

Dedicated to the Preservation of Scottish Culture and Heritage in Rhode Island



# The Saltire

Newsletter of the Saint Andrew's Society of Rhode Island  
Founded 1923, Incorporated 1998



Volume 93

2014

Issue I

## GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN SCOTLAND THIS YEAR

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ATTENTION ALL GOLF FANATICS—Scotland, the home of golf will host the 40th Ryder Cup at Gleneagles Hotel located in Perthshire September 23rd to the 28th.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



June 14th  
RI Scottish Highland Festival, Washington Fairgrounds, Richmond  
August

SASRI Annual Picnic, Anawan Club, Rehoboth  
Date to be confirmed.

September 19, 20, 21  
39th NH Highland Games  
Loon, NH

ALL EYES WILL BE ON GLASGOW AS IT HOSTS THE  
XX COMMONWEALTH GAMES JULY 23<sup>RD</sup> – AUGUST 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2014

# Tartan Bash 2013

By Cathy Poirier



Oh, if you missed this year's Tartan Bash on November 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Imperial Room at Rhodes place, you missed a good time! Decorated by a selection of representative clan Tartans, the room exuded Scottish pride and ambiance. Attended by more than sixty guests, old friends warmly greeted one another and welcomed new friends with the same warmth and good cheer. The youngest guest, just two weeks old, seemed right at home and happy to be among his larger Scottish family.

Opening remarks by Joyce Dell noted that 2013 celebrates the 90th year the St. Andrew's Society has been in existence. Quite an accomplishment for any organization, St. Andrew's Society is noted for its long term commitment to local humanitarian activities.

Following the requisite formal salutations to the Queen and the President, a rousing Address to the Haggis was exquisitely delivered by David Ward. Bob Hanold's skillful piping performances before and after dinner added immensely to the festivities of the evening.

A delightful buffet selection of fish and chicken

selections followed the tasty beef barley soup and greens salad served to guests at their tables.

Complemented by the vegetables of the day, both haggis and a roast beef carving station rounded out the buffet offerings. Delicious carrot cake for dessert capped the meal, accompanied by coffee or tea.

Playing expertly, The Irish Express deftly moved between lively contemporary selections, Ceilidh dancing numbers, and, to give the dancers a bit of a breather, slower waltzes. The wide selection guaranteed that there was a choice for everyone's dancing preference. The band was well pleased to see so many on their feet enjoying the music!

Too soon, the evening came to an end with the traditional playing of Auld Lang Syne. As folks gathered their belongings and began to take their leave, the refrain "See you next year!" was heard to ring out frequently.



## “A Short Time in the Kilmartin Glen”

By Peter Dell

*Memories, a sampling, an hors d'oeuvre of what great interests there are to discover in this, the ancient kingdom of a land long before we knew of it as Scotland.*

It seems like forever, but a short while ago the four of us (Shirley, Roy, Joyce and I) visited the westerly side of Scotland just a little below Oban – the area of, and around the Kilmartin Glen.

Typically, commercial enterprises whisk people away to the touristy, well trodden places taking a quick look at stone circles and miscellaneous exhibitions of Celtic antiquity – all well and good. However, so much may be missed and so much is to be gained from a more individually planned tour – as was the case in our adventures to this ancient place.

Little known and not yet touristy, this segment – once the ancient capital of Scotland as we now know it - is one of the most significantly important prehistoric landscapes in Europe. Before there was ever a nation known as Scotland, a large stone with



a wild boar carving and a huge foot imprint show where the kings of Dalriade were inaugurated to rule over all of Argyll and north Antrim in Ireland. Taking a walk from the Kilmartin House Museum, following the Kilmartin Burn, we saw and climbed into 11,000 year old burial cairns, viewed the angles and alignments of equally ancient standing stones – even took a photograph of a great spider. Could it be he was awaiting the return of his king? Who knows? He was rather scary however. At this time of year the hedgerows offer up great treats of wild black berries. Juicy, plump, tasty: a nourishing snack for travelers. Then, just a little further along was an old, one roomed school house still serving the local area children. We were the subject of a social studies project docu-

*Continued on page 8*





## THE 51ST (HIGHLAND) DIVISION AT THE BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

By J. ROY McKECHNIE... ULTIMA THULE/UTAH SALTIRE CORRESPONDENT



Massed bands of the 51st Highland Division at Aldershot in 1939.

In the Spring of 1940, having fought a gritty delaying action against the stunningly-powerful Nazi blitzkrieg that swept through France at the start of WWII, the remnants of the old 51st (Highland) Division were ordered hold as long as possible against hordes of panzers, artillery and storm troopers to allow exhausted British Army and done-in French troops to escape back to England. They did so and finally, what remained of the old 51st surrendered, ironically, to then General Erwin Rommel... ironically because just short of 2 years later, the re-constituted 51st Highlanders would meet Field Marshall Rommel's forces with a decidedly different outcome.

