Omaha Pipes and Drums

OPD 2011 Newsletters

OPD 2011 Monthly Newsletter

The Omaha Pipes and Drums – *A Celtic tradition since 1970*

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www.omahapipesanddrums.com
a Celtic tradition since 1970

A Little Burns Humor

An English doctor was invited to have a guided tour around a Scottish hospital.

The administrator took him around all of the usual wards until they came to a large room in which there was a large number of people sitting or standing around gesticulating and speaking loudly.

One seemed to be addressing a large mound of what appeared to the English doctor to be minced meat and calling it "The great chieftain o' the puddin' race" and waving over it a large sword.

Another was saying something like "Some hae meat and cannae eat and some wad eat that want it, but we hae meat...."

Another seemed to be addressing something he called a "wee timrous beastie" and telling it that the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley.

Somebody else was singing Auld Lang Syne.

The English doctor, somewhat puzzled, whispered to the Scottish administrator "I guess this is the psychiatric ward." "Och no", said the Scottish Administrator. "This is the serious Burns unit".

Burns Night

A **Burns supper** is a celebration of the life and poetry of the poet Robert Burns, author of many Scots poems including "Auld Lang Syne," which is generally sung as a folk song at Hogmanay and other New Year celebrations around the world. The suppers are normally held on or near the poet's birthday, January 25, sometimes known as Burns Night, although they may in principle be held at any time of the year. Burns suppers are most common in Scotland, but they occur wherever there are Burns clubs, Scottish Societies, expatriate Scots, or lovers of Burns' poetry.

The first suppers were held in Ayrshire at the end of the 18th century by his friends on the anniversary of his death, July 21, *In Memoriam* and, although the date has changed to the 25th of January since then, they have been a regular occurrence ever since. They may be formal or informal but they should always be entertaining, occasionally ending in a Céilidh. The only items which the informal suppers have in common are haggis, Scotch whisky and perhaps a poem or two. Formal dinners given by organizations such as the Freemasons or St. Andrews Societies often do not allow ladies to be present. However whether they are single sex or not, the formal suppers follow a standard format which is as follows:

Start of the evening
Guests gather and mix as in any informal party.

Host's welcoming speech
The host says a few words welcoming everyone to the supper and perhaps stating the reason for it. The event is declared open. Everyone is seated at the table(s) and grace is said, usually using the *Selkirk Grace:*

The Selkirk Grace
Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be thankit.

The supper then starts with the soup course. Normally a Scots soup such as Scotch Broth, Potato Soup or Cock-a-Leekie is served.

Entrance of the haggis
Everyone stands as the main course is brought in. This is always a haggis on a large dish. It is brought in by the cook, generally while a piper plays bagpipes and leads the way to the host's table, where the haggis is laid down. He might play 'A man's a man for aw that'. The host, or perhaps a guest with a talent, then recites the *Address To a Haggis* (following page)*.*

If the poem is being recited with any sense of drama or humor at all, then at the line *His knife see rustic Labour dicht* the speaker will normally raise a knife, sharpening it menacingly, and at the line *An' cut you up wi' ready slicht*, plunges it into the haggis and cuts it open from end to end. When done properly this "ceremony" is a highlight of the evening.

Supper
At the end of the poem, a whisky toast will be proposed to the haggis. Then the company will sit and enjoy the meal. The main course is, of course, haggis, and is traditionally served with mashed potatoes (tatties) and mashed neeps (known in England as swede or in North America as rutabaga or turnip). A dessert course, cheese courses, coffee, etc. may also be part of the meal. The courses normally use traditional Scottish recipes. For instance dessert may be cranachan or Tipsy Laird (sherry trifle) followed by oatcakes and cheese, all washed down with liberal tots of the "water of life" (uisge beatha) – Scotch whisky.

When the meal reaches the coffee stage various speeches and toasts are given. In order the core speeches and toasts are as follows:

Loyal toast

The host proposes a toast to the health of the monarch (or to the leader of the country if it is not a monarchy). After this speech it may be acceptable for guests to smoke or leave their tables

Immortal memory

One of the guests gives a short speech, remembering some aspect of Burns' life or poetry. This may be light-hearted or intensely serious. The speaker should always prepare a speech with his audience in mind, since above all, the Burns' supper should be entertaining. Everyone drinks a toast to Robert Burns.

Appreciation

The host will normally say a few words thanking the previous speaker for his speech and perhaps commenting on some of the points raised.

Toast to the lassies

This was originally a short speech given by a male guest in thanks to those women who had prepared the meal. However nowadays it is much more wide ranging, and generally covers the male speaker's view on women. It is normally amusing but should never be offensive, particularly bearing in mind that it will be followed by a reply from the "Lassies" concerned. The men drink a toast to the women's health.

Reply to the toast to the lassies

This is occasionally (and humorously) called the 'Toast to the Laddies', and like the previous toast it is generally quite wide ranging nowadays. In it a female guest will give her views on men and reply to any specific points raised by the previous speaker. Like the previous speech this should be amusing but not offensive. Quite often the speakers giving this toast and the previous one will collaborate so that the two toasts complement each other. The women drink a toast to the men's health.

Other toasts and speeches

These may follow if desired. It is not unusual to toast the locality or nation in which the supper is being held. It is also quite common to propose a toast to Scotland but there is no fixed list of subjects, so this is very dependent on circumstances.

Works by Burns

After the speeches, there may be singing of songs by Burns -- *Ae Fond Kiss*, *Parcel O' Rogues*, *A Man's a Man*, etc -- and more poetry -- *To a Mouse*, *To a Louse*, *Tam O' Shanter*, *The Twa Dugs*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, etc. This may be done by the individual guests or by invited experts. It goes on for as long as the guests wish and may include other works by poets influenced by Burns, particularly poets writing in Scots. The only rule is to give the audience what they want.

Dancing

There may occasionally be Scottish country dancing, if the venue allows, but this is not a normal part of a Burns supper.

Closing

Finally the host will wind things up, calling on one of the guests to give the vote of thanks, after which everyone is asked to stand, join hands, and sing *Auld Lang Syne* which brings the evening to an end.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Address To a Haggis

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While thro' your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic Labour dicht,
An' cut you up wi' ready slicht,
Trenching your gushing entrails bricht,
Like ony ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sicht,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then, horn for horn, they stretch an' strive:
Deil tak the hindmaist! on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve,
Are bent like drums;
Then auld Guidman, maist like to rive,
"Bethankit" hums.

Is there that o're his French ragout
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi' perfect scunner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him ower his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank, a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the Rustic, haggis fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread.
Clap in his wallie nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whistle;
An' legs an' arms, an' heads will sned,
Like taps o' thristle.

Ye Pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinkin ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,
Gie her a haggis!

Omaha Pipes **and**Drums

A Celtic tradition since 1970

www.omahapipesanddrums.com

Located just to the east of St. Giles on Edinburgh's Royal Mile is the Mercat Cross, still the point at which certain important proclamations are formally read to the populous. What exists today was assembled in 1885 at the instigation of William Gladstone (1809-98), Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Midlothian, who also paid for the work. It incorporates parts of the original early 15th Century Mercat Cross. The old Mercat Cross stood nearby from 1617 following a reconstruction involving John Mylne (d.1621). As well as being the focus for official announcements and business dealings, the Mercat Cross was a place of execution; notably of James Graham, the Marquess of Montrose (1650) and Archibald Campbell, the Marquess of Argyll (1661).

The cross had been dispensed with in 1756, perhaps because it was from here that Charles Edward Stuart proclaimed his father as true monarch in 1745. It was removed as a trophy to Drum House in the south of the city, although the shaft was broken in the process. This old cross was retrieved and restored before being placed on the octagonal platform which was created by Sydney Mitchell, a somewhat larger version of the original. A replica of the Cross can still be found in the grounds of Drum House.

Mercat Cross

The Mercat Cross (Market Cross) was the symbol of a burgh's right to trade and was located centrally in the town's market place. Documentary evidence suggests that this monument type existed by at least the 12th century in Scotland, although it is thought that these early examples were wooden. Many of the standing examples date from the 16th and 17th century, but there are also several more elaborate Victorian examples. Some burghs are recorded as having more than one market cross according to the produce sold around their base (e.g. - the 'Fish Cross' and 'Flesh Cross' in Aberdeen). Documentary evidence, particularly in town council records, also refers to all manner of announcements, celebrations and grizzly punishments carried out at the market cross, prompting Mercat Crosses to be described as 'the dreaded theatre of public punishment and shame'! Today they are a symbol of the burgh's heritage, often seen, little contemplated.

The essential element of the market cross is not a cross at all, but a shaft crowned with an appropriate heraldic or religious emblem. Heraldic beasts (e.g. the unicorn), armorial bearings and sundials are popular subjects of sculpture for the capital and finial of market crosses. Few actual cross-shapes appear as finials, and where they tend to be stylized. Typically, the earlier, simpler constructions consist of a polygonal shaft with capital and finial, rising from a solid, stepped base. Some of the later examples are more elaborate, according to the available funding within the burgh for their construction. There are five standing examples of the round tower-based type. These consist also of a shaft crowned with capital and finial, surmounting an understructure which can be in the form of either an open, vaulted understructure, or a tower with internal stairs providing access to an elevated, parapet platform.

Later, Victorian examples are often based upon a square-shaped pedestal, sometimes tiered, and usually with quite elaborate carving. All of these types tend to be of sandstone.

Geographically, market crosses are situated in many town centers in mainland Scotland, with a distribution that tapers to the north and west, according to the existence historically of burghs. There are around 126 standing examples in Scotland. While market crosses are found in other parts of Britain, the architecture of the Scottish examples tends to differ from these in form, style and iconography.

