

THE SILVER BOUGH
A FOUR VOLUME STUDY OF THE NATIONAL AND
LOCAL FESTIVALS OF SCOTLAND

F. MARIAN McNEILL

VOLUME FOUR
THE LOCAL FESTIVALS OF SCOTLAND

Contents

Publisher's Note

Foreword

Introduction

1: Festivals of Spring

2. Festivals of Summer and Autumn

3. Festivals of Winter

4. Highland Gatherings

5. Some lapsed festivals

Acknowledgements

Notes

Illustrations

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE AUTHOR

F. Marian McNeill was born in 1885 at Holm in Orkney where her father was the minister of the Free Presbyterian Kirk and it was this early life on the islands which would shape her life-long passion for Scottish culture and history. She moved from Orkney so that her secondary education could be continued in Glasgow and then Paris and the Rhineland. She travelled extensively as a young woman, visiting Greece, Palestine and Egypt and then living and working in London as part of the suffragette movement.

Her first book *Iona: A History of the Island* was published in 1920 following her visit to the island. Her only novel, *The Road Home*, was published in 1932 and was loosely based on her years in Glasgow and London. The Scottish traditions which Marian had been brought up on shaped two of her books, *The Scots Kitchen* (published in 1929) and *The Scots Cellar* (1956), which both celebrated old recipes and customs and provide a social history of northern domestic life.

Marian MacNeill was most proud, however, of this, her four-volume work, *The Silver Bough* (1957–1968), a study of Scottish folklore and folk belief as well as seasonal and local festivals. The Scottish Arts Council celebrated the completion of this work by giving a reception in her honour.

THE SILVER BOUGH

The Silver Bough is an indispensable treasury of Scottish culture, universally acknowledged as a classic of literature. There is no doubt F Marian McNeill succeeded in capturing and bringing to life many traditions and customs of old before they died out or were influenced by the modern era.

In the first volume of the Silver Bough, the author deals generally with Scottish folk-lore and folk belief, with chapters on ethnic origins, the Druids, the Celtic gods, the slow transition to Christianity, magic, the fairy faith and the witch cult. In the three subsequent volumes she explores in more depth the foundations of many of these beliefs and rituals through the Calendar of Scottish national festivals, in which we find enshrined many of the fascinating folk customs of our ancestors. This fourth volume focuses on the local festivals of Scotlands, which are explained in great detail at the time of writing. Readers should of course bear in mind that the "today" of the author was back in 1968 and so it is quite possible that many festivals will have changed, died out, or indeed been revived since then. The publisher has chosen to leave her original work intact, rather than undertaking what would surely be the mammoth task of updating to the present day.

The underlying message of Marian MacNeills' work defies time, being as relevant today as when it was written, indeed more so as we grapple with scientific and technological progress and become further distanced from our roots. As man makes greater and greater advances in the understanding and control of his physical environment, the river between the known and the unknown gradually changes its course, and the subjects of the simpler beliefs of former times become part of the new territory of knowledge. The Silver Bough maps out the old course of the waterway that in Celtic belief winds between here and beyond, and reveals the very roots of the Scottish people's distinctive customs and way of life.

The Silver Bough is a large and important work which involved many years of research into both living and recorded lore. Its genesis lies, perhaps, in the author's subconscious need to reconcile the old primitive world she had glimpsed in childhood with the sophisticated modern world she later entered. How much more so can we, today, echo the words of the author:

"I do not believe that you can exaggerate the importance of the preservation of old ways and customs, and all those little things which bind a man to his native place. Today we live in difficult times. The steam-roller of progress is flattening out many of our old institutions, and there is a danger of a general decline in idiom and distinctive quality in our Scottish life. The only way to counteract this peril is to preserve jealously all these elder things which are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. For, remember, no man can face the future with courage and confidence unless it is solidly founded upon the past. And conversely, no problem will be too hard, no situation too strange, if we can link it with what we know and love"

F Marian McNeill

FOREWORD

THE FESTIVALS described in this book include those which have survived into the present century or have been resuscitated or instituted in the same period. Some are of pagan origin—notably Up-helly-aa in Lerwick, the Burning of the Clavie at Burghead, the Midsummer Fire at Durris, the Beltane ceremonies on Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh, and at the Cloutie Well, near Inverness, and, probably, the Procession of the Burryman at South Queensferry. Many perpetuate the annual Riding of the Marches of the common lands granted to the burghs which sprang up in the Middle Ages and in later times. Among these are Hawick, Selkirk and Dumfries. A few — Irvine, Gilmerton and West Linton, for instance — originated in the Carters' Plays once so popular in agricultural areas. Other burghs, such as Melrose, Galashiels and Innerleithen, which possess no common lands, have instituted colourful festivals based on their local history and traditions.

