

the

# thistle

The St. Andrew's Society of Los Angeles

March 2012

## Big Bang Theory

By: Aedan MacDonnell



In April 2011 Warner Bros. rented a harp for set

dressings for their sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* and I delivered the harp to the studio. In August they rented the harp again. This time an actress would actually be playing the harp, so I casually said "I teach harp."

A day after dropping off the rental harp I received a call from Traci, the producer's assistant, to set up a lesson. Driving onto the Warner Brother's lot is a fun experience.

Building 25, where *The Big Bang Theory* is taped, is at the back of the lot, so I had to navigate around battery powered golf carts, bicycles, pedestrians and trams filled with tourists.

I parked and hauled my trusty Dusty 32 harp into the building where I met Mayim Bialik for our first harp lesson. I was impressed with Mayim's down-to-earth friendliness, and she made my job very easy, understanding

See *Big Bang*, page 4

a message from J. D. MacPherson, *President.*



First I would like thank the board of trustees for Electing me president. With help from all of you I plan to keep the society on course with more Scottish cultural and social events.

We had a tent at the Queen Mary Games thanks to the efforts of Stuart Bird-Wilson and plan to have one at both the United Scottish Society's Costa Mesa games on Memorial Day weekend and the Seaside Highland games the second weekend in October. On the second of April we will join the Seaside Highland Games folks at the Tam O'Shanter for a Tartan Day celebration. We will continue to present the awards for dancers at both the Costa Mesa and Seaside games. As many of you know we also support the Pasadena Scots Pipe Band. This is a really special band as there are families playing together carrying on our Scottish traditions. We are planning another Garden Party this summer and a Ceilidh later this year. Also we will have our Kirkin O' the Tartan, St. Andrew's Day Dinner and our very successful Burns Supper January next year. If you have any ideas or would like to help with any of our events please do not hesitate to contact me. Yours Aye,

*Dave*

Contact J. D. MacPherson  
via email at: [jdmacpherson@att.net](mailto:jdmacpherson@att.net)



## Scotland's Saltire and St. Andrew Societies Merge

Readers of this newsletter will have noticed the regular letter from Edinburgh, penned by St. Andrew Society secretary Kenneth Sinclair. Stewart is absent in this issue. The St. Andrew Society of Edinburgh has been

absorbed into the Saltire Society and no longer exists as an independent entity. Our heartfelt thanks go to Kenneth and our best wishes for the new organization to prosper and flourish. Ed.

## Murray Beats World's #1



Scotland's Andy Murray beat Novak Djokovic in straight sets and after just 82 minutes in their semifinal at the Dubai Duty Free Open March 2.

The Serbian superstar remains human, after all. Djokovic looked strong early, taking his first two service sets at love. Murray came on strong after that, however, rattling off an incredible seven straight games against the world

Please see *Murray*, page 6

# In Gear

## Ecurie Ecosse is back!



60 years since the team was formed, legendary Scottish outfit *Ecurie Ecosse* will make a full-time return to top-level international sportscar racing in 2012.

The team will run twin

programmes in the Blancpain Endurance Series (including 24 Hours of Spa) and British GT Championship with a BMW Z4 GT3.

The illustrious squad, which won the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1956 and '57, has been largely dormant on an international level since the 1990s when the team



*The Ecurie Ecosse BMW Z4 GT3*

won the British Touring Car Championship running works Vauxhalls. This latest announcement follows a successful one-off return by Ecurie Ecosse last year when four of its drivers successfully

Please see *Ecurie Ecosse*, page 4

## Letter from the editor

Ian Skone-Rees

**The Scottish Parliament was reconvened in 1999 after almost 300 years, having been adjourned on March 25, 1707 when members passed the Act of Union combining the Scottish and English Parliaments at Westminster in London. The union of the crowns occurred in 1603 when James VI, King of Scots, ascended the throne of England.**

The reestablishment of the Scottish parliament provided for a wide range of powers to be devolved from Westminster to Scotland. Devolved powers are Health, Education and Training, Local Government, Social Work, Housing, Planning, Tourism,

Economic Development, Law and Home Affairs, Police and Fire, The Environment, Natural and Built Heritage, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Sport and The Arts, Statistics, and Transport. Reserved powers, or areas that Westminster still remains responsible for, are Foreign Affairs, Defence, National Security, and Social Security. In addition Scotland receives subsidies from Westminster that result in Scots receiving \$9,179 per capita in public funding while south of the border it is \$7,535. One practical result of this apparent disparity is free university education for Scots while English students are required to pay. Not surprisingly English tax-payers are unhappy and some suggest that giving Scotland to the Argentine to settle the Falklands issue may be

an answer.

