



Website: [inlandnwscots.org](http://inlandnwscots.org)  
Email: [spokanescots@gmail.com](mailto:spokanescots@gmail.com)  
PO Box 11312 Spokane WA 99211

# Thistle Epistle

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## Help!!

The Society needs some of its members to step up and volunteer for leadership positions.

Our Vice-President, Barbara Bley, is leaving us in the fall to be closer to family. As V-P she organizes the Burns Night Dinner-Dance; she has also been the organizer of the National Tartan Day event in April, and has manned the genealogy tent at the Games where she helps people find their clan and tartan. She will be sorely missed, and we thank her for her outstanding contribution over the years. Barbara has offered to show the new V-P the ropes before she leaves in September.

We are also looking for a webmaster. Clint Hill has done an outstanding job in the position, but is snowed under with other commitments and needs a break. Clint said the webmaster needed a good familiarity with computers and setting up websites.. There are also good opportunities for creativity in how the website looks. Clint has offered to mentor the new webmaster.

Please consider if you are able and willing to take on any of these jobs, or know someone who can do so. Bear in mind that there is a wealth of experienced people in the Society, who will be happy to guide new members - you will not be alone. As Barbara's eloquent article later in this edition of the Thistle emphasizes, societies like ours need volunteers, or they will cease to exist. We believe that a society dedicated to the furthering of Scottish culture and sponsoring of events such as the Games

and the Burns Night are well worth the effort, and contribute greatly to the cultural life of our community. It would be a shame to lose it.

### **Annual General Meeting**



The Society's held its Annual General Meeting on April 14th, at O'Doherty's downtown.

Kenyon Fields was elected for a second two-year term as President. Anna Guthrie was elected as Secretary for a two-year term; she was appointed to that position earlier this year when the previous Secretary resigned due to health reasons, so this will be her first term as an elected official. Barbara Bley and Peter Guthrie both enter the second year of their two-year term, as Vice-President and Treasurer respectively.

Twenty members attended the meeting, and there was one proxy submitted.

Kenyon Fields reviewed the events of the previous year. The events of the Society and its affiliates were all successful, particularly the Highland Games which had record attendance, the Tannahill Weavers concert, and the Burns Night dinner and dance in January, which was sold out.

Peter Guthrie reported that the Society was in good financial shape. He submitted a budget for the coming year which forecast cost increases in several areas, and overall a break-even position.

### **National Tartan Day**



The Society's National Tartan Day celebration on April 6th was a great success this year.

It was held at Shadle Library, which has been totally remodeled over the past several years and the difference between its previous form and what is there now is like night and day - literally. It is much larger, lighter and airier than it was previously, particularly the room in which our event was held. The presentation of the Colors used to cause problems in the room we used prior to the remodel, because the ceiling was lower than the flagpoles; there was no such problem in this new room. We were originally looking at the Spokane Valley library, which is also new, but the room we would need had a prior booking. The Library system offered us Shadle, which now is the main venue for cultural events so fits our needs perfectly: it has excellent facilities, and also is able to advertise events throughout the whole system.

The program provided a well-varied representation of aspects of Scottish culture to a good-sized and appreciative audience. There was the traditional piping and drumming, highland dancing and country dancing. Barbara Bley read the proclamation by the City of National Tartan Day, after which Peter Guthrie gave an outline of the history and significance of the Declaration of Arbroath, Scotland's manifesto of independence from England, which was signed on April 6th, 1320, and Jason Gordon read quotes from the document. Jason also read some of Robbie Burns poems. Charlie Bond gave an enlightening talk on tartans, and the Spokane Weavers Guild were there to show how it is done. Howard Hansen explained the finer points of Scottish weaponry, using his collection of original

pieces to illustrate the talk. We were happy to welcome a group of Vikings from Coeur d'Alene who came to talk about and display aspects of the Viking way of life; Peter Guthrie gave a talk on the influence of the Vikings, and in particular the Norwegians, on Scotland: they ruled over parts of Scotland for over 600 years. SAMS did the presentation of the Colors. So, a very successful event.

### **Expo '74 Anniversary Celebration**



The Society was contacted by the City of Spokane to participate in the City's 50th Year celebration of Expo '74. Since our groups were represented in the original Expo in 1974, we were happy to do so, since the Angus Scott Pipe Band played there, the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers were founded during Expo '74, and there was a Scottish week in May of 1974.

