



St. Andrews Society of the Inland Northwest

Thistle Epistle

September 2023

Burns Dinner and Dance, 2024

The St. Andrews Society Council has the preparations for next year's Burns Night Dinner and Dance well in hand, led by Barbara Bley, organizer of the 2023 festivities last January. The date will be January 27, 2024. The location will be the same as last year: the Commons at Mukogawa. The doors will open at 5:00 p.m., and the program will start at 6:00 p.m.

There will be all the traditional features of a Burns Night, with the toasts to the haggis, to the lassies and lads, and, of course, to the Immortal Memory of Robbie Burns; performances by the Angus Scott Pipe Band, Lake City Highland Dancers and Spokane Scottish Country Dancers; the Grand March and social dancing to the music of Crooked Kilt; readings of Burns' poetry; a dinner, with haggis available for those who like it; and a full bar, with an emphasis on single malt scotch.

Tickets will be the same price as last year - \$60 for adults and \$45 for those under 18. They will be available online at our website, inlandnwscots.org, starting on November 1. The cut-off to purchase tickets will be January 21, 2024 - so don't procrastinate: last year, we had to turn some latecomers away since we had to stay within the maximum number that the hall would hold, allowing for dinner and the social dancing.

Don't miss out on the best party of the winter season! We look forward to seeing you there.

The Tannahill Weavers are Coming to Town

Save the date: the Tannahill Weavers are coming to Spokane on Sunday, November 19!

The Tannahill Weavers are one of Scotland's best and most famous Celtic music groups. Hailing from Paisley, near Glasgow in Scotland, they are named after local poet laureate Robert Tannahill and the historic weaving industry of Paisley. They were among the first groups to incorporate the great highland bagpipe in an ensemble and were inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame in 2011. You can find them on YouTube.

The performance will be at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 19, at Opportunity Presbyterian Church at 202 N Pines. Tickets will be \$25 for adults and \$15 for those aged ten to 18. Under the age of 10 will be free. We will send further details to members by email in due course.

The Angus Scott Pipe Band and the St. Andrews Society of the Inland Northwest sponsor the event.

The Tannahill Weavers



Spokane Highland Games, 2023

Wendi Johnson, Spokane Highland Games Chairperson, reports:

I am happy to report we had another successful day at the Spokane Highland Games on August 5. The day was sunny, warm, and not too hot.

We had our first dance competition since Covid. It ran smoothly, with dancers back vying to win trophies and ribbons. Our dance coordinator, Victoria Hawkins, did a great job organizing and running the competition through the morning hours.

We also had more bagpipe competitors this year, with a good showing for our massed bands. Our beloved sheep herder, David Imas, returned with a herding exhibition this year.

Highland Coos and Clydesdales returned this year, which is always a hit with both young and old alike.

We highlighted a highland coo on our T-shirts this year, which was popular and sold out well before the end of the day.

Opening ceremonies were MC'd by Ian Roberts, who brings contagious joy to the stage. We had a special guest, the head of the MacFarlane Clan, Michael MacFarlane, say a few words.

Doug Malcolm, our Chieftain of the Day, was recognized for his commitment to locally supporting Scottish American culture. Our annual Parade of Clans included Mary, Queen of Scots, and her court.

Both vendors and clans reported they had a good time, with many planning to return next year.

We had positive feedback on the musicians who joined us this year and the many heritage groups and events throughout the day.

We had a great turnout of athletes, and the field was busy with multiple events throughout the day.

Celebrating our heritage with competition, demonstrations, and music was a great day!

The Spokane Highland Games Committee and I want to thank our Sponsors and the many Volunteers who support the Games. We could not have had such a fun, informative, and engaging day without them.

If anyone is interested in joining the Spokane Highlands Games Planning Committee, becoming a sponsor, or volunteering, please visit our website, www.spokanehighlandgames.net.

Until next year, Wendi Johnson

Society Picnic

The Society's annual picnic was held on August 26 at the home of Doug and Janet Malcolm. Thanks as always to them for their hospitality: it takes a lot of effort to set up the tents, picnic tables and chairs, and the drinks area, as well as cooking the meats on the BBQ.

It was fun to get together with so many of our long-time friends and to be able to have the time to catch up - though we were hoping more of the newer members of the Society would attend. As it was, there were around 25 in attendance.

