



THE BAGPIPER

The St. Andrew's Society of the Eastern Shore

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ARE WE CELTS OR SCOTS

By Philip J. Webster

When I wrote about the excellent Gaelic College of Cape Breton for last September's Back to School issue of The Bagpiper, I wondered why the immigrants from Scotland's Highlands to Nova Scotia established a college to focus on Gaelic/Celtic culture rather than our Scottish history and traditions.

Were they not of Scottish descent (like us) wearing their clan tartans? Perhaps identifying as Celtic is a broader-based ethnic perspective? The mystique of Gaelic/Celtic culture, our Scottish Gaelic language (as opposed to Scots), and the beautiful rhythms of our Celtic songs and dances? Even I find the music of *Celtic Women* compelling and the dances of *Riverdance* mesmerizing on PBS, but I also can't wait for reruns of *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy* on Netflix.

So, what am I, a Scot or a Celt? The answer I gave myself was that I am of Scottish ancestors, some or all of whom are of a Celtic ethnicity! So, I'm both, and the people of Cape Breton are both.

The SASES and similar organizations nationwide have a branding challenge. The Transceltic Festival USA organization lists tens of cultural, sporting, and music festivals that celebrate our heritage in almost all US states. Here in Maryland, we can choose between the Southern Maryland Celtic Festival in St. Leonard or the Fair Hills Scottish Games in Elkton. Going further, we can enjoy a Celtic Music Festival in Denver and elsewhere and Highland Festivals from St. Augustine, Florida, to Salisbury, Connecticut. Irish Festivals proliferate the country (the most significant Irish Festival in the world is in Dublin, Ohio), and those festivals that have given up trying to explain our compelling, Celtic cultural conundrum call themselves Scottish Games or Celtic Festivals. By my count of these events and organizations, "Celtic Festival," is the winning brand, followed by "Highland Games," "Scottish Festival," and "Irish Festival." "Gaelic" is often added principally because it's the iconic Celtic language.

Our indomitable editor, Nile Simpson, tried to educate me by saying, "Scots are an interesting paradox because they are a polyglot mixture of their native influences (Picts, Norsemen, and Scotties essentially Celts) and conquerors (Anglos, Normans, and Saxons) ..."



Celtic Round Dogs from the Book of Kells, fol. 29r

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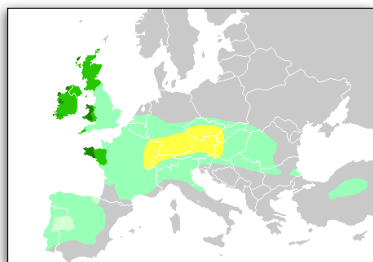
...And Much More

Try these Links:



Before the Ancient Romans and Germanic and Slavic-speaking tribes began to expand their territories and influence, most of Europe was dominated by Celtic-speaking cultures. As time passed and cultural assimilation occurred, the Celts were left with six geographic areas: Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales, which are all still considered Celtic. Some places still dabble in Celtic identity – Atlantic Canada, Cape Breton Island, Newfoundland, and the northern Iberian Peninsula. There are estimated to be over 1.4 million speakers of Celtic languages today.

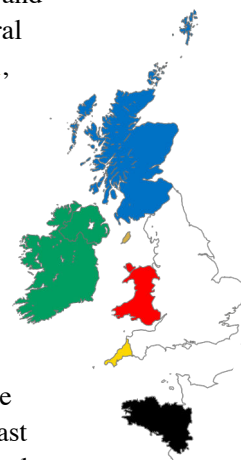
And the Celtic heritage is celebrated widely, as far away from its roots as Talbot County (MD), Australia, and Cuba. People worldwide seem to like Celtic music and dance, as witnessed by the global success of those traveling professional troupes and films mentioned above and the proliferation of Irish pubs worldwide.



Celts in Europe

Irish Isles remains the same density today, while the cultures of each area have gone their unique ways.

Fans of Ancestry.com will be interested to know there has been a broad range of genetic studies done first by Oxford University in 2006 and later by at least three other academic groups. They show that the core of the genome of insular Celtic populations was fully formed some 4,000 years ago during the Bronze Age in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, after several different migrations from European hunter-gatherers and farmers from their Indo-European homeland. Despite the influx and intermingling of Anglo-Saxons from southern Denmark and Northern Germany by around AD 600, the Celtic genetic makeup of the countries/regions of the British and

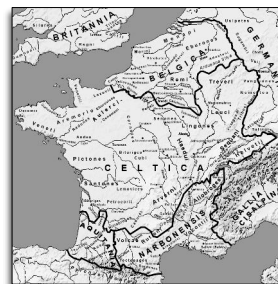


Phil Webster

Experts conclude that “Celtic” represents a tradition or culture rather than a genetic or racial grouping. Leaving me somewhat confused, but with a belief that we are Scots first because of where we came from and Celts second because of our traditions and cultural influences.

Visit the Transceltic Website for information about ‘Celtic festivals’ in the USA [here](#) and an article about the Celtic Festival renaissance in America [here](#).

Find information about Scottish festivals hosted in America this summer [here](#).



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The Bagpiper Says

Palestinians and Jews in Scotland

War! The many clashes between clans, families, and neighbors define Scottish history. And what about the Hatfields and the McCoys in the Appellations of the US? However, one family feud has lasted over two thousand years... The clash between the sons of Abraham; today’s most glaring example, the Palestinians and the Israelis.

In Scotland (like in many free and progressive nations), there are small diaspora communities of cultures from around the world. So, it’s not surprising that Scotland has a Jewish presence and a small, well-established Palestinian community.

Most of us recognize that the extremes of any ideology make the most noise and cause the most trouble. Still, the diaspora communities are mostly peace-loving, often the reason they left their homeland in the first place.

A Man’s A Man For A’ That

By Robert Burns

Then let us pray that come it may,

(As come it will for a’ that.)

That Sense and Worth, o’er a’ the earth,

Shall bear the gree, an’ a’ that.

For a’ that, an’ a’ that,

It’s coming yet for a’ that,

That Man to Man, the world o’er,

Shall brothers be for a’ that.



You can find more information about Jews in Scotland [here](#) and Palestinians in Scotland [here](#).

Nile J. Simpson