

St. Andrew's Society welcomes University of Edinburgh leadership to San Francisco

By **David McCrossan**,
Chairman, Board of Trustees

On March 30th 2015 in San Francisco, the Society Trustees hosted a reception to welcome the Chancellor and Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Sir Timothy O'Shea and



Sir Timothy O'Shea with St. Andrew's Society President Jaeamie Koyil and David McCrossan, Chair, Board of Trustees.

his wife Lady O'Shea (Professor Eileen Scanlon). Sir Timothy outlined the deep roots of the University and its contribution both to Scotland's enlightenment and to the founding of early American institutions such as Princeton. Then, bringing the

Edinburgh University, continued on page 2

Scottish Borders Heritage Celebration

Originally published in Scottish Life, Spring 2015

By **Peter Ross**

Photos by ILF Imaging

Every summer, communities across the Scottish Borders celebrate their heritage by riding the town boundaries, a day when pageantry and local pride joyously collide.

The bells of St. Mary's are striking six as the drum and fife band marches into the hopeful morning light, playing the Hawick



anthem "Teribus," martial beats echoing in empty streets, raising rooks from gables. It is the duty of the band to waken

Borders Celebration, continued on page 3

APRIL 2015 ~ Vol. 152, NO. 3

A Welcome Reception for Sir Timothy O'Shea	1
University of Edinburgh Leadership visits San Francisco	
Scottish Borders Celebration	1
Each summer it's a spectacle of pageantry	
President's Letter	2

The Scottish Independent	5
New online Scottish Newspaper	
Upcoming Events	8



President's Letter – April 2015

Yes it's Spring. Since most of the rest of the country has been covered in snow let's take a moment to count our blessings here in the temperate Bay Area.

Let's also thank Roger Weed again for a great presentation on Traditional Scottish dress. It's amazing what even us old timers can still learn.

Last meeting I announced that I'd like to begin a practice which some other groups do which is to appoint recognized "Envoys" to kindred groups. The Envoy would be someone who regularly attends both our meetings and the meetings of the other group. The Envoy would let us know any important goings on in the other group and would also make a point to announce our activities at the meetings of the other group.

This way our open meetings and our social events will always be well publicized.

The position of envoy would be on a volunteer basis, and if contested, by vote, and would serve concurrently with other officers.

Having announced the idea at our March meeting I will be calling for a members vote on this in the April meeting.

I hope to see everyone at our April 20th meeting and until then I will have the honor to remain,

Yours Aye

Jaame I. Koyil

President



An Important Notice

In May 2015 the St. Andrew's Society of San Francisco is proud to announce that it will award \$30,000.00 for the 2015-16 academic year to students of Scottish heritage.

You probably know of a student who could use extra help paying for college costs.

Basic criteria details are listed in our newsletter.

(children of members are NOT eligible)

To apply go to our website: www.saintandrewssocietysf.org

Download the application and read the basic criteria.

From Front Cover

Edinburgh University

picture up to the present, attendees were delighted to hear of Edinburgh's outstanding track record in pure and applied research, including active partnerships with leading Bay Area institutions such as Stanford.

Lady O'Shea (Prof. Eileen Scanlon) also generated keen interest at the reception, describing her work on the Trust of the famous World War II code breaking facility at Bletchley Park.



Sir Timothy O'Shea and his wife Lady O'Shea (Professor Eileen Scanlon) with reception hosts Tom McLaughlin, Chair of the St. Andrew's Foundation, and his wife Jane.

University development manager Joanna Storrar, based in their New York office, surprised the attendees with the news that some 2,000 University of Edinburgh alumni now live in California, half of them in our part of the state.

Speaking at the reception, David McCrossan, chair of the Board of Trustees said: "Tonight is a great start to a conversation with Scotland's leading research university. Our

scholarship program has previously supported students headed to the University of Edinburgh: we will look to ways that we can develop this prestigious Edinburgh connection further, to the benefit of students traveling in both directions. We also want to reach out to University of Edinburgh alumni as potential partners in support of our shared educational purpose".

We were especially grateful to Tom McLaughlin, chairman of the St. Andrew's Foundation, and his wife Jane, for hosting the event at their home.



From Front Cover

Borders Celebration

Hawick and to alert its folk, known as Teries, that today is the Common Riding, the loudest, proudest day in the town's calendar.

In truth, everyone knows already. Hawick is decorated in the Common Riding colours of



azure and gold; flags strung across streets and hung from balconies; shop windows tricked out with ribbons; pansies in planters blooming in the approved livery. Even the weather has obliged with a honey sun in a pale blue sky.

