

Celtic Guide

Volume 2, Issue 11 –November 2013



Loose Ends



From the Editor

Our idea of a monthly theme for the Celtic Guide has really generated a lot of twists and turns in areas I never even thought of. However, we occasionally get something that doesn't quite fit a theme, or we have a left over from an earlier issue that needs to go somewhere and so we've chosen the theme of "Loose Ends" for November, to allow us to make use of all these great efforts.

Our cover photo is from the Library of Congress collection and is entitled "Irish Spinning Wheel – around 1900." We've added our own wee bit 'o drawing effect to the original and it simply looks like the coolest painting, capturing a moment in time from long ago. Note the leather shoes this lovely lady is wearing. They look like they were meant for hard work!

Our articles this month will run the gamut and so we just invite you to jump from one subject to the next, all of course dealing with Celtic culture. Consider it a weaving together of a lot of loose ends to form 'yarns' of a different type.

We are setting new records on Facebook 'likes' and website 'hits' and will end this year very proud of what we've accomplished. It was noted that many photographers, illustrators and authors who got their start with the Celtic Guide are branching out into new areas, taking their craft more seriously or at least more commercially, and spreading their wings – with their work in the Guide as a sample of their abilities. This was something unexpected, but of course we couldn't be happier. Thanks to all!

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by Jim McQuiston, USA

Loose Ends

from around the Celtic (Guide) World

Celtic Guide articles are regularly picked up across the web and on Facebook. We were also asked if our articles could be used in publications in NYC, in an Irish Cultural Society newsletter in Erie, PA, and if the Obie story could be used in a newspaper in Ireland - the 'Ballincollig News.' Of course we said yes to all, and always will, unless there is some type of copyright restriction. Our goal is to spread Celtic culture in any way that we can.

Speaking of this, we were approached by an organization in Romania, which wants to present the first ever Celtic Festival in that country! We led them to three coordinators of major Celtic events in the US, to see if they could learn from and perhaps even form a long-distance partnership with one of these groups.

Mara Marcu is heading up the Phoenix Association (the phoenix being the symbol of Romania) and is seeking "a few 'brothers in arms', institutions and cultural associations with experience with Celtic festivals who are willing to support us by helping us with ideas, know-how, information. We really think this is important to ensure the success of our idea, and will assure our supporters that we will achieve this in a professional manner."

The Celtic Guide will pass on the information of anyone wanting to provide serious help to this group.

We've had authors from Celtic strongholds in Portugal, Poland and Germany. We've had correspondence with a Celtic re-enactment group in South America, and now this startup Celtic festival in Romania.

We've also been contacted by a group from South Africa who has asked us to link to an epic Norse book translated into Afrikaans.



They've written to say, "Some of us here in South Africa have strong roots from the Nordic lands as well as Germany, Holland, Netherlands, Scotland and Ireland (to name a few).

"There are a lot of people in SA that belong to Asatru (who speak Afrikaans) and there are also followers of Celtic Guide who are Afrikaans and who will appreciate this piece of work. There are NO works in Afrikaans (that I know of) that are readily available, that contain stories of our ancestors and their customs or way of life.

"My good friend Herman van Rooyen, took it upon himself to translate two chapters of the *Poetic Eddas* into Afrikaans for our people. There are a lot of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in Europe and other foreign countries.

“I wanted to ask you if you would be so kind as to post a link to these documents? I’d really appreciate it. We aim to support the revival of our ancestors’ customs and beliefs, and this document, translated into Afrikaans, is just the beginning... Kind Regards, Demé Misselhorn”

If you read Afrikaans, or are just curious, the PDF of the book, *Poëtiese Eddas*, is found at – www.celticguide.com/pdfs/PoetieseEddas.pdf

While Afrikaans is mostly a spin off of the Dutch language, there is a small amount of Celtic heritage in the mix with an estimated 100,000 Afrikaans speakers in the UK, and many others in Canada, America, New Zealand and other parts of the world.

Moving on to Scotland . . .

Celtic Guide contributor Ron Henderson, from Perth, sent us a photo (see below) of a rally in Edinburgh, which took place on September 21, 2013, at which around 20,000 people marched in support of the Yes Scotland movement for independence. A vote on Scottish independence is planned for next year and there are strong opinions on both sides of the issue.

Also, from Scotland, Albert Thomson from Aberdeen sent us information on an event held October 13th at which the oldest settings of the tune “The Battle of Harlaw” were featured, along with a very unusual chance to see and hear the formal and ceremonial art and music of the time of the battle.

Harpist and ancient music specialist Simon Chadwick presented a very unique concert of medieval Scottish ceremonial music.

The concert was held at the Museum of the University of St. Andrews (MUSA), in the fabulous setting of the current exhibition of medieval maces from universities across Europe.

The maces on display are superb examples of late medieval art and craftsmanship in silver and gold. Simon’s music drew on the themes and ideas presented by the maces, to demonstrate in music the power and ceremony of late medieval Scotland.

Simon performed using an amazing decorated replica of the medieval Scottish “Queen Mary” harp. This instrument, an exact working copy of the medieval original preserved in the National



Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, is itself a work of art, with exquisite late-medieval carved and painted decoration.



The program included a variety of stately, impressive music from the oldest strands of Scottish tradition – all of it derived from medieval events, people and themes. These elaborate compositions reflected and built on the geometric, architectural and formal decorations found on the maces and on the harp. The sound of the replica medieval harp's silver and gold strings provided a lush and rich sound, perfectly complementing the silver and gold maces.

(We have a completely separate harpist story/interview elsewhere in this issue. Be sure to catch it!)

On another note, we were pleased, while enjoying a quick vacation in Fort Lauderdale, FL, to find the Briny Irish Pub, located along a waterway

leading to the nearby port. Your Celtic Guide editor is shown (lower right corner) beside a stoic pirate, along with just a small fraction of the massive amount of seagoing items that hang from the ceilings and walls of this large pub. There are probably 100 times more nautical items, besides those shown in this photo, to enchant the eyes of Irish folks and sailors alike.

All of these items came from one warehouse in Nova Scotia, where they had been collected over the years. When this seaside bar decided to “go Irish” they found out about this stash of interesting collectibles and sent a crew up to Nova Scotia to purchase the entire lot. It took weeks of careful hanging to safely secure each item above the heads of the patrons below. The local St. Patrick's Day Parade conveniently ends just a short distance from this Irish pub making for a very busy March at the 'Briny'.



And Even More Loose Ends . . .



A fireball lit up the sky above Sligachan, on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, on Oct. 14, 2013.

Landscape photographer Marcus McAdam captured the event when he placed his camera in the Cullin Mountains overnight to record the stars. When he spotted this photo, McAdam wasn't sure what he had taken a picture of so he took to Facebook to ask others. He was informed that it was a fireball since there were news reports of a fireball seen in the sky. Amazingly, he has since discovered that the phenomenon he recorded was

a different fireball — meaning there were two within 50 miles of each other at around the same time.



Ron Henderson also sent along this photo of him feeding some hungry animals, which seems to prove that the grass *is* always greener! Despite the bright green grass that fills the field behind these cattle, they are eager to partake of a small clump of half-dry grass Ron offers from the opposite side of this Perthshire fence.

Celtic Guide saga continues

- All past and current issues of Celtic Guide are now available on Amazon.com **at cost**. This is a service provided to our readers, just as the PDF versions are offered **free of charge**. Instruction on how to order are available on our website. Remember, the Celtic Guide e magazine is produce entirely by **volunteers**.
- In addition to making all issues available in print, we have far surpassed **20,000** page hits by the posting of this issue, which far and away beats all of last year. We should come close to or surpass **25,000** by year's end.
- We've also garnered around **10,000** likes on our Facebook page and have a strong community there, often with a weekly reach of up to **35,000** people.

We are so thankful to all our contributors and readers for making this such a **resounding success**.

<http://www.celticguide.com>



Julie Fowlis

Songstress for the movie 'Brave'

Ever wonder who was the voice and talent behind two of the three songs in the Pixar movie 'Brave' about a headstrong Highland princess? Well this American production company went right to the source to find one of the most authentic people available - Julie Fowlis.

Julie grew up on the Isle of North Uist, an island off the northwest coast of Scotland – one of the Outer Hebrides we've spoken so much about in the Celtic Guide. Fowlis, 34, is the polar opposite of the character Merida, star of 'Brave' – Julie being quite laid back, no doubt from the calm life to be found on these remote islands. Her mother spoke Gaelic, a language Julie also studied, along with music, both on the nearby Isle of Skye.

As well as being a powerful vocalist, Julie has been involved with Scottish dance and also plays the bagpipes. Julie says of traditional music, "I think there is an honesty about the music that speaks to people – an honest account of who we are, and our own history. There's something about a song that's been around 500, 600, 700 years."

**Nollaig Shona!
Merry Christmas!**

Jewelry, Ornaments
Rubber Stamps, Books
Stocking Stuffers, Gift Wrap, More
Think Celtic For The Holidays

www.triskelt.com
www.facebook.com/triskelt
www.etsy.com/triskelt



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

Hello, Readers! I'm very excited to be starting this new column, as I have a penchant for getting lost in the digital archives and discovering some fabulous finds. I had been wishing I had someone who shares my interest in old poetry, art, and snippets of fact and folklore who would be as excited as I am to pour through these treasures... when it dawned on me that Celtic Guide readers love this stuff! So I hope you all enjoy these wonderful old gems as much as I do, and it will be my pleasure to continue to share them with you.

In our first installment we travel to ye olde Yorkshire. Here is a selection of poems and lyrics in the Yorkshire dialect, accompanied by antique illustrations of Yorkshire. The poems come from "Yorkshire Dialect Poems" edited by F.W. Moorman (no date given, it appears to be circa 1914, with many poems dating earlier). All illustrations come from "Yorkshire Painted and Described" by Gordon Home (also undated, appears late 19th or early 20th century). I hope very much that you enjoy.

– Carolyn



Robin Hood's Bay (located in North Yorkshire)

Heam, Sweet Heam

by A. C. Watson, 1914

When oft at neet I wanders heame
To cosy cot an' busy deame,
My hardest day's wark seems but leet,
When I can get back heame at neet,
My wife an' bairns to sit besaade,
Aroond my awn bit firesaade.
What comfort there's i' steep (*1) for me,
A laattle prattler on my knee!
What tales I have to listen tea!
But just at fost there's sike to-dea
As niver was. Each laattle dot
Can fain agree for t' fav'rite spot.
Sike problems they can set for me
'T wad puzzle waaser heeads mebbe.
An' questions hawf a scoor they ask,
To answer' em wad prove a task;
For laattle thowts stray far away
To things mysterious, oot o' t' way.
An' then sike toffer (*2) they torn oot,
An' pratty lips begin to poot,
If iverything's nut stowed away
To cumulate frae day to day.
Sike treasures they could niver spare,
But gether mair an' mair an' mair
In ivery pocket. I've nea doot
They've things they think the wo'ld about.
An' when their bed-taame's drawin' nigh,
Wi' heavy heead an' sleepy eye,
It's vary laattle din they mak,
But slyly try a nap to tak.
An' when on t' lats (*3) they've gone aboon,
I fills my pipe an' sattles do on

To have a comfortable smewk.
 An' then at t' news I has a lewk;
 Or hods a bit o' talk wi' t' wife,
 The praade an' comfort o' my life.
 Cawd winds may blaw, an' snaw-flakes flee,
 An' neets may be beath lang an' dree,
 Or it may rain an' rain agean,
 Sea lang as I've my day's wark dean,
 I wadn't swap my humble heame
 For bigger hoose or finer neame.
 If all could as contented be,
 There'd be mair joy an' less mis'ry.

**1. In store. *2. Odds and ends. *3. Laths.*

Love and Pie

by J.A. Carill

Whin I gor hoired et Beacon Farm a year last Martinmas,
 I fund we'd gor a vory bonny soort o' kitchen lass;
 And so I tell'd her plooin' made me hungry—thot was why
 I awlus was a laattle sthrong on pudden and on pie.
 And efther thot I thowt the pie was, mebbe, middlin' large,
 And so I ate it for her sake—theer wasn't onny charge;
 Until it seems t' missus asked her rayther sharply why
 She awlus used t' biggest dish for pudden and for pie.

I wasn't mich of use, ye know, et this here fancy talkin',
 She had no chance o' goin' oot for armin' it and walkin'.
 But thin I knawed I gor her love whin I could see t' pies;
 I knawed her thowts o' me were big by bigness o' their size.
 The pies and gell I thowt thot geed (*1),

they hardlins could be beaten,

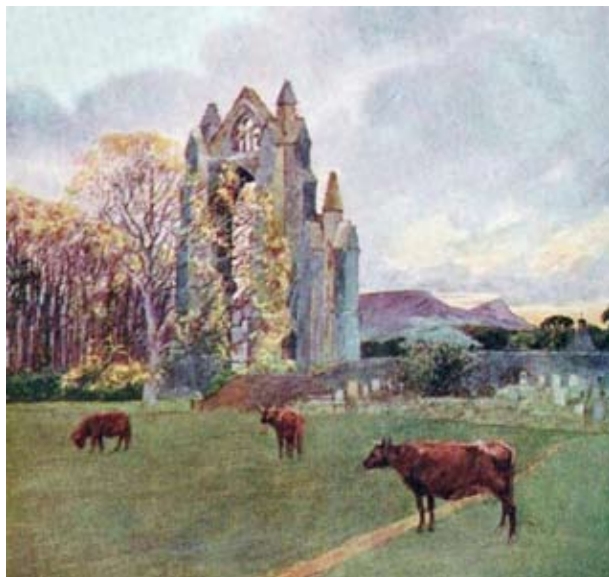
She knawed I'd awlus thowts on her by way t' pies were eaten;
 Until it seems t' missus asked her rayther sharply why
 She awlus used t' biggest dish for pudden and for pie.

