

## **CLOTHING – Update Mar. 17, 2008**

### **Clothing Requirements**

MacIntyre tartan kilts, trews and ties (men) and accessories (sash or rosette or similar showing of our tartan (women) are always appropriate and encouraged.

**HIKING:** Go to the following like for information on clothing and accessories, if you plan to hike.

**[www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/macintyre/glennoewalk.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/macintyre/glennoewalk.htm)**

**AT THE BANQUET:** We want the Banquet to be as dressy as possible without enforcing a dress code. In a world that is getting more informal, it is nice to have a dressy occasion. Dress as if you are going to a fancy restaurant or wedding banquet.

If at all possible, the men should have a business suit or jacket and dress pants with a white shirt and tie. The ladies rarely need to be advised on dressing up for an evening out, but you should know that dressy pants are okay!

I realize that this advice may not be feasible for everyone but do your best. If you have a kilt but no evening jacket, they can be rented in Oban.

**AT THE CEILIDH:** The Ceilidh is more informal and the range for acceptable dress is much wider. For the men, jackets and tie aren't required but are still welcomed. The more kilts the better.

**DAYWEAR AND HIKING.** If you plan to do any hiking, be sure to bring sturdy hiking shoes and socks. Assume that the ground will be soft and you might sink in here and there.

More on this will come in future updates as we get feedback and questions.

### **THE KILT**

The kilt is not required clothing for any of the Gathering events but if you are lucky enough to have one then please bring it and wear it as often as possible. If it is the extra luggage weight that you are concerned about then wear it on the airplane. The more attendees who wear a kilt and our tartan the more colorful our Gathering will be and the bigger our presence will be in the community.

It is unlikely that you will be able to rent a kilt with MacIntyre tartan anywhere in the world because the number of tartans are limited and, unfortunately, our beautiful tartans aren't among the five or six that are commonly used for rentals. If you have a kilt but don't have an evening jacket, you can rent one in Oban.

**Here are some questions and answers about kilts that I've taken from two sources:**

[www.ccsna.org/jsep46.htm](http://www.ccsna.org/jsep46.htm) (brown)

and

[www.scotweb.co.uk/faq?id=jKJzbcIX](http://www.scotweb.co.uk/faq?id=jKJzbcIX)

**I'm not endorsing the answers or opinion found in these sites but offer them only for your information.**

## INTRODUCTION

While Scottish-American dancers, pipers, caber tossers, shot putters, sheaf-throwers and kilt makers adhere very strictly to the standards of those skills as devised in Scotland, for some reason when the average Scottish-American is asked to consider the norms of Highland dress for non-competitive wear, there is sometimes a curious reaction.

Some people in North America apparently believe that any outlining of what is "correct" in Scottish Highland dress is a gross infringement of their independence and human rights. However many other people are interested to know what the standards are, even if they choose to exhibit variations on the theme themselves. Knowing just how much to infringe on the standards to show individuality and yet still maintain the traditions is a matter of subtlety which those with skill can enjoy.

To discard having any standards in any sphere of life leads only to chaos. Some believe that there is extreme danger of the genuine traditions of Highland dress being completely lost in experimentation and a preference for "costume" in place of Scottish national dress in the United States. While there is always a place for well-researched costume reproductions in any field, there is reason to hope that a growing number of Campbells will find the means of being able to dress well in the national dress of their heritage when the occasion demands.

For those who are confused by the plethora of "costume" one sees at the average North American Highland Games and who are yet more interested in participating in the continuing and evolving live traditions of Scottish National dress, there follows an outline of modern standards for their guidance. Nobody will arrest you if you do not always get things "right" but for those who like to know, here are some guidelines:

## LADIES' DAY DRESS

For ladies this most often means a well-cut tartan skirt, dress or suit in the latest fashion. Traditionally Highland ladies wore fashionable clothes where they could afford them and added a light plaid or shawl of tartan material and this custom is not out of place today. Skirt length depends upon either fashion, occasion or preference. Ladies wear kilted skirts (kilting meaning pleating) but not kilts (except when in band uniform).

