Omaha Pipes and Drums

# OPD 2016 Newsletters

# OPD 2016 Monthly Newsletter

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

*Table of Contents*

Omaha Pipes and Drums

A Celtic tradition since 1970

# Chanter Newsletter

January 2016

## First-Foot

Bliadhna Mhath Ùr (pron. *Blee-an-uh Va Oor*), Happy New Year. It seems appropriate that the first newsletter of the year focus on a New Year's Day tradition.

In Scottish and Northern English folklore, the first-foot, also known in Manx Gaelic as *quaaltagh* or *qualtagh*, is the first person to enter the household of a home on New Year's

Although it is acceptable in many places for the first-footer to be a resident of the house, they must not be in the house at the stroke of midnight in order to first-foot (thus going out of the house after midnight and then coming back in to the same house is not considered to be first-footing). It is said to be desirable for the first-foot to be a tall, dark-haired male; a female or fair-haired male are in some places regarded as unlucky. The dark male bit is believed to be a throwback to the Viking days, when a big blonde stranger arriving on your door step with a big axe meant big trouble, and probably not a very happy New Year!

The first-foot usually brings several gifts, including perhaps a coin (silver is considered good luck), bread, salt, coal, or a drink (usually whisky), which represent financial prosperity, food, flavor, warmth, and good cheer respectively.

The firework displays and torchlight processions now enjoyed throughout many cities in Scotland are reminders of the ancient pagan parties from those Viking days of long ago. The traditional New Year ceremony would involve people dressing up in the hides of cattle and running around the village whilst being hit by sticks.

The festivities would also include the lighting of bonfires and tossing torches. Animal hide wrapped around sticks and ignited produced a smoke that was believed to be very effective in warding off evil spirits: this smoking stick was also known as a Hogmanay.

Many of these customs continue today, especially in the older communities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. On the Isle of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides, the young men and boys form themselves into opposing bands; the leader of each wears a sheep skin, while another member carries a sack. The bands move through the village from house to house reciting a Gaelic rhyme. The boys are given bannocks (fruit buns) for their sack before moving on to the next house.

One of the most spectacular fire ceremonies takes place in Stonehaven, south of Aberdeen on the north east coast. Giant fireballs are swung around on long metal poles each requiring many men to carry them as they are paraded up and down the High Street. Again the origin is believed to be linked to the Winter Solstice with the swinging fireballs signifying the power of the sun, purifying the world by consuming evil spirits.

For visitors to Scotland it is worth remembering that January 2nd is also a national holiday in Scotland, this extra day being barely enough time to recover from a week of intense revelry and merry-making. All of which helps to form part of Scotland's cultural legacy of ancient customs and traditions that surround the pagan festival of Hogmanay.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums

A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter

February 2016

# Scottish Place Names Around the World

For a comparatively small nation, Scotland contributed greatly to new place names around the English-speaking world. In one country after another where British settlers put down permanent roots, Scottish names can be found in abundance. For instance, there are at least 550 towns, suburbs, villages, mountains, rivers and other topographical features in South Africa alone that have Scottish names, as do more than 200 localities in the New York Metropolitan area.

To take Aberdeen as an example, places with this name can be found in no less than 34 locations around the world, including three Australian states, as well as in Canada (Saskatchewan), Jamaica, Antigua, Guyana, South Africa (Eastern Province) and Sierra Leone. And there are 18 Aberdeens in the USA (including Arkansas, California, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington). Perhaps the most famous example, known to seasoned travelers, is the picturesque but far from Scottish-looking settlement in Hong Kong. And the citizens of Boston, Massachusetts will know that Aberdeen is the name of one of their neighborhoods and that part of it contains a cluster of roads with exclusively Scottish names (Ayr, Braemore, Colliston, Kilsyth, Kinross, Lanark, Orkney, Selkirk, Strathmore and Sutherland).

Waves of Scottish settlers over a period of more than 400 years took not only their distinctive culture but also their names with them. The first among these were men and women who left Scotland during the seventeenth century for the West Indies and the southern colonies in America, both as free settlers and as political prisoners transported there by Oliver Cromwell. A second major wave were the Scots-Irish, i.e., ethnic Scots from Northern Ireland, who sailed in large numbers to New England, New York, Pennsylvania and the Carolinas during the early 1700s and whose hardy descendants effectively opened up the interior of what was to become the USA. Among the loyalists who left the USA after the American War of Independence were many Scotsmen, who took their names to Canada.

Across the USA, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe, Scottish place names are found roughly in the ratio of one Scottish name to every four of English origin. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, Scottish names appear to outnumber Irish ones by five to one, and Welsh ones by ten to one.

There are large regional variations, of course. Very few Scottish place names are to be found in New England, especially Connecticut and Massachusetts where English and indigenous names dominate the map. The proportion of names that are Scottish also decreases in south-western USA, where Spanish names are numerous and in Quebec Province, where place names are overwhelmingly French. The proportion also drops in South Africa (where names of indigenous Khoisan, Black African, Cape Dutch and Afrikaans origin are dominant, though in relation to other British names, the Scottish proportion is high) and in parts of Pennsylvania, where Welsh names outnumber Scottish names two to one. One of the biggest surprises is the paucity of Scottish place names in Canada's largest city, Toronto, though the surrounding countryside, and indeed the whole of Ontario is rich in Scottish names.

On the other hand, the number of Scottish names equals and in some districts exceeds the number of English names in New Zealand's Otago Province and in many parts of Canada and South Africa. Scottish place names are also found in abundance in Greater Pittsburgh, a city that is more closely associated with the English, Irish, Germans, Italians and Poles than with the Scots.

Large cosmopolitan cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Sydney and Johannesburg have many Scottish place names but these vie with names from other cultures and ethnic groups, resulting in a reduced percentage share of the total. Scottish place names tend to be more prevalent in the smaller cities and towns.


Johannesburg has possibly the world's largest cluster of contiguous suburbs with Scottish names outside Scotland, stretching nearly 6 miles from Blairgowrie in the west to Highlands North in the east. Similar, but less compact clusters can be found in the north-western suburbs of Baltimore, the northern suburbs of Melbourne, the southern suburbs of Adelaide and parts of Sydney and Metropolitan Washington DC.

There appears to be a small group of cities and large towns where ten per cent or more of the names of their districts, neighborhoods and suburbs have a definite Scottish origin. The list includes Dunedin, Hamilton, Wellington and possibly Christchurch (New Zealand); Winnipeg, Calgary, Hamilton, Edmonton, Halifax, Regina, Vancouver, Ottawa and possibly London (Canada); Canberra, Townsville, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth (Australia); East London and possibly Port Elizabeth (South Africa); Kingston and Montego Bay (Jamaica); and Pittsburgh (USA). There may be other examples in the smaller American cities as well. Canberra is particularly interesting since the names of its suburbs overwhelmingly honor famous Australians rather than towns and villages and the British Isles. The fact that twenty per cent of the names of Canberra's suburbs are Scottish is a demonstration in itself of the role played by the Scots in exploring and governing Australia and the role played by their descendants in the arts, sport, welfare and politics.

Dunedin in New Zealand is in a league of its own. Founded by the Presbyterian Free Church of Scotland in 1848, the city is proud of its Scots heritage, even down to naming its two main thoroughfares Princes Street and Georges Street, and its main creek Water of Leith, after their namesakes in Edinburgh. In fact, more than 40 per cent of Dunedin's suburbs and streets have Scottish names. Moreover, the countryside surrounding Dunedin is particularly rich in Scottish place names. The small city of Invercargill to the south of Dunedin is of particular interest from a Scottish perspective. Although very few suburbs in Invercargill have Scottish names, nearly all the streets are named for Scottish rivers.

Suburban areas where all or most of the street names are Scottish include Highland Park (Auckland), Corstorphine (Dunedin), Stirling (East London, South Africa), Waverley (Johannesburg), Highlands Park (Gold Coast City, Australia), Macleod (Melbourne) and St Andrews (Campbelltown in Greater Sydney). There are probably many other examples from cities around the world including, as already mentioned, Boston's Aberdeen. In the case of St Andrews, Sydney, not only the streets, but also the parks and reserves all bear Scottish names. This is because of a decision taken in 1976 by the Campbelltown City Council to honor the close links that had been forged between the Council and the Burgh of Campbeltown in Argyll & Bute, Scotland. Campbelltown in Sydney was named in 1820 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie, for the maiden name of his second wife (who came from Argyllshire).

The astonishing number of place names around the world that have direct or indirect connections with Scotland is an enduring legacy of the major contribution made by the Scots and their descendants to the melting pot of cultures that have formed new societies in North America, Africa and the Antipodes.

