

La Frontera

Association for Borderlands Studies Newsletter

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Highlights of This Issue

Editor: Jussi Laine

Message from the President

President Barraza recaps the past year and outlines the future developments for the association.

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New Officer

ABS members voted for their 2nd Vice President who will take over the position of Vice President next April at the ABS Annual Meeting in San Francisco

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New Board Members

ABS warmly welcomes three new board members!

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Lifetime Achievement Award

Prof. Paul Ganster recognized with ABS Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2016 ABS annual conference in Reno, Nevada.

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Book Awards

Reece Jones & Corey Johnson (Eds) *Placing the Border in Everyday Life* has won the ABS Past Presidents' Book Award!

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Annual Meeting CFP

ABS invites proposals for individual papers and complete panels related to the study of borders for the 2017 annual conference

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MENSAJE DE LA PRESIDENTA / MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Estimados y estimadas integrantes de la ABS,



A s u m í l a presidencia de la ABS al concluir la Conferencia Anual de abril 2016 en Reno, Nevada. Como presidenta electa tuve la honrosa tarea de organizar los t r a b a j o s

conducentes a la conferencia del mismo año. Tal y como lo esperábamos el evento fue todo un éxito, ya que, como lo mencioné en el boletín anterior, nos acompañaron participantes de 22 países de América del Norte, América del Sur, Asia, África, Europa y Oceanía. Cada uno de las mesas y demás actividades anunciadas en el programa general de la WSSA fueron llevadas a cabo conforme a lo previsto. Aunado a ello, se dio la convivencia formal e informal entre colegas de diversas

instituciones, a partir de la cual surgieron contactos y acuerdos de reuniones, proyectos de investigación e intercambios de académicos y estudiantes de posgrado en un futuro próximo. Cabe destacar que en esta reunión participó un grupo importante de colegas provenientes de Centro y Sudamérica, particularmente de Cúcuta, Departamento de Norte de Santander, Colombia, quienes se integraron de manera muy activa y colaborativa en los trabajos de la ABS.

Una de las tareas principales de la presidencia en turno es que la ABS continúe extendiendo su cobertura territorial—sus fronteras, por así decirlo—y su membresía. Para tal propósito, en el período que nos ocupa se han apoyado y se ha participado en diversos foros como los llevados a cabo en el “IV Encuentro Latinoamericano de Estudios Transfronterizos y de Desarrollo de Capacidades Humanas,” realizado los días 5, 6 y 7 de Octubre del presente año en la Ciudad de Cúcuta, Colombia. Este gran evento contó con la participación y apoyo de tres de las instituciones universitarias más importantes de la región como son la Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander, la Universidad de Pamplona, y la

Universidad de Santander, así como de dos de las universidades más importantes a nivel latinoamericano—la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica y la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México por medio de su Centro de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias sobre Chiapas y la Frontera Sur—CIMSUR-UNAM. El Objetivo principal del encuentro fue promover la reflexión y el debate académico en torno a procesos de cooperación y configuración de identidades en regiones transfronterizas de América Latina con el propósito de establecer una agenda de investigación.

Asimismo, se realizó y se participó en la ABS Europe Conference 2016: “Differences and Discontinuities in a Europe Without Borders,” que tuvo lugar del 4 al 7 de octubre de 2016, y que fue organizada por la Universidad de Luxemburgo en cooperación con la UniGR-Center for Border Studies (UniGR-CBS). El objetivo de la conferencia fue analizar la visión de una “Europa sin fronteras,” considerando los asuntos que se centran en la movilidad, la diversidad, la responsabilidad y el cambio desde una perspectiva multidisciplinar.

Actualmente, dos miembros distinguidos de la ABS, Akihiro Iwashita, expresidente de

The United Borderlands Project

— Brian Moffatt

Everything has to start somewhere....

I am 72 yrs old, the first half of my life was spent in England. The second half, just on the North side of the Anglo Scottish Border Line. Half of my ancestry is English, and the other half is Scottish.

I am a Borderer.... by descent, by location, and.... by choice. I write poetry, novels, and "blog" on the Borders, but I fear that the "Borderer" is a dying breed.