Besides the burghal festivals proper, I include one or two in which only the Town Council or Incorporated Trades take part, the townsfolk being no more than casual spectators; for from such roots a community festival may well yet spring. I include also such well-known patriotic festivals as the Wallace Commemoration at Elderslie, the Bannockburn Day Rally at Stirling and the Arbroath Pageant; and, in addition, such religious festivals as the Sunrise Service on the summit of Arthur's Seat — once a site of Druidic sun-worship — on the first of May, and the annual Communion Service in the ruined chapel of Holyrood that precedes the opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

It must be borne in mind that occasional minor changes are apt to be made in the festivals, though basically they remain unchanged.

Many interesting old festivals have long lapsed, but I have added a supplementary section dealing briefly with the more important of these. Lastly, whilst I exclude the numerous festivals of sport, music and cultural activities, I make an exception of the Highland Gatherings, since these — the smaller ones, at least — can claim to be community festivals; but as they are too numerous and too similar in character to warrant individual descriptions, I confine them to one chapter.

What distinguishes our local festivals is the strength and the spontaneity of the community spirit, which in this age of loose loyalties is surely something well worth preserving.

F. M. McN

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most remarkable phenomena in twentieth-century Scotland is the reflorescence of local patriotism in the form of festivals and pageants. A patriotism that begins and ends with the nation is too vague and abstract for the average man. To have substance, it must be rooted in the familiar scene and among the friendly folk of his youth. It is true that many Scots grow up in ugly industrial towns and grim villages that are ill-fitted to inspire affection (though astonishingly, they often do), but that is a thing that can and must be remedied. Ugliness, like joylessness, is a form of blasphemy, a sin against the Holy Spirit. Fortunately, the increasingly liberal thought of the last half-century has smoothed the way for a return to a fuller and richer community life, and we have come to realise that there is a happy *via media* between the licentiousness of pre-Reformation and the repressions of post-Reformation times.

Ostensibly based on civic memories and pride in the past, the festivals strike far deeper roots than these. They are a rejoicing in our common humanity, a paean of praise for life itself. How much they mean to the life of the people has been well expressed by William Power, whom I quote at length:

"The notion that the Scots are by nature a gloomy, dull, morose people is curiously contradicted by their old popular literature — what remains of it — and by the impressions of foreign visitors to Scotland in early times.

"Froissart, Aeneas Sylvius and other strangers found the country wild and poor in comparison with their own sunny lands, but they noted the strong, independent character of the people, and their fondness for dress, display, and even pleasure. My own impression is that the mass of the Scottish people in the 15th and 16th centuries, in spite of their poverty, enjoyed life better than did the majority of the peasants in France, Germany or Italy. In no other country have we so many songs and poems testifying to a spirit of popular gaiety. 'Peblis to the Play,' 'Christis Kirk on the Green,' 'The Blythsome Bridal,' and many other things of the kind, some of them surviving only in fragments, commemorate the vigorous merriments of a high-spirited and fun-loving race.

"In their summer 'progresses' throughout the country, the Jameses associated themselves with the Jocks and Jennies in rustic diversions. Ait Beltane and other seasons, lads and lasses convened 'to dance about the thorn,' 'at Polwart on the Green,' and at many other places. The cities and chief burghs had their guild plays, interludes and processions.

"... By the 17th century all this was changed. Colour, mirth and music had been driven out of life. The kill-joys had pulled off a triumph unexampled even in priest-ridden Spain.

"... When release came, country folk threw themselves with zest into farm and village dancing. But the picturesque popular traditions of towns and countrysides had been lost. And just when they might have been revived, along came the cinema. Jock and Jenny, instead of busking themselves as the lively actors in their own diversions, submitted themselves to a worse 'dope' than 17th-century sermons.

"Now, however, there is a revolt... The old, vigorous 'play' spirit of Scotland has awakened, and is finding organised expression.

"Lanark's ancient Lanimer Day has risen in splendour and importance. Once a year, that usually dull and rather bleak town bursts into beautiful colour and joyous pageantry, with an effect as astonishing as the sudden blossoming of the aloe. Carnwath has its immemorial 'occasion'

recently enhanced. Crawford has now shone forth. Irvine has its Marymass Day. The ancient Liliass Fair of Kilbarchan has been splendidly revived.

"And so the movement goes on, like beacon after beacon blazing out from the hills and dales of southern Scotland. And the strange thing about it is its spontaneity. No 'highbrow' group of nationalist 'intellectuals' — Scots maypole dancers and hey-nony-no-ers — could ever have engineered it. But something beyond their wildest dreams has come straight out of the hearts of the people.

