



Object of the Newsletter

To promote the appreciation of fine Scotch Whisky, the area from which it comes, the people that inhabit the land and it's history. By the way, I do not profess to be an expert, I am merely expressing an opinion on the whiskies I am tasting.

In this issue I look at Highland Park “Dark Origins” which is matured in “double first fill sherry casks”, using “twice as many first fill sherry casks as the 12-year-old”. The “Dark Origins” name is a nod to Magnus Eunson (known as the “whisky priest”) as he would hide his whisky from the Gaugers (Taxmen), by placing it under the pulpit in the church or inside coffins! It's said that he was warned that the church was to be searched and moved his whisky into the middle of a room in his house, threw a coffin lid and white sheet over the top and had 'mourners' surround it, thus keeping it safe when his home was also searched. This whisky has no age statement (NAS), is bottled at 46.8% and is non-chill filtered (and like everything produced at Highland Park these days contains no caramel coloring).

You can buy “Dark Origins” for around \$90.00 a bottle.

Tasting Notes;

Nose - Cocoa, cinnamon, vanilla & liquorice

Palate - Light peat & chocolate orange

Finish - Long with heathery smoke & a little chocolate

If you have a personal favorite and you would like it to feature in future “Slange” newsletters, please let me know. I can be contacted at my website www.scot-talks.com

“Slainte Mhath”

Paul Bissett





HISTORY OF HIGHLAND DRESS - MAINLY THE KILT

by Nancy A. MacCorkill

Highland dress and the tartan are among the most powerful, romantic and dramatic of all the symbols of Scotland. It has been claimed that 'a man in a kilt is a man and a half'; there really is something about the wearing of the kilt that confers extra stature on its owner. It is absolutely no coincidence that the kilted 51st Highland Division was rated by the Germans as the most formidable of all the formations they came across during the First World War. Certainly the British government had no doubts on the matter when, after the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie, they banned the use of Highland dress and the tartan, which they clearly saw as an incitement to further subversion. Offenders were killed or sent to the colonies. The form of Highland dress has always owed much to the army and it was the Highland regiments which kept the kilt and the tartan alive until at last, in 1782, their use was once more permitted. Before that time, Scots were only permitted to wear any Scottish wear if they joined the British Armed Services. Pipers were permitted to wear their kilt, but usually in a Regimental color. Other service men - most were permitted to wear the Balmoral with their clan badge on it. A high price to pay to wear highland clothes, laying their life on the line to do it.

