

Place: Minto House Estate (Minto) (*Minto, Scottish Borders, Scotland*)

Year: 1930

Indoors/outdoors: Outdoors

Number of performances: 2

6 September at 3pm and 6pm 1930

The pageant was held in the grounds of Minto House; the estate was then seat of the Earl of Minto. The small village of Minto is nearby and this is situated about six miles from the town of Hawick.

Name of pageant master and other named staff

- Choir Master: Miss C.B. Innes
- Stalls at the Countrie Fayre:
- Convenor of novelty stalls: The Duchess of Roxburgh
- Convenor of glass and china stalls: The Countess of Dalkeith
- Convenor of cake and candy: Mrs John Laidlaw, Kippilaw
- Convenor of game and produce: Mrs Bell Irving, Makerstoun
- Convenor of basketry stalls: Mrs Heron Maxwell, Cairnmount and Mrs Pringle, Benrigg
- Convenor of Jumble stalls: Mrs A. Paton, Whitehill
- Convenor of amusements and sideshows: Col. J. Fyfe-Jamieson, Cavers and Rev. G.O. Mackenzie, Minto

Notes

There was no named pageant master for this event; it is likely that each episode had its own producer. If there was any one person overseeing, this may have been the pageant's author and narrator, Molly Clavering.

Names of executive committee or equivalent

General Organisation Committee:

- Chair: Lady Minto

Notes

Names of other members have not been recovered. Representatives of the Roxburghshire Girl Guides would likely have been amongst the organisers, particularly local commissioners.

Names of script-writer(s) and other credited author(s)

- Clavering, Molly
- Benson, A.C.

Notes

The author of the pageant was a published novelist who went on to produce many works of fiction set in Scotland. She also published serialised stories which appeared in publications such as the *People's Friend*. Clavering used several pen names including 'Marion Moffatt'.¹

Land of Hope and Glory was sung at the close of the pageant; lyrics of this song were by A.C. Benson.

Names of composers

- Elgar, Edward

Numbers of performers

700

A number of performers were members of local aristocracy and upper-middle-class families from the locality; however, the majority were girl guides and boy scouts from local troops. A large number of horses appeared, particularly in episodes III, IV, V, VI and VIII.

Financial information

Around £1000 was raised by the event after expenses were met.³

Object of any funds raised

- The Roxburgh County Girl Guides.
- Contribution to the building of the Girl Guides Imperial Headquarters in London.
- The Roxburgh County Boy Scouts.⁴

Linked occasion

n/a

Audience information

- **Grandstand:** Yes
- **Grandstand capacity:** n/a
- **Total audience:** 10000

Notes

Around 6000 people attended the afternoon performance with a further 'large audience' in the evening.⁵ The *Times* newspaper stated that around 10000 had attended the day's event.⁶ The event attracted news coverage because of the attendance of HRH Prince George at the afternoon performance. Half way through this first show, the weather deteriorated. This continued for the evening performance. Higher attendances for the afternoon were always likely because of the Prince's presence, but the weather also likely affected attendance at the evening show; precise figures

have not been recovered for this but they are likely to have been substantially less.

Prices of admission and seats: highest–lowest

7s. 6d.–6d.

Admission to the grounds only: Adults 6d.; Children 3d. Guides and Scouts in uniform: free.

Admission to Pageant Enclosure:

- Afternoon performance: 7s. 6d., 5s, 2s. 6d. Standing only: 6d.
- Evening performance: 5s., 2s. 6d. Standing only: 6d.
- Admission to Flower Gardens: 6d.
- Motor Car Park: Cars 2s. 6d.; Motor Cycles 1s.⁷

The higher priced seats for the afternoon performance reflected the attendance of royalty at the pageant and fayre.

Associated events

A fair with stalls and attractions ran alongside the pageant.

Pageant outline

Prologue

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Melrose, St Boswells and District. The playing of the national anthem as the royal visitor, Prince George, took his seat in the pageant enclosure preceded the beginning of the pageant. The drama then opened with a group of Guides seated about a fire; they sang 'of the old days'.⁸ A figure then approached their fire and spoke to them. This was the 'Spirit of Border Legend' (played by Molly Clavering, who wrote the scenario for the pageant). She tells the children that she 'will show you something of the past'; this speech goes on:

You shall see vanished splendour, struggles to the death for causes which are now no more than names, merciless persecution in the name of God the All-Merciful. And if you see also tyranny, lawlessness, cruelty, forget the evil, and remember only the chivalry, the courage, and the loyalty of those men and women now dust who fought to defend the land which is your heritage.

