

The Fettle

A Newsletter Dedicated to the Macpherson Bairns

Wow! Where has the time gone? It is hard to believe that this is the last issue of the Fettle for 2009. As I write this, Halloween is over. Veterans' Day is around the corner. Thanksgiving is a few weeks away. In this issue, we will be covering the various holidays and as promised the subject about Morag.

HALLOWEEN

The history of Halloween in Scotland begins with the ancient Celtic religious celebration of Samhain (summer's end). One of the two greatest annual Druidic festivals (Beltane is the other); Samhain marked the end of the light half of the year and the beginning of the dark half.

Samhain is the Celtic New Year celebration. Beginning on the evening of October 31 (the Celts counted their days from sunset to sunset, just as the bible does); the festival would last three days (perhaps longer).

As with other holidays of the Celtic year, October 31 marked a mystical time when the usual barriers between our world and the Otherworld thinned and stretched allowing contact between human beings and the fairy folk and/or the spirits of the dead.

Many of the celebratory elements, such as playing pranks, originated in the notion that at this time the world was turned inside out prompting people to act with abandon against the usual social strictures.

Fire is a central element in all the Celtic celebrations. All hearth fires were put out and new fires lit from the great bonfires. In Scotland, men lit torches in the bonfires and circled their homes and lands with them to obtain protection for the coming year.

Later, Christian elements came into play, as All Hallows' Day (all Saints' Day) and All Souls' Day contributed their own unique traditions to the core, such as trick or treating (collecting "soul cakes" on All Souls' Day) and dressing up in frightening costumes as protection against evil spirits.

At no time, either in the Celtic religion or in the Christian was Halloween history connected with the devil or devil worship. Modern Satanists have appropriated a holiday that is not their own.

Once Halloween (name corrupted from All Hallows' Eve) came to America from Ireland and Scotland, other cultures have added their own elements to the modern American celebration - vampire lore, werewolves, etc.

Sheep Halloween Costume

Little babies and/or small children are so cute! I guess that why parents like to dress them up for Halloween as little pumpkins, etc. They are also as cute as fuzzy and furry animals. Here is a costume for infants, toddlers, and children of all ages.

- 1 white hooded sweat suit
- Cotton batting or stuffing from a pillow
- 2 white or black felt triangles for ears
- Double sided tape
- 2 pairs of white or black socks

Apply strips of double sided tape up and down the sweat suit. Attach cotton batting in clumps by pressing onto the tape. For the ears, cut two triangles from either black or white felt. These will need to be hand-sew or hot glue onto the hood. Keep in mind that hand-sewing will make the ears easily removable so you can reuse the sweat suit after Halloween! Have child wear one pair of white socks on hands and one pair on feet (use black socks if you used black felt to the ears).

If Mom, Dad and/or another grown-up has taken your picture in your Halloween costume, please send a copy to Linda Ryan. It would be a great addition to the next issue of the Fettle.

VETERANS DAY

November 11, 2009 (11/11/09) is the 91st anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended World War I.

Yes, Scotland celebrates the signing of the armistice. They call this holiday "Remembrance Day." They like to keep traditions going. The treaty was signed on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. So the Scotland County Veteran's Council will hold their annual Veterans Day Ceremony at 11 a.m. at the Clinton V. Willis National Guard Armory at 1520 S. Main St., Laurinburg, according to Jimmy Bennett, president of the organization. "It was scheduled to be at Legion Park, but due to the weather, we moved it to the National Guard armory," Bennett said.

Yet, it hasn't been until recently that they now have their own "Veteran's Day". In 2008, Scotland's oldest war veteran called for all the country's soldiers to be properly honored. He is Colonel Frank Saunders, who at the age of 101 in 2008, spoke out as he helped to launch Scotland's Veterans Day. It was passed and will take place on July 12.

Scotland's Veterans Day celebrations will actually take place over the weekend of July 11-13. The events, centered in Stirling, will include exhibitions, music, a procession of pipe bands and a RAF fly-past.

There will be a reception for veterans at the Scottish Parliament, parades in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh and smaller events elsewhere.

Here in the United States; U.S President Woodrow Wilson first proclaimed November 11, 1919 as Armistice Day - "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day." Armistice Day was the anniversary of the symbolic end of World War I.

In 1953, a shoe store owner from Emporia, Kansas had the idea to expand Armistice Day to celebrate all veterans, not just those who served in World War I. The store owner had been actively involved with the American War Dads during World War II. The Emporia Chamber of Commerce took up the cause after determining that 90 percent of Emporia merchants, as well as the Board of Education, supported closing their doors in support of the holiday. In 1954, Congress voted to change Armistice Day to Veterans Day. Veterans Day is now an annual holiday honoring all military veterans.

