

HSHC SPORRAN

www.HighlandSocietyofHarfordCounty.com

December 2024 — Alba Gu Brath — Scotland Forever

The Highland Society of Harford County was incorporated for the preservation of the spirit, lore, poetry, art, dress, welfare, and history of the Scottish people dedicated to the promotion of these traditions among those of Scottish ancestry within Harford County and its environs.



DECEMBER 19 HOLIDAY GATHERING

State Theater / \$10 per member

6:30 - cash bar/fellowship

7:00-ish dinner

After dinner:

Games / Music / Crafts / Scottish Swap / 50-50

HOLIDAY POTLUCK – if you didn't sign up – just bring your dish that compliments those below.
(BTW, we'll publish the recipes.)

APPETIZERS:

Hot Crab Dip

Salmon and wild rice soup

MAIN DISHES:

Boneless ham

Enchilada casserole

RoFo chicken fingers

SIDES:

Pineapple stuffing

Stuffed mushrooms

Potato salad

Green salad

DESSERTS:

Bundt cake

Cheesecake

Shortbread

Oatmeal chocolate chip cookies



HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Scottish Swap (*see page 2*) / 50-50 Raffle

Music / Games / Crafts

Fellowship & Laughter

HSHC ELECTION RESULTS FOR 2025

The HSHC membership unanimously reelected these officers at the November 19th gathering:

LAIRD — John Polk, Clan Pollack

1st AIDE DU LAIRD — David Ray, Clan McKay

2nd AIDE DU LAIRD — Susan Wheeler, Clan Shaw

SECRETARY — Andrea Bowden, Clan McMillan

TREASURER — John Polk, Clan Pollack

Continuing on the Board:

LAIRD EMERITUS Keith Reagan, Clan Keith

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS !!! Shawn & Melissa Halligan

Not much is known about Shawn's Scottish heritage, but his Irish heritage is somewhat documented. His clan hails from County Cork, Ireland. There are also ties to the Halligan clan in County Meath, Ireland, with land maps dated back in the 1700s. In the 1800s his family fled from British rule to the United States.

As a longtime resident of Harford County Shawn graduated from Edgewood High School in 1995. He has been a Correctional Officer for Cecil County and Campus Police Officer for the Community College of Baltimore County. His current position is as a Nuclear Security Officer at Peach Bottom Nuclear Plant in Pennsylvania. His wife Melissa Halligan is also a new member of the Highland Society.



Please contribute an article, news, a joke - cartoon - humorous anecdote, or other contributions, or suggestions for articles and send them to:

sallyjoanderson@hotmail.com or abowden@bcps.k12.md.us



Fellow Highlanders –

Thanksgiving has come and gone and Christmas is upon us. Our year has come to an end. It had its ups and downs but I think we are in a good place now. We have five new members since September. Let us give thanks and enjoy it at our Holiday Celebration. A few notes:

Holiday Celebration – Come One, Come All! We will be meeting at the State Theater in Havre de Grace on Tuesday, 17 December. Our Social gathering starts at 6:30; formal meeting at 7:00. Kallie and Andrea are planning fun and games for us. It is POTLUCK so everyone needs to bring something. If you have not yet notified Kallie with what you intend to bring, please do – kallie67@comcast.net

Dues are due: Annual dues to our esteemed Society are due as of the new year, 1 January. I will send out a notice but if you wish to pay early at our December meeting you can. Either check or cash.

Officers for 2025: As approved by your vote at our December Meeting, our current officers will stay on for another year; Laird – John Polk; Aide de Laird – Dave Ray; 2nd Aide de Laird – Susan Wheeler, Secretary – Andrea Bowden; Treasurer – John Polk; Laird Emeritus – Keith Reagan.

Hogmanay: Stay tuned! We'll send a update soon.
Alba gu bràth and a most happy Christmas to all!



SCOTTISH SWAP

at our December 19 gathering



Bring an item to swap – something Scottish or something gift-like.

(Maybe something you received but can't use.)

Please don't buy anything new! Gently used items are fine.

Bring something you already have.

Ideas: scarves, pins, jewelry, magnets, hose, hats, souvenirs, art, decorative or holiday items, books, DVDs

You will receive a ticket for each item you bring. We will draw and if your number comes up, you can select an item from the swap table. (If an item you brought isn't selected, you can take it home.)

