



President's Newsletter Volume 46 #2 (March 9, 2025)

Greetings members!

If Punxsutawney Phil is correct, spring is right around the corner, and with it our March stated meeting and our annual spring events. Please read on and mark your calendars, I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Social and Business Activity

The St. Andrew's Society of the City of Albany (the Society) experienced the flurry of social and business activity highlighted below since our last letter.

Stated meeting, Thursday, January 9th, 2025: The first stated meeting of the Society for 2025 was well attended with a quorum of members, guests, and prospective applicants in attendance! Officiating my first stated meeting as President, I expressed great optimism for the robust condition of our Society and the upcoming year! Our Chaplain, the Very Rev. Gary Kriss delivered a very appropriate invocation for the evening, remembering the principles and life of service of President Jimmy Carter, who was laid to rest this day. Rev. Kriss reminded us that during his life, President Carter embodied many of the principles upon which our Society was founded, and led us in prayer that not only we, but all the people of this great nation, be inspired by President Carter's example of loving our neighbor in both word and deed.



Albany St Andrews The Very Rev. Gary Kriss Albany St Andrews Treasurer Thomas Goodfellow

Treasurer Thomas Goodfellow reported that he has been continuing to reconcile our books and converting our bookkeeping system to Quick Books, and that our investment accounts were doing well. Tom had also been working to secure a directors and officers (D&O) liability policy, and depositing checks received for Member dues and from our event fees.



Albany St Andrews Board Chairman Timothy Thornton Albany St Andrews Dr. Richard MacDowell

Timothy Thornton, Chairman of the Board of Managers, reported that at the Board's January meeting they had approved expenditures for repair of the Society's gas fire places and upgrade of the House security system.

Dr. Richard MacDowell, as Chairman of the Credentials Committee, reported on applications for Membership in the Society recommended for approval by the Committee. An application for Resident Membership had been received from Aidan Daft, a teacher at the Hoosac School, talented contra- bassoonist, and Rugby player who had attended many of our events and met all the other qualifications for Membership. The application was voted on using the traditional ballot box and was approved unanimously by the Membership. Welcome Aidan!



Dr. MacDowell continued his remarks as Security Chairman, having met with Doyle Security Systems to have failed bluetooth sensors replaced on the doors of the first floor of the Rooms. Dr. MacDowell reported that for a relatively minimal cost relative to the cost of replacing the failed first floor sensors alone, Doyle would hardwire new sensors in the basement, replace the sensors on the first floor, replace the alarm system service panel in the basement, and replace the entry keypad on the first floor. The Board of Managers agreed and approved this measure.

First Vice President Jay Hagle reported for the Program Committee on the St Patrick's Day parade watch party at the Rooms which will occur this year on Saturday, March 15 at 1:00 p.m. Jay also mentioned the prospect of having a "Fire and Water" event at the Rooms to welcome new Members in the April time-frame. William Burke discussed the possibility of having a tour of the Saratoga Military History Museum for the Society Members. Willard Bruce suggested a Summer Picnic for the Society at the Lake George Battlefield Pavilion, and also the possibility of a reception at the Rooms involving the Historic Albany Foundation. Secretary Richard Hixon reminded Members of the upcoming Lecture on Colonial Wars in Lake George to be presented by John DiNuzzo and Mark Silo on Sunday January 12th at the Colonie Library.

Society Member William Storrs delivered the evening's program, a humorous and nicely detailed account of his recent trip to Scotland with wife Victoria! Some of the highlights included arrival in Edinburgh which was extraordinarily crowded even at the end of September, an enjoyable stay at the Bruntsfield Hotel, and then travel to Stirling and from there up the West Coast through lands of Bill's Clanranald! Bill discovered quickly that Scottish Roads could be a challenge, too narrow even for a rented Jeep Compass and uncommonly constrained by curbs. At one pull off stop Bill found that his rental car had previous experience with these curbs, manifested in a rim so badly bent that it refused to hold air satisfactorily for the rest of the trip. Bill provided a report of his travels illustrated with stunning landscape photos that is attached to this newsletter!