Our one-hour performance followed the same pattern as the one at Folk Fest, with tunes from Angus Scott, highland dances performed by Lake City Highland Dancers accompanied by solo piper, and country dances by the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers.

The City is holding events each weekend during the summer, with different groups performing during the day. Most of these are being held at Riverfront Park; however, our performance, on June 8th, was at Manito Gardens since the Pride event was occupying the downtown venue. The Expo '74 stage shared the grass lawn with Art in the Park, which is also held on June 8th, to the benefit of both of the events due to the shared attendance.

Our one hour performance went very well, and was well-received. However, there did not seem to be much in the way of advertising for any of the Expo '74 Anniversary celebration events, which may possibly have reduced the numbers of those who came to see it.

### **Highland Games**



The Spokane Highland Games Association is in the final stages of organizing the Games this year.

The Games will be held at the usual venue, the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center on Havana, on Saturday, August 3rd. Games open to the public at 9:00 am. Opening ceremonies with the massed bands will be at noon, and closing ceremonies at 5:00 pm.

There will be the usual wide variety of things to do and see: piping and drumming, heavy athletics, highland dance competition, country dance exhibition, sheep-herding, highland cows and Clydesdale horses, kids' games, Scottish vendors, clan tents, the tug o' war, and Celtic music. This year we are excited to report that the San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers is coming to our games, bringing over twenty players.

We are also happy to say that admission prices will remain the same as last year, despite the increase in costs we are experiencing, with adults at \$10, youth 11-17 at \$8, ages 5-10 \$5, and under 5 free. Look forward to seeing you there!

## Highland Games exhibition of photos of Scotland



Recently we sent out an email requesting members to send in pictures taken in Scotland, to refresh the photo exhibit at the Highland Games. We have already received some photos, so the exhibit will feature some different areas of Scotland from those shown previously. Thanks to those who have sent them in, and keep 'em coming!

As noted in the email, you can send jpegs to this email address, and we can print them out.

## Bitterroot Celtic Games and Gathering



The 15th Annual Gathering will be held at the Daly mansion in Hamilton, Montana, on August 17-18th. Should you wish to go, information can be found on their website [bcgg.org](http://bcgg.org). They always put on a good show!

## Picnic



The Society's annual picnic will be on Saturday, August 24, starting at 4:00 pm. The same venue as the past few years: Doug and Janet Malcolm's property at 13411 S Sherman Rd. The normal route to get there:

- Take 195 south from Spokane, turn right on Cheney-Spokane Road, stay on Cheney-Spokane for a few miles, then turn left on Sherman and continue until you get there. The numbers of the properties are marked on most of the post boxes by the side of the road. Two useful indicators are that Doug and Janet's house is just a few hundred yards beyond Washington Street which turns off to the right; and Doug usually puts out the saltire flag by the roadside. It is an easy drive, maybe 20 minutes from downtown.

However, it is possible that Cheney-Spokane Road will still be closed, in which case:

- Take 195 south from Spokane, go past the Cheney-Spokane Road turn, then turn right from the 195 onto White. At the T-junction turn left on Cedar. Then turn right on Taylor, and left onto Sherman, and continue until you get to Doug and Janet's house on the left. The turn from 195 to White is quite abrupt: if you miss it, continue on 195 to Paradise Road, turn right on Paradise, then right on Sherman and continue until you reach their house on the right. Again, look for the saltire.

As always, we hope that our newer members will join us there. The event is free, and there is plenty of food and drink. The Society provides the meats, and members bring potluck sides and desserts. Hope to see you there!

## Fall Folk Festival



The Scottish groups - Angus Scott Pipe Band, Lake City Highland Dancers, and the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers - will be performing again at the Spokane Fall Folk Festival, at the Spokane Community College campus at Mission and Green. Folk Fest is on the weekend of November 9-10. The Scottish groups expect to be performing on the 9th.

## **The importance of volunteerism**

This country is built on volunteerism! Almost every organization, group or club operates with unpaid volunteers, who serve for the love of the organization, and the knowledge of its importance to those it serves. St Andrews Society of the Inland Northwest is no different.

Unlike the Angus Scott Pipe Band and Scottish Highland and Country Dancers who organize to perform, the St Andrews Society is organized to support large events such as the Highland Games, the Robert Burns dinner/dance and the National Tartan Day observance. Its officers and Council take on positions of leadership and responsibility not for recompense or glory, but because we love this culture, this common history, this Scotland. We want to share with our fellow Americans the Scottish culture of music and dance, athletics, food and drinks, clothing, innovations, and yes, even battles that have been so influential in shaping America.

