



## Report on the Gaisgeach Tartan

Following a discussion on the way back to Stornoway in Roddy Murray's car after a visit to the Pairc Cairn by Mr. Will Maclean, Mr. Roddy Murray and Angus Macleod in 1993, when we felt that it might be a good idea if we had a new tartan designed in honour of the Gaisgeach of the land law reform. Angus Macleod approached the textile department of the Castle College and the suggestion was warmly received, work on a newly designed tartan was put in hand.

Shortly before the opening of the Pairc Cairn the Castle College indicated that a length of 18 or 19 yards of double width new tartan was ready and I called for it. At that time a decision on the charge by the Castle College was not arrived at but they felt that perhaps there might not be a charge.

The new tartan was used as a screen on the platform in Balallan Hall at the opening of the Pairc Cairn and was therefore seen by many people. After the opening Kenny Mackay, Balallan, took the tartan back to Park House, Marybank.

Catherine & Calum MacRitchie both of whom assisted with the opening of the Pairc Cairn asked for a ½ yard or so to do the front panels of a vest she proposed to do, and I responded by saying she would get that. When, eventually, she came for it she requested one yard and I gave her that on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1994 and I indicated that the committee did not price the cloth yet and in fact they hadn't decided what was to happen to the cloth.

John M Macleod, 15 Balallan, called here at Park House, the day before Catherine MacRitchie and we discussed the Gaisgeach Tartan and we agreed that he could take one yard of it for the front panels of a vest that a tailor from Balallan offered to do for him. Neither of us were aware of the likely price to charge, and already a proposal was made that the three members of the Lochs sub-committee, Alastair Macleod, John Macleod and Angus Macleod should be given a short length of the new cloth free of charge, in appreciation of their services. As that proposal was not yet before the full committee we decided to leave the matter of the charge for the time being.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1994 Kenny John Macleod, 8 Ranish, phoned to ask for two metres of the Gaisgeach Tartan for a cousin who was home from Glasgow, and I explained that the committee had not yet discussed a price or manner of disposal of the cloth, and I was not prepared to dispose of any more of it until a decision was taken as to what to do with it and if it was to be sold - what was to be the price?

I discussed the Gaisgeach Tartan with Donald Macleod, 52 North Shawbost, Managing Director of the Harris Tweed Mill at Carloway, on the phone on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September 1994 and we both agreed that from a practical point of view, it was very difficult to commercialise the Gaisgeach Tartan.

1. In the first place it is a double width and the industry is not yet geared up to either manufacture or sell double width Harris Tweed.
2. Until a decision is made by the industry to launch double width Harris Tweed, it is not legal to sell double width if one calls it Harris Tweed, and neither is it legal to stamp it and without the stamp it is not Harris Tweed nowadays.
3. There is of course nothing to stop Cuimhneachain Nan Gaisgeach or anyone else selling double width cloth so long as they do not call it Harris Tweed.
4. In the circumstances therefore the Harris Tweed manufacturers are not interested in our double width Gaisgeach Tartan for the time being at least.
5. The design: At present the design might be ours but we would need to register it if we intended to retain any rights to it. A design is a very easy thing to copy and I am not sure if it can be registered for exclusive use.
6. A manufacturer might give us a donation in return for our tartan design, if he feels like it.
7. The Castle College will not weave supplies of this cloth on a commercial basis for us.

8. The price: I believe the price of single width Harris Tweed (in so far as the manufacturers will indicate) is in the region of £6 or £7 and therefore double width might be £12 a yard, or perhaps a metre.
9. The price I have just quoted is the manufacturer's wholesale price for the mass production to order. Such pieces are dispatched to the buyer as soon as they are ready.
10. Stock pieces: Traditionally stock pieces were made from odd lots of yarn or were pieces that were cancelled and therefore devalued, and sold at whatever price one can get for them.
11. They are not regular production and therefore they are never sold or bought at the regular prices.
12. Our short length of Gaisgeach Tartan is in fact 'Stock Cloth' and at present we have no buyer for it.
13. If we were to sell it retail we would have to charge a higher or retail price to compensate for the loss in cutting, postage, packing and handling.
14. You will see that there are formidable difficulties and having said all that - I want to point out that there is yet another aspect of the situation: Our cloth is a 'one-off' and therefore very valuable.
15. It is commemorative and distinctive, and therefore very valuable.
16. To realize any value that is in the cloth someone must assume responsibility for it and after 5 long years of hassle I wish to state frankly that I am not prepared to assume any responsibility for it.

Knowing that members of the committee are not conversant with this trade, I have spelt it out in the debate to enable you to arrive at a decision.

Excuse lengthy report.

Angus Macleod

PS. Presumably the Castle College agreed to become involved in the tartan in the belief that they were contributing to the cause. It is therefore proper to distribute it **free!**

[ends]

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