

THE QUAICH AND OTHER THINGS

SCOTLAND'S CUP OF FRIENDSHIP

Never heard of a Quaich before?

Or it rings a bell but you're unsure of what it is exactly, what you use it for and where it comes from?

Then this article is for you!

WHAT IS A QUAICH?

The word 'Quaich' comes from the Gaelic word 'cuach' meaning cup. Many think it is pronounced 'quake' but in Scotland we actually pronounce the 'ch' in the same manner as we would for the word 'loch'.

The Quaich is also known as the Scottish "Loving Cup" or "Cup of Friendship".

A Quaich is a traditional Scottish shallow drinking cup with two handles on opposite sides that is typically carved out of wood, probably in imitation of a scallop shell from which drams of whisky are believed to have been drunk.



There were also larger Quaichs used for ale, the largest surviving one being big enough to hold 1,5 pints.



An example of a modern Scottish wooden Quaich with silver lugs.

WHAT'S THE HISTORY OF THE QUAICH?

The “Loving Cup” is a cherished Scottish invention that originated in the Highlands, where it's been used for centuries.

Quaich making was a highly regarded profession in Scotland in the 17th century.

The earliest Quaichs were made from a single piece of wood, with the lugs (handles) sometimes covered with silver – which provided a perfect place for engraving the initials of the owner. In the seventeenth century, metal Quaichs made of silver, brass or/and pewter also started to appear – making the cups fancy enough to be used among the fashionable upper classes of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Quaich is said to have first travelled south in the canteens of the armies of Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745.

Since the wooden Quaichs are quite sturdy and thick at the bottom, the design had to change in order for the aristocracy (mainly fine Scottish ladies) to be able to lift the fine metal Quaichs and drink from them in a sophisticated manner. This resulted in a much lighter design where the sides were of the same thickness and the inner cavity much deeper and more bowl-like than before.

The centre of the bowls are usually decorated with an engraved silver disk – a traditional message might be inscribed in Gaelic: ‘SGUAB AS’I’, which means ‘Toss it back!’

WHAT WAS THE QUAICH USED FOR?

Scotland's cup of friendship has been used throughout the centuries to offer a welcoming drink in the form of whisky or brandy at clan gatherings and family occasions as well as to greet friends and visitors.

The two handles make the Quaich an ideal cup for sharing and incorporates trust between the giver and the receiver who could be friends, family, lovers or even strangers.

A Quaich should always be offered so that the receiver can hold both lugs, making it impossible for the drinker to use any weapons.



A traditional Wedding set of Sterling Silver Scottish Quaich with detailed handles.

WHAT IS THE QUAICH USED FOR TODAY?

The Quaich has found its place in many ceremonial events and is still being used to offer welcoming toasts to guests in some Scottish homes.

At weddings the Quaich is seen as a symbol of the shared love between the wedding couple and in christenings it is used to drink to the health of the newborn. This friendly cup is also often present at traditional events such as Burns Suppers.

A QUAICH MAKES A MEANINGFUL GIFT

A “Cup of Friendship” is a common wedding, christening and anniversary gift nowadays. And what better gift is there than this beautiful symbol of love, sharing, friendship and respect?



SCOTTISH CEREMONY FOR USING A QUAICH AT A WEDDING

The Quaich is often referred to as the **love cup** as you each take a handle to take a drink, showing you trust one another to share the cup.

You can fill the cup with a drink of your choice, usually whisky (IT BETTER BE) or you can combine two drinks symbolising the two of you becoming one.

The bride and groom may also use the Quaich at the reception for their first toast together. It is a moment they will long remember.

It is symbolic of the sharing between the couple, it's an ancient vessel used by two families or clans, to celebrate a bond, with each leader partaking of the offered drink.

The Quaich ceremony would be conducted once the signing of the schedule has been completed.

Example Wording:

Example 1

(**Registrar** to all) Party 1 and 2 would now like to take this time to toast their new life together.

It is a tradition in Scotland to toast friendship and love with a Quaich. This small pewter cup has two handles symbolizing love and partnership. (Cup is handed to the couple, they both hold it).

Registrar to Party 1 and 2 As you both hold on to this cup, reflect on how your love for each other, makes you stronger. Your marriage today, is a partnership, which prepares you for the challenges, and triumphs life will bring you.

[Party 1] as you drink from this cup know that you have a [husband/wife/life partner] to have and to hold, please take a drink from the Quaich.

[Party 2] as you drink from this cup know that you have a [husband/wife/life partner] to love and to cherish, please take a drink from the Quaich.

Registrar

As you have both shared from this cup you have promised to share all that the future may bring. And may the sweetness that life brings be all the sweeter because you have drunk from this Quaich together

Example 2

(**Registrar** to all) To celebrate the marriage of [Party 1] and [Party 2].they are now going to share in the drinking from the Quaich.

