

# Thistle Epistle

September 2022

## Highland Games

The Spokane Highland Games Committee have been hard at work since early in the year – though the organization did start a bit later than usual, due to the uncertainties at the beginning of the year brought on by the continuing spread of Covid.

This year was, of course, the first year since 2019 that the Games have been held. This made the organization of the event harder than normal, due to the two-year break in the momentum and knowledge which in normal times is carried over from year to year. We were fortunate that so many of the committee members from past years came back again this year. One notable exception was Marie Darling, who has been the Highland dance committee chair for at least 15 years that I know of, and probably longer. She moved out of state earlier this year. Luckily Victoria Hawkins stepped in as the new dance chair. Victoria has been competing at our Games for several years, and placed 2nd in the nation in the last national championship. Megan Sargent also volunteered to fill the position, and will be assisting Victoria.

This year, as noted in previous Thistle Epistles, we were unable to have a full Highland dance competition, since Covid prevented dancers from learning and practicing for the past two years. However, Lake City Highland Dancers, where Victoria teaches in Coeur d'Alene, put on two exhibitions during the Games, which were very well received. Victoria says she will also be teaching in Spokane, which is good news for our local dancers.

This year we also had to forgo the usual pipe band competition, for much the same reasons as for the dancing; bands have not been able to practice. However, members of the Angus Scott Pipe Band, the Spokane County Firefighter Pipe Band and the Borderers from Pullman came and put on a good massed band display for the opening of the Games. The Borderers put on an exhibition later in the day. It wouldn't be a proper Games without the sound of the pipes!

OK, enough about the few things we weren't able to do, and let us get on to what we could.

We were able to attract a good slate of vendors this year. Some of our vendors who attend several Games in the region reported that vendor attendance at these other Games have been low, so kudos to our vendor and clan chair – and to the Spokane public who come to our Games and patronize our vendors. Several of our vendors say they do well at our Games, which keeps them coming.

We also had a good turnout of clans – ten in all. The clan tents are always a big attraction, particularly for those interested in genealogy and the history of the clan to which they are affiliated.

Scottish farming was very well represented this year. Don Imas brought his dogs and sheep and provided demonstrations of the art of sheep herding, which were very popular. Teri Sardinia brought two Clydesdale horses: the gentle giants who until quite recently were the backbone of arable farming. Dan Howry brought three highland coos, including one calf.

Carla Carnegie gave us a good slate of Celtic music entertainment on both stages during the day, with Hunter Koss, Muckle Roe, Deep Roots, Free Whisky and Crooked Kilt. In addition, there were the Scottish story tellers, the Country Dancers, and Bruce Ridley's poetry slam celebrating the poems of Robert Burns.

This year National Tartan Day was celebrated at the same time as the Games, since things were so uncertain at the usual date it is held, on April 6th. Barbara Bley, who has run this event for several years, read the Proclamations of Tartan Day at the opening ceremonies, and was busy non-stop all day helping people find their clan affiliations. Howard Hansen brought his collection of original Scottish weaponry and explained the finer points of the design of each of them.

I heard someone comment on how much there was for the kids to do. In the heritage area there was the Braveheart face-painting and kids' coloring tents. The Adrian Empire brought the Shoot the Knight. The Padilla family had a busy day with the kids' athletics. After the traditional tug o' war between the Scots and the Irish, the kids were invited to come out for their own tug o' war.

A highlight of our Games was – as usual – the athletic competition, where we had 75 competitors. Certainly, an impressive turnout and one which resulted in a late finish for the athletes. This year, as well as the main lawn where most athletic events are held, we also had the weight-over-bar competition on the vendors and dance stage lawn, which brought the athletes more into the swing of the rest of the Games.

Our thanks to Jim Miller and Northwest Classic Cars who organized the British car show, where 10 beautifully-maintained vintage cars were on show during the day.

Prior to Games Day, there was some trepidation that people might not come; again, that was because of the interruption in momentum. We need not have worried. Over 2,600 came through the gate, which is almost the same as the last Games in 2019. The field seemed well-populated, with all the various venues having sizeable audiences throughout the day. There seemed a particularly joyful vibe to the Games this year, with everyone having a good time and glad to be back.

Another worry was financial. So many of our costs increased this year from prior years. Despite this, we kept our attendance prices the same as in past years. Luckily, we were able to break even. This was partly due to the good attendance numbers, but also due to the generosity of our sponsors, who made a very sizeable contribution. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, breakeven is good enough for us, providing we have enough of a cushion to finance the next year's Games.

This year our Chieftain of the Day was Ian Robertson. Ian has been our MC at the Games for many years, and has also contributed as the authentic voice of our advertising. Congratulations to Ian on his wedding earlier this year.

Thanks are due to many people who helped make this year's Games memorable and a great success:

- The public who came to attend;
- The athletes, pipers and drummers, dancers, Celtic musicians, vendors, clans, heritage and farming exhibitors;
- The Games committee, who worked hard throughout the year to bring the Games to Spokane;

- and last, but certainly not least, our Games chair, Cheryl McLean, for her exemplary leadership. She has been our chair throughout all the uncertainties of the Covid period, and now finally at the resumption of the Games. She has been a source of strength and good cheer throughout.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, sponsored, and showed up to support our Highland Games! Can't wait for the 2023 Spokane Scottish Highland Games!

