



*The Pipes of Christmas*  
**The Pipes of Christmas**  
18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1999 - 2016

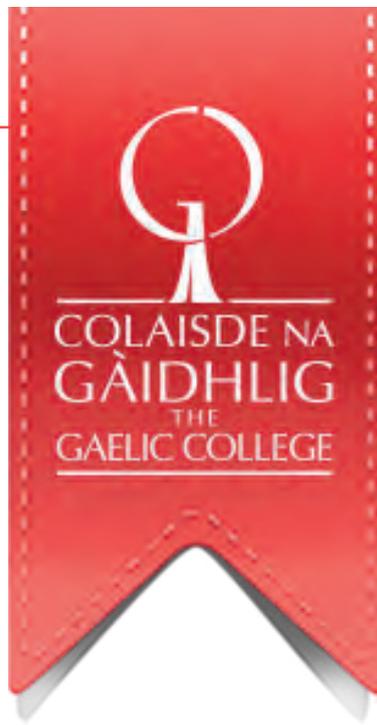
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**The Pipes of Christmas!**

*Sponsored by*

The Gaelic College, St. Ann's, Nova Scotia  
The Grand Summit Hotel, Summit, NJ

**Saturday, December 17, 2016**

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church  
New York City

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**Sunday, December 18, 2016**

Central Presbyterian Church  
Summit, NJ

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission.

Please turn off all cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices.  
The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment is strictly prohibited.

*The 2016 edition of the Pipes of Christmas is lovingly  
dedicated to the memory of*

Evan Thomson Cattanach  
Angus MacMillan  
Ronnie Stewart  
Dreama Powell  
Andrew MacMillan

*The Clan Currie Society gratefully acknowledges the generous support of*

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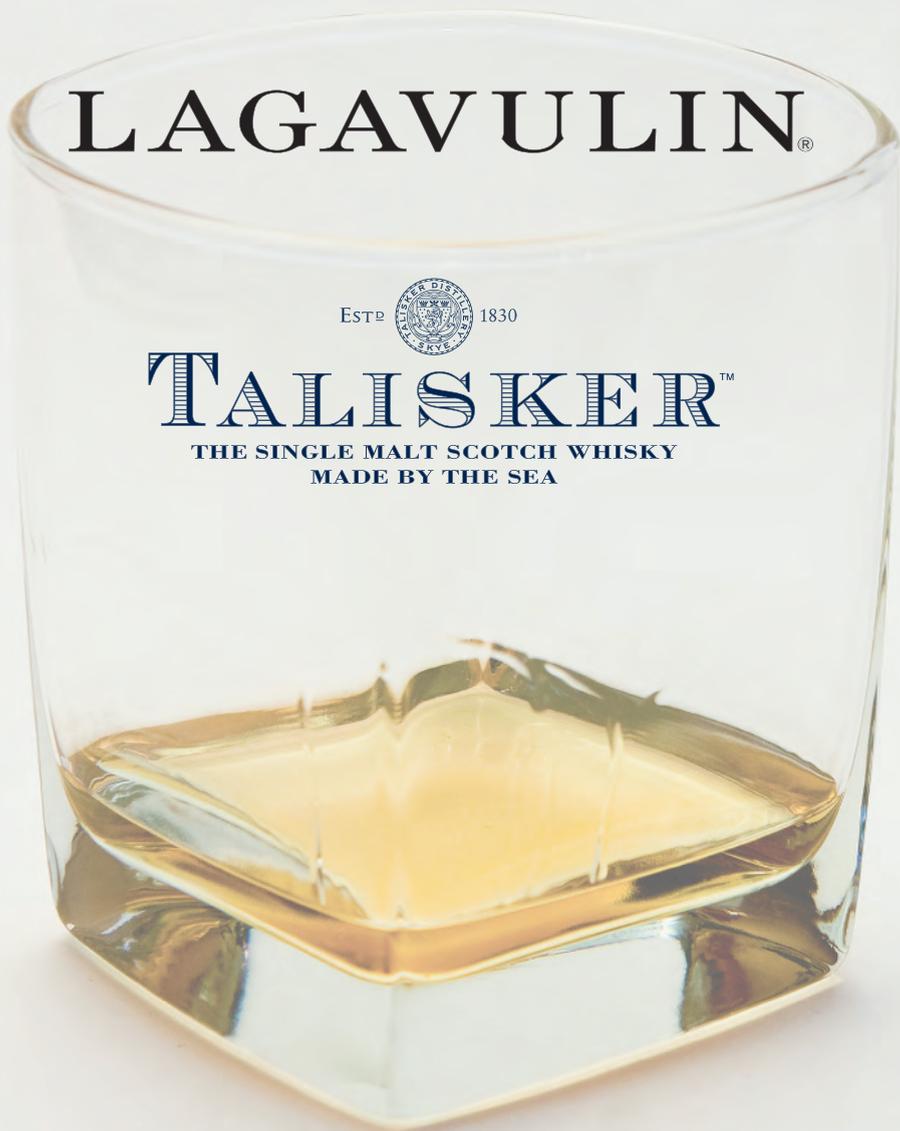
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# Welcome Home to the Pipes of Christmas!



