

ISSUE No 06
WINTER 2025/6

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from Ancestry to Family Tree DNA



Clan fleming Scottish Society

SEPARATED BY OCEANS - UNITED BY HERITAGE

WINTER 2025/6

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COVER IMAGE

Fleming Snowdrops, from
Carnalynch, Co. Cavan

DEED DESIGN

Ian Fleming

Let the deed shaw...

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HOO'S IT GAUN?



Tammy Schacket-Fleming
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A NOTE FROM OUR CFSS PRESIDENT

Hoo's it gaun? While some of us are in the throes of winter cold and snows there are just as many of us enjoying warmth and sunshine (*wish I was there*).

We, Flemings, are dispersed all over the world and it becomes easy to wish all a **Merry Christmas**. But that is a complicated issue in Scottish history and culture, the entire banning of Christmas at the top of the list. Also complicating the discussion is the integration of Celtic celebrations of the winter solstice into Christmas. Add to that that many of us celebrate a variety of other holidays, including Hanukkah and Kwanza. Flemings are indeed a global family.

Though it feels like Clan Fleming Scottish Society is USA focused, we do truly embrace you wherever you live and your cultures. Angie Fleming is sharing her story about the settling of Flemings in Appalachia (primarily settled by Scots and Irish). We would love others to share their stories of where their Fleming ancestors settled after leaving Scotland, Ireland or Wales. I've heard how the Flemings of Liberia established themselves and how the Flemings of Argentina's ancestor left Scotland for Canada then Texas and finally Argentina. I found it fascinating when I chatted with Agnes Fleming to find her family is from Kuujjuarapik in Nunavik, Quebec, part of the Inuit community. Their Fleming history and village culture is extraordinary.

All of this leads to such an important aspect of Fleming history. While we are all Flemings, we may not be all DNA related as noted by Reggie Chambers-Fleming. Everyone's journey is different and we encourage you to explore your Fleming history, take a DNA test, and share your story with all of us.

Wishing you all the Happiest Holidays and New Year.

Nollaig Chridheilagus Bliadhna Mhath!

Merry Christmas

PS. The old bloke beard and grey hair is only a disguise. The editor is 5yrs old, always has been and never will be any older

HOHOHO

Its a little unconventional for the editor to be contributing articles, but then since your editor is only 5 years old he doesn't really know any better. I hope you enjoy the **Nightlights** story on how I saw Santa and his sleigh in the night sky on Christmas Eve.

KIDS CORNER

Oh yes...

and please don't forget

THE BAIRN'S NEUK

We do want to see and hear your facebook posts on the Clan Fleming Scottish Society page with parents and grandparents jumping over yardsticks, hopping on one leg and listening to their bairns drumming on saucepans and marching accompanied by the skurl of the pipes



EDITORS CORNER

by **Ian Fleming**

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Clan Fleming Scottish Society's the **DEED** periodical magazine... it may be an obvious statement, but a publication like this doesn't just fall in a 'pile of digits' onto a page, whether that page is virtual, or made of the best quality paper, or as in days gone by onto parchment or vellum.

I would like to thank all of our contributors, especially our President Emeritus, Reginald Sanford Chambers-Fleming, and our President Tammy Schakett-Fleming for writing articles about their knowledge of and experiences with DNA and how it can contribute to the field of genealogy.

The article by Angie Fleming really highlights how DNA can 'turbocharge' your efforts in tracing your family ancestry. Angie has used AncestryDNA; FamilyTreeDNA;

Familysearch; 23andMe DNA tests and other resources along with over 20 genealogists, librarians and family historians...

Her article **From Vikings to the Virginia Frontier** really only touches on a small proportion of family lines in the USA and even since the article was completed the DNA links to lines of the rich and the powerful monarchies across Europe has been staggering.

Thanks also to Jim Fleming for his insights on Fleming family heraldry, and also to Mark Nicol, Jess Fleming, and Lyndsay Fleming for illuminating the traditions around the winter solstice, Christmas and Hogmany as it is celebrated in Scotland.

Let your **DEEDs** show

Fleming

Surname Origins

by **Jim Fleming**

Flandren

Flandrensis

Flandrensi

Flaminges

Flammaticus

Vlamentch

Flamensis

Flaminganus

Vlamen

Vlaen

Flam

Flambard

Flemen

Flamiani

Fleminch

Fleamyinge

Fleamyng

Fleeminge

The surname Fleming originates from an epithet or by-name used by scribes in Norman Britain to distinguish individuals who shared the same personal name. In the Norman court, men who hailed from Flanders were often given the Latin epithet Flandrensis or Flammaticus, meaning “native of Flanders.” This designation was sometimes rendered in French as le Fleming, or in Scottish charters as Flamang. In many cases, the epithet was passed down to their descendants and in rare cases was eventually adopted as an hereditary surname.

At the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror’s army included not only Normans but also contingents from Brittany, Maine, northeastern France and Flanders, along with smaller groups from other parts of Europe. Following his victory, many of these men were rewarded with English estates, as recorded in the Domesday Book twenty years later. Among the Flemish magnates granted land were Baldwin, Erchenbald, Frederic, Hugh, Humphrey, Odo, Ranulf, Roger, Walter and Winemar.

While most descendants of these Flemish newcomers eventually adopted other surnames, a few appear to have taken Fleming as their own. For instance, Erchenbald’s grandson, Baldwin of Biggar, is considered the progenitor of the surname Biggar. Meanwhile, descendants of Baldwin’s brother Erchenbald junior include the **Barons Slane of Ireland, who bore the surname le Fleming**. This family’s arms were vair, a chief chequy or and gules, and they also retained ownership of Erchenbald’s Domesday estates in Devonshire and Cornwall.



Arms of the Barons Slane
vair, a chief chequy or and gules

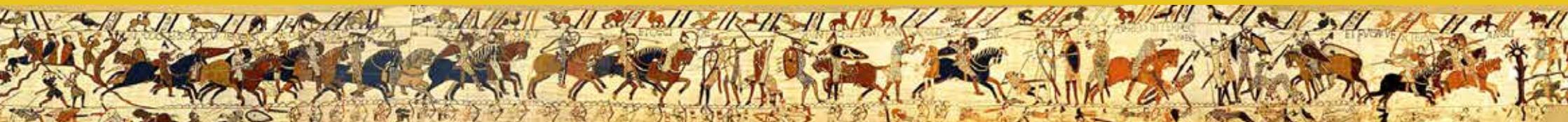


Arms of the Rydal Hall Flemings
gules, a fret argent

Other families in England also adopted the surname le Fleming. One of these, the **le Fleming family of Rydal Hall in Westmorland**, bore arms gules, a fret argent.

Another Fleming family that was established in Cumberland—bearing variations of azure, two

A portion from the Bayeux Tapestry
which illustrates William the Conqueror’s victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066





Arms of the Flemings of Cumberland
azure, two bars argent on a chief of the second (three lozenges gules)

The names of many of them initially included the epithet Flandrensis, Flamang, or le Fleming. However, most of their descendants adopted different surnames, including prominent families such as Baird, Balliol, Beaton, Biggar, Brodie, Bruce, Cameron, Campbell, Comyn, Crawford, Douglas, Erskine, Graham, Hamilton, Hay, Innes, Leslie, Lindsay, Murray, Oliphant, Seton, Stewart and Sutherland.

Fol. 3v: *William killing Harold at the Battle of Hastings, from the manuscript Decrees of Kings of Anglo-Saxon and Norman England*
British Library Cott Vitt A XIII

bars argent on a chief of the second—had **septs in Yorkshire and Lancashire**.

In Wales, a Fleming family bore gules, three crescents ermine.

A significant influx of men with Flemish ancestry arrived in Scotland shortly after 1124, when King David I ascended the throne, accompanied by his wife Maud, herself of Flemish descent. Although these individuals had Flemish heritage, many had been born in England following the Norman Conquest.



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In this manuscript William appears to have used a lazer to kill Harold. This may cast doubt upon its reliability as a source

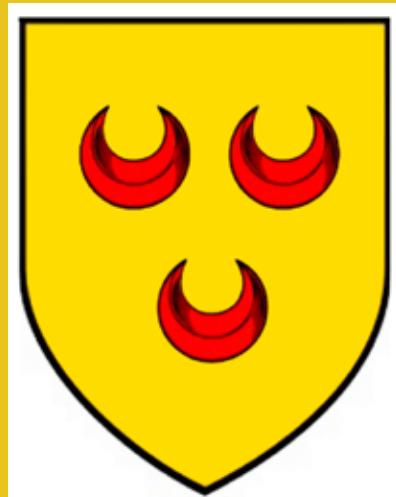


Arms of the Flemings of Wales
gules, three crescents ermine

Descendants of at least one of these 12th century Flemish immigrants to Scotland later adopted Fleming as a surname. This likely occurred during the early 13th century, as nine signatories to the Ragman Rolls of 1296 bore the name Fleming, with another possibly deriving it from a place called Fleming.