Lake City Highland Dance (LCHD)

The 2023 Highland dance season is starting to slow after a busy summer of competitions, workshops, and performances. Lake City Highland Dancers had much success at the USIR National Championships in July, and Bethany Hawkins won Champion of the Premiership Under 12 class! In total, the studio came home with 29 medals and seven trophies! USIR 2024 will take place in Boston, Massachusetts.

Soon after USIR, the Spokane Highland Games welcomed back the Highland dance competition with 32 registered competitors from all over the Northwest, Canada, and even two individuals from Florida. The director of LCHD, Victoria Hawkins, organized the competition and is looking forward to heading up the event in the future.

The Highland Dance World Championships took place in late August at the Cowal Highland Gathering in Scotland, and three dancers from the USA competed at it this year.

LCHD has been very busy with performances over the summer, with four shows at the North Idaho Fair, Spokane Highland Games, and a recent performance at Idaho State Veterans Home. They will also be performing at the Spokane Renaissance Fair on October 7.

LCHD started its fall semester in early September with ten new students and a new Spokane class location at Millwood Community Presbyterian. Victoria Hawkins has been working hard to rebuild the Highland dance community, and everyone is excited to see what is in store for the LCHD over the next few months. We invite you to support LCHD by attending the LCHD Christmas Show on December 16, 2:30 p.m., at Coeur d'Alene Public Library.

Talie and Bethany Hawkins



Scottish American Military Society (SAMS) Post 1955

SAMS is a society for those of Scottish descent or particularly interested in Scotland who have served in any of the US military branches. Several years ago, a Post in Spokane was disbanded when its membership grew too few. Last year, the Post was resurrected under the leadership of Ed Wattawa, a previous Post member.

Ed reports:

The Post now has twenty-two members. We had a very good day at the Highland Games, at which we signed up six new members, including Seth England, a piper with the Angus Scott Pipe Band, who is now our official piper. He retired from the Air Force on Friday before the Games. We held a raffle for a sword and a food basket, which resulted in many ticket purchases from people stopping at our tent. All funds gained from the raffle will go to support JROTC programs.

Two of our officers, Adjutant Ray McGuire and Treasurer Brenda McGuire, are leaving Spokane to go and live abroad. At our AGM after the Games, James Wilkins was elected adjutant, replacing Ray McGuire, and at our monthly meeting in September, Sally Nick was elected treasurer, replacing Brenda McGuire. Many thanks to Ray and Brenda for their dedicated service to our Post. They will be missed, but we'll keep in touch as they start their new life in Portugal.

Mark Loe, Vice Commander, and his wife, Wanda, attended the Highland Games in Hamilton, Montana. And he assisted in recruiting enough new members there to form a camp.

Fall Folk Festival

The Spokane Folk Festival will take place Saturday and Sunday, November 11 and 12, at its usual location of Spokane Community College, at Greene and Mission. As always, the Scottish community will be putting on an hour-long performance with the Angus Scott Pipe Band, the Lake City Highland dancers, and the Spokane Scottish Country Dancers. This group will have participated in every one of the Folk Festivals for 28 years. The performance will be in the Auditorium on Saturday, November 11, at 11:00 a.m. There will be song and dance performances throughout the weekend, with representation from all parts of the world.

The full schedule has yet to be finalized, but when it is, you can find it at www.spokanefolkfestival.org.

Do come on out - both the event and parking are free!

What's going on in Scotland?

Scotland's population

The 2022 Census figures are now in. Scotland's population is now officially 5,436,600. This is an increase of 2.7% since 2011; by comparison, England's population is over 6.6%. Scotland's population grew in the first half of the 20th century but has remained relatively stable since - there were just under 5 million in 1951.

Currently, over 1 million are aged over 65 - nearly 20% - an increase of 22.5% since 2011.

Within Scotland, the population of the Lothians - the area around Edinburgh - has increased substantially, while the west and the islands have seen decreases.

Politics

Scotland's First Minister, Humza Yousuf, has laid out his priorities. The major one is providing more money for childcare. Yousuf believes this is the underpinning for economic progress, making it easier for working women to participate in the labor force and generate economic growth. Yousuf is pro-business, but his government doesn't have much fiscal room to fund his priorities, so he may be looking to increase taxes on the wealthy.