Since ladies' fashions are so much more varied than those of men, they lend themselves to historical references without entering the realm of reproduction costume. The calf-length tartan kilted skirt with a wide belt and a blouse using some lace at cuffs and collar or down the front, sometimes combined with a tartan or velvet sleeveless jacket or waistcoat, has been used successfully by

some Scots girls who were obliged to appear with those of other nations in National dress. When combined with a light plaid worn as a shawl or a hooded cloak of tartan, variations on this theme can be striking.

For more formal day dress an ankle length tartan skirt can be impressive.

## MEN'S DAY DRESS

For men in Scotland, full day dress in civilian Scottish National dress means kilt stockings with garter flashes, brogue shoes, a kilt and sporran, a shirt, tie, waistcoat (vest) and tweed jacket. A bonnet is useful particularly as it allows the wearing of the crest-in-buckled strap silver badge and, when available, the plant badge.

For everyday use there are as many varieties of dress above the belt with a kilt as there are with slacks. Depending upon the task or situation one can wear anything from no shirt to a sports shirt, from a pullover to an anorak. Only remember that even with a fishing jacket, it is best to wear short jackets since the longer jackets which look fine with slacks will not look well with a kilt if they extend more than about 6" below the waist. Shoes and stockings, or lack of them, can also be varied to task and time.

However here the idea is to outline those norms of Scottish national day dress with which you can be secure in any situation where a more traditional or senior person in the United States would wear a jacket and tie with street clothes. Using that as standard you can then vary the combinations for more informal situations.

The items of full Scottish national day dress are discussed here in the order in which they should be put on when dressing to cause the least strain. Lacing shoes is easier without a kilt.

## SHIRTS

Due to the warmth of climate and preferred level of house heating in the United States, men commonly forgo the waistcoat and, on less formal occasions such as at Highland Games, the tie and jacket. This means that the shirt becomes of added importance, however the shirts with large full sleeves sold by Scottish traders are more costume than National Dress, and unpatterned dress or sports shirts in the current fashion are particularly appropriate. The use of "T" shirts with the kilt is more justifiable when participation in sporting events or for the younger generation. Some of a military background wear military style shirts which look well. In the United States it is currently customary among retired military gentlemen to wear medals with these shirts. The practice is entirely a matter of personal choice and is in no way an obligation, very much the opposite.

To avoid possible embarrassment for those visiting Games in Scotland, it is as well to be aware of the different customs there with regard to medals, name tags and other items sometimes worn in North America. In Scotland medals would not be worn in daytime with civilian clothes except when participating in a military ceremonial such as wreath-laying or armistice (veteran's or memorial day) parade. Similarly plastic name tags, while possibly now worn at some business conferences in Britain, are never worn at Highland Games in Scotland and are

considered the equivalent in the United States of turning up at a reception with a plastic pocket-protector full of ballpoints, a bit nerdish. But it is up to you.

However in North America, since the successful recruiting of previously unknown people to the clan societies requires that those doing the recruiting are easily identifiable to strangers, it has become customary for those manning tents to wear a plastic name tag if they wish to do so. These name tags are not, of course, a part of Scottish National Dress as such, and their use is to be identified with the work that is being done and not with the clothes being worn.

If you need support there is no disgrace in wearing some, however if you wear your kilt in the traditional way it is important to be sure to wear shirts with long tails and aprons.

## TIES

Tartan ties are seldom worn in Scotland, particularly with Highland dress. But there is no law against them. The same ideas of attempting a balanced effect and compatible colors applies when selecting ties to wear with Highland dress as do with street clothes. Since jackets are seldom worn at United States Highland Games in the heat of summer, ties might be seen as appropriate for more formal occasions such as church, parades and receptions when jackets are worn.

## STOCKINGS AND FLASHES

Day stockings in Scotland are generally heavier than evening stockings, both for warmth and, when out on the hill shooting or stalking, for protection from the heather. However the warmer climate in the United States generally calls for stockings of a lighter knit. Garter flashes can be bought either with adjustable elastic or in the old style to be wound and tucked. The color of stockings and flashes should compliment both kilt and each other. Vermilion red is often used for flashes with good effect, but some wear green or light blue.