But...as we all get on in age, those who are currently taking on the tasks of leadership and responsibility are becoming fewer. Many in these positions have served for a long time. WE NEED NEW BLOOD! We are calling on the wider membership to step up and volunteer, or this organization and the activities it supports will cease to exist!! Many of the older members have already served their time, and we thank them most graciously. The immediate needs of the Society are for a Vice-President, whose job is to organize the Robert Burns dinner; someone to organize and host the National Tartan Day event in April; and someone to take over the Webmaster position for the Society. Until now, the first two of these positions have been filled by myself. However, I have made the hard decision to move to the west side of the State to be with family. I am really hoping someone will come forward in time for me to fill them in on these two positions.

I will really miss you all, and am very thankful to those who have helped me!

Respectfully,  
Barbara Bley  
Vice-President

## **Highland Dance**



May and June have been busy and exciting months for dancers of Lake City Highland Dance.

The studio's year end performance was held on May 19th, at which twenty-five dancers ages five through adult showcased traditional Highland Dancing and special themed choreographies. At the performance, LCHD raised over eight-hundred dollars for the Inland Northwest Highland Dance Association, which has been helping grow the dance community in the Inland Northwest through scholarships, workshops, and more.

In June, LCHD performed at the Expo '74 50th Anniversary Celebration at Manito Park and held their annual summer dance camp. Also in June, 16 LCHD dancers competed at the Prosser Highland Games, coming home very successful with many medals and numerous trophies. Unfortunately, the dance competition planned at the Bitterroot Celtic Games and Gathering has been cancelled, but everyone is training hard for the Spokane Highland Games in early August.

*Victoria Hawkins*

## **Angus Scott Pipe Band**



The Angus Scott Pipes and Drums (ASPB) utilizes a structure of leadership commonly utilized by bands and musical groups, with some unique differences. Through an Executive Board of Directors, Drum Major, Pipe Major, & Drum Sergeant, the ASPB maintains both an administrative and musical core of leaders that continue to lead the band since it was formed in 1955.

With most wind and symphonic musical ensembles, there is a hierarchy of leadership both for musicianship and daily operations. Musical arrangements are led by a conductor who directs the entire group, and each musical instrument grouping is led by either the first chair or other position commonly referred to as the “principal.” The principal or first chair is customarily a position that is auditioned for and requires an excellence in musicianship far superior to other players. Pipes and drums have a leadership structure which, although similar, varies to a certain degree.

With Pipes & Drums, there are leadership positions, both administrative and musical. ASPB maintains an active executive board of directors with an operational component comprising a President, business agent, secretary, quartermaster, and treasurer, who handle the day-to-day operational needs of the band; and a musical component which handles 100% of the musical side of the pipes and drums. Leading and guiding the musical component of the pipes and drums, ASPB has three leadership positions, a Drum Major (DM) Pipe Major (PM) and Drum Sergeant (DS).

Depending on the type of performance - the most common being a parade - you may see a Drum Major (DM) leading the band. The drum major serves as the figurehead for the band and is positioned in front, leading the band. Duties of a drum major are forming, moving, starting, and stopping all band movement. The drum major is easy to recognize through their ornate dress and long vertical mace from which they signal the band through calculated movements.

Leading the bagpipers is a Pipe Major. (PM) This position is usually appointed and can be voted on as well. The pipe major is the most proficient musician in the bagpiper section of the band and responsible for picking musical selections, tuning, and instructing, calling off/starting the songs/tunes, and signaling the end of the song/tune. Some bands, like ASPB, also have a Pipe Sergeant that assists the PM in tuning the band and assumes the role of the PM in their absence.

Finally, the drum section is led by the Drum Sergeant (DS). Side (snare) drums, tenor drums, and bass drums make up the rhythm section in a band, and the drum sergeant is responsible for all three. They work with each musician on musical selections, selecting and teaching new drum music, and ensure each member's instrument is tuned and properly maintained.

Band leadership is important for a pipes and drums. Both administrative and musical positions are important for the day-to-day functionality, as well as for performances. ASPB executive board members are selected through voting by fellow band members and serve in their positions for two years.

If you are interested in becoming a musician with the Angus Scott Pipe Band or would like to hire the band for your event, we can be reached at [www.aspband.com](http://www.aspband.com) or via email at [aspbpipesanddrums@gmail.com](mailto:aspbpipesanddrums@gmail.com).

