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# Thistle Epistle

March 2024

## Burns Night

The Society's Burns Night Dinner and Dance was a resounding success, with a sold-out attendance. It was held as usual at Mukogawa Commons. Although the room we use can hold considerably more tables, a large amount of space is required for entertainment, particularly social dancing, so we limit the numbers to 240.

There was the usual program. Jason Gordon gave the Address to the Haggis; the Angus Scott Pipe Band, Lake City Highland Dancers, Shadle pipers and dancer, and the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers gave performances; Allen and Lois Bremner gave the toasts to the lassies and lads; Lyn Russell gave the toast to the Immortal Memory; and Anna Guthrie led the Grand March and the social dancing. Jason Gordon and Agnes Freeland gave a novel twist to the Burns poetry reading of "To A Louse": Jason read the poem as written by Burns, in his Scottish accent and with all of Burns' words and phrases, which are unfamiliar to American ears, while Agnes provided the "translation."

A welcome addition to the Angus Scott Pipe Band part of the performance was singing "The Flowers of Scotland," Scotland's unofficial national anthem, which President Kenyon Fields suggested. The band played the tune, and then Carla Carnegie led the singing with keyboard accompaniment. Kenyon's inspiration was the singing of the Flowers at Scotland's rugby matches at Murrayfield when 67,000 are in full throat. We may not have quite matched that, but we gave a good account of ourselves!

The Society received a letter from the First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf, praising Scots worldwide for their efforts to keep traditions alive, particularly Burns Nights. The letter is included at the end of this edition of the Thistle.

## **Awards**

The Society gives out awards to members who have contributed to the Society, its affiliates, or the Scottish community in the Inland Northwest. The award is usually made at the Burns Night Dinner. This year, four members received the Flowers of Scotland award:

- Cheryl McLean for her leadership of the Spokane Highland Games before, during, and after the Covid period, particularly its very successful return in 2022 following two years of shutdown.
- Catherine Hill, for her services to the Highland Games over many years, and in many roles: St Andrews tent, Sponsors tent, currently Secretary, but particularly the recruitment and organization of volunteers - cat-herding!
- Anna Guthrie for her many services to the Society and the Games, and in particular for her leadership of the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers.
- Barbara Bley, for services to the Society, including initiating and planning the National Tartan Day event and organizing the Burns Night Dinner and Dance for the past two years, particularly its return after the Covid shutdown.

Congratulations to the four recipients on very well-deserved awards!

## **Sons of Norway**

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the Society was invited by the Sons of Norway to take part in their Craft and Cultural Day in Coeur d'Alene.

We presented a one-hour program. The Angus Scott Pipe Band performed, accompanied by dancer Megan Sargent from Lake City Highland Dance. Peter Guthrie gave a talk on Norway's influence on Scotland—Norway ruled over parts of Scotland for over 600 years. Barbara Bley talked about Clan Gunn, of which she is a member and which is descended from Norwegian settlers. The Society also had a table, run by Barbara, with information on the St Andrews Society and Scottish culture in the region.

We were impressed by the level of participation at the event, which had a large crowd in attendance, many exhibits, and local vendors. Barbara has invited the Solhjalmr Vikings to come to our National Tartan Day event on April 6th to talk about Viking settlements around the world.

## **St. Patrick's Day Parade**

As always, the Angus Scott Pipe Band and the Spokane County Firefighter Pipes and Drums were at the forefront of the parade. Avid readers of the Spokesman-review will notice that the latter got the credit, although ASPB was the larger group. Immediately

behind the band were the Spokane Highland Games, the Society's National Tartan Day banner, and the SAMS contingent.

The weather for the parade was the best anyone can remember, which resulted in a huge turnout of spectators along the route, so a most successful day.

### **National Tartan Day**

The Society's National Tartan Day (NTD) event will be held on April 6th at the Shadle Library on Wellesley Avenue.

The original plan was to have NTD at different libraries each year. For some years, we were at Shadle before it closed for remodeling. The following year, COVID hit. So, there was no NTD event for two years. It returned last year and was held at the North Spokane Library in Hawthorne. This year, Barbara planned to have it at the new Valley Library. She was told that bookings could be made up to two months before the event, so she waited until the appropriate time. When she applied, she was told that various groups had priority - despite the two-month rule - and it was already booked for a tax preparation class.

