HSHC SPORRAN

www.HighlandSocietyofHarfordCounty.com

October 2026 — Alba Gu Brath — Scotland Forever

The Highland Society of Harford County was incorporated for the preservation of the spirit, lore, poetry, art, dress, welfare, and history of the Scottish people dedicated to the promotion of these traditions among those of Scottish ancestry within Harford County and its environs.

Our October 20 Gathering

6:00 pm

Vandiver Inn

301 South Union Avenue, Havre de Grace

410-939-5200

https://www.vandiverinn.com/

To make your reservations:

https://www.vandiverinn.com/tickets?utm_source=chatgpt.com%20

Password is Highland

Menu options include upgrading to:

steak, crab cake, or surf 'n turf



New Time for Our Gatherings!!

Per concensus at our September gathering, the regular Society meetings will begin one half hour earlier at 6:00pm instead of 6:30pm.

Upcoming Events

November 13-15

https://irishfestival.com/

the Maryland Irish Festival at the State Fair Grounds

- Friday: 6:00 to 11:00 PM
- Saturday: noon to 11:00 PM
  - Whiskey Tasting: 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:00
- Sunday: noon to 6:00 PM
  - Traditional Irish Breakfast: 11:30 AM
  - Whiskey Tasting: 1:00, 2:00

November 15 (a Monday)

our monthly gathering will be at Coakley's Pub in Havre de Grace. We will take time to recognize and honor our veterans.

Because Coakley's is closed on Tuesdays, this gathering will be held on a Monday, November 16th rather than our usual meeting night.

December 15

our montly gathering and annual potluck will be at Bulle Rock in Havre de Grace.

Anyone wishing to contribute an article, news, a joke or humorous anecdote or other contributions, news, suggestions for articles send them to: 21901sj@gmail.com or abowden@bcps.k12.md.us

Our Gathering at Pappas Restaurant







Laird's Letter



Greetings Highlanders,

Fall has arrived, and with it comes one of my favorite times of year. The cooler weather, changing leaves, and shorter days somehow seem particularly well suited to gathering with friends, sharing a meal, and celebrating the traditions that bring us together. I was disappointed to miss our September Gathering at Pappas due to a work commitment, but I heard it was a great success. Nineteen members and guests gathered for an evening of good food and fellowship. I was also pleased to hear that we welcomed guests Yvonne Stephens, Nick Borns, and Tracey Hand. I hope they enjoyed getting to know our Society and will join us again.

September also marked the beginning of our new 6:00 PM start time. As we discussed previously, many of the venues we enjoy need us to wrap up earlier in the evening. Starting a little earlier gives us more time to enjoy dinner, conversation, presentations, and Society business without feeling rushed. Unfortunately, our planned October 3 trip to the American Visionary Art Museum and Fort McHenry did not have enough participation to move forward. I still think this would make a wonderful Society outing, and I hope we can try again in the future. In this issue of The Sporran, you will find an article exploring something I discovered while thinking about that trip, the fascinating Scottish and Scots-Irish connections on both sides of the Battle of Baltimore. Sometimes our Scottish history is much closer to home than we realize.

Next up is our October 20 Gathering at the Vandiver Inn in Havre de Grace. The Vandiver has prepared a wonderful fall menu for us, including several options to upgrade your meal to steak, crab cake, or even Surf 'n Turf. Please remember that reservations are made directly through the Vandiver Inn, so be sure to reserve your seat. Reserve Your October Gathering Ticket

November will bring us to a new location, Coakley's Pub in Havre de Grace, where we will take time to recognize and honor our veterans. Because Coakley's is closed on Tuesdays, this gathering will be held on a Monday, November 16th rather than our usual meeting night. Then on Tuesday, December 15th, we will close out 2026 with our annual potluck at Bulle Rock.

As we move into fall and winter, there is much more ahead. Some events will be traditional favorites, others will take us somewhere new, but all of them give us an opportunity to enjoy one another's company and keep our Scottish heritage alive. I hope you will find something on our calendar that draws you in, and I look forward to seeing you at the Vandiver Inn later this month.