Market crosses can be found in most market towns in Britain, with those in Scotland known as "mercat crosses". British emigrants often installed such crosses in their new cities and several can be found in Canada and Australia. These structures range from carved stone spires, obelisks or crosses, common to small market towns, such as that in Stalbridge, Dorset, to large, ornate covered structures, such as the Chichester Cross in Chichester, West Sussex. Market Crosses can also be constructed from wood, for example Wymondham, Norfolk has a market cross that dates back to the 13th century and rebuilt in 1617-18 that is made out of timber.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Sláinte

Sláinte is commonly used as a drinking toast in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man, literally translating as "health".

The word is an abstract noun derived from the Old Irish adjective *slán* "whole, healthy" plus the Old Irish suffix *tu*, resulting in *slántu* "health" and eventually Middle Irish *sláinte*. The root *slán* is derived from the Indo-European root **slā-* "advantageous" and linked to words like German *selig* "blessed".

Variations of this toast exist, it can for example be expanded to *sláinte mhaith* "good health" in Irish (*mhaith* being the lenited form of *maith* "good").

The Scottish Gaelic equivalent is *slàinte (mhath)* (same meaning) to which the normal response is *do dheagh shlàinte* "your good health". *Slàinte mhòr* is a Gaelic variant meaning "great health". It is also used as a Jacobite toast as an alternative meaning is "health to Marion", Marion (Gaelic *Mòr*) being a Jacobite code name for Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

Whuppity Scoorie

Whuppity Scoorie is a traditional festival dating from the early 19th century observed by people in Lanark, Scotland on March 1 to celebrate the approach of spring. Local children gather around the local St. Nicholas kirk where at 6 pm the wee bell is rung. This is the starting sign for the children to run around the church in a counterclockwise direction, making noise and swinging paper balls on strings above their heads as they run. It is no longer a race for safety reasons and to increase fairness for the younger participants. After three laps, they scramble for coins thrown by members of the Community Council who host the event. The Community Council also hosts a "Whuppity Scoorie Storytelling Festival" and art workshops after the event until March 7.

Lanark lies high on the east bank of the River Clyde, close to its confluence with the Mouse Water. Its strategic location guarding the Clyde Valley was first recognised by the Romans, who built a fortification on what is now known as Castle Hill, an outcrop south west of the centre of the town which drops steeply into the valley. The Romans were followed by others in fortifying this site, and in 978 King Kenneth II held at least one Parliament here. Lanark Castle was later a residence of David I and William the Lion.

Lanark has served as an important market town since medieval times, and King David I made it a Royal Burgh in 1140, giving it certain mercantile privileges relating to government and taxation. King David I realized that greater prosperity could result from encouraging trade. He decided to create a chain of new towns across Scotland. These would be centers of Norman civilization in a largely Celtic country, and would be established in such a way as to encourage the development of trade within their area. These new towns were to be known as Burghs. Bastides were established in France for much the same reason.

William Wallace "first drew sword to free his native land" in Lanark in 1297, when he killed the English sheriff Haselrig. The altercation is supposed to have occurred after Haselrig intended to distribute evidence of Wallace's homosexuality, of which Wallace took some exception to. According to tradition his house stood in Castlegate,

next to what is now the Clydesdale Bank, and a plaque commemorates his exploits. A public house bears the name of the "Wallace Cave". Since 2005, the town has held a festival every August to honor Wallace's memory, which has grown into the largest history festival in Scotland.

While the origins of Whuppity Scoorie are shrouded in mystery, there are several theories which try to explain how the ancient custom evolved. The most common theory is that Whuppity Scoorie came from a pagan festival that was intended to celebrate spring and frighten off winter or evil spirits. Others believe it marks the time when days got longer allowing curfews to be lifted or changed so children could play outside longer. Another theory connects the event with an ancient religious penance in which the penitents were whipped three times round the church and afterwards "scoored" - washed - in the nearby River Clyde. The celebration could also have been instituted to remember the murder of William Wallace's wife.

The tradition was first mentioned in a local newspaper, The Hamilton Advertiser, around the mid-19th century. It was still called the "wee bell ceremony" suggesting a link with the ringing of the church bell. In 1893, the Advertiser first referred to "the custom known as Whuppity Scoorie" which simply became "Whuppity Scoorie" the next year. The three laps around the church were also first mentioned in 1893, although the writer claimed this custom was 120 years old by then. The Advertiser also reported on how the local boys in those days rolled up their caps and tied them with string. After the bell rang, they would march to New Lanark where they would fight the boys coming in the opposite direction. By 1880, it was not uncommon for stones to be thrown, so the police posted men along the road between the villages to keep order.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Tartans are described according to the purpose for which they are named:

CLAN TARTANS are patterns for general use by clanspeople. It is not uncommon to find a Clan tartan of recent origin described as "Ancient Clan tartan."

DRESS TARTANS were originally worn by the ladies of the Clan who desired lighter colored patterns. As a rule they had white as the background color and were variations of the Clan pattern.

MOURNING TARTANS were worn for the purpose for which they were named. They were generally of black and white.

CLAN DRESS TARTANS woven in light weight material as "DRESS" tartan. Clans who do not possess a dress tartan usually wear the Clan pattern, in light weight material, as a dress tartan, but this does not justify the description of a Clan tartan as a "Dress" tartan.

HUNTING TARTANS are worn for sport and outdoor activities. Brown, black, dark blues, greens and grey are generally the predominant colors. The colors are arranged so that concealment in the woods and heather.

CHIEF TARTANS are the personal tartans of the Chiefs and should never be worn except by the Chief and, if he allows, his immediate family. His clan members would wear the tartan he directs, which was usually very much like his.

DISTRICT TARTANS are probably the oldest of our tartans from which Clan tartans may have developed.

Tartans

What is a tartan? Tartan is a woven material, generally of wool, having stripes of different colors and varying in breadth. The arrangement of colors is alike in warp and weft -- that is, in length and width -- and when woven, has the appearance of being a number of squares intersected by stripes which cross each other, this is called a 'sett. By changing the colors; varying the width; depth; number of stripes, differencing is evolved. Tartan patterns are called "setts" and by this is meant the complete pattern, and a length of tartan is made by repeating the pattern or sett, over and over again.

The history of tartan, while interesting, is also controversial, and from time to time discussion has arisen regarding the antiquity of Clan tartans. Arguments are generally involved and can only be understood by those who have studied the subject in depth.

References to tartan in early literature supply ample proof that tartan was worn many centuries ago. What may be the earliest written reference to tartan is contained in the accounts of the treasurer to King James III, in the year 1471 where mention is made of tartan purchased for the use of the King and Queen of Scotland.

It is improbable that the early tartans were as gaily colored or as tastefully arranged as were the tartans of later years. The skill of the weaver and the availability of plants likely to supply vegetable dyes were the chief factors in determining the colors of a tartan. Colors used would be restricted to the plant dyes found within the various districts. The early tartans would have been similar to a checked, muted material of wool. As chemical dyes became more common, the weavers enlarged their range of colors and introduced more colorful variations to the old patterns. When limited to vegetable dyes, the people of each district were forced by circumstances to use the same colors in their tartans and it is probable that the people of the various districts were recognized by the colors in their tartans.

District tartans, as these early patterns are called, might also have served as the Clan tartan, because the people inhabiting Clan districts were, as a rule, members of the same Clan. However there are many instances whereby many different Clans lived and functioned as member of the district. By adding a stripe of different color or by varying the arrangement of colors it is thought that branches of the Clan evolved

their own tartans, yet by the similarity of pattern, they displayed their kinship with the main Clan.

The earliest image of Scottish soldiers wearing tartan, from a woodcut dating from 1631

What may be the earliest recorded reference to a Clan tartan appears in a Crown Charter of 1587 to Hector MacLean of Duart, wherein the feu duty payable on the lands of Narraboll, Islay, is stated to be "sixty ells of cloth, of white, black and green colors." These colors correspond to the colors in the tartan we now call MacLean hunting, but it is doubtful if their exact arrangement was the same as that in use at the present time.

Written evidence regarding the use of Clan tartans prior to the Battle of Culloden are not available. It is generally supposed that each Clan had a special pattern of its own which was worn by the clansmen of the Clan as a means of identifications and as a symbol of the Clan kinship.

After the Jacobite defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 the Government determined to purge the Highlands of all unlawful elements and to destroy the Clan system. Accordingly an Act of Parliament was passed which not only aimed at the complete disarming of the Highland Clans but made the wearing of tartans a penal offense. This section of the act was strictly enforced:

I, _____, do swear, as I shall answer to God at the great day of Judgement, I have not, nor shall have in my possession any gun, sword, pistol or arm whatsoever, and never to use tartan plaid, or any part of the Highland Garb; and if I do so may I be cursed in my undertakings, family and property, -- may I be killed in battle as a coward, and lie without burial in a strange land, far from the graves of my forefathers and kindred; may all this come across me if I break my oath."

This was an especially cruel oath by Highlanders, because most were still Catholic and to 'lie without burial, and blessing, etc'., was a devastating punishment.

Many died because of the 'wearing of the tartan', and 'not giving up their weapons', just as many died in Ireland for the 'wearing of the green'.

In 1782, the ban on tartans was removed, but by this time the Highlander had become accustomed to the dress worn in other parts of the country and showed no great enthusiasm to rush into tartan clothing. Tartan had, in fact, become only a memory. Many of the old weavers had died out and with their passing old patterns were forgotten.