"... What has really happened, I think, is that Scots people have suddenly realised not only the value of their own local traditions, but also the power of man over adventitious circumstances. They have become aware of the immense resources — economic, social, artistic and so forth — possessed by any vigorous and solidly knit community of a few hundred people. Also, the comparative decline of the overshadowing 'big hoose' may have liberated a spirit like that of the old town-guilds of Flanders.

"Those stalwart young Cornets, sturdily seated on their sturdy horses, are an inspiring portent, bringing pith and encouragement with a breath of caller air into the minds of pallid 'intellectuals' dreaming feverishly of a re-awakened Scotland. When Dandie Dinmont, with flowers in his bowler hat, mounts his Clydesdale and raises the town banner, doubts and fears flee away over the hill-tops. And those processions of brightly-clad children, cheering and laughing and singing heeze the hopes of the despondent dreamer. Scotland lives!

"The movement will spread. It will arouse even the more feudalised centres of the north to independent communal life. It will introduce a more thoroughly popular note into the Highland gatherings, and generate a spirit of self-help that will save the north-west counties from social and economic decay. It may even react upon the mining and industrial towns of the South-Central Belt.

"When Motherwell-and-Wishaw goes a-maying in its own streets, and Bellshill hangs its banners on the outer walls; when Coatbridge decks itself with flowers, and Blantyre burgeons into music and colour, and Cowdenbeath holds proud civic carnival — then shall we behold the passing of a dark age and the dawning of a bright new era in Scotland."¹

There are those who heap scorn on a local festival that lacks "a lang pedigree." One eminent folklorist of my acquaintance condemns "braw lads and lasses" as "terribly concocted moderns," and deplores the Viking galley that has replaced the tar-barrels in the festival of Up-helly-aa at Lerwick, although the Burning of the Boat is a genuine Norse tradition. I entirely disagree. A local festival that has been designed simply as a tourist attraction (admittedly they all attract tourists) is certainly not a genuine folk-festival; but if it arises spontaneously from the desire of a community to rejoice together, then it is, in my view, genuine, whether five hundred years old or five. Moreover, if it is alive and not static, some changes are, in the course of time, inevitable, and, when they add to the beauty and dignity of the occasion, desirable.

To those who would condemn our local festivals as out of place, even rather ridiculous, in the brave new world we are now entering, I commend the words spoken by John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) as Warden of Neidpath Castle at the Beltane Festival of Peebles in 1935:

"I do not believe that you can exaggerate the importance of the preservation of old ways and customs, and all those little things which bind a man to his native place. To-day we live in difficult times. The steam-roller of progress is flattening out many of our old institutions, and there is a danger of a general decline in idiom and distinctive quality in our Scottish life. The only way to counteract this peril is to preserve jealously all these elder things which are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. For, remember, no man can face the future with courage and confidence unless it

is solidly founded upon the past. And conversely, no problem will be too hard, no situation too strange if we can link it with what we know and love."

Lastly, here is the view of a man who cannot possibly be accused of not being modern-minded. Professor G. M. Carstairs, of Edinburgh, is both a social scientist and a psychologist. In *This Island Now* (the Reith Lectures for 1963) he discusses the problem of how best to fit the people of these islands to benefit from their prolonged span of life. To encourage the values that make for happiness he believes that the artist, among others, has his part to play.

"I suggest that the creative artist's role in the future may be to keep alive the sense of significance in local and national traditions and so to combat the deadening effect of uniformity."

A reviewer of the book credits the author with "a luminous common sense."² I, for one, entirely agree.

F. M. McN.

CHAPTER 1

FESTIVALS OF SPRING

JEDBURGH

CANDLEMAS BA' (February 2)
FASTERN'S E'EN BA' (Movable)

JEDBURGH is one of the oldest of the Border burghs. With Melrose and Kelso it bore for centuries the brunt of Border warfare in both attack and defence. Local patriotism is as perfervid here as in any other burgh, and among Jethart Callants overseas nostalgia for their home town is never stronger than at Candlemas and Fastern's E'en, when Ba' days come round again. The Callants' Ba' (Lads' Ball Game) is played on Candlemas Day and the Men's Ba' on Fastern's E'en (Shrove Tuesday). The latter is fixed in accordance with the natural, not the ecclesiastical calendar, and falls on the Tuesday after the new moon that succeeds Candlemas. It is said that before the Union of the Crowns, the Fastern's E'en festival formed an excuse for a large gathering of men near the Border March bent upon a nocturnal raid into England. Two hundred years ago, the game was changed from football to handball. In 1848, an attempt was made by the civic authorities to abolish the game, on the grounds that it had been found "detrimental to the peace, order, and good government of the Burgh... Every kind of business is thereby interrupted, and the shopkeepers find it necessary to shutter their shops for protection."

The ban was proclaimed through the streets by tuck of drum; but the youths of Jedburgh decided to ignore it. Several players were arrested and fined by the chief magistrate, but they appealed to the High Court of Justiciary and won on a point of law.

