



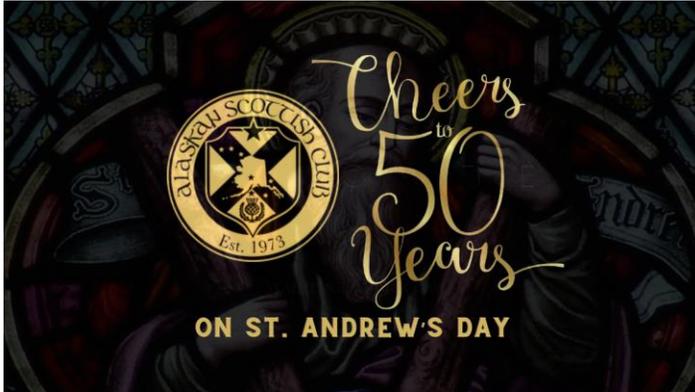
Tundra Thistle

The Newsletter of the Alaskan Scottish Club

Volume 29 Number 10

November 2023

Coming Events:



St Andrews Night Celebration

Join the Alaskan Scottish Club for a cocktail party on St. Andrew's Day, Thursday, November 30, as we celebrate 50 years of sharing Scottish culture, traditions and heritage in Alaska.

There will be live music and entertainment, delicious appetizers, cash bar, volunteer recognition, a fantastic silent auction (see a special sneak peek below), the infamous knobby knees contest and more fun!

This will also be your first chance to purchase this year's Hogmanay Grams and Islay the ASC highland Coo Merch which will make the perfect gift for your Highland Coo loving family and friends.

The festivities will start at 6 with live music, a cash bar, and tasty appetizers. At 7, the evening's entertainment will begin, featuring Alaska Celtic Pipes and Drums.

When: St. Andrew's Day, Thursday, November 30, 2023, 6-9pm

Where: Saint Coyote 135 W Dimond Blvd #111, Anchorage

Member price: \$40.00 Per Person/\$75.00 Per Couple

Nonmembers: \$45.00 Per Person/\$80.00 Per Couple

We have some amazing items for our Silent Auction at St. Andrew's! Here is a little Sneak Peek (photos on page 5):

- Prints from The Kilted Photographer, Thomas Lamont <https://www.thekilted.photo/> (Including The Jedi and Sith Coo, Wallace Memorial, and more!)
- Mythical Beats of Scotland and Castles of Scotland Map Prints by Neil Parkinson <https://www.pucaprinthouse.com/>
- Highland Coo Package (Featuring the cutest Coo Stuff around!)
- Cooking Package (Featuring Gary Maclean's Book: *Kitchen Essentials*)

- Midnight Sun Spurtle Package (Featuring Everything you need to become the greatest Porridge maker in all of the Alaska)
- And that's just a few of the items available! You won't want to miss out on this fun evening and the amazing Silent Auction items.

📣 SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT 📣

Graham McTavish



McTavish Spirits - Official Bourbon

Alaska Scottish Highland Games

We are beyond excited to make a HUGE announcement about the 2024 Alaska Scottish Highland Games! For the 2024 Games, we will be joined by Scottish Actor, Author, and President of McTavish Spirits, Graham McTavish! We are proud to have McTavish Spirits as the official Bourbon of the Alaska Scottish Highland Games! Details of the full McTavish Spirits Alaskan Tour will be announced here first. Expect multiple events from Palmer to Homer over the week!

Share Your Memories

December Special Thistle Issue

In honor of the Club's 50th Anniversary, there will be a special issue of the Thistle to be produced. Please submit your pictures (please annotate with the year and identify the people in the picture) and memories of our Club activities through the years. All submissions, whether selected for publication or not, will be awarded a 50th anniversary commemorative gift.

Submit to tundrathistle@alaskanscottish.org.

Holiday Events

This year we are excited to be out in the community for some fun Holiday events. These events are a great chance to grab some Scottish themed Christmas Presents, Join or Renew your Scottish Club membership and order your Hogmanay Gram (See details on this year's Gram in this issue). We will also have FRESH Welsh Cakes and will have some amazing Holiday flavors (a little elf told me that the Welsh Baker is even going to make some Butterscotch Fireball specially for the ASC). If that was not enough, we are very excited to be introducing our "Coo Corner" at these events. We have procured some of the softest, COOtest, and most sought after Highland Coo items around and will have them ready to go to good homes!