Among these signatories was **William le Fleming de Seton**, presumably a member of the Seton family and possibly the progenitor of the Welsh Fleming line mentioned earlier. Notably, both the Welsh Flemings and the Seton family bore arms featuring three crescents.

Arms of the Seton family
Or three crescents gules



Around thirty years later, additional Flemish men—expelled from England by King Henry II—found refuge in Scotland. Some settled as knightly tenants under King David's son, Malcolm IV, leaving their mark on the place names of Upper Clydesdale. These included Simon Loccard (Symington), Wice or Wizo (Wiston), Tancred (Thankerton), Lambin (Lambington), and Lambin's brother Robert (Roberton).

Seton family historian Beryl Platts has hypothesized that this symbol indicates descent from Count Lambert II of Lens, second son of a Count of Boulogne—then part of Flanders. She further suggests that the le Fleming family of Rydal Hall also descends from Lambert.



Arms of the Flemings of Barochan
Or a fess chequy argent and azure
surmounted by a bend of the third

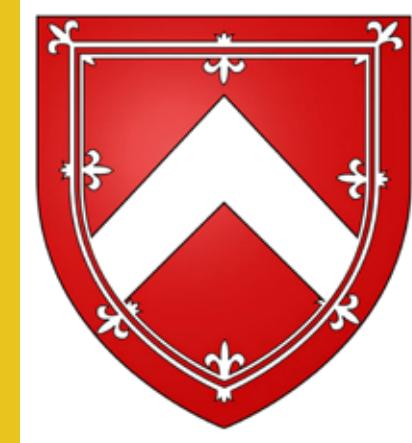
Patrick Fleming signed in association with men from Dunbarton. In my forthcoming book, Scotland's Fleming Clan: A Genealogical History, I will argue that Patrick, William, and Walter were early members of the family of **Good Sir Malcolm Fleming of Fulwood**, who would be created the **1st Earl of Wigtown** approximately fifty years later.

Another signatory, William le Fleming, signed alongside Finlay de Houston, Hugh Kennedy, and Hugh de Danielston—families associated with Renfrewshire. William's seal, attached to the document, features a fess surmounted by a bend, charges similar to the arms borne later by the **Fleming family of Barochan in Renfrewshire**. Walter le Fleming, likely his son and heir, also signed the document.



1344 Seal belonging to Malcolm Fleming of Fulwood
A chevron within a double tressure flory – counterflory, argent

In 1344 Malcolm attached his seal to a charter whereby he granted an annual rent of 100 shillings from the lands of Carse and Bulschalach to the friars preachers of St Katherine of Ayr for the benefit of his soul and those of his parents. The seal (pictured) bore his name and his arms - a chevron within a double tressure flory – counterflory. These symbols were featured in the arms of all subsequent leaders of the **Scottish Fleming clan**.

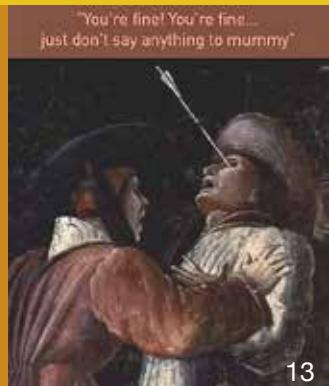


Fleming Arms
Gules, a chevron within a double tressure flory – counterflory, argent



Jim Fleming is a retired Customs Director and lives on Sydney's lower north shore. He began researching his family history in 1983 and has been a member of the Society of Australian Genealogists since then. Aside from genealogy he enjoys travelling and singing baritone in two choirs. He is Secretary and Historian of the Clan Fleming Scottish Society.
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STARTING YOUR FLEMING GENEALOGY JOURNEY

by Tammy Schacket-Fleming

Genealogy is the study of family history and lineage, specifically Clan Fleming for all of us. Embarking on a genealogy journey can be a fascinating way to discover more about your Fleming ancestors and understand your Scottish heritage and culture. There is always the option of hiring a professional genealogist, but DIY is fun and rewarding. This guide provides an overview of how to get started, helpful tips, and resources to make your research rewarding.

A Beginner's Guide to Exploring Fleming Family History

Step 1 Define Your Goals

Begin by asking yourself what you hope to achieve. Do you want to trace your family back as far as possible or uncover specific stories or events? Setting clear goals will help guide your research and keep you motivated.

Step 2 Gather What You Already Know

Start with yourself and work backward. Write down names, dates, places of birth, marriage, and death for your parents, grandparents, and, if possible, great-grandparents. Collect family documents, photographs, letters, and heirlooms that may hold clues.

- Interview relatives for stories and details.
- Review birth certificates, marriage licenses, and other vital records.
- Pay attention to family traditions or stories that may hint at origins or migrations.

GENEALOGY 101

Step 3 Organize Your Information

Keep your notes organized using charts, notebooks, or genealogy software. Family tree charts and pedigree forms can help visualize relationships and gaps in information. Consider using online platforms such as Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, or MyHeritage for digital recordkeeping and collaboration. FamilyTree DNA partners with MyHeritage and has an ongoing study of Fleming DNA. We encourage all Flemings to have their DNA tested with FamilyTree DNA. While most of these sites are free to some degree, eventually you will need to spend money to go further back in history.

Step 4 Start Researching

Expand your search to public records, archives, and online databases. Key sources include:

- Census Records: Track families and individuals over time.
- Immigration & Naturalization Records: Discover migration patterns and origins.
- Military Records: Reveal service history and connections.
- Newspapers and Obituaries: Find stories, announcements, and clues.
- Church and Cemetery Records: Access baptism, marriage, burial, and membership details.
- Fleming academic research and books written by professional researchers or family autobiographies.

Step 5 Verify and Document Sources

It's crucial to verify the accuracy of the information you find. Always record where each piece of information came from. Proper documentation makes your family tree reliable and helps others who may be researching the same lines.

Step 6 Connect with the Community

Join genealogy societies, online forums, and social media groups, like Friends of Clan Fleming Scottish Society. These communities can offer support, advice, and access to specialized resources. Consider attending workshops, webinars, or local events to enhance your skills and meet fellow researchers. Attend Clan Fleming gatherings or Scottish games/events to share your stories with other Flemings.

Step 7 Share and Preserve Your Findings

Share your discoveries with family members and consider creating reports, books, or digital presentations. Preserving your research ensures it remains available for future generations and encourages others to continue the journey.

- Print and archive important documents.
- Back up digital files regularly.
- Consider donating research to local archives or libraries.

Conclusion

Starting your Fleming genealogy journey is a meaningful way to explore your roots, celebrate your heritage, and connect with family past and present. With patience, curiosity, and organization, you'll uncover stories that enrich your understanding of who you are and where you come from. Watch The Deed for Fleming family stories. If you have a story, please share with us and we will put your story in an upcoming issue.

NIGHTLIGHTS

by Ian Fleming

**It was the sudden movement of lights
that caught my eye. I was transfixed**

I recognised him immediately....

**He had been in my every waking
thought for weeks now.**



a family Santa's sleigh decoration that hung on our Christmas tree for many years

**If it had happened nowadays
I may not have seen anything.**
The towns and villages of my youth were not bathed in the orange glow of sodium street lighting. Then the lights in the sky didn't have to compete with the comforting 'security blanket' illuminating our roads and footpaths - banishing darkness and easing our fears.

**I'm sure his task was easier
in those days - navigating the globe by starlight - observing the position of the planets - he's made the journey thousands of times. No light pollution then.**

I only saw him for two minutes - before the horror of what I was doing chewed through the trance I was in. The realisation of the risk I was taking struck home. The terrible consequences of being discovered flowed into my mind.

Everyone knows what will happen if you see Santa. He won't leave your presents - I didn't know exactly what would happen to them. Whether a good boy or girl would get extra presents, or whether he might keep them for a year and if my behaviour was up to scratch - I might get them the following year.

NIGHTLIGHTS

As I re-inserted myself between the covers the panic which struck was tempered by awe and wonder.

I had seen the whole sleigh — reindeers — and very clearly, I had seen the red suit. He was too far away for me to have seen his face, but there was no doubt.

There were lights on the sleigh. I think there were four. The whole sleigh glowed slightly and there seemed to be a pathway of light under the reindeer that trailed away behind the sleigh. I didn't notice if there was a red glow at the front — perhaps there was and I just didn't notice, but all the reindeer looked identical to me.

The whole sleigh had been turning in a circular movement and now as it sped away it dropped lower in the sky and its path was gradually obscured by the large copper beech tree on the way down the long avenue of our house.

Fear gripped me . . . and uncertainty. I hadn't seen what direction he had come from, but he was obviously leaving now. **Comfort came**, I realised that our house was the last one in the village. Yes of course he must have done all the other houses first. . . . But. Had he actually stopped at my house. Had he left presents - or did he know I was going to look out and see him. If he had left presents, could he just make them evaporate and disappear now that I had seen him.