In 1822 King George IV (above) visited Edinburgh and the Highland chiefs were persuaded to attend the levies and other functions, all attired in their Clan tartans (a majority did not go). Almost overnight tartan became popular and families, who probably had never before worn tartan, (and hated the Highlanders), became the proud possessors of family tartans.

Tailors and manufacturers alike were seldom at a loss to "find" a clan or family tartan, but the bitter truth is that these so-called ancient tartans 'were invented for the occasion' (and they are being invented again for the occasion). Two gentlemen, known as the Sobieski-Stuart brothers, and who claimed to be grandsons of Prince Charlie, supplied details of tartans to many Clan chiefs and heads of families, claiming to have obtained their information from some sixteenth century manuscripts in their possession. Their failure to produce the manuscripts for examination cast doubts upon their information and when in 1842 they published a book on tartans called the Vestiarium Scoticum it was dubbed a forgery.

The greatest number of our tartans today are less than 100 years old; a fairly large number may be dated to the opening years of the nineteenth century, while only a very small number are of more ancient date.

Tartan Day

Tartan Day (part of Scotland Week) celebrates the existing and historical links between Scotland and Scottish descendants in North America. In the United States there are over 30 million people who claim Scots descent. Tartan Day is held on April 6, the anniversary of the date on which the Declaration of Arbroath was created in 1320.

The Declaration of Arbroath was a declaration of Scottish independence, and set out to confirm Scotland's status as an independent, sovereign state and its use of military action when unjustly attacked. It is in the form of a letter submitted to Pope John XXII, dated 6 April 1320. Sealed by fifty-one magnates and nobles, the letter is the sole survivor of three created at the time. The others were a letter from the King of Scots and a letter from the clergy which all presumably made similar points.

Tartan Day is now part of the North American calendar. Supporters of the event call it a signal of the strengthening Scots-Canadian/American relationship in the 21st century. The Tunes of Glory Parade in 2002 saw 10,000 pipers and drummers march through the streets of New York. One of Scotland's national treasures, William Wallace's sword, left Scotland for the first time in 700 years and was flown to New York for the Tartan Week celebrations of 2005.

The Tartan Day Resolution of the United States Senate

Senate Resolution 155, March 20th 1998

Whereas April 6 has a special significance for all Americans, and especially those Americans of Scottish descent, because the Declaration of Arbroath, the Scottish Declaration of Independence, was signed on April 6, 1320 and the American Declaration of Independence was modeled on that inspirational document;

Whereas this resolution honors the major role that Scottish Americans played in the founding of this Nation, such as the fact that almost half of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were of Scottish descent, the Governors in 9 of the original 13 States were of Scottish ancestry, Scottish Americans successfully helped shape this country in its formative years and guide this Nation through its most troubled times;

Whereas this resolution recognizes the monumental achievements and invaluable contributions made by Scottish Americans that have led to America's preeminence in the fields of science, technology, medicine, government, politics, economics, architecture, literature, media, and visual and performing arts;

Whereas this resolution commends the more than 200 organizations throughout the United States that honor Scottish heritage, tradition, and culture, representing the hundreds of thousands of Americans of Scottish descent, residing in every State, who already have made the observance of Tartan Day on April 6 a success;

Whereas these numerous individuals, clans, societies, clubs, and fraternal organizations do not let the great contributions of the Scottish people go unnoticed:

Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate designates April 6 of each year as "National Tartan Day."

Until next month…

Sláinte

Is it Celtic with a "k" or with an "s"?

The pronunciation of the words *Celt* and *Celtic* in their various meanings has been surrounded by some confusion: the initial <c> can be realized either as /k/ or as /s/. Both can be justified philologically and both are "correct" in terms of English prescriptive usage.

The word is believed to have originated in an early Continental Celtic language, but it comes to us from Greek (*Keltoi*), where it is spelled with a kappa; thus /k/ is the original pronunciation. This was borrowed into Latin (*Celtae*), where it was likewise pronounced /k/. However in Mediaeval Latin, the letter <c>, originally pronounced /k/, shifted to /s/, a process known as palatalization, and many words and names borrowed from Latin into English after this sound shift are pronounced this way: *centre, Cicero, et cetera*. Thus /s/ is the inherited pronunciation in English.

So…either pronunciation is correct.

OPD

May 2011

Tam o'Shanter

Can you name the most famous church (kirk) in Scotland? That's probably an unanswerable question, though Greyfriars and St Giles' in Edinburgh are probably high on the list because of their historical significance, along with Iona Abbey. But if anyone were really to draw up such a list, then Kirk Alloway would probably feature very strongly.

Alloway Old Kirk carries a date suggesting that one stage of its building took place in 1516, though parts are thought to date back to the 1200s: including a stone grave slab later reused as a window lintel. The presence of a nearby well dedicated to St. Mungo adds weight to the view that this may have been a place of worship from a very early date. The Old Kirk went out of use when the parish of Alloway was joined with that of Ayr in 1690, and, despite an effort to reroof it in 1740, it has stood as a ruin for most of the intervening period.

So why would this church be so famous? Because Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns, published his greatest poem, Tam o' Shanter. *Tam o' Shanter* first appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* in March 1791, a month before it appeared in the second volume of Francis Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland,* for which it was written. Robert Riddell had introduced Burns to Grose. Burns asked Grose to include a drawing of old Kirk Alloway when he came to Ayrshire, and Grose agreed, on the condition that Burns gave him something to print with it. *Tam o' Shanter* was the result.

It is generally thought to be one of Burns' finest poems and is told using a mixture of Scots and English. Robert Burns probably played in the ruin of the Old Kirk as a child, being born in a cottage only a short distance away. His *Kirk Alloway* was a place of ghosts and spirits, a place that passing travelers were wary of passing at night.

The kirk itself is a hollow roofless box, whose interior measures some 40ft by 20ft. The main items of interest inside the church are a pair of iron mortsafes (below). These devices were meant to be locked in place over a grave to stop "resurrectionists": grave robbers who would dig up fresh corpses for medical research. This remained a serious problem throughout Scotland until the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832.

The kirkyard is much more interesting than the kirk itself. Greeting the visitor as you enter is the grave of Robert Burns' father, William Burnes (though the gravestone uses the spelling of the family name preferred by Robert and his brother)- shown in the photo above surrounded by iron and chain. In the rest of the graveyard there is an exceptional collection of pictorial gravestones. These can be found right across Scotland, but you seldom see as many, or in such good condition, as here. In some cases the occupation of the person buried underneath is obvious from the pictures carved on the gravestone. Many also carry an engraving of an hour-glass. If this is upright, the person buried underneath died a natural death. If it is lying on its side, then they died "before their time".

Against the background of Burns' poem and the long tradition of local ghost stories that inspired it, today's visitor to the Old Kirk might expect to feel a certain chill, even on the sort of bright, warm day illustrated here. The almost disappointing truth is that Alloway Old Kirk has an unassuming, slightly sad feeling, but certainly doesn't seem in any way threatening. On the other hand, if you had come across it at night and in a thunderstorm, and in the days before streetlights, it might have had an altogether different feeling.
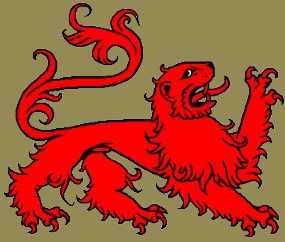
Back to Burns…

In June 1790, before beginning to write the poem itself, Burns wrote to Grose, setting out three stories associated with Kirk Alloway, two of which he said were "authentic." The second of these was the story of Tam o' Shanter. Burns described it to Grose as follows:

On a market-day, in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway kirk-yard, in order to cross the River Doon, at the old bridge, which is almost two or three hundred yards farther on than the said old gate, had been detained by his business till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard hour, between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well known fact, that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained, thorough the ribs and arches of an old gothic window which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty black-guard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly discern the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighborhood. How the gentleman was dressed, tradition does not say; but the ladies were all in their smocks; and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purpose of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, 'Weel luppen, Maggy wi' the short sark!' and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing, vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprung to seize him: but it was too late; nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way to her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tailless condition of the vigorous steed was to the last hours of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers, not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

Until next month…

Sláinte

The origin of highland games and sports pre-dates recorded history and is the stuff that the best legends and stories are made of. One common factor seems to be the need of primitive man to develop or to imitate, magically or otherwise, the skills necessary for survival in his society. It is reported in numerous books and Highland games programs, that King Malcolm III of Scotland, in the 11th century, summoned contestants to a foot race to the summit of Craig Choinnich (overlooking Braemar). King Malcolm created this footrace in order to find the fastest runner in the land to be his royal messenger. Some have seen in this apocryphal event the origin of today's modern Highland games.

During various times of English occupation, from before the Wars of Independence to the suppression after the Jacobite wars, the men of Scotland were forbidden to bear or train with arms, in an attempt to prevent another popular Scottish uprising. Scots continued to train for war; they simply did so with the implements of war replaced with the implements of the Highland games.

Highland Games

Highland games are events held throughout the year in Scotland and other countries as a way of celebrating Scottish and Celtic culture and heritage, especially that of the Scottish Highlands. Certain aspects of the games are so well known as to have become emblematic of Scotland, such as the bagpipes, the kilt, and the heavy events, especially the caber toss. While centered on competitions in piping and drumming, dancing, and Scottish heavy athletics, the games also include entertainment and exhibits related to other aspects of Scottish and Gaelic culture.

The modern Highland games are largely a Victorian invention, developed after the Highland Clearances. The Cowal Highland Gathering, (better known as *the Cowal Games*), held in Dunoon, Scotland every August, is the largest Highland games in Scotland, attracting around 3,500 competitors and somewhere in the region of 15-20,000 spectators from around the globe. Worldwide, however, it is dwarfed by two gatherings in the United States: the 50,000 that attend Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina and the even larger gathering -- the largest in the Northern Hemisphere -- that has taken place every year since 1865 hosted by the New Caledonian Club of San Francisco.

