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Scotland in the Southland:
The History of the Costa Mesa ScotsFest, 1932-2012

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the degree requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Music

by

Erin Ruth Thomson

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Introduction: What is a Scottish Festival?

Celebrations of ethnic heritage take place all over the world. From marking the Chinese New Year to American Indian Powwows, people need little incentive to honor their heritage. For people of Celtic descent—that is, anyone who can trace his or her roots back to Ireland, Wales, and especially Scotland—these celebrations often take the form of Scottish festivals. In North America, Scottish festivals take place throughout the United States and Canada. It is possible to go to one or even two festivals a month, especially during the summer, or “festival season.” In California, the season runs from mid-February to early October, encompassing festivals across the entire state.

Scottish Festivals Today

Scottish festivals go by many different names: Highland Games, Scottish Games, Scottish Festival and Games, Scottish Highland Games, Highland Gathering and Games. “Games” refers to the traditional “heavy” athletic competitions held at a festival, which include the hammer toss, weight throwing, stone throwing, and most famously, the caber toss, all of which involve the lifting and throwing of heavy objects. Each of these events is a test of strength, endurance, and accuracy. All are stylized forms of farming activities that would have been common to Scottish clansmen, from clearing a field of rocks to shifting bales of wool. Although they were originally a way for rival clans to compete with each other without going to war, today the competition is about individual athletes, who are as dedicated and focused as any football, track, or boxing star.

A modern American Scottish festival is made up of many components, each of which has its own sets of rules and expectations. There are the athletics, where kilted,

muscle-bound men and women attempt to outdo each other in their ability to lift and throw large, heavy objects. The athletics are usually located at the edge of a festival, on a large, grassy area. More centrally located are the clan tents, rows of E-Z-Ups dedicated to every Scottish clan and society imaginable. Each tent is decorated with clan memorabilia, among which the clan tartan, crest, and genealogy appear prominently. There is usually a map of Scotland showing the clan's ancestral home, and pictures of famous people who belong to the clan. The Clan Morrison tent, for example, features a life-size cardboard cutout of John Wayne, whose real name was Marion Morrison, and both the Wallace and Gibson tents have pictures of Mel Gibson, dressed as—ironically enough—William Wallace from the movie *Braveheart*.

At the heart of the festival are the vendors, who sell everything Scottish, Irish, British, or even faintly Celtic. Merchandise ranges from cheap tourist trinkets, such as bagpipe-shaped magnets that play “Scotland the Brave,” to expensive, handmade clothes and jewelry. It is possible to buy a full Scottish costume, complete with custom-tailored kilt in your clan's tartan, or a complete set of bagpipes. In fact, a Scottish festival is one of the only places to find piping supplies, such as reeds, hemp, cases, and everything else necessary to maintain and play bagpipes. There is also a strong element of fantasy in many of the available wares, and a vendor who sells a replica of William Wallace's sword is just as likely to carry a replica of Gandalf's sword from *The Lord of the Rings*, as well.

Food is another important element of a Scottish festival. British candy, tea, cereal, and snacks are all obtainable, and there are several vendors who hand out samples

of shortbread and preserves. Since a festival is a two-day affair, there is plenty of hot food available for lunch. The majority of offerings are all iconic British fare, including meat pies, bangers and mash (sausage and mashed potatoes) and even haggis (a traditional dish made from sheep entrails and cooked in a sheep's stomach). The most popular, however, is fish and chips. There are usually a dozen or more food vendors at any given festival, and each has their own version of fish and chips, complete with salt, ketchup, and malt vinegar to put on them.

Perhaps the most iconic aspect of a Scottish festival is the pipe bands. Certainly, besides the kilt and tartan, bagpipes are one of the first things one associates with Scotland. You cannot go anywhere in a Scottish festival without hearing bagpipes. Indeed, you can start hearing them before entering the festival, and your ears will probably be ringing with them long after you have left. The piping area of a festival is usually somewhat isolated from the rest of the festival activities, as it is where the bands set up their tents and where the competitions take place. Solo competitions for both piping and drumming take place early in the morning, often before the festival has opened to the public. In the afternoon, the bands compete. In between, band members practice together, eat lunch, and snatch a few minutes to peek at the vendors' wares before tuning for competition. The culmination is the massed bands at the end of the day, when all the bands at the festival gather to play a selection of tunes and hear the competition results. Audiences can count on hearing "Highland Laddie," "Amazing Grace," and, of course, "Scotland the Brave."

The Scottish dancers have their own encampment, similar to that of the bands. They also have designated areas for competition, and tents in which to relax, practice, or change. The vast majority of Scottish dancers are girls ranging in age from six to early twenties, although the occasional boy can be found. Unlike bagpipe competition, Scottish dancing is strictly a solo competition, although dancers usually compete in groups of three or four dancers at a time, while a solo piper plays off to the side. There is a variety of dances in which to compete, and each requires its own costume.

Finally, there are musical groups scattered throughout the festival. These range from preservation societies, who play traditional music on traditional instruments to keep history alive, to folk groups, who put their own unique perspective on the traditional songs, to Celtic rock bands, who add traditional instruments such as fiddles, pennywhistles, and bagpipes to the conventional rock band setup of guitars and drums, playing traditional and original songs at high speed and loud volume. Irish and Scottish dancing can be incorporated into any of these formats. Each group has its set of followers, and shirts and CDs can be bought at the corresponding tent, which are usually located close to whatever stage is being used.

Music is one of the most important elements of a Scottish festival. There are the obvious sources, such as the pipe bands, the dancers, and the entertainment groups, but there are less visible—or audible—sources, as well. The athletics usually have some form of rock music playing over loudspeakers while the competitors throw their heavy objects around. The clan tents usually have someone who can play an instrument, from a pennywhistle to fiddle to bodhran (a handheld Irish drum), and have small jam sessions

in between answering questions about their clan. At the vendors' booths, every conceivable incarnation of Celtic music can be found on CD, from famous pipers and pipe bands, to Celtic rock groups, to Celtic folk groups. Ironically, the majority of music performed or sold at a Scottish festival, outside of the pipe bands and dancers, is usually some form of Irish music.

Evolution of the Scottish Festival

Scottish festivals were not always like this, and festivals that still take place in Scotland bear only a faint resemblance to a modern American Scottish festival. So, what has changed? How did Scottish festivals travel from clan gatherings in the highlands of Scotland to the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa, California? In the following chapters I will examine this phenomenon, using the oldest Scottish festival in Southern California, ScotsFest, as a focal point. I will trace the growth of ScotsFest, from its origins in Clan Cameron picnics and Burns dinners, into one of the largest Scottish festivals in California, and even in the United States.

I will start by examining the “Celtic Mystique,” by which I mean ideas of what it means to be Celtic or of Celtic descent, and how those ideas are played out at Scottish festivals. A festival is an opportunity for many people to act out their heritage, or what they *think* their heritage is. For others, it is an opportunity to act out their favorite movie. At any given festival, you can find reenactors of regiments and famous historical figures, pirates, belly dancers, fairies, Goths, and extras from old Conan the Barbarian movies. Added to all of this are the men who wear a kilt with a t-shirt and combat boots, because they think it looks “cool,” families who have lived down the street for years but are

attending the festival for the first time, and a smattering of tourists from all over the world.

At the same time, there are the clan tents, where people with Scottish heritage work diligently to trace their roots back as far into the Scottish Highlands as they can. Often, the people manning the tents, or the people who visit the tents, have never actually been to Scotland, but this does not prevent them from situating themselves firmly in Scotland. If asked, they can tell you exactly where their family's ancestral lands are located, and show pictures of their family house—or castle, as is often the case. The majority of people interested in tracing their roots can usually produce a connection to Scottish royalty, or, at the very least, their clan's leader, or chieftain.

After exploring the diversity of ways people understand the concept of “Celtic,” I will turn my attention to the history of Scottish festivals, using the Costa Mesa ScotsFest as my case study. Beginning with its roots in Clan Cameron picnics, I will examine the clan's formation of the United Scottish Society, and the early days of the festival in 1932. From there, I will investigate the challenges faced by the Society as the festival continued to grow, and the difficulties which would arise as membership in the Society fell. I will end by studying the festival in its modern incarnation, ScotsFest, and how it has changed and adapted since its early years.

An analysis of a Scottish festival would not be complete without considering its music. There is an incredibly diverse array of music that falls under the classification of Celtic, and it is important to do justice to each kind. The most iconic is the piping and drumming, but there is much more to pipe bands than just the massed bands at the end of

a long festival day. For a piper or a drummer, a Scottish festival is an important opportunity for competition. Although there are a few solo-bagpipe competitions outside of festivals, most pipe and drum competition—and band competitions—take place at festivals. Competition is an important way for pipers and drummers to improve their playing, both as soloists and as a band. In the United States, competition is a way for solo and band performers to measure their ability, and all leading players and bands compete at some point in their careers.

In many ways, however, competition is strictly for the competitors. Apart from family members and friends who provide support, there is not a large audience for these events. While there is a slightly larger audience for band competitions, it is still comprised mostly of people who are associated with the performing bands in one way or another. For the general festival-goers, there are stages scattered across the festival where different music groups perform. There are usually two or three groups per stage, alternating performances throughout the day. Stages are dedicated to a particular style, so one stage will feature the more traditional folk groups, with their fiddles, pennywhistles, harps, and bodhrans, while the louder, faster Celtic rock groups will be centered around another stage—usually at the other end of the festival. While audiences at any of these stages may be inclined to clap or sing along with their favorite songs, the Celtic rock audiences usually combine listening with dancing, and often the performers will dance their way through the audiences while playing.

In conclusion, I will take my observations of the past and present of ScotsFest, and use them to extrapolate the future of the Scottish festival. By looking at how Scottish

festivals have adapted over the years, I can speculate on what might change or remain the same as Scottish festivals adjust to new generations of audiences, performers, and Scots. The past eighty years of ScotsFest is a template for the next eighty years, both for ScotsFest and every American Scottish festival.

Chapter One: The Celtic Mystique

Scottish festivals are as diverse as the people who attend them, but the main element that binds all Scottish festivals together is just that: the fact that they celebrate a Scottish heritage. However, many festivals are not so much Scottish as Celtic. While kilts and bagpipes predominate, there is also a high concentration of Irish, Welsh, and generically British components in the festival structure. The majority of music played by entertainment groups is Irish, not Scottish, and the food sold—apart from haggis and whiskey—could be found in any city in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, or even England. Vendors sell merchandise that hails from all of these countries as well. Indeed, many festivals incorporate “Celtic,” not “Scottish,” in their titles. So what does it mean to be Celtic?

This is a harder question to answer than it first appears. The simple response is one of geography and genealogy. Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and their surrounding islands were all populated by a group of people known as the Celts, a pale-skinned, blond or redheaded people who can be traced back to the time of the Romans and beyond.¹ Before Hannibal crossed the Alps in 218 BC, there already were Celts on both sides of the mountains, having crossed the range themselves about two hundred years earlier.² Celts put up a stiff resistance but were ultimately defeated by Julius Caesar in France—then Gaul—in the first century BC.³ When the Romans invaded Britain in the first century AD, Celts were already there, and in the second century, Hadrian's Wall was built to

¹ Gerhard Herm, *The Celts: The People Who Came out of the Darkness* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993).

² *Ibid.*, 2-6.

³ *Ibid.*, 175-201.

protect the Romans from the Caledonian (at the time, Scotland was known as Caledonia) Celts—not the other way around.⁴

Over time, these British Celts mixed with Vikings and other invaders and came to be identified separately as Irish, Welsh, and Scottish, rather than a single ethnic group. The term “Celt” became one of the past, along with Roman and Gaul. It did not, however, stay in the past. The modern use of “Celt” and “Celtic” in referring to a people other than contemporaries of Hannibal and Caesar can be traced to the nineteenth-century writings of Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold.⁵ Gerry Smyth, an Irish professor of literature and cultural history, problematizes the modern use of “Celtic” by linking it to these nineteenth-century figures, one a “French cultural historian” and the other an “English poet and social critic,” and to the complicated subject of English imperialism in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland.⁶

Smyth quotes Renan’s description of “the Celt” as a melancholy, sensitive individual, a description on which Arnold based his own concept of Celts:

[Arnold] deployed an array of pseudo-scientific and cultural discourses to characterize “Celticness” as a wistful, melancholy, sentimental, passionate category; the Celt is “keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow;” at the same time, however, he is “always ready to react against the despotism of fact”—qualities which have haunted Irish cultural production ever since.⁷

“Basically,” concludes Smyth, “in Arnold’s vision, the Celts were ideally suited to entertain the English after a hard day at the empire.”⁸ This view of the Celts has become

⁴ Ibid., 180, 221.

⁵ Gerry Smyth, *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 71.

⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁸ Ibid.

almost a stereotype, with variations for each group—cheerful, contrary Irish, thrifty, canny Scottish, and silver-tongued Welsh—but all with the underlying melancholy.

