

# HEATHER BELL

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALEDONIAN & ST. ANDREWS SOCIETY OF SEATTLE

[www.caledonians.com](http://www.caledonians.com)

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## NEXT GATHERING

Our next gathering is **Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**, at 2:00 p.m. **Yes, we know that day is Mother's Day**, but the church is not available on other Sundays. We will meet at Haller Lake United Methodist Church, 13055 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98125. For those taking the freeway north, use the exit at NE 130<sup>th</sup> St in Seattle, turn left across the freeway, and turn right at the first light (1<sup>st</sup> Ave. NE.) The church is one block north, on the left.

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=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjkxQT09>

## MAY PROGRAM

Molly Bauckham will provide a program of harp music and vocals for the May gathering. She will play and sing songs of Robert Burns and other well-loved Scottish folk songs.

## SCOTTISH MOVIE NIGHT

Our May Scottish Movie Night will be on Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>. Again, it will start at 6:00 p.m. We will enjoy "Wee Geordie". This charming Scottish comedy tells the fictionalized story of a 99-pound weakling who grows up to be a hammer thrower in the 1956 Olympics.

These movie nights have been very popular, and we urge more Caledonians to join us. The Zoom link is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/713418301?pwd=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjkxQT09>

## SUNSHINE REPORT

Bonnie reported that she sent a sympathy card to Jim Van Zee after his daughter's death. She also sent get-well cards to Fay Griffin after her heart surgery and Bill McFadden after his skin cancer surgery.

If you know of a Caledonian who would be cheered by a card, let Bonnie Munro know. She can be reached by phone at 425-806-3734.

## Recap of the April Caledonian Gathering

Ten people in person and four on-line enjoyed an interesting program put on by President Tom Lamb about the history of music in Scotland. Tom provided considerable information about the different kinds of music in Scotland and how it changed over the years, illustrating his talk with samples of the music. Prior to that Tom led off with a brief program about the origins and music of Tartan Day.

## Recap of Tartan Day Ceremonies

By Diane McAlister

Tartan Day 2024 was held on a stunningly beautiful day (first glorious Washington State Tartan Day



celebration in memory?) on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Jim and May Heltsley and Harry and Diane McAlister were the only Caledonians present, as the event was a week later than usual and held on the same day as our April Caledonian gathering.

Debra Ross, of Clan Ross, presided over the event which

began with the entrance of the Olympia Highlanders Pipe Band, as well as members of the Tacoma Scots Pipe Band.

Following Debra Ross' welcoming statements, Alan McEachern sang the national anthems of Canada, Scotland and the U.S. A brief history of Tartan Day was given by Debra Ross and 'Mary, Queen of Scots' read the Declaration of Arbroath.



The pipe bands played 'Amazing Grace' in memory of Caledonian member Chuck Cook who passed away this past year and was instrumental in establishing Tartan Day in Washington State.

Following closing remarks, many of those present retired to Tugboat Annie's restaurant for additional socialization and refreshments!

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## Calendar of Seattle Area Scottish Events

### May

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

**26 Caledonian Scottish Movie Night** 6pm on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/713418301?pwd=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjlxQT09>

### June

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

**22 Tacoma Highland Games,** Frontier Park, 21714 Meridian Ave. E., Graham, WA

**23 Caledonian Scottish Movie Night** 6pm on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/713418301?pwd=K1ZUQnBOSE53YURUYjE4SW4ySjlxQT09>

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## 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.

## Robert Burns Collection Now Online

The National Trust for Scotland's Museum and Archive Collection from the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum are now available for everyone, everywhere, to explore online. The Robert Burns Collection gives unprecedented access to manuscripts, archives, and artifacts related to Scotland's bard, including 1,000 pieces that are off public view and held in storage for their long-term preservation and protection.

[Robert Burns Birthplace Museum | National Trust for Scotland \(nts.org.uk\)](https://nts.org.uk)

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## The Black Watch

The Black Watch is the oldest Highland Regiment, formed in 1725 following the Jacobite rebellion of 1715, when General George Wade was authorised by George I to form six "watch" companies to patrol the Highlands of Scotland, three from Clan Campbell, one from Clan Fraser of Lovat, one from Clan Munro and one from Clan Grant.

These watch companies were to police the Highlands at a time when many of the clans harboured pro-Jacobite sympathies. Their charge was to disarm the Highlanders, prevent depredations, bring criminals to justice, and hinder rebels and attainted persons from inhabiting that part of the kingdom.

In 1739, King George II commanded that four more companies be trained and added to the six existing companies, creating one single infantry regiment known as The Black Watch. The regiment's motto is *Nemo Me Impune Lacessit* (No One Assails Me With Impunity). There was one condition to join, and it was that all the men must be native to Scotland.

They became known in Gaelic as *Am Freiceadan Dubh*, "the dark" or "black watch." This epithet likely was derived from the dark colour of the tartan the men wore and the companies' role to "watch" over the Highlands.

Other theories for the name have been put forward; for instance, that the name referred to the "black hearts" of the pro-government militia who had sided with the "enemies of true Highland spirit", or that it came from their original duty in policing the Highlands, namely preventing "blackmail"

(Highlanders demanding extortion payments to spare cattle herds.)