*Alan Wilkes, President*

### **Spokane Scottish Country Dancers**



A group of six dancers formed part of the Scottish Celebration of Expo '74, on the community stage in Manito Park on June 8. The first dance was one I devised especially for the occasion, "Expo on the Spokane River," so I was pleased that it was well received. We are now practicing for our next performance, which will be at the Highland Games on 3rd August.

Our group is bringing itself into the 21st century, musically speaking. Dancer Caleb McDougall is digitizing our music library of CDs and we now need to buy a tablet and bluetooth speaker so we can play our new MP3 files. No more embarrassing moments when the our ancient CD player refuses to play the chosen track. It has served us well over the years, though.

Another exciting development is that that Kelly Milne, one of our experienced dancers, plans to pursue a Core Training for Instructors certificate from the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society (RSCDS), so in due course she will take over some of the teaching of our group. She is a lot younger than I am, which bodes well for the future of our group.

As always, we would love members of the St Andrews Society to come and join us on Thursday nights, and bring a friend or two. We meet at 6:30 p.m. for a couple of hours in the church hall of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church on Washington, just south of Indiana. Occasionally the church has events going on in the hall, so check the St Andrews website calendar; I generally remember to pass along updates to our webmaster. Should you feel a bit intimidated by the idea of just showing up, come to our Beginners Night on 17 October, when we will go through the basic steps and do some fun dances that are perfect for beginning dancers.

*Anna Guthrie*

## Golden Spurtle Porridge Contest

Are you proud of your perfectly-prepared porridge? If so, I have the perfect contest for you: the Golden Spurtle World Porridge-Making Championship in the village of Carrbridge in the Highlands of Scotland. The contest will be held on 5 October; this year is their 30th anniversary. Applications come from all over the world; the 2016 winner was Bob Moore of Bob's Red Mill fame, and the 2017 winner was Swedish, so being born and bred in Scotland is obviously not necessarily an advantage. The prize is the coveted Golden Spurtle along with UKL500 (approximately USD \$625).



What is a spurtle, you might be wondering. It is a traditional Scottish tool for stirring porridge (and other things cooked in pots), about 10-12 inches long. It seems to have originated in the Scottish Highlands in the 15th century. Apparently the advantage of a spurtle over a spoon is that with a spoon lumps can form in the hollowed-out part, but with the tapered shape of the spurtle, lumps are less likely..

Additionally, if you have found an interesting way of featuring porridge in a tasty and original recipe, there is a competition for that too, the Specialty Recipe Competition. The winning recipe for 2022 was for Porridge Noodles, served with Seared Scallops and Chinese Sauce or Honey Glazed Figs. (The latter sounds fun - it involves setting whisky on fire!) The prize for this competition is the Duncan Hilditch Memorial Quaich and UKL350.

If you'd rather just watch the contestants stirring up their porridge creations, you can be part of the audience and get to taste the offerings along with various local whiskies.

If you are a golfer, you could take part in the World Porridge Golf Open on 6 October at the Carrbridge Golf Club. Quoting from the organizers' description: "The course is not as easy as it may seem, but an exciting challenge and a test of golfing nerves, all set in stunning Highland countryside."

Entry for this year's competition closed on 20 June, 2024, but you can find out more about the competition at [goldenspurtle.com](http://goldenspurtle.com), and maybe make plans for next year.

*Anna Guthrie*

## Culloden



Since I visited the Culloden battlefield just last month, it seemed a good idea to include an article about it in the Thistle.

The actual field of battle is not that exciting: a stretch of moorland about five miles east of Inverness. In 1746 it undoubtedly looked a lot rougher than it does now, though the National Trust for Scotland, who are the custodians of the site, are working on having it revert to how it would have looked over a quarter of a millennium ago. They are doing a good job, though a drop in the level of the water table in modern times makes it a difficult one.

At the battle site is a visitor center, which lays out the story of the Jacobite rebellion and is most enlightening - definitely worth seeing. It is laid out in a kind of long corridor, with what the Jacobites were doing on one side, and what the Government were doing on the other: which is an excellent way of following the timeline of the events leading up to the battle.

The Jacobite rebellion is often perceived as a forlorn hope, with the wild highlander clans pitted against the disciplined English troops. So, how accurate is this assessment; and could the rising have actually succeeded?

First, let's look at the actual battle of Culloden, which was the culmination of the Jacobite rebellion. It took place on 16th April, 1746. The answer to whether the Jacobites could have won the battle itself is a fairly definite no.