This is not only a day to remember the sacrifices and celebrate the achievements of the men and women who served in our armed forces. It is a day to reflect upon a quote predating to World War I and the resulting Armistice Day: "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," George Santana. Our military veterans have given themselves to preserve the future of liberty and freedom. It is through their actions that we sustain the values Americans hold dear. Their service to a cause greater than themselves deserves our recognition, praise and most definitely thanks. Please join me in celebrating the birth, history and continued celebration of a day dedicated to remembering and respecting those who have served to ensure our continued rights and freedom.

Do you have a veteran in your family? It can be someone who has served in a prior war such as WWII. Better yet, how about someone who is actually serving our country at this time. Yes, those who are fighting now in Iraq and Afghanistan are Veterans. Send a picture with

their name and how they are related to you. Please send it to Linda Ryan so we use them in the next Fettle.

THANKSGIVING

Scotland does not celebrate "Thanksgiving". These are just regular days to them. This is a USA holiday for when the Pilgrims settling in America.

This is a time when Americans stop and count the many blessings that we have. You could say it is a celebration of family and home. For a majority of families Thanksgiving is the only time when all members of a family can gather together. Halloween is known as the time of obtaining and eating the most candy at any time of the year. People eat more food on Thanksgiving than at any other time of the year.

Most people will state that 1621 was when the Pilgrims (English settlers in America) gathered their crops, they celebrated the first Thanksgiving. They thanked their God for the success of the harvest. Historians will state there is evidence that settlers in other parts of America held earlier Thanksgiving celebrations yet the Pilgrims story is the most popular.

The Pilgrims fled oppression in England as religious dissidents. Their first stop was to the Netherlands, and then left that country to establish a colony in North America. They landed in 1620 in what is now known as Plymouth, Massachusetts. The boats/ships which they travel do not compare to what we have now. These boats made the trip across the Atlantic Ocean very difficult. Their first months here in America were difficult as well. When they arrived as autumn was turning to winter, they did not have hotels, restaurants and/or groceries stores like we have. They had to build their homes and gather food to spend winter here.

When spring finally arrived, the Pilgrims began planting crops. A Native American Indian named Squanto helped them. When summer ended, the Pilgrims had a good harvest. Corn and barley was good but some vegetables were grown poorly. Yet, they have enough food to get them through the upcoming winter.

These Pilgrims decided to celebrate in order to give thanks for their harvest. The Indian tribe which lived close by was invited to participate. They spent three (3) days celebrating.

Thanksgiving celebrations were held in many towns and settlements from that point onward. Finally, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared the 4th Thursday in November as a national holiday of Thanksgiving. If you remember your history, the USA was fighting a civil

war at the time. President Lincoln liked the idea of having a Thanksgiving holiday which would celebrate national unity. Since then, the USA has continued to celebrate Thanksgiving.

SAINT ANDREW'S DAY

Saint Andrew's Day is on November 30 and like Robert Burns Day, is another distinct day for serving the haggis. Saint Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. He is also the patron saint of Romania, Greece and Russia. Saint Andrew was one of the twelve Apostles (disciples of Jesus) and a brother of Saint Peter. This makes Scotland one of the few countries to have one of Christ's disciples as their patron saint.

Saint Andrew's Day is a day to celebrate Scottish culture, food and dance. It is also a bank holiday in Scotland. Yet the different employers choose whether to close their banks or to leave them open on this date

Saint Andrew's Day is connected with Advent, which begins on the first Sunday after November 26. It also marks the beginning of Scotland's winter festivals.

Saint Andrew is believed to have died on a diagonally transverse cross which the Romans sometimes used for executions and which therefore came to be called Saint Andrew's Cross. Saint Andrew did not feel worthy of being crucified in the same way as Jesus Christ so he asked for it to be different.

Andrew's flag is the flag of Scotland. The flag is in the form of a white X on a blue background and is commonly known as "The Saltire".

CHRISTMAS

During the middle ages, Scotland celebrated Christmas just like the other Celtic countries – a wonderful combination of celebrating the "Christ's Mass" in the Catholic tradition combined with Celtic customs and traditions that are familiar to us Americans from England and Ireland.

For an example: We hang mistletoe in our homes. If someone stands under it, we give them a kiss. The Scots decorated their homes with mistletoe and juniper. We all created and perform skits, prepare and eat special foods. The Scots carefully prepare a Yule log (a tradition that Scots still maintain and will call Christmas itself "Yule".)

How did they come about that the Scots celebrate New Year's so much more heartily than Christmas? Unfortunately, in the late 1500's, the Scottish Reformation took a strong stand against pagan (e.g., Catholic) celebrations and abolished Christmas. This is not a joke! Christmas was abolished for four hundred (400) years. The Scots were

not allowed a day off from work for the holiday until almost 1960. The Scots who did celebrate Christmas, it was handled as a private matter with just the family.

