



Chieftain's Chatter

You wouldn't really ever call the weather in Perth 'dreich' - it is never really wet and grey enough for long enough to qualify, but it has certainly been "affa weet" this past couple of weeks! This of course, is not necessarily a bad thing! The ever receding level in the ground water aquifer from which my bore supplies our house, is in urgent need of replenishment. Furthermore, I generally prefer to be doing stuff outside rather than held hostage by my computer inside, so the weather means the June Saltire is going to come out well ahead of its 'end of the month' deadline!

The Chieftain's Ceilidh

The only item worthy of discussion here apart from the weather, is the Chieftain's Ceilidh - which, judging by the plentiful feedback received, was a resounding success! We had the largest number of attendees for this particular event since records began (more than three years ago!), which was extremely encouraging for the committee - who put a great deal of work into making it happen.

Thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of the raffle ticket buyers and those determined to own a bottle of whisky by hurling gold coins at it, we were able to donate almost \$700 to 51ACU Drums & Pipes. I am delighted to announce that this money is going to be used to sponsor a pipe banner. The banner will feature our logo on one side and will be carried on the pipes of the Junior NCO Cadet Piper on Parade. I am hoping the banner will have been made (in Scotland) in time to be presented at the Ball.

Events

Since the March Saltire, the committee have firmed up the calendar of events for this year, a summary of which appears below.

Fliers will go out shortly for the Golf Day and Winter Ceilidh. We are not sure what support there will be for the golf yet. The plan is to head down to Mandurah's "The Cut" course and play in teams of 4 under Ambrose Rules. Everyone would be back in Perth in time to change and get to the Winter Ceilidh - at which the inaugural presentation of the Chieftain's Perpetual Golf Trophy will be made!! But it won't happen unless there is sufficient interest!

The Winter Ceilidh will be held at the Royal Park Hall. Tickets, which will cost \$20, will be offered to members of the society first. The Heel 'n Toe will be playing for us and there will be a raffle. The programme is still being finalised, but be assured it will be a fun evening with singing and dancing - some dances you will know and others we will take the time to walk through and learn. It should be good!

2018 Events:

Weekend away

Date: 7 July 2018.

Venue: The Rose Hotel, Bunbury.

A good crowd have booked for this event, but there are still places left.

Golf Day

Date: 4 August 2018.

Venue: "The Cut", Mandurah.

Still to be confirmed whether we have sufficient interest for this event.

Winter Ceilidh

Date: 4 August 2018.

Venue: Royal Park Hall, West Perth.

Live dance band.

This will be a good, low cost, fun event. Members will get ticket priority.

Pre-Ball dance classes (x5)

Date: (See the website).

Venue: Royal Park Hall, West Perth.

We will teach you to become proficient at the dances for the Ball.

80th Anniversary St Andrew's Day Ball

Date: Friday 30 November 2018.

Venue: Pan Pacific Perth.

The premier event of our year.

Details of all these events are on the website.



Am Bàta

Every so often (probably rather too often actually!), one hears of a 'deserving cause' in need of money. One's immediate thought is "if the government wasted a little less tax payer money on (*complete in your own words*), they could fund this themselves."

Unfortunately governments usually have other agendas - political self preservation being chief among them!

When governments do distribute largess, they tend to do so in more heavily populated areas, where they can get the most bang for their buck (ie. influence the most voters!). So if you live in a place like the West Highlands of Scotland and you need funds for a small cause, you are up against it, however worthwhile the project.

A good example is Am Bàta, which is based at Plockton, a picturesque village on the coast, opposite the Isle of Skye. Am Bàta, which in Gaelic means The Boat, is a boat-building collaboration between Plockton High School's Technology department and Mark Stockl, a professional boat-builder based in Ullapool. Operating for ten years now, they teach traditional boat building skills.

The remoter parts of the Scottish highlands and islands face a problem. As young folk complete their education, they find there are few jobs to be had locally, so they move away. All too often,

they never come back. The communities they leave often still look idyllic to outsiders, with well maintained white painted cottages, but when you talk to the local folk that remain, you discover that half of all the cottages, once lived in by locals, are now holiday houses, the owners of which only contribute anything to the community for a few weeks a year.

Am Bàta was started in response to this problem in order to build the entrepreneurial skills of local high school children, teach them to work through and deal with problems in collaboration with others while at the same time developing strong employability skills. This happens through the practical experience of building new and repairing old boats, all commissioned by private clients over a school year. Ultimately, Am Bàta is about encouraging local folk to stay, while providing them with the means of doing so.

A problem they face is that the time it takes to complete repairs or new builds is significantly longer than a commercial enterprise would take, as tuition is time consuming and progress, this being a school, is intermittent. They are also unable to charge full commercial rates, because the work is performed by students, albeit under a tutor's watchful eye. The result of this is that costs always exceed income - they run at a loss!

Despite receiving favourable reviews from local, national and international press, Am Bàta needs money to continue, but it would seem that the government's 'pork barreling' barrel doesn't have enough pork left in it! So Am Bàta have turned to crowd-funding.