Treasurer's Report	
Dr. John Polk	
Period: 1-30 November 2024	
OLD BALANCE	\$3662.14
Expenses:	
Bank Fee	\$3.00
Venue and catering, MacGregors	\$972.59
MD State fee, Resident Agent	\$77.25
Income:	
Collected, meals at meeting	\$805.00
Raffle proceeds	\$98.00
Checks never debited	\$110.25
NEW BALANCE	\$3622.55

NOVEMBER 2024 GATHERING



We can line up at the bar with the best of 'em.

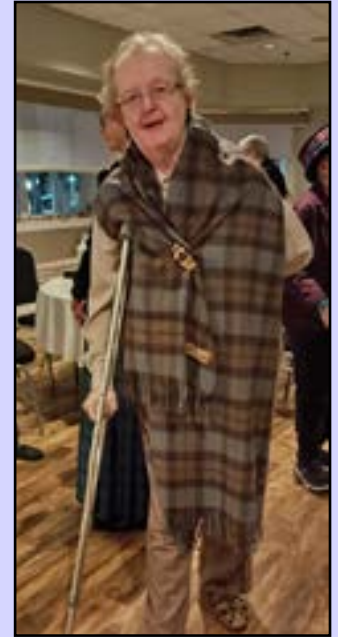


Hogmanay hostess with the mostess



See? Nothing to worry about!

MINUTES OF OUR LAST GATHERING



HSHC gathered at MacGregor's Restaurant in Harve de Grace MD on Tuesday, November 19, 2024. There were 24 members present. Fellowship began at 6:30 PM in the well-lighted, toasty banquet room. Andrea Bowden (on a crutch) and Sarah Autry circulated selling 50/50 raffle tickets.

Laird John Polk, Clan Pollack, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. The toast to King Charles III was given by David Ray, Clan McRay. The toast to President Biden was given by Andrea Bowden, Clan McMillan. The toast to Scotland was given by Jim Wasson, Clan Buchanan, who opted out of standing on a chair this time. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by John Polk. SJ Anderson, Clan Anderson, offered grace. Birthdays and anniversaries were recognized.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious buffet of field greens salad, beef bourguignon, rice, chicken parmesan, green beans, mashed potatoes and rolls plus a variety of cookies for dessert.

Laird John Polk thanked people for their presence. The first order of business was Election of Officers for 2025. The current officers were all standing for re-election and were voted in by acclamation followed by enthusiastic applause. The 2025 Board: Laird: John Polk, Clan Polk; 1st Aide du Laird: David Ray, Clan McRay; 2nd Aide du Laird: Susan Wheeler, Clan Shaw; Secretary: Andrea Bowden, Clan McMillan; and Treasurer: John Polk. Immediate Past Laird Keith Reagan, Clan Keith, will continue on the Board.

John introduced new members Melissa Moreno and George Kingery who signed up for HSHC at the recent Irish Festival. Everyone welcomed them into HSHC. John announced that our December 17th Holiday Celebration will be a potluck held at the State Theater. Kallie Lyons circulated a paper for people to sign up for the food they would bring to the potluck so that we have a variety. Andrea Bowden announced that our December gathering will include a Scottish Swap to which people bring items that are Scottish or gift-like; and being true to our Scottish heritage, no gifts are to be purchased. People will be given a ticket and numbers will be drawn so people can choose a swap item (*see page 2 for more details*).

Traditional Hogmanay will be celebrated at the home of Betsy and Jim Wasson, 113 Tim Tam Court, Havre de Grace, MD 21078 on New Year's Eve 9:00 pm -12:30 am. It's BYOB + a snack to share. Haggis will be served if it's not provided at the December gathering. The group will be able to view fireworks from the Wasson's porch. Sixteen people indicated that they were interested in attending. John then reviewed future gatherings: January 21, 2025- Robert Burns Night at State Theater and February 2025 Whisky Tasting at Vandiver Inn (\$35/member). Before the program, Andrea announced that \$165 had been collected for the 50/50. The winning ticket was held by Kallie Lyons who won \$82.50!

