



Tundra Thistle

The Newsletter of the Alaskan Scottish Club

Volume 32 Number 2

Second Quarter 2026

Coming Events:

Tartan Day Celebration

Americans of Scottish descent have played a vibrant and influential role in the development of this country. In 1998 National Tartan Day was officially recognized as April 6. That date commemorates the signing of the **Declaration of Arbroath** in 1320, which asserted Scotland's sovereignty over English territorial claims, and which was an influence on the American Declaration of Independence. <https://www.nationalcapitaltartanday.com/history-of-tartan-day/>

Join the Alaskan Scottish Club **on April 4th** for a full Scottish breakfast and a morning of tradition and , community.



Date: April 4th

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Cost: \$25

Location: Eagle River Elks Event Room (17111 N Eagle River Loop Rd, Eagle River, Alaska)

[RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW!](#)

Come enjoy a traditional Scottish breakfast and learn the secrets behind classic Scottish staples. We're thrilled to have past games champions on hand to personally teach you:

- How to bake the perfect shortbread with Kerry Howard, multiple ASHG Shortbread contest winner
- The art of making authentic porridge using a traditional spurtle with Alison Fiscus, organizer of the ASHG Midnight Sun Spurtle event.

It's the perfect way to gather with the community and get ready for the Games!

Win two tickets to Gness:

Gness

Breathing new life into Scottish folk



When: Friday, April 10, 2026 @ 7:30pm

Where: Alaska Center for the Performing Arts

How to win: Text "Gness" to 907-602-0901. A drawing will be held April 6th, and winner will be notified via text. The Anchorage Concert Association will then send the ticket link to you.

Scottish folk band Gness is a group you can recognize after hearing their first notes. With a rich sonic tapestry of acoustic layers, the lads weave skillful musicianship, traditional roots, and contemporary flair into songs overflowing with character.

Hailing from the Orkney Islands off Scotland's northern coast, this dynamic foursome—comprising fiddle, flute, guitar, bodhran, and vocals—unleashes energetic tunes and driving folk rhythms with maturity beyond their years. Three-time nominees at the Scots Trad Music Awards, Gness has earned fans all over Europe, including three consecutive sold-out performances at Glasgow's famous Celtic Connections festival.

Folk Radio UK characterizes their latest album, produced by Scott Wood of Skerryvore, as "superbly balanced instrumental harmonies and some rather fetching melodies...the boys have captured a sound dipped in honey."

Event is close to sell-out!

Dinnae miss Gness!

Meet Gness with the Alaska World Affairs Council



FEATURING GNOSS

Triple nominees at the Scots Trad Music Awards, Gness has built a devoted following through their innovative approach to Scottish folk and acclaimed live performances. Across three celebrated albums, the band continues to push their sound forward, combining tradition with fresh influences and new sonic elements.

APRIL 10, 2026

12:00 – 1:00 PM
Main Event Grill & Catering
\$15 General/ \$10 Members
Free for Students



Learn more & register online: www.AlaskaWorldAffairs.org/Events

In partnership with the Anchorage Concert Association, the Alaska World Affairs Council will be hosting a lively program at **Main Event Grill** where Gness will blend live acoustic music with storytelling—sharing the history, traditions, and personal experiences behind their songs. It's a unique opportunity to experience Scottish music in a setting that highlights its cultural roots and contemporary evolution.

We would love to have members of the Alaskan Scottish community join us for this lunchtime event!

Registration: <https://alaskaworldaffairs.org/events/stories-behind-the-songs-music-as-history-memory-connection/>

We'd be delighted to have you there and to celebrate Scottish music and culture together!

Warmly,

Siobhan Choi

President & CEO

[Alaska World Affairs Council](http://AlaskaWorldAffairsCouncil.org)



Games Musical and Special Guests

Our special guests this year include Gary Mclean, National Chef of Scotland, musical act the Screaming Orphans, and our perennial favorites, the Harp Twins featuring the Wolfgang Twins. Here are short descriptions of each group, along with links to learn more.

