



PLEASANTON-BLAIRGOWRIE-FERGUS
SISTER CITY ORGANIZATION

February 2022

From the President

A long overdue hello and welcome to 2022! Yes, it has been some time since the last PBFSCO newsletter. It feels a bit like coming out of hibernation — as does the slow crawl back to pre-pandemic life. I remain ever hopeful for better and brighter days in 2022 and beyond.

The PBFSCO Board of Directors and I were disappointed that we could not hold our Burns Supper for a second consecutive year. Our last Burns Supper in 2020 was the 26th annual. However not to be discouraged, we look forward to holding our annual event anew in 2023. We are also hoping to revive our popular Scotsman Train Ride in early May. We will share more about that in the next few weeks.

I want to pay tribute to two noteworthy women of PBFSCO whose deaths occurred in 2020 and 2021. Jenny Blair Oliphant, wife of Blairgowrie Laird Laurence Blair Oliphant, passed away September 2, 2020 following several years of degrading health. Many long time members and friends may remember when she and Laurence attended the Caledonian Club Highland Games in 1997. Or perhaps you were graced with her hospitality when visiting Blairgowrie. I fondly recall one particular day in 2008 when a large PBFSCO contingent was staying in Blairgowrie. Lawrence and Jenny welcomed us into their home Ardblair Castle. At the end of the visit, Jenny served us delicious refreshments she had prepared for this day. Meanwhile, Laurence had a surprise for us in their driveway - the retired Pleasanton Fire Truck gifted to Blairgowrie for the 1996 formal twining ceremony. Jenny was at the ready with glasses of champagne to celebrate the moment!

Past President Joan Zehnder passed away August 20, 2021. Joan was an original member of the group that in 1994 formed what was originally known as Pleasanton Blairgowrie Sister City Organization (PBSCO). She stepped in to take the reins as the very first President of our fledgling organization. Joan was active in other Pleasanton organizations including President of the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce, Rotary member also serving as president, American Association of University Women Tri-Valley Branch President, St. Augustine's Catholic Church and Open Heart Kitchen. When Joan and her husband retired, they moved out of Pleasanton, eventually settling in Boise, Idaho until her death.

In lieu of a Burns Supper Toast to Absent Friends, please charge your glass and be upstanding: A toast to Jenny Blair Oliphant and Joan Zehnder.

Yours Aye,
Steve Lind

(be on the lookout for sliding Scottish stones! )

Blairgowrie - courtesy of Charlie Blair Oliphant and ardblairstones.com

Have you heard of the Ardblair Stones (as in Ardblair Castle)? The Ardblair Stones are the creation of Charlie Blair Oliphant, son of Laurence Blair Oliphant. Ardblair Stones consist of nine stone spheres made from reinforced concrete ranging in weight from 40 to 335 lbs. The stones first made in 2008 were used by Charlie for strength training on the grounds of Ardblair Castle. Growing in notoriety from visitors and tourists, Laurence suggested featuring them at the Blairgowrie & Rattray Highland Games which are held each September on the Ardblair estate. So was born an event with the stones named after Ardblair Castle.

The Ardblair Stones made their first appearance at the Blairgowrie & Rattray Highland Games in 2012, followed by the first event in 2013. The concept of the Arblair Stones Event is simple but hardly easy to accomplish! The nine Ardblair Stones sit on the ground in front of one of nine whisky barrels, each barrel standing 52" from the ground. Starting with the 40 lb stone, competitors lift each stone sequentially onto the top of the corresponding whisky barrel in the shortest amount of time possible.

At the 2015 Blairgowrie & Rattray Highland Games, John Pollock was the first man to successfully load all nine stones (the 9th stone is 335 lbs). He accomplished it in a time of 58.55 seconds. The current world record for loading all nine stones is held by Tom Stoltman in a time of 21.81s — under 2.5 seconds per stone! The Ladies world record is held by Donna Moore who loaded 7 Ardblair Stones (the 7th Stone is 260 lbs) in 37.14 seconds. Both records were set at the International Highland Games Federation Stones of Strength Scottish National Final held at the 2019 Blairgowrie & Rattray Highland Games.