In 1743 the King had the Black Watch Regiment transferred out to the West Indies to fight. Some thinking is that the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 may never have taken place had the Black Watch remained in the Highlands.



The regiment wore a kilt as a part of their everyday uniform from their conception in 1725 until 1940.

The Black Watch tartan is a

Government Tartan, which means that anyone, from any family, can wear the tartan.

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## Beltane: A May 1<sup>st</sup> Druidic Celebration

The annual Druidic festival of Beltane (or *Bealltainn* in Scottish Gaelic) has deep and ancient roots in pagan traditions. For this historic festival, Scottish forefathers kindled great fires on the hilltops in honour of the sun and sought to harness the mysterious forces of nature by sacrifice (allegedly including human sacrifice in its very earliest historical times.) Beltane was one of the four most important festivals in the Celtic calendar alongside *Samhain* (Hallowe'en), *Lughnasa* (1st of August) and *Imbolc* (St. Bride's Day). It has long been seen as a highly symbolic time in which it is important to welcome in the summer. In Scotland's more agricultural past this meant a lot more than hoping for some sunny weather, as successful crops and good grazing for cattle could mean the difference between life and death. Overall, there was a strong focus on fertility and a healthy start to the summer.

Some of the most notable Beltane customs are given an overview here:

### Face Washing in the Dew

On May Day mornings gone by, the slopes of Arthur's Seat were once as crammed with pedestrians as the paving slabs of Princes Street.

In Edinburgh each May 1, thousands of people, mostly young ladies, would set their alarms for before sunrise to traipse up Arthur's Seat, Calton Hill and Blackford Hill and partake in the ancient rite of washing their faces in the May dew.

Doing this was supposed to ensure an abundance of corn and cattle and increase their chances of producing offspring. Moisture produced by nature was seen by the ancients as a sacred entity – vital to make things grow. May dew was therefore deemed to be the holy water of the Druids, and sprinkling it on one's self assured a healthy dose of vitality, beauty and good fortune for the rest of the year.

Curiously, the tradition appears to have taken hold chiefly in Scotland. On May Day morning for several hundred years, tens of thousands of mostly female devotees--perhaps oblivious to the fact they were taking part in an ancient pagan rite--ascended the nearest hill from 4am onwards to give their faces a good old drenching from the dew and guarantee themselves a favourable complexion.

The tradition of washing one's face in the morning dew persisted in Scotland for hundreds of years, having only fallen out of favour fairly recently. Even into the 20th century the tradition was still incredibly popular. Records show that plenty of folk were still making the journey well into the 1960s.

### Bonfires

Perhaps the most popular and important element of any Beltane celebration is the lighting of a large bonfire, which long held a great deal of significance among communities.



There are records of all sorts of rituals relating to communal fires taking place – particularly in the Highlands, where communities were known to burn 'need-fires'. This involved extinguishing all flames in the village before lighting one large fire, using flint or wood to create friction, which would then be carried as torches to relight the hearth fires in the village, a process of renewal and cleansing. It was also popular for festive goers to leap over or drive their cattle around Beltane bonfires, which held a sacred significance.

### Bannocks

Another common Scottish Beltane custom was the baking of special bannocks, an oatmeal-based bread similar to oatcakes, to mark the occasion. There were rituals and practices associated with this as well. For one ritual, people faced the fire,

breaking off and throwing pieces of the bread over their shoulders to ask for blessings on farm crops and livestock to ensure good growth for the crops and reproduction for the animals.



### Nature and Greenery

Nature and greenery of course also play an



important part in Beltane lore, with the rowan and hawthorn trees being of particular significance. In Strathspey people

would make hoops of Rowantree which they would then make sure their cattle passed through in the morning and evening of Beltane.



Crosses of rowan were also made to act as protective talismans. Hawthorn is heavily associated with Beltane due to its association with fertility and was often used as decorations and symbols during weddings.

### Other Superstitions

Other superstitions were associated with Beltane in the Gaelic tradition, for instance that Beltane falling on a Friday would bring misfortune for the rest of the year.

It was also common in places for 'healing wells' to be drunk from on Beltane, such as in Killin, where it was a hotspot for the young people, and the water was believed to have restorative powers.

However, there was a stranger superstition attached to water in Lewis, where in Barvas it was recorded that 'On the first day of May a man went across the river there to prevent any female from passing over it first, otherwise the natives believed that the salmon would be hindered from coming into the river during the rest of the year.'

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### Heckling Invented by Scots

Dundee's **hecklers** – a type of jute worker – gained such a reputation as highly vocal political

radicals that the term came to mean interrupting public speakers.

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### Scotland's Ancient Buildings Rebuilt

Buildings of Scotland's ancient past are emerging once again as how Scots used to live is explored through a series of loyal reconstructions. Among them are an Iron Age home of loch dwellers, a Pictish roundhouse, and a 17<sup>th</sup> Century turf house which once stood in one of Scotland's most celebrated glens.

Archaeology is being used to help both connect to the history that surrounded them and inform a future shaped by climate change and the need for sustainability. These buildings offer valuable lessons in sustainable design and resourcefulness. Some may have been intended to show wealth or display some sort of cosmological system.

[Scotland's ancient buildings return to the landscape \(scotsman.com\)](http://scotsman.com)



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

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