Past Laird Keith Reagan presented an inspiring program in honor of Veterans. He described the origin of Veterans Day and explained that in the United States there six uniformed military services: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Space Force plus two uniformed non-military services: NOAA and Public Health Service. He reviewed notable military veterans of Scottish descent and then played the anthem of each branch and asked people to stand for their affiliation. Everyone clapped and thanked our veterans for serving. The gathering concluded at 9:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Bowden and SJ Andreson

Fada 's Farsing -- Far & Wide

Christmas Customs from Old Scotland

from The Rampant Lion — reprint for December 2015 Sporrán, edited by Jim "Ski" Schiaffino



There is a scene in the movie Robin Hood Prince of Thieves where the sheriff of Nottingham, in a bit of a snit, shouts "and call off Christmas!" It is true that Art imitates Life; that actually happened. It wasn't the sheriff of Nottingham, it was the General Assembly in Edinburgh and it was 1638 when the Assembly voted to enforce the rigid Laws of The Kirk frowned upon ostentatious displays. So Christmas went underground.

The season became known as Nollaig Beag (Little Christmas) and was a three day period of solemn Tribune, or church service, fasting and hard work. The three days were: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day. The first was a day of preparation, cooking meals and cleaning. The second day was spent in church and the third day was a day of Charity.

Scots are nothing if not cunning, persistent and stubborn. All this austerity eventually gave way to many days of festivities, celebrations and general rowdy activity to make up for lost time. St. Stephen's Day evolved into Boxing Day. That was the day the lord and lady of the house gave gifts in boxes to the servants. Now everyone gives gifts.

These days eventually became known as Twelfth Night or The Twelve days of Christmas. The twelve days begin with Christmas Eve and end with Little Christmas, January 6th. That is the day tradition has it the Magi came with gifts for baby Jesus.

There is a popular Song or Story that describes the preparations for the Twelfth Night Party. As can be expected, the American version strongly deviates from the original. The real, as in accurate, version is divided into two distinct parts. The first half of the song describes the food including desserts to be served- the gold rings refer to Ringed Necked Pheasants baked to a

golden brown and the Colley Birds (not Calling Birds they didn't have telephones back then) are blackbirds as in a chicken pot pie (and when the pie was opened the birds began to sing). The last half of the song describes the entertainment.

This time was also referred to as Yuletide from the Norse Yultid. That is the twelfth name of Oden. Who, in December, was supposed to ride his chariot down to earth. Wearing a hooded cloak he would visit and listen to everyone then leave a gift of bread or coins. (Hhmm has a wee bit familiar ring, eh?)

Which leads us to Hogmanay. Like many Scottish customs the origins of which can be somewhat problematic, Hogmanay could have been a celebration of The Winter Solstice. Oden, the gift bringer, sweeping across the night sky in his chariot. (See above Paragraph.) Or it could have been a Druidic fertility feast or simply a popish celebration after Yultide.

So where on earth did we get Hogmanay? The term Hogmanay could have come from the Norse word Hoggunott which means night slaughter - the night when animals were slaughtered and smoked for winter keeping. Or it could have come from the French word Huguinane which is French cake day. Then again, it might be Huh-Me -Naay or Kiss Me Now, a time when everyone, even strangers, kiss. Personally, I am partial to the last one. Don't forget Hogmanay is a two day affair in Scotland. These days, in Scotland at least, are almost as important as Christmas. It is the time when all the bells in Scotland are rung at midnight and everyone does Redding, cleaning the house of everything old including last year's ashes. (And Scotland is the ONLY place in the world with statutory holidays on January 1st AND 2nd to give every Scot a chance to recover from the excesses of December 31st.

SCOTTISH NEW YEAR

by Dr. Andrea Bowden

The traditional New Year's celebration in Scotland is called HOGMANAY which runs four to seven days after Christmas. The origin of the word is uncertain- perhaps from the Greek Holy Month or perhaps French, Norse or Gaelic roots. Ceilidh bands provide music for shindigs and barrels of whisky appear in abundance. Most towns have some form of celebration, and it varies by locale.

Edinburg is famous for its huge celebrations that involve fireworks, music, piping, dancing, ringing of bells, and torch parades.