The tops of kilt stocking generally fold over for a couple of inches, or even fold twice, down and up again, and so hide the elastic garters. However some stockings in an older style display the garters and have a castellated top. These need special care in tying the necessary ribbon garters. The top of the stocking should be worn two fingers width below the lump of bone which protrudes on the outside of the leg at the top of the side of the calf.

## SHOES OR BROGUES

Early Highland shoes were primitive and more like undecorated mocersons or moccasins, pieces of hide pulled together round the ankle with a thong. These would have been generally brown in color. With the transformation of the fighting strength, chiefs and chieftains of the clans into Highland regiments and their officers in the second half of the 18th century, the footwear of the Highlanders improved and became black polished leather. Since for many years the majority of those civilians found kilted in Scotland had formerly served in Highland regiments, it was natural that the custom persisted of wearing black shoes with a kilt. Many feel strongly on one side or the other of this issue but if you take the long view it is a matter of wearing what seems most appropriate to you. In

Scotland black will be least obtrusive. The shoes or brogues worn in Highland regiments are virtually the same as American black 'wing-tip' shoes. For those on a tight budget, these are ideal for wearing with a kilt as they can equally well be worn with street clothes. There are more elaborate brogues available on the market from dealers in Highland dress which have a more open lacing, allowing the longer tasselled laces to be worn cross-tied about the calf.

## KILTS (singular = a kilt)

The kilt should have pleats all the way round the back and sides with only the front apron of both ends being unpleated. Men who hold the ends of their kilt in each hand with the pleats behind them should fold the right hand end about them first, the left and end folding over the apron of the right. This leaves the edge of the end which started in the left hand lying along the right side of the right thigh. Ladies' tartan skirts fold the opposite way.

Civilian and officer's kilts are made with straps, military other ranks kilts use pins at the waist as they must fit many sizes of waist. In Scotland a heavier material is generally used for day kilts and a lighter for evening, although if too light, kiltmakers sometimes sew elastic along the inside of the pleats about 6' above the bottom hem to avoid over-exposure during a dance swing.

Your kilt should hang an inch free of the ground in front of your knee when you kneel down. Adjusting this length (using a belt if necessary) is highly important as kilts worn too long or too short can make you look ridiculous. When first wearing a kilt you must learn to cross your legs or keep the knees together when seated.

## BELTS

Since the tops of modern kilts are not designed to be exposed to view, normally being hidden by a belt or waistcoat (vest), a piper's belt, about 2 1/4" wide and with a metal buckle about 2 1/2" x 4", is particularly useful in the United States. For evening wear the belt should be of black leather and the buckle silver. The buckle gives a chance to display ornamental work, particularly of heraldic design.

## SKIAN DUBH

Skian Dubhs (pronounced skian doo), the sheathed knife worn on the right side of the right leg in the top of the stocking, are always handsome and even useful but remember that when dancing they need to be firmly secured by tighter garters. Lawmen in the United States with limited sophistication have been known to consider it a concealed weapon and so illegal. With both dirks and skians the more gaudy and over-large Cairngorm stones (garnets) in the tops can upset the balance of the knife. The skian should be worn with the top of the sheath just above the garter.

## DIRKS

Ebony and silver Dirks with black leather sheaths are worn by pipers as day dress but by civilians only as evening dress, however other belt-hung sheath knives may be useful with day dress when hunting or camping. Again, check the

local laws. The innovation of including knife and fork in the dirk seems first to have appeared in the middle of the 18th century. Dirks were originally worn immediately to the right of the sporran. However military custom now has them worn on the side of the right buttock in the position used for a bayonet.

## **SPORRANS**

With the recent rise in urban misunderstanding of rural customs and environmental issues, care should be taken in selecting fur or animal head sporrans which avoid infringement of import or interstate laws. Day sporrans made of the skins of small fur bearing animals had been known earlier but became popular in Scotland in the early 19th century, otters, seals and badgers being favorites. Previously the bag type of sporran of cured leather with a metal half-moon clasp at the top was common. This came back into use in the Highland regiments recently with an interest in historical dress. The metal clasp gives opportunity for decorative or heraldic emblems. The standard all-leather sporran is perfectly adequate for day dress and some have adopted the regimental custom of inserting a small silver heraldic crest or emblem in the center of the smooth panel. The leather for evening sporrans is most often black, rather than the brown more often used for day wear.