When I moved here around 37 yrs ago, if one asked about anyone's Nationality, the reply was almost invariably "Borderer" first, and English or Scottish a long way second. Because we live far from London, and a long way from the minds of those politicians up there in Edinburgh, and perhaps it has always been that way.

Landscape dictates history, and the origins of the Anglo Scottish Border line was established by the Cheviot hills, which effectively blocked travel both North and South, through ancient Britain, forcing both individuals, and armies, onto those narrow coastal plains to both east and west. Take a middle path through the hills, and one may never emerge.

And sometime around 117 - 118 A.D. the Roman Ninth Legion did take that path, and as a result, they more or less disappeared from the pages of history, and their loss prompted the Emperor Hadrian to order the building of a high stone wall across the narrow neck of Britain, from the Tyne to the Solway, with the intention of containing the Northern Barbarians.

In the late 4th century the Romans began their withdrawal from Britain, leaving control in the hands of a number of local "warlords," and thus began the golden age of the "Old North," the age of the Saints, the age of Heroes.... the age of Arthur, of Merlin, and the age of great, near mythical, battles of the Border, Arthuret, 573 A.D. pitting pagan against Christian, and the pivotal

near forgotten Battle of Degsaston, where Aethelfrith of Northumbria defeated Aedan mac Gabron of Dal Riata so decisively that at one blow, he checked the expansion of the Scots by around two hundred years, and thus allowed the flowering of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, a kingdom which later in the 7th century occupied all of the eastern seaboard from Edinburgh to York, and extended as far west in places as the Irish sea.

But Anglo Saxon peace did not last, and over the centuries, the Borderlands were devastated by waves of invaders, Vikings, Normans, and the opposing armies of the Wars of Independence, and the exact position of the Borderline varied over those centuries, eventually settling into its present form. on a line more or less northeast to southwest, extending from Berwick on Tweed, to just North of Carlisle.

The folk who lived on this Border line, were a product of their environment. Devastated by centuries of warfare, they knew little other than raiding and theft. Why raise cattle and crops when they would most likely be stolen or burned? This was the land of "The Unblessed Hand." (baptism of all but the right hand, which still carry out the Devil's work), the land of the "Reivers," with a people so unruly and dedicated to warfare, that it was found necessary to divide the Borderline into three sections on either side. "The Border Marches." Each was under the nominal control of a "Warden" whose theoretical task was to police his area, but often the Warden proved to be as unruly as their "subjects."

Oddly, perhaps due to their descent from the Scandinavian tradition, these "Reivers" who thought nothing of violence or theft, also produced, one of the finest bodies of poetry in

the Western World, "The Border Ballads," and had the oddest code of honour, where the worst crime known was the breaking of one's given word.

And what a convenient source of manpower they were. Regarding themselves as neither Scots nor English, Borderers were employed by both realms to supplement their armies in time of need, and in time of peace... well they were equally persecuted for their misdeeds.

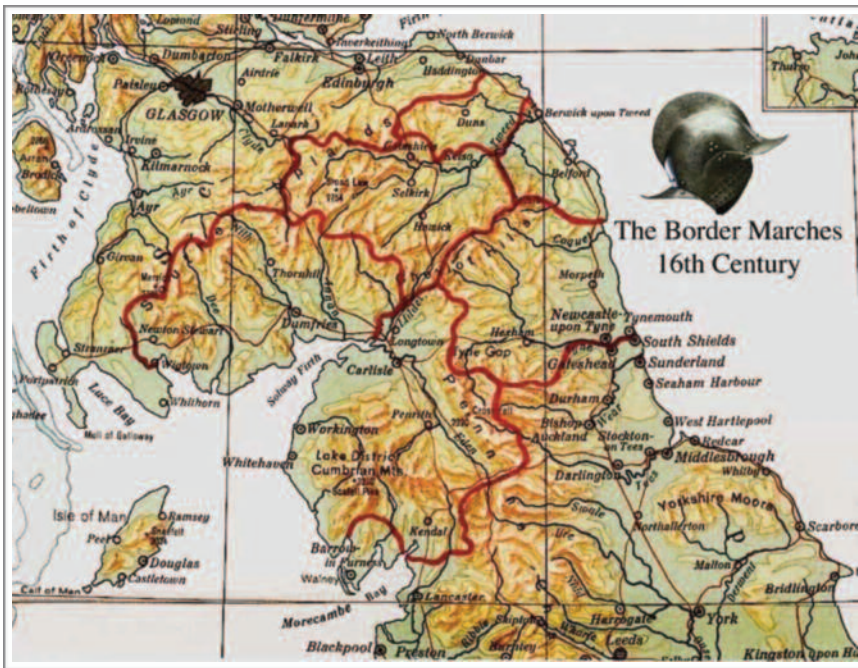
That situation, lasted right up until the end of the sixteenth century, when King James VI of Scotland, realising that he had a very good chance of becoming King of a "United Kingdom," decided that he no longer needed the Borderers, and began to encourage the local warlords, to dispose of their more unruly elements.... a process which left the Borders so devastated, that it has never properly recovered. A subject which it is unpopular to raise to this day. In effect, James had the country cleared, and those who did that clearance, were the forbears of our current "nobility."

