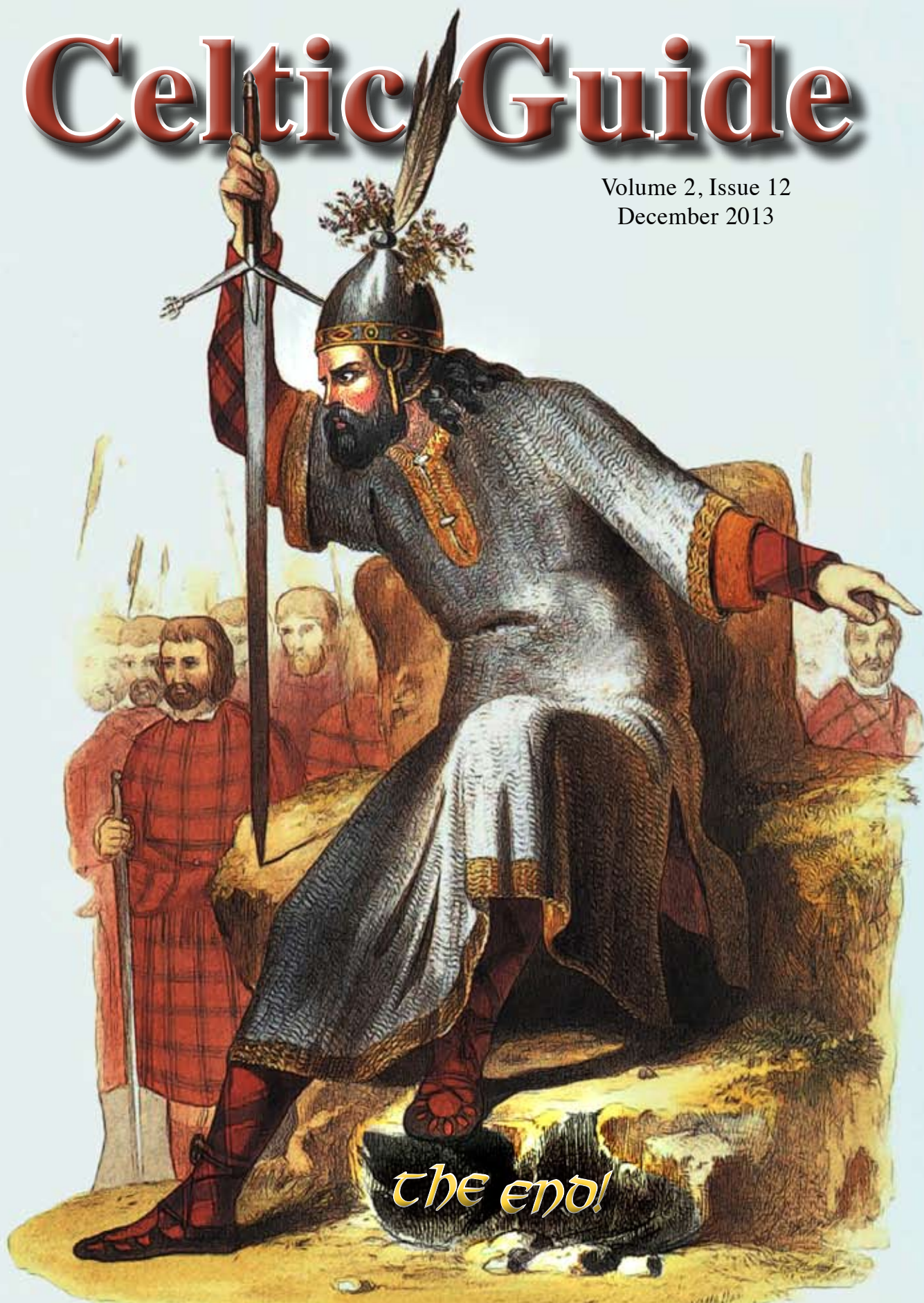


# Celtic Guide

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*the end!*



## From the Editor

It is an absolute fact that all great civilizations from the past have come to an end in one way or another – think the Roman Empire, ancient Greece, the Mayans, the Incas. . . the list goes on and on. Some say this will happen to modern society, but what will follow is the big question.

The one thing that hasn't come to an end is Celtic culture, recorded for two thousand years or more. Celtic art, the Gaelic language, Celtic instruments like the harp, fiddle and bagpipes, Celtic melodies, history, human features, all of this continues – and seems to be in a revival, based on the number of Highland Games, Celtic Fests, St. Patrick's Day parades, Celtic tattoos, concerts, websites, romance novels, etc., that permeate modern society, even though they harken back to centuries gone by. Naturally, we think this is the way it should be.

However, along the way, many years, centuries, dynasties, movements, even lives have ended – some ending a complete era. This month our theme is "The End." We will present tales along this line of the fall of people, places and things, and so we've chosen a drawing of the Lord of the Isles originally created by Robert Ronald MacIan (1803-1856), and published by James Logan, in *The Clans of The Scottish Highlands*, in 1845, to accompany a story I have a vested interest in.

Another thing that is not coming to an end is the tendency of Celtic Guide contributors to spread their wings. For instance, Deb and Cass Wright have announced that they will publish their long-awaited *Henceforth Tales* in Spring of 2014, with 60 clan histories and more. Also, our canine friend, Obie, who got his start in Celtic Guide, is becoming world famous, and both Larry Andrews and Carolyn Emerick have begun some serious e-publishing, after starting out in the Guide pages. Other creative folks are having successes beyond the Guide pages, too, and we congratulate all!

We are excited to end this year with about 25,000 website hits, added to last year's 17,000 – and also with around 11,000 likes on Facebook. We continue to grow, to attract new readers and authors, and to refine our publication. Wishing a bright holiday season for all!

And the beat goes on . . .

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# THE END OF LORDS OF THE ISLES

by James A. McQuiston  
USA

The story of the reign of the Scottish Lords of the Isles is perhaps one of the most often told, and one of the most often referred to in romance novels or as the epitome of Highland nobility. I have a vested interest in understanding this story as my family comes out of this very history.

The first thing to note is what is being called “The Isles” and how did these lords come into possession of it.

Between the larger islands of Ireland and Scotland/England there lie many smaller islands. Most of those off the western coast of Scotland were ruled by Picts, then Irish Celts, then Vikings, and finally by the Sons of Somerled, including Clan Donald or the MacDonalds. (See **Larry Andrews’ *Song of Somerled* and some great artwork elsewhere in this issue!**)

These islands are known as the Hebrides. While the Isle of Skye eventually became a strong player in the rule of the Isles, the earlier center of power was on the isle of Islay.



*ABOVE: A Celtic Guide drawing based on an old National Geographic photograph of just one of the many beautiful scenes available in the Hebrides.*

Finlaggan (the seat of Clan Donald power) is an historic site on Eilean Mòr, in Loch Finlaggan. The loch, the smaller island, and Finlaggan castle lie just northwest of Ballygrant on Islay.

The sway of this family continued all the way up through the western Isles to Skye and often beyond. They shared much of this sea kingdom with the MacLeods, and with other smaller clans, but the MacDonalds always seemed to be one of the more prolific and powerful, with other clans often acting as their vassals.

The story begins as far back as the combining of Irish Celts with Picts who were living on the western coast and the western Isles of Scotland. The distance between the northern Antrim coast of Ireland (now part of Northern Ireland) and the islands and coastal areas along the western edge of the Scottish mainland is a relatively short distance, considering these people were more likely to travel by boat or ship than across land. It was less than a two-week sail from the furthest extremes of MacDonald land – from Caithness, Scotland, to Coleraine, Northern Ireland, most of which, at one time or another fell under at least some MacDonald influence.

In fact, there was a time these two seemingly separate lands – the northeast corner of Northern Ireland and northwestern Scotland – were considered as one under the name of *Dál Riata*.

This was one region where the Romans were never able to gain a foothold, and these hardy races who stood up to one invader after another became the Gaels, the Gall-Gaels, the Highland Scots and the first Scottish-Irish. It is no wonder they’ve never been truly beaten, after two thousand years of on-and-off persecution.

It is difficult to separate out who was where first, and exactly when, but it is thought that the descendants of an Irish king named Conn of the Hundred Fights began moving into the Scottish Isles between 200 and 400 AD, perhaps from being forced out of Ireland, perhaps to gain new land or to pillage nearby lands, perhaps to

combine similar peoples, in forming a stronger mutually-supportive kingdom.

The Irish raiders or explorers were known as “scotti” and the new realm they established in Scotland became known as Scotti Land, which is the source for the overall name of Scotland.

It is obvious the very important role these people played in Scottish, Irish and even English history. The reason England is included in this list is because the Lords of the Isles sometimes allied themselves with the English when it could help them deal better with the Scottish crown.

The Lords of the Isles all came out of the basic MacDonald Clan. There are a few varying genealogy charts attempting to establish the line of the Lords, and some of this same genealogy is used to establish the genealogy of some of the kings and queens of England.

Without getting into deep detail, this realm is usually said to begin with the great Celtic/Viking leader, Somerled, who is credited with ‘driving the Vikings out of the Isles’ though, in fact, it may be that he simply was able to calm the Isles down. He is thought to have had considerable Viking blood, himself, and he married the daughter of the most powerful Viking in the area. So, it may well have been a settling in of two cultures under one strong leader, descended from both races.

Somerled was born around 1100 AD, and died in 1164 AD. He was killed in a battle with troops of the Scottish king, and it was this rivalry between the Scottish crown and their very large and powerful neighbors to the north that feeds many a tale of Scotland.

Somerled is said to have died very near or at the site of the current Glasgow Airport, which is located east of that city, and very adjacent to the smaller town of Paisley. It would be weavers in Paisley who perfected weaving patterns first found in the Middle East into the well-known Paisley pattern, especially popular in the 1960s, but actually having been around much longer.

Even more importantly, in Paisley is found Paisley Abbey. It is said that the monks who

eventually established Paisley Abbey took responsibility for the proper burial of Somerled, who is supposed to be buried near the Mull of Kintyre, the point of land immortalized in the great Paul McCartney song of the same name.

This abbey has been called the birthplace of the Stewart royal Scottish dynasty. Walter FitzAlan, whose family came to Scotland from Normandy with William the Conqueror, back in 1066, became the land steward of Scotland. Walter’s family eventually adopted the name Stewart, sometimes spelled Stuart, most likely due to French influence.

Walter has been described as “a Norman by culture and by blood a Breton.” Either way, he would have had strong Celtic and Viking blood in his veins, since Brittany was principally Celtic, and Normandy was once a Celtic nation overrun by Norsemen. He led the forces that defeated Somerled, and he established Paisley Abbey.

Another Walter Stewart, sixth High Steward of Scotland, had a son who married Robert Bruce’s daughter and their son was King Robert II, the first true Stewart king of Scotland. Robert II married off his large number of children to other wealthy noble families in Scotland as a way to cement the country. However, in years to come, this would lead to many battles over territory between cousins, especially between the Stewarts and MacDonalds.

At the time of Bannockburn, descendants of Somerled were split in support of the Bruce, however Angus Og MacDonald, the leader of the Isles at that time, did, in fact, not only support Bruce but also helped him hide from his enemies for a time in the Isles and in Ireland.

In Sir Walter Scott’s epic poem, from 1815, ‘Lord of the Isles,’ we find the following verse:

*The heir of mighty Somerled,  
Ronald, from many a hero sprung,  
The fair, the valiant, and the young,  
Lord of the Isles, whose lofty name  
A thousand bards have given to fame,  
The mate of monarchs, and allied  
On equal terms with England’s pride.*



ABOVE: A woodcut taken from Sir Walter Scott's famous epic poem, 'Lord of the Isles.'

To clear up any misconception, the more aged leader of the Isles, at this time, was one Angus Og MacDonald, who joined Robert Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn, with legend saying that among his troops were remnants of the Knights Templar. What is more historically accepted is that Angus brought along somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 Highlanders and Islanders, reportedly including many common people carrying nothing more than farm implements.

It was Angus's son Ranald, or Ronald who is being spoken of in this poem. However, neither Angus nor Ronald are actually considered as "official" Lords of the Isles despite the poem's name. Yet, they were the leaders of the Isles.

The phrase "mate of monarchs" refers to both a very recent MacDonald/Stewart marriage (with at least one more to come), and more ancient marriages between Viking royalty and Celtic royalty.

The phrase "and allied on equal terms with England's pride" refers to the many times the Lords of the Isle held meetings with, made treaties with, and made secret plans with English kings. It is true that there were a few times the entire history of Scotland could have been much different had a battle here or there been won by

the Lord of the Isles side, with English support. The reason the Lords of the Isles would ally with the English was again to have a more powerful hand in dealing with the Scottish king. Many battles and much intrigue took place between these two Scots factions that would influence much of the nature and history of Scotland.

In his 'Lord of the Isles' poem, Scott tells of how Bruce was protected from his enemies by Isle royalty. Supposedly, he was taken to Rathlin Island, one of the few islands located between Scotland and Ireland that is considered Irish, not Scottish. Truth is, these people still considered all this land as one - the land of the Gael, the very heart of the Gaelic homeland - the old sea kingdom of *Dál Riata*.

To get to the tale of the end of the Lord of the Isles reign it is important to begin at least three generations earlier.

There were four men considered as actually titled Lord of the Isles, though many men preceded them as rulers or thanes of the Isles.

The man first considered to be an actual Lord of the Isles was Good King John of Islay, a descendant of Somerled. John married Margaret Stewart, the daughter of Robert II, and great, great granddaughter of Robert Bruce.

In Donald, second Lord of the Isles – the son of these two members of oft-opposing royal families – we find the most "royal" of leaders. As told in an earlier version of the Celtic Guide, Donald supported the return of the true king of Scots, James I, from English captivity, and, while often accused of trying to take over all of Scotland, his efforts culminated in the Battle of Red Harlaw (the bloodiest battle ever fought on Scottish soil). Not long after, James was returned to Scotland and immediately took revenge on many of those who did not support him.

Donald was followed by his son Alexander, third Lord of the Isles, and first MacDonald Earl of Ross. While this part of the story has been told in our earlier issue on Harlaw, it is important to recount that, upon the return of James I to the Scottish throne, Alexander

clashed at least twice with James, who was actually his very close relative. On the death of James I, Alexander also ascended to the title of Justiciar of Scotland. He was essentially the supreme judge or sheriff of the Highlands. With this and his titles of Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross, Alexander was arguably one of the most powerful men in all of Scotland as the young James II found his footing.