The Common Riding takes place each year on the first Friday after the first Monday in June. Dating back to 1514, it represents both the capture in battle of an English flag by the youth of Hawick and the ancient custom of marking the boundaries of the common land. There are similar festivals throughout the summer in the Borders towns and elsewhere, each a spectacle of pageantry and a booze-up, but Hawick is first and so has a particular air of abandonment and joy.

"It will never be forgotten in this toon," says Ronnie Nichol, a giant of a man, steam rising from his bald head as he removes his band cap. "Things are changing all over the country, financially and in every other way. But this will always go on"

At this, his friend and band mate Ian Anderson nods with great certainty. But what makes them so sure their tradition will endure? "Because fathers sing 'Teribus' to their sons

instead of lullabies," says Anderson.

Nichol has been in the band for 37 years, Anderson for 33. That's the way things go in Hawick. You find a role and stick at it. Yet there is no sense of dry obligation. Rather, these men and many other Teries take enormous pleasure in participating in the ritual.

"Whatever high point you have in Glasgow, it can't touch this," Anderson explains to me, a Glaswegian, with gentility. "If you're a Celtic fan and they won the European Cup six times in a row, then that might come close. But it wouldn't be the same."

There are ceremonies within the ceremony. In the Kirkstile area, at the foot of the church, a large group has gathered. Some wear tweeds and golden waistcoats. Others wear bowler hats and carry riding crops. Some have beer on their breath and whisky on their mind. A wee girl in pajamas waves down from a window. It is quarter past six in the morning.

In the midst of the crowd stands Mike Aitken, a 50-year-old joiner in his 11th year as Song Singer. It is he who leads the songs throughout



the day. For the moment, he must perform his other task—distributing snuff from an old ram's horn to those brave enough to fight for it. A cry goes up—"Let's have it, boys!"—and

*Borders Celebration,
continued on page 4*

suddenly Aitken is at the centre of a writhing, struggling, grunting serum, all hoarse curses and builder's bum. Men fall to the ground, heads smacking stone. Someone loses a shoe. Occasionally, a burly figure emerges, grinning broadly, their fingers dark with snuff dug from the horn.

Afterwards, Aitken has blood on his neck and battered brogues. "That was pretty coarse the day," he grins. "That's as rough as it's been. The word on the street last night was a bunch of Denholm boys were coming up to pinch the horn. There was 50 quid to whoever got it from us. They did their best but the horn's still oors."

The tradition, after the Snuffin', is to retire to the pubs for the day's official beverage—rum and milk. "Have a wee taste," offers Graham Bennett, 44, standing outside the Exchange Bar. "It's not bad after you've had a couple." Bennett is visiting from Musselburgh. "I was Honest Lad in 1986." The places that hold Common Ridings send envoys to each of the others. Often these men introduce themselves as Coldstream or Kel so and so on, rather than giving their names. Where they're from is, today, more important than who they are.

Inside the Exchange, it's rammed and they're singing "Up Wi' Auld Hawick." A group of friends, old mill girls, are swaying with their arms linked, bellowing it out. "Where are you from? Scotland On Sunday? We'll still be singing come Sunday," says Helen Ford, 69. "This means everything to us. I can't explain it to you. It's in your blood."

Ford has a glass of rum and milk in front of her, but her pal Merle Campbell is on the gin and soda. It's only seven in the morning. Too early yet for rum, she reckons. Her fingernails are painted blue and yellow. Only one year did she miss the Common Riding. She was in Germany and listened on that day to a tape of the old songs. "Oh, the tears were streaming down my cheeks. It was heart-rending."

At 8:25 a.m., we get our first glimpse of the Cornet, the young man chosen to lead the riders as they travel on horseback around the boundaries of the common land. He also carries

the flag, representing that captured from the English all those centuries ago. It is a tremendous honour. You are the toast of the town, a hero and heartthrob.

This year's Cornet is Michael Davidson, 25, who works in forestry. This is the most important day of his life. He first rode

out when he was seven years old on a pony called Rupert. Today, he sings the Old Common-Riding Song outside the town hall, reading the words from inside the top hat that he holds in front of him, then it's on to his horse, Storm, and away through the streets.

Some 329 horses are taking part this year. Each horse and rider is cheered by a crowd of several hundred as they canter out from a vennel. The band

is at the front with oak leaves on the brims of their hats; then comes the Cornet in his green tailcoat and white breeks. The visiting dignitaries from other towns are also on horseback. The four men from Jedburgh, splendid in their Balmoral bonnets, are particular favourites with onlookers. One dashing fellow wears a burgundy sash that identifies him as the Linton Whipman.

