



# TARTAN Herald

The Newsletter of the Scottish Tartans Authority

Issue no 47 - May 2016

## The National Tartan Centre Project



Illustrative purposes only - Artist's impression of how the entrance to the Centre could look.

One of our core objectives at the Scottish Tartans Authority is to develop a National Tartan Centre. The vision for the Centre is that it will be a self-sustaining gateway, showcasing and promoting tartan and its important Highland heritage as well as its iconic status as the defining symbol of a nation. From traditional Highland Dress to modern fashion, manufacture and design, the past, present and future will combine to create a journey for the visitor, identifying the origins of a fabric now synonymous with all things Scottish. It will emphasise how tartan provides a source of identity and belonging to so many people across the globe, and we would like to attract both domestic and international visitors, providing them with a hugely informative and unforgettable experience. We want to attract visitors from throughout the world and promote tartan as the defining symbol of a nation. We have been making excellent progress towards seeing the Centre become a reality and worked with Scottish Enterprise to commission consultants to undertake a Feasibility Study that was completed in late 2015.

## National Tartan Centre continued

The report was very positive and recommended that a National Tartan Centre should be progressed and that we should start discussions with the Scottish cities identified in the report as being the most appropriate locations. This will then allow us to identify a suitable geographic location and building. Since then we have been working with a number of partner organisations to find the best home for the Centre and are now getting closer to confirming this. Initial ideas for the interior of the Centre include an exhibition space exploring the story of Tartan up to the present day, an education and research centre, as well as a café and retail space. We are still in the very early stages but we are confident that there is a clear demand and need for a Centre. So a hugely encouraging start towards establishing a Centre and as STA members we will keep you up to date with the latest progress. If you are interested in supporting us with this pivotal project, then please get in touch with us.



The image above shows how the exhibition space in the Centre may look.

## We've "Got Social..."

We have got social and set up some new social media channels and we would love for you to join us there. So just click on the links below and start following us to keep up to date with all things tartan...



[www.facebook.com/tartansauthority/](http://www.facebook.com/tartansauthority/)



[www.twitter.com/tartanauthority/](http://www.twitter.com/tartanauthority/)

## A New Era & a New Director

As we move forward with our ambitious plans, it is fitting that we welcomed a new Director last year. Grant MacKenzie joined us in June 2015 with a remit to manage and coordinate key projects as well as to ensure that the STA reaches it's full potential in terms of organisational focus.



Grant looking towards the majestic Kelpies

Grant was born and bred in the Highlands, having grown up in both the Lochaber and Black Isle areas. He comes with a professional background, gained in some of Scotland's most high profile heritage sites and his life-long interest in Scottish history and heritage was deepened when he studied history and heritage management at University. Grant went on to work at a number of prestigious sites including the British Museum, Edinburgh Castle and National Museums Scotland. He joins the STA fresh from having managed the Kelpies and Helix project. For anyone who has not heard of the Kelpies, they are two 30 metre sculptures that are the world's largest equine statues - they are located in Falkirk. The project is the UK's largest lottery funded project and welcomed over 1 million visitors in its first year.

Grant has had a whirlwind introduction to The Scottish Tartans Authority and is already learning much about the fabric that we all know and love, his focus continues to be ensuring that we continue to create a sustainable organisation and that we achieve our charitable purposes. Brian Wilton continues to provide invaluable support as an independent consultant while Peter MacDonald, Trustee and Head of Research is having one of the busiest years imaginable in terms of interesting tartan finds. Grant may be contacted at [grant@tartansauthority.com](mailto:grant@tartansauthority.com) so please get in touch with him and welcome him to the STA family. Now that he has his feet under the table, Grant is looking forward to meeting as many members as possible.

## Blair Macnaughton Snr 1927 ~ 2015

Blair Macnaughton, who, last year, passed away in Pitlochry aged 88, was for many years managing director of Macnaughton Holdings the international maker of tartan and tweed. He guided the firm through many challenging years to make it one of the largest private textile companies in Scotland. Blair was the sixth generation to be in charge of the firm and introduced far-reaching schemes of modernisation. He was an expert and canny salesman - creating and nurturing markets in Europe, the Far East and America where the company's products were seen in such New York stores such as Bloomingdales, Macy's and Sachs.