In fact, Alexander began his reign as Earl of Ross in the very same year that the young James II began his career as Scotland's king - 1437.

Alexander seems to have been a relatively upright person, especially in a time when powerful men had their way in just about any area of life that appealed to them.

Alexander had three sons of note – John, Hugh and Celestine.

John inherited the Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross titles, on the death of his father. By now the main headquarters of this dynasty was actually near Inverness, at the town of Dingwall. It is very likely that the second son, Hugh, was born at Dingwall Castle.

When John took over as clan leader, he bestowed the Isle of Skye on his brother, Hugh, assuming Hugh could win it from opposing forces who held it at the time.

Skye had previously been in the hands of the MacDonalds, who held sway in most of the western Isles for centuries. However, it was not in their hands when it was given to Hugh and so he took at least part of it by force.

On the death of John, the center of power for the MacDonald Clan became principally Hugh's family on Skye (Clan Donald North) and another branch located in the combined lands of the Scottish peninsula of Kintyre and the Irish county of Antrim. This branch (Clan Donald South), began using the spelling McDonnell, along the way. Still, they were and are the same family. As prolific as this clan was, members could be found on nearly every side of any conflict that Northern Ireland or western Scotland was to experience in coming years.

Lord Donald's brother, John Mor, established the McDonnells in Antrim. Antrim became a safe haven for many a member of Clan Donald during times of religious or political uproar. In fact, the travel back and forth between Scotland and Ireland of "Scottish-Irish" families manages to cloud a lot of family histories, since these people traveled freely and often between these two countries.

So, here we are at the end of the Lord of the Isles/MacDonald reign. John, last Lord of the Isles and MacDonald Earl of Ross, was apparently not fit to lead such a spread out and powerful family. Even his own son opposed him, along with the Scottish royal family.

John's son Angus Og met his father at the Battle of Bloody Bay off the coast of Mull, sometime between 1480 and 1483. Though Angus seems to have been the victor, the true result of the battle was that the clan became extremely weakened due to the large loss of life, ships, and family wealth.

John's brother Hugh joined other Highland chiefs in encouraging John to give up the Earldom of Ross in order to keep the clan from total annihilation, and to keep intact the Lord of the Isles title.

John finally accepted a stipend from the king of Scotland and retired to Dundee, where he later died. He was buried at Paisley Abbey, as Clan Donald had supported that lowland abbey since the days of Somerled.

Several descendants of John, Hugh and Celestine continued to claim the title Lord of the Isles, but none are considered as actually being an official Lord. John was the fourth and last Lord of the Isles.

The power of the clan fell on Hugh, who lived on the Sleat Peninsula of the Isle of Skye. My vested interest in this story is that Hugh's Gaelic name was Uisdean and four of his sons are recorded with versions of the MacUisdean name, which developed into my own McQuiston name, as well as many other forms such as McCutcheon, Hutchinson and MacHuston,

which later became the Houston name, at least in some cases. One of the legacies of Hugh is found in the lives of Andrew Jackson, whose mother was a Hutchinson, and in Sam Houston. These men were said to be distant cousins; they worked closely on the early development of America and especially the annexing of Texas, and, as Jackson lay dying at the Hermitage, Sam Houston was frantically trying to get to his side. He missed the death of his hero Andrew Jackson by just a short time. These American heroes were connected by a bond that extended all the way back to the Lords of the Isles.

Once the power of the Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross became so diminished, the clans of the Isles, who had so often followed

their MacDonald lord, resorted to lesser battles between various clans, or factions of clans, over the remaining spoils.

Today, Prince Charles of England holds the title of Lord of the Isles, though he has no clear connection to the legacy of the men who once controlled a large portion of Scotland, and who led the most widespread, powerful clan of Scotland.

There is a saying amongst the peoples of this diaspora –

Yet still the blood is strong,  
The heart is Highland,  
And we, in dreams,  
Behold the Hebrides.

## Thank you from the Celtic Guide

Two years ago - January of 2012, to be precise - I started this online e-magazine in hopes of giving voice to the many sides of Celtic culture, and voice to all those creative folks who wished to play a role in that quest - from authors to artists, from photographers to craftspersons, from musicians to Celtic travelers. It has been a resounding success! We ended 2012 with 17,000 hits, as the January 2013 issue was posted. We expect to be at around 25,000 hits at the end of this year for a whopping 42,000 or more hits on the site, not to mention tens of thousands of hits on our Facebook site, plus around 11,000 Likes. This all must mean something, and I think it means people like what we are doing.

**We'd also like to announce that we now have an official mascot by the name of Obie!**

Remember all past and current print issues of Celtic Guide are now available on Amazon.com **at cost**. Instructions on how to order are available on our website. This is a service provided to our readers, just as the PDF versions are offered **free of charge**. The Celtic Guide e-magazine is produced entirely by **volunteers**. Please support our **advertisers**, too, as they help defer expenses.

We are so thankful to all our contributors and readers for making this such a tremendous publication. Make 2014 count!

<http://www.celticguide.com>

# HOGMANAY

by Ron Henderson  
Perth, Scotland

*The end of the year,  
the beginning of the mystery*

This little article isn't about the actual festivities and celebrations associated with Hogmanay (last day of the year); it's about the meaning and derivation of the word itself.

If you look it up in some dictionaries, they will tell you that Hogmanay isn't a Scottish word; *Chambers Dictionary* for instance, will tell you that it is derived from the northern French dialect expression *Hoguinane*, from 16th century *Aguillanneuf*; meaning, 'A gift at the New Year'.

Well maybe . . .

Bestowing gifts at the New Year is certainly a very old Celtic tradition as I will explain shortly.

The *Concise Scots Dictionary* gives alternative spellings for Hogmanay (Hagmane, Hangmanay, Hugmanay etc.) and has this to say:

- "1) The last day of the year. New Year's Eve. A New Year's gift of oatcakes etc. given to, or asked for by children on New Year's Eve.
- 2) The cry uttered in asking for the New Year's gift. A drink given to a guest to celebrate the New Year."

Now the interesting thing is that Hogmanay in Scotland seems to mean two things. It means the last day of the year, but it also means the gift itself, which is given and the gift that is received.

You will hear the question "What would you like for your hogmanay?" or the statement "This is for your hogmanay," and either an oatcake, piece of coal or peat, or glass of something or other is handed over. So it appears that the main meaning of Hogmanay is indeed the gift itself and not so much the last day of the year.

My 100 year old *Collins Dictionary* says – "Hogmanay. (etymology doubtful). The last day of the year; a gift given on that day."

## **But where did the word itself come from?**

An interesting theory has been put forward by Brian Hayward in his book, *Galoshins: The Scottish Folk Play*, in which he informs us that in many places Hogmanay was known as 'Cake Day' from the practice of giving bread and cake to New Year visitors. He has found a little chant sung by children in Stirling in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It appears in a work titled *Archaeologica Scotica*, from 1822.

Hogmanay,  
Trollolay,  
Gie me o' your white bread,  
I'll hae nane o' your grey.

Significantly this chant was used at Halloween which is also a time of gift giving and receiving. A similar chant was used in Glasgow.

Hogmanay, Troll-ol, Troll-ol aye,  
Gie us a piece o' your white bread  
And eke a bittock o' your grey,  
Wi' brown bread laif dawds for Hogmanay.

It will be noted that three types of bread are mentioned in this chant, ie. white, grey and brown. I quote fully here from Mr. Hayward:

"Three classes of bread are listed as early as c.1320 in a review of the rights of the canons of Restenneth Priory in Angus, where they were entitled to collect 'on each coming of the king to Forfar, and for each day he abides there, two loaves of the Lord's bread, four loaves of the second bread, and six loaves, called hugmans'."

Hugmans, the coarsest bread of the three, is mentioned in the Household Book of Edward IV of England, where 'hogman' bread is to be



made from the bran of a bushel of flour for the king's horses.

Mr. Hayward suggests that this 'hugman' or 'hogman' bread was coarse bread, and was traditionally given to beggars at the end of Yule and that this day became known as 'Hogman Day' which subsequently became our 'Hogmanay'.

It's an excellent theory and for me it holds a lot more water than the French *Aguillanneuf* that is to be found in various dictionaries.

The next best suggestion for a derivation for Hogmanay comes from a Charles MacKay in 1877 in his snappy titled book, *The Gaelic etymology of the languages of Western Europe, and more especially of the English and lowland Scotch and of their slang, cant and colloquial dialects*.

He is scathing of all suggestions that Hogmanay comes from French or any other language (he gives examples) and believes that it is Celtic in origin. MacKay says,

"Hogmanay. A lowland Scottish word signifying a festival kept on the last night of the Old Year, and the early morning of the New. It is a day of visiting, merriment, and the bestowal of gifts, especially to women,

(my emphasis) whether mothers, wives, sisters, sweethearts or particular friends and acquaintances. Gaelic: *Og*, young; *maighdean*, a maid or a virgin; *mnaoi*, women; whence *Og-mnaoi (og menai)*, the Festival of the Young Women."

This *Og-mnaoi* is pronounced roughly as "Ogmanay".

Last, but probably by no means least, for there seem to be almost as many derivations for Hogmanay as there are stars in the night sky, is the following.

Quoted in the same book by MacKay, is a book titled *Northamptonshire Dialect* by a certain Mr. Brockett, in which we are informed that "Hogmena" is a name given to the month of December, and to any gift during that month, especially on the last day – and that 'hogmena' might signify New Year's Eve.

So there you have it. Make your preferred choice. My own suggestion is just not to worry too much about all these derivations but to go out and enjoy it again, and hopefully for many years to come.

A Happy New Year to you all.

Ronald Henderson, Perth, Scotland



*All those little tiny dots are people! This is a photo from a Hogmanay celebration in Edinburgh, Scotland.*

The end of the journey ... or the beginning?

Patrick Perching Eagle Watters  
Lakota and Celtic, USA

# From Clan to Tribe

The Watters family - the name meaning "They that dwell by loch and sea" – originally lived on the western islands and the Highlands of Scotland. Belonging to a sept (smaller family group) of Clan Buchanan, or possibly Forbes, the families were farmers and fishermen under the protection and leadership of the clan chief.

It is likely but nearly impossible to prove that the family was descended from the Dalriada kingdom of the 5th century. Even now, the Watters are predominantly found in areas that coincide with the original Gaelic kingdom that was part of the Ulster region of Ireland and the Highlands and Isles of Scotland. Being in the upper Highlands and islands afforded some security during the 18th and 19th centuries, the land and climate being somewhat inhospitable

and troublesome for travelers. These people subsisted on a diet largely of potatoes and whatever vegetables might grow in the rocky soil, as well as whatever the sea would begrudgingly give up. Life was extremely simple and often just plain "extreme."

Faith had always been a mainstay of strength and community for our family and others. The old Celtic church established by monks, (Patrick, Columba and others), was critical to the life being and morale of people who struggled to eke out a living in this country. As time and seasons would pass, this faith would play a continual role in the life of the family. Especially as oppression and tyranny caused the family to uproot themselves and journey to other lands and places.



Source: University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives. Title: Skye Crofters planting potatoes.

The 18th century finally brought insecurity to the Watters family in the form of the notorious and often barbaric Highland Clearances. Without going into detail in this brief history, the Clearances were England's answer to dealing with troublesome clans, and also a way to introduce sheep to the Highlands to bolster the woolen industry. Lowland clansmen were even utilized by the government to drive out, burn out, and brutally displace the Highland families and clans. There are many general accounts of all this mayhem and where all the surviving families fled to, but there are always exceptions to generalities throughout history.

For the most part, the Watters family fled the Highlands to either the outer islands or across the sea to Ireland, settling on the north shores in what is known as County Antrim. Also, many Watters were already in Northern Ireland (Ulster) so this was not "hostile" territory for those from Scotland. Many others emigrated to North America and Oceania (Australia & New Zealand) at the same time.

James Watters (this author's great, great grandfather) and Ann Lowery were wed in Ulster and started their family, continuing the pattern established by generations before them; farming and fishing. Dates and details of the Watters family are very difficult, if not impossible, to find. Ship's manifests and the occasional recorded birth, death or marriage document are often the only evidence of where and when the family turned up in places.

It wasn't long before another "clearance" of sorts would cause the Watters to once again seek freedom and safety from oppression. The English weren't satisfied with colonizing just the Highlands, but also earlier (17th century) wanted to displace troublesome Gaelic peoples in favor of bringing industry and colonists to the Ulster regions of Ireland.

While Scot/Irish Presbyterians were not necessarily persecuted as were the Roman Catholics, during this time, it was clear that troubles were to come from these occurrences.

These actions once again included military operations in what is now Northern Ireland. Suffice to say, James Watters did not want to stick around for the potential destruction and death that seemed to be coming once again. Making their way to a port, the family secured steerage on a ship bound for Philadelphia in the hopes of connecting with other Celtic families that fled earlier to America.

James and Ann settled in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, after a short stay in Philadelphia. Farming was good and the family prospered. During this time, my great grandfather, Samuel, was born. Again, there is not much in the way of detail about our particular family in Pennsylvania, but other histories give a very good indication of how life looked during this time in the history of the United States.

Samuel apparently thrived in this new world environment, and developed an also apparent penchant for exploration and adventure. He eventually left Pennsylvania and traveled northwest to Minnesota, where he became employed as a fur trapper for either the Hudson Bay or Northwest companies. Again, details are sketchy but those were the two major companies employing trappers. French, Irish, and Scots made up the bulk of the workforce at that time. Like many other trappers, Samuel "took up with" a Native American woman, which was not only convenient for surviving in the land, but also brought valuable connections with the native population in terms of business propositions.

Eventually, Samuel and Isabel Marshall (her English name) were wed and started their own family. At this time, (early 1800's) the Lakota people were happily entrenched as a woodland people, enjoying hunting, fishing and gathering, while also engaging in the occasional skirmish with the neighboring Ojibwe tribe.

It wouldn't be long, however, before yet another sort of "clearance" would threaten the Watters family. Now, a little cultural history on the Lakota is probably necessary here.

The Lakota people had a somewhat matriarchal society, not so much that women were in charge, but that whenever a man married, he became part of the wife's tribe/family. Tribes usually consisted of several family groups led by a chief, hence the "clan to tribe" transition of my family.

During this time, settlers were pushing westward seeking their own "manifest destiny." And, often the settlers were accompanied by government military forces who would establish forts in the frontier. The forts provided protection and a sort of town where people could gather, obtain goods and services, and in general maintain a sense of community. Needless to say, the native population was often a hindrance to this new colonization westward. All sorts of "arrangements" and coalitions were established

between various groups; unfortunately for the Lakota these coalitions didn't include them.