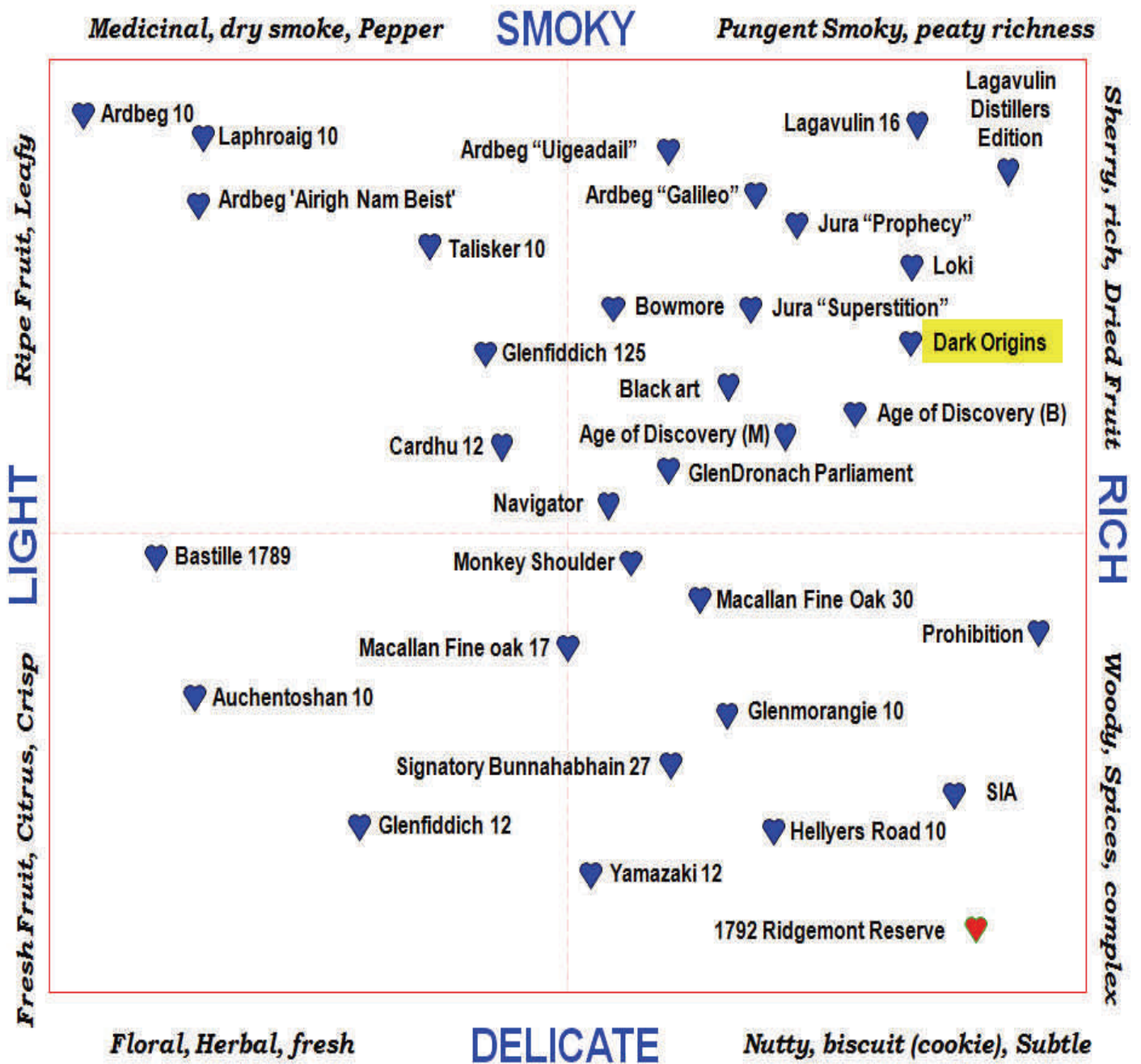
Nowadays, the kilt is seen as the national dress of Scotland. In fact, it started life as NO SUCH THING, being entirely confined to the Highlands. The Lowlanders, who have always made up the majority of Scots, regarded what they considered a "barbarous" form of apparel with 'loathing' and 'contempt' and conferred the opprobrious term of 'redshanks' on the Highlanders, who were, they reckoned, what we would now term 'blue' with cold. But today anyone with the smallest claim to Scots ancestry (and not a few without) proudly wears the kilt; even Lowland chiefs and their followers vie with their Highland counterparts in a way which their forefathers would have found incomprehensible and appalling.

The kilt itself in its original form was a very basic garment which required neither the trouble of tailoring nor the frequent replacement which a pair of breeches needed. The tartan cloth forming a piece of material some 2 yards in width by 4 or 6 yards in length. This was known variously as the Breacan, the Feileadh Bhreacain and the Feileadh Mor - the big kilt, usually referred to in English as the belted plaid.

To put it on, its owner "put his leather belt on the ground and then placed the material lengthways over it. This he then methodically plaited it in the middle, (suitable to the size of the wearer) over the belt until he had gathered along its length leaving as much at each end as would cover the front of the body, overlapping each other. Lying down on the belt, he would then fold these ends - overlapping each other. The plaid being thus prepared, was firmly bound round the loins with a leather belt, in such a manner that the lower side fell down to the middle of the knee joint, and then while there were the foldings behind, the cloth was double before. The upper part was then fastened on the left shoulder with a large brooch, or pin, so as to display to the most advantage the tastefulness of the arrangement, the two ends being sometimes suffered to hang down, but that on the right side, which was of necessity the longest, was more usually tucked under the belt."