At the sight of the Cornet and riders, none cheers louder than Charles Whillans, known as Chuck or Mr. Common Riding, a small jovial man in a blazer. At 87, he is the oldest living former Cornet, having discharged that duty in 1948. He hopes, he says, to have his coffin draped in the blue and gold flag, though, of course, his many friends in Hawick pray that day is far off. It was Helen Ford who pointed him out to me. Whillans is the first Cornet she remembers; he visited her school in his green tailcoat when she was five.

Now both are old but seem young. "Here's my Common Riding kiss," she says, pecking his cheek. "Thanks, bonnie lass," he replies.

One important stop on the Journey of the riders is The Hut, an old barn at St. Leonards farm, a short distance outside town, with "Rally Roon Oor Cornet" written

above the door. This event, at which songs are sung and toasts given, is arguably the emotional highpoint of the day. It is men



There are similar festivals throughout the summer in the Borders towns and elsewhere, but Hawick is first and so has a particular air of abandonment and joy.





only. The proceedings are piped out by loud speakers to the assembled womenfolk picnicking on the grass.

The principal ladies, among them 23-year-old receptionist Kirsteen Hill, the Cornet's Lass, sit in their finery on benches beneath the branches of an ancient oak, having travelled here by stretch limo. "I'm right proud for Michael and happy that he's got to fulfill a lifetime dream," says Hill. She doesn't seem

bothered at having to remain out here, wrapped in her official Cornet's Lass blanket, while her boyfriend is warm indoors.

She might even be better off. The Hut is a hot, crowded, beery place with red-faced, damp-eyed men crammed together, elbow to elbow, jowl by jowl, banging on the tables and singing lustily. They alternate spoonfuls of curds and cream—known as "soor dook"—with more rum and milk. One young man stumbles out and embraces his mother. "Don't go back in just yet," she tells him. "The longer you stay out here, the less drink you'll have."

Eventually, proceedings at The Hut are over and the riders make for the Moor Racecourse, where most of the townsfolk have set up a makeshift camp of gazebos strung with gold and azure bunting. It is Agincourt meets T in the Park. The revelry



will go on until dawn. "This is the best party in Scotland," says one woman, and she may have a point.

The Common Riding is certainly vastly more enjoyable than, say, Edinburgh's Hogmanay, perhaps because it is in no way geared towards tourists or the media. It is by the Teries for the Teries. Though the locals are very welcoming, the Common Riding would happen if no one from outside town was here. Indeed, its very insularity is the key part of its identity; it is about boundaries, about the community that holds you in its sweet embrace. It is not narrow parochialism, it is big-hearted local pride.

Steph Reith, a local woman here with her husband and teenage children, sums it up. A day out of Hawick," she laughs, "is a day wasted."

Online Scottish Newspaper

Dear Society:

We are pleased to announce the creation of a new online newspaper, *The Scottish Independent*.

www.thescottishindependent.com

It may have been difficult to observe from afar, but the coverage of the Scottish Independence referendum demonstrated the degree to which virtually all of the mainstream papers which cover Scottish news do so from a corporate, London-based perspective.

Since the referendum, there has been a great demand for a homegrown newspaper which focuses on the news from a Scottish perspective, and shows Scots in a much more positive light than is currently the case.

It is with that in mind that we have created *The Scottish Independent*, and seek to promote it through expat Scots to get the widest possible distribution.

Depending on how many subscriptions we sell, we hope to produce a weekly printed version in the near future. We will also be printing articles in Gaelic and English side by side with audio in Gaelic on the online version.

Please send on the link to your members, subscribe, and help make us the paper for Scots throughout the world.

Sincerely,

Mark McNaught

Editor in Chief of the *Scottish Independent*



Upcoming Events

Peat-Fire Flame Concert Duo

Dear friends of Celtic music,

Along with the welcome spring rains comes a free East Bay concert by the Peat-Fire Flame!

WHEN: This Sunday 12 April at 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: First United Methodist Church
2950 Washington Blvd.
Fremont, California



The Peat-Fire Flame Concert Duo

What will you hear? Some of your favorite Scottish melodies, played with stunning beauty by virtuosic violinist-fiddler Colyn Fischer and surrounded by the warm, mellifluous piano of Shauna Pickett-Gordon... a bit of classical music of the Scottish fiddle masters... one or two "pure classical" pieces you'll recognize... new compositions (some serious, some light-hearted) by Colyn and Shauna... and, of course, the duo's own trademark Jazzeltic tunes and irresistible, image-laden improvisations.

