

Gordon Craigie



An independent mind...

This month, I'm celebrating the significance of small acts of resistance in the pursuit of independence...

WELL, THERE WE ARE and there we have it. After all the to-ing and fro-ing, claims and counter claims, threats, conspiracy theories, misrepresentations of the truth – and downright lies! – we'll have had our election then. And despite, once again, the might of the British state media and the English-registered political parties being unapologetically slanted against the pro-independence parties, we have... drumroll... the largest pro-independence majority in Holyrood so far! The big question now is, what are we going to do with that majority?

At the time of writing, it appears that John Swinney has already arranged to meet Keir Starmer next month to discuss our route to independence, though Starmer's "people" are already rowing back on that suggestion to reinforce their opposition to any such



It was a feather in the cap of Maureen O'Hara that she changed the American naturalisation system!

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discussions. Maybe Starmer only agreed to the meeting because he knows he'll not be in Downing Street that long? (We can but hope, though the alternatives appear equally frightening!) Or given his propensity for a screeching U-turn, maybe he'll agree that he can no longer deny Scots the right to democratically decide their own futures... aye, I'll no be haudin my breath on that ane either!

Anyway, the pantomime that we're currently living through looks set to continue for a wee while yet as both Starmer and Sarwar claim they're going nowhere anytime soon... actually, that's an incredibly accurate analysis, just not in the way they mean it! That choice may or may not be theirs to make, of course, and events may overtake them before you even read this! However, as a quick aside, the dogged refusal of those two complete chancers to accept responsibility for their failures, or to admit to their catalogue of lies, and step aside stands in stark contrast to a not-so-long-ago time when politicians felt obliged to "do the honourable thing" and resign when it was obvious their number was up. If only Alex Salmond hadn't felt the need to act "honourably" in 2014 by taking responsibility for our failure to win the independence referendum (an action he later deeply regretted) we can only imagine where Scotland would stand today...

For what it's worth, I truly believe that, had he not resigned, we would already be a reborn independent nation of at least five or six years standing watching aghast at the right-wing clusterbourach south of the border as Scotland continued to flourish in alliance with our European and international friends. Sadly, we'll never know. And, as we continue to mourn Alex's passing, when will we see his like again? However, this month's musings are not intended to be about the political classes – though they'll inevitably get a mention here and there! – but instead I'd like to focus on the unsung heroes of the independence movement and how simple acts of resistance can have disproportionately large effects.

Here's one I only heard about recently and, unsurprisingly, it involves our Irish brethren who were where we are now a century ago... Although the famous actress Maureen O'Hara, a Dublin native, moved to the USA in the late-1930s to seek fame and fortune in Hollywood she remained fiercely proud of her Irish heritage. Indeed, when she applied for American citizenship in 1946 she point-blank refused to sign the naturalisation papers because they

listed her as a “British Subject” and demanded that the documentation recognise her as Irish. According to the Women’s Museum of Ireland:

It was a very determined and indignant Irish woman who stood before a clerk at the Los Angeles immigration court in 1946. Maureen FitzSimons (aka Maureen O’Hara) had passed the required exam for US citizenship when she was instructed to swear allegiance to England. She replied, “I’m terribly sorry, but I can’t forswear an allegiance I don’t have. I have no allegiance to England at all – I’m Irish”.

Maureen had noted her nationality as Irish on every part of the document, and in each instance it had been crossed out and replaced with ‘English’. Maureen stated, in front of the immigration judge, that under these conditions she could not accept citizenship. Turning to walk out, she made a last appeal, “Your Honor, do you realise what you are trying to do to my children and grandchildren? You’re trying to take away their right to boast about their wonderful Irish mother and grandmother”. With that, the judge threw his hands up and instructed the clerks to give Maureen what she wanted but remove her from court. This was the first time that an Irish person seeking US citizenship was officially pronounced to be Irish, and Maureen went on to be the ‘first’ in many other areas.

Like, I’m sure, many of you reading this, I do exactly the same when completing any documentation that requires “country” or “nationality” to be entered and, for online forms, an extraordinary amount of swear words can be heard each time the dropdown menu refuses to offer me the choice of “Scotland” or “Scottish”! When we were driving through Germany in 2016, a few weeks after the Brexit referendum, we arrived at a hotel in Karlsruhe and the owner presented us with a printout of our details for signature. I couldn’t understand why he seemed a bit stern and nervous when he did so but, being of a disposition not to sign anything I haven’t read through, I proceeded to score out “United Kingdom” in our home address and replace it with “Scotland” and similarly score out “British” for “Scottish” under nationality. He immediately laughed and relaxed, telling us that, after the Brexit result, he’d been wary of what to expect from a “British” booking but he was delighted that we were Scottish! Simple acts of resistance.