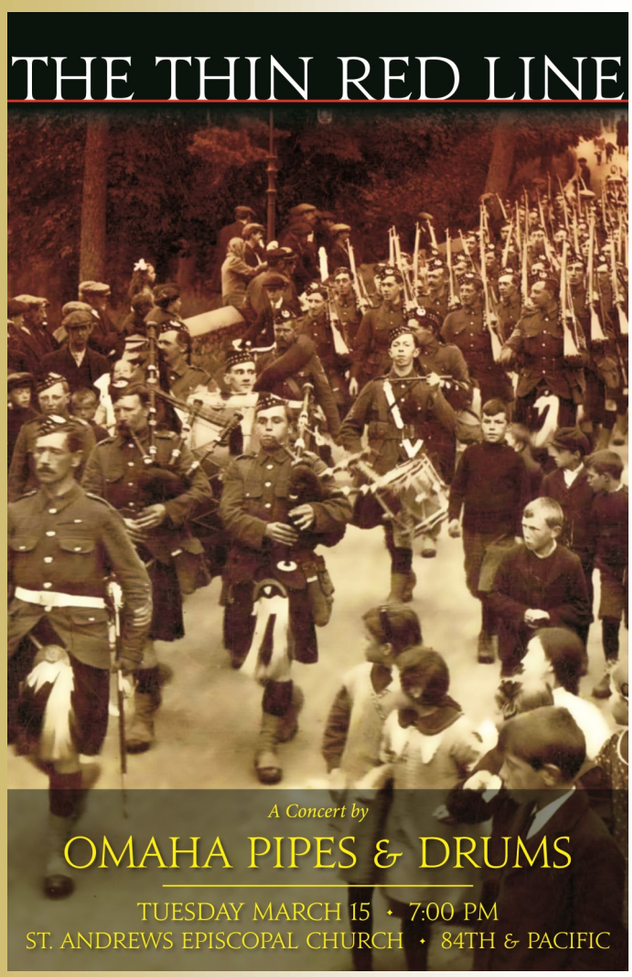
Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

# Chanter Newsletter

March 2016




The Omaha Pipes and Drums will present a **FREE** public concert on Tuesday, March 15th at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (84th & Pacific Streets) in Omaha, NE beginning at 7 PM.

The 2016 concert is a salute to the armed forces entitle, *The Thin Red Line*.

*The Thin Red Line* was a military action by the British Sutherland Highlanders 93rd (Highland) Regiment at the Battle of Balaklava on 25 October 1854, during the Crimean War. In this incident, the 93rd, aided by a small force of Royal Marines and some Turkish infantrymen, led by Sir Colin Campbell, routed a Russian cavalry charge. Previously, Campbell's Highland Brigade had taken part in actions at the Battle of Alma and the Siege of Sevastopol. There were more Victoria Crosses presented to the Highland soldiers at that time than at any other.

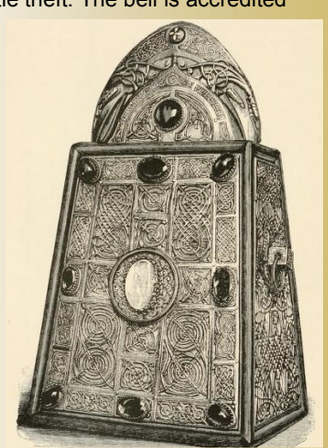
The term has become an English language figure of speech for any thinly spread military unit holding firm against attack. The phrase has also taken on the metaphorical meaning of the barrier which the relatively limited armed forces of a country present to potential attackers.

Be sure to watch our website for Band performances throughout the Omaha area on St. Patrick's Day and watch the band perform at the 2016 Annual AOH St. Patrick's Day Parade, Saturday, March 12th starting at 10 AM in the Old Market.

## Saint Patrick's Bell

St. Patrick features in many stories in the Irish oral tradition and there are many customs connected with his feast day. The symbolic resonance of the St. Patrick figure is complex and multifaceted, stretching from that of Christianity's arrival in Ireland to an identity that encompasses everything Irish. In some portrayals, the saint is symbolically synonymous with the Christian religion itself. There is also evidence of a combination of indigenous religious traditions with that of Christianity, which places St Patrick in the wider framework of cultural hybridity. Popular religious expression has this characteristic feature of merging elements of culture. Later in time, the saint becomes associated specifically with Catholic Ireland and synonymously with Irish national identity. Subsequently, St. Patrick is a patriotic symbol along with the color green and the shamrock. St. Patrick's Day celebrations include many traditions that are known to be relatively recent historically, but have endured through time because of their association either with religious or national identity. They have persisted in such a way that they have become stalwart traditions, viewed as the strongest "Irish traditions".

The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin possesses a bell (*Clog Phádraig*) first mentioned, according to the Annals of Ulster, in the Book of Cuanu in the year 552. The bell was part of a collection of "relics of Patrick" removed from his tomb sixty years after his death by Colum Cille to be used as relics. The bell is described as "The Bell of the Testament", one of three relics of "precious minna" (extremely valuable items), of which the other two are described as Patrick's goblet and "The Angels Gospel". Colum Cille is described to have been under the direction of an "Angel" for whom he sent the goblet to Down, the bell to Armagh, and kept possession of the Angel's Gospel for himself. The name Angels Gospel is given to the book because it was supposed that Colum Cille received it from the angel's hand. A stir was caused in 1044 when two kings, in some dispute over the bell, went on spates of prisoner taking and cattle theft. The bell is accredited with working a miracle in 1044 and having been coated in bronze to shield it from human eyes, for which it would be too holy.



The annals make one more apparent reference to the bell when chronicling a death, of 1356: "Solomon Ua Mellain, The Keeper of The Bell of the Testament, protector, rested in Christ."

The bell was encased in a "bell shrine", a distinctive Irish type of reliquary made for it, as an inscription records, by King Domnall Ua Lochlainn sometime between 1091 and 1105. The shrine is an important example of the final, Viking-influenced, style of Irish Celtic art, with intricate Urnes style decoration in gold and silver. The Gaelic inscription on the shrine also records the name of the maker "U INMAINEN" (which translates to "Noonan"), "who with his sons enriched/decorated it"; metalwork was often inscribed for remembrance.

The bell itself is simple in design, hammered into shape with a small handle fixed to the top with rivets. Originally forged from iron, it has since been coated in bronze. The shrine is inscribed with three names, including King Domnall Ua Lochlainn's. The rear of the shrine, not intended to be seen, is decorated with crosses while the handle is decorated with, among other work, Celtic designs of birds.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums

*A Celtic tradition since 1970*

# Chanter Newsletter

April 2016

## Pipe Banners

In simple terms, a pipe banner is a heraldic flag flown from the large bass drone of the bagpipes. They are used by clan chiefs, chieftains, lairds and military officers of certain rank. The first written reference to an armorial pipe banner would appear to be 1679. A Print of a Piper and the banner taken from a print of 1838 by John Kay titled 'McArthur, piper to Ranald Macdonald Esq. of Staffa'.

*The reverse of the print is inscribed 'Piper to the late Sir Reginald Macdonald Stewart Seton of Touch and Staffa, Bart'*

During the 1700s, pipers were not paid by the Government, but by the officers of Highland units personally. It became natural for the pipers to carry the insignia of the officers who dressed and employed them. In the days when commissions were purchased, it could be expected that each field officer would have been in possession of a personal coat of arms. Commissions were granted based on wealth, family, position and influence, and officers of the period were often keen on displaying their arms and social status to fellow officers.

As the regulations regarding Regimental Colors were formalized over the years, there was no such regulation of military pipe banners. Over time, however, as pipers began to be employed by the government directly beginning in the mid-1800s, it become more correct to display the insignia of the regiment on one side of the pipe banner, and the personal arms on the other. At some point it also became presumptuous for junior officers to have their status displayed through the use of pipe banners, and the practice became, unofficially, restricted to senior officers.

Currently, in British and Canadian practice, it is more common for officers to purchase banners only after having been appointed to command a company, and to have his banner carried by one of the company pipers. Even in Britain, fewer officers come from army families, and especially in Canada, cultural diversity often means that officers have to matriculate arms before being able to present a banner.

Other banners, presented to Regiments by cities, towns, or eminent persons with some special connection to the Regiment, may also present banners to military pipe bands. These become the property of the Regiment, while personal pipe banners are theoretically the property of the officer presenting them, unless the officer has made a point of presenting them to the Regiment.

As tradition evolved, it became customary to use the facing color of the regiment on one side or the other of the pipe banner, with the other side in either a color selected by the owner, or by the regiment for the sake of uniformity. Pipe Banners are kept in a strict order of precedence. Upon assuming command, the Commanding Officer presents his pipe banner to the Pipe Major; the other pipe banners are assigned to pipers based on this order of precedence and the seniority of each piper.

The two sides of the banner are known as 'obverse' and 'reverse'. 'Obverse' is the side that would be seen if a piper was circling the observer in a clockwise direction. This side usually carries the regimental badge. The 'Reverse' is the side which often carries the personal device of the owner of the banner. When pipes are played at dinner, pipers will generally start by circulating the table clockwise but will later circulate anti-clockwise so that the reverse side of the banner may be seen by those sitting at the dinner table on the inside of the circle. A regiment may specify:

- The shape of the banner i.e. either 'fishtail' (with pointed ends) or 'guidon' (with rounded ends)
- The main colors to be used on one or both faces (usually the regimental colors although these might not be appropriate in some cases because of the main colors of any heraldic device to be used)
- The form of the regimental badge to be used
- The type of personal device that might be used

A banner may be made 'personal' by adding a monogram of greater or lesser prominence, usually instead of a heraldic device.

In a military context, the banner may show the badge of the regiment on one side and a personal device (usually heraldic such as a coat of arms, a crest or the full achievement including supporters if appropriate) on the other side although the practice varies from regiment to regiment. Such banners are normally the personal property of a particular officer although some regiments have banners which are solely regimental property. In some regiments the regimental badge appears on both sides.

The use and awarding of pipe banners has expanded to presentations to competing pipers and pipe bands, and gifts to Pipe Majors.


Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
May 2016

# Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic, sometimes also referred to as Gaelic, is a Celtic language native to Scotland. A member of the Goidelic branch of the Celtic languages, Scottish Gaelic, like Modern Irish and Manx, developed out of Middle Irish, and thus is ultimately descended from Old Irish.

Scottish Gaelic is not an official language of the European Union or the United Kingdom. However, it is classed as an Indigenous language under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which the British government has ratified, and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 established a language development body, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, "with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland.