Social Events:

The Society's annual Burns Night supper was held at the Rooms on Saturday, January 25th, starting with cocktails at 6 PM. As President, I was honored to serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the evening. The presentation of the haggis was performed by Dan Graves, Bearer, Jay Hagle, boozier, Andrew Patterson, poet, Dr. MacDowell, Armorer, and Matthew Farrigan, piper.

An introduction to the evening's meal and the Selkirk Grace was delivered by Rev. Kriss. Toasts were offered to the United States by William Storrs, to the Society by President Thornton, to the Lassies and Laddies by guests Michael Belange and Leslie Nestor, to Absent Friends by Richard Hixon, and to the Bard by Richard Mazzaferro.

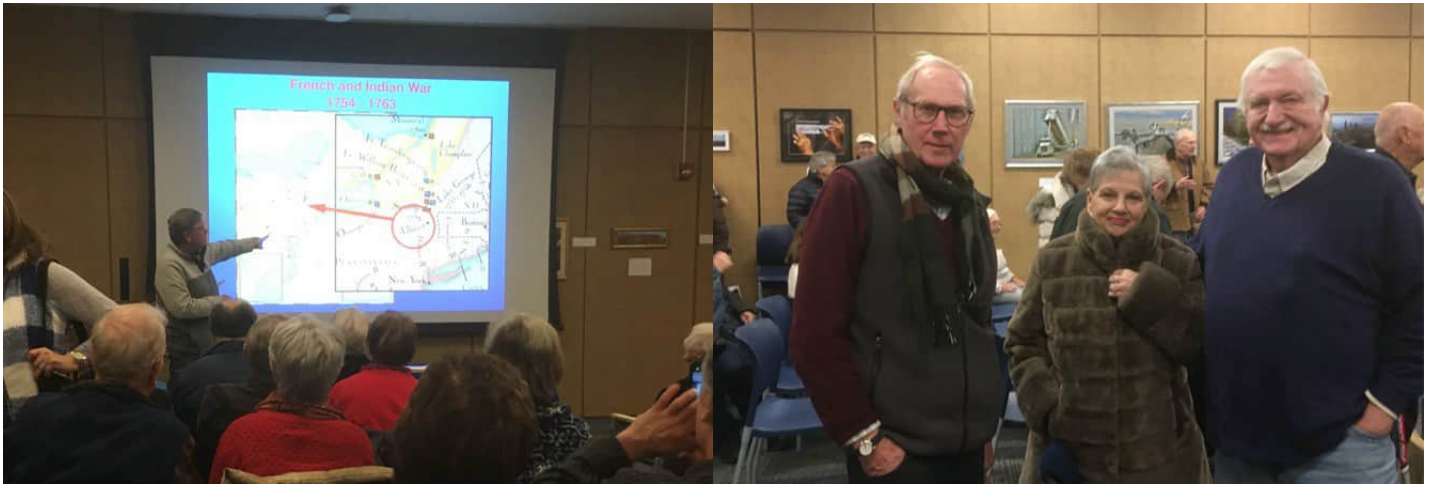


Daniel Graves then invited guests to the dinner, once again raising the bar for our expectations for these events, and providing an amazing supper of haggis, neeps and tatties, steak tips, and other delicacies. A table of delicious deserts was provided by the Members. A Silent Auction with numerous tempting Scottish-themed articles was organized by Barbara MacDowell that received enthusiastic bidding by the Members!



Members and guests then offered poems, songs, anecdotes, and other entertainment including two Burns poem set to music with guitar accompaniment by William Storrs, and of course our traditional joint rendition of Auld Lang Syne, Burns' 1788 song, led in fine baritone form by Richard Mazzaferro.

Members of the Society attended a presentation at the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie on Sunday January 12th to hear a presentation given by John DiNuzzo, President of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and member-historian Mark Silo on the significance of the site to both the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Discussion with Mr. DiNuzzo suggests that Society Members may be given a private tour of the site if we hold a summer picnic there!



Correspondence Received:

The following is a summary of mail received at the Rooms over the last several weeks related to our charitable work, not including time-sensitive letters such as Member Dues and Donations and correspondence from the City which was forwarded to Thomas Goodfellow or other Officers for follow up, and not including junk mail (ie, solicitations from firms we do not do business with).