Come visit the Alaskan Scottish Club booth at the Irish Holiday Market Presented by our friends with the Irish Club of Alaska.

Sunday, December 10 12pm-4pm at The Nave Spenard



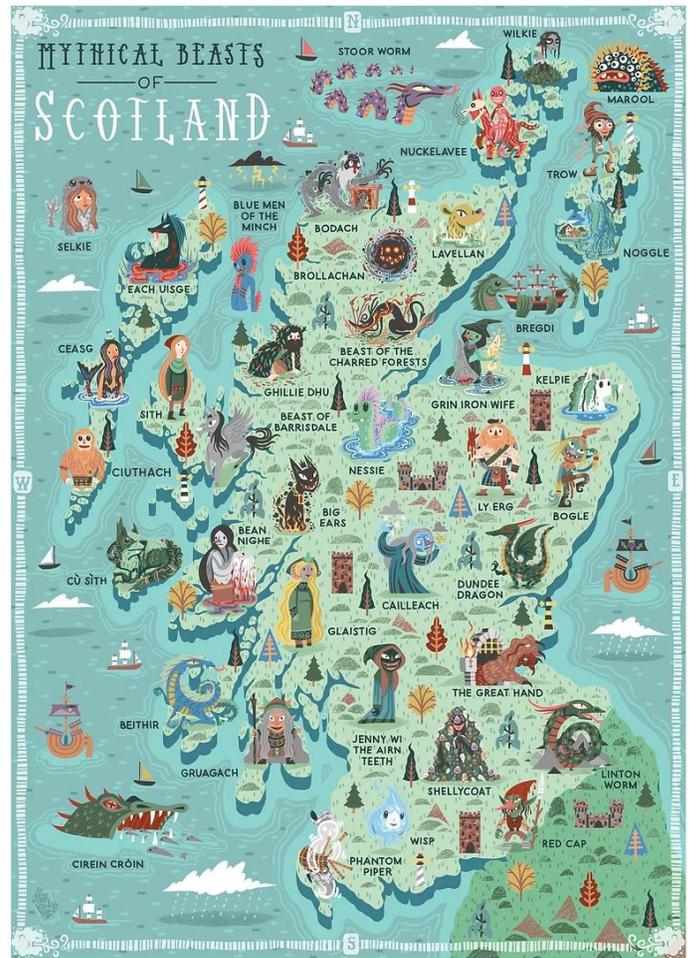
Come visit the Alaskan Scottish Club booth at the Colony Christmas Arts & Crafts Fair in the MatSu Borough Gym.

Saturday 12/9 10am-7pm and Sunday 12/10 11am-4pm

Hogmanay Gram Teaser

This year's Hogmanay Grams are turning out to be mythical and magical! While we have never given any hints to what the theme is or what is inside the box, we are so excited about this year's Grams, we decided to break the rules and give you all a little hint about this year's theme. We are excited to be working with UK artist, Neil Parkinson of Pucaprinthouse and his Mythical Beasts of Scotland Map is the inspiration behind all the gifts in the Hogmanay Grams this year. These will be some entertaining and whimsical Grams, so don't miss out! There are only 100 Grams available and they will go on sale on November 30 at our St. Andrew's Night event and will be available on December 1

online. They will also be available for order at our Holiday events. Remember Grams will be delivered/mailed in time for the New Year.



Clan Corner:

THE PIRATES OF KISIMUL CASTLE

By Thom Eley

Clan MacNeil, Alaska Commissioner for the Clan MacNeil Association of America.

I greatly enjoyed Christa Wallace's article on Scottish pirates—it was well researched and interesting. Keep up the good work, Christa. We need more of these historical articles in Tundra Thistle. I, too, have an interest in pirates, including lecturing about them on cruise ships in the Caribbean. Perhaps my interest is in my MacNeil genes.

Clan McNeil inhabits the island of Barra in the far south of the Outer Hebrides—the last inhabited island. On our island, Kisimul Castle has dominated Castlebay on Barra for at least 600 years. The castle protected the main harbor on Barra which would have been incredibly vulnerable to pirates and other seaborne raiders. Instead, they were protected by this fortress on the rock and secure enough to allow them to cause trouble at sea themselves. Ironically, the MacNeils were notorious pirates who raided south to the Irish Sea and to the north along the Outer Hebrides to the Orkney and Shetland Islands as well as coastal villages on Scotland's coast. MacNeil women were pirates as well. The MacNeil's boats were called Galleys (Birlinn in Scottish

Gaelic) and closely resemble the Viking boats which were common when the Vikings occupied the Outer Hebrides. Galleys were propelled by sail but more often with oars.



