



Vikings leading the Hogmanay Torchlight Parade, Edinburgh

Scottish Heritage USA

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HAPPY NEW YEAR & HAPPY HOGMANAY!

HOGMANAY may be Scotland's New Year celebration, but it lasts three to five days with unusual, weird and wild traditions. It starts on Christmas with the Edinburgh Torchlight Parade and is all downhill from there! Look to Scotland to find the best, most spectacular fire festivals in the UK. Combine the primitive impulse to light up the long nights (*the ancient idea that fire purifies and chases away evil spirits*) and the natural Scottish impulse to party to the wee small hours and you end up with some of the most dazzling and daring midwinter celebrations in Europe. At one time, most Scottish towns celebrated the New Year with huge bonfires and torchlight processions. Many have disappeared, but those that are left are real humdingers. Here are the five of the best winter fire festivals in Scotland:

STONEHAVEN FIRE FESTIVAL: Strong Scots dare-devils parade through the town on New Year's Eve swinging 16-pound balls of fire around themselves and over their heads. Each "swinger" has his or her own secret recipe for creating the fireball and keeping it lit. Thousands come to watch this famous event on the North Sea, south of Aberdeen. It all gets underway before midnight with bands of pipers and wild drumming. Then a lone piper, playing Scotland the Brave, leads the pipers into town. At the stroke of midnight, they raise their flaming balls over their heads and begin to swing and twirl them, showering the street, themselves and usually the 12,000 strong crowd, with sparks.

THE BURNING OF THE CLAVIE: This bizarre ritual, on a spit of land at the edge of Moray Firth, involves a flaming, tar barrel (*a clavie*), filled with wood shavings, tar and barrel staves, nailed to a post and marched around the town of Burghead, Scotland before being ignited by one of the town's oldest residents with smoldering peat from his own fire. As it makes its circuit, smoldering embers are sometimes presented to householders to ignite their own fires. It then becomes the basis of an even bigger, beacon fire on a hill at an ancient Pictish stone altar. When it finally breaks up, scattering embers across the hill, locals scramble to catch a smoldering bit to start their first hearth fire of the New Year. The origins could be Pictish, Celtic or Roman - nobody really knows.

UP HELLY AA: Costumed, torch carrying "Vikings" spend all day parading a Viking galley through Lerwick, Shetland's main port. There is a great deal of rowdy, Viking singing and then, at the sea, the torchbearers throw their torches into the ship and set it ablaze. The Viking festival goes on for about 24 hours. If you can't make it to Shetland on the last Tuesday in January, you might meet up with the Up Helly Aa Vikings a bit earlier in Edinburgh (*see picture in masthead*), where they usually lead that city's torchlight parade for Edinburgh Hogmanay. While Up Helly Aa has all the earmarks of an ancient Viking orgy, it's actually a relatively modern innovation, dating from the 1880s.



Stonehaven Fire Festival

Photo Credit: Christopher Furlong-Getty Images

Continued on page two: Hogmanay

HOGMANAY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

THE BIGGAR BONFIRE: The huge New Year's Eve bonfire in the center of this South Lanarkshire town has been going on for hundreds of years. There is a torchlight parade, pipers and drummers and an annual ritual with the town's oldest resident lighting the fire. What makes this event special (*and especially terrifying*) is that while bonfires elsewhere are lit in open fields or at the top of empty hills, this huge bonfire is lit in the middle of the town's high street, surrounded by homes and shops. Despite that, it is a family affair with all ages taking part.

THE COMRIE FLAMBEAUX PROCESSION: Like something out of a horror movie, the townsfolk of this Perthshire town set fully grown birch trees, wrapped in hessian and soaked for weeks in paraffin and tar, aflame. They march the eight huge torches around the town before throwing them

into a river with their cargo of a year's worth of evil spirits. Flames leap as high as ten feet above the tree torches themselves.

Why this big national party is called Hogmanay is anybody's guess. The word itself has been around since at least 1604 when it first appeared in written records. But many of the traditions are much older.