## **SPORRAN STRAPS**

The strap can be either a leather strap or a strap with a center section of silvered chain to show on either side of the sporran, the latter being particularly apt for evening wear. Again, black with silver buckle and chain is most used with evening dress.

## **JACKETS AND WAISTCOATS**

Waistcoats, known as 'vests' in the trade and in western North America, add considerably to the style of Highland dress, however in warm climates they are not often practical in summer or indoors until old age warrants more warmth and dignity. Similarly the weight of tweed for kilt jackets should be lighter for use in the warmer situations. Some Highland gentry still wear checked tweed kilt jackets, however in the United States the convention about not mixing checks means that in general plain unpatterned cloth is preferred for kilt jackets. This does not hold in Britain. Again, the color should compliment that of the tartan worn, certain muted browns, blues and greens being handsome with Campbell tartan.

If you are going to wear a jacket with your kilt it is best to buy or borrow a kilt jacket as normal sports jackets are too long and do not do a kilt justice. If you can afford a second day kilt jacket, a dark charcoal gray tweed jacket and waistcoat look exceptionally well at weddings and particularly at funerals.

## **BONNETS**

The traditional Highland bonnet was and is based upon the old blue bonnet of the Scots which can be found in 16th century drawings of Highlanders. The folding "Glengarry" was invented in Victorian times as convenient for military use and has now come back into general use in Highland regiments. Today the civilian



style of bonnet is almost identical to that worn in the first half of the 20th century by some Highland regiments. The civilian style bonnets worn with Scottish National Dress are most often of the same cut as those formerly worn by officers and may be of pale tan, light blue, dark blue or Lovat green. Some have dicing and others do not. The use of the dark blue bonnet with dicing may be more appropriate for evening use perhaps, but that is a matter of taste.

The slit and ribbons go at the back of the head, the badge over and behind the left eye and then the top is pulled down to the right front. The bonnets look best when worn slightly over the front of the head, perhaps a finger's width above the eyebrow, never on the back of the head and never with hair showing under the front band. Bonnets should be worn for parades but must always be taken off when entering a church or private house (although not necessarily a tent). In Scotland the custom of taking off one's hat to a lady was awkward with a bonnet, due to messing the hair, and so it became more customary to touch the bonnet in a salute when out of doors.

### CAP BADGES

The Chiefs of clans have, by customary courtesy, allowed their followers to use the Chief's heraldic crest as a cap or bonnet badge when worn within a buckled strap with the Chief's motto and all combined as a silver badge. Members of armigerous families (those whose Chieftains have been granted arms) may have different crests from the Chief, so that you will see a Campbell of Airds wearing a swan, or a Campbell of Inverawe wearing a deer's head crest. Those who have not traced their ancestry to some armigerous family or received a grant of arms themselves, wear the Chief's crest badge. If a small sprig of the 'clan' plant badge is available it may be stuck behind the crest badge and rising no more than about 1 1/2" above the top of the badge.

### NO FEATHERS

Feathers are NOT generally worn in the bonnet in Scotland except by Chiefs. Officially the rule is; a Chief wears three feathers, a chieftain wears two, and an armigerous gentleman (one who has a right to heraldic arms) wears one. However the wearing of bonnet feathers by those who are not chiefs is generally considered presumptuous in Scotland. As with the heraldry of Clan Campbell, in one sense these rules do not extend outside Scotland. At the same time it is in the interest of overseas Campbells to uphold customs which add to the dignity of their chiefs. Voluntarily observing the rule and custom of the Scots in the matter of bonnet feathers is one way to strengthen the unity of the clan and to reinforce the genuine and traditional in Highland dress.

Hackles' or short thick bunches of feather about -- cm (2") long are worn by some Highland regiments but are not currently seen in civilian Highland dress in Scotland. Some among the once Jacobite clans are currently interested in reviving the custom of the white cockade, a rather divisive concept rooted in complete misunderstanding of the consequences of Jacobite success.