The damage was done now, all I could do was sleep and hope. No comfort was given by the dark shape of the dressing gown which hung on the back of the bedroom door. Tonight, however, it could not inflict any greater fears than those already felt.

It was important to keep my eyes closed now.

A story from my childhood, about age 6 and now, nearly 60 years later, I still find it difficult to accept that I may not have seen Santa Claus, ...the power of belief

WILL YOU BE WASSAILING THIS TWELFTH NIGHT



flemings - acting the goat since... . . . well since forever

Will you join the Lords of Misrule on January 5th to appease tree spirits and ensure fertility, singing, shouting, banging pots/pans, or firing guns to scare away demons. Sharing a drink of spiced ale, cider or even a wee dram from the communal Wassail Bowl?

FROM ANCESTRY, TO FAMILY TREE DNA

A Story not so Clear

by President Emeritus

Reginald Sanford Chambers-fleming

My genealogical journey began with a simple DNA test from Ancestry. The results, although presented in simplistic terms to appeal to more consumers, were not simple at all, but have multiple layers of complexity. It was and still can be exciting, but can be frustrating and tedious if you are making a serious attempt at proper research.

When first working on the Chambers tree, my first tree was completed in a weekend! I was ecstatic, I was related to Somerled, the **Lord of Isles and the chiefly line of Glencoe**. However, since I was using Familytree provided by the Church of Latter Day Saints other members could edit your entries (*I believe they have changed this*). **Members from Clan MacDonald erased my tree up to the Chambers departure from Scotland.**



I was furious... and reached out to a Chambers family historian who I had been corresponding with. She assuaged my frustration and gave me some tips on how to research my genealogy. It wasn't for another year that I actually narrowed down an approximate area where the Chambers originated and even now, that particular line's origins are not exactly clear.

After this adventure is when I discovered that ***I wasn't a Chambers*** at all. Ancestry had introduced Thrulines and names began appearing that I wasn't familiar with. **Blispinghoff, Fleming and Kleis** were present, but Chambers was not. Compounding this was my Chambers cousin's inquiry if I shared a connection with a person who had Cherokee ancestors. Rumor was that the Chambers had indigenous blood. If so, I did not, indigenous peoples having unique genetic markers. I shared this with my cousin and she gave me some powerful advice. All in all **DNA does not lie** and there is a bunch of wishful thinking.

**I WAS FURIOUS, I HAD
BEEN LOOKING FORWARD
TO A LIFETIME'S SUPPLY
OF HAGGIS BURGERS WITH
NEEP & TATTIE CURLY FRIES**

As I started tinkering with Thrulines, no Chambers were popping up as cross matches, only a few Blispinghoffs and Klies's and a growing number of Flemings. One individual, Lauren, turned out to be my sister and has been on this adventure with me nearly since the beginning. She informed me that our father's father's surname was Fleming and he had an affair with a Kliess who married a Blispinghoff. I've always made the off handed joke that our family history could have easily been an episode on Jerry Springer. Our story is the perfect example of a **Non Paternal Event** or **NPE**. However, I contacted a Fleming cousin on Ancestry who was doubtful of our relationship. This prompted me to research companies that provided Y-DNA tests.



FTDNA BIG-Y700 Globetrekker feature

my anthropological inclinations. However, it is also significant in tracking where our ancestors heralded from and when the Fleming name was adopted.

Our family history could have easily been an episode on the Jerry Springer Show !

Using my personal story as an illustration of how convoluted name acquisition was up to the point when more accurate censuses were taken after the formation of the United States, many Flemings are not from Flanders. **How do we know this?** Another advantage of FTDNA are the surname and cultural DNA projects it supports, run by members. Several of these directly involve the Fleming surname. One particular one has traced several branches, mine included, adding new members and designating others to specific categories.

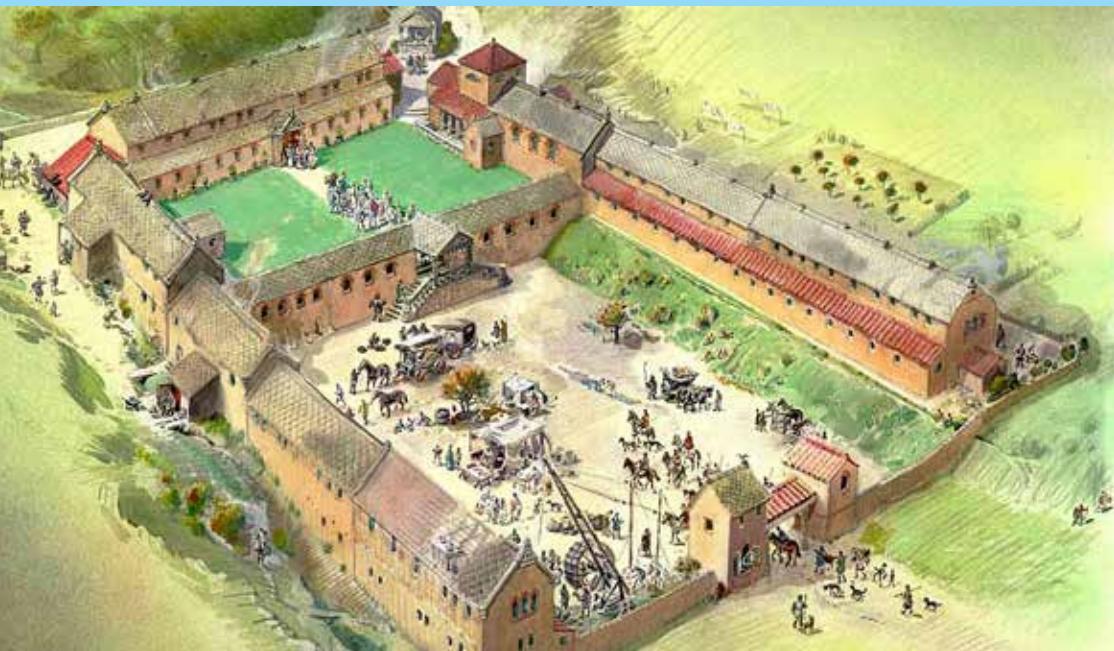
What you first realize is that we are not all related. The second epiphany is that culturally our ancestors entered Britain at different periods. **My ancestors are estimated to have crossed the 'English' channel 300 BCE. Flanders wouldn't even exist for another 1,000 years.** Recorded as Gallia Belgica by the Romans it was home to the Celtic Belgae. Across the Rhine were the Germanic tribes that would form a confederation called the Franks. Rome conquered the Belgae and in time the Franks overthrew the Romans, eventually becoming the Frankish empire. One Frankish tribe in particular, the Salian Franks, resided where Flanders is now.



Merovee, King of the Salian Franks

Although a **Germanic haplogroup** (haplogroups are groupings of specific DNA) according to phylogenetic trees, my ancestors resided in the British Isles before Roman occupation. I speculate this is the case for many Flemings, our predecessors living in the lowlands before there was a Scotland, when Welsh myth records the mysterious Men of the North as laying the foundations of the

Kingdoms of **Gondoddin**, **Rheged** and **Strathclyde**. Among my Fleming contacts in England and Northern Ireland there is some connection to the Woodchurches of Kent, whose founding member was Norman and descendant of a viking, but the Jutes also had a kingdom in Kent which, purportedly, the Normans feared. Then there is the case of the Franks who along with Frisians and Saxons were pirates and also served as auxilia for the Roman Empire.



Artist's reconstruction of Chedworth Roman Villa in the fourth-century, image by UK National Trust, via historyoftheancientworld.com

Everyone who does their family history wants to be related to Marie Antionette... No one ever seems to find out they're related to the local rat catcher...

All of these latter cultural groups are phylogenetically separate, however their material culture tells a different story. Anglo-Saxon, Frankish and Viking cultural materials are hardly discernable between the lot!



John Fleming, 2nd Earl of Wigton (1589-1650), was the 7th Lord Fleming. Known as "Wigtoun" or "Wigtown" a portrait made in 1625.

There have been many dead ends, pot holes and twists and turns, but there are several things we know for sure. Paternally, the noble Fleming line ended and its titles and lands were inherited by the Elphistones through the marriage of the last Lord Fleming's daughter to her contemporary.

Any connection claimed to the **Lords Fleming** is conjecture and slapdash.

Do not trust public trees, they are notoriously fraudulent, but can provide stepping stones. Do not be a wishful thinker, reserve your ancestors for the dregs of society or a peasant at best. This will make any findings that much better if your Fleming ancestor was anyone of import. Lastly, DNA doesn't lie. There are margins of error and time estimates sometimes are off, but the attack on science is disinformation and

the few times results have been wrong it was the testee and not the tester that contaminated the sample. **My challenge to all Flemings: please take a DNA test, let's get a more complete mosaic that we can look at with pride of our rich, Fleming history.**

Reginald Chambers is a paraeducator and head coach. He is married and has three sons. Besides coaching, his passions are history and genealogy.



