



Thistle Epistle

December 2022

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Burns Night

The Society's annual Burns Dinner and Dance is shaping up well. The date is January 28th, 2023 – the closest Saturday to Burns' actual birthday on January 25th.

The organization for this year's festivities has proven a bit more challenging than in previous years. Firstly, of course, there is the long break since the last in-person Burns Night, in 2020, caused by Covid. We have had virtual Burns celebrations using Zoom for the past two years, which required some organization, but of a quite different sort from an actual Burns dinner. Secondly, Marie Darling left the state earlier this year. She was the main organizer of Burns for several years, and was a great help to Doug Malcolm and Stacy Hodges when they became the chief organizers. Thirdly, although we have secured Mukogawa Commons as the venue, which is the same as in past years, they no longer do catering, so we had to find a third-party caterer to provide the food.

Our thanks to Barbara Bley, who stepped up to become the Society's vice president, and thus the person in charge of Burns Night. She has worked hard to overcome all the challenges, with the support and assistance of officers and council, and it looks like things are in good shape.

One area we have paid particular attention to is the cost of attendance. In 2020, tickets were \$55. Since then, three years have elapsed, and inflation has reared its ugly head, so we have been working hard to keep the costs down and only raise the price of attendance by \$5, to \$60. Despite this, we have not stinted on any of the things which add to the enjoyment of the evening. Cuts are more in the administrative areas, such as not mailing out tickets and doing a lot of printing ourselves.

Tickets went on sale on November 18th and are selling fast. They can be purchased online at the Society's website inlandnwscots.org. We will not be mailing out tickets: an email confirmation is sent out automatically when the tickets are purchased. We will check guests off when they arrive on the evening of the event, and they will be handed a ticket with their name or the name of their party and the table at which they are to be seated.

We are looking forward to a great evening of fun and entertainment, and hope we will see many of you there.

Highland Dance

The Scottish spirit is still going strong in the Inland Northwest despite two long years of online dance lessons, cancelled competitions, and studio closures across the country. There is only one studio, Lake City Highland Dance, in our immediate area of the Inland Northwest that teaches Scottish Highland dancing; meaning dancers travel from all over the area for lessons. LCHD has students who live as far out as Sandpoint, ID and Rice, WA, who attend class once to several times a week. With the increase of interest in the dance form this year, head instructor, Victoria Hawkins, has been able to expand classes to Spokane Valley, WA and now has over 30 students! The next closest studio to our area is Mid-Columbia School of Highland Dance, in the Tri-Cities.

Lake City Highland Dance dancers had a blast performing at the Fall Folk Festival with the Angus Scott Pipe Band this November. Every year, LCHD has multiple opportunities for dancers to perform and participate in community events, such as St. Patrick's Day performances, Christmas events, parades, and workshops. Performing is a very important part of dancing, so that dancers can learn to overcome anxiety, develop stage presence, and showcase what they have learned to their family, friends, and the community.

Competitions are thankfully back on the rise, with events throughout the year in the Northwest in Seattle, Tacoma, Prosser, Portland, and more. Dancers in this area have also traveled all over the USA for larger competitions, including Florida and South Carolina, where several of LCHD's dancers recently competed. There aren't as many Highland dancers in the Northwestern states as there are in places such as Florida, so competitions in this area have low attendance. There are plenty of upcoming competitions in our region though, including the Northwest Regional Championships. This competition will be held in Seattle on May 20th, and dancers who qualify at this competition will go on to represent the Northwest at the United States Inter-Regional (USIR) National Championships. The USIR is hosted in a different region each year, and the Northwest is excited to be the host of the 2023 USIRs! Portland, Oregon, has a lot to prepare for as they will be welcoming qualifiers from all corners of the country, and the Northwest is currently holding fundraisers to help put on this event.

Speaking of competitions, the Spokane Highland Games is excited for the return of the Highland dance competition at the 2023 games! Victoria Hawkins has volunteered to organize the dance competition this year, and has also joined the Spokane Highland Games Association (SHGA) and is now the chairman of Highland Dance. She is hoping for an attendance of at least 35 dancers, and is already contacting studios around the area and in Canada to bring dancers out for the competition. Of course, there are always unexpected factors that can change the attendance number of any competition, but everyone is keeping their fingers crossed that the competition will have a great comeback in 2023!

