



The mission of the St. Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh is to preserve and promote Scottish Heritage and Traditions through educational, philanthropic and social endeavors, primarily in the Greater Pittsburgh area.

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Carnegie Mellon University Pipes and Drums Take on The World



At some point in 2024, it was decided that the Carnegie Mellon University Pipes and Drums would undertake preparations to compete in Scotland at the World Championships in August, 2025. After long hours of memorization, practice, and preparation, the band competed twice in 2025 before heading across the Atlantic.

Those two competitions were the American Championships in Norfolk, Virginia, at the end of April, and the Chicago Highland Games, held in mid-June. We were lucky enough to win both of those titles, competing against many bands we had not previously met. After many weekend practices, we set out on the journey toward an ever more challenging field of bands in Scotland.

This was the first time ever for Carnegie Mellon to undertake such a daunting task, and we had some great results. We arrived on the 7th of August, practiced for two days and headed to Perth for the European Championships on the 9th. We were elated at the closing massed bands, when it was announced we had placed 1st in Drumming and 2nd overall (actually tied for 1st) out of 15 bands. In the event of a tie the ensemble score is the tiebreaker, hence we were second overall.



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The Thistle



President's Message

Fall in Scotland/Fall in Pennsylvania

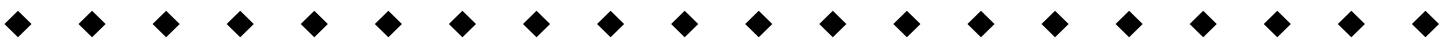
Prior to the subject of the article being addressed, I would like to note how successful the Ligonier Highland Games were this year. The crowds were great, the weather was amazing, and the air bespoke a summer day in Scotland. Field events were spectacular, the vendor tents were busy, and the clan tents were well attended. With the St. Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh being a sponsor of the event, I was pleased to see the St. Andrew's tents were well staffed and well visited. A great big THANK YOU to everyone who helped, coordinated, and attended the event.

Earlier in the week of the Highland Games, I was returning from the Manhattan cruise port in New York City. While driving back I noticed that the change in the trees had begun. I observed some of the yellows which are typically the first to appear, and then some of the deep reds in the valleys. As I was enjoying the view, I began to think of what fall is like in Scotland. This thought prompted me to look up photos of Scotland in the fall. Fall colors in Pennsylvania and fall colors in Scotland are of equal splendor. The yellows, reds, oranges, and the view of the ground opening as the leaves start to fall are enjoyed by both Scots and Pennsylvanians. Search the Internet for fall pictures of Scotland; you will see the beautiful similarities. While my home is still mostly green, I am looking forward to the change in colors.



The photo is a fall photo taken by John Hoffman and given to the St. Andrew's Society for its use.

A great sunny fall day with the colors starting to show.





The Thistle



Grant's Defeat

By Dale McLeod

In mid-September 1758 the area of downtown Pittsburgh was the battleground of one of the bloodiest battles ever experienced on the frontiers of Colonial America. As had occurred in so many pivotal events in the settling of western Pennsylvania, Scottish Highlanders figured prominently in the story.

By 1758 the French had controlled the Ohio Country for the prior four years by means of building and garrisoning Fort Duquesne at the Forks of the Ohio. In 1755 British General Edward Braddock marched from Virginia with 2100 soldiers to take control of the Forks for the British but lost his army and his life in the Battle of the Monongahela (today's town of North Braddock). In 1758 General Forbes set out from Philadelphia with almost 7000 regular and provincial troops to try again; this time making a slow march over the mountains and building protective forts and supply depots along the way. After months of planning and procuring supplies, his army set out from Carlisle in July in stages. The army was far too large to march together as one unit. By early September, after almost three months of grueling conditions cutting their way through the densely forested mountains of central and southwestern Pennsylvania, the first wave of the army had reached Loyalhanna - today's Ligonier.

By the time they had arrived at Loyalhanna there had been several instances of Indians picking off, killing, capturing and scalping soldiers who had to leave the safety of the camp and go into the woods to hunt or forage their horses and cattle. The fighting tactics used by the Indians confused and angered the Highlanders. The Highlanders were itching to get into an open and all-out fight with their enemy. The small amount of enemy intelligence the British officers had been receiving was sketchy and not completely trustworthy, but essentially it seemed that the French garrison at Fort Duquesne was rather small and their Indian allies were not entirely committed to their cause.