The Quaich, a two handled loving cup, (show Quaich) is an ancient Scottish tradition that seals the bond of two people, and marks the blending of two families. It symbolizes the love and trust implied by the bond, as the new couple shares the first drink of their marriage together.

Example 3.

(Registrar to all)

The Quaich which I am holding is a traditional drinking cup which is unique to Scotland. Drinking from a Quaich was part of a long established tradition of hospitality.

(Registrar to all) [Party 1] *and* [Party 2] would like to continue with this tradition today. As their first act together as a married couple, they are going to drink from this Quaich. In doing so they are symbolising their commitment to sharing everything in life and sealing the bond between them, whilst signifying the blending of their families."

Family member or a guest fills the Quaich with whisky, wine or other preferred drink and says:

Strike hands with me, the glasses brim,
The dew is on the heather.
For love is good and life is long,
And two are best together.

Bless the union of these two,
Eager for marriage, eager for love.
May they begin life together,
Live that life together
And come to the end together.

[Party 1] *and* [Party 2], it is now time to complete your bond.

Registrar steps forward and presents Quaich to [Party 1] and [Party 2] then to the wedding party.

Example 4.

Registrar to party 1 and 2.

The years of your life together are like a cup of Whisky poured out for you to drink. This Loving Cup contains within it a Whisky that is sweet - symbolic of happiness, joy, hope, peace, love and delight.

This same Whisky also has some bitter properties that are symbolic of life's trials and tribulations.

Together the sweet and the bitter represent "Love's Journey" and all of the experiences that are a natural part of it.

As you share the Whisky from this Loving Cup, so will you share all things in your life.

Family Member/Friend pours drink into the Loving Cup and holds it up

Registrar to all

This cup of Whisky is symbolic of the cup of life.

As you all share the preferred drink from the Loving Cup, you undertake to share all that the future may bring. All the sweetness life may hold for each of you will be the sweeter because you drink it together. Whatever challenges it may contain will be less difficult because you share them.

Drink now from this cup, and acknowledge to one another that your lives have now become one

Family Member/Friend hands the Loving Cup to the couple and says.....

May the best ye've ever seen
Be the worst ye'll ever see
May a moose ne'er leave yer giral
Wi' a tear drap in his e'e
May ye aye keep hale an' he'rty
Till ye're auld eneuch tae dee
May ye aye be jist as happy
As we wish ye aye tae be

The couple sip from the Loving Cup and hand it back to the registrar.

Registrar: As you have shared the Whisky from this Loving Cup, so may you share your lives. May you explore life's mysteries together and find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and all of life enriched by the love of family and friends.

THE QUAICH AND THE TOAST TO THE HAGGIS

This poem was written by Burns to celebrate his appreciation of the Haggis. As a result Burns and Haggis have been forever linked.

This particular poem is always the first item on the programme of Burns' suppers. The haggis is generally carried in on a silver salver at the start of the proceedings.

As it is brought to the table a piper plays a suitable, rousing accompaniment but make sure that everyone is seated or no one really sees anything.

One of the invited artistes then makes an introduction of the haggis in a fairly humorous form and then recites the poem before the theatrical cutting of the haggis with the ceremonial knife.

Address to a Haggis

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye worthy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o need,
While thro your pores the dew's distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic Labour dight,
An cut you up wi ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright,
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then, horn for horn, they stretch an strive:
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swallow'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
The auld Guidman, maist like to rive,
'Bethankit' hums.

Is there that owre his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi perfect scunner,
Looks down wi sneering, scornfu view
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll make it whistle;
An legs an arms, an heads will sned,
Like taps o thrissle.

Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinning ware
That jaups in luggies:
But, if ye wish her gratefu prayer,
Gie her a Haggis

Now comes the Toast.

Traditionally this toast is always given **AFTER** the Address, not before it...but if that is what they do then that is what they do.

The other thing that you must remember is that **the Toast is to the Haggis**. Not the guests and not the Haggis party. It is **a toast to the Haggis**.

Following the Address the presenter distributes any spare glasses or Quaich to the members of the haggis party and he then proposes the toast..

“Ladies and gentlemen (as the case may be) I give you the Toast...the Haggis “ , then he and everyone else present drink a bumper toast.



*Let's drink to the haggis, the beastie of beasties
The pride o' the Highlands, the King o' them a'
when oor plates empty, as empty they'll be
Just bring out the Haggis and see I get more.*

SLANJEVAR



“SLANGE VAR” ... “SLANGE MHOR”

Slange var, pronounced “Slan je varr”

This is the Scottish for cheers and **is NOT used** when toasting the Haggis.

We uses these when toasting friends and family

- “Slainte” **meaning** “Cheers!” and pronounced “slangjy”
- “Slainte mhath **meaning** “Good health” and pronounced “slanjy var”
- The traditional response is: “Slainte mhor” **meaning** “Good health” (as a reply) and pronounced “**slanje vor**”

You now know what I know...scary isn't it.