## CROMACHS

The long stick with a curved top used by both stockmen and shepherds in Scotland is, on more well dressed occasions such as Highland Games there, used by men with daytime Highland dress. Its use is equally appropriate in North America. The cromach (pron. CROMach, with the `O' as in song) gained popularity in the 20th century and has come into accepted use for the Stewards (or organizers) who run Highland Games in Scotland. But use of the cromach is in no way limited to those in authority. The making of fine cromachs is a craft much admired in Scotland and they are generally made of hazel and sometimes with a horn handle with a carved finial. Some makers bend twigs on the tree and wait years for them to grow thick enough to cut for a cromach with the hook grown in.

There is another style of stick, sometimes seen at Games in North America, which is a twisted or club-like stick. This is properly a shelailagh and is more of Irish than Highland origin and not particularly appropriate to Highlanders unless of `Scots-Irish' ancestry perhaps.

## EVENING DRESS

Highland evening dress is more formal than day dress. There is a misconception among some people in America that the British are more formal than the Americans. This is only true among limited number of more cosmopolitan Britons for whom making some occasions more formal than others adds to the quality, dignity and variety of life. The same can be found among Americans of a more traditional background who like a change of pace now and again. There are even a few in the United States and Britain who find any vestige of formality to be somehow anti-democratic, tending towards the Chinese who for a time dressed everyone the same in a forced equality.

Because of the vigorous and even athletic nature of Highland reels and Country dances when danced for social enjoyment, modern men's evening Highland dress has tended to do away with the `Christmas-tree' or `everything-but-the-kitchen-stove' style of dress. There was a time up to WWII in Scotland where plaids were worn to balls, sometimes even with sword belts, dirks, hunting horns, silver dag pistols and the keys of the castle. To some, these all vied with military decorations to create an impression of a hardware store in motion, handsome though the effect undoubtedly was.

Today the silver belt buckles, miniature (in the United States) military medals, silver buttons and silver-headed hair sporrans create quite enough dazzle without causing too much danger to the opposite sex and to their dresses, which can all too easily catch on sharp objects.

## LADIES' EVENING DRESS

The recognized formal evening dress for Highland ladies is to wear a dress in the fashion of the time or of their choosing. A fairly recent custom has developed of wearing a silk (or similar) tartan sash. Obviously the choice of color of dress should be compatible with the tartan to be worn. Like the bonnet feathers for the men, the shoulder on which the sash is worn is important for ladies. Lady Chiefs, the wives of Chiefs and the wives of the Colonel of the Regiment of Scottish



regiments, all wear the sash over the left shoulder. All others wear the sash pinned on the right shoulder. This is one of those harmless conventions which add spice to ladies' Highland dress.

Evening dresses designed of tartan have been worn at times to great effect. Some absolutely stunning evening dresses have been made from the darker Campbell or Black Watch dress material, when it can be found. With a tartan dress the sash need not necessarily be worn.

## **MEN'S EVENING DRESS**

In general, in the evening Highland dress for men everything tends to be of finer or thinner material. This is true of the dancing brogues or pumps, the stockings, kilts, shirts, waistcoats and jackets. The items of day dress above are outlined in the order they would be put on and the same order applies for evening dress.

The area of widest variety in acceptable evening dress can be found above the belt. There are a number of styles of jacket to choose from and these fall into two categories. In the first category are jackets with waistcoats which allow for wearing a bow tie, and in the second are those which involve the wearing of a jabot or lace collar and ruffle. (Jabot is originally a French word and so pronounced ja-BO). The former are generally of dark material similar to that used for a dinner jacket or tuxedo and the latter generally of velvet or velveteen. Since the latter style fits closer to the waist, those with any tendency to a portly disposition may find the former more appropriate. Silver buttons are the norm for both styles. Smooth, slightly domed, square buttons often look best unless you have inherited family buttons.

For those occasions where black tie is required but where the climate makes jackets uncomfortable, the Highland regiments adopted what the British Services term "Red Sea Rig" for officers mess dinners in the tropics. Tartan trews are worn with an evening long sleeved shirt and black bow tie. The top of the trews are hidden not by a belt but by a silk cummerbund. The cummerbunds were of regimental tartan but with the dark Campbell tartan a red, green or blue cummerbund could be effective. British miniature decorations were not normally worn with this less formal rig.

