

SCOTTISH GARB

An information pamphlet for members of the St. Andrew's Society of the Middle South
by
Harrison Gill, 1968

Highland Dress, which originated long before the Battle of Culloden, has continued to develop into what we know today as Scottish Garb. The styles of men's and women's clothing, civilian and military, change from year to year, and this is also true of styles in Scottish national dress. This paper is confined to what is considered proper today (1968) - not what was worn fifty a hundred or two hundred years ago.

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The foundation of all Scottish dress is the wearing of Tartan, a colorful type of weaving, native to Scotland and hundreds of years old. How many tartan designs are there? How old? Nobody knows. Between 1831 and 1850, the first books were published on tartan patterns and by then one authority listed only 55 "genuine" old tartans. In 1938 Robert Bain's new book listed 118. Today (1968) there are over 400 named tartans, and many others only to be found in private and museum collections and old portraits which are not named or woven at all today. Some are very recent, like the Royal Canadian Air Force Tartan, or the four contemporary designs registered by Clan Gayre. Today, any Scot can find a tartan which he may wear without criticism including several District tartans and four general tartans which are not affiliated with any clan, family or area.

TARTAN FOR THE LADIES

Our only concern is with tartan when worn as a mark of Scottish identity: The named tartans to which the wearer has some claim. For this purpose, don't select a tartan because you like the colors or because they match your hair, eyes, or complexion. Your first choice should be the tartan your husband wears because, upon marriage, you become a member of his clan.

Before marriage you wear your father's tartan. If neither your husband nor your father is of a tartan family, then your mother's, perhaps even your grandmother's is not out of place, or one of the general tartans if you are of Scottish descent without any clan affiliation.

For daytime wear, you have a wide choice of scarfs, stoles, shawls and skirts. With a tartan skirt, wear a wool sweater, a tweed or Scottish check jacket. Never, never wear a sporran; they are for men only. If you wish to wear a bonnet, however, they can be the same as the men wear.

For the evening there are some rules which should be observed when wearing a sash and brooch. The sash may be worn bandolier fashion with the ends crossing on the right shoulder and fastened with a brooch, or merely by fastening to the right shoulder with one end in front and the other behind without being carried across the chest and back. The brooch may be of any Scottish silver design, with or without semi-precious stones or pebbles. It may be a clan or personal crestbadge.

There are a few exceptions to these rules. The sash is fastened with a brooch to the shoulder only by the wives of hereditary clan chiefs and chieftains, the wives of colonels of Highland regiments and ladies who are chiefs themselves. Married women of Scottish descent, whose husbands have no clan affiliation, should wear a sash of their father's tartan, fastened with a brooch on the right shoulder, but with the ends knotted and hanging on the left hip rather than straight down from the shoulder.

SCOTTISH GARB FOR GENTLEMEN

There are a few pointers to remember. All of these are not absolute but represent the accepted custom for proper dress today (1968).

For day wear with the kilt

Hose should be of a solid color - not clan or diced, except with a band or piper's uniform. Wear wool garter flashes in any color, and the Sgian Dubh on the right leg. A modern, popular custom is to wear a Highland bone or horn handled sgian, rather than the traditional black one. A kilt pin for day wear should be the ancient Celtic "blanket" pin, which was invented thousands of years ago; but more ornamental pins are not out of order. The sporran should be plain leather or fur without a metal frame. Occasionally, an evening type sporran is worn before dark, but only at semi-formal daytime gatherings.

The jacket should be tailored to the proper length (the line where the kilt pleating starts), not a sport coat, blazer or ordinary tweed coat. The jacket may be very simple, or with military shoulder straps, cuff and pockets. The buttons should be horn, the material a plain tweed or Scottish check, but not a check associated with a specific family, club, or regiment, unless the wearer is entitled to it. A vest of the same material as the jacket is proper, or a knitted sweater in place of a vest, or a jacket without a vest on warm days, and a sweater without a jacket on very informal occasions.

The tie is preferably in a solid color. Tartan ties should only be worn with a tweed suit and not with kilts, and tartan bow ties never.

The bonnet may be either Glengarry type or Balmoral, with or without a diced band. Usually the color is dark blue, but the bonnet can be in any color or a tartan, but tartan Balmorals are not considered to be in good taste. The bonnet should always be worn with a badge or brooch; a proper clan or regimental badge if entitled to one; otherwise, a general Scottish badge with St. Andrew cross, thistle or cairngorm. Individuals who have a personal coat of arms registered at Lyon Court may wear their personal crest badge with motto in a circle without the belt and buckle design. With the crest badge a sprig of the clan badge plant may be worn if the clan has one. Pipers and drummers wear ornamental feathers. Feathers of rank may be small silver attachments to the crest badge, or they may be natural eagle feathers. Three feathers are worn by recognized clan chiefs; two by sept and sub-clan chieftains, and one by a duine uasail, who is a gentleman with his own Scottish coat-of-arms and who is the head of his immediate family. Scottish custom dictates only black shoes when the kilt is worn.