Mr Macnaughton was a proud Scot and played an active role in the clan Macnaughton. He was instrumental in promoting the Scottish Tartans Authority. Brian Wilton, former Director of the STA told The Herald, "Without Blair's foresight, enthusiasm and drive, the STA would never have existed. His enthusiasm and single-mindedness resulted in the formation of an organisation that has brought together under one harmonious roof, the major companies in the Scottish tartan industry and the world's leading tartan academics and historians. It was Blair's all-consuming passion that a national Tartan Centre should be established and it is a very fitting tribute that in the last weeks of his life, that dream took its first government-sponsored steps towards reality."



At Glenalmond College Blair became a prominent sportsman and captain of the 1st XV from where he moved on to train as a physical training instructor with the Marine Commandos. He played rugby for the Marines and for Exeter Rugby Club. Demobbed in 1947 he attended the Scottish Woollen College in Galashiels where he met his future wife Elsie Davidson. In the early 1950s he returned to Pitlochry, succeeded his father and spearheaded the firm's progress to become one of the largest woollen manufacturers in Scotland.

From school and his time in the Marines, Blair was a keen sportsman and an especially passionate curler and his enthusiasm for the sport spread far beyond Scotland. He was a long-standing member of the Pitlochry Curling Club and co-founded the Heart of the Highlands. He was secretary to the Atholl Province for 30 years, attended numerous Silver Brooms around the world and was a participant in every Grand Match since the war.

His name was placed on the Roll of Honour of the Macnaughton clan and he acted as an enthusiastic host at the 2009 Gathering in Holyrood Park. His son Blair, now running the firm recalls, "Dad's enthusiasm saw no bounds. His welcome included organising a tour of Macnaughton country from Perthshire to Argyll. The bus was full of laughter and dad was in his element repeating family and clan yarns."

## Membership Update

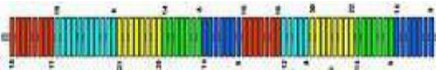
As you hopefully know we very much appreciate the support of all our members at the STA. Without your involvement we would not be able to deliver our key objectives. We are therefore always on the look-out for new members and so if anyone you know would be interested in joining us then please get in touch with us so that they can also become part of the STA family. As a charity we need members to be able to carry out our aims. Join us by visiting the website at [www.tartansauthority.com/membership/membership-benefits/](http://www.tartansauthority.com/membership/membership-benefits/) or email us at [admin@tartansauthority.com](mailto:admin@tartansauthority.com). Last year we reduced our membership rates to make them better value and private members can now join from just £20, with Business membership starting from just £50 for Sole Traders and potential and current members may also wish to consider a Lifetime subscription for £500.



# Tartan Genetics

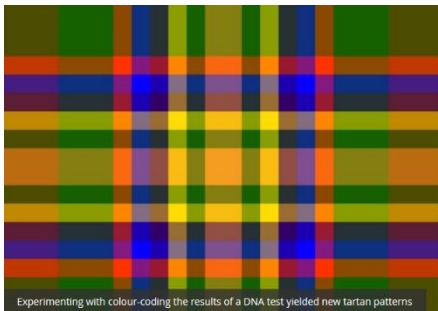
Noticing the similarity between the colour strip method of recording tartans and the strip notation used to describe genetic markers, University of Dundee honorary research fellow Jim Pattison ingeniously decided to experiment by turning his genetic markers into a tartan! Project funding came from the Wellcome Trust Foundation and two exhibitions of his work have taken place.

Jim sent a sample of his saliva to a US company whose test can expose – amongst very many factors – 38 physical traits common to a person's family, such as ear wax type, hair curl, pain sensitivity and what percentage of Neanderthal a person has. Ear wax AND Neanderthal traits . . . oh boy . . . as we say in Scotland 'haud me back!



**Top: DNA Strip**

**Bottom: Tartan based on the DNA strip**



An added incentive to Jim's project was that his Mother had, over the years, made kilts for family and friends but he had declined because of there being no Pattison family tartan. You can find out more about Jim's innovative work on his website <http://jimpattison.co.uk/L>

## BURNS NIGHT AT DUMFRIES HOUSE

So how did you spend your Burns Night.....? Well, a number of us at the STA were honoured to be invited to a celebratory dinner hosted by His Royal Highness, The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay for the 501st anniversary of The Incorporation of Weavers of Glasgow.