On behalf of our Honorary Chairs, the Hon. Antonia Romeo – British Consul General in New York and renowned fashion designer and author, Jeffrey Banks, our inspirational company of artists and the dedicated members and friends of the Clan Currie Society we wish you a warm welcome to the Pipes of Christmas. It hardly seems like a year since we last gathered to celebrate, through music and verse, this very special time.

For our 18th season we have an outstanding program of traditional Celtic music, including some much-loved old favorites. The music is accompanied by readings from Scottish, Irish and Welsh literature. In the course of the concert we hope to stir your blood, bring out the romantic in you and just perhaps bring a tear to your eye. As part of the program we are excited to announce two new musical compositions, both world premieres. From Steve Gibb, award-winning guitarist and composer, we have the *John Muir Suite*, a work which pays tribute to the life of naturalist John Muir. This piece was commissioned in honor of the Centennial of the US National Parks.

The second is the *Old Bard of Stilligarry* composed by Eyler Coates of New Orleans, LA. Eyler was the winner of a tune writing competition sponsored by the Scottish Harp Society of America in recognition of Clan Currie's support of the Scottish harp community. His work takes us on a journey through the ages to the wild beauty of Stilligarry on South Uist, the spiritual home of the MacMhuirich bardic family.

We say to our sponsors, the Gaelic College of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the Grand Summit Hotel in Summit, New Jersey and Celtic Life Magazine, thank you for choosing to support The Pipes of Christmas. While your generous help allows us to stage this joyous occasion, it goes much further than that.

Proceeds from our concerts benefit, through educational scholarships, our young people in the United States, Canada and Scotland. Their drive and passion keep our Celtic culture flourishing.

From all of us to all of you, we wish you a happy Christmas, and when the time comes, a Hogmanay filled with laughter and fun and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.



Dear Friends

It is my pleasure, as honorary chair of the 18th annual Pipes of Christmas, to welcome you to this year's concerts in New York City and Summit, New Jersey. It's also great to join you all in welcoming performers including James Robinson, Paul Woodiel, Christopher Layer, Jennifer Port, the Solid Brass ensemble, and the Pipe Major Kevin Ray Blandford Memorial Pipe Band. Since 1999, the Pipes of Christmas concerts have become a fabulous holiday tradition for Scots and all who love Scotland. The music you will hear today, which includes two world-premiere performances, is in turn rooted in hundreds of years of Scottish, Welsh and Irish musical tradition. Long may the Pipes of Christmas uphold and indeed extend the great musical and literary legacies of the countries of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