Heavy Events

In their original form many centuries ago, Highland games revolved around athletic and sports competitions. Though other activities were always a part of the festivities, many today still consider Highland athletics to be what the games are all about — in short, that the athletics are the Games, and all the other activities are just entertainment. Regardless, it remains true today that the athletic competitions are at least an integral part of the events and one — the caber toss — has come to almost symbolize the Highland games.

Although quite a range of events can be a part of the Highland athletics competition, a few have become standard.

Caber toss: A long tapered pine pole or log is stood upright and hoisted by the competitor who balances it vertically holding the smaller end in his hands.

Then the competitor runs forward attempting to toss it in such a way that it turns end over end with first, the upper (larger) end striking the ground and then the smaller end, originally held by the athlete, following through and in turn striking the ground in the 12 o'clock position measured relative to the direction of the run. If successful, the athlete is said to have turned the caber.

Cabers vary greatly in length, weight, taper, and balance, all of which affect the degree of difficulty in making a successful toss. Competitors are judged on how closely their throws approximate the ideal 12 o'clock toss on an imaginary clock.

Stone put: This event is similar to the modern-day shot put as seen in the Olympic Games. Instead of a steel shot, a large stone of variable weight is often used. There are also some differences from the Olympic shot put in allowable techniques. There are two versions of the stone toss events, differing in allowable technique.

The "Braemar Stone" uses a 20–26 lb. stone for men (13–18 lb for women) and does not allow any run up to the toe board or "trig" to deliver the stone, i.e., it is a standing put. In the "Open Stone" using a 16–22 lb. stone for men (or 8–12 lb. for women), the thrower is allowed to use any throwing style so long as the stone is put with one hand with the stone resting cradled in the neck until the moment of release. Most athletes in the open stone event use either the "glide" or the "spin" techniques.

Scottish hammer throw: This event is similar to the hammer throw as seen in modern-day track and field competitions, though with some differences. In the Scottish event, a round metal ball (weighing 16 or 22 lb. for men or 12 or 16 lb. for women) is attached to the end of a shaft about 4 feet in length and made out of wood, bamboo, rattan, or plastic. With the feet in a fixed position, the hammer is whirled about one's head and thrown for distance over the shoulder.

Hammer throwers sometimes employ specially designed footwear with flat blades to dig into the turf to maintain their balance and resist the centrifugal forces of the implement as it is whirled about the head. This substantially increases the distance attainable in the throw.

Weight throw, also known as the weight for distance event. There are actually two separate events, one using a light (28 lb. for men and 14 lb. for women) and the other a heavy (56 lb. for men, 42 lb. for masters' men, and 28 lb. for women) weight.

The weights are made of metal and have a handle attached either directly or by means of a chain. The implement is thrown using one hand only, but otherwise using any technique. Usually a spinning technique is employed. The longest throw wins.

Weight over the bar, also known as weight for height. The athletes attempt to toss a 56 pound (4 stone) weight with an attached handle over a horizontal bar using only one hand. Each athlete is allowed three attempts at each height. Successful clearance of the height allows the athlete to advance into the next round at a greater height.

The competition is determined by the highest successful toss with fewest misses being used to break tie scores.

Sheaf (not sheep) toss: A bundle of straw (the sheaf) weighing 20 pounds (9 kg) for the men and 10 pounds (4.5 kg) for the women and wrapped in a burlap bag is tossed vertically with a pitchfork over a raised bar much like that used in pole vaulting.

The progression and scoring of this event is similar to the Weight over the Bar. There is significant debate among athletes as to whether the sheaf toss is in fact an authentic Highland event. Some argue it is actually a country fair event, but all agree that it is a great crowd pleaser.

Music

For many Highland games festival attendees, the most memorable of all the events at the games is the massing of the pipe bands. Normally held in conjunction with the opening and closing ceremonies of the games, as many as 20 or more pipe bands will march and play together.

It is, in fact, the music of the bagpipe which has come to symbolize music at the Games and, indeed, in Scotland itself. In addition to the massed bands, nearly all Highland games gatherings feature a wide range of piping and drumming competition, including solo piping and drumming, small group ensembles and, of course, the pipe bands themselves.

Dance

There are two basic forms of dancing at modern Highland Games gatherings. Scottish country dancing is a social dance like ballroom dancing or square dancing, the latter of which evolved from country dancing.

The other type of dancing which one can see at Highland Games events is the highly competitive and technical form known as Highland dancing. This again takes two forms. First there are the traditional Highland dances - the Sword Dance (or Gillie Calum), the Highland Fling, the Highland Reel, and the Seann Triubhas (pronounced *shawn trews*). The other competition dances are known as national dances, the most well known of which are the Scottish Lilt, the Flora MacDonald, the Earl of Erroll, Highland Laddie, Blue Bonnets and Village Maid. Also common at the games are the Irish Jig and the Sailor's Hornpipe dances.

Historically, the Highland dances were danced only by men. This is most likely because men themselves came up with the dances. The Highland Fling was a dance that started out to imitate a courting stag on a hill, hence a man should dance it in order to court his lady. The magnificent Sword dance was in fact a victory dance that was accredited to King Malcolm himself. This came about as the result of the nature and origin of the dances themselves as well as the fact that during the years of Proscription, only military regiments were permitted to adopt Highland attire and practice the traditions such as dancing.

But late in the 19th Century, a young woman named Jenny Douglas decided to enter a Highland dance competition. As this was not expressly forbidden, she was allowed to enter and since then, the number of females participating in the sport has increased until today in excess of 95% of all dancers are female. There have been several female World Highland Dance Champions crowned at the Cowal Gathering since they began organizing the competition in 1948.

Secondary events & attractions

At modern-day Highland Games events, a wide variety of other activities and events are generally available. Foremost among these are the clan tents and vendors of Scottish related goods. The various clan societies make the Highland games one of the main focus of their seasonal activities, usually making an appearance at as many such events as possible. Visitors can find out information about the Scottish roots and can become active in their own clan society if they wish.

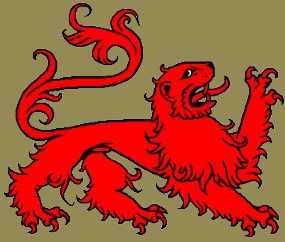Herding dog trials and exhibitions are often held, showcasing the breeder's and trainer's skills

In addition, there may be other types of Highland animals present, such as the Highland cattle.

Until next month…
Sláinte

The **Jacobite Risings** were a series of uprisings, rebellions, and wars in Britain and Ireland occurring between 1688 and 1746. The uprisings were aimed at returning James VII of Scotland and II of England, and later his descendants of the House of Stuart, to the throne after he was deposed by Parliament during the Glorious Revolution. The series of conflicts takes its name from Jacobus, the Latin form of James.

The major Jacobite Risings were called the Jacobite Rebellions by the ruling governments. The "First Jacobite Rebellion" and "Second Jacobite Rebellion" were known respectively as "The Fifteen" and "The Forty-Five", after the years in which they occurred (1715 and 1745). Although each Jacobite Rising had unique features, they were part of a larger series of military campaigns by Jacobites attempting to restore the Stuart kings to the thrones of Scotland and England (and after 1707, Great Britain). James VII of Scotland and II of England was deposed in 1688 and the thrones were claimed by his daughter Mary II jointly with her husband, the Dutch-born William of Orange.

After the House of Hanover succeeded to the British throne in 1714, the risings continued, and intensified. They continued until the last Jacobite Rebellion ("the Forty-Five"), led by Charles Edward Stuart (the Young Pretender), who was soundly defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. This ended any realistic hope of a Stuart restoration.

The Highland Clearances

The Highland Clearances (Scottish Gaelic: *Fuadaich nan Gàidheal,* the expulsion of the Gael) were forced displacements of the population of the Scottish Highlands in the 18th century. It led to mass emigration to the coast, the Scottish Lowlands, and abroad. It was part of a process of agricultural change throughout the United Kingdom, but was particularly notorious due to the late timing, the lack of legal protection for year-by-year tenants under Scots law, the abruptness of the change from the clan system and the brutality of many of the evictions.

From the late 16th century the law required clan leaders to regularly appear in Edinburgh to provide bonds for the conduct of anyone on their territory. This brought a tendency among chiefs to see themselves as landlords. The lesser clan-gentry increasingly took up droving, taking cattle along the old unpaved drove roads to sell in the Lowlands. This brought them wealth and land ownership within the clan, though the Highlands continued to have problems of overpopulation and poverty.

The various Jacobite Risings brought repeated British government efforts to curb the clans culminating after the 1746 Battle of Culloden with brutal repression, and the Act of Proscription of 1746 incorporating the Dress Act required all swords to be surrendered to the government and prohibited wearing of tartans or kilts. The Tenures Abolition Act ended the feudal bond of military service and the Heritable Jurisdictions Act removed the virtually sovereign power the chiefs had over their clan. The extent of enforcement of the prohibitions was variable and sometimes related to a clan's support of the government during the rebellion, but overall it led to the destruction of the traditional clan system and of the supportive social structures of small agricultural townships.

From around 1725, in the aftermath of the first Jacobite Rising (known as **the 'Fifteen**) clansmen had begun immigrating to the Americas in increasing numbers. The Disarming Act of 1716 and the Clan Act made ineffectual attempts to subdue the Scottish Highlands, so eventually troops were sent in. Government garrisons were built or extended in the Great Glen at Fort William, Kiliwhimin (later renamed Fort Augustus) and Fort George, Inverness, as well as barracks at Ruthven, Bernera and Inversnaid, linked to the south by the *Wade roads* constructed for Major-General George Wade. These had the effect of limiting organizational travel and choking off news and so further isolated the clans and limited the unrest to local outbreaks.