Among the guests were representatives from the weaving and Highland wear industries, educationalists, Deacons of the other Scottish and English weaving trades and supporters of The Scottish Tartans Authority.



**Dumfries House**

This superb evening was also a key opportunity for us to promote our exciting plans for a National Tartan Centre. On show were a number of our important artefacts and these were complemented by other historical tartan and Highland Dress items from Mount Stuart, The National Trust for Scotland and Paisley Museum as well as some important pieces kindly on loan from private collectors.

The evening was a huge success and an occasion that we will all remember with fondness and appreciation.



**The STA display case at Dumfries House.**

## Fraser of Altyre - A Misnomer...?

Amongst the STA's records is a silk sample labelled Fraser of Altyre obtained from Andersons (now Kinloch Anderson) in the 1960s. Quite how it came to bear the suffix 'of Altyre' is unknown but recent research has thrown the naming of this tartan into doubt and it now seems likely that it should be more correctly named Fraser of Struy. Working with a number of photographs of unnamed 18th century fragments the Authority's Head of Research, Peter MacDonald, was able to identify two separate specimens, each having the potential to be the source of the sett on which the Anderson's silk was based.



Silk sample labelled Fraser of Altyre. STA Collection © Peter Eslea MacDonald

The original plaid belonged to Thomas Fraser of Struy who is said to have worn it at the Battle of Culloden. Following the Jacobite defeat he joined the newly raised 78th Regt of Foot (Fraser's Highlanders) in 1757 and died in Canada the following year 'of a violent fever'. The military historian Capt Wm. MacKay owned a piece of the tartan of which he speculated that the plaid may also have been worn by the Fraser's Highlanders; something thought unlikely - see Peter's paper on the Tartan of the 78th Regt of Foot.

The lands of Altyre have long been associated with the Cummings and, apart from the 16th century marriage of Mary Fraser of Lovat to James Cumming of Altyre, there is no known connection of the Frasers with Altyre. On the other hand, we know that MacKay's fragment was from the plaid that belonged to Fraser of Struy and that that sett is identical to the one previously called Fraser of Altyre. In the absence of any proven Altyre connection it is logical to conclude that the tartan was misnamed/attributed at some point c1950-60 and that it should more correctly be called Fraser of Struy. More information can be found in Peter's paper [Fraser of Altyre – A Reappraisal](#).

## A Stitch In Time

On 25th June 2015 The Scottish Tartans Authority attended "A Stitch in Time" at Dumfries House, a prestigious event celebrating the best in British Textile and Fashion Manufacture. Chairman John McLeish represented the STA and was joined by a number of Trustees whose businesses had been asked to participate on the day: Ken MacDonald (Houston Kiltmakers), Colin Brown (Ingles Buchan), John Culbert (Glenisla).

The event was hugely informative and all four of our Trustees were introduced to Their Royal Highnesses, The Duke and Duchess of Rothesay, both of whom showed great interest in the STA artefacts on show. HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay was particularly interested in the Duke of Sussex sporran as well as the 18th century tartan samples on display.



Chairman alongside STA display case

Our input to the event told the story of tartan from the 18th century pre-Culloden era to the present day, including the important Highland revival period and, not forgetting the phenomenal growth of tartan in the 19th century - quite literally "stitches through time". Particular thanks go to James Sugden OBE, Chairman of Future Textiles and Kenneth Dunsmuir, Administrative Director, Dumfries House for extending an invitation to The Scottish Tartans Authority and allowing us to combine past and present to showcase some of our important collection.



## THE TWO JOHN BROWNS...



Any admirers of Kenneth MacLeay's magnificent watercolours of "The Principal Clans and Followings and the Retainers of the Royal Household at Balmoral" will have seen the impressive portrait of Queen Victoria's Personal Servant, John Brown. The portraits, commissioned by the Queen were published in 1870 in two leather-bound and gold-embossed volumes measuring 22 x 18 inches (57 x 47cms) at a price of 18 Guineas (2 years' wages for a labourer!). It's said that the Queen's family and friends often teased her about John Brown - some affectionately and others no doubt maliciously - and to counter that, she allegedly asked Kenneth MacLeay to modify his portrait of Brown to make him less rural and more urbane. The portrait on the right is the result of that transformation in which MacLeay has done away with Brown's thick ankles, rather dumpy legs, comfortable waistline, homely shoes and crumpled everyday clothing, grey hair and aging face and turned him into a tall and handsome figure whom Victoria's friends might have wished for their own personal servant.

