

THE GREAT KILT



The Feileadh Mhor - The Great Kilt

Scotland was a terrible, hostile environment long ago - It was not for the faint of heart!

It is fascinating how they survived generations ago. It was evolution at its best and generally speaking, only the strongest men and women survived into adulthood. They lived off the land - it was survive or die.

They would have to find a way to master their habitat or perish in the long dark winters. Clothing would have been an integral part of that survival story, we often forget in our modern world the importance of warm, sturdy, workable clothing.



The Feileadh mhor, Gaelic for great kilt, was a traditional garment worn all over the highlands. It was traditionally very heavy and made of rough wool, wrapped around the body.

The cloth would have been woven in whatever colours available, found from the land. Different local areas would have had their own dyes and patterns from the resources around them.



Some clans would have woven their own clan patterns, a lot of these ancient patterns have been lost over the years as they could not write or keep records.

Most cloth would have been woven quite narrow as large looms could not fit in a crofters home, so smaller pieces of cloth would be joined together. They would have worn a basic leather pouch with their Feileadh Mhor. The word Sporrán is Gaelic for pouch.

The Sgian Dubh would have been hidden under the fold at shoulder, under the armpit or in the sock. It would be kept in a hidden & easily accessible place in the event it needed to be used.

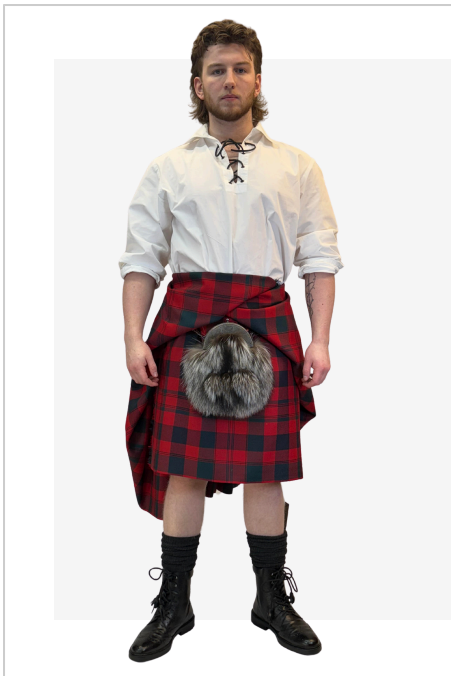
The word, Sgian Dubh is Gaelic for black dagger. You can accessorise your Feileadh Mhor however you see fit.



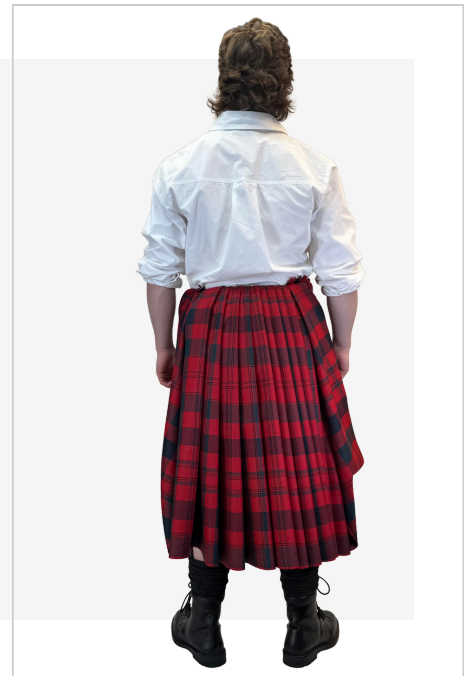
[Shop The Great Kilt](#)

Useful Information

- *Pure new wool cloth is used for the great kilt, The cloth is double width (1.5m wide).*
- *4-6 yards is best, 8 yards is a lot of cloth if your wanting to wear the kilt the traditional way, i.e. live in it in the wild in winter*
- *5 or 6 yard is best for a great kilt, dependant on your seat size*
- *There are multiple ways to wear and fold*
- *Note your great kilt can be made into a classic 5, 6 or 8 yard kilt (feileadh beg) at a later date if you want to wear a traditional kilt*
- *Email us for more info at shop@kiltmakers.com*



Jacobite Remnant



You Can See All Tartans On Our Website



Evolution of Highland Dress in Scotland

Scottish Highland dress has come a long way & can be traced back through multiple eras of history.

From stone age furs, basic cord, bone to emergence with the **Picts**. They are best known for their warlike nature, distinctive symbol stones, and resistance to Roman rule.