Gary Mclean: National Chef of Scotland



Gary will be performing three cooking demonstrations each day in the Hoskins demonstration kitchen, with tastings to follow.

Gary first became a household name after winning BBC's MasterChef: The Professionals in 2016, triumphing over 47 of the UK's leading chefs. Born in Glasgow, award-winning chef Gary Maclean has spent more than 35 years at the forefront of Scotland's vibrant hospitality industry, overseeing the launch and development of over 80 venues across the country. In recognition of his passion and achievements, the Scottish Government appointed him as Scotland's National Chef a role he embraces wholeheartedly, championing Scottish food, health, and culinary education both at home and internationally.

An accomplished author, Gary has published several books including Kitchen Essentials: The Joy of Home Cooking, Gary Maclean's Scottish Kitchen, Great FE Teaching, and his latest title Scottish Celebrations. The Scottish Kitchen launched in North America through Penguin Random House, further cementing his reputation as a leading voice in modern Scottish food.

With his trademark passion, creativity, and charisma, Gary Maclean continues to inspire audiences worldwide, proudly flying the flag for Scotland's rich culinary heritage.

Follow Gary's adventures at www.garymacchef.com
Instagram & X (Twitter): @Gmacchef

Screaming Orphans



Screaming Orphans are a chart-topping all-sister Celtic folk and pop band from Donegal, Ireland. They are known worldwide for their award-winning sound combining their original songs with a unique take on traditional Irish music.

The band has always defied being pigeonholed, having masterfully developed their own unique fusion of folk and pop. The sisters' trademark spine-tingling four-part harmony and mastery of their instruments combined with their highly energized performances take audiences of all ages on an exhilarating and emotional musical journey.

Screaming Orphans' pitch perfect harmonies have led them to many collaborations on recordings and stage with artists such as Sinéad O'Connor, Peter Gabriel, Joni Mitchell, Baaba Maal, and Afro Celt Sound System. The band continues to tour and play extensively across America, Canada and Europe.

As of this year, the band has released 16 albums, encompassing both original pop and folk/Irish music, as well as two Christmas albums. Their albums *Taproom*, *Life in a Carnival*, *Sunshine and Moss*, and *Paper Daisies* have topped Billboard, iTunes and World Music charts.

<https://screamingorphans.com>

The Harp Twins featuring the Wolfgang Twins



The Twins will be joining us again this year with multiple performances before and during the Games.

As a special addition to the ASHG, they will be hosting "Tea with the Twins" in the Tea Tent. A separate ticket will be required to attend. Keep an eye out for details.

Check out their latest releases at [Nordic Celtic Harp Duo | Harp Twins](#)

Scots Influences on American Independence

By Dr. Christa Wallace, EdD

America's 250th Birthday is a great time to look back on the people who left their mark on America. From the early immigrants to more recent ones, here's a snapshot of a few Scottish greats.

John Paul Jones

Jones was born in Arbigland, Kirkcudbrightshire in 1742. He became a sailor at the age of 13 and served onboard several different merchant ships.



Jones sailed aboard the frigate *Alfred* on the Continental Navy's maiden cruise in 1776. Jones has the honor of hoisting the first Continental Union flag. Often referred to as the "Father of the American Navy", Jones is regarded by several commentators as one of the greatest naval commanders in the military history of the United States.

Hugh Mercer

Hugh Mercer (January 16, 1726 – January 12, 1777) was a Scottish born brigadier general in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Mercer was born in Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire, Scotland and studied medicine. He served as an assistant surgeon in Charles Edward Stuart's army during the Battle of Culloden during the Jacobite Rising of 1745.



On January 3, 1777, Washington's army was enroute to the to engage the British Army at Princeton. British troops mistook Mercer for George Washington and ordered him to surrender, when he refused, Mercer was mortally wounded. "Legend has it that a beaten Mercer, with a bayonet still impaled in him, did not want to leave his men and the battle and was given a place to rest on a white oak tree's trunk, and those who remained with him stood their ground. The tree became known as "the "Mercer's Oak."