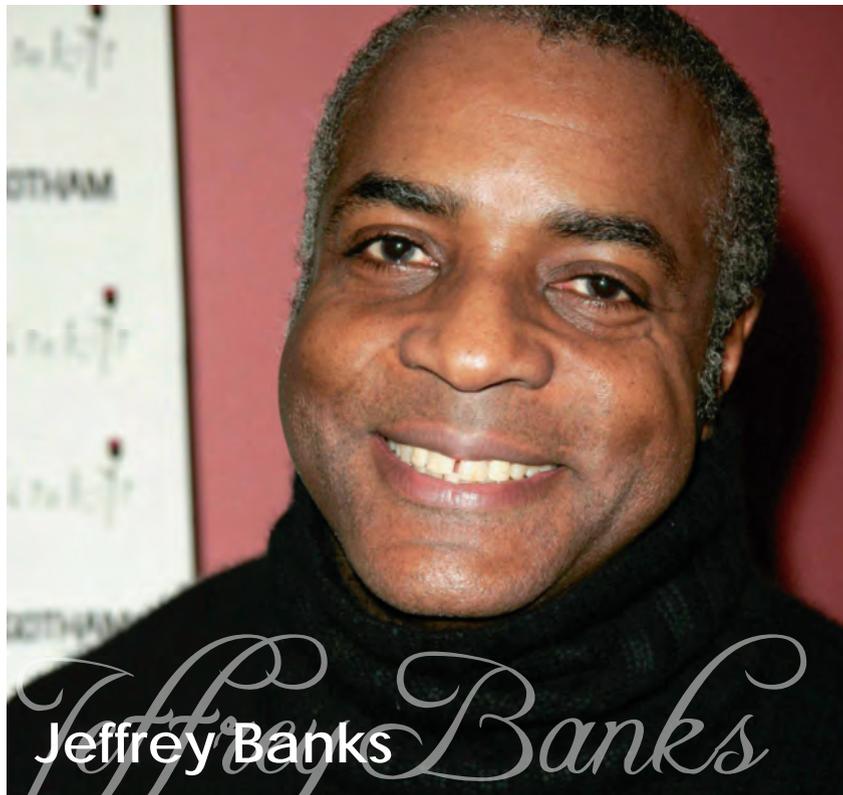
Proceeds from these concerts support a number of worthy initiatives including scholarships for students studying in Scotland. Besides the Pipes of Christmas, the Clan Currie Society's activities have expanded in recent years to encompass Tartan Day on Ellis Island, one of New York Tartan Week's signature events. Congratulations to Clan Currie from all at the British Consulate General on your achievements.

I look forward to attending my first of many Pipes of Christmas concerts this year with my family, and hope to see you there.

Best wishes and happy holidays,

***Antonia Romeo***

HM Consul General, New York



There are a few iconic events that herald the start of the Christmas season: Santa's arrival in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the lighting of the tree in Rockefeller Center and for me, nothing brings out the spirit of the season more than The Pipes of Christmas!

If you have ever set foot in Scotland you are instantly charmed by the glorious landscapes and vistas, the warm and wonderful people who inhabit it, and the deep roots of history woven into everything you see around you. This love of Scotland and its national treasure, tartan plaid led me to write my first book, TARTAN: Romancing the Plaid.

The history of Scotland is a rich one, full of struggles and triumphs and when you hear the first strains of the bagpipers from The Pipes of Christmas, you can almost hear that history in every chord. Combining sacred Christmas hymns, traditional holiday songs, and even specially commissioned music, The Pipes of Christmas is guaranteed to set your toes a tappin' and your heart to soar.

From rousing chorale work to tender violinists, The Pipes of Christmas is an always amazing start to the holiday season. If you have experienced it before than you know exactly what I mean. If this is your first time here...well we know we will see you again!

Wishing you a Joyous Holiday Season,

Plaidfully Yours,

*Jeffrey Banks*



May the peace and joy of the holiday season be with you throughout the coming year.