American ideas of the Celtic are to some extent guilty of these same stereotypes, although not necessarily out of a desire to patronize or oppress. At any given festival, a Celt is seen as a wild, passionate, fiercely independent individual, generally cheerful—especially when making the English look foolish—but always with a sense of righteous indignation, or even melancholy, over their history of unjust oppression. Many of these terms match Arnold's description almost perfectly. It is virtually impossible today to separate stereotypical ideas of the Celtic, which have taken on near-mythic proportions, from the way people of Celtic descent actually view themselves and their culture.

An Irishman himself, Smyth is not comfortable with the modern use of Celt and Celtic, and is always careful to place them in quotation marks. This practice is common among contemporary scholars, especially those writing on Celtic music.⁹ However, the term is inescapable, and in spite—or even because—of its history, it still serves as the best description for Irish, Welsh, and Scots as a whole. Despite obvious differences in geography, language, and culture, these groups share a common Celtic heritage, one that is easily recognized as such. Thus, while aware of the overly romantic connotations that are implied by the term Celtic, I will continue to utilize it in my discussion of Scottish festivals.

To some degree, the idea of Scotland and “Scottishness” found in many festivals is closely related to this modern meaning of Celtic. The people who attend festivals

⁹ For example, see Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 6-7.

range from those who want as authentic an experience as possible to those who see a festival as a celebration of New Age mysticism, and everyone in between. To examine these ideas further, I will divide Scottish festival attendees into three very broad, basic groups: Clan Tents, Regimental Celts, and New Age Celts. These groupings by no means include every single Celtic manifestation to be found at a festival, but they do provide a workable overview.

Clan Tents

Clan tents are one of the staple features of a Scottish festival. Regardless of the city, state, or size, no festival is complete without a section devoted almost exclusively to the clans. A clan is a family group or tribe, one sharing a common name, history, land, and, in the case of Scotland, tartan. Each tent boasts a collection of heirlooms and memorabilia designed to give the average festivalgoer an idea of his or her clan's history. If a movie has been made of one of their family members, or a movie star or other famous person shares their name, so much the better. Thus, the clan MacGregor tent features a poster from the movie *Rob Roy*, with Irish actor Liam Neeson in the title role, prominently displayed on the outside of their tent.

The tents are arranged in aisles, and a large festival, such as ScotsFest, can boast up to seventy or more clans.¹⁰ Interestingly, clan tents, like many elements of festivals, are not prominent in festivals in Scotland but are instead an American Scottish festival tradition.¹¹ In fact, clan tents began fairly recently, at the Grandfather Mountain

¹⁰ "Scottish Clans," *ScotsFest*, <http://www.scotsfest.com/clans.htm> (accessed October 31, 2012).

¹¹ Emily Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co. 1986), 201.

Highland Games and Gathering of the Scottish Clans in Linville, North Carolina, a festival established in 1952.¹² As with many ethnic groups in the United States, American Scots are in many ways “more Scottish” than Scottish Scots, at least according to their understanding of what it means to be Scottish.

Clan tents are designed to serve a number of functions. They instruct casual festivalgoers on the clan’s history, provide a place for clan members to relax and socialize, and work to attract new members to the clan. The more outgoing—or aggressive—tents have genealogy books or experts on hand to help attendees trace their family line, and the majority of tents have some sort of membership form available for new members to fill out on the spot. Often there are charts with surnames that are claimed by that clan, and one can find the same name claimed by more than one clan, which can lead to some confusion!

For example, my own surname, Thomson, is connected to the clan MacTavish. At a festival, it is possible to see clan tents for both Clan Thomson and Clan MacTavish. Both have their own crests and mottos, and both have their own tartan. However, Thomson is claimed as a sub-clan by several other clans, including Clan Campbell and Clan Mackintosh. Clan MacTavish claims it as well, by relating it to the Gaelic spelling of MacTavish: MacTamhais.¹³ However, Clan Thomson strongly refutes this, as well as the claim that the name “Thomson” was adopted by members of Clan MacTavish during

¹² Ibid., 203, 225.

¹³ “Thom(p)son IS MacTavish!” *Clan MacTavish* (2012), <http://www.clanmactavish.org/MacTavishisThompson.php> (accessed October 31, 2012).

the Highland Clearances.¹⁴ This is just a small example of the complicated dynamics that take place between clans.

Matters become even more muddled when one includes clans that do not have any roots in Scotland but are instead a product of the Scottish-festival culture. One such clan, complete with crest, motto, and tent, is Clan Inebriated. Clans such as this poke fun at clan tents in general, and at Scottish-festival culture as a whole. However, given the amount of alcohol consumed at any particular festival, Clan Inebriated might arguably have almost as valid a claim to authenticity as any of the other, more conventional clans at the festivals.

In addition to genealogy and information, many clan tents have merchandise to offer curious festivalgoers. Almost every clan—including Clan Inebriated—sells t-shirts emblazoned with the clan name on the front and the crest and motto on the back. Clan merchandise is a bit of an industry in and of itself, as it all follows a standard format that varies only in the name and crest. Many clan tents also sell magnets, key chains, and pins with their crest. Like the shirts, they are usually made by a single company. Especially dedicated festivalgoers can stop by the vender booths and buy a sash, shawl, or even a kilt in their family tartan.

The majority of people operating clan tents adorn themselves with accessories to one degree or another, all meant to demonstrate their pride in their Scottish heritage in general, and their clan in particular. Most wear a clan t-shirt, at the very least, many of the women wear tartan sashes, and a few brave men wear kilts. Managing a clan tent is

¹⁴ John Hamilton Gaylor, "Thomson, Thoms and MacThomas," *Clan Tom(p)son Society* (2012), <http://clanthompson.org/Gaylor.html> (accessed October 31, 2012).

usually a family affair, and grandparents, parents, and children all turn out to show their pride in their clan. There is a slight age difference among members of the various clans. Many of the more established clans have older members, while the members of newer clans tend to be younger. This is due in part to the exodus that took place in the 1980s, when Scottish-Americans moved to northern California, depleting the membership in many Scottish societies and clan organizations.¹⁵

At some point during a Scottish festival, there is a Parade of the Clans. Usually, if the festival has opening ceremonies at noon, the parade will be incorporated into the ceremonies, take place at the main arena, and be accompanied by the pipe bands. If a festival does not have opening ceremonies, then the parade will be led by a single piper and take place at the clan-tents area. The clans have standards, flags, or banners with their name and crest emblazoned on them, and there is an announcer to call out the names of the clans—to which the clans respond with a cheer or by shouting their motto. Each clan makes a prominent show of its family tartan, displaying it on flags, kilts, sashes, and even pets.

Tartan is an important expression of a modern Scottish identity, especially in the United States. The pattern of colors and stripes is unique to each clan, and often a clan will have several different tartans for various occasions, such as Dress and Hunting.

Again using my own clan as an example, there are at least five distinct Thomson tartans:

Dress Thomson, which is mainly light blue with thin black, white, red, and yellow

¹⁵ Loraine Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012). Mrs. Booth is the proprietor of British Perceptions, a vendor booth that sells fine china at Scottish festivals. She and her husband emigrated from Scotland in 1971 and have first-hand experience with Southern California Scottish festivals, societies, and bands, as well as Scottish dancing competitions, in which both their daughter and granddaughter are involved.

stripes; Hunting Thomson, which is brown, dark green, and a light blue-green; Muted Hunting Thomson, which uses darker shades of the Hunting tartan colors; Grey Thomson, which is a dark grey with white, black, and red stripes; and Camel Thomson, which is tan with white, black, and red strips.¹⁶ Interestingly, the Camel tartan is quite a popular pattern in the fashion world, and can be seen on scarves, hats, umbrellas, boots, purses, and cell-phone covers. This is a striking example of the influence, however unconscious or subtle, that Scottish culture has had on mainstream American culture.

In spite of its importance and popularity, tartan and many other elements of the modern American Scottish festival have only been around about two hundred years, beginning with Sir Walter Scott in the early nineteenth century and gaining in strength in Victorian times.¹⁷ Due to the Act of Proscription of 1746 and the Highland Clearances, which began in 1762, the practice of many traditional aspects of Scottish heritage, such as wearing tartan, playing bagpipes, and participating in athletic competitions were forbidden to Scots, particularly the Highland Scots.¹⁸ The Act of Proscription was repealed in 1782, but it was not until Scott's work in the early 1800s to romanticize Scottish culture, culminating in his careful orchestration of King George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822, that Scottish culture began to resurface.¹⁹

Even then, it was an idealized form of Scottish culture, one rooted in romantic ideas of the Scottish Highlands, rather than Scotland as a whole. Anthropologist Paul

¹⁶ The Hunting tartan is my personal favorite, and has often been described as "mint-and-chip".

¹⁷ Paul Basu, *Highland Homecomings: Genealogy and Heritage Tourism in the Scottish Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 18-19.

¹⁸ Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America*, 10-11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

Basu links this idealization to the sentimentalism that took root in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion, writing,

By the end of the eighteenth century Jacobite rebelliousness had been so thoroughly tamed and metamorphosed that it provided the key iconography for a new unified, assimilationist, Protestant ‘North British’ identity—one of the very things it had rebelled against.²⁰

This romanticization of the Scottish Highlands is known in academic terms as “Highlandism,” and Basu later refers to it as “the cult of the Highlands.”²¹

Highlandism can certainly be seen in American Scottish festivals, many of which include the word “Highland” somewhere in their title. From the athletics to the pipe bands to the re-enactors to the clan tents, Scottish festivals are made up of people acting out stylized forms of Scottish tradition. This does not, however, mean that Scottish festivals in the United States are simply the idealized imaginings of people who have little or no connection to authentic Scottish culture. Nor does it mean that Basu’s rather cynical outlook on American and other diasporic expressions of Scottish identity are shared by all modern Scottish authors.

For instance, Scottish author Billy Kay has quite a positive opinion of the people who make up the Scottish diaspora, one that is tempered with a realistic understanding of modern attitudes and practices:

Their knowledge and pride in their sense of Scottishness is to me more attractive and positive than the attitude of those people resident here who constantly belittle the country and its people because of the endemic Scottish cringe or their irrational fear of Scottish self-belief finding stronger political expression. Yes, I too find aspects of Scottish Americana way over the top...but given the choice between attending Highland games in North Carolina, for example, or the

²⁰ Basu, *Highland Homecomings*, 18.

²¹ Ibid.

cauldron of hatred that is Ibrox or Parkhead on Old Firm match day, I would take the harmless benignity of the former rather than the malignant, sectarian repulsiveness of the latter, and unlike the frightening number of politicians who attend and enjoy the hate-fuelled football occasions, I would also choose the former as a more valid expression of Scottish identity.²²

Regimental Celts

Another group of Celts similar in structure to the Clan Tents, though not as extensive, are the regimental Celts, that is, those who embrace the militaristic aspects of Celtic culture and history. These include historical drill and re-enactment groups such as The Black Watch and Bydand Forever, flag-bearing color guards that lead opening ceremonies and massed bands, regimental societies, and, to some extent, pipe bands and athletics.²³ Indeed, martial elements permeate all sections of a Scottish festival. Pipe bands, which will be addressed in a later chapter, take their model from the Scottish regiments of the British army, including rank, dress, and even music. Weaponry of all kinds, including knives, swords, and guns, is displayed and worn by active participants and casual attendees alike, and even the Highland dancing competitions—in its modern incarnation almost exclusively a female domain—feature distinctly martial components.

A growing element of Scottish festivals is an American military presence. The Marines have an encampment near the Clan Tent and band areas of the Caledonian Club of San Francisco Annual Scottish Gathering and Games in Pleasanton, California, and the Marine Band traditionally holds a place of honor in the closing massed bands at the same games. In 2012, the 1st Marine Division Band made an appearance at ScotsFest in Costa

²² Billy Kay, *The Scottish World: A Journey into the Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company Ltd., 2006), 16.

²³ Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America*, 10.

Mesa and received a warm welcome from festivalgoers during their concerts and at massed bands.²⁴ Scottish festivals in general have a congenial relationship with active military and veterans, and they often offer special military rates on admission, as well as ceremonies to honor servicemen and women. This is especially true of ScotsFest, which is held on Memorial Day weekend.

Nevertheless, the military identity of a Scottish festival is first and foremost a *Scottish* military identity, or at the very least, a Scottish-American military identity. Figures such as William Wallace and Bonnie Prince Charlie, and to a lesser extent, Rob Roy MacGregor, hold places of pride in Scottish-festival culture and have taken on near-mythic, almost demigod, status in the Scottish-American psyche—somewhat to the chagrin of Scottish historians and scholars.²⁵ Blue face paint is a popular choice for expressions of Scottish identity at festivals, imitating Mel Gibson’s iconic—if inaccurate—look in the 1995 movie *Braveheart*.

The Celts have a reputation for being fierce warriors. From their earliest appearances in history, they are recorded as indomitable fighters, overwhelming their often better-equipped opponents.²⁶ Even the Romans, often held up as the greatest fighting force in the ancient world, did not know what to make of the Celts when they met them in battle, and were as intimidated by them as any of their own conquered people. German scholar Gerhard Herm describes the elements that made them so intimidating:

²⁴ “Festival Entertainment,” *ScotsFest*, <http://www.scotsfest.com/entertainment.htm> (accessed November 14, 2012).