Come a few minutes early to get the best seat. We look forward to seeing you there! And feel free to pass the word.

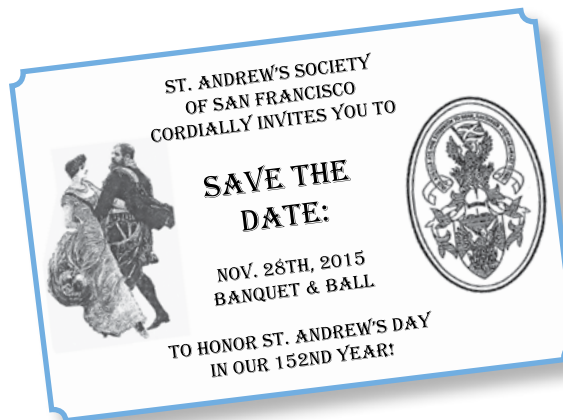
For more information please visit:

www.scotsduo.com



Summer Ceilidh

Saturday, July 11th, 2015
Encinal Yacht Club



St. Andrew's Society of San Francisco Banquet & Ball

November 28th, 2015

The Flying Scotsman

From Steve Lind.

The 2015 PBFSCO Flying Scotsman train ride through Niles Canyon is Sunday, May 3, 2015. This is a fun event for the whole family.

Enjoy the train ride from Sunol to Niles and back to Sunol. The price of your ticket includes beverages and snacks during the train ride. Bring your picnic lunch and join others at the park adjacent to the Sunol station.

Please reserve online through Brown Paper Tickets at:

www.FlyingScotsman2015.brownpapertickets.com



Meeting & Events Schedule

Date	Event / Topic	Location / Notes
2015		
Sat. April 18	18th Annual Tartan Day Scottish Faire	Ardenwood, Fremont
Sat. April 18	John Muir Association / Earth Day celebration	Martinez
Mon. April 20	Member Meeting..... (Guest Speakers: Kathleen Kimura and Karen Thomas, British Benevolent Society)	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. May 18	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. June 15	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. July 20	Summer Break – no meeting	
Mon. Aug. 17	Summer Break – no meeting	
Sept. 5–6	150th Highland Games & Gathering	Pleasanton
Mon. Sept. 21	Member’s Dinner	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. Oct. 19	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF
Sun. Nov. 8	Remembrance Day Service.....	Grace Cathedral, SF
Mon. Nov. 16	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF
Sat. Nov. 28	153rd Annual Banquet & Ball	Marine’s Memorial
Mon. Dec. 21	No Meeting due to Hogmanay Potluck on 12/31	
Thur. Dec. 31	Hogmanay Potluck.....	1088 Green St., SF
2016		
Mon. Jan. 18	Member Meeting..... <i>Inauguration of 2016 Office Bearers</i>	1088 Green St., SF
Sat. Jan. 23	Burns Supper (The Family)	545 Powell St., SF
Mon. Feb. 15	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF
Mon. Mar. 21	Member Meeting.....	1088 Green St., SF

About Us

The Saint Andrew’s Society of San Francisco

1088 Green Street
San Francisco, CA
94133-3604

415-885-6644

www.saintandrews
societysf.org

Editor: Gary Ketchen
E-mail: ketchen.gary@
gmail.com

Membership Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month, at 7:30 P.M. Light supper served before the meeting. (Free valet parking is provided for members’ meetings. MUNI: one block east of Hyde St. cable car).

Officers of the Society

Jaeame I. Koyil,
President
David Campbell, First VP
Francesca McCrossan,
Second VP
Ian Baird, Treasurer
Jean Allen, Secretary
Roger Weed, Librarian
Marilyn Van Story ,
Chaplain
Marjory Matic, Bard
Jack Cunningham, Piper
Thomas E. Kasinger,
Historian
Kent Walker,
Membership Secretary
Dr. Bill Blair, Physician

Trustees

David McCrossan,
Chairman
Norman McLeod,OBE
David McCrossan
Stewart Hume
James Robertson, AIA
Sandy Corbett

Board of Relief

Marilyn Van Story
Biz Obley
Robert Blair, Jr.

Board of Student Assistance

J. Robert Logan,
Chairman
William Cummings, Sr.
William Cummings, Jr.
Jean Allen
Kitty Lenhart



**The Saint Andrew's Society
of San Francisco**
1088 Green Street
San Francisco, CA 94133-3604

Recipient