Yours Aye,

Susan Wheeler, Laird
Clans Shaw and MacBean

Treasurer's Report

Keith Reagan

Period: 30 September 2026

STARTING BALANCE	$4,271.19
Expenses:	
registration for Covenanter Scottish Festival	($65.00)
bottle of Clan MacGregor Scotch for toasting at Pappas	($25.00)
reservation for Bulle Rock venue for Dec 15	($151.00)
Income:	
refund for cancellation of Covenanter Scottish Festival	$65.00
ENDING BALANCE	$4,095.19

Scots on Both Sides of the Star-Spangled Banner

by Laird Susan Wheeler

Most of us know the story. Through the rain and darkness of September 13 to the dawn of September 14, 1814, Francis Scott Key watched the British bombard Fort McHenry. When morning came and the enormous American flag was still flying, he began writing the words that became "The Star-Spangled Banner." What I had not fully appreciated was just how many Scottish threads run through the story. Start with the name Fort McHenry. James McHenry was born in Ballymena, County Antrim, in Ulster in 1753 to a Presbyterian family and came to America at 18. He served in the Continental Army during the Revolution, became a Maryland statesman, signed the United States Constitution, and served as Secretary of War. The fort guarding Baltimore Harbor was named in his honor.

There is an even better connection. McHenry was still living outside Baltimore when the British arrived in 1814. Although illness kept him at home, his son John volunteered to defend Baltimore and fought at the Battle of North Point on September 12. So, as British forces approached the city and the fort bearing his father's name, John McHenry was among the Marylanders trying to stop them. And there were Scots coming from the other direction.

Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, the commander of the British naval forces that bombarded Fort McHenry, was born in Scotland in 1758 into the prominent Cochrane family. Under his command, British warships moved into the Patapsco and began the bombardment that would give us Key's famous "rockets' red glare" and "bombs bursting in air." Meanwhile, on land, the British force included the 21st Royal North British Fusiliers. Raised in Scotland in the 17th century, the regiment carried the Scottish thistle and the motto "Nemo me impune lacessit," ("No one provokes me with impunity"). The 21st fought at North Point as British troops attempted to reach Baltimore.

Think about that for a moment. During the Battle of Baltimore, the son of the Ulster-Scots immigrant for whom Fort McHenry was named stood with the Americans at North Point. Coming toward him were soldiers of a Scottish regiment. Out on the Patapsco, a Scottish-born admiral directed the fleet attacking the fort. And somewhere between the two sides was Francis Scott Key, watching.







There is another local connection in the flag itself. The enormous flag Key saw that morning was made in Baltimore by Mary Young Pickersgill, with help from members of her household. Measuring approximately 30 by 42 feet, it was intentionally made large enough to be seen from a distance. Pickersgill's maiden name, Young, has long-standing roots in Scotland as well as England and Northern Ireland. Her father, William Young, was a Philadelphia goldsmith who died during the Revolutionary War. While the Young surname makes a Scottish or Scots-Irish connection an interesting possibility, I have not found enough evidence to claim that ancestry for Mary Pickersgill as fact. For those of us who enjoy genealogy, however, it is one more thread worth pulling.

Our Highland Society had hoped to visit Fort McHenry this fall, but unfortunately we did not have enough interest to make the trip work. We would love to reschedule the visit in the future and hope members will consider joining us when we do. In the meantime, Fort McHenry is close enough for an afternoon visit, and there is much more to its story than many of us realize. For those of us interested in Scottish and Scots-Irish history, it offers another opportunity to discover how those stories became intertwined with the history of Maryland and the nation. Sometimes Scottish history is much closer to home than we realize.

Fun Scottish Halloween Traditions

contributed by SJ Anderson from various websites

• **Guising:** Instead of saying "trick or treat," Scottish children traditionally donned costumes and pretended to be malicious spirits as they went 'guising' around the local streets. It was believed that, by disguising themselves, they would blend in with any wandering spirits and remain safe from harm. After performing tricks or songs, guisers were given gifts to help ward off evil.



• **Neep Lanterns:** Traditionally, Scots carved lanterns out of turnips (neeps or tumshies) rather than pumpkins to ward off evil spirits, a practice noted by the National Trust for Scotland.



• **Kale Pulling:** Once upon a time, kale stalks were used to predict your romantic future. In Robert Burns's poem 'Halloween', young men and women pull stalks from the ground after dark with their eyes closed or blindfolded. According to Scottish folklore, the length and shape of the stalk was said to represent your future lover's height and figure. Even the amount of soil left clinging to the roots was symbolic – a generous coating indicated future wealth and a clean stalk suggested lean days ahead.