Charlie envisioned the stones being accessible to everyone regardless of age or ability. As such, the stones have toured all around the United Kingdom and are free to all willing to give it a try - thousands have attempted lifting the stones with varying amounts of success. Visit ardblairstones.com for more about Charlie and the Ardblair Stones. To see the Ardblair Stones in action, find links on the media page to the Facebook page and YouTube channel.



The Ardblair Stones at the 2018 Erskine Motorbike Meet,
Sunday 27th May



Charlie Blair Oliphant with Donna Moore — 2016, 2017 and
2019 Winner of the World's Strongest Woman Competition
and World Record Holder for the Ardblair Stones.

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Fergus — Deb Dalziel

Plaid Tidings from Fergus Ontario Canada!

On behalf of the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games and the community of Fergus, I am thrilled to be greeting anyone after the past few years! As most of you around the globe, we are working in a virtual world and have only just recently started to open our doors, classrooms and hopefully our gates for an actual Games this year!

After the past few weeks, I am saying hello literally the from the “Great White North” as we are lovingly referred to in January through March!

Our community of Fergus did not experience many of the major weather crisis’s here in South Central Ontario that you have seen on the Canadian West Coast.

The past month we have experienced temperatures plunging to the –20 C range, outdoor activity is limited to those not of the faint of heart or part polar bear! We are enjoying loads of the white stuff that is offering great activities such as snowmobiling, sledding, outdoor skating rinks and my favourite-winter tubing!



Downtown Fergus in Winter on the Grand River

A new Event for our Scottish Festival is the celebration of Kilt Skate Canada! This is celebrated across the Country in various communities. The Great Canadian Kilt Skate is indelibly Scottish and undeniably Canadian. Kilt skating is a phenomenon that is spreading beyond Canada as a way to celebrate the contributions the Scots have made around the world.

This event is open to everyone. It’s a chance to nurture your inner Scot. You don’t have to be Scottish. You don’t even have to wear a kilt. Just come to the party with a spirit of Scottish fun and fortitude, and wear Canada’s favourite colour – tartan!

Fergus has added this great event to our roster of Festival awareness programs and allows us to engage with our volunteer and attendees about the Fergus Scottish Festival & Highland Games and provides a gentle plug for the upcoming August event.

Unfortunately, we have received word we need to put this event on hold again due to the Pandemic-but we hope to be ‘live’ again in /23. It was a little too soon from our recent lock down to risk an indoor event even at a large skating facility.

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Fergus — Deb Dalziel

The Board of Directors and volunteers of the Fergus Scottish Festival continue to meet and plan for the 2022 Festival while monitoring ongoing COVID-19 developments. Board President David Radley noted that recent developments are keeping the Festival on its toes. “Our immediate concern is for everyone involved with the Festival, our volunteers, competitors, performers, guests, and the community. We encourage everyone to be safe during these uncertain times. Although it is difficult, we will continue to work diligently towards a live Festival, which is what we all desire.” We are so envious of Pleasanton, that was able to safely and successfully host their event ‘live’ this past September — We in Fergus have our fingers crossed!

To receive information and keep on top of news on the 2022 event, follow the Festival as it remains true to their commitment to bring you Scotland — Without The Airfare — on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Save the date for the next Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, August 12 - 14th, 2022. The Pipes are calling to carry you home to Fergus!



Home ice Advantage - with Festival Volunteers and Scottish Dancers



KiltSkate Canada -Toronto, Nathan Phillips Square

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The Blairgowrie & Rattray website: <https://www.discoverblairgowrie.co.uk>
facebook page: www.facebook.com/blairgowrieandrattray

FERGUS

Fergus & Elora website: <http://elorafergus.ca/>
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Fiona

living & milking happily at
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