Noo just thoo wait a bit and see; I'm only thod-lad (*2) noo,
 I moight be wagoner or hoind within a year or two;
 And thin thoo'll see, or I'm a cauf, I'll mak 'em ring choch bell,
 And carry off et Martinmas yon prize-pie-makkin' gell.
 And whin thoo's buyin' coats and beats (*3)

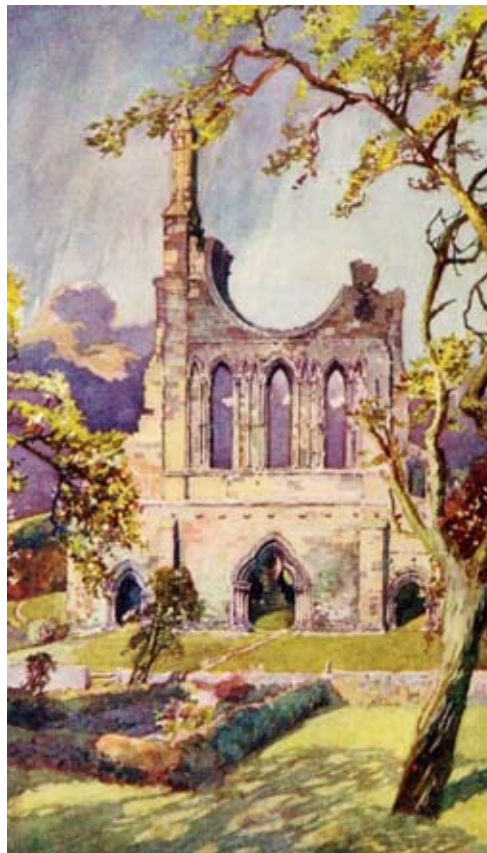
wi' wages thot ye take,

It's I'll be buyin' boxes for t' laattle bits o' cake;
 And whin I've gar a missus ther'll be no more askin' why
 She awlus gers oor biggest dish for pudden and for pie.

**1. Good. *2. Third lad on the farm. *3. Boots.*



An Autumn Day at Guisborough (N. Yorkshire)



*The West Front of the Church
 Of Byland Abbey
 (Coxwold, North Yorkshire)*

A Natterin' Wife

by George H. Cowling

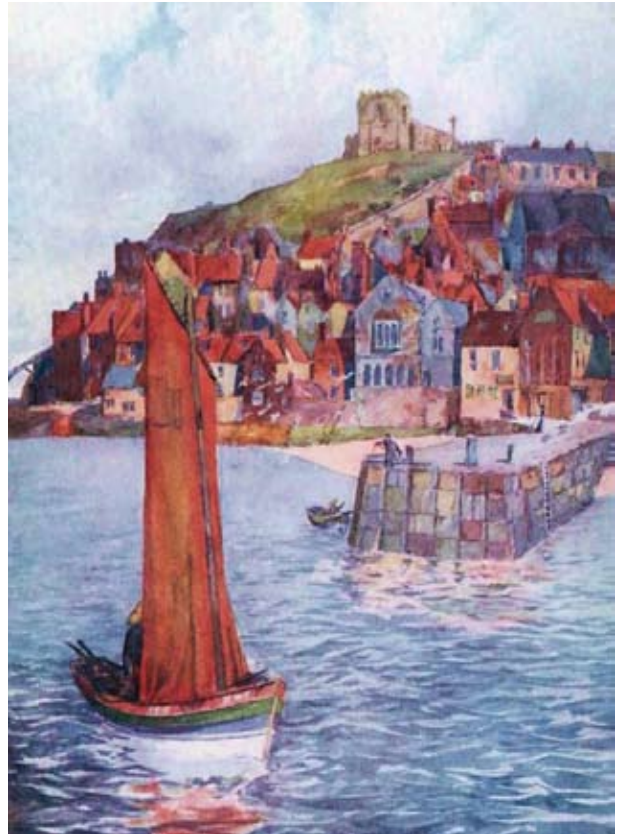
The parson, the squire an' the divil
Are troubles at trouble this life,
Bud each on em's dacent an' civil
Compared wi' a natterin' wife.

A wife at mun argie an' natter,
She maks a man's mortal life hell.
An' that's t' gospel-truth o' t' matter,
I knaws, 'cause I's got yan misel.



The Market Place, Beverley

(Located in Yorkshire, the origins of this market place go back to the 12th Century)



The Red Roofs of Whitby

(Located in Yorkshire, the origins of this market place go back to the 12th Century)

Owd England

by Walter Hampson

Tha'rt welcome, thrice welcome,
Owd England;
It maks my een sparkle wi' glee,
An' does mi heart gooid to behold thee,
For I know tha's a welcome for me.
Let others recaant all thi failin's,
Let traitors upbraid as they will,
I know at thy virtues are many,
An' my heart's beecin' true to thee still.

There's a gladness
i' t' sky at bends ower thee,
There's a sweetness
i' t' green o' thy grass,

There's a glory i' t' waves at embrace thee,
An' thy beauty there's naan can surpass.
Thy childer enrich iv'ry valley,
An' add beauty to iv'ry glen,
For tha's mothered a race o' fair women,
An' true-hearted, practical men.

There's one little spot up i' Yorkshire,
It's net mich to crack on at t' best,
But to me it's a kingdom most lovely,
An' it holds t' warmest place i' my breast.
Compared wi' that kingdom, all others
Are worthless as bubbles o' foam,
For one thing my rovin' has towed me,
An' that is, there's no place like hooam.

I know there'll be one theer to greet me
 At's proved faithful through many dark days,
 An' little feet runnin' to meet me,
 An' een at howd love i' their gaze.
 An' there's neighbours both hooamly an' kindly,
 An' mates at are wor'thy to trust,
 An' friends my adversity's tested,
 At proved to be generous an' just.

An' net far away there's green valleys,
 An' greeat craggy, towerin' hills,
 An' breezes at mingle their sweetness
 Wi' t' music o' sparklin' rills;
 An' meadows all decked wi' wild-flaars,
 An' hedges wi' blossom all white,
 An' a blue sky wheer t' skylark is singin',
 Just to mak known his joy an' delight.

Aye, England, Owd England! I love thee
 Wi' a love at each day grows more strong;
 In my heart tha sinks deeper an' deeper,
 As year after year rolls along;
 An' spite o' thy faults an' thy follies,
 Whatever thy fortune may be,
 I' storm or i' sunshine, i' weal or i' woe,
 Tha'll allus be lovely to me.

May thy sons an' thy dowters live happy,
 An' niver know t' woes o' distress;
 May thy friends be for iver increeasin',
 An' thy enemies each day grow less.
 May tha niver let selfish ambition
 Dishonour or tarnish thy sword,
 But use it alooan agean despots
 Whether reignin' at hooam or abroad.



Coxwold Village
 (Located in North
 Yorkshire, this village is
 mentioned in the 1186
 A.D. Domesday Book
 by the name of Cucvalt.
 The name is derived
 from Saxon words Cuc,
 meaning 'cry' and valt,
 meaning "wood".)

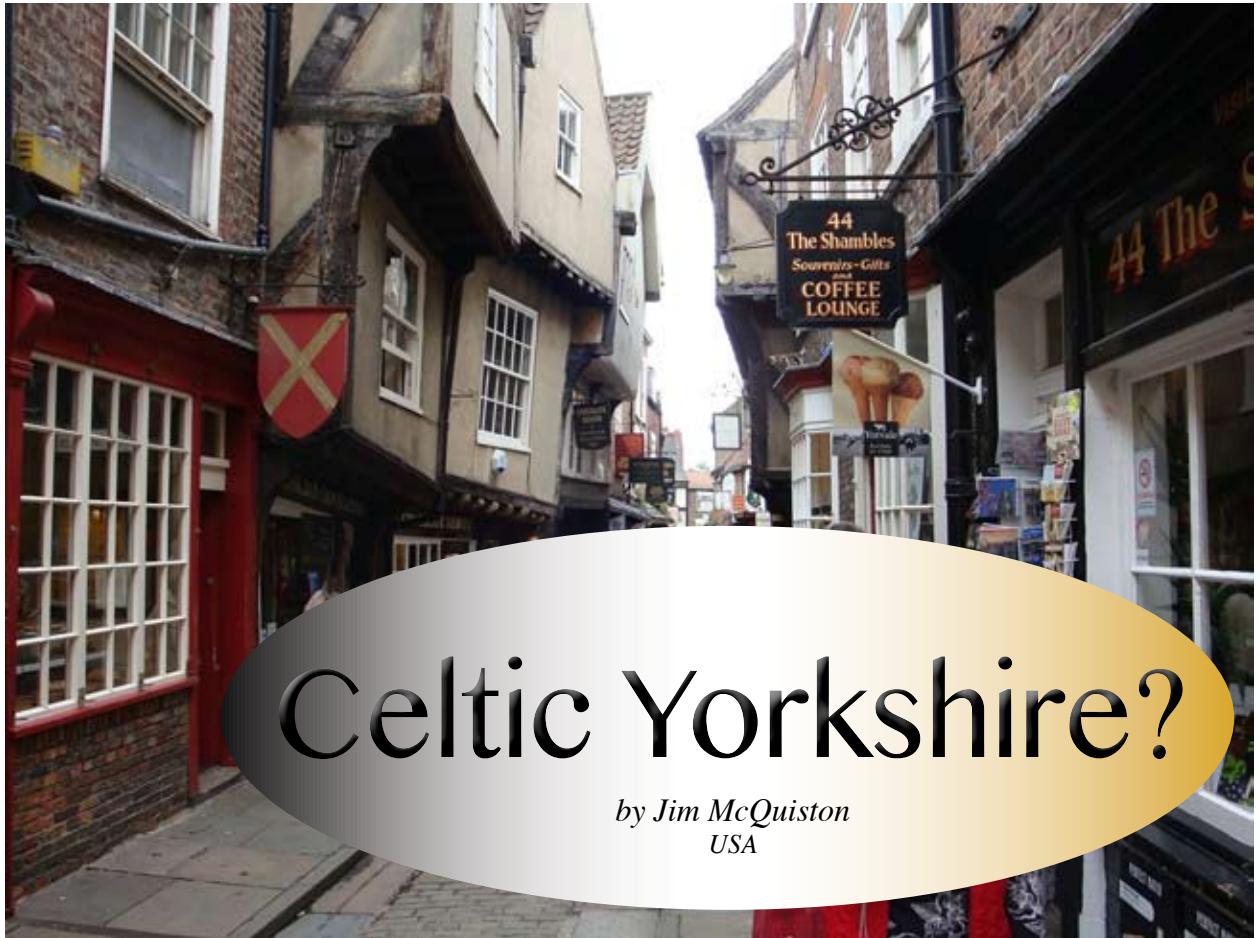
Elphi Bandy-legs

Elphi bandy-legs,
 Bent, an' wide apart,
 Nea yan i' this deale
 Awns a kinder heart.
 Elphi, great-heckad,
 Greatest iver seen,
 Nea yan i' this deale
 Awns a breeter een.

Elphi, little chap,
 Thof he war so small,
 War big wi' deeds o' kindness,
 Drink tiv him yan an' all.
 Him at fails to drain dry,
 Be it mug or glass,
 Binnot woth a pescod,
 Nor a buss frae bonny lass.

*Written in an old cook-book
 and signed "J. L. 1699"*





Celtic Yorkshire?

by Jim McQuiston
USA

Back in 1999, on my very first trip to Scotland, I sat with my son in an Irish pub in the middle of the town of York, England. As if that wee bit 'o juxtaposition wasn't enough, the duo that was performing was playing American folk rock type music. I remember, in the middle of their take on the Eagle's 'Desparado' how my son commented on the strangeness of it all. The crowd, however, was enthusiastically singing "You better let somebody love you," as we snickered at the sight . . . and sound.

I suspect many an Irish or Scottish person has sat and listened to Americanized versions of their music somewhere in the 'states' and thought, "Ach, this is not how it's supposed to sound! These crazy Americans."

York is not far from the 'Scottish' border and it now seems more obvious to me that there should be a large amount of Celtic influence in that region. In fact, there was!

The York street, shown above, is known as Shambles Street and that is not an optical illusion. The buildings were built to lean inward, supposedly to block the hot sun from ruining butcher's meat hanging along the walkway. During that period there were no hygiene laws as exist today, and so guts and the like were thrown into a gutter in the middle of the street. Today, any scene of total disorganization and mess is thus referred to as being "in shambles".

Yorkshire was populated by Celts pre- and post-Roman invasion. The same thing happened again during the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

An army of Vikings invaded the Yorkshire area, in 866 AD. The Vikings conquered what is now modern day York and renamed it *Jórvík*, from where the modern name comes.

It seems, in fact, Yorkshire has seen as much Celtic and Viking influence as just about any part of Scotland or Ireland.

HALEY HEWITT

by Jim McQuiston
USA

WINS BIG!

A CELTIC GUIDE INTERVIEW



EDITOR'S NOTE: In this issue of the Celtic Guide, we interview harpist Haley Hewitt, crowned as National Champion of the Scottish Harp Society of America this past September. It's been a busy time for Haley, having just founded the Connecticut Harp Circle, this October. The group is set to meet monthly in New Haven - basically an opportunity for the local harp playing community to get together and get to know each other and how much fun it is to play with other harp folks! Also, in October, Haley participated as a composer in the Whaling City Film Project, in which the team had to script, score, film, and edit a short film in four days. "I had a blast working collaboratively on it and am very proud of the results!," states Hewitt.

Just a short time ago, September 21st to be exact, the Scottish Harp Society of America, in conjunction with Clan Currie, presented a harp competition at the famous Ligonier Highland

Games at which Haley Hewitt of Connecticut, was chosen the 2013 U.S. National Scottish Harp Champion of America.

Ligonier is located about 60 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, PA. This area was home to most of the first Scottish Irish frontiers people to cross over the Allegheny Mountains, in the early to mid 1700s. Nearby Ligonier are Derry and Donegal, highlighting the Celtic influence that runs through this rugged, beautiful countryside.

For over 50 years, the Ligonier Games have entertained local and regional Celts and wannabe Celts. For over 40 years, the Scottish Harp Society of America has been dedicated to the Scottish harp, the *clarsach*, and its music, ancient and new. For over 60 years, Clan Currie has promoted Scottish events throughout North America. Combine these three powerful Scottish-oriented entities and you have a formidable host for an event that saw harpists from a wide area compete for this championship.

The event was – and will continue to be – sponsored by the Clan Currie Society, who has entered into a five-year commitment to act as Title Sponsor for the Championships.

