

THE GAELIC FILI

Historically, the poet has played a great role in Gaelic society. This was exceptionally true of the Gaelic *fili* (Old Irish) or bard who served as court poets. In Medieval Scotland and Ireland, the *fili* was never just any great wordsmith. The *filid* (plural of *fili*) formed a hereditary caste of highly trained poets.

Filid were professionals who underwent years of training in special schools, mastering language, history, and genealogy, not to mention all the skills of versification.

The *fili* caste was an hereditary aristocracy. But, it was also an aristocracy of learning. The *filid* were the recognized intelligentsia of Medieval Gaeldom. As such, they held a commanding place—ranking in some cases, only below the king.

A *fili* was given land and granted special gifts and privileges. In return, he served the lord as a kind of medieval press agent—composing epic poems and hymns of praise to commemorate the lord's great deeds.



Before it died out, it produced a remarkable body of epic sagas and poetic verse that still resonates today. It invented poetic and musical forms which are now standard. It preserved many centuries of history. And it left a legacy of Gaelic song and story—whose echoes are heard far and wide—in tales of Celtic warriors and heroes and magic which will forever stir our imaginations.



He wrote poetry to mark great events like births, deaths and marriages. And when war was waged, it was the *fili* who wrote the words that called the men to arms, and stirred them on, even to death.

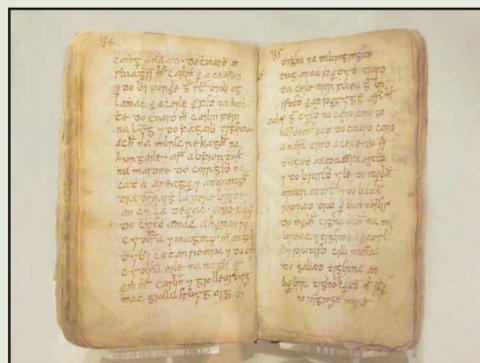
The system that supported the *filid* lasted roughly 600 years, ending in the middle of the 17th century in Ireland, somewhat later in Scotland.

THE MACMUIRICHS

There were many bardic (aka *fili*) families in Scotland and Ireland. Without question, the greatest of them all was the clan or dynasty of court poets known as the MacMhuirichs.

MacMhuirich (pronounced MacVurich) bards served at the very highest levels of Irish and Scottish nobility for 700 years—most notably as arch poets to the all-powerful Lord of the Isles.

It was in the service of the MacDonalds, that successive generations of MacMhuirich bards produced one of Gaelic Scotland's greatest literary treasures, The Red Book of Clanranald. This monumental work, is a literal masterpiece—legendary in every sense of the word.



The founding father of this Bardic dynasty was Muireadach O'Daly—an outstanding Gaelic poet, who had studied for many years at Ireland's world-renowned colleges. By the 12th century, the O'Daly line was well-established as bards. Their lineage, however, can be traced much further back—to Conn of the Hundred Battles, 110th High King of Ireland in 177 AD.

The MacMhuirichs descended from royalty, and were regarded not only as great bardic poets, but literary princes. When it came to the study (and composing) of heroic literature, and the genealogy of the ancient Gaelic world, the MacMhuirichs were “it”.



The feudal system in Scotland and Ireland that supported the Gaelic bards (or *fili*) effectively ended in the 18th century though branches of the MacMhuirichs continued to compose poetry.

Eventually the MacMhuirichs—one of the earliest constituted clans of the Scottish Highlands—took on the name Currie.

Today the Clan Currie continues to play an active role in preserving and promoting their Highland heritage. The Clan Currie Society has assumed the

mantle of their bardic ancestors, producing programs, events, exhibitions and documentaries which honor Scotland's rich culture and ancestry.

The name MacMhuirich belongs to an age long since past. But today's Curries are in every sense of the word, their true heirs and descendants.