Some would argue that it brought a certain kind of "peace." Others tell the truth.... It left an almost empty land.

When James did ascend the throne of Britain in 1603, he declared that this now "peaceful" land should be known as the "Middle Shires of Britain."

Nice idea... but it quite simply never happened, and what remained of the once great "Reiving Surnames," simply went about their daily tasks, expecting little from





the governments of either realm, and living under a near feudal system controlled by the ever powerful landowners, yet still retaining their individual identities as "Borderers" and a fierce pride in their ancestry. And whilst their displaced cousins, hacked their way through the thirty years war, spread out across Europe and pushed ever westwards across America, they quietly preserved the ballads and traditions, passing them down as a verbal tradition generation to generation.

In the early 19th century, (Sir) Walter Scott, collected and published the Border ballads, and achieved for both the Reivers and their exploits near mythical status, a status which lasted until the second half of the 20th century, when it was boosted yet further, by both television, and modern writers, and this perhaps marked the highpoint of interest in both the Anglo Scottish Border Marches, and the old "Riding Surnames."

A slow decline began in the last two decades of the 20th century, pretty much in line with the rise of the "official" Tourism Agency, Visit Scotland. History, and the reivers were not perceived as being, quite "Politically Correct," and the focus of Border Tourism, moved more towards golf, walking, food, and the growing sport of Mountain Biking.

Scottish Nationalism was also on the rise, and the typical promoted image of the Scot, was much more inclined towards the kilted "Highlander," thanks in no small measure

to Hollywood, with films such as "Highlander," and the exciting, much lauded, but hilariously inaccurate "Braveheart." Mel Gibson became the darling of the SNP.

The Lowlander.... was more or less forgotten.

To make matters worse as we entered the 20th century, the largest of the landowners, turned his attention away from the traditional pastoral pursuits, and concentrated ever increasingly on forestry, wind farms, and the potential, of the coal and gas fields lying beneath the heartland of reiving country.

The Borders stagnated, and visitor numbers progressively declined. The closer to the actual Border line, the worse the situation became.

So bad did it become that in April of 2014, the Scottish Affairs Committee, down in far off London, decided to do something about it, and set up "The Borderlands Initiative," a theoretical collaboration between all of the Councils of (more or less) the Old Marches, to do something about the situation, to foster cross Border co-operation, and to promote Tourism.

Two and a half years later, virtually nothing has been published, no action has been taken, and no correspondence addressed to any of the parties involved is ever answered. No Member of Parliament wishes to speak on the matter.... And Visit Scotland refuse to

comment at all on the progress or lack it. To all intents and purposes, "The Borderlands Initiative." is dead in the water.

And that, is the reason, why I and my partners in this small business are launching our own small "United Borderlands Project," using only our own rather limited capital.

By the use of car stickers, and sew on / iron on badges, we hope to give the "Border Marches" back an identity. One car bumper sticker, in a city, is seen by many hundreds of people in a single day, and it is hoped that hundreds of them, will be seen by thousands of folk over years.

It may be a small beginning... but as I said at the outset.... Everything has to start somewhere.... and the establishment of an identity... Is exactly where the Government sponsored "Borderlands Initiative" ought to have begun.... But it did not.... It has not... and so far, no-one associated with it... wishes to express any opinion at all on our own efforts.

