

# Kilt Hose

Let's take a step back into history and look at the very first type of kilt hose worn – the *cadadh*. These hose were cut and sewn from tartan cloth. They were not necessarily the same tartan as the kilt – most often they were a different tartan entirely. In fact, two tone red and white (or red and black, blue and white, and other color combinations) were popular. The important thing here to remember is that these were not knitted hose. They were made from cloth, cut and sewn with the tartan pattern on the bias (diagonal) for elasticity, with a single seam running down the back of the calf and the bottom of the foot.

The earliest portrait of anyone wearing the *cadadh* with a kilt is from the early seventeenth century. Since the earliest evidence we have of anyone wearing any form of kilt (the belted plaid) is from 1594, it would seem that the Highlander has been wearing *cadadh* for as long as he has been wearing the kilt. Today's knit tartan hose are the modern descendants of the *cadadh*.

The Hon. Stuart Ruaidri Erskine in 1901, writes:

*Formerly hose were made of the same stuff with the kilt. Nowadays tartan hose are not worn, save with evening dress, and not always with that.... [after some discussion of the traditional cut and sewn hose] Nowadays, however, hose are invariably knitted, and modern fashion decrees that tartan shall not be donned for day wear.*

Tartan hose should not be worn for day wear, unless by livery servants, pipers, or some other in "day full dress." For day wear he prefers simple, plain colored hose, and for evening for formal wear, diced hose of whatever color looks well with the kilt.

J. Charles Thompson in "So You're Going to Wear the Kilt," writes:

*Remember... that tartan hose [here he is referring to knit hose] are for evening only! They are not correct for day wear... Diced hose in blue and white or red and white have always been an alternative choice for evening wear, and since even these are hard to come by, you will see many men in evening attire with solid color stockings. The purists have given in on this point, but they insist that the only correct color is white.*

Bob Martin, author of *All About Your Kilt* (second edition, 2001). On the subject of hose, he begins:

*Not too much need be said about kilt hose. Some time ago, the only hose "ruled" proper for evening wear were "tartan" hose, with fold-over or castellated tops. The "rules" went through a modification, and now white knitted hose are quite popular. Since when, may I ask, must a color be apportioned its time of day or night? May not a good, strong red be worn with equal "correctness" at night? Perhaps one is wearing an all-tartan evening outfit with no white save a jabot. Wouldn't hose that tone with the kilt be preferable to white ones? The books say that "tartan" hose should not be worn during the daytime, without remembering that kilt hose were originally of tartan cloth, cut from the piece and worn all the time (cadadh).*

The truth of the matter is that there are no "rules" about what you wear with your kilt other than the rules of fashion and common sense – but then again, some people have no fashion sense.



Flashes are yet another matter. Originally hose were kept in place by wrappings. Some of you may have seen me wear traditional hunting flashes with my kilt. They are still available in three colors.

In "*The Kilt and How to Wear It*," the only color garters Erskine mentions at all is scarlet, worn with any kilt. Hamish Bicknell, a frequent poster on the X Marks the Scot kilt forum, and full-time kilt wearer, has some good advice. His strategy is to match the color hose to the shirt you are wearing, and match the flashes to the dominant color of your kilt. In this way, your kilt is "framed" so to speak by your shirt above and your hose beneath. If your hose match your shirt, you can even get by with wearing a color that is not in your kilt at all. I've seen lovat blue hose paired with light blue or denim shirts to good effect, in tartans that are red and green.