



St Andrews Society of the Inland Northwest

Thistle Epistle

June 2023

AGM

The Society held its Annual General Meeting on April 16th at O'Doherty's. There were 19 in attendance, plus two proxies.

The Treasurer reported that we were in good financial condition. This year's contribution from Burns Night should be enough to cover the other expenses of the Society. We also received some donations, including proceeds from donations made for the books donated by John Wiess, who has contributed over \$300 to the Society over the last two years. Thanks, John!

The Society donated \$200 to the Highland Dance organization, FUSTA, which resumed its competition schedule after Covid.

Our membership is steadily increasing, with 15 new members since October last year. Our email list now has a total of 255, including some couples and singles.

The revised Bylaws were approved. The revisions were mainly related to the change from a dues-paying membership model to having no dues, with the Society financially supported by donations, but more particularly by the Burns Night event.

Two offices were up for election, the Treasurer and Vice-President. Barbara Bley was elected as vice president, having held the office by appointment for most of the past year after the resignation of Stacy Hodges. Peter Guthrie was elected to the Treasurer position, having previously been the Secretary. The Secretary position was elected last year, so since the two-year term still needed to be completed, the President appointed Jacob Bryson to complete the term.

National Tartan Day

The Society celebrated National Tartan Day on April 1st. The official day is April 6th. However, we wanted to celebrate on a Saturday, and the closest Saturday to April 6th was April 8th, which conflicted with Easter.

The event was held at the Spokane County North Spokane Library on Hawthorne Road from 10:00 to 3:00.

Presentations included reading the Declaration of Arbroath performances by the Angus Scott Pipe Band

members, the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers, and the Lake City Highland Dancers. Barbara Bley gave a slide show presentation of her trip to Scotland. There was Scottish story-telling and a talk on Macbeth; most people know of the Shakespeare play, but who was the real Macbeth?

Thanks to Barbara for organizing the event.

As Vice-President, Barbara led our Burns Night celebration and continues to be in charge of National Tartan Day. We welcome volunteers willing to take over the Tartan Day event. As usual with any of the positions in the Society, there are always members who have experience in what needs to be done and are very willing to provide advice and assistance.

Picnic

The Society's annual picnic will be held on Saturday, August 26th, starting at 4:00 p.m. As usual, Doug and Janet Malcolm will host it at their home at 13411 S Sherman.

All members are invited to come. It is a free event, and the Society will provide a few scotches to try. The Society will provide the meat dishes; members are invited to bring a side dish or dessert. If you would like to bring a beverage of your choice, that would be great.

An email giving directions will be sent to members in early August. We hope to see you there!

Angus Scott Pipe Band

Angus Scott Pipe Band members have been busy these past few months. The general public got to see the whole band, along with the Spokane County Pipe Band, playing during the St. Pat's Parade in March, but they also played at several other events that weekend. In April, some members played at our National Tartan Day celebration. Then, things get busy in May: three Gonzaga graduations, two Whitworth graduations, and the St George's School graduation – for which they have played for many years. There were two different Memorial Day performances. On May 27th, they played at the Lake City Highland Dance exhibition in Coeur d'Alene, which is reported elsewhere in this issue, and then in June at the LCHD performance at Family Day in the Coeur d'Alene city park. Individual members have also played at funerals.

The Society would like to thank Angus Scott for helping keep our Scottish heritage front and center in our region through their participation in all these events.

Highland Dance

Lake City Highland Dance, under the leadership of Victoria Hawkins, has been very active these past few months.

On May 27th, they put on “Warriors of Scotland: Spring Showcase” in Coeur d'Alene, where all the members, from the youngest to the most experienced, performed. It was a most impressive exhibition and very enjoyable to watch. It was great to see such a large audience and such support from the

community.