"I for one," said the Lord Justice Clerk in giving judgment, "should hesitate to encourage the abolition of an old and customary game which from time immemorial has been enjoyed by the community."

His decision caused the greatest jubilation in the town and was celebrated with a bonfire and procession, at the head of which was carried an upright pole, surmounted by a ball.

To-day, the Provost and Magistrates not only allow the game, but when not active participants, appear as interested spectators.

For over half a century, the central figure at the Callants' Ba' was Mr. T. Colledge Halliburton, Town Clerk of Jedburgh and the last of the old line of Candlemas Kings of the Grammar School, which was founded many centuries ago within the precincts of the Abbey. He was crowned in 1884, just before the School Board prohibited the Candlemas offerings that were hitherto part of the Rector's perquisites, and until his death in 1941 regularly exercised his right to throw up the first ball. Not until 1942 was a Candlemas King again elected, the honour falling to the sports champion of the Grammar School.

"To many of us," said the Provost on that occasion, "the morning of the second of February was the most exciting and the merriest of our school years. I can still see the clothes basket running over with oranges, and the bakers' boards heaped with glistening cookies; and I can also picture the handing over of the ball to the "Queen," to whom, with her maids of honour, was given the privilege

of arranging for the decoration of the ball with ribbons. The ball was then presented to the "King," who was carried shoulder-high by his school-mates up the High Street to the Mercat Cross, where he performed his high office of throwing up the ball and starting the contest."

At the Fastern's E'en Ba', the sides consist of the "Uppies " and the "Doonies," those born above the site of the Mercat Cross playing towards the Castlehill, and the downward men to the Townfoot.

The windows of business premises as well as those of dwelling-houses in the line of battle are barricaded as for a siege.

There is always a generous supply of balls — some provided by natives who have settled overseas — which are decorated with coloured ribbons. At two o'clock the first ball is thrown up from the site of the ancient Cross in the Market Place and there is a keen tussle for the possession of the gaily-coloured streamers of ribbon. The game, though governed by no written rules, is fought with the utmost good nature and regard for fair play.

"When play becomes open," writes a spectator, "some fine throwing is usually seen; and a sudden runaway through one of the closes at the foot of the Castlegate, and up the Skeprunning Burn, or down at the riverside by Queen Mary's Gardens, occasionally adds to the surprises of the sport. No Fastern's E'en is satisfactorily observed unless a visit is made to the Jed, where the players splash and 'dook' one another until the stronger side succeeds in putting the ball out of play. The 'Doonies' have a right to 'cut' the ball in the Goose Pool at the Annan, in which, long ago, supposed witches were put through their 'water trial'; and the 'Uppies' claim similar privileges in the long stretch of still water immediately beyond the Abbey Cauld."

The Fastern's E'en Ba' is followed by a dinner given by the Jethart Callants' Club, old and young Callants taking part.

The lure of the game is illustrated in the incident of the young soldier, a native of Jedburgh, who, stealing away from Edinburgh Castle, took part in the game and returned to the barracks — and punishment.

"Jethart Ba'" was commemorated on the heights of Alma; and it is recorded that during the Boer War a little company of Jedburgh soldiers stationed in a South African town on Fastern's E'en gathered in the Market Place where, on the stroke of two, they threw an imaginary ball into the air, shouting "Hurrah for Jethart Ba'!"

KIRKCALDY

LINKS MARKET (Mid-April)

ALTHOUGH markets and fairs are outwith the scope of this book, an exception must be made of the Links Market, which originated as an Easter Chartered Fair in 1305, and has a claim to be the largest street fair in the world.

The Lang Toun o' Kirkcaldy (its main street was once four miles long) is a seaport and manufacturing town in the Kingdom of Fife. According to legend, it was the site of one of the numerous churches founded by St. Columba in the sixth century. Its authentic history, however, begins only in 1334, when the town was mortified by David II to the monastery of Dunfermline and became a burgh of regality. In 1644 it was created a royal burgh. Kirkcaldy has associations with an unusual assortment of figures who include Michael Scot, " the Wizard," (Sir Michael Scot of

Balweanie, called "the Wizard" on account of his researches in natural science); Kirkcaldy of Grange, a loyal supporter of Mary Stuart; Adam Smith and the Adam Brothers (all natives); Thomas Carlyle and Edward Irving, who were masters together at the burgh school; and Marjorie Fleming (Pet Marjorie).

