



The Thistle

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At the Royals Scots Monument in West Princes Street Gardens Mr Stewart Colquhoun assures HRH that the unveiling cord will definitely work. l to r; Mrs Charlie Ritchie, The Lord Provost, Brig George Lowder, HRH and Mr Stewart Colquhoun.

Foreword

Brigadier G E Lowder MBE. Chair of the Regimental Trustees, President of the Regimental Association and Chair of the War Memorial Fund Trustees

It has been a particularly eventful Summer including the commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the Gretna Rail Crash, Victory in Europe and Japan events, Armed Forces Day, the unveiling of the conserved 4th/5th Battalion Colours, outreach and most notably the unveiling of the final addition to our monument in Princes Street Gardens by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, our Royal Patron, followed by a reception and Beating Retreat at the Club. All of these are reported in this edition which I hope you enjoy.

Governance – Regimental Trust (SCIO).

After many years of support to The Royal Scots in several roles, culminating in being our Trustee responsible for governance advice, Jandy Stevenson has stood down. Jandy has been key to helping us navigate the path to establishing the SCIO and we are hugely grateful to her. We look forward to thanking her properly when Trustees next meet in October. I also hope that when Trustees meet in October, they will consider appointing James Stevenson as a Trustee. We continue to conduct succession planning and would be keen to recruit new Trustees with charity law and grant funding experience whilst continuing to develop our diversity. I can report that the Trust has weathered the storm of trade tariffs and the volatility of markets caused by the current geopolitical situation. Trustees are pleased with the performance of our new investment managers; Evelyn Partners and we continue to work closely with them to maximise the total return on our investments. I am particularly grateful that two of our Trustees, Alex Dockar and Nick Edwardson, have expert professional knowledge in this area and thank them for their continued support and engagement. We have decided to pause the work to bring the Club into the SCIO for now, whilst we await the outcome of anticipated further changes to Scottish charity law which we expect to include SCIOs and unincorporated associations. I expand on this decision below.

The Association and Associating.

The Association has continued to ensure that we are well represented at the formal events throughout the Summer, not least by providing Standard Parties, organising the attendees and generally supporting the Regimental Secretary. I am very grateful to all of them and of course to the Chair, Stu Marshall, and all the Association Office Bearers for their support and engagement. It is also great to see the Pipes and Drums in good spirits and benefitting from Rab Burns' involvement now that he has a bit more time to spare.

Unfortunately, Shirley and I were unable to attend the annual summer party in Prestonpans hosted by the East of Scotland Branch on 30 August and well attended by the other branches. Judging by the photographs the "retro" theme was a resounding success. I would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that the annual summer party is open to all ex-Royals, regardless of membership of the Association.

Planning has begun for the laying up of the 1 SCOTS Colours on Sunday 29 March 2026. This comes about as 1 RANGER continue to establish themselves as part of the RANGER formation having already been presented with their own guidon when they rebadged from SCOTS to RANGER. The laying up will involve a parade from the Castle Esplanade to the Canongate Kirk, our regimental kirk. It is expected that the Colours will be escorted by three guards from SCOTS, RS and KOSB. Please put this date in your diaries. All Royals, regardless of membership of the Association, are invited to participate and march if able.

I am also pleased to report that the SCIO and Club continue to support a wide range of informal associating, much of it, but not all of it, around golf. In the foreword to the last edition of The Thistle I floated the idea of an Iraq reunion dinner, in February 2026, marking the 35th anniversary of Operation DESERT STORM. This would be open to all those involved in Operation DESERT STORM and the subsequent Operations TELIC. The idea was spawned by the successful Op BANNER reunion dinner in 2020. Whilst there was initial enthusiasm for the idea the subsequent silence was deafening, so the idea has not been taken forward at this time. We also flagged the possibility of arranging company "smoker" events in the Club and the first of these, for all those who served in A Company during their service, will be held on Friday 17 October in the Cellar Bar of the Club. If this is a success, then other company "smokers" will follow.