CHRISTMAS BEFORE CHRIST

Winter Solstice in the Scottish Borders

by **Mark Nicol**

In the hills and valleys of the Scottish Borders, a search unfolds for ancient hill forts and stone circles once sacred to pre-Christian peoples.

Long before Christmas, these pagan communities marked the Winter Solstice with rituals tied to the land — but does the evidence still remain? In this article, we explore the decline of Paganism in Scotland, how Christianity took root, and the cultural impact of this religious shift.



Join us on a festive adventure through hillforts, stone circles, and ancient high places across the Borders, as we explore how the pagan tribes of Scotland may have marked the Winter Solstice — long before the nativity scene ever came into view.

As the snow settles on the hills and another year draws to a close, it's time to ask a bold question: Did people in the Scottish Borders celebrate Christmas... before Christ?



Winter Solstice at Callanish on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland where our ancestors have marked the turning of the year for several millenia



Winter Solstice – The Original Festival of Light

Long before Christmas as we know it — the trees, the tinsel, the turkey — ancient peoples were gathering at sacred sites to honour the turning of the seasons. For them, the Winter Solstice marked the shortest day of the year — the death of the old sun and the rebirth of the new.

They didn't call it Christmas, of course, but the essence of hope, renewal, and light returning was at the heart of their winter celebrations.

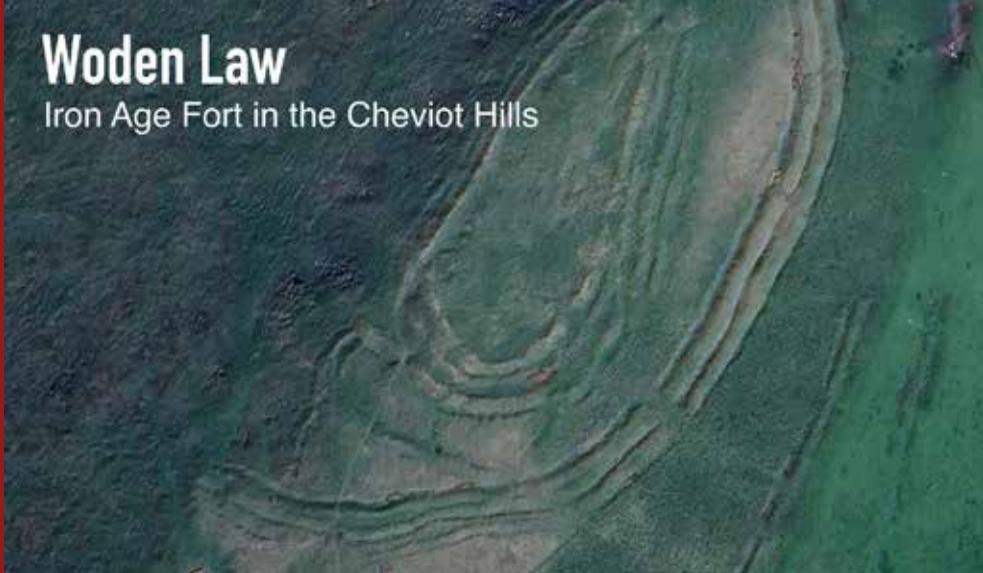


Searching the Hillforts and Stone Circles

So, what kind of sites did these people use? And can we still find them today? I set out into the Scottish Borders, searching through forests, moors, and lonely hills for evidence of stone circles,

Woden Law

Iron Age Fort in the Cheviot Hills



Our ancestors have sculpted the land for centuries, observing the skies to determine the turning of the seasons, time to plant and move animals to new pastures

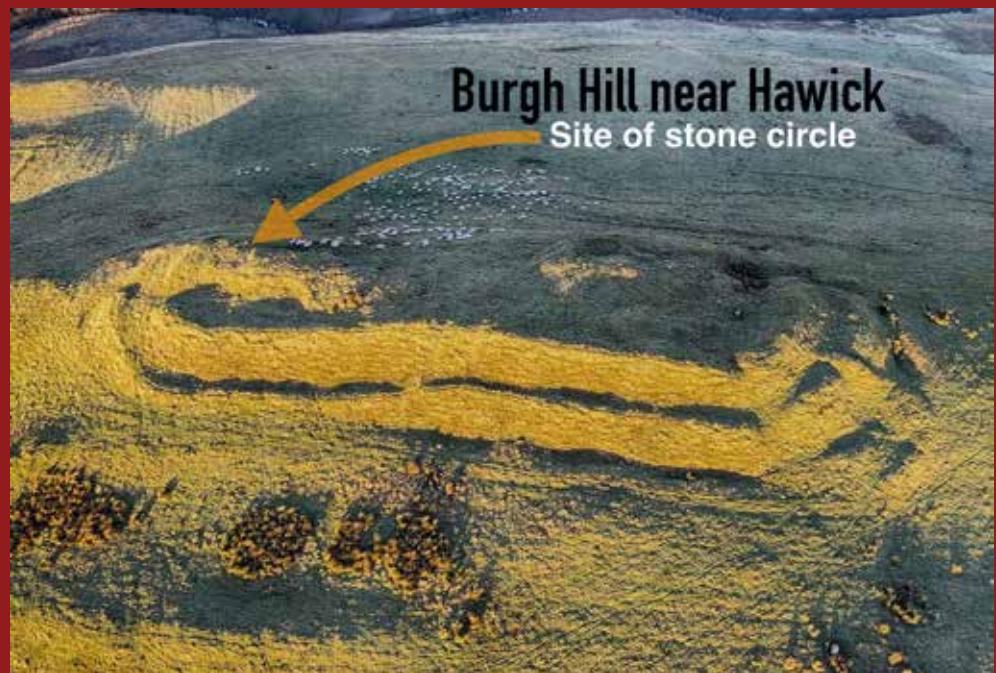
hillforts, or sacred alignments. These places would have been key gathering spots for midwinter rites — giant timekeepers used to track the sun, stars, and shifting seasons.

The Scottish Borders has the highest density of Iron Age Hill Forts in the UK and I have explored many of them over the years. At Woden Law in the Cheviot Hills with its colossal earthworks, there is much



evidence of how these people used the seasons to govern their lives. I believe that many if not all of these Iron Age forts would have accompanying stone circles, many of which have disappeared.

However, at Burgh Hill near Hawick in the historic county of Roxburghshire, I had heard there may still be a stone circle, so I set out with my drone to see if I could discover any evidence of it...



And yes, I located the very overgrown circle and I could locate 19 stones — so not as grand as Stonehenge — but no less powerful. Stone circles, set in alignment with the rising or setting sun, hinting at seasonal awareness and celestial observation. Some hillforts even show signs of long-forgotten rituals — where people may have gathered together, lit fires, and looked skyward as the sun stood still in the darkest part of the year.

THE DARKNESS OF WINTER GRADUALLY YIELDS TO THE LIGHT AND HOPE OF A NEW YEAR

What Would a Pagan Christmas Look Like?

Picture this: snow crunching underfoot, pine branches thick with frost, fires blazing at the centre of a sacred ring of stones. No shopping malls, no fairy lights — but plenty of symbolism, song, and storytelling. A celebration of light in darkness, of surviving the coldest days, and welcoming the sun's return.

Sound familiar? It should. Much of what we now associate with Christmas — trees, candles, feasting, and gathering together — is rooted in these pre-Christian traditions.



Forgotten but Not Lost

Many of the stone circles I visited are now half-buried, moss-covered, and nearly forgotten. But they still speak, in their quiet way, of a time when the land was the calendar — and the stars were the storytellers.

Places like:

- ⌚ Remote stone settings hidden in forest clearings
- 🔥 Hilltop enclosures where fires once blazed
- ⌚ Ancient alignments pointing toward midwinter sunrise

They're still there — if you know where to look. And they tell us that the Borders were alive with ritual and reverence long before Santa ever popped down anyone's chimney.



Christmas Tree, 1922 Painting by Newell Convers Wyeth (1882-1945)

A Different Kind of Christmas Gift

This year, maybe the greatest gift we can give ourselves is a deeper connection to the land beneath our feet — to remember the myths and stories etched in stone, and woven into the cultures of the people who came before us.