They were covered in tattoos and painted blue, known as ferocious warriors, their name comes from the Latin "Picti", meaning "painted people," likely referring to their use of tattoos or body paint.

The Picts likely wore tunic-like garments made from wool or linen. Some evidence suggests they may have used simple checkered or striped woollen fabrics, possibly an early precursor to later tartans.



Picts



Ancient Druids -

Druids held high status in Celtic societies and likely influenced dress traditions. While they mostly wore plain garments, high-status Celtic elites wore colourful, patterned wool mantles, possibly in early tartan-like designs.

Celtic "Brat" (cloak or plaid) was a large, rectangular woollen garment dyed in checks or stripes, later evolving into the Highland plaid.

The standing stones were said to have been built by pre-celtic people and used by the Druids for rituals, astronomical, religious, and social purposes, aligning with the solstices and seasons.

You can see standing stones all over the UK.

Leading into the Roman Scots -

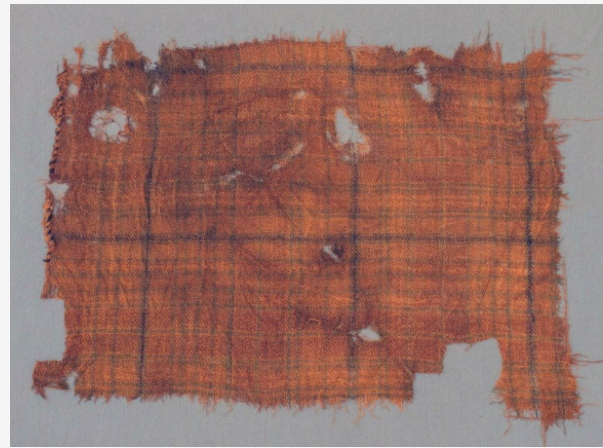
After they brought over some of the first luxury materials to lowland Scotland, they eventually moved up to the highlands.

The earliest remnants of tartan (Falkirk Tartan) were discovered in Scotland around 3rd century. It featured a simple two-tone check pattern, proving that tartan-like designs existed in Roman-era Scotland. This pattern was simple brown and white, created using native wool shades rather than plant dyes.

Romans invaded southern Scotland but never fully conquered the Picts and Caledonians. The construction of Hadrian's Wall (122 CE) and Antonine Wall (142 CE) marked the division between Roman-controlled Britain and unconquered Scotland.

By the 5th century, Romans had withdrawn leaving Scotland open to other influences such as the **Gaels, Vikings, Anglo-Saxons**.

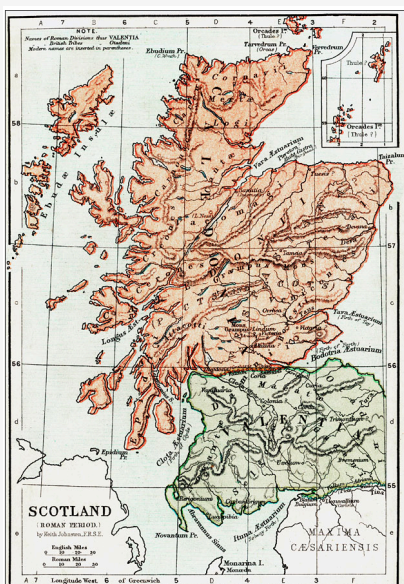
A Gaelic-speaking group known as the Scoti (originally from Ireland) established the kingdom of Dál Riata in western Scotland. They merged with Picts and Britons, spreading Gaelic language and culture.



Affric -The oldest Tartan after the Falkirk Tartan



Antonine Wall



Roman period Scotland

Norse seafarers from Norway and Denmark—began raiding Scotland in the late 8th century, eventually settling in key areas. They established strongholds in the Hebrides, Orkney, Shetland and Caithness, forming a hybrid Norse-Gaelic culture.

After the fall of Rome, **Anglos and Saxons** from northern Germany settled in south-eastern Scotland (Lothian & Borders). The Lowlands were increasingly influenced by Anglo-Saxons and Normans.

The great kilt is said to have been inspired by the Norse Cloaks as styled over a long wool tunic known as (kyrtill), often belted at the waist, similar to léine (Gaelic shirts). The Norse introduced new dyeing techniques, enriching the reds, blues, and yellows found in early Scottish tartans.

During the Wars of Scottish Independence (1296–1357), led by **William Wallace and Robert the Bruce**, Scotland's warriors adapted their clothing for battle, climate, and practicality.