The 51st, which had seen much bloody action in WW I, was a true Scots unit, a Territorial Army division (similar to the U.S. National Guard) with its battalions recruited largely from the Highlands, the islands north of the Firth of Forth and the Clyde valley. In fairly recent history, brilliant, always front-line fighting units like the Cameons, Seaforths, Gordons, the Black Watch and the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders suffered heavy losses in "The Great War" but were always able to recruit fresh and feisty fighters. (My father, Joe McKechnie, became an American citizen in 1929, and in the 1930's, was one of the founders of The St. Andrews Society of R.I. He served with the Argyles' 2nd Battalion in WW I's bloody trenches — and survived!)

By early 1942, despite having seemingly evaporated as a

fighting unit but now re-constituted, with its Territorial Battalions full of re-trained, re-armed and decidedly re-motivated Scotsmen, the latest, Phoenix-like 51st had its blood up, eager to erase what it held to be the shame of its forced 1940 surrender. And so it was shipped to the then most contentious battleground of WW II's European theater... Egypt, where Britain's General Bernard Montgomery was preparing to kick back against Rommel's heretofore victorious Africa Corps and its Italian Army cohorts.

In Montgomery's battle plan, an enormous artillery barrage on several miles-deep of Nazi land mines and barbed wire would be followed by a direct assault on enemy emplacements by troops and tanks, ordered to break through enemy lines and forge forward as far and fast as possible. The 51st was detailed to lead the charge, directly into the center of the battlefield.

A Battalion of the Black Watch plus two of the Gordon Highlanders comprised one attacking force while one Battalion of the Camerons plus one of the Argyles formed the second... which gave rise to the quip that "One Battalion of Camerons/Argyles equals two of Seaforths/Gordons or three of the Black Watch"... a notion much debated within the Division, often physically, before and after El Alamein.

The Division's key mission involved smashing a collection of enemy strong points early on in the fight so that Montgomery's tanks could thrust through. To make their objectives totally clear, each of the 51st's attacking Battalions was assigned targets named after the towns and districts from which each had been recruited in Scotland, and so individual unit battle maps bore target names like Dundee, Banff, Kincardine, Braemar, Stirling, Renfrew and Paisley. And in a reversion to an old custom, pipers were ordered to play their men into battle. The pipers were even given specific tunes to play, usually Company marches like "The Nut Brown Maiden", "The Black Bear", "Wha' Saw the Tottie Howkers?" and "The Atholl Highlanders".

At 9:40 p.m. on October 23, 1942, a British barrage from more than 800 guns began to maul Nazi barbed wire entanglements and front-line strong points. Twenty minutes later the 51st's troops, with their pipers leading, marched into battle. An official report following the attack stated: "Despite the anti-personnel mine tripwires which you could see by the flares, came a sight that will forever live in our memories. Line upon line of steel helmeted figures with rifles at "high port", bayonets catching the moonlight, and over all, the wailing of the pipes."

One by one, the enemy strong points were overwhelmed, mostly, as was customary in Highland infantry fighting, with the bayonet. British tanks rolled up to and over the Nazis and Italians and the heretofore victorious Africa Korps was put to rout. Inevitably, it was cleared out of Africa with its survivors sent into Allied prison camps in Canada and the U.S. And taking many of the surrenders were the men of the ever-new 51st Highland Division.

Rommel, a Field Marshal by the time of El Alamein, missed the show; he was back in Germany with an ear ache. But it was his strategy and detailed orders, followed to the letter by the foe, that the 51st and the relentless execution of Montgomery's plan went up against and smashed. So it was with perhaps excusable (but certainly in-character) hubris that Montgomery claimed that in Egypt, he'd defeated Nazi Germany's most formidable general.

But there had been a cost. Cited among the Division's butcher's bill for its El Alamein victory were more than 2500 casualties. At least 5 of the pipers who had led the gallant charge through minefields and wire entanglements were dead, with others gravely wounded. So grievous had piper losses been and so important their contributions to unit morale and fighting spirit that a Division order was issued, still standing today, that requires pipers and other bandsmen to be based at unit headquarters, out of the battle line, as rescue men and medics, otherwise available largely for ceremonies, celebrations and parades.

A competition was held to decide the battle's most deserving commemorative pipe tune and a 4-part, 6/8 march to be played in quick time swept all before it. Its name? What else: "The Battle of El Alamein." And in May, 1945, the re-constituted Division took the surrender of the 7th Panzer Division, Rommel's original WW II command, to which the old 51st's rear guard survivors had surrendered in France in 1940.