Crowd-funding can be a remarkably effective way of raising money. Causes far less deserving than Am Bàta regularly raise huge sums. Its effectiveness lies in raising small amounts of money from a lot of people - which is where you come in - if you like! To secure its future, Am Bàta needs to raise **£11,000**. If you would like to donate the cost of your next cup of coffee (a significant donation, given the cost of coffee in Perth these days!), or perhaps a little more, in order to help secure the future of this excellent project, please follow this [LINK](#) to Am Bàta's crowd-funding page.



'The first laird of aw Scotia'

This strange looking picture is actually a well known piece of satirical art dating back almost two centuries to the year 1822. It shows Edinburgh Castle up on its rock to the left with a number of distinguished looking gents standing on a stage. The longer you look at it however, the more the satirist's work becomes evident. It is immediately obvious that the kilt of the central figure is too short, his sporrán is worn too high and his hose are too short. The figure to the right of him has a kilt that's too long, appears to be wearing his sporrán round his neck and looks decidedly uncomfortable with the whole affair - as do the two figures on the extreme right. In the crowd meanwhile, there seems to be a lot of sniggering going on!

What's it all about?

Well the central figure is King George IV. His lack of familiarity with Highland dress can be excused by the fact that he had never set foot in Scotland before, indeed in 1822, no reigning British monarch had set foot in Scotland since Charles II almost 200 years previously. Having become king the year before, it was suggested

a royal visit to Scotland might bolster the sagging popularity of both the king and the government. In addition, the visit was timed to coincide with the Congress of Verona, which the government wanted to keep the king away from, in order to prevent him from meddling in foreign policy!

1822 was only 76 years after the defeat of the last Jacobite Rebellion, following which the 'Dress Act' had been passed by parliament, to ban the wearing of the kilt and any clothing made of tartan, by anyone other than 'officers and soldiers in His Majesty's service.' The act was a central part of the government's efforts to crush the clan system that had provided so much support for the Jacobite cause. These measures, followed by the infamous Highland Clearances, were sufficiently effective at crushing the traditional Highland way of life, that the law was repealed in 1782.

However, such was the romance of the "ancient belted plaid", that following the repeal of the Dress Act, those wanting to preserve the Highland identity and culture soon set up Highland Societies in Edinburgh and other cities such as London and Aberdeen, and those attending meetings were obliged to wear Highland Dress. Into this age of Scottish revivalism was born Scotland's most renowned romantic historical novelist, playwright, poet and historian - Sir Walter Scott.

As early as his boyhood, Scott was fascinated by the oral traditions of the Scottish Borders in particular and became an obsessive collector of stories. By the early 1800s, having attained worldwide celebrity through his poetry, he decided to try his hand at writing novels, weaving the results of his researches into the oral traditions of Scotland into his stories. Such was his success that he became the unofficial leader of the Scottish cultural rival.

So it was not unnatural that when planning for a royal visit got underway, Scott's advice was sought. Sir Walter seized the opportunity to invent a splendid pageant wherein ancient Scotland would be reborn, and the king, so often parodied in cartoons as being fat and debauched, would be seen as "a portly handsome man looking and moving every inch a King". George would be presented as a new Jacobite king, with the logic that he was by bloodline as much a Stuart as Bonnie Prince Charlie had been, thus winning the affections of the Scots!

The king, having been persuaded by Scott that he had every right to consider himself a 'Stuart prince' and could rightly and properly swathe himself in "the garb of Old Gaul", placed an order with George Hunter & Co, Outfitters, of Tokenhouse Yard, London and Princes Street, Edinburgh, for a highland outfit in bright red Royal Tartan (known ever since as Royal Stuart), complete with gold chains and assorted weaponry including dirk, sword and pistol - for which he forked out the sum of £1,354 and 18 shillings (a sum equivalent to £110,000 today!)

Time and space forbid a full description of the royal visit here, however an aspect of the 'Grand Ball', held by the peers of Scotland to entertain the king, is worthy of note. The dress rules for this event, written by Sir Walter, referred to the event as a 'Highland Ball' and, having reminded readers that the king had ordered a kilt himself, stipulated that, unless in uniform, "no Gentleman is to be allowed to appear in anything but the ancient Highland costume". On reading this, lowland gentlemen (and many highlanders for that matter) suddenly embarked on a desperate search for a suitable tartan kilt from the tailors of Edinburgh - who responded inventively! There is no doubt that this can be seen as the pivotal moment from when, what had previously been thought of as the 'primitive dress of mountain thieves', became the national dress of the whole of Scotland.

While the King's one and only kilted appearance was to be ruthlessly caricatured, as seen above, the event resulted in an increase in goodwill and a new-found Scottish national identity, uniting Highlander and Lowlander as they had never been before, in sharing the iconic symbolism of kilts and tartans. The pride of the Clan chieftains in their heritage was also reinvigorated, although there was no check in the progress of the Highland Clearances, which continued unabated.

Incidentally, the catering contract for the Edinburgh royal visit of 1822 was won by an Ebenezer Scroggie, who would become the posthumous inspiration for Charles Dickens' character Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol!

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