

# THE WEBMASTER'S BIT - 2

## A SIDEWAYS LOOK AT ...



By the time you read this, Alex Salmond will know whether he is a Head of State or yet another failed politician reduced to writing their semi-fictional memoirs bemoaning how the damn-fool voters failed to recognise their exceptional intellectual and leadership qualities. Which of these happened will depend in the main on whether the electorate believed the mathematical garbage spewed by the advocates of independence or the no more credible arithmetic of the union adherents.

For one such as I, brought up to understand that the sum of two plus two can only ever have one total, I find it more than somewhat confusing that Scottish legislators possess such a wondrously flexible concept of numeracy. How is it that rather than four, they can manufacture an answer to this simple calculation which is free to lie anywhere between minus six and plus 15 depending upon what is being sold and to whom. Furthermore, with a bit of judicious juggling of time, where a decade may encompass durations of four to sixteen years depending upon the need for obfuscation, the deft MSP generates annual values which are astronomic or infinitesimal irrespective of the starting values the raw data defines to simple souls such as me.

Now the last thing I want is to appear as if I am having a go at politicians who can make simple digits represent not numbers but the colour of their rosette. Just the opposite! I fully accept the fault is wholly mine that I fail to grasp the

mathematical ingenuity their canvassing relies upon. However surely I am not alone in finding such subtleties beyond comprehension? I therefore propose an electioneering system which our political masters would be advised to employ in future as not only will it greatly benefit the populace living north of Hadrian's Wall but it will also be much simpler for us, the dim-witted amongst the voting public, to grasp. What is more, it relies upon a tried and tested classification which has survived for millennia as well as making use of higher authorities: personalities with whom history shows it is decidedly unwise to argue.

My arrangement is based entirely on 2 fundamentals which everyone of voting age is familiar with, even if some of the details may be somewhat foggy. The first is that each country of the UK has a patron saint and that most towns of any size have one too. None of you needed telling that Scotland is protected by Saint Andrew and very few of you, and then probably only the newest of newcomers, need reminding Saint Giles holds a watching brief over Edinburgh. Although it is only too obvious after just a moment's contemplation as to why Edinburgh can never achieve top of even a single poll for the most desirable place to live in, I shall nevertheless take a moment to explain the reason those dwelling in this city have been all but ignored by those celestial characters who should be striving for our best interests.

The cause is quite simply that Saints Andrew and Giles are grossly overworked. Not content with ensuring Scotland has everything of assistance it desires, Andrew also has responsibility for half a dozen other countries including the vastness of Russia. Then, as if all this did not qualify for a full-time commitment, our busy saint, who many

Scots will be unaware was a Jew, also has the surely impossible task of arranging suitable husbands for all the unmarried women of Eastern Europe. Finally, by way of finding something to occupy what little leisure time might conceivably remain to him, he ensures witches do not descend down chimneys. Now before you feel too much sympathy for Saint Andrew, Scots may just count themselves lucky. Consider the labours Saint Patrick must toil at. Not content with monitoring another small country within these islands, he also has responsibility for the large metropolis of New York as well as several other major cities in the USA besides, including Boston. Nevertheless compared to Saint Giles, the Blessed Paddy and Andy lead relatively undemanding existences. In addition to Edinburgh, Giles has responsibility for those suffering a whole mixed bag of ailments from cancer through epilepsy, sterility through leprosy and the mentally ill through those who are disabled. As if ministering to the hordes of the sick is not enough toil, in addition he has to make time for the legions of the poor. Fortunately as the centuries passed, the blacksmiths and spur makers he also looks after have become less demanding of his time. It is therefore hardly surprising that Edinburgh is chock full of failings, problems, disadvantages and shortcomings when such a small proportion of his attention can be directed towards our city?

