

Scottish Silver and Accessories

Tuesday 26th August 2008
33 Broughton Place
Edinburgh



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BALMORAL HIGHLANDERS UNIFORM AND ACCESSORIES

The commission by Edward VII in 1903 of twenty five complete uniforms for the newly expanded Balmoral Highlanders was a turning point in William Robb of Ballater's career. Working in and around Ballater from the early 1880s William Robb had been closely linked with the booming tourist trade with the new found fashion and popularity of the Scottish Highlands, cemented by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's purchase of the nearby Balmoral Castle. Ballater was the centre of the tourism industry in Royal Dee side and this along with William Robb's skill and quality of work proved a great combination for success.

The commission for the new uniforms was to increase the company of men (workers and inhabitants of the Balmoral estate) available for ceremonial duties, mainly consisting of parading at the local Highland gatherings at Ballater and Braemar and at official functions at Balmoral.

The accessories supplied by Robb were designed with the finest skill and show to a high degree the quality of which this maker was capable. It does seem that, like many provincial silversmiths, his work was often stunted by the commissions he received.

The design process for all the items appears to have been a fluid one between King Edward VII and William Robb. Each piece had at least two designs presented to the monarch and discussion on style and detail created the final product, often a combination of features from each proposed pattern.

This said each piece shows a truly handmade appeal with no two pieces designs being identical but with a unique aspect. The inspiration for the design came from classic styles and patterns from earlier Scottish forms. The plaid brooch shows this in the most detail, with obvious comparison to earlier niello decorated plaid brooches popular throughout Scotland from 1730-1760. William Robb's place within the Celtic revival has never been in doubt and is expertly shown through this commission.

The Balmoral Highlanders continued virtually unchanged until 1936 when they were disbanded by the then King Edward VIII. On the disbandment each member of the Highlanders was presented with the full uniform as a memento of their service and with no restriction placed upon wearing it.

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365
Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders cap badge
by William Robb circa 1904, marked ROBB / Ballater and inscribed 'E.R.I. 1904', of conventional garter form with raised legend 'NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT' with applied lion sergeant to centre
5cm diameter, 1.4oz

366
Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders plaid brooch
by William Robb, ROBB / BALLATER (in triangular punch), Edinburgh 1903-04, of annular form with engraved panels of Celtic knot work and four Celtic bosses, inscribed to reverse '19 ERI (in monogram) 04'

9cm diameter, 3.1oz

Note:
For a similar example see Lyon & Turnbull, 'Fine Scottish Silver' 13th February 2008 lot 105



367
Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders waist belt plate
by William Robb, marked ROBB / BALLATER (in triangular punch), Edinburgh 1903-04, additionally inscribed 19 ERI (in monogram) 04, the curved rectangular plate with simple angular border with engraved Celtic knot border around vacant oval cartouche, with integral clasp to reverse, the

6.5cm wide black leather belt with dirk hanging loops and integral silver loop to end, marked ROBB, BLTR (incuse), Edinburgh 1903-04
plate 9cm x 7.2cm, 3.5oz





368

Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders sporran

by William Robb, marked ROBB / BALLATER, Edinburgh 1903-04, also inscribed ERI (in monogram) 1904, the curved cantle with serpentine bottom edge, engraved with panels of Celtic knotwork between cross hatched and knot work bosses and with three reeded knops to top, the vacant centre with black waxed leather panel, the white horse hair body with three black horse hair tassels suspended from oval belcher link with simple conical bells with engraved bands of Celtic knotwork, with red morocco leather backing with change purse and belt straps; together with black leather belt (2)

cantle 18.5cm at widest point, overall length 48.5cm approx

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369
Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders dirk
 by William Robb, mounts marked either ROBB / BALLATER in triangular punch or ROBB, BLTR (incuse), Edinburgh 1903-04, the top scabbard mount additionally engraved '19 ERI (in monogram) 04', the finely carved black wood handle with Celtic knot and basket weave decoration and with silver stud details, the terminal socket set with a pin top with running band of engraved Celtic knot work, the bottom mount with simple Celtic border, the leather covered wooden scabbard set ensuete with bi knife and three pronged fork with basket weave carved black wood handles with simple pin top terminals, the mounts all engraved with Celtic knotwork panels and three Celtic bosses, the top mount with integral hanging loops with attached long link chain with clasps
overall length 44.5cm, blade 26.5cm

Note:
 The double fullered blade is marked to one side with the running ostrich mark, signifying it having been bought from the master cutlers in Solingen Germany.



370
Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders sgian dubh
 by William Robb, marked ROBB / BALLATER (in triangular punch). Edinburgh 1903-04 to top and chape mounts of scabbard, the carved black wood handle with Celtic knot and basket weave decoration, applied with nine simple studs, the terminal with socket mounted pin top with engraved Celtic knot details, the bottom mount with incised zig zag border, the leather covered wooden scabbard with Celtic knot work and three bosses, chape mount similarly decorated

overall length 21cm long, blade 10.5cm

Note:
 The double fullered blade is marked to one side with the running ostrich mark, signifying it having been bought from the master cutlers in Solingen Germany.

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371

Ballater - a Scottish provincial Balmoral Highlanders suite of shoe buckles

by William Robb, marked ROBB / BALLATER (in triangular punch), Edinburgh 1903-04, comprising a pair of large shoe buckles and a pair of smaller ankle buckles, each of shaped curved rectangular outline with cross hatched bosses to corners and Celtic knotwork borders between, the large buckles with waxed leather insert, the smaller buckles with curved hinged tongue and tapered pin (4)

shoe buckles 6.5cm x 4cm, ankle buckles 3cm x 2.8cm

372

A Balmoral Highlanders uniform and fitted trunk

comprising, black beretha wool doublet with twenty six diamond shaped silver plated buttons with linear background and lion sergeant, by Firmin and Sons London; a black wool glengarry; a Hunting Stewart tartan kilt, plaid and under trousers; a pair of diced hose; pair of black leather brogues; contained within fitted black japanned trunk with twin

handles and hinged lid, with blue painted interior with sectioned lift out tray, the interior of lid with painted '25', the case with maker's labels for 'Shirras Laing & Co Ltd, Makers, Schoolhill Aberdeen'

Note:

The fact this trunk is numbered '25' would appear to point to this being the final set of the 1903 commission by Edward VII for the twenty five new uniforms from William Robb.