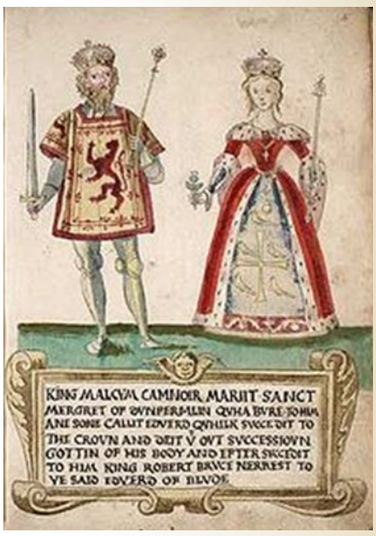
Scottish Gaelic should not be confused with Scots, the Middle English-derived language varieties which had come to be spoken in most of the Lowlands of Scotland by the early modern era. Prior to the 15th century, these dialects were known as *Inglis* ("English") by its own speakers, with Gaelic being called *Scottis* ("Scottish").

It is commonly accepted by scholars today that Gaelic was brought to Scotland, probably in the 4th–5th centuries CE, by settlers from Ireland who founded the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata on Scotland's west coast in present-day Argyll.

Gaelic in Scotland was mostly confined to Dál Riata until the 8th century, when it began expanding into Pictish areas north of the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. This was spurred by the intermarriage of Gaelic and Pictish aristocratic families, the political merger of the two kingdoms in the early 9th century, and the common threat of attack by Norse invaders. By 900 Pictish appears to have become extinct, completely replaced by Gaelic. An exception might be made for the Northern Isles, however, where Pictish was more likely supplanted by Norse rather than by Gaelic. During the reign of Caustantín mac Áeda (900–943), outsiders began to refer to the region as the kingdom of Alba rather than the kingdom of the Picts, but we do not know whether this was because a new kingdom was established or Alba was simply a closer approximation of the Pictish name for the Picts. However, though the Pictish language did not disappear suddenly, a process of Gaelicization (which may have begun generations earlier) was clearly underway during the reigns of Caustantín and his successors. By a certain point, probably during the 11th century, all the inhabitants of Alba had become fully Gaelicized Scots, and Pictish identity was forgotten.

By the 10th century Gaelic, had become the dominant language throughout northern and western Scotland, the Gaelo-Pictic Kingdom of Alba. Its spread to southern Scotland was less even and totalizing. Place name analysis suggests dense usage of Gaelic in Galloway and adjoining areas to the north and west as well as in West Lothian and parts of western Midlothian. Less dense usage is suggested for north Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, the Clyde Valley and eastern Dumfriesshire. This latter region is roughly the area of the old Kingdom of Strathclyde, which was annexed by the Kingdom of Alba in the early 11th century, but may have continued to speak Cumbric as late as the 12th century. In south-eastern Scotland, there is no evidence that Gaelic was ever widely spoken. The area shifted from Cumbric to Old English during its long incorporation into the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria. After the Lothians were conquered by Malcolm II at the Battle of Carham in 1018, elites spoke Gaelic and continued to do so down to c. 1200. However, commoners retained Old English.

With the incorporation of Strathclyde and the Lothians, Gaelic reached its social, cultural, political, and geographic zenith in Scotland. The language in Scotland had been developing features independently of the language in Ireland at least as early as its crossing the Druim Alban into Pictland. The entire country was for the first time being referred to in Latin as *Scotia* and Gaelic was recognized as the *lingua Scotia*.




Many historians mark the reign of King Malcom Canmore (Malcolm III) as the beginning of Gaelic's eclipse in Scotland. In either 1068 or 1070, the king married the exiled Princess Margaret of Wessex. This future Saint Margaret of Scotland was a member of the royal House of Wessex which had occupied the English throne from its founding until the Norman Conquest. Margaret was thoroughly Anglo-Saxon and is often credited (or blamed) for taking the first significant steps in anglicizing the Scottish court. She spoke no Gaelic, gave her children Anglo-Saxon rather than Gaelic names, and brought many English bishops, priests, and monastics to Scotland. Her family also served as a conduit for the entry of English nobles into Scotland.

During the reigns of the sons of Malcolm Canmore (1097–1153), Anglo-Norman names and practices spread throughout Scotland south of the Forth-Clyde line and along the northeastern coastal plain as far north as Moray. Norman French became dominant among the new feudal aristocracy, especially in southern Scotland, and completely displaced Gaelic at court. The establishment of royal burghs throughout the same area, particularly under David I, attracted large numbers of foreigners speaking 'Inglis', the language of the merchant class. This was the beginning of Gaelic's status as a predominantly rural language in Scotland. The country experienced significant population growth in the 12th and 13th centuries in the expanding burghs and their nearby agricultural districts. These economic developments surely helped spread English as well.

Gaelic had ceased to be the language of all of Scotland by 1400 at the latest. It disappeared from the central lowlands by c1350 and from the eastern coastal lowlands north of the Mounth not long afterwards. By the mid-14th century what eventually came to be called Scots (at that time termed Inglis) emerged as the official language of government and law. Scotland's emergent nationalism in the era following the conclusion of the Wars of Scottish Independence was organized using Scots as well. For example, the nation's great patriotic literature including John Barbour's *The Brus* (1375) and Blind Harry's *The Wallace* (bef. 1488) was written in Scots, not Gaelic. It was around this time that the very name of Gaelic began to change. Down through the 14th century, Gaelic was referred to in English as 'Scottis', i.e. the language of the Scots. By the end of the 15th century, however, the Scottish dialect of Northern English had absorbed that designation. English/Scots speakers referred to Gaelic instead as 'Yrisch' or 'Erse', i.e. Irish. King James IV (d. 1513) thought Gaelic important enough to learn and speak. However, he was the last Scottish monarch to do so.

The 2011 UK Census showed a total of 57,375 Gaelic speakers in Scotland (1.1% of population over three years old). The main stronghold of the language continues to be the Outer Hebrides (*Na h-Eileanan Siar*), where the overall proportion of speakers is at 52.2%.

Outside Scotland, a group of dialects collectively known as Canadian Gaelic are spoken in parts of Atlantic Canada, mainly Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In the 2011 census, there were 7,195 total speakers of "Gaelic languages" in Canada, with 1,365 in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island where the responses mainly refer to Scottish Gaelic. About 2,320 Canadians in 2011 also claimed Gaelic languages as their mother tongue, with over 300 in Nova Scotia (mostly in Cape Breton, Antigonish and Pictou) and Prince Edward Island.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
June 2016

# Amazingly Scottish

Scotland is a country of a rich and ancient history, strikingly beautiful landscape and proud, hardy people. From the traditional Scottish dish haggis to the legendary Loch Ness monster, check out these 25 amazing things unique about Scotland.

25 **World´s shortest commercial flight**
Operated by Loganair, the world's shortest commercial flight takes place between the two Orkney Islands, Westray and Papa Westray, north of Scotland. The flight covers a distance of only 1.7 miles and if the weather conditions are favorable, it can be completed in just 47 seconds.

24 **Home of golf**
Modern golf originated in Scotland and it is the Old Course at St. Andrews, a town on the eastern coast of the country, which is considered to be the site where the sport was born. Golf has been played there since the 15th century.

23 **Oldest tree in Europe**
Located in the churchyard of the village of Fortingall in Perthshire, Scotland, the Fortingall Yew is estimated to be 3,000 – 5,000 years old which means it could be Europe´s oldest tree. With its massive trunk of 52 feet in diameter, the yew is still in good health and may last for many more centuries.

22 **Haggis**
Considered the national dish of Scotland, haggis is a savory pudding containing sheep's pluck, minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and traditionally encased in the animal's stomach and simmered for about 3 hours. Haggis is popularly assumed to originate in this country but there is no historical evidence that would prove it.

21 **Scotch whiskey**

If you ask people what they associate with Scotland, they will mostly say whiskey. And that's right – whiskey has been the national drink of this country for centuries (since 1494) and Scotch whiskey (often referred to as just "Scotch") ranks among the finest and most desired whiskeys in the world.

20 **Caerlaverock Castle**
Scotland is notable for its abundance of stunning medieval castles. Some estimates suggest there were as many as 3,000 castles built in the country. Located on the southern coast, the iconic Caerlaverock Castle with its typical moat and triangular shape is one of the most famous ones.

19 **World's longest echo**
The world record for the longest echo in a man-made structure has been set in an underground fuel depot constructed near Invergordon, Scotland before World War Two. The time for the reverberation to end was 112 seconds. That beat the 1970 Guinness World Record set in Hamilton Mausoleum in Lanarkshire which is also in Scotland.

18 **Loch Ness monster**
The legend of the Loch Ness monster belongs among the most famous myths in the world. Reputedly occupying the Loch Ness lake in the Scottish Highlands, the monster (nicknamed "Nessie") is believed by some to be a plesiosaur. Since 1933 when the modern interest in the monster was sparked, there have been hundreds of videos and photos of the alleged creature, most of which have been proved hoaxes.

17 **Burns' Cottage**

Born in 1759 in Alloway, Robert Burns is considered to be the national poet of Scotland and one of the pioneers of the Romantic movement celebrated all over the world. The cottage where he was born has been fully restored and has become part of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum.

16 **Glenfinnan Viaduct**
Built in 1898, the Glenfinnan Viaduct on the West Highland Line in Glenfinnan is a must-see for both train as well as architecture fans. No wonder this spectacular rail viaduct has been featured in several films and television series, including Ring of Bright Water, Charlotte Gray, Stone of Destiny, and the Harry Potter movies.