• **Treacle Scones:** Children try to eat treacle- or jam-covered scones suspended from a string using only their mouths.

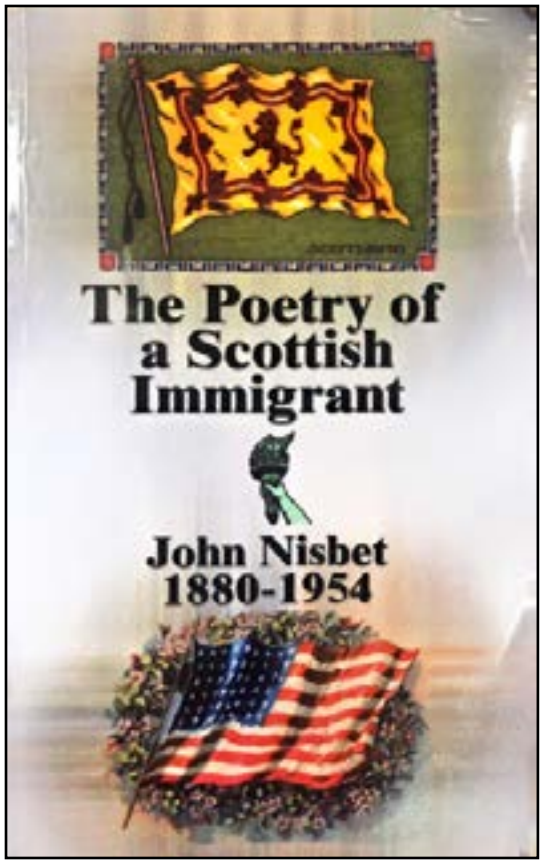


• **Nut Burning & Divination:** Old folk customs involved throwing nuts into a fire or reading fortunes from kail-runts (stems). As noted by users on Reddit, many classic party games remain central to family



Auld Scotland

by John Nisbet - submitted by Brian Nesbit



O, itner lands are rich and grand,
But nane are half sae bonnie
As that dear land, our sin Scotland
Our ain dear Caledonia.
The Scotch may wander o'er the earth
In search O' fame and fortune,
But, ne're forget their place O' birth,
In some dear auld scotch toon.
They long for jist a glint O' hame,
A breath O' scottish weather.
Nae itner land seems quite the same
As the land O' purple heather.
Aye - the Scotch are dour, but never sour.
Infact they are sentimental.
You find the Scotch the world o'er
Are never temermental.
Nae gowd or jewels there we find,
But Scottish herts sae tender,
In noble men O noble mind,
In all their scottish splender.
Then here's a hand tae auld Scotland,
Our ain dear Calendonia,
Where all the lads are simply grand,
And all the lassies bonnie.



About the Author:

John Nisbet was born in 1880 near Glasgow, Scotland. There were a poor family and his father worked in the coal mines as did several boys of the family. John made it through the second grade of school before he had to quit school and work in the mines. At the age of 20 years, he decided to go to America to seek a better life. He arrived in New York City as an immigrant sometime in 1900.

For no particuar reason, he ended up in Cumberland, Maryland, and worked for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. He began to read and educate himself and he progressed in his work for the railroad. In about 1905 he met, and later married, Rose Hartsock, a farm girl from near Cumberland. they had four children, two boys and two girls. John continued his reading and learning and he became a locomotive engineer on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

Poetry became his greatest joy and whenever he had a few minutes to himself he would write. Quite a lot of his poetry was written on note paper while sitting in his locomotive awaiting orders to move the train. After his retirement in 1946, he wrote almost continually.

As is usual with poets, their writings are not fully appreciated until after their death. John Nisbet died in 1954 at the age of 74 years. Only recently have I, his grandson, become aware of his great talent, accomplished with only a second grade education.

Grover Nelson Sensabaugh
(John Nisbet's grandson)

WEE NEWS BITS FROM SCOT-LAND

compiled by
SJ Anderson &
Andrea Bowden

Reform MSPs walk out of parliament in protest against independence debate. - BBC Scotland

Reform MSPs have walked out of the Holyrood chamber in protest against a debate about Scottish independence.