The Scots are brave warriors but they also like to have their parties. Like all of us, they want to have fun. So due to Christmas being abolished, they changed the date of New Year's from March 25 to January 1 and began celebrating Hogmanay.

HOGMANAY

Hogmanay is the same as New Year's Eve to us. The original midwinter celebrations were based on fire rituals of the pagan times (such as the Yule log). Many Scots remained Catholic (especially in the highlands). They simply transferred the majority of their Christmas celebrations to the New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Hogmanay is a two (2) day event. People have January 1 and 2 off as a holiday. They are spent filled with all kinds of festivals, parties, and bonfire plus fireworks. In many parts of Scotland, a midnight mass is still celebrated on New Year's Eve. I've been told that if you wish to experience a Hogmanay – go to Edinburgh. They are suppose to have a festival which lasts for days and one of the most spectacular fireworks display in the world.

The Scots had a tremendous influence on our own New Year's Eve celebrations here in the USA. We both sing Auld Lang Syne. Did you know that our New Year's resolutions also come from Scotland? Yes! It's true! I've been told that guests are asked to BYOB "Bring your own bottle" when it comes to drinking Whisky. Why? The Scots have a custom called "first footing" which consists of a dark man (some say handsome young man) being the first to cross the threshold as soon as the "bells ring" at midnight. The man bears gifts of bread or meat (food for the New Year), coal (warmth for the New Year), and, what else? Whisky - drink for the New Year and it's been stated as being the most important and consistently unforgotten contribution.

As always, there will be those who drink too much and will wake up the next day with a hangover. Yet, there are those (I hope you are one) that can celebrate and can handle things with a sense of responsibility. Remember the phrase "Don't Drink & Drive".

ROBERT BURNS DAY

In Scotland, on January 25 – they celebrate Robert Burns' birthday. He is considered to be their national poet.

Robert Burns was born on January 25, 1759 to a family of a peasant farmer in southwest Scotland. He took up farming at a young age but was not successful. He started writing poems for the local area. Soon, when in a small town of Kilmarnock, he had them published into a book. Copies of these Kilmarnock books reached Edinburgh and those with higher education were impressed with his work. If you read his poems, they are short, lyrical pieces but they became a hit in Scotland.

He is actually the best known among all of Scotland's poets. He has been admired for having spoken in the manner of the common person and his native lyrical understanding. His poems celebrate the pride of the self-reliant man and woman, the enjoyment of sociable drinking and the natural love between a man and a woman.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, Robert Burns combined romantic tradition of poets such as James Thomson and William Shenstone with the Scottish native custom of Robert Fergusson and Allan Ramsay to provide some of the finest lyrics known to English literature.



Howard Parson addresses the haggis at the US Branch 2009 Annual General Meeting. Stuart H. MacPherson, the sword bearer, looks on. Xerxes Herrington, guards the whiskey that will be drunk by the piper and the chef.

One of his many poems is one called "To a Haggis" in which he describes the dish as that "Great chieftain O' the puddin'-race." So naturally haggis must be served at the party. I have not tasted Haggis personally. I have been told Haggis tastes slightly like hash but I wouldn't know if that was true because I've never eaten it. Haggis is made from the heart, liver and lungs of a sheep. These organs are finely chopped and mixed with toasted oatmeal, onions and seasonings. Then everything is boiled in a bag made

from the sheep's stomach. Sound yummy. To some "yes". To others -"ugh!"

While the haggis is ready to be served, a man marches

into the dining room playing a bagpipe. Behind him comes another man, elegantly carrying the haggis on a tray. The appearance of the famed pudding causes the crowd to cheer. Saint Andrew's Day is on November 30 and is another distinct day for serving the haggis. Saint Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland.

There is nothing set on exactly how this celebration feast is to be done. Each has its own unique style and various to the individual tastes of your guests in regards to the makeup of the feast. The host or some of the guests may read some Burns poems and tell stories. Yes, even true ghost stories. Some may enjoy giving a toast after the whisky is served.

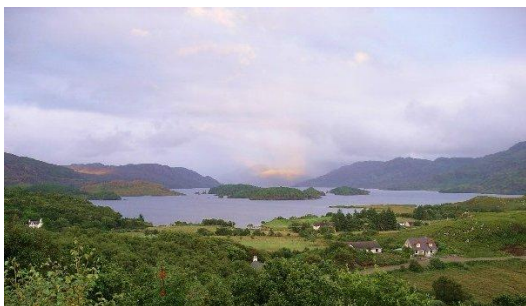
Some of the traditional dishes that will be served are:

Haggis (it's considered to be a tasty treat among the Scots), Neeps (Turnips) and Tatties (Potatoes)

With a little planning ahead, anyone can enjoy a Burns Night holiday. You will need to have a home and/or hotel room large enough room for good friends and family plus also a master of ceremonies (for the haggis) and several bottles of good Scotch to drink. Make sure there is enough haggis and neeps to go around the table. Having an evening of enjoyment listening to poems and storytelling along with good food among friends is a fine way to do honor to a well-remembered poet of Scotland.

