



THE CHRISTMAS CEILIDH

The annual Christmas luncheon and ceilidh was a sold-out success on Saturday December 6th with 60 members, family and friends in attendance. The Ford's Colony banquet room was decorated for the season, replete with a Christmas tree decked with red and gold ornaments to match the sparkling garland over a crackling fire-place. The tables were dressed in holiday color and each place setting was adorned with a Christmas cracker, thanks to the generosity of John and Vicki Scott.

Attendees in highland day wear and Christmas attire began arriving at 11:30 a.m. and enjoyed warm apple cider, eggnog, and libations from the bar while they mingled. Lynn Newcomer, Past President, delighted everyone with a selection of songs played on the small pipes, while a continuous slideshow played of Christmas photographs submitted by members and assembled by Russ Madigan, Quartermaster.



Quartermaster Russ Madigan reads 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.

The Reverend Michael Thompson gave the blessing, and Jim Murphy presented the Burns-inspired Selkirk Grace. The three-course plated lunch was delicious, with three entree choices that included salmon with citrus butter, herb-marinated chicken breast, and Virginia mountain mushrooms braised in madeira jus.

Russ Madigan read *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, followed by an explanation about a photo that he included in the holiday slideshow of a gentleman whom he met at the Scottish Games at Grandfather Mountain — and who always dresses as a Scottish Santa (he's even in the Santa Hall of Fame)! Member Iona Brad-



Society members entertain the crowd with a unique, prop-filled rendition of the 12 Days of Yultide.

ley read a moving poem called *The Ode to Man* (anonymous). Martin Cox, Webmaster, regaled us with a memorable Viking Yule greeting complete with authentic costume for the era, emphasizing that promises made are sacred and must be honored.

A rollicking "12 Days of Yuletide" was presented by a dozen member songsters with unique props, accompanied by Clay McEldowney on banjo: Susan White, Irene Lelansky, John Scott, Jan Hruz, Iona Bradley, Harley Stewart, Jim Murphy, Vicki Scott, Lianne Boller, Mary Murphy, Anna-Marie Cox, and Terry Murphy Lewis. Attendees were invited to sing along, but none shone so brightly as Harley Stewart who stole the show with five warm McEwans!

A gift exchange was accompanied by a delightful brand-new "Left-Right" story written and presented by Douglas Boller. Following that, everyone joined in singing Auld Lang Syne before departing, filled with the warmth of holiday spirit.



Webmaster Martin Cox presents his dramatic Viking Yule.

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

by Anna-Marie Cox

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) meeting was held on November 15th at Bruton Parish's Lewis Hall. The gathering was well attended by over 60 members and guests. Attendees were welcomed by the Williamsburg Pipes and Drum (WPAD) outside the hall.

President Sherri Cornoni opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing nine new members who were present for the 2025 AGM. WPAD and SASW member Lynn Newcomer piped in the new members: Wayne Eacho, Bruce Forester, Mary Johnson, Susan MacArthur, Katie McAlpin, Suzanne Lockhart-Kane, Nancy Miller, Charles Miller, and Kimberly Miller-Daum.

The Reverend Michael Thompson led the Society in a prayer of grace, followed by the Selkirk Grace. A delicious and varied potluck lunch followed at 1:15 p.m.

Sherri called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. and presented the President's annual report. It was noted that we have 27 new members this year, and that the new website is definitely attracting new members. The website features the addition of online payment for dues and events and receives plenty of traffic by members and prospects.

Minutes for the November 2024 meeting were presented by Jimmy McCarter. The treasurer's report was presented by John Scott and both reports were approved.

The membership approved a \$5 across-the-board increase in dues for 2026. Treasurer John Scott noted that increased costs (including one-time development of the new website) had impacted the operating budget, and a small increase was necessary to enhance budgetary stability. The membership also approved a reduction of annual dues set-aside for the Ken Graham Education and Charitable Fund from 25% to 20% as part of the amendments to the Society's By-laws, which will also support the operating budget.

In addition, proposed by-law changes were presented by John Scott, including clarification on the eligibility requirements of Scot of the Year, the clarification of Associate Member rights, and restating that a President must be on the board for one year prior to becoming President. In addition, the clarification of job descriptions for the positions of Vice President for Membership and the Registrar was provided. All measures were voted on by the membership and passed.

Recognition of the Board members who have fulfilled their 3-year commitments were Jimmy McCarter, Jerry Lelansky, Vicki Scott and John Scott. New board members as of 2026 are Lianne Boller, Ron Carnegie, Wayne Craigmiles and Roger Gosden who will begin their 3-year terms in January.

The meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m. and was followed by the always-popular complimentary whisky tasting, led by Bruce Buchanan and assisted by Tim Cordle and Bob Davis.

2026 SAS-W BOARD & OFFICERS

The following members were voted in to fill 4 open seats on the Board of Directors at the November 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM):

Lianne Boller	Wayne Craigmiles
Ron Carnegie	Roger Gosden

The total Board of Directors for 2026 is comprised of twelve members, which includes the above newly elected members as well as:

Bruce Buchanan	Wayne Glass
Sherri Cornoni	Jan Hruz
Anna-Marie Cox	Tami Schumann
Bob Davis	Susan White

All board members serve a 3-year term, unless an unexpected vacancy occurs.

During the December BOD meeting, the following board members were elected as officers for a one-year term, ending on December 31, 2026:

President:	Sherri Cornoni (re-elected)
Vice President:	Wayne Glass (re-elected)
Treasurer:	Anna Marie-Cox
Secretary:	Vacant

Additional positions appointed by the President and BOD are:

Facebook Administrator:	Anna-Marie Cox
Historian:	Vicki Scott
Newsletter Editor:	Donna Peak
Quartermaster:	Russ Madigan
Registrar:	Vicki Scott
Webmaster:	Martin Cox
VP of Membership:	Vacant



At the AGM, nine new members were piped in and welcomed by President Sherri Cornoni: L-R: Lynn Newcomer (Society Member, Piper), Mary Johnson, Kim Daum, Susanna Lockhart-Kane, Sue MacArthur, Katie McAlpin, Nancy Miller, CG Miller, President Sherri Cornoni, Wayne Eacho, Bruce Forester

Autumn Kirkin' of the Tartans



Society members gathered at Williamsburg Presbyterian Church to observe the Kirkin' of the Tartan on Sunday, November 9th. We were blessed with a temperate autumn day, with 30-plus tartan clad members and guests in attendance.

Reverend John Morgan and his staff presented a meaningful program and Rev. Morgan sported traditional Scottish Highland attire. The society thoroughly enjoyed a warm welcome, once again, by the Williamsburg Presbyterian Church.

The Williamsburg Pipes and Drums provided music during the service and then played a short, rousing concert at the front entrance of the church. It was enjoyed by society members, church goers, and many passersby!



THE SCOTTISH THISTLE

And why it's the National Flower

by Russ Madigan

"Oh, Flower of Scotland."

Many of us think of Scotland when we see the vibrant purple and green of a Thistle. I used to have several growing at our house in Maine. One got as tall as 6 feet.

But why does this beautiful flower hold such reverence for the natives of Scotland? Although it's classified as a "noxious weed," the Scots have thistle images on their money, and it's everywhere in Scotland: in architecture, advertising, and even stamped on shortbread.

Now, it's time for a little history ... the legend. It boils down to a small battle in the 13th century on the Ayrshire coast and an unfortunate

Norseman. One evening, the Viking army, which was intent on invading the country, came ashore in Largs with plans to ambush the sleeping Scottish clansmen. In order to be as quiet as they could, they removed their boots. As they crept across the countryside, one of them stepped

on a thistle bush. His cry of pain awoke the Scots, and the warriors rose up and defeated the Viking invaders.

Now, I hope you'll think twice about killing all those "noxious weeds" in your yard or garden, and you will look at them with a new understanding and smile.



Welcome New MEMBERS

October '25

Katherine McGaw

James ("BJ") Johnston

Nancy Miller

Laura Smith

Beth Liivak

November '25

Charles ("CG") Miller

January '26

Jim Eckels

Kathy Eckels

Pat Chrenka

Lucinda Gosden

Rob Engelman

SAS-W'S CENTERPIECE: BURNS NICHT (NIGHT)

By Howard Topp



The centerpiece of the Saint Andrew's Society of Williamsburg's Social Calendar from its very foundation has been a Burns Nicht celebration. Currently, it is our only formal event and gives our membership the opportunity to celebrate the life and works of Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns. But, in addition, a Burns Night gathering is an opportunity for each of us to think about the richness of our Scottish culture and an opportunity to reconnect with our heritage.

The first SAS-W Burns Nicht was held in 1969 and like all those that have followed it was a grand occasion, allowing members to gather together in our highland evening formal finery. However, at that time, many of our members were striving to acquire suitable highland attire. Consequently, that first Burns Nicht we had members in tuxes, suits, and military dress blues. Many of the ladies were, of course, spectacularly attired with tartan sashes and long skirts in clan tartans. Interestingly, though, we had plenty of kilts, and two of our members from lowland clans, wore tartan trews with their Prince Charlies that night.