Fire plays a significant role in Hogmanay customs and is thought to derive from the pagan traditions of the pre-Christian Celts. The annual Torchlight Procession in Edinburgh pays homage to this history, with thousands marching through the city center carrying blazing torches.

In Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, kilted men construct vast fireballs of up to two feet wide, so that at midnight, they can swing them around their heads in a procession on the High Street. Any remaining fireballs at the end of the parade are set off into the harbor. Some say the fireballs signify the sun, or a shooting star or that they purify the world by consuming evil and warding off witches and evil spirits.

The Highland custom of saining (or blessing) the house and livestock goes far back in time but is still practiced today in some households. The ritual involves the drinking of water believed to be magic – this is sourced from a river ford that's said to be crossed by both the living and the dead. The water is also sprinkled across all contents of the household.

Next comes the burning of juniper branches to fill the house with smoke, which is believed to cleanse the household and drive evil spirits away. Afterwards, the windows and doors are opened to let in fresh, New Year air, and a nip of whisky is taken as a restorative before indulging in a hearty breakfast.



Redding the house – rather than a Spring clean, the Scots have a New Year's clean to welcome in the New Year. Starting the New Year with a dirty house is bad luck. When open fires were common, people would clear the ashes and lay a new fire for the New Year. Cleaning one's house also extends to clearing one's debts before midnight.

First footing - the 'first foot' in the house after midnight is still very common in Scotland. To ensure good luck, a first footer should be a dark-haired man. If no dark-haired man was available, the first footer carried a lump of coal. Fair-haired or red-haired first footers had to enter last because they represented Viking invasions of ancient times. Traditional gifts include a lump of coal to add to the host's fire, along with shortbread, a black bun and whisky to toast to a Happy New Year. Showing up empty handed is not only very rude but also bad luck!



I grew up in the town of Lonaconing, Maryland, located in the George's Creek Valley in western Allegany County, near the Garrett County border. George's Creek Valley is the site of some of the richest coal in the Appalachian region. Lonaconing saw an influx of Scots beginning in the 1830s when iron ore and then abundant coal was discovered. All the towns in the valley were settled by different immigrant groups, e.g., Lonaconing-Scots; Midland- my mother's hometown-Irish; Frostburg-Germans.

As a child and teenager, I remember first-footing every new year's eve. We would bundle up wearing scarves from Scotland and take shortbread my father had made and go house to house. He was dark-haired, so he could enter first. My mother also had dark hair that had been auburn in her youth. I inherited the red hair, so I usually had to enter last because of the "bad luck" of redheads! I spent many cold minutes in the snow waiting to enter the warm houses of our neighbors.

Each family shared a special food: shortbread, cookies, small ham sandwiches, or finnan haddie (smoked haddock, see the recipe on the last page) in a cream sauce over toast. There was hot tea, cold egg nog or hot Tom & Jerry, which is made from eggs, sugar, vanilla, spices, and cream plus a shot of whisky or brandy. My mother always gave a special new year's toast "sláinte" in Irish Gaelic. In Irish, the response to sláinte is sláinte agatsa, which translates "to your health as well". The basic Scottish Gaelic equivalent is slàinte (mhath), with the same meaning, to which the normal response is do dheagh shlàinte "your good health".

Often there was music- piano, autoharp, flute or recorder and other instruments, as ceilidhs were common. In every house we would lock arms and sing Auld Lang Syne. I treasure these memories and as I get older, they become even more special.



Kirkin' of the Tartans in Baltimore

by Dr. Andrea Bowden



The St. Andrew's Society of Baltimore held its annual Kirkin' of the Tartans November 24, 2024, at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore. This ceremony was one of three sponsored in November by the St. Andrew's Society. Others were at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Abington and Perry Hall Presbyterian Church. The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen is an impressive structure in North Baltimore that seats 2000. The Homeland community surrounding the Cathedral is the wealthiest in Baltimore and predominately white. Due to the closure of 40 of the 60 Roman Catholic churches in Baltimore City, several nearby churches have been merged with the Cathedral resulting in a more diverse congregation that includes African Americans, Filipinos, and Latinos. My estimate was that at least 500 people were present for the 11:00 AM Mass and Kirkin'.