The Society received requests for continued support or renewed subscriptions from the following:

- A request for donation from Colel Chabad
- A request for donation from the Capital City Rescue Mission
- An offer to renew the Society's subscription from Scotland Magazine

Other correspondence included:

- Acknowledgment from The Luzerne Foundation of receipt of our donation to the Patriots Cove fund of that organization.
- A Newsletter from the Friends of Albany Rural Cemetery
- An invitation to attend a reception hosted by the Open Space Institute in NYC on May 7, 2025
- Holiday Greetings addressed to Jay Hagle and our Trustees from the Hoosac School
- A brochure listing program offerings from the Arts Center of the Capital Region

Occasionally we receive correspondence addressed to persons who have never been authorized to reside in our building or use our address as their mailing address. During recent weeks received the following of two such mailings:

- A solicitation to Miles Baxter at 150 Washington Avenue from Colonial Penn to purchase insurance.
- A solicitation to extend the warranty on a 2018 Honda CRV to Mike Michaels at 150 Washington Avenue.

The Secretary retains these pieces for approximately three months. If you would like copies of any of the above, please let Richard Hixon know.

Other News:

More happy news! Madeline Lotti was born on January 23rd at Saratoga Hospital to parents Nicholas and Nichole MacVie. Mom and daughter are doing well!



Wells Morgan was born on February 2nd at Glens Falls Hospital to parents Marissa and Cori Winch. He is providing great entertainment for Grandpa Roy Gordon, big brother Walker, Great Aunt Lydia Levine, and the rest of the family! Roy and Lydia are Toni LeBron's son and daughter.



What Comes Next:

I hope to see you all soon at our upcoming events planned for the new next few months:

- Our Second Stated Meeting for 2005 will be held at the Rooms on Thursday March 13th, 2025 at 7:00 PM. A reminder for the meeting and link to the Zoom broadcast will be emailed shortly.
- Our annual St. Patrick's Day Party welcomes our friends and families to the Rooms to watch the Albany Parade on Saturday, March 15th at 1:00 PM.
- The NYC Tartan Parade will be held on April 5th 2025. Information about the Society's involvement in the parade will be provided in upcoming meetings and mailings.
- A tour for Members of the Society of the NYS Military Museum in Saratoga is being contemplated, details will be forthcoming in future Meetings and emails.
- Our third Stated Meeting for 2005 will be held at the Rooms on Thursday May 8th, 2025 at 7:00 PM. This evening will be our Ladies Night Meeting for this year, and our guests will be greeted by a Harpist.

Attachments:

Our Recent Trip to Scotland, William Storrs

For the St Andrew's Society of the City of Albany,
Christopher Thornton, President

In September, Victoria and I made our first trip to Scotland (and our first trip outside the continental United States in many years). Our nine-day self-planned trip began in Edinburgh, from which we drove to Oban via Stirling, from Oban to Skye, and from Skye back to Edinburgh. What follows is a brief description of the highlights, as well as some cautionary remarks.

In Edinburgh, we stayed at the Bruntsfield Hotel and enjoyed it very much -nice rooms and restaurant and a well-stocked bar. It is a bit under a mile south of Edinburgh Castle via city streets, however, it offered a very relaxing walk to the Royal Mile (via Bank Street/George IV Bridge) across the Bruntsfield Links and The Meadows, two very attractive parks. We also enjoyed the fact that the Bruntsfield was an actual neighborhood with local pubs and restaurants within walking distance.

Edinburgh Castle was coldly impressive (the St. Margaret Chapel was a surprise) and the Royal Mile was crowded and touristy. After two days in Edinburgh, we picked up our rental car (a “small” SUV) and drove to Stirling. We found Stirling Castle more interesting (and much less crowded) than Edinburgh, perhaps because it had been the Stewart residence.