The Jacobite army had been in retreat from Derby, which was their deepest penetration into England, since December. They were tired and hungry. Bonnie Prince Charlie was running out of money: just before the battle a supply ship from France with arms and 15,000 pounds was captured by the Government forces. The Prince determined to fight at Culloden, despite the misgivings of his commanders, mainly because he realized he was running out of time.

His army marched out of Inverness the day before the battle itself. Meanwhile the Duke of Cumberland had brought his army to Nairn, some nine miles away. The Jacobites decided to surprise the enemy by a night march, with an attack at dawn. The weather was atrocious, the terrain difficult, and around two in the morning the night march was called off and the men straggled back. Next morning most were exhausted, and many scattered to forage and try and find food.

Cumberland's army was in excellent shape. On the 16th they left Nairn at 5:00 am and marched to Culloden, arriving at noon and surprising the Jacobites. Battle was joined.

The tactics of the Jacobite army was to charge at full speed towards the enemy, discharge their muskets when they were in close range, then attack with broadsword and shield in a terrifying charge. This was actually a disciplined tactic, not just a wild charge, and had worked at every engagement they had fought and brought decisive victories: at Prestonpans outside Edinburgh, at Falkirk, and at other minor battles. Given the slow rate of fire using muskets they expected to receive only one volley from the enemy before they engaged.

However, the tactic didn't work at Culloden. The Jacobite lines were not parallel to the Government army, but slanted with the left wing further away from Cumberland's troops. The right wing was closer, and was charging over reasonably good ground: even so it was some 600 yards from the enemy. The left wing charged over boggy ground, which slowed them down and caused the whole army to wheel. This allowed the Government troops to concentrate their fire, and also meant that many Jacobites could not fire their muskets because their own troops were between themselves and the enemy. The Jacobite army had too few men - 5,500 against the Government's 7,500 - to properly secure their flanks, which left them open to enfilading fire. The Jacobites did have some cannon, but

they were light artillery, which allowed the army to move quickly but was ineffective in the battle. Cumberland's heavier guns wreaked havoc on the Jacobite army, especially after they switched from round shot to grapeshot. Lastly, Cumberland had spent several weeks in Aberdeen training and drilling his men on how to counter the broadsword attack with their bayonets, and emphasizing the importance of standing firm in the face of the highland charge.

So the Jacobite army really did not stand much of a chance in the final battle of the campaign. The affair was over in an hour, though the harrying of the fleeing Jacobites lasted much longer.

So, how about the overall campaign: could the Jacobites have won?

On the face of it, it looked at first as if the Jacobites were unstoppable. Bonnie Prince Charlie landed at Eriskay on July 23rd, 1745. On September 4th his army took Perth, and then on September 17th they seized Edinburgh. Sir John Cope challenged him with the Government's forces, but were soundly beaten at Prestonpans outside Edinburgh. After six weeks in Edinburgh the Jacobites headed to England, taking Carlisle on 17th November, and arriving at Derby on December 4th - which is as far as their advance into England took them before their retreat back to Scotland.

However, appearances were deceptive. Britain was involved in the War of the Austrian Succession, which lasted from 1740 to 1748. There's no need to go into detail about this war: However, the important point is that it involved the rivalry between Britain and France which went on for the entire 18th century. Most of the British army was overseas in Flanders, where in 1745 it was soundly defeated by the French at Fontenoy. This left few Government troops in Britain, which is why the prince seized this moment to stage his uprising. By April 1746, of course, the Government had had time to bring its army back from Flanders to counter the Jacobite threat.

The Prince's cause did appeal to some of the Scots, and particularly the highlanders : some believed the Stuarts were the rightful kings, and the Hanoverians usurpers; the Act of Union of 1707 between England and Scotland had not been as favorable to many of the Scots as they had hoped; many Scots resented rule from Westminster; and many Catholics and Episcopalians would prefer a Stuart king. However, several highland clans, notably the Campbells, Grants and Munros supported the Government and fought on the side of the Duke of Cumberland.

However, the Prince realized he couldn't win with only the support of the Scots. Admittedly there were many other nationalities in his army, including French, English, and Scots lowlanders, but at Culloden around two-thirds of his army were highlanders. What he needed to win was an invasion of Britain by France, and strong support within England. He believed both would be forthcoming. Neither proved to be true. France thought about invading, but called it off when the retreat from Derby was decided on. Most people in England, and also in the lowlands of Scotland were against him. The Prince was a Catholic, and in favor of bishops. Most Scots were Presbyterians and anti-Episcopalians. The English had passed a Test Act in 1673 which forbade Catholics from holding office, and a law said that the monarch could not be a Catholic. James II had been given the boot: there was no reason why his grandson should be welcomed back. With little support in England and

no French invasion, there was really no chance that the Prince could have got his British throne back.