The Harford Highlanders Pipe Band led the procession with four pipers and two drummers who were followed by a dozen men from the St. Andrew's Society in Baltimore in Scottish attire, carrying tartan banners and tartan cloth. They were seated in the chancel opposite the choir. The celebrant was Archbishop William E. Lori, who recognized the Kirkin' at the start of Mass with comments about St. Andrew. A representative of the St. Andrew's Society of Baltimore gave a description of the significance of a Kirkin' at the end of Mass and Archbishop Lori blessed the tartans as they were brought forward. The recessional featured pipes, drums, St. Andrew's Society members and finally the clergy. Many people were taking pictures.

After the ceremony, I talked with several members of the St. Andrew's Society and inquired about the possibility of collaborating with HSHC on a Kirkin' in the future. In the small world category, I spoke with James Dawson, whose family is from Midland, the town next to my mine in Allegany County. Like my forebearers, they came from Scotland to mine coal, but emigrated to the Baltimore area when the coal seams were depleted. It was a delightful day!

The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen is the mother church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore under the pastoral care of the Most Reverend William E. Lori, the 16th Archbishop of Baltimore. Located in the Homeland neighborhood of Baltimore City, the Cathedral has lifted hearts, minds, and voices to the Lord since its dedication in 1959. Following the miraculous rescue of his dry goods store from the great Baltimore fire of 1904, Mr. Thomas J. O'Neill (1849-1919) bequeathed two-thirds of his estate to the Archdiocese for the construction of a new Cathedral. Archbishop Francis Patrick Keough broke ground on Baltimore's still unnamed 'new Cathedral' on October 10, 1954. On the following day, Pope Pius XII instituted the new liturgical feast of Mary's Queenship. And, thus, the Cathedral found its name. Auxiliary Bishop Jerome D. Sebastian consecrated the finished edifice on October 13, 1959. The official dedication and solemn opening to the public occurred on November 15, 1959.



WEE NEWS BITS FROM SCOT- LAND

contributors:
Dr. Andrea Bowden
& SJ Anderson

HAGGIS THE HIPPO from BBC

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Edinburgh Zoo announced Monday that their own tiny pygmy hippo, named Haggis, was born Oct. 30 to parents Otto and Gloria. The name HAGGIS was chosen because she resembles the Scottish delicacy. The calf is doing well and will be able to "accept visitors" in a month. Pygmy hippos, native to forests and swamps in West Africa, are endangered animals, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. There are just an estimated 2,000 that remain in the world, mainly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Ivory Coast, due to habitat loss and being hunted for bushmeat, according to the Pygmy Hippo Foundation.



PAGANISM ON THE RISE IN SCOTLAND?

from <https://www.bbc.com/news/videos/cgl711k201po>

Paganism is now the fourth largest religion in Scotland, according to the most recent Scottish census.

There are 19,113 Pagans recorded in the census, more than for the numbers worshipping Judaism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

The amount of Pagans has nearly quadrupled since the last census in 2011, while other religions have seen either a fall or a modest increase in followers.

Although it has no singular doctrine or vision, academics define Paganism as an umbrella term for a collection of religions and spiritual traditions that share a reverence for nature, belief in a plurality of gods and a belief in magic.

ABERDEEN HAS BEEN NAMED THE BEST SCOTTISH TOWN TO VISIT IN DECEMBER

from the Daily Record

Earlier at UK Hidden Gems published a list of the "10 best places to visit in Scotland in December". Topping the list, and the only city to feature, is Aberdeen. Also known as the Granite City, Aberdeen is known for its annual Christmas Village. Featuring everything from a festive fairground to an ice rink, it has something for the entire family. Aberdeen's Christmas Village also features the popular Curated in the Quad festive market, featuring stalls selling arts, crafts, clothing, jewellery, and more. A wide selection of festive food and drink is also available. UK Hidden Gems wrote: "Aberdeen is perfect for nature lovers, offering easy access to the breathtaking Cairngorms National Park and the famous Dolphin Spotting tours at the harbor. History buffs will love exploring its ancient castles, like Dunnottar Castle, perched dramatically on cliffs overlooking the sea.