Plan B was the South Hill Library on Perry. However, Barbara was contacted by the Shadle Library, which encouraged us to go there. The Shadle Library is the new hub for cultural events, and a staff member is responsible for attracting and organizing such events. The week before we went to visit, they held a Chinese New Year festival with over 500 people!

We went to the South Hill and Shadle libraries and concluded that Shadle was much more suitable. The remodeled library is most impressive, with very high ceilings and a large and airy room for our event. Those involved in the flag ceremony will remember the lower ceilings in the old library and will appreciate the added headroom!

Holding the event at Shadle has the advantage of the library advertising cultural events, boosting attendance.

The Society always holds NTD on a Saturday, and this year, April 6th, the date of the Declaration of Arbroath and the official National Tartan Day falls on a Saturday.

The event, which starts at 11:00 am and runs until 4:00, offers a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in Scottish culture and history. With a full program of exhibitions, pipe band and dance performances, and insightful talks, you'll gain a deeper understanding of Scotland's rich heritage. A schedule of events is appended at the end of this issue of the Thistle.

The event is free and open to all who are interested. Light refreshments will be available. We hope you will be able to attend. If you can't, remember to don some tartan to honor the day.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, April 14th, at O'Doherty's downtown, 525 W Spokane Fall Blvd. A social hour will begin at 4:00 pm, followed by the business section of the meeting at 5:00 pm.

The draft agenda is appended to this issue of the Thistle.

All members are encouraged to attend, hear about the running of the Society, and meet other members.

If you cannot attend, you may mail a proxy to the Society at PO Box 11312, Spokane Valley 99211, or by email: [spokanescots@gmail.com](mailto:spokanescots@gmail.com). Proxies may be general, in which the proxy holder may vote on any motion, or specific, relating to one or more particular motions. The proxy may authorize a particular person to exercise the vote or may be directed to the Secretary to exercise the vote. Proxies may also be given to persons who are attending the meeting. Mailed or in-person proxies must be signed by the person giving the proxy.

There are two positions up for election: President and Secretary. The Society has four officers, two of whom are elected each year for two-year terms. Barbara Bley, Vice President, and Peter Guthrie, treasurer, are in the middle of their two-year terms.

Nominations are invited for either of these two positions. They may be made in advance or at the meeting. Nominees must be members of the Society and must agree to the nomination. We strongly encourage new members to step up and volunteer for positions in the Society's administration so that it may remain strong in the future.

We have received one nomination: Kenyon Fields has agreed to be nominated for the office of President. He is ending his first two-year term as President, so he needs no introduction.

Nominations are invited for the position of Secretary.

The Society is run by a Council consisting of four officers: the Thistle Epistle Editor, the Webmaster, one representative from each of the Society's affiliates, and any members-at-large appointed by the Officers. Being a member-at-large would be a good introduction to the workings of the Society without having the responsibilities of becoming an officer.

We hope to see you there!

## **Highland Games**

The Spokane Highland Games are on August 3rd, 2024, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center on N. Havana St.

Planning for the Games is well in progress. The Games Committee meets each month at 6:30 pm on the 3rd Wednesday at the Valley Library on Herald and Sprague.

The Games will follow the same pattern as the past two years, with gates open to the public at 9:00 am, Opening Ceremonies at noon, and Closing Ceremonies around 5:00 pm.

There will be a full slate of events and attractions:

- Piping and drumming
- Heavy athletics
- Highland dance
- Country dance
- Shortbread competition
- Burns poetry
- Celtic storytelling
- Highland cattle exhibit
- Shepherding
- Clydesdale horse exhibit
- Blacksmithing demonstrations
- Tug o'war
- British car exhibit
- Clan tents
- Scottish goods vendors
- Celtic music throughout the day

Bring your whole family to the Spokane Highland Games! We have something for everyone, and admission prices are family-friendly too. It's \$10 for adults, \$8 for ages 12-17, \$5 for ages 6-10, and free for children under six. Plus, parking is free. Don't miss this opportunity to create lasting memories with your loved ones.

The Spokane Highland Games Association is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization that runs the games. Their website is [www.spokanehighlandgames.net](http://www.spokanehighlandgames.net).

We can't wait to see you at the Spokane Highland Games! We also encourage you to share this exciting event with your friends and acquaintances. Let's make this year's Games the best one yet by spreading the word far and wide.

### **Expo 74 Anniversary Celebrations**

The City of Spokane is putting on a nine-week celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Expo 74, starting on May 4th with a procession at 6:00 pm followed by a concert. The Society expects to be represented in the parade.