15 **Kilts**
This knee-length garment became the iconic symbol of Scotland. The traditional dress of men and boys in the Scottish Highlands of the 16th century, kilts are an integral part of local culture and Gaelic heritage. However, these days, the kilt is usually worn only on formal occasions, folklore festivals etc.

14 **Almost 800 islands**

Few people know Scotland can boast of almost 800 islands. Only about 100 of them are permanently inhabited which means the remaining islands offer pristine nature, breathtaking views and unique wildlife. The Hebrides, for example, provide breeding grounds for many important seabird species including the world's largest colony of northern gannets.

13 **Edinburgh Castle**

Perched high above the capital, the Edinburgh Castle is Scotland's most important and famous castle. Dominating the city skyline for hundreds of years, the castle has been the site of numerous historical events and battles throughout Scottish history.

12 **Unusually long coastlines**

Despite being a relatively small country, Scotland has an unusually long and indented coastline. Mainland Scotland has 6,160 miles of coastline, which is three times larger than England's and twice that of France or Spain. If you include the numerous islands, it increases to an astonishing 10,250 miles.

11 **Morag Monster**

Yes, the Loch Ness monster is not the only legendary creature allegedly living in Scotland. Hiding deep in waters of Loch Morar in Scottish Highlands, the Morag monster is another mythical beast of the country. The alleged witnesses have reported it as a large snake-like creature about 30 feet long.

10 **Skara Brae**

Located on the Bay of Skaill in the Orkney archipelago, Skara Brae is a stone-built Neolithic settlement dating back to about 3200 B.C., which means this unique building complex is older than Stonehenge or the Egyptian pyramids. It has been called the "Scottish Pompeii" because of its excellent preservation.

9 **Highland Bagpipes**

A bagpipe is another item commonly associated with Scotland. The first mention of bagpipes having been used in this country dates back to 1547 when they allegedly replaced the trumpet on the battlefields. Nowadays, similarly to kilts, bagpipes are usually played just during traditional ceremonies and formal occasions.

8 **Louns and quines**

If you wonder what these are, "louns" and "quines" are boys and girls in Doric dialect, a very specific dialect spoken in north-eastern Scotland. Another popular Doric phrase is "Ay ay, fit like?" (Hallo, how are you?").

7 **First international soccer match**

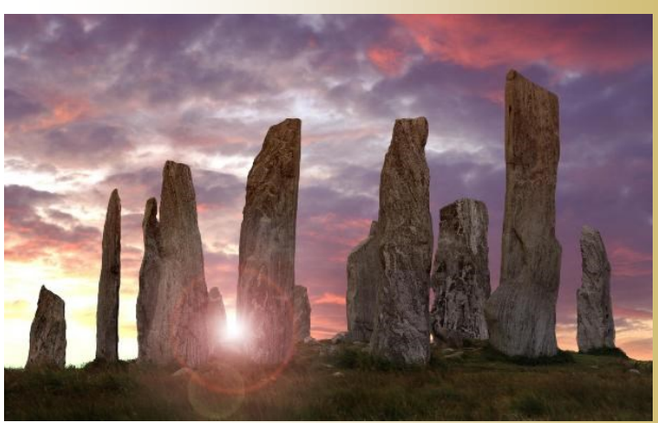
In 1872, Scotland v England was the first ever official international association football match to be played. It was held at the West of Scotland Cricket Club's ground at Hamilton Crescent in Partick.

6 **Ben Nevis**

Situated deep into the Highlands, Ben Nevis is – at 14,409 feet – the highest mountain in the U.K. Offering stunningly spectacular views, Ben Nevis attracts viewers, hikers and climbers alike to celebrate the tranquility of the surrounding nature. Estimates suggest there are about 100,000 ascents on Ben Nevis every year.

5 **Callanish Stones**

Located in the Outer Hebrides, the Callanish Stones are an arrangement of standing stones placed in a cruciform pattern with a central stone circle. Built in the late Neolithic era, they were probably a center of ritual activity during the Bronze Age. Numerous other ritual sites can be found within just a few miles from there.



4 **Glasgow cathedral and necropolis**

Built in the 12th century, the Glasgow Cathedral (also called the High Kirk of Glasgow or St Mungo's Cathedral) is one of the prime landmarks of Scotland´s largest city. Next to the cathedral, there is the Glasgow necropolis where over 50,000 people have been buried.

3 **Scottish feral goats**

Feral goats are a fairly common sight in the Scottish Highlands. The goats are descendants of livestock abandoned, through necessity, by Highlanders during the Highland Clearances (18th and 19th century forced displacement of the Highlanders). The goats act as a living reminder of the region's turbulent past.

2 **One of the world´s greatest sport derbies**

The rivalry between the two most famous Scottish soccer clubs – the Glasgow Rangers and the Celtic Glasgow is enormous. It's deeply embedded in Scottish culture and has largely contributed to the political, social and religious division in Scotland. Rangers and Celtic have played each other 399 times and most of these matches have been marked by crowd ferocity, severe riots and hooligan brawls.

1 **More redheads than anywhere else**

Scotland has the highest proportion of red-haired people in the world. As much as 13% of the Scottish population has red hair and approximately 40% carry the recessive redhead gene. Ireland comes second with 10% of redheads.

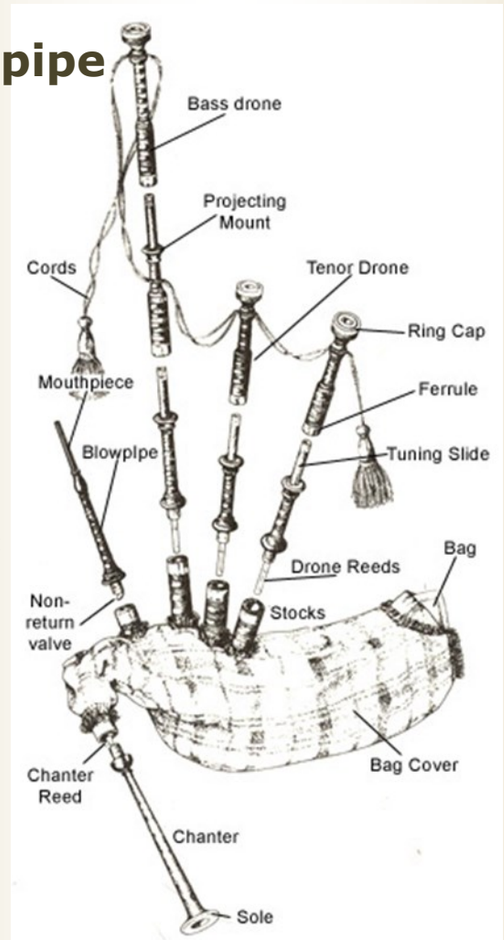
Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums

*A Celtic tradition since 1970*

# Anatomy of a Bagpipe




Though popular belief sets varying dates for the introduction of bagpipes to Scotland, concrete evidence is limited until approximately the 15th century. One Clan still owns a remnant of a set of bagpipes said to have been carried at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, though the veracity of this claim is debated.

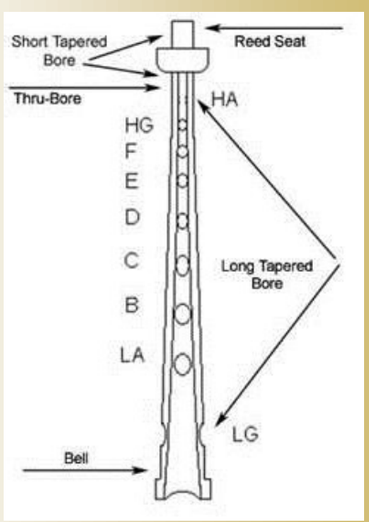
Bagpipes are constructed from synthetic and natural materials. The wood used today in bagpipe making, as well as making other woodwinds, is *Dalbergia Melanoxylon*, commonly known as African Blackwood. In the past, many different woods have been used in bagpipe making, including laburnum, holly, pear, ebony, cocus and cocobolo (the last two from Central America). Of all the woods used to make pipes, blackwood is considered to be the best available today for tone and stability. Many top players, however, are playing antique cocus or ebony sets, both preferred for their tonal qualities. Unfortunately neither cocus nor ebony are viable economically today.

African Blackwood, or Mpingo, is a shrublike tree which grows in the uplands of Tanzania, Kenya, and the island of Moçambique. The trunk sections of these trees, which normally grow to a height of 30 feet, are seldom bigger than eight inches in diameter; the trees take approximately sixty years to mature. Billets cut from the trunks are quarter-sawn for best grain and strength. Much of the blackwood used by pipe makers arrives in billets about 2x2 inches and 16-18 inches long, which makes for ease of transport and storage.

The wood is typically seasoned two to three years before working - usually one or more years at the source, several months in transit on shipboard, then to lumber yards in the UK where it is graded and sorted. By the time it reaches its destination the moisture in the content has stabilized at two to four percent - dry enough to turn.

The wood is turned either by hand or by machine. The first operation involves turning the squared billets into cylinders after boring a 1/8" pilot hole through the long axis and then given their initial shaping.

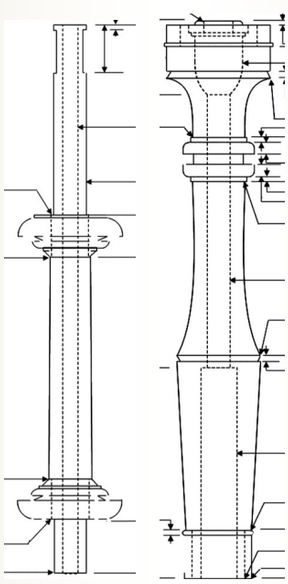
After initial rough shaping the most important part of pipe making takes place - creating the perfect bore.