MORAG

Linda had written about "Nessie", the Loch Ness Monster. What many people do not know is that Nessie is not alone. She has a sister called Morag.



A view of Loch Morar. Like most Scottish deep lochs it was formed by a glacier.

Morag (the monster) lives in Loch Morar. Morag lives in a completely separate Loch and not in the same one with Nessie. According to the article mentioned above, Morag's Loch is located around 70 miles to the southwest of Loch Ness. It is separated from the sea by only a quarter of a mile and much smaller than Loch Ness. It is eleven (11) miles long by around one and a half (1 ½) miles wide.

Do not let the size of water fool you. People around the area will say that if someone would drown in the cold water, their body would never be found. There are some living in the area that have seen "Morag" like those who have seen Nessie. These few sightings of "Morag" could explain the reason why.

According to the same article, they stated that large bones were discovered from a spot near the center of the loch. At first, they were thought to be the bones of Morag (or another of her relatives). After an investigation, it was discovered to be from a deer. The only way for that to occur is the deer had to come down to the lake for a drink. Yet, how could the deer bones move towards the center of the Loch. Was it snatched from the bank by Morag?

The number of sightings are few, and photographs are rarer still. This is partly due to the situation of the loch. It is far more remote than Loch Ness with only a small single track road for access at one side. The tourist industry has not capitalized on Morag in the same way they have with Nessie. Therefore; less people at the loch lead to fewer sightings.

There is a long tradition that something resided in the loch, recorded sightings only began in the 1800s and have numbered around 30-40. However; many of these sightings had multiple witnesses.

From the sightings so far, the creature does appear very similar to Nessie. It has a small head, long neck and large body similar to a plesiosaur but with the ability to raise its head out of the water. A sighting in 1968 by John MacVarish, barman at the Morar Hotel confirms this:

"I saw this thing coming. I thought it was a man standing in a boat but as it got nearer I saw it was something coming out of the water. I tried to get up close to it with the outboard out of the water and what I saw was a long neck five or six feet out of the water with a small head on it, dark in color, coming quite slowly down the loch. When I got to about 300 yards of it, it turned off into the deep and just settled down slowly into the loch out of sight. The neck was about one and a half feet in diameter and tapered up to between ten inches and a foot. I never saw any features, no eyes or anything like that. It was a snake like head, very small compared to the size of the neck-flattish, a flat type of head. It seemed to have very smooth skin but at 300 yards it's difficult to tell. It was very dark, nearly black. It was 10am, dead calm, no wind, brilliant sunshine. I saw it for about ten minutes travelling very slowly: it didn't alter its angle to the water. It looked as if it was paddling itself along. There was very little movement from the water, just a small streak from the neck. I couldn't really see what was propelling it but I think it was something at the sides rather than behind it."

The number of encounters was such that the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau expanded its search to include Loch Morar in February of 1970. Several studies have been undertaken, however she is a far more elusive creature than her sister and very little evidence has been recorded by the teams, nevertheless the eyewitness accounts exist; from small boys on holiday from Yorkshire up to Sir John Hope (Lord Glendevon) a privy councilor and undersecretary of state for Scotland.

So how did Morag come to find her way into the loch? Well as many theories exist as there are sightings. If her ancestors came into the loch from the sea this would have been possible as sea levels were high enough at times for the loch to have been easily reached from the sea. There is also a theory that some mysterious underground tunnel exists between Loch Ness and Loch Morar since both lie on the same geological fault line known as the Great Glen. It could be that Morag and Nessie are one and the same or at least they pop up and down to visit for tea and a chat now and again. Maybe swapping stories about how many fishermen they've had 'keech their breeks' that week!

Other Scottish Lochs are also said to harbor strange creatures: Among these are Loch Lochy, Loch Arkaig, Loch Oich, Loch Linnhe, Loch Quoich, and Loch Shiel. Although Nessie is by far and away our most famous 'beastie' - Morag deserves recognition too. Just remember the next time you plan a wee paddle while on holiday in the highlands in the crystal clear loch you have just discovered, that might not just be a few wee fishes nibbling your toes!

Invitation From the Editor

As always, we want your participation in *The Fettle*. If you know a Scottish tale, or have information on the crest or heraldry of the clan, please tell us about it. If you know a joke, have a favorite game site, please send it in. You can write a story, an article, tell us about yourself and your awards, skills, or participation in anything Scottish. Thanks for your help in making this a publication that serves you.

Electronic Fettle

If you prefer to receive the Fettle electronically, please send your email address to George McPherson at: georgemcphrsn@aol.com.

Thanks and Sources

Thanks to Norma Bierens for her contribution to this issue of *The Fettle*.