

St. Andrews Society of NW Michigan
“Northern Thistle”
September 2017



Annual Membership Meeting – Sunday, October 1 at Ruby Tuesday 5pm. Special guest: NMC Professor Tom Gordon who will discuss “The Scots and the American Revolution.”

Friday, December 1 – St. Andrews Dinner – details soon

Friday January 26 – Robert Burns Dinner

Sunday, April 8 – spring gathering

Grand Traverse Pipes and Drums will play on Reformation Sunday (October 29) at The Presbyterian Church, TC. Tickets to the Scottish luncheon are available through the church office: 946-5680.

Sad loss: Long-time member Don Iseler passed away in August. He and Marge came to SAS gatherings for years, and were very well-liked by other members. Marge will try to join us again soon.

Annual Picnic: The predicted rain held off, and it was a nice day, perhaps a tad cool for some. Several burly young gents competed in the Games this year. IF there were a winner, it would be Nolan Morrow who reclaimed his title. We welcomed new friends Kim Shepherd, Fred and Debbi Stoye, and Jan Crockett’s family. Shelley, Kelly, Emily and Cindy tried their hand at the bagpipes. And their *lungs*. ☺ Great fun. Photos on Page 3. (More picnic photos will be at the October dinner.)

Short Trip Report: Don & I recently attended my Innes Clan Society reunion in Syracuse. If you haven’t been to your clan’s annual gathering, do yourself a favor--go! What fun meeting all those people with your last name, learning where they’re from, their history and interests, and of course seeing all *your* clan’s tartan.

Longer Trip Report: Alan & Betty McColl were in Scotland in August. Here's part one of their adventure, called "Driving in Scotland" written by Alan, a *native Scot*:

Chapter 1 – Transportation: Leaving the airport in our rented car, I keep murmuring to myself, "drive to the left". The airport roads are confusing, but navigating the first roundabout restores some confidence, then the second one, then the third. If you're not dizzy by then, you are on your way.

Welcome to driving in Scotland.

We rented a Fiat Tipo, which in Europe is called a mid-size compact, equivalent to a Ford Focus. It felt huge in the tight quarters of the car rental lot, and still big once we were on the roads. Although I have a long history with standard transmissions, the six-speed took a bit of getting used to – down-shifting from fifth to fourth often went into second, and the car jerked. The brakes were grippy, so seat belts were needed to keep us secure.

Everywhere we went there were signs warning of speed cameras. In towns there were multiple electronic signs attached to lampposts that lit up when you were above the speed limit. Speed camera systems track how long it takes you to drive between two points, so even if you weren't speeding at either camera, but were in between, the system can catch you.

The motorways and dual carriageways were similar to our freeways and divided four lane roads. Not many potholes. But the fun starts on the two-lane roads. Major "A" roads are legitimate two-lane roads, at least between towns. Less important roads are narrower with more curves and you meet oncoming vehicles with trepidation. Many roads aren't wide enough for a car and a bicycle.

The straight north-south or east-west roads here in Wexford County are the opposite of the curves, hills, dips and peaks of Scottish roads. Shoulders do not exist. You have blacktop, invented by (Scot) John MacAdam in the 19th century, and to the side are hedgerows, walls and fences, often at least two feet higher than the road surface.

That leads to the way of driving there - frequent pulling over to let oncoming traffic pass. In the countryside, that might be pulling over by a field gate.