The portrait on the left was discovered in a small 9 x 7 inch hardbound book of the same title and from the same publishers as the original volumes and purchased in 1880 (owner's inscription). The black & white illustrations are described as "Reduced from the original lithography by Vincent Brooks, Day & Son." Also in the Tartans Authority library from the same publishers (Mitchell) is a second publication of the same size and title but leather-bound and gold-tooled in which the illustrations are described: "Photographed from the original drawings by Vincent Brooks, Day & Son" What is most interesting is that the original 'crumpled' John Brown portrait has gone . . . and has been replaced by the much younger and more handsome version. We wonder if the publisher Mr Mitchell received a royal slap on the wrist for his faux pas in exposing the real John Brown to his readers? Of less, but still significant interest is a previously unseen (certainly by us at the Tartans Authority) portrait of "Peter Farquharson, Her Majesty's Keeper at Abergeldie" which didn't make it into the final publications. The originals of all the MacLeay portraits are in Windsor Castle and it would be interesting to know if the original "crumpled" John Brown is amongst them.

## GUEST ARTICLE

## SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE CLAN TARTANS

By Willie Scobie

Of Sir Walter Scott it has been said that he –  
*“...invented the cult of the clan tartan... arguably one of his finer works of fiction.”* (Ann Rigney in her “The Afterlives of Walter Scott”).

Other writers, such as John Sutherland in his “Lives of the Novelists”, have expressed a similar claim. Strangely, though, Scott has been frequently quoted as having said

– “I do not believe a word of the nonsense about every clan or name having a regular pattern which was undeviatingly adhered to.”

And yet...

“A new plaid sal ye hae, and o’ the best, - your ain clan-colours, man, - an ye will tell me where it can be sent t’ye frae Glasco.”

“I needna name my clan, - I am of a king’s clan, as is weel kend,” said the Highlander; “but ye may tak a bit o’ the plaid... and that’ll learn ye the sett...”

(**Rob Roy**: Sir Walter Scott: 1817: present author’s emphasis)

These words would seem to imply that Scott **did** believe that individual clans wore quite specific colours and patterns. Where did he get this notion from?

*“I have myself known many old people that were out in 1715 and I have understood that generally speaking the clan tartans were observed by the more numerous & powerful names... I must however add that though I am sure I could show that the clan tartans were in use a great many years before 1745 I do not believe a word of the nonsense about every clan or name having a regular pattern which was undeviatingly adhered to.”* (Sir Walter Scott: Letter to Mrs Hughes: 12<sup>th</sup> April 1825: present author’s emphasis)

From this we can see that Scott has been habitually quoted selectively and out of context in order to create a misleadingly skewed notion of his actual understanding of clan tartans. Scott had good reason to believe that the concept of clan tartans was a reality prior to 1745, but he did not believe that each and every Scottish surname had exclusive claim to some particular sett which was “undeviatingly” worn by all of its members. This is a very different thing from saying;

- a. Scott did not believe in clan tartans.
- b. Scott invented clan tartans.



Sir Walter Scott

But again – where did he receive his understanding, and from whom?

Scott speaks of old people that were “out in 1715”, by which we are to understand – men who fought in the Jacobite uprising of that year. We know of one such individual who was a channel of information to the novelist. In the year 1786, when Scott was fifteen, he journeyed to Duror in Appin to visit one of his father’s old legal clients, Alexander Stewart of Invernahyle. This was an old Highlander with a unique claim to fame. He was the man who had got the better of none other than Rob Roy MacGregor in a fencing duel. Rob was elderly by then and the contest had been settled by a single, non-fatal wound, but it was nevertheless a considerable distinction.

Invernahyle had, indeed, fought in the Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745, and it was from him, and the likes of him, over a period of years, that Walter Scott gained the intimate knowledge of Highland culture and tradition which enabled him to write such classics as **Waverley** and **Rob Roy**.