During the nine weeks, various groups will perform on Saturdays, alternating between Riverfront Park and Manito Park. The St. Andrews Society will stage a one-hour performance at the Manito location on June 8th at 11:00 am. This performance will showcase the Angus Scott Pipe Band, the Lake City Highland Dancers, and the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers. The stage will be on the lawn between the Duncan Garden and Tekoa Street.

### **Angus Scott Pipe Band**

After celebrating another active St. Patrick's Day, the Angus Scott Pipe Band continues to make music within the community.

The Angus Scott Pipe Band (ASPB) was formed in 1955 by a small but dedicated group and is one of the oldest continuing Scottish bagpipe bands in the Spokane & Coeur d'Alene area. The band was named in memory of Pipe Major Angus Scott of Kimberly B.C. His enthusiasm and support for the project had much influence on the Scottish community in the Inland Empire. The Angus Scott Pipe Band continues to follow its primary mission of promoting public awareness of Scottish heritage and traditions through instruction and performance of highland bagpiping and drumming.

Today, the ASPB has 21 musicians who continue to honor the band's primary objectives of promoting quality playing and performing as an educational venture for the public, providing free concerts to educational and charitable organizations, and non-discriminatory basis, to teach, promote, and foster the proper techniques needed to perform on the Scottish bagpipe, bass drum, tenor drum, and snare drum. Under the musical direction of Pipe Major Aaron Stratton and Drum Sergeant Tom Hamming, the group meets for weekly practice, learning new songs and honoring traditional Scottish bagpipe and drumming musical scores.

The ASPB is active year-round, performing throughout the community. Events you can see the band perform at include:

- Spokane's St. Patrick's Day Parade and local business performances
- St. Andrews Society's Robert Burns Night
- National Tartan Day – April 6, 2024

- Expo 74 - 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration – June 8, 2024
- Memorial Day Remembrances at Fairmont Memorial Park and Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake
- Graduation ceremonies for St. George's School, Gonzaga, and Whitworth Universities
- Spokane Fall Folk Festival
- Spokane Highland Games – August 3, 2024

The band continues to grow and is always looking for new members. If you are interested in learning Scottish bagpiping and drumming, please contact us at [asbpipesanddrums@gmail.com](mailto:asbpipesanddrums@gmail.com) or check our website at [aspband.com](http://aspband.com).

## **Highland Dance**

The Inland Northwest Highland Dance Association (INHDA), which was established last year as a 501 (c)3 non-profit, currently has two studios under the association - Lake City Highland Dance (LCHD) and Missoula Highland Dancers. These are the only studios that teach Highland dancing in Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Until this year, Cassandra Humphreys taught Highland dancing in the Tri-Cities but has moved across the country. Several dancers in our area are training to get their teaching certification, though it may be a few years before we see the rise of new studios.

Missoula Highland Dancers currently has 20 dancers, plus a few wee dancers who just joined. There are 30 dancers under LCHD: six Premier dancers, one Intermediate, two Novices, seven Beginners, and the rest recreational. Three Premier dancers are currently training for the Regional Championships in May, and everyone is working hard for the annual dance testing in early April. LCHD will hold free workshops for the community through April, May, and June to encourage new dancers. LCHD has classes for new dancers ages 5+ in both Coeur d'Alene and Spokane Valley. To register for classes and free workshops, please visit the LCHD website at [www.lakecityhighlanddance.com](http://www.lakecityhighlanddance.com).

LCHD recently finished a busy St. Patrick's weekend with performances at Holman Gardens Assisted Living, DanceFest 2024, Coeur d'Irish, North Star Senior Living, and Paddy's Sports Bar and Grill. The studio's next big performance will be its year-end show, the Spring Showcase, on May 19th at Ridgeline High School at 3:30 pm. The showcase will include a fundraiser raffle to raise funds for the INHDA and the Bitterroot and Spokane Highland Games. Visit the LCHD website for more details.

The closest Highland Games in the area to host a dance competition is the Spokane Highland Games, but if you travel a bit further, there are plenty more. Coming up in June, the Prosser Highland Games and Tacoma Highland Games are expected to hold dance competitions, along with the Skagit Valley Highland Games in July. Spokane's Games will take place on the first weekend of August, and the Bitterroot Celtic Games

& Gathering will also take place in August. Bitterroot has not had a dance competition for several years, and the INHDA will hold it as the first competition under the association.