The spirit then summons two assistants: these are Thomas of Ercildoune (played by Patrol Leader Julia Dutton) and 'a mighty wizard, Michael Scot [sic]' (played by P.L. Chrissie Swinton). The wizard then leaves the stage alone but the Queen of Elfland (Elizabeth McConnel) and 'her elfin band' lead Thomas away.⁹ Aside from these central characters, a large number of Guides took part with Brownies playing the elves.

Episode I. Saint Cuthbert, 7th Century

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Melrose, St Boswells and District. Taking part in this episode were Druids, Monks, a 'human sacrifice', a crowd of children and the character of St Cuthbert (played by Girl Guide Celia Sprot). Few details survive but it is assumed that St Cuthbert interrupts a druidical ceremony involving human sacrifice. In introducing the episode, the Spirit narrates that when St Cuthbert appeared the Druids 'looked upon him with gloom and hatred, but the children run to him, for the gentle monk is more to their liking than the stern heathen priests.'¹⁰

Episode II. The Bridal of Alexander III, 1285

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Jedburgh and District. In the introductory narration made by the Spirit, it is explained that Alexander III has married for the second time. His bride is 'Joleta' (sometimes called Yolande), the daughter of the French *Comte de*

Dreux. She further states that 'the marriage is looked upon as ill-fated' and that the seer, Thomas of Ercildoune, had foretold this. The episode shows the arrival of the figure of Death among the dancers at the wedding. Around 50 Guides, Brownies and Scouts took part in the episode.

Episode III. The Black Douglas, Early 14th Century

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Kelso and District. This episode re-enacts the storming of Roxburgh Castle by a party led by Douglas (played by Major Balfour). Sentries guarding the castle, which was then an English garrison, are seen to be careless about keeping watch. The wife of one of the sentries (played by Miss Cormack) sits on the battlements cradling a child and sings 'a lullaby which promises that the dreaded Black Douglas shall not harm her sleeping baby.' Meantime, the Scots creep through the dusk and successfully breach the walls:

and the very Douglas of whom she is singing suddenly lays a mailed hand on her shoulder. The castle is taken and sacked after the manner of the times, but the Douglas does not forget to save the woman and her child.

The main players in this drama were adult men, but Boy Scouts who played Scottish men-at-arms assisted them.

Episode IV. Hornshole, 1514

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Hawick and District (Hornshole is close by to Hawick). This familiar story, which formed the basis of Hawick's Common Riding festival every year, was re-enacted. The Cornet (standard bearer) for that year's Riding, as well as a group of Cornets from previous years, played the parts of the young men, who in the year following the disaster of Flodden stole a march on English marauders at Hornshole and relieved them of their flag, bringing this back to the town in triumph.

Girls from Hawick and District Girl Guides took the roles of the welcoming party in the town. The Hornshole victors were played by: Cornet MacTaggart and ex-Cornets I. Mactaggart, V. Grieve, J. Glenny, D.G. Scott and Messrs A.P. Innes, W. Wilson, R. Innes and J. Henderson.

Episode V. Johnie [sic] Armstrong and King James V, 1530

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Hawick and District. The Spirit introduced this episode by saying that it was 'a dark page in Border history'. James V was known to 'rule Scotland with a heavy hand' and comes to the Borders in order to put a stop to the lawlessness at large in the region. The episode shows James arriving at Carlanrigg where a Wapinschaw is in progress. The Border reiver, Armstrong, goes to meet the King accompanied by twenty-four supporters, ostensibly to offer their services. The episode depicts Armstrong's arrival and the Spirit explains that:

the gallant freebooter's fine appearance only hardens the King's heart. Johnie must hang, and his men with him. James has forgotten that these are of the men who died round his father at Flodden...

There are no further details of the action in the episode but it is assumed this encompassed the arrest of Armstrong and his followers. Mr A. Teacher played James V, with Guides and Scouts taking other roles.

Episode VI. Mary Queen of Scots, 1566

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Jedburgh and District. A familiar trope in Scottish Border pageants where Mary Stuart featured was the appearance of gypsies. In this episode, Mary was seen at the gypsy camp at Yetholm during the time of the annual fair. The gypsies dance and sing for the entertainment of Mary (played by the Hon. Jean

Campbell) and her courtly entourage which includes the four Marys and the Earl of Moray. In this particular performance, the happy scene ends when a message is delivered stating that Bothwell lies wounded at the Castle of Hermitage prompting Mary to hastily depart. In the introduction to the episode, the Spirit describes the consequences of this drama as follows:

she sets out on that ride which is to cause her own long illness at Jedburgh. It is not for us to judge her whose name has ever held glamour for all who know her tragic story. Let her pass on, lovely and ill-fated as ever mortal woman was, to those dark years that lie before her...