Although the classic great kilt (Feileadh mhòr) had not yet fully developed, their era helped shape the clothing that would become synonymous with Highland dress. During the 1400s - 1500s there was evidence of the first complex tartans starting to emerge as can be seen in the Glen Affric tartan.



Jacobite Uprisings

Jacobite Uprisings -

The Jacobite Rebellions (1688–1746) sought to restore the exiled Stuart kings to the throne of Britain. The Highland clans were among the most loyal supporters of the Jacobite cause, and their traditional dress became a symbol of defiance against British rule.

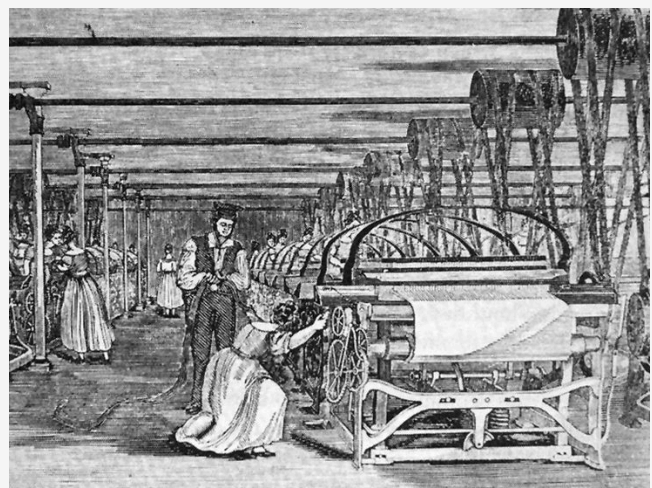
After the 1745 Jacobite uprising the English banned the wearing of highland dress, bagpipes and the gathering of clans men Jacobites, Bonnie Prince Charlie Scots. Jacobite exiles in France and Italy wore tartan to signal their loyalty to the Stuart cause.

Bonnie Prince Charlie himself wore a tartan coat and kilt, reinforcing the association of Highland dress with Jacobite resistance. The ban was eventually lifted and this is when more complex tartans started taking off and tartan started to get a more mythical image after the ban.

The Industrial Revolution -

The Industrial Revolution (18th–19th century) had a major impact on Highland dress, transforming how kilts and tartans were produced, worn, and perceived. This era saw mass production of textiles, a shift in social structures, and the revival of tartan as a national symbol of Scotland.

Industrial revolution Scots turned the great kilt into the Feileadh beg - what we know today as the standard 8 yard kilt - wrapped round the waist. Scots were world leaders in textiles and started weaving on commercial powered looms during the industrial revolution around 1800s.



Power Weaving 1836

When **King George IV** visited Leith and Edinburgh in 1822, this was a big event as it was the first time a monarch had visited north of the border in hundreds of years. Sir Walter Scott made sure all the clan chiefs wore their tartan sparking a tartan boom which has continued to this day.

Tartan and highland wear are now exported from Scotland all round the world.

The great kilt was carried through history and after the industrial revolution it saw the design change, such as stitched pleats and reinforced material to support use during harsh working conditions and battle. Overtime the great kilt has now turned into the kilt we all know and love today.

[View our History of kilt blog](#)

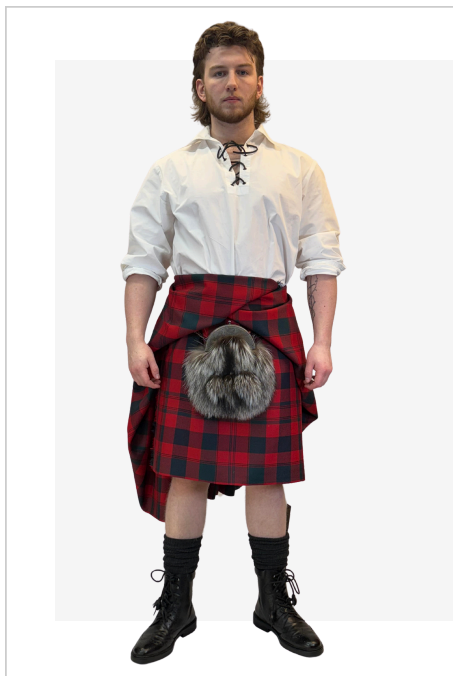
[View our History of tartan blog](#)



