



Tundra Thistle

The Newsletter of the Alaskan Scottish Club

Volume 30 Number 8

September 2024

Coming Events:

Anchorage Pirate Festival

Anchorage Pirate Festival is being held in Anchorage on **September 14th**. Always scheduled to closely coincide with International talk like a pirate day, this event is expanding to include family friendly activities in Town Square from 2 – 7, followed by the 21-and-over Pirate Pub Crawl.

Pirate Cove

The Pirate Cove is the event in town square that includes vendors selling their pirate wares, entertainment, and food trucks. Children's activities will be featured here from 2 -7 (stop by the Scottish club booth to make a pirate craft and take a photo at our selfie station!). Some of the local restaurants are also having child-friendly events for the kids to participate in.

Pirate Pub Crawl

The Pub Crawl starts in Town Square with a group picture of all the pirates before they all disperse throughout the town on the Pub Crawl. Pick up your treasure map here or at any of the participating Pubs, get all the pub stops stamped, and turn in the map to be entered in a drawing for 80,000 Alaska Air Miles. There is no cost to participate. All money raised by the Pubs' fundraising activities are donated to the blood bank of Alaska.

Celtic Community of Alaska

Annual Samhain Celebration

Join us at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center on October 26 from 6 – 10 PM for a magical evening celebrating Samhain, the Celtic holiday that inspired Halloween.

Event Highlights: Entertainment: Enjoy an evening filled with captivating performances, including fire dancers.

Themed Dinners: Savor delicious themed dinners prepared by the Senior Center's chef.

Cash Bar: Refreshments available for purchase.

Ancestor Remembrance: Participate in a special ceremony to honor our ancestors.

This celebration is perfect for all ages! We encourage everyone to wear costumes, inspired by our theme for the night: "Once Upon a Time." There will be a costume parade and prizes for the children.

Tickets at Eventbrite on October 1.



Alaskan Entry Accepted for Golden Spurtle Competition

Georgia Barkwood, two-time winner of the Midnight Sun Spurtle Challenge at the Alaska Scottish Highland Games, has been accepted to compete in this year's Golden Spurtle Competition in Carrbridge, Scotland.

A total of fourteen countries will be represented in Carrbridge on 5 October from; Australia, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Rest of UK, Scotland and USA.

A press release from the competition hosts describe it as follows:

Porridge fanatics from around the world will gather in the Highland village of Carrbridge on Saturday 5 October 2024 to battle it out for the title of World Porridge Making Champion and lift the much sought after Golden Spurtle®.

Heats and the final 'Cook off' takes place in Carrbridge Village Hall in front of spectators. The competition is also live streamed across Facebook. In 2023 a world-wide audience in excess of 77,000 watched as the finalist battled it, out spurtles in hand.

Both winners of the Traditional Dish made from oatmeal, salt and water and the Specialty Dish where competitors' creativity can run wild are set to defend their titles.

Adam Kiani who scooped the 2023 Golden Spurtle trophy as a first-time entrant said: "My life has been bubbling away like never before since my first visit to Carrbridge in October last year. Porridge in all directions – it's been brilliant! From regular porridge parties with the Spurtle's class of 2023 London contingent, to baffling cooking cameos on daytime TV! My rich love of porridge has only gained more flavor since that weekend in Carrbridge, and I'm hoping I can stir some of it into the next batch when I return to defend my title!"

Good Luck Georgia!

A Celebration of Tradition and Community: The 2024 Maine Highland Games

By Danny Autrey

Drums and bagpipes, cheers and shouting, battle cries and woeful sighs all filled the salty air of Brunswick, Maine at the 2024 Maine Highland Games on August 17. This beautiful showcase of heritage, camaraderie and strength was organized with great care by the Saint Andrews Society of Maine and energized by the No Fame Game crew. Athletes from around the world descended upon the sleepy pine forest of Thomas Point Beach Park to put their skills to the test.