This episode had a large cast of around 150 Guides and Scouts as well as adults in principal roles; many were on horseback.

Episode VII. The Covenanters, c. Mid-17th Century

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Newcastleton and Hawick and District. This episode depicts a conventicle; a crowd of worshippers are gathered for a service in a remote place but this is never begun because the dragoons arrive and harry them. Few details are described in newspaper reports of the scene. All members of the cast, including the Minister and the dragoons, were played by women; these were made up of around fifty adults and thirty children.

Episode VIII. The '15, 1715

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Kelso and District. The scene includes the arrival of Highland Jacobite troops in the Borders and the proclamation made in the town square at Kelso announcing James VIII and III.¹¹ The *Hawick News* pointed out that Highlanders were joined by 'Southern Scots and the Gentlemen Volunteers from the North of England led by Lord Derwentwater and others.' The review goes on to say:

let us remember not that cause, which to many seems wrong, but the loyalty and devotion of those who gave all, even to life itself, for the man they thought their rightful King.

Most of the players in this episode were women. One exception was the leader of the Jacobite Highlanders, Brigadier Macintosh, who was played by 'Captain Cunningham'.

Finale. Britannia

This part of the pageant was organised by Guides from Melrose, St Boswells and District. Accompanied by singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory', the Spirit enters 'guarded by her patron saints and with the performers of all the previous episodes gathering at the back of the scene'.¹² The Spirit of Border legend then sums up the message of the pageant:

The past is gone, but its noblest traditions still live and from them has sprung a mighty Sisterhood of Nations who call Britannia their mother... Never let it be said of you, who are Guides, that you stood idle when there is work for you to do in the world... To your hands I give this wreath, lay it at Britannia's feet in token of the loyalty which Scotland gladly gives to that Empire of which she forms a not unworthy part...

This imperialist message closed the pageant.

Key historical figures mentioned

- Cuthbert [St Cuthbert] (c.635–687) bishop of Lindisfarne
- Thomas of Erceldoune [called Thomas the Rhymer] (fl. late 13th cent.) supposed author of poetry and prophecies
- Scot [Scott], Michael (d. in or after 1235) translator, philosopher, and astrologer
- Alexander III (1241–1286) king of Scots

- Yolande (d. in or after 1324) queen of Scots and second consort of Alexander III, subsequently duchess of Brittany
- Douglas, Sir James [called the Black Douglas] (d. 1330) soldier
- Armstrong, John [Johnnie], of Gilnockie (d. 1530) gang leader
- James V (1512–1542) king of Scots
- Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542–1587), queen of Scots
- James Francis Edward [James Francis Edward Stuart; styled James VIII and III; known as Chevalier de St George, Pretender, Old Pretender] (1688–1766) Jacobite claimant to the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland
- Stewart, James, first earl of Moray (1531/2–1570) regent of Scotland
- Gordon, George, fifth earl of Huntly (d. 1576) magnate
- Radcliffe, James, styled third earl of Derwentwater (1689–1716) Jacobite army officer

Musical production

There was an orchestra but no details of this have been recovered. Also a choir made up of 92 singers (66 female voices and 26 male voices). It is assumed that music was an integral part of the entire pageant but, given that the programme has not been recovered, details of what was played are scanty. It may be conjectured that these included traditional tunes and ballads, and the following were also performed:

- The National Anthem (opening of pageant)
- Psalm 121, 'The Lord is Thy Keeper' (Episode VII)
- 'Land of Hope and Glory' (Finale)

Newspaper coverage of pageant

Hawick News

Hawick Express

The Southern Reporter

The Scotsman

The Times

Book of words

n/a

No book of words was produced.

Other primary published materials

n/a

There was a souvenir programme costing 6d.¹⁵ A copy of this has not been recovered.

References in secondary literature

n/a

Archival holdings connected to pageant

- *Pathe News* produced film footage of the pageant some of which is available to view on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KICDRApADFQ>.