Addressing the second of the 2 principles, I shall dwell upon merely one downside of visiting, let alone living in Edinburgh: the traffic. Short of taking a wrecking ball and bulldozer to the centres of every urban area founded in medieval times, all must remain grossly unsuitable for modern cars since their street plans are invariably based upon crooked, narrow lanes and alleys that intersect every few yards. Scotland's capital can not be blamed for being established in an age when the words internal, combustion and engine still

referred to a great hall, the great fire of London and great war machines such as the trebuchet. Is it any wonder that it is the third most congested town in Britain when its thoroughfares can either permit traffic to pass provided there is nothing stopped at the kerb; or if vehicles are parked, there is no room for their movement? Compounding this is the minor matter that the majority of tenements have a frontage suitable for only 2 to 4 cars outside on the roadside and yet the inhabitants of the building usually have over a dozen motors between them. In other words, take your pick – as far as much of this city is concerned, if you park your car there is nowhere to drive it or else if you wish to drive it then there is nowhere to park the thing. And please do not get me started on the vexed issue of why, if by some miracle you do discover a parking space, you are then expected to pay the equivalent of a family's weekly grocery bill for the privilege of resting 4 tyres there for a couple of hours. Cyclists fare little better because when not confronted with a steep hill or wet cobbles, the poor peddler must contend with freezing rain and high head winds no matter which direction they wish to travel in.

My analysis therefore, after unsuccessfully trying to negotiate Edinburgh's streets even when there was no extra digging for trams, drains, cables or merely upon the whim of a jobsworth is that Edinburgh has now become a truly Jewish city. Not only does the Scots capital maintain our non-travelling observances just on the Sabbath, but it ensures there is little chance of making even limited vehicular progress on any other day of the week. It is as if the place is striving to turn the entire calendar into a religious festival and thereby make good Jews of us all.

By now my solution to all Edinburgh's problems must be self-evident but to those who have still failed to encompass its magnificence I freely offer this resolution to its problems. MSPs should find

it particularly helpful as it saves them the bother of needing to play fast and loose with arithmetic, whilst also avoiding any need for their contriving arguments in favour of independence, devolution or some other administrative bodge. All that is required is to replace the 2 current and severely overworked patron saints with 2 others, a couple with outstanding Jewish credentials who have no commitments other than to further the welfare of those in their charge. I offer a few suggestions before setting out my preferred duo.

Finding one for Edinburgh proved remarkably easy since, though this may come as a surprise to you, Elijah the Prophet is also a saint. More importantly from the city's perspective and probably as a result of his ascent to heaven being by flaming chariot, he is also the patron saint of vehicles and car drivers. A further advantage is that I can not trace any other commitments he might have. I would select him despite a reputation for heavy binge drinking every spring. Saints Richard, Francis of Rome and Sebastian of Aparicio can also claim some interest in traffic matters but I would veto their selection on the grounds of a lack of proven Jewish bona fides. The same goes for Otto of Bamberg despite his being the Patron Saint of Parking.

Saints to replace a pensioned-off Andrew are almost too numerous to mention thus my first inclination was to limit the selection to those of impeccable Judaic credentials. In addition, so as to reduce the candidate list further, I thought to stipulate that the replacement for Scotland must also be free of any other commitments, optimistically hoping they could then totally devote themselves to our country full-time. As my preliminary list hit the fifty mark a somewhat more measured approach seemed appropriate and thus via a series of decisions, which even if I do say so myself, were brilliant in their logic and lateral thinking, I arrived at the following short-list.

Few may have heard of Jared but he is a prime candidate on the grounds that the life expectancy in some parts of Scotland is worryingly low. Who is better qualified to remedy this situation than someone who lived to the ripe old age of 962? Alternatively, and since I see no good reason why at least one of our two saints should not be female, I suggest Deborah is an excellent choice since despite having no work commitments that I can trace, her symbol is the ideally industrious and charming bee. On the basis that there can be little of greater long-term benefit to the populace than somebody looking over family life, I could break my no other duties rule and opt for Joseph as the twin responsibilities of family and Edinburgh would be entirely compatible. Finally, there is the little known Saint Dympne who whilst not Jewish also can be relied upon to minister to the needs of family happiness. This one is another female and being a Celt could prove preferable to some Alban chauvinists on the basis of neither being an Israelite nor indeed hailing from any other parts arid and foreign.

My final word on the subject is that that whilst I unreservedly opt for Saints Elijah and Deborah, those who were born with an over-developed political gene will certainly wish to have their say in the matter. I would therefore allow a free vote on all the individuals above – just so long as the electoral system employed ensures my favoured duo came out the victors.

Having so successfully solved the problem of what is best for Edinburgh; I may very well turn my attentions next to the only slightly more complex issues of The Middle East.

*Jo Cular*