Major James Grant was an officer with the 77th Regiment of Foot. The 77th, also known as Montgomery's Highlanders, was raised in the Scottish Highlands by Archibald Montgomery in 1756. James Grant, the 4th Earl of Ballinalloch, was born in 1720 and had seen continuous military service since 1741 with the Royal Scots including action in the battle of Fontenoy in 1745. When Grant arrived at Loyalhanna with Forbes's army he approached his commander, Colonel Henry Bouquet, and pitched an idea that had been rejected earlier in the summer by General Forbes. Grant thought he'd try again with Bouquet. He wanted to take a large detachment of soldiers and quietly march the 50 miles from Loyalhanna through the forest to Fort Duquesne, capture some French for interrogation, make a drawing of the details of the Fort, and then get back to Loyalhanna. This obviously was a dangerous mission since the British were not familiar with the roads and terrain of the area and were not sure what they would be up against if they made it as far as the fort. Bouquet, however, consented to the idea and provided detailed instructions to Grant that were intended to keep the detachment safe. Bouquet saw this as their best chance to learn more about their opponent and the fort. Additionally, as Bouquet would later write to Forbes in his explanation of why he authorized the mission, "Major Grant's proposal ...would be the means of curing our men of the panic terror they had of [the Indians] ...".

While the objective and destination of this mission was kept a closely-guarded secret from everyone other than a small group of officers, they selected the very best woodsmen and soldiers from the assembled army. Montgomery's Highlanders composed 17% of Forbes's entire army; however, they contributed 43% of Grant's almost 900 total men for this sensitive mission – a testament to the respect they had earned as solid soldiers. The Highlanders were truly excited to have been chosen to finally take action, in some way, against the enemy.

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The Thistle



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Grant's forces departed Loyalhanna on September 9 and, en route, the men were taught and drilled in "the art of bush fighting" so as to adapt to the style of the Indians. The main body of the army reached Old Shannopin Town at 10:00 PM on September 13. Shannopin Town was a deserted Indian village at today's Lawrenceville near 35th and Smallman Streets. They were running a few hours behind schedule so they left their baggage, horses, and provisions to be guarded by about five dozen soldiers and they set off for the hill that was to provide an observation point about a half-mile from Fort Duquesne. They arrived at the height, later to be named Grant's Hill, at 2:30 in the morning. This is Grant Street today in the vicinity of 3rd Avenue to 5th Avenue. The original plan at this point was to send some men down to the Indian campsites outside the fort, kill and capture a few, and then get back to the hill. The Highland drummers would play from the hill so in the darkness the soldiers could follow the sound and find their way back to Grant's Hill. When they got to the hill the whole army was to beat a retreat for about 6 miles and wait in ambush as the French would likely send a small party out at daybreak to check things out. Grant could then capture some French and they would all march back to Loyalhanna having gained intelligence of their enemy and feeling good about their ability to inflict pain. That was the plan.

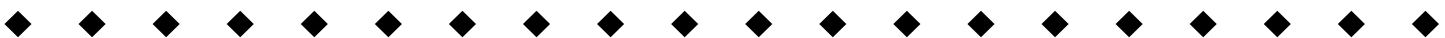
Perhaps because he was 3-4 hours behind schedule and it was now in the wee hours of the morning of September 14, Grant did not see the anticipated fires of the Indian campsites that should have guided his men to their destination. The fires had probably burned out. The moon was only four nights away from being a full moon so it should have provided fair illumination for the soldiers, but again because of the delay, the moon had set by the time the operations were to get underway. Also, a thick fog had set in on the ground between the three rivers creating a situation where men who were unfamiliar with the area could see nothing.

In these circumstances Grant ordered Virginia Major Lewis and 400 men to go down to the area outside the fort and "attack everything that was about the fort". They put on white shirts over their clothes and tied the shirttails into knots so the man behind could hold on while they stumbled in single file through pitch darkness and fog. They set out about 3:30 AM but had not gone far before they became confused by bad roads and spooked by sounds so they returned to Grant's Hill. Major Grant was in disbelief as he learned from Lewis that basically he had given up without even having made contact with the enemy. Colonel Bouquet's instructions in this contingency were to give up and get out, avoiding risking the lives of so many valuable troops. However, the thought of returning to base camp safely but with nothing to show for it appears to have been out of the question in Major Grant's mind. No, he wanted glory.