Carolyn and Howard Topp at Burns Night, 1983.

Our agenda for the early Burns Celebrations pretty much followed that of the Washington St. Andrew's Society, our mentors at that time. We honored Burns' life and works through various traditional activities. The evening's entertainment usually included recitals of Burns' poetry and songs, along with traditional Scottish music and dancing. Over the years special performances by nationally known balladeers were frequently featured, such as Carl Peterson and particularly Bill Darrow. Our regular members have also provided entertainment: Bob Flinn on piano and later Kathy Kasley on harp. We also featured special entertainment such as Mary Adams' Highland dancers - with our daughter Heather being one of the troupe.

During those first years the society also had Dr. Janet Kimbrough, a Great-Great-Grandniece of Robert Burns, as our special guest. Dr. Kimbrough entered with the first class of women at the College of William & Mary in 1918, and was also a firm supporter of the Williamsburg Scottish Festival at its founding and early years. We have had numerous special guests over the decades and some may remember when we had General William S. Wallace, the commanding general of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, as our guest in 2008. With a name like his, there was no question why our board directed me to make sure he was invited!

Another traditional activity included the Address to the Haggis, with a ceremonial recitation honoring the great haggis. The late Byron Adams actually had a "two-fer" by both piping the haggis and reciting the ode! These days we are treated to Douglas Boller's terrific delivery. Other important parts of the evening include the key talk — the Immortal Memory. I have been truly honored to give several of these, reflecting on Burns' life and contributions and to offer the toast to the Bard at the

Burns Night 2026 update

Due to inclement, dangerous weather on January 25, 2026,
our celebration of the birth of Scottish poet Robert Burns was rescheduled:

when: March 28; Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

where: 240 Ford's Colony Drive, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188

We hope you can still join us!



conclusion. As most of you know, there are a series of other toasts delivered as well: To the president, to the reigning monarch of the UK, and the particularly appreciated Toasts to the Lassies: a warm and humorous tribute to women, often followed by a reply to the Lads.

Throughout our history, SAS-W has endeavored to pay homage to and maintain a bond with Scotland by celebrating this great and extraordinary ploughboy poet with Burns Nights. We must appreciate that he simply wrote in the dialect of rural Scotland, yet he wrote on the grand themes of love, friendship, brotherhood, and his beloved homeland.

Each time you attend a Burns gathering, just appreciate his way with words and his perceptive observation of the joys and absurdities of life, the daily difficulties, and the pleasures that we all experience.

Howard Topp and Gordon Duffus Address the Haggis, 1983.



“Fair fa’ your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin’-
race!...”

“His knife see rustic Labour
dight, An cut ye up wi ready
slight”

Williamsburg Christmas Parade 2025

By Susan White

It was a lovely evening for the Christmas parade on Dec. 7, 2025 — not too cold nor rainy. We were fortunate with the weather, because the very next day it snowed about 4 inches, and I doubt that we would have had the parade! Eight of us assembled in the Kaplan Arena parking lot. We were in the first half of the parade participants, and we didn't have to wait too long before the parade start, about 5:00 p.m. We carried our St. Andrews Society of Williamsburg lighted banner and followed the Williamsburg Pipes and Drums down the street. When the pipes start playing, the crowd goes wild and cheers loudly! It's all very exciting! The best part of the route is walking through Merchants Square, which normally is occupied with tables and chairs. The lights were bright, and the crowds were packed in! It was all a lot of fun! Hope you'll join us next year!



~passages~



Tom Gee (John T.)

Passed on June 23, 2025

Survived by his wife, Eve



Dan Cloutier (Daniel Brian)

Passed on December 23, 2025

Survived by his wife Kimberly



Joe (Francis) Beene

Passed on January 20, 2026

Joe was a popular society member and is survived by his wife Joyce

BRITISH REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

OCTOBER 18TH AT YORKTOWN

By Jerry Lelansky (Clan Anstruther)

The organizers of the British Remembrance Ceremony invited the St. Andrew's Society of Williamsburg (SAS-W) and the Williamsburg Pipes and Drums (WPAD) to participate again this year, in the British Remembrance Ceremony on the morning of Oct 18th at Yorktown. This was a small, semi-private remembrance ceremony for Scottish military regiments/units that participated in the battle and surrender at Yorktown. The ceremony occurs the day before Yorktown Days.

