



JANUARY '25 NEWSLETTER

Greetings to all Come Singing friends

Dear Everyone,

We would like to wish you all A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR for 2025 with plenty of uplifting singing and music to come! Here is a Fanfare Royale to announce the New Year in a very grand way, played by the Welsh Guards' Band

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA98vAkNYjI>

It doesn't seem long after the Christmas celebrations before we are expected to start again - celebrating the New Year! North of the border in Scotland they certainly know how to do this with panache attracting visitors from all over the world. In Edinburgh the street parties begin on 29th December and last to the New Year with torchlight processions, cultural events, concerts and fireworks culminating in joining hands to sing Auld Lang Syne at midnight. Unfortunately, severe weather has made it necessary this year to cancel Edinburgh's outdoor events.



Few countries mark the New Year as much as the people of Scotland do at Hogmanay. The word is believed to come from the French "*hoginane*" meaning gala day, which dates back to the 16th century when the exiled Mary Queen of Scots returned to Scotland.



The festivities traditionally include "first footing" when a tall, dark haired man is the first to enter a neighbour's house in the New Year. This is thought to be a pagan custom marking the arrival of the dark part of the year.

In the past the first footer sometimes gave a lump of coal to the householder to make sure there would be warmth in the house for the winter! Just before the New Year some Scottish people used to clean their houses and sweep the ashes from the fire to clear away the old year ready to start afresh in the new.

Singing “*Auld Lang Syne*” at midnight, standing in a circle with linked arms, is another famous Hogmanay custom that has been adopted south of the border too. It originated from Robbie Burns’ poem written in the eighteenth century. The tune, here played on the bagpipes, is said to be a folk song also from 18th century <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58SbJi15CnQ> .

Here is the whole poem translated into English. Its title means *Days long ago*:

Should old acquaintances be forgotten
And never be remembered?
Should old acquaintances be forgotten
and days long ago?

Chorus (between each verse)
For days long ago, my dear,
For days long ago
We'll drink a cup of kindness yet
For days long ago!

And surely you'll have your pint tankard
And surely I'll have mine.
And we'll drink a cup of kindness yet
For days long ago.

We two have run about the hills
And pulled the daisies fine.
But we've wandered many a weary mile
Since the days long ago.

We two have paddled in the stream
From morning sun till dinner-time.
But the broad seas have roared between us
Since the days long ago.

And here's my hand, my trusty friend,
And give me your hand too,
And we will take an excellent good-will drink
For the days of long ago.

You probably know this famous patriotic song about Scotland: “*Scotland the Brave*”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inHpvMyAzFs>

You will hear these words repeated:
*“Land of my high endeavour,
Land of the shining river,
Land of my heart forever
Scotland the brave!”*



If you have been fortunate enough to visit Scotland you will remember the magnificent scenery and the sometimes wetter weather!! In the Highlands, the Cairngorms contain the highest mountain in the British Isles, Ben Nevis. Surprisingly, there are nearly 800 islands around the north and west of the mainland.

Some have inspired music, such as the Orkneys:
Farewell to Stromness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poQEG2DSANE>
by Peter Maxwell Davies, and the Hebrides by Mendelssohn in his *Hebrides Overture*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdQyN7MYSN8>

Other smaller, but well-known islands feature in songs, such as Skye, and Mull (of Kintyre) in the song by Wings https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Plhtk_XJqhM

Loch Lomond and Loch Ness are famous examples of the many beautiful stretches of water in Scotland.

When thinking about Scottish music, perhaps the bagpipes come to mind, although they are found in other parts of the world too. They are thought to date back around six centuries in Scotland. Today bagpipes can be purchased on Amazon from £20 to £7,000.



Bagpipes are basically a woodwind instrument and are worked by the piper blowing through a wooden pipe to inflate a bag (originally an animal skin) tucked under his arm.

The chanter is the pipe, containing a reed or reeds below the bag, which plays the tune. The drones are the pipes, also containing reeds, at the top of the bag, usually three in number, which produce the constant low droning sound under the tune. The bagpipes' sound is often described as a "skirl and drone".

Maybe you think of traditional Scottish (country) dancing accompanied by the pipes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgMoCHDOpQM> It is believed that the dancers hold their arms high in imitation of the red deer's antlers. The accordion has also become a popular instrument accompanying Scottish dancing, and a notable player was Jimmy Shand, here playing *Bluebell Polka* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-14L7wDwuGc>

Kilts play an important role in the history and culture of Scotland. Worn by men and boys in Scotland since the sixteenth century, they originated in a large plaid wool cloth up to seven yards long, wrapped and belted around the body. The pleats in the kilt allowed freedom of movement, it kept the wearer warm and dry and was suited to the Scottish weather. It was said that you could even wrap yourself in it at night! By the eighteenth century the kilt had become smaller and less cumbersome and was soon adopted by the Highland regiments. Andy Stewart's song *A Scottish Soldier* was one of his best known hits: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wn7QzvellDs> The kilt is worn by lovers of Scottish dancing, and on many occasions by civilians. It remains popular today even among non-Scots.



Here are some well known songs from Scotland.

QUIZ

1. Which famous song tells us the quickest way to get to Scotland. Should it be a high road or a low one?
2. A comic song about Donald who appears to have lost something!
3. His love is compared to a particular sweet smelling, red flower in this well known Scottish song.
4. What time of day did Harry Lauder famously like roaming with his sweetheart?
5. What traditional song contains these words, "*How can ye chant, ye little birds and I, sae weary and full o' care*"?
6. This is a well loved, very old song about a dangerous boat journey to a Scottish island.
7. Sung by the Corries, a popular song with the words "*the wild mountain thyme grows around the blooming heather*". What is the question asked?

8. In another funny song by Sir Harry Lauder, Jock would annoy the girls with his.....?
9. *"Land of my high endeavour, land of my heart forever!"*
10. Kenneth McKellar is homesick and longing for his what in this song?

To end the January newsletter on a positive note for the future in this new year, perhaps you are not aware of the latest news about the felled Sycamore Gap tree.

The National Trust was able to save 49 saplings, called **"trees of hope"**, from the original tree. They were grown from seeds recovered from the felled tree, one for each foot of the tree's height. Applications for the saplings were invited and over 500 people applied from across the British Isles.

The "trees of hope" will all be accessible to the public and have been given to charitable or worthy concerns. There will be three in East Anglia: two in Cambridge and the other in Suffolk given to the New College in Ipswich. The saplings are around a metre tall already, and symbolise nature's power of regeneration and our hope for the future.



ANSWERS

1. Loch Lomond <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2Z1KnePLbE>
2. Donald where's your troosers?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uTrWdf5dNw>
3. My love is like a red, red rose <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0zrqQ5zsSE>
4. Roamin' in the gloamin' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W517U2f1udQ>
5. Ye banks and braes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE4U6eYLI9s>
6. Skye boat song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1CTxa-FuKc>
7. Will ye go lassie go <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVQkdV4GwLc>
8. Stop your ticklin' Jock <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1rw59l4MwI>
9. Scotland the brave <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inHpvMyAzFs>
10. My ain folk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPVDYmtnO8Y>

Your contributions to future newsletters, in any form, will be very welcome. Please send them to:
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