

British set about building roadways into the Highlands. Their objectives were to keep the Highlanders employed and too occupied to start another rebellion and to allow for the rapid deployment of British soldiers should the first objective fail.

One of the first road builders was a Quaker ironmaster from Lancashire, who in 1727 established an iron foundry at Invergarry, near Inverness. He soon realized that whatever advantages the kilt had when worn by men in their normal Highland pursuits, it was hardly



the thing in which to fell trees and stoke furnaces. So he commissioned a local regimental tailor to adapt the men's traditional dress to make it more suitable for manual labour. This

tailor created the modern kit by separating the bottom half of the kilt and sewing the pleats to hold them in place. The invention caught on and by 1745 the modern kilt was very popular.

In the aftermath of the Rebellion of 1745 came the Acts of Disarming and Proscription of 1747. Like the Penal Laws of Ireland, these Acts were designed to destroy a culture. According to these new laws, it was illegal to wear Highland clothing, including kilts, sporrans, and any tartan material. It

was also illegal for clansmen to arm themselves, play the bagpipes, and teach the Gaelic language to their children. By 1782, when the Acts were lifted, a generation of Scots had past that knew little of their former culture. It wasn't until the early 1800's that interest in Scottish culture cropped up again. Ironically, the survival of the culture and dress depended heavily on foreigners, especially the British Army. During the years the Acts were in force, soldiers in the Highland Regiments proudly wore the modern kilt. This opportunity allowed British tailors to shape into their mold what is now called Highland dress.

### Murray Tartans

There are a number of Murray tartans, but only four are generally available today (listed in the order in which they appear in this tri-fold): Murray of Atholl (ancient) Murray of Atholl (modern), Murray of Elibank, and Murray of Tullibardine. The ancient tartans have the same warp and weft as the modern versions, but the colors appear less vibrant, or more faded and washed out. This is an attempt by the weaver's to imitate use of colors thought to have been achieved by using ancient plant dyes.

# Murray Clan Society

## Tartans

The first two sections are adapted from the Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia<sup>1</sup> and Scotland and Her Tartans<sup>2</sup>.

### The Highland Plaid

Anciently, the standard outer garment for Highland men was the *lein-croich*, a kind of saffron (yellow)-dyed shirt whose tails came down below the knee, and made



from as much as nine metres of pleated linen. This in time gave way to the *féileadh-breacan* or *féileadh-mór* (belted plaid, big wrap, or great kilt), whose name perfectly describes the normal Highland dress for men during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The plaid was a huge blanket of woven

<sup>1</sup> Way of Pleas, George and Squire, Romilly. Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia. Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Fulton, Alexander. Scotland and Her Tartans. New York: Gallery Books, 1991.

wool, a double-width (about two metres) in breadth and between four and six metres long. After belting it on, the wearer would sometimes drape the top half around his torso or sometimes over his head, according to his whim or the weather. The legs were kept bare for in moorland bogs and generally oozy terrain of the Highlands, bare legs were an essential contribution to health. After all, wet clothing could not be dried with any certainty or regularity in the damp and draughty conditions of even the finest homes.

The wool from which the plaid was made was woven in either a striped or tartan (checked) pattern. Its close weave was midge (gnat)-proof and moderately water-proof, and the plaid served as a blanket out in the open at night, as well as a convenient garment to wear by day.



Tartan patterns, or setts, were created by the interweaving at right angles of the same sequence and proportions of coloured thread. In the majority of tartans this

sequence is one which can be repeated back and forth in either direction between two pivot points, which can then be reproduced by multiplying each number to achieve the required scale.

Originally, the different tartan setts meant very little. People could tell what area of Scotland you were from by the shade of the dyes that were used in your clothing. This gave rise to the "great tartan myth" that people of the same clan wore the same tartan. The truth is that weavers in a particular area would often only have the resources or patience to weave one or two tartans, thus all their customers wore a similar tartan.



The connection between tartans and the clans with which they are associated is a fairly recent occurrence. In fact, portraits of chiefs and lairds from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show the tartan in a number of different setts and that none of them equate to the respective clan patterns of today. However, early in the nineteenth century the chiefs of the clans began to register, under their own names, tartans that were thought to be associated with the areas from which their clans came. Of course, by that time much had been forgotten and disagreements about which tartans should fall under whose names raged then, and continue to this day.

Interest in the tartan industry was rekindled in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, mainly by

the Allen brothers<sup>3</sup>. They published some of the first tartan books that identified tartans for specific clans. Most of these tartans, it was later found, had been created for these books. By that time the chiefs of the clans had accepted the idea of using tartan as a means of identification. In 1822, with the first royal visit to Scotland in decades, Britain's King George IV made quite a show of it when he traveled to the Highlands wearing a kilt which he was "reliably informed" was the native dress. After that, the re-culturalization of Scotland could not be stopped. The myths grew, fed by the writings of Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and Robert Louis Stevenson. It is from these images that much of modern Scottish culture is based.

## The Modern Kilt

The suggestion that the modern kilt, also known as the *féileadh-beag* (little kilt), was invented by an Englishman may be unsettling to many Scottish traditionalists. The background to this particular version takes place in the aftermath of the Rebellion of 1715 and the abortive mini-rebellion in 1719. As a means of averting further unrest, the

<sup>3</sup> Though the Allen's were of sound English stock, between about 1820 and 1840 they changed their name successively to the more Scottish Allan, then to Hay Allan, and to Hay, finally calling themselves, respectively, John Sobieski Stuart (John Sobieski had been King of Poland and was the grandfather of Bonnie Prince Charlie's mother, Clementina Sobieski) and Charles Edward Stuart.