“We are absolutely thrilled to have the Clan Currie Society make such a generous and long-term gift,” said SHSA vice-president and Competition Chair, Jen McGovern Narkevicius. “Part of the success of our National Championship depends upon generous donors like the Clan Currie to ensure we have sufficient funding in place to produce a first class competition. It is especially rewarding when that support comes from a clan with such an ancient and distinguished history of Gaelic poets and musicians.”

According to Robert Currie, president of the Clan Currie Society, the partnership with SHSA is a perfect fit. “The founders of our clan were the celebrated MacMhuirich bards of Medieval Scotland and the instrument of the Bard was the *clarsach*.”

Judge Ann Heymann tells us, “The standard at the 2013 SHSA National Championships, held at the Ligonier Highland Games was unbelievably high, and the perfect performance of Haley Hewitt in the Master Category earned her the title of 2013 SHSA National Champion.”

Haley Hewitt is a harpist currently based in Connecticut, this after spending two years in Glasgow, Scotland, obtaining her Master’s degree in Scottish harp! She loves to play ancient and new music and to collaborate with other musicians. She performs on both pedal and lever harp.

Her Master’s degree in Scottish Music was earned from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she studied under Corrina Hewat, plus she holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Pedal Harp Performance from the Hartt School of Music, in the studio of Rebecca Flannery.

As a pedal harpist she has played in solo, chamber, and orchestral settings extensively, including performances at Carnegie Hall and

Benaroya Hall. As a traditional musician, she has presented programs featuring the music of modern Scottish harpers and fiddlers.

Haley is a sought-after teacher for pedal harp and lever harp students and is an experienced performer in various public and private engagements. She is well-known as an orchestral musician, a wedding performer, and a concert harpist and offers weekly classes in New Haven, CT and Burlington, CT, where she frequently gives specialist workshops and masterclasses.

Hewitt is also a new composing talent, with commissions for film, solo, small ensemble, and large ensemble works. Her original material is featured on her upcoming 2014 debut album.



Haley Hewitt, during her performance, in September, at the Ligonier Highland Games for the Scottish Harp Society of America, as sponsored by Clan Currie.

Haley has been kind enough to participate in a Celtic Guide interview and we are very pleased to have her join our family. And so, here is an interview with another great musician –

CG: Welcome, Haley, to the pages of the Celtic Guide.

HH: Thank you!

CG: Despite the immense popularity of the fiddle and bagpipes, the harp has remained the musical symbol of the Gaelic culture of both Scotland and Ireland. What first attracted you to playing this wonderful instrument?

HH: I was first attracted to the shape of the harp, then the sound. By the time I was nine years old, I had been playing piano for a few years. At a music shop in Vermont, I saw a beautiful harp and went straight to it, picking out my piano repertoire. It was love at first sight! It's a very accessible instrument - for the player, you have an intimate and direct connection to the sound you produce; for the audience, there is a visual connection to the music you are hearing played that most other instruments cannot match.

CG: To the non-harp player it seems quite complex to have all of your fingers acting somewhat independently of each other. How were you able to gain the dexterity and syncopation necessary to perform on the harp and win championships?

HH: Having piano training from an early age helped me quite a bit, as there are many transferable skills (reading music notation, a basic understanding of music theory, and an already developed ability to play with hands acting independently, etc.) I have practiced a lot over the course of many years, and as almost every musician will tell you, you won't get far without practicing. However what I found even more valuable and influential was my experiences with sharing music - whether with other musicians or as a performer. You can spend countless hours perfecting your technique, but something deep and vital to music is lost if it is not shared.

CG: I am always fascinated by these next two questions. Is there a spiritual element to your performance? And do you find yourself drifting off somewhere in your consciousness, or are you focusing intently on your performance.

HH: I am a devoted teacher, and I see performing as another method of teaching. When I play I try my best to share the joy and love I have for the harp, music, and all of life's experiences. Sometimes I do drift off, and other times I get into the 'zone' where everything else disappears and I am at peak focus. Each performance is different, because each audience is different. I do my best to suit what and how I play to whomever is listening.

CG: We understand you are now composing your own pieces. Are they Celtic in nature or more orchestral? . . . or both?

HH: Good question! It's always difficult to talk about your own creation. I am certain that to a classical musician my writing sounds 'traditional,' and to a folkie it sounds classical. But my influences are drawn from far more than these styles. I have listened to rock music my whole life, and have over the past few years been delving into jazz and indie - it's inevitable for those sounds to not have influenced me just as much as my academic pursuits. Many years ago I read a quote by George Harrison and I cannot remember the exact words, but the gist of it was: at first he was intimidated by composing until he realized that all the music he has ever heard is still within him and informs all the decisions he makes when writing. I am still very new to composing, but his words have inspired and comforted me to keep trying.

CG: Where can our readers find examples of your music?

HH: I have demo recordings on my Soundcloud page at – www.soundcloud.com/haleyhewitt

CG: We are sure you are thrilled with your win at Ligonier, and your award of a Master's degree earned in Scotland. Is there a special award or recognition that leads your list of accomplishments?

HH: Awards or recognition are not really why I play, so no I suppose not! I find the proudest moments in my career have been when the music I play or write makes a difference to other people, or when a student is as excited about music as I am.

CG: Certainly it must have been a thrill to play Carnegie Hall. Do you have a favorite type of venue at which you like to play?

HH: I love smaller audiences so much better. With a huge packed hall, it's so hard to feel a connection with the listeners that I tend to revert to my perfectionist tendencies and forget about the reason I'm there. However, with a small coffee-house sort of group, you can feel the energy from the room. That feedback is so important to the decisions I make on-stage. Music is about making connections with people, and that's so easily lost in a huge auditorium.

CG: What about studio work . . . does that bring something different out of you musically than performing a live performance, or is the opposite true?

HH: I'm comparatively new to the studio, but it has been such a great experience for me every step of the way. I used to be so terrified of recording myself (that perfectionism tendency again!) that I would feel paralyzed. But my teacher Corrina Hewat, a very accomplished recording artist and phenomenal musician, encouraged me to explore recording. The experience in a studio is indeed very different from playing live, and I try to capture that same energy that a performance has. The main advantage I see to studio time is that you are more able to get the music the way it sounds in your head.

CG: How did you like living in Scotland? Did you travel the countryside and find that special place that felt like home?

HH: I adored living in Scotland! I found the people to be warm and friendly, welcoming me at every opportunity. Moving to Glasgow was quite an adjustment for me because until then I had lived in the comparative countryside. I was able to explore a good chunk of the country, escaping the city as often as I could. It fascinated me how the land is soaked with tradition, nearly each river, mountain, and field having a story and a song. My favorite place was the Isle of Skye, and I would love to visit again.

CG: Is there something in particular you'd like the readers of Celtic Guide to know about Haley Hewitt?

HH: To beginning harpists and musicians - keep playing for the joy of it! If you have that, everything else will follow. To other musicians in my area, I would love to collaborate and am always looking for a new project. To my past teachers, thank you for helping me learn how to listen.

CG: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us, Haley.

HH: You're very welcome! I am delighted to share.



Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright
Bellows Falls, VT, USA

Boyd

So often in the course of Scottish history, the core personality of a clan or family is molded by a single, celebrated distinction - such as an heroic act recognized by a king or commander, or an ancestor's renown for having slain a great beast, perhaps an early descent from a famed leader or churchman, or sometimes even an element as trivial as a progenitor's peculiar physical appearance . . . but was there indeed a clan of auld who might well have bootstrapped themselves to power and prominence by their remembrance of one man's gesture in a single incident? The tale that follows might seem apocryphal to some, but not to anyone named Boyd, for it cuts to the very heart of their familial identity.

The time of that pivotal occasion was the autumn of 1263, and the ferocious King Haakon of Norway was the wolf with most of western Scotland in his hungry jaws. Having been inflamed by reports of Highlanders and Scotch Islemen committing raids and plunder among the Norse-held isles of the Inner Hebrides, Haakon had swiftly retaliated against the homelands of the perpetrators, and emboldened by thundering victories on the isles of Arran and Bute, pressed on with his armada of 160 ships, his objective turning from attrition and suppression, to lustful dreams of potential conquest.

Torching all towns and settlements in passing, driving all survivors ahead of their vast swath of destruction, this great Viking invasion sailed its

longships triumphantly up the Firth of Clyde, fixing their sights on the wealth of the fertile lands of Ayr. But unbeknownst to Haakon, his Scandinavian invaders were headed for a sudden, savage beachhead, for reports had early on reached the court of the King of Scots, sending Alexander III and his mail-clad legions galloping westward, resulting in a clash that would forever alter the maps of Scotland and the North Atlantic.

Arguably, if the King had known how severely the Norwegian forces outnumbered his own, he might have sought to draw his battle lines further inland, but being ignorant thereof, he instead chose to trust that his liegemen native to Ayrshire would mount an early bulwark to rebuke the vanguard of the invaders, and create secure frontlines for the royal defenders to occupy. Despite the blindness of his optimism, Alexander found himself well assisted on his army's arrival by a massive rallying of local militia, thanks to such landed district leaders as the Laird of Boyd, the Cunningham Laird of Kilmaurs, and the strong, canny Lords of



Boyd Tartan and Shield

Eglinton (who would later consolidate into the House of Montgomerie).

And it is upon this stage that the critical act of character for this clan comes to pass, as told by seannachies to the Boyd bairns as they huddled by Yuletide hearths for century after century – and it was told like thus: as the two great armies met in furious battle at the place called Largs, steel rang on steel, blood reddened the very burns and soaked the heather, and grim passed the first several hours, and then as the cold October sun broke through the clouds, the combatants fell briefly back, leaving small knots of men yet fighting, and so did Alexander the King, blood-spattered and exhausted, look across the field of slaughter,

and happen to lock eyes with his devoted servitor, the Laird of Boyd, recognizable by the device on his battered shield and his unhelmeted shock of yellow hair, and in a moment of defiant courage, the King gestured with his right hand to the Laird, giving the commonly-known Catholic signal for “have faith” (thumb and long fingers lifted from an upright palm), which the Laird saw and bravely returned in kind, before turning his nicked and bloody sword upon the next Norse attacker.

Despite the lopsided odds, Alexander and his Scots went on to carry the day, littering the braes of Largs with hundreds of Viking corpses, and routing the remaining invaders down to their ships, rowing desperately for the open sea; nor would it end there, as the victors began a great purge throughout the Isles, attempting to free those settlements for Scottish domination,



even as Haakon himself died while sailing back to Norway. Ultimately, the domino effects from the Battle of Largs would include the Treaty of Perth in 1266, by which Haakon’s successor, Magnus, ceded possession of the Hebrides back to the Scottish throne in perpetuity - and also resulted in Alexander III rewarding the unwavering support and loyalty performed by the Laird of Boyd, receiving him often at court, and assisting him to acquire enough status and resource to elevate his clan from vassalage to one of the wealthier landholders around Largs, Irvine and Kilmarnock.

In reciprocation of having earned, and received, the favor of the King, Boyd celebrated his elevation to peerage by commemorating his proudest moment with a new crest to cap his arms: those two fingers raised in salute, with the motto reflecting his eternal pledge: *Confido* (Latin for “I Have Faith”).

But let us turn back the sundial here, and ask: what were the origins of the Boyds? Some claim that the name derives from an old Gaelic pronunciation for the isle now known as Bute, but most descendants call that faulty reasoning, and cling rather to the simpler, more popular explanation that it is an evolution of the Gaelic adjective for blonde, or more precisely 'yellow-haired' - a belief strongly evidenced by Medieval references to the chiefs being known for their paleness of hair. There is also the claim that the Clan's progenitor was actually Robert, grandson of Walter, the first High Steward of Scotland, or possibly Walter's brother Simon, and thereby of Norman extraction . . . but historically, there are lots of dogs in that fight, so most modern Boyds prefer to treat that theory with a smile and a shrug. In the outer orbits, there are also those espousing connections to the Pendragons of King Arthur's time, which would suggest a Welsh origin . . . or might they not have come from Ireland, under the surname Guillabuihde (son of the blonde man)? After all is said and done, perhaps the simplest is still the best.

The earliest record of the Boyds which has survived is in Irvine in 1205, when Robertus de Boyd witnessed a contract between the Lord of Eglinton and the burgh of Irvine. After the Battle of Largs, the name of one Robert de Boyte is listed in the Ragman Roll of 1296, surrendering homage to Edward I of England; it may be noted soon after, the name was fairly common, especially in Ayrshire and environs.

Duncan Boyd, an associate of William Wallace and a great partisan of Robert the Bruce, was beheaded by the English in 1306. In 1314, Sir Robert Boyd, also a loyal follower of the Bruce, commanded troops at the Battle of Bannockburn. His gallantry in battle was rewarded by lands which the Bruce had happily confiscated from the Balliols, whom in his estimation had bartered away Scotland to the English throne. Among those were included Kilmarnock, Bondington and other holdings in Ayrshire.

The first Lord Boyd was Robert, elevated in 1454; he became regent for the infant King James III, after James II died in a siege gun explosion in 1460. Robert's greatest claim to fame was his work in arranging the marriage of his king to a princess of Norway, which helped facilitate Scotland's repossession of the Shetland and Orkney islands. When the young King James came of age, Lord Robert was appointed to the office of Great Chamberlain; his son, Thomas was later married to Princess Mary, sister of James III, creating him the first Earl of Arran.

But the bonds cementing the Boyds to the hearts of the Royal Court were not as strong over time as many had imagined, and numerous rivals arose at every hand. Conspirators whispered rumors aplenty to the young monarch, and soon the Clan's ambitions were seen as threatening to the future of James' reign. Summons led to charges of treason, and in short order demotion, annulment, imprisonments, exiles and even executions followed, with the name of Boyd becoming stained, defamed and crippled nearly beyond repair.

But this family was justly known for its resilience, and in Robert, a grandson of the first Lord Boyd, would land on their feet when he received confirmation from Mary, Queen of Scots, returning all the estates, honours and dignities of the family, with the title of 'Lord Boyd'. After her escape from Loch Leven Castle, Robert Boyd was among the first to join the Queen at Hamilton, and fought valiantly for her at the Battle of Langside. In defiance to the power of the Protestant authorities and the Tudor dynasty, he remained irreversibly loyal to his Queen, making many visits to her during her captivity in England, and until his dying day (in 1590) would brook no malignment of her memory.