The series of orders and events that began then to unfold in the early morning hours of September 14 defy explanation.

An infuriated Grant ordered Lewis with his Virginians and Royal Americans back to the baggage at Old Shannopin Town. He then informed his fellow Highlanders, Lieutenants Archibald Robertson and Alexander MacDonald who had just returned from the aborted mission under Major Lewis, that they would take two platoons of Highlanders and basically go back and do it right this time. Their mission essentially was to act as human bait to entice the enemy from their fort. It was around 4:30 AM when they set out. They too could find no Indians or French to kill or capture so they ended up setting fire to a small log house storing tobacco in the vicinity of today's Commonwealth Place at the edge of Point State Park. Surprisingly, the French still showed no sign of concern by the time that the detachment returned to the hill.

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The Thistle



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By now it was around 7:00 AM, daylight had begun, and the fog had lifted somewhat. Again, Grant should have heeded his orders by withdrawing to the planned ambush site and waited. Instead, and despite being informed that enemy Indians had discovered a unit of Highlanders protecting the left flank along the Monongahela, Grant orders Lt. MacDonald back for a third time along with the valuable engineer Charles Rhor to draw plans of the fort and its outbuildings. This extraordinarily dangerous situation was further compounded by Grant ordering his drummers to play Reveille while his men are on their way toward the fort. These decisions seem beyond poor judgment; almost suicidal.

Unknown to the British, Fort Duquesne had received significant reinforcements of Indians – Shawnee and Delaware - only the day before. As the Highlanders were moving toward the fort, 1500 Indians and 500 French troops swarmed out. Some of the Indians moved secretly along the shores of the rivers up-stream to surround the British. More Indians who camped on the North Shore near today's Heinz Field came across the river in canoes to join the action. The fighting was fully underway. To rally his Highlanders and provide encouragement, Grant ordered his piper and drummers to play from the hill. I'm sure many of you are familiar with artist Robert Griffing's beautiful painting titled "Major Grant's Piper" – this is the scene.



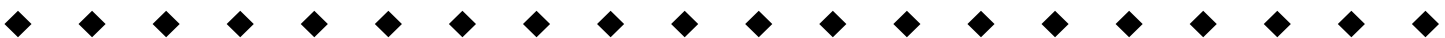
To the right is Robert Griffing's painting, "Major Grant's Piper"

Highlanders and provincial militia troops were being slaughtered. Many were scalped. Some officers, seen as valuable prisoners, were taken captive. By 11:00 AM Major Grant and some others had fought their way back to their baggage depot near Lawrenceville where Grant was offered quarter by the French and taken captive. By that time most of his forces had been killed, captured or had retreated back toward the relative safety of their camp at Loyalhanna. At about this time of the day it had started to rain which rendered the muskets less effective and the French troops were called back. The pursuit of the British had ended.

Of the almost 900 men who left Loyalhanna to march to Fort Duquesne, just under 400 were killed, captured or injured. The British and provincial troops that found their way back to Loyalhanna were within three days back at work making the camp stronger as they assumed there would be a French counterattack. It turns out that there was no French counterattack.

While the loss of so many valuable men could never be considered a good thing, there was one beneficial outcome to the overall campaign: many of the Indians who were allied with the French believed they had dealt the same fatal blow to Forbes's campaign that they had to Braddock only three years earlier. They thought they had effectively stopped the British again. Additionally, they had obtained all the scalps and plunder they needed to consider it a successful fighting season so they felt justified in returning to their villages to prepare for winter by hunting and harvesting. The Indians abandoned the French, leaving Fort Duquesne vulnerable to the enemy.

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Major Grant was eventually taken to Montreal where he was kept by the French for over a year before being released. Astoundingly, he was never court-martialed for violating his orders. He had been a popular officer and was respected by both Forbes and Bouquet. Indeed, he seems to have been able to simply forget that this unfortunate incident had ever happened as his military career continued to thrive upon his return to his regiment and continuing through the American Revolution as he fought the Continental Army in several key battles, eventually attaining the rank of a full General.