The party's Scottish leader Malcolm Offord, who had tried to have the debate cancelled because it related to non-devolved matters, described it as an insult and a waste of time.

He then led his MSPs out of the chamber, to jeers from the rest of the parliament.

It came after First Minister John Swinney tabled a non-binding motion asserting Scotland's right to decide its constitutional future - which passed with support from

Scottish whisky to be blasted into space - Independent

Whisky will be distilled in space for the first time as part of an experiment that will also measure how the spirit ages in the harsh environment beyond the Earth's atmosphere.

Engineers in Scotland and Japan are planning to put Scotch on a rocket in 2028, sending a satellite containing samples of whisky and its base ingredients on a five-year mission to orbit the Earth.

It is hoped the frequent changes between extreme heat and freezing cold experienced by the whisky as it rotates the planet every 90 minutes could speed up the maturation process.

You Could Own An Entire Scottish Island For €414,000 – But There's A Catch - Eoronews.com



If you're looking for a more permanent off-grid solution – and have £350,000 (€414,000 or $500,575) to spare – you might just want to take a look at this remote Scottish island that just went up for sale. Found just off the west coast of Shetland, Hildasay Island spans some 110 hectares (267 acres) and is only accessible by boat. The year-round average temperature is 46 degrees with frequent rain and wind.

While the island was once occupied by a small community in the 19th century when people mined granite and caught herring. Today the only thing you'll find (aside from spectacular views, and peace and quiet) is a traditional stone-built bothy and a small pier. (A bothy is a basic stone shelter in remote areas of Scotland.)

A stay on Hildasay is the definition of off-grid: The bothy isn't connected to mainland electricity. Previous owners have made use of a small wind turbine and diesel generator, but would-be buyers will need to sort this out for themselves, according to the estate agent managing the sale.

The accommodation includes a living area with a solid-fuel stove, a raised open-plan leeping area, and a separate bathroom with a shower, wash basin and toilets.

Those looking to upgrade the digs would need to get planning permission and other statutory consents, so this property is best suited for those who like to get back-to-basics.

On the plus side, you can expect unbeatable scenery, with a rugged coastline and two freshwater lochs, as well as an abundance of birdlife that changes through the seasons.

DID YOU KNOW THAT SCOTLAND HAS A RAINFOREST?

from Forestry and Land Scotland & https://savingscotlandsrainforest.org.uk/rainforest // Compiled by Dr. Andrea Bowden



Climate change is making it harder to restore Scotland's rare rainforests, according to the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforests. The group warns that warmer, drier summers and air pollution threaten the biodiversity of the remaining 30,000 hectares of rainforest, with funding shortages also hindering efforts. The alliance aims to restore all rainforest biodiversity areas by 2045, but experts stress the need for "climate change refugia" in long-term planning .

Scotland has a unique temperate rainforest, known as "Scotland's rainforest" or Atlantic/Celtic rainforest, found mainly in the west Highlands and Argyll, but it is rare and under threat.

Scotland's rainforest is a coastal temperate rainforest — a wet woodland ecosystem that can only grow where there is high year-round rainfall (over 1,400 mm), mild temperatures (5–15 °C), and clean air. It is one of the rarest habitats on Earth, occurring in less than 1% of the planet's land surface

The best remaining areas are in Argyll and the west Highlands, where the climate is wettest. These woodlands include ancient oak, ash, birch, hazel, and native Scots pine forests, plus rich undergrowth of mosses, liverworts, lichens, ferns, and rare plants.

Why it's special:

• Global rarity: Some mosses, lichens, and liverworts here are found nowhere else.

• Biodiversity: Home to spring flowers, migrant and woodland birds, deer, badgers, red squirrels, and threatened insects like the chekered skipper butterfly

• Historical importance: This was once a vast "Caledonian Forest" that stretched along the Atlantic coast of Europe before human activity and climate change reduced it .

Only about 30,000–30,325 hectares remain — an area slightly larger than Edinburgh — and these are small, fragmented, and often degraded by grazing, invasive rhododendron, and conifer plantations.