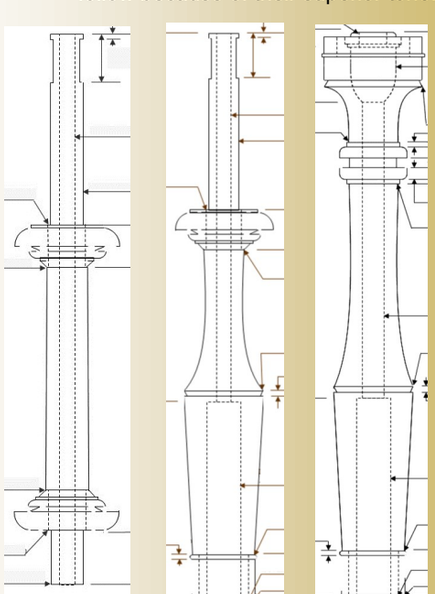

The chanter is rough turned and a pilot is bored, then stored for additional months to ensure that they stay straight. One of every three blackwood chanters is destroyed in the manufacturing process - unavoidable due to the thinness of the chanter walls (about 1/16" through the chanter body) - the main reason why blackwood pipe chanters are twice as expensive as plastic ones.

Each section is given its primary boring after determining what piece of the bagpipe it will become. Sections which do not measure up to drone standards are used for blowpipes or stocks. The best pieces are reserved for pipe chanters.

A cross section of the tenor drone (below) reveals bores that are straight but of differing diameters up to the bell/top...



...the same is true for the bass drone (below). While somewhat standard in size and length, the bore of the drones vary. In general, a smaller bore creates a softer, flatter tone. Many of today's bagpipe manufacturers use earlier pipes from Henderson, Lowrie and others as model to follow because of their superior tone.



When all of the sections are turned, mounts are attached.

Bagpipes can be decorated with metal, natural materials - such as ivory or horn - and other materials as accents. “Mountings” refers to what is decorated. Ferrules, caps, projecting mounts, and tuning slides serve both to protect and adorn the bagpipe.

Bagpipes can be decorated with metal, natural materials - such as ivory or horn - and other materials as accents. “Mountings” refers to what is decorated. Ferrules, caps, projecting mounts, and tuning slides serve both to protect and adorn the bagpipe.

Mounts can be engraved, hand engraved, chased, cast - similar but different terms when it comes to metal work. Some is done by machine or laser or a pattern is pressed into the metal. Hand engraved is actually etched into the metal surface.

While enhancing the beauty of the pipes, the mounts do not affect the tone.

The purpose of the bag is to serve as an alternate source of air pressure for when you are not blowing. This lets the piper breath naturally while maintaining the necessary pressure to keep the chanter and drones playing. Five stocks are tied or fastened directly to the bag. Air enters the bag through the blowpipe stock and exits the bag through reeds contained within the drones and chanter.

Bagpipe bags fall into three primary categories; tanned leather bags, synthetic material bags, or a combination of leather and synthetic materials. In general, hide bags (not hide covered synthetic) have to be “seasoned” to keep them airtight. Synthetic bags use a man-made material that is kept sealed with an airtight zipper.

Mounted in the top of the chanter is a chanter reed. The chanter reed is a double reed (two matching pieces secured together) made of Spanish cane. The chanter reed is critical since the melody for a musical piece ("tune") is played on the chanter.



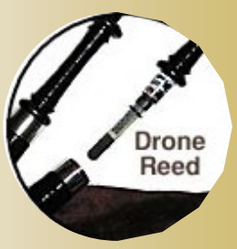
There are two basic reed shapes or cuts: molded ad ridge-cut.

Molded reeds have a gradual taper from the binding to the top of the reed. Due to their shape, a molded reed's blades get most of their support from the staple.

A ridge-cut reed has a distinct step at the shoulder, though not all ridge cut reeds are quite this obvious. The blades of ridge cut reeds get the most of their support from their thick base.

Matching the right reed to the chanter is essential in creating a unified “band sound.” Take the same chanter reed and stick it in another chanter and it may not sound the same. Similarly, take a chanter and stick in various chanter reeds and the sound will change.

Chanter reeds vary from brand to brand and perform differently under different conditions. Some reeds do well in dry conditions – while that same reed goes limp in humidity. This is why we all use the same brand of chanter (and usually reed) when competing.




Each of the three drones also have a reed. The drone reeds may be natural cane, synthetic, or a combination of cane and synthetic materials.

The first drone reeds (and chanter reeds for that matter) were made of *phragmites australis*, the native cane of Europe. However, since this type of cane is very sensitive to humidity, another type of cane, *arundo donax*, native to circummediterranean areas but now introduced to temperate regions, is used in modern times.

This drone reed is considered the best sounding. Unfortunately, cane can be very unpredictable in different weather conditions, hence the push for the development of more stable synthetic reeds.

The first modern synthetic drone reed—or at least partially synthetic as the tongue is actually true cane coated with water resistant polyurethane—was introduced in 1985 by Geoff Ross of Australia.

The first drone reeds made entirely of plastic were introduced in 1992 by the R. T. Shepherd Company of Scotland. Today, there are dozens of different styles of drone reeds all trying for that magic sound.

Air is introduced into the pipe bag through a blowpipe. Even here there are options and variations. The standard blowpipe mouthpiece is round and narrow—reverently called a soda straw. A more comfortable oval mouthpiece is also available. The length of the blowpipe varies and adjustable blowpipes are available as are rigid blowpipes that can be cut to a comfortable length.

The pipe bag is generally covered. The bag cover is frequently embroidered with the band name and/or logo and often has a “gripper” patch on either side to avoid slipping and zippered to allow easy access to the bag.

The pipe cords vary in color and are made of either cotton or silk. The pipe cords serve to space the drones on the piper’s shoulder. The tassels draping from the drowns swing as the piper marches.

The final product is a thing of beauty. All of the parts work in harmony to produce a sound that is full and rich and distinctive in the musical world.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
August 2016

# Chief, Chieftain

In Scotland the heads of sometimes very large family groupings are known as clan chiefs. The Scottish Gaelic word *clann* means children. Clan members in the past believed themselves to descend from a common ancestor, the founder of a Scottish clan. From its perceived founder a clan takes its name. The clan chief represents this founder, and thereby the clan.

In the Scottish clan system, the term chief denotes a greater chief than that of a chieftain. In consequence, branch chiefs (heads of branches of a clan) are designated chieftains.

By the second half of the 16th century Highland chiefs were styled by the Crown as 'of that Ilk' (the chief being head of the family and owning the name-place, e.g. Moncreiffe of that Ilk), but other chiefs varied between this form and a territorial designation (e.g. Maclean of Duart).

After the Union of 1707, Highland chiefs moved to a straightforward reiteration of the name (e.g. Macdonald of Macdonald) because of the difficulty in explaining 'of that Ilk' in England, and most other families have since followed suit.

For centuries some chiefs have abbreviated their style and adopted the definite article, e.g. Chisholm of Chisholm is known as 'The Chisholm', and Macnab of Macnab as 'The Macnab'.

Others use the definite article as well as the clan or territorial designation, e.g. The MacLaren of MacLaren, The MacKinnon of MacKinnon and The Macneil of Barra. The use of 'The' by certain chiefs in place of the forename is officially recognized by the Lord Lyon.

Historically the principal function of the chief was to lead his clan in battle on land and sea. The chief and the chieftain were at one time in the Scottish Highlands influential political characters, who wielded a large and often arbitrary authority. However, none of this authority now remains. Highland chiefship or chieftainship in the modern sense is no more than a high social dignity. The existence of chiefship and chieftainship has been recognized by Scottish law, however, the disarming of the Highland clans after the 1745 Jacobite rising effectively eliminated clanship from ordinary civil or statutory law. Most notable was the Heritable Jurisdictions (Scotland) Act, of 1746 that abolished traditional rights of jurisdiction afforded to Scottish clan chiefs.

While Scottish law recognizes the existence of Scottish clans, chiefs and chieftains, this recognition is only one of social dignity or precedence, and as such does not involve any interest for which the law has jurisdiction. The Lyon Court can make a recording of the dignity of a chiefship acknowledged by attestation, but can not declare judicially a chiefship. Further, no Scottish court can exercise a jurisdiction to determine disputes of competing claimants to a chiefship or chieftainship; to quote Lord Aitchinson in the Court of Session: *"Historically the idea of a chief or chieftain submitting his dignity to the arbitrament of it Court of law is really grotesque. The chief was the law, and his authority was derived from his own people.".*

In cases where a clan has no chief, or a family wishes for recognition as a clan, clan or family members can formally get together in a derbhfine (patrilineal group) and appoint a **clan commander**. The Lyon Court can recognize this appointment for an interim period of up to ten years, whereupon a further derbhfine will be required.

In Scotland it is normal to write to Chiefs, Chieftains and Lairds by their designation or estate, and not by their surname. Neither 'Mr.' nor 'Esq.' are added to the name on the envelope.

A non-Scotsman who writes to a Chief or Laird with a Service rank, especially a correspondent who is younger or junior in rank, would write to The Mackintosh as 'Dear Admiral Mackintosh of Mackintosh', and a member of a Clan or Name would write to his Chief as 'Dear Chief'.

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs is the definitive and authoritative body for information on the Scottish Clan System. You can visit their website for information relating to the Standing Council, as well as links to other relevant resources, together with additional information on the Clan system.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
September 2016

# The Curiously Compelling Story of Tweed

It is commonly thought that tweed emerged in Scotland and Ireland as a way for the farmers there to battle the chilly, damp climate that characterizes those parts. Tweed began as a hand woven fabric. The cloth was rough, thick, and felted and the colors were muted and earthy. It was truly a working man's cloth. As far as the name goes, there are a couple of theories.