Kisimul Castle, Castlebay, Barra, Scotland (Photo courtesy of Cherie Northon, 2018)

In the late 16th century, the most famous MacNeil pirate Ruari MacNeil inhabited the Castle. His piracy caused so much trouble for the Scottish government that he became known as “Ruari the Turbulent.” Ruari was so proficient at piracy he, allegedly, became famously rich. Kisimul Castle was rumored to be decorated with the finest of textiles, and the cellar was filled with European wine. Although a pirate, to the local people on the Isle of Barra, Ruari was a hero who brought wealth to Barra and a clan chief who looked after them.

His raiding of English ships eventually brought Ruari the Turbulent to the attention of Queen Elizabeth I. She was not happy with losing her ships and their cargo often gold. She put an enormous price on his head, but his clansmen wouldn't dream of betraying him. Ruari seemed safe behind the strong walls of Kisimul Castle.



Hebridean Galley, Outer Hebrides, Scotland (Photo courtesy of the National Trust of Scotland)

Elizabeth encouraged King James of Scotland to bring this pirate to justice. The King commanded another west coast chief, Mackenzie of Kintail, to bring Ruari to Edinburgh dead or alive. Mackenzie arrived at Kisimul Castle and invited Ruari onto his ship for a drink of French wine that Mackenzie had just liberated. Ruari had a wee bit too much wine, and, by morning, Ruari awoke in chains on his way to Edinburgh. During his trial, which would probably end in his execution, Ruari was asked to explain his piracy on the English ships.

His excuse resulted in touching the sympathies of the King and the court. He felt it was his duty to avenge the execution of James' mother, Mary Queen of Scots and pirating English ships was the only way he knew how. Regardless of how genuine Ruari's sympathies were, he was allowed to live but not without punishment. Kisimul Castle and the island of Barra were given to Mackenzie as his reward.

Mackenzie agreed to lease his lands back to Ruari and his heirs for only 40 Merks (\$1942.67 US today) per year, allowing him to return to his old ways of piracy. The tradition of cheap rent has continued with Historic Scotland now running Kisimul Castle on a 1000-year lease for only a good bottle of whisky and £1 (\$1.21 US) per year.



Clan MacNeil's Clan Chief Roderick Wilson MacNeil (right) and me on the steps of Kisimul Castle at the World Gathering of Clan MacNeil on Barra. (Photo courtesy of Cherie Northon, 2018)

Executive Director Report

It's amazing how much goes on year around with the Club. With the continued growth of the Games, it sometimes feels like planning is a year-round job, but in the few months between the wrap up of the Highland Games and St. Andrew's Night (which kicks off our holiday themed events) there is a lot of housekeeping that must be attended to.

This year one of the bigger projects that had to be handled was replacing our beloved Big Red Athletic Trailer. Unfortunately, it couldn't handle the snow last winter and the roof collapsed. This trailer was used to move and store the majority of our Athletic Equipment (Cabers, Weights, Highlight Standards, Fencing, etc).

For those who may not know, we have 4 trailers that are stored at the Alaska State Fairgrounds Year-round. These trailers hold all games related items, tables, chairs, coolers, Scotch Tasting Glasses, VIP Tent items, dance stage, fencing, all the fun stuff! The board researched different options and decided the best option would be to purchase a Connex.

This newly organized connex gives us the ability to access equipment year-round without hassle. It also gives us more room as we take on more and the Games continues to grow. A BIG Thank you to Board Members, Nelson, Michael, and David for all the heavy lifting and planning in this transition.

I am happy to report that we sold our trusty Big Red trailer to some folks who are going to give it a good second life after they spend some time making the needed repairs on the roof.



Last year our Games, with the help of our amazing sponsorship team (thank you Cathy, Tonda and Dorothy) dramatically increased our sponsorships, both in kind and cash. We are continuing this momentum and fund-raising efforts by getting an early start this year with potential new sponsors and grants. I have been spending time creating a timeline of major donor and grant deadlines. This will help us in continue to develop a solid sponsorship program that will be extended throughout the year, not just at games time.

