

HEATHER BELL

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALEDONIAN & ST. ANDREWS SOCIETY OF SEATTLE

www.caledonians.com

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JANUARY GATHERING

Our January gathering will be on the **third** Sunday, **January 18th**, at 2:00 p.m. We will meet at Haller Lake United Methodist Church, 13055 1st Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98125.

The gathering will be hybrid: in-person and on Zoom. The link for those who attend on Zoom is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/713418301?pwd=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjlxQT09>

JANUARY PROGRAM

The January program will be a celebration of Robert Burns.

SCOTTISH MOVIE NIGHT

The Scottish Movie Night for January will be on Sunday, January 25th at 6:00 p.m.

We will view the film *Red Rose*. The film follows the life of Robert Burns as told from the viewpoint of the father of his wife, Jean.

The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/713418301?pwd=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjlxQT09>

SUNSHINE REPORT

Bonnie reported that she sent a card to Bill McFadden who received a pacemaker in December to regulate his heartbeat. Bonnie also reported that she fell in November and injured her tailbone. She is recovering slowly. (Maybe we should be sending cards to her!)

Contact Bonnie Munro at 425-806-3734 if you know a Caledonian who would appreciate receiving a card.

Calendar of Seattle Area Scottish Events

January

18 Caledonian & St. Andrews Society Gathering, 2:00pm, Haller Lake United Methodist Church, 13055 1st Ave. NE., Seattle, WA <https://caledonians.org>
206-714-2601

25 Caledonian Scottish Movie Night. 6pm on Zoom

From Your Social Director

As some of you may have heard, the Wednesday before Christmas I had an incident of dehydration. The EMT's who were called in were the biggest I have ever seen! They took me to UW Northwest Hospital ER.

The dehydration was serendipitous because after a batch of tests, doctors found that the upper two chambers of my heart were doing the cha-cha-cha while the lower chambers were doing a waltz. So, "Mr. McFadden, you need a pacemaker now!" That surgery was done on Friday, and I came home late on Saturday evening, so I was home in time for Christmas.

After a couple of follow-up visits to the Heart Institute and my own doctor, it appears that I'm going to be okay, but I don't want to go through that again! All's well now.

Yours, aye,
Bill

Recap of November Gathering

Members in person and those on Zoom enjoyed viewing videos of Scottish history.

Articles and Topics About Scotland and Things Scottish

Information based on articles in *The Scottish Banner*, *The Scotsman newspaper* & using *Wikipedia* and various other websites pertaining to the topics for supplemental information.

Scottish Folklore in Winter

Scottish folklore is rich in stories and superstition. Cailleach, the goddess of winter, is a key figure in Celtic mythology where she is the divine hag. Credited with forming Scotland's mountains and islands, she ushers in winter each year. She displays several traits befitting the personification of winter: she herds deer, she opposes spring, and her staff freezes the land.

Highland legends often describe encounters with her as an old woman. From the Iron Age until the 19th century, belief in the Cailleach in the Highlands and Islands would have been nearly universal.

Celebrations of the New Year

Before calendar reform, Scots marked New Year on January 11, under the Julian calendar, now known as **Old Hogmanay**. Even after Scotland adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1600 and Britain followed in 1752, rural Highland and island communities, especially those with Norse traditions like Shetland and the Outer Hebrides, continued to celebrate the old date, reflecting enduring customs of fire, kinship, and renewal.

Burghead, a village on the Moray Coast with a population just under 2,000, comes alive for the



Burning of the Clavie.

This centuries-old fire festival is held on January 11th and reflects the local community's historical refusal to adopt the new Gregorian calendar.

Townpeople light a

barrel of tar filled with burning staves and carry it through town. The flaming barrel is eventually placed on Doorie Hill atop the ramparts of the ancient fort, where it is allowed to burn out. Embers from the Clavie are collected by townspeople who believe they bring good luck for the coming year. Tradition dictates that members of the 'Clavie Crew' must be natives of the town.

Kirkwall, a town on Orkney adjusted to the change in the date of the New Year and use it for a centuries-old street football tradition pitting two local teams – the Uppies and the Doonies – against each other in a fierce, rule-free contest, a battle for the ba'. Every 1st of January, the narrow streets of Kirkwall transform into a battlefield for the Ba' game, a custom believed to date back to the Norse era. Shops and homes along the route are barricaded in advance, as the surging scrum can spill into doorways and windows.



The match begins under the steeple of the stunning St Magnus Cathedral, where a hand-crafted leather ball is thrown into a dense crowd of players. From there, chaos ensues: the Uppies aim to force the ball to Mounthoolie Lane at the town's upper end,

while the Doonies strive to reach Kirkwall Bay at the harbour. The game can take hours!

The Ba' is divided into the Boys' Ba' in the morning and the Men's Ba' in the afternoon, ensuring the tradition is passed down through generations. There are no time limits, no fixed team sizes, and virtually no rules apart from the shared understanding of the goals. Victory is achieved when the ball touches the designated goal.

Beyond its physical intensity, the Ba' embodies Orcadian culture. Players join sides based on family allegiance, birthplace, or tradition, reinforcing Kirkwall's social fabric. Though there have been numerous injuries during this unique event, for locals the Ba' is more than a game – it is a living link to Orkney's unique Viking past, a celebration of resilience, rivalry, and belonging.

Hogmanay 2026 in Edinburgh



Military Roads in Scotland

After the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 King George I made General George Wade the Commander-in-chief in North Britain. He arrived in Scotland in July 1724 and discovered that many people in the Highlands were ready to rebel again. It was clear that government troops needed better roads and river crossings to help them stop any future rebellions.

Wade began building the first of his four military roads a year later. Roads were between 10 and 16 feet wide depending on the terrain. Building teams had 100 men and were led by corporals, sergeants, and a captain. They often had drummers, too. Skilled workers like masons and carpenters were hired to ensure that big structures like bridges were built well. Inns called Kingshouses were built near camps established every ten miles.

Road construction halted during the harsh winters, so roadbuilding was limited to between April and October each year. Summers were tough too, due to bad weather and many midges.



A well-preserved part of General Wade's Military Road near Melgarve.

The roads cost about £90 per mile, an extravagant amount at the time. The bridge over the River Tay at Aberfeldy was very expensive at a cost of over £4000.

A total of about 1100 miles of military roads were built between 1725 and 1767. Wade himself accounted for

300 miles before retiring in 1747

and turning the task over to Major William Caulfeild who built the remaining 800 miles. Military road building stopped when Caulfeild died in 1767.



Bridge over the River Tay at Aberfeldy

Roads in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire existed long before the military, but from about 1752, Caulfeild's troops helped improve about 250 miles of road with the military paying part of the cost.

As the Jacobite threat faded in the late 1700s, the military no longer needed to keep the roads in good shape. Some parts were completely abandoned if they were not useful for trade. Travelers avoided the steeper parts, which were not good for coaches. By 1790, only 600 miles were still usable.

In 1803, the Commissioners of Highland Roads and Bridges were created and took over keeping the roads in repair after the military stopped doing it.



Near Tomatin

Miles of old roads can still be seen today. They are either completely abandoned or used as paths for walking and mountain biking.



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

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