## **THE SUBDIVISIONS OF SCOTTISH NATIONAL DRESS**

Where competition is concerned, whether in piping, dancing or athletics, it is best to consult someone already involved before buying any outfit. Not only will they keep you up to date with evolving customs but they may well know good sources for what you need and enable you to save.

## **UNIFORMS**

Scottish military uniforms have continued to evolve with the needs and fashions of the times.

Highland regiments of the British army have worn kilts, Lowland regiments have worn trews (tartan slacks). The pipers in the bands of both have worn kilts.

Pipe bands of other services and of civilian organizations have often imitated the uniforms of the Highland regiments.

Today it is generally accepted that, for the sake of uniformity, women in bands will wear the same uniforms as the men.

Scouts in Scotland may wear their kilt with Scout uniform shirt.

## PERFORMERS

Athletic competitors at Highland Games sporting events, particularly the heavy events, wear sports or tank shirts (or none) with kilts, kilt stockings and sports shoes. They seldom wear a sporran on the field as it gets in the way of the caber etc.

For Highland dancing competition (as opposed to Scottish Country Dancing), girls wear a tartan skirt designed like a kilt but with no sporran. They wear a blouse which may or may not have some reference to earlier styles of men's shirts. The typical dress for these competitions has improved considerably in simplicity during the development of the competitions in recent years. Men and boys wear day dress with dancing pumps. Again, check local organizations for requirements.

Scottish Country Dancers who perform in exhibition at Highland Games or Scottish events generally wear day or evening dress as appropriate to the time of day. Frequently the women wear white dresses with tartan sashes and, because the exercise is warming, the men wear shirts without jackets in the United States.

These often stiff performances of country dances should not be confused with recreational and social enjoyment of the same dances. Sadly but frequently these exhibitions show none of the spirit but merely the precision of the traditional dances and the men are too often trained to look emasculated by the dance teachers who emphasize a French rather than a folk tradition in having them keep a straight back. None should dismiss the practice of Scottish country dancing until they have seen a Highland ball in progress with people enjoying the dancing as a social activity of the most exhilarating kind.

Pipers and members of pipe bands, see above. Individual pipers may wear civilian day dress for competitions.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM [www.scotweb.co.uk/faq?id=jKJzbcIX](http://www.scotweb.co.uk/faq?id=jKJzbcIX)

### Can women wear kilts too?

A traditional 8 yard kilt is strictly speaking a man's garment. But the same used to be said of trousers, and if a woman asks us to make her a kilt we have no problem at all in doing so. It is however more common for women to choose a kilted skirt, a full range of which we can supply in many lengths and styles. Traditionally the apron (the flat flap at the front) of a woman's kilt or kilted skirt was worn with the seam on the same side as a man's kilt (i.e. to the right). But today most female customers prefer the seam to be placed on the other (left) side. This is how we supply ours, unless asked to do so in the traditional manner to special order.

### Can I wear a kilt more informally?

You can wear a kilt any time you'd wear trousers! Kilts are amazingly versatile, and can be used to create countless looks, according to the impact you want to make! This could include a tweed jacket, shirt and tie; or a chunky jersey, rolled-down socks, and hiking boots; or the romantic, loose-fitting Jacobite shirt; or a simple T-shirt and sneakers, with or without socks. In the end, wherever and however you wear your kilt, you'll be on the receiving end of plenty of admiring attention!

## **Are kilts pleated to the sett or the stripe?**

The repeating pattern in a tartan means that two quite distinct appearances can be had to the rear of a kilt, depending on how it is pleated. Kilts can be pleated either to the sett, so that the tartan pattern is preserved in the pleating, or else to the stripe, so that the same vertical line is centered on each pleat. Traditionally civilian kilts were pleated to the sett, and military to the stripe. But ultimately it is a matter of taste.