Parallel to part of the High Street runs the Esplanade or Links, where the Market is held. The site is sealed off from traffic for a week. Shortly after midnight, when the last bus service is ended and the Esplanade is clear, the first of some six hundred travelling showmen arrive with their vehicles and stake their claims to a stand in the Market. At this season Kirkcaldy is not only the Mecca for Scottish and North of England salesmen, but draws wise-cracking showmen from as far south as London's Petticoat Lane; and the latest thing in British Show equipment often makes its debut at the Links Market. The event is both Market and Fair, the Fair element predominating. Hundreds of stalls, interspersed with shows, merry-go-rounds, and a couple of circuses, line both sides of the fairway, which is thirty-five feet wide — the broadest in Britain — and stretches for a mile and a half.

The ancient Fair has survived all threats. It has, naturally, been greatly transformed in the present century by glittering light bulbs, electrically-boosted music and power-operated amusements. Brilliant illuminations are a feature of the Fair. The lights stretch the whole length of the Esplanade and make an impressive sight from the other side of the Firth of Forth. Thousands of townsfolk and visitors throng the streets, for this is a great occasion for re-unions and celebrations after the long dark winter, and an outlet for high spirits. The lads still give the lasses a "fairin'," and the old pink sugar-hearts and curly-andrews are still to be found amid the galaxy of modern sweets.

There have always been the happiest relations between members of the Showmen's Guild and the local authorities. The Provost and Councillors attend the opening ceremony, which is conducted from one of the riding-machines, and, together with the President of the Guild and the Chairman of the Scottish Section of the Guild, fortify themselves for the event—for it can be chilly in Kirkcaldy at Easter time — with traditional refreshment from a nearby showman's caravan. Tribute is paid to the Market Superintendent, who "sets out the Fair," says the spokesman of the Guild, "with such tact and firmness that everyone is very nearly satisfied!"

At the end of June, Kirkcaldy holds a Youth Pageant Week when a Lang Toun Lad and Lass are formally installed. There are various entertainments and a fancy dress parade at which collections are uplifted for various charities; but there are no visits by the Lad and Lass to places of historic interest, nor does the pageant portray local history.



3. LANARK WHUPPITY STOURIE



4. ORKNEY HORSE AND PLOUGH FESTIVAL

LANARK

WHUPPITY STOURIE (First Day of March)

*Little kens our guid dame at hame
That Whuppity Stourie is my name.*

Old Rhyme

Whuppity Stourie or Whuppity Scourie, as it is now more commonly, but less correctly, known, is a festival peculiar to Lanark. Formerly, the older lads took part; now it is entirely a children's festival.

From the month of October to the month of February inclusive, the bells in the Parish Church cease to ring at six in the evening but resume at the same hour on the first day of March. The children of the town gather in great numbers at the Cross, where the Parish Church stands, and at the first sound of the bells they set off, shouting and jostling, each whirling round his head a closely rolled ball of paper attached to a string about two feet long, and rush round the church, beating one another with their swinging balls of paper until the bells have stopped pealing.¹ A crowd of townfolk, including several Town Councillors, watch the proceedings, and pennies are thrown for the children to pick up. Ten pounds in pennies are allocated from the town's Common Good Fund. The Provost addresses the gathered crowd, especially the boys and girls.

In the recollection of some of the oldest inhabitants, the runners tied their caps to the string, and in addition to running round the church joined in "the buffing of the bell-man," which meant trying to strike him with their bonnets; after which a rush was made to the Wellgate Head, where the youths of Lanark engaged in a stand-up fight with the youths of New Lanark, the weapons used being again their bonnets. The fight over, the victors returned, marching in order, and headed by one of their number carrying an improvised flag (a handkerchief attached to a tall stick), they paraded the principal streets singing, as their fathers and grandfathers had sung before them:

*Hooray, boys, hooray!
For we hae won the day:
We've met the bold New (Old) Lanark boys
And chased them doun the brae!*

The fight was suppressed by the Magistrates many years ago, and only the bell-tolling and the running round the church are now observed.

The origin of the custom is obscure. One theory is that it is a welcome to spring; another, that it is a survival of the handloom weavers' "summertime"; a third, that it is a relic of the days when penitents are said to have been whipped round the church. But the likeliest explanation is surely that it arose as an exorcism of evil spirits. (Compare the swinging of fireballs on Hogmanay at Stonehaven). Our forefathers believed that these evil spirits travelled in clouds of dust (scour) and were given to casting a blight on the crops in spring time. They had to be exorcised, and that exorcism was attained, as in many European countries, by clashing metals together. In Scotland this is achieved by the ringing of church bells, beating trays and so forth on Hogmanay, a rite originally

meant to drive out all the evil influences that might have accumulated in home or burgh throughout the year.

The clouds of dust referred to were known in the North-East as "a furl o' fairies' ween" (a whirl of fairies' wind).

"In this climate," writes J. A. Campbell, "these eddies are among the most curious of natural phenomena. On calm summer days they go past whirling about straws and dust, and as not another breath of air is moving at the same time, their cause is sufficiently puzzling."²

By throwing one's left shoe at it, or *one's bonnet*, or a naked knife, or earth from a molehill, one could prevent the fairies from carrying out their malign intentions.

