

# The Sporrán Mullach

Alexander Walker

## *The Black (Kilt) Purse*

arr: P.S.C.

strathspey

### **SPORRAN MULLACH, THE (The Black Kilt Purse).**

Walker: *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Marches, &c., 1866; No. 32, pg. 12.*

Scottish, Strathspey. A Minor, AAB.

i. Gordon Coté, cassette, 1994.

Sporran comes from the Gaelic word sporran - meaning a purse or a pouch.

Mullach, g. mullaich, pl. mullaichean (m) – means, roof, top, ceiling, summit, upper end

A Gaelic humorous story in an Aberdeen paper in 1861 uses the term ‘Sporain – Mullach’ but translates just as ‘purse’

The whiskers continued looking at the three *seriatim* at every substantive. “Breacan, sporain-mullach, luirigean-an-ruathd! agus chau nrrah dhuibh uirt’s ‘Faihte oirbh’ a ràdh ann, an cainnt nan Gaidheal !!” (Tartan **purse**! bare legs! and ha’nt Gaelic enough to say—God bless you!) That’s a very free translation, but never mind. The curl of the

Wednesday 30 January 1861, Aberdeen Journal

The Sporrán Mullach refers to the upper part of the sporran which in leather workers terms would be called the cantle.

Sporrans can have sterling or silver-plated cantles trimming the top of the pouch. The cantle may contain intricate filigree or etchings of Celtic knots. The top of the cantle may have a set stone, jewel, or emblems such as Saint Andrew, a thistle, Clan, or Masonic symbols.

For example the Black Watch sporran shown on the immediate right has a silver cantle for officers and a black leather one for enlisted men. The sporran on the far right has a silver cantle with central stone probably a cairngorm and the inscription Lonach above it.

This was probably a sporran worn by one of the Lonach highlanders as noted in the newspaper report of 1876 below:



"Lonach" emblazoned thereon. The remainder of the procession was made up of spearmen, and each one who had a place in it wore the Forbes Tartan and had the word "Lonach" engraven on his sporran and shoulder brooch. In this order the company marched to Castle

**Wednesday 30 August 1876**

#### **Alexander Walker Connection**

While he was living at Castle Newe Alexander became very involved with the Lonach Highlanders. He marched with them and when they went to the games at Braemar it is possible that he acted as their quartermaster. Finally he regularly played for them at the Lonach Ball after the games.