Rev John Witherspoon

John Witherspoon was a Scottish Presbyterian minister, educator, farmer, and Founding Father. He was born in Yester. Witherspoon embraced the concepts of Scottish common sense realism, and while president of Princeton University, he became an influential figure. Witherspoon was a delegate from New Jersey to the Continental Congress and a signatory to the July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence. He was the only active clergyman and the only college president to sign the Declaration. Later, he signed the Articles of Confederation and supported ratification of the Constitution. He promoted theological and civic ideas, particularly the concept that resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.



James Wilson



James Wilson (born near Fife) was a Founding Father, legal scholar, jurist, and statesman who served as a justice on the Supreme Court. Wilson was a signatory of the Declaration of Independence. In 1787 he was a major participant in drafting the Constitution and became one of only six people to sign both documents.

He was the principal architect of Article II of the Constitution (executive branch) and was an outspoken supporter of greater participatory democracy, a strong national government, and proportional legislative representation based on population. He proposed the use of an electoral college system ultimately adopted by the convention.

Henry Knox

Knox was of Scottish decent, known as a military officer, politician, bookseller, and Founding Father. He was a senior general during the Revolutionary War, serving as chief of artillery in all of Washington's campaigns.

Following the war, he oversaw the War Department under the Articles of Confederation from 1785 to 1789. Washington appointed him the nation's first secretary of war, a position which he held from 1789 to 1794. He is well known today as the namesake of Fort Knox in Kentucky.



Influential Scots In American History

By Dr Christa Wallace, EdD

Writers

There are numerous writers of Scottish decent in early American literary history. While the list is long and distinguished, here are a few notables making the list of literary geniuses.



Washington Irving

James Fenimore Cooper

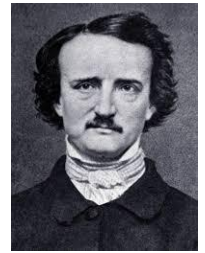
Edgar Allan Poe

Herman Melville

Margaret Mitchell

William Faulkner

James Mackintosh Kennedy



Auto Makers

While many remember Ford and Benz as early automakers, **Alex Winton** and **David Dunbar Buick** lead the way as Scots influencing the auto industry. William Blackie invented the Caterpillar Tractor. The 20th century was influenced by the Scot, **William C Harley**, one of the founders of Harley Davidson.



Aircraft

The Aircraft Industry was transformed by 4 Scots: **Samuel Langley** was an aviation pioneer, **Allen and Malcolm Loughhead** (Lockheed) were early aviation engineers. **Donald Wills Douglas** created the DC-3, and McDonell Aircraft (jets, missiles and spacecrafts), were created by James Smith McDonell.

Computer Science

Of Scottish decent, R-ADM Grace Murray Hopper invented the COBOL computer language and coined the term "debugging" a computer.



Food Technology



These three Scots left a lasting impression on American Taste buds. Phillip Danforth Armour founded the Armour Meats Company that was known for bacon and hotdogs. Joseph Campbell still has us humming "Um Um Good" about his soups. And last but not least, our

childhood would not be the same without W. K. Kellogg's cereal; "they're great."

Tartan Tourney



Saturday June 13th

3 p.m. start

Settlers Bay Golf Course

Sponsorships available!

Bagpipers wailing, drummers setting the rhythm, Highland Dancers twirling – this is not your average golf ambiance; this is a full-blown Scottish extravaganza! But wait, there's more – Scotch flowing, Scottish-themed games throwing challenges at you left and right, and the tastiest treats in any Golf Tourney-Butterscotch Mulligans.

Your day will be an unbridled rollercoaster of Scottish amusement, and we dare you to find anything more entertaining in the Alaskan golf scene!

Golfers and non-golfers alike are invited to the after-Game Ceilidh (Scottish Party) like no other. Delicious food that'll make your taste buds do the Highland Fling, Scottish entertainment that'll have you tapping your toes involuntarily, a steady flow of Scotch to keep the spirits high, and fun prizes that will turn your day into a memorable celebration.