"Whuppity Stourie" seems to be the name of the evil spirit or bad fairy, as in the two charming Nursery Stories quoted by Robert Chambers in his *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*.

ORKNEY

SOUTH RONALDSAY HORSE AND PLOUGH FESTIVAL (Easter)

Once a year the children of South Ronaldsay dress up — as horses; or, more correctly, half of the participants in this spring festival are horses and the other half are ploughmen. The origin and significance of this time-honoured custom are completely obscure. It used to be kept up in the neighbouring island of Burray, but whether it was more widely observed no one seems to know. The festival is confined to children of school age. As a rule the Horses are anything from five to nine and the Ploughmen from nine to fourteen. Girls may play the part of Horses, but the Ploughmen are always boys. The Ploughmen do not dress up, but the Horses wear garments of almost barbaric splendour.

"The horses on display each year are brightly decked with colour and sparkle. Faces of dumpling innocence are framed between curiously exotic-looking headdresses and horse-collars which are thickly trimmed with anything that will catch the light — pearl buttons, spangles, mirror glass, gold braid, tiny bells. To these are added ribbons and feathers. Sleeves are closely decorated, and the sturdy legs, which bear such testimony to the goodness of country food, sport knee frills, cross garters, and, of course, hair anklets to resemble a horse's fetlocks. Sometimes the Horses wear tails, and the edges of their shoes are painted to simulate horse-shoes."¹

Some of the more striking of the Horses' costumes have been handed down; others are prepared by the mothers, who vie with one another in producing brightly coloured and richly decorated costumes.

The first part of the competition is held in the Cromarty Hall, in St. Margaret's Hope. Those children who fail to secure prizes for the best decorated Horses have a chance to succeed in the Grooming section, where good preliminary work in teeth, nail and shoe-brushing is considered. The Horses now leave the hall in great style under an archway of miniature ploughs held aloft by the Ploughmen. Buses are waiting to take judges and others to the sandy beach at Sand o' Right, which has been marked out into "Flats" or sandy sections for the Boys' Ploughing Match.

Each "Ploughman" brings his own small plough. Some of these are complete replicas of a farmer's plough and came originally from a local smithy. Others, though not so well finished, are efficient. The older folk remember the days when the boys would arrive with nothing but a cow's hoof fixed upon a stick. In former times the boys ploughed a field just after the potatoes had been lifted. Now they plough a stretch of fine sand just cloggy enough to serve the purpose. The more experienced lads show considerable skill in turning an unbroken furrow of equal width in a given time. The Ploughmen are divided into Ordinary and Champion. The winner in the Ordinary class each year receives a Silver Medal. He is afterwards in the Champion class. The judging after the ploughing is done by an adult committee with considerable seriousness and precision. There are awards for the Best Ploughed Rig, the Straightest Ploughing, the Best Kept Plough, the Oldest Ploughman, and the Youngest Ploughman.

The match over, they all return to the Hope, where a sumptuous tea awaits both Horses and Ploughmen in the Cromarty Hall. This is followed by games and dancing, and the day ends with the excitement of the prize-giving.

ORKNEY

PAPA WESTRAY GYRO NIGHT (Old Candlemas Day)

Gyro Night was celebrated on the Tuesday following the first new moon of the Voar, or spring season—that is, on Old Candlemas Day. The word Gyro is derived from the Old Norse *gygr*, an ogress or giantess, and in the Candlemas rites the gyro always appears as a female monster. The celebration was latterly confined to the island of Papa Westray. It has now died out.

"From middle-aged men," writes Dr. Hugh Marwick, "one gathers that in the days of their youth the gyro was a very real terror. One tells how he used to run to his mother in mortal fear of the gyro. He also affirms that the gyros came up from the beach, and that their characteristic weapon was a heavy tangle. Another said that in his young days a stuffed figure representing a gyro was thrown into a bonfire and burned."

Eventually the ceremonies declined into a youthful frolic. Each of the smaller boys provided himself with a torch made of a bundle of simmons (straw ropes). Sometimes they would light a bonfire and then run away, and the gyro or gyros — for they usually went about in pairs—would be drawn to the blaze. The gyros were two of the bigger lads dressed in women's garments, with masks and grotesque headdresses and with loose simmons dangling from the waist about their legs. Occasionally, however, they dressed plainly like any of the old island women, and were thus often able to cheat the boys, for a woman who had received a visit from a neighbour would often accompany her part of the way home. "But if the woman turned out to be a gyro, we very soon knew," says a native of the island, "as each of them had concealed about his person a piece of rope or a tangle, and we very soon felt the weight of that on some part of the body. Of course, we had to run for dear life."