The Saint Andrew Society of Maine partnered with the No Fame Game crew to host an elite group of athletes who threw their hats in the ring in the "Open" class, a mixture of professionals and elite amateurs. Glenn Nys even traveled from Belgium to contend! Our group was honored with first-class treatment all weekend, as we were fed by a professional chef and lodged in an "athlete village", complete with large tents and comfortable beds! Personalized trading cards were also issued to the professional athletes, which was an extra special touch by The Society.

An incredible display of Power

The "Open Class" is a recently introduced format that rewards not only the overall champions, but anyone who wins an event as well. As such, every event was a chance to get in the money, which generated excitement for all of the athletes in the class. The competition ended with 4 different athletes winning events. 1st and 2nd place was a ding-dong battle between newly minted professional Matthew McDougal and Belgian sensation Glenn Nys, who most recently took 3rd place at the Webster World Championship. Ultimately consistency in all 9 events proved to be the deciding factor, and Matt was able to eke out the victory.

Consistency once again determined the final spot on the podium. Though I didn't set the world on fire by any means, my throws on the day were good enough to keep me in the top 5 of every event. A huge win in the Sheaf Toss all but sealed the deal for me, going into my best events, the light and heavy hammers. The sheaf victory came in clutch, though, as I crashed hard into the net after losing grip on my first hammer throw and never really bounced back. I was able to do just enough to fend off "The Giant Killer" Nick MacPhee for a 3rd place overall finish.

It's not often a guy gets to throw with an Olympic athlete, but I had just such an honor. No Fame Game does an incredible job of attracting elite athletes to the events they're involved with, and the Maine Games was no exception. Nick Ponzio, a shot putter who represented Italy in the 2021 Tokyo games was in the group, competed with us at his second ever Highland Games. He put together a solid performance overall, but really wowed both the crowd and the athletes when he launched the Open Stone over SIXTY

feet. There haven't been many such throws in the entire history of the event, and it was special to see it in person.

A triumph of Tradition and Togetherness

One of the things, in my opinion, that sets the Scottish Highland Games apart from most sports is the community and camaraderie found at every turn. The burly athletes, the dancers, the clan chieftains and the spectators all celebrate tradition together beautifully. The Maine Highland Games was no different. As we engaged with the spectators more and more throughout the day, they in turn were right there to cheer us on. We even had a nice little entourage of adoring fans that would follow us from event to event!

Saturday night, after the last throw was thrown and the melodies of the drums and bagpipes faded, a fire was lit for us to gather 'round and unwind after the long day. We came together to eat, drink and be merry, just as we would do at our small games in Homer, Alaska or in one of the largest games I've ever competed at in Pleasanton, California. The community we have in this sport is incredible, and as good a reason as any to participate.



Appreciation

I'd like to extend the greatest of appreciation to Jeni McDaniel and the Alaskan Scottish Club for providing me with a travel grant to attend the Maine Highland Games. Once again the Highland community and spirit of generosity prevails, and ASC and Jeni are two beacons within the community! All of the club's sponsors, clans and donors can rest assured their contributions are being allocated with all the benevolence they should be.



The Legends of Heather Ale

By David White

[The Legend of Heather Ale - Folklore Scotland](#)

The legend of Heather Ale has numerous incarnations across both the Mull of Galloway and over the Irish sea. All are similar in that they speak of an Irish King who, having defeated a civilization, was faced with the final two of their

kind and stated he would free them if they would share the secret recipe of Heather Ale.

In the Scottish version, depicted in the below poem by Robert Louis Stevenson, the civilization being wiped out was the Picts and the attackers were the Irish. The story goes that having defeated the Picts throughout Scotland the last few were driven to the Mull of Galloway where all but two were slain. The king sought to retrieve from those two survivors the secret of Heather Ale. Those two survivors were a father and son who had been captured in battle. Upon the king's demands for the recipe for Heather Ale the father told the raiding king that he would tell him the recipe if the king killed his son, for he believed his son would surely kill him if he were to disclose this sacred secret to an outsider. The king then killed the son and upon doing so the father laughed, for while saddened by the loss of his son he knew he had beaten the king. He stated he had never intended to share the recipe, but his son may have and thus, to ensure its secrecy, he had to die. Upon the disclosure of his deception he threw himself from a cliff and died on the rocks below, the secret dying with him.