1. There is a River Tweed in Scotland, and the cloth was made in the Tweed Valley, and some believe that is the origin of the word.
2. A more popular legend has it that the name tweed is a twist on the Scottish word for "tweel" or twill in our parlance, which is the signature weave of the fabric. It is said that in 1826, a London clerk accidentally transcribed an order to "tweel" and wrote "tweed" instead, and from there the name came into use.

Whatever the origin, tweed is a rugged fabric, resistant to wind and water with excellent insulating properties.

The wearing of tweed entered a new phase when in the first half of the nineteenth century many estates in Scotland were acquired by English noblemen wishing to expand their life of leisure. In 1848, Prince Albert ignited a rush on Scottish estates when he purchased Balmoral. Although the foundation of the castle wasn't laid until September 28, 1853, he designed *The Balmoral Tweed* earlier. Blue with white sprinkles and crimson in color, it was no coincidence that it looks gray from afar resembling the granite mountains of Aberdeenshire around Balmoral because it was designed for deer stalking in the area. As such, one of the first *Estate Tweeds* was born, and subsequently it became all the rage among estate owners to commission their special tweeds.

Tweeds includes both ***Clan Tartan Tweeds*** identified the members of the same family no matter where they live, and ***Estate Tweeds*** used to identify people who live and work in the same estate, regardless of whether they are related or not.

Because the tradition of Tartan was limited mostly to British noblemen, the estate owners focused on both the distinctiveness and the practicality of their tweed pattern. After all, the tweed needed to provide camouflage for hunting and deer stalking. As such, the colors were derived from the land itself, and even the brightest were designed to blend in with the heather, timber, and rocky terrain. You can get an idea of the color variety from the picture of the Scottish landscape above.

The book Scottish Estate Tweeds (1995) cites Glenfeshie as the first estate tweed, commissioned around 1835 for the estate's ghillies and keepers. The Glenfeshie was modified from a basic black and white check worn by the estate's shepherds overlaid with a red windowpane and is the early relative of the "gun club" pattern. The variety of patterns and colors of tweed found, today, owe much to the originality of those 19th-century estate owners. Although these patterns were once restricted only to family members and workers of the estate—much like the regimental tie or school crest—today anyone can wear them.

Tweed was the ideal sporting attire of the 19th and early 20th-century gentleman and as such it was the *performance fabric* of its time. The English gentry quickly adopted tweed as the ideal outdoor cloth on their upcountry estates. Wearing tweed made hunting, shooting, and fishing comfortably enjoyable pastimes.

Tweed also became popular among the 19th-century Victorian middle classes who associated it with the leisurely pursuits of the aristocracy. It was worn for virtually every sporting and adventure endeavor including golf, cycling, tennis, motoring, and mountain climbing.

Early golfers such as Old Tom Morris only played in tweed "plus fours," and the wear of tweed for golf was nearly ubiquitous up until the 1930's when summer flannel pants and polos starting becoming more popular. This photo of an Irish golfer from 1915 gives an idea of what it was like.

It is also a little known ironic fact of history that during the Boer War, the Boers, in fighting against the British in their desperate struggle, overwhelmingly clothed themselves in tweed.

Some tweeds are named for the sheep that originally produced the wool. Cheviot Tweed is named after a breed of white-faced sheep first kept in the Cheviot hills of Northumberland and the Scottish borders. Cheviot yarn is generally larger, rougher, and heavier than other types of tweed. It is a stiff fabric with a certain "sharpness" to the touch, and a bright luster. Cheviot fabric is normally woven more tightly, making it well suited for country wear due

## September Band Performances:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **5th** | 70th Annual Hoo-Doo Day's Parade in Neola, IA | |
| **11th** | Holy Cross Irish Festival—48th & Woolworth, Omaha | http://holycrossirishfestival.com |
| **17th** | Greeley Irish Festival—Greeley, NE | http://www.greeleyirishfestival.com |
| **24th** | St. Louis Highland Games—St. Louis, MO | http://www.stlouis-scottishgames.com |

to its firmness and durability and city wear due to its ability to drape well and hold a crease. Shetland tweed was originally woven from sheep raised on islands of the same name. The wools from these sheep are exceptionally fine with a soft, delicate and a slightly shaggy finish. It is the epitome of a casual tweed.


Other tweeds are named for the region from which they came. Donegal tweed is derived from the Irish county of Donegal. The fabric is coarse which produces a rustic look, and features contrast-colored "neps" or "slubs" that produces a casual, sporty look. Saxony Tweed has a fine, short pile on its face and is very soft. It is used to produce comfortably wearing Merino-based sport jackets and to some extent, suits. Back in the day, the British Bladen company provided the marvelous 700 grams *Supasax* tweed, which was a fantastic piece of Saxony Tweed. Although the company is still in existence today and still produces this tweed in 650 grams made from dense and heavy lambswool, it feels different than back in the day. Also, the jacket styles are more limited. However, they also have a lighter 450 grams version that mixes wool and worsted yards that are well suited for office wear.

Other Geographically Named Tweeds: You may run across "Welsh," "West of England," and "Yorkshire" tweeds which are named for the areas in which they are manufactured.

Still others are gathered up as part of a brand name, and yet more are named for the function they were called upon to perform. Gamekeeper Tweed is a heavier weight cloth (700g+ or 24oz+) for greater insulation and protection on cold days. It can be found in a variety of patterns, weaves, and colors.

Sporting tweeds were developed as a form of indigenous camouflage to help hunters blend into the landscape particular to individual hunting estates. Color combinations were optimized to find the most effective combinations. For instance, one local weaver produced eight color variations for the Strathconon Estate before enlisting hunters to prove which was least visible. Tweed's estate sporting background is the primary reason we have so many variations of patterns and colors today.

A thornproof tweed is woven with high twist fibers to make the cloth tough and resistant to tears and punctures. It was first used in 1870 in the Red River Rebellion in Canada, where troops wore a cloth made to resist the thorns. Thornproof is usually a plain, solid colored lightly grey-green fabric but also available with windowpanes. It is extremely practical for hunting or hiking through thick underbrush, brambles, and gorse. An interesting feature of the thornproof tweed is that it is a self-repairing cloth. If you were to push a sharp pointed object through the cloth to make a hole, all you need to do is massage the cloth between your thumbs and the hole will disappear.

The most famous brand named Tweed is of course Harris. Harris Tweed has an open, loose twill weave that is rough to the touch. First woven in the 18th century by crafters in the Outer Hebrides, it was introduced to the British aristocracy in the 1840s by Lady Dunmore. To regulate and protect the fabric against imitations, the Harris Tweed Orb certification mark was created in 1909—the oldest British mark of its kind—with the definition, "only tweeds woven in the Outer Hebrides would be eligible." The use of the name was protected, and only hand-spun and hand-woven products of 100% wool form the Outer Hebrides was allowed to use the Harris Tweed trade mark.

Today, the yarn is 100% pure virgin wool, but no longer hand spun. This change was introduced with the Hattersley mark 1 loom, the first kind operated by feet because the weavers were unable to produce the quantity or consistent quality necessary from hand spun yarn. Unfortunately, there was not enough wool from the Outer Hebrides to meet the demand, and hence 100% virgin wool from the UK is accepted now. Clothing made out of Harris Tweed will have trade mark label sewn into it.

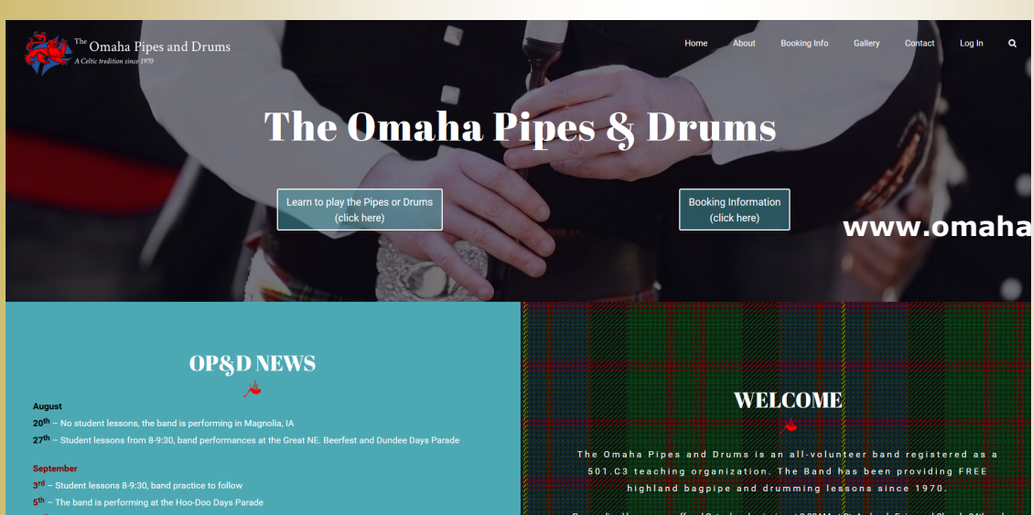
Tweed comes in a variety of patterns and weavers that contribute to the look and durability of the fabric.