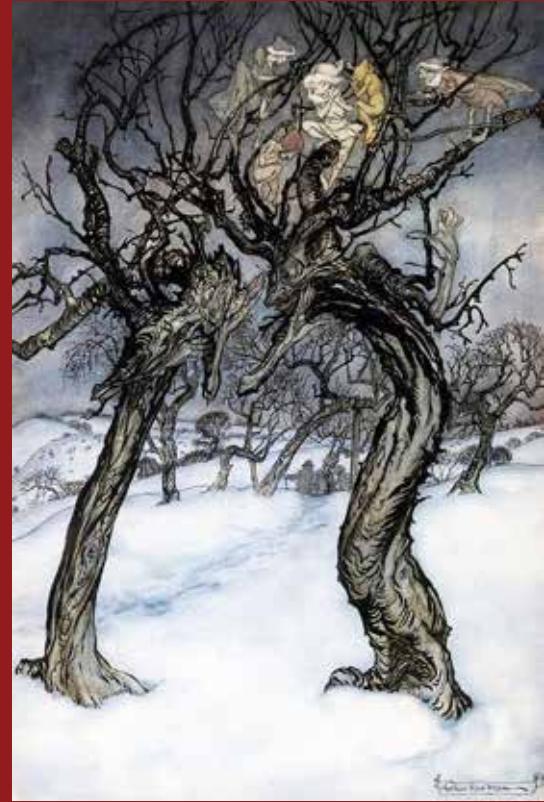
So wherever you are, whether you're lighting a candle, singing a carol, or just taking a quiet walk in the hills — know that you're part of a much older tradition than you might have realised.

 Blessed Winter Solstice

 Merry Christmas from Discover Scottish Borders

 And lets celebrate the returning of the light.

 Watch the full video here: Christmas Before Christ — on YouTube



The Whisper Trees, Arthur Rackham

Mark Nicol

Historian | Filmmaker | Blogger

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FROM VIKINGS TO THE VIRGINIA FRONTIER

The Fleming journey to the Appalachians

Tracing our DNA from Scandinavia, Normandy, Flanders, Scotland and across the Atlantic to the Appalachians and the Virginia Frontier.

by Angie Fleming

The story of the Fleming family stretches across continents and centuries—originating among Norse-influenced settlers of medieval Flanders, rising to prominence within Scotland's noble houses, and ultimately taking root in the rugged Appalachian Mountains. Descendants across Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee carry a heritage shaped by migration, indigenous ties, frontier warfare, folklore, mining, horsemanship, and a powerful sense of clan identity.

Genealogy has been affected massively by advances in DNA technology and its wider availability – this article highlights just some of the connections that are appearing on my family tree. There's much more study to be undertaken but the initial results have been absolutely mindblowing for me...



The beauty of an Appalachian Mountain sunset

The results of DNA tests on Family Finder DNA have linked me to **Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye** (Old Norse: Sigurðr ormr í auga) or Sigurd Ragnarsson - his father was the famous Viking King **"Ragnar Lothbrok"** (or Lodbork - Old Norse: Ragnarr Loðbrók) and his mother was "Aslaug the Seer." Obviously this predates our family surname **Fleming**, but it does link our ancestry to the Flemings originally referred to as people from Flanders who migrated into Britain during the Norman period?



Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye's nickname arose from the mark in his left eye, described as the image of a snake biting its own tail, known as the Ouroboros.



Appalachian Mountain ranges

By the 11-1200s, Flemings were well established in Scotland as landowners, warriors, and political allies to the Stewart, Bruce, and Hamilton Clans. Their ancient motto, **"Let the Deed Shaw"** ("Let the Deeds Show"), reflects a lineage built on action, loyalty, courage, and service.

As a result of my genealogical and DNA research journey, my application to the **Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)** has been accepted and my details are in the process of being submitted to the **Mayflower Society**, since I can trace ancestors who arrived on the original Mayflower ship that landed at Plymouth.



King Ælla's messenger before Ragnar Lothbrok's sons, Ivar the Boneless, Ubba, Hvitserk & Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye. painting by August Malmström

All the following people mentioned who are from the Appalachians and beyond are related to the Flemings and myself either directly through DNA or through marriage into lines on my family tree.

THE DNA DON'T LIE

the Carolinas before pushing into what would become Appalachia, intermarrying with the Potters, Bentleys, Mullins, Johnsons, Roberts, Hendersons, Roberts, Bruce and Stewart lines – all of whom appear on my family tree. That has resulted in the incredibly rich intermingling of DNA and family connections that we Fleming's share across those centuries.

As centuries passed, Fleming descendants—along with Scots, Scots Irish, English border families, and northern Europeans—emigrated to the American colonies. Many moved along the Great Wagon Road through Virginia and

Boone, Roberts, Henderson & the Settlement of Kentucky

Few events shaped the Appalachian frontier more than the opening of Kentucky. In 1775, Daniel Boone carved the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap, opening the western frontier despite fierce resistance from Native warriors.



Daniel Boone
leads settlers through
the Cumberland Gap



*Engraving of Daniel Boone
circa 1861*

Boone founded Boonesborough, one of the earliest English-speaking settlements west of the Appalachians. By 1800, more than 200,000 settlers—including the Flemings and Bentleys—had followed his trail.

**DANIEL BOONE
OPENED THE
WESTERN FRONTIER
BY CARVING THE
WILDERNESS ROAD
THROUGH THE
CUMBERLAND GAP**



At the Siege of Boonesborough etching by Edwin L. Sabin (1919)

Family tradition holds that Boone's cousin Cornelius Roberts (Robards)—connected through the Fleming line—saved Boone's life during the **1778 Siege of Boonesborough**.

Kentucky Colonels & the Henderson Legacy

In March 1775, Boone and Henderson negotiated land treaties with Cherokee leaders at Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga River at Elizabethton, Tennessee. Henderson's Transylvania Company agreed to pay £10,000 sterling in trade goods to purchase 20 million acres of land between the Kentucky and Cumberland Rivers which makes up much of modern-day Kentucky and northern Tennessee.



Treaty of Sycamore Shoals, depicted in T. Gilbert White's mural in the Kentucky Capitol building

Henderson petitioned the **Continental Congress** for recognition as the 14th colony. However, in 1776, the **Virginia General Assembly** invalidated the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals (also known as the *Transylvania Purchase*) and officially reclaimed the land, ending the rather short existence of Transylvania.

The origins of the **Kentucky Colonel**, the highest civilian honour in the Commonwealth, reach back to the era of Colonel Richard Henderson—a pivotal founder of early Kentucky and tied to the Fleming family through marriage.

Henderson's Transylvania Land Company, along with his commissioning of Boone and Daniel Boone Henderson, shaped the earliest governance, diplomacy, and settlement patterns of the Kentucky frontier. His leadership is often seen as an early model of what the Kentucky Colonel would later represent: service, civic duty, wise judgment, and leadership.

Native Appalachia Before European Settlement

It is worth pausing to consider Appalachia prior to European settlement. Appalachia belonged to a network of powerful indigenous nations, including the Yuchi, Shawnee, Powhatan, and Cherokee. These tribes used the mountains for hunting buffalo and elk, for warfare, for ceremony, and as strategic lookout points. Their ancient trails later guided settlers, long-hunters, scouts, militias, and early soldiers.



Meeting of the Transylvania House of Delegates convened by Richard Henderson. Sketch of the constitutional convention meeting by B.F. Cox "under the shade of a huge elm tree at least a hundred feet wide".



Pocahontas

Mary Bolling (Fleming)



However, we ought to note that there were many instances of relationships between native peoples and European settlers. Among those instances was Pocahontas, I am kin to Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy through my Pocahontas line and also by marriage through her grand daughter Mary Bolling (Fleming)

Jefferson Davis relationship to Pocahontas is through her son Thomas Rolfe, via the well-documented Bolling–Randolph–Davis lineage. This is one of the most established Pocahontas descendant lines in American genealogy. Thomas Jefferson 3rd President of the US is also related to the Fleming's through the John Rolfe and Pocahontas line.

Notable descendants of Pocahontas through the Fleming line

The Fleming branch begins with Mary Bolling (1711–1744), daughter of Major John Bolling and Mary Kennon, who married Col. John Fleming (c. 1697–1756) in 1727. Their eight children (including Charles, John, Thomas, William, and others) produced many lines of Virginia gentry, intertwining with families like Randolph, Cabell, and Gay.

American Revolution, Land Grants & War of 1812

After the Revolutionary War, land grants were awarded to many soldiers such as the Flemings, Bentleys, Harlans, and Roberts, and these tracts of land helped establish many Appalachian homesteads.

Brigadier General Daniel Stewart

Daniel Stewart was born in Liberty County, Georgia, and enlisted in the militia during the American Revolution. Captured by the British, Stewart escaped from a prison ship docked in Charleston Harbour. After the war, Stewart served as a state representative and county sheriff for Liberty County, where he assisted with resolving the Creek Indian wars in Georgia. While serving as state senator for Liberty County, Stewart was promoted to brigadier general in the Georgia Militia and commanded a cavalry brigade during the War of 1812.



Brigadier General Daniel Stewart

Colonel William Fleming



Another prominent figure linked to the Fleming name was Colonel William Fleming, an American physician, soldier, planter, and political leader on the southwest Virginia and Kentucky frontier. He served as a justice of the peace, represented the region in the Senate of Virginia, and even briefly acted as Governor of Virginia during the Revolutionary War.