Another project that gets some serious attention this time of year is the Club Storage Locker. As you can imagine, after the game's items get returned it sometimes needs some help getting back to working order. This is a large task but it's also a fun one! Along with using this storage unit to house Games and other event items, it is also home to our "Merchandise Department." When you place an online order, our Merchandise Team (aka yours truly) heads over to the Unit to pull , package and ship your order.

Going into the Holiday season, I hope you and yours have a wonderful time. I also hope to see many of you at our upcoming events. As always, if you have an event you would like to see the Scottish Club participate in or host, please reach out! 907-602-0901 or jeni@alaskanscottish.org



Equipment Manager (and board member) Nelson Alger assists with positioning of the new club connexion.

From Scotland to Canada, a totem pole finally returns home

By Nadine Yousif & Eloise Alanna

After almost a century and a journey of thousands of miles, an artefact taken from Canada is now home. It is the first totem pole to be returned from a British museum to an indigenous community - a potentially precedent-setting moment in the broader move towards museum repatriation.

Museum curator Marius Barbeau had been eyeing the totem pole for some time. It was the late 1920s, and the Canadian ethnographer had paid many visits to the Ank'idaa village in the Nass Valley, an indigenous community nestled between picturesque mountains, creeks and waterfalls in a remote part of British Columbia (BC). There, he would photograph interesting items and send those pictures to museums around the world. One item in particular, the Ni'isjoohl memorial pole, caught the attention of the Royal Scottish Museum - now known as the National Museum of Scotland. They offered him between C\$400 (\$295; £240) and C\$600 for the pole - estimated to be about C\$7,000 and C\$10,000 today - and Mr Barbeau obliged.

In the summer of 1929, when most Nisga'a people were away working, hunting, or fishing, he and his team simply took it. The 11m (36ft) pole, carved mostly from a single piece of red cedar, had been commissioned to honour a warrior named Ts'wawit, who had died in battle. After cutting the pole down, Mr Barbeau's team bundled it onto a raft that floated down the river to Prince Rupert, on a journey that would eventually see it shipped more than 6,700km (4,200 miles) away to Edinburgh. "We never gave him permission to steal our pole," Amy Parent, whose great-great grandmother was the one to commission it in 1855 to honour her warrior son, told the BBC.

Now, nearly a century later, the Ni'isjoohl memorial pole is back in Nass Valley, welcomed by hundreds with an event marking its arrival on Friday. The pole will be on display permanently at the Nisga'a Museum - a modern building with a stunning glass facade and surrounded by snow-capped mountains.



The Ni'isjoohl memorial pole has been on display at the National Museum of Scotland since 1930. As it arrived, the morning's misty weather shifted, leading to remarks on how the artefact was basking in its first sunshine in a long while. Children placed cedar branches around the pole as it lay on its side in the light, and people queued to walk past and take pictures.

It was a historic "rematriation" not only for the family of Ms Parent, whose Nisga'a cultural name is Noxs Ts'aawit, but also for the indigenous nation of around 600 people. "It sets out what we can do for our families who know about other artefacts that may have been taken from their possession," said Eva Clayton, president of the Nisga'a Nation. The return of the Ni'isjoohl pole could also set a precedent in a broader repatriation movement gaining steam around the world, as indigenous communities and nation states ask museums to return artefacts.

The journey home

The quest to get the pole back began last year, when a delegation, including Ms Parent, visited the National Museum of Scotland to formally ask for its return. Ms Parent told the BBC that she felt emotional as soon as she entered the room where the pole was displayed. "As we came up that escalator, we could feel the breath of our ancestors as we walked into the Living Lands exhibit where the pole was being housed," she said.

The delegation explained to museum and government officials how the totem pole was taken and asked for its return without any conditions.



