

HEATHER BELL

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALEDONIAN & ST. ANDREWS SOCIETY OF SEATTLE

www.caledonians.com

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NEXT GATHERING

Our December gathering will be on Sunday, December 8th.

As usual, we will gather at 2:00 pm at Haller Lake United Methodist Church, 13055 1st Ave. NE, Seattle, WA. 98125.

We will have a Christmas program with Christian Skoorsmith playing his small pipes and also leading us in a few Christmas carols.

Facebook

The Caledonians have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/seattlecaledonians/?ref=bookmarks>

Diana Smith frequently posts interesting articles and notices, so check back often.

Sunshine Report

Bonnie Munro sends cards to members who are ill. If you know of anyone who needs a card, please let her know.

She reminds people that she does not have e-mail, so please call her when you have information about Caledonians who are ill or passed away. Her phone is 425-806-3734.

Calendar of Seattle Area Scottish Events

December

7 Christmas Parade, Enumclaw, WA 6:00 pm

7 "A Winter Gift" Celtic Holiday Concert, Littlefield Celtic Center, 1124 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon, WA.

7:00. \$35. 360-416-4934 <https://celticarts.org/celtic-events/holiday-19/>

8 Caledonian & St. Andrews Society Gathering, 2:00 pm. Haller Lake United Methodist Church, 13055 1st Ave. NE, Seattle, WA. 98125. <http://www.caledonians.com>

8 Northwest Chamber Chorus, "A Child's Christmas in Wales", Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, 7500 Greenwood Ave. N., Seattle. 7:30pm. \$25, \$20. <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316398>

9 Celtic Arts Foundation Annual Holiday Open House. Littlefield Celtic Center, 1124 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon, WA. 3:30-6:30pm. Free. 360-416-4934 <https://celticarts.org/celtic-events/openhouse19/>

10 SSHGA Meeting, 7:30 pm. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church 111 NE 80th St., Seattle, WA. Info: (206) 522-2541

12-13 Geoffrey Castle Celtic Christmas Concert, Kirkland Performance Center, 350 Kirkland Ave., Kirkland WA. 425-893-9900 7pm. \$42 <http://www.kpcenter.org/event/geoffrey-castles-12th-annual-celtic-christmas-celebration/>

14 Northwest Chamber Chorus, "A Child's Christmas in Wales". Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, 7500 Greenwood Ave. N., Seattle. 7:30pm. \$20, \$25 <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316412>

Interesting Website

Rampant Scotland is a useful website for anyone looking for links to all things Scottish, whether you are looking for accommodations or information about clans, castles, history, genealogy, tartans, or tourism. Check it out at <http://www.rampantscotland.com/>.

Re-Cap of October Gathering

Caledonians gathered on November 10th to see pictures Tom Lamb had from his trip to Scotland last summer.

Articles and Topics About Scotland and Things Scottish

From *The Scottish Banner*

How an Edinburgh grave inspired a Christmas Carol

His visit to Edinburgh in 1841 was a whirl of activity; the young Charles Dickens, not yet 30 but already the acclaimed author of soon-to-be classics such as *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, was feted at parties, given the freedom of the city and applauded for a literary lecture.

But somewhere in between meeting Edinburgh's glitterati and being mobbed by an adoring public during his 12-day stay, the author managed to fit in a stroll through Canongate Kirkyard. And here he came across something which proved rather more valuable than any of the dinners given in his honour by lords and ladies – it was the inspiration for one of his most famous characters. He came across a tombstone engraved “Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie - a meal man” and misread it as “mean man”, an epitaph that haunted him. He wrote in his notebook: “I thought it was a grievous message for Eternity. The Scots are famous for frugality but mean man was an advertisement of a shrivelled soul... this was the emblem of a life surely wasted.”

But it was the shrivelled soul of the slightly renamed Scrooge which captured the public's imagination when *A Christmas Carol* was published two years later. The story of Ebenezer Scrooge and his miserly ways, and his visits one Christmas Eve from four ghosts – that of his former business partner and of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet To Come – who teach him to change his ways is famous around the globe. And it is in a graveyard, confronted with the neglected tomb bearing his own name, that Scrooge repents his past and promises he is not the man he was.

But Dickens' misreading of meal man – meaning corn merchant – for mean man has had the consequence that the real Ebenezer Scroggie has now gone down in history as the inspiration for the world's most miserly man. “By all accounts,

Scroggie was a really jovial, happy generous sort of guy, someone who doesn't really deserve to be associated with the Ebenezer Scrooge we know,” says Tony Cownie, the writer and director of *An Edinburgh Christmas Carol*, this year's festive production at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in the Scottish capital, which sets the story back in the city which inspired it.