Our William Fleming shouldn't be confused with Judge William Fleming. While they were contemporaries who served in the Virginia legislature and the Continental Congress - they were two very distinct individuals, because the Judge was also the 5th President of the Continental Congress from 1805-09.

Robert Fleming – War of 1812 Veteran

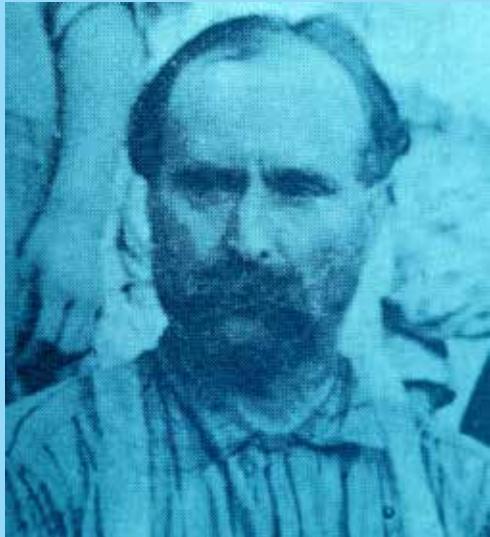
A foundational ancestor, Robert Fleming arrived in America as a stowaway from Ireland, served in Captain David Gooding's Company, fought in the 16th Regiment, Kentucky Militia, served Sep 10, 1814 – Mar 9, 1815, and received a War of 1812 land grant.

The Civil War: North & South divided many families

Appalachian families were no different to families all across America in the deep divisions that felt during the Civil War. Four Fleming brothers fought for the Confederacy: Frederick Nelson "Fighting Fred" Fleming, John Jackson Fleming, Phillip Fleming, and Robert Jefferson "Big Jeff" Fleming. Other Confederate relatives included **Black Saul Fleming**, William Bentley, Thomas Fleming, Isaac Fleming, Robert Robards, and James Bentley.

My Grandmother was a Bentley and the family was equally represented in the North, including John Bentley and Robert H. Bentley. Of course many other Flemings also served, such as Captain James Fleming, (whose 18 letters sent back to Ireland regarding the Civil War are of great historic importance) John C. Fleming, Robert Flemming, and Burr Bryant Fleming.

Outlaw and Civil War Hero Black Saul Fleming was said to be a Mulangeon.



Brevet Brigadier General Robert H. Bentley



Robert H. Bentley was born in Mansfield, Ohio on August 8, 1835. At the time of his enlistment, he was 26 years old and was an attorney by profession. He enlisted as a Sergeant and was later commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant and Quartermaster in the 32nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. 2 years later he was commissioned as a Lt Colonel in the 12th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry and was eventually promoted to Brevet Brigadier General.

The story of those divisions between kith & kin has no better illustration than Sanders D. Bruce who fought for the Union not only against his own brother Benjamin Bruce, but also against his brother-in-law John Hunt Morgan the "Thunderbolt of the Confederacy."

Bruce was a Union Colonel from Lexington, Kentucky – and Morgan, was a Brigadier General in the Confederate Cavalry. Clarksville, TN and the Cumberland River at what is now known as Fort Defiance Civil War Park was the area where the two clashed during the war. The fort known to many as Fort Bruce (and to some Fort Sevier) changed hands numerous times during the war.

Granny Easter Fleming & the Line of Seers

In the mid-1800s, **Granny Easter Branham Fleming** served the mountains as a midwife and healer, often paid in barter with eggs, quilts, produce, or livestock. Her compassion and skill embodied the earliest form of healthcare in Appalachia. Clan tradition also speaks of a lineage of seer-women, such as the Viking völur, "Aslaug the Seer," wife of Ragnar Lothbrok, as an ancestral figure. And in Scotland, Lady Margaret Fleming, lady-in-waiting to Mary, Queen of Scots, was noted for her prophetic insight and suffered accusations of being a witch.

Granny Easter Branham Fleming and Solomon Fleming



Mixed-Race Communities & the Melungeons of Appalachia

These communities lived in remote hollers, often isolated by geography and by prejudice. Their bloodlines developed unique genetic markers that occasionally reappear generations later. In the Fleming family, elders often noted the “Melungeon gene” surfacing every few generations—a trait that has drawn interest from modern DNA studies.

Melungeons are an isolated, tri-racial group in the southeastern U.S. (Appalachia) with mixed European (Portuguese, Spanish, French, Welsh), African (free people of color), and Native American ancestry including Yuchi, Shawnee, Powhatan, and Cherokee lineages, historically living in areas of Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. Regardless of origin, Melungeons became an essential part of Appalachian identity—resourceful, blended, and culturally rich long before America embraced diversity.

Coal, Cornmash, Church, Hospitality, & Mountain Community

During the Great Depression, many Flemings worked in coal camps such as the Elkhorn Creek Coal Company. The mines were dangerous, and family memory honors several lost in mining accidents. One of the most tragic losses occurred at the Elkhorn Coal Corporation in Hemphill, Kentucky, where brothers Bill and Saul Fleming were killed in a major mine accident that devastated the community.

Another tragedy struck at Bethlehem Mine No. 22 in Deane, Kentucky, where Pallas “Patty” Harlan Fleming lost his life. This accident remains one of the most painful chapters in the family’s mining history. These events left deep emotional scars and stand as somber reminders of the extreme risks Appalachian miners faced to feed their families and maintain their homes.

Another part of Appalachian history—rarely recorded but long remembered—is the presence of African American miners who lived and worked beside white Appalachian families, including the Flemings and Bentleys. Underground, racial lines blurred - miners depended on one another completely. The role of African American miners remains one of the mountain’s quiet, often forgotten chapters.

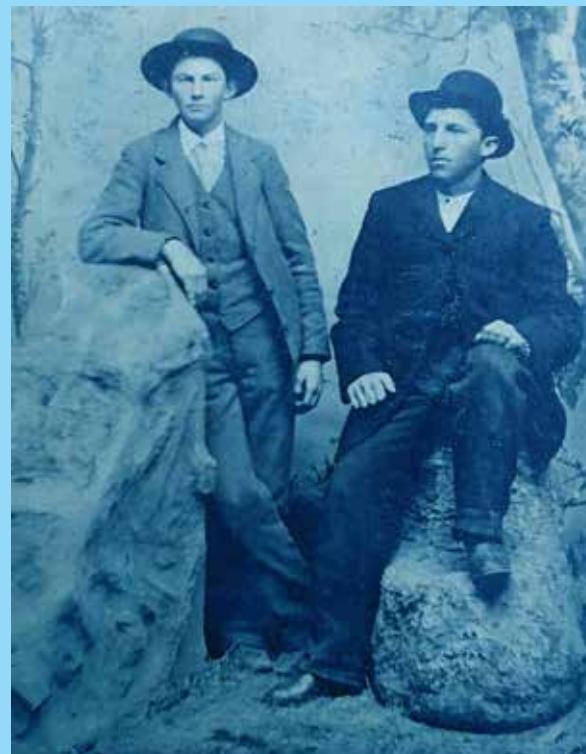
To endure the harsh economic times, families quilted, farmed, kept bees, grew gardens, raised large families, and made cornmash whiskey—the ancestor of both moonshine and bourbon. Scottish and Irish musical traditions blended with mountain rhythms to form bluegrass, while contests of strength echoed the Highland Games.

Sunday church served as the spiritual and social center of mountain life. If a boy was “sweet on a girl,” church was where he hoped to see his sweetheart. Many marriages began across a wooden pew or during the slow walk home afterward. Sunday dinner was a deeply rooted custom—a meal you simply could not refuse without causing offense. Women spent all day Saturday preparing the meal so Sunday could be reserved for worship, rest, and fellowship.

Frank & Jesse James Outlaws to the World, Kin to the Flemings

I am a distant cousin to Frank and Jesse James who was also related to Devil John Wright. My great grandmother met Frank and Jesse James, who stayed with Fleming relatives during their travels. In the way of things in those days Devil John Wright was not only an Outlaw, but also a US Marshall, mercenary for hire and both a Confederate and Union Soldier.

Another outlaw legend in the family is Black Saul Fleming, an outlaw-scout hero known for disappearing into the mountains while remaining fiercely loyal to his kin.



Outlaw brothers Frank and Jesse James



*Legendary Kentucky Moonshiners
Jeff and George Fleming*

Horses reared. Confusion erupted. And the Bentley boys vanished into the ridgeline. The revenuers had the authority—but the Bentleys had their wits.

Jeff and George Fleming were Kentucky Moonshiners during the Great Depression and Prohibition. They did whatever it took to take care of the family and used our whiskey making Scottish Heritage to feed the family.

Underground Railroad: The Lemmon Home of Cynthiana, Ky

The Underground Railroad was a clandestine network which assisted fugitive slaves, and its activities were often undocumented to protect those involved. On Battlegrove Avenue in Cynthiana, three homes formed a coordinated Underground Railroad network. The Lemmon home included a cistern-tunnel escape route, a gas lantern used as a signal to move travellers and a cast-iron fireplace engraved with a protective knight. Members of my Henderson relations were said to be strong supporters of this network.