This was the story I was told when growing up in rural Dumfries & Galloway; however, another similar legend is told in Ireland that dates back via spoken word to the 1600s and likely much earlier. The Irish tales share subtle differences; however, their version speaks of the Vikings as the vanquished civilization and their descriptions seem to correlate to a significant victory by an Irish High King in 1014 against the Vikings. Here too there are two left and offered the chance to live but the recipe is never shared.

Interestingly, the early Irish legends refer to the Heather Ale as "bheoir Lochlannach", or 'Viking Beer', however, it is thought that it was actually a mead-like drink rather than Ale. So unfortunately, modern recreationists may be looking in entirely the wrong direction for that legendary liquor.

Robert Louis Stevenson took a particular likening to this legend and thus wrote this poem.

Heather Ale – A Galloway Legend

By Robert Louis Stevenson

From the bonny bells of heather
They brewed a drink long-syne,
Was sweeter far than honey,
Was stronger far than wine.
They brewed it and they drank it,
And lay in a blessed swound
For days and days together
In their dwellings underground.

There rose a king in Scotland,
A fell man to his foes,
He smote the Picts in battle,
He hunted them like roes.
Over miles of the red mountain
He hunted as they fled,
And strewed the dwarfish bodies
Of the dying and the dead.

Summer came in the country,
Red was the heather bell;

But the manner of the brewing
Was none alive to tell.

In graves that were like children's
On many a mountain head,
The Brewsters of the Heather
Lay numbered with the dead.

The king in the red moorland
Rode on a summer's day;
And the bees hummed, and the curlews
Cried beside the way.

The king rode, and was angry,
Black was his brow and pale,
To rule in a land of heather
And lack the Heather Ale.

It fortune'd that his vassals,
Riding free on the heath,
Came on a stone that was fallen
And vermin hid beneath.
Rudely plucked from their hiding,
Never a word they spoke:
A son and his aged father—
Last of the dwarfish folk.

The king sat high on his charger,
He looked on the little men;
And the dwarfish and swarthy couple
Looked at the king again.

Down by the shore he had them;
And there on the giddy brink—
"I will give you life, ye vermin,
For the secret of the drink."

There stood the son and father
And they looked high and low;
The heather was red around them,
The sea rumbled below.

And up and spoke the father,
Shrill was his voice to hear:
"I have a word in private,
A word for the royal ear.

"Life is dear to the aged,
And honour a little thing;
I would gladly sell the secret,"
Quoth the Pict to the King.
His voice was small as a sparrow's,
And shrill and wonderful clear:
"I would gladly sell my secret,
Only my son I fear.

"For life is a little matter,
And death is nought to the young;
And I dare not sell my honour
Under the eye of my son.
Take him, O king, and bind him,
And cast him far in the deep;
And it's I will tell the secret
That I have sworn to keep."

They took the son and bound him,
Neck and heels in a thong,
And a lad took him and swung him,
And flung him far and strong,

And the sea swallowed his body,
Like that of a child of ten;—
And there on the cliff stood the father,
Last of the dwarfish men.

“True was the word I told you:
Only my son I feared;
For I doubt the sapling courage
That goes without the beard.
But now in vain is the torture,
Fire shall never avail:
Here dies in my bosom
The secret of Heather Ale.”

NOTE TO HEATHER ALE.

Among the curiosities of human nature, this legend claims a high place. It is needless to remind the reader that the Picts were never exterminated, and form to this day a large proportion of the folk of Scotland: occupying the eastern and the central parts, from the Firth of Forth, or perhaps the Lammermoors, upon the south, to the Ord of Caithness on the north. That the blundering guess of a dull chronicler should have inspired men with imaginary loathing for their own ancestors is already strange: that it should have begotten this wild legend seems incredible. Is it possible the chronicler's error was merely nominal? that what he told, and what the people proved themselves so ready to receive, about the Picts, was true or partly true of some anterior and perhaps Lappish savages, small of stature, black of hue, dwelling underground—possibly also the distillers of some forgotten spirit?



