

Friends of Wighton Lunchtime Recital

Early clàrsach music played by Simon Chadwick

Wighton Heritage Centre, Dundee Central Library Wednesday October 4th 2006

The early Gaelic harp tradition was common to Ireland and Scotland from over 1000 years ago. The early clàrsach died out in Scotland in the 18th century, and in Ireland in the 19th, and was replaced by the familiar modern neo-clàrsach, a 19th century romantic invention.

Though Andrew Wighton probably never heard an early clàrsach being played, his books contain a lot of its old repertory.

John Gunn's book "An historical enquiry respecting the performance on the harp in the Highlands of Scotland" published in 1807 (Wighton Collection 10405) describes the "Queen Mary harp", now preserved in the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. The harp was probably made in Argyll in the 15th century, so it was already over 300 years old when Gunn studied it. No-one then knew how to play it.

Simon's replica of the Queen Mary harp was made by students at London College of Furniture in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Its dimensions and measurements accurately reproduce the original medieval instrument. Its soundbox is made from willow. It has 29 strings, made of metal wire: brass in the treble, silver in the mid range and gold in the bass.

Airs by Fingal

Port Lennox

The Battle of Sheriff Moor

These tunes are from "A collection of strathspey reels and country dances" by John Bowie, published 1789 (Wighton Collection 10459). They were played on the Queen Mary harp by John Robertson of Lude in the early 1700s.

The Lady of the Desert - Irish

This Irish song air, better known as *An Chúilfhionn*, has variations by the harper Cornelius Lyons (c. 1680 - c. 1750). It also appears in Bowie's book, but Simon plays a setting noted down from the playing of one of the last and most important of the Irish harpers, Denis O'Hampsey (1695 - 1807).

Cumb Joarla wigton - Earl of wigton's Lament

A lament with an interesting set of variations in the old Gaelic style, from "A collection of ancient Scots music" by Daniel Dow, published 1776 (Wighton Collection 53675). It may have been composed for the death of the first Earl in 1619

For more info call 01334 474263 or visit www.friendsofwighton.com or www.simonchadwick.net/wighton
The next Wighton Harpist event is an illustrated lecture on the early clàrsach, Wednesday October 18, 1:15 - 1.45 pm at the Wighton Heritage Centre, Dundee Central Library, Wellgate, Dundee, DD1 1DB

Wighton Harpist

AN
HISTORICAL ENQUIRY
RESPECTING
THE PERFORMANCE

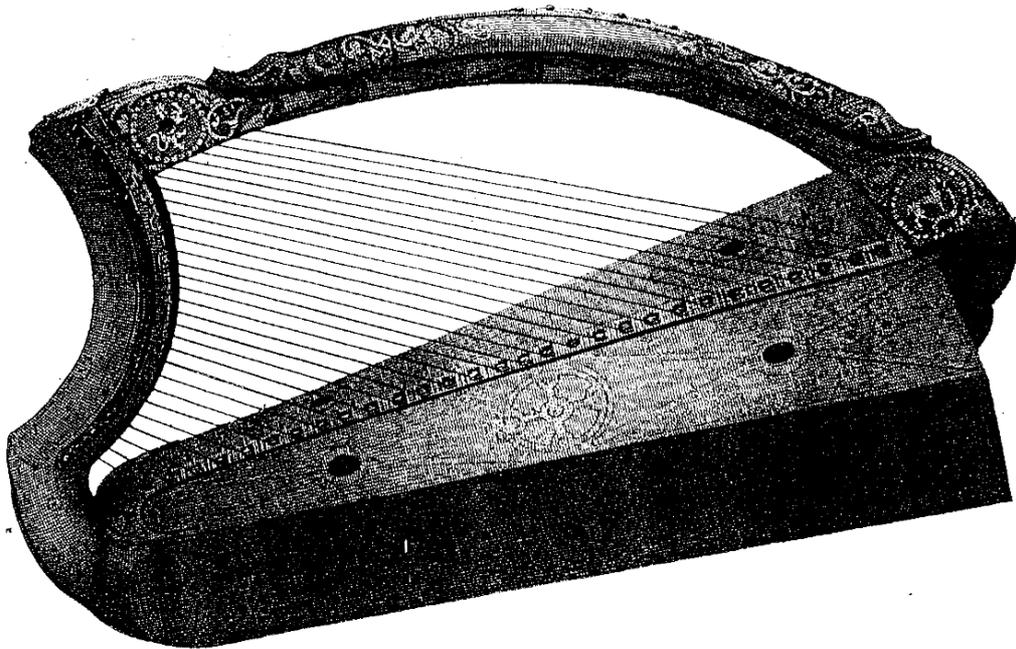
ON THE
HARP

IN
THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND;
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES, UNTIL IT WAS DISCONTINUED, ABOUT
THE YEAR 1784.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
AN ACCOUNT OF A VERY ANCIENT CALEDONIAN HARP,
AND OF
THE HARP OF QUEEN MARY.
ILLUSTRATED BY THREE ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS.

DRAWN UP
BY DESIRE OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND,
AND PUBLISHED UNDER ITS PATRONAGE,
BY
JOHN GUNN, F. A. S. E.
AUTHOR OF A TREATISE ON THE ORIGIN AND IMPROVEMENT OF STRINGED INSTRUMENTS;
AN ESSAY ON THOROUGH BASS, ADAPTED TO THE VIOLONCELLO, &c.

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AND
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1807.



Drawn and Engraved by David Sumner, 1807.

QUEEN MARY'S HARP.

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Lunchtime Series 2006