²⁵ Celeste Ray, *Highland Heritage: Scottish Americans in the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 205.

²⁶ Herm, *The Celts*, 6.

It was not just the cruel weaponry that so terrified their enemies, but the impression the Celtic warriors gave: the seething rage, the fury of their attacks. However soberly they made preparations, in the midst of battle, for a possible retreat, when they were actually fighting they were transformed, beside themselves, entranced in a rage for blood. The Romans later described this entrancement...as *furor*, and they were always in great fear of it. If this incomprehensible battle-fury was not proof enough that the Celts had come out chaos itself, further evidence was provided by the most terrifying of their military customs. This was their habit of cutting off their enemies' heads and nailing them over the doors of their huts.²⁷

While these practices sound barbaric and would more than likely be tried as war crimes today, they were, if not quite common practice in ancient times, at least slightly more acceptable than they would be today. While the modern descendants of the Celts would not dream of enacting any of these practices themselves, the idea that their ancestors were feared warriors is for them a strong foundation for cultural pride. Moreover, the perception of the ancient Celts as a source of trepidation for the ancient Roman Empire is a fitting counterpoint to the more modern Celt's less-than-amenable relationship with the British Empire. These images fit in with the persona manifested in movies such as *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy* and the mystique of the failed Jacobite rebellion led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, a persona that represents the Scottish Warrior as fighting a noble but doomed battle against impossible odds and unscrupulous opponents.

Although this vision of the Scottish Warrior does not quite parallel the idea of the “noble savage” depicted in so many early ethnographic writings, it certainly aligns with the stereotype of the Celt perpetrated by Renan and Arnold. After all, authors such as Rousseau and Guillaume Raynal were writing about the “noble savages” of North America, the Pacific, and Africa at the same time that Bonnie Prince Charlie was leading

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

his failed attempt to retake the Scottish throne in the eighteenth century.²⁸ This romantic ideal permeates much of the Scottish-festival culture, and it is a source of concern for many Scottish historians and scholars, in Scotland and the United States alike. Many average Scots, as well as Scottish authors, resent the stereotypes presented in Hollywood, and Americans and Scottish-Americans fear being consolidated with those who hold overly superficial views of the Scots.²⁹

Nevertheless, whether from ignorance or for commercial reasons, these stereotypes can be seen at Scottish festivals all over the United States, and in spite of their problematical nature, they help generate interest in learning about a Scottish heritage.³⁰ Much of the uneasy relationship between Scots and Hollywood depictions of Scots is a modern version of the relationship between Scots and Sir Walter Scott in the nineteenth century. However, a good portion of this uneasiness stems from the idea of Americans, regardless of their claim to Scottish heritage, making statements about Scotland and the Scots.³¹ In this case, it is not simply an instance of Scots versus the English, or even Scots versus Hollywood, but a case of Scots versus Scots.

At the same time as Mel Gibson doppelgängers wander Scottish festivals, embracing the romantic ideal of the doomed Scottish Warrior, another extreme of Scottish military heritage is enacted. These are the Scots who represent the Highland regiments of the British army, displaying regimental tartans, demonstrating weapons, and performing drills. This is much more of a corporate expression of Scottish identity, for

²⁸ William Womack, "Guillaume Raynal and the Eighteenth-Century Cult of the Noble Savage," in *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* 26/3 (Autumn 1972), 98.

²⁹ Basu, *Highland Homecomings*, 19, 82, 87-93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19, 87-93.

³¹ Celeste Ray, *Transatlantic Scots* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 2-3.

while the Scottish Warrior is often a lone figure, the Scottish regiments and re-enactors are small communities of people who meet not just at Scottish festivals, but throughout the year to socialize and rehearse. They are intended to educate festivalgoers about the customs and traditions of the Scottish regiments, much the same way as the clan tents are designed to educate on the customs and traditions of the clans.

Among the regiments that make regular appearances at Scottish festivals, perhaps the best known is Bydand Forever, a “Commemorative Team” that portrays the Gordon Highlanders of 1882. Bydand Forever is based in San Diego, California, and travels to every Scottish festival in California. The group is made up of a wide range of members of the community, retired military, and school-age children. All members wear meticulously researched uniforms, based on those of 1882. They set up an encampment, usually near the clan tents, with period equipment such as canvas tents and wagons. In the same way that the clan tents have a relationship with their respective clans in Scotland, Bydand Forever has a relationship with the Gordon Highlander regiment in Scotland.³²

Several times a day over the two days of a festival, Bydand Forever gives drill and weapon demonstrations. This includes marching in formation and attaching and removing bayonets. The climax of the demonstration is when the members of the unit fire their weapons, beginning with their rifles, and ending with a replica Gatling gun. These demonstrations are very loud, and at the end it is almost impossible to see the re-

³² “The Story of Bydand Forever,” *Bydand Forever: The Gordon Highlanders of 1882* (2009), http://bydandforever.com/the_story_of_%E2%80%98bydand_forever%E2%80%99 (accessed November 14, 2012).

enactors through the haze of smoke.³³ Their demonstrations always draw large crowds, and are quite popular with festivalgoers.

Weapons are an important element of Scottish-festival culture, especially swords and knives. No traditional highland outfit would be complete without at least a *sgian dubh* (alternately spelt *skean dhu* and pronounced “skeen doo”), meaning “black knife” in Gaelic, which is worn in the kilt hose (traditional, knee-high knitted socks) with the hilt showing over the top of the hose.³⁴ The *sgian dubh* is thought to have developed from a concealed weapon that would be a last resort for fighting clansmen.³⁵ The custom of wearing the *sgian dubh* with the hilt showing traditionally comes from meetings between clans, when the Highlanders would display their hilts to demonstrate their goodwill.³⁶ Modern *sgian dubhs* are purely decorative and have a dull blade and hilts that range from plain to quite elaborate, and may even be decorated with jewels. The dull blade is a precaution, to protect inebriated wearers from accidentally stabbing themselves in the leg when replacing the knife.

While *sgian dubhs* are worn by almost everyone who wears a kilt, a smaller number wear dirks. A dirk is a long knife worn on the belt.³⁷ Like the *sgian dubh*, the modern dirk is purely decorative. The majority of traditional dirks have a stylized thistle for a hilt, with a large jewel in the pommel. Many dirks have a small knife and fork

³³ Ibid. All weapons fire blanks, so there is no danger of accidentally shooting an audience member.

³⁴ Ray, *Highland Heritage*, 212.

³⁵ “History of the Sgian Dubh,” *Celtic Studio*

http://www.celticstudio.com/celticstudio/catalogue/clan_item/highland_weapons/sgian_dubhs/sgian_dubh_history.htm (accessed November 21, 2012).

³⁶ “The Origin of ‘Sgian Dubh,’” *Custom Sgian Dubhs, Kilt Accessories & Jewellery*,

<http://www.rainnea.com/sgian-dubhs.htm> (accessed November 19, 2012).

³⁷ “What the Scots Wear,” in *Caledonian Club of San Francisco: 110th Annual Gathering and Games* (1979), 13.

stored in individual pockets on the outside of the sheath. Dirks are often worn as part of a more formal outfit, complete with jacket and vest, and, unlike *sgian dubhs*, are usually not worn by pipers and drummers.

The last piece of weaponry commonly worn by kilted festivalgoers is the claymore, the traditional, giant broadsword.³⁸ The claymore is worn in a harness across the back, and is favored by the Scottish Warrior, rather than the regimental Scot or average festivalgoer. Like many aspects of the Scottish Warrior's attire, the claymore was made popular by the movie *Braveheart*. The Scottish Warrior's appearance is much more rugged than that of other festivalgoers, and while he—it is almost always he—will often wear a *sgian dubh* and a dirk in addition to his claymore, they are not the ornate, decorative pieces worn by the rest of the kilted participants and attendees. Instead, they are either designed to look as if they could actually be used in battle, or patterned after weapons featured in popular fantasy movies or role-playing games. After all, much of Scottish-festival culture is about role-playing, from the clan tents, the Scottish Warrior, and the regiments to the Celts in the following section.

New Age Celts

For many, a Scottish festival is an opportunity to enact not a particular heritage, per say, but rather an opportunity to act out a favorite book, movie, or game. Thus, mixing with the bands, regiments, re-enactors and warriors, are also pirates, belly dancers, elves, fairies, wizards, and, of late, “steampunk” characters in pseudo-Victorian costumes bedecked with clockwork gears and salvaged metal parts. There are almost no

³⁸ Ray, *Highland Heritage*, 213.

elements of science fiction at Scottish festivals, but the culture lends itself quite well to the fantasy genre. For these festivalgoers, historical accuracy is less important than achieving an impressive appearance (a “cool look”), and “Celtic” becomes synonymous with mystical, spiritual, and New Age. At any given festival elements of Nordic mythology, druidism, Wiccans, and other pagan and neo-pagan religions abound, both as merchandise for sale in vendor booths and as semi-educational displays, constructed in a fashion similar to clan tents.

The modern interpretation of Celtic, with its emphasis on emotion and spirit, lends itself well to New Age ideas of spiritualism and unity with nature.³⁹ In the vendor booths, symbols from Celtic myths abound, in statuettes, jewelry, t-shirts, wall hangings, and leather journals. A particular favorite is the Green Man, a creature usually depicted as a face made out of oak leaves. The Green Man is a type of forest guardian, and can be anything from a type of Celtic bogeyman to a neo-pagan symbol of fertility and life.⁴⁰ The majority of festivalgoers interested in purchasing Green Man-adorned merchandise is not necessarily familiar with the myths, and may buy products because they like the way they look, or because it makes them feel connected to an ancient, mysterious past.

Other, more generic fantasy creatures can be seen in abundance, including dragons, unicorns, fairies, mermaids, wizards, elves, and leprechauns. Like the Green Man, these creatures are available for sale in every conceivable form, from jewelry to clothing to home décor. Some vendors sell walking sticks carved to look like wizard staffs, including the staffs of Gandalf and Saruman from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy,

³⁹ Taylor, *Global Pop*, 4-7.

⁴⁰ John Satchell, “The Green Man in Cumbria,” in *Folklore* 110 (1999), 98-99.

and, of course, the replica weapons describe earlier. Wizard hats from both *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* are popular items, as well, as are more generic witch hats and Viking helmets. Other vendors sell handmade costumes, usually stylized Renaissance or medieval in design.

Much of the current trend of dressing up as either specific fantasy characters or more general fantasy archetypes comes from the “cosplay” culture, a term coined from “costume play,” which has its roots in Japanese anime and manga (animation and comic book) conventions.⁴¹ Although “Cosplay” is a fairly recent development at various comic book, science fiction, and fantasy conventions such as ComicCon in San Diego or Gallifrey One, the *Doctor Who* convention in Los Angeles, it is rapidly gaining in strength and popularity.⁴² Like Scottish festivals, such conventions have a culture all their own, and “cosplay” is a major element of it. Although dressing in costume is nothing new, “cosplay” involves not just dressing up as a specific character, usually from a movie, television show, video game, or comic book, but also acting as that character and, ideally, staying in character for the entire time.⁴³ Handmade costumes are preferred, although store-bought costumes or accessories are allowed, especially if they are high-quality replicas. The ultimate goal is to be as accurate to the original character as possible.

“Cosplay” at a Scottish festival is generally confined to fantasy archetypes, rather than specific characters. Thus, while the occasional Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the*

⁴¹ Hank Stuever, “What Would Godzilla Say?” *The Washington Post Online* (February 14, 2000), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/feed/a49427-2000feb14.htm> (accessed November 21, 2012).

⁴² Henry Jenkins, “Superpowered Fans: The Many Worlds of San Diego’s Comic-Con,” *Boom: A Journal of California* 2/2 (Summer 2012), 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Caribbean or Xena from the fantasy television show may be seen at a festival, most prefer to dress up as their own version of warriors, wizards, fairies, or Renaissance Fair “wenches.” Enough vendors sell different costuming elements for regular festivalgoers to assemble complete fantasy wardrobes. Often, it seems as if dressing in costume is an excuse to wear as little as is legally possible, for women in low-cut, tightly-cinched dresses and shirtless men in kilts are common features of a festival.⁴⁴ At every Scottish festival there is a “court” set up re-enacting that of Mary, Queen of Scots, complete with guards, ladies in waiting, pages, courtiers, and Queen Mary herself. They wander the festivals in authentic period costumes, often in ninety-degree or more weather. While an argument might be made that they are taking part in a form of “cosplay,” it is not at all certain that these re-enactors would appreciate such a label.