ROYAL NEWS from BBC

Princess Anne made an appearance at a gala dinner supporting the Eric Liddell 100 which celebrates the life and time of Scottish athlete and his historic performance at the 1924 Olympic Games. She wore a 1960s Frank Usher dress and a sapphire and pearl brooch that was her late mother's. The piece first entered the royal collection in 1866. It is valued at \$650,000!



WINTER CELEBRATIONS & HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD

compiled by Dr. Andrea Bowden



Christianity · Advent: four Sundays preceding Christmas Day · Saint Barbara's Day: 4 December – The Feast of St. Barbara is celebrated by Artillery regiments across the Commonwealth and some western Catholic countries. · Krampusnacht: 5 December – The Feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated in parts of Europe on 6 December. In Alpine countries, Saint Nicholas has a devilish companion named Krampus who punishes the bad children the night before. · Saint Nicholas Day: 6 December · Feast of the Immaculate Conception: 8 December – The day of Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception is celebrated as a public holiday in many Catholic countries. · Saint Lucy's Day: 13 December – Church Feast Day. Saint Lucy comes as a young woman with lights and sweets. · Las Posadas (The Inns): 16–24 December – In Mexico is a procession to various family lodgings for celebration and prayer and to re-enact Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem · Christmas Eve: 24 December – In many countries e.g. the German speaking countries, but also in Poland, Hungary and the Nordic countries, gift giving is on 24 December. This the December global holiday · Christmas Day: 25 December and 7 January – celebrated by Christians and non-Christians alike. · Anastasia of Sirmium feast day: 25 December · Twelve Days of Christmas: 25 December–6 January · Saint Stephen's Day: 26 December – In Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Ireland a holiday celebrated as Second Day of Christmas. · Saint John the Evangelist's Day: 27 December · Holy Innocents' Day: 28 December · Saint Sylvester's Day: 31 December

Buddhism · Bodhi Day: 8 December – Day of Enlightenment, celebrating the day that the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni or Siddhartha Gautama) experienced enlightenment (also known as Bodhi).

Hinduism · Pancha Ganapati: a modern five-day Hindu festival celebrated from 21 through 25 December in honor of Ganesha. · Vaikuntha Ekadashi: Mid December - Mid January.

Historical · Malkh: 25 December · Mōdraniht: or Mothers' Night, the Saxon winter solstice festival. ·

Saturnalia: 17–23 December – An ancient Roman winter solstice festival in honor of the deity Saturn, held on 17 December of the Julian calendar and expanded with festivities through to 23 December. Celebrated with sacrifice, a public banquet, followed by private gift-giving, continual partying, and a carnival. · Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Day of the birth of the Unconquered Sun): 25 December – late Roman Empire.

Judaism · Hanukkah: usually falls anywhere between late November and early January. In Hebrew, Hanukkah means "dedication," and the holiday marks the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the 2nd century BC, after a small group of Jewish fighters liberated it from occupying foreign forces.

Paganism · Yule: Pagan winter festival that was celebrated by the historical Germanic people from late December to early January. · Koliada: Slavic winter festival celebrated on late December with parades and singers who visit houses and receive gifts.

Persian · Yalda: 21 December – The turning point, Winter Solstice. As the longest night of the year and the beginning of the lengthening of days, Shabe Yaldā or Shabe Chelle is an Iranian festival celebrating the victory of light and goodness over darkness and evil. ·

Satanism · Sol Invictus: 25 December – A TST Satanic celebration of being unconquered by superstition and consistent in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge.

Other celebrations · World AIDS Day: 1 December · International Day of Disabled Persons: 3 December · Human Rights Day: 10 December · Salgirah: 13 December - celebration of Shia Ismaili Muslims of their Imam (Aga Khan IV) · Soyal: 21 December – Zuni and Hopi · Winter Solstice: on or about 21 December · Dongzhi Festival – a celebration of Winter · Boxing Day: 26 December- servant's holiday in UK · Kwanzaa: 26 December–1 January – Pan-African festival celebrated in the USA



CHRISTMAS IN SCOTLAND, A Quiz



Christmas has been a national holiday in Scotland for hundreds of years. TRUE OR FALSE

FALSE Would you believe that Christmas, December 25th, has been a national holiday in Scotland only since 1958? When much of Scotland was Roman Catholic, Christmas was a special feast day honor the nativity of Jesus. It was celebrated by Mass, singing, feasting and a day free of work. After the Reformation in 1560 much of Scotland became Protestant. The powerful Kirk (Church of Scotland) frowned on many of the practices of Catholicism. In 1640 the Scottish Parliament even passed a law that made celebrating "Yule vacations" illegal, so people had to work on Christmas. Even under Charles II, who was king of England, Ireland and Scotland 1661-1685, Christmas remained a minor feast. Over the years, Christmas celebrations became more elaborate and more similar to those in the UK and USA.