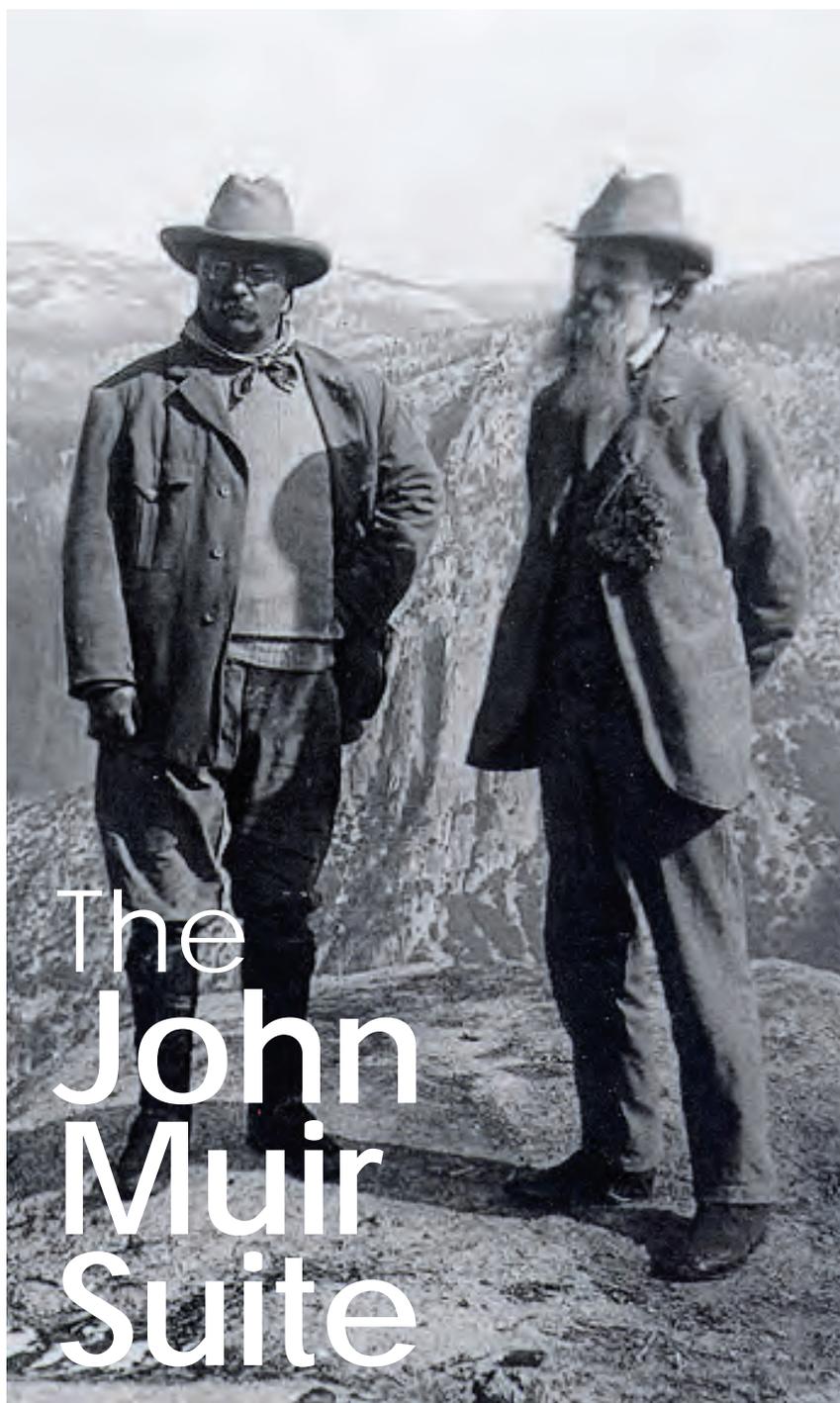
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The  
John  
Muir  
Suite

# The John Muir Suite

During the summer of 2016, the Clan Currie Society joined the US National Park Service (NPS), the guardians of American cultural and recreational resources, to mark their centennial year. As part of the Tartan Day celebrations, the Society's exhibition *The Life and Legacy of John Muir*, displayed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, told the story of an inspirational Scotsman who became the "Father of the National Parks."

Following the huge success of the exhibition, the Pipes of Christmas 2016 now proudly presents the *John Muir Suite*, a new work, commissioned in honor of the centennial, by composer Steve Gibb. This much anticipated world premiere pays tribute to the life and work of naturalist John Muir.

Steve, originally from Inverness, now living in the United States, said, "I wanted the piece to be a journey, in a sense mirroring Muir's own journey from his childhood in Scotland through his emigration to America and his eventual role of early environmentalist and champion of the wilderness." While his music will be all of this, it also re-enforces the Clan Currie Society's continued commitment to the preservation of Scotland's history and heritage.

Centennials are of course a time for celebration, a chance to throw a party, but also are often a time of reflection, a chance to stop, draw breath and consider the years that have passed. In a sense NPS has done both. They've had fun this year but perhaps aware of the wise words of Confucius who told us to, "Study the past if you would define the future," NPS has also taken the time to re-examine those precious 'childhood' memories.

As part of that process they have recognized and saluted a number of, "visionary leaders who came before us with groundbreaking ideas." Among these men and women who made American history, and are so important to the modern park service, were Charles Young, Freeman Tilden, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, President Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir. The service also rightly acknowledges their 'unsung heroes,' the thousands of men and women who staff their monuments, battlefields, cemeteries and parks.

John Muir was born on 21 April 1838 in the small town of Dunbar around 30 miles east of Edinburgh. Like many Scots of the time John, aged only 11 and his family,

# Muir Suite

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made the crossing to the United States in search of a better life. In the spring of 1849, they sailed on an overcrowded boat from Glasgow to New York before taking the Hudson River to Albany, then on to Buffalo, and across the Great Lakes. The family finally arrived and settled in the fledgling state of Wisconsin, a moment which prompted him to announce, "This sudden splash into pure wildness in Nature's warm heart – how happy it made us." It was, without him knowing it, a sign of things to come.