Fantasy “cosplay” is not the only magical element of Scottish festivals. Those interested in learning about or practicing magic can buy sets of tarot cards and incense holders with Celtic designs, stones carved with runes, amulets with various pagan symbols, and books on Celtic myths, magic, and spells. Often there will be a booth set up offering either fortune-telling or palm-reading, or both. Many festivalgoers and vendors alike are quite proud of the pagan elements of festival culture and Scottish history. T-shirt declaring the wearer to be an “Unorthodox Pagan” or with sayings attributed to “The Druid” are for sale at every festival.⁴⁵ In addition to the Green Man, elements from darker Celtic mythology such as the Wild Hunt (usually manifesting as

⁴⁴ Jenkins noted a similar phenomenon in his article on ComicCon, postulating that it allows “nerds” to feel “sexy.”

⁴⁵ One of my favorite quotes proclaims that the wearer is “Diagonally Parked in a Parallel Universe.”

men with stag antlers) are displayed, and there is a general fascination with the pagan aspects of ancient Celtic rituals, both historical and invented.

In an attempt to take advantage of the New Age, magic-infused Celtic psyche that runs more and more through modern Scottish-festival culture, Disney launched an extensive advertising campaign for its movie *Brave*, which was released on June 22, 2012. The movie was set in a semi-medieval, fantasy version of the Scottish Highlands, so the decision to aim a marketing campaign at Scottish festivalgoers was a shrewd one. This campaign featured collectable posters and post cards, cardboard fans, and banners, all emblazoned with images from the movie. The movie premiere in Los Angeles, in addition to speakers from the Pixar Company, which animated the movie, included performances by pipe bands and Scottish dancers.⁴⁶

The promotional campaign was especially strong at ScotsFest, which was held the month before the movie came out. Little girls and grown women alike dressed up (or perhaps “cosplayed”) as Merida, the main character, and the aggregate winners in every competitive event, from piping and drumming to Scottish dancing, won a pair of tickets to the premiere. In addition to Merida in *Brave*, the characters of Hawkeye in *The Avengers* and Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* both favored archery in combat. These three movies came out relatively close together and, together with the archery featured in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, helped to generate interest in archery

⁴⁶ “‘Brave’ Premiere Shows off Dolby Theatre—and Pixar’s Hopes for a Recovery,” *The Wrap: Covering Hollywood* (June 19, 2012), <http://www.thewrap.com/movies/column-post/brave-premiere-shows-dolby-theatre-and-pixars-version-disney-princess-movie-44811> (accessed November 21, 2012).

as a sport.⁴⁷ This interest was evident at both ScotsFest in May and at the Vista Games in San Diego, which were held the following month. As a result, archery booths, as well as the sale of toy bow and arrow sets, did extremely well at both games.

All of this magic and fantasy role-playing seems a far cry from the traditional, almost staid, Victorian-inspired representations of Scots in their kilts, Prince Charlie jackets, ghillie brogues (notoriously uncomfortable leather shoes that lace around the ankle), knit hose (knee-high socks), and military-esque Glengarry bonnets (narrow, brimless caps with badges representing clans or bands, sometimes unflatteringly referred to as “soda-jerk” hats). Certainly a woman in a tightly-laced leather bodice, raggedly-hemmed flowing skirts, and glitter-dusted fairy wings appears slightly incongruous when standing next to a re-enactor in full regimental regalia. Yet both are integral parts of modern Scottish-festival culture, and both are, at least in their own opinion, expressing legitimate variations of a Celtic identity.

Conclusion

Modern concepts of the “Celtic,” sometimes influenced by Hollywood, and sometimes influencing Hollywood, help to shape Scottish festivals into a rich and vibrant experience. While they are not strictly accurate to historic customs, and while they are sometimes in danger of succumbing to an excess of commercialization, modern Scottish festivals are more accessible to the general public. Thus, although early festivals in the United States were held so that Scottish immigrants and their descendants could socialize

⁴⁷ Tim Reynolds, “Archery Hits Its Mark in London,” *The Spokesman-Review* (August 12, 2012), <http://m.spokesman.com/stories/2012/aug/04/archery-hits-its-mark-in-london/> (accessed November 21, 2012).

and celebrate a common heritage, Scottish festivals today are opportunities for anyone interested, however tenuously, in the “Celtic” to learn more and meet others who share their interests. Whether festivalgoers come to learn about their own history and culture, act out warrior roles, or represent a favorite fantasy character, Scottish festivals provide a welcoming space to do so, and allow them to meet many like-minded individuals.

Part of the “Celtic mystique” is that expressions of the Celtic, whether in music and art or as a mindset and way of life, transcend borders.⁴⁸ As a result, anyone can claim either Celtic descent or, at the very least, an affinity with the Celtic. While many scholars, such as ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor, dismiss this affinity as an effort on the part of white Americans to claim an ethnic identity,⁴⁹ they do not account for the popularity of the Celtic with minorities. Thus, while the majority of festivalgoers are still people of Scottish descent, there are an increasing number of attendees of all ethnic backgrounds. This development of Scottish festivals, from exclusively Scottish clan picnics to multicultural celebrations of the Celtic, will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *Global Pop*, 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Two: The History of ScotsFest

Scottish festivals have a long history, both in Scotland and North America. Indeed, anywhere in the world that Scots have emigrated, there is sure to be at least one, and often several, festivals throughout the year. In the United States, highland games have taken place since the mid-1800s, and some of those first festivals are still held today. Modern festivals, however, are far more elaborate than early festivals, requiring a year to plan. Large festivals such as ScotsFest and Pleasanton, two of the biggest and oldest festivals in the United States, started work on 2013's festivals the day after 2012's were over.

American Scottish festivals were not always so involved. Many early festivals were simply day-long picnics designed to allow Scots to socialize. Scottish festivals were hosted by Scottish societies, which were in turn established to provide social and financial support for newly arrived Scots.⁵⁰ Indeed, compared to festivals in Scotland, festivals in the United States are a relatively recent product of a long history of Scottish immigration. Scots have immigrated almost since the beginning of an English presence on the North American continent, though the increase in Scottish colonists was slower than that of their English counterparts. As with English immigrants, there were a number of motivations for Scottish immigration, and this migration was not always voluntary.

Through the centuries in Scotland, the people faced periodic famines, wars, religious persecution, and oppression by their English neighbors.⁵¹ This was incentive

⁵⁰ Ferenc Morton Szasz, "Scots in the North American West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 51/1 (Spring 2001), 63; David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607-1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 36.

⁵¹ Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*, 13.

enough to emigrate, but prior to the seventeenth century, Scottish immigration was directed mainly toward Europe and Ireland, rather than America.⁵² There was not a lot of inducement for Scots to travel overseas to America when the Netherlands, Poland, and Ulster (Northern Ireland) were so much closer.⁵³ It was not until the mid-seventeenth century that there was a significant impetus for Scottish emigration to the colonies, and much of that momentum was derived from the transportation of prisoners and religious dissenters by the English government.⁵⁴ Colonial America was a popular destination for deported “political, religious, and criminal undesirables,” and Scots made up a significant number of these “undesirables.”⁵⁵ The first major group of Scots to be transported to the colonies as prisoners consisted of men and women arrested by Oliver Cromwell in the aftermath of the English Civil War.⁵⁶ To this day, Cromwell, if not quite viewed as the devil incarnate, is seen as the scourge of both the Irish and Scottish, and he enjoys an unshaken reputation for villainy at festivals.

Scotland and the English colonies in America took as great an interest in the Civil War as did England itself, and faced they many of the same repercussions. All took sides in the conflict between the British Crown and Parliament, but not everyone backed the winning side. Scotland for the most part supported Parliament in their rebellion against Charles I, although they condemned his execution.⁵⁷ Later, however, Scotland supported

⁵² Ibid., 10-16.

⁵³ Ibid., 12-13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 28, 33.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 33-34.

⁵⁷ Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community: Revisiting Toleration and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 87; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*, 33.

Charles II as the rightful king in place of his executed father, and Cromwell invaded Scotland with the Parliamentary army and defeated the Scottish army before Charles could take the throne.⁵⁸ It was after this battle, and the battles that followed it, that large numbers of Scots were deported to the colonies.⁵⁹ Cromwell set up his own government to replace Charles, which was known as the Protectorate.⁶⁰ He was particularly suspicious of Scottish Presbyterians, both because they had fought for Charles and because he disagreed with their theology. Although Cromwell's new government ostensibly promised toleration for differing viewpoints, in reality Cromwell reserved the right to restrict any religious practices with which he disagreed.⁶¹ Many Scots found themselves on their way to New England and Virginia as indentured servants as a result.

Indentured servitude was one of the main ways of life for many America-bound Scots. It was a means of disposing of troublemakers, such as those who fought against Cromwell in the 1650s.⁶² Some Scots became indentured servants voluntarily, as a way to pay for passage to the colonies and have a chance for a new life once their period of service was done.⁶³ In 1657 one of the earliest Scottish societies, the Scots Charitable Society of Boston, was founded "for the relief of Scotchmen" to provide support for the Scots as they were released from their service contracts.⁶⁴ Once their time was up, many of these Scots remained in New England or moved to settle in other colonies.⁶⁵ Few

⁵⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 33, 35.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*, 33, 35.

⁶³ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34, 54.

returned to Scotland. Many could not afford to, and with the land and opportunities available in the colonies, few wanted to.⁶⁶

The Civil War was not the last time transportation was used rid the English government of Scottish troublemakers. In the late seventeenth century, there was an uprising among a branch of Presbyterians known as the Covenanters.⁶⁷ Covenanters believed the church should be run by Presbyterian synods (church assemblies), instead of by bishops and the English crown.⁶⁸ They were willing to fight for their cause, and some were willing to murder—the assassination of St. Andrew's archbishop James Sharp by a group of Covenanters led to the battle of Bothwell Bridge and instigated the persecution of Covenanters by other Protestants and the British government.⁶⁹

The Duke of York led the British army against the remaining Covenanters, necessitating their flight from Scotland.⁷⁰ Those captured by the army, like the Civil War prisoners of two decades earlier, were transported to the American colonies to be disposed of as indentured servants.⁷¹ Covenanters who managed to escape the army often ended up in America as well, though as refugees and heroes, rather than convicts and servants.⁷² Many Scots came to the American colonies because of economic reasons, not just as a result of deportation or to escape religious or political persecution. Emigrants were drawn by the promise that they could obtain land and wealth more easily in the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 34, 50.

⁶⁷ Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 11.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11, 18.

⁷¹ Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*, 39.

⁷² Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed*, 18.

colonies than they could in Scotland, or even England or Ireland.⁷³ However, not all of these immigrants were overly concerned with the legality of their livelihoods. Many Scots, like other colonists, engaged in smuggling and piracy as an easy way to get rich.⁷⁴

Colonists who benefitted from the contraband cheerfully turned a blind eye to the proceedings.⁷⁵ The British government tried to enforce their shipping laws, seizing ships and charging the captains with smuggling, but their efforts met with only mixed success.⁷⁶ Some colonists chose to engage in outright piracy rather than smuggling. Successful ports in colonies such as New York were ideal targets for attack by both the French and pirates.⁷⁷ To discourage this, the British government began licensing privateers, a move that perhaps was a little too successful, as Dobson observed: “the involvement of important figures in New York enabled many of the privateers to diversify into piracy in the knowledge that they would receive official protection.”⁷⁸ Several Scots took advantage of this offer, including the infamous William Kidd, who immigrated to New York in 1688.⁷⁹ Kidd was hired by a joint-stock company to be the captain of the privateer ship *Adventure Galley*, but soon turned from privateer to pirate. He was caught, convicted of piracy, and hung in 1701.⁸⁰ His story does not have nearly the same popularity at Scottish festivals that Wallace and Bonnie Prince Charlie enjoy, and pirates at festivals are far more likely to channel Captain Sparrow than Captain Kidd.

⁷³ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁵ Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*, 53-54.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Immigration to the colonies in the eighteenth century continued in much the same manner as it had in the seventeenth. Scots came mostly as indentured servants or to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered in America.⁸¹ However, in 1715 and again in 1745, the Jacobite Rebellions, the second led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, “resulted in about two thousand Scots setting in the American colonies, the majority as involuntary exiles.”⁸² The captured Jacobites were deported to the colonies as indentured servants, as the Civil War prisoners and Covenanters had been in the seventeenth century.⁸³ Often, the prisoners would protest their status, refuse to be indentured, or simply run away from their masters.⁸⁴ Sometimes they had a sympathetic ear in the local governor, especially if he was a fellow Scot.⁸⁵ Other times, however, they could only endure their situation and look forward to the day when they would be released from service.⁸⁶

Many of the Jacobites were Highlanders, and, in an effort to prevent such an uprising from occurring again, the British government set out to “destroy the traditional social structure of the Highlands and to integrate it as fully as possible with the British economy and society” through the Act of Proscription and the Highland Clearances discussed in the previous chapter.⁸⁷ These policies made it increasingly difficult for the Highlanders to survive as they had in the past, and many chose to immigrate to the colonies “rather than be assimilated into the culture and society of Lowland Scotland,”

⁸¹ Ibid., 86-87.

⁸² Ibid., 92.