Whatever our individual points of view about the proposed referendum in 2014 it is Scotland's welfare and its continued positive influence on the world that we are interested in. Can Scotland go it alone? Some think not and some think if she did an economic disaster along the lines of the current Greek economic debacle would follow. The SNP political leaders meanwhile are rubbing their hands with glee at last year's election outcomes and see the future of an independent Scotland almost assured. Let's hope that the individual political gains and honors that will flow to the party's elite with such a result will not be at the expense of a proud contributor to a union that has given so much to the world. 🦋



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or

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## Flowers of the Forest

### June L. Clarke 1920-2012

June L. Clarke, 92 passed away February 12th after a brief illness. Born in Stockton, she was a third generation Californian and a longtime Brentwood resident. June was a graduate of UCLA and a member of Tri Delta sorority. A true blue Bruin she attended football games as a season ticket holder for over 70 years. An avid traveler, June was always up for a new adventure. She also enjoyed golf, reading, crossword puzzles and her daily trips to Starbucks. A friend to all generations, she relished her role as wife, mother, grandmother and great

grandmother. Survivors include her daughter, Meredith, and grandson Matt and great grandson Spencer. A private memorial will be held to celebrate her life. Donations in her memory can be made to The St. Andrews Society of Los Angeles, The Wooden Athletic Fund or The Wounded Warrior Project.

### John Harry Ernster 1921 - 2011

John Harry Ernster, 90, of Palos Verdes Estates, California, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, died Thursday, Dec.

15, after a long and vigorous life. He was born September 26, 1921, Chicago, Illinois, to Harry Albert and Eleanor Moody Ernster. John graduated in 1946 from the Univ. of Ill., Champagne-Urbana, with a degree in dairy technology. He was married in June, 1946, to first wife Joan Van Antwerp (d. Apr., 1969), and married second wife Joan Kelm in Nov., 1969. John was a WWII Naval aviator from 1941-1945. He moved his family to Palos Verdes in 1963, and resided there for the duration of his life. Over the course of his life-long career in the food industry, John obtained several patents for innovation in food products and

*Please see Flowers of the Forest p. 6*

# Scotland's Influence in the United States

**Scotland's ties with the United States date back to the founding of the USA. Scots and those of Scottish descent have helped shape the history of**

**America in profound ways. Here are ten things Scotland has given the USA.**

## 1. The US Navy

John Paul Jones (1747 - 1792) is famous in the United States as the 'Father of the American Navy'. A gardener's son from Kirkbean, Kircudbrightshire, Jones went to sea at the age of 13 and went on to become America's first naval hero in the American Revolutionary War.

## 2. The voice of Mickey Mouse

You might be surprised to learn that the world's most famous mouse was voiced for almost 40 years by a Dundonian. Jimmy MacDonald (1906 - 1991), who became a Disney sound effects wizard, was chosen by Walt Disney to provide the voice of his most well-known creation Mickey Mouse in 1947.

## 3. National Parks

Dunbar-born John Muir emigrated with his family, aged 11, in 1849 to rural Wisconsin, USA. Muir had developed an early passion for the natural world, and pursued these interests across the Atlantic where he fell in love with the wilderness. He is credited with starting the national park movement in America - including Yosemite and the Grand Canyon. Muir has been voted 'Most Famous Californian of all Time', appeared on two US postage stamps and has dozens of places named after him. Muir died in Los Angeles on December 24, 1914.

## 4. At least 33 Presidents

Of the 43 men who have served as President, an astonishing 33 have been of either Scottish or Ulster-Scots descent. This includes George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. According to genealogists, current president Barack Obama's ancestry can be traced back to William the Lion who ruled Scotland from 1165 to 1214.

## 5. American icon Uncle Sam

'Uncle Sam', who is famously depicted on patriotic recruiting posters, is a national icon in the United States. The original 'Uncle Sam' is said to be Sam Wilson, a food business operator in New York, whose parents came from Greenock in Scotland. Wilson supplied meat to the US Army during the 1812 War and it was joked at the time that the 'U.S.' stamped on the crates stood for 'Uncle Sam', in reference to Wilson.

## 6. Thousands of its place names

Many locations in America were nostalgically named after the places Scottish immigrants had left behind. There are eight Aberdeens, eight Edinburghs, seven Glasgows and eight places simply known as Scotland in the United States today. In addition, many places are named after Scottish clan names with areas named Campbell, Cameron, Crawford and Douglas throughout the USA.

## 7. The Man on the Moon

Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, took a scrap of Armstrong tartan with him on his historic space flight of 1969, in tribute to his ancestors from Langholm, now in Dumfries and Galloway. The astronaut was made a freeman of Langholm when he visited in 1972.

Armstrong's fellow-moonwalker, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, also boasts Scottish antecedents.