On Gyro Night, the fields were bright with torches and the farmers were often concerned for their stacks; but in spite of the fear inspired by the gyro in the boys of the older generation, says the islander quoted above, "we did enjoy Gyro Nights."

ST. ANDREWS

KATE KENNEDY DAY (Second Saturday in April)

LEGEND traces the origin of St. Andrews to St. Rule or Regulus, an Abbot of Patras in Greece, who bore certain relics of St. Andrew to "this far neuk of the world," where the King of the Picts welcomed him and built a kirk to house the relics. In 814, after repeated savage raids on the island by the Danes, the primacy of the Scottish Celtic Church was transferred temporarily from Iona to Kells in Ireland; thence, *circa* 818, to Dunkeld and finally, in 908, to St. Andrews. (Gaelic was spoken in Fife until at least the thirteenth century).

In 1412, the University was founded by Bishop Wardlaw and later ratified by a Papal Bull. The students wear the scarlet gown, which strikes a happy note of colour in the grey quadrangles. With its ecclesiastical ruins, its fine old colleges, its spacious tree-lined streets, its wide sands and grassy links, the city provides an ideal setting for the pageantry of Kate Kennedy Day, when the Lady Katherine Kennedy, who is represented by a beardless bejant¹ (first-year student) in medieval dress, is the principal figure in a great pageant of historical characters who have been associated with the life of the University and the city of St. Andrews.

The origin of the custom is debated. Some derive it from the Celtic festival of Spring and identify Kate with Bride.² Others identify her with St. Katherine, to whom, it is conjectured, the bell of the steeple of St. Salvator's College was dedicated in 1406 by the pious James Kennedy, Bishop of the See and founder of the College.³ The students themselves long accepted the legend that the festival originated in the middle of the fifteenth century, and that its principal figure was the Bishop's charming niece, Lady Kate, daughter of Gilbert, Lord Kennedy of Dunure, in Ayrshire who (according to tradition) visited her uncle, the Bishop, in 1451 and became the toast of town and gown. It is said that a fancy dress ball was held in Kate's honour and that the students, in their enthusiasm for the beauty and charm of their guest, vowed to make it an annual affair.

But, sad to relate, although its persistence is extraordinarily strong, the whole Kate Kennedy legend is dismissed by the historian of the University, Mr. R. G. Cant, as a spurious myth.

"It would be pleasant to believe," he writes, "that this was a survival from the medieval past of the University. Even more remote origins have been suggested. In sober truth there appears to be not the slightest evidence of its existence before the Victorian period, and it would seem to have originated in the later 1840's as an end-of-the-session rag of the final year students in Arts. The old bell "Katherine" in the College Tower had long been known as "Kate Kennedy," and was popularly supposed to have been called after a niece of the Founder. So, no doubt on a momentary impulse, a student was dressed up to represent "Kate," and to be the centre of a rather noisy masquerade in the college classrooms and quadrangle. The "rag," once found a success, was repeated, and in a very short time had become a tradition. As the professors (with some justification) attempted to suppress it, it also became a symbol of undergraduate freedom.

"By the 1860's the celebration, originally quite a simple affair and confined within the limits of the United College, had developed into an elaborate progress through the streets and accordingly (in the eyes of authority) as much a public scandal as an academic misdemeanour. Each year the conflict with the authorities became more acute, and after some particular unpleasantness in 1874 the

celebration was forbidden. In 1879, an attempt to hold it was forestalled by the professors, but it was actually held in 1881, after which it was again suppressed. After many years, it was revived in the form of a historical pageant in 1926."

Whether she originated in "a momentary impulse" or in a dim folk-memory⁴ it is certain that "Kate Kennedy" is very much alive today and may look forward to a long lease of life.

The Festival was formerly held in late February or early March, but in 1938 the date was changed to the second Saturday in April.

"Since it was re-instituted in 1926, the Procession," as a member of the University points out, "has had, despite Lady Katherine's uncertain genealogy, a serious historical value. It embodies an interpretation of history at a level at which the lives of individuals are more important than the political, economic and cultural patterns of the periods in which they lived."

"Kate" is appointed in secret conclave by the officials of the Kate Kennedy Club, and her identity is a carefully guarded secret until she emerges on the morning of the Festival in her medieval gown of silver brocade or other sumptuous material, with a conical headdress and a long train, which is borne by a page.

Both page and footman wear the Kennedy colours, black and red. In the cloisters, Kate, who carries a bouquet, is presented to the Professors and other members of the teaching staff, and is then conducted to her carriage — the old family coach of the Lairds of Lathrisk, a well-known Fife family — which is drawn by two horses. She is escorted by eight bejants (the runners-up for the honour of impersonating Kate), who carry the eight shields of the University.