Conservation status: Scotland's rainforest is in trouble. Threats include overgrazing, invasive plants, ash dieback, pollution, and climate change. Conservation groups and Forestry and Land Scotland are working to restore native woodland, remove invasive species, and protect remaining

In short: Scotland does have a rainforest — but it's a rare, ancient, and fragile temperate rainforest, not a tropical one, and it needs urgent protection to survive.



It's the diversity of bryophytes and lichens in Scotland's rainforest that makes it internationally important - credit WTML



Saving Scotland's rainforest will help combat both our climate and biodiversity crises - credit: Niall Benvie / WTML

MINUTES OF OUR LAST GATHERING

Keith Reagan, Treasurer



Regular Membership Gathering, September 15, 2026

The Highland Society of Harford County met on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at Pappas Restaurant and Sports Bar in Bel Air. There were 19 attendees who arrived between 6:00pm and 6:40pm. After food orders were taken, Brian Nesbit, 1 st Aide to the Laird, Clan Nesbit, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Susan Wheeler, Laird, Clan Shaw, was unable to attend due to a work commitment.

Brian Nesbit, Clan Nesbit, led us in the pledge of allegiance to the flag and gave the toast to the office of the president. John Polk, Clan Pollack, gave the toast to the Constitution. The Toast to the King was given by Chris Wilson, Clan Gunn. The toast to Scotland was given by Kallie Lyons, Clan Stewart and John Polk, Clan Pollack. We all toasted to John Polk's birthday in September and to our guests, Yvonne Stephens, Nick Borns, and Tracey Hand.

Brian Nesbit announced that the regular Society meetings will begin one half hour earlier at 6:00pm instead of 6:30pm. John Polk gave the details for the upcoming October 3 outing at the American Visionary Art Museum and Fort McHenry.

Keith Reagan announced the upcoming events; the regular meeting on October 20 at the Vandiver Inn, the Maryland Irish Festival at the State Fair Grounds, November 13-15, the regular meeting on November 15 (a Monday) at Coakley's Pub in Havre de Grace, and the regular meeting (annual potluck) on December 15 at Bulle Rock in Havre de Grace.

The food arrived and a wonderful evening of consuming fine fare and socializing ensued.

A raffle was not held but will resume at the October meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Keith Reagan, Treasurer (for Andrea Bowden, Secretary)

Autumn Recipies from Scotland

Bramble Blood Martini

contributed by SJ Anderson - from www.nts.org.uk/stories/autumnal-recipes

Bramble is technically any rough, prickly shrub, usually from the Rubus genus (blackberries, raspberries, etc). In the UK, we mostly use the term for the common blackberry, Rubus fruticosus. Look out for the last of them on hedges on your wintery walks – but watch out for the thorns!



Serves 1

Small handful of fresh brambles
Pinch of grated fresh ginger
10ml blackcurrant cordial
50ml flavoured vodka
50ml ginger beer (optional)
Muddle (smash) the brambles and ginger, then add to a cocktail shaker (or large jar) with the cordial, vodka and some ice.

Shake, then strain into a cocktail glass (topping with ginger beer if desired) and garnish with a fresh bramble.

Classic Scottish Beef Stew

contributed by SJ Anderson - from https://www.finescottishhampers.com/blog/scottish-food/aberdeen-angus-5-delicious-recipes-using-proper-scottish-beef/

Ingredients

100g Diced Aberdeen Angus Beef Skirt or Steak
3 Carrots (chopped)
2 Celery Stalks (chopped)
3 Parsnips (chopped)
1 Onion (diced)
300ml Beef Stock
1 tbsp Tomato Purée
1 Glass of Red Wine
Squeeze of Honey*



Directions

Many love to make their stew in a slow cooker, but if you don't have one of these just a large casserole pan will do. Place your casserole on the heat and cut up your Aberdeen Angus beef skirt or steak into chunks. Toss in seasoned flour and gently fry until they are a light brown colour. Remove from the pan and add in the onions, celery, carrots and parsnips with garlic. Brown all of these together, and add the red wine, beef stock, a squeeze of honey and the tomato purée, stir, bring to the boil and cover. Cook in the oven for 4 hours at 150 C stirring once. Remove and serve with mashed potatoes or dumplings.

*A note from SJ: Mr. Google says: A "squeeze of honey" in a recipe is a non-exact, small amount of honey added directly from a squeeze bottle, usually equal to about one to two teaspoons (or a quick, gentle one-second squeeze).