## 8. Buick (see *The Thistle* December 2008)

Buick is the one of the most famous brand names in the motor industry and is stamped on more than 25 million cars in the USA. The car is named after David Dunbar Buick, a plumber from Arbroath, who emigrated to the USA in 1856 and went on to set up the Buick Motor Company.

## 9. The Private Eye

Glaswegian Allan Pinkerton founded the world's most well-known detective agency in Chicago in 1850. He became famous when he foiled a plot to assassinate President-Elect Abraham Lincoln. The distinctive Pinkerton agency logo, the All-Seeing Eye, inspired the phrase 'Private Eye'. A major crime-fighting force, the Pinkerton Agency and its methods are thought to have inspired the FBI.

## 10. Elvis Presley

Elvis Presley's roots can apparently be traced back to a village in Aberdeenshire. The musical icon is descended from Andrew Presley, who emigrated to North Carolina in 1745.

Scotland was the location for The King's only visit to the UK, a brief landing at Prestwick Airport in 1960. 

## Big Bang Theory, *from page 1*

By: Aedan MacDonnell

everything the first time.

The music she was to play in the upcoming episode was *The Girl From Ipanema*! And, Mayim was to play it during the taping in front of a live studio audience in less than two weeks. Oy! We definitely had a challenge ahead of us.

Like many beginning harpers that have a musical background, she quickly picked out the tune. And like almost every beginner, she plucked strings using the *claw* technique. The left hand was particularly problematic because she really wanted to drop her thumb. The studio rented another harp for her to take home to practice on, and by the time of our next lesson she had greatly improved. But she still had the challenge of playing *Girl From Ipanema*. Fortunately, about 15 minutes into our second lesson the script arrived and we found out they wanted her to sing the song while playing. That made our task

somewhat easier because now we just had to come up with a simple accompaniment, rather than trying to create a very simple arrangement of a not-so-simple song. We had one more lesson before the taping on Tuesday evening. Mayim was still having trouble keeping her left thumb up, which was causing other problems. I finally told her to approach the harp with her hands in a relaxed fist with her thumbs pointed to the sky. That helped immensely. She was doing great for only three lessons. I was asked if I could come in for the taping the following evening in case Mayim needed my assistance. As I walked into the building from the back door, I heard an emcee entertaining the crowd. I found Traci and was instructed to just hang out and help myself to the buffet table provided for the cast and crew. About 20 minutes before they taped Mayim's segment I was

asked to tune the harp, which was already on set. Mayim came out, played the harp and finished the rest of her segment. They taped her segment twice, and both times she nailed the harp piece.

A couple of months later I received another call to rent the harp again, followed by a call from Traci setting up more lessons for Mayim. This time she was to play and sing *Everybody Hurts* by R.E.M. I found a rendition of it on YouTube and came up with a simple arpeggio that very closely duplicated R.E.M.'s arrangement. At our first lesson I could feel her hesitation when I showed her the arrangement. But she didn't say a word and by slowly showing her how to play it, and with lots of encouragement, she played her first two-handed arpeggio. I don't know who was more thrilled, Mayim or myself!

I was called in a third time in February to coach Mayim. This

time the song was Bon Jovi's *Wanted Dead or Alive*.

It was a genuine delight to work with Mayim, and she really enjoyed playing the harp. So if you watch *The Big Bang Theory* and see her playing the harp, you can say definitively that it is actually Mayim playing, and doing a remarkable job of playing and singing with only a handful of lessons.

Will I go back to Warner Bros? You'll have to ask the writers, but it looks promising. 

*Those of you who attended our Burns Supper last January will remember Aedan's wonderful solo playing during the reception and later with her trio on stage. Ed.*

### Interested in playing the harp?

Harp Rentals: Sylvia Woods Harp Center 800.272.4277  
[www.HarpCenter.com](http://www.HarpCenter.com)

Harp Lessons: Aedan MacDonnell 818.939.4313 [www.HarpMuse.com](http://www.HarpMuse.com)

## Ecurie Ecosse, *from page 1*

contested the GT3 Pro-Am class of the 24 Hours of Spa in an Aston Martin DBRS9.

*Ecurie Ecosse* is continuing its successful partnership with two-time British GT Championship winners Barwell Motorsport who will run the programmes on the team's behalf. The British GT Championship rounds will be contested by drivers Oliver Bryant and Alasdair McCaig, with Andrew Smith and Joe Twyman filling two of three seats available for the team's Pro-Am Blancpain Endurance Series campaign. Barwell are seeking a suitably qualified driver with budget to fill the third Blancpain seat.

*Ecurie Ecosse* has attracted commercial backing for the season from sponsors such as John Clark Motor Group, Cotton Tree, Bremont and Ragus.