There was a slight chance he could have had a partial victory by holding Scotland and abrogating the 1707 Act of Union. However, he showed no interest in calling a Scottish Parliament, so many Scots would have feared the return of an autocratic king. When he marched into England, he didn't secure his position in Scotland; Government forces quickly regained control of Edinburgh and the other gains the Jacobites had made in Scotland. It is unlikely that George II and his government would have countenanced the loss of part of their kingdom, given the forces at their disposal.

So the bottom line is: it was a gallant effort, but really doomed to failure in the long run.

After Culloden, there was a major persecution of the Jacobites. Scotland remained a part of the United Kingdom, and in fact many highland chiefs became strong supporters of the Government and raised regiments for the British army. Until 1745, the highlanders were feared by the lowland Scots, and regarded as a wild and alien people. Afterwards, the highlands steadily became romanticized, leading up to Walter Scott and his novels. As Burns wrote "My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer". The decline of the clan system, where allegiance was primarily to the clan and its chief - and which was already starting to change by the time of Culloden - was greatly accelerated. It is probable that the breakdown on the bond between chief and his clansmen was a strong influence on the highland clearances in the early 19th century, when clansmen were displaced to allow more efficient agriculture - forcing them to emigrate, and thereby enrich the countries to which they went - in particular of course the United States.

*Peter Guthrie*

### **Scottish Politics**



Well, another shake-up in Scottish politics. Nicola Sturgeon resigned just over a year ago, which resulted in a leadership competition in the Scottish National Party (SNP) and hence the government. The two front-runners were Humza Yousaf and Kate Forbes. Yousaf won, and became First Minister, but because the SNP did not have a majority in Parliament, he was only able to form a government by allying with the Green party.

The Greens agenda was not popular with the SNP members and the other parties in the Scottish Parliament, including unattainable greenhouse gas goals, forcing people to rip out their gas boilers, and gender self-identification - the latter very unpopular with female voters led by J.K.Rowling, and in any case impossible to effect due to the UK's overriding gender policies. The SNP members resented the outsize influence on government policy wielded by the Greens, who received only 5% of electoral votes.

So, after only just over a year in office, Yousaf ditched the Greens, which proved to be a mistake. He now couldn't achieve a majority in Parliament, and faced a vote of no confidence, so he resigned at the end of April. This led to yet another First Minister coming into power, this time John Swinney.

Swinney has a lot of experience in government. He was a Member of the UK Parliament for four years before the Scottish Parliament was founded in 2001. He was then elected to the Scottish Parliament, in which he has sat ever since. He has served in a number of roles: leader of the SNP opposition before it gained power, and Deputy First Minister under Nicola Sturgeon. However, he is widely regarded as a safe pair of hands, rather than a dynamic leader.

The SNP remains a minority in Parliament, and its popularity is dwindling. Originally the SNP brought in all those who wanted Scottish independence from the UK, which included a wide variety of different - and often disparate - interests. Since then, other parties have arisen who also want independence but don't agree with other policies of the SNP. This in itself has diluted the appeal of the SNP. Other factors which make the situation worse for the party are:

- its record of achievement - or lack thereof - in office. Education and the National Health Service are both deteriorating fast, and the economy is not doing that well, with a sizable proportion of the nation's children living in relative poverty. These are all issues in which the voters are most interested, much more so than independence..
- The ongoing investigation into SNP finances, which has resulted in the arrests of Nicola Sturgeon and her husband, treasurer Colin Beatty, and SNP chief executive Peter Murrell.
- The continuing empty promises of a new referendum on independence, or the claim of a mandate for independence which would be granted by an electoral victory, neither of which were going to happen.

The term of the current Scottish Parliament lasts until 2026. However, many people, and particularly the Labor Party and its supporters, are pushing for an earlier election, since Swinney will be the second First Minister appointed by the SNP party rather than being elected by the voters, and with the current disarray it looks like the next two years will be very much a lame-duck administration: if, indeed, it lasts that long.

So it looks as if Scotland is in for a continuing period of political turbulence, and the short-term prospects for independence from the UK are nil - although the long-term outlook might be more favorable.