As Scottish Highland dancing is such a huge part of Scottish culture, everyone is very happy that the dancing world has kept going through the past years of hardships. The Inland Northwest is very fortunate to have a strong Celtic community to keep the spirit of Scotland thriving.

Victoria Hawkins

Scottish Country Dancing

The Spokane Scottish Country Dancers are flourishing, with the addition of several new members. As noted in the article on the Fall Folk Festival, we performed there and we will be dancing at Burns Night.

Our group is affiliated with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. Since this edition of the Thistle has a definite slant towards royalty, this might be a good time to take a look at where the “Royal” comes from.

The royal connection with Scottish country dancing begins with Queen Victoria, in the 1850s, when she hired a teacher for herself and her children. The dances he taught were mainly the Highland reels, the Reel of Tulloch, and other country dances. The aim was to get the family ready for the annual Gillies’ Ball at Balmoral. Apparently, the teacher endeavored to strike a balance between the vigorous “native” style of dancing, and the more refined ballroom style.

The royal family continued with country dancing thereafter, particularly with the influence of Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the mother of Queen Elizabeth II, who was brought up at Glamis Castle in Scotland. However, the first direct connection with the Scottish Country Dance Society was in 1932, when the Society sent a volume of dances to Queen Mary, Elizabeth’s grandmother. The informal connection continued until 1946, when another volume of dances was sent to Princess Elizabeth. Knowing that Elizabeth had a keen interest in Scottish country dancing, the Society invited her to become the Society’s Patron, which she graciously accepted. In 1951, the Society petitioned the King (George VI) to be granted the addition of “Royal” to the Society’s title, and since then the Society has been known as the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

If you are interested in joining the Spokane country dancers, we meet on Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the Greek Orthodox church at 1703 N. Washington St. All are welcome and you don’t need to bring a partner.

Scottish American Military Society (SAMS)

It’s official! After a long delay, SAMS Post 1955, Inland Empire, has been approved by the National Vice Commander. Congratulations to Ed Wattawa on accomplishing this.

As recounted in previous Thistle Epistles, the Spokane area had a SAMS post for many years, under the leadership of John Wiess. The post was discontinued due to dwindling membership. However, there has been a resurgence of interest and Ed has taken the lead in getting it reinstated. It has taken quite a time to get the post made official, but finally Ed’s efforts have met with success.

Currently there are thirteen members. The Society is open to anyone who has served in the US armed forces and has Scottish connections, or has a particular interest in Scottish culture. If any of our members would like to join or would like more information, you can email spokanescots@gmail.com and we will put you in touch with Ed.

Fall Folk Festival

This year's Fall Folk Festival, held at Spokane Community College on the weekend of November 12-13, went extremely well. Overall, there was a full weekend of musical and dance acts from all around the globe. More particularly, Scottish and Celtic culture was well-represented.

Since the inception of Fall Folk Festival, there has always been a Scottish hour, with the Angus Scott Pipe Band, Highland dancers and country dancers. This year that tradition continued, with a 30-minute performance by Angus Scott Pipe Band and the Lake City Highland Dancers, and a 15-minute performance by the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers. In the past, we have always been in the small gym, but this year the use of the small gym was discontinued so the Scottish performances took place on the main stage. We had a large and enthusiastic audience and the performances went very well. Thanks to Kenyon Fields who organized the Scottish hour.

One particularly fun moment, which may have been missed by the main audience, but not by the country dancers waiting in the wings, was when the Angus Scott Pipe Band entered on to the stage through the curtains at the back of the stage – which were drawn. This worked out fine for the pipers, and snare and tenor drummers, but was a bit trickier for poor Kenyon Fields who had to keep playing the big bass drum while enveloped in folds of curtain!

Queen Elizabeth II and Scotland

My wife and I happened to be in Scotland just after the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and were pleasantly surprised that the Scots felt so deeply about her.

The ties of the royal family to Scotland go back a long way. After centuries of hostilities which reached a climax with the Scottish Wars of Independence in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, but continued thereafter through the 16th century, the crowns of the two countries were united in the person of King James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England. After moving to London on his accession, James VI and I never went back to Scotland. His son, Charles I, went back for his Scottish coronation in 1633. During the Interregnum, 1649-1660, Charles II called on the Scots for support against Cromwell, but the Scots supporting him were defeated and he went into exile. Charles II did, though, go back on his accession at the Restoration in 1660 to be proclaimed King in Edinburgh.