There are those who claim that the old survivors never were out of the fight because although behind barbed wire, they proved to be especially thorny captives. Shortly after the old 51st survivors went into the bag in Oflag VII B prisoner of war camp they re-constituted their unit-wide band, with 8 pipers, four snare and two kettle drums and a bass, and a full-dress pipe major. The band played regular concerts and parades to the delight of the supposedly surrendered Scots and the reported bedevilment of their Teutonic captors. ("Doodlesacks! Genug... genug!!!") They created what is, today, one of world-wide Highland dancing's run-away favorite figures, especially in The Ocean State during SASRI's balls, outings and Dance Club practices: "The Reel of the 51st". And they pulled so many escapes that in frustration, the Nazis finally split the Division's survivors into small bunches and distributed them throughout their POW system...where they caused their captors even more problems.

Today, the sweeping re-organization of Britain's Army has essentially swept away the great, independent Scots units. But bide a wee... listen... and from the misty distance you'll hear the auld "Tunes of Glory" as they pipe the storied regiments of the 51st (Highland) Division into history. May their men, their deeds and their music never be forgotten.



Men of the Highland Division on the march.



# Member's Page



## Flowers of the Forest

Mary Carroll

Jessie Prosser

Alice Hurl

Andy Rosner

Ernest Mansollilo

Donald Weir

Harold Leigh (Sach)



Fans of Diana Gabaldon's "Outlander Series" will be happy to know that Starz will be airing a mini-series of the first book. No date has been announced but it is due out this summer. Previews are available on Starz and the internet.



## Welcome New Members

DENISE AIKEN

CAROLYN BROWN

PHILIP AND ELIZABETH (BETSY) MCMASTER

DIANE ROCHA

HERBERT AND CHRISTINE STEVENS

KAREN AND LUCIANO SZTULMAN

Members Roy and Shirley Loiselle welcome their new grandson Andrew Joseph born on February 16, 2014 at 10:03 am.

## ATTENTION ALL GARDENERS

Avid gardener Jill Frew has kindly shared her remedy to keep deer ticks away.

8 drops of rose geranium oil in a pint of water, shake, and rub on your ankles. Good for pets, too.



Oil is available at Whole Foods.

## Rhode Island Burns Supper 2014 Video



Available to view on the S.A.S.R.I. website or on YouTube titled as above.

## Massachusetts court says 'upskirt' photos are legal...



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## Board of Directors

### EXECUTIVE

Joyce Dell	VP	401-334-2448	<a href="mailto:jdellmri@gmail.com">jdellmri@gmail.com</a>
Virginia Butler	Treasurer	401-823-8431	<a href="mailto:queenmom34@aol.com">queenmom34@aol.com</a>

### DIRECTORS

G. Richmond Cargill		508-644-9820	<a href="mailto:riscotty@verizon.net">riscotty@verizon.net</a>
Peter Dell		401-334-2448	<a href="mailto:peterdell45@live.com">peterdell45@live.com</a>
Robert Hanold	Society Piper	508-695-8601	<a href="mailto:robhanold@yahoo.com">robhanold@yahoo.com</a>
John MacLean		401-781-7909	
Br. Enoch John Valentine		401-597-6771	<a href="mailto:brenochjohn@gmail.com">brenochjohn@gmail.com</a>
Joseph Muzzy		401-732-2304	<a href="mailto:jfmuzzy@verizon.net">jfmuzzy@verizon.net</a>



We saw, in that sunny afternoon, perhaps five percent of what there is to be seen.

That hors d'oeuvre of what great interests are in this easily accessible area of Scotland has definitely whetted our appetites for a more leisurely and concentrated return visit: perhaps to combine it with a trip from there through the Crinan Canal and out to the Sound of Jura at the Crinan Basin.

Someday - - - perhaps - - - I hope so!



menting from where passers by had travelled. Of more interest, however, was the cross section of children now representative of the modern Scotland and in a combined class of thirteen children up to grade five.

After a great afternoon walk, we returned to the museum to enjoy one of the biggest bowls of fabulous soup ever served up, then explored the exhibits. An interesting perspective is provided for visitors in that the exhibits dated from the Bronze Age came from sites we had just walked through and could actually see from the museum.

My most interesting part was making flour in a granite trough many thousands of years old, then, sifting with a rush basket woven in the same manner and of the same plants as the original. I would have brought some home – but then being a “wheat free person” - thought better of it.

Aside from all the early Christian crosses and grave slabs in the local church was the fish sun dial: a most fascinating and cleverly created device. Pour water into the middle and the hour of the sun can be seen by the shadow/reflection of the water in the center bowl. The water runs out of a small hole in the base, protected by two opposing salmon, and flows into a trough on one side. This section is carved with a shoal of small salmon swimming up the stream. The stone carver, a shy man who voluntary restores the various carvings and tomb stone reliefs in the church briefly explained the ancient meanings behind this amazing carving – then, just as a camera was raised – he abruptly turned and briskly walked away.



Interesting reading and information on this area may be obtained from the following web sites:

[www.kilmartin.org](http://www.kilmartin.org) and [www.scottishcanals.co.uk](http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk)