

THEODORE NAPIER A VICTORIAN JACOBITE IN KING EDWARD'S COURT¹

Stephen Michael Szabo
Heraldic Consultant, Sydney

AFTER a long if not always glorious reign of nearly sixty-four years, Queen Victoria died at half past six in the evening of Tuesday 22 January 1901. As reported some months later in the *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, that same night an unknown hand or hands posted a notice 'on the gates of St James Palace, the railings of the Guildhall and elsewhere' protesting against the accession of Victoria's eldest son and asserting that the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland 'doth of right belong to her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Mary the IV, whom God defend.'² While no-one stepped forth to claim credit for this particular action, one of the most prominent supporters of it was a man domiciled in Edinburgh named Theodore Napier who, in a letter to one of the Scottish newspapers, expressed his regret that the handbill had not been more widely circulated.

In the months following Queen Victoria's death Napier continued to be at the forefront of neo-Jacobite activity. When the coronation



¹ A much shorter version, 'Theodore Napier—An Australian Jacobite', was published in *History: The Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, No. 132 (June 2017), pp. 18–19. The picture above is from 'MR. THEODORE NAPIER', *The Australasian* (Melbourne, 1864–1946), 9 August (1901), p. 59. At: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4329552>. Accessed 23 December 2017.

² 'Notes From London', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, Tuesday 2 April (1901), p. 10. 'Queen Mary IV' was Maria Theresia Henrietta Dorothea von Habsburg-Lothringen, the Jacobite heiress to the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland. She succeeded to the Jacobite claim in 1875.

of the King approached in mid-1902, the *Adelaide Register* carried this story:

If a rumour be true, the coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey is likely to be enlivened by a startling dramatic incident. By certain perfervid Scots, who cherish the memories of Wallace and Bruce, the King's assumption of the title of Edward VII is regarded as historically and otherwise unjust to the northern portion of the kingdom, which until last year was never ruled over by an Edward. Efforts to induce His Majesty to call himself by some name more pleasing to the extreme Scottish Home Rule Party have proved unavailing, and now, it seems (says *The Leeds Mercury*), a bold step has been decided upon by the insulted patriots north of the Tweed. It is reported that Mr. Theodore Napier, the leader of the movement against the Edwardian nomenclature, whose picturesque figure in all the glory of the kilt is a familiar one in the streets of Edinburgh, intends at the coronation to dispute the title of King Edward to style himself the Seventh of Scotland, by challenging the King's Champion to mortal combat. It is a pity for the truth of this story that there will be no 'Champion' at the coronation.³

Theodore Napier was no stranger to readers of newspapers in Britain and Australia in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. His fervent Scottish nationalism saw him involved in an annual round of commemorations of events such as the Massacre at Glencoe, the Battle of Bannockburn, the Battle of Culloden, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, and others. He espoused Legitimism, which took the fundamental view that it was God, not the people, who chose monarchs. He also understood the importance of the spectacle in drawing attention to a cause, even if some of the attention was negative.

So who was Theodore Napier, and why would he be of particular interest to Australians of Scottish heritage or with interest in Scottish matters?

³ *The Adelaide Register*, Tuesday 10 June (1902), p. 4.

In the early 1840s Melbourne was still a small settlement on Port Phillip Bay, although some of its citizens had very high hopes of its potential. One of these was a Scotsman, Thomas Napier, a settler who had arrived from Hobart in late 1837, successfully speculated in property and who was also a builder. Theodore Napier, his second son, was born at the family home on Collins Street in 1845. Theodore's elder brother, Hector, was to die in 1858 at the age of nineteen, leaving Theodore as his father's heir.

Following Hector's death, Thomas took the family to Scotland on holiday in 1860, where Theodore was to remain for 5 years to complete his schooling. He apparently studied engineering at



Edinburgh University, but there is no record of him graduating, and by 1865 he was back in Australia. He then spent 'some years on his father's sheep station, Mackenzie River, Queensland, getting experience.'⁴

Two years after Theodore's return his younger brother Thomas died, leaving him the only surviving male issue of Thomas senior. Theodore commencing studying medicine at the University of Melbourne in 1868, but either did not take his degree or took it but did not practice.

Theodore married Ann Noble in 1877, and they were to have two daughters and a son. It seems that Theodore, like his father, also successfully dealt in land, and was to inherit one-third of the residue of his father's estate in 1881. He was described as being of independent means, and could afford to be both philanthropic and to indulge

⁴ 'Mr. Theodore Napier', *The Australasian*, Saturday 9 August (1913), p. 59. The picture is from SIR HARRY LAUDER (right) AND MR. THEODORE NAPIER, *The Australasian*, 4 August (1923), p. 62. At <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40823609>. Accessed 23 December, 2017.

his passions. While the term ‘mid-life crisis’ was unknown in the nineteenth century, Theodore appears to have had one anyway, and at some time in the 1880s he was to become an outspoken Scottish nationalist and an ardent Jacobite.

He became an easily recognisable figure on Melbourne’s streets, clad in full highland attire, and he was always keen to argue that Britishness did not equate to Englishness. He supported the Jacobite cause of the rightful lineal descendants of the House of Stuart, and became one of the most able spokesmen for neo-Jacobitism in both Australia and Scotland, writing and speaking on the matter.

Napier’s ‘costume’ was frequently remarked upon, and numerous photographs of him show that he seems to have kilted up at every opportunity. Late in his life *The Australasian* newspaper described his appearance thus:

Mr. Theodore Napier is easily the most picturesque figure in Melbourne to-day. In the portrait given of him he is wearing his ‘everyday costume’ of the Cavalier (Charles I) period, Vandyck in very much of its ornamentation. The brown homespun jacket has the gauntlet maroon cuffs and collar, Vandyked with real Irish lace. The belted plaid is of the obsolete Appin-Stewart tartan, with hose to correspond. His leather brogues are of very ancient form, and his bonnet with red border bears the white cockade with crest and motto, ‘For King and Country.’⁵

Throughout the 1880s Napier gave the cause of Scottish identity his support through words and deeds. ‘In 1885, Napier moved a long motion at a meeting of the [Caledonian] society [of Melbourne] regarding the misuse of the term ‘English’ for things actually imperial or ‘British’, but the motion was withdrawn after discussion. Two years later, he led vigorous and successful protests against the use of the term ‘Queen of England’ in Victoria’s Golden Jubilee illuminations.’⁶

⁵ ‘Mr. Theodore Napier’, *The Australasian*, Saturday 9 August (1913), p. 59.

⁶ Malcolm D. Prentis, ‘Scottishness and Britishness in Australasia, 1875–1920’, *The Free Library* (Sydney: Royal Australian Historical Society, 2010). At <https://www>.

It was one thing to espouse the cause of Scottish identity in the British colonies, but quite another to pursue Home Rule for Scotland. In the early 1890s Napier felt the call to return to Scotland to work in favour of that cause, or at least to visit for a spell.

On 1 March 1893 *The Argus* carried a report of a banquet held in Napier's honour by the residents of Essendon, where he was living, the purpose of which was to farewell him, as he was leaving for Europe 'for a two years' trip'. In thanking the assembled diners, Napier noted that he 'would take advantage of his trip to Scotland to visit the old historic scenes of Bannockburn and others, and on his return he trusted that he would have something to tell them.'⁷

The visit of two years became a stay lasting nearly two decades, although in that time Napier made some visits back to Australia as well as to other parts of the world.

Writings included pamphlets such as Scotland's demand for home rule or local national self-government: *an appeal to Scotsmen in Australia* (Scottish Home Rule Association, Melbourne, 1892); *The Royal House of Stuart: A Plea For Its Restoration*; *The arrogance of Englishmen a bar to imperial federation*; also, *Remarks on the apathy of Scotsmen* (Scottish Home Rule Association, 1895). He also edited *The Fiery Cross*, a periodical which ran from 1901 until 1912, and was devoted to Jacobite and Legitimist themes. Murray Pittock wrote that, in this journal, Napier

blended both impossibilist Stuart nostalgia and the beginnings of modern Nationalist aims and means of agitation. Eccentric extremist as in many respects he was, Napier's journal attacked imperialism ('Scotland in 1746 = Transvaal in 1901') and militarism and commented on the cultural structures of Scottish society in a manner which would be familiar to the nationalist theorists who followed him. As well as apparently instituting the Culloden anniversary commemoration which still takes place, Napier organised 'a diamond jubilee petition to Queen Victoria protesting against the misuse of national names' (i.e. 'England' and 'English')

thefreelibrary.com/Scottishness+and+Britishness+in+Australasia%2c+1875-1920.-a024476516. Accessed 10 December 2017.

⁷ 'Banquet to Mr. Theodore Napier', *The Argus*, Wednesday 1 March (1893), p. 6.

for Britain as a whole) that may have attracted more than 100,000 signatures.... Napier's work was evidence that hard politics could grow out of absurd romance.⁸

Napier was still in Scotland in 1896 for the centenary commemorations of the death of Robert Burns. A special correspondent noted that at the ceremony held at Burns' graveside:

The Caledonian Society of Melbourne was represented by Mr. Theodore Napier, a picturesque figure in the garb of a Highland chief, who brought a wreath composed of Australian heath.⁹

The wreath of the Highland Society of New South Wales had been despatched packed in ice, but had gone astray. Like the Melbourne Society's wreath, it too was composed of 'Australian flowers'. These floral displays suggest that Napier and other Australians of Scottish descent saw themselves as being capable of identifying as Scottish, British and Australian all at once, a notion that nationalist historians in particular seem to find difficult to comprehend.

In that same year Napier was apparently responsible for instituting the commemoration of the Battle of Culloden anniversary on 16 April.¹⁰ This commemoration became part of an annual round of observances carried out by Napier of events he saw as significant to the Legitimist cause, placing a wreath on the tomb of MacIan at Glencoe on 13 Feb 1900, and visiting Fotheringhay annually for a period of ten years on the anniversary of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. A special occasion was marked on 20 November 1908, which was, according to the *Legitimist Kalendar*:

⁸ Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and The British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 73-4.

⁹ Special Correspondent, 'The Burns Centenary', *The (Adelaide) Chronicle*, Saturday 5 September (1896), p. 45

¹⁰ 'The Culloden Commemoration', *The Jacobite*, Vol. I, No 1, 8 November (1919), p. 1.

The 33rd Anniversary of the Accession, *de jure hereditario*, of H.R.H. the Princess Louis of Bavaria (Mary III. And IV.) to the Throne of these Realms duly celebrated by Mr. Clifford Meller of Craigard, Carrick Castle, when the Royal Standard is unfurled by Mr. Theodore Napier in honour of our exiled Queen.¹¹

Although maintaining a home in Scotland from the mid 1890s until just before the First World War, it seems that Napier made trips back to Australia and also journeyed to other places. In 1906 Napier was travelling yet again, this time in the New World. Here his appearance was to cause a minor incident in the American territory of Hawaii, where a policeman refused him permission to come ashore because he was wearing a kilt, making his landing conditional on donning a pair of trousers. An exchange of views took place, a senior officer was eventually summoned, and Napier was permitted to land with kilt intact. He then proceeded to make an impression on the town ‘on account of his typical garb’,¹² as one local newspaper put it. The paper went on to say that he ‘was Scottish from plume to pedal’,¹³ a rather nice and striking bit of writing.

As well as his regular appearances in Highland garb and his devotion to commemoration of anniversaries which were significant to those with Scottish nationalist or Jacobite sympathies, Napier had a keen interest in artefacts related to those causes. He was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, having been elected in 1896, and took an active interest in the work of the Society. He collected artefacts, such as a cradle which was said to have been that of Mary Queen of Scots, which he ‘wrote up’ in a

¹¹ E. Josephine Foulds (ed.), *The Legitimist Kalendar for the Year of Our Lord 1910* (London: The Forget-Me-Not Royalist Club, 1910), p. 86.

¹² ‘No Kilts in Honolulu’, *Maitland Weekly Mercury*, Saturday 18 August (1906), p. 5, citing an unnamed local Hawaiian newspaper.