Scroggie, a cousin of the economist Adam Smith, was born in Kirkcaldy in 1792 – the name comes from a village in Perthshire. A merchant dealing in wine, whisky and corn, Scroggie secured the first contract to supply whisky to the Royal Navy offices at Leith, and even became the chief beverages supplier for King George IV's visit to the Capital in 1822, providing bottles of “Scroggie's Highland Brandie”. He lived in the Grassmarket and was well-known for throwing parties – legend has it that he goosed the Countess of Mansfield at a General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and that he got a maidservant pregnant.

He died in 1836 and was buried in the Kirkyard's cemetery - metres away from his famous cousin Adam Smith and just five years before Dickens' stroll. The grave itself was lost in 1932 in redevelopment work.

Edinburgh Castle becomes “Castle of Light”

History is set to come to life at Edinburgh Castle this winter, as the iconic landmark is illuminated with tales from Scotland's past. The mesmerising 90-minute journey of light, sound and wonder, entitled *Castle of Light*, will treat guests to an evening of dazzling animations, never seen before at the castle in its 900 year history.

Running throughout the festive season to Sunday 22nd December, the castle will be transformed using state-of-the-art projections and enchanting storytelling.

The event which will be the biggest light experience to hit the city centre, bringing together a consortium of the finest digital and visual talent in Scotland to create a truly immersive experience which will captivate locals and visitors alike every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Hogmanay Traditions

First Footing - The "first foot" in the house after midnight is still very common in Scotland. To ensure good luck, a first footer should be a dark-haired man. Fair-haired first footers were not particularly welcome after the Viking invasions of ancient times. Traditional gifts include a lump of coal to lovingly place on the host's fire, along with shortbread, a black bun and whisky to toast to a Happy New Year. These days shortbread and whisky will suffice. Showing up empty handed is not only very rude but also bad luck!

Redding the house - Rather than a Spring clean, the Scots have a New Year's clean to welcome in the New Year. Starting the New Year with a dirty house is bad luck. When open fires were common, people would clear the ashes and lay a new fire for the New Year. Cleaning one's house also extends to clearing one's debts. An old Scottish superstition states that you should try to clear all your debts before the stroke of midnight.

Saining of the House - This is very old rural tradition that involved blessing the house and livestock with holy water from a local stream. Although it had nearly died out, in recent years it has experienced a revival. After the blessing with water, the woman of the house was supposed to go from room to room with a smouldering juniper branch, filling the house with purifying smoke.

From *The Scotsman Newspaper*

Painstaking clean-up of Scottish Viking hoard unlocks new secrets

Growing evidence is emerging that the contents of the Galloway Hoard, which was discovered by a metal detectorist five years ago, have been drawn from across Europe and Asia.

Tiny traces of linen, silk, wood and leather have been analysed during two years of detective work on the hoard has helped develop theories that some objects are several centuries older than previously thought. The careful wrapping of more than 100 gold, silver and jewelled treasures is set to shed new light on how long it was accumulated for before being buried in Galloway nearly 1,000 years ago.

Dr Martin Goldberg, principal curator of archaeology and history, said the extensive

conservation work was resulting in new information about where times came from and how old they were. While a burial date around AD 900 is still the consensus of investigators, they believe many items may be several centuries older, and have come from other places in Europe than homeland of Vikings.



Identifying gold, silver, and jeweled treasures is just the beginning. For one thing, many objects were wrapped in multiple layers of material, including silk, linen, wood, and leather, making conservation efforts more difficult. It's not a simple matter of cleaning off corrosion, for instance, since the corrosion has potential traces of one or more materials embedded in it. Radio carbon dating will eventually be used to help identify a chronological record for when wrapping materials were created.

A major exhibition of restored items from the Viking hoard will open in 2020, before going on tour.

From *rampantscotland.com*

Lighthouse Beacons from Scotland

Barra Head Lighthouse



Barra Head is on the west side of the island of Berneray at the top edge of a very steep cliff. The tower is built of stone and is only 58 feet high, but the light is 693 feet above sea level and has a range of 18 miles.

It was engineered by Robert Stevenson of the famous Stevenson family of lighthouse builders, father of Robert Louis Stevenson, the author. Its oil burning light first shone on 15 October 1833. The light was converted to incandescent 1906 and a Wireless Beacon was established there in 1936. Its day characteristic is a white conical tower and its night is flashing white every 15 seconds.