As you move around downtown Pittsburgh, think about the momentous events of September 14, 1758 and notice the plaque on the Allegheny County Courthouse commemorating this battle. Today standing at Grant Street looking down toward the Point, the view is different; not only because of the modern structures and paved roads, but the elevation of Grant's Hill has also changed significantly. Three excavations, starting in 1836 and ending in 1914, have lowered Grant Street by 33 feet in order to assist travel for horses, trolleys, pedestrians and vehicles. It's difficult today in the midst of the city to visualize what it looked like 254 years ago but we know that the ground we walk on was the ground that staged the bloody battle known as Grant's Defeat.



A new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses.

She started her class by saying, "Everyone who thinks they're stupid, stand up!"

After a few seconds, wee Hamish stood up.

The teacher said, "Do you think you're stupid, Hamish?"

"No, Ma'am, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself!"





The Thistle



"There Are Damned Few of Us..."

Not-So-Famous and Infamous Scots Who Shaped Our World

Billy Connolly – *The Big Yin*

by

Roy Aber

If you were to take a poll among Scotsmen asking who their favorite comedian is, the answer you most likely receive in response is Billy Connolly, who actually started out as a folk singer in the 1960's. Born on November 4, 1942 in Glasgow, Billy was the younger of two children born to William Connolly and Mary McLean. Billy's father was serving with the RAF in Burma at this time and it was also a period when Glasgow was being bombed consistently by the German Luftwaffe. Since they lived close to the docks of Glasgow, their home and lives were in constant danger. One day, his mother being a teenager with two children to look after with no father, suddenly left them for another man. Asked in later years how Billy felt about being abandoned by his mother, he said that he could not really blame her. She was a woman with two kids living in a slum and it could all end tomorrow with a bomb. If given the chance, **he** would have left with the other man. Years afterward, their paths would cross.

Billy and his sister, Florence, were then left to his two paternal aunts. Being barely any older than Billy's mother, the two aunts, almost in fairy tale tradition, were resentful and negligent in their care of the two children they had suddenly inherited. The sisters being so young, had no real preparation for child rearing and often ignored or mistreated their niece and nephew. This abuse shaped Billy's personality and probably helped to form his comedy act into the blue and rough language with which most people are familiar.

When Billy's father returned to Glasgow in 1946, he was a stranger to his children and never talked about their natural mother. His father, a big man, often took to beating Billy and this left indelible marks on Billy's psyche. In a 2010 interview with *The Observer*, he said "Sometimes, when father hit me, I flew over the settee backwards in a sitting position. It was fabulous. Just like real flying, except you didn't get a cup of tea or a safety belt or anything."

Billy began his formal education at St. Peter's School which was located across the street from where he was living in Glasgow. His time at St. Peter's was a series of mottled anachronisms characterized by his joining a local gang and also becoming a Boy Scout.

After St. Peter's. Billy attended St. Gerard's School in Govan on the south bank of the river Clyde. With the sandstone tenements of Glasgow being razed, Billy's father moved to a new public housing development in Drumchapel, outside of Glasgow and surrounded by trees and shrubbery rather than the dreary and forlorn tenements. But it was still no better than the life he had left behind. When he re-visited Drumchapel in 1992,

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he said "This dreadful atmosphere came about the place. It's like [Siberia](#). And once you're out here, there's no getting out of it. You have to buy your way out, or some kind of talent has to take you out, or you have to be very bright and move away to university."

At fifteen, Billy left school with two engineering qualifications. He actually only qualified for one but was mistakenly given the second that was intended for a student named Connell. He was too young to work in the shipyards but developed an interest in music, namely Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis, both of whom were never played on BBC airwaves. He probably heard them from a "pirate" radio station, popular in the 1950's because they played American rock and roll and were anchored offshore in international waters. His interest in music and comedy was growing within him.

When he turned sixteen, Billy went to work in the shipyards as a boilermaker. This was a time when the shipyards on the River Clyde were still arenas of activity. Ships were being built in record numbers and Connolly had a good, steady job. It was here that he decided he wanted to work on his music and comedy skills. According to Billy's wife, Pamela, the biggest influences on Connolly at this time were his co-workers, Jimmy Lucas and Bobby Dagleish.

After watching an episode of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Billy bought his first banjo and set out teaching himself to play it. Along with his friend, Tam Harvey, they formed a folk-pop duo act called The Humblebums. In 1969, they were joined by Gerry Rafferty to make the group a trio. Later, Rafferty would break out on his own and have two major hits here in the United States, *Baker Street* and *Right Down the Line*. Connolly credits his time with Rafferty for honing his comic skills. While waiting to go on stage, Rafferty would make prank phone calls which Billy said caused him to roll on the floor with laughter. At this point in his career, Billy was writing quirky and humorous song lyrics, not really focusing on stand-up comedy.