⁸³ Ibid., 92-93, 39.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 86-87, 95.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 153.

which was already very similar to England.⁸⁸ So many Scots abandoned the Highlands that the British government imposed restrictions on Scottish immigration, and one landlord even had five of his tenant farmers imprisoned rather than allow them to carry out their plans to break their leases and immigrate to America.⁸⁹

Although immigration halted briefly during the American Revolution, it resumed as soon as the war was over.⁹⁰ Thereafter, Scots were encouraged to immigrate to Canada, rather than to the former colonies.⁹¹ There they joined Scottish loyalists and discharged Highland regiments who had already left the United States for Canada.⁹² Many Scots, recalling the disastrous results of opposing the English crown at the battle of Culloden, chose to remain loyal to England in the American Revolution—and, once again, backed the losing side.⁹³ Not all Scots, however, remained loyal. A significant number of Scottish colonists fought for the American side in the Revolution and were able to remain in the States when the war was over.⁹⁴

Despite the push for Scottish immigration to Canada, Scots continued to immigrate to the United States after the Revolution. The American colonies could no longer be used as the British Empire's convenient dumping ground for political and religious prisoners, but Scots continued to arrive throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century in a steady, if thin, trickle. Their small numbers and the fact that they did not form exclusively Scottish settlements in the States or later in the Western territories

⁸⁸ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 155.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 193.

⁹² Ibid., 187.

⁹³ Ibid., 162.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

encouraged Scottish immigrants to develop a unique ethnic identity.⁹⁵ This identity, writes historian Ferenc Szasz, was constructed,

Partly as literature (Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns); partly as religion (some Catholics, some Episcopalians, some Freethinkers, but mostly Presbyterians); partly as costume (the kilt and other aspects of 'the garb of Old Gaul'); partly as language (some Gaelic but mostly Lowland Scots); partly as special foods (haggis, oatcakes); and of course, a 'wee dram,' especially significant for a culture that elevated social drinking virtually to an art form.⁹⁶

In addition, holidays such as St. Andrew's Day on November 30 and later Robert (Robbie) Burns' Day on January 25 were especially important dates in the Scottish-American calendar, and they became central to Scottish-American social events.⁹⁷

Over the years, Scottish-American celebrations of Burns' Day evolved into the most visible form of Scottish heritage veneration, the Scottish festival. Burns' Day, unlike St. Andrew's Day, is still regularly observed, but it is only one day—really, one night—a year, while Scottish festivals are scattered throughout the calendar. Moreover, Burns' Day celebrations, while not exclusively Scottish affairs, certainly require more than a casual acquaintance with Scottish customs and the life of Robbie Burns, all of which are incorporated into the observance of a Burns' Night Supper. Conversely, there is no special knowledge required to attend and enjoy a festival, and you do not even have to be Scottish. People of all cultures can be found at any given festival, and all are welcome.

⁹⁵ Szasz, "Scots in the North American West," 52, 61-62.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 61-62.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 62-63.

Clan Picnics

The clans have always been important to American Scottish festivals. Today, Scottish celebrations such as St. Andrew's Day and Burns' Night Suppers are almost always organized by clan societies, and, like modern Scottish festivals, they are a far bigger production in the United States than they are in Scotland. Indeed, St. Andrew's Day and Burns' Day are to the Scottish what St. Patrick's Day is to the Irish—a festivity more for the Scots abroad than for those in Scotland.⁹⁸ Although today Scottish festivals are central to the observance and dissemination of Scottish heritage, clan societies still host other clan-centered activities, including Burns' Night Suppers, clan Christmas parties, clan yacht clubs, and clan trips to Scotland.⁹⁹ Clan societies started out as Scottish social clubs, and they remain so today. They gave Scottish immigrants the chance to “meet and share experiences, eat familiar food, hear familiar music, [and] dance.”¹⁰⁰ Clan picnics were opportunities for clan members to visit with each other, especially those who lived farther away. Often, clans in the United States became networks of extended family.

The Costa Mesa ScotsFest grew out of the Clan Cameron and Caledonian Club social gatherings. Annual picnics were held by Clan Cameron on Labor Day in the 1920s and 30s, and were closely related to the Caledonian Club events held on the Fourth of July.¹⁰¹ The gatherings were held in various parks throughout Southern California.

⁹⁸ Szasz, “Scots in the North American West,” 63.

⁹⁹ “Unite Across the Western Sea,” *The Annual Magazine of the Clan Cameron Association of North America*, 5 (2012): 1.

¹⁰⁰ Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Cathy Cameron, “Looking Back...United Scottish Society Highland Games,” in *United Scottish Society's 50th Annual Highland Gathering and Games: Golden Anniversary* (1982), 5.

There were some dancing competitions as well as piping and drumming exhibitions at these gatherings, but the main events, outside of socializing, were athletic competitions.¹⁰² The competitions included track-and-field events as well as the more readily recognizable Scottish events.¹⁰³ The picnics, as well as the early festivals, were truly examples of “Gathering and Games.”

The first festival was held in 1927, making Costa Mesa the fourth oldest continuous Scottish festival in the United States.¹⁰⁴ However, in its early incarnation, ScotsFest was the Los Angeles Highland Games, and it was held in stadiums and parks from Los Angeles to Long Beach.¹⁰⁵ In 1940, the games committee turned down an invitation to hold the festival on Catalina Island, on the grounds that it was better to “remain in Santa Monica ‘where so many of the Scots reside.’”¹⁰⁶ The games were held throughout the Great Depression and were only halted briefly by World War II.¹⁰⁷ The organizing committee resumed meeting as soon as the war was over.

The initial festivals were essentially still the clan picnics, but open to the public. They were only one day long, and, like the picnics, featured athletics, piping, and dancing. By the late 30s, the games were charging for advertisement in their program and were regularly using raffles to help raise funds to pay for the games. In 1939, the games cost \$606.62 to stage and made a total of \$821.95.¹⁰⁸ This is a far cry from the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America*, 214.

¹⁰⁵ “About the USS,” *United Scottish Society*, <http://www.unitedscottishsociety.com/about.htm>, accessed May 15, 2012; Cameron, “Looking Back...United Scottish Society Highland Games,” 5-7.

¹⁰⁶ Cameron, “Looking Back...United Scottish Society Highland Games,” 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 5.

cost of producing ScotsFest today, which reaches well into hundreds of thousands of dollars. By 1946, the first festival held after World War II, admission prices were “60 cents for adults and 30 cents for children over twelve.”¹⁰⁹ Today’s prices are close to twenty dollars.

Although women were heavily involved in the planning and execution of the games, especially in regards to the highland-dancing competitions, in the early years of the festival, the games committee was made up solely of men. Women could bring suggestions and complaints before the committee, and they were “invited to help with food sales and raffles at the Games,” but they were not allowed to serve on the committee.¹¹⁰ It was not until 1949 that the Lady Cameron Lodge and the Heatherbell Lodge, two women’s leagues associated with the clan societies, were allowed to send delegates to the games committee. The first two women on the committee were Bessie Hendry and Dorothy Lewis, both of whom were active in clan events.¹¹¹

United Scottish Society

The United Scottish Societies were incorporated on January 15, 1952, which “gave legal sanction to the activities that had been conducted for many years by the Highland Games Committee.”¹¹² The games were growing steadily, and that same year they moved from the Rancho Cienega Stadium in Los Angeles to Sentinel Field in Inglewood to accommodate the larger numbers.¹¹³ They moved again in 1956 to the even larger Olive Memorial Stadium in Burbank, but the location and the time of year—the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Efforts were made to find more information on both women, but were largely unsuccessful.

¹¹² Ibid., 8.

¹¹³ Ibid.

games had been held in August since 1946—conspired to make the heat almost unbearable.¹¹⁴ Threatened with boycotts by several bands, the games moved to the cooler Cosair Field on the Santa Monica City College campus, where they stayed for the next nineteen years.¹¹⁵ This, with the addition of moving the date forward from August to late June, ensured steady growth for the games over that period of time.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the area was notable for its large population of Scots, which had been an attraction for the smaller games back in the 1940s.¹¹⁷

During the 1960s and 70s, high taxes and a poor economy led to a mass exodus from the United Kingdom as people from Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland moved to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.¹¹⁸ This period, as well as a similar time in the 1950s, was known as the “Brain Drain” due to the number of highly-educated British immigrants.¹¹⁹ Many of those immigrants ended up in Southern California, where there was already a strong Scottish population. They entered into the Scottish social scene, joining the clubs, societies, and associations and gathering in the British and Irish pubs that peppered, and continue to pepper, the Southern California landscape. In addition to the Clan Cameron Society and the Caledonian Club, Southern California was home to The Queen Mary Club, the British and Dominion Club, the Mayflower Club, the

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁸ Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012); Eamonn Butler, “British Brain Drain Strikes Again,” *The Wall Street Journal* (March 10, 2011), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576190191632378896.html> (accessed February 7, 2013).

¹¹⁹ Robert Winnett, “Biggest Brain Drain from UK in 50 Years,” *The Telegraph* (February 21, 2008), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1579345/Biggest-brain-drain-from-UK-in-50-years.html> (accessed February 7, 2013).

Transatlantic Brides and Parents Association, the Daughters of Scotia, and the Daughters of the British Empire.¹²⁰

These new arrivals also began attending the local games. They and their children participated in the various competitions, from piping and drumming to highland dancing. Some joined local pipe bands and performed in the community, while others traveled to festivals across California, Arizona, and Nevada to find more opportunists to compete.¹²¹ Often, it was not until these Scots left their homeland for the United States or other countries that they learned how to play the pipes and drums or dance.¹²² However, they continue to practice these hard-earned skills, and today many have passed those skills on to their children and grandchildren.

By the 1970s, the United Scottish Society Highland Games was the largest in California, thanks both to the Scottish-Americans already in California and the newly arrived Scots. The larger attendance and greater income meant that the games had a larger budget—over \$40,000 by 1976—that it could use to expand the games.¹²³ Over the nineteen years that the festival was held in Santa Monica, the Games Committee added more competitive events in piping, drumming, and dancing, imported judges from Scotland, as well as Canada and the United States, and began hosting soccer and rugby matches.¹²⁴ The number of competitors increased as well, and bands came from across

¹²⁰ Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Cameron, "Looking Back...United Scottish Society Highland Games," 8.

¹²⁴ Cameron, "A Diamond Jubilee Tradition...Looking Back Through 75 Years of United Scottish Society Highland Games," in *United Scottish Society, Inc. Highland Games: 75th Annual Highland Gathering and Festival* (2007), 7.

the United States, as well as from Canada and even New Zealand, to compete.¹²⁵ Massed bands featured up to a dozen bands, and there were so many vendors that “limits had to be imposed due to space limitations.”¹²⁶ The festival’s growth necessitated a larger facility, and in 1977 the games moved once again, this time to Long Beach Veterans Memorial Stadium.¹²⁷

During the 1980s, many Scottish-Americans left Southern California for Northern California, Oregon, Washington, and Colorado. This was due to several factors. Some left the area to take jobs in the quickly-growing computer industry.¹²⁸ Others, however, simply “no longer felt comfortable” in Southern California as a result of the growing Hispanic population and the changes to the area that it inevitably brought and chose to leave instead.¹²⁹ Few respond readily or well to change, whatever their background, and the Scots, notwithstanding the welcoming atmosphere of Highland games, are not immune to this struggle. Despite this migration—or even evacuation—the United Scottish Society Highland Games continued to grow.

The year 1982 was the fiftieth anniversary of the festival and brought with it some significant changes. There was yet another change of venue, this time to the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa.¹³⁰ More importantly, the games expanded from the one-day event they had been since the 1920s to a two-day event, affording more time for

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012).

¹²⁹ Cameron, “A Diamond Jubilee Tradition...Looking Back Through 75 Years of United Scottish Society Highland Games,” 7.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 8.

competitions and entertainment and creating a greater attendance capacity.¹³¹ The name changed as well, from “Highland Games” to “Highland Gathering and Festival.”¹³²

There were over twenty bands and seventy clans represented at the festival during the 1980s and 1990s as the games continued to grow. By 1990 the games had moved to their current date of Memorial Day Weekend in May, affording festivalgoers a convenient three-day weekend to attend (and recover from) the games.

In 2005, the games moved from the popular location of Costa Mesa, its home of twenty-two years, to the Los Angeles County Fairgrounds, or “Fairplex,” in Pomona.¹³³ In many ways, this was a repeat of the move to Burbank in 1956. Fairplex could not boast the same amount of shade as the older Orange County Fairgrounds. Its lack of shade and its more inland location combined to make games far hotter than they had been in Costa Mesa, and, when added to the awkward and expensive parking, this ensured that the Fairplex was a highly unpopular location all around. Attendance dropped, and once again bands threatened to boycott the games. Much to everyone’s relief, the Games returned to Costa Mesa in 2008. During their now-infamous tenure at the Pomona Fairplex, the games, which are commonly referred to as “the Costa Mesa games” or “Costa Mesa,” were briefly dubbed “Costa Mona” by regular festivalgoers.

ScotsFest

With its eightieth Anniversary in 2012, the festival changed its name from the cumbersome United Scottish Society Highland Gathering and Games to the more

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 7.