Many people seem reluctant to participate in civil disobedience to further our cause and there’s no doubt that some forms can be dangerous. One of our previous correspondents, drawing on his time living in Ireland, used to caution against the danger of underestimating the might of the British state if civil disobedience were ever to lead to actual conflict. Paraphrasing one of his stories, if you were standing at a border or barrier calmly telling a British soldier that you didn’t recognise his authority in your country then your resolve might quickly dissipate when he smacked you in the mouth with the butt of his rifle and continued about his mission to defend the British state. Harsh, but true.

But civil disobedience can take many forms and simple acts of resistance can really carry some weight. Another Irish example from much more recently – if you ever see actors like Cillian Murphy or Colin Farrell lining up on a red carpet at some film awards, notice that they keep their hands firmly in their pockets if any members of the British royal family are in attendance. If you think, *why would they do that when Ireland is independent?*, well, I would say that it’s both a recognition of their country’s history and also the fact that the northern part of their country is still partitioned...



The “secret” card... without a hole in the corner!

Use Your Vote
To Free Scotland's
Voice 
Scottish Parliamentary Election
May 7, 2026
Independence is Normal

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Anyway, on a lighter note, and much closer to home, apart from contributing to this award-winning magazine and thus promoting Scottish history, culture, and progressive politics, one of my weekly acts of resistance is to meet up with a small group of fellow independistas at a small café in Forfar. Over breakfast rolls and coffees, we exchange information, knowledge, and nonsense, and plot the downfall of the British state! If everyone is in attendance there are nine of us, though one lives in Canada (!), and the group could accurately be described as having different personalities and opinions, but most definitely united by a common cause. Mainly that common cause is relentless micky-taking and couthy “banter”, but it’s all underpinned by 100% dedication to the cause of restoring Scotland’s independence – and two of our motley crew are English! A couple of the guys are still pounding the streets canvassing and delivering leaflets for the SNP – though in B’s case “pounding” might be a slight exaggeration! The rest of us have other ways of contributing, like the recent “secret” card distributions around Angus and Dundee – oops, I guess that’s no longer secret! I think I’ve learnt something from each and every one of them, but the usefulness of much of that is still in some doubt...



Bon Scott supports independence – For Those About To Vote!

For instance, when the aforementioned cards were being discussed, D suggested that we put a hole in the corner of each card. When cross-examined on this preposterous suggestion he doubled down and insisted that he'd read that, psychologically, this made it more likely that someone would turn the card over – you can imagine the ridicule he suffered! However, a couple of us independently resorted to consulting Mr Google later and were astonished to discover that D was indeed correct. Who knew? Well, D, obviously, so that makes it all the more inexcusable that when he later told us that a Sheffield police station was located in Letsby Avenue he was, once again, dismissed as being "at it"... aye, you've guessed it, he was right again!

B was treated similarly the day he confidently asserted that beavers eat trees – as opposed to just sharpening their teeth on them – and, yet again, Mr Google confirmed he was right.



Bridges for Indy display at Kinnaber in Angus (credit Iain Frisealach Macristeard)

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(B's going to frame that "he was right" statement, mainly because it's such a rare occurrence.) Because he's in Canada most of the time, R's contributions are usually written in the WhatsApp group where the rest of us spend an inordinate amount of time deciphering what he's actually written – putting it kindly, he's a serial victim of autocorrect. Mind you, one time he wrote his message in Gaelic and we thought he'd just emptied out the Scrabble letters! Anyway, one piece of genius he came out with one day when he was there in person was, "When bigotry, hatred, and thievery outstrip intelligence, you get a Tory!" He's not wrong, and since nowadays there's an extremely fine line between Tory/Reform, Labour, and Lib Dem, it's a fairly transferable assessment of unionist politics and politicians...

Highlighting those few pieces of nonsense is not to dismiss any contributions made by C, I, F, T, or B, or indeed myself, but there's a finite space in the magazine! But if you're wondering what any of this has to do with independence then you've missed the point that this column is intended to be a celebration of the small acts of resistance, and different forms of activism, that take place all over the country by individuals and groups just like this fine group of Farfar loons, and its token Dundonian. That it's not all deadly serious with endless bureaucracy proves that the very things that put many folk off organised politics don't have to be part of the deal.

These are the very people that organise regular flag events (Bridges for Indy) or religiously turn up for the Indy Bikers processions, who make and distribute Yes stones nationally and internationally, who distribute leaflets, flyers, cards, posters, stickers, and all sorts of informational material, who organise talks, fund-raising events, music concerts, and film showings, who turn up for protests, exhibitions, marches, who manage Yes hubs, and so much more. They, we, do all of this without payment or recognition and pay for it all out of our own pockets. The pro-independence majority that we have just returned to Holyrood would not be there without us, and it's incumbent on those MSPs to repay us by getting the job done and securing the restoration of our national sovereignty at the earliest possible opportunity. John Swinney has said some very encouraging things since the election, now he has to walk the walk and deliver on those promises, unlike his predecessor. In the words of two of the world's largest sportswear brands, adidas and Nike, *Impossible is Nothing and Just Do It!*

**The names of the Farfar loons have been disguised to protect the guilty!*



Yes Stones can be found on Facebook