Boxing Day is a special holiday sporting event. TRUE OR FALSE

FALSE Boxing Day is celebrated on December 26th in most of the UK, but it has been recognized as a holiday in Scotland only since 1974 and is known as "Sweetie Scone Day" and the feast of St. Stephen. Traditionally, wealthy families gave their old possessions (e.g., clothes, food, instruments, implements) to their servants. In modern times it has become a day to share baked treats, shop for bargains.

What do Scots call the bearer of gifts at Christmas?

(a) St. Nicholas (b) Santa Claus (c) Father Christmas

Actually, it is none of the above! Scottish children simply say "Santa". The only reindeer that live in the UK are a herd in the Cairngorms Mountains in Scotland.

Do you say MERRY CHRISTMAS in Scotland?

Not usually. Its Happy Christmas in English, Blithe Yule in Scottish and Nollaig chridheil agus bliadhna mhath ur in Scots Gaelic. (pronounced "nollyk chree-ell blee-un-u va oor").

Do Scots use Christmas trees?



Yes. This tradition has increased since World War II. Many Scottish homes have a real or artificial tree. Favored real trees are Scots Pine, Blue Spruce Norway Spruce, Fraser Fir, and Nordman Fir. There are tree farms in Scotland that supply trees to the UK. Many allow people to cut

their own. Decorations tend to be varied ornaments, rather than balls. Tinsel and chains are popular. A star is the traditional topper. Christmas tree lights have replaced candles on the tree.

What is YULE BREAD?

Yule bread is unleavened bread baked at Christmas with a trinket inside. Whoever finds the trinket is said to have luck in the new year. Yule bread is more like bannock than modern shortbread. Cinnamon, allspice, nuts, and dried fruit have been added in modern times.

How about the YULE LOG?

This tradition was brought by the Vikings in the 8th century. Families burn a hardwood log on the shortest day of the year (December 21st), lighted with a piece of the previous year's log. It is said that those enjoying the flame receive prosperity and protection in the coming year.

Who is the CAILLEACH?



This is a totem of wood carved to represent "Old Woman Winter" that is tossed in the fire on Christmas Eve to ward off evil and destroy winter. Many Scottish families keep a candle burning in the window from Christmas through New Year's Day to welcome strangers.

What is SOWANS NIGHT?

In some places in Scotland, Christmas Eve is called Sowans Night, after the dish Sowans, which is made of oat husks and meal steeped in water for several days.

What are other Christmas customs in Scotland?

Hanging a wreath on the door.

Writing letters to Santa and leaving him biscuits (cookies) or mince pie and a wee dram of whisky.

Watching the Christmas speech of the Queen or King.

Pulling "crackers" after Christmas dinner (A Christmas Cracker is a cardboard paper tube, wrapped in brightly colored paper and twisted at both ends. The ends are pulled causing a sound. Inside the cracker there is a paper crown made from tissue paper, a motto or joke and a little gift.)

Wassailing - singing traditional Christmas carols.

Favorites include:

- Carol of the Bells.
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- In the Bleak Mid-Winter - Darke and Holst versions
- O Come All Ye Faithful
- Hark!
- Silent Night.
- O Holy Night
- Coventry Carol
- O Come, O Come Emmanuel



UUUMM Hogmanay? Exactly what is it????

contributed by Jim "Ski" Schiaffino

Craig Ferguson, Glasgow born comedian, can wax eloquently on the subject. He is known, in America, as Nigel Wick, Drew Carey's boss from the show of the same name, but more recently as the host of The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson. He has upon occasion referred to Hogmanay "As the most important of all Scottish holidays, probably because we celebrate it over two days and it's an easy word to say when you're hammered (A Scottish word for the condition politely referred to as "overindulgence." The Brits use "pissed") We use other words.