Gentlemen's Evening Wear (only after sunset)

The kilt may be the same tartan as for day wear or it may be a clan dress tartan. The hose should be "full clan" or diced, shoes black, with silver buckles if desired. A decorative kilt pin sgian dubh, more elaborate wool or silk flashes than for day wear, and an evening type sporran, usually seal skin and silver mounted, are all correct.

The jacket, may be anyone of several types:

1. **Prince Charlie Coatee**: This was developed from civilian "full dress" but with short tails, silver buttons and ornamental cuffs. It is usually worn with a black or red full dress evening vest, a starched or pleated shirt, turn-over collar, and a black bow tie. A few individualists wear a white tie and wing collar and white vest, but they are in the minority. This was the most popular and almost the only evening coat worn with Highland Dress during the Victorian era. All other types are more recent revivals and are becoming more and more popular in Scotland.

2. **The Standard Doublet** is almost the same as the Prince Charlie but has side flaps to carry the line of the " tails" around the hips.

3. **The Montrose Double** buttons up to the neck and is worn with a jabot and optional lace cuffs. It tucks into the kilt with a wide leather dirk belt to cover the juncture. It may be single or double breasted.

4. **The Morar Doublet** is a variation of the Montrose but has flaps below the belt on the outside of the kilt.

5. **The Sheriffmuir Coat** has some similarity to the Standard Doublet, but without lapels and is worn with a jabot.

The Prince Charlie Coatee and Standard Doublet are black. The others may be black or of colored velvet, and the Sheriffmuir can be of tartan cloth or at least the vest of tartan.

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One writer suggests several additional types of Highland Dress, but few Americans will be interested:

1. Court Dress, prescribed and required by the Lord Chamberlain for Court functions at Holyrood or Buckingham palaces.
2. Morning Dress (a formal type of day-dress)
3. Day Dress (described above)
4. Hunting Dress (very similar to, and exchangeable with, Day Dress)
5. Informal Evening (to be worn when a Tuxedo would be correct. It is similar to Morning Dress but with a black bow tie.)
6. Formal Evening (described above)

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The plaid with shoulder brooch was customary wear fifty years ago and optional today. One type is the large full plaid worn by pipe bands. The other is the short-belted plaid, fastened to the waist behind and hanging over the left shoulder. It may still be worn with evening dress but its use is dying out.

For day wear, a large plaid, folded and carried on the left shoulder without a brooch, has become popular in recent years. They are usually worn by chiefs and heads of families but can be carried by any Scot and occasionally in a different tartan from that of the kilt.

Walking sticks are quite proper for daytime wear. They may be normal size or long. The long Cromaq, or Highland Shepherds Crook, with ram's horn handle is often carried by chiefs and heads of families. The wood may be black thorn, hazel or other Scottish wood suitable for a crook.

The Dirk belt is becoming popular all over Scotland for day as well as evening wear. It is wide and has a large ornamental silver buckle, but the dirk itself is only worn on formal and semi-formal occasions.

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Members of the St. Andrew's Society may care to encourage the wearing of miniature medals with formal evening wear, but never with daytime clothes. These medals add to the colorful appearance of Scottish garb and are perfectly proper if worn correctly by those entitled to them. They should be on a

single bar on the left breast, about four inches below the shoulder, and may extend over the lapel on coats which have lapels.

Anyone who has served with the armed forces in time of war, national emergency, or on campaigns will have one or more service medals, possibly a decoration or two, or a foreign medal or decoration. Most patriotic and hereditary societies have miniature medals, as well as various orders and other societies with heraldic, military, or feudal connotations. Never wear the full-size medals in the evening, unless they are authorized to be worn on neck ribbons as a token of rank.

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For further information consult:

"Tartans and Highland Dress" by McKinnon of Dunakin
William Collins Son & Co., Ltd., Glasgow & London, 1961

"Clans & Tartans of Scotland" by Stuart Maxwell and Robert Hutchinson
Adams & Charles Black, London, 1958

"The Tartans of the Clans & Families of Scotland" by Sir Thomas Innes of Learney
W. and A. K. Johnston & G. W. Bacon, Ltd., Edinburgh & London

Scottish Tartans Information Center. Old Tolbooth, Stirling, Scotland