Lake City Highland Dancers have been doing extremely well in competitions in our area:

- They have two new champions! Talie and Bethany Hawkins competed at the Northwest Regional Championships in May and won 1st overall in both categories.
- Kasey and Victoria Hawkins have won regional championships, and their younger sisters Talie and Bethany are excited to be carrying on the Hawkins legacy.
- Dancers from LCHD recently attended the Prosser Highland Games and came home with three trophies and several placings. They also competed at the Tacoma Highland Games, and a few LCHD students will also be competing at the Skagit Valley Highland Games.
- Elizabeth Keck and Talie and Bethany Hawkins have been selected to attend the BATD North American Sadie Simpson Scholarships in October. Qualifying for the scholarships is very difficult, as the qualifying examinations include dancing and verbal theory examinations.
- Head instructor of Lake City Highland Dance, Victoria Hawkins, has been selected to perform at the Okanagan Military Tattoo in Vernon, BC, this July. Qualifying to be a performer at the Tattoo is a tremendous honor, and this will be Victoria's second time attending.

Upcoming highland dance events:

- The USIR National Championships will be held in just over a month in Portland, Oregon. This week-long event will be competitions for dancers of all levels, regional dinners, a finalist's banquet, a Ceilidh, and more.
- Registration for the dance competition at the Spokane Highland Games is now open.
- The BATD Scholarships will occur in Whistler, BC, Canada, this October.

Country Dance

The Spokane Scottish Country Dancers are still dancing on Thursday evenings at the Greek Orthodox church at 1703 N Washington, starting at 6:30. All are welcome, either beginners or experienced dancers, and you don't need a partner. It is a good idea to call before you come to make sure we are dancing since sometimes we can't dance because of holidays and Church activities: 509-924-1284.

Our next performance will be at the Spokane Highland Games on the 5th of August. There will be audience participation, so if you would like to try it, we'd be delighted to see you!

Highland Games

The Spokane Highland Games Association Games Committee is in the final stages of organizing the Games, which are coming up on Saturday, August 5th. The Games will be held as usual at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center at 404 N Havana, Spokane Valley. Gates open to the public at 9:00 a.m., and the Games run until 5:30 p.m.

There will be the usual activities: heavy athletics competition, including the caber toss; Celtic music; vendors with Scottish and Celtic merchandise; clans; children's activities such as shoot the knight, coloring, and face painting; highland cattle; Clydesdale horses; sheepherding; tug of war; exhibition of British cars; and country dance. There will also be a highland dance competition this year. Last year, it was too soon after Covid for the competition to take place, so we are excited to have it back. There will

be plenty of piping and drumming, including the massed bands at the opening ceremonies at noon. It all makes for a full day!

Admission remains at \$10 for adults, \$8 for youths 11-17, \$5 for children 6-10, and free for children five and under. Parking is free!

The Games needs volunteers. Quite a few of our old stalwarts from past games are aging out. We need people to help set up on the Friday before the Games, starting at 8:00 a.m. and takedown on Sunday morning. On Friday, lunch is provided, and there is a BBQ in the evening for volunteers and vendors. We also need help on the day of the Games, for just 3-hour shifts – so volunteers have time to see the Games.

Volunteers do, of course, get in free. If you are willing to help, contact Catherine Hill at 509-868-5161.

One particular activity needs someone to step in and help. At past Games, we have had Children's Games, put on by the Padilla family, where youngsters are introduced to the events of Scottish athletics, such as the caber toss. It has always been a great favorite. Unfortunately, the Padilla family cannot do it this year, so if anyone else would like to take it on, contact us. Our email is SpokaneHighlandGamesAssoc@gmail.com. Many thanks to the Padilla family for their many years hosting this event.

Scottish Politics

Many of you will probably have heard that Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland who resigned unexpectedly in February, was arrested recently. So, what's going on?