Although, in his adult life, he traveled widely throughout the United States and further afield, an extended journey sometimes described as, "40 years of intermittent wandering," it was California's Sierra Nevada and Yosemite that truly inspired him.

To help protect those areas he co-founded the Sierra Club in 1892, an organization, with its outreach and education program, is still alive and well today. The current president of the Club, Aaron Mair was one of the distinguished guest speakers who opened the Society's, The Life and Legacy of John Muir on Ellis Island.

Muir became America's best-known naturalist and conservationist persuading the government to protect Yosemite, Sequoia, Grand Canyon and Mt Ranier as national parks.

Greatly influenced by Alexander von Humboldt, Muir wrote extensively, much of it California related. He lived for many years in the state and in 1984; he was voted the most important person in the history of the California.

He received an honorary degree from Harvard and honorary doctorates from Wisconsin, where he briefly studied, Yale, and California. Sadly he died, the day before Christmas 1914 in Los Angeles, two years before the creation of the US National Park Service.

John Muir was a great lover of language and music from the country of his birth, both inspired his writing which influenced presidents, congressmen and others, forcing them to action. So it seems fitting, as the Clan Currie Society looks forward to next year that the performance of the John Muir Suite at the Pipes of Christmas, an event which Steve Gibb described as one of, "great heart and integrity," brings down the curtain on 2016.



*To our dear friends,  
Bob and Suzanne Currie*

*Thank you for bringing us our favorite  
event of the Christmas Season!*

*Congratulations!  
Steve, Karen and Breanne Bowman*





# 2016

## National Park Service™ CENTENNIAL

Dear Bob,

On behalf of all the women and men who care for the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, congratulations on this year's Pipes of Christmas program. The Clan Currie Society has been hosting Tartan Day on Ellis Island since 2002. This year, you celebrated the 15th anniversary of this annual event highlighting Scottish heritage and culture at the same time the National Park Service celebrated its centennial. Thank you for being part of our centennial celebration with Tartan Day and with the exhibition "The Life and Legacy of John Muir."

We are very happy that each year visitors to Ellis Island can look forward to the pipers, drummers, dancers, fiddlers, kilt makers and the like representing the portable culture that Scots brought with them to America. This year's opening of "The Life and Legacy of John Muir" was particularly special by including representatives from Muir's family, the National Park Service, the Sierra Club (which Muir founded) and the Scottish Government. Over one million visitors came to Ellis Island during the exhibition's run. I understand from you that this made Tartan Day on Ellis Island the largest Tartan Day event in the world. Congratulations!

Wishing you and the Clan Currie Society a joyous holiday season and successful Pipes of Christmas program.

Sincerely,

***John Piltzecker***

Superintendent, Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Monument



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Martha Hall, Pipe Major

**Musical Director**

**Jeff Rickard**

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**Robert Currie**

# *Act One*

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Highland Cathedral

Joy to the World

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Angels We Have Heard on High

The John Muir Suite – World Premiere

Bhu Buachaillean an Dùthaich Shear

*(There Were Shepherds in an Eastern Town)*

I Wonder as I Wander

Amazing Grace

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# *Act Two*

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The Lad from Kingussie

Hallelujah

Pipe Band Medley

The Old Bard of Stilligarry – World Premiere

Hymn to the Saviour

In the Bleak Midwinter

Oidhche Shàmhach

*(Silent Night)*

O Come All Ye Faithful

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# In Memoriam

*Christmas is a time when we often think about those who are no longer with us. In 2016, we sadly lost a number of special friends. Let us pause for a moment and remember them fondly.*

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## **Evan Thomson Cattanach**

Evan was a true friend to many in the Clan Currie Society. As an enthusiastic supporter of The Pipes of Christmas concerts over many years, he was a 'weel-kent' face to many of the audience who returned year after year. Who can forget, for example, his evocative reading of the first Christmas in 'auld Scots' or his wonderfully theatrical address to the haggis? As a long-time brand ambassador in Scotland's whisky industry it is only right and proper that we raise a glass of the very best malt and toast his memory. Evan will be sorely missed but never forgotten.