The procession, which numbers some eighty figures, is marshalled in the spacious quadrangle of the United College (St. Salvator's and St. Leonard's) before setting out at 2 p.m. on its triumphal tour of the city.⁵ At its head walks the blue-robed figure of St. Andrew, bearing the cross of martyrdom, the Saltire of the Scottish flag. Next comes the Shield of the University, followed by three pipers in Stuart tartan, who play national airs. Behind them ride William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, clad in chain mail, the latter carrying his mighty battleaxe. Among the richly robed dignitaries in the ecclesiastical group are Pope Benedict XIII, by whose Bull the University was founded; Archbishop Beaton, part-founder of St. Mary's College, in purple, and his kinsman, Cardinal Beaton, in scarlet, carrying his Cardinal's staff; Prior Hepburn and Bishop Wardlaw. Patrick Hamilton, the martyr, in sharp contrast, wears sackcloth and carries faggots. Three figures—William Dunbar, Gavin Douglas and David Lyndsay of the Mount—represent the galaxy of poets at the Court of James IV who virtually alone in these islands illumine the barren period that separates Chaucer from Spenser.

Notable among the mounted figures are Archbishop Stewart, a gifted pupil of Erasmus, who fell at Hodden; the Admirable Crichton,⁶ that brilliant linguist and dialectician who was killed in a duel in Italy at the age of twenty-two; Sir Andrew Wood of Largo, whose naval exploits are still remembered; and Lord Darnley in gallant array. On foot, again, come John Knox, a sombre figure in his black Geneva gown, carrying a Bible; George Buchanan, who became tutor to James VI and is perhaps the greatest classical scholar these islands have ever produced; and Andrew Melville, a leading figure in the Reformation.

A noble figure is Mary Stuart (represented by "Kate" of the previous year) who, in a black velvet gown with white ruffles and headdress, is mounted on a snow-white palfrey.⁷ Behind her rides her son, James VI and I, who is followed by three mounted figures — the Marquis of Montrose, King Charles I and Graham of Claverhouse. Archbishop Sharp rides in an old-world coach, drawn by four horses, reminiscent of the coach in which he was murdered in the lonely woods of Magus Muir.

Other figures are Napier of Merchiston, brilliant mathematician and inventor of logarithms, the poet Robert Fergusson to whom Burns owed so much, and James Wilson, the Fife lawyer who drafted the American Constitution. (There is scarcely a name in Scottish history that is not associated in one way or another with St. Andrews).

Kate's carriage, preceded by a mounted herald, brings up the rear. There follows a great army of carnival characters who, as the procession moves through the crowded streets, take up a collection for some local charity. The medieval aspect of the procession is accentuated as it moves through the old West Port and past the Pends.

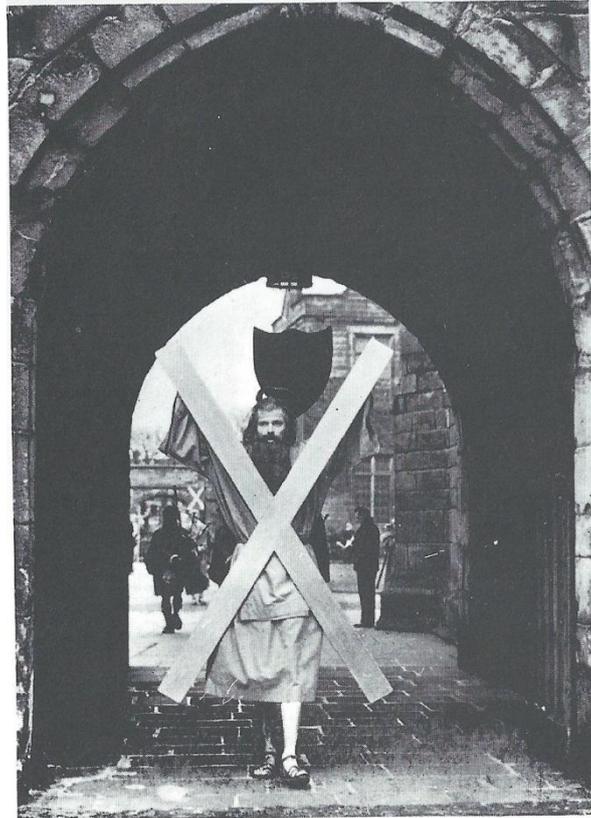
It is customary for Kate to make a round of visits, beginning at University House, where she is received by the Principal. In the Council Chamber of the Town Hall she is welcomed by the Provost and his Councillors in their scarlet robes of office. After a further tour of the Colleges and the city, the procession returns to the United College Quadrangle and disbands.

The proceedings terminate with a banquet.

The women students are rigorously excluded from the celebration.



5. ST. ANDREWS
KATE AND THE BISHOP



6. ST. ANDREWS
ST. ANDREW