The totem pole was commissioned by Amy Parent's great-great-grandmother

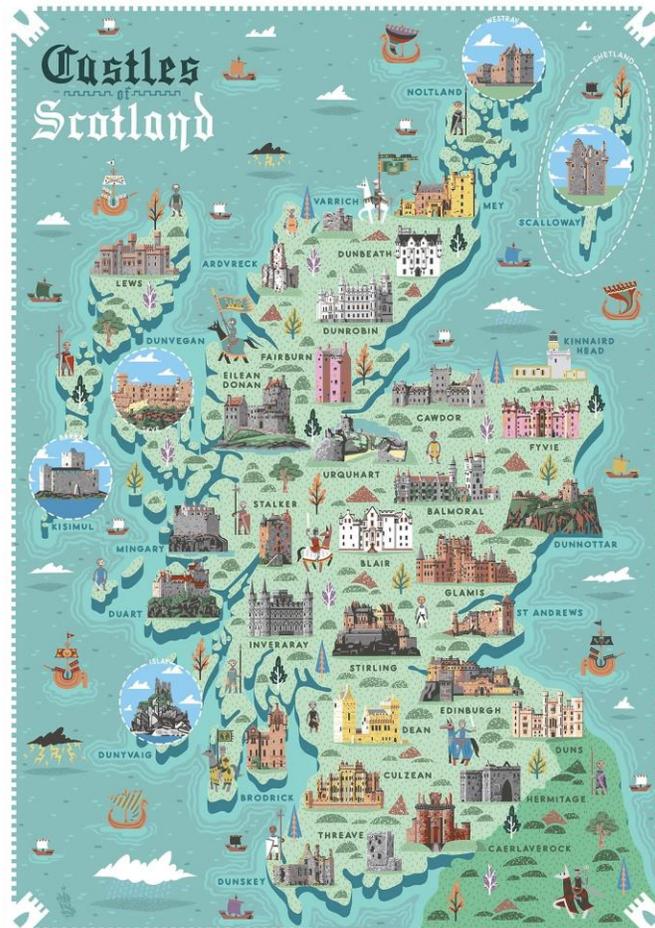
Within those conversations, Ms Parent said the delegation formed a deep connection with the Scottish representatives over a shared history of colonialism and its impact. By December, the museum and the Scottish government knew what they would do. It was going home. "This is the place where the spiritual and cultural significance for the pole is most keenly felt, and it makes absolute sense for it to be here with its people," said Chanté St Clair Inglis, the head of collections services at the National Museum of Scotland, who attended the welcome ceremony in BC.

The pole began its month-long journey home this summer, starting with it being carefully manoeuvred out of a museum window and flown across the Atlantic to BC by the Royal Canadian Air Force. It will be housed permanently in the Nisga'a Nation, where a place for it had been carved in the ground to symbolise a return to its roots.

Ms Parent said the community members will finally be able to learn the story of Ts'wawit and the significance of the artefact. "We've always wanted our children to be able to not work so hard in order to understand the stories of who we are," she said.

In Scotland, the national museum said it will use the totem pole's now empty exhibit space to share the story of its return. "This isn't about us losing something," Ms Inglis said. "This is about developing a relationship and telling [the pole's] story in a much better way."

Sneak Peek at St. Andrew's Night Auction Items



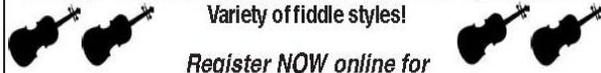
Castles of Scotland Print



The Jedi Coo (photo by the Kilted photographer)

Contact Information for Alaska Pipe Bands:	
<p>Crow Creek Pipes & Drums Practice every Monday, 6:00 p.m. First Congregational Church, 2610 E Northern lights Blvd. http://crowcreekpd.com/</p>	<p>Fairbanks Red Hackle Pipe Band P.O. 82782 Fairbanks, Alaska www.fairbanksredhacklepipeband.org</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Alaska Piping and Drumming Society Contact Teddy Krogh at krogh_teddy@hotmail.com</p>	<p>City of Juneau Pipe Band Juneau, Alaska www.cityofjuneaupipeband.org</p>

Scottish Club Supporters

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Club Calendar

Scottish Club Board Meeting

November 20, 6:00 pm
BP Energy Center

ASC 50th Anniversary Party St. Andrew's Day

Thursday, November 30, 6:00 – 9:00
Saint Coyote
135 W Dimond Blvd #111, Anchorage
Tickets at: www.alaskanscottish.org

Irish Holiday Market

Sunday, December 10 12pm-4pm
at The Nave Spenard

Colony Christmas Arts & Crafts Fair

Saturday 12/9 10am-7pm, Sunday 12/10 11am-4pm
MatSu Borough Gym.

Burns Night
January 2024
Details next month

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:

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P.O. Box 244416 Anchorage, AK 99524-4416

Thanks to our contributors for the November: Cathy Steen, Christa Wallace, Jeni McDaniel and Thom Eley. Photos by Cherie Northon

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Cell: 907-602-0901

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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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