Museum and Heritage.

I can report that the Joint Museum Working Group is now up and running. We are represented by Dickie Donovan, David Jack and Allan Carswell. Our Curator Sophie Lenihan is available to offer advice. The Working Group has agreed its Terms of Reference, and we have signed a Collaboration Agreement with SCOTS. It is anticipated that external fundraising will commence next year. It is not envisaged that SCOTS and RS will equally fund the project, but we will be expected to contribute as best we can.

Liaison continues with 1 RANGER regarding the items of Regimental property that they hold. A number of items, including the centrepiece will return to Edinburgh this Autumn and we continue to carefully monitor the condition and maintenance of the items in Belfast. I am also very grateful to Tony Reid, Malcolm Copland and Caroline Cole who have meticulously checked and catalogued our property in the Club, confirming what is Museum, Regimental, Club and other property. Thanks go to them for this important work.

Four successful outreach events have been conducted in recent years; at Dalkeith Palace, Tynecastle, Dalmeny Street and most recently at the Central Library. We have learnt a great deal about how best to deliver outreach, telling our story outside the confines of the Castle and have refined our understanding of outreach, its purpose and objectives. I am very grateful to Martin Gibson, Jim Blythe, Iain May, Liz Kyle, and Cathy Tucker, all of whom have indicated that they now wish to step back from being heavily engaged with this activity. Trustees are now determining exactly what outreach will be conducted when and by whom from now until 2031 when outreach will most likely be conducted jointly with SCOTS.

Martin Gibson and Cathy Tucker have also stepped down from the Museum Committee after many years of service for which we are sincerely grateful. The Committee will need refreshed to support the heavy lifting in the coming years relating to the joint museum project. So, if you are interested in this do let us know. The Committee is currently chaired by Dickie Donovan.

The Club.

I stated above that we have decided to pause the work to bring the Club into the SCIO. The principal reason for this is that following recent changes to charity law in Scotland we understand that more is to come, specifically focusing on SCIOs and unincorporated associations. Our work to date has highlighted several areas that require very careful consideration, including, but not exclusively, corporation tax paid on RSC Management Ltd surpluses, VAT, Regimental Office rent and the legal steps to be taken. It would be unwise to proceed at this time until we know what any further changes to charity law in Scotland mean for us. Rest assured we still believe that having a single entity for our four pillars is the right thing to aim for.

The objectives and purpose of our Club and SCIO are now very firmly aligned, and we continue to do all we can to ensure coherence between both. To this end I am delighted that the Trustees of the Club War Memorial Fund have appointed Christian Jetuah, a Director of RSC Management Ltd and James Stevenson, recently retired from Deloitte, to the Board of Trustees.

The Club continues to do well thanks to Adrian Hayes and his excellent team, supported by a very effective Board of Directors chaired by Norman Soutar. The new property acquisition at 1A Dundas Street has now been fully renovated to add 3 further en suite rooms to our Annex at 34A Abercromby Place and is now generating income. Many thanks to everyone involved in this project.

Trustees of the Club and SCIO and the Association continue to support coherence being enhanced by having one titular head of all of our pillars. To that end planning has commenced for my successor to be selected and appointed. I anticipate that having been involved in our governance in one way or another since 2004, I will hand over some time next year.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all Trustees, Directors, Committee Members, Office Bearers and Volunteers who keep our show on the road. We have a strong and diverse team in place, many of whom were not Royal Scots or Veterans, but they are very much part of our wider Regimental Family. I am deeply grateful to every one of them – thank you. Succession planning is an ongoing task, and we are continually refreshing the team through natural churn and for good governance. If you would like to get involved in any way, please do let us know.

I look forward to the next time our paths cross and hope you can make it to one or more of our planned events this Winter. Please do come along and if possible, bring a Royal who we may not have seen for a while.