Sources used in preparation of pageant

n/a

There are several versions of the traditional ballad 'Johnnie Armstrong', the most well-known of which is Child ballad no. 169; this may have been used for Episode V.¹⁶

Summary

The Border Pageant was a relatively small and locally focused event, unabashedly held to raise money for the Girl Guide movement at a regional level and in order to improve the local contribution to national funds of the organisation. Despite bad luck with the weather on the day, it turned into something of a triumph for its well-to-do organisers. This success was almost certainly the result of the coup they achieved in managing to obtain the attendance of one of the most glamorous members of the royal family, Prince

George (fourth son of George IV and Queen Mary and then fifth in the line of succession). Moreover, the Prince was paying his very first trip to the Scottish Borders in order to grace the pageant, a fact that attracted a good deal of news coverage. With royalty in attendance and many titled women as organisers, a great number of the Borders County set likely also came along to the pageant, which loaned the whole event extra social cachet; a local newspaper described it as 'a brilliant assemblage of Scottish society'.¹⁷

A copy of the programme that accompanied this pageant has not been recovered, but details of its content were included in news coverage, and film of the event has survived. In terms of the narrative, this pageant utilised many standard Scottish Border pageant tropes. Thus, the arrival of Christianity with St Cuthbert gently but certainly wresting authority from the Druids is shown in Episode I; the local post-Flodden skirmish against the English at Hornshole appears in Episode IV; and Mary Queen of Scots once again encounters the gypsies of Yetholm in Episode VI. For the latter, Mary is depicted in the company of her favourites, the four Marys, as well as the Earls of Huntly and Moray. The equestrian culture of the locality is showcased in this and other scenes, with the availability of large numbers of horses and able riders being testimony to the popularity of hunting among Borders communities.¹⁸ This was especially evident too in Episode V, when the Border reiver, Johnnie Armstrong, made famous in balladry, rides in to meet his gruesome fate at the hands of James V. This scene had something of the classic Wild West scenario about it and certainly alluded to the lawlessness prevalent in the Borders of yesteryear, which James, as a sort of regal forerunner to the merciless, hanging judge, was determined to quell.

Local lore was to the fore in this episode, but other episodes, although featuring characters commonly seen in Scottish pageantry generally, are also dealt with very much in line with their place in local historical legends. Episode II, for example, deals with Alexander III of Scotland. In other pageants Alexander's role as the vanquisher of the Vikings is common; but here, in order to foreground a local figure of legend, the seer Thomas of Ercildoune (Thomas the Rhymer), who is said to have foretold the King's death, the king's second marriage to Joleta is depicted. In the seer's prophesy it is this ill-fated act which sealed the country's fate, and, in the drama shown, the figure of Death arrives to dance at the wedding. This less popularly known aspect of his reign is thereby given local significance. The

effects of the Wars of Independence are similarly placed in a local setting with The Black Douglas in Episode IV. This character, perhaps more than any other in this pageant, served to promote a notion which was a strong feature of many Border pageants: that figures from history who achieved fame for fighting against the English should nonetheless command respect for their patriotism and faith in a cause they believed in, even though such a cause was, of course, no longer of relevance within contemporary unionist sentiment. The same support for the Union is also prominent in the final episode concerning the 1715 Jacobite rising. It is notable that the writer of the pageant made sure to highlight that nobles from the English side of the border, such as the Earl of Derwentwater, also supported the Old Pretender, so undermining any notion that this was a cause imbued with Scottish political nationalism.

The Jacobite episode is the precursor to a singular finale, unusual in Scottish pageants. While other Scottish events do make use of mythical figures, the choice of Britannia was a novel one. This totem of the strength of the British island race did have particular significance in this instance, however, since the entire event had involved Girl Guides and Scouts and the ethos of these movements in the inter-war years was firmly unionist and imperialist.

The whole event, which involved a daylong fete as well as two performances of the pageant, raised the respectable sum of £1000, despite the fact that no expense appears to have been spared in staging the show. The *Hawick News* described a long arena backed by trees in which a representation of Roxburgh Castle occupied the centre.¹⁹ No dialogue featured in the performances; instead, the writer of the pageant scenario, Molly Clavering—in the guise of the Spirit of Border Legend—gave a description of the events depicted and information about the historical background and significance of the drama. She did this from a raised platform on the left of the arena and used a loud speaker to do so. Nonetheless, despite this lack of vocal performance, many of the scenes were lively and it is clear that music was integral to the tableaux; also grouped in the background was a large choir 'dressed in Druidical robes' and an orchestra.²⁰ Unfortunately, much of the column inches in news reports of the pageant were given over to the attendance of royalty, and details of the music are limited: notably, there was a rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory', which, again, is unusual in a Scottish context.