After Charles II, no king visited Scotland for over 150 years. The 18th century was not a period when the rugged landscapes of Scotland held much appeal. George III (1760-1820) hardly ever left the Home Counties, the area immediately around London.

The early 19th century saw the rise of romanticism, with an emphasis on the beauties of nature and an interest in picturesque history. In Scotland, Sir Walter Scott, with his Waverley novels, was a major figure in this movement, and it was he who invited George IV to visit Scotland in 1822. George duly showed up, arrayed in tartan – rather voluminous tartan, since

he was of a generous figure – which started the huge interest in clan tartans which continues to this day.

The major royal interest in Scotland really started with Victoria and Albert, who visited Scotland, fell in love with it, and bought the Balmoral estate in 1852. They enlarged and renovated the existing structure into a Gothic revival castle and considered it their favorite residence. Since then, every generation of the royal family has spent their summers at Balmoral. (Note that Balmoral is privately owned by the royal family, along with Sandringham in Norfolk which was bought as the private residence of the Prince of Wales in 1862. The other royal residences such as Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle are owned by the State).

Of course, the official Scottish residence of the monarch is Holyrood House in Edinburgh, although it is used more as a place to hold state functions than as a residence.

The major Scottish newspaper, the *Scotsman*, had very extensive coverage of the Queen's funeral and of her love of Scotland. The edition of September 12th, 2022, included a 16-page picture special celebrating her love of Scotland and 32 pages of her journey from Balmoral, where she died, to Edinburgh.

King Charles III too has strong ties to Scotland. He was, of course, the Duke of Rothesay, the title held by the eldest son of the reigning monarch. He has a residence on the Balmoral estate, Birkhall, which he plans to use as his residence in Scotland in preference to the main castle. He went to school at Gordonstoun, in the Northeast, though that would not have been his favorite memory of Scotland. He has been active in employment and training schemes in the poorer areas around Glasgow.

Perhaps the late Queen's view of Scotland is best summed up in her own words:

“I have spoken before of my deep and abiding affection for this wonderful country, and of the many happy memories Prince Philip and I always held of our time here. It is often said that it is the people that make a place, and there are few places where this is truer than in Scotland, as we have seen in recent times.”

Thistle Editor

The Stone of Scone

The Stone of Scone is a block of sandstone on which the Scottish kings were crowned from 840, when Kenneth McAlpin brought it to Scone, until 1292, when John Balliol was crowned. It was then stolen by Edward I of England in 1296, and incorporated in a special coronation chair he had built for the purpose, where it remained until the 20th century.

However, in 1950 it was taken from Westminster Abbey by a group of Scottish Nationalists. It was found some three months later by the high altar of Arbroath Abbey – probably not coincidentally. Arbroath was where the Declaration of Arbroath, which proclaimed Scottish

independence was written in 1320. The Stone was returned to Westminster Abbey, but in 1996 it was returned back to Scotland by the UK Government.

The reason for mentioning it is that the Stone is going to be temporarily taken back to Westminster Abbey for the coronation of Charles III, to keep the line of monarchs crowned on it intact.

The Stone is said to have had at one point a verse attached:

“Unless the fates be faulty grown
And prophet’s voice be vain
Where’er is found this sacred stone
The Scottish race shall reign.”

In 1603, when James VI succeeded Elizabeth I, the Scots regarded the prophecy as having been vindicated, since a Scot now sat on the English throne.

Looking for a Good Home

We have some kilts available, for which members no longer have a need:

1. Through some misunderstandings with The Scotland Kilt Co, which resulted in them sending a kilt which was too long for me, I have a kilt I can’t wear. The kilt in question is a 38/40” waist-hip and 24-inch drop. It is a very nice poly viscous black Stewart.

If anyone can wear it, please get in touch through the Society’s email, spokanescots@gmail.com.

2. I have several kilts to give away. Most of them I made while practicing the art of kilt making.

Some are of wool, some of other fabrics. Some are “traditional” wool kilts, some are knife pleats, some box pleats, one or two are contemporary kilts. One or two are of identifiable tartans, most not. Should fit 36-42” waist and with a 22.5” drop.

Contact me at headghillie@gmail.com to make arrangements to try them on.

Greg Roth

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



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

Compliments of the season and Happy Hogmanay!