Yousuf still has Scottish independence as one of his priorities. However, the courts have upheld the requirement that the UK Parliament approve a new independence referendum, and it has no intention of doing so. Therefore, Yousuf aims to try and have the main independence party, the SNP, gain more seats and use this as a stand-in for a formal referendum.

Nicola Sturgeon

Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister until her resignation earlier this year, is still facing legal battles over her tenure of office. Police Scotland have sent prosecutors a 20-page document claiming that Sturgeon and Jeane Freeman were "dangerous and reckless and did not work within the law" regarding their actions during Covid. Specifically:

- Moving elderly patients from hospitals to care homes;
- Safety and efficacy of protective equipment given to care staff; and
- The widespread use of Do-Not-Resuscitate orders.

However, no Fatal Accident Inquiries have been carried out to support these allegations.

Orkney Islands

The Orkney Islands are seeking greater independence from Scotland and the UK. The local government there is exploring connections with Norway, with the idea of having an arrangement similar to the quasi-independent relationship of the Faeroe Islands with Denmark. The Orkney economy is in bad shape. The benefits of North Sea oil are waning. Orkney is complaining that it gets less funding from the Scottish government than other parts of Scotland, such as the Shetland Isles and the Western Isles. However, 31% of employment in Orkney is in the public sector, compared with 25% in Scotland. Shetland has also since 2020 been talking about some form of secession, but so far, nothing concrete has materialized: it may be being used as a bargaining chip to gain more from the Scottish government.

St. Andrew's Day

St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, and his day is celebrated on November 30.

Recently, the Society received an email from a member of the Scottish Parliament. They would like to have St. Andrew's Day more widely recognized and were inquiring what various groups in the USA with Scottish interests were doing for St. Andrew's Day and what they, the Scottish Parliament, or the Scottish people could do to make St. Andrew a more prominent figure. They probably have in mind the major celebrations in the USA of St. Patrick's Day.

In the reply that the Society sent, we noted that we had in the past had a Kirkin' o' the Tartan service at the time of St. Andrews Day but had discontinued it because of a lack of attendance from our membership. The major problem in the USA is that Thanksgiving always falls right around the end of November, so most people are busy with that celebration. Our Kirkin' o' the Tartan always avoided the Thanksgiving weekend, but this pushed it into the first week in December.

We explained that we have a very active Scottish community in Spokane, with a local pipe band, a Burns Night in January, a National Tartan Day in April, and our Highland Games in August.

Let us know if anyone thinks we could or should do more in Spokane to recognize St. Andrew's Day.

For anyone interested in St. Andrew, last year, the Society sent out an email on November 29, 2022, explaining who St. Andrew was and his connection to Scotland. We could resend this on request to any of our newer members who are interested and might have missed it.

The Saltire

Most people know that the Saltire is the national flag of Scotland, and the Scots are very proud of it. The flag has a white diagonal cross on a blue background. It is the oldest flag in Europe.

The story of its origin is that in 832 AD, an army led by Angus mac Fergus, High King of Alba, went on a punitive raid into Lothian, territory of the Northern English Kingdom of Northumbria. They were met by a larger Northumbrian force led by Athelstan and forced to battle at Athelstaneford, now in East Lothian. The evening before the battle, King Angus led prayers for safe deliverance. That night, while he slept, he dreamed that he would see a cross in the sky and prevail in the battle the next morning. When he awoke that morning, he saw a cloud formation of the white diagonal cross against a clear blue sky. Since the white diagonal cross was a symbol of St. Andrew - representing the cross on which he had been martyred - Angus vowed that if the Scots won, St. Andrew would become the patron saint of Scotland.

The first mention in the records of the Saltire is in 1385, when, in the Acts of Parliament in the reign of King Robert II, it was ordered that every Scottish soldier wear a white saltire on his uniform. Since then, the Saltire has always been flown as the national symbol of Scotland.

In the village of Athelstaneford, where the battle took place, there is now the Scottish Flag Heritage Center, which reopened after renovation in July 2022. The Center is housed in a 16th-century doo'cot (dovecote) and tells the story of the battle, the flag and its origins, and the history of St. Andrew and Scottish societies throughout the globe, including an audiovisual experience of the battle.

[From an article in "Scotland - The world's leading Scottish interest magazine"]