Recipe of the Month:

Heather Ale: A Sacred Beverage

By Cathy Steen

When a club member shared the above article for the Thistle, it piqued my interest as a wine and mead maker. Delving into Stephen Harrod Buhner's book, *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers*, I uncovered fascinating history and recipes for heather ale. Here's a summary of what I found:

There is considerable evidence that fermented heather was one of the sacred beverages of the Picts and Celts and an integral part of Druidic sacred life and ceremonies. Shards of pottery found at an archeological site on the Isle of Rhum indicate that fermented beverages containing heather were made as early as 2,000 BCE in Scotland. Both Greeks and Romans highly valued Pictish fermented beverages made from heather honey and heather.

More recent research shows that although heather contains a low (but measurable) amount of narcotic and sedative compounds, the “fogg” (moss) that thinly coats it when grown in the wild contains both narcotic and hallucinogenic properties, as well as containing a wild yeast that was traditionally used to ferment the beverages. As a result, Scottish Heather Beer is made with “vigorously rinsed” heather tops.

Given the time period of the records, and the fact that the Picts were nomads, it's thought to be unlikely that their heather ale contained barley, although today's heather beers get their fermentation sugars from barley, not heather honey. The following is a mead recipe, for a detailed heather beer recipe, please refer to the source cited above.

Don't use heather intended for floral arrangements for this recipe as it may be treated with chemicals to keep it fresh which are not good for the mead nor for imbibers thereof.

Heather Mead

Ingredients:

6 pounds heather honey

10 cups lightly pressed flowering heather tops


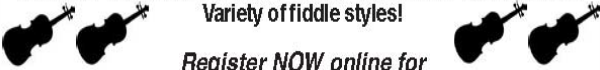


4 gallons water

5 grams dry Windsor brewing (Danstar) yeast

1. Heat water to 170° F, add 6 cups heather flowers, and allow to stand covered overnight.
2. Strain liquid and boil, remove from heat and add the honey. Stir until dissolved.
3. Run hot wort through a sieve filled with 2 cups of heather tips into the fermenting vessel.
4. Allow to cool, add yeast, and ferment until fermentation slows.
5. Remove ½ gallon of the ale, add 2 cups of heather flowers, and warm to 158° F.
6. Cover and steep for 15 minutes, then strain and return to and return to fermenter.
7. When fermentation is complete, prime bottles (if carbonated mead is desired), fill and cap. Store from two weeks to two years for aging.

| Contact Information for Alaska Pipe Bands: | |
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| Crow Creek Pipes & Drums Practice every Monday, 6:00 p.m. First Congregational Church, 2610 E Northern lights Blvd. http://crowcreekpd.com/ | Fairbanks Red Hackle Pipe Band P.O. 82782 Fairbanks, Alaska www.fairbanksredhacklepipeband.org |
| Alaska Celtic Pipes & Drums Lessons on Tuesdays - 6:30 pm - Mat-Su College; Lessons on Fridays - 5:30 pm - Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Chugiak: Band Practice to follow. Contact Richard Christiansen - 907-315-9838 www.alaskacelticpipesdrums.org | Anchorage Scottish Pipe Band Practices Monday, 6:00 to 8:00pm (Anchorage) and Thursday, 6:30 to 8:30pm (Eagle River) Lessons: Thursday, 6:00pm (Eagle River), or by appointment Contact: Tim Kincaid, 907-360-2585; Email: tim@terntech.com Find us on Facebook |
| Alaska Piping and Drumming Society Contact Teddy Krogh at krogh_teddy@hotmail.com | City of Juneau Pipe Band Juneau, Alaska www.cityofjuneaupipeband.org |