- **Plain Twill**: This is a simple weave with a diagonal pattern running throughout.
- **Overcheck Twill**: A plain twill with a large checked design overlaid in contrasting color.
- **Plain Herringbone**: Herringbone is so named because it looks like fish bones. The direction of the slant alternates column by column to create 'v' shapes. The pattern is quite pleasing to the eye.
- **Overcheck Herringbone** (Estate Tweed): This pattern consists of a herringbone weave overlaid with a check in various colors. Also known as estate tweeds.
- **Barleycorn**: Barleycorn tweeds are typically coarse and have a weave that produces the effect of barley kernels when viewed close-up. It is a very lively pattern.
- **Striped**: Striped tweeds incorporate vertical line to create visible stripes of various sizes.
- **Houndstooth**: This pattern resembles the back teeth of a dog and was found to be a very effective form of camouflage. The larger houndstooth pattern is contrasted with the smaller "dogtooth."

Whatever your choice of pattern or weave, you just can't go wrong with a classic tweed.

Until next month…

Sláinte




If you haven't checked it out, keep up with band events on our new website

**www.omahapipesanddrums.org**

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

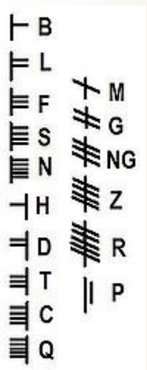
Chanter Newsletter
October 2016

# Ogham

Contrary to popular belief and active marketing, there is no such thing as a Celtic rune. Runes (Proto-Norse: ᚱᚢᚾᛟ (*runo*), Old Norse: *rún*) are the letters in a set of related alphabets known as runic alphabets, which were used to write various Germanic languages before the adoption of the Latin alphabet and for specialized purposes thereafter.

Ogham /ˈɒgəm/ (Modern Irish [ˈoːmʏ] or [ˈoːəmʏ]; Old Irish: *ogam* [ˈɔɣamʏ]) is an Early Medieval alphabet used to write the early Irish language (in the so-called "orthodox" inscriptions, 1st to 6th centuries), and later the Old Irish language (so-called scholastic ogham, 6th to 9th centuries).

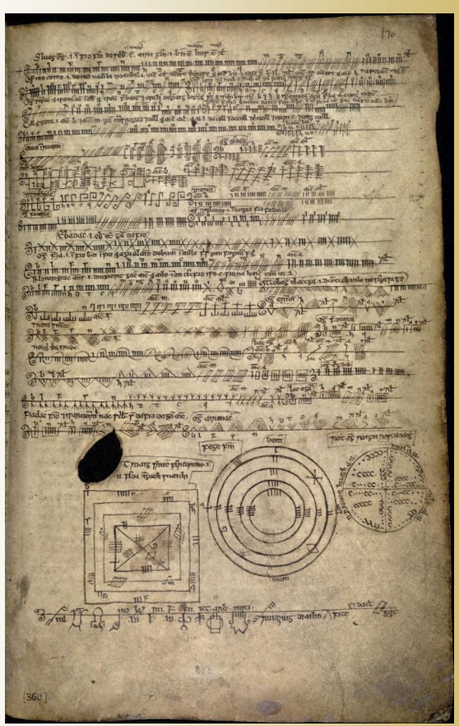
It is claimed that the earliest inscriptions in ogham date to about the 4th century AD, but its origin may be within the 1st century BC. Although the use of "classical" ogham in stone inscriptions seems to have flowered in the 5th and 6th centuries around the Irish Sea, from the phonological evidence it is clear that the alphabet predates the 5th century. A period of writing on wood or other perishable material prior to the preserved monumental inscriptions needs to be assumed.




There are two main schools of thought among scholars as to the motivation for the creation of ogham. The first suggests that ogham was first created as a cryptic alphabet, designed by the Irish so as not to be understood by those with knowledge of the Latin alphabet. With this school of thought, it is asserted that the alphabet was created by Irish scholars or druids for political, military or religious reasons to provide a secret means of communication in opposition to the authorities of Roman Britain.


The second main school of thought is that ogham was invented by the first Christian communities in early Ireland, out of a desire to have a unique alphabet for writing short messages and inscriptions in the Irish language. The argument is that the sounds of Primitive Irish were regarded as difficult to transcribe into the Latin alphabet, so the invention of a separate alphabet was deemed appropriate. A possible such origin, as suggested by McManus (1991:41), is the early Christian community known to have existed in Ireland from around AD 400 at the latest, the existence of which is attested by the mission of Palladius by Pope Celestine I in AD 431.

According to the 11th-century *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, the 14th-century *Auraicept na n-Éces*, and other Medieval Irish folklore, ogham was first invented soon after the fall of the Tower of Babel, along with the Gaelic language, by the legendary Scythian king, Fenius Farsa. According to the Auraicept, Fenius journeyed from Scythia together with Goídel mac Ethéoir, Íar mac Nema and a retinue of 72 scholars. They came to the plain of Shinar to study the confused languages at Nimrod's tower (the Tower of Babel). Finding that they had already been dispersed, Fenius sent his scholars to study them, staying at the tower, co-ordinating the effort. After ten years, the investigations were complete, and Fenius created *in Bérla tóbaide* "the selected language", taking the best of each of the confused tongues, which he called *Goídelc*, Goidelic, after Goídel mac Ethéoir. He also created extensions of *Goídelc*, called *Bérla Féne*, after himself, *Íarmberla*, after Íar mac Nema, and others, and the *Beithe-luis-nuin* (the ogham) as a perfected writing system for his languages. The names he gave to the letters were those of his 25 best scholars.



Strictly speaking, the word *ogham* refers only to the form of letters or script, while the letters themselves are known collectively as the *Beith-luis-nin* after the letter names of the first letters (in the same manner as the modern "Alphabet" deriving from the Greek Alpha and Beta).

The ogham alphabet originally consisted of twenty distinct characters (*feda*), arranged in four series *aicmí*. Each aicme was named after its first character (*Aicme Beithe*, *Aicme hÚatha*, *Aicme Muine*, *Aicme Ailme*, "the B Group", "the H Group", "the M Group", "the A Group"). Five additional letters were later introduced, the so-called *forfeda*.

In Scotland, a number of inscriptions using the ogham writing system are known, but their language is still the subject of debate. The Pictish inscriptions are scholastic, and are believed to have been inspired by the manuscript tradition brought into Scotland by Gaelic settlers. A rare example of a Christianised Ogham stone can be seen in St. Mary's Collegiate Church Gowran, County Kilkenny.

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
November 2016

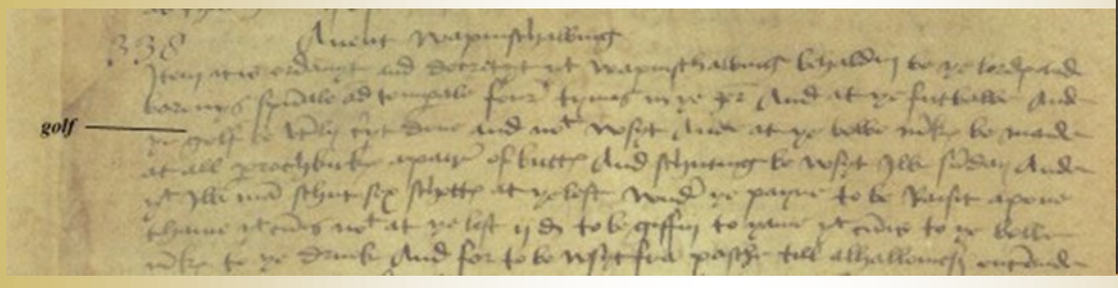
# SCOTTISH GOLF HISTORY

The history of golf in Scotland must forever live with the problem that there are few written records on it and what there are shed light on the day-to-day minutia of how much golf balls cost, but little on the monumental matters of who invented the golf hole or where or when. Sadly the good 'burgesses' of Edinburgh (and elsewhere) did not record their inaugural golf meetings or thoughts and we are left forever guessing about many details.

The following are excerpts from the Scottish Golf History website.

'Golf' balls were being imported from The Netherlands to Scotland from at least 1486 and golf was being played officially from 1502. A common misconception is that the word GOLF is an acronym for Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden. This is definitely not true. It is now accepted that the 'golf' is derived from an old word meaning 'club'.

The first documented mention of the word 'golf' is in Edinburgh on 6th March 1457, when King James II banned 'ye golf', in an attempt to encourage archery practice, which was being neglected.




*1457 Item it is ordanyt and decretyt that ye futbawe and ye golf be uterly cryt done and not usyt .. (It is ordained and decreed that football and golf be utterly condemned and not practised)*

The royal ban on golf was repeated in 1471 by James III, son of James IV and again in 1491 by James IV, his grandson. This may not have been links golf as we know it today but a target variant played in city streets or churchyards. Golf on the links may have continued unabated.

Even when the ban was effectively lifted in 1502 in Perth, there was over a century of complaints and convictions by the Kirk, from 1580 until 1724, against golf on the Sabbath (Sunday). The official (royal) line, voiced by King James VI in 1618, was that golf on the Sabbath was acceptable, so long as it was not during the times of service. It was not a view shared by the Kirk. Indeed Sunday golf at St Andrews only began during the Second World War and is still not permitted on the Old Course, though this is more to do with preserving the course rather than religious strictures.

Golf in its early days in Scotland may have had two forms. One was a target game, round churchyards and village greens, hitting balls at targets, such as trees or stakes, in the landscape.

This may be the type of golf that was the subject of the early legal prohibitions, as being dangerous. Clearly, this is not 'links' golf. This type of golf may have continued in existence even after 'links' golf was being played, with at least one death recorded in 1632 in Kelso of an innocent bystander near a church, which is long after golf was being played on the links at St Andrews, Barry, Elie and Aberdeen.

## World's First Named Golfer

King James IV of Scotland (1473-1513) was a man of many talents.