¹³³ Ibid., 8.

succinct ScotsFest.¹³⁴ It has grown from its early clan-picnic days to being one of the two largest festivals in California, as well as one of the largest in the United States. The 2012 festival featured over ninety vendors and Scottish societies, as well as seventy clans, over thirteen entertainment groups—including the 1st Marine Division Band—and nearly one thousand pipers and drummers, in addition to the thousands of average festivalgoers.

Even before the 2012 games, when Disney made such a concerted effort to market their movie *Brave* to Scotland-oriented festivalgoers, the Costa Mesa games enjoyed attention from Hollywood and its celebrities. In the first fifty years alone of the festival, stars such as Roddy McDowell, Greer Garson, Fred MacMurry, June Haver, Roy Rodgers, Dale Evans, Alan Young, Gene Kelly, and June Lockhart all made appearances at the games.¹³⁵ In addition, politicians from across California attended, as well as authentic clan chieftains visiting from Scotland. While movie stars have the benefit of greater notoriety and name recognition, quite often, the chiefs imported directly from Scotland enjoy as much or more celebrity status as the actual celebrities. For the dedicated festivalgoer, the mists of the Highlands are far more impressive than the glitz of Hollywood.

Conclusion

The United Scottish Society ScotsFest has changed greatly from its early clan picnic days. No longer is it simply a chance for expatriate Scots to gather and socialize.

¹³⁴ This seems to be a growing trend among Scottish festivals, as the 2013 Queen Mary Games also dubbed themselves “ScotsFest.”

¹³⁵ Cameron, “Looking Back...United Scottish Society Highland Games,” 11.

Instead, it is a celebration of Scottish culture and heritage, an open invitation to become Scottish for a day (or two), and even a shrewd marketing opportunity for Scotland-oriented merchandise and media. At its heart, however, it is still a place for Scottish-Americans to come together, eat Scottish food, play Scottish games, and hear Scottish music. In the end, perhaps not much has changed after all. In the next chapter, I will focus on the music of ScotsFest, which is one of the most iconic and memorable elements of any Scottish festival.

Chapter Three: The Music of ScotsFest

One of the most iconic elements of any Scottish festival is the music. From the bagpipes and drums to the dancing to the entertainment, music permeates every aspect of a festival. It is the first thing festivalgoers hear upon arrival, and it often echoes in their ears long after they leave. In addition to the piping and drumming competitions, which start with the first solo at eight in the morning and run until the last band finishes competing around five in the afternoon, there are stages scattered across the festival grounds dedicated to musical groups that perform throughout the day.

Although all the music at a festival is in Celtic in origin, from Ireland, Scotland, and occasionally from England and Wales, there is a wide variety of interpretations. These interpretations range from the traditional, including piping, drumming, dancing, and folk-style groups, to the Celtic rock groups that blend traditional instruments and melodies with electric guitars, drum sets, and fast tempos. Entertainment stages are usually segregated between traditional and rock groups. Each stage is shared between two or three groups that play a similar style of music. Thus, a solo fiddler such as Alasdair Fraser might share a stage with the fiddle-playing, step-dancing, high-energy family group Celtic Spring, but never with a loud, Celtic-rock-fusion group such as Bad Haggis. For my study, I will refer to three main groups of festival music: Piping and Drumming, Celtic Folk, and Celtic Rock. Celtic Folk is something of a catch-all category, and includes everything from Highland dancing to traditional entertainment groups. In addition, I will briefly address the growing Tribal Celtic movement, which falls between Celtic Folk and Celtic Rock.

Competition is the most formal version of music at a Scottish festival and usually has the most specialized audience. This is true of solo piping and drumming, Scottish dancing, and the pipe bands. More casual festivalgoers are drawn to the highly visible entertainment stages, which are usually clustered around the center of the festival. However, smaller, traditional-music groups can sometimes be found tucked away in the Clan Tent or vendors' areas. Often, they are heritage groups such as the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, which gives demonstrations of traditional group dances and teaches festivalgoers simple dance figures. Watching such a demonstration is like observing a Jane Austen ball come to life, only with men in kilts instead of knee breeches and women in white dresses and tartan sashes instead of empire-waist ball gowns and elbow-length gloves. Groups such as these perform in the hopes of attracting new members and as a way to keep traditional skills alive. In addition, various clan members get together throughout the weekend to play music for fun, or to attract festivalgoers to their tents.

There are many names that long-time festivalgoers recognize and expect to see at a festival. Among traditional performers, Alex Beaton is one of the oldest and best-known names. Other traditional-style names are Alasdair Fraser, Celtic Spring, and Highland Way. Groups such as The Wicked Tinkers and Brother, as Tribal Celtic bands, fall in between the Celtic Folk and Celtic Rock styles, in that they play traditional instruments, but play them loud and fast. Well-known Celtic Rock groups include Bad Haggis, Stand Easy, Dropkick Murphy's, Flogging Molly, and Tempest. In the Piping and Drumming world, the most high-profile band is the LA Scots, California's sole

Grade 1 band. However, any band, regardless of grade, that has attended the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow enjoys special prestige among their competition and audience. Often, they do not have to win, or even place well. The fact that they competed in Scotland is prize enough, especially in the eyes of those who have not gone to Scotland themselves.

Some festivalgoers have rather eclectic tastes and will sample every type of music available at a festival over the course of the weekend, but generally there is not a lot of intersect between musical preferences. Both Celtic Folk and Celtic Rock audiences overlap with Piping and Drumming audiences, but hardly ever with each other. Audiences of solo piping and drumming competitions are generally other competitors, or family and friends of the competitors, and will often watch Celtic Folk or Celtic Rock groups later in the day, depending on their predilection. The competitors themselves, if they have time, often have favorite groups that they hope to see during the festival. Although by no means a definitive division, audiences of Celtic Folk tend to be older than those of Celtic Rock; however, there is a healthy amount of younger festivalgoers at the more traditional stages, and older at the rock stages. Likewise, some of the music groups, both traditional and rock, are more heavily involved with alcohol consumption than others.

Piping and Drumming

The most significant musical aspect of a festival is undoubtedly the piping and drumming competitions. For many competitors, who sometimes feel as if they have attended far too many festivals in the course of their careers, competition is the sole

reason for attending a festival. Indeed, if they are in a band, competition may well be the *only* thing they do in during a festival. However, before I address the specifics of competition, it might be expedient to first consider the actual instruments, especially for those unfamiliar with bagpipes and Scottish-style drumming. I will not go into the history of the instruments here, but I will describe them and how they function.

A bagpipe is a reeded woodwind instrument. It consists of three drones, which are long hollow tubes that rest on the piper's shoulder, a chanter, on which the melody is played, and a blowpipe, which is used to fill the bag with air. Everything is connected to the bag, and the airflow is regulated by alternating between blowing into the bag and squeezing with the arm. The ability to keep a steady pressure is the first thing a piper learns once they get their pipes, and it is something that they work on—and sometimes struggle with—throughout their careers. There are four reeds in a bagpipe: one in each of the three drones, and one in the chanter. The drone reeds are single-bladed or “tongued” reeds, and are usually synthetic, as they are more stable than traditional cane reeds. The chanter reed is a double-bladed reed similar to a bassoon reed, although smaller, and it is always cane.

The bag is usually made out of some kind of hide. Elkhide is the most popular in the United States, but top level pipers and bands prefer sheepskin. The tone is affected by the type of material used, and sheepskin gives the best sound. Similarly, cane reeds give the best sound in the drones. However, sheepskin bags and cane reeds are very sensitive and require constant fine-tuning, which is why only the more advanced pipers are willing to put in the work to keep them playable. Synthetic bags are available, just as

there are synthetic drone reeds, and are the easiest to use and maintain. Hide bags of any kind require the regular application of a substance called “seasoning,” which is used to keep the bags airtight. Any sort of leak makes the pipe incredibly difficult to play. Seasoning is rather mysterious, as no one quite knows—or, based on the smell, wants to know—the ingredients used to make it. Nevertheless, it is effective, and unavoidable.

The melody is produced by covering and uncovering holes on the chanter to create the nine notes of the bagpipe scale. The notes are Low G, Low A, B, C, D, E, F, High G, and High A. However, these are not the same notes that a pianist would sound when playing G, A, B, C, D, E, or F on a piano. The closest thing to playing the bagpipe scale on a piano would be to play an A Mixolydian scale, but to start on the G above Middle C rather than on A. Although bagpipe music is notated in treble clef, bagpipes do not use the same tuning system as Western orchestral music. Orchestras tune at A440 Hz, but Low A on a bagpipe is usually between 470 or 480 Hz. Pipers use a special chanter, called a B-flat chanter, in order to play with other instruments, such as a piano.

There are three kinds of drums in Scottish-style drumming: snare drum, tenor drum, and bass drum. The snare drums are the same kind of instrument as marching-band snare drums, but the actual playing style is very different. Tenor drums are slightly larger than snare drums and do not have the snares across the bottom, so the tone is deeper and less rattling. Bass drums are the largest and have the deepest tone. Snare drums are played with drumsticks, and provide dynamics and rhythmic embellishment. Tenor drums are played with soft mallets, which the drummers twirl in complicated patterns. They still play rhythms on the drums, but they primarily provide visual interest.

The bass drum is played with large, soft mallets, and it provides a steady beat to keep both the drum and pipe sections in time with each other.

Most competitions in California are sanctioned by the Western United States Pipe Band Association (WUSPBA), which is the governing association for California, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.¹³⁶ Sanctioning means that solo and band competitions are overseen by the WUSPBA, which monitors band membership, competition eligibility, what kinds of competitions can be held and where, grade standing, and, perhaps most importantly, tabulation of aggregate scores. Participating in a sanctioned competition earns competitors a certain number of points, which are kept track of by the WUSPBA, and placing up to sixth place means that bands and solo competitors get extra points. Competitors can check their aggregate standing throughout the year and see how they place in relation to the rest of their grade. At the end of the year, the highest-ranked competitor in each grade is awarded the WUSPBA Champion of Champions status.¹³⁷ Bands and solo competitors do not have to be members of WUSPBA, but WUSPBA membership is the only way to collect WUSPBA aggregate points. For many, WUSPBA aggregate points help competitors judge their standing in relation to their grade, and help them determine whether or not to move up to a higher grade.

There are still unsanctioned competitions, usually when the competition is just starting out. However, unsanctioned competitions mean that they will not collect

¹³⁶ “Branch Web Pages,” *The Western United States Pipe Band Association*, <http://www.wuspba.org/index.htm>, (accessed February 29, 2013).

¹³⁷ “Announcements Archive: 2009,” *The Western United States Pipe Band Association* (accessed February 29, 2013).

aggregate points, so many competitors prefer only to compete in sanctioned competitions. Because the WUSPBA oversees competitions in a number of different states, competitors can travel to festivals outside their home state and still have their points counted toward the WUSPBA aggregate. The eastern United States has a similar organization, the EUSPBA, and both are in turn part of the ANAPBA, or the Alliance of North American Pipe Band Associations, which oversees pipe band associations across Canada and the United States.¹³⁸

For a solo competitor, a festival begins with their first competition, usually on Saturday morning. Some festivals have Friday afternoon piobaireachd competitions,¹³⁹ but the majority of festivals, including ScotsFest, hold the competitions in the morning on Saturday and Sunday. A solo piper can have anywhere from one to four competitions, either over the two days or all in one, while a drummer usually has two or three competitions on one day. If they compete with a band, then they will have the band competition in the afternoon, preceded by one or two practice sessions earlier in the day and tuning and final rehearsal about an hour before competition.

Competition is arranged in five grades, for both solos and band. I will deal with solo competitions first and address band competitions later, as there are some differences. Grade 5 is for beginning players, who have just started to learn the pipes or drums and want to “wet their feet” in competition. They have just one competition, in which they play a simple tune of their choice. A Grade 5 piper plays a practice chanter, which is

¹³⁸ *Alliance of North American Pipe Band Associations*, <http://www.anapba.org/> (accessed February 29, 2013).

¹³⁹ Piobaireachd is the classical music of the bagpipe and the oldest type of music played on the Great Highland Bagpipe.

similar to a recorder. It is the chanter or melody part of the bagpipe and the blowpipe, without the bag or the drones. All pipers begin on this instrument and continue to use it to learn new tunes. A Grade 5 drummer uses a practice pad, which, like the practice chanter, is the beginning tool for drummers.

Grade 5 competition is the most informal and least intimidating of any competition, and it is a fairly recent development. The first Grade 5 band competition was held in 2010, at the Las Vegas Celtic Gathering and Highland Games, and the first festival in California to hold a Grade 5 competition was the Sacramento Valley Scottish Games and Gathering.¹⁴⁰ Solo Grade 5 competitions are not sanctioned the way that Grade 5 band competitions are, so the decision to hold a Grade 5 solo competition is strictly up to the festival, and there is no cumulative aggregate score for Grade 5 competitions throughout the year.