Eventually, the Lakota people sought another place to live in peace, and this saw them leave Minnesota traveling southwest into the Dakota territories. Samuel and his family were part of this migration, at least what little evidence that exists seems to lend credence to that movement. (Later evidence such as death certificates and gravestones would provide further hints to the movement of the family.)

During the time of life on the Great Plains, the Lakota nation thrived. The new lifestyle of hunting and moving with the great buffalo herds seemed to suit them well. Horses added another advantage to the growing nation of tribes, and the often glamorized life of the Indians began to be developed among white America.



*This Wikimedia Commons photo of Lakota tribe members and U.S. Government officials is from the copyrighted collection of John C.H. Grabill, held by the Library of Congress, and taken in 1891, in South Dakota.*



Sadly, the “good days” of the Buffalo and plains life would also be short-lived for the Lakota and our Watters family. Further westward movement of settlers and forts (cavalry) continued to desecrate both the land and the indigenous people; disease, massacre of the North American Bison (Buffalo), and environmental damage (yes, believe it or not it had already started) among other things. The government felt compelled to intervene on behalf of settlers and deal with the “Indian uprisings.” Again, I won’t belabor that history here, but suffice it to say our family was once again feeling the need to move.

The establishment of reservations (areas of isolation for the various tribes) by the government heralded a clear signal to Lakota leaders that something must be done. Several skirmishes among cavalry and Indians alarmed Washington and prompted further escalating military intervention. Notable among these campaigns was Custer’s debacle at the Little Bighorn River (the Greasy Grass our people call it). While Lakota people did have some effective efforts against the government troops, it was clear to all Native American leaders that they could never outlast the numbers and force of the government. Most leaders chose to comply with treaties and move their people to reservations (which sadly was the beginning of “social genocide” of Native American culture and people). Our family chose to flee to Canada with other Lakota, accompanied by Cheyenne tribes. Sitting Bull, chief of the Hunkpapa tribe of Lakota, had made this choice while Crazy Horse (a relative and also chief of the Oglala tribe) finally decided to stop fighting and return to the reservation,. He was later tragically murdered there.

In Canada, the government had taken a much more amicable approach to native populations, ceding large tracts of land and granting citizenship to their indigenous tribes. This looked like a very good choice for the Lakota, but the Canadian government took the position

that only existing indigenous Canadian tribes could be granted this status. Once again, my family was a people without a country. Staying in Canada was useful for a time, but Lakota people wanted to be with other families (tribes), and eventually Sitting Bull decided to return to the reservations, and many different tribes followed. Sadly, this choice would also end Sitting Bull’s life in similar fashion to Crazy Horse. This became a critical turning point for my family.

My young grandfather, James, chose to return with some Lakota back to the U.S. via Montana (west of the path of other tribes). Those Lakota joined cousins of the Assiniboiné tribe at the Fort Peck Agency in northeastern Montana. This was also a time of deeply emotional decisions by members of our family. Samuel Watters chose to take his family and separately move back to Minnesota. Details of that move and whatever happened to him and his family are once again scarce, except for a death record of Samuel in Ottertail, Minnesota. His son, James, on the other hand decided that he must begin to hide his Lakota heritage if he wanted to own land and have a future in America. James met and married Eliza Coffey, an Irish woman whose family lived in that area of Montana at the time.

James homesteaded near the intersection of the Missouri River (Big Muddy) and Milk River. There the couple raised their family of eleven children, farming and hunting (but all the while being very cognizant of hiding any Lakota connections). The children were an interesting mix of clearly Lakota looking people (much like James), but also with fair skinned and even some red-headed ones! When asked about the darker character of some members of the family, James explained that we were descended from “black Irish” lineage. The ruse worked and my family thrived in the Fort Peck area, but never associated with relatives on the reservation there. Some of my uncles even went so far as to deride “the lazy Indians on that reservation.”

Fast forward to all of my father's family getting older, going away to college, starting their own families and moving to one coast or the other, (Montana winters had taken their toll on their collective psyches). Many of us ended up in Sacramento, California, and life went on for the Watters, the Irish Watters. The only conflicts of note were the occasional bout between the Protestant and Catholic sides of the family, but those usually boiled over harmlessly, (unlike things back in Ireland). Most of the families gathered every summer back in Montana to visit the grandparents and Uncle Arvie (the sole member who stayed on to ranch and farm).

As kids, we spent those summers hunting, riding horses, learning how to drive the farm trucks, working the harvest and more. I always recall the "tack room" my Uncle Arvie had on his farm. It was loaded with the most wonderful collection of leather goods; saddles, bridles and more. And, there were many handcrafted bows and arrows among the weaponry in that room. I suppose I should have suspected some Indian connection in my family, what with all the prowess in hunting and horseback skills, but again, no one in the family ever brought up Indians in conversation. Then, one summer when we were much older, and apparently with the blessing of my now very old grandfather (James), my own father pulled out an old sepia tone photograph of a Lakota woman. The resemblance to my grandfather and my own father and a couple of his brothers was uncanny.

It was then that I first found out about our Lakota heritage, and yet still it was a secret between my father and me. Sadly, the family still harbored fears of being "found out", even though at this point it would not have mattered. I guess my father felt a deep need to recognize this heritage with me? We had been involved with the Boy Scouts for many years, and my father always emphasized the Indian lore aspect of Scouting. In fact, we both joined the Order of the Arrow, a subgroup of Boy Scouts dedicated

to Native American culture. His own skills as a Lakota warrior became very apparent: horse whisperer, wonderful worker of leather and natural materials, an amazing hunting eye and skill.

Fast forward again, I have raised my own family and "retired" from regular work. All the years of being a park ranger, environmental biologist and father now seemed to be speaking to me of something deeper in my spirit. I had also become a Christian in the truest sense, a disciple of Jesus. That new identity seemed to be calling me to look back, to seek my roots. This new journey led to expanding our family tree, which had been mistakenly "altered" at the point of Samuel and his alleged wife in that tree. Thus this story was born, and it has given me a deeper understanding of who I am, not only as a Lakota Celtic, but as a follower of Jesus, and through Him of the Great Mystery, the Holy Trinity.

I realize I am on a journey with still more seasons to experience, but now the journey has a destination, even if I don't know where the next step leads. I have found purpose, God's purpose, in my life as a disciple. I have found identity in my heritage as a holy man (shaman, priest, etc.) but also as a *heyoka* (clown in the Lakota sense.)

From Patrick and Columcille, to Nicholas Black Elk and Crazy Horse, I have found relatives and spiritual mentors from the past who continue to "speak" to me today. They point me to the Way, they affirm my path and guidebook (the Bible) and they join me in the Journey.

*Mitakuye Oyasin, Bennacht De Ort*, ("All My Relatives" in Lakota and "God Bless You" in Gaelic, the language of the Celtic peoples)

[Among resources that have provided both physical and spiritual "evidence" for this story are; *Nicholas Black Elk – Medicine Man, Missionary, Mystic* by Michael F. Steltenkamp, and *Stories of the Celtic Soul Friends – Their Meaning for Today* by Edward C. Sellner.]

# The Hidden History of Christmas Carols

by Carolyn Emerick  
USA

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Short of the celebration of the dawning of a new year, Christmas is the last big holiday at the end of each year for many thousands of people around the world. We would be remiss in not presenting an interesting story on this perhaps most famous of holidays, and so our Celtic Guide Facebook guru, Carolyn Emerick, hereby presents a deeply researched report as a gift to our readers to help celebrate the end of 2013.

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*A note to the reader: Never has it been so evident that history can sometimes be murky and difficult to wade through than during my quest to discover the roots of Christmas caroling! Different sources give different information, conflicting dates, and varying histories. Ordinarily I would not open with a disclaimer. But, under the circumstances, if the reader were to look up this information on their own, they might find answers different than what I've written here. So, I will endeavor to weed through it all and give my own assessment of the material. And, I will try to be clear about where my information came from by citing all sources. - Carolyn*

The story of Christmas caroling is full of unexpected surprises. The practice itself has gone through many changes over the centuries, and our perception of caroling today is based only on very recent history. We think of Christmas caroling as a wholesome, and even religious, activity. Caroling seems to speak of the beauty, innocence, and magic of the Christmas season. However, in researching this practice, I have discovered that caroling was not as innocent as we might think. In fact, the act of caroling was actively combatted by the Church for hundreds of years.



Uncovering the origins of caroling has proven difficult. Some sources give the 14th or 15th centuries as the earliest known date of the practice. I believe the reason for this is because this is the period when caroling began to be adopted by the church, and therefore this is when carols first began to be written down. However, there is much evidence that caroling was around long before that. We don't have written carols from the early periods, but what we do have are edicts from the Church and recorded sermons which make reference to caroling.

In his book, *The Book of Christmas Folklore*, Tristram P. Coffin says that "For seven centuries a formidable series of denunciations and prohibitions was fired forth by Catholic authorities, warning Everyman to 'flee wicked and lecherous songs, dancings, and leapings'" (p98).

Apparently early carols could be quite lewd, and they were originally associated with dance as well as song. The caroling dancers often went around town in costume, and it is related to the custom of mumming.



ABOVE: UK stamp commemorating medieval mummers.

Coffin mentions that this revelry was considered so offensive to the Church that they referred to caroling as “sinful traffic” and issued decrees against it in 1209 A.D. and 1435 A.D. It must have been a ‘good time’, for clerics and priests who found themselves caught up in the fun received a stern scolding. In one document from 1338 A.D. they are accused of neglecting their clerical duties “while indulging in dances and masques; for prowling the city ‘streets and lanes’ ‘day and night’; as well as leading a riotous existence” (p99).

The Church viewed these activities as “very remnant of pagan custom” (p99). But, more than that, the street revelry could get out of control. Alcohol was usually flowing during caroling festivities, and drunken singers could get rowdy and even violent. “When a fellow named Gilbert de Foxlee tried to break up the dancing, he was stabbed in the back with a dagger, cut in the right arm with a sword, and slashed on the left leg with an axe. He died after eight weeks of infection and pain” (Coffin, p 99). Evidently carolers were well armed!

Sandra M. Salla is a contributor to a fantastic resource called Medieval Folklore, an

encyclopedia of folkloric terms. In her entry for “Carols,” Salla says that “between 600 and 1500 C.E. the Church formally banned the dancing of carols on church grounds” and that numerous informal “decrees, sermons, and exempla were written condemning the activity” (Salla, p61).

While some authors attribute caroling to purely Christian origins, and begin the history of caroling with those written down in a Christian context, this is contradicted by the evidence. We can see that the Church long considered it a pagan practice, as evidenced by the wording in the edicts condemning caroling. Also, that Salla mentions the edicts against caroling begin in the 6th century is telling. The 6th and 7th centuries were the period of conversion for the Anglo-Saxons in England. The fact that edicts against caroling begin to appear in the record at the same time as the conversion period is circumstantial evidence hinting that caroling had pagan roots and was in existence long before conversion.

But, those records do not explain why caroling was considered to have pagan connotations. Jacqueline Simpson, a scholar who specializes in medieval English and Scandinavian history, explores this in her wonderful book, *European Mythology*. Simpson explains that it can sometimes be difficult to determine which customs actually stem from pagan tradition because Church clerics were quick to condemn almost anything as pagan. She explains that customs involving drunkenness, cross dressing (usually in play acting and carnival type festivities), or elements that expressed sexuality were described as “devilish” even if there was no devil involved (Simpson, p118).

One example of a song and dance tradition similar to caroling that has an overt connection to paganism is in Romanian Căluș dance which has survived into modern times. Participants dress in costume, like modern mummers and early carolers, and go around the village singing and dancing. The Călușari, members of the all-male dance troupe, were once a secret society which appears to have been openly associated



with paganism, and their members were exempt from partaking in mass. This group of dancers had another purpose other than entertainment. They were said to possess secret charms of healing, and were known for banishing evil spirits. The Călușari went door to door during mid-Winter, offering their services and expected to be welcomed and generously compensated. If a home refused them entry, a curse would befall the homeowner (Simpson, pp121-126).

If this reminds you of Halloween, there's a good reason for that! The mid-Winter holiday we now call Christmas, but which was known as Yule in pre-Christian England and various other names in different cultures, was known to be a period of high spiritual activity – just as old Samhain was. This notion has faded away in our modern perception of Christmas, but it lingered on in Halloween. European folklore is full of references to spiritual activity during Yule-tide. In fact, it was regarded as a spiritually dangerous time in both Celtic and Germanic cultures.



*Father Christmas and 'wassail'.*

So, it is not that far of a stretch to wonder if the Romanian Călușari tradition (which lasted well into the 19th century and perhaps later) gives us a glimpse of the earlier mumming and caroling traditions and we may speculate on the long lost spiritual connotations.

Further, just as the Călușari expect a reward or threaten a curse (literally trick or treat) early caroling traditions are almost always associated with demanding to be rewarded with food and drink or risk some kind of retribution.



*"Christmas carolers invited inside"  
– a 1905 illustration by Charles M. Relyea.*

Contemporary carolers still sing "Here we go a-wassailing" wherein there is a line requesting "now bring us some figgy pudding" and carolers threaten "we won't go until we get some." A survey of medieval carols will demonstrate that the request for food and drink is not unique to this song. Wassailing, a medieval synonym for caroling, is itself a reference to the alcoholic beverage wassail. The word derives from the Old English term "waes-heal" meaning "good health," a greeting or toast (Baker, p83). Wassail is a medieval mulled wine (heated with spices) which was commonly served to carolers.

Another reason to consider that there may be some connection between caroling and trick-or-

treating is that caroling was done throughout the year, not simply at Christmas. This is mentioned in numerous sources, and there are accounts of caroling at other holidays in early folklore journals. One article of particular interest is *The Celebration of Candlemas in Wales*, by Trefor M. Owen. In this scholarly article about the Candlemas holiday, the word “carol” is mentioned seventy-two times, emphasizing the overwhelming evidence of caroling during a holiday other than Christmas. Candlemas is another holiday with known pagan origins, being the Christianized version of the old Celtic pagan Imbolc.

Owen shares one account of Welsh Candlemas caroling wherein the revelers go around town and sing outside of homes. This sounds innocent enough... at first. What ensues is the carolers sing bawdy songs about the Virgin Mary (no wonder the Church considered caroling sacrilegious!) and hurl insults at the home-owners! The home-owners are then obliged to return the insults to the carolers. Whichever group out-wits the other in verse would be declared the winner. If the revelers won, they must be allowed inside and given food and beverage (Owen pp242-243).

