

Reflections on a First Gathering

When my friend George Butler and myself decided to attend Blair Atholl 2011, the usual emotions of anticipation, excitement and apprehension were there in abundance. While both strong Jacobites, we realised that others would have superior knowledge of the uprising of 1745 and did not wish to appear wanting.

Any apprehension quickly dissipated when we walked through the portal of the Blair Atholl Arms Hotel and where greeted by Peter Lole, Peter welcomed us warmly and politely and made us feel very much part of the gathering. This was enhanced that evening when we met up with fellow Jacobites at the first dinner. John McFarlane and his wife Val, Malcolm White, Maureen Lipscombe together with Emsley Nimmo were welcoming and friendly.

The highlight of my evening was being introduced to the historian Christopher Duffy, whose book "The '45" I was currently reading, Christopher very kindly wrote a sentiment in my book the following morning. On re-pasts following we circulated among other guests rather than sit at the same table and were quickly aware of a broad spectrum of society that were our companions for the gathering.

The bus tours of the following days were full of interest and enthusiasm and I must pay tribute to our bus driver whose name regretfully escapes me. This gentleman was a fountain of knowledge and showed George and myself the tomb of "The Wolf of Bananoch" personally a rare treat indeed. The highlight for us was the visit to Ardblair the home of the Blair-Oliphant family. They are wonderful people and greeted us royally, must mention Amelia who showed us around her home, with genuine love for Jacobitism and no small measure of emotion while talking about the after math of Culloden, for me at times a spine tingling event that will long live in the memory.

During one of our lunches Peter Lole introduced me to a local ale:- "The lure of Meikleour" what a grand drop amber nector that was my thanks for that Peter .

Following great difficulties with my bow tie, the annual formal dinner ended proceedings and a grand affair it was. The food was sublime and I sampled Haggis, Neeps and Tatties for the first time (cant for the life of me understand why I have not had this before) really good. The group on our table including Glen MacDonald enjoyed each other's banter and laughter with gusto, grand company. Johns oration on Gaelic Jacobite music was fascinating and informative. Pipe-major Sharon Kelly gave a wonderful recital of Pipe music that I confess got my feet and hands tapping rather loudly, a gentle rebuke from Malcolm the following morning who informed other breakfast companions that Solo piping should be Listened to in silence!! My apologies Malcolm.

So now it is onward to Derby 2012 and another gathering of likeminded people, that will hopefully match this years which apparently was very good having listened to comments afterwards and to which I would fully concur.

Brian Whiting, September 2011