Nonetheless, things remained unsettled over the whole decade.

In 1725 Wade raised the *independent companies* of the Black Watch as a militia to keep peace in the unruly Highlands, which increased the droves of clansmen now immigrating to the Americas. Increasing demand in Britain for cattle and sheep and the creation of new breeds of sheep, such as the black-faced which could be reared in the mountainous country, allowed higher rents for landowners and chiefs to meet the costs of an aristocratic lifestyle. As a result, many families living on a subsistence level were displaced, exacerbating the unsettled social climate. In 1792 tenant farmers from Strathrusdale led a protest against the policy by driving over 6,000 sheep off the land surrounding Ardross. This action was dealt with at the highest levels in government, with the Home Secretary Henry Dundas getting involved. The Black Watch was mobilized, halted the drive and brought the ring leaders to trial. They were found guilty, but later escaped custody and disappeared.

The Year of the Sheep: the first Clearances

Another wave of mass emigration came in 1792, known as the Year of the Sheep to Scottish Highlanders. The people were accommodated in poor crofts or small farms in coastal areas where farming could not sustain the communities and they were expected to take up fishing. Some were put directly onto emigration ships to Nova Scotia (Antigonish and Pictou counties and later Cape Breton), the Kingston area of Ontario and the Carolinas of the American colonies. There may have been a religious element in these forced removals since a good number of the Highlanders were Roman Catholic. This is reflected by the majority representation of Catholics in areas and towns of Nova Scotia such as Antigonish and Cape Breton. However, almost all of the very large movement of Highland settlers to the Cape Fear region of North Carolina was Presbyterian. (This is evidenced even today in the presence and extent of Presbyterian congregations and adherents in the region.)

As in Ireland, the potato crop failed in the mid-19th century, and a widespread outbreak of cholera further weakened the Highland population. The ongoing clearance policy resulted in starvation, deaths, and a secondary clearance, when families either migrated voluntarily or were forcibly evicted. There were many deaths of children and old people. As there were few alternatives, people emigrated, joined the British army, or moved to the growing urban cities, like Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee in Lowland Scotland and Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Liverpool in the north of England. In places some people were given economic incentives to move, but few historians dispute that in many instances landlords used violent methods.

The **Highland Potato Famine** was perhaps more of a major agrarian crisis than a true famine, but *Highland Potato Famine* is now in widespread use as a name for a period of 19th century Highland and Scottish history. True famine was a real prospect throughout the period, and certainly it was one of severe malnutrition, serious disease, crippling financial hardship and traumatic disruption to essentially agrarian communities. The causes of the crisis were in many respects similar to those of the very real Great Irish Famine of about the same time.

In the mid-19th century, most crofters in the Highlands of Scotland were very dependent on potatoes as a source of food. This was because they had been deprived of access to most of the land they had worked in previous centuries and were expected to subsist on very small areas of land. The potato was perhaps the only crop that would provide enough food from such land areas. The land was generally of poor quality in exposed coastal locations. Very similar conditions had developed in Ireland.

In the Highlands, in 1846, potato crops were blighted by a fungal disease. Crops failed, and the following winter was especially cold and snowy. Similar crop failures began earlier in Ireland, but famine relief programs were perhaps better organized and more effective in the Highlands and Islands. During 1847, Sir Edward Pine Coffin (Yes, that's his real name) used naval vessels to distribute oatmeal and other supplies. Nonetheless, in Wick, Cromarty and Invergordon, there were protests about the *export* of grain from local harbors. Troops were used to quell the protests. Crop failures continued into the 1850s, and famine relief programs became semi-permanent operations.

Crofters were not simply given their oatmeal rations: they were expected to work for them, eight hours a day, six days a week. Relief programs resulted in the building of destitution roads. Also, they produced projects with very little (if any) real value, and their administration was very bureaucratic, employing legions of clerks to ensure compliance with complex sets of rules, though clerks feel hunger too and might have taken another job if one, which they thought would feed them better, had been available. The daily ration was set at 24 ounces per man, 12 ounces per woman and 8 ounces per child.

Some landlords worked to lessen the effects of the famine on their crofting tenants. Rather than accept any real responsibility for the plight of crofting tenants, many landlords resorted to eviction. In particular, John Gordon of Cluny became the target of criticism in Scottish newspapers when many of his crofters were reduced to living on the streets of Inverness. Gordon resorted to hiring a fleet of ships and forcibly transporting his Hebridean crofters to Canada, where they were simply dumped on Canadian authorities.

To put it another way, for whatever reasons, some landlords supplied a free passage to what was hoped would be a better life, in Nova Scotia and Canada. It should be made clear that the eviction of people unable to pay their rents was not peculiar to this area. On this occasion, hard as it was, the people had somewhere better to go and the means of getting there.

During the ten years following 1847, from throughout the Highlands, over 16,000 crofters were shipped overseas to Canada and Australia. In 1857, potato crops were again growing without serious blight.

Second phase of the Clearances

It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the second, more brutal phase of the Clearances began; this was well after the 1822 visit by George IV, when lowlanders set aside their previous distrust and hatred of the Highlanders and identified with them as national symbols. However, the cumulative effect was particularly devastating to the cultural landscape of Scotland in a way that did not happen in other areas of Britain.

Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland, and her husband George Leveson-Gower, 1st Duke of Sutherland, conducted brutal clearances between 1811 and 1820. Evictions at the rate of 2,000 families in one day were not uncommon. Many starved and froze to death where their homes had once been. The Duchess of Sutherland, on seeing the starving tenants on her husband's estate, remarked in a letter to a friend in England, "Scotch people are of happier constitution and do not fatten like the larger breed of animals."

While the collapse of the clan system can be attributed to more economic factors and the repression that followed the Battle of Culloden, the widespread evictions resulting from the Clearances severely affected the viability of the Highland population and culture. To this day, the population in the Scottish Highlands is sparse and the culture is diluted, and there are many more sheep than people. Although the 1901 census did return 230,806 Gaelic speakers in Scotland, today this number has fallen to below 60,000. Counties of Scotland in which over 50% of the population spoke Gaelic as their native language in 1901, included Sutherland (71.75%), Ross and Cromarty (71.76%), Inverness (64.85%) and Argyll (54.35%). Small percentages of Gaelic speakers were recorded in counties such as Nairn, Bute, Perth and Caithness.

What the Clearances started, however, the First World War almost completed. A huge percentage of Scots were among the vast numbers killed, (Scotland lost over 147,000 men in World War One - 20% of Britain's losses while only being 10% of the total British population) and this greatly affected the remaining population of Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

The 1921 census, the first conducted after the end of the war, showed a significant decrease in the proportion of the population that spoke Gaelic. The percentage of Gaelic speakers in Argyll had fallen to well below 50% (34.56%), and the other counties mentioned above had experienced similar decreases.

However, the Clearances did result in significant emigration of Highlanders to North America and Australasia — where today are found considerably more descendants of Highlanders than in Scotland itself. One estimate for Cape Breton, Nova Scotia has 25,000 Gaelic-speaking Scots arriving as immigrants between 1775 and 1850. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were an estimated 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton, but because of economic migration to English-speaking areas and the lack of Gaelic education in the Nova Scotian school system, the numbers of Gaelic speakers fell dramatically. By the beginning of the 21st century, the number of native Gaelic speakers had fallen to well below 1,000.

Until next month…

Sláinte

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August, 2011

Edinburgh Castle is an ancient fortress which, from its position atop Castle Rock, dominates the sky-line of the city of Edinburgh, and is Scotland's most famous (and most visited) landmark. Human habitation of the site is dated back as far as the 9th century BC. As it stands today though, few of the castle's structures pre-date the 16th century.

The origins of Edinburgh lie so deep beneath the mound of history that writing on the matter is largely speculative and often contradictory. It has been suggested that an early reference to occupation of the site of the Castle can be found as early as the mid-second century AD.

Ptolemy refers to a settlement of the Votadini known to the Romans as *Alauna* (rock place). More doubtful evidence of still earlier habitation is provided by Andrew of Wyntoun, an early chronicler of Scottish history. Wyntoun alludes to a king Ebrawce residing in the area 1,000 years before the Roman reference. If the story is to be believed, Ebrawce (from whom the name Edinburgh is, in this version of the story, said to have derived) had over fifty children by his twenty wives. On the site of Edinburgh castle he built a "Maiden's Castle" and "bygged Edynburghe wyth-alle." The name of this mythical King Ebrawce however is more cognate with the hypothetical name of the sub-Roman Kingdom of York, Ebrauc.

The Scottish National War Museum – Edinburgh Castle

The Scottish National War Memorial commemorates nearly 150,000 Scottish casualties in the First World War, 1914 - 1918, over 50,000 in the Second World War, 1939 - 1945 and the campaigns since 1945, including the Malayan Emergency, the Korean War, Northern Ireland, the Falklands War and the Gulf War.

The building occupies the north side of Crown Square and the highest site in Edinburgh Castle, but rather than intrude something wholly new on the historical character of the place, on three sides the architect has used the walls of the original barrack block. The fourth side, the entrance from Crown Square, is however a completely new façade with a high central porch and projecting wings, but even so the new stonework is integrated with the old as the rubble construction of the old building continues in the new, a theme of historical continuity that is carried through the whole building.