In 1968, at the age of 26, Billy married Iris Pressagh and they moved to the south shore of Loch Lomond. Later that year, Billy would meet up with his natural mother for a second time. She was living with another man named Adams, with whom she had three children. Billy says that he felt that neither one liked the other, no matter how hard they tried. It was to be the last time the two of them would ever meet.

When the Humblebums broke up in the early 1970's, Billy was encouraged to become a stand-up comic because of his humorous introductions and lyrics to the songs he was playing. In 1974, he released his debut comedy album *Solo Concert*, which became a best seller in the UK. That same year he had a sellout performance at the Pavillion Theater in Glasgow. He was also booked on the popular British talk show, Parkinson, and would go on to set a record for guest appearances on that show.

Billy's success continued to grow in the 1970's. He had a hit record, a parody of Tammy Wynette's *D.I.V.O.R.C.E.* a hit play on the stage in London and continual appearances on television talk shows. But it being the 1970's, Billy, like almost every other celebrity, was doing alcohol and cocaine.

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He was fortunate enough to meet a comedienne from New Zealand named Pamela Stephenson. She says when she first met Billy she was convinced; he was about to die. After they met a second time, Connolly confessed that he was unhappy and his marriage was over. Supposedly, he drank thirty brandies at this meeting. Shortly thereafter, they began an affair. Billy and Iris were divorced in 1985.

The big break for Billy came when John Cleese, of *Monty Python fame*, asked Connolly to join the cast of *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball*. The commercial success of this movie in the United States opened up a new and larger audience for Connolly. A few years before, he had tried to tour the US as a solo act but because of his strong Glaswegian brogue, very few people made the effort to understand what he was saying. It was the peripheral appearance of the Monty Python cast that ensured Billy would get a fair shake this time. The really big breakthrough came when Billy starred with Whoopi Goldberg in an HBO special titled, surprisingly enough, *Whoopi Goldberg and Billy Connolly in Concert*

In 1989, after she took a strong role in intervention, Billy kicked his habit of drugs and alcohol. To this day, he still shuns even a wee dram. It was the same year that he and Pamela were married. They are still married to this day and have three children together. With the two from his previous marriage, Billy has five children.

Since he has "cleaned up", Billy has found many new horizons to explore. He's done a number of television specials and appeared in movies such as *Muppet Treasure Island*, *The Last Samurai*, *The X Files: I Want to Believe* and *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* to mention a few.

While he has retired from doing stand up comedy, Billy has found other interests to keep his mind active. He has taken up painting (and you can purchase his paintings from his website), doing television specials such as *Tracks Across America*, and *Journey to the Edge of the World*.

And possibly the biggest change that Billy and Pamela have gone through over the past five decades is the choice of residence. In 2010 they moved from Glasgow to New York City. After eleven years, they then relocated to sunny Florida giving up the cold New York City winters and cockroaches for the hot, humid tropical climate and palmetto bugs (cockroaches).

And how did he exactly come to be called The Big Yin? It was used by the locals in his old neighborhood to differentiate him from his father. In Billy's own words: "My father was a very strong man. Broad and strong. He had an 18+¹/₂-inch neck collar. Huge, like a bull. He was "Big Billy" and I was "Wee Billy". And then I got bigger than him, and the whole thing got out of control. And then I became *The Big Yin* in Scotland. So, we'd go into the [pub](#) and someone would say, 'Billy Connolly was in.' 'Oh? Big Billy or Wee Billy?' 'The Big Yin.' 'Oh, Wee Billy.' If you were a stranger, you'd think, 'What are these people talking about?!'"





The Thistle



World Championships continued from page 1

We worked hard as we practiced every day between Perth and the World's Championships in Glasgow on the 16th. Since there were so many bands in our grade, we were divided into two groups of 12 bands. The top six from the morning qualifier competition moved on to the final event held in the afternoon. Our drummers were first again in the morning qualifier, which helped us to move forward and play again. We played our best in the Medley contest that afternoon, which earned us 5th overall in the final (actually tied for 4th) in Grade 3B. We made our presence known on our first appearance as a competing band in Scotland. What an experience, and what great accolades to bring home to Pittsburgh!