Team boss Hugh McCaig, who sees the 2012 programme as a natural progression towards a return to Le Mans, commented:

"This is a very exciting development for *Ecurie Ecosse*. We looked at a number of options for 2012 following the race at Spa last year but believe, with the combination of BMW's Z4 GT3 and guys at Barwell, that we absolutely have the right ingredients in place to achieve success. We also have a team of

ambitious and talented young drivers who have shown their commitment to this programme through a tireless effort to put the deal together in an extremely challenging economic environment. Ultimately we want to be back at Le Mans and this is a fantastic step in the right direction."

*Ecurie Ecosse* driver Andrew Smith added:

"We are all very excited to be involved in the continuing development of the *Ecurie Ecosse* comeback. We are confident the BMW Z4 GT3 is the best chassis out there and I have no doubt

that our combination of car, drivers and team will prove competitive."

Barwell Motorsport Managing Director Mark Lemmer is looking forward to the start of pre-season testing:

"We are absolutely delighted to announce that we will be running the *Ecurie Ecosse* programme with the BMW Z4 and believe this is the start of what will be a very exciting and fruitful partnership."

The team is exploring a number of new commercial partnership opportunities with interested sponsors. 

# Burns Supper January 28, 2012

See more photographs of Burns Night at [www.saintandrewsla.org](http://www.saintandrewsla.org)



## Poets' Corner

Poets' Corner is the name given to a section of the South Transept of Westminster Abbey due to the number of poets, playwrights, and writers now buried and commemorated there, including Scotland's own Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, and Robert Adam.

Please send your submissions of original compositions, or poems that have special meaning for you, to the Editor via email: [rees1@mac.com](mailto:rees1@mac.com)

### My Hame

by Thomas Carr (1780-1860)

I canna ca' this forest hame,  
It is nae hame to me;  
Ilka tree is suthern to my heart  
And unco to my e'e.

If I cou'd see the bonny broom  
On ilka sandy know';  
Or the whins in a' their gowden pride  
That on the green hill grow.

If I cou'd see the primrose bloom  
In Nora's hazel glen;  
And hear the linties chirp and sing,  
Far frae the haunts of men.

If I cou'd see the rising sun  
Glint owre the dewy corn;  
And the tunefu' lavrocks in the sky  
Proclaim the coming morn.

If I cou'd see the daisy spread  
Its wee flowers owre the lea;  
Or the heather scent the mountain breeze  
And the ivy climb the tree.

If I cou'd see the lane kirk yard  
Whar' frien's lie side by side;  
And think that I cou'd lay my banes  
Beside them when I died;

Then might I think this forest hame,  
And in it live and dee:  
Nor feel regret at my heart's core  
My native land, for thee.

## New Society website



**The Board of Trustees has set in motion a process that will help propel the society into the 21st century.**

Director of Communications, Ian Skone-Rees, presented a proposal to the Board to overhaul and update the current website which has been developed by him using the Apple MacIntosh iWeb software. Ian is currently sourcing possible developers to bid on the new website. It is envisioned that improvements will include an interactive photo gallery, a search engine look-up feature, database management which will allow easier maintenance of the online membership roster, and society email addresses. The new website will also include the latest social media tools available from Facebook™ and Twitter™. It is hoped the new website will be launched by the middle of 2012.

### Flowers of the Forest, from page 2

processes. He was admired by all for his intelligence and candidness. John was a true Renaissance man: artist, craftsman, inventor, entrepreneur, and an inspiration to all. He was predeceased by son Michael, survived by wife Joan, sons John and Peter,

[www.saintandrewsla.org](http://www.saintandrewsla.org)

## Calendar of Events

April 2, 2012

### Tartan Day Dinner

Tam O'Shanter Inn  
Los Feliz

May 5, 2012, 2:00 p.m.

### New Member Reception

174 S. Burlingame Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Date TBD

### Annual Garden Party

For information contact:  
Rod Schreckengost  
[rod@schreckengost.com](mailto:rod@schreckengost.com)

October, 2012, 11:00 a.m.

### Kirkin' of the Tartans

Beverly Hills Presbyterian Church  
505 N. Rodeo Drive  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

July 11-13, 2014

### Gathering of the Clans

Stirling, Scotland

For further details log on

[www.saintandrewsla.org](http://www.saintandrewsla.org)

### Murray, from page 1

no. 1. Murray ended a run at Dubai for Djokovic that saw him win 18 straight and put him up as the three-time defending champion. The tournament was seen as a virtual lock for Djokovic by many observers, but the spirited Scot was up for the challenge. 🏆

Andy was defeated in the final March 3, by an indomitable Roger Federer 7-5, 6-4. Ed.

daughter Paige Deary, daughter-in-law Lori, 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Trinity Care Hospice, UCLA's Jonsson Cancer Center or your favorite charity. 🏆