The Boyds adhered to the Royalist cause during Scotland's civil war, and were rewarded when William, Lord Boyd, in 1661, was created the first Earl of Kilmarnock by Charles II

himself. But the Jacobite rebellions managed to divide the sympathies of the Boyds, with the third Earl standing tough for his government in 1715, and raising his own regiment to help defend the throne. Come the advent of Bonnie Prince Charlie, though, the old Earl's son embraced the cause of the Stuarts, and was given a generalship, which did him little good as a prisoner of war after Culloden, and cost him his head at Tower Hill in London, and his Clan the forfeiture of all their lands in Scotland.

But landing again on their cat-like feet, the Boyds regained a good measure of acclaim by succeeding to the Erroll earldom twelve years later through his mother's bloodline, thereby enabling his grandson to be created Baron of Kilmarnock in 1831; in modern times, the Chiefs of Clan Boyd hold the heritable title of Lord Kilmarnock.

For nearly half a millennium, the Boyds

proclaimed unshakable faith in their kings, their queens, their popes, and the sanctity of their beloved Homeland; looking back, they could also have boasted their ability to prosper in the face of overwhelming odds.

This material is just a sampling of one of the 60 clan names and legends appearing in the upcoming book -

Henceforth Tales

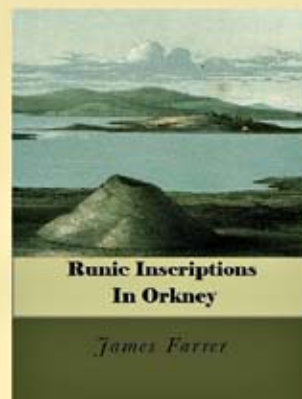
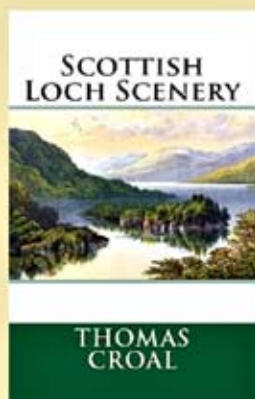
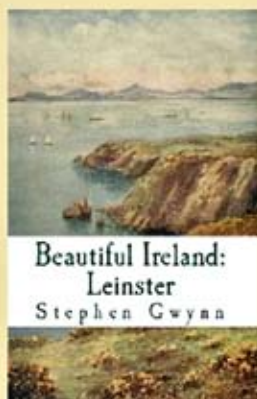
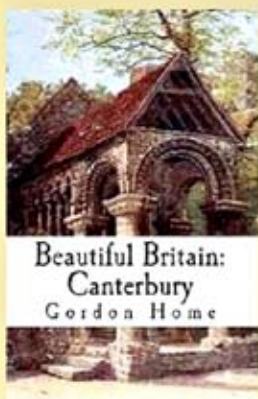
by Cass and Deborah Wright

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



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PART FIVE - FINAL INSTALLMENT

by Piotr Kronenberger
Poland

THE OTHER SIDE

In Greek historians' eyes, head-hunting was one of the more repulsive Celtic customs. My 'brothers' probably borrowed it from the Scythians – nomads living on the eastern fringes of Europe.

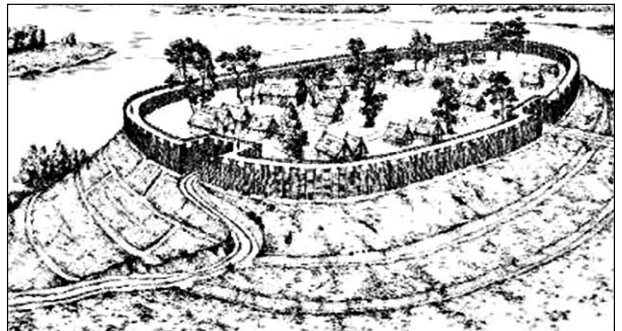
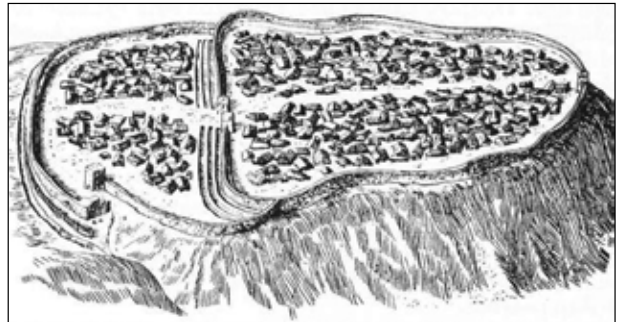
My favorite people viewed head-hunting as a cross between a religious ritual and a sports event. Going into battle, Celtic warriors wanted to gather as many enemy heads as possible. The purpose of this was three-fold:

1. It was easier to count how many adversaries were slain. The number of heads was also a testament of one's battle prowess,
2. Enemy heads were trophies. The more heads a warrior got, the higher his position in the tribe,
3. When taking an enemy's head, a Celt could be sure that the person would not rise from the dead to haunt him. An enemy head warded off evil, and magically augmented the victor's strength.

The Celts knew and honored the power of the HUMAN MIND. They believed the memories and experiences passed through the mind of the defeated onto the champion.

Upon uncovering Celtic *oppida* (walled settlements) in France and Germany in the 1970's and 1980's, archeologists were baffled by the fact that many of those houses contained a small niche beside the entrance. Later, they deduced that niche held severed enemy heads. It was thought that the spirit of the head's owner would protect that house and its inhabitants this way.

This practice concerned individual families as well as entire tribes. Enemy heads were often placed on the wooden stockade surrounding a settlement. Likewise, every house had a high pole reaching above the chimney. The decapitated heads on top of such poles served as a warning to all the local tribes: DO NOT ATTACK OR YOU WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE.



Julius Caesar described the larger Celtic Iron Age settlements he encountered in Gaul as oppida. Many oppida grew from hill forts, although by no means did all of them have significant defensive functions. The main features of the oppida are the architectural construction of the walls and gates, the spacious layout and the commanding view of the surrounding area.

On another note, my ‘brothers’ led an interesting sexual life, too. They loved members of their own sex as much as of the opposite one. According to Caesar’s reports, during feasts they would lie in bed with a companion on either side. The Celts had strict rules regarding incest – they lay only with kin of the sixth degree.

As is evident from this five-part column, Greek and Roman accounts concerning the Celts are true to some extent. At the same time, they are full of hypocrisy. Right up until the year 97 BC, the Romans practised all those things for which they so heavily condemned their Celtic adversaries...

In keeping with this month’s theme, I think I’ve managed to tie up all the “Loose Ends” not mentioned in the previous parts – to

present to you all the other, “darker” side of the Celtic story.

There’s nothing more I can add here, so (as Porky Pig would say): “That’s all, folks!”

I hope everybody enjoyed reading this column as much as I enjoyed writing it. Maybe you’ll see me on these pages again sometime...



EMERALD AND BRITISH ISLES

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KILCHURN CASTLE

by Victoria Roberts
Pittsburgh, PA, USA



Scenic Scotland

CAMERON MORRISON ©

The most photographed and recognizable castle in Scotland is without a doubt Eilean Donan. In last month's issue of the Celtic Guide, Scottish photographer Cameron Morrison provided a dramatic view of this legendary structure. Situated on the point of an island where three sea lochs meet, the castle is one of the most visited attractions in Scotland today.

But there's another castle in Scotland that holds my heart, as well as the setting of my first series.

Kilchurn Castle on Loch Awe was the ancestral home of the Campbells of Glenorchy. The castle was built around 1450 by Sir Colin Campbell, the first Laird of Glenorchy. During the 15th century, the Campbells held such a

variety of lands that in order to properly oversee the vast undertaking, the clan split into other various branches in order to maintain control of their many properties.

The castle started out as a five story tower with a courtyard and has amassed into something greater. During the early 16th century, Sir Duncan Campbell added a single story great hall along the inside of the south curtain wall. The 6th laird, Sir Colin Campbell built chambers north of the tower house and remodeled the parapet with corner turrets. Each laird tried to expand this structure to suit their needs. In order to travel to the castle at that time, most sources suggested access to Kilchurn was only by boat or low-lying causeway. At any rate, the castle

was definitely a formidable site that sat on the northeastern end of Loch Awe.

By the end of the 16th century, Clan MacGregor occupied the castle since the Campbells spent most of their time at Fincharn. To put it mildly, the arrangement between the two clans lasted until the early 17th century up until the Campbells



Kilchurn Castle, as recreated in an old print from the UK

and MacGregors had a falling out. Whereas the MacGregors and the Campbells once had equal power and status, the Campbells quickly amassed lands, power, and the king's favor.

In the late 1600's, Sir John Campbell of Glenorchy converted Kilchurn into a stronghold which held approximately 200 troops. This continued until the early 1700's when Kilchurn was used as a government garrison. The Campbells were unsuccessful in trying to sell Kilchurn to the government after 1740,

and the property sat while the clan moved to Perthshire.

In 1760, a violent storm erupted and Kilchurn was struck by lightning. When you walk through the courtyard today, there are stone steps which look like a circular podium. The force of the lightning was so strong that it knocked off the top of the tower. The stones landed in one piece, upside down in the courtyard.

Today the castle is in the hands of Historic Scotland, preserving history.

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The Loose Ends of Harris Tweed

Jim McQuiston
USA

The Celts have long been famous for their weaving of Scottish tartan, of Irish knit fishermen sweaters, and even Welsh weaved blankets and furniture accessories.

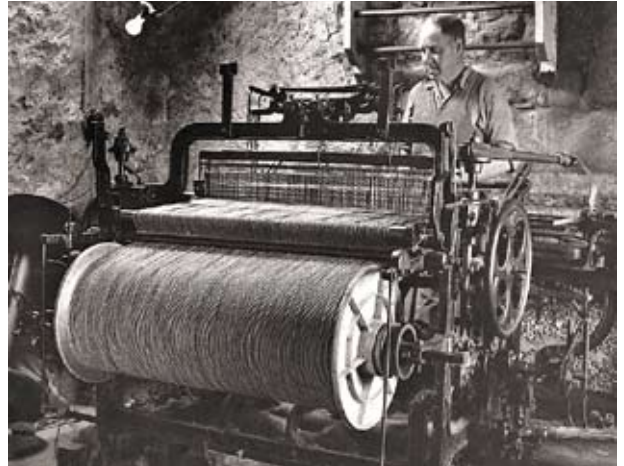
One weave that has gain some notoriety as an exclusive product is Harris Tweed.

This cloth has long been handwoven by Scottish islanders in their homes on the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, finished on the Outer Hebrides, and made from pure virgin wool, dyed and spun on the Outer Hebrides.

Harris Tweed is so unique it is protected by the Harris Tweed Act of Parliament 1993, which strictly outlines the conditions in which the cloth can genuinely be made.

Authentic Harris Tweed is issued with the Harris Tweed Orb Mark, the United Kingdom's oldest registered trademark, after inspection by the Harris Tweed Authority, the industry's governing body.

Traditional weaving by crofter families has been slowly taken over by industrialization. Currently the company is expanding and Harris Tweed Hebrides chairman Brian Wilson said: "On the basis of existing orders, we have told



Harris Tweed weaver circa 1960



both mill-workers and weavers that full-scale production will continue throughout the winter months. One of our greatest successes to date has been to take seasonality of employment out of the production cycle."



Harris Tweed Hebrides' Shawbost Mill, Isle of Lewis , Scotland

Thanksgiving's Roots in Old World Harvest Feasts

by Carolyn Emerick
USA



November hearkens the coming of that great American harvest feast wherein we express our gratitude for Nature's bounty, and for the indigenous people whose generous support ensured the survival of the progenitors of our nation. However, when we dig a little deeper we discover that the tradition of Thanksgiving extends far beyond the borders of the United States. Canada celebrates her own Thanksgiving in October, and Germany's version, called Erntedankfest, is celebrated either at the end of September or in early October. The November harvest festival that the British-American pilgrims would have been familiar with, prior to their emigration, is the Feast of Saint Martin, or Martinmas.

The first American settlers in New England were British separatists and largely Puritan. Recent history had seen the Protestant Reformation and the birth of the Anglican Church. The Puritans believed that the new Church of England's reforms did not go far enough in breaking from Catholic tradition; hence the journey to settle new lands and form

THE Christianized Indians in some parts of *Plymouth*, have newly appointed a day of Thanksgiving to God for his Mercy in supplying their extream and pinching Necessities under their late want of Corn, & for His giving them now a prospect of a very Comfortable Harvest. Their Example may be worth Mentioning

Painting above: 'The First Thanksgiving', by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, circa 1915. Newspaper clipping: Oldest known recording of the same event depicted in the painting, the very first Thanksgiving. This is from Monday, September 25, 1690, as published in the newspaper 'Publick Occurrences' at Boston, Massachusetts.

what they hoped would be a religious utopian life in the New World. We all know the story from here.

Things didn't go as planned, crops failed, and the settlers were nearly starved out when the indigenous Americans stepped in with food as a gesture of good will.

Today, hundreds of years later, we honor the memory of this story every year with the ritual of the Thanksgiving feast.



*Illustration by E. Stuart Hardy
for 'The Pigeon Tale' by Virginia Bennett.*

But, many Americans aren't aware that our own Thanksgiving feast has precedent in the ritual and ceremony of Old Europe.

It would be misleading not to point out that virtually all cultures around the world whose societies were built around agriculture had (and many still do have) their own harvest feasts wherein thanks is given to whichever gods are honored in that culture. And this was certainly true of Europe.

Virtually all people in all corners of Europe, barring perhaps hunting/herding societies such as the Saami in Lapland, celebrated the feast of the harvest. In fact, they usually celebrated more than one, as they were often stacked between August and November depending on climate, geography, and the crops grown in the area.

August sees the wheat harvest festival of Lammas which has been resurrected as a

religious holiday by neo-Pagan groups. The word Lammas comes from the old Anglo-Saxon hlaf-mas, meaning "loaf-mass." Its Irish counterpart was/is known as Lughnasadh, honoring the Celtic god Lugh.

