



Members of Clan Blair storming Blair Castle

december inspiration... tartan tales

I have always been mad for tartan. To borrow the words of the one and only Diana Vreeland, "**mad, mad, mad**". It must be in my DNA as there is no other way to explain my unabashed love for those Highland fabrics.

CLARENCE HOUSE VS THE REAL THING

If you are one of our clients, I surely presented a tartan fabric to you in some way, shape or form. Where interiors are concerned, it doesn't need to be an official highland pattern. I am not that much of a purist and I am happy to negotiate. A few years ago, we were working on a project with clients who have a family name that has several of their own tartans- (Royal Stuart). I couldn't believe they wouldn't want to cover every surface in their family room with one of those famous red fabrics. When I broached the topic I got a "thumbs down" (*were they kidding?*). However, I was able to get their okay to upholster a pair of high backed chairs in a tartan like fabric (taupe / hunter green / maroon). Even if it isn't the real thing, it makes me feel warm all over whenever I pass through their family room.

BLAIR ANCIENT VS BLAIR MODERN

In my personal life, Christmas has always meant Tartan to me. It is the one time of year that I can break out the tartan without seeming a bit excessive. The Christmas tree skirt and one hundred tartan bows (Royal Stuart) are the final touches on our Christmas tree.

Christmas dinner at our home meant any of the Clan Blair who had a kilt (or one that still fit) wore them to dinner. One of the bonuses about kilts is even if you put on a few pounds during the past year, those black straps with buckles are easily adjusted- such a brilliant design! Go ahead, don't be shy, you can go for that second serving of *bouche de noel* and be none the more uncomfortable for it. My Dad and Uncles wear the Clan Blair ancient (blue/green with red and black), but our generation and our children prefer the Clan Blair modern (navy /hunter green /black and bright red). Around the yuletide table we all stand, charging our glasses and toasting the holidays and the New Year.



HEY ARE YOU BOYS OR GIRLS?

Actually, I would be lying if I said that our young sons "preferred" kilts of any kind. After the boys reached a certain age, our sons preferred NOT wearing their kilts. I have to admit, it was a tussle on Christmas Day to get them to dress for dinner. I don't know what was more exhausting for me, trimming our tree with 100 tartan bows, or tackling my sons to get them to wear their kilts for Christmas.



When our oldest son arrived, a teeny tiny kilt was handed down from my nephew. It soon became an annual event for my sons to wear their kilts and have their holiday photos taken. Year after year, we headed down to Riverside Park or over to The Natural History Museum- kilts flying, Power Ranger undies flashing- to have their pictures taken. For the first few years, it went without a hitch. The boys discovered the secret girls have known for years...skirts are freeing, movement is easy and they don't itch your legs like flannel pants. *Heaven.*

Soon heaven turned into purgatory and then it became sheer hell. It all started when, after a lively photo shoot in Central Park (the boys were about 6 and 9), we decided to visit their cousin who lived on Central Park West. Not thinking, I took a short cut through a playground. It was about 5:00 and getting dark, so most of the children had gone home. All had left but two little tuffys that were perched on a see saw. They spotted the boys, stared for a few seconds and yelled out, "Hey kids, are you boys or girls?" Up until that point, the boys hadn't even thought about wearing a "girly" outfit. To them, it seemed as natural as wearing a blazer and tie while doing their homework. It was just what you did.



I glanced over at my son's and witnessed two light bulbs turning on. From that moment going forward, suiting them up in their kilts was like a scene from *Braveheart*. It became a blood bath.

THE REENACTMENT OF THE BATTLE OF CULLODEN 1745 AD

Several years after their walk through the park, the experience of taking our family holiday photo had become somewhat "unpleasant". I had given up the professional photographer who tried every trick in the book to capture goods photos of the boys, so their uncooperative attitudes forced me to take the job on myself...sigh.



Despite resistance on the home front, the photographs that we tucked into our holiday cards each year were a *huge* success. We heard from many of our family, friends and associates commenting on how much they enjoyed receiving the annual photo of our boys (I also discovered how many people hang other people's photos on their refrigerators...in case you are wondering, a lot!).

My husband, who never had the pleasure of being actively involved in the annual photo shoot, was very *enthusiastic*. That was understandable since he only experienced the *upside*. Each subsequent year, the more the boys balked, the more I complained. It had become a chronic repetition of balk / complain / wrestle...balk / complain / wrestle etc., etc. I was getting older and running out of steam.

Finally, my husband decided to take the situation in his own hands. He would have to step in because obviously, Mom wasn't up to the task. He instructed me to grab the camera and announced that we all were to follow him to the field behind our house. **SHOWDOWN!!!**

What ensued in that field was nothing short of a mutiny. It was like a reenactment of the Battle of Cullodon where the British literally leveled the Jacobites. However, in the battle reenacted on Blair-deBart soil, 2007 AD, it was the Jacobites (the boys) who defeated the British (their parents).

In closing, and in the spirit of the holiday season, I would like to raise a little Scottish toast.

Wherever you live in the world so wide,
We wish you a nook on the sunny side,
With much love and a little care,
A little purse with money to spare,
Your own little hearth when the day is spent,
In a little house with hearts content.

Ladies and gentlemen, charge your glasses!

Debra

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NB: Do not be fooled by this photograph, those are the smiles of victory.