The Hall of Honor
The hall itself is transverse and so opens to your left and right. It is high and barrel-vaulted and built in a simple classical style. Tall windows of stained glass made by Douglas Strachan, responsible for all of the glass in the Memorial, cast a soft and solemn light. There are four windows in the south wall and one at either end. To give light, the windows are designed with medallions set in large areas of uncolored glass.

The north side of the Hall of Honor is divided by columns into bays, each dedicated to a different regiment and decorated with colors and battle honors. A frieze runs around beneath the vault with the names of battles inscribed on it in bold letters cut in relief in the stone, the background gilded. Variations on this lettering continue throughout the building.

On the broad shelf in front of each of the bays, the names of the dead are listed in leather-bound books. This immediately brings the grandeur of the architecture back to the personal. However terrible the numbers recorded here may be, they are nevertheless not anonymous statistics, but the sum of individual sacrifice and individual loss and so the visitor is not confronted with a great wall of names, but is invited to perform a private action by turning the pages of these books to find the name or names of those they have lost.

The transepts to the south at either end of the Hall of Honor are plain and square in plan. They are entered by a double arch divided by a broad pier. The arches echo the configuration of the bays on the north wall. Each transept is lit by a single window identical in form to those on the east and west walls. Here the monuments are to the non-combatants and especially the women.

It is the Women's Services that are the subject of the window here. Beneath it is a deep bronze relief by Alice Meredith Williams of nurses and orderlies gathered around a wounded man on a stretcher, which commemorates the Women's Services and the Nursing Services.

But perhaps more remarkable is the monument on the opposite wall which is to the women of Scotland, to the support they gave to the men at war, but also to their toil, suffering and grief. And so the inscription in the bronze reads, "In honour of all Scotswomen who, amid the stress of war, sought by their labours, sympathy and prayer, to obtain for their country the blessings of Peace."

High above this is a tall bronze panel, topped by circular relief in oxidized bronze of a ship at sea by Pilkington Jackson. It commemorates another non-combatant group, the sailors of the Merchant Navy. While on the pier between the two entrance arches a bronze relief by Hazel Kennedy commemorates the Chaplains, here shown conducting a service in the devastated landscape of the Western Front.

The Shrine
The high arch that leads into the Shrine is adorned with the arms of the Cities of Scotland held by angels, their tall wings following the line of the architecture. On the inside of this arch the arms of what were then the British Dominions are similarly displayed. The gates to the Shrine are wrought iron, forged by Thomas Hadden. In contrast to the classical forms of the Hall of Honor, the architecture of the Shrine is Gothic, tall and narrow and lit by windows high above.

Hanging above is the huge figure of St Michael. Above St Michael too, carved in the stonework of the roof and setting him in the Heavens are symbolic representations of the Planets, designed like the windows beneath them, by Douglas Strachan. St Michael, carved in Scottish oak by the Clow brothers from a design by Alice Meredith Williams, is the only monumental freestanding sculpture in the Memorial. As leader of the Heavenly Host in the overthrow of the Rebel Angels when Satan was cast out of Heaven, the Archangel Michael personifies the soldier fighting in a just cause, but here he stands, not for temporal victory - there is no triumphalism of that kind anywhere in the Memorial - but for mankind's triumph

over the evil of war, the theme of the seven great windows that surround the figure of Michael and which illuminate the Shrine.

In front as you enter stands the Casket. It holds the Rolls of Honor inscribed with the names of the dead, returning once again to the individuals, the men and women commemorated here. Designed by Alice Meredeth Williams, the Casket is decorated with angels and the figures of St Andrew and St Margaret of Scotland. It is made of steel, a difficult metal to work in this way, but as it is the metal of war, its use here is deliberately symbolic, to suggest the ancient biblical image of swords beaten into ploughshares.

The theme of the separate contributions to the war and the individual sacrifices it entailed is repeated in the remarkable frieze, which continues on all five walls of the Shrine. The frieze is the most complex sculpture in the whole Memorial. In five parts, modeled in low relief and cast in bronze, the two sections on either side form processions of figures that converge on the fifth and smallest panel. Set in the wall directly behind the Casket, the fifth panel represents the Sword of Honor with two wreaths, a wreath of bay for victory and, borrowed from Christian symbolism, a wreath of thorn for sacrifice. Based on the drawings of Morris Meredith Williams, who had served in the war, and modeled by Alice, these processions (shown in partial in the banner head of this issue) reputedly include at least one representative of every rank and unit serving in the First World War and of every weapon and piece of equipment employed. This procession of seemingly innumerable figures almost two thirds life-size placed here in the Shrine at the climax of the whole Memorial movingly evokes the central idea of individual sacrifice and individual grief.

The Eastern Transept
The Eastern Transept continues the theme of the Hall of Honor and is dedicated to monuments of individual corps. Here however the principle monuments are decorated with relief sculpture. On the east wall a wide bronze panel in low relief by Alexander Carrick adorns the monument to the Royal Artillery. It shows men manning an eight-inch howitzer.

Above this the monument to the Scottish Yeomanry is a stand of arms in painted stone relief by Pilkington Jackson, truly remarkable for its detailed and accurate representation of the weapons used in the war.

Reveille
As you leave the Shrine, there is a tall figure so placed above the exit that it is the last thing that you see as you leave. This is the beautiful figure of Reveille by Pilkington Jackson (gold figure shown in banner head). The figure stands against a brilliant golden rising sun with the symbol of peace, a broken sword, in her hands. This is the only bright image in the Memorial other than the windows.


Until next month…

Sláinte

Music Notation is a system that represents aurally perceived music through the use of written symbols.

The earliest form of musical notation can be found in a cuneiform tablet that was created at Nippur, Iraq in about 2000 B.C. The tablet represents fragmentary instructions for performing music. A tablet from about 1250 B.C. shows a more developed form of notation.

Ancient Greek musical notation was capable of representing pitch and note-duration, and to a limited extent, harmony. It was in use from at least the 6th century BC until approximately the 4th century AD. The notation consists of symbols placed above text syllables. An example of a complete composition is the Seikilos epitaph which has been variously dated between the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD.

Byzantine music is vocal religious music, based on the singing of Ancient Greece and the pre-islamic Near East. The notation developed for it is similar in principle to subsequent Western notation, in that it is ordered left to right, and separated into measures.

By the middle of the 9th century, however, a form of notation began to develop in monasteries in Europe for Gregorian chant, using symbols known as neumes; the earliest surviving musical notation of this type is in the *Musica disciplina* of Aurelian of Réôme, from about 850.
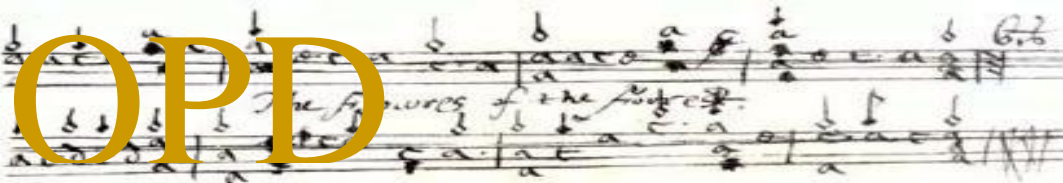
Bagpipe Music – *a Primer*

The bagpipe carries a long and honorable history stretching back to the beginnings of civilization as one of the oldest instruments created and played by early humans.

Most likely, the music had its beginnings in ancient Egypt where a simple chanter and drone were played together. These were later attached to a bag made of skin and fitted with a blowpipe making a primitive form of the instrument we have today. This kind of Bagpipe was played by the Greeks and the Romans, and eventually spread throughout Europe, carried first by the Celts and then by the Romans on their invasions. (*see the May 2010 Issue of OPD for an abbreviated history of the bagpipes*)

In Britain, its history and fate, except in the Highlands of Scotland, followed the same pattern as on the continent. It came with the Celts and the Romans and flourished for centuries as the instrument of the common people. It was played at fairs, weddings, open air dancing, pageants and all sorts of processions and merry makings.

It fitted into the clan system then operated in the Highlands, the chiefs of the clan having their own – in many cases a hereditary office – and colleges, of which there were several, were set up for the teaching of bagpipe playing. In these colleges was developed the "Ceol Mor", or "Piobaireachd (*see the July 2010 issue of OPD for an explanation of Piobaireachd).*

Piobaireachd was originally passed from one generation to the next using an oral system for teaching the repertoire, called *canntaireachd*. This was eventually replaced by the classical European system of music notation.

Without getting into a lot of music theory, music notation uses a five-line staff. Pitch is shown by placement of notes on the staff and duration is shown with different note values and additional symbols such as dots and ties. The lines are (from bottom to top) **E G B D F** and the spaces are **F A C E**. Notation is read from left to right.

A staff (or stave, in British English) of written music generally begins with a clef, which indicates the position of one particular note on the staff.

Following the clef, the key signature on a staff indicates the key of the piece by specifying that certain notes are flat (*b*) – lower in tone by one half-ton, or sharp (#) – higher in tone by one half-tone throughout the piece.

The question is frequently asked, *"What key are the bagpipes?"*

The appropriate answer is, bagpipe music is written in the *key of B minor* or *D major* (two sharps #).

Following the key signature is the time signature. Measures (bars) divide the piece into groups of beats, and the time signatures specify those groupings of notes.

The bagpipe scale consists of nine (9) notes…that's it. The limit of nine notes (along with the key) is why some tunes cannot (and/or should not) be played on the bagpipes.

Unique to bagpipes are the embellishments that separate the notes in a tune. There are single grace notes, doublings and half-doublings, and combinations of grace notes including throws, shakes, birls, lemluaths, taorluaths, crunluoths, and edres.