<https://alaskanscottish.regfox.com/tartantourney>

Games Registrations OPEN NOW

for both the Alaska Scottish Highland Games (ASHG) & Midnight Sun Scottish Highland Games (MSSHG)!

The planning is well underway for an exciting 2026 season with the Alaskan Scottish Club, and registrations for many of our most beloved events are opening soon (or already open!). Whether you're swinging a club, throwing a caber, pulling a rope, setting up a vendor booth, or cheering from the sidelines, now is the time to mark your calendars.

Sponsor & Vendor Registration

Heavy Events Registrations

Gathering O' the Clans

Alaskan Scottish Strongman

Camping

Tug-O-War Championships

ASHG Tug-O-War

MSSHG Tug-O-War

Registrations Opening April 6

Event Tickets, including Scotch and Mead Tasting

Volunteer Registration

Midnight Sun Spurtle Challenge

Haggis Eating Contest

Beard, Braids & Mustache Contest

Find all links on [Alaskanscottish.org](https://alaskanscottish.org), then click on the Games you're interested in.

Get Involved and have fun doing it:

Join the Highland Games Planning Committee

Behind the Alaska Scottish Highland Games (ASHG) and the Midnight Sun Scottish Highland Games (MSSHG) is a dedicated group of volunteers working year-round to make the magic happen.

As we gear up for the 2026 Games season, we are inviting members of our community to join the ASHG and MSSHG Planning Committees. These events continue to grow each year, and that growth means we need many hands, many ideas, and many perspectives to keep them thriving.

Planning committee members help shape every aspect of the Games, athletics, vendors, clans, entertainment, volunteers, logistics, and more. Whether you have professional experience to share, love organizing details, enjoy brainstorming creative ideas, or simply want to give back to the Scottish community, there's a place for you at the table.

Meeting dates for the 2026 season are currently being finalized and will be published on our website and social media channels soon. Meetings are collaborative, welcoming, and focused on teamwork and you don't need to attend every meeting to make a meaningful contribution. Meeting for the ASHG will start in February in Anchorage while meetings for MSSHG will start in March in Fairbanks.

If you'd like to ask more questions or ready join a planning committee and be added to the planning committee email list to receive meeting dates, agendas, and updates, please contact Jeni McDaniel: Jeni@alaskanscottish.org or 907-602-0901

The Alaska Scottish Highland Games and the Midnight Sun Scottish Highland Games are truly community-built events, and we would love for you to be part of what makes them happen. Many hands make light work and unforgettable Games.

Membership Update

Remember to check on your membership status before the upcoming Highlands' Games. Letters and emails have been sent to remind members to renew if their membership has or will be expiring soon. The annual Highland Games in Palmer will be on June 27th and 28th, and the second annual Midnight Sun Scottish Highland Games will be August 15 in

Fairbanks. As a member, **you get two free adult entry tickets to the Games of your choice!** If you don't have a paid membership, you won't be eligible to receive the free tickets.

Your membership is included automatically if you're a games sponsor, and no matter what month you send in your sponsorship, your membership expires at the end of June the following year for the ASHG, and at the end of August the following year for MSSHG sponsors.

Finally, members are always needed to help support the games as volunteer workers. There are many areas where volunteers are needed. I'm sure you can find something that you will enjoy. We are requesting that you donate three hours of your time. If you do volunteer work, you get into the games free of charge and still have time to view several events that day or the next. Beginning April 6th, there will be a link on our website listing the events with dates/times where volunteers are needed and that you can choose from. You can always contact me or another board member if you can't go online and we will help you.

See you at the games!

Tonda Scott
membership@alaskanscottish.org

The Declaration of Arbroath

There is an ideological connection between the Declaration of Arbroath, the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, and the American Revolution. The principle is that kings rule by consent of the people (popular sovereignty) not by Divine Right (a belief that God chose the sovereign). The Scots, through this declaration, declared Robert the Bruce as their chosen king, and their independence from King Edward II of England. This idea that the people had a say over who their ruler is was exemplified in 1648 with the execution of King Charles I of England.