Yours aye

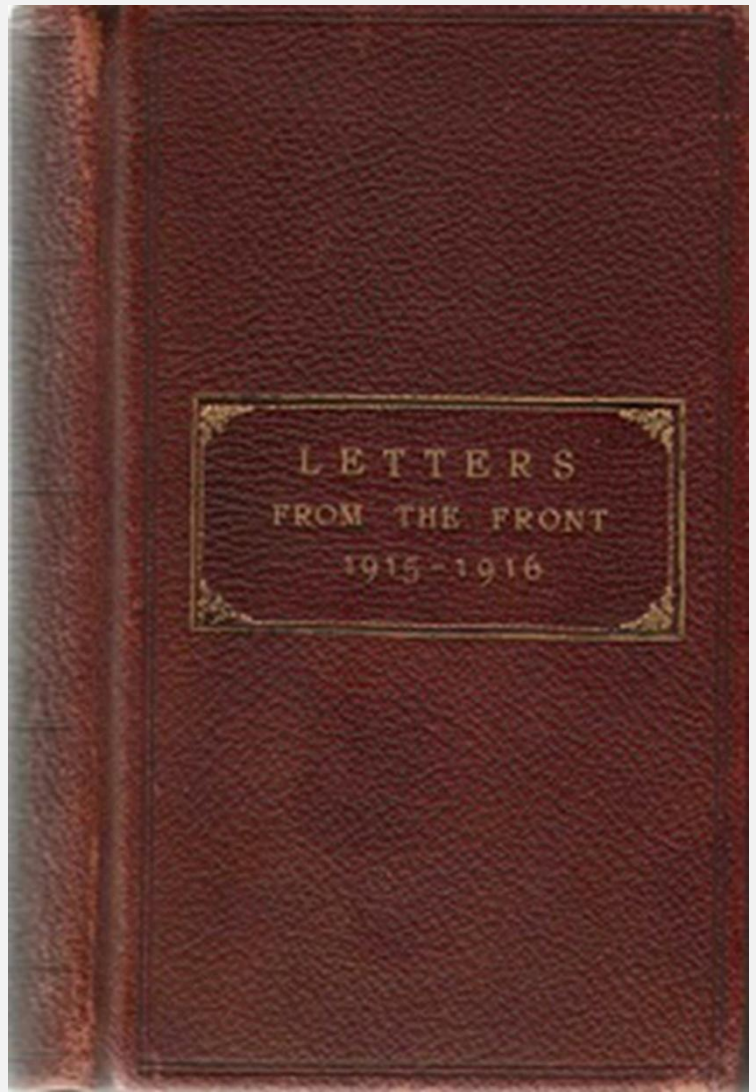
George

For myself the story of this publication, and the historical treasures contained within its pages, began in July 2024 when I opened an enquiry email from Peter Fraser. He had attached a photograph of the cover of a leather-bound book which was embossed in gold leaf with the following title: *Letters from the Front – 1915-1916*. Peter explained that they were letters from his uncle, Charles Morrison 'Chid' Coutts, who had been wounded in Gallipoli whilst serving with the 4th Battalion the Royal Scots. He was wondering how the production of this book would have happened at the time. It signalled the beginning of a fascinating journey for all involved.

After explaining a little about the publishing industry in the early 1900's I passed on the wishes of our Museum Curator, Sophie, that, if Peter felt comfortable, he might share some of the contents of the book with us, owing to it being a first-hand account of events which no one at the museum had, as of yet, been privy to. Peter was very happy to do this and in October, as he and his charming wife, Marion, were visiting Edinburgh for the rugby, a visit to the museum was arranged which of course enabled Sophie and I to see the original book in person. This allowed us to discover that the letters had not been published in the traditional sense, but rather transcribed. Lo and behold the business details of George Waterson & Sons of Edinburgh, the stationer connected to the work, were still safely connected to the binding. Peter was even able to find a direct descendant of the family, who explained the process to him.