¹³ ‘No Kilts in Honolulu’ *Maitland Weekly Mercury*, Saturday 18 August (1906), p. 5.

notice.¹⁴ In 1912 he donated the cradle, along with a bed which was said to have been that of her son, James VI and I, to the Royal Scottish Museum. It seems he also owned one or more Jacobite drinking glasses, and doubtless made ritualistic use of them. These glasses, engraved with motifs such as white roses to allude to the Stuart cause, were used by Jacobites when drinking toasts. When in mixed company, and a toast to the sovereign was called for, the Jacobites present would pass their toasting glasses over their water glass on the table, symbolising that they were drinking a toast to the King over the Water.

In at least one instance, Napier acquired a replica of a relic which had eluded him at auction. In 1904, a harp that was known as the Queen Mary Harp came up for auction. Napier was one of the bidders, but ultimately the Scottish National Museum was successful in acquiring it. A replica of the harp had been made by Robert Glen in 1895, and it was this that came into the possession of Theodore Napier at some point. It is now here in Australia.

It was during one of his Scottish residences that he petitioned for arms, which were granted on 22 May 1896. The arms granted were:

Gules, on a Saltire engrailed between four Roses Argent a Lion's head affrontée Gules.¹⁵



The minimal text of the Letters Patent tells us little about the grantee. The arms themselves are a simple variant on those of Lord Napier, or at least on the arms in the quarters of the latter's arms relating to the Napier name, which were *Argent a saltire engrailed between four roses Gules barbed Vert*. The white roses and the Latin motto, when rendered into English

¹⁴ *The Scottish Antiquary, or, Northern Notes and Queries*, Vol. 10, No. 40 (1896).

¹⁵ Arthur Charles Fox-Davies (ed.), *Armorial Families: A Directory of Gentlemen of Coat-Armour*, seventh edition (London: Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1929), p. 1420.

do, however, reveal Napier's Jacobite sentiments, as the white rose was a symbol of the Jacobites, and the motto *Pro Rege Et Patria* ('For King and Country') reflects Napier's adherence to the cause and his love of Scotland.

He made use of the arms in the form of the bookplate illustrated here, and frequently flew a banner of his arms, as the following item tells:

On May 29th (Restoration Day) and 10th June (White Rose Day) Mr. Theodore Napier, in honour of these two notable anniversaries, had his armorial banner flying from his residence at 'Magdala,' Essendon, Melbourne. Mr. Napier has similarly observed these historic events for many years both in Australia and when living in Edinburgh.¹⁶

It is hardly surprising that a man who was an ardent Jacobite and who doubtless felt he was a gentleman would have acquired and used the indicia of such status.

CONCLUSION

So, was Theodore Napier simply an eccentric enthusiast, or was he a man ahead of his time who understood the importance of media manipulation and the use of spectacle to draw attention to causes that one believed in? Perhaps it is best to leave it to Napier to have the last word. In an interview with him in Melbourne when he was seventy-five years of age, Napier had this to say:

'Some people called me a crank,' he says, laughingly. 'But I am not a crank—I am only an enthusiast. I know the cause that is nearest my heart is a lost cause, but the principle is there just the same. We Jacobites are loyalists as well as royalists. We would like to see the Stuart line come back. But we would rather be loyal to the present king than to no king at all, and had I been a younger man during

¹⁶ 'Notes and General', *The Jacobite*, Vol. 1 No. 8 (August 1908), p. 29. This publication is billed as 'New Zealand's Only Jacobite Paper'.

the war I would have drawn my sword for King George as gladly as
I would have loved to draw it for Prince Charlie.¹⁷

Napier lived a further four years, dying in 1924. His heraldic patrimony would have passed to his son Archibald Wallace Napier (1890–1967) and subsequently to his grandson John Napier (1924–1975). The latter appears to have had no male issue, so the arms would have become extinct with his death. The house Theodore built, ‘Magdala’, was destroyed by fire in 1927. What remains, and is increasingly recognised by scholars and historians, is his significant role in the development of Scottish national identity in the twentieth century, and one imagines that is a legacy that Theodore Napier, Australian Jacobite, would have thought was well worth having.

¹⁷ ‘Scotland Forever: An Australian Jacobite’, *The* (Melbourne) *Argus* (Saturday 11 December 1920), p. 6.