Congratulations to the section leaders, Andrew Carlisle, Pipe Major; Miles Bennington, Drum Sergeant, and Lauren Bennington, Lead Tenor Drummer, all of whom served as able instructors.

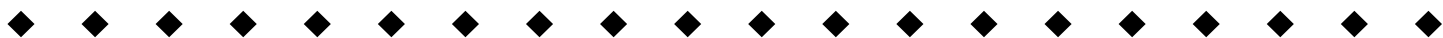
Submitted by Joyce McIntosh, on behalf of CMU band members and alumni



Genealogy Corner

Welcome to the 24--25 season of Symphony East. I hope you have had a good summer. Your Board has been busy planning for the new season. Your year book will not be ready until October this year. We decided to hold off until after the September meeting. Dues are due by then. The by-laws say that after 2 years of non-payment of dues, the name shall be removed from the roster. Please be prepared to pay your dues if you have not done so already. Lunch cost will be \$30. We pay the Lamplighter on average \$25 for lunch. The additional \$5.00 goes to help defray the cost of the programs. We are required to pay \$125.00 to \$150.00 per performer. So you see we often have to tap reserves for the additional money. All of the profit we make on the fund raisers goes to support the orchestra. Our operating funds come from dues and contributions by individuals. The Board does it's very best to be good stewards of your finances. The April in Paris fund raiser was a smash hit. There are plans in the works for another memorable event.

Stay tuned. Pat





The Thistle



2025 Ligonier Highland Games

The 66th Annual Ligonier Highland Games took place at Idlewild Park on Saturday, September 13th on a warm and sunny day. This report is admittedly limited to my observations from the Games headquarters tent and morsels of information I picked up during the day. I was the (non-Athletics) field announcer at the Mail Field so that typically means I don't break free from my chain to see anything else. Thus, a limited report here. I will focus my comments on St. Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh members who I'm aware made significant contributions to the day.

Lyn Orr and Ken Stiles coordinated details at the society's tent at the entrance to the Main Field. I know that Lyn got volunteers aplenty to staff the tent for the entire day to sell official Games T-shirts, field questions about tartans, Clans, genealogy and any number of questions - that's wonderful! Thank you volunteers! Liz Dahne held down the post of accepting membership applications, and I hope we received many. Kathy Wells set up her Celtic weaving and spinning exhibit adjoining the SASP tent at the Main Field. John Hoffman was this year's overall T-shirt planner and coordinator for our post at the Main Field as well as at a smaller tent near the footbridge, Tammy Hoffman and Pam Maniet spent their day, along with John, at the bridge t-shirt tent selling – selling – selling.

Melanie Sandrock – Queen of the Scottish Harp (my designation due to all the students and performers she has produced over many years) – coordinated all activities at the Scottish Harp tent which included a day of workshops, performances and competitions. Melanie also won an award in the fiercely-contested Shortbread Baking Competition. Dave and Roz Strunk were again the Senior Directors of the Heavy Athletics at the Main Field, a role they have played so successfully for many years. In the evening Susan and Jim Borowski performed with the Rich Patrick Trio at the 2nd Annual Highland Ceilidh held at the Gray Goose restaurant in Ligonier after the day's festivities at the Park.

I suspect there were many more society members who played pivotal roles throughout the day and weeks preceding the day that I'm not aware of or am inadvertently leaving out.

While the staff and volunteers who operate the Ligonier Highland Games are not paid, an event like this requires a LOT of funding to pull it off. The St. Andrew's Society of Pittsburgh makes an annual contribution of \$1000 to The Ligonier Highland Games and we also sponsor trophies for Scottish Harp and Scottish Fiddle. There are several businesses and individuals who contribute generously. Of our society members who have been generous, I'm aware of the following people: Rev. Canon Dr. & Mrs. John A. Macdonald of Kingsburgh are Patrons who significantly sponsor the Games generally. Sarah Jean Thompson sponsored the "Most Promising Highland Dancer" trophy.

