

Up High in the Doocot!

Visitors to the Heritage Centre who have enjoyed the dramatisation of the 9th century battle may have wondered as to the technicalities behind the audio-visual show. How does the Saltire suddenly appear high above them in the confined space of the doocot?

The answers lie in the original concept devised in 1997 by Bill Macpherson of MKW Design. Bill utilised a theatrical device, comprising two high level suspended screens. Only the lower gauze screen is visible from below. But at the appropriate moment in the narrative, hidden lighting suddenly illuminates the higher screen which depicts white clouds on a blue background in the shape of a Saltire.

Above the screens and out of view is the audio-visual system that operates the lighting and soundtrack. Accessing this high level roof-space has always been difficult. To remove the system for its annual workshop inspection involves the engineer in a precarious climb and balancing act. Similarly, cleaning the screens each year has exposed Charlie Blair to many hazards, not least leaning out from a high ladder and wielding a long brush to dislodge cobwebs and accumulated insect life!

At the start of 2008, the Trust erected scaffolding within the doocot to allow the roof-space to be properly inspected. This revealed that further work will be needed at the end of the season to upgrade the hanging arrangements for the upper screen, and to replace the gauze lower screen.

In addition, it is becoming clear that the Centre's audio-visual system is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be replaced. Technology has moved on. Ideally, the equipment should also be relocated to a secure but more accessible location. The firm AVC has provided details of options for replacing/upgrading the system, together with cost estimates (between £'a310k and £'a325k), and an approach to potential funding partners is underway. The preferred option involves making the show more accessible to a wider audience by providing, at the push of a button, narratives in up to 6 foreign languages, and an induction loop for those with impaired hearing. ❖



Engineer Peter Menzies dons his safety harness before climbing high into the doocot roof space.

Tribute to Dr Farquhar Macintosh

It was with great sadness that we learned in November 2007 of the death of Farquhar Macintosh, aged 84. Farquhar had served the Flag Trust with considerable commitment and contribution over a number of years, and he will be greatly missed. His initial spell as Trustee was while he held the position of President of the St Andrew Society, but thereafter he generously agreed to stay on as a Trustee. He attended meetings conscientiously, even when not in the best of health, and he took delight in bringing his wife Margaret out to Athelstaneford with him, and then on to lunch locally in East Lothian.

A crofter's son from Elgol in the Isle of Skye, Farquhar was rector of three schools (Portree High, Oban High, and latterly the Royal High School of Edinburgh). His interests as an educationalist extended much wider, and he was appointed chairman of the Scottish Education Board in 1977 where he served three terms.

Farquhar was always aware of his roots in Skye and in the Gaelic language, as exemplified by his close involvement with the Highlands and Islands Development Consultative Council, and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute. And over the last 20 years, he gave willingly of his time and energy to the Gaelic renaissance, chairing the Board of Trustees of Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College in Skye. His public service was recognised by the award of a CBE in 1982. ❖



Picture courtesy of Sabhal Mor Ostaig

Sell-out of Frayed Flags!

Last year, the Trust intimated that used Saltires that had been flown at the historic Athelstaneford site could be purchased. Such was the demand, these have now all been sold! Anyone still interested can add their name to a waiting list. ❖

Constitution

The Scottish Flag Trust's constitution has recently been subject to a number of minor amendments, primarily to meet requirements introduced by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). A copy can be made available on request (please send stamped addressed envelope). ❖

VISIT THE WEBSITE

Information about Athelstaneford can be found via the St Andrew Society Website at

www.st-andrew.org.uk