## **Angus MacMillan**

As the Currie family historian, Angus was an enthusiastic supporter of the Society's academic events. A Benbecula man with a love for the islands, he had a sharp, inquisitive mind. However, he was much more than a scholar, he was, when the occasion arose, a gifted raconteur with some memorable stories to tell. Some lines from a recent poem written about him reveal yet another side to him:

I can see him there smiling - that wonderful Angus smile - with a wee glint in his eye.

The many who called him a friend will miss that glint. His detailed history of the MacMhuirich bardic family, a work unfinished at his death, will be published in due course.



# In M

## Carol Hassert

Edinburgh-born Carol came to Summit in 1988, later becoming the President of Summit Music Parents Association, an organization dear to her heart. Her love of and involvement in music and theatre were, along with her family, important parts of her life. In recognition of her dedication to community work, the Clan Currie Society and The Pipes of Christmas are proud to support the new Carol Hassert Memorial Scholarship for a deserving graduate of Summit High School pursuing a Fine Arts degree. We will remember her warmly.

## Ronnie Stewart

Ronnie, originally from Aberdeenshire, came to the United States in 1968 becoming, in the words of the New York Caledonian Club, "A long-time friend and pillar of the Scottish community." He was a man of many talents – a specialist carpenter in his working life – he also had an impressive artistic side. Ronnie was an accomplished and championship winning fiddle player and the author of the Gamekeeper's Son, published in 2015. As a lover of the poetry of Robert Burns he was often called to recite both the Address to the Haggis and the Immortal Memory. Of course, he was an original and much loved cast member of The Pipes of Christmas. He was also a favorite entertainer at the Clan Currie Society's Burns Night dinners. Ronnie, a born entertainer, will be fondly remembered.

# Memoriam

## Andrew MacMillan

Andrew, born and raised in Hingham, Massachusetts had a long career in television and theatre. He was widely recognized as a pillar of the New York Scottish American community. In an impressive list of appointments, he was twice Chief of the New York Caledonian Club, a past President of the National Tartan Day New York Committee and past President of the Clan MacMillan Society of North America. A colleague said, "Andy was an extraordinary man, of many parts. I don't think there was anything he could not do if he put his mind to it." His many friends and colleagues will miss his company.

## Dreama Powell

Dreama, a Cuyahoga Falls resident, was a longstanding Life Member of the Scottish Harp Society of America, and a valued contributor to the Kilt and Harp magazine, a publication which in the summer of 2016 was issued in her honor. As a member of the Bronte Society she was an avid reader of the Bronte sisters, she was too, a true Scottish storyteller. Dreama was well-known for her delicious shortbread which she would make for the harp competition at the Ohio Scottish Games. Everybody looked forward to this deliciously sweet treat. One of her many friends said, "I'll miss her artwork, her shortbread, her cheerful smile and gentle ways..." "I will miss you dear friend," said another.

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# Celtic Holiday Traditions

*According to the longstanding theory, the origins of Christmas stems from pagan winter festivals. One main reason early Christians were able to spread their religion across Europe so quickly came from their willingness to embrace celebrations prevalent among regional populations.*

*One such example is the Celtic 'Alban Arthuan,' a Druidic festival that took place around December 21st, the Winter Solstice. This traditional fire festival celebrated the re-birth of the Sun.*

*Although a celebration of the Son's birth replaced that of the Sun's, still a number of Christmas-tide traditions – including those the ancient Celts practiced – remain today.*

*As we look at the Celtic nations, it is interesting to note some similarities among Christmas traditions that cross geographic boundaries. They include, for example: Holly (a symbol of rebirth among Pagan Celts, but also of hospitality—it was believed fairies sought shelter inside the evergreen leaves to escape the cold); Mistletoe (believed to have healing powers so strong that it warded off evil spirits, cured illnesses and even facilitated a truce between enemies); fire and light (most notably the Yule log or candles placed in windows to light the way for strangers and symbolically welcoming Mary and Joseph); and door-to-door processions, from wassailing to Wren Hunts.*

*Each of the seven nations possesses its own variations of Celtic Christmas customs. Surrounding cultures and local identify shape these practices as well.*

## Scotland

Christmas was not officially recognized in Scotland for nearly four centuries. The Puritan English Parliament banned Christmas in 1647 and it did not become a recognized public holiday in Scotland until 1958.

However, according to Andrew Halliday, in his 1833 piece Christmas in Scotland, Scots were not discouraged from celebrating Christmas. Halliday wrote, "We remember it stated in a popular periodical, one Christmas season not long ago, that Christmas-day was not kept at all in Scotland.