How then can it reasonably be doubted that such as Invernahyle passed on accurate information on clan tartans decades before they were allegedly “invented”? In the early part of the twenty-first century, there has been inherited a widely believed and oft repeated conventional wisdom to the effect that clan tartans are in some way bogus. One has to wonder at the motives of those who dismiss evidence of the quality passed down to us by Sir Walter Scott.

*Please note the views expressed are that of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Tartans Authority.*



## Janet Spalding Tartan: The Story Continues...

Those of you with good memories may remember a previous piece on what we called the 'Janet Spalding' tartan. Recapping on the story . . . we had donated to us a fascinating length of unidentified old tartan which we knew about but had never seen in the flesh. The generous donor was a descendant of the weaver and the tartan provenance was fascinating in that it was spun, dyed and woven in 1770 by Janet Spalding from her own sheep reared 1,000 feet up in the Perthshire hills at a croft called Braes of Clayquhat. To our great surprise there was still a property called that on the modern Ordnance Survey map and a few weeks later we set out to find it.



A lone pine tree stands guard over the current occupier of Janet's little patch of land.



Centre skyline just behind the wind turbine is where Janet Spalding lived and worked.

Once in the area, we gingerly drove a couple of miles up into the hills along a single track road, wincing every now and then when the protruding boulders introduced themselves to the bottom of our car...

But it was all worth it! A 100-year-old dwelling had long replaced whatever croft Janet and her family occupied but we stood where her sheep had grazed and from where she had looked out over the panoramic spread of hills and forests that can have changed little since her day. Most important of all, we took her woven tartan back to its beginnings of two-and-a-half centuries ago – if only for a fleeting stay before it came back to our archives here in Crieff.



The Spalding Tartan

### Business Directory

We have set up a new Business Directory on our website where our business members can promote their businesses and where private members can search for their tartan products. If you are a business member and want to update your details please just email us.

Find out more here

<http://tinyurl.com/zl9k89w>



## SCOTLAND'S CHARITY AIR AMBULANCE TARTAN

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) launched on 22nd May 2013 and from Scone-based Perth Airport is well positioned geographically to reach 90% of Scotland's population within 25 minutes. It's also ideally placed to reach some of Scotland's remotest areas within a 15 to 30-minute timeframe. The crew flies to time-critical emergencies across Scotland and relies 100% on donations from supporters to ensure we are there when needed.

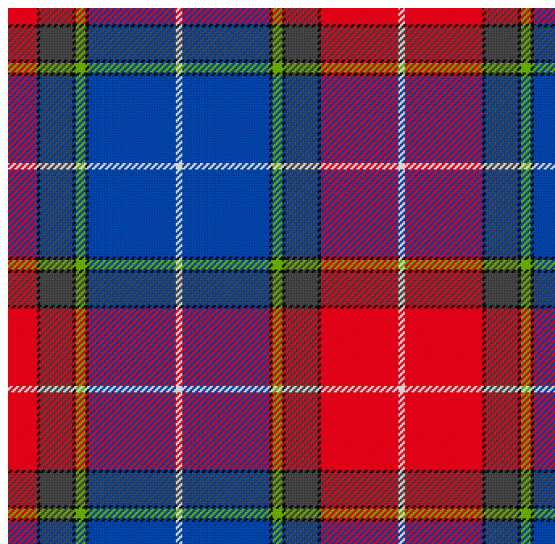
When the idea of having their own tartan was discussed, the SCAA came to us at the Scottish Tartans Authority and we were delighted to develop and donate a special design to such an extremely worthy cause.



The SCAA air ambulance in operation.

The SCAA were delighted with the result and the rationale behind the design which was that Robert the Bruce was crowned King of Scotland in 1306 in Scone and the 18th century Bruce tartan gives the inspiration for this 21st century tartan for the Scone-based SCAA - Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance - the first of its kind in Scotland. The two predominant elements are the blue and white for Scotland's national flag and the white on red - the universal colours of medical aid. Separating those two symbolic elements are the grey and green of the Scottish landscapes over which the SCAA operates in all weathers.

Learn more and see how you can help with a donation at [www.scaa.org.uk](http://www.scaa.org.uk).



The SCAA Tartan in all its glory



The launch of the SCCA Tartan took place on a rather wintry day.