What's on the menu of a typical Christmas dinner in Scotland?

Scottish Cheeseboard featuring creamy Caboc covered with toasted oatmeal,

Lanark Blue made with sheep's milk, Isle of Mull Cheddar, and Bonchester Cheese – all served with Oat Cakes.

Scotch Broth -lamb or mutton stock soup with turnips, leeks, carrots, peas, and pearl barley

OR Cock-a-Leekie Soup -chicken broth with pearl barley, leeks and rice

Salmon – fresh from Scotland's streams and roasted or smoked salmon in a pie

Turkey- roasted with stuffing OR Ham OR Leg of Lamb

Black Bun – rich, dark fruit cake wrapped in pastry and served in slices

Christmas Pudding – was originally made with wheat and milk and called Frumenty. Later dried plums, other fruits, eggs salt, spices and suet were added. Traditionally, Christmas pudding is made on the "Stir Up Sunday" at the start of Advent four weeks before Christmas. It must be stirred from East to West in honor of the Wise Men and has 13 ingredients to represent Jesus and his disciples. Every family member must give the pudding a stir and make a secret wish. After mixing all the ingredients together, the pudding must be steamed for about 9 hours before being wrapped in paper and stored for four weeks until Christmas. On Christmas Day the pudding is heated and served with a brandy sauce that is set afire.

Irish Festival 2024



Dave Ray demonstrating weaving at our booth at the Irish Festival



Scottish Recipe of the Month

For Officer Favs this month we feature the favorite dish of First Aide du Laird, David Ray-HOT CRAB DIP. It might come in handy for a holiday party. We also feature Finnin Haddie, a traditional Scottish New Year's dish.

HOT CRAB DIP

contributed by Dave Ray

Ingredients:

1 pound crab meat (backfin is best)
1 pound butter
½ pound Velveeta cheese
½ pound cheddar cheese
3 tablespoons of mayonnaise
Salt and pepper to taste
1-3 teaspoons Old Bay (to taste)
Parsley or scallions for garish (optional)



Directions:

Melt cheeses and butter together over a low flame, fold in crab meat, but do not boil.
Transfer to chafing dish. Top with scallions or parsley.
Serve with assorted crackers or in bread bowl with bread chunks.

CREAMED FINNIN HADDIE

Contributed by Dr. Andrea Bowden

NOTES: My father made Finnin Haddie, or smoked haddock, a traditional Scottish dish, every New Year's/Hogmanay. Haddock is smoked over peat and green wood fire to impart a distinctive flavor. My hometown of Lonaconing in western Maryland had many people of Scottish descent, so the local grocery store ordered the huge smoked fish from Scotland. The fish had to be soaked in water multiple times to soften it and reduce the salt and smoked flavor. Then it had to be boiled before creaming it in milk and butter. All of this was accomplished by my father, bundled up against the cold, using a hot plate on the back porch because of the pungent odor of the cooking fish. Finnin Haddie is available locally at Wegman's and Harford Seafood Market. You can also order it online from Scotland.

Ingredients:

1 pound Finnin Haddie
2 Tbs Butter
4 Tbs flour
1 ½ cups milk
1 large or 2 medium onions sliced into rings
1 ½ t dry mustard
Salt and pepper to taste.

Directions

Slice onions
Cut fish in half to fit in deep skillet
Add water and boil 15-20 minutes (If already cooked, reduce to 10)
Remove from pan and drain
Try to remove bones and flake fish with fork
In the same skillet, melt butter, whisk in flour and cook over medium-low heat, stirring until the flour is foaming but not browned - about 1 or 2 minutes.
Over low heat, gradually add in 1 ½ cups of milk, bringing to a boil, whisking constantly until the sauce thickens.
Season with salt, pepper and optional nutmeg, and leave to simmer slowly for an additional 1-2 minutes. If sauce is too thick, add more milk, 1 tablespoon at a time, stirring constantly.
Add the flaked fish and onions into the sauce, stirring to combine and warm throughout.
Serve with boiled or mashed potatoes on New Year's Day.