Point View Salutes the Pipes of Christmas

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Such is not the case; the Scots do keep Christmas-day, and in the same kindly Christian spirit that we do, though the Presbyterian austerity of their church does not acknowledge it as a religious festival.”

Halliday’s 19th century account went on to describe festive sowens (sweetened oat gruel) ceremonies, “beggars” (actually “strapping fellows”) singing yule song, dances and card parties and children’s teetotum games.

Despite Puritan rule, some long-time Christmas traditions are preserved. These include burning the Cailleach (a piece of wood carved to look like an old woman’s face or the Spirit of Winter) to start the new year fresh; or on Christmas Eve burning rowan tree branches to signify the resolution of any disputes. The Celtic tradition of placing candles in windows was also done in Scotland to welcome “first footers” (strangers, bearing a small gift) into the home.

Traditional dishes also continue to be featured at Christmas lunch and throughout the holidays, including Cock-a-Leekie soup, smoked salmon, beef or duck, Cloutie dumplings, black buns, sun cakes, Christmas pudding and Crannachan.

Because Christmas was not an official holiday until the late ‘50s it is no surprise that today, for some Scots, Hogmanay (New Year’s Eve) is the most important event of the season. Arguably, locals ring in the new year with much more gusto than any other place on the planet.

## Ireland

A Fall clean-up was a common practice in Irish homes to prepare for Christmas. Women looked after cleaning the interior, while men took care of the outdoors, including whitewashing all exterior surfaces. Then holly, grown wild in Ireland, was spread throughout the house with cheer. Contemporary Ireland also highlights this clean-up ritual; once complete, fresh Christmas linens are taken out of storage.

Other customs include the Bloc na Nollaig or Christmas Block (the Irish version of the Yule log), candles in the window (perhaps one for each family member), and leading up to Christmas, “Calling the Waites,” where musicians would wake up townspeople through serenades and shouting out the morning hour.

Christmas Eve Mass is still a grand affair, a time for friends and family to reconnect. It is not uncommon for churchgoers to end up at the local pub after service to ring in Christmas morn. On Christmas Day, traditional dishes include roast goose or ham and sausages, potatoes (such as champ), vegetables (such as cabbage with bacon) and plum pudding, whiskey Christmas cake and barmbrack (currant loaf) for sweets.

Traditionally on December 26th, St. Stephen’s Day, Wren Boys with blackened faces, carrying a pole with the dead bird pierced at the top, tramped from house to house. Today the custom sometimes sees children carolling throughout the neighbourhood to raise money for charity. It is also quite common to go out visiting on this day.

One modern-day Irish tradition to note is gathering around the television to watch the “The Late Late Toy Show” in late November/early December, said to be the most watched program in Ireland.



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## Wales

Dylan Thomas' story, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, is renowned around the world. An excerpt offers a glimpse of a traditional Welsh festive season:

"Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang 'Cherry Ripe,' and another uncle sang 'Drake's Drum.'... Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night."

Music was and still is a major part of Welsh holidays. Plygain is a Christmas day church service, traditionally held between 3 and 6 a.m., featuring males singing a capella in three or four-part harmonies. While today this may be mainly practiced in rural areas, Eisteddfodde (caroling) is abundantly popular in homes, door-to-door and as part of annual song-writing competitions.

Other intriguing Welsh traditions include toffee making; drinking from a communal wassail bowl of fruit, spices, sugar and beer; children visiting homes on New Year's Day looking for their Callenig gift; and Mary Lwyd (Grey Mare) featuring wassail singers going door-to-door carrying a horse's skull and challenging residents to a contest of mocking rhymes.

## Isle of Man

Carolling also holds a special place in Manx Christmas celebrations, but traditionally an unconventional twist characterized it. On Christmas Eve, large numbers attended church for Carval. While the congregation sang, all of a sudden women would begin the traditional food fight, having peas on hand to throw at their male counterparts!

Accounts from the 1700 and 1800s describe 12 days of non-stop Christmas celebrations where every barn was filled with dancers accompanied by fiddlers the local parish hired. "On the twelfth day the fiddler lays his head on one of the women's laps, which posture they look upon as a kind of oracle," recorded Reverend John Entick (as published in 1774). "For one of the company coming up and naming every maiden in the company, asks the fiddler, who shall this or that girl marry? And whatever he answers it is absolutely depended on as an oracle."

