

Letter from Scotland



“The field of dreams”,
Blair Atholl Scout
Jamboree, July 2014

I've been watching the Commonwealth Games from a TV screen in the corner of the staff tent at a Scout Jamboree in Blair Atholl. Both events have been showing Scotland at its sun-blessed best. While the athletes were performing on the world stage, scouts in this field of dreams were facing up to their own challenges.

There were over 40 activities to choose from...field sports, water sports, hill-walking, bush craft, circus skills, martial arts, crafts, cycling, movie-making etc ...not to mention camping and cooking in the scouting equivalent of the Athletes Village. And instead of a medal race, there was a badge race. By completing 12 different activities you could earn the “White Cockade.”

They came from all corners of the scouting world to take part, from Japan, the USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway, France, Ireland, England...19 countries altogether. Half of the 900 scouts came from Scotland and each patrol was paired with a foreign patrol to encourage different nationalities to work together.



MacDonald sub-camp, Blair
Atholl Jamboree

Just like the Commonwealth Games there was an opening ceremony but without the razzmatazz and kitsch of the Glasgow affair. Instead we had a pipe band, led by a 10 year-old boy, a parade of flags and a fire-lighting ceremony. We had our traffic jams

on Open Day. And we had the same logistical challenges of feeding and watering a tented village of 1300 people.

By and large, the weather has played along nicely with both events. At Blair Atholl we had no rain for the entire first week. The sun shone. There were no midges. The swimming sessions in the River Tilt in the late afternoon were hugely popular and wonderfully refreshing.

In short, both the Games and the Jamboree – which are still in full flow as I write – look like show-casing Scotland as a land of healthy young people be-sporting themselves in the sunshine. The issues of poverty, sickness, crime, pollution, constitutional change are over the horizon, things to worry about in the autumn.

For the moment, we are a land of blue skies and coloured flags.