Musically, our society was well-represented with the following medalists: Christine Nolin was the Overall Winner of Grade IV Senior Piping. Sean Patrick Regan took the Professional silver medal for Bagpiping in the March, Strathspey and Reel event. Bagpiper Palmer Shonk was the Pipe Major for the Macdonald Pipe Band Grade 4 which won 2nd place in the band March, Strathspey and Reel contest and he took 1st place in the solo Professional piping contest for Hornpipe & Jig. Also, Palmer performed the beautiful solo lament, "Flowers of the Forest", during the Welcoming Ceremony on the Main Field when the names of the past year's decedents were read aloud in remembrance.

Again, I apologize to those whose names I should have cited above but did not.

In closing, there are strong indications that the date for next year's Ligonier Highland Games will move to a new date (possibly a new month) in order to avoid what seems to be scheduling conflicts which might be reducing attendance at the Games. When that date decision is made, the 2026 date will be announced on the Games website, www.LigonierHighlandGames.org . Once we learn the 2026 date we will spread the word.

Submitted by Dale McLeod





The Thistle



Bringing Joy to the St. Andrew's Society Picnic



Scholarship recipient Marybeth Miller entertained the picnic attendees with her fiddle, showcasing some of the music she has been learning with *The Strathgheny School of Scottish Fiddling* thanks to the Society's scholarship program. John and Susan Parks' grandson Elliott who is 2 1/2 years old was fascinated listening to her play. Susan asked Marybeth if she would bring her fiddle over to show him. She not only showed him, but let him pluck the strings.

Then, she let him handle the bow and draw it across the strings several times while talking to him about the sounds.



A week later, while Susan and John were visiting, Elliott grabbed the new paper towel holder, fingering the top, and using the dowel handle from his rocking horse as a bow. He "played his fiddle" singing along with it.

A future scholarship recipient?

Submitted by Marybeth Miller





The Thistle



Wind Farms in Scotland: (Cumhachd na Gaoithe ann an Alba):

Globally as well as very much in Scotland, **Wind Power** is the fastest-growing renewable energy technology, with 16,648 megawatts (MW) of installed wind power capacity by Q2 2024. This included 9,756 MW from onshore wind in Scotland and 2,971 MW of offshore wind generators. The largest onshore wind farm in the UK is **Whitelee** , just south of Glasgow, with 215 turbines and a capacity of 539 MW. There is further potential for expansion, especially offshore given the high average wind speeds, and a number of large offshore wind farms are planned. As offshore wind farms are moving into deeper water, floating wind turbines are being used. Hywind Scotland off the coast of Peterhead was the world's first floating offshore wind farm, commissioned October 2017. The Scottish Government has achieved its target of generating 50% of Scotland's electricity from renewable energy by 2015, and hoped to achieve 100% by 2020, which was raised from the lower target of 50% in September 2010. The majority was expected to come from wind power. Renewables produced the equivalent of 113% of electricity consumption in 2022, mostly from wind.

The target for 2030, made in 2023, was for 11GW of offshore wind by 2030. This would represent an increase of 400% in offshore wind and a 60% increase in total wind generated power and form part of the 50GW of offshore wind planned by 2030. The North Seas Energy Cooperation group plans on having 76GW in the North Sea by 2030.

In 1887, the wind turbine concept was invented by James Blyth and installed at his home in Marykirk in the Mearns, Aberdeenshire, leading to a second being installed at the Montrose Lunatic Asylum in 1895 at the Sunnyside Royal Hospital.

The first recorded public electricity system was installed on Wormit hill to supply the houses built by Alexander Stewart who built much of the village. This initially consisted of a "windmill"; on Wormit Hill and backup steam generator before replacement with a diesel generator in the 1930s.

Submitted by John F. Webber





The Thistle



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Let's Par-Tea

St. Andrew's Society Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 18th from 2-5PM

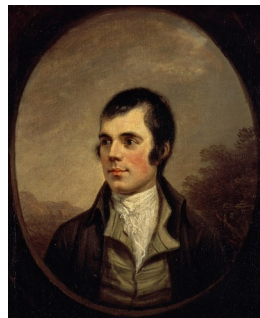
at The Johnston House Teahouse

\$45 per person

<https://www.standrewspittsburgh.org/>



Save the Date



Burns Supper

Saturday evening,

January 24, 2026

The Pittsburgh Golf Club





The Thistle



Dear Dale and members of the St. Andrews Society,

Thank you very much for granting me a scholarship towards the cost of attending the Ohio Scottish Arts school at Oberlin College in Oberlin Ohio in June. This was a new campus for me, although many participants had been to Oberlin College for OSAS in the past. The campus had many unique and beautiful gardens, and the architecture of the town was fascinating.