The organizers found our Society when we shared the Clan Campbell tent in the November 2023 Richmond Highland Games at Dorey Park. They asked that we participate in the 2024 remembrance ceremony; they thought that SAS-W had a pipe band and I immediately contacted WPAD and asked that they participate.

The Battle of Yorktown, also known as the Siege of Yorktown, was fought between the British Army and the combined forces of the French and Continental Armies between September 28 and October 19, 1781.

NATO Commodore Donald J. Mackinnon, Rear Admiral, Royal Navy (GBR), began the British Soldier's Ceremony with a speech at Lord Nelson's Garden. We then walked down Ballard Street to the Queen's Rangers plaque, on Water Street, for the Loyalists Soldier's Ceremony, then onto the Watermen's Museum Carriage House for a service followed by a 'meet and greet' with the NATO (British, Canadian, and German) military representatives and the organizers of the ceremony.

The NATO military representatives were very pleased with the program and most impressed by WPAD and SAS-W's participation.

The organizing committee is already looking forward to 2026 and hope that SAS-W and WPAD will participate for the 245th anniversary.



From left to right: Clay McEldowney, Darell Johnson, Josephine Borden, Jerry Lelansky, Irene Lelansky, Dan Gardner, Howar Topp (a founding member), and Susan Gardner. Josephine, who is not an SAS-W member, is married to George Borden. George and Michael Rolla are the organizers of the British Remembrance Ceremony.

Did you know that the Stone of Scone used in

Scottish coronations may date back to the legendary Fergus, who some believe was the first King? He reportedly took the stone from Ireland to the Kingdom of Dalriada in Argyll as early as 500 AD.



New SAS-W Apparel

New cold weather items are on the SAS-W webstore!

They include a soft shell jacket, micro fleece vests, micro fleece quarter zip pullover, micro fleece full zip jacket, Oxford dress shirt, sweatshirt, and long sleeve polos.

These items come in both mens and ladies sizes, except for the 1/4 zip pullover and sweatshirt, which are unisex sizes. The micro fleece jacket also comes in youth sizes.

All items have a wide range of colors to compliment just about any color of tartan. Like the summer polos, you have the option to have your order shipped to your home for a shipping fee or pickup at the local store and save shipping costs.

A portion of your purchase will go toward our operating fund - so it's a win-win as you support SAS-W in style!

Yours aye,
Russ Madigan

SHOP: https://stores.inksoft.com/st_andrews_society

Who was the Real Macbeth?

by Martin Cox

Few early medieval kings of Scotland are as well known or poorly understood than Mac Bethad mac Findlaich, better known as “Macbeth”. Most of us are familiar with the character from William Shakespeare’s famous play, but the actual individual who ruled Scotland was quite different from how he is portrayed by the Bard.

Macbeth was born around 1005, most likely in Moray, as the son of the Earl of Moray and (possibly) the grandson of King Malcolm II of Alba (the name for Scotland at this time). Macbeth became the Earl of Moray in 1032, in the time-honored fashion of killing his predecessor, Gille Coemgain. In 1040, King Duncan I of Scotland (also very different in real life from Shakespearean portrayal) invaded Moray and was killed, with Macbeth acceding to the throne.

Macbeth’s rule lasted for 17 years, a long time in a period when reigns tended to be short and violent. Although information on his rule is somewhat sparse (typical for this time), most contemporary sources describe his reign as peaceful and benevolent, and his hold on power must have been secure, as he faced no major challengers and even left his realm to make a pil-

grimage to Rome in 1050. During his regency, he ended up becoming involved in 1052 in the power struggles in neighboring England between the English king Edward the Confessor and Earl Godwin (the father of King Harold Godwinson, who fell at the Battle of Hastings in 1066). Macbeth’s reign came to an end in 1057 at the

Battle of Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire where he was slain, leading to Malcolm III becoming King of Alba.

So why did Shakespeare choose Macbeth as the main character in one of his best-known plays, and why is Macbeth portrayed as a villain? Although scholars are uncertain of the reason, the general consensus is that the play was written not long after King James VI of Scotland had become King James I of England, and Shakespeare knew well from the Tudor period what happened to people who ended up on the wrong side of the English monarch. As King

James claimed descent from Malcolm III, it would make sense for Shakespeare to portray Malcolm’s foe as villainous and treacherous; similarly, the play’s emphasis upon witchcraft and supernatural is also believed to be a nod to King James, who had a well-known fascination with supernatural phenomena.