The philosophical period known as the Enlightenment furthered the ideas of freedom of speech, religious choice, social contracts and the right of revolution. The ideals of the American Revolution directly related to the French Revolution, which in turn influenced the Russian Revolution. The ideas of liberty and voting ignites people to fight for constitutions and representation. These ideas even spurred women to seek the same rights as men.

Declaration of Arbroath

(Excerpts)

"As long as a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be subjected to the lordship of the English. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself."

To this man (King Robert I - ed), in as much as he saved our people, and for upholding our freedom, we are bound by right as much as by his merits, and choose to follow him in all that he does.

6 April 1320

Declaration of Independence

(Excerpts)

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are

Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,...That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new ... But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security... The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

July 4, 1776

Club Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Location	Details
Every month				
3rd Monday	6:00 p.m.	Scottish Club Board Meeting	Blood Bank of Alaska Board Room	Open to Club members
April				
4	10 – 12 a.m.	Tartan Day Breakfast	Eagle River Elk's Club	Full Scottish Breakfast
7	6:00 p.m.	MSSHG Planning Meeting	Mushers Hall, 925 Farmers Loop Rd, Fairbanks	Also on zoom*
14	6:00 p.m.	ASHG Planning Meeting	Eureka Space, 405 W. 36 th	Also on zoom*
May				
5	6:00 p.m.	MSSHG Planning Meeting	Mushers Hall, 925 Farmers Loop Rd, Fairbanks	Also on zoom*
12	6:00 p.m.	ASHG Planning Meeting	Eureka Space, 405 W. 36 th	Also on zoom*
June				
2	6:00 p.m.	MSSHG Planning Meeting	Mushers Hall, 925 Farmers Loop Rd, Fairbanks	Also on zoom*
9	6:00 p.m.	ASHG Planning Meeting	Eureka Space, 405 W. 36 th	Also on zoom*
13	3 pm start	Tartan Tourney	Settler's Bay Golf Course	Register online at www.alaskascottish.org
27-28	All day	Alaska Scottish Highland Games	AK State Fairgrounds, Palmer	Registrations open
July				
4	All day	Kachemak Bay Highland Games	Karen Hornaday	Coastal games with a Celtic twist
August				
15	All day	Midnight Sun Scottish Highland Games	AK Dog Musher's Assoc. Musher's Hall, Fairbanks	Celebrate under the midnight sun

*Zoom Link (Same for All Meetings): <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84068169436> Meeting ID: 840 6816 9436

Contact Information for Alaska Pipe Bands:

Last Frontier Pipes and Drums

Pipe Major: Jenni Stewart
Practices: Mondays, First Congregational Church
 2610 E. Northern Lights
 Contact - Chris Walker at: aewalker@mtaonline.net
 Find us on Facebook

Fairbanks Red Hackle Pipe Band

P.O. 82782
 Fairbanks, Alaska
www.fairbanksredhacklepipeband.org

Alaska Celtic Pipes & Drums

Lessons Tuesdays - 6:30 pm - Mat-Su College;
Lessons Fridays - 5:30 pm - Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Chugiak: Band Practice to follow.
 Contact Richard Christiansen - 907-315-9838
www.alaskacelticpipesdrums.org

City of Juneau Pipe Band

Juneau, Alaska
www.cityofjuneaupipeband.org

Scottish Club Supporters/Club Contacts

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Club Information

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Go online to www.alaskanscottish.org and click the membership link, Mail a check to ASC, PO Box 244416, Anchorage, AK 99524 or Call 907-602-0901 and provide payment information.

Educational Assistance Program

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/>

If you have any questions regarding the program, please contact Committee chair, Christa Wallace at Volunteers@alaskanscottish.org

Back Issues of the Thistle

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 on our website under the "About us" tab.

Gaming Permit

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.

Support the Club through EZBiz



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

Club Contact Information

The Tundra Thistle, the newsletter of the Alaskan Scottish Club, is published approximately 4 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.
P.O. Box 244416 Anchorage, AK 99524-4416

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Alaskan Scottish Club

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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