And, interestingly, Owen mentions that wassailing was done at Halloween as well as Christmas, Candlemas and other holidays (p247).

So, we have a caroling tradition that involves costumes and demanding reward in the form of food or risk a threat. And, we also discover that caroling was done on Halloween in Britain.



*Old illustration of medieval circle dancing.*

Could modern trick-or-treating and Christmas caroling have evolved from the same root practice many hundreds of years ago?

The practice of caroling went through a transformation between the High Middle Ages (12th and 13th centuries) and the Renaissance period. As explained, the Church categorically rejected the practice due to the “close relationship between ‘heathen dancing’ and witchcraft” (Coffin, p99). Eventually, church leaders adopted an “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” approach. St. Francis of Assisi was one of the major proponents of replacing the old “riotous carols with ones more appropriate” in Italy, which then spread through Europe (Coffin, pp99-100). Eventually, this led to a “great age of carol writing” between the years 1400 to 1650 (Baker, p81).



*14th century depiction of peasants breaking bread and wine.*

But, during the same period caroling was actively suppressed by the Puritans (insert joke about Puritans always ruining all the fun here). A little known fact about the history of witch trials is that caroling came up in trial testimony. Salla says “in witchcraft trials of the sixteenth century and later, accused witches often confessed to caroling” (p62). Interestingly, just as witches were accused of inverting Christian practices like the mass and Sabbath rituals, there was apparently some notion of a witch’s carol, which inverted the carol song and dance commonly practiced by the rest of the peasantry (Salla, p62).



Caroling evolved much over the years and seems to have gone through many stages. With the end of one stage came the beginning of another. The Puritans and their influence faded, and the Victorian era began. The Victorians had a penchant for romanticizing and idealizing nostalgic customs of the past. And so, while other aspects of caroling such as its association with dance and other holidays faded away, the Victorians kept it very much alive at Christmas, albeit in a version very tame compared to the original. It is only in recent years that the popularity of Christmas caroling has become in danger of extinction all together. Today the custom is mostly seen in shopping malls sung by children or church groups. Will caroling disappear from Western culture all together? Maybe it's time to reintroduce the wassail and liven up the party!

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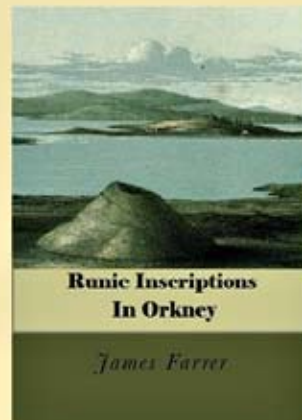
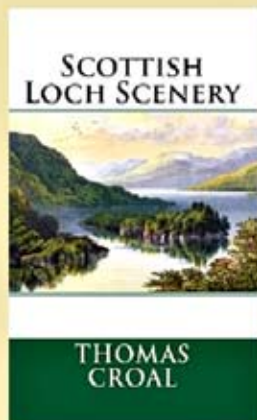
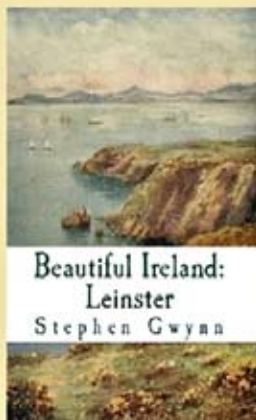
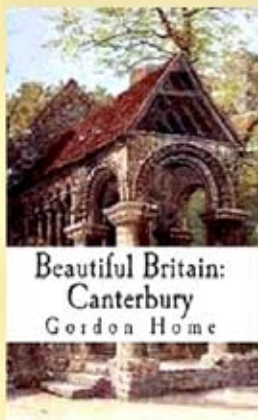
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# Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright  
Bellows Falls, VT, USA

## Guthrie

Under the August sun of 1177, William the Lion smiled broadly as he rode home to Dunfermline; at 34, he had sat the throne for nearly 20 years, had founded the Abbey at Arbroath just the year before, had given his nation the Royal Standard of the Lion Rampant, a flag recognized in London, Paris and the Vatican, had leveraged the canny Henry II of England for a bride of royal descent, and had begun promoting the very covenants and treaties with the courts of France that would soon come to guarantee the support of French monarchs for another four centuries. Indeed, on this bright summer's day, he was positively jubilant, having just presided over the annual celebration of the Braemar Highland Games, founded by his great-grandfather, Malcolm Canmore.

Knowing William to be flushed with days of hunting, drinking, frolic and high sport, the King's royal falconer decided to make a grand move for his own advancement. Shouldering his way through other mounted retainers, the falconer engaged his liege at stirrup, remarking to William that he would soon be passing close by his meager house to the west of Forfar, and beseeched that his Highness might grant him so great an honor as to break bread beneath that humble roof.

"Why Yes!," William answered, such would meet his favor; arriving at that modest domicile, the falconer escorted his King into his home, presenting him to his astonished wife, and commanding her to bring forth the best repast attainable for their Royal

Majesty. Allegedly, she replied that she was blest to have bought fresh fish from the monger that very day, and she would now gut the best two to cook for her husband and her King, at which moment, William I of Scotland is eternally remembered as having magnanimously declared: "Nay, Good Woman, I say gut three, and come ye dine as well!"

Now, could the surname of this proud Aberdeenshire family have really come from so thin a spoken membrane, borne from so far distant a memory? Could it not be just so peculiar as to bear the spectral hue of truth? Perhaps it does, as equally as it may not, but to the modern Guthries around the world, it is a tale that they always greet with good humor, and have come to cherish as their own, whether they individually give credence to it, or not.

But be that tale fact or fable, the leaders of this clan had indeed emerged as falconers to their kings since the days of Canmore himself, and had zealously molded that high post into a virtually heritable honor, generation after generation, from one monarch to the next for



*Guthrie Tartan and Shield*





over three centuries, as evidenced by a courtyard rhyme dating from the early years of the Stuart Dynasty, penned by an anonymous cleric about the ginger-haired, tennis-playing James I:

Give Him but a Keith to order his Stables  
And a Guthrey to train his Birds  
A Scott to set his Hounds to Stag  
An' then merrie shalt be his Words.

Turning back to the 1170's, history shows us that whatever incident had put that falconer before the eyes of William, King of Scots, it was certainly capitalized on for the next handful of years, as the family now known as the Guthries began purchasing more and more parcels of land in the vicinity of Arbroath to add to their original holding, expanding so significantly that those regions swiftly became known as the Lands of Gutherin, and were even designated as such on maps drawn from that time forward. Without question, this family's star was ascending. Yet even in the service of kings and princes, there were only so many posts for the management of hawks and falcons at which to employ the young males of any family, and within a couple of generations, the mews of the Royal Court of Scotland were top-heavy with falconers named Guthrie, leaving their ever-ambitious chiefs casting about for more toe-holds in their climb to nobility.

No doubt there were assignments of adolescent Guthries as novice groomsmen, and as squires to the chamberlains and standard bearers, and doubtless several sons and nephews became acolytes in the High Court's Bishopric priesthood –

certainly a proven way to ensure the best literacy achievable for well-bred boys. But perhaps the most noteworthy effort among this campaign of niche-seeking were by the Guthries who began studying iron-working under the Gows and the Smiths, as evidence would bear in a later century.

Fortunately, all the plans and preparations to keep their chiefs within the notice of the Scottish Court were successful, as in 1299, the ruling council chose none other than the Laird of Guthrie to lead a small contingent to Europe, with instructions to find the expatriate Sir William Wallace, reportedly at the court of Philip V of France, and convince him to return in peaceable envoy to Scotland, his presence being earnestly sought to aid in maintaining order during the growing rivalry of John "Red" Comyn and Robert the Bruce, both vying for John Balliol's vacant throne.

Although surviving documentation thereof is practically nonexistent, history does bear out that the Laird of Guthrie did manage to locate Wallace in France, and over some time, persuaded Scotland's former Lord Protector to journey back with him to their homeland, as they are both recorded being back on native soil by 1304, and so arguably may have debarked as early as late 1303.

It takes little assumption to imagine the

Laird of Guthrie joining many other patriots among Scottish nobility in deeply regretting the outcome of that mission when the winter of 1305 found Wallace betrayed, imprisoned, condemned and executed by Edward I and his Anglo-Scot confederates.

Regardless, enough stardust clung to the mantles of the Laird's family that David II, son and heir of Robert the Bruce, chartered the Barony of Guthrie during his reign (1329-1371). Although being highly-prized as a stepping stone of gentrified establishment, passage of time would see the family relegate the office of the Barony to a specific branch, the Guthries of Halkerton, who were also noteworthy for having continued holding the Barony through the office of royal falconers in the district of Angus, right up through its relinquishment in 1747 under the Heritable Jurisdictions Act.

The decades and generations had long since moved the rest of this family, whose various branches and houses now constituted a recognized Clan, to loftier concerns than lures and bells, and hoods and jesses, and the breeding of merlins and tiercels, and the keeping of mews, royal or noble. Wide had Clan Guthrie spread its proverbial wings, feathering their nests with many broad estates, as evidenced in the old rhyme recited by kith and kin (and probably some grumbling, ink-stained clerics to boot): "Guthrie o' Guthrie, And Guthrie o' Gaigie, Guthrie o' Taybank, An' Guthrie o' Craigie"; it is the House first named therein that constitutes the central branch of the Clan, producing an Alexander Guthrie of Guthrie who is named a witness to a 1442 charter between two Lords, one a Gordon and the other a Keith. That same Alexander went on to become the Baillie of Forfar, and annex for himself the neighboring lands of Kincaldrum.

In the 1460's, the Clan's next chief, David Guthrie of Guthrie, was named to the post of Armor Bearer to the King, under James III, who found him so sanguine a retainer that he authorized for him a charter under the Great

Seal to build a castle for his family at Guthrie, to be held as the chiefly residence. His rapport with the King deepening, David found himself elevated to Lord Chief Justice of Scotland by royal appointment in 1473, and consequently decided to show his appreciation to his liege patron by founding a collegiate church at Guthrie in 1478, as was confirmed by mention in a Papal Bull the following year. The next chief, another Alexander, was as devoted to his own king as had been his father, following James IV to their shared demise at the massacre of Flodden.

The chiefs who followed, though, would take the Clan in an entirely different direction, with a depth of devotion and dedication rivalled by few - beginning with their championing of the authority of James VI in political opposition to his mother, Mary, Queen O' Scots, the Guthries swiftly emerged as firebrand proponents of the Protestant Reformation. Complicating these times of internecine upheaval, the Guthries' long-simmering feud with the neighboring Gardynes boiled over, resulting in the assassination of the Laird Alexander Guthrie at Inverpeffer.

The Guthries were swift and savage in their retaliation, leaving much of Angus smeared in blood and ash, and resulting in the necessity of martial intervention by Crown forces. As luck would have it, those Guthries involved had enough influence with the Protestant Royal Court in London to escape most of their consequences through a royal pardon in 1618. Never at a loss to build on good fortune, Alexander, 10th Chief of Guthrie, improved that favor into becoming a pensioned bodyguard to James VI and I, and thus attended the King of Great Britain whenever he rode at sport or hunted.

As they were ever in for a pound and ne'er just a penny, those Protestant fires burning in the hearts of the Clan were fanned yet higher in the generations that followed, and when the Covenanting Wars took spark across the breadth of Scotland, most of the Guthries transformed their despal of all things Catholic to an abiding hatred of the interpreted oppressions by the

Anglican Church. Vows to defend God's will with sword and musket culminated, for most of the Clan, with the capture of the popular officer Andrew Guthrie at the Battle of Philliphaugh in 1646, and his execution at St. Andrews under the "swift kiss" of the Scottish guillotine known as "The Maiden". For some though, that ardor would still not be quenched for another 15 years, until the beloved crusader James Guthrie, remembered often as the Martyred Minister of Lauder, brought his incendiary sermons and diatribes to the burgh of Stirling, and ignoring all warnings of the consequence, loudly preached against the will of King and Church until he was arrested, tried and executed.

Looking back from hindsight, perhaps a fitting elegy for this Clan can be derived from a sobriquet applied to Reverend James Guthrie the Martyr by none other than that greatest of English butchers, Oliver Cromwell, who,

seeking to ridicule his words as dismissively as possible, referred to him repeatedly as "The Little Man who Refused to Kneel."

Truly, nothing breeds immortality like an insult that names a point of pride!

This material is just a sampling of one of the 60 Clan names and legends appearing in the Spring 2014 upcoming book; -

## *Henceforth Tales*

by Cass and Deborah Wright

Follow future issues of Celtic Guide for further information about 2014 publication. . . . and thank you for joining us at the hearth ! - DW



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# THE END OF A LIFE THE END OF AN ERA

by James McQuiston  
USA

It is not difficult to find an instance of a man or woman in a Celtic country who gave up their life for the cause of freedom and the common good. The month of November, in the United States of America, saw the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of perhaps one of our greatest presidents, the Celtic-blooded John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

“Do you remember where you were when you heard Kennedy was shot?” – is a question often asked.

I do. I was 13-years-old and sitting in a Junior High School Art classroom as the announcement came over the loudspeaker. Raised Catholic in a mixed Presbyterian/Catholic family, I was shocked enough by the news and certainly didn’t need the kid next to me smiling and asking me, “Did you want him to get shot?”

The idea that anyone would “want” the president of the country to be killed was so foreign to me.

For fifty years, conspiracy theories have grown. I personally have read many books, some very convincing, on the subject, having searched for closure to this mysterious tragedy.