Many regions around the world still have local festivals to celebrate the harvest of crops grown locally. In my region of Upstate New York, for example, the town of Hilton hosts the Hilton Apple Fest, and Naples (named for the Italian city) hosts a grape festival.



Medieval Grape Harvest for the Royal Family

In an age when the livelihood of the entire region depended on the success of the crops, one can imagine how important each crop was for the survival of the community, and so much ritual and ceremony built up around these events. The American Thanksgiving story emphasizes how dire it could be when a crop failed. Indeed, the generosity of the indigenous Americans in sharing their own harvest was truly something to give thanks for.

Martinmas, also called Martlemas, is one of the many harvest feasts described above, but it has the important distinction of being the very last one of the year. The cult of Saint Martin likely came to Britain during the earliest days of Christianity during Roman times. However, with the Anglo-Saxon migration came another period

of active paganism in England. Even when the Anglo-Saxons converted, it does not appear that they placed a great emphasis on Saint Martin or his holiday. In the old Anglo-Saxon calendar, November was called Blod-Monath, which means Blood Month. The name is a reference to the final slaughter of the season when the livestock that would not be kept through the winter were killed, and the records indicate oxen were a main animal culled at this time. What could not be preserved was eaten in a great feast. These feasts and festivals not only celebrated the harvesting of food, but they helped to brace people for the onset of winter. And in the case of Anglo-Saxon Blod-Monath, the feast was also a time of religious sacrifice (prior to conversion). After the Norman Conquest of 1066, churches dedicated to St. Martin began to spring up, and references to the feast of Saint Martin begin to appear again in the record.

The emphasis on the slaughter of cattle in November seems to have continued on through the Norman era and afterward. Just as Americans today reference the ubiquitous Thanksgiving turkey, mediaeval Britons made reference to the Martlemas beef. The term was apparently so common that it became a figure of speech to indicate a full pantry, a reference to the abundance of food after this large scale slaughter. As time progressed and farming techniques improved, the need for such a large cattle slaughter at Martinmas seems to have lessened. By the late Middle Ages, the Martlemas beef enjoyed the company of St. Martin's wine. This also became a time of a great grape harvest and the celebration of new wine. Hence, Martinmas became a time of revelry and merry-making.

Drunkenness appears to have thus been associated with Martinmas not only in Britain but also on the continent.



Painting by William Holman Hunt - circa 1847 to 1857 - A scene of Medieval drunkenness, while revelry in the street is seen through the window . . . as might have taken place on the Martinmas holiday.

There are accounts of surprise attacks being planned to take advantage of Martinmas drunkenness. Yet, Martinmas was a special holiday. It was considered the threshold of winter, the last great harvest of the year, and there was food and drink a plenty.

While Martinmas was apparently important enough to be given the suffix “mas” or “mass” (reserved for only the holiest of holidays, such as Christmas, Christ’s Mass), its celebration dissolved soon after the Protestant Reformation. Other harvest traditions, however, did manage to linger on much longer. The concept of the Corn Spirit was celebrated almost universally across Europe, and certainly in Britain and Ireland. In this context “corn” refers to kernels of wheat and other grains, not American maize. During wheat and grain harvests, often one sheath would be left remaining standing in the fields. Traditions varied by location, but it would typically symbolize the spirit of the crop, and many local traditions and rituals sprang up around it. Often, the spirit would be dubbed the Corn King or Queen (or both) who must be killed as a symbolic sacrifice.



These ‘Corn Doll’ photos were provided by Pollyanna Jones, another contributor to the Celtic Guide. At left is a corn doll handmade by Pollyanna. At right is another corn doll given to her as a gift. In ancient European cultures it was believed that the spirit of the corn lived amongst the crop and was made homeless by the harvest. A corn doll was made to house the corn spirit and was often ploughed into the first furrow of the new season.



‘Crying the Neck’ is still re-enacted at harvest time especially in parts of Cornwall. These ceremonies in Cornwall date back thousands of years, but as farming became mechanized towards the end of the nineteenth century, the tradition died out. It was revived by the Old Cornwall Societies in 1928. Above: A Cornish farmer carries out the ceremony holding the final stook of corn. The religious ceremony traditionally marks the end of the harvest. Normally crowds gather in harvested fields to see the last ‘stook’ of corn or ‘neck’ scythed and everyone prays for a good harvest next year.

Sometimes the corn spirit was seen as a malicious spirit embodying bad luck. This spirit had to be dealt with to ensure the prosperity of the coming season.

There are a whole host of traditions associated with the grain harvest. Like with many European folk festivals, role-playing and play-acting was often involved. In some areas two individuals would be chosen to represent the “Harvest Lord and Lady.” (One wonders if this particular practice bears any connection to the old Germanic sibling gods Frey and Freya,

for they were both associated with fertility and their names also mean “Lord” and “Lady” respectively.)



Illustration by William T. Van Dresser
for 'The Golden Harvest' – 1908

Other traditions involve building a life sized figure out of stalks of grain to represent the Harvest Queen. The figure would be placed in the field while the workers labored, and then paraded through the town on the final day of the harvest with music and celebration.

Similar customs continued well into the modern era. John Barleycorn is one example of a folk song that continues on the theme of the Corn Spirit from the Middle Ages well into modern times, and is still sung today. Related to this custom is the art of weaving corn dollies, sometimes called harvest dolls or kern babies. They could be modeled after the human form, shaped after animals, or simply decorative and abstract. If the dollies were made from the last sheaf of grain, they would be hung in the home to bring good luck for the coming year.

With our pumpkin pie, zucchini bread, roasted turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet candied yams, minced meat, and so on and so forth; we continue a long tradition of celebrating Nature's bounty with our families and loved ones. Our Thanksgiving décor today still places emphasis on the abundance of produce in season at this time of year. As we partake in our own cornucopia of plenty, lift a

glass in remembrance of the celebrations of our forbearers and take pride in knowing we are carrying on traditions that have continued for hundreds of years.

Does your family or community celebrate a harvest tradition you'd like to share with us? Post your photos on our Facebook wall: www.facebook.com/celticguide

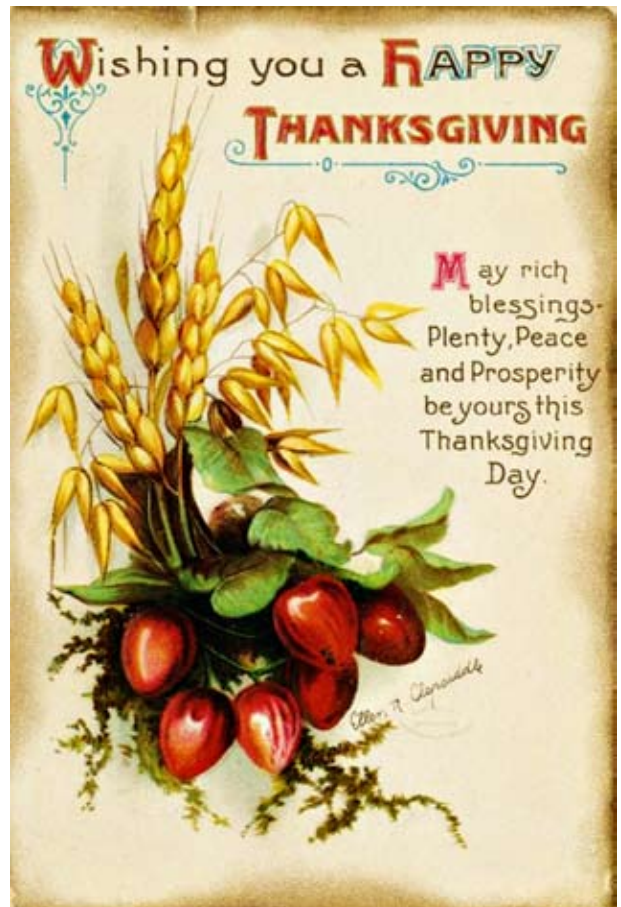
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The Blarney Stone

by Pollyanna Jones
England

Many of you are likely to have heard of the legend of Blarney Castle. It is said that whoever kisses the Blarney Stone is granted the Gift of the Gab. But what is it, and what are its origins? In this article, I shall endeavour to explain this to you dear reader, to the best of my ability.

Blarney Castle is situated in County Cork. In the south west of Ireland, it lies in the ancient kingdom of Munster; specifically the old country of Desmond. There has been a keep on this spot since the 10th Century when a wooden structure stood in the marshy land overlooking the river. In around 1210, a stone keep was built, but this was later demolished for materials. Finally in 1446, the King of Munster, Dermot McCarthy, built the third castle, the ruins of which stand to this day.

The mythical Stone of Eloquence, more commonly known as the Blarney Stone, is a bluestone block set in the battlements at the very top of the keep. To access it, one must bend over backwards through a hole in the parapets, and hang upside-down over a terrifying sheer drop. To fall would mean certain death. According to the tourist information, world statesmen, literary giants, and legends of the silver screen have travelled to Blarney to kiss the stone to gain its powers. So why do they, and so many other pilgrims do it?



Blarney Castle – by Pollyanna Jones

It is said that if one kisses the stone, one is graced with the power of the Gift of the Gab. “Gab” is thought to be derived from “gob”, a term for mouth. The Gift of the Gab enables a person to speak with great charm and eloquence, and to speak in a clever or coaxing manner. Those with this gift have a power of wit and flattery, and the silver tongue of one who speaks freely and

easily. It is rare gift that is sought by many storytellers or those who wish to coerce others with the power of speech.

“’Tis there’s the stone that whoever kisses
He never misses to grow eloquent;
’Tis he may clamber to a lady’s chamber,
Or become a member of Parliament.
A noble spouter he’ll sure turn out, or
An out and outer to be let alone;
Don’t try to hinder him, or to bewilder him,
For he is a pilgrim from the Blarney stone.”

~ Francis Sylvester Mahoney

It has been a mystery as to how and why this blue stone has been placed in the battlements. It is possible that it is an older standing stone from the site, or may be a token from a friend to the King of Munster whilst his castle was being built. There are several legends around the Stone and its history. Some may be more credible than others.

One version tells that the stone is the great Lia Fáil, which was the magical stone upon which the Kings of Ireland were crowned. A telling of this legend describes how the stone was taken to Scotland, becoming the Stone of Scone. A piece of this was given to Cormac McCarthy by Robert the Bruce in thanks for his support in the Battle of Bannockburn, in 1314. Another version of this myth tells that it was merely a gift granted by Robert the Bruce, not the Stone of Scone at all. However, these tales are flawed in that the stone is said to have been removed from Scotland a full 18 years before the Battle of Bannockburn.

I have even heard an unattested theory that the bluestone slab comes from South Wales, the stone being the same that makes up the inner bluestone circle within Stonehenge.

A more likely explanation centres on King Cormac McCarthy, his efforts in defying Queen Elizabeth I of England, and the aid of the Celtic Goddess, Clíodhna.

The British Isles in Tudor times were a bed of intrigues and power struggles. As so often

occurred in its history, Ireland was coveted by England’s wealthy and powerful. The Catholics, since Henry VII’s abolition of the Catholic Church, were deemed a threat to the newly formed Church of England. Queen Elizabeth I had set her sights on Blarney’s estate, yet McCarthy, King of Munster, had other ideas.

The Earl of Leicester was set the task of leading negotiations to take possession of Blarney and the King of Munster’s domain. Each time he and his men travelled to the castle, McCarthy would throw a grand event. Great banquets were held, hunts were organised, or lengthy festivals took place, with any hope of political negotiation thrown out of the window during these riotous days of celebration. The Queen’s retainers were greatly delayed in their mission, and when finally the Earl of Leicester sent progress reports (or lack thereof) to Her Majesty, the Queen described them in frustration as being “Full of Blarney”. This was most likely used in the context that they were filled with news of the events held in Blarney, and over the years the term has come to describe beguiling talk or empty flattery.

McCarthy’s skills in charming his guests were extraordinary. Few denied the Queen of England what she wanted, yet he managed it quite well. It was only when Cromwell’s men came around a century later with cannons, that the castle was finally taken.

Legends grew about the King of Munster and his remarkable gift. Tales were whispered about a pact with the Old Ones, specifically Clíodhna, a goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. Anglicised, her name is Cleena, and is said to have been the principal goddess of the old land of Desmond, also known as South Munster. It was this country that Cormac McCarthy’s line hailed from, and myths describe how he made an appeal to this ancestral goddess.

Clíodhna is described by some as a goddess of beauty and love, who dwelt in the Land of Promise known as Tir Tairngire. Legends describe how she dwelt in a palace in the centre of a pile of rocks known as Carrig-Cleena, ruling over her people.



Clíodhna Banshee Queen, by Pollyanna Jones

Clíodhna's role though, had more aspects than love and beauty. Some say that she was drowned when she was swept into the sea whilst in an enchanted sleep during a visit to be with her mortal lover, Ciabhán. She became known as the Queen of the Banshees, ruling over the fairy-women of the mounds. A potent banshee, Clíodhna or any one of the Sidheog (fairy-women) would appear at a household when a death is imminent, wailing around the rooftops. Rather than a terrifying portent of doom, this omen instead should be viewed as a lament in tribute to the noble descendants of Clíodhna's line. For she is associated with the old families of Munster, and appears to be some sort of matriarchal goddess of the lands ruled by the Ui-Fidgheinte during the period between 373AD and 977AD.

Throughout history, Clíodhna appears in records of the lands and families under her domain. Due to a potato crop failure and high exports commanded by the British, a huge number of Irish died of hunger between 1845 and 1852. John O'Donovan, Irish Antiquarian, wrote a letter in 1849 to a friend, referring to terrible

events of the Irish famine. He describes how this goddess lamented those in her own lands, and one of his relatives.

"When my grandfather died in Leinster in 1798, Cleena came all the way from Ton Cleena to lament him; but she has not been heard ever since lamenting any of our race, though I believe she still weeps in the mountains of Drumaleaque in her own country, where so many of the race of Eoghan Mor are dying of starvation."

The Donovans are descendents of the Ui Donnobhans, a tribe of the Ui-Fidgheinte people.