In an oddly serendipitous set of events when the visit took place I was working on research, for the archivist at what is now Aberdeen Group, regarding a memorial that Standard Life created for their employees who had fallen during both of the World Wars. During the visit Peter mentioned that Charles had also worked at Standard Life, both before and after his service. Hence, I was able to open up a further avenue of information for Peter, connecting him to his uncle's former employers who proved only too happy to be involved.

It was around this time that Peter began to wonder if anyone might actually be interested in reading the letters, and on receiving a number of affirmatives he took it upon himself to transcribe them once more, adding notes which he collated from all of the various people he was now connected to in order to explain the events which Private Coutts was relating.



It is now available in both physical and electronic form via Amazon, and a percentage of the profits from the sale of the book will be donated to the Royal Scots Museum. If you wish to purchase the book please go to https://www.amazon.co.uk/Gallipoli-Letters-1915-1916-Written-Battalion/dp/B0F9L7S961/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0 or scan the QR Code.

So, what of the contents of these letters? They really are absorbing. Charles had a rather wicked sense of humour as well as a keen sense of duty, both in himself and others. To follow his journey from Larbert, to Gallipoli, to hospital in Alexandria, and then back to the Peninsula once more, allows us to truly get a glimpse of what life was like for this particular soldier. Of course, he had to be



careful not to get his letters censored, but you might be surprised at how much information was cleared to be sent to his various relations. It is the number of different recipients which gives us, in my personal opinion, one of the most interesting aspects of this work. For we can read about the same event in different ways depending on whom the letter was for. Charles is far more careful when talking to his mother than to his elder brother John for example. It is John, for instance, who receives the most detail regarding Charles' lack of enthusiasm for the newer members of his beloved Battalion, especially the, very young, officers. This receptacle of historical information becomes even more important as it is from Charles's own words.

Heartbreakingly the family have another letter in their collection which is discussed in the book. It was written by May Coutts, one of Charles and John's sisters, and sent out to John on 28 June 1916. It never reached its intended recipient and was returned to sender after John died with so many others on 01 July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

Gallipoli: Letters from the Front 1915-1916

Written home by
Charles M Coutts
4th Battlaion Royals Scots



PK Fraser

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About the Book

These letters are a detailed but very much understated description of life in Gallipoli as well as a travelogue about the journey to the Dardanelles, in hospital in Egypt and after the final evacuation from Cape Helles, sent home to Edinburgh by Charles Coutts (my Uncle Chid). They are written in a light-hearted way to convince his parents that life wasn't all that bad, despite everything.

About Charles Coutts

Charlie Coutts worked for Standard Life for 46 years from 1912. He was called up at the start of WW1 and joined the Royal Scots. Wounded in Gallipoli and then badly wounded in the Battle of Arras in France in 1917, he moved to London after the war before returning to Edinburgh.

Charles Morrison Coutts died in 1971, aged 78



About PK Fraser

After a career in business software and consultancy, Peter is a Life Member of the British Computer Society. A former captain of Gordonian Rugby Club and regular competitor in the Highland Cross charity biathlon, he is a Member of the Order of St John.



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Charles in later life.

Although the letters do not cover this time period we do know, from the Retirements section of *The Standard Review* from June 1958, that Charles took his officers' exam, passing out first in the written examination and was posted to the 13th Battalion The Royal Scots in France. He was seriously wounded with a GSW to the head at the Battle of Arras on 11 April 1917, but after a long stay in hospital, *begged* to be allowed to return to his Regiment, where he finished the war with the 51st Division in France.

These letters really are a wonderful addition to the history of the Regiment, allowing an insight into a time which may otherwise have been lost, so our thanks go out to Peter for both his hard work and his wish to have us involved in the journey. To quote Charles, he may have been writing, "to say that I believe I am still living", but he left behind a bounty of historical, as well as family details for those who followed.

Amy Elliott
Volunteer Museum Researcher



Charles in his Royal Scots officer uniform.