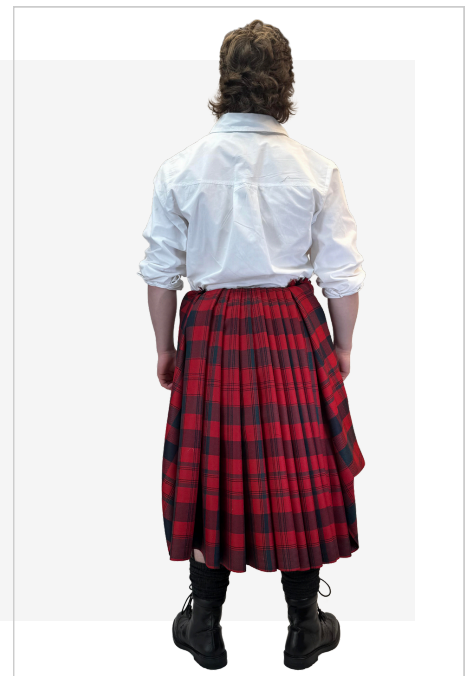
The town of Paisley where the shop is located was a centre of tartan and textiles in the UK and was at one time home to the third richest company in the world - Coats and Clark thread makers made 90% of the worlds thread and had factories all round the world.

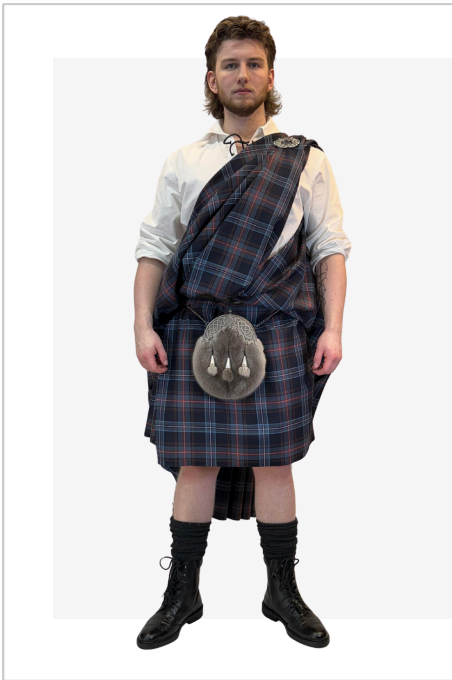
Come and visit our shop any time

Here are Some Feileadh Mhor kilts we have made

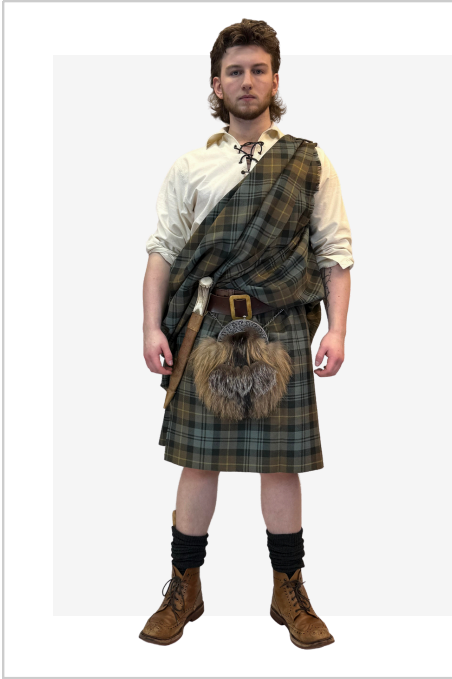
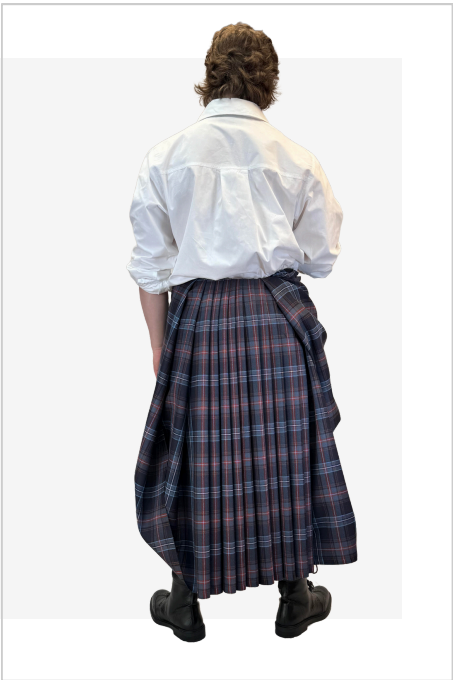


Jacobite Remnant





Europa Clipper for JPL & NASA



Weathered Gordon