Biggar Bonfire

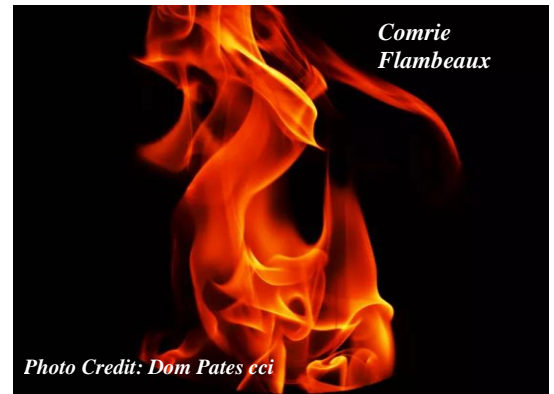
Photo Credit: Kathy Collins Getty Images

Story courtesy of the Daily Record



Burning of the Clavie

Photo Credit: Jeff J. Mitchell-Getty Images



Comrie Flambeaux

Photo Credit: Dom Pates eci

1,000-YEAR-OLD CROSS BURIED IN SCOTTISH FIELD

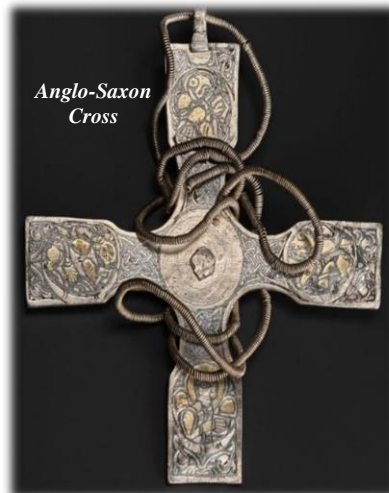
A spectacular Anglo-Saxon cross has emerged from beneath 1,000 years of encrusted dirt. The quality is such that whoever commissioned this treasure may have been a high-standing cleric or even a king!

It was first unearthed by a metal detectorist in 2014 from a ploughed field in western Scotland as part of the Galloway Hoard, the richest collection of rare and unique Viking-age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland. It was acquired by the National Museums Scotland in 2017.

The tiniest glimpses of its gold-leaf decoration could be spotted through its grubby exterior, but its stunning, intricate design had been concealed until recently. A supreme example of Anglo-Saxon metalwork has been revealed. The cross was created by a goldsmith of outstanding skill and artistry.

The Galloway Hoard, over 100 pieces of gold and silver items, was buried in the late 9th century in Dumfries and Galloway.

The pectoral cross has survived with its



Anglo-Saxon Cross



Galloway Hoard *Cross*

intricate spiral chain, which shows that the cross was actually worn. Dr. Leslie Webster, former keeper of Britain, Prehistory and Europe at the British Museum, said: "It is a unique survival of high-status Anglo Saxon ecclesiastical metalwork from a period when - in part, thanks to the Viking raids - so much has been lost."

Why the hoard was buried remains a mystery. The cross now raises many more questions and research continues.

The Hoard will be exhibited at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh from 19 February – 9 May 2021 before touring to Kirkcubright, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Story courtesy of "The Guardian"

RECIPE CORNER

QUICK, SUPER EASY, SHORTBREAD FINGERS

1/2 cup sugar
1 stick butter
1 1/2 cups self-rising Flour

Soften butter. Cream with sugar til white. Add flour slowly - mixture will be sticky. Divide into two balls, and press/roll out onto a baking sheet till you have two strips about 9x4 inches and about 1/4 inch thick. Prick all over with a fork and decorate using the rounded edge of a potato peeler pointing outward to create a scallop effect around the edges.

Bake at 350 for 10-15 minutes. *(I like to take it out while it's still very soft).* Slice crosswise into fingers while it is still warm. Sprinkle with sugar. Cool on a wire rack...and see how long you can resist tasting one!

Recipe courtesy of Caroline Kelly



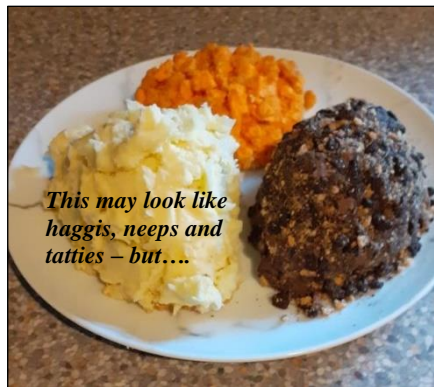
The Board of Scottish Heritage USA sends all our members our very best wishes for the Holidays especially during these exceptional times.