Butt of Lewis Lighthouse



This lighthouse is located at the most northerly point of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. It is 37 metres high and can be seen 25 miles into the Atlantic. Unlike other lighthouses constructed of “common brick,” this one features red bricks, since its builder, David Stevenson (also of the lighthouse building family) believed that red brick would better withstand exposure to the sea. Built in 1862, it initially displayed a fixed light fed by fish oil. Eventually the light was changed to flash every 20 seconds and was powered by paraffin. Because the flashing light was achieved with a fixed light source housed inside a large lens, the light keeper had to wind the clockwork motor by hand every ½ hour during the evenings. This necessitated three keepers, and they with their families lived at the station. Because of its location and the lack of adequate road structure in the Isle of Lewis, supplies and fuel had to be delivered by sea.

Scottish Memory Lane -

Coal Fires



Fires to provide heating inside houses goes back a long way, but it is really only since the 16th and 17th centuries that houses other than castles and large mansion houses had fireplaces and chimneys to take away the resulting smoke. By the end of the 20th century most homes had changed to “central heating” of various types and coal fires had rapidly declined. While there still is nostalgia for the flickering flames of a coal fire, the reality was often not particularly attractive.

The original “black houses” in the north of Scotland had the fire in the middle of the main living area, and the smoke ideally vented through a hole in the roof. It was considered to be a great advance when people could have a source of heat and clear smoke from the house by having it go up a chimney.

Coal fires, however, were labor intensive. Every morning the ashes from the previous day had to be shoveled out of the hearth and a new fire lit. In houses wealthy enough to have servants tasked with this duty, the family could avoid this labor. However, in tenements in cities or in the countryside, it was often the wives who were up early to get the main fire going. In many city tenements, the only room with a fire was the main living area.

Coal delivery vehicles were a frequent sight in the streets of towns. The last step in the mine-to-house transportation process was getting the bags of coal from the street to the coal “bunker” which was either in the house or outside if there was a garden. The delivery men carried the 100-pound sacks on their backs, sometimes up five flights of stairs!

Coal fires created a lot of soot, leading to smog in certain weather conditions, particularly in cities. Most of the soot particles accumulated in chimneys as



creosote, requiring an army of chimney sweeps to go around house to house, removing the soot. Ideally, this involved blocking the chimney and sweeping the soot from the top of the chimney down to the foot, to be taken away, hopefully without too much escaping into the house.

Some larger houses and others that were badly designed didn't respond to the brushes and young children would be sent down the chimney to do the cleaning by hand.

Oddly, in Britain it is considered lucky for a bride to see a chimney sweep on her wedding day. This "good luck" was shown to good effect in the "Mary Poppins" film of 1965.

Washing Day



In the days before automatic washing machines and spin dryers, all clothing had to be cleaned by hand. Some larger houses would have a dedicated room for doing this but often the washing was taken to a communal wash house. In larger cities, this would be a large building, busy from morning to night with housewives bringing their washing to the "Steamie", not just to clean clothes but to gossip and chat with other women who lived in the area. In smaller groups of houses there would be a communal wash house with nearby residents given a designated day to turn up.

A fire would be started to heat the boiler. The whites were first boiled and then wrung out and rinsed repeatedly in the sink to make sure they were free of soap. They had to be white as the driven snow, otherwise the neighbors would talk!

In smaller towns wet wash would be hung out in the back garden to dry, and children were not allowed to play in that area if any washing was on the lines.

Some people remember being treated to a hot bath using the still-warm wash water afterward.

Dancing and Dance Halls

Dancing became an extremely popular leisure pursuit in Scotland in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in Glasgow, which was (and still is) Scotland's largest city. It was strictly ballroom dancing but by the 1920s there were eleven major ballrooms in Glasgow and about 20 smaller venues, which was more than anywhere else in Britain.

Some of the finest ballrooms in the world were said to be in Glasgow. In the large ballrooms such as the Locarno (later renamed Tiffany's and later still became a cinema), Plaza, Dennistoun Palais, La Scala, Majestic, Green's Playhouse, Barrowland (See graphic on the right) and Dixon's Halls in Cathcart, dress was still fairly formal and the dance steps were strictly regulated - which certainly would help avoid stepping on a partner's toes!



On Christmas Eve in 1934, one of the most famous ballrooms in the city - Barrowland - opened and stayed open even during the Second World War.

The neon sign was taken down during the

war years as "Lord Haw Haw" mentioned in his propaganda broadcasts from Nazi Germany that German planes had been using it to navigate by! In 1948, the dance floor at Barrowland was enlarged to be able to accommodate 2,000 dancers - and frequently had that number, with queues all around the building waiting to get in.



A fellowship founded in Seattle in 1902 to foster a love of Scotland, her people, and her heritage.

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