A bagpipe music manuscript for the familiar tune, *Scotland the Brave*, is shown on the following page.

Music written for the Great Highland Bagpipes falls into one of three categories:

- **Ceol Mor**—the Great Music: a repertoire consisting of salutes, gathering tunes, marches, *cumha* (laments), and *brosnachadh* (incitements to battle)
- **Ceol Meadhonach**—the Middle Music: slow airs and jigs
- **Ceol Beag** (or **Ceol Aotrom**)—the Little Music: marches, strathspeys, reels and hornpipes

We've discussed Ceol Mor/Piobaireachd in a previous issue of OPD.

Ceòl Meadhonach
Ceòl Meadhonach includes tunes as are neither constructed to the measure of Piobaireachd, nor adapted to the quick march or dance. Included are the slow air and jig.

Generally, **airs** are graceful, elegant, polished, often strophic songs (i.e., songs having the same music for each stanza), typically dealing with amorous subjects. But many are lively and animated, full of rhythmic subtleties, while others are deeply emotional works that gain much of their effect from bold, expressive harmonies and striking melodic lines.

The **jig** is a popular tune-type within the traditions of Irish dance music; second only to the reel, and popular but somewhat less common in Scottish country dance music.

Ceòl Beag

As mentioned, **Ceòl Beag** is the Gaelic-language term for "little music," which in bagpiping includes such forms as marches, strathspeys, reels, and hornpipes.

A **march**, as a musical genre, is a piece of music with a strong regular rhythm which in origin was expressly written for marching to. Marches can range in tempo from slow to quick. A **Retreat March** is a form of departing music. It is believed that the term comes from the French *Retraite* meaning retire or return to bed in the evening.

Strathspey refers both to the type of tune, and to the type of dance usually done to it. It is named after the Strathspey region of Scotland, in Moray and Badenoch and Strathspey. It is similar to a hornpipe but slower and more stately, and containing many snaps. These days there are at least four, some would say seven, varieties: the bouncy schottische, the strong strathspey, the song or air strathspey, all three of which can be enjoyed for dancing, and the Competition strathspey for the bagpipe, primarily intended as a display of virtuosity.

The **reel** is a folk dance type as well as the accompanying dance tune type. It is one of the four dances which comprise Scottish country dancing, the others being the jig, the strathspey and the waltz. It is very rhythmic and very quick tempo. It is believed that the reel was originated from an old Irish dance called the *Hey* in the mid 1500's. Today many Irish reels are supplemented with new compositions and by tunes from other traditions which are easily adapted as reels. It is the most popular tune-type within the Irish dance music tradition.

The term **hornpipe** refers to one of several dance forms played and danced in Britain and elsewhere from the late 17th century until the present day. This type of hornpipe is generally thought of as a sailors' dance.

All bagpipe music is performed from memory; adding to the complexity and art of the instrument. Building a repertoire of tunes in each of the genre is a lifelong endeavor.

When competing, bands are placed into one of five grades with 1 being the uppermost. The Omaha Pipes and Drums compete in Grade 4. Each grade has an associated minimum number of performers (pipers and drummers) and music requirements. For pipe band competitions, the music requirements fall into one of three categories; **MSR** (March/Strathspey/Reel), **QMM** (Quick March Medley – any number of quick marches played in succession), or **Medley** (minimum of four different tune categories). The grade of the band determines the tune requirement and time limit. The selection of tunes to meet the requirements is up to the individual band.

Solo players are graded as professional, amateur, or novice. The Amateur Grade is further divided into Grades 1 - 4. The Novice Grade is divided by age; Senior Novice (30 years and older) and Junior Novice (29 and under). The music requirements are determined by grade and fall into four categories; **March**, **S/R** (Strathspey/Reel), **H/J** (Hornpipe/Jig), and **6/8 Mar** (6/8 March). Similarly, **Piobaireachd** is graded as professional or amateur with the amateurs being divided from into four grades.

It has been said that seven years go to the making of a piper, and seven generations go before the seven years. To transition from student to competitive piper represents a tremendous investment and dedication on the part of the piper and the band. The Omaha Pipes and Drums provides free instruction and scholarships for pipers and drummers to attend local and regional schools and regularly brings in piping and drumming instructors at no cost to the members. If you would like to contribute to the OP&D Scholarship Fund, contact Mike Barnes, Treasurer at barnesclan00@hotmail.com.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Scotland The Brave — March — Traditional

October 2011

Six Centuries of Golf

Golf has been played on the Links at St Andrews since around 1400 AD and the Old Course is renowned throughout the world as the Home of Golf. The game grew in popularity and by the 19th century it was part of the way of life for many local people, whether as players, caddies, ball makers or club makers. Golf still plays a major part in the culture and economy of St Andrews today. As the 600 year history of the Links has unfolded, one simple track hacked through the bushes and heather has developed into six public golf courses, attracting hundreds of thousands of golfing pilgrims from around the globe. St Andrews Links is the largest golfing complex in Europe and all 18-hole courses can be booked in advance. The Castle Course, the seventh course at the Home of Golf, is situated on cliff tops overlooking St Andrews to the east of the town.

Golf was clearly becoming popular in the middle ages, as the game was banned in 1457 by King James II of Scotland who felt it was distracting young men from archery practice. This ban was repeated by succeeding monarchs until James IV threw in the towel and in 1502 became a golfer himself. In 1552, however, Archbishop John Hamilton's charter recognized the right of the townspeople of St Andrews to play golf on the Links.

St. Andrew's Castle

You are probably familiar with the legendary St. Andrew's golf course, but before there was a course there was a castle. The site was fortified by the 1100s, and from around 1200 it was adopted as the main residence of the bishops and archbishops of St Andrews. As such, the Castle became the principal administrative center of the Scottish Church and was the setting for some of the key events in Scottish history.

Little of this early Castle can be traced through the existing ruins. Certainly almost nothing remains of the earliest structure which suffered badly during the Wars of Independence and was finally rendered indefensible by the Scots in 1337 to avoid it again being held again by the English.

Completed in about 1400, the "new" castle was the work of Bishop Trail. With steep cliffs protecting it to the north and east, thick curtain walls and rock cut ditches on its landward side it was built to be easily defended.

The structure of the castle included five square towers providing residence for the bishop, his large household and guests. Ranges were built along the inside of each length of curtain wall and further accommodation was provided in outer courtyards to the south and west of the main castle.

As a residence, St Andrews Castle saw many notable visitors, including the young James I who visited in 1410. The castle also served as a strong and grim prison. An especially striking remnant of this role is the bottle dungeon, a bottle shaped pit dug 22ft down into the rock below the Sea Tower and accessible only via the narrow neck opening through a trap door from the floor of tower vault. Into this prisoners could simply be lowered, or dropped, and forgotten. David Stewart, 1st Duke of Rothesay was briefly imprisoned here by his uncle, Robert Stewart, 1st Duke of Albany, in 1401 before being taken to Falkland Palace and, probably, starved to death.

Further significant work on the castle was undertaken by Archbishop James Beaton following the Battle of Flodden in 1513. This was designed to allow the structure withstand an attack by heavy artillery. Two massive circular gun towers, called blockhouses, were built on the landward side and heavy carriage-mounted guns were positioned at the wall tops.

Beaton appointed as his successor his nephew David Beaton, an ambitious man who later became a Cardinal and a prominent figure in both the religious and political life of Scotland: despite being in all but name married to Marion Ogilvy. It was Cardinal Beaton's strong opposition to the marriage of the infant Mary, Queen of Scots to Prince Edward, son and heir of Henry VIII of England that led to renewed warfare between the two countries in 1544.

Not satisfied with this, in March 1546, he had the Protestant preacher, George Wishart, burnt at the stake in front of the castle walls. This was subsequently used as a pretext for Beaton's grisly murder at the hands of local Protestant lairds who captured the castle by stealth.

The besiegers sought to undermine the walls of the castle by digging a spacious tunnel large enough to take pack animals that were used to carry out the spoil. The defenders responded to the mine by trying to dig an intercepting tunnel or countermine. After several false starts the defenders' low, narrow, twisting countermine broke through into the attackers' mine, resulting in underground fighting between the two sides. Today's visitors are able to make their way down the countermine and into the mine, though it's not somewhere for those with claustrophobia or an overly active imagination.

The siege was eventually settled, decisively, in 1547 with the arrival of a French fleet which reduced the castle to ruins. Amongst those captured when the castle fell was John Knox.

St Andrews Castle passed next to the illegitimate brother of the Regent Earl of Arran, Archbishop John Hamilton. Although finally hanged after he was implicated in the death of Lord Darnley, he was able to rebuild most of the castle. The results were a much more grand and elaborate structure than the fortress it replaced.

The Cathedral of St Andrew was the seat of the Bishops (later Archbishops) of St Andrews from its foundation in 1158 until it fell into disuse after the Reformation. It is currently a ruined monument in the custody of Historic Scotland. The ruins indicate the great size of the building at 350 feet long.

The Reformation of the Scottish Church in 1560 had little immediate effect on the castle and its operation, but over time it became increasingly neglected. Its association with the church seemed permanently severed in 1606 when it passed to the Earl of Dunbar, but it did later return to church control before finally falling into ruin after the ascendancy of William and Mary in 1689.

To the modern visitor, St Andrews Castle shows the scars of the centuries of decay since its abandonment. But it is still possible to get a sense of grandeur here and view the unusual features that have survived. There is also an excellent visitors' center.

Until next month…

Sláinte

American Civil War Memorial

The imposing Edinburgh monument on Calton Hill to the Scots who fought in the Union Army is exceptional as it is the only memorial outside the United States to those who lost their lives in the American Civil War.