Dozens of competitions, specifically the National Championships, will be held in the USA this summer. Any dancer who places in the top three overall at their Regional Championships will head to Boston, MA, in July for a full weekend of competing. Only Premier dancers may compete in the Regional Championships, and representing your Region at Nationals is a distinguished honor.

Victoria Hawkins.

### **Scottish Country Dancing - A Message from Anna Guthrie**

It's official! Scottish country dancing is good for you. We all knew that, but in case there is any doubt, well-regarded research confirms it. The Universities of Cumbria and Strathclyde published a report touting the health benefits of Scottish country dancing.

According to their research, during a typical dance session, you can burn between 390-425 calories, about the same as you would burn playing badminton or golfing while carrying your bag. It can help prevent diseases like diabetes, heart disease and arthritis. It can help prevent degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's (all that memorizing of steps and formations!). It can help build bone density, core strength, and agility while reducing stress and improving your mood. It can even help slow the aging process!

While all this might be true for many forms of exercise, none is as much fun as dancing to great Scottish tunes with a friendly group. The Spokane Scottish Country dancers love having new members join the group. We dance on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, in the church hall on the south side of the building. The address is 1703 N Washington Street. If you have not danced with us before, it's best to check with one of the people below; sometimes, church events or inclement weather will cause a cancellation.

Anna Guthrie: (509) 924-1284

Katie Roth: (509) 389-6429



## **Scottish politics**

The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) is running into difficulties, with many in Scotland questioning its record of government over the past 16 years in power. The Labor Party, led by Anas Sarwar, is now slightly ahead in the polls, with a general election coming up in 2024. The popularity ratings of First Minister Humza Yousaf have dropped precipitously, and the SNP risks losing control of the government. The situation is not helped in that Kate Forbes, who lost to Humza Yousaf in the leadership race last year, has been gaining in popularity.

As far as the drive for independence is concerned, pro-independence supporters are frustrated that little has been done. A second referendum was mooted, but Labor and Conservatives in the UK Government refuse to allow it. Unless the SNP wins in the coming election, it is unlikely that a referendum will be held in the near term. However, although independence may not be imminent, long-term trends suggest it is becoming more likely sometime in the future. Over two-thirds of younger voters support independence - though people have been known to change their minds as they grow older. Currently, 63% of Scottish voters regard the UK Government as incompetent. However, at present, independence is not at the top of voters' minds. A recent poll showed that two issues - the economy and the National Health Service - were major concerns, with 67% and 60% citing them, compared with 21% for Scottish independence.

## **In Memoriam**

### Cliff Baxter

The Society is sorry to learn of Cliff Baxter's passing.

Cliff was a stalwart for the Highland Games for many years, volunteering in many positions. He helped with set-up and take-down, sold tickets at the gate, acquired tents and a trailer, stored the game's assets, and was always there when needed.

Cliff was proud of his service in the US Navy, from which he retired after ten years as a Petty Officer 3 after being an aide to three admirals. He liked to tell the story of his involvement with the nuclear submarine USS Scorpion. In 1968, the submarine sailed through the Mediterranean to Gibraltar, then continued into the Atlantic, where it disappeared. No one knows if this was an accident, a result of USSR action, or other causes. Cliff was on it for the first part of the voyage - but luckily disembarked at Gibraltar! The story of the submarine is told in the book "Scorpion Down."

Cliff worked for Premera Blue Cross from 1990 until he retired in 2010.

Cliff was also active in other organizations, teaching at the sailing school at Camp Lutherhaven on Lake Coeur d'Alene and belonging to the Inland Empire S Gauge Association of the Pacific Northwest model railway club.

He is survived by his wife, Carman Colwell, and daughter Deboree.

A memorial service will be held on one of the last two Saturdays in April at All Saints Church in Browne's Addition. An email will be sent out when the exact date and time are ascertained.

### Patrick Timmins

The loss of Patrick Timmins, a cherished member of our Society for many years, deeply saddens us. His commitment and loyalty to our community will always be remembered and respected.