We thank you for your continued support.

Let us hope that 2021 will be a better year for all of us!

A SWEET SURPRISE!

A Scots “mum” served her family haggis, neeps and tatties for dinner, but they were in for a sweet surprise. Yvonne Cadden dished up the age-old traditional Scottish “fayre” for her husband and sons, who found it was not all as it seems. The ‘dinner’ was actually an elaborate illusion cake, so rather than savory mashed potatoes, turnips and haggis, the family tucked into chocolate and vanilla sponge cake with buttercream filling!



This may look like haggis, neeps and tatties – but....

Story courtesy of the Daily Record

The cake took Yvonne (mum of four) two days to make and she even managed to fool two of her kids into thinking it was the real deal.

Yvonne said “It took one day to bake and I done the decorating the next day. The haggis is chocolate cake, the tatties and turnips are vanilla and the gravy is chocolate icing.”

Now that is a haggis anyone would appreciate!



BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Self-lacing sneakers-just like those worn by Marty McFly in the 1989 movie Back to the Future Part II – have been unveiled by sportswear giant **Nike**.

The laces of the £272 (over \$370) Nike Adapt BB tighten or loosen at the press of a button on the sneakers or through a connected mobile phone app. You can have Siri do your laces and never have to bend to the task!

Nike says the shoes, which are designed for basketball players, can be programmed to remember different fit settings eliminating the need to memorize the best tightness for your laces!

Wow! Next, we will have shoes that walk for us. Then we can increase our step goal for the day.

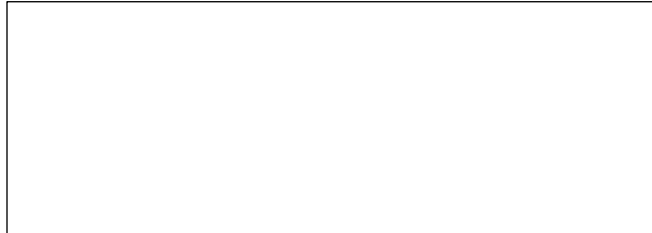


Story courtesy of the Daily Record





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SCOTTISH KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1. Where do you first see the Vikings Up-Helly-Aa during the New Year celebrations? *(The answer is in this newsletter).*
2. Who was the Scottish General who handed Charles I over to parliament in 1646?
3. In what decade did the first postage stamps come to use in Scotland?
4. What does it mean to “Bag a Munro”?
5. What is the longest river in Scotland?
6. Where is Barra Castle?
7. Where is the David Livingstone Centre?
8. By what title is Sir John Sholto Douglas known?
9. Which clan had Ivy as its clan badge?
10. What does Mackenzie mean?

Bonus: Which Edinburgh character inspired Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde?

1. Edinburgh torchlight parade
2. Alexander Leslie
3. 1830's
4. Climb a Mountain
5. The River Tay
6. Oldmeldrum
7. Blantyre
8. The 8th Marquis of Queensbury
9. Gordon
10. Son of Kenneth

BONUS: Deacon Brodie



Scottish Heritage now has a presence on facebook – just look for Scottish Heritage USA or follow the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/698401680928383>

WHISKEY or WHISKY?

Have you ever heard the folk song “Whiskey in the Jar”? Or is it “Whisky in the Jar”? What is the difference between whiskey and whisky? And while we are at it, how does scotch, bourbon and rye fit in? Well, they are all types of whiskey-ky which can be any distilled liquor made from a fermented mash of cereal grains and aged in wooden containers. The name is based on the type of grain used in the distilling process as well as how and where it was produced.

So why the “e”? In the US and Ireland, the “e” is used and in Canada and Scotland (*and several other countries*) the “e” is not.

Scotch is a whisky made primarily from barley grain and heated over a peat fire; hence the smoky taste. Whisky cannot be called Scotch unless it is entirely produced and bottled in Scotland.

Bourbon, a whiskey first produced in Kentucky, US uses 51% sour corn mash in its production. For a whiskey to be called bourbon, it must be produced in the US.

Rye uses a rye or rye and malt mash.

So, what is in the Jar? Given it is an Irish folk song, it is probably Whiskey.

