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Major's Description of Wild Scots

by [Sharon L. Krossa](#)

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John Major, who born near the Scottish-English border in 1470, wrote the *History of Greater Britain*, which was published in 1521. *History of Greater Britain* includes a brief description of the clothing of "Wild Scots" or "men of the Highland".

This shouldn't need saying, but I've learned from past experience: This is **not** a description of a belted plaid or kilt of any kind. Not all male skirts are kilts! Not all plaids are belted plaids!

Original

Unfortunately, at the moment I don't have the details of the original.

[H. F. McClintock](#), *Old Irish and Highland Dress, with Notes on that of the Isle of Man*. Dundalk: W. Tempest, Dundalgan Press, 1943.

Original Latin:

"A medio crure ad pedem caligas non habent, chlamyde pro veste superiore et camisia croco tincta. amiciuntur. ... Tempore belli loriam ex loris ferreis per totum corpus induunt et in illa pugnare. In panno lineo multipliciter intersuto et coerato aut picato cum cervinae pellis coopertura vulgus sylvestrium Scotorum corpus tectum habens in praelium prosilit." (p. 110)

English translation:

"From the middle of the thigh to the foot they have no covering for the leg, clothing themselves with a mantle instead of an upper garment and a shirt dyed with saffron. ... In time of war they cover their whole body with a shirt of mail of iron rings, and fight in that. The common people of the Highland (*lit.* 'wild') Scots rush into battle having their body clothed with a linen garment manifoldly sewed and painted or daubed with pitch, with a covering of deerskin." (p. 110)

McClintock has a lengthy discussion of how to interpret "pannus lineus", pointing out that it is "obviously different from the "camisia" or "shirt," ...", etc. He concludes that "It is most likely, however, that the acton is intended."

McClintock also includes another quote from Major, saying "Elsewhere Major, in speaking of Clan Cameron and Clan Chattan, says: --"

Original Latin:

".... frequenter tibiis nudis sub cruribus; in hyeme chlamydem pro veste superiore portant." (p. 111)

English translation:

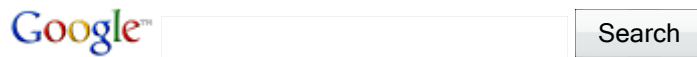
".... often with the legs bare below the thighs; in winter they wear a mantle (or plaid) for an upper garment." (p. 111)

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