## **Appendix I - National Tartan Day schedule**

Shadle Park Library

- 11:00 - Opening ceremonies by SAMS Color Guard and Piper
- 11:10 - Welcome and Reading of City of Spokane Proclamation (Barbara Bley)
- 11:20 - Reading of Declaration of Arbroath (Peter Guthrie and Jason Gordon)
- 11:40 - Talk on Tartans (Charles Bond)
- Noon - Weaving a Tartan (Vickie Leuba - Spokane Weavers Guild)
- 12:15 - Angus Scott Pipe Band
- 12:45 - Talk on Pipes & Drums (Alan Wilkes - President ASPB)
- 1:00 - 30 min. Refreshment and Exhibit Break
- 1:30 - Poetry Readings (Jason Gordon and Agnus Freeland)
- 1:50 - Scottish Storytelling (Constance Holland - Spokane Storytelling Society)
- 2:10 - Spokane Scottish Country Dancers
- 2:25 - Highland Games Video (Wendi Johnson)
- 2:30 - Scottish American Military Society (Mark Loe)
- 2:35 - St. Andrews Society Video (Barbara Bley)
- 2:45 - 20 min. Break 3:05 - Scottish Weaponry (Howard Hanson)
- 3:20 - Scotland and the Vikings (Peter Guthrie)
- 3:40 - Solhjalmr Vikings (Shaun Chaffee)
- 4:05 - Closing Ceremony (SAMS and ASPB Piper, Kenyon Fields)

## **Appendix II**

Draft agenda: Annual General Meeting April 14th, 2024

There will be a social hour from 4:00 pm, followed by the business meeting at 5:00 pm.

### Agenda

1. Call to order

2. Establishment of quorum
3. Approval of minutes of the last AGM, held on April 16th, 2023
4. Treasurer's report  
Financials for the year 2023-4  
Budget for the year 2024-5
5. Membership report
6. President's Review  
Review of the past year  
Plans for the upcoming year
7. Election of officers  
Two positions are up for election:
  - President
  - Secretary

A nomination has been received for the President of Kenyon Fields. Kenyon has reached the end of his first term and has agreed to stand for a second term. We are seeking nominations for the position of Secretary.

Any member may nominate for these positions, provided the nominee is a member of the Society and willing to be nominated. Such nominations may be made in advance by email to the Secretary at inlandnwscots@gmail.com or at the meeting.

The other two officers are at the end of the first year of their two-year terms: Barbara Bley is Vice President, and Peter Guthrie is Treasurer.

8. Affiliate reports
  - Highland Games
  - Angus Scott
  - Lake City Highland Dance
  - Spokane Scottish Country Dancers
  - SAMS
9. Topics from the membership  
Any member may bring up questions, concerns, or suggestions.
10. Adjournment

## Appendix III

### Letter from the First Minister of Scotland

The Society received this letter from Scotland's First Minister, relating to Burns Night and Scots throughout the world:

*"I wish you a very Happy Burns Night.*

*Few writers or composers are as widely celebrated as Scotland's National Bard Robert Burns. Each year, people gather to celebrate Burns and his works on 25th January - what would have been his birthday - in a tradition that is now marked the world over.*

*Our country has a rich history of creative minds, and Robert Burns was one of Scotland's first creative pioneers. He had a unique ability to put himself in the shoes of others, giving his words an enduring appeal that continues to this day.*

*This celebration of Burns speaks to Scotland's wider spirit. Burns Night is a time to savour Scottish customs - haggis, neeps and tatties, a warming dram of whisky or a sip of Irn Bru. It's also an opportunity to celebrate our unique culture and creativity and to embrace our Scottish connections.*

*It's thanks to you - our fellow Scots and friends and family of Scotland - that Robert Burns continues to be celebrated so widely around the world. Coming together to attend Burns Suppers, poetry readings, or ceilidhs where you embrace Scotland's culture is what keeps our traditions alive and thriving. Events like these are invaluable - both for bringing together our communities and for reaffirming Scotland's reputation around the world as a welcoming and creative nation. I extend a heartfelt 'thank you' not just to our attendees, but to the event organisers, whose efforts to bring us together are often unsung, but hugely valued. I am grateful that so many of you choose to celebrate with us.*

*If your Burns Night celebration has inspired you to travel to Scotland - we would love to see you. Whether it's to visit family, enjoy our breathtaking scenery,*

*or sample our world- renowned food, drink and festivals – you are very welcome. Scotland is also open for business, investment and for those that want to study at our world-class universities.*

*As Burns himself said, “It’s comin yet for a ’that, That Man to Man the world o’er, Shall brithers be for a ’that.” Thank you again for being part of our community ‘the world o’er ’and for your support of Scotland’s culture.*

*Happy Burns Night,*

*Humza Yousaf”*