But then... there is all of that coal... gas and windpower to consider... and what is the ignoring of history, and the potential destruction of an historic environment compared to that?

Sir Walter Scott must be revolving in his grave!

...And that is how things should have stood at the moment.... But they don't... because of the vote on the 18th of September 2014, on Scottish Independence, and the "Brexit" referendum of the 23rd of June 2016.

There was already a strong degree of polarisation over the question of "Nationality" in Scotland, but both of the events above, were highly divisive.

There were suggestions during both campaigns of manned International Border crossing points, if Scotland went "Independent," and for those of us on the Border line, those of us who habitually travel back and forth across the Border... this is a very serious matter indeed.

And so in the interests, of trust and friendship we are launching our own small "project." As a first step in bringing together, what the events of the last few

years, have thrust ever further apart.

I will be nice if it succeeds... but I do fear that on an "official level" there are a number of individuals who may wish it to fail.

Nationalism can be a very dangerous thing indeed. It took a very long time to put the United Kingdom together. It would require almost no time at all to knock it apart.

The question we all ought all to be asking... is why anyone really wish to do so... To quote David Cameron.....Doo-doo-dooooooo..... Right!.... Good! But what exactly was "Right!" and what exactly was "Good!"....?

Alex Salmond, the SNP leader during the Independence vote, simply resigned when he failed to achieve his aims, leaving Nicola Sturgeon to step, by default, into his place. He.... is now a Westminster M.P. and lives part of his life in London.

David Cameron who had insisted on the Referendum on "Brexit," stood down as Prime Minister, in the most unusual fashion, exiting Downing Street through the front door of "number ten" humming the tune from "The West Wing" followed by his final words as he closed the door..."Right!.... Good!"

His place was taken by Theresa May, and it very soon became apparent, that there was no plan at all in the event of a public vote to leave Europe..... Incredible by any standards.

Mr Cameron then stood down even further, by resigning as a Constituency M.P.

Few politicians in Britain, have yet grasped what is apparent to anyone at all, who on a day to day basis actually talks, to the general public. There is an ever growing divide, between the values of our cities, primarily, London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, with almost entirely the rest of the country.... a huge divide between rural and urban. London in particular, is seen as by many, as no longer really a British city, (over half of its population having been born outside of the United Kingdom), and the Cities, are seen as having a priority.... of monopolising most of our National product.

The values and lifestyle of the city dweller, appear to be held very high indeed above the basic necessities of the rural dweller.

But this is not just a British problem.... America seems to be suffering from it too... perhaps also, much of Europe?

Few folk anywhere, any longer trust our politicians.... Whatever... the result of all of this for those of us who live on the Anglo-Scottish Border is this....

The Independence vote reduced visitor numbers from England very dramatically indeed, Brexit and recent the machinations of the SNP have made matters even worse.

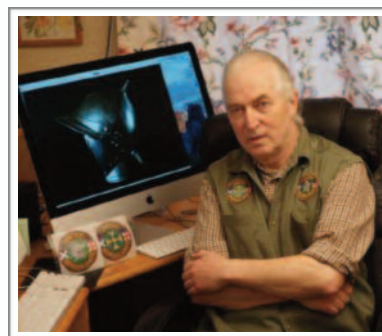
"Visit Scotland" hotly deny that this is true, but they, are no more than the Tourism arm of Government, and adjust their statistics by taking their "visitor count" from our major cities, or, specifically chosen and promoted destinations.

They simply rob Peter, to pay Paul. Which is no fun at all, if you happen to be Peter!

Visit Scotland, and its close attachment to Central Government is one of the major reasons why such a project as "United Borderlands" is very necessary indeed.

I have asked Visit Scotland Borders, very directly if they would support such a project.... I have yet to receive any reply at all.

* * * *



Brian Moffatt is a Novelist, Goldsmith, and specialist in the Arms and Armour of the Anglo - Scottish Border Reiver. He is 72yrs old, an ex-Police officer who served for 15yrs in both London, and on Tyneside. Since 1978, he and his family have lived in Scotland just North of the Anglo - Scottish Border Line.

Further details can be found on his blog... fallingangelslosthighways.blogspot.com/



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