## Picnic

The St. Andrews Society held its picnic on Saturday 27th August. Thanks, as usual to Doug and Janet Malcolm, who kindly offered their home again, and had tables, chairs and shade tents set up at the back of the house, with its splendid views. The Society provided the meats, which Doug barbecued – sausages, chicken and pulled beef. Side dishes and desserts were brought by members attending, so we had a fine feast – washed down with the Society's scotch and various beers, wines and soft drinks.

There was an excellent turnout, including some members who were there for the first time, which was good to see. Our president, Kenyon Fields, brought his pipes and treated us to some tunes. The weather cooperated – not too hot, with a bit of a breeze. Everyone enjoyed catching up with old friends and meeting the new attendees, so the event was a great success.





## Scottish American Military Society (SAMS)

As previously reported, Ed Wattawa has been taking the lead on re-establishing a SAMS presence in Spokane. At the Games, SAMS had their tent in the clans area, attended by local SAMS members and Rob Donaldson, SAMS Region 15 Commander. Ed reports that they were kept busy all day with inquiries and people who joined on the spot. There are now enough members to form Post 1955, Inland Empire. Now it's just a matter of getting the Petition for Formation of a SAMS post approved by the National Vice Commander.

## Spokane Scottish Country Dancers

We had a great time at the Highland Games and had one of the best responses to the audience participation dances. A big thank you to Cheryl and her committee for all the work they put into organizing the event. I'm not sure who was in charge of the weather, but good job!

The next event we are looking forward to is being part of the Scottish program at the Fall Folk Festival mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter. Hope to see you there!

Our group will be taking a short break during the last two weeks of September. the Trinity Greek Orthodox Church will be holding its 86th annual Greek Festival on 22, 23 and 24 September.

There will be no dancing on 22 and 29 September, but you can go and eat like a Greek between 11:00 am to 8:00 pm on the festival dates, and enjoy some Greek dancing too.

## Fall Folk Festival

Fall Folk Festival is coming up on the weekend of November 12 – 13. The Scottish community will be participating as usual, with the highland dancers, the country dancers, the Angus Scott Pipe Band, and possibly the Spokane County Firefighters band. Our time is at 12:30 pm on Saturday 12th. We hope you will come and take in not only the Scottish performances, but also the other music and dance from around the world.

## Burns Night

The Society is well advanced on organizing the 2023 Burns Night celebration. The actual date of Burns' birth was January 25th. Our Burns celebration will be held on the closest Saturday, which is January 28th. We will be going back to the Commons at Mukogawa, which is where we held the event for several years before Covid forced us to go virtual in 2021 and 2022. We are planning the same format as in previous years, with the haggis ceremony, the toasts, Burns poetry, pipe bands, exhibitions of highland and country dancing, and of course the social dancing. Save the date!

## Scottish Independence

In the past two years, the movement for Scotland to become independent of the United Kingdom has been fairly low-key, though Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, still is insisting that there will be a second referendum on the separation question in October 2023. Part of the reason for the reduction in interest in the question is simply that there have been more pressing concerns – specifically, of course, Covid. Covid is still with us, but has assumed a much lower profile in the past six months or so than it did before.

There are several issues surrounding a second referendum. Legally it has to be approved by the UK government, and Liz Truss is following in Boris Johnson's footsteps in saying she does not support it. There is currently a legal case before the UK's highest court, to decide if a referendum called unilaterally by the Scottish government would be legal.

The original referendum in 2014 had a majority in favor of staying in the UK. However, Scottish Nationalists argue that circumstances have changed enough that a second referendum is warranted; the main change being Brexit, which most Scots opposed. The Scots argue that means the entity they agreed to be part of in 2014 is no longer fundamentally the same as now.

The passing of the Queen has added another element of uncertainty. The Queen was seen as the glue which held the separate parts of the United Kingdom – and for that matter, the Commonwealth – together. Her close ties to Scotland reinforced in particular the allegiance of that country to the UK. The fact that she died at Balmoral adds to the favorable feeling of the Scots to the royal family. Now that she is gone, it remains to be seen if King Charles can command the same respect and remain a cogent reason for Scots to wish to remain in the UK. In fact, there is a division in the ranks of the supporters of Scottish independence between those who would wish to become a republic and those who would prefer to retain the King as the head of state of an independent nation in the same way as such countries as Australia and Canada.

Looking around the world at present, there seems to be a lot to be said for having the head of state not be an elected politician!

## Looking for a Good Home

Donated lady's kilted skirt in dress Stewart tartan (also known as White Stewart), length: 28inches.

Label information:

*100% pure wool, dry clean only*

*Made in Great Britain*

*UK size 18/US size 16; 42 inch/107 cm hips*

However, UK/US conversion charts give UK size 18 as a US 14, so you would definitely need to try it on. It's in excellent condition.

If interested call Anna or Peter Guthrie at (509) 924-1284