Michael Collins, famed from the Easter Uprising of 1916, knew of Clíodhna and the legends of her matronage of the old families. His family name is derived from Ó Coileáins of Uí Chonaill Gabra, which interestingly, is also a tribe of the Ui-Fidgheinte. One is left to wonder if Clíodhna wept when Collins was killed in a gun battle during an ambush in 1922.

It is said that Clíodhna came to the King of Munster's aid when Queen Elizabeth had her sights set on the land of Desmond. The story tells how Cormac McCarthy was involved in a lawsuit regarding possession of his lands, and begged the Clíodhna for her assistance. He was no good at speeches, and minced his words. After his appeal to the goddess, he met an old woman whilst walking through his estate. She told him that whilst on his way to court, he should kiss the first stone he found in the morning, and he would be granted the ability to deceive without offending. He did this, kissing a flat blue stone, and subsequently won his court case. King Cormac had the stone placed in the parapets of his castle as a trophy and reminder of the gift granted by the goddess.

Whatever tale is true, we can take these facts from the myth. Clíodhna was adopted by the McCarthy's as their "Fairy Woman", and is a remnant of a regional goddess of Pre-Christian times. The King of Munster kept his castle, and the Gift of the Gab kept his land from the clutches of the English until long after his death.

His Blarney frustrated the court of Queen Elizabeth I, and became the origin of an intriguing tradition.

To this day, you can visit Blarney Castle and see the Stone of Eloquence for yourself. If you are feeling brave enough, you might even dare leaning over that awful drop to kiss it. Although

these days, iron railings prevent all but the skinniest among you from falling through the gap.

As to whether the legend of the Stone's powers are true, I have been there and kissed it myself. Perhaps then, this entire article is nothing more than Blarney...



Photo from 1897 - Kissing the Blarney Stone



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PART TWO

APPALACHIAN MEDICINE

EDITOR'S NOTE: In this two-part series, Laura delves into the Celtic background of Appalachian healing techniques. Part one appeared in our October Halloween issue.

The ancestral spirits were an important part of the culture and the magic, as well. The spirits of the dead and the little people both lived in the woods, in the mountains, in graveyards, by water sources, and by the crossroads (perhaps where the blues legend re: meeting the devil at the crossroads and trading one's soul for fame or fortune evolved from).

Those working with faery seership worked with these spirits and sometimes termed them as "haints" (what we now call ghosts or poltergeists), Grey Ladies, Grey Men, Devil Dogs, the Woods Folk, and Bogans (what we now call "boogey men or booger monsters).

Events such as death were known more as "visits" or "visitations." These visits heralded the arrival of personages such as "Old Man Death" or "Mr. Death" (what we now sometimes refer to as the "Grim Reaper"). Even God was known as "the Creator" or "the Maker," as opposed to his Biblical name.

The "local witch" had charms, spells, and rituals that were used to keep bad spirits away. In fact, the color blue was one used to repel evil forces. A specific shade of blue was used to dispel these spirits and is still used today. It is called "Haint Blue."

Music was a large part of spells and rituals and included singing, dancing, jigs, reels, lullabies, and chants. Those chants were often sung in rounds. Dancing changed from traditional Irish step dancing to what is now known as clogging. This may have changed due to the fact that shoes were scarce in the Appalachia, so when made weren't as delicate as they were in Ireland, so when made here, were made heavy and durable to



Celtic Guide drawing of Appalachian couple, based on a photograph from the Berea College Library.

match the rugged terrain (Irwin, 1985, chapter 5).

Festivals were seasonal and music, being a part of festival and rituals tradition, and were a part of the Irish, Scottish, and Cherokee cultures. Where the Cherokee had ceremonies such as the Earth Blessing and had particular song and drumming, an example of an Appalachian carryover from Europe, would be the singing of Auld Lang Syne from Scotland, and written by Robert Burns. Where we are now familiar with this song being sung on New Year's and at Scottish Gatherings such as Burn's Night, it was sung in the Appalachia on Samhain (known to us as Halloween), during funerals, and for the secular New Year.

Witches used other forms of "magic" and ritual in their practice. Divining was popular and took many forms. One that was handed down from European witchcraft and used by the Cherokee as well, was the reading of spiderwebs. The belief was that there were magical messages spun into the webs and only a chosen few could read and interpret them. In fact, a form of lace making was patterned after this and remains as a cottage-industry in some places.

Other types of readings were accomplished using tea leaves, playing cards, tarot cards, clouds, and through scrying, using dirt, sand, or water. Scrying is basically gazing at something and being able to discern, perceive, interpret, or reveal messages. Modern-day literature and Hollywood have equated this with crystal ball or mirror gazing or reading water in a scrying bowl.

Divining rods were used and those changed to “wands.” The wand was a very important tool, used in rituals and spells, to accomplish many tasks such as locating water for wells, finding missing objects or persons, finding or sending energy, locating or connecting to spirits, etc.

Many other items were used in ritual. Among those were pottery, baskets, brooms, and candles, all of which were homemade goods. Mirrors were a luxury and rare, but used and where chalices or goblets were used in Europe, a very accessible and well-used item was used in its place; the cast-iron cauldron.

While the Cherokee used it for cooking and to boil water down to obtain salt to be used in cooking and for ceremony (such as “holy salt”), the Appalachians used them for cooking, making soap and candles, and being utilitarian, were used by local witches in the preparation of remedies, charms, and potions. In point-of-fact, it was not at all uncommon to find one in a witch’s yard, designating that she was working.

The local witch usually worked alone. She wasn’t known to wear a particular style of dress when performing spells or rituals, as is depicted in the books and movies of today.

There were individuals who only practiced, using charms. They were called “charmners.” This was a practice that was documented in Europe, showing up in both Celtic and Manx literature, and brought over and continued in the Appalachia for at least 300 years.

Another interesting practice was the use of prayer water. In Ireland and Scotland, for example, particular wells, springs, and lochs are said to have holy, magical, or mystical power,

and exist to this day. A few examples of these would be St. Brigid’s Well, Glendaloch, and Islan Munde.

St. Brigid’s Well is located in County Kildare, Ireland. It is an area of prayer, where drinking of the well water is touted to lead to both physical and spiritual healing. It also of cloth of some import to the person tying it, his/her wishes or prayers will be granted.

Glendaloch, Ireland was the first monastical community in Ireland and sits besides St. Kevin’s Cross and the lake where St. Kevin’s cave was. The area is magical and mystical in and of itself, but is also an area where the magical white horses live. Simply being near those waters is touted to be a holy experience.

Islan Munde, an island in the loch outside of Ballychulish, Scotland, is an island where only the chieftains of three clans are buried. The spirit of the last chieftain to be buried inhabits and protects all of those who have passed before, until the next one passes, is buried, and takes over that task. It is these histories and many others, which bring forward the making and using of prayer water.

Prayer water was used for blessing and anointing, and through the use of it, it was believed that God would heal an individual (much like holy water or holy oil in the Church and holy salt in the Indian culture. Water sources, such as wells, springs, and spring-fed lakes have long been revered as being magical and mystical, and even portals to the otherworld.

Snake handling is a practice that has unfortunately been equated with Appalachian medicine, but actually didn’t come into practice until the early 1900’s and is used only minimally to this day. The practice of snake handling is an offshoot of some of the Pentecostal churches and has been outlawed in most states. There is no herbalism used in the practice. However, because it evolved in the Appalachian region, has been connected with it. Though it was initially practiced in the Appalachians, it has been seen in small churches in places such as Punkin’ Holler,

Oklahoma (where Timothy McVey stayed prior to the Oklahoma City bombing).

Mark 16:17-18 states, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Holy Bible, 1977, p. 597). This is the premise for those involved in the practice of snake handling. Those that practice it are fundamentalists, are typically in rural areas, typically maintained through families as tradition, and have taken that particular scripture as the total truth, professing that if one is in the faith, that being bitten cannot harm them. "According to one explanation...serpent handling is an act of faith defined by a biblical text" (Tidball and Toumey, 2007, para 1). This particular denomination emphasizes "an individualistic faith, often characterized by such spiritual practices as evangelism, speaking in tongues, and faith healing" (Snake Handlers, 2010, p. 1).

Faith healers are individuals who lay hands on others who are ill and heal through touch and the speaking of Biblical scripture. The premise is that these individuals are vessels of God and the healing happens through the connection through them and from God. Their healing gifts are in these areas:

1. Burns;
2. Bleeding not related to natural causes;
3. Thrush.

Some of the healers practice in only one area, some in two, and still others practice in all three areas.

For those who deal with burns, they "blow out" or draw the fire out. They contend that fire is contained within a wound and if it isn't taken out, will burn all the way to the bone.

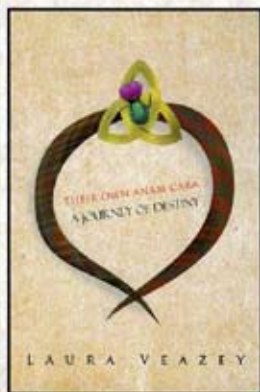
The second area of illness is bleeding. These healers work with both humans and animals.

The last ailment is "Thrash" or "Thrush." Because blisters around the mouth and the subsequent pain are so bad, some babies cannot nurse. These healers contend that those blisters can go all the way through to the digestive tract

THEIR OWN ANAM CARA... A JOURNEY OF DESTINY

Laura Veazey

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About the Author

Laura Veazey Morrison-Roets has a diverse background in traditional naturopathy, allopathic health, therapeutic and outdoor recreation, possesses an EdD in Applied Educational Studies and a PhD in Traditional Naturopathy, an MA in Athletic Administration, and is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and Certified/Licensed Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. She is Scottish, Irish, and Cherokee and a board member of Omicron Eta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, member of the Scottish St. Andrews Society of Springfield, MO, Scottish Club of Tulsa former board member/current member, as well as a re-enactor for Scots of the Old West, portraying Belle Starr and Calamity Jane. She is a musician and writer and loves camping, hiking, kayaking, geocaching, raising Angus and Jake, spending time with her beau, children, and spending as much time as possible at their cabin.

About the Book

Everything is a differentiation of itself; what has a front has a back, what has a back has a front and the bigger the front, the bigger the back. This certainly holds true in THEIR OWN ANAM CARA...A JOURNEY OF DESTINY, the first of the Anam Cara Trilogy. Sir Ailin Drummond and Sarah "Angel" Evangeline Hale, a direct descendant of Boadecia, Queen of the Iceni, in the 1600's in Scotland and Ireland are caught up in the turbulence of the times. They're faced with plantationists, dark and light magyk, pirates, druids and druidesses, clan battles, the whiskey trade, and magical creatures. Through it all, they begin to learn what love, hate, loss, vengeance, hope, and faith can do to break or transform their lives.



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and become fatal. Faith healers use a different Bible verse for every ill that they treat. However, though they are all over the Appalachian area, scripture and not plant medicine is the modality that they treat with (Wigginton & Bennett, 1977, pp. 346-347).

Appalachian medicine has evolved from both European herbalism and Native American plant medicine. Besides Granny Women, both men and women were and are also herbal doctors or herbalists. Many of the same remedies were used and new ones introduced. The overriding theme remained(s) the same throughout the literature re: knowledge, skill, and respect for the use and availability of plants for healing:

“There’s a plant for every disease. Of course you need to know when to get your herbs. Now, the Indians wouldn’t gather no kind of herb unless it was in full bloom. Said it had more strength then” (Irwin, 1985, p. 135).

“I always did believe that God never did make no mistakes. He never made anything he didn’t make a remedy for. The Lord’s put something out there if we would only get out there and hunt it” (Patton, 2004, p. 13).

“Everything that grows was put here for a reason and it’s our jobs t’ find out what it’s here for” (Carpenter, Page, & Wigginton, 1983, p. 121).

As was noted previously, even the herbalism practiced today and within the last century, was passed down from generation-to-generation, and typically in families. However, as times have changed and culture has evolved slowly in the Appalachia region, apprentices have been chosen outside of the familial circle because of their interest, love, and respect for the field, as well as their natural-born and innate skills, knowledge, and abilities in herbalism. This is evidenced by individuals such as Darryl Patton, Phyllis Light, and Dr. Lelani Stone Anderson (the Cherokee Medicine Woman).

The Foxfire series has taught many remedies and skills, as well as introduced many of those who practiced in the Appalachia. One of the most famous was Aunt Arie. As was typical, she stated,

“Mommy taught me lots about the doctoring business. When y’ have sickness in th’ family and no doctors, you sure learn t’ do lotsa ways. You just have to. I can remember all th’ doctor business. Yes sir. Cause I lived a long ways from th’ doctor. Didn’t never get to go t’ th’ doctor” (Carpenter, Page, & Wigginton, 1983, p. 117).

Alex Stewart (Irwin, 1985, p.135) stated, “Back then, people didn’t go off (to a doctor). They went to the woods and got their medicine and made it and they wasn’t near as much sickness and disease as they is today. My uncle was a herb doctor and he learnt it mostly to me. He cured diseases that none of the regular doctors could cure. He could cure syphilis when all others failed.”

A.L. “Tommie” Bass said that he didn’t “claim a cure...I just try to give people some ease. Plants used to provide this ease varied greatly. Tommie’s immense knowledge of herbal lore encompassed more than 300 plants in his personal pharmacopoeia” (Patton, 2004, p. 11).

Though he made and treated individuals, his knowledge came first from an intense interest in the plants that made up the packaged remedies his family got from local drugstores. Once he began studying the ingredients, he then began to match the pants up and developed his own remedies. In addition to that, Tommie wildcrafted, selling herbs to individuals, herb companies and pharmaceutical companies, consulted in the uses, and taught skills to budding apprentices.