In 2019, the Scottish National Party (SNP) was riding high, securing 45% of the Scottish vote in the general election. Membership in the party was up to 126,000, and the independence fighting fund was UKL 667,000. However, in 2020, membership dropped to 104,000, and then blogger Stuart Campbell noted that in 2019, the SNP had only UKL97,000 in cash and total assets of UKL272,000, and he asked: where did the money go? Then, in March 2021, three SNP's finance and audit committee members resigned after being denied sight of the accounts. A few days later, Police Scotland received an anonymous complaint about the finances. In May 2021, the SNP Treasurer, Douglas Chapman, resigned, saying he was not receiving the financial information required to carry out his fiduciary duties. Colin Beattie, who was defeated by Chapman in an internal vote for the position of Treasurer the previous year, was reappointed as Treasurer. In June 2021, SNP Chief Executive Peter Murrell – Nicola Sturgeon's husband – provided a loan of UKL 107,000 to "assist with cashflow". Nicola Sturgeon, Peter Murrell, and Colin Beattie were the only check signatories for the SNP. In September 2022, the SNP's external audit firm resigned as auditors.

In February 2023, Sturgeon resigned as First Minister. In March, some members asked how many members the SNP had, but the party refused to tell them. It came out that the membership had dropped to 72,000, and Peter Murrell resigned as SNP Chief Executive Officer after admitting responsibility for misleading the media about the membership numbers.

In June of this year, police arrested Sturgeon, Murrell, and Beattie for questioning, though they were later released. Sturgeon predictably said that she had done nothing wrong.

So that's where we stand right now.

The woes of the SNP are partially linked to the emergence of alternative pro-independence parties. For several years, the SNP has been the leading advocate of Scottish independence from the UK. However, in July 2020, the Action for Independence party was founded. Then, in February 2021, Alba was founded. Alba is also pro-independence and was led by Alex Salmond, Scotland's First Minister, until 2014, when Nicola Sturgeon was elected. Salmond and Sturgeon don't always see eye to eye.

In 2021, the Action for Independence party stood down in favor of Alba. 40% of SNP voters said they would support an alternative independence party led by Salmond; however, in the 2021 elections, the SNP won just one short of an outright majority in the Scottish Parliament, and Alba had only 1.7% of the vote. In 2022, there were local council elections throughout Scotland: Alba put up candidates for all of them but did not win a single seat.

A hodge-podge of interests supports Alba. Its platform is independence, an elected head of state to replace the monarchy, and Scotland to join EFTA, the European Free Trade Association. EFTA is an intergovernmental organization with Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland as members, so it is distinct from the EU to which most European countries belong. Since in the Brexit vote, Scotland voted in favor of staying in the EU, many who favor independence are looking for Scotland to join the EU.

Scotland's First Minister is now Humza Yousaf, who, in March, won the leadership contest to replace Nicola Sturgeon. He is pro-independence. So, many leading figures in Scottish politics aim for independence but are having trouble creating a united front due to personal and political differences. Since polling has consistently shown that less than 45% of voters favor independence, there is a disconnect between the leaders and the general population.

Sturgeon was aiming for a referendum in 2023, though the British Parliament – required to sanction this – has refused to allow it. Yousaf has recognized that he needs a solid majority in favor of independence before holding another referendum, so holding one this year would be premature.

The Conservatives are currently in power in the British Parliament, with Labour in the minority. Yousaf has said that there is no way he would join the Conservatives to form a government, but he would be prepared to join Labour. However, he also said that if Labour did not support holding a Scottish independence referendum, he would make life very difficult for them.

From Labour's point of view, agreeing to Yousaf's position is unpalatable because it would mean supporting the breakup of the UK.

Another cause of friction between the UK and Scotland is the Scottish gender reform legislation. This legislation makes it easier for anyone to self-identify their preferred gender, with no medical input required, and the age at which they may do it lowered from 18 to 16. The UK retains stricter standards and believes there should be uniformity throughout the country.

Effect of Brexit on Scotland

In some ways, it is hard to judge the effect of Brexit since it took place right as Covid hit, with its disruption to the supply chain, and then the Ukraine war followed straight after. However, there is evidence that the downturn experienced by the UK was deeper and inflation higher than in other countries that experienced the same global difficulties. A third of Scottish businesses report trouble with increased red tape in dealing with their overseas customers, and half say transportation is more difficult and expensive. Some businesses are finding that securing supplies from countries in the EU, which used to be quite simple, is a lot harder – partly because businesses in EU countries don't want to be bothered with the hassle of exporting to the UK. Many companies are finding it harder to find labor, though that is, of course, a problem not confined to the UK. However, whereas citizens of the EU could easily cross the border to fill jobs, now they can't. Of course, some companies are winners; for example, UK firms can replace goods previously supplied from EU countries. Still, Brexit has hurt Scotland and the UK – though Scotland has fared somewhat better than other parts of Britain, particularly outside London.