Both piping and drumming competitions center on bagpipe tunes. Pipers play the actual tunes, while drummers play rhythm scores written to accompany the tunes. Competitions are made up of combinations of marches and dance tunes, collectively known as “light music,” which vary depending on the venue and grade. In addition to the light music, solo pipers also compete in piobaireachd (pronounced “peebrock”), or *ceol mor* (“great music” in Gaelic, pronounced “keyol mohr”).¹⁴¹ Piobaireachd is the classical music of the bagpipe. It consists of a theme, or “ground,” and several variations on the

¹⁴⁰ “WUSPBA 2010 Band Contest Results,” *The Western United States Pipe Band Association* (accessed February 27, 2013).

¹⁴¹ Light music is *ceol beag*, pronounced “keyol beg”.

ground of diverse speeds and difficulty. Piobaireachd can last anywhere from seven to twenty minutes, depending on the tune.

Most pipers and drummers begin competing in Grade 4 rather than 5. Some move on to a higher grade almost immediately, while others stay in Grade 4 for years, or for their entire competing careers. This is true of each grade and is a combination of the competitor's ability and the level of their desire to win competitions. Grade 4 events are usually made up of 2/4 and 6/8 Marches, Slow March or Air, and the ground and first variation of a piobaireachd in piping, as well as 2/4 and 6/8 Marches in drumming. Drummers only play slow airs in band competitions, because slow-air drumming scores are meant to lend drama to what the pipers are playing and are generally not complex enough for solo competition. Grade 3 is a little more complicated, with a Strathspey/Reel set replacing the slow air for pipers, and sometimes adding a hornpipe or jig to the events. Grade 3 drumming also adds a Strathspey/Reel event to the 2/4 and 6/8 March events.

The events for Grade 2 feature a full March/Strathspey/Reel (MSR) set and a Hornpipe/Jig set. Pipers are required to have two 2/4 marches prepared for their MSR, as well as two Piobaireachds. The competitors write the names of their tunes on a card that they hand to the judge before playing, and the judge picks the tune they want to hear. Grade 2 pipers have to be able to play either tune at a moment's notice. Grade 1 events are the same as Grade 2, although the pipers must have two of each type of tune prepared for all of their light-music events and three in piobaireachd. Drummers in every grade are only required to have one tune of each type prepared, and Grade 1 snares can also

compete in a Drum Solo, which is one to three minutes long and unaccompanied by a piper.

In addition to the grades, there are Professional competitions for both piping and drumming, which are a step above Grade 1 in difficulty. Professional pipers must have four of each type of tune for their MSR, three for their Hornpipe/Jig, and four Piobaireachd. Professional drummers in both snare and tenor compete in MSR and Hornpipe Jig, and Professional snares are required to submit two sets for competition, and, like Grade 1 snares, also have a Drum Solo competition of two to five minutes. Professional competitions mean the winning pipers and drummers receive money rather than medals or trophies, usually \$100 or \$150 for first place and descending by \$25 or \$50 for second and third.

Solo piping competitions are strictly between the piper and the judge, but drumming competitions are a little more involved. Snare-drumming competitions require one or two pipers to play whatever tunes accompany the rhythm scores the drummer plays, although the pipers' playing does not figure into the drummer's final score.¹⁴² A tenor-drum competitor also must be accompanied by a piper, and they have the option of having a snare drummer as well, all playing the same tune. Bass-drumming competitions were popular in the early years of Scottish festivals and are coming back into fashion, after being almost nonexistent for several years. Unlike piping and snare- and tenor-drumming competitions, bass drummers are not separated into grades, but simply into

¹⁴² The piper does not even have to have the tune memorized; it is not uncommon to see a drummer, their piper, and someone holding sheet music for the piper at a drumming competition.

Professional and Amateur. Bass-drumming events are only offered at a few competitions throughout the year.

The majority of tunes played in competition, piping and drumming alike, are related in some way to the Highland regiments. Such tunes are often named for officers, regiments, and soldiers' wives and sweethearts, or to commemorate battles. Many were written in the late nineteenth century throughout the twentieth, and most must be a few years old at least before they are considered appropriate for solo competition. However, most drumming scores, while written to accompany the same tunes played by the pipers, are written especially for or by the drummer, and are much more individualized. Usually, the drumming instructor for a band, or a drumming teacher, will write the scores for their students' competitions.

Solo competitions are usually done by noon, giving the competitors just enough time to eat lunch before those who also play in bands must begin preparing for the band competitions in the afternoon. A band must have a minimum of six pipers, two snares, and a bass to compete, and, although tenors are not required, bands have been marked down for not having any. Like solo competitors, bands are separated into five grades. Unlike solos, there are no professional competitions, because the winning bands receive prize money for placing in each grade. This gives bands incentive to compete, and if a band does well enough over the weekend, they can actually have a little profit left over from attending a festival.

As of 2012, Grade 5 bands compete in a Quick March Medley (three or four marches in any time signature) and the March/Slow Air/6/8.¹⁴³ The Grade 4 events are the Quick March Medley and a Timed Medley, in which the band must play several different types of tunes within a time frame of between three and five minutes. The Quick March Medley in both Grade 5 and 4 is timed as well, and must be over 2'45'' and under 4'30''.¹⁴⁴ Finishing under or over time can result in disqualification for the offending band, and members or associates of opposing bands have been known to time the competition themselves and demand a band's disqualification if its time deviates by seconds. Grades 3 through 1 replace the Quick March Medley with an MSR, similar to the higher solo grades. Bands in Grades 2 and 1 are required to have two sets prepared, and it is expected that the tunes played are progressively more difficult the higher the grade. Unlike solo competitions, it is considered acceptable to play new music in band competitions, although sometimes more traditional—that is, older—judges may frown on it and even mark bands down for it.

Band competitions have at least three, and sometimes four judges: one or two piping judges, an ensemble judge, and a drumming judge. The same group of judges presides over all band competitions—and some solo competitions—throughout the festival weekend, although the ensemble judge trades places with either the piping or drumming judge on the second day. One of the requirements for being an ensemble judge is that the judge must be conversant in both piping and drumming, regardless of

¹⁴³ “WUSPBA 2012 Band Contest Results,” *The Western United States Pipe Band Association* (accessed March 7, 2013). In 2011, when WUSPBA was still working out the rules for Grade 5 band competition, Grade 5 bands competed with a Quick March Medley and a Timed Medley, similar to Grade 4.

¹⁴⁴ “WUSPBA Contest Rules,” *The Western United States Pipe Band Association* (accessed March 7, 2013).

their own specialty. It is usually obvious, however, whether an ensemble judge is a piper or a drummer, since the majority of their comments focuses on one section or the other. Although all sections of a band are necessary for competition, it is the ensemble score that takes precedence in case of a tie between two bands.

After all competitions are over, the bands gather for the closing ceremonies. This is usually the bands' least favorite part of the day, because it involves standing for up to an hour, sometimes in the sun, while the games officials talk for a long time about how wonderful the organizers and the games are. At festivals such as ScotsFest, bands parade individually into the grandstand area where massed bands are held, playing a tune of their choice and lining up behind the stage where the officials are. This means that the performers cannot hear what the officials are saying, but they generally only care about hearing the competition results anyway.

In addition to piping and drumming awards, games officials sometimes hand out the awards for dancing and athletics, and, on one infamous occasion, handed out plaques for every single volunteer involved in organizing and running the games.¹⁴⁵ Many bands would be perfectly happy to skip massed bands altogether. The games organizers are aware of this and therefore require all bands to play in the closing ceremonies or forfeit their travel money. The closing ceremonies are more for the festivalgoers than the

¹⁴⁵ This was at the San Diego games, and the bands were not at all happy about standing in the sun for an hour. The bands like it best when they march in, play Scotland the Brave, Highland Laddie, and Amazing Grace (the bare minimum of massed-band music), hear the competition results, and march off. After playing all day, pipe bands become fairly self-centered entities and do not really care about hearing the results in dancing or athletics, or hearing speeches about the volunteers. Often, festivals are judged based on the length of their closing ceremonies; many performers do not like San Diego and Pleasanton, because they have some of the longest closing ceremonies of the festival circuit.

performers, and it is undeniable that the sights and sounds of more than a hundred pipers and drummers playing in unison—or close to unison—are truly inspiring.

Celtic Folk

Apart from Piping and Drumming, traditional-style music can be heard at the dancing competitions and the entertainment stages. Dancers are divided by age and compete in strathspeys, reels, hornpipes, jigs, the sword dance, the *Seann Triubhas* (“Old Trousers,” pronounced “shawn trues”), and the Highland Fling.¹⁴⁶ Most dances are descended from victory celebrations from both clan and regimental battles. The *Seann Triubhas* is a product of the Act of Proscription and its later repeal, and is a stylized representation of kicking off a pair of trousers in favor of a kilt.¹⁴⁷ Like Piping and Drumming, Highland dancing has its own set of rules, sanctioning, and associations. Festivals such as ScotsFest are overseen by the Southern California Highland Dance Association (SCHDA).

Each dancer has several costumes and accessories. The basic Highland dancing costume is a light kilt, a velvet jacket or waistcoat, tartan hose, and soft shoes. The shoes are black, but the rest of the costume is a bright color, usually green, red, blue, or purple, coordinating with the tartan. Unlike the tartans of kilts worn by other competitors and festivalgoers, the tartans of dancing kilts only have two or three colors: white, with thin black stripes and thick strips in the main color of the costume. Other costumes include a sailor suit, for dancing the hornpipe, a stylized Scottish country dancing costume with a

¹⁴⁶ “About Highland Dancing,” *Southern California Highland Dance Association*, <http://www.schda.com/> (accessed March 7, 2013).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

tartan sash for the *Seann Triubhas*, and a stylized Irish peasant costume with an apron, short, frilly skirt, billowy blouse, and hard shoes for the jigs.¹⁴⁸ Another dancing accessory is a pair of dull regimental-style swords for dancing the sword dance. The swords are laid on the stage in an X, and the dancer must dance around them without accidentally kicking them.

Although Highland dancing was originally performed only by men, today the majority of dancers are girls and young women. Highland dancing is similar to gymnastics or figure skating, in that the girls start very young, usually around five or seven years old, and have competition careers that run through their early twenties.¹⁴⁹ A Highland dancer is fairly easy to spot at a festival, even when not in costume. The typical dancer is teenage and slender, with careful makeup, hair pulled into a tight bun high on the back of her head, and, when not in costume, dressed in exercise clothes and Crocs.¹⁵⁰ The few boys who compete in Highland dancing usually wear a black Balmoral bonnet, Prince Charlie jacket, and bowtie with their kilt.

All dancing competitions are accompanied by a piper, who plays the appropriate tune for each type of dance. Usually one or two pipers are hired by the festival to play for the entire weekend. Unlike solo piping and drumming competitions, where a single competitor plays for a single judge, Highland dancing competitions have three or four dancers competing at the same time before a panel of judges. The competitions run all day, and, like the pipe-band areas, the Highland dancers have their own encampment,

¹⁴⁸ "Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing Costuming Rules," *Marg's Highland Dance Wear Inc.*, <http://www.margshighlanddancewear.com/sobhd.htm> (accessed March 7, 2013).

¹⁴⁹ Booth, e-mail message to author (October 17, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ Crocs are popular with dancers, because they can wear them over their dancing slippers.

filled with tents for quick changes, garment bags full of costumes, and foam mats on which to practice steps. Highland-dancing competitions are mainly held at festivals, so dancers follow the same circuit as pipers and drummers, but the two groups almost never interact—not because they do not like each other, but because their respective competitions take up almost all of their time. Occasionally a piper or drummer will learn dancing, but the time required to become proficient in either skill means that they will eventually have to choose between making music or dancing to it. Many pipers and drummers dance as a hobby, but few dancers play pipes or drums as a hobby.

Outside of competition, the main venue to listen to traditional Celtic music is at the entertainment stages. One of the biggest names in Celtic Folk is Alex Beaton, a Scottish singer who emigrated to the United States in 1965. After serving in the United States Army during the Vietnam War, Beaton became a U.S. citizen.¹⁵¹ He has been performing Celtic Folk music since the 1970s and was largely responsible for the promotion of traditional music at festivals.¹⁵² Beaton is a fixture at every Scottish festival in California and pioneered the format of giving regular performances throughout the day and selling CDs (previously audio cassettes) at a nearby table. His music is acoustic, as is the majority of Celtic Folk, and he accompanies himself on guitar—another common trait of Celtic Folk musicians, especially solo singers. In the summer of 2011, Beaton suffered a severe spinal-cord injury that forced him to retire temporarily from performing. Festival organizers, other entertainers, and festivalgoers immediately

¹⁵¹ Bill Lawson, “Musical High Note,” *PN Magazine* (February 2012), 8.

¹⁵² *Alex Beaton*, <http://alexbeaton.com/index.htm?id=13023> (accessed 14 March 2013).

banded together to raise money to help pay for Beaton's medical and travel expenses.¹⁵³

For many, festivals represent an extended family, and festivalgoers believe in taking care of each other.