Below is a simple guide to help you choose your single malt Whisky, and the flavor notes you should expect from it. Being Scottish I recommend you find a likely candidate and try it in a bar before buying the whole bottle. With each issue of the newsletter I will add in another Whisky to the flavor map. This Issue; "Highland Park Dark Origins.". For more information go to <http://highlandpark.co.uk/>





HISTORY OF HIGHLAND DRESS - MAINLY THE KILT

Cont.

The belted plaid had many advantages in the Highland climate and terrain. It allowed freedom of movement, it was warm, the upper half could provide a voluminous cloak against the weather, it dried out quickly and with much less discomfort than trousers and if required it could, by the mere undoing of the belt, provide a very adequate overnight blanketing. The tightly woven wool proved almost completely waterproof, something the loose woven wool of today -- is not. When complete freedom of action was required in battle it was easily discarded, and one famous Highland clan battle, that between the Frasers the MacDonalds and Camerons in 1544, is known as Blar-na-Leine, which can be translated as 'Field of the Shirts'.

The garment that was (originally) largely, -- that of the people; and lesser leaders) worn a Leine Croich or saffron shirt, in fact a knee-length garment of leather, linen or canvas, heavily pleated and quilted, which provided a surprisingly good defense and which was much more mobile (and less expensive) than contemporary plate armour. This form of dress in to be seen on West Highland tombstones right up to the early seventeenth century, worn with a high conical helmet and the great two-handed claymore. For ordinary wear the kilt may be made of tartan or tweed and may be box-pleated or knife-pleated (as are most); for dress wear it should be of the dress tartan of the Clan. If the Clan posses one. The kilt should be worn with the lower edges reaching not lower than the centre of the knee-cap.

The ordinary or everyday jacket and vest worn with the kilt, should be made of tweed, home-spun (usually wool) or lighter weight for summer, or other suitable material preferably with horn buttons.

The sporran, or purse, may be made of leather for day wear; the head and skin of the badger, seal, ermine or other light and dark coloured skins for evening. (The kilt having no pockets, the sporran was evolved by necessity). Hose for daywear can be a white or oatmeal color, for evening they should be tartan to match the kilt, fine knit, woven or cut from the piece. Garters are usually of wool or worsted, and knotted with a garter knot, the end or flashes handing below the overturn. At present elastic garters with tartan flashes attached are popular. Colours either red, green or navy blue. Instead of a tie, the lace jabot is worn over a plain white shirt, in modern days, some wear the tie but the lace jabot is favored. Lace cuffs are usually sewn or snapped into the jacket.

Shoes for evening wear should be light weight and with silver gilt buckles. Gillies or a light weight leather shoe with the appearance of gillies can be worn and are well suited to dancing the Country Dances. Shoes for daywear any color leather that compliments the kilt.

The "Balmoral" style bonnet is the most popular style of headwear. And it approximates more closely to the old broad bonnet of the Highlander. It is generally dark blue, green, and brown in color, and may have a pom-pom (usually) of red. The bonnet should display the crest buckle and strap in silver of the wearer, (if he is entitled to wear one - if he is in fact, a member of that clan). Under no circumstances should ordinary clansmen wear the crest without the strap and buckle which indicates that the wearer is merely displaying the topmost part of his chief's crest in the strap and buckle.



HISTORY OF HIGHLAND DRESS - MAINLY THE KILT

Cont.

Only the Chief of the Clan is entitled to wear the full Crest. The diced (or orange checkered) band around the base of the Balmoral indicates loyalty to the House of Hanover, i.e. the King/Queen of England. Highlanders generally do NOT wear the diced Balmoral, but choose to wear the plain dark blue bonnet; many lowlanders may choose wear the diced cap as they are intermingled with English blood and loyalties. Some Lowlanders also will not wear the diced cap. It is a matter of loyalties as some Lowlanders and Highlanders are loyal to the highlands, and would not wear the diced cap, even after all these years.

The wearing of a dirk, although not necessary, is generally carried in the loop on the kilt, at the waist, made for the dirk. A sgian-dubh, (or small dagger) however, is carried in the right hand stocking on all occasions. The kilt is male attire and should NEVER be worn by the ladies, except Highland dancer lassies.

