



The early days of a **better nation**

Or how we laid
the foundation
for the campaign
that will win an
independent
Scotland

by Stewart Bremner



Imagined Images Editions





Foreword

I AM NO ARTIST. But throughout last year's independence campaign, amidst the stream of meetings, road-trips, TV interviews and talks, I started to glimpse something I couldn't properly describe. A new attitude amongst the members of Scotland's self-starting Yes movement. A fearless, clear-sighted outlook rooted in Scottish custom, culture and humour – with a decidedly feminine energy. Then one day I came face to face with Stewart Bremner's *Spirit of Independence* – the embodiment of that new Scotland. The image was striking – a young woman with tousled ginger hair, bedecked in plaid, bonnet, feather and jewelled clasp – all traditionally male symbols of Scottishness. She met the viewer with a powerful, direct and uncompromising gaze but held the jagged thistle in a delicate

feminine clasp. She was neither asexual nor suggestive. Stewart had done what writers could not. He had created an iconic image the whole Yes campaign could rally around and identify with – an aspirational yet very real Scot. The Spirit of Independence – driven around Scotland on an old fire engine by the redoubtable Chris Law – soon became the face of the indyref.

But this rich compilation shows that The Spirit – in her many colours and incarnations – represented only a tiny fraction of Stewart's graphic and artistic output during the independence campaign. I'm baffled that I didn't see more of these images first time around and sad because I guess most persuadable No voters missed them as well. Still, better late than never.

The Early Days of a Better Nation is much more than an



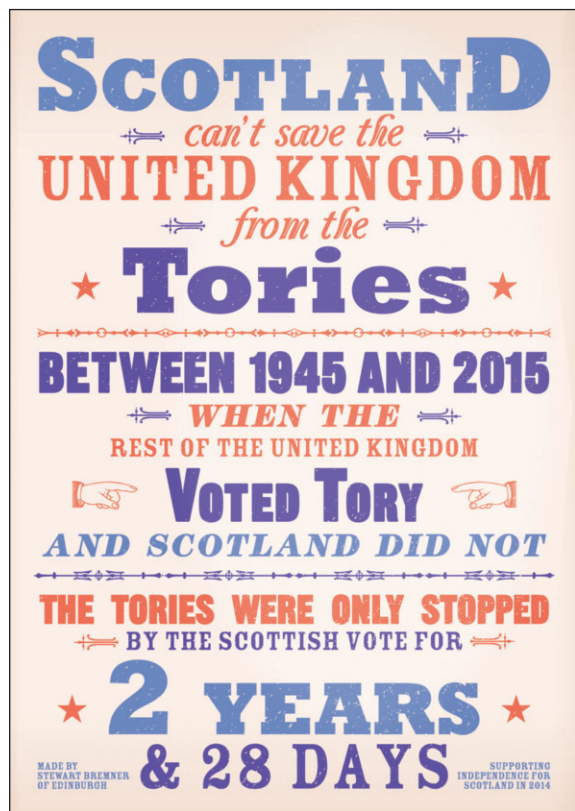
Lesley Riddoch is an award-winning journalist, commentator and broadcaster who writes regularly for the *Scotsman*, the *National* and the *Guardian*. Her book *Blossom* was updated following the referendum.

illuminated trip down memory lane. It's an education, provocation and inspiration, which raises questions as pertinent to the General and Holyrood elections as they were to the indyref. Stewart stretches far beyond the mainstream to feature heroes of the wider Yes movement like Jim Sillars, Patrick Harvie, Carol Fox, Cat Boyd, Alan Cumming, Elaine C. Smith and Dennis Canavan. He has tackled subjects as varied and hard-to-popularise as Royal Mail privatisation and Scotland's underdeveloped renewable energy resources with a vast array of styles and techniques.

Prolific is far too small a word.

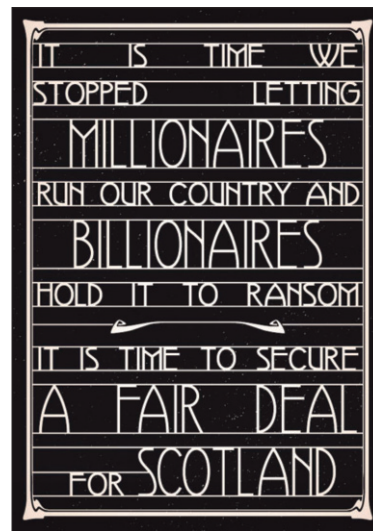
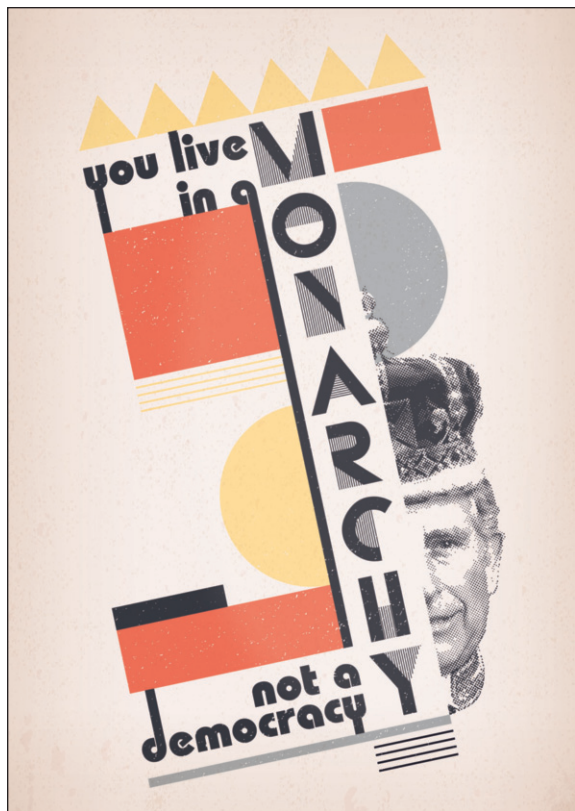
This beautiful anthology of Scotland's journey to independence proves that pictures do indeed paint thousands of words. Here's to Volume 2.