As in Celtic fashion, Hunting the Wren processions occurred on the Isle of Man and today the practice is going through a revival, characterized by costumes, singing and dancing.

Other Manx customs include Mollag Bands, wearing eccentric clothing, swinging a molla (fishing float) and demanding money (a practice since outlawed); the kissing bush (a more elaborate ornament than a sprig of mistletoe); and Cammag, a sport that originated on the Isle of Man traditionally played on December 26th and/or Easter Monday.

Finally, in older times, but even as recently as the early 20th century, Christmas decorations were not taken down until Pancake Tuesday (when they were burnt under the pancake pan). Now holiday décor tends to be packed away on Old Christmas (January 6th).

## Brittany

Brittany boasts a wealth of folklore and supernatural beliefs around Christmas time. Christmas Eve was known as a night of miraculous apparitions from fairies to korrigans, and at midnight,

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for just a brief moment, waters in the wells would turn into the most sweet-tasting wine. It was also at midnight, when families were either at mass or in bed, that ghosts would surface; traditionally food was left out for deceased loved ones just in case they visited.

During the holidays, Christmas markets come alive in many Breton towns vending hand-made crafts and toys, baked cakes and bread and ingredients for Christmas dinner. You can also buy Galette des Rois at stalls, as well as bakeries, which is traditionally eaten on January 6th (Epiphany). A tiny figurine (the *fève*) is hidden inside the puff pastry cake; the person who finds the figurine in their piece gets to be king or queen for the day and wear a crown. Another special tradition through all of France is a meal after Christmas Eve's midnight mass, called Réveillon. Specifically in Brittany, the traditional dish for this occasion is buckwheat crêpes with cream.

## Cornwall

As a result of Oliver Cromwell's government banning Christmas, authentic holiday carols began to fade through much of Britain. However, throughout the 1800s, Cornish composers and collectors, sparked a revival of local Christmas song.

“Contrary to the effect Methodism might have had on the English carollers, in Cornwall its impact was to stimulate song,” states the Cornwall Council (Cornish Christmas Carols – Or Curls, 2011). “In those areas where Methodism was strongest, music and signing had their greatest appeal, and notably so at Christmas. The singers would practice in chapels and school-rooms, some of them walking miles to be there.”

Certain carols, well-known around the world, such as Hark the Herald Angels and While Shepherds, are credited to Cornish origins.

Today, Cornwall erupts in festivals, fairs and markets during the holidays. The Montol Festival in Penzance (named for Montol Eve on December 21st) is a six-day celebration highlighting many Cornish traditions. These include Mummers plays, lantern processions, Guise dancing (participants dressed in masks and costume, such as mock formal dress, to play music and dance).

Montol is also the time for burning the Mock (yule log). A stickman or woman is drawn on the block of wood with chalk. When the log burns, it symbolizes the death of the old year and birth of the year to come.

## Galicia

Galicia has its own, unique Christmas gift-bearer that predates Christianity. He is called Apalpador, a giant who lives in the mountains. For Christmas, he descends into the villages below to make sure each child has a full belly. He brings treats, such as chestnuts, and well wishes for a year full of delicious sustenance. While Apalpador may not be widely observed in Galicia, his legend is seeing a revival.

Food is very important during the Galician holidays featuring at least two feasts (on Christmas Eve and Day). Unsurprisingly, seafood is on the menu, such as lobster, prawns, shrimp, sea bass, and cod with garlic and paprika sauce. Other culinary delights include cured meat, cheese and bread, roast beef with vegetables and for dessert tarta de Santiago (almond cake), filloas (stuffed pancakes) and turrões (nougats).

Throughout all of Spain, including Galicia, children anticipate the coming of the Three Kings or Magis who fill their shoes, left out on Epiphany Eve (January 5th) with gifts. Many Galician municipalities also host a parade featuring the Kings on January 5th.

# CREATING THE COMPLETE SMILE.

**Dr. Mindy Ok** is part of the Summit tradition of dental comfort and care. She is a 1997 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. She received the Fellowship Award from the Academy of General Dentistry in 2006. Only 7% of dentists nationwide have the FAGD status. Dr. Ok has dedicated her professional career to providing you with the best that dentistry has to offer. She is continually educating herself and her team on the latest techniques, which include: **Same Day Veneers, All Porcelain Crowns, Composite Fillings, Invisalign Clear Orthodontics, Dental Implants, Gum Treatments, Root Canals, Whitening and outstanding Preventive Care.**



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