## **What is the best material and weight for tartan?**

Tartan for a traditional kilt is always woven in pure new wool. Some shops sell cut-price "kilts", poorly-made from cotton or synthetic fibre mixes, but these are simply rubbish and if you wear one to anything but a party or game you will probably regret it. We offer the world's widest choice of tartans, but only from mills that weave their tartans from pure wool to top quality standards.

Tartans are woven in a range of weights, which are suited to different uses and fall into three broad categories: Light Weight (6-12 oz), Medium Weight (13-14 oz), and Heavy Weight (15-18 ounce). For a kilt, most people choose Medium weight, which gives the ideal balance of warmth, crease-retention, durability, swing, and ease of wear. If you live in a very hot climate, you might prefer a Light Weight fabric; this is cooler to wear, but is likely to need more regular pressing of the creasing at the rear, and may not swing quite so impressively when moving. Or you might choose a Heavy Weight fabric for even greater warmth and durability; these are especially popular amongst the military, and pipe bands.

Other tartan products, such as ladies' skirts or gents' ties, are more commonly made in lighter weight tartans, and perhaps even in tartan silks.

## **Why do colour shades of tartans vary?**

You may well find that the actual colour of a piece of tartan fabrics differs from what you expect (sometimes greatly) compared to what you've seen on a computer display; or compared to the 'same' tartan from a different weaving mill; or even compared to a previous piece from the same source. This is quite normal, for many reasons.

One of our tartan weaving specialists puts it this way: "Tartans are made up of two main ingredients namely the sett [the criss-cross pattern] and the colours. The sett is the main one as if this is not correct a tartan can not be what it purports to be. Colour is secondary because in the old days these would vary with plants for dyeing used and there would be differences within one clan or family."

Even today, just as with any textile such as wallpaper, one batch will never quite match another. Dyes vary and one batch of yarn can be significantly different to the next.

And different weaving mills may also have quite different ideas as to how a particular tartan should look. The 'same' tartan from two mills can be rich and vibrant or subtle and subdued, for example.

As for computer monitors, well these can never display reliably... just look at a range of television sets in the shop side by side, and see how the colours vary! Even how long it has been on (and so how hot it is) can make a big difference. So can lighting conditions in your room.

Several of these factors may even overlap. So if you are making a major purchase such as a kilt and you are concerned with exactly what the colours will be, we strongly advise that you order a fabric swatch from us in advance. When no swatch is available (e.g. for a fabric that has to be woven to order) please enquire for further advice if you are concerned. We will try to give you as much indication as possible as to how actual colours may turn out. But if you commission our highly experienced weavers to produce a length, it is ultimately at your own risk, and we cannot accept responsibility if shades are not as you like or expect

## **So what is in fact worn beneath the kilt?**

The answer to this eternal question is... whatever you like. Many kilt wearers do like to go 'commando', which is fine if you prefer the feeling of freedom. Just be considerate to those of sensitive feelings, particularly when dancing. But it is equally traditional to don underwear or shorts, especially in very active or windswept circumstances.

More important than what you actually do wear is always to have a good answer ready for when asked what is worn, such as the old standby: 'Nothing, it's all in perfect working order!'

## **Do I really need all the accessories to wear a kilt?**

You can look fantastic wearing a kilt with nothing but a T-Shirt and sneakers. In fact sometimes you'll impress even more as you fit the garment into your own wardrobe for your own distinctive look. But if you want to really look the part at a more formal occasion, you'll probably want many or most of the traditional accessories.

## **Do I need to wear a sporran with the kilt?**

Most people would still think that a Traditional 8 yard kilt looks right only when worn with a sporran, quite apart from the practicality it lends to a garment without pockets in giving you somewhere to carry those coins and keys.

## **What are the different kinds of sporrans?**

Instead of pockets as well as to protect the wearer's modesty (especially with light weight tartans) the sporran is a form of purse and is actually useful. Worn from a chain or strap that extends through the loops at the rear of the kilt strap to fasten at the back, hang the sporran about three fingers below your waistcoat or belt, to sit roughly over the groin area. A sporran can range from very plain to extremely ornate, which in the end is mostly a matter of taste.

