SNP ended up one seat short of a majority, so require a coalition to form a government. The coalition has been formed with the Greens. However, one of the Green MSPs has been appointed Chair, which is a politically neutral position. This leaves the SNP with 64 seats and the other parties combined with 64: but the Chair has the deciding vote in the event of a tie.

Nicola Sturgeon remains leader of the SNP and First Minister. She still aspires to lead Scotland to independence from the UK, but promises to pursue another referendum on the question after the Covid crisis has passed. Opinion polls currently show that the vote for staying or leaving would be very close, having earlier been more in favor of leaving. The raising of whisky tariffs by the US, possible due to the ability of the UK to negotiate outside the EU, may have disposed some Scots to look more favorably on staying (see below).

Brexit

So how is Brexit actually going?

The UK left the EU in January 2020, but the commercial and trading arrangements existing during EU membership remained in place until the end of the year, to allow time for negotiating new terms with a separate UK. A deal was finally struck on Christmas Eve 2020.

Many exporters say that the new Brexit deal has hurt their businesses, with severe disruption to their operating model, with lots more paperwork, delays, higher transport costs, and seeming obstructionism by the EU. London has been overtaken by Amsterdam as the top European share trading city, and many financial assets and jobs have moved from the UK to the EU since the Brexit referendum. Businesses wishing to deal with European countries no longer wish to base themselves in the UK. Exports to the EU countries were down 50% in January, the month after the trade departure of the UK took effect. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has claimed that these problems are teething troubles, which will go away. Others believe they are structural and permanent. Probably the answer lies somewhere in the middle.

Trade to countries outside the UK was down slightly but not as hard hit - the UK has agreements with 64 of 70 countries that were previously covered by EU treaties.

So far, the British government has not released information on the effect on the economy, though it should be noted that precise comparisons with the situation prior to leaving the EU are almost impossible due to the effect of Covid, which has distorted everything.

Scotch Whisky Tariffs

Oct 2019, the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreed to let US impose \$7.5 billion worth of tariffs on European merchandise, among which were scotch whisky and Scottish clothing. Other items affected were wine, cheeses, other luxury items, and aircraft parts.

The imposition of the tariffs was due to the dispute over subsidies to Airbus, a European aircraft manufacturer in competition with Boeing. However, most of the items subject to the tariffs had nothing to do with the actual Airbus/Boeing dispute; they were just the items it was felt would provide maximum leverage for the US.

In retaliation, the EU in 2020 imposed tariffs on \$4 billion worth of US goods, mainly agricultural and food goods; again, nothing to do with the actual dispute.

The result of the tariff on scotch whisky was a drop of around 35% in exports to the US of single malts, worth around 500 million pounds (approximately USD 700 million).

The scotch industry employs 11,000 directly, and supports 40,000 other jobs.

On March 4, the US suspended the tariffs on Scotch for 4 months, to give time for the US and UK to negotiate a trade deal. This move followed the UK unilaterally dropping tariffs on many US exports, including rum. These concessions were made possible now that the UK is no longer part of the EU and can make its own trading arrangements.