The monument consists of two statues; a crouching, freed slave extends his arms in gratitude to an imposing Abraham Lincoln. The freed man is resting on furled flags, symbols of victory. The statues are made of bronze and that of Lincoln is about 16 ft. high. The base is marble. A medallion on the monument has the flags of Britain and the United States surrounded by thistles and cotton plants.

On the east face of the Edinburgh monument is carved: "In memory of Scottish-American soldiers. To preserve the jewel of liberty in the framework of peace - Abraham Lincoln", and on the west side: "Unveiled 21st August 1893. This plot of ground given by the Lord Provost, Town Council of Edinburgh to Wallace Bruce, US. Consul as a burial place for Scottish soldiers of the American Civil War 1861-5".

Bagpipes in the
American Revolution

Music has been an integral part of warfare and the soldier's life since the dawn of history. Even the instruments on which it is played have themselves acquired great symbolic power and the Bagpipe was an early entry as a musical weapon of war.

Scotland's national instrument, the Bagpipe or in Gaelic "piob-mhor" (the great pipe) is not, contrary to popular belief, an instrument which has its origins in Scotland. The bagpipe is an instrument of great antiquity, an instrument which has its origins in the Middle East and traveled through and evolved in Europe alongside early civilization. The first documented bagpipe is found on a Hittite slab at Eyuk. This sculptured bagpipe has been dated to 1,000 B.C.

The Roman Emperor Nero considered himself a good piper. He even had the bagpipes put on a coin. Dio Chrysostom wrote in 115 AD:

> *"They say he can...play the aulos both with his mouth and also with his armpit, a big bag being thrown under it, in order that he might escape the disfigurement of Athens,"*

This was one of the first positive references to the bagpipes. Nero also used bagpipes to inspire his troops before battle, though at that time they were generally recognized as peasant entertainment. Soon after the first century, traditions of bagpipes stretch all the way from India to Spain and from France to Egypt.

Middle Ages Pre-Reformation churches reveal carvings of bagpipes. Chaucer refers to the Miller playing pipes in "The Miller's Tale", Documents from the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland (1498 and 1506) refers to payments to the English piper. Shakespeare's "Henry IV" refers to the "Drone of a Lincolnshire Bagpipe". The Irish are believed to have played pipes for Edward I at Calais in 1297 and at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298. In fact, both Henry VII and Henry VIII are believed to have enjoyed pipers.

When they arrived to Scotland, they quickly became a part of Scottish life. Every town would hire a bagpiper, usually out of special taxes from the wealthy families in the area, who would pipe for townspeople on all occasions. In some places the piper would play in churches in place of an organ.

After Scotland was defeated by the British at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the Celtic people were greatly oppressed. The Great Highland Bagpipes were deemed

"an instrument of war" and were banned by the British for more than 50 years.

While many Scottish and Irish people left their native land to escape British rule, the Great Highland Bagpipes were regarded as a symbol of Celtic freedom and heritage. As the immigrants moved away from their heavily oppressed native land, fewer restrictions by the British could be enforced, so the bagpipes were reborn in America. Also, many Scottish pipers joined the British army so that they could legally bagpipe.

Pipers came to America at least as early as the French and Indian War with the arrival of the famous Black Watch, the 42nd Foot, in 1756. At that time, the British Army did not officially authorize pipers for the highland regiments, but they were present: The 42nd was known to have a piper attached to the grenadier company in 1759. Additionally, inspection returns of regiments show that in 1768, the 25th Foot "had a bag piper in the Band of Music", in 1773, the 42nd had "two Pipers and a very good band of music". The 42nd was soon followed by two volunteer Scottish units, Frazer's Highlanders, the 72nd Foot, and Montgomery's Highlanders, the 74th Foot.
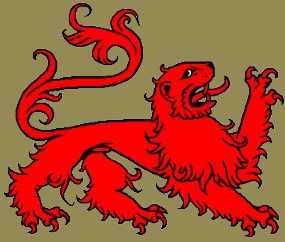
The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place not in Ireland, but in the United States. Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City on March 17, 1762. Along with their music, the parade helped the soldiers to reconnect with their Irish roots, as well as fellow Irishmen serving in the English army.

Pipers also came to the new world with the horde of Scottish immigrants following the 1746 defeat. There were mentions of pipers in descriptions of the Virginia Militia from the Shenandoah Valley, fighting the Indians near what is now Charleston, WVA, in Lord Dunsmore's War of 1774.

In the American Revolution the bagpipe and the kilt were present on both sides. In addition to the five British Army and at least two Loyalist Highland regiments, the Continental Army had its share of Scots with their pipes. General Lachlan MacKintosh's Georgia Brigade of the Line was largely kilted, particularly the 2nd Georgia, and of course marched to the pipes. Most of North Carolina troops at Cowpens and King Mountain were also Scots, and their pipers accompanied them. The blue Kilmarnock bonnet was as popular among the troops as the three-cornered hat - at the Battle of Saratoga, almost the entire Northern Army wore it. The pipes were there as well as they have been in every major battle since.

Until next month…

Sláinte

OPD

Lerwick is the capital and main port of the Shetland Islands, Scotland, located more than 100 miles off the north coast of mainland Scotland on the east coast of the Shetland Mainland. Lerwick is about 210 miles (340 km) north of Aberdeen, 230 miles (370 km) west of Bergen in Norway and 230 miles (370 km) south east of Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands.

Lerwick is a name with roots in Old Norse and its local descendant, Norn, which was spoken in Shetland until the mid-19th century. The name "Lerwick" means *bay of clay*. The corresponding Norwegian name is *Leirvik*, *leir* meaning clay and *vik* meaning "bay" or "inlet".

Evidence of human settlement in the Lerwick area dates back 3,000 years, centered on the Broch of Clickimin, which was constructed in the first century BC.

The first settlement to be known as Lerwick was founded in the 17th century as a herring and white fish seaport to trade with the Dutch fishing fleet. This settlement was on the mainland (west) side of Bressay Sound, a natural harbour with south and north entrances between the Shetland mainland and the island of Bressay. This collection of wooden huts was burned to the ground twice: in the 17th century by residents of Scalloway, then the capital of Shetland, who disapproved of the immoral and drunken activities of the assembled fishermen and sailors; and again in 1702 by the French fleet.

Lerwick became capital of Shetland Islands in 1708.

Up-Helly-Aa

Up-Helly-Aa is a relatively modern festival. There is some evidence that people in rural Shetland celebrated the 24th day after Christmas as "Antonsmas" or "Up Helly Night", but there is no evidence that their cousins in Lerwick did the same. The emergence of Yuletide and New Year festivities in the town seems to post-date the Napoleonic Wars, when soldiers and sailors came home with rowdy habits and a taste for firearms.

On old Christmas eve in 1824 a visiting Methodist missionary wrote in his diary that *"…the whole town was in an uproar: from twelve o clock last night until late this night blowing of horns, beating of drums, tinkling of old tin kettles, firing of guns, shouting, bawling, fiddling, fifeing, drinking, fighting. This was the state of the town all the night - the street was as thronged with people as any fair I ever saw in England."*

As Lerwick grew in size the celebrations became more elaborate. Sometime about 1840 the participants introduced burning tar barrels into the proceedings. "Sometimes", as one observer wrote, *"…there were two tubs fastened to a great raft-like frame knocked together at the Docks, whence the combustibles were generally obtained. Two chains were fastened to the bogie supporting the capacious tub or tar-barrel . . . eked to these were two strong ropes on which a motley mob, wearing masks for the most part, fastened. A party of about a dozen were told off to stir up the molten contents."*

The main street of Lerwick in the mid-19th century was extremely narrow, and rival groups of tar-barrelers frequently clashed in the middle. The proceedings were thus dangerous and dirty, and Lerwick's middle classes often complained about them. The Town Council began to appoint special constables every Christmas to control the revelers, with only limited success. When the end came for tar-barreling, in the early 1870s, it seems to have been because the young Lerwegians themselves had decided it was time for a change.

Around 1870 a group of young men in the town with intellectual interests injected a series of new ideas into the proceedings. First, they improvised the name Up-Helly-Aa, and gradually postponed the celebrations until the end of January. Secondly, they introduced a far more elaborate element of disguise - "guizing" - into the new festival. Thirdly, they inaugurated a torchlight procession.

At the same time they were toying with the idea of introducing Viking themes to their new festival.

The first signs of this new development appeared in 1877, but it was not until the late 1880s that a Viking longship - the "galley" - appeared, and as late as 1906 that a "Guizer Jarl", the chief guizer, arrived on the scene. It was not until after the First World War that there was a squad of Vikings, the "Guizer Jarl's Squad", in the procession every year.

The First Guizer Jarl, J.W. Robertson with his squad in 1906

Up to the Second World War Up-Helly-Aa was overwhelmingly a festival of young working class men - women have never taken part in the procession - and during the depression years the operation was run on a shoestring. In the winter of 1931-32 there was an unsuccessful move to cancel the festival because of the dire economic situation in the town. At the same time, the Up-Helly-Aa committee became a self-confident organization which poked fun at the pompous in the by then long-established Up-Helly-Aa "bill" - sometimes driving their victims to fury.

Since 1949, when the festival resumed after the war, much has changed and much has remained the same. That year the BBC recorded a major radio program on Up-Helly-Aa, and from that moment Up-Helly-Aa - not noted for its split-second timing before the war - became a model of efficient organization. The numbers participating in the festival have become much greater, and the resources required correspondingly larger. Whereas in the 19th century individuals kept open house to welcome the guizers on Up-Helly-Aa night, men and women now co-operate to open large halls throughout the town to entertain them.

Until next month…

Sláinte