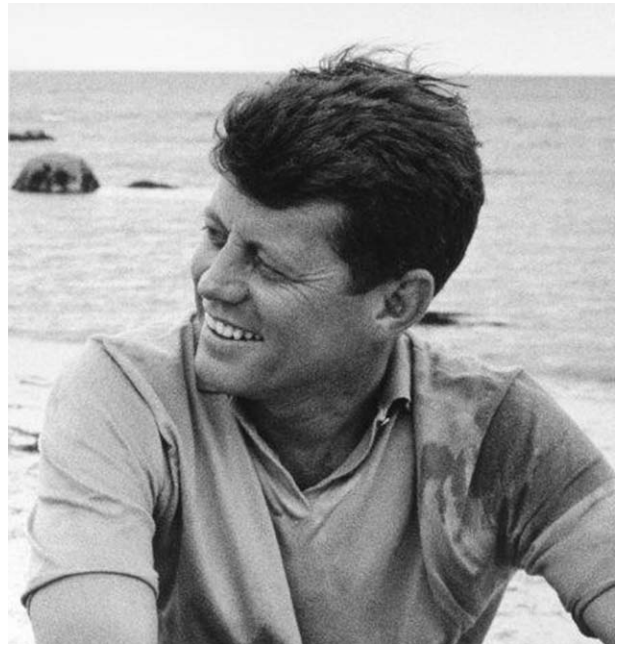
Almost as shocking as the assassination news was the episode when Oswald was killed on live TV. They had sent all of us children home from school. I was laying on the couch as my mother ran the vacuum cleaner over the rug in our living room. As the police began to bring Oswald out, my mother shut off the vacuum cleaner and she and I watched as he was gunned down.

She began to cry.

I thought, “How odd she would cry over a criminal getting his just dessert?”

It took me a few years to realize that she was crying over the collapse of Camelot, not over

the scene we had just witnessed live, though that was a shock enough for people who had never seen anyone murdered before their eyes. We have often mentioned that day when we both witnessed the raw, heartless side of life.



John “Jack” Kennedy was as Irish as they come. He was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on May 29, 1917 to U.S./England Ambassador Joseph Patrick “Joe” Kennedy, Senior, and philanthropist Rose Elizabeth Fitzgerald. Joe was the elder son of businessman/politician Patrick Joseph “P. J.” Kennedy and Mary Augusta Hickey. Rose was the eldest daughter of Boston Mayor John Francis “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald and Mary Josephine “Josie” Hannon. All four of his grandparents were the children of immigrants from Ireland.

He died, arguably as the most famous Celtic martyr in U.S. history, on November 22, 1963.

Last year I had the uncanny good fortune to meet a man who knew Kennedy personally and



who negotiated the return of the Bay of Pigs prisoners from Cuba. His name is E. Barrett Prettyman.

Prettyman was a long-time lawyer and political aide in Washington. If I remember his words correctly, he said he was told to call a certain phone number from a phone booth located by the water's edge, very much like in a spy movie. Bobby Kennedy was on the other end of the line and told him he was going to Cuba to negotiate with Castro.

Truth was, a lot of the negotiations had already taken place. Jack Kennedy was embarrassed by the failed Bay of Pigs assault on Cuba and he put together an amazing coalition of entities who raised \$53 million dollars in medical and food supplies for Cuba in return for the prisoners.

In the group of fund raisers were highly placed members of the Catholic Church, along with American industrial giants, the American Red Cross, and many other U.S. and Canadian organizations.

Prettyman says that he flew into Havana not knowing if he'd come out alive. He simply gulped at his orders, and did his duty as prescribed by Jack Kennedy's brother.



*A photo I snapped of Mr. Prettyman in 2012*

Prettyman was met at the Havana Airport by two jeeps filled with camo-clothed individuals carrying machine guns. He boarded one of the jeeps and headed off down backroads until the jeeps stopped and Fidel Castro jumped into the seat beside him. His insides were trembling but he played the part of a cool Cold War negotiator. Eventually, the jeeps pulled up next to the house of Ernest Hemingway, who had left Cuba shortly before because, though he was a friend of Castro, he knew his writing career would be over if he was tied to Communism.

Castro so respected Hemingway that he left his house intact, and especially his library. Today, there is a team of American researchers in that library organizing the notes Hemingway wrote in the pages of his many books, into an almost autobiographical diary of his life.

On the day Prettyman arrived with Castro, he was first given a tour of the Hemingway home, and especially the library. The two men ended up in Hemingway's kitchen where apparently rum and Cuban cigars were broken out, and the "talks" commenced.

Prettyman said the next thing he knew he was waking up in a hotel room with guards telling him to get to the airport and get on one of four planes waiting there to leave for the United States. He quickly did so and found the plane full of prisoners with not a word being spoken.

For hours they waited for clearance to fly. Russia did not want Cuba to release the prisoners and they were trying to stall the takeoff.

Finally, the engines roared and the planes headed north to Florida. Once out of gun range, Prettyman said the plane exploded with loud cheers and laughter. He said the prisoners were hugging and kissing him and saying they never thought they'd get out of Cuba alive.

One theory of conspiracy in the death of Kennedy is that it was Castro who ordered his assassination. Throw in the Mob, the CIA, LBJ, the Russians, and the kitchen sink. I suspect we'll never know, but our blind faith in government came to an end that day.

# Belgium!

by Victoria Roberts  
USA



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** According to Wikipedia "The general consensus among linguists is that the ethnic name Belgae comes from the Proto-Celtic root *\*belg-* or *\*bolg-* meaning "to swell (particularly with anger/battle fury)." During Caesar's time there was an area just above a region called Celtica, which was named Belgica. Off to the east was Germania. Caesar described the Belgae of Belgica as Celtic and Germanic. The Greek geographer, Strabo, insisted there was little if any difference between the Celts and the Belgae. Belgium only became an independent country in 1830. Before that it has belonged to nearly all major continental European powers during their heydays, including the Romans, the Franks, the Holy Roman Empire, Habsburgian Spain and Austria, Revolutionary France, and the United Kingdom of Netherlands. Even Germany got in the act by taking over Belgium during WWII. After the war, Belgium became one of the most successful countries in Europe, putting an end to the question of which race it is that now makes up the Belgians.

Out of all the places in the world to travel, Belgium had never come to mind. Not for any particular reason, but I thought there were far more interesting places to visit like Scotland, England, Ireland, and perhaps France and Italy. Frankly, Belgium was never on my radar as a must-see. So when my sister asked me to tag along with her on a business trip for my birthday, I thought what could be better than spending an entire week in Europe with my sister? I was right. Nothing could be better.

When my sister and I left the Belgium airport, she warned me that the scenery was very much like the PA Turnpike. She was pretty much right. There's a farm. There's another farm. I think you get the picture. I started to think my week was going to be very long. But as if the clouds parted and the sun decided to make a grand entrance, we reached the city of Antwerpen.

The first thing I noticed was the amazing architecture. There were quaint cobblestone streets, men, women and children who rode bikes everywhere, churches, cathedrals, markets, shops; I was never so happy to be in my element. I toured structures that were centuries old, dined



beside a castle and a cathedral, walked in the footsteps of Napoleon, and saw breathtaking paintings from Rubens, a Flemish Baroque painter (1577-1640.)

According to legend, Antwerp got its name from a mythical beast named Antigoon who lived near the Scheldt River. Antigoon supposedly charged a toll to those who crossed the river. For those individuals who refused to pay Antigoon's price, the mythical creature severed one of their hands and tossed it into the river. The giant was eventually slain by a young hero who cut off Antigoon's own hand and tossed it into the river. The name Antwerpen is Dutch from the term *hand werpen*. Remnants of this tale can be seen throughout the city as works of art, such as hand sculptures, hand jewelry, and hand chocolates. Oh yes, Belgium is definitely for chocolate, diamonds, and fashion lovers.

My sister and I stayed extremely close to the Cathedral of Our Lady. Where the cathedral now stands, there was a very small chapel called Our Lady from the 9th to the 12th century. The gothic Cathedral of Our Lady is Roman Catholic and construction actually started in 1352.

Celtic influences could be seen throughout the building, and I literally lost myself in the history of this cathedral for over three hours. The architecture was so detailed and exquisite.

Stained glass windows depicted many different scenes, and there were so many to see. Frankly, I didn't want to miss a thing. Worshipers could find sanctuary in one of the many private chapels within the cathedral as the candlelight reflected from the golden altars. I walked over the catacombs of men who lived centuries ago. History bled from the walls and more of Ruben's glorious paintings hung from them.

The Belgian people were as charming as their city. Although the primary language was Flemish and Dutch, most of the Belgian people spoke English and French. They were always willing to talk about their country, and they were all so proud.

I am so proud to say that I should never assume anything. Antwerp is definitely a must-see for any lover of history, culture or tradition.



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# The death of Sir William Bryerton

by James McQuiston  
Pennsylvania, USA

Normandy is a section of France most noted for its role in the D-Day attack on Germany by Allied forces, during World War II. However, it received its name from the Norsemen, or Vikings, who attacked it in the 9th century and established the Duchy of Normandy there. The previous inhabitants were mostly Celtic. Thus the average Normans became very much like the northern British Isles races – a mix of Celtic and Viking bloodlines, with a few others added in from time to time.

In 1066, William the Conqueror was the Duke of Normandy. In that year he attacked and defeated England, just across the English Channel. With him came several knights and warriors, who were rewarded with land in England and Scotland for their service. William became the first Norman king of England.

In an area just southeast of Liverpool, separated from that town by the Mersey River, is an area called Brereton, which is part of a larger area called Cheshire. This was the home of the Brereton family for many centuries, along with parts of Wales. This family could, in theory, be considered Celtic, Viking and Welsh to some degree.

In many ancient books that mention the family of Brereton, the name is spelled in a variety of different ways, but most especially as Bryerton. In fact, the names Brereton and Bryerton are often used interchangeably for the very same person. There is no historical doubt that these names are in fact the same name.

The first mention of this area of Brereton was in the so-called Domesday or Domesday Book, commissioned by William, in 1186. His intent was to record everyone in his realm, and especially their net worth, even if that only consisted of land and animals.



*Sir William Bryerton*

The end game was collecting taxes, of course. He also decreed that everyone must assume a last name.

At the time, many men had names following their first name that identified their father's name, with prefixes like Mc generally from Scotland, O' from Ireland, and Fitz from Normandy, all meaning "son of". Thus we have names like McDonald, O'Brien and FitzAlan.

Others were identified by their job, such as Smith, Fisher, Hunter, etc. For example, John Smith would mean John the blacksmith.

For those who did not use either of these surname types, King William insisted they use the area where they lived as their last name. Because of the French influence in Normandy, these names were usually preceded by the prefix "de" as in de Bryerton. In fact, this is exactly what happened in this case.

In the Domesday book, the area we are speaking of is called Breton Manor – 'manor' meaning a parcel of land, not a building, in this case. The name was most certainly meant to represent the word Breton. So Breton Manor meant "the land of the Bretons."

The Bretons were also Celtic people from Brittany (next door to Normandy, in France).



Some of them joined with the Normans and accompanied William to England in 1066, and so this region was undoubtedly named for them when they were given the land by King William. Many in the Bryerton family used the first name William in future generations in honor of King William the Conqueror.

The first person recorded to have reigned over Bretune, Brereton or Bryerton (thanks to a gift from King William) was Hugh the Fat, who became Earl Hugh of Chester (a town located near Brereton, in Cheshire), in return for services rendered at the battle of Hastings, Hugh parceled out his new possessions among his soldiers who fought in the battle, and whom Hugh would need to keep handy in case the native English Saxons revolted.

He gave Bretune to one Gilbert Hunter as part of a larger area. As we have pointed out, Hunter was most likely an occupation this man had before becoming a soldier. Gilbert then gave Bretune to two of his men (thought to be named Venables), in return for their military services.

The most likely explanation of this is that the two men were brothers, or possibly father and son. They would have begun to use the place name as their identifier or surname, using the French style, as in de Brereton.

In the Domesday Book the manor of Bretune or Bretune (Brereton/Bryerton) was shown as being granted to William Venables, Baron of Kinderton near Middlewich, who held his barony under Hugh (the Fat) Lupus, Earl of Chester.

There are still families named Venables along the Mersey River, today, as well as families named Brereton or Bryerton. Venables was a small village in Normandy and so this father and son pair, who was given Brereton, were almost certainly from Venables, Normandy.

It is almost certain that the Venables came to England as part of the invasion force. The first documentary evidence for the family comes in 1100 when Ralph de Brereton witnessed a deed of Gilbert Venables.

The earliest person connected to the family tree of the more established Breretons is William de Brereton, living in the late 12th century. There are many records of the family in this area over the next several centuries.

The Brereton/Bryerton men were often sheriffs of Cheshire. In fact, there is a record in 1519 of one Ralph Bryerton being forgiven by King Henry VII for “casual murder,” most likely meaning involuntary manslaughter, perhaps in his line of duty as sheriff.

The current parish council embraces the heritage of the area from the legend of an early Lord William Brereton and a bear, in which, for his punishment from the King for murdering a man, was to have three days to invent a muzzle for a bear. William had killed his valet in a temper after he was interrupted at his meal. After three days a bear was let loose on the lord, and luckily for him, the muzzle he fashioned proved to be successful, and so the emblem for the Brereton’s from that day forward has been a muzzled bear.

In more recent times, the local church of St. Oswald’s has organized a bi-annual ‘bear’ hunt in the area, with local residents putting out amusing bear sculptures throughout the area during the summer months, in an event entitled ‘The Brereton Bear Festival’.



Today, there is a town of Brereton, a Brereton Church, and even a Brereton Hall, which is currently a family home, though it is gigantic.

The name permeated the area and also quite a bit of the history of King Henry VII and VIII,

the famously ‘infamous’ Ann Boleyn, and the British Civil War, which was essentially a fight between Catholics and Protestants.

A later William Bryerton became a Baronet of Cheshire and eventually was knighted, being known as Sir William Bryerton, or Brereton interchangeably.

Sir William Bryerton was essentially raised in the court of the kings Henry VII and VIII, and served as a page and courtier. He married a woman by the last name of Savage, whose family had a fair amount of wealth.

Henry VIII was notorious for marrying a woman, then leaving her behind to marry his new love. At the time of this part of the tale, Henry was married to Ann Boleyn, though his first wife, Catherine, was still alive, living as a divorcee. Henry next fell for Jane Seymour and now he must find a way to rid himself of Ann.

A rhyme from the time went:

King Henry the Eighth,  
to six wives he was wedded.  
One died, one survived,  
two divorced, two beheaded.

On an April day in 1536, at a tournament at Greenwich, Queen Ann Boleyn dropped her handkerchief. The chivalrous knight, Sir William Bryerton, used the tip of his jousting lance to pick up the cloth and return it to its owner. Henry saw the activity and the smile Ann gave to her gracious knight. He left the viewing stand in a fury.

Henry was looking for excuses to get rid of Ann, though history is still torn as to her trysts with other men. Still, the act of kindness was enough to add Bryerton’s name to a list of three other men accused of being with his Queen.

The men were arrested, despite their pleas of innocence.

