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The London '81 Friars' Briar

The dream of an across-Canada clergy bonspiel was hatched in the East by Canada's greatest curling enthusiast among clergy, Don Amos of Brampton, Ontario. It was appropriate that, after two successful runs in the West (in Winnipeg and Calgary respectively), it should be hosted by the *wise men* of the East this time. The Silver Broom World Championship Competitions were being booked for London, Ontario in 1981. That seemed like the logical place for us to stage our next Friars' Briar, and at the same time, put us in a position to see world class curling.

No sooner had the decision been made in Calgary, than Don Amos was on the phone and the typewriter contacting participants nationwide. "Be in London for the March 24th to 27th 1981 event." Hugh Christmas had done a magnificent job of raising funds for the '80 Friars' Briar. He was rumored to have a tidy sum on hand in the care of the Calgary Clergy Curling Club. Hugh was asked to be treasurer of the Association that was gradually taking form. In fact, the seed money that he was able to turn over to the London committee as it set about making plans for the '81 Friars' Briar, proved most helpful. Mel Boyd became secretary-treasurer for the London Committee and was subsequently asked to act as secretary for the Association.

When the great week for viewing and curling arrived, curlers from all four provinces west of Ontario were met at the airport by friendly faces. Greeters were Jack (Bible Society) Thompson, chairman of the London Committee and/or the ever helpful secretary-treasurer, Mel Boyd and his wife Muriel.

The weather was mild, much to the pleasure of the western visitors, save young Kerry Burtnyk's rink who, being used to nothing but cold, slippery ice in Winnipeg, fell victim to the watery ice of the small university arena, caused by the mild weather and intense heat of the C.B.C. filming floodlights. After winning all their games in round robin play, Canada lost to the U.S. in semi-final play and the U.S. to Sweden in the famous game that featured a dispute about the use of corn brooms.

Although a few Westerners stayed with friends while in London that week, most went to the wonderful Ivanhoe facility that featured motel rooms and curling ice in the same building. It was great to sleep in until one had to have a quick breakfast in the cafeteria and step out on the ice for the first Friars' game of the day!

The cost per night for accommodation was truly a clergy/Scotsman's delight. It was \$18.50 for a single, \$27.50 for a double and \$35.00 for three in a room!

Cost of a book of Silver Broom tickets for all games was \$80.00. Bus travel on the local transportation system was convenient. Visitors walked a couple of blocks to the nearest bus stop. Many had fun waving their newly purchased Canadian flags at people in cars as they passed.

The Thompson Arena at the University of Western Ontario, although smaller than most venues where national and world playdowns are held, created a very friendly atmosphere and Westerners were surprised how easy it was to break into conversation with everyone around them. The myth that Easterners are not friendly was a good one to have dispelled! In those days of constitutional talks and accusations flying from east to west and vice-versa, it was good for us all to feel the warmth of each other's good will through the medium of a curling event!

By this time it was evident that it would be in the interest of a successful Briar if the host province could come up with the greatest number of rinks, approximately as many as the sum of the visiting ones. Also, the question of who is eligible to play was unofficially discussed and settled. Clergy, church workers and spouses for sure. When short of players in this category, one lay person who is part of a local clergy curling club or is certified by his/her minister, may act as lead on a given rink. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring local Briar committee to find a spot for any applicant who is not attached to a rink.

Curling at the Ivanhoe Rink for the friars proved to be a very pleasant experience. There were eleven rinks from Ontario, two from Manitoba and one from each of the provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, making sixteen in all. The ice was tended and the draw looked after in a professional manner. The East won the top three places. A gold medallion went to Harold Martin and his rink consisting of Don Johns, Dixon Moor and John Moor. Silver went to Gray Rivers, Forbes Thomson, Basil Adams and Maxwell Johnston. Bronze to Les Files, John Vardy, Jack Thompson and Archdeacon K. Bolton.

A gracious gesture by the London Committee was a travel subsidy to each curler coming from outside the province of Ontario. The amount each received varied with the distance travelled. This was provided from a fund established by each Ontario curler paying a *hosting* fee, and, from contributions sent in by Ontario clergy curling clubs and friends.

Through good management by the local committee and its treasurer, Mel Boyd, the seed money received from the Calgary club was able to be returned and a sum set aside for future national clergy curling events. This was still another step toward the stabilization of the Canadian Clergy Curling Association and the guarantee of future Friars' Briar competitions.

A new feature of the London '81 Friars' Briar, much appreciated by the curlers and their spouses, was a Fellowship Supper held at Westminster College on the Tuesday at a nominal cost of \$5.00. It was fitted in between the afternoon and evening draws of the Silver Broom. What has become the usual Opening Breakfast was held at the Ivanhoe cafeteria Tuesday morning prior to the first draw of the Friars' Briar. The banquet and awards night was held on the Friday evening with special music arranged by the local committee.

It had always been the hope of Don Amos and others prominent in the organization of the Canadian Clergy Curling group, that curlers might be recruited from Quebec, the Maritimes and Newfoundland as well as Ontario and the West. No doubt cost has been the factor preventing this from happening. In London, we had an entry from New York State in the person of the Reverend Alfred Gross. Future dreams also included the possible entry of one team from Scotland, or, that a team from Canada might some day join clergy curlers in a game or bonspiel over there.

A very touching gesture at the London '81 Briar, was the gift to each visitor of a hand crafted ceramic curling rock. Mrs. Claire MacKay, wife of the Reverend Chauncey MacKay of Ilderton, presented one to each of the visitors from outside Ontario.

Those from the prairies appreciated the lovely growths of trees that adorned the city generally and gave relief to the large insurance company and other business buildings. People from B.C. were quick to congratulate Easterners from the London area for arranging such mild B.C. like weather for this March event!

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Rev. & Mrs. A. P. Addison	Midland, Ont.	Mr. & Mrs. Ken MacFarlane	Winnipeg, Man.
Rev. Walter Allum	Dundas, Ont.	Rev. & Mrs. Chauncey MacKay	Ilderton, Ont.
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