Who was the real Macbeth?

Shakespeare's play Macbeth is one of his better-known works. A summary goes as follows: Duncan is a kindly old king whose chief general Macbeth has just put down an insurrection and repelled an invasion. Macbeth and his fellow general Banquo meet three witches on the way back to see the king, and Macbeth is hailed as Thane of Glamis (which he is), Thane of Cawdor (which he isn't), and promised that he will be king. Banquo is told that he will not be king, but his successors will.

When Macbeth gets to the king's court, he finds that the Thane of Cawdor was involved in the insurrection and has been executed, and he, Macbeth, has been given the Thaneship and its lands as a reward for his services. Of the witches' prophecies, only the promise of becoming king remains unfulfilled.

Macbeth talks to his wife, and they plot to kill the king, blame his guard for the deed, and seize the throne.

Macbeth kills the king and becomes king, supplanting the rightful heirs, Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain, who flee to England.

Macbeth now realizes Banquo is a threat because he suspects Macbeth of foul play and because it will be his successors rather than Macbeth's who will become kings. He has assassins murder Banquo, but his son Fleance escapes.

Macbeth's rule is very shaky, with many nobles defecting. MacDuff, Thane of Fife, flees to England to join Malcolm and Donalbain. Macbeth now has his wife and children murdered for no reason other than pure spite.

Macbeth seeks out the witches again; they tell him to beware MacDuff, but he shouldn't worry unless Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and anyway, none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth goes mad from remorse and kills herself.

Malcolm, with his army and accompanied by MacDuff, invades and attacks Macbeth. His army takes branches from Birnam Wood to disguise their advance to Dunsinane – so Birnam Wood has come to Dunsinane.

MacDuff meets Macbeth. When Macbeth tells him none of woman born shall harm Macbeth, MacDuff says that he “was from his mother’s womb untimely ripped” – so he was not born of woman. MacDuff slays Macbeth, and Malcolm becomes king.

So how much is true, and how much did Shakespeare make up?

- There was a king of Scotland named Macbeth. He came to the throne in 1040.
- Duncan was not a kindly, wise old king. He was a rash, young and impetuous king, totally unsuited to the position, and only there because he was put there by his formidable grandfather Malcolm II.
- Macbeth did kill Duncan, but in battle.
- Macbeth did not supplant the rightful heir. Primogeniture, where the eldest son inherits his father’s throne, was not established at this time. There was a royal house from which the king would be chosen, and of which Macbeth was a member, and the most suitable member would be made king. Macbeth was the strongest person, and Malcolm was only 11, so would not have been made king.
- There is no record of Banquo or his being the progenitor of a line of Scottish kings.
- Macbeth’s reign was not short and shaky. He reigned until 1057 and was on the throne for 17 years. In 1051, he visited Rome – hardly the thing someone worried about his tenure of the throne would do.
- Malcolm does eventually kill Macbeth in battle and becomes king: he was Malcolm III, nicknamed Canmore, who reigned from 1057 to 1093 and was one of Scotland’s more successful kings. It is said of him that his warriors originated the sword dance in highland dancing: that style of dancing showed off the dancer’s strength and agility.

So why did Shakespeare choose this subject for a play?

It just happens that the throne of England when the play was written, probably in 1606, was occupied by an old Scottish king – James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England in 1603.

In November 1605, there was the infamous gunpowder plot, where Guy Fawkes and a group of Catholic conspirators tried to blow up the king and parliament. Shakespeare was probably trying to get into King James’ good graces by demonstrating what bad things happen to people who try to murder kindly old Scottish kings!