Hatchet-Head Dolly Bentley and Moonshine Lore

No history of the Appalachian Flemings and Bentleys is complete without the fierce pioneer matriarch Hatchet-Head Dolly Bentley. During Prohibition, when families relied on moonshine to survive, Dolly's sons were distilling corn liquor when revenuers arrived on horseback, riding hard up the mountain path. The boys fled out the back door, racing toward the woods. But Dolly's daughter, Icye Bentley, stood her ground.

Quick as lightning, she cut the galluses (suspenders) off the officers' trousers. Their pants fell.



Sanders Dewee Bruce

and the first national equine publications. Through the Stewart-Bruce lineage, they were also related to President Theodore Roosevelt.

A Legacy That Endures

From Vikings to midwives, from Scottish warriors to coal miners, seers, outlaws, healers, politicians, soldiers, and storytellers, the Fleming legacy is one of endurance and transformation. Through language, music, faith, work, indigenous ties, and mountain tradition, the deeds of the clan still speak.

Angie's DNA and genealogical research continues apace, to date it has uncovered links to Founding Father Benjamin Franklin, 8th President Van Buren, 16th President Abraham Lincoln, 26th President Theodore Roosevelt – and through the HV Royalty Gene, meaning links to royalty not only on the Stewart line through Robert Bruce, King James and Mary Queen of Scots but also through Cleves to Alexandra Federonova of Germany through to the Romanovs. **Watch this space...**



Angela "Angie" Fleming

*Historian | Genealogist | Regional Director
Clan Fleming Scottish Society (KY-VA-TN)*

The Fleming-Bruce Connection

Kentucky's Equine Industry is born

One of the most overlooked chapters of American history is the Fleming-Bruce influence on Kentucky's thoroughbred industry. Despite fighting on opposite sides of the Civil War - Sanders and Benjamin Bruce reunited to create Kentucky's first organized breeding standards, the earliest equine auctions, foundational stallion registries,

THE BAIRN'S NEUK KIDS NEED TO MOVE!

KIDS
CORNER



Move with your little ones by guiding their movements to some of your favourite Scottish music! Try out some of these movements that we use in our kids workshops to help them connect to the music and the culture!

MARCH TO PIPE MUSIC

Put on some of your favourite Highland pipe music and have your little one March behind you in a follow the leader style pattern. If you are daring, let them lead! Try to find faster tunes to match the faster heartbeat of children.



HOP TO THE MUSIC

This one is a favourite! This is especially fun if you challenge them to hop longer than you. Find your favourite Scottish dance music and encourage them to hop through the entire piece. You can prompt them to hop on one leg and then switch to the other.

JUMP OVER THE YARDSTICK

If you have a few yardsticks, place them in a cross pattern and challenge your little one to jump in each square without touching the yardsticks! Then add the music and make the challenge again while they jump to the beat of the music.

BEAT THE DRUM TO THE BEAT OF THE MUSIC

Play some pipe band music and have your little one join in on the drums! Most people don't have drums around their home, and we've all made the mistake of giving our little ones the pots to beat.

However, wooden bowls or wooden cutting boards with rubber spoons great options because they aren't so loud!



REMEMBER

Slower music is harder for children to move with.

CHALLENGE

Use Scottish themed words to fit the beat as you march.

HAGGIS, NEEPS & TATTIES TOWER

by Jess Fleming



Nothing warms the heart on the holidays quite like Haggis, Neeps and Tatties. The most typical and usual way that haggis is served in Scotland is scooped onto a plate alongside neeps and tatties. An alternative is to make a haggis stack (recipe below), but haggis is used in many other recipes. It is often replaced in recipes instead of ground beef or mince.

Our family has a Bon Bon recipe that when paired with an Onion gravy, is pure joy. Haggis is not for the faint of heart (no pun intended) as it traditionally contains sheep's heart, liver and lungs, adding suet, oats, onion and herbs, and seasoning with spices like pepper and nutmeg.

It's typically prepared and then put into a sheep's stomach, which gives it its often spurned, unappealing look. Modern Haggis can be made with a variety of cuts of meat and our family has their own recipe, those family recipes will be in future issues of The Deed.

What are "Neeps"? This term, which is a Scottish term for "turnips" is quite confusing. Well, not the term, but the fact that turnips in Scotland are actually what we call "rutabagas" in the US. There seems to be different terms for both in different parts of the UK, too. "Swedes" are thrown into the mix, and it rather does my head in to try to sort them all out! Just know that if you want to make haggis, neeps and tatties in the US, use rutabagas and not turnips.

What are "Tatties"? Tatties are a Scottish nickname for potatoes. If you see or hear "totties", it's the same thing. For example, Potato scones are referred to as tattie scones or tottie scones.

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Total Time
15 mins	30 mins	45 mins

Things you'll need

The ingredients for this are not surprising but the way to create the stack needs a little explanation.

- Steel Ring – we used the ones in this set.
- Small round bowl/dish at least 3 inches deep. Like a small individual pie dish. (If you're not using a steel ring.)
- Cling film (If you're not using a steel ring.)
- Masher
- Two saucepans

Ingredients

- 2-3lbs Potatoes - Whichever you prefer for making mash
- 2-3lbs Swede/Neeps
- 1 stick Salted Butter
- .5 Cup Milk
We use full fat
- salt, pepper, garlic powder, and onion powder to taste

You can make your own Haggis by getting a sheep's heart, liver and lungs, and adding suet, oats, onion and herbs etc...

Alternatively why not just get a genuine free-range Lego Haggis, they're really tasty

Step by step instructions

1. Fill both saucepans half full of water, adding a pinch of salt to both
2. Peel the potatoes and chop roughly into quarters and peel the turnips, chopping into small cubes.
3. Once the water is boiling add the potatoes to one pan and the turnips to the other
4. Boil for 20-30mins or until you can easily slide a knife into either
5. Drain the potatoes. Season and allow them to release any steam.
6. Drain the neeps and also allow to steam
7. Add three and a half tablespoons butter and two ounces of milk to the potatoes, mash until creamy and all lumps have been removed
8. Taste for seasoning, stir more in if required
9. Add three and a half tablespoons butter to the neeps and roughly mash, leaving some rough texture to balance the creamy texture of the potatoes.
10. Serve both while hot with the haggis



How to build your Haggis, Neeps and Tatties Stack

With a Steel Ring

1. Place your ring on the plate you wish to serve on
2. Add a layer of haggis, filling roughly a third of the ring or 1 inch.
3. Push down on the haggis using the back of a spoon to make sure it's firm
4. Repeat this with the neeps and then the tatties
5. Carefully slide off the ring, using the back of your spoon to ease the ring up without losing the shape of the stack

Without a ring

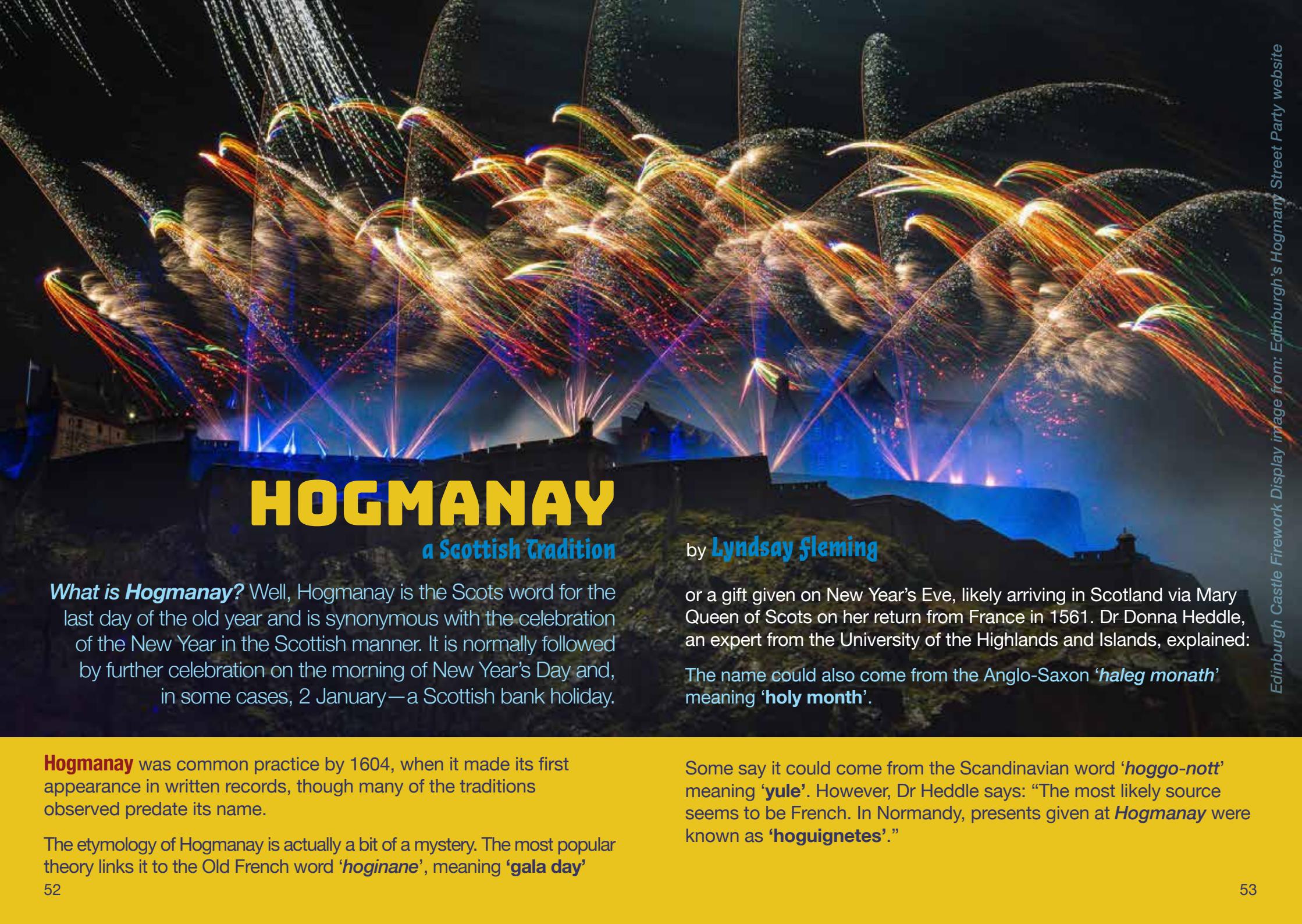
Making a haggis, neeps, and tatties tower with a ring is much easier and will get you the desired 'stack' look. However, we did try this with our small round pie dishes and we achieved the layered look if not quite a straight up and down stack due to the shape of the dish.

