

50 locals tour Scotland with Ayr-Paris Band and connect with those in the 'original' Ayr

By Irene Schmidt-Adeney

It was lucky number 13 for the Ayr-Paris Band that toured Scotland from July 22 to August 5. Beautiful weather and sunny skies for much of the tour greeted the 41-piece band that was under the direction of Merry Schmidt. Vocalist Jennifer Budd of Paris and Piper Les Brunton of St. Marys were welcome additions to the band's six performances and 50 group members rounded out the tour that had stops in Glasgow, Dundee, Inverness, Inveraray, and Ayr.

Hillary Cain, formerly of Ayr, and Dave McCann travelled from their home in Australia to Scotland where Hillary joined the band and visited with many family members along the way.

The trip was several years in the making, with a 2018 trip to England being the last international tour. The impact of COVID-19 was felt with a cancelled trip to Newfoundland and then the uncertainty of booking accommodations and band engagements so far in advance, something that is required when planning a trip of this magnitude.

The group landed at Glasgow International Airport on Sunday, July 23 and while waiting for hotel accommodations, they took part in a side trip to Stirling to view the castle and then hike to the top of Abbey Craig to view the Wallace Monument.

Band members met members of the Glasgow Community Concert Band for a rehearsal and the next day held a joint concert at the Fotheringay Centre. There was free time to explore Glasgow over the three-night visit, particularly the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the Tennent's Brewery, one of the largest breweries in the world. All the government-operated museums in Scotland have free admission.

Some tour members took the opportunity to take a day trip to Edinburgh while staying at Glasgow and again in Dundee.

The next stop was a two-night stay at Dundee that began with a city bus and walking tour. Dundee was a former centre for ship building and jute (bur-lap) production. Today it is the home of the Dundee Museum of Transportation, V & A (Victoria & Albert) Museum of Design, McManus Art Gallery and Museum and a living museum on the history of jute production. The RRS Discovery, the ship built in Dundee, made the first expedition to the Antarctic with Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton and is now permanently docked at Discovery Point.

The band performed its first outdoor concert under sunny skies and in a beautiful setting at the University of Dundee Botanic Gardens. Vocalist Jennifer Budd performed several numbers during the concert that was attended by her parents Rob and Christine Smith of Perth, Scotland.

The tour packed up and headed to Inverness with a stop to perform and visit Balmoral Castle, the Royal Family's Highland Holiday home. It was a highlight of all the band's performances. The iconic Putto Fountain in front of the tower was a perfect backdrop for the band's performance. While the castle is billed as being "open to the public", it is the exterior lawns and gardens and only the ballroom that can be seen by the public.

Inverness is known as the Capital City of the Highlands, the most northern point in Scotland and in Europe that has been visited by the band. The hotel was on the River Ness, that leads into the Loch Ness home of the legend-



Members of the Ayr 200 Committee met with Provost Iain Campbell. From left: Irene Adeney, Chair Merry Schmidt, Iain Campbell, Derrick Ostner, and Pat Radke.



Joint concert with the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum at Alloway, Ayrshire.



Tour members in Dundee, Alan Kelley, Marilyn Sewell, and Stuart Budd.



This original stone cottage is the only building that remains following the battle at Culloden Moor on April 16, 1746. People were much shorter at that time, providing a challenge for group member Dave McCann, but easily navigated by future band member Cam Bellamy.

Beth, and a tour of the Glen Moray Distillery.

The band left the Highlands for Inveraray, stopping for lunch at Fort William. Inveraray is a picturesque village on the Firth of Clyde and the band took over the entire Inveraray Inn and several nearby bed and breakfasts. The next day featured a boat ride on Loch Lomond. Band members Les Brunton and Dawna Ward couldn't resist a dip in the chilly loch before getting back on the bus and proceeding to Luss, a conservation village on the shores of Loch Lomond.

Piper Les Brunton provided entertainment at hotels along the way including at Inveraray where he piped several members of band who were former highland dancers, Jessica Bellamy, Hillary Cain and Gabriella Ellingham, and several members of the band who will need some more lessons, Merry Schmidt, and Heidi Ostner. Pipers were scarcely seen on the band trip making Brunton very popular especially at Bal-

moral, where he was "swarmed" by those wanting a photo with a "real" Scottish piper, not realizing he was Canadian talent.

The performance highlights continued with a stop at Inveraray Castle, home of the Duke of Argyll, Chieftain of the Campbells. Equally impressive to Balmoral, the band was admitted into the castle to view the interior before it was opened to the public. Another band engagement proceeded under threatening skies with a substantial wind, but still appreciated by those visiting the castle. Staff posted the band's performance to their Facebook page, where comments were made by tourists from around the world.

Ayr was the final stop, providing a chance to visit the town where our Canadian home got its name. The hotel was a short walk to the beach and the Firth of Clyde that leads into the Atlantic Ocean. It was a dramatic change to the landscape after descending from the Highland hills to the relatively flat area and the palm trees of Ayrshire with a warmer temperature provided by the Gulf Stream.

A group dinner was held at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum restaurant that was attended by South Ayrshire Provost (mayor) Iain Campbell. Following the dinner, spontaneous entertainment was provided by band and group members. A presentation was made to the trip organizing committee comprised of Geoff Adeney, Irene Adeney, Derrick Ostner, Jamie Rossignoli, and George Schmidt.

There were several members of the Ayr 200 committee along on the trip who took the opportunity to meet with the Provost and Depute Provost Mary Kilpatrick at the impressive South Ayrshire Council building. Members of the committee invited members of council to come to Canada in 2024 to celebrate Ayr's 200 anniversary of its founding as a settlement.

Later that afternoon, the Provost and Depute Provost attended the Burns Birthplace Museum for the final Ayr-Paris Band performance where they were joined by the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra. Several long-time friends of the band also attended the concert including Wallace Galbraith, the founder and former leader of the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra, former editor of the Ayr Advertiser Ann Galbraith, and former members of the orchestra who were billeted with Ayr-Paris Band members when they visited in 2017 for a Canada 150 celebration in Ayr, Ontario.

All too soon, there was a 3:00 a.m. wake up call to board the bus for Glasgow International Airport and the return trip to Toronto, and back to the band's homebase in Ayr.

Members of the Ayr-Paris Band included: Director Merry Schmidt, Vocalist Jennifer Budd, Piper Les Brunton, flutes - Myrtle Arruda, Jessica Bellamy, Dianne Delisle, Janette Kruegel, Heather McQuillin, Janet Schmidt, Greg Stroh; oboe Barbara Black; clarinets - Deborah Berry, Steven Brunton, Ann Brunton, Heidi Ostner, Jamie Rossignoli, Dawna Ward, bass clarinet Peter Heuss; Saxes - Terry Boutillier, Michael Schmidt, Gabriella Ellingham, Hillary Cain, Sarah McIntosh; trumpets - Geoffrey Adeney, Randy Dodd, Daniel Fedrock, Peter Hafemann, David Romagnoli, George Schmidt; French horns - Stuart Budd, Ruth Ireland, Christine Shantz; euphoniums - Irene Adeney, Susan Follows; trombones - James Brown; Paul Ellingham; Larry Green; tubas - Ernie Arruda, Dieter Morell; percussion Andy MacPherson.

Ayr-Paris Band 2023 Highland Holiday