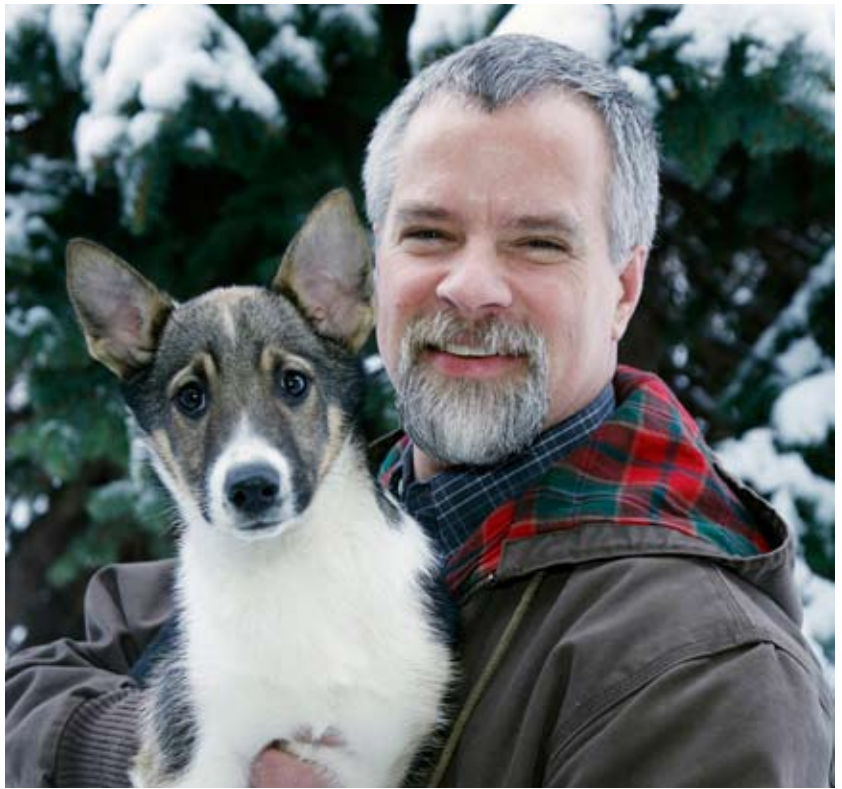
Darryl Patton, MA, ND, Master Herbalist, and Clinical Hypnotherapist, apprenticed under Tommie Bass, even documenting Tommie’s life in a book. Darryl has been termed a walking encyclopedia of herbal folklore. In addition to operating his own herbal pharmacy, Darryl teaches as an adjunct professor in the field of mountain medicine and herbalism, advocates in the field, authors and publishes two newsletters (Stalking the Wild and The Southern Herbalist), and operates weekend workshops and internship programs which teach herbalism, iridology, and wilderness survival.

Pennsylvania Celt Takes Up Iditarod Challenge

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race: If a grueling thousand mile crossing of some of the most desolate, daunting landscape in Alaska in the dead of a subarctic winter is not enough, try it by a transportation method that is, essentially, Stone Age. During one running, teams were caught during the crossing of North America's greatest mountain range in what has gone down in race annals as "The 50-50 Storm." For three nights and two days, minus 50 and worse ambient temperatures plus wind speeds of 50 mph and higher drove the wind chill factor well below the charts which only go to minus 128 degrees. In other contests, temperatures have gone low enough to freeze the flame off a lit match and the dry, light snows of the Interior have fallen so deep that neither snowmobile trail breakers, dog teams, nor racers on 10" X 60" trail shoes can make headway until it was given time to settle. Risking thin ice and a watery grave is part of the game as is enduring sleep deprivation, extreme to the point where sleep's more craved than is food to a starving man.

Now just who, who in his right mind, would subject himself to such obvious danger and torture? Well, the adventurer who cannot turn down such a challenge any more than turn down his next breath, that's who.

The race was founded in 1973 when an intrepid field of Alaskan gold prospectors, trappers, big game guides, bush pilots, remote homesteaders,



ABOVE: Herb Brambley, a man of Celtic heritage from southern Pennsylvania, has decided to take on the Iditarod challenge. Our Alaskan friend Rod Perry tells of the great exploits revolving around the race, itself, and Herb's participation. Meanwhile, we learn that the Brambley name goes back to Ireland, Scotland and Yorkshire, England – from 25 mentions of the name in an issue of the Celtic Monthly from 1880, to an old Brambley 'crier' for the Irish Bar Association during the trials of Oscar Wilde, to the 'Brambley Braes of Arran' (Scotland) to the modern day Brambly Hedge estates of Scotland, plus a multitude of other ancient records in these countries as well as in heavily Celtic-influenced Yorkshire. On his maternal side, Herb descends from two Scottish immigrants to America – John Edye of Burlington, Scotland, and James Edwards of Stevenston, Scotland, both born in the mid 1600s.

mountain guides and other hardened trailsmen, along with the final trailing edge of the great (pre snowmobile) Indian and Eskimo dog men plunged into the unknown to pioneer a revolutionary new concept in sled dog racing. Succeeding brilliantly, the Iditarod adventure swept across Alaska like a brilliant comet, adding new luster to the image of The Last Frontier, and providing the state a

glittering new facet to its image. The great race struck a chord in the human spirit. Reverberations were felt far beyond those pounding within the hearts of the founding northern sourdoughs. Beyond Alaska, out in more tamed, settled states and developed countries, others began acknowledging that they marched to the same beat, identifying themselves in spirit with those quintessential Alaskans that pioneered the race. A latent longing that had before lacked a place and event for expression now had a vast untamed wild and a primal contest for the ages.

And so, over the past decades, brave hearts have come, drawn as a moth to a flame to test themselves against the Iditarod.

Now to do battle with Alaska comes Herb Brambley of Breezewood, Pennsylvania, a 52 year old grandfather and teacher of environmental education and fourth grade at Southern Fulton Elementary in Warfordsburg.

Pennsylvania? Pennsylvania you say?—and he would dare a northern wilderness so vast that it could take in the largest wild in all of PA and not even notice anything is added? He would duel a harsh climate where Pennsylvania's worst day in any winter would be looked upon as a welcome warming break? He would battle a topography where the PA's tallest mountain would barely rank the term, "hill"? Does he not know that he'll be negotiating the great Alaska Range, driving his dog team in the shadow of scores of mountains comparable in height to the tallest peak in the East? And furthermore, that those Alaskan Mt. Washington-like heights are so commonplace and so dwarfed by much taller crags that most of them don't even rate names?

Well, yes, Herb knows all that. For Herb is no ordinary Pennsylvania grandpa and elementary school teacher. Herb prevailed in a stiff national competition to be named Iditarod's vaunted Target® Teacher On The Trail (TOTT) for the year 2010. Each year, the TOTT is brought to Alaska by the Iditarod Race's educational arm, which itself is funded by a grant from ExxonMobil. They checkpoint hop, following the race from Anchorage to Nome, flown by one of Alaska's

skilled bush pilots who make up the famous Iditarod Air Force. Along with his duties visiting schools and working with teachers in the Native villages, Herb took time to carefully familiarize himself with the race competition and compile a game plan against the day when he would come back to compete.

Herb is an outdoorsman, who's always been an outdoorsman. As a boy he avidly camped, canoed, fished, and hunted. Herb's still fit and flat-bellied, the residual of playing soccer at the most elite youth level as well as wrestling, then coaching wrestling for 20 years. He hasn't always been a teacher, but early on made his living as a farmer, construction worker, blacksmith, farrier, tool and die maker and machinist. Even as a teacher, his environmental education classroom is a 140-acre tract of woodland and streams. In the log home he and his wife Jamie built themselves, these woodsy parents raised their two sons.

As a veteran of the Iditarod scene, I can tell you that no schoolteacher's income can fund Herb's adventure. He'll need sponsors large and small. Even competitors who already live in Alaska need sponsors, and we're not talking chump change.

In my earliest foray into Iditarod, I didn't ask many for help. However, I soon became aware that it was anything but beggary to ask. Really, it was giving companies and individuals a chance to engage in an enriching experience. I found that folks who couldn't physically go, but helped my effort, vicariously went with me by sending along something of themselves.

How about you? Are you up for a unique adventure by getting in there and helping? Would you thrill to stand on the runners as with Herb, feeling the power of his team coursing back through the lines and sled and driving bow? Would you like to imagine yourself experiencing the perils, rigors, and thrills of crossing the imposing Alaska Range, daring blizzards and intense cold of the Interior, coursing over the frozen back of that river of legend, the mighty Yukon, and, in the land of the Eskimo, battling northwest along the windswept Bering Sea ice to Nome, the city of gold?

Herb will not be running the upcoming Iditarod, but the race of March, 2015. Although that may seem too far off for you to get excited about, think about the complexity and scope of preparation for such an expeditionary venture and the volume of effort that must go into it. That it's a year away gives you that much more opportunity to get involved in a unique opportunity. And for more immediate excitement, this winter Herb will be running several of the middle distance races that are official qualifiers required of first-time Iditarod entrants.

Here are a few ideas about how you can roll up your sleeves and dive into preparations with Herb and his dogs:

- Actually build equipment, such as sew dog booties to Herb's specs;
- Alone or teaming with others, adopt one of his huskies to pay for its feeding and care;

- Put gas in Herb's tank, helping him drive to his training sites, to races, and to Alaska;

- Help pay his entry fees as he competes this winter and next in official Iditarod qualifying races;

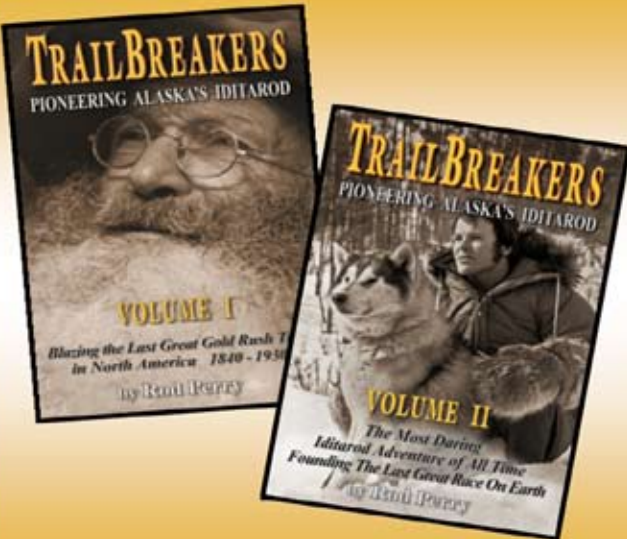
- Help pay his Iditarod entry fee and shipment by bush plane of his supply drops out onto the Trail;

- Help with cash donations to cover the vast minutia—the million and one general expenses;

- For further ideas about how Celtic Guide readers can help, ask Herb to email you a list, such as what must be packed in his supply and equipment drops.

Your contribution of \$100 or more will gain you regular blog updates including pictures you can download of Herb and the team.

Email questions to brambleys@frontiernet.net or to rod@rodperry.com.



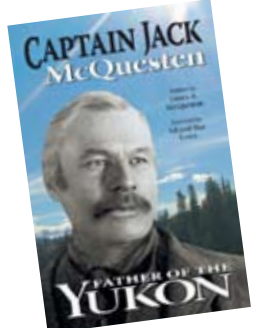
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While there visit Rod's Blog



Celts in the Yukon?

People of Celtic blood played some of the more substantial roles in exploring the Yukon River Valley. In his book *Father of the Yukon*, Celtic Guide publisher, Jim McQuiston, presents some great history of the only person ever to be named Father of Alaska or Father of the Yukon, along with substantial information on the 25 years BEFORE the Klondike gold rush.

<http://www.fatheroftheyukon.com> and available on amazon.com

Geoffrey Of Monmouth

William Shakespeare is probably the most well known writer in the Western world; very few people have not heard of some of his more famous works, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*. Such works are household names and continue to prove very popular in both theatre and literature ensuring that his name resonates in the minds of people throughout the world. Two of Shakespeare's works – *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* are adapted from stories told in a 12th century chronicle named *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of The Kings Of Britain circa 1138, referred to hereafter as HRB) which was written by a lesser known writer and cleric who referred to himself as Geoffrey Of Monmouth.

Geoffrey Of Monmouth may be lesser known outside of academia but he was responsible for the first real narrative concerning the life of King Arthur. This was also part of his most well know HRB and had phenomenal influence in Britain and beyond. In fact, it was printed in such large quantities that today, more than 186 of the original manuscripts survive – a huge amount. Though originally written in Latin, it was in such high demand that it ended up being translated into several different languages and in some cases, resulting in regional variations or takes on the story. Brittany for example, embraced the story to such an extent that the region developed its own unique Arthurian legend. Geoffrey Of Monmouth claimed that his HRB was the translation of an “ancient book” (Huber) given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford but this is largely dismissed by scholars thus HRB is considered by most to be largely made up as opposed to being historically accurate because although the name Arthur does appear prior to Geoffrey Of Monmouth's accounts...most of the legends were the product of oral tradition in Britain.



*Drawing of a statue of Geoffrey Of Monmouth
found at Tintern, Wales, UK.*

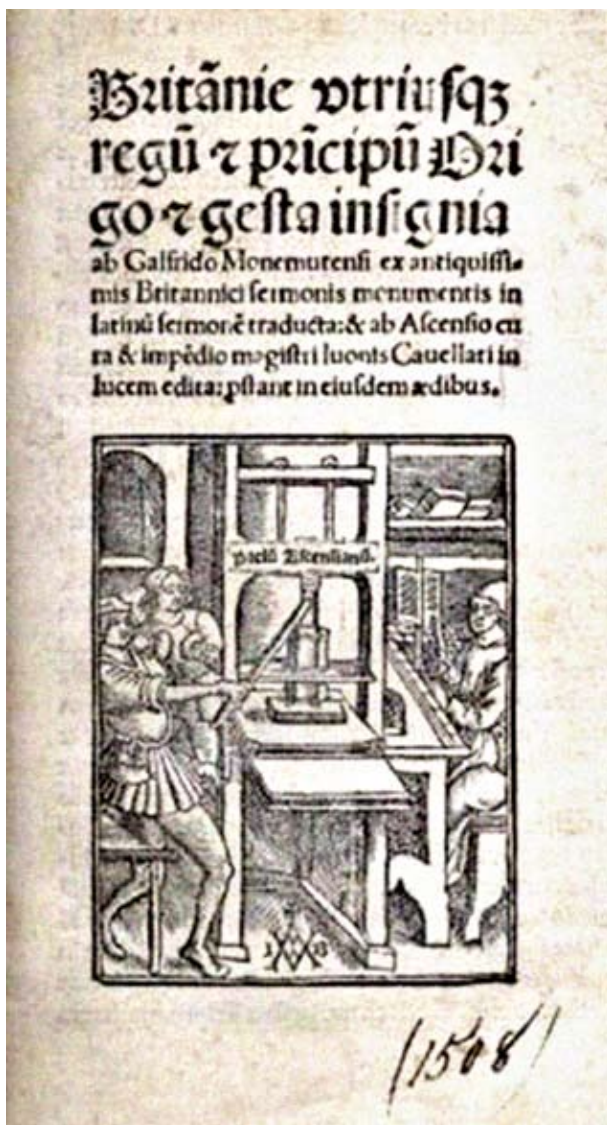
Geoffrey Of Monmouth used sources such as Gildas and Nennius, who was the first person to mention “Arthur the soldier” (Huber.)