1. Take a small bowl and line with clingfilm with some hanging over the edges
2. The bottom layer in the bowl will be the top layer of your stack, so put a layer of tatties in the bottom and smooth with a spoon
3. Follow with a layer of neeps, and finally the layer of haggis
4. Smooth both down with a spoon so the layers are compact
5. Place a plate on top, face down, and then flip the bowl and plate so the bowl is upside down in the middle of the plate
6. Twist the bowl a little to loosen the wrap, hold down the clingfilm and gently lift the bowl, then peel back the cling film and you have your stack!

Variations and additions

Whisky Sauce

As if a haggis, neeps and tatties stack couldn't get any more Scottish we would also suggest adding a whisky sauce! Our creamy whisky sauce really works well with the pepper of the haggis and the soft mashed potato.



HOGMANAY

a Scottish Tradition

What is Hogmanay? Well, Hogmanay is the Scots word for the last day of the old year and is synonymous with the celebration of the New Year in the Scottish manner. It is normally followed by further celebration on the morning of New Year's Day and, in some cases, 2 January—a Scottish bank holiday.

Hogmanay was common practice by 1604, when it made its first appearance in written records, though many of the traditions observed predate its name.

The etymology of Hogmanay is actually a bit of a mystery. The most popular theory links it to the Old French word '**hoginane**', meaning '**gala day**'

by **Lyndsay Fleming**

or a gift given on New Year's Eve, likely arriving in Scotland via Mary Queen of Scots on her return from France in 1561. Dr Donna Heddle, an expert from the University of the Highlands and Islands, explained: The name could also come from the Anglo-Saxon '**haleg monath**' meaning '**holy month**'.

Some say it could come from the Scandinavian word '**hoggo-nott**' meaning '**yule**'. However, Dr Heddle says: "The most likely source seems to be French. In Normandy, presents given at **Hogmanay** were known as '**hoguignetes**'."



CHRISTMAS

is cancelled for the next 400 years!

After the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Christmas was viewed in Scotland as a Catholic extravagance and was banned by the Scottish Parliament in 1640. Although the ban was lifted in 1712, Christmas didn't become a public holiday again until 1958.

In the meantime, Hogmanay took centre stage as Scotland's main winter celebration. Christmas was not celebrated as a festival and virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years. And so it was, right up until the 1950s that many Scots worked over Christmas and celebrated their winter solstice holiday at New Year, when family and friends would gather for a party and to exchange presents which came to be known as Hogmanays.



Edinburgh celebrates Hogmanay with a multi-day festival featuring a torchlight procession, a massive street party and concert, a midnight fireworks display from Edinburgh Castle, and various traditional events. The festivities often include traditional elements like the "Auld Lang Syne" song after midnight and, for the truly adventurous, the new year's day "Loony Dook" tradition of a cold-water dip.

Edinburgh hosts one of the largest New Year celebrations in the world. Every year, tens of thousands of people flock to the city to celebrate four days of concerts, street parties, torchlight processions, and a spectacular fireworks display over Edinburgh Castle. **Key events include:**

Torchlight Procession The celebration often starts with a torchlight procession on December 30th, featuring fire performers, street theater, and



drummers, which historically symbolized warding off evil spirits. Fire is a massive part of Hogmanay, symbolising the burning away of the old year's evil spirits and welcoming the light of the new one. This ancient pagan ritual is spectacularly brought to life across Scotland. Here in Edinburgh, our world-famous Torchlight Procession sees tens of thousands of people carry flaming torches through the heart of the city, creating a river of fire.

Concert in the Gardens A major outdoor concert is held in West Princes Street Gardens, featuring popular musical acts.

Street Party On New Year's Eve, Princes Street hosts a massive street party with music and dancing. An integral part of Hogmanay, the traditional Ceilidh embodies the heart and soul of Scottish revelry. This Gaelic gathering, typically featuring folk music, traditional Scottish dances, and storytelling, transforms Edinburgh's streets into vibrant dance floors. The Ceilidh under the Castle, in the shadow of the magnificent Edinburgh Castle, is a sight to behold, with attendees swirling and reeling to the lively tunes of the pipes, fiddle, accordion, and drum.



Midnight Moment The countdown to the new year is marked by a spectacular fireworks display launched from Edinburgh Castle. Long before spring cleaning, Scots practiced the Hogmanay ritual of 'saining', or blessing, their household and livestock. This involved sprinkling magic water around the house and burning juniper branches and carrying the smoking embers through every room of the house. Once the house was full of smoke, the windows and doors were thrown open to let in the fresh, cold air of the new year, which was then sealed with a celebratory dram of whisky!

Midnight cleaning, also known as the "redding of the house," this tradition involves giving your home a thorough clean before the bells chime at midnight to sweep away the bad luck of the old year and welcome good fortune in the new.

**Should old acquaintance be forgot
and never brought to mind?
Should old acquaintance be forgot
and auld lang syne?
For auld lang syne, my dear
for auld lang syne
we'll take a cup of kindness yet
for auld lang syne**

Auld Lang Syne As the clock strikes midnight, thousands of people link arms to sing Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne" together. You know that song everyone sings at midnight as people join hands around the world?

That's ours!

Auld Lang Syne comes from a poem by Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, written in 1788. While you may know the words, the proper tradition

involves joining hands with your neighbours in a large circle. At the final verse, you cross your arms across your chest and link hands again, rushing to the middle of the circle at the end.



TOTAL LOONIES

Loony Dook On New Year's Day, brave participants run into the freezing water of the Firth of Forth in South Queensferry for a "dook" (dip) to start the year with a shock. For anyone brave enough, New Year's Day begins by running into the icy waters of the Firth of Forth. This bonkers but brilliant tradition is known as the Loony Dook.

Thousands of people, often in hilarious fancy dress, take the plunge to raise money for charity and clear their Hogmanay heads. If you want to see superheroes, animals and ...the Loch Ness monster? ...in one place, then you know where you need to be.

First-footing One of the most famous Hogmanay traditions is 'first-footing', which dictates that the first person to cross the threshold of a home after midnight on New Year's Day will be a bringer of good fortune for the coming year. This is the tradition of being the first person to enter a home after midnight, often bringing symbolic gifts like coal, shortbread, or whisky to ensure good luck for the household. Bringing symbolic gifts like a lump of coal for a fire, shortbread, or a bottle of whisky is a key part of first-footing.

While it's not as common today as it once was, traditionally the most desirable first-footer was a tall, dark-haired man as it would bring good luck. This belief may date back to the Viking invasions, when a fairhaired stranger arriving at your door was very bad news indeed! A first-footer should never arrive empty handed. Each gift represents a different wish for the year ahead:

- **Coal** for a warm hearth, symbolising that the house will always be warm.
- **Shortbread** or **Black Bun** to represent that the house will never go hungry.
- **Whisky** good cheer and prosperity.
- **Salt** for health and to add flavour to life.



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If you need to know anything about Vikings, paganism and anime, she is the go to person.

THE DEED



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