PS: The icing on the cake is that to contribute to the service's fund-raising efforts, the House of Edgar (just a few miles from the helicopter base) has very generously woven and donated a substantial number of lambs' wool scarves in the new tartan.

## Tartan Marque Project

### CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME



I'd like to welcome all of our members to this long overdue edition of the Tartan Herald. I do hope that you will enjoy the content and thank you for your patience - we trust that the balance of news and research is to your liking.

Change continues to be the order of the day at The Scottish Tartans Authority and, with the adoption of a revised set of Articles of Association last year, we now have a robust and modernised Constitution that we believe will be able to stand the test of time. You will read in the following pages about the appointment of our new Director, Grant MacKenzie and about two of our exciting projects in the form of a National Tartan Centre and Tartan Marque. You will also recognise the style of a few of the articles as the irrepressible Brian Wilton continues share his extensive knowledge alongside important contributions from Peter MacDonald and Willie Scobie.

Thank you all for your continued support and I look forward to sharing more news in what is shaping up to be another landmark year for The Scottish Tartans Authority.

Weaving truth with trust

*John McLeish*  
*Chairman – The Scottish Tartans Authority*

The Scottish Tartans Authority has, for many years, sought to support businesses involved in the tartan sector. The idea of tartan protection and provenance is not in any way new however it has always been clear that in tartan, we have a very different proposition to that presented by a fabric such as Harris Tweed - tartan is already woven worldwide.



Notwithstanding previous attempts at establishing a workable labelling system for tartan fabric, The Scottish Tartans Authority has now responded to the growing number of requests to look again at the options for protecting, so far as is possible, the fabric that we all hold so dear. Earlier this year, we commissioned an independent study to look at the options for protecting tartan woven in Scotland. By looking at this narrow definition, it is hoped that any results will be very focused and may be capable of being translated for use by other manufacturers of Highland Dress.

At time of writing, the Trustees are reviewing a final draft report and we look forward to keeping you up to date with any future developments. A short paragraph for a big subject..... more to come!

## Board Update and Governance

During 2015 we completed a full constitutional review to ensure that our governance structure and processes are fit for purpose and up to date.

Changes to our Articles of Association were approved by members at or 2015 AGM. The new Articles may be found on our website  
[mailto:http://www.tartansauthority.com/media/459515/2015\\_articles\\_of\\_association\\_pdf.pdf](mailto:http://www.tartansauthority.com/media/459515/2015_articles_of_association_pdf.pdf)

As well as ensuring that the promotion, protection and preservation of Highland Dress sits alongside tartan within our charitable purposes, we took the opportunity to make some changes to our Board make-up, achieving a balance between personal and business members and introducing a new board position of Keeper Trustee.

We feel confident that the changes we have made will allow us to seize the growing number of opportunities to further our charitable purposes while ensuring that we focus on the projects that provide the greatest level of impact.

Our current Trustees are John McLeish—Chairman, Ken MacDonald—Vice Chairman, Colin Brown—Ingles Buchan, Moira Dalgetty, Tim Ellis, Chief Executive National Records of Scotland and Keeper of The Scottish Register of Tartan, Robin Elliot, Andrew Elliot Ltd, Peter Wilson, President, Great Scot International Inc.



The photo above is from the 2015 AGM held at Crieff Hydro. From left to right; David Cowley, Strathmore Woollen Company, Grant MacKenzie, STA Director, Peter MacDonald, - Head of Research—STA, Colin Liddell—Company Secretary—STA, John McLeish—Chairman—STA, Ken MacDonald, Vice Chairman—STA, Moira Dalgetty, Trustee—STA, Robin Elliot—Trustee—STA, Colin Brown, Trustee—STA.

## Got a story to tell...?

We are always looking for interesting stories to share with you all, so if you have anything you want to share with our members then please get in touch with us.

We can also share these on our social media channels and website so get in touch and let us know what is going on in your world of Tartan...

**Contact us at**  
**[admin@tartansauthority.com](mailto:admin@tartansauthority.com)**



## THANK YOU

Thank you to Brian Wilton, Tartan Ambassador Ltd Willie Scobie, one of our dedicated members and Peter MacDonald, STA Head of Research for their contributions to this edition.