A great deal of expense spent on the production was likely saved by the fact that well-known people in the region gave much in kind to the pageant or were able to use their influence to persuade others to do so. The aristocratic Minto family provided the venue; and Lady Minto and Lady Dalkieth (County Commissioner of the Guides) were heavily involved with the organisation—and both of these would have had personal staff to call upon. The pageant author was not that well known in 1930 having published only two novels, but she had a long association with the Girl Guides and had cut her teeth as a pageant scriptwriter only the previous year with a similar Girl Guide pageant in Bridge of Allan.²¹ Although Molly Clavering's writing is now largely forgotten, she went on through succeeding decades to become a prolific and popular writer of romance and family saga type novels, many of which were serialised in newspapers and journals. She also contributed non-fiction pieces for titles such as the *Countryman* magazine and *Scots Magazine*, through which she achieved an even larger audience.²² In addition to Clavering's contribution, the success of the pageant was mainly due to the hard work of the local Guides and their leaders. Yet for all that, praise for Guides' efforts was scarce in the news coverage, which was replete instead with adoring reports of the pageant doings of royalty and aristocracy, and lengthy descriptions of the gloriousness of the Minto estate. Even so, the success of the event provides its own testimony to the kind of enthusiasm and keen organisation that was so important within the Guide movement itself and which undoubtedly was expressed in this pageant.

Footnotes

1. ^ See 'Furrowed Middlebrow, off the beaten page: lesser known British women writers' at <http://furrowedmiddlebrow.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/in-detail-molly-clavering-1900-1995-aka.html> and National Library of Scotland blogs at <http://blogs.nls.uk/modernscot/?cat=1290>. Both accessed 6th November 2015.
2. ^ 'Border Pageant at Minto', *Hawick Express*, 11 September 1930; see also 'The Minto Pageant', *Hawick News* 12 September 1930, 4.
3. ^ 'Drawings at Minto', *Hawick Express*, 12 September 1930.
4. ^ Mentioned in several news articles including 'Minto Forthcoming Pageant and Countrie Fayre', *Hawick Express*, 21 August 1930.
5. ^ 'A Colourful Story: from St Cuthbert to Britannia', *The Scotsman*, 8 September 1930, 8
6. ^ 'Prince George', *The Times*, 8 September 1930, 15.
7. ^ Advertisement, *Hawick News*, 5 September 1930, 1.
8. ^ 'Historical Pageant at Minto', *Hawick News*, 12 September 1930, 6.
9. ^ All quotations and names of cast members are from a review article, *Hawick News*, 12 September 1930.
10. ^ *Hawick News*, 12 September 1930, 6.
11. ^ 'A Colourful Story', *The Scotsman*, 8 September 1930, 9.
12. ^ 'A Colourful Story', *The Scotsman*, 8 September 1930, 9.

13. ^ See list of names of those who were members of the choir in the review of the pageant, *Hawick News*, 12 September 1930, 6.
14. ^ 'Border Pageant at Minto', *Hawick Express*, 11 September 1930. Available copy of this document is in a deteriorated state and difficult to read, the page number is not legible.
15. ^ Advertisement, *Hawick News*, 5 September 1930, 1.
16. ^ See Francis J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. III, no: 169 (1884-1898).
17. ^ 'Border Pageant at Minto', *Hawick Express*, 11 September 1930 (page number illegible).
18. ^ This is evident in film footage see: *Pathe News* film of the pageant available to view on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KICDRApADFQ> accessed 29/2/16.
19. ^ *Hawick News*, 8 September 1930, 6.
20. ^ *Hawick News*, 8 September 1930, 6.
21. ^ See 'Scotland's Crown: Pageant of Scottish History at Bridge of Allan', *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 June 1929, 6; I am indebted to volunteer archivists at Girlguiding Scotland who provided me with information about Clavering from their records, and in particular to Mrs Betty Robertson who researched Clavering's career as a guide for me. According to records consulted, at the time of the pageants in Stirling and the Borders she was a Guide Captain at Strathblane.
22. ^ For example, Clavering's Kailyard fiction was a regular in the best-selling magazine *The People's Friend* where she wrote under the penname Marion Moffatt; she also crops up as the author of serials published in the likes of the weekend edition of the *Glasgow Herald*; for an example, see 'The Silver Girdle', *Glasgow Herald*, 20 October 1934, 4. In her non-fiction she often wrote about the countryside and landscape of the Borders region.