There were over 30 harpers at OSAS this year! Seven were from Ringgold Harp Ensemble. This was my fourth year of harp workshops. I asked to remain in the apprentice group because I am so slow at learning tunes by ear (even though when I have the sheet music, I can play more complex tunes). That was the best placement for me. I learned eleven new tunes and enjoyed the classes. It is interesting to experience a variety of teachers who each have different techniques. This year's harp instructors were Jen Narkivicius, Martha Hill, Wendy Stewart and Kelly Stewart.



As in prior years, we were awakened at 7 a.m. every morning by a student piper marching through the dorm hallways. Nothing like the skirl of bagpipes to get one's blood enthusiastically moving in the morning!



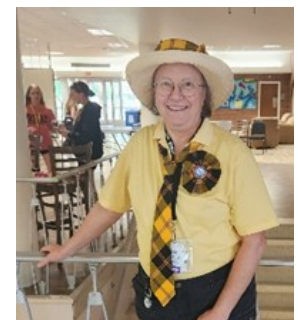
OSAS was one day short this year due to July Fourth falling on Friday. Therefore, we did not have time for individual lessons.

The Ringgold harp group presented an amazing formal tea again this year; it has become a treasured tradition. You would not believe how many teacups and saucers Melanie Sandrock has collected! Because of the shortened week the tea included gourmet tea sandwiches at lunchtime.

Every year the instructors put on a recital for all the students which inspires all of us to study hard and practice, practice, practice! What a thrill to hear them each perform! There was a talent night for students to perform.

And one afternoon the huge piping and drumming classes held their own competition by dividing into five different bands, each included students with varying abilities. That was fun to watch, and they were all good!

Every day there was a different theme for clothing to wear for fun. One day was designated Tartan day, so I wore the Pittsburgh Tartan items made by our own Kathy Wells: a yellow shirt with tartan necktie, and tartan rosette, and a hat with a Tartan



sash tied around the brim! Thanks Kathy!





The Thistle

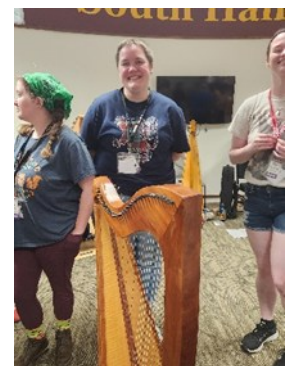


In the evening the harps gathered in the main lobby for fun group sessions playing a terrific variety of tunes. Some evenings we were joined by fiddles, small pipes, concertina and bodhran! I am excited that I am getting better at playing along in the sessions.

My most memorable experience of the week happened to another student in the Apprentice class. There were only 5 of us in the class. Hannah fell in love with the harp when she attended a different section of OSAS last year. In the evenings she would come over and listen to the harp sessions; there she felt welcome, included, and comfortable. Last October she started to take harp lessons on a rented harp. This year the OSAS administrators arranged for Hannah to rent a harp at OSAS from Rick Kemper. All of us in the Apprentice class, including the instructors, were thrilled by Hannah's enthusiasm and passion for learning the harp. She learned tunes by ear quickly and played well. On the final day of OSAS, all the harp students and instructors gathered for the last time, to present awards. The final award was described as a harp given by Rick Kemper's family. He had built the harp several years ago for a woman who is no longer physically able to play. She returned the harp to Rick and asked that the harp be given to a promising, deserving new student. Our instructors were unanimous that this harp be given to Hannah! We all cheered and cried and hugged her! What a beautiful way to end the week at OSAS!



My love of the harp continues to grow – especially in the Scottish tradition. I have had opportunities to perform with the Ringgold Community String band and their harp ensemble, both led by Melanie Sandrock. Our group competed at the Ligonier Highland Games in the Harp Pavillion and performed at the Clan Forsythe tent. When my husband George was in a rehab hospital for a week, I took my harp to the hospital three different times and played soothing music for him and for the other patients and staff. By the third evening the music attracted quite a group! I was surprised, and happy to share the joy of the harp.



Thank you very, very much for the scholarship which helped make it possible for me to attend the Ohio Scottish Arts School this summer to learn new tunes and improve my playing.

Sincerely,

Kay Balderose