As it happens, pre-nineteenth century portraits of the chiefs and lairds painted in tartan are remarkably few; in general, apart from those wearing kilted military uniforms, they preferred to have their pictures painted in ordinary dress of the time.

The Feileadh Beg, or little kilt, is what is worn today. In essence it consists of the lower part of the old belted plaid with the pleats sewn in at the back and neatly tailored (knife pleated), the ends of the kilt's two aprons being drawn across the front of the body and secured usually by buckle and strap. This form of dress may have existed earlier, but there is no sign of it before 1725. It is a severe shock to many people to find that the "little kilt's originator may well have been an Englishman, one Rawlinson, who was employed as the manager of an iron smelting works in Lochaber who adapted it, to allow more freedom of movement for his workers. (Probably so they could work faster being the concerned English they were). Be that as it may, it is this form of garment which is now firmly taken as being the kilt.

Identification at any distance of differing clans was due largely to the wearing of the various clan plant-badges of which, it will be noticed, is a considerable feature by an easily visible token in the bonnet so as to allow other clan members to know who their clan, septs and friends were in a battle. This plant-badge was worn on the bonnet or Balmoral.

During the Jacobite uprising the white cockade (from the French cocarde or the Old French coquarde meaning "vain, or cocky"). It was worn in the bonnet to identify supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie. The modern, armorially correct fashion for a clansman of wearing (the upper portion) of his chief's crest within a buckle and strap displaying the motto as a silver cap badge, as stated earlier, only the Chief of the clan can wear the complete crest.

Today, tartans abound and it is an unfortunate person indeed who will not be told by the tartan shops that he or she indeed can buy 'their' tartan. The ascribing of a vast plethora of names to membership of various clans has long been an industry in itself - luckily there is insufficient time or space here to enter into that particular subject!

The convention has now been adopted that it is the chief of the clan - assuming that there is one - who lays down who belongs to his clan and what is it's tartan.



HISTORY OF HIGHLAND DRESS - MAINLY THE KILT

Cont.

The transformation of the attitude towards the Highlander in the mind of the rest of the nation from the fear and disgust engendered by the Jacobite rebellions (few people would believe that there were many Scots in arms against Prince Charlie than for him, but such is the case), to admiration and respect is nothing short of remarkable.

Jacobite (from new latin Jacobus meaning: James, or latin meaning Jack). It was a name chosen to show support for James II. The bravery of the Highland regiments of the latter part of the eighteenth century, must give them the right to claim a large part of the credit, but the early years of the nineteenth century saw the arrival of an extraordinary veneration and romanticizing of the Highlander.

Of course, the most eminent enthusiast of things Highland was Queen Victoria herself, her task at the time being summed up in that splendid word 'Balmorality'. The Queen displayed enormous pride in her Stewart ancestry, ignoring the fact that if that family had triumphed a hundred years before, her own would have remained in undistinguished obscurity.

Her reign saw the final transformation of what their detractors could claim to be a race of savages, however noble, into figures of glamour and romance. The process can perhaps be summed up by the comparison between the silver encrusted and often cairngorm ornamented ceremonial dirk with its knife and fork in the sheath so frequently illustrated in Scottish books, and the much older and plainer example on display at Inveraray Castle. Any doubt as to the stark purpose of the latter is dispelled by the Gaelic inscription on its worn blade which, being translated, reads 'Give me blood for I am thirsty...!'

The element of fantasy is still with us today now that Highland dress is popular as never before.

There is something that is very special indeed about the kilt and the tartan. It is a limp back indeed that does not straighten as the kilt is buckled on and a poor heart that is not lifted just a little, at the sight of the colours of the clan.

The kilt has now become, beyond any doubt the national dress of Scotland; let us keep it that way and ensure it is not allowed to decline into mere fancy dress.

Regimental tartans can be addressed in another article although one must mention the influence of Regimental tartans played a very large part in keeping the tartan very much alive and very greatly revered.

<http://scottish-history.com/kilt.shtml>