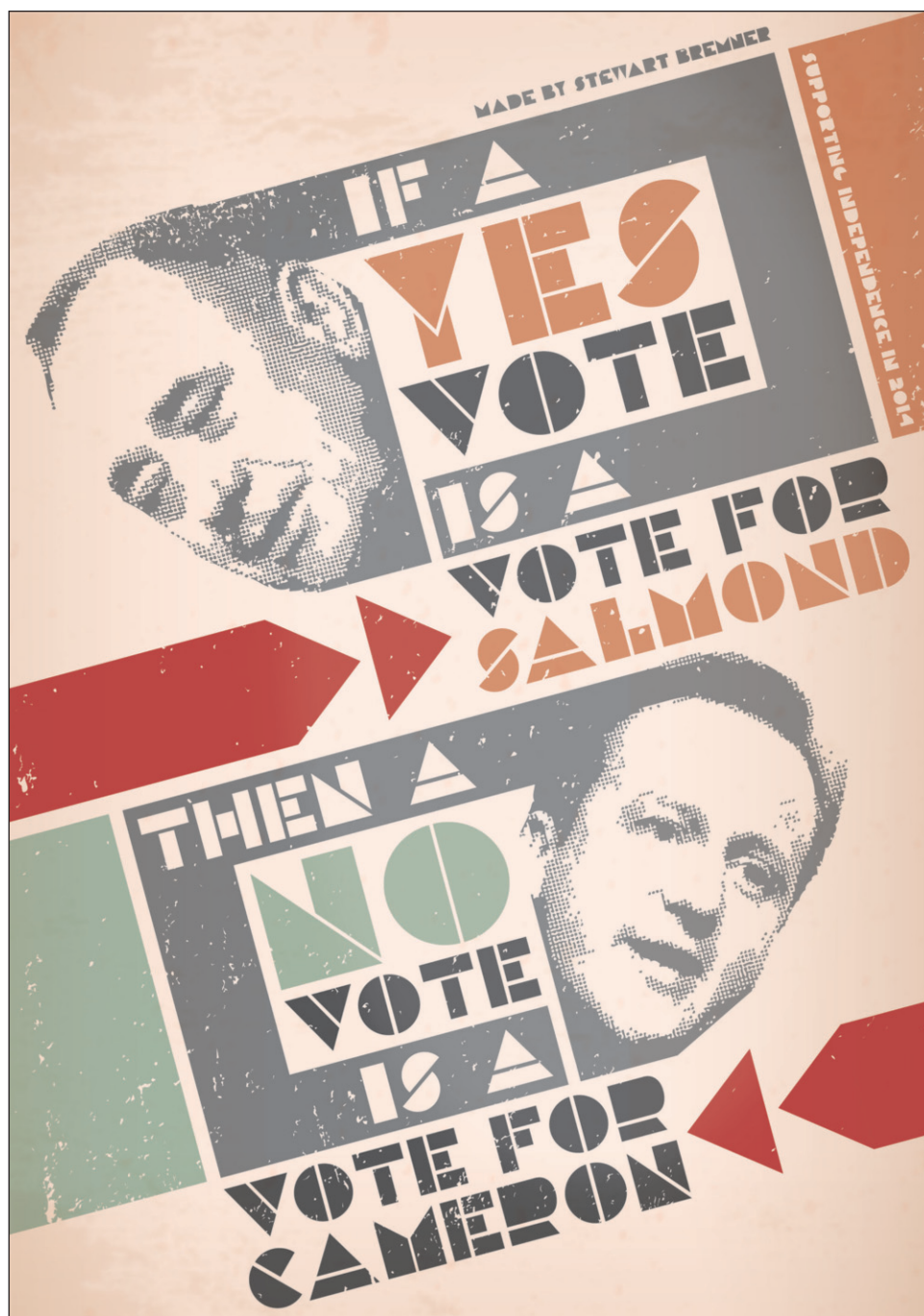
This page: Tired of the mostly safe designs I had been creating, I decided to try my hand