Scottish Club Supporters/Club Contacts

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| <p>MAPPING SOLUTIONS</p>  <p>Custom maps and graphics (907) 561-4627 Mapmakers.com</p> | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>AMANDA KERR SUZUKI VIOLIN & FIDDLE STUDIO Weekly Private Lessons and Group Classes for Age 3 and up Variety of fiddle styles!</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Register NOW online for Spring Semester Jan. 14th - May 21st</i></p> <p>Complete Information available on the website: www.amandakerrmusic.com</p> <p><small>Amanda Kerr holds State, Regional, and National titles for Fiddling and is teacher-certified in the Suzuki Method (Every Child Can, Suzuki Principles in Action, Violin Units 1 & 2), and Music Mind Games.</small></p> </div> |
| <p>RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP</p>  <p>Go online to www.alaskanscottish.org and click the membership link. Mail a check to ASC, PO Box 244416, Anchorage, AK 99524. Call 907-602-0901 and provide payment information. Visit the ASC booth community events to pay in person.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Club Scholarship Program</p> <p>The Alaskan Scottish Club Education Assistance Program offers individual grants up to \$500 per applicant for schools or workshops and up to \$1,500 for a post-secondary educational institution. See the club's website for more information and to access the application https://alaskanscottish.org/club-membership/</p> <p>If you have any questions regarding the program, please contact Committee chair, Christa Wallace at Volunteers@alaskanscottish.org</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Back Issues of the Thistle</p> <p>Ever wanted to check out old issues of the Thistle? Maybe to find that steak pie recipe from two years ago, or see who won the tug-o-war at last year's Games? Back issues may be found at: https://us11.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=6523ba4c42aca618e88eb6b99&id=f54a8e4ad1</p> |
| <p>Gaming Permit</p> <p>The ASC possesses an Alaska Gaming Permit. This Permit allows the club to hold our fundraising raffles and auctions. The ASC is allowed to use our permit to sponsor raffles for other Non-Profits for their events and fundraisers. If you are in need of a gaming permit for an upcoming event please let us know.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>The Club can earn airline miles at the same time you earn your own! The Easy Biz program allows the club to earn 1 mile for every dollar spent on the base fare portion of ticket purchases made online through the EasyBiz® website. Simply sign in to EasyBiz for your travel purchases and each purchase will automatically be credited to the Club's account along with your own! Interested in signing up? Send Jeni an email and she will get you on our account! jeni@alaskanscottish.org</p> |

Club Calendar

Scottish Club Board Meeting

September 16, 6 pm
Blood Bank of Alaska Board Room

Samhain with Celtic Community of Alaska

October 26, 2024 6 – 10 pm
Anchorage Senior Activity Center

St Andrew's Night

November 30, 2024

Burns Night

January 25, 2025
49th State Theater

Alaska Scottish Highland Games

June 28 and 29, 2025
Alaska State Fairgrounds, Palmer

Tartan Tourney

July 26, 2025
Settler's Bay Golf Course

The Tundra Thistle, the newsletter of the Alaskan Scottish Club, is published approximately 11 times each year. Subscription is by membership to the Alaskan Scottish Club. Send articles for publication, membership info, and advertising rate inquiries to:

Editor, Tundra Thistle, Alaskan Scottish Club, Inc.
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Thanks to our contributors for the July-August issue: Cathy Steen, Brian Gregg, Jeni McDaniel, Allison Fiscus, Sherri Borchert, Tonda Scott. Photos by John Whipple

Alaskan Scottish Club

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|---------------------------------|--|
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The Alaskan Scottish Club is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity and can accept cash and services. Cash donations are welcome at any time of the year. For those with corporate matching programs, we are eligible for those funds. You can contact the Board of Directors at the above address with questions. Facebook and Instagram contacts are:
Facebook: www.facebook.com/AlaskanScottish (Club page)
www.facebook.com/alaskashg (Highland Games page)
Instagram: www.instagram.com/alaskanscottish

NOTE: Thistle information gratefully received at all times. However, to make the monthly deadline, please submit by the 25th. Send to tundrathistle@alaskanscottish.org



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