Sporrans are generally classed into three types. These are the simple and informal "Daywear" sporran; the "Semi-Dress" sporran that is considered suitable for most occasions; and the most ornate "Full Dress" sporran mostly worn only with a formal Prince Charlie evening outfit.

## **What is the Sgian Dubh (or Skean Dhu, etc.)?**

The sgian dubh is a sheath knife about 6" long, traditionally worn in the right sock with the handle showing, though strictly speaking a left-hander could wear his on the left. These blades were once hidden in a pocket under the armpit, but it has become customary to position the sgian dubh more openly as a courtesy. It's only known use today is to cut the Haggis at Burns Suppers.

The name comes from the Gaelic for black (dubh) dagger (sgian) with the blackness referring not only to the hard jet black bog oak from which handles were often made, but also to the covert manner in which the weapon was often concealed (i.e. 'black' as in blackmail or black market). Often hidden in the armpit, the sgian dubh might well be retained for safety when being entertained at a host's home, but kept on more open show such as in the top of the stocking - hence its customary positioning today.

The ornamentation seen here, as well as on other components of traditional Highland Dress, was more than decorative. In a society where banks or other places of safe keeping barely existed and paper money widely distrusted, the embellishment of personal apparel with rare jewels and expensive metals was a practical means to carry wealth on the person... where it could be easily defended.

## **How do I choose a Belt and Buckle?**

These are not strictly needed as the kilt should stay up without it. But a belt and buckle is a traditional part of the Argyll (or similar) styles of outfit. The belt itself can be plain or patterned (such as Celtic knotwork) in brown or black leather. The buckle may be chosen with a motif to match the Sporran and/or Sgian Dubh, such as a Thistle or Celtic design. But note that it is normal to wear no buckle or belt with the Prince Charlie jacket, as the waistcoat (vest) would not lie correctly over it.

## **How and why do I wear the special ghillie brogue shoes?**

Always shiny, ghillie brogues typically have highly decorated leather and can feature metal heels for a loud tap when dancing. Ghillie brogues have no tongue, and have long laces that cross back and forth as they are wrapped up the leg and tied halfway up the calf. To tie the laces, start by crossing the two laces as usual and pull tight. Twist the laces three times. Then pull tight again to produce a vertical thong about one inch long. Pass the laces round behind your ankle, and tie at the outside with the remaining lace and toggle left to dangle.

## **How and why do I wear the special kilt hose socks?**

Kilt Hose are generally thicker than normal socks, so it is wise to allow an extra half size when choosing brogues or shoes to wear with them. Traditionally kilt hose would have been blue or green to tone with the kilt, or even chequered in a pattern to match the wearer's tartan. But recently white or cream coloured hose have become more common, largely due to their popularity with the kilt hire trade. They should be pulled to about 2-3 finger widths beneath the knee cap.

## **How and why do I wear flashes with kilt hose?**

Flashes are brightly colored strips of wool or cotton that hang down from the folds in the kilt hose. They are in effect a decorative garter, that help to hold the hose (socks) up. Bring the hose turnover down to cover half the double loop of the flash with only the bottom half showing, to the outside of the leg.

### **How and why do I wear a kilt pin?**

Ever since Queen Victoria reputedly used her hat pin to secure her kilted skirt modestly on a blustery day, a kilt pin has been worn with a traditional kilt. Its style is entirely a matter of your personal choice. It should be on the right hand side of the kilt, pinned through the front apron only (to prevent tearing) about 4 inches from the bottom of the kilt and 2 inches in from the fringe.

### **Do I need a cap or bonnet?**

A Glengarry or a Balmoral cap is worn by many pipers and others, but whether you wish to wear one is largely a matter of personal taste. The Balmoral is a beret with woollen ball on top and a bow at the back. The Glengarry is more like a U.S. military cap, with two untied ribbons at the back. Both have a patch to one side where an emblem badge (e.g. Lion Rampant or Thistle) or clan crest can be attached. Balmorals and Glengarries are available either plain or with a Diced headband (the red and white checker board pattern at the bottom of the bonnet). The large feather bonnet (sometimes wrongly called a bearskin) is made of ostrich feathers and is worn mainly by Pipers or perhaps Drum Majors.