Another well-known Celtic Folk performer and a regular at ScotsFest is Alasdair Fraser. Like Beaton, Fraser is a Scottish immigrant who makes a living in the United States performing at Scottish festivals and selling CDs. Fraser founded two summer schools to promote Scottish fiddling, and he directs the San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers Orchestra.¹⁵⁴ He performs with many other Scottish musicians, including Beaton, and, again like Beaton, is an inspiration to young Scottish fiddlers. In addition to the festival circuit, Fraser has performed on the soundtracks of several motion pictures, including *Titanic* from 1997 and *The Last of the Mohicans* from 1992.¹⁵⁵ As Celtic music continues to grow in mainstream popularity, it is easier to find well-known festival performers on the soundtracks for movies and television shows.

One group that benefits from Fraser's influence is Celtic Spring, made up of the six brothers and sisters of the Wood family, who play Celtic fiddle music while performing Irish step dancing.¹⁵⁶ All six siblings attended one of Fraser's summer schools, and they have shared a stage at ScotsFest with him. Their high-energy shows always draw a large crowd, and, although their music is traditional, their lively arrangements and the addition of step dancing make them popular with a wide variety of festivalgoers. Their band has the added prestige of having been one of five finalists on

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Alasdair Fraser, <http://alasdairfraser.com/about.html> (accessed 14 March 2013).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ "Bio," *Celtic Spring Band*, <http://celticspringband.com/index.htm?id=14044> (accessed 17 April 2013).

the reality show America's Got Talent in 2007.¹⁵⁷ That a traditional, Celtic Folk group would do so well on a mainstream music show, especially when Celtic music is still often subject to unflattering stereotypes, is an impressive accomplishment.

While Celtic Spring is a more modern version of Celtic Folk music, Highland Way is a fairly typical example of a traditional-style band. The six-member group plays a variety of traditional acoustic instruments, including guitar, whistle, mandolin, fiddle, banjo, accordion, and drums.¹⁵⁸ They perform instrumental and vocal sets, and their members come from Ireland and Scotland, as well as from the United States. Indeed, although not every Celtic music group features a performer from Scotland or Ireland, the addition of an authentic Celtic performer undoubtedly adds an extra element of legitimacy and notoriety to a band's reputation, in much the same way that competing in Scotland adds to a pipe band's reputation.

Tribal Celtic

Not all groups can be clearly divided between Celtic Folk and Celtic Rock. Those that fall between these categories style themselves "Tribal Celtic." These are groups who play traditional and ancient Celtic instruments, and they usually include a didgeridoo. One such group is the Wicked Tinkers. Although they play traditional acoustic instruments, similar to Celtic Folk groups, their arrangement, stage presence, and following is closer to Celtic Rock. Their set-up is a variety of traditional drums, a bagpipe, Irish horn, and didgeridoo.¹⁵⁹ Their music is advertised as "loud"—indeed, that

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ *Highland Way*, <http://www.highlandway.us/bio/> (accessed 17 April 2013).

¹⁵⁹ "Wicked Tinkers – a Celtic Tribal Sound Explosion!" *Wicked Tinkers*, <http://www.wickedtinkers.com/bio.html> (accessed 17 April 2013).

is the title of one of their CDs.¹⁶⁰ While Celtic Folk groups are usually content with selling CDs of their music, the Wicked Tinkers, like the majority of Celtic Rock groups, sell t-shirts, stickers, temporary tattoos, and even comic books of the band's adventures in a magical alternate reality. The Tinkers' piper, Aaron Shaw, is a well-known performer and has appeared on television shows such as *Friends* and been featured on the soundtrack of movies such as *The Fugitive*.¹⁶¹

Another Tribal Celtic band contemporary with the Wicked Tinkers is Brother. Like the Tinkers, Brother combines bagpipes and drums with didgeridoo, although they also incorporate guitar.¹⁶² Two of the members of Brother are, in fact, brothers who emigrated from Australia in the 1990s.¹⁶³ Brother has been performing and recording CDs since 1993, and are a few years older than the Wicked Tinkers, who did not form until 1995. Although they are not quite as well known as the Tinkers among festivalgoers, they perform regularly on the festival circuit and have made appearances on television shows such as *ER* and *The Twilight Zone*.¹⁶⁴

Celtic Rock

Although the popularity of traditional Celtic music began to rise in the 1960s and 70s, as part of the general revival of folk music, Celtic Rock began its development in the 70s as part of the "folk-rock" movement.¹⁶⁵ The majority of Celtic Rock bands that perform at Scottish festivals today started in the 90s and early 2000s. Bands such as Bad

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² "The Brother Story," *Brother Music*, http://www.brothermusic.com/fr_home.cfm (accessed 17 April 2013).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Smyth, *Noisy Island*, 43.

Haggis, Stand Easy, Flogging Molly, Dropkick Murphy, and Tempest all play many of the same songs as traditional Celtic Folk bands, but their interpretation of those songs is wildly different. The music is played quite fast, with a driving beat provided by a drum set. Indeed, apart from the source material and a token bagpipe, fiddle, or mandolin, there is, at first glance, little to distinguish these bands from the many contemporary rock bands.

Yet those elements are enough to make a Celtic Rock band instantly recognizable. Although Celtic Rock bands as a whole may sound to the average festivalgoer as fairly interchangeable with one another, even the most casual listener will have no trouble discerning a Celtic Rock band from a contemporary one. Celtic Rock bands share many common features besides their musical arrangements and instruments. Like the Wicked Tinkers, they sell t-shirts and other merchandise in addition to CDs. Their audiences tend to be rowdier, and there is a greater amount of audience participation, such as singing, dancing, and providing the performers with beer during their sets, than there is for Celtic Folk groups. Often, audience participation takes the form of inviting young pipers, drummers, and dancers onstage to perform with the band. While both Celtic Rock and Celtic Folk performers all tend to dress in Celtic-influenced styles, usually with kilts for the men and Celtic/fantasy costumes for the women, Celtic Rock performers generally cultivate a more casual, edgy style than Celtic Folk, in keeping with their rock music image. Despite the obvious similarities, for their dedicated followers, the Celtic Rock bands remain quite distinct from each other.

Bad Haggis is one of the best-known Celtic Rock bands on the modern Scottish-festival circuit. Their instrumentation is typical of Celtic Rock bands and includes bagpipe, guitar, drum set, and a variety of ethnic drums. They style themselves as a “band that fuses cutting-edge Celtic with influences of rock, alternative, jazz, pop, groove, world beat, African and Latin influences to produce a hearing-is-believing sonic experience.”¹⁶⁶ Bad Haggis’s main claim to fame is their piper, Eric Rigler. Rigler is one of the best-known contemporary pipers and has been featured on the soundtracks of a number of movies, including *Titanic*, *Braveheart*, *Master and Commander*, and, most recently, *Brave*. He performed on CDs with Celtic Folk artists Alex Beaton and Alasdair Fraser and with mainstream artists Josh Groban, Phil Collins, Rod Stewart, and many others.¹⁶⁷ In addition, Rigler has played at high-profile events such as Ronald Regan’s funeral and the 2013 funeral for Officer Jeremiah MacKay, a detective in the San Bernardino County Sherriff’s Department.¹⁶⁸

Another Celtic Rock band that performs on the Scottish festival circuit is Stand Easy. While not quite as well-known as Bad Haggis, Stand Easy follows a similar format. The band is made up of five members who play a variety of instruments, from bagpipes and whistles to guitars and drums.¹⁶⁹ The lead performer is John McLean Allan, who, like Rigler, has played bagpipes on several film soundtracks, including

¹⁶⁶ “Who is Bad Haggis?” *Bad Haggis featuring Eric Rigler*, <http://www.badhaggis.com/who/> (accessed 17 April 2013). The website defines “Bad Haggis” as “1: A bag of sinister by-products wrapped in a dubious membrane made possible by generous organ donors; 2: A band.”

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; *Alex Beaton*.

¹⁶⁸ Josh Dulaney, “Eric Rigler, Legendary Bagpipe Player, to Perform at Detective Jeremiah MacKay’s Funeral,” *San Bernardino Sun*, http://www.sbsun.com/news/ci_22632924/eric-rigler-legendary-bagpipe-player-perform-at-detective#ixzz2RgOQu51N (accessed April 27, 2013). Himself a piper, MacKay was killed in the recent standoff between police and former Los Angeles police officer Christopher Dorner.

¹⁶⁹ *Stand Easy*, <http://standeasyband.com/about.php> (accessed 17 April 2013).

Million Dollar Baby and *Austin Powers*, which also featured Rigler.¹⁷⁰ In addition to bagpipes, Allan plays several other instruments and writes many of the songs the band performs. Their music is touted as “creating a landmark fusion of commercial songwriting, Celtic music, and rock & roll.”¹⁷¹ Again, this is similar to the description of Bad Haggis’s music, but there are enough differences between the two bands to ensure that each enjoys its own following of loyal fans.

Conclusion

Scottish-festival music incorporates an impressive variety of sounds and styles. From traditional to progressive, there is music for every kind of taste and performer. Some festivalgoers attend just to hear their favorite band, while others turn to the entertainment stages as an opportunity to relax between competitions, shopping, or just touring the festival. Despite the unavoidable element of segregation between the different musical styles, there is an impressive degree of overlap, as musicians and competitors travel across the festival grounds to watch each other perform. This mutual appreciation once again demonstrates both the extended-family relationships that develop between long-time festivalgoers, competitors, and entertainers, and the incredible diversity of Scottish festival culture.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; “Who is Bad Haggis?” *Bad Haggis featuring Eric Rigler*.

¹⁷¹ *Stand Easy*.

Conclusion: The Future of Scottish Festivals

American Scottish festivals have a rich history and are the product of a unique culture. They are constantly changing to adapt to new demands, and, although modern festivals bear little resemblance to early clan picnics, they share a common heritage. Festivals are a way for members of the Scottish diaspora to connect with their cultural inheritance, whether or not they ever actually visit Scotland. The games, music, merchandise, and demonstrations all help to keep Scottish traditions alive and to introduce Scottish culture to a new generation. They are one of the few places people can go to see living examples of many Scottish traditions, and it is much cheaper to go to a festival than to visit Scotland.

For the immediate future, festivals will continue on as they are now, offering opportunities to learn about and celebrate Scottish culture. They will provide places for musicians, dancers, and athletes to compete in specialized events, which would be almost impossible to find outside of the festival circuit. They will also continue to be sources of unique merchandise, including British food and piping supplies, which again are otherwise difficult to find. On the entertainment stages, musicians will continue to perform traditional Celtic music and to combine it with other styles to create new sounds. Despite the growing number of Celtic artists performing on television shows and movie soundtracks, Scottish festivals remain one of the most reliable venues for Celtic music performances.

Some things continue to change, however. Festivals have already evolved from events for one specific clan, to events for anyone of Scottish descent, to events for

anyone of Celtic descent, and are now open to anyone interested in Scottish, Celtic, and British culture, even if they themselves are none of the above. I believe festivals will continue to welcome people of all backgrounds and work to incorporate different cultures into the event while still preserving a recognizable Scottish identity. However, I also believe that festivals will become increasingly commercialized as they try to attract new visitors and make a profit.

Long-time festivalgoers can already see this happening, as ticket and parking prices rise. Higher fees for space are already driving some vendors and clans away from individual games, as the people running the clan tents and vendor booths cannot afford to pay the licensing and insurance fees. Some of these fees are imposed by the cities, rather than the festivals themselves, and a solution might be for the festivals to move to more welcoming locations. Those vendors who have to pay large fees before the festival even begins find it harder to make any sort of profit during a festival weekend, and some are happy simply to break even. Many are seeing festivalgoers buy less, and some complain of increased shoplifting. These are serious concerns and must be addressed by games committees if they hope to maintain a vendor presence at their festivals. Vendors are an integral part of a festival, one that the festival organizers cannot afford to lose.

Increasing commercialization means that festivals will also try to take advantage of Celtic and fantasy stereotypes in an effort to appeal to mainstream visitors, who do not necessarily have a background in Scottish and Scottish-festival culture. This may mean catering more to “cosplayers”¹⁷² and New Age Celts, who derive most of their knowledge

¹⁷² That is, people who dress up as fictional or historical characters; see “New Age Celts” in Chapter One.

of Celtic culture from Hollywood representations such as *Braveheart* and *Brave*. Only time will tell if Disney's marketing efforts at the 2012 ScotsFest were successful enough to make Scottish festivals a viable target for future media campaigns, but it is quite likely that festivalgoers will see new attempts to promote Celtic and fantasy productions at festivals to come.

In the meantime, Scottish festivals such as Costa Mesa's ScotsFest remain places where people of Scottish descent or interested in Scottish culture can come to learn, meet like-minded people, or just have a good time. New Scottish festivals start every year, and many fail for want of visitors, funds, or a venue. As long as festivals such as ScotsFest adapt to changing times without losing their Scottish identity, or losing sight of the people who have made their festival viable for the past eighty years, it is almost certain that they will be able to continue producing successful festivals for the next eighty years.

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