The probability that HRB is not an historical account of the life of Arthur is not important when asking...just how influential was Geoffrey Of Monmouth to Celtic legend? The legend of King Arthur is incredibly well known today...a household name just like Shakespeare is yet Geoffrey Of Monmouth is largely unknown. The story we have come to be familiar with started with his version of events, which led to several retellings of the story. Much of what we associate with when thinking of King Arthur now was not actually included in Geoffrey Of

Monmouth's version but his HRB led the way for a new wave of Celtic epics concerned with the legend (at a time when the Celts were in need of their own hero) and new writers adding their bits and pieces which we may be familiar with now, such as the Knights of The Round Table...this was first mentioned in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155), a rewrite of Geoffrey Of Monmouth's *Historia*. Several film and television adaptations as well as plays have been made as a result of his work (Geoffrey Of Monmouth's) which included *Prophetiae Merlini* (Merlin) and another later poetic work titled *Vita Merlini* (Life Of Merlin)...of course, Merlin is probably equally as famous as Arthur in his own right, not to mention Camelot, Avalon, Lancelot and Guinevere as just some of the people and places synonymous with the legend that is King Arthur.

For one to have contributed such a great deal to Celtic literature and folklore and to be virtually unknown is quite shocking and sad but his stories continue to influence Celtic literature all these years later.

AT RIGHT: Page from
1508 printing of
Geoffrey Of Monmouth's
Historia Regum Britanniae



Happy Holidays
to all of our great Celtic Guide readers,
writers, photographers, musicians
artists and advertisers . . .
Our Celtic Guide Family!

Magusto:

by Hugo da Nóbrega Dias
Portugal

the Samhain from Gallaecia

I've always had a certain reluctance in accepting Halloween entering our lives (in Portugal) for reasons that I will explain later in the text. It is a tradition that we, Portuguese and Europeans, used to link with the USA— with its carved pumpkins and horror costumes, so popularized in the movies, but also in comics, music and other cultural genres. It reached Portugal by a commercial way, as shops started to adopt Halloween as motifs in their window displays and decorations. This way, they found a new business opportunity that filled the gap between Summer and Christmas.

When we were children, the night of the 31st of October was always known as 'Night of the Witches' and I remember waiting, in vain, until the midnight hour, at the window, in the hope of sighting some witch crossing the skies on her broom.

The truth is that the way Halloween was deployed and diffused also contributed to that reluctance of mine. Plus, we already had our traditional S. Martinho (S. Martin's Day), and our Magusto (festivity where people gathered to eat chestnuts and drink wine), which is celebrated on the 11th and on the 1st of November.

Other issues to my position were related with the lack of studies of our own traditions and the fact that Portuguese culture is center based in its capital, which is in the southern part of the country and doesn't reflect much of our own. It is when I became an adult that I start to get myself interested in Celtic studies and, in the same way, for the traditions of my own region.

It is with great amazement that, years later, I found an old black and white picture of an old lady with two boys, seated in a chair and holding a carved pumpkin on her knees. Before that I only had heard of reports and read some texts that told about an ancient tradition, linked to the rest

of the Celtic world, which was more embedded in our culture than one usually thinks.



Children in Portugal enjoying Halloween

In fact, in the region north of the river Minho (Minus), in the land that is nowadays known as Galiza or Galicia, the celebration of the night of the 31st of October was kept alive in some of its traditional villages. The habit of carving pumpkins is something that the elders remember doing so "for long time ago". In those villages, most of the people thought of as being linked to Celtic countries, and not to our own land, those traditions were still alive and were an uninterrupted practice for centuries. If we think of it, it is logical for that being so, as the geography of old Gallaecia consists of very mountainous ground with difficult access, contributing to keeping these old traditions.

The 31st of October, Samhain, was the end of the Celtic year and a new cycle was about to start. In that night, the world of the dead and the world of the living mixed. People used to believe (and some still do) that the souls of the dead could walk in our world, and finding

one roaming the dark ways of the night was a probability with great acceptance. That way, people used to place scary and horrific faces in roads, ways and at village gates. In the beginning they used human skulls with a candle in them and placed these skulls in these places, especially in the cross roads, as they form the sign of the cross. Later, we don't know when, people started to carve turnips, taking out the inside to carve scary faces and to put a candle in, giving it a horrific appearance. With the discovery of America, people started to use pumpkins.

In chats held during the years, with locals and old people, I have been collecting testimonies about a past not so far in time. One of these testimonies happened in Ílhavo, next Aveiro, land of fishermen, very conservative and traditional. In a cultural event that promoted gathering fishermen and visitors of that city, locals were invited to open their houses to us, so we could socialize and get to know the way these people live. The locals accepted the challenge and we were received with a huge table plenty of food and drink. My hosts were people from the historic centre of the village who live in tiny streets where cars can't drive, because of their width. With these characteristics, they decided to receive us as a community, instead of individually, in a big table placed in the middle of the street, as it was summer time. Mr. Mário, my host, told me, among other things, that when he was young, 30 or 40 years ago, people of that neighbourhood used to fill those streets with carved pumpkins, by Samhain. I was astonished by that revelation

Also, in conversations with my father and mother and with other relatives, I found that all of them had memories of carving pumpkins for the night of the 31st of October and they all gathered to eat chestnuts, traditional sausages and to drink new wine (the wine just produced). My father is from the historical centre of Gaia (ancient Cale, Celtic *kalla, door, gate), next to river Douro, standing opposite to the city of Porto (hence the name Portugal: Portucale,

from Portus and Cale). My mother is from the highlands of northern Portugal, that continue through ancient Gallaecia land.

We can just imagine the amount of people with similar stories to tell and share, rich in traditions. Northern Portugal has a huge number of people in advanced age, with a strong link to the land, that puts them in touch with the old manners and behaviours of a remote past, and which is now ending by the acceptance of new forms of culture of the youngsters. If a report and a study of these testimonies was made, it is sure that many other interesting traditions would be revealed, and links to the Celtic world would be even more discovered.

Although the tradition of carving pumpkins became forgotten, the 1st of November still is one of the most important days of the year. On that day, millions of people gather at cemeteries to celebrate the dead and their ancestors. All of the country stops and all of the family gathers and celebrates with chestnuts, wine and food, in what we call Magusto. The official day to celebrate Magusto was transferred to the 11th of November (S. Martin's Day) when the Gregorian calendar was adopted and 11 days were deleted from the old calendar. The party, though, was still celebrated on the same day, with 11 days less, that day become the 11th of the month.

In S. Martin's day, in Magusto, in our Samhain, people gather to eat chestnuts and other goods of the season and to drink the wine just made with the grape harvest. And they dance to the sound of bagpipes and other traditional musical instruments and songs. The cult of carving pumpkins has been recovered by the acceptance of Halloween in our lives. It is curious – and somewhat ironic – that it was through the concept of a global world culture, the one that sometimes ends in minor cultures and cults, that we recovered a tradition lost in time. A tradition we thought we were importing and, yet, after all, it is ours as well and it is part of our cultural legacy and places us even more in the Celtic world, of whom we always felt we were a part of.

Confessions of a Serial Volunteer

Jim McQuiston
USA

In January of 2012 I started publishing the Celtic Guide. As all readers and authors know, it is entirely volunteer. We have NO STAFF.

Though ads appear in the publication, the majority of them are in trade for stories, photographs or illustrations. We owe such a debt to our two regular advertisers, Harrigan Holidays and Triskelt.com.

Even with their support and a small number of Google ads on our website, no profit has ever been made in over two years. It is doubtful, as long as we continue to offer all of this for free, that any profit will ever be realized.

Profit was NEVER the intent. I, and all of those involved, have done this for the love of the Celtic (and Viking) culture.

Working a rigorous day job, and keeping up with daily life, at the age of almost 64, makes the late nights of volunteerism especially difficult to achieve, but still I struggle onward for the love of the whole idea.

In an earlier posting of this issue I made the mistake of saying that Julie Fowlis was the voice of Merida in the movie 'Brave' when I meant to say she was the voice of two out of three of the songs in the movie 'Brave.' I have since fixed that error in this newer PDF.

Last month there was another slip up of sorts. A couple people on Facebook pointed out that my article on the death of kings was misleading when I referred to "King James I of Scotland and England." I have since reposted that issue with better wording. By time James became king of England, England and Scotland were, in fact, the same, as the crowns had been combined, and James was the first king, and King James I, of this combined entity to be known as Great Britain. However, earlier he had been James VI of Scotland, and so many continue to call him James VI of Scotland, James I of England. In a way it

is a matter of semantics, but to make sure no one misunderstands his positions as king, or takes offense, I have fixed that issue.

In an article by another author, the Celts were described as being illiterate, which brought the wrath of a few on Facebook. This was another misunderstanding. The author was meaning to say that during the time period that the Romans and Greeks were leaving written records of the Celts, the Celts, themselves, were leaving virtually no written records. It was never the intention to paint them as stupid, only as not creating any literature, thus illiterate. This has been posted for so long, and the Amazon issues have been sold for so long, that it would be senseless to go back that far for a fix. Please understand that this author in no way meant that the Celts were stupid. She is a proud Scot herself and would never slam her own people. For those few offended we apologize.

Finally, in the very first issue I referred to the "two lost tribes" of Israel. There were, historically, ten lost tribes, though some doubt any were ever lost. What I was trying to get at is the persistent legend (even hinted at in the Declaration of Arbroath) that the Celts descended from the tribe of Dan, while others contend that the Vikings descended from the tribe of Benjamin. We'll obviously never know if this is true, but there have been many books and articles written about it.

So there you have it - I have confessed my/our sins of carelessness and/or omission - though very small in number over 23 mostly jam-packed issues.

The Guide is put together on the fly, in the spare moments of busy days, with articles arriving out of the blue, and an effort made to let everyone have a voice. We will never be perfect but we will always be free to our readers and open to any and all authors, photographers and illustrators who wish to share their free time, research, and skills for the cause of the Celtic Guide.



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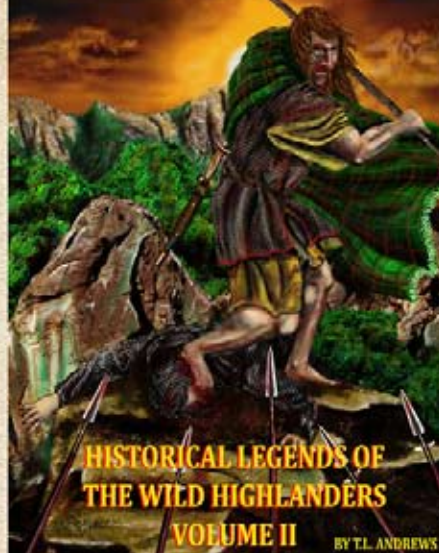
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So, what's next?

Who ever thought loose ends could be so much fun to tie up? We were able to fit in a lot of unrelated stories (beyond their general Celtic-ness, that is) and provide some great twists and turns along the way. Thanks once again to everyone involved. Without all of you, the Guide would just be me rambling endlessly. Think how sore my typing fingers would be!!

We are thrilled with our number of hits and likes and reach and all that, thrilled that we have a couple of new songs on our Free Music page, thrilled that we have so many readers and writers interested in what we are doing.

December's theme will be "The End." Since it is the end of the year there will obviously be some holiday stories. We'll also talk about the ends of eras, of dynasties, in some cases of lives. Of course, as we said once before, with every end there is a new beginning.

I am reminded of the Laura Nyro song (first recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary, then later by Blood Sweat and Tears, and, of course by Nyro, herself) "When I Die" – "and when I die, and when I'm dead, dead and gone . . . there'll be one more child in a world to carry on, to carry on."

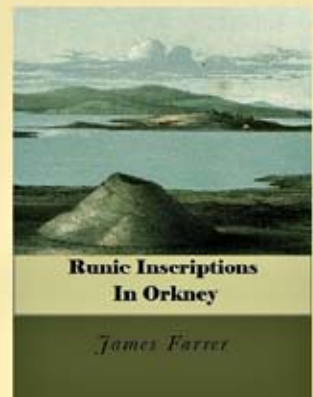
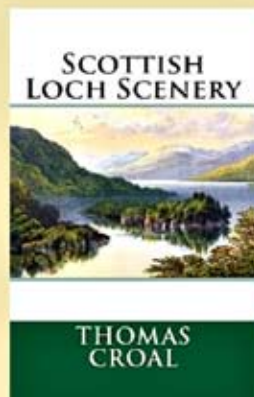
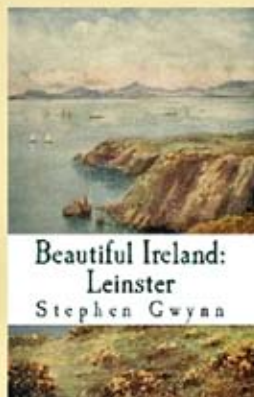
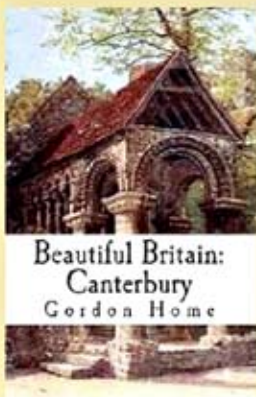
And isn't that what all this cultural sharing is about – carrying on, carrying on songs, traditions, words and phrases, musical talents, stories and so much more. Even when your old Celtic Guide editor hangs up his hiking stick and writing quill, someone will be there to carry on.

January's theme will mostly likely be "The Islands". Meanwhile enjoy, enjoy, enjoy.



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