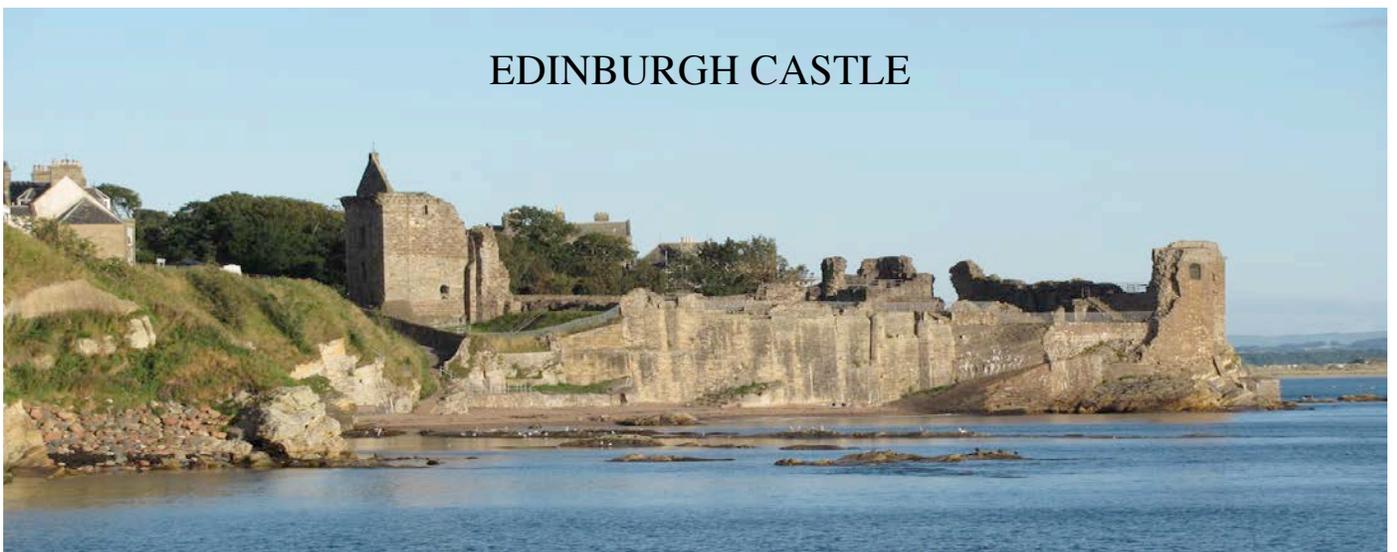
In towns where there is parking on the main roads, you pull in where there's a gap in the parked cars, or into a bus stop. If parked cars are on the other side of the road--and it does not matter which way they're facing--then you have the right of way, but not always taken. Snuggle in behind a bigger vehicle and ride his coattails as oncoming traffic lets him *and* you through.

Roundabouts are everywhere. Main road ones are bigger than what we see in Michigan, like at Mesick. They're designed for faster traffic. Remember to signal before your exit, stay in the correct lanes and never stop once in the circle. Small ones are used in quiet residential areas. They may just be a slightly raised white concrete circle that you can drive over. In congested areas, where roundabouts were invented to maintain traffic flow, they're adding traffic lights. Now you have a parked zoo.

There may not be many potholes but in towns the roads have lots of intentional bumps to restrict speed. The front spoiler on our cars would scrape these bumps. Where the infrastructure wasn't built to handle traffic speed, the authorities do everything possible to restrict it. I cannot say that driving was a pleasure – it was a chore, but necessary to get around, even though there are lots of buses.

My sister recently traded in her compact for a tiny Toyota, apparently so efficient that the government eliminated the annual road tax on it (about \$250). The Fiat we rented got about 30 MPG, despite all the stopping, starting and first gear usage. I don't know how we managed to avoid scraping the sides of the car on our journey.

EDINBURGH CASTLE





2017 Officers & Committees:

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St. Andrews Society of Northern Michigan
Membership Form

The SASNM is a non-profit organization founded in 1997. Annual dues are \$20 per household. Send checks to SASNM, PO Box 2303, TC 49685.

Name(s) _____

Clan affiliation (if any)

Home Phone # _____ **Cell** _____

Address (if new member)

Email address (if new)

We look forward to your participation. {If you are renewing, a big thank you as well.} We look forward to seeing you at the next gathering and will alert you of upcoming events through our newsletter and Emails.