Either way, it makes for a whopping good play!



SAS-W 2026 EVENT CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

26 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

MARCH

26 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

28 Burns’ Night Dinner
5:00 p.m. Ford’s Colony Club Williamsburg

APRIL

6 Tartan Day (Official observance in U.S.)

12 Kirkin’ of the Tartan
1:30p.m. Historic Christ Church, Weems

23 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

MAY

28 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

JUNE

25 Pub Night
5:30p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

JULY

23 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

AUGUST

27 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

SEPTEMBER

24 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. Anna’s Brick Oven

OCTOBER

TBA British Remembrance Ceremony at Yorktown

22 Pub Night
5:30 p.m. (Halloween Theme)Anna’s Brick Oven

NOVEMBER

TBA Annual General Meeting (AGM)

TBA Autumn Kirkin’ of the Tartans

TBA Food Drive in observance of St. Andrew’s Day

DECEMBER

TBA Christmas Luncheon & Ceilidh

TBA Williamsburg Christmas Parade March



Time for Pub Nite!

Here we are at the start of another Pub Night season. Thanks to you, last year was terrific, so let's try to keep up the momentum.

Our first Pub Night will be on Thursday, February 26 at Anna's Brick Oven on Richmond Road. As usual, we will gather at 5:30 for social time with friends you may not have seen in a few months, followed by dinner if you're hungry. Our special guest will be George Washington and I know he'd love to meet you!

Please RSVP to me at jan.hruz@yahoo.com by Tuesday, February 24. (It's important to RSVP so that the restaurant has an accurate headcount. They really do appreciate it.)

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Yours aye,
Jan Hruz



Scenes from our October 2025 Pub Night

Top: Medusa (aka, Vicki Scott) says you should have looked the other way, Stone Man!

Middle, left to right: A spectacular night at the opera; Uncle Fester (Jerry Lelansky) can't handle the heat; The Whites get a little witchy.

Bottom left: New members get a warm welcome from our president, the Queen of Hearts.



If you haven't joined us for our monthly pub night, what are you waiting for?

TECH UPDATE

By Martin Cox, Webmaster

It has been a busy and productive few months for the Society on the technology front. Approximately 50% of payments for the November Ceilidh and the (postponed) Burns Night Supper were made through the website interface. Society members are starting to use the website to renew annual dues, and several new members have applied online, with some indicating that they found SAS-W via an online search. That is good news!

At the request of some members, we have added the ability to conduct basic traffic analysis on site visits and usage. Because of the added functionality, users will now see on their initial visit a banner at the bottom of the page with the choice to opt-out for analytic tracking (or “cookies”), which is in compliance with a wide variety of privacy laws. It’s important to point out that absolutely no data is collected on an individual basis; the data we collect for site analysis is aggregate and only shows how many visitors we’ve had, which pages they visit, and basic geographic information (for example, “United States—Virginia” or “United Kingdom.”

We also are in the process of creating a Google Workspace for Non-Profits for the Society. This allows us to better manage email addresses for Society email addresses (for example, webmaster@scotsofwmbg-va.org), along with substantially more (200 terabytes as opposed to 15 gigabytes) data storage for the Society, and the ability to use Google Meet to hold online meetings and discussions. Because we are a non-profit organization, it comes at a price that any Scot can appreciate—free!

As always, if you have any questions about how the Society is using technology, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at webmaster@scotsofwmbg-va.org.

Society Ornaments

Now Available – SAS-W Ornaments!

These attractive wood ornaments will be available again at the **February Pub Night** (Thursday, Feb 26) – as well as **Burns Night** (Sat, March 28th) for \$10 each. It comes with a nice protective pouch and will benefit the society’s operating fund (to help finance events and furnishings such as display tartans and banners).



By Anna-Marie Cox, Facebook Administrator

Did you know that we have a Facebook site? You can find us here:

www.facebook.com/groups/1410543212957245

Members are posting interesting tidbits and travel info about Scotland. I also post reminders about the society’s upcoming activities. In addition, photos of those activities and of our members are posted. Currently we have 73 members on the Facebook page.

This is our online community so join the conversation — we would love to have you join us!

St. Andrew’s Food Drive



The annual Saint Andrew’s Food Drive was held on December 1st at FISH (312 Second Street, Williamsburg). A luncheon immediately followed at Revolution Golf & Grille and a good time was had by all!

This charitable activity is a long-standing tradition of our society, to honor St. Andrew’s Day (which actually falls on November 30th).

Several members participated at the event, with others contributing separately with food donations and in cash.