Bryerton had served Henry well in the English Civil War as a Protestant leader of troops, particularly in capturing his family’s old lands of Bryerton, and the town of Chester in

Cheshire. His nephew who held the land had remained Catholic, along with other family members. He is said to have scratched a note on the wall of Brereton Hall reading:

On yonder hill my uncle stands,  
but he will not come near,  
for he is a Roundhead,  
and I am a Cavalier.

Despite his service to his country and to the king, sometimes against his own people, Sir William was targeted along with three other men, by Henry VIII, in order to have Ann Boleyn tried and beheaded for infidelity.

The list of charges against Ann were so specific that modern historians believe they would have had to have been contrived. The charges even listed the day, hour and place of the supposed tryst between Sir William Bryerton and Ann Boleyn. There is no evidence there ever was one.

On May 12, 1536, though they all pled not-guilty, the four men, including Bryerton, were sentenced to be “drawn, hanged and quartered” on the following day. Whether they were “drawn and quartered” or not, they were beheaded by an axe rather than being hung, this on May 13th.

Ann Boleyn was beheaded shortly afterwards and Henry VIII went on his merry way with Jane Seymour. He proceeded to wed three more wives before he thankfully died himself.

Henry VIII was followed by his nine-year old son, King Edward.



In August of 1548, one Thomas Bryerton was being sought by Edward and had escaped to Broughton Castle in Scotland. This castle

had exchanged hands between the English and the Scots, and between the Catholics and the Protestants, a few times.

At this point Thomas would have been a Catholic or disaffected Protestant escaping from a Protestant King Edward to a Scottish castle held by Catholics. The Catholics would make a stand in Scotland under Mary Queen of Scots.

Broughty Castle is located near the mouth of the Tay River. Thomas Bryerton escaped to the castle “in his bark” according to King Edward’s own official records, which means he owned his own sailing vessel.

A bark is a three-masted sailing ship of medium size. This word, of Celtic origin, is also spelled barque. Whether Thomas ever returned to England, and was captured by King Edward’s men, is not yet known.

Thomas may well have been the son of Sir William Bryerton, soured in loyalty to Henry VIII after his father’s beheading. He is known to have had a son named Samuel. Beyond this the genealogy charts would have to be searched

It is thought that some Bryertons in England and possibly Scotland remained Protestant, while others remained Catholic – some of those escaping to Catholic Ireland. This time period is often called “The Killing Times” and many innocents were massacred. At times, people would join in with whatever cause was winning at the time just to save their own lives.

As royal influence slowly died in the old world, and also due to persecutions, famine and the promise of new opportunities and freedoms, the Bryerton family, like so many others, moved to America, though they left behind family members, much history, and many places and buildings named for them.

This story reveals a centuries-old, powerful family of mixed Celtic and Viking bloodlines – one whose family members served as sheriffs, knights, leaders of troops for the king, and even rebels; one that was torn apart by the English Civil War – and a man who came to an unfortunate end due to his association with Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn.

Nollaig Shona!  
Merry Christmas!

Jewelry, Ornaments  
Rubber Stamps, Books  
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Think Celtic For The Holidays

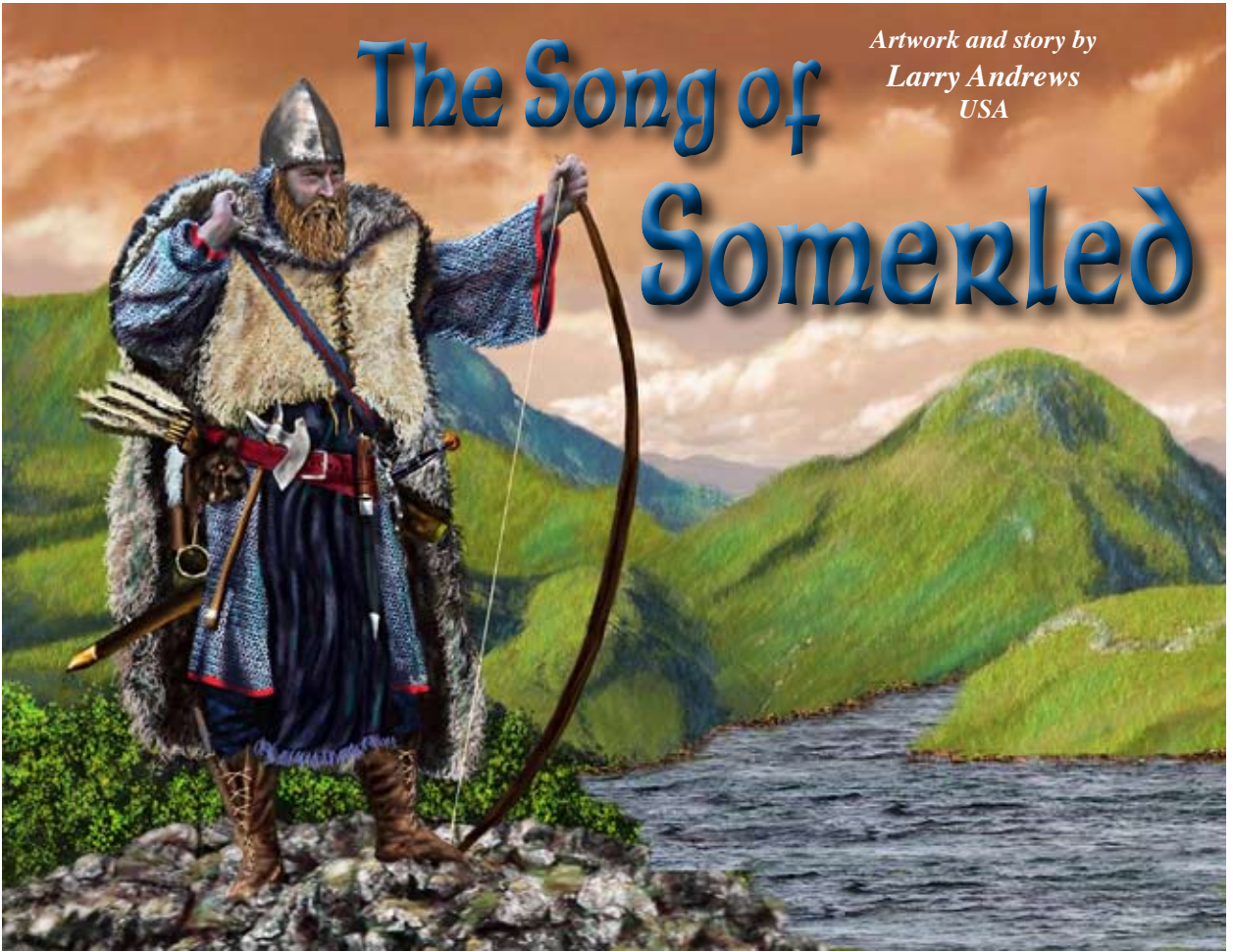
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*Artwork and story by  
Larry Andrews  
USA*

# The Song of Somerled



He wis raised in a cave living aff the wild, he learned tae bend a bow, swing a swerd and survive on guile.  
Called by his kith and kin tae return tae the Isles, tis then when his life as a chief wid begin.  
He kept his course whit hands held ticht tae the rudder, an rin the west islands o' the wicked Norse.  
The shield maiden o' Island o' Man wid wed this wild warrior when he won her fair hand.  
He wid lead wave-walking fleets an rule the gray-green sea, rival greet Kings an nae hav tae bend his knee.  
Twas Malcolm IV he did abhor, a lair an letch wit whom twice he had tae gae tae war.  
His line has spread both far an wide for millions o' miles,  
Til untold numbers noo can reach back tae Somerled Lord O' The Isles.

Gillebride, father to the famed hero of the Hebrides, Somerled, with the aid of Irish allies, landed in Argyll in an attempt to drive out fearsome Norse invaders. He collected the Irish clansmen of Cholla, landed with a full force of wood-wrapped wave-riders, and boldly met the enemy for battle. Even with all the men Gillebride could gather, they were still well outnumbered by the Norsemen. Yet with axe, spear, sword and shield the Gaels attacked.

The Norsemen moved as one and locked their linden shields into a grim wall ready for war. The Gaels roared in defiance and ran fast footed for their enemy. They crashed like waves against a thick stone wall. Shields slammed and spears poked back and forth, felling men to bleed out and be trampled under feet. The most seasoned warriors were at that front, men ready to face the frightening grim grip of slash and thrust. Great axes fell hard, splintering shields



and giving gifts of gore. Archers rose above the shield walls and fired deadly, fletched arrows deep into the foe's nest, killing and wounding enemy warriors who were felling too many friends.

The clash of wild Gaels and raiding Northmen was fierce, fast hearted, and filled full of woe. Hard men screamed, grabbing gashed faces and lost limbs. They vomited gulps of gushing blood and died in droves. Gillebride, with crimson-splashed cheeks, hacked like a hero, leaving corpses with every cut. Brave beyond compare, he brought his battle craze to those foes like a raging lion feasting on the flavor of life's red liquid. He was a prodigy of death and destruction; his shield bore the brunt of enemy arrows yet on he fought. But for every Norseman that fell, there were five to fill his place in the war wall.

Though the Gaels fought like fiends, they could not bear the overly nourished numbers of the enemy. Gillebride's war host began to waver. His men fought against odds of two and three to one. They started falling fast, sucking their last lick of life, splashed red and in ruin. Then they broke running in all directions that led away from the Norse numbers. Some made it back to their boats, others were cut down by axmen and enemy archers. A few warriors fled for a nearby forest. They ran like wolves hunted by hounds, moving fast through the woods to hide deep in the dark and high on the hills.

Those who had wind left in their lungs lived. Warriors who were worn out from fighting in the grim war wall were caught. They thought for but a moment of friends and family, then feeling the bite of Norse blades kissed the cold hand of fate. Gillebride fought his way free, killing any fool who dared to follow that warrior into the wild woods. He and a few followers slew those Norsemen who chanced that deep dark forest. When fully free of those foes the Gaels scouted their way to safety. It was in Morven, high up in the mountains where Gillebride had to make a new home. Like so many Highland men who

had come before and would follow after, he found a haven in the caves of Morven.

For the people of Argyll and the Hebrides this Norse victory led to sad misfortune and servitude. They labored long under the yoke of their Norse lords, no longer living a life of freedom. Many of their young men and women were sold into slavery. Overtaxed and ever troubled by these invaders from the North, the people nearly gave in to the Norse Lord's grim purpose, but some remembered that a savior still lived; one reared in the old ways, one wild and untamed by time or tyranny, Somerled, son of Gillebride the brave.

Now Somerled had grown up in the wild woods of Morven and knew nothing of life outside of that forest. It had been said that his mirror was the clear running waters of rushing mountain rivers; his drinking cup, the sole of a well-worn shoe. His boldness came from hunting the fierce wild boar, and his great dexterity from dashing after the mighty deer. He was not a big man but as stout and strong as a bull steer. He favored the forest life over any other, listening to the cry of the eagle and the call of the wolf; moss and heather was a favorite pillow for his head.

Somerled was ever quick to learn and quicker to listen when wise council was given. Gillebride's boy grew into a well-tempered man who would rather spear a fish than a foe. He preferred peace and quiet to the rant and raving of wild drunken warriors. Ever liking to wander alone in woods for days on end, Somerled lived only to fish and hunt in his Highland home. The day would come though when destiny's fateful hand tapped at his happy heart and led this humble man down a fame-filled road.

As the traditions of wave-wrapped Skye claim, the clan folk whom his ancestors had long led collected in council and decided to offer Somerled and his descendants chief-ship over them. They sent out clansmen to find the forest dweller and make their bid to him for this high and proud position. It took many weeks of

wandering the thick and wide forest of Morven to find Somerled. When they finally did, he was fishing thigh deep in a slow-rolling river. Somerled, never leaving the water or letting go of his fishing rod, listened to the Skye men's long council. His clansmen waited a long while to hear a reply, for the only span of time a man of the forest knows is that of day and dark.

Though Somerled would be well happy living out his life in the Morven Mountains, his good heart weighed heavy with the wrongs and worries of kith and kin. Somerled pondered their plight while flicking out his fishing line. After long thought, the man finally decided to let fate settle his mind. Somerled called back to the clansmen on the bank, "There is a huge new salmon yonder, swimming an proudly leaping

in that dark pool ahead. If I catch em, I weel return tae reclaim tha seat o' mi forefathers frae old. However, if I dinnae, Somerled weel remain here a wanderer o' tha wild wood."

Now the Gael are a race who live by the laws of omens and so understood that fate should make the first move in answering. With a single cast, Somerled caught that leaping salmon and so came ashore. He gathered his few things from the Morven cave which had so long been his only home then set for ship, sea and Skye. On broad-bottomed birlinns they rode the wide rolling waves of a cold gray-green sea until the shores of Skye were reached. There, Somerled was met by a great crowd of high-hearted clansmen who hailed him as Lord of the Isles.

The young forest dweller rose to the challenges of chief with his characteristic calm and fox-like wisdom. One of the first encounters with enemies of his claim was against a great Norwegian fleet filled with mail-clad fighting men. Somerled had only one hundred followers of his own and knew well the fate of his father when facing greater numbers of Norsemen. So he devised a stratagem to even up the odds against him.

The young Lord had the invaders led to an Island where he and his hundred warriors waited.

Before the enemy fleet arrived, Somerled and his weapon wielders killed enough cattle to cover each of the warriors with a hide. When the Norwegian fleet appeared before them in the bay, Somerled had his men march around a high hill he had encamped on.



As the column moved round the hill and out from the enemy's sight, he told each to don their cow hide, hair side up, and march round again. Each warrior did this in turn. On their last trip round, each flipped the hide over and marched in view a third and final time.

The Norse warlords, sitting in their long ships, counted three full divisions of well-armed warriors waiting to attack them. They had already sent a few ships in to land before Somerled made his march.

Now the Norsemen were rethinking the amphibious attack. By this time, about sixty Danes had already landed and were securing the sandy shores of that Island.

Somerled saw this and told his fearless fighters to follow him. He knew that with the rest of the fleet rethinking the attack, the few ashore would be faint hearted about fighting and quick to turn back to the rest of their galleys. He called to his clansmen to show stout courage in combat and reap red ruin exactly as he would. Roaring out his wild war cry, Somerled leaped from the hill and rushed like a storm of red ripping steel down on the beached Danes. As one, his Islander's followed fast for the fray. Years of depredation fueled the revenge that burned bright in their heaving hearts. They were a screaming tempest of deadly blue blades come to kill Danes.