Driving from Stirling to Oban, we quickly learned that Scottish roads were not made for larger cars and trucks, as the lanes become much narrower after you left the four-lane highway. The roads also seemed to have a curb more often than a shoulder, which made them seem even narrower. It was along this stretch of road that we got a flat tire (I may have hit the curb), which some very nice employees of the Cruach hydro plant helped me to repair (cars don’t have spare tires anymore).

In Oban, we stayed a few miles south of the City at the Tigh An Truish, a very old inn on the Isle of Seil. Its name means “house of trows” because it was where the residents would change from kilts before crossing to the mainland after the ‘45. This was one of the highlights of our trip. Excellent staff, accommodations, and food, some very nice walks across the island to the firth on the other side.



Access to the island is across a very short stone bridge (the “bridge across the Atlantic”) built in 1793. They added walls to the sides of the bridge in 1794 because the sheep kept falling into the water.



Our first day in Oban was intended to be a day trip to Mull, but instead we spent the day trying to get the tire replaced on our rental SUV. We were ultimately unsuccessful, apparently because the car had suffered so many flat tires that the wheel rim would no longer hold the tire under pressure. The rental company was very understanding, however. They not only brought a new car to the Tigh An Truish, they paid for our cab fare around Oban the next day so that we did not have to lose another day.

The second day in Oban began with a boat tour of the Firth of Lorn. This was an excellent way to see the sights, including a Stevenson lighthouse. Many of the castles were built with an eye toward ocean access rather than land access. Be warned - if they tell you that it might be a bit “splashy” sitting in the outside deck seating, you will get both wet and cold!

After the tour, we stopped in a wine/liquor shop that promised world-wide shipping and, while Victoria warmed herself by the peat fire, I warmed myself sampling several single malts (several of which were shipped home). We then walked across the street to the Oban Distillery where we had scheduled a tour. This was, in hindsight, not the best scheduling. But it was a nice tour, followed by dinner at a very nice seafood restaurant (“Coast”) and, fortunately, a cab back to the hotel.

The next day we set out for Skye. Our plan was to drive across the Skye Bridge at Kyleakin rather than take the ferry from Mallaig to Armadale, and were quite certain that we had correctly programmed the car GPS system. We were, therefore, quite surprised after a beautiful drive (stop to look at Castle Stalker), to find ourselves in Mallaig. Fortunately, we were first in line for standby on the ferry and it turned out to be a very nice way to arrive on Skye.

On Skye, we stayed in Portree, which we found to be somewhat disappointing after Oban and the Tigh An Truish. I suspect that it suffered more by comparison than in actuality. One word of warning, though. If you stay in Portree on a Sunday night, there is only one pub serving dinner. Get there early and be prepared to wait anyway.

The main reason that we went to Skye was to climb a mountain toward the northeastern end of the island named 'The Storr' to a rock formation called "The Old Man of Storr." It can be seen for miles to the south across the flatter part of the island and is quite beautiful.



The walk from the parking area offers a quicker, steeper path or a slower, shallower path, along with historical markers that are quite informative. Victoria concluded that, if you can climb to the Old Man of Storr, you are not yet the Old Man of Storr.



After getting off the mountain, we drove back down to Armadale to see the Clan Donald Headquarters in Armadale Castle. More of a manor house than a castle, but a good

museum (and a nice restaurant). Disappointingly, very little by way of Clanranald history (more of that can be found at the museum in Edinburgh).

The next day, we drove back to Edinburgh via Glencoe, paper map in hand, taking care not to follow the directions of the GPS, which tried again to make us take a ferry, this time to Edinburgh. The drive through the Glencoe area was breathtaking but slow, due to a combination of sightseers and people hauling trailers (caravans). The drive took several hours longer than we had planned.

Our return home was delayed a day when the only daily flight by that airline to the U.S. was cancelled. It was not a hardship for us to stay an extra night in Edinburgh, but, when picking an airline, the ability to get on another same day flight might be something to consider.

We plan to go back – there was so much that we wanted to see and just didn't have the time, including some of the islands. Next time, however, we plan to spend more time in one place as a base and make day trips from there, rather than driving between locations. As we are intending to return to Oban, we will probably fly into Glasgow and take the train to Oban, postponing the car rental until we are already off the main roads.