He inherited the Scottish throne at the age of fifteen and unified the outlying areas of his kingdom by force of arms. He practiced dentistry and founded the Royal College of Surgeons in Scotland, many years ahead of that in England. He introduced compulsory education, requiring large landowners to send their sons to school and to one of the universities at St Andrews, Glasgow or Aberdeen. Yet his most lasting legacy is probably that in 1502, he decided that the threat of war with England had receded sufficiently to lift the longstanding ban on golf, imposed to encourage archery practice.

He bought his first clubs from a Perth bow maker. At the time Perth served as the capital and it was where James was crowned at Scone Palace on 26 June 1488. That makes James IV, at almost 30 years old, the first recorded player of golf as we know it and it makes Perth the oldest dated location in the world, where a named golfer played golf.

## Oldest Golf Courses

1754 St Andrews Old Course (1552)

1774 Musselburgh Old Course (1672)

1787 Elie and Earlsferry (1589)

1793 Fortrose (1702)

1817 Scotscraig

1818 Montrose

1823 Kingsbarns

1832 North Berwick West Links

1835 Carnoustie Burnside

1840 Gullane Links

1845 Monifieth Links

1846 Leven Links

1851 Prestwick

1851 Lanark

1856 Dunbar

1856 Pau

1857 The Curragh

1860 Perth

1864 Westward Ho!

To speed up play, two holes were added to the middle greens. The 5th hole (Hole O'Cross) seems to have been the first to have been adapted as shown on the 1836 William Chalmers plan of the Old Course. In 1855, the R&A minutes report that Daw Anderson added a second hole to the 7th High Hole. Two years later, following work by Allan Robertson, all the middle greens had two holes in time for play at the Spring Meeting. The Fifeshire Journal reported these new arrangements as a great success which included the use of colored flags for out & in holes. This created the mind-set in the golfers of a course of 18 holes and thereafter at intervals of 2 to 3 years other courses were increased to 18 holes.

The main influence seems to have been members of the R&A, who were also members of other clubs and who wanted the same rules and standard round as they had at St Andrews. The only early Scottish 18-hole course that would qualify for this list, of which no part is playable today, is Innerleven's Dubbieside course. However, the student golfers at Cambridge University created and then abandoned two 18-hole courses - Royston in 1869 and Coldham Common which was 9 holes in 1876 and 18 holes in 1887. The Royston course was the first 18-hole course outside Scotland and was laid out by AG Murray of Trinity College, the future Lord Dunedin.

## Oldest 18-Hole Courses

1857 St Andrews Old Course

1863 Montrose North Links

1868 Leven Links and Lundin Links

1871 Wimbledon Common

1871 Hoylake

1871 Forfar

1872 Old Luffness

1873 Carnoustie

1874 Westward Ho!

1875 Pau

1876 Aberdeen Links

1877 North Berwick West Links

1879 Machrihanish

1880 Dunbar East Links

1880 Monifieth Links

1880 Kingsdown

1882 Prestwick

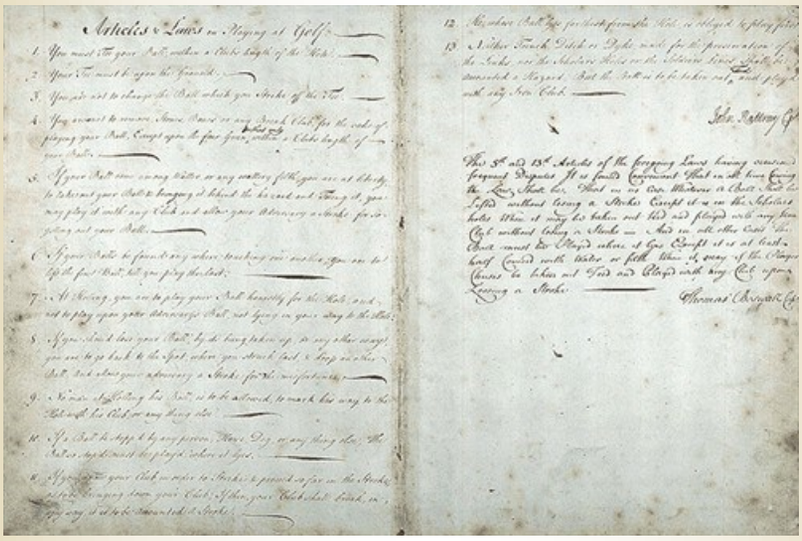
1883 Grouville Links

# Rules of Golf - 1744

The first known Rules of Golf were drawn up in 1744 in Edinburgh for the world's first 'open' golf competition at Leith by the Gentlemen Golfers of Edinburgh, who would go on to become The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers.

The rules were drawn up at the behest of the City of Edinburgh Council, who had presented the silver club prize and insisted that there had to be rules for the competition. The competition was open to all gentlemen golfers in Britain, but only local players participated. This tells us that there were no prior rules, and maybe if it had not been for Edinburgh Council, the golfers would not have drawn up rules themselves.

For centuries, the original rules were thought lost, but in 1937 they were re-discovered by Mr CB Clapcott on two pages at the back of a Minute Book of the Honourable Company.



*Rules of Golf, signed by John Rattray Captain 1744-47 and 1751 with amendments by Thomas Boswell Captain 1758. The original is in National Library of Scotland. A thousand copies were made and distributed by Hon Co and are on display in the golf museum at St Andrews and clubhouses of many old golf societies.*

The pages contained thirteen Articles and the signature of John Rattray, as Captain.

There is a later amendment clarifying rules 5 and 13 also written on the same document. It is signed by Thomas Boswell who was Captain of the Leith golfers in 1758, but who had previously won the St Andrews competition in a play-off in 1755.

The golfers at St Andrews, who would later become the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, adopted the Leith rules for their own competition in 1754. They wrote them into their minutes, with only a small amendment to Rule 5, but strangely they included references to 'the Soldiers' lines' and 'the Scholars' holes' in Rule 13 that only existed at Leith. In the eighteenth century, other clubs, including the Burgess at Bruntsfield Links in Edinburgh and those at Aberdeen and Crail also drew up their own rule

Until next month…

Sláinte

Omaha Pipes and Drums
A Celtic tradition since 1970

Chanter Newsletter
December 2016

# The 2016 Best Solo Piper in the World

The Glenfiddich Piping Championship was established in 1974 to inspire and stimulate individual pipers, and to seek the best overall exponents of the Ceòl Mór or piobaireachd (the great music) and Ceòl Beag (the little music). The championship was founded and continues to be run by William Grant & Sons., distillers of Glenfiddich and other whiskies. The venue for the event is Blair Castle.

There are two panels of three judges for each of the sections of the Championship

*Piobaireachd* with each piper submitting six tunes in advance, from which the judges select one
*March, Strathspey & Reel* with the judges selecting three tunes from those submitted, to be played twice through.

There are three overall prizes, with a further five prizes for the two sections of the competition and the winner of this event is (unofficially) known as *The Best Solo Piper in the World.*

To be invited to compete at the Glenfiddich, pipers have to have placed in the top of a number of qualifying events including the following:

- Former Glenfiddich Champions
- The Clasp (Northern Meeting)
- Former Winners MSR (Northern Meeting)
- Gold Medal (Northern Meeting)

The **Northern Meeting**, established in 1788 in Inverness, Scotland, is best known for its bagpiping competition in September. These competitions are among the most prestigious solo events in the piping world. The most famous competition is the pìobaireachd competition, which is organized in three tiers. Entry is restricted to fewer than 100 of the world's top pipers, who must re-apply each year. The entry level competition is the Silver Medal and is restricted to 30 players. Winners of the Silver Medal (and sometimes runners-up) are usually offered a spot to compete for the Gold Medal the following year, which is restricted to 25 to 30 players. Only previous winners of the Gold Medal are allowed to compete for **the Clasp**, but winning the Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering also qualifies pipers to play for the Clasp at the Northern Meeting.

- Senior Piobaireachd (Argyllshire Gathering)
- Former Winners MSR (Argyllshire Gathering)
- Gold Medal (Argyllshire Gathering)

Piping seems to be in the genes of Argyllshire people. Every year, on the fourth Thursday in August, the people of Argyll gather with family and friends in their central town of Oban.

We only have to look at the marvelous contribution they have made, and continue to make, to the national music. It was at the **Argyllshire Gathering** that the Piobaireachd Society – formed to preserve and foster the classical music of the pipes, ceol mor – was first mooted.

- Masters Solo (Glasgow International Piping Festival)

Each August, Glasgow is transformed into a global hotspot of traditional music fans, as the Glasgow International Piping Festival takes place. The best competing pipers of this generation compete in Piobaireachd and MSR at The National Piping Centre as they take part in the annual Masters Solo Piping Competition. The competition is open to Gold Medalists and those who have won 'A' Grade events at either Oban or Inverness.

- Overall Winner (Scottish Piping Society of London)
- Bratach Gorm (Scottish Piping Society of London)

The **Bratach Gorm** (a.k.a. Blue Banner) is the highest prize given by the Scottish Piping Society of London and was introduced in 1938. It can only be won by those who have won the; Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering or Northern Meeting or the first prize at the William Gillies Memorial Cup. The monetary value as a primary Pibroch is £500. In 1994 the competition pool was further reduced in protest at the selection of judges. In order to win the annual London Piping Championship an entrant must have won this and another award.

The 2016 field of competitors (shown above) for the Glenfiddich included Bruce Gandy (Nova Scotia), Alasdair Henderson, Finlay Johnston, Jack Lee (British Columbia), Stuart Liddell, William McCallum, Angus MacColl, Ian K. MacDonald (Ontario), Roderick MacLeod, and Iain Speirs .

The 2016 winner of the Glenfiddich and title of *best solo piper in the world* is Roderick MacLeod.

Until next month…

Sláinte