Somerled, Lord of steel and wielder of woe, ripped wildly, delivering death to the first Dane to face him. With the edge of his shield he dashed out the Northman's teeth, and with the might of a mad man laid that Dane low. Then, in front of the enemy fleet and his own corpse-collecting clansmen, Somerled, dirk in hand, tore free the dead Dane's heart. He flung that Norseman's blood pump out toward the enemy fleet and went for another. Following orders, each of his clansmen who had killed flung their foes' hearts at that floating fleet. So wildly did Somerled's grim gift enthrall his reaping warriors that they all fought like fiends, bathing red in the enemy's blood.

As their chief predicted, the Danes fled the beach for their ships and fleet. Many a Dane drowned in his mail coat and only one Norse ship made it away from that crimson shore. The rest had not enough crew to carry them off and so fell fast under the Islanders' fury. The Norse warlords, watching the ruin of that landing party, decided discretion was the wiser way this day and turned helm for home. They sailed out of sight, all the while hearing the war song of Somerled and his red-washed warriors. The Islands of Mull and Morvernin were freed from the yoke of Norse slavery. The Lord of the Isles added two Norse war ships to his fleet and returned to Skye, famed for his wisdom and wicked fighting fury.

Somerled, now loved for his victory, became the very valor of the Hebrides and as such had little trouble gathering clansmen to his cause. He raised an army of Islanders and headed by birlinn for the lands of his ancestors. One by one, he retook the lands of his forefathers from the Norse, then headed by fast fleet for the mainland. He landed in Argyll and fought the sons of the Norse warriors who had, with greater numbers, defeated his father. This time the tables were turned and the Island chief, a bulwark in battle, utterly destroyed the Danes of Argyll.

By force of sword and shield, he gained back the home of his great forefathers. Somerled took the title Thane of Argyll and set his ambitions toward the Isle of Man to create a Celtic kingdom.

Word had begun to spread about the far-famed Skye Lord and his savvy fighting skills. Olave the Red, King of Man and the Isles, raised a fleet to impress Somerled and sailed for Stoma Bay. Ever the clever one, Somerled devised a plan to take it all without the need for war. All he had to do was wed Ragnhildis, Olave's daughter, and the rest would follow. So at Stoma Bay, in disguise, Somerled went out to meet Olave the Red and win his daughter for a wife. He sailed to Olave's ship under the guise of an envoy.

It is said that Ragnhildis was a radiant shield maiden of unparalleled beauty. Her hair shined like the noon day sun, golden and gleaming; her skin was as white as the first snow fall; and her bonnie lips were as red as a blooming rose. When Somerled first saw the lass on Olave's ship, he was struck love dumb by her beauty. Instantly, the handsome Lord's heart leapt from him to her to be kept forever in Ragnhildis' keeping. Ragnhildis was also overwhelmed by the handsome Islander whose piercing, pale-blue eyes seemed to bore into her very soul. She had heard of his far-reaching fame and fell fast for him.

When Olave the Red asked the envoy of his intentions, Somerled replied, "My Lord Somerled, Thane of Argyll, sends me to say that he will join your fleet and aid you in every way if you will give him the heavenly hand of Ragnhildis in marriage." Olave could tell who the love smitten Islander really was and denied him her hand. Somerled, realizing he was found out, smiled and invited Olave and his body guard to go ashore and partake in a fine feast where they could discuss the matter deeper. At the urging of Ragnhildis, Olave the Red agreed and set off for shore.

Best friend and clansman to Somerled was Maurice MacNeill, who was also foster brother to Olave the Red. The Island chief readily conspired with his friend and ally to win and wed Ragnhildis. While Somerled wine and dined Olave with strong drink and huge dishes of venison, his fast friend MacNeill set about boring an abundance of big holes in Olave's galley. He then made wooden plugs for those holes and put them in crafty Somerled's own sea ship. Next, the MacNeill packed the holes he had put in Olave's galley with gobs of tallow and butter. Then he returned to the ceilidh as though nothing clever had transpired.

The next day, after another good feast, Olave set off for his fleet, unmoved in his mind on the marriage. By the roll of waves and constant wash of salt water, the tallow and butter began

to work loose. Before the King of Man knew what was happening, his ship began to sink. His crew called out to Somerled on the shore to come and save them. The Island chief at once gathered a waiting crew, took out his galley, and rowed to the rescue. When he reached the sinking galley, Somerled offered to give help only if Olave would agree to let him wed the shield maiden Ragnhildis. The lovely girl gave a rare giggle and nodded at the handsome clansman in concordance. Olave the Red had little choice but to give his daughter's hand to the happy chief.

All were brought aboard Somerled's birlinn and taken to safety. Meanwhile, MacNeill climbed into the King's sinking galley and put in the plugs, saving the ship. To the amazement of The King of Man, his great galley was returned to him no worse the wear. Around the year 1140, Somerled was wed to Ragnhildis and became more like a son than a son-in-law to Olave, King of Man and the Isles, who always admired the clan chief's craftiness.

Several years passed when sad news came to Ragnhildis and Somerled. Three nephews of Olave the Red, for pride and power, murdered their uncle then laid claim to half his kingdom. From Norway, in long wood-wrapped ships, came Olave's son Godred to drive the enemies from his father's domain. A gold ring wearing wolf in his fury, Godred brought blue blades and battered shields to the Islands, reclaiming all of Olave's lands. He killed one of his father's murderers and brought blade to eye, blinding the other two. With wide-ranging mail-coated warriors, one and all mead nourished and quick to kill, Godred ill treated the chiefs and Island people of his father's kingdom. A terror to free men, he made a long legacy of want and woe throughout those wave-wrapped lands.

A revolt rose among many of the Islesmen and chiefs came to bold Somerled, Thane of Argyll, for aid against that brutal Norse tyrant. The mighty man raised a famed fleet of birlinns and agreed to lead the Islander's in full revolt.



Somerled's war host roved the wide waves with tall masts and sails filled full. They came to the Islands, delivering doom to those grim-faced beard-biters, crumbling bit by bit the cruel Godred's empire.

Word reached Godred and the two sea kings' war galleys met for sea struggle. Off the coast of Islay, on the night of Epiphany, with fire, bows, axes, and swords, they battled boldly to the last. Warriors wrought ruin on one another all night and into the next day; many mighty men were lost in that battle to red waves and steel ruin. So ferocious was that sea fight, neither warlord could claim victory. Both sides lost several ships and suffered countless killed. A truce followed and the Hebrides were divided between the fierce sea kings.

Two years passed, Somerled and his Island war reapers raged from rolling sea to wide rivers wreaking ruin on much of Godred's commerce. Bringing Island men from their Norse bondage, Somerled, famed to the far reaches for his war reaping, that Thane of Argyll, added to his titles Rìgh Innsegall, King of the Isles. Sailing on a sea of wealth, Somerled reworked the rudders of his war fleet then took those mighty wave-lapping water-roamers to face Godred's great fleet again.

He was the bold one who led from the front, Lord of the Isles, Thane of Argyll, mocker of war hosts, hewer of crimson-covered men. Somerled sailed with eighty rear-rudder birlinns to Man with banners flapping and boldly met Godred in a broad bay for the blood bath. They held hard to those rudders and roved the wide waves to battle.

A famous fight ensued; ship to ship men clashed and killed. Bows were bent and barbed arrows flew fast and fell hard on heroes, killing when they came. Ships grappled and sea sleighs slid together washing crimson from stem to stern. Mail-clad men fought for life and limb, hacking and hewing red ruin. Many fell into a cold watery tomb, sinking fast under the weight of their webbed war coats.

Worthy of any twelve warriors, the Lord of the Isles killed without care, leaving decks covered deep with crimson corpses. His sword song sang a stinging tale of warrior's woe. With red-splashed cheeks, he drove his foes from life and limb. A lion among wolves, that Gaelic king was a firm fortress of doom in the thickest of the fray. Spears shattered against his shield, swords could find no place to cut, axes were turned to their sides, and hard hit fell all who faced him. His high hero's heart, in the den of death, filled foes with fear and gained an immortal love from those who followed him. "Somerled! Somerled! Somerled!" became their battle cry.

With his rear-rudder birlinns, the Norse long ships were outmaneuvered, and mail-clad clansmen seemed to come from all directions at once. Godred's fleet was picked apart piecemeal, often forced to face two and three to one odds at any given moment. War ships faltered and men fell, pinned into place by a hail storm of flaming, fletched death. Godred fled for England, and the Isle of Man was once again under the rule of a Celtic King. Somerled had become the undisputed Lord of the Isles.

With great power comes greater enemies, and now the proud King of Scotland, Malcolm IV, became overly apprehensive about Somerled's growing power. Malcolm sent a huge army to unseat the Lord of the Isles from his mainland hold in Argyll.

Somerled, that mocker of war hosts, took to the challenge and fought a pitched battle that left both sides bloodied and a bit broken. An uneasy truce was reached and for a brief time, the two kept peace between them. However, Malcolm IV and his greed-grabbing ministers repeatedly provoked Somerled until he would take no more.

Aged into his sixties, the Lord of the Isles went to war once more. With a mighty host of Islanders and Northern Irish filling his fleet of 164 war galleys, the sea king made for struggle and red strife. His wild war host sailed boldly up a river at the Firth of Clyde. There on that

river, they beached their galleys and brought steel poison to all who dared not to flee. Fire and sword was to be the answer to all complaints. Somerled's war horde, deliverers one and all of mournful fates, marched, blade ready, to the Knock, a small hill between Renfrew and Paisley. At the Knock, the High Steward of Scotland, with a much smaller force, leveled stout spears to stop the invader's onslaught.

During the bloody conflict of Renfrew, Somerled and his eldest son fell from kings to corpses.

Some say he was slain deep in the enemy's nest; others, that a treacherous dirk from a trusted family member was used to murder the mighty king of hosts.

Whatever the cause, his fall undid the courage of his followers and their shield wall quickly

splintered against the stout spears of the Scots.

Ravens' meat was made of the fleeing invaders. The river that brought them ran red with Irish and Islander carcasses. For many a year, long would be the grief over the slain sea-washed warriors. Though Somerled and his eldest son fell to war's red sway, he left lions living to carry on that blood line. For centuries, Somerled's descendants would ever be a source of strife to the kings of Scotland. Ronald, surviving son of Somerled, was the father of Donald, who was father of Angus Mor, father of Angus Og, father of John. John fathered Donald Lord of the Isles, who like his ancestor, Somerled, also had ambitions toward the mainland of Scotland.

An Deireadh



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# Journey's End

by Allen Hartley  
USA

In our hectic world, the passage of our lives is marked by a time sequence created and distorted by humans. Reflect on the self-imposed “crisis” of Y2K, the entry into a new millennium, the year 2000. This self inflicted situation created employment for many people and worries for companies, consumers, and governments. They were concerned the “end of the world” was at hand, or at least the world as we knew it.

Many had forgotten the teachings handed down from our ancestors. These were encompassed in stories, poems, engravings, and oral traditions. One of the most basic lessons passed from our ancestors deals with cycles and the concept that there isn't an “end” or a “beginning”. It's a matter of perspective. Our lives, environments, the world we occupy, and the universe in which we exist are not static. There's a constant flowing and ebbing. This theme is reflected in the cycles of the seas, sun, moon, water, and plants. The messages and mysteries are imprinted by the creators on their creations. They have genetically “signed” their name on their work.

The Runes have been generously passed to us from our creators. I struggled as I prepared and reflected on the theme “The End”. From my perspective, there is no end or beginning, only cycles exist. These are never-ending cycles. When you leave this existence, it is not the end. It is a movement to another existence in a larger cycle. The movement is as simple as walking through a doorway from one room to another.

The first Rune that came to mind was, Jera/Jara/Ár. This is the Rune of cycles.

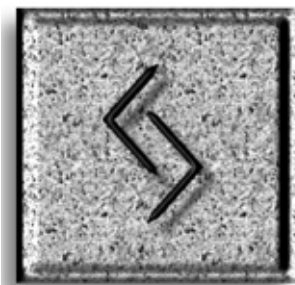


Cover  
From  
*The Book,  
Boundaries  
Of Time*

It represents cycles of change, life, lunar, seasons, etc. It symbolizes a vortex of cycling energy, the eight fold wheel of life, the point inside the circle, which is the glyph of the Sun or regeneration. This Rune is associated with the time of the harvest. This can be crops, results of our actions, or death. It is also the Rune of regeneration associated with birth, renewal, “new” journeys, and “new” beginnings.

The setting of the Sun in one part of our world is the rising of the Sun in another. As our world traverses its cyclic path through our universe, the seasons change in the hemispheres. Winter in one portion becomes spring in another. Many have been conditioned to view their traversal in this existence like a photo album. The pictures in the album have a relational coherence, but are viewed as individual, segmented snapshots of time.

Our ancestors viewed the entry into this existence as part of a larger cycle. We brought talents, skills, and knowledge from our prior existences. Our prior knowledge and accomplishments were veiled in this existence.



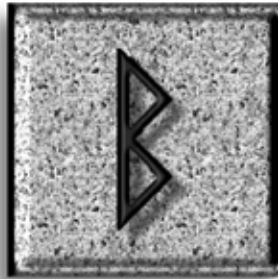


There are lessons to learn without their benefit. Some of us have quickly burned off this veil and regained a portion or all the accomplishments we once acquired. In our traditions, there is a collective knowledge and accomplishments passed from our ancestors to help us in this existence. Once again, a cyclic theme is exhibited.



The next Rune that came to mind representing cycles and the potential from the cycles was Ing/Ingwaz/Enguz. The older symbol infers a cyclic nature. In addition to representing the god of fertility, Ing, this Rune symbolizes potential or stored power and energy. At the harvest, seeds are collected and stored for the next planting. This ensured another cycle of crops for our ancestors. Like the stored seed of the plant, this Rune also is symbolic of the male seed bag.

The next related Rune is Berkano/Bjarkan/Beroc. This is the Rune associated with feminine

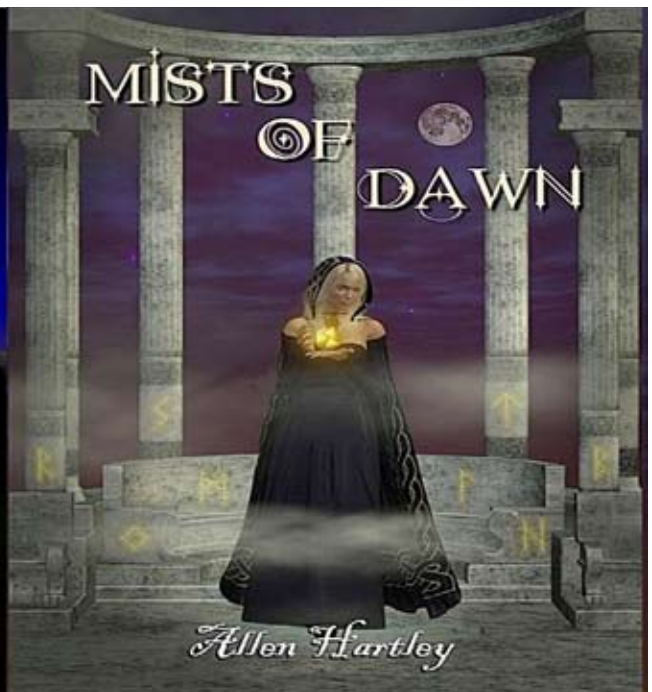
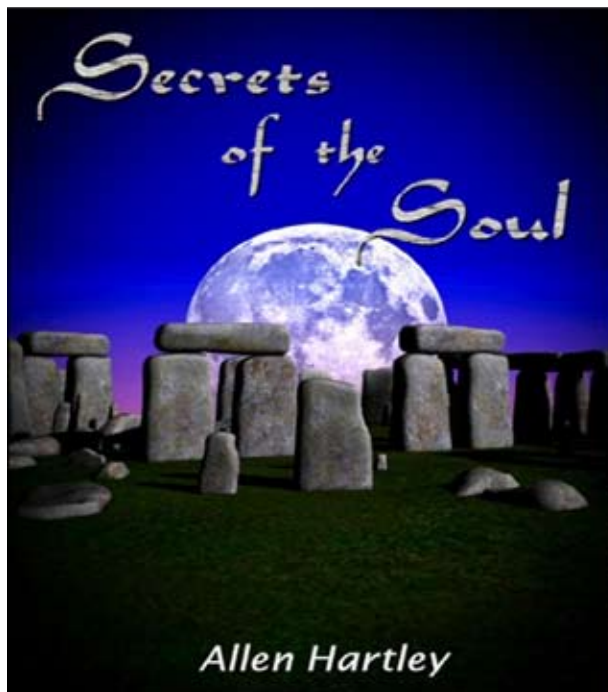


fertility, the Great Mother earth or mothers of all species. Ing is joined with Berkano to give birth to offspring in the endless cycle represented by Jara. Our ancestors associated the Birch tree with this Rune. It governs both mother and child. It relates to the period in infancy when the mother is feeding and controlling her young. When this Rune is viewed from the side, it presents the shape of a pregnant mother.

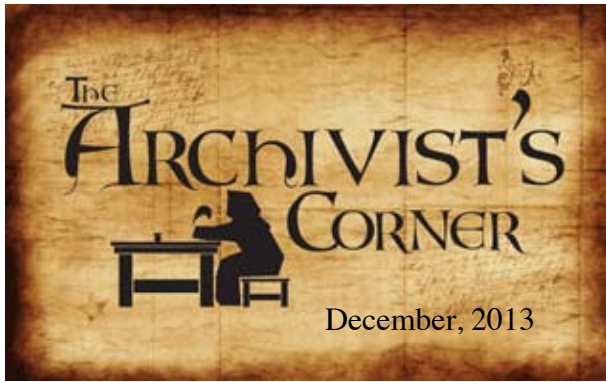
When the three Runes are joined together, Ing is the container that holds the potential for the next cycle. The end is the beginning. We should remember the lessons passed to us by our ancestors and creators, breaking free from the shackles imposed by those that attempt to subdue us and erase our heritage.



**Available At Amazon.com**







*Carolyn Emerick is a regular contributor to Celtic Guide. She also serves as an assistant to the editor fulfilling some of the behind the scenes tasks for our magazine. Carolyn is currently completing a master's degree in library science with a concentration in archives. This column will feature interesting tidbits from the past that Carolyn comes across in her research, that our readers may enjoy as well. For more like this, follow her on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/carolynemerickwriter](http://www.facebook.com/carolynemerickwriter)*

Welcome back to the Archivist's Corner! It's December, and so I'm rustling up some dusty old treasures that are sure to bring you a bit of Yuletide cheer. The first piece I have for you is a Medieval Christmas Carole called "The Boar's Head." It is thought to be of German origin, but it was sung in England during the Middle Ages. This is especially interesting because it hearkens back to the days of old Yule, before the changeover to Christmas. The boar was a sacred animal to Germanic pagans, and therefore also to the Anglo-Saxons who were of Germanic origin. Many people still eat ham on Christmas today, which is a remnant of the old pagan custom of sacrificing a boar for the Yule feast at Winter Solstice.

## The Boar's Head\*

The boris hed in hondes I brynge,  
 (The boar's head in hands I bring,)  
 with garlondes gay & byrdes syngynge!  
 (with garlands gay & birds singing!)  
 I pray you all, help me to synge,  
 Qui estis in convivio!  
 (I pray you all, help me to sing,  
 who are at this banquet!)

The boris hede I vnderstande  
 (The boar's head I understand,)  
 Ys cheffe seruyce in all this londe!  
 (Is chief service in all this land!)

Wher so ever it may be fonde,  
 Seruitur cum sinapio!  
 (Whersoever it may be found,  
 it is served with mustard!)

The boris hede I dare well say,  
 (The boar's head I dare well say,)  
 Anon after the XIIth Day,  
 (Anon after the twelfth day,)  
 He taketh his leve & goth a way!  
 Exiuit tunc depatria!  
 (He takes his leave and goes away!  
 He went out from his native country!)

*\* recorded approx. 1500, but estimated to be much older*

This next piece was found in an old journal called Irish Monthly, from 1905. The author is known only by his initials, J.W.A.

## Ballade of Christmas

Hang up the holly, nor forget  
 The waxen-berried mistletoe;  
 What matter if the wind be wet  
 And roads be slushed with melting snow ?  
 The lamplight's gleam, the yule-log's glow,  
 Shall brighten all the hours that glide,  
 And we will bless them as they go  
 The merry days of Christmastide.

The clouded sun makes haste to set,  
 The feet of night are overslow,  
 -The bare bough shivers, black as jet,  
 While gusty winter's breezes blow;  
 But on our hearts no gloom can throw  
 Its shadow, where glad thoughts abide:  
 We sing our stave and laugh, Ho! Ho!  
 The merry days of Christmastide!

Banished awhile are cares that fret,  
 Sad memories of grief and woe;  
 We make a truce with old regret  
 And bitter tears of long ago:  
 Such cares may come, such tears may flow  
 Before the winter shall have died;  
 But cares and tears must never know  
 The merry days of Christmastide.

Friend, Father Time may bend his bow  
 To slay our pleasures in their pride;  
 His malice cannot conquer so  
 The merry days of Christmastide.



*Above: Illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith, 1912*

*Below: Vintage holiday card entitled "Holly."*



Now we journey to the Isle of Skye. This is an untitled Hogmanay song that was also published in the journal *Folklore*. Mary Julia MacCulloch included this in her article “Folk-Lore of the Isle of Skye” printed in 1923. This song is no doubt much older.

## (Untitled) Hogmanay Song

A Christmas, A Christmas,  
 A Happy New Year,  
 A pocketful of money  
 And a barrellful of beer.

God bless the master of this house,  
 God bless the mistress too  
 And all the little children  
 That round the table go

Hogmanay, Hogmanay,  
 Give us a penny and let us away,  
 If you haven't a penny, a ha'penny will do,  
 If you haven't a ha'penny, God bless you.

As I went down the river side  
 The river gave a jump,  
 If you've anything within the house  
 Give us a big lump.





*Another vintage Christmas card -  
"Bringing home the Yule Log."*

The last piece I have for you brings us back to Olde Yorkshire. This is an excerpt from an article called "Folklore from Yorkshire" by J. B. Partridge. It was published in the journal *Folklore* in 1914, and it discusses some of the old traditions that still survived at the time it was written.

## Christmas Observances in Yorkshire

Furmety is still eaten on Christmas Eve in Swaledale. The corn with which it is made is a present from the grocer.

*At right: This is most likely the first commercial Christmas card, and was created in 1843. Sir Henry Cole is credited with instigating the first mass-produced Christmas greeting cards in the 1840s. He commissioned a friend of his, John Calcott Horsley, an artist, to produce a thousand handmade cards for Cole to distribute to his friends. The introduction of the penny post helped to further the practice.*



Sword dancers still go round on Christmas Eve, dancing and singing a song about "Poor old horse."

The Yule log is generally given. It is brought into the house after dusk on Christmas Eve, and is at once put on the hearth. It is unlucky to have to light it again after it has once been started, and it ought not to go out until it has burned away. To sit round the Yule log and tell ghost stories is a great thing to do on this night, also card-playing.

Two large coloured candles are a Christmas present from the grocer. Just before supper on Christmas Eve (when furmety is eaten), while the Yule log is burning, all other lights are put out, and the candles are lighted from the Yule log by the youngest person present. While they are being lighted, all are silent and wish. The wish must not be told, but you see if you get it during the year. As soon as the candles are on the table, silence may be broken. They must be allowed to burn themselves out, and no other lights may be lighted that night.

Some people, especially cottagers, put a ring, thimble, and six- pence into the Christmas cake. (*From Mrs. Day, Minchinhampton, a native of Swaledale.*)



# a few more LOOSE ENDS

by James McQuiston  
USA



One of the nice things about this business is not only do you get to read lots of great stories and look at lots of great artwork and photography, but you also get to enjoy lots of good music. I recently received a great Christmas album from an American band of Scottish origin.

The band Eclipse is made up of Matt Wilkie, and his twin sisters, Nell Malyszka and Trish Keil. They were born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland, where the trio performed throughout the country. In 1975 they moved to the United States where they performed acoustic music

along the east coast. In 1986, Andy Lafreniere joined the band bringing his experience as an acoustic and electric guitarist as well as his skills as a composer and arranger. The group then evolved into a seven piece band, playing a variety of popular music of the seventies and eighties.

With this new Christmas recording, they are now going back to their roots by performing original acoustic and traditional music. All members of Eclipse now make Connecticut their home. Andy and Nell are co-directors of the Suzuki Talent Education School of Sandy Hook, CT, where they teach early music programs as well as lessons in piano and classical guitar. Trish also teaches in the early music program.

Matt runs a successful contracting business (Scotia Contracts) out of Southbury, CT.

Here are two “the end” stories, with sort of a nutshell version of each –

## Titanic

Many folks don't know that the Titanic, which came to its own bitter end after a collision with an iceberg, was built at the Harland and Wolff



shipyard in Belfast, N.I. and was designed by Thomas Andrews, born in County Down. I visited the shipyard back in 2004. There was little recognizable evidence of this historic accomplishment, although the word is that now the docks and shipyard are being revived as a tourist attraction.

I say “historic accomplishment” because the Titanic truly was one. The Titanic was the largest ship afloat at the time and featured thousands of hand carved decorations created by Irish craftsman, the likes of which the world will likely never see again.

On May 31, 1911, the Titanic’s immense hull – then, the largest movable manmade object in the world – made its way down the slipways and into the River Lagan in Belfast. More than 100,000 people attended the launching, which took just over a minute and went off without a hitch. The hull was immediately towed to a mammoth fitting-out dock where thousands of workers would spend most of the next year building the ship’s decks, constructing her lavish interiors and installing the 29 giant boilers that would power her two main steam engines.

The luxury steamship RMS Titanic met its catastrophic end in the North Atlantic, plunging two miles to the ocean floor after sideswiping

an iceberg during its maiden voyage. Rather than the intended port of New York, a deep-sea grave became the pride of the White Star Line’s final destination in the early hours of April 15, 1912. More than 1,500 people lost their lives in the disaster.

## The Year 1922

The year 1922 was a definitive year in bringing on at least the beginning of the end to the vastness of the British Empire. At the start of the year it covered a quarter of the world and ruled over one in four people on Earth.

On January 15th, Michael Collins became Chairman of the Irish Provisional Government which lasted until the creation of the Irish Free State on December 6, 1922.

February 28, 1922 also saw the end to the U.K. Protectorate over Egypt. Finally, in March of that year, the “Indianization” of the army of India began, and Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned. These two events helped lead to an independent India within a generation.

The losses of Ireland, Egypt and eventually India were major for this, one of the strongest, most widespread empires in history. Next year may see the loss of Scotland as well.



*Map of the British Empire in the 1920s, shortly after losing Egypt.*

# So, what's next?

Here we are at the end of our second year. A lot's happened during that time and we've been please to have so many major successes, from articles by world's experts to interviews with world class musicians, from scientific results on DNA to an analysis of Ogham carvings, from fun-filled stories to serious historical papers. True, I do the layout and write a few articles myself, but all of this wouldn't have been possible without all the contributors, and probably without the work Carolyn Emerick has done, so well, to promote the Guide and all its contributors on Facebook. There's a lot of "you-scratch-my-back-I'll scratch-yours" going on, to everyone's benefit. The end result for us is that we've had some spectacular Celtic Guides and have built a library of valuable information on Celtic and Viking culture, new and old.

Along the way, we've had authors from the U.S., Canada, Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, Poland, Germany, and Portugal. We've worked with groups from South America, South Africa and Romania. And we've had hits from just about every country in the world.

For January, our theme is going to be "The Islands" and for February "Romance" – of course all of this dealing with Celtic/Viking culture. Beyond that, I would just like to say that it was my intention for this publication to grow organically, and it has. Some like to have five year plans or ten year plans, or other highly organized growth charts. Me? I don't think I am as smart as the Universe, and so I would much rather leave it up to that great vastness of creativity to supply the path forward, even if only revealed a few steps at a time. I have faith in the Universe and in our ancestors that whatever I/we do with the Celtic Guide will be for the highest and best of all.

## POSTCARDS FROM OBIE

by Liam O Shea  
Ireland



*Here's Obie at Ross Castle in Killarney National Park, Killarney, County Kerry, Ireland.*

*Set in the stunning national park and within 20 minutes walk of two other heritage sites (Muckross house and Muckross*

*Abbey), Ross Castle is a great place to spend the day. The old copper mines are another 20 minutes further walk and are the oldest known copper mines on the Irish and English Isles. All this is set around the scenic lakes of Killarney with a large variety of wildlife. Other close-by attractions are Torc Waterfall and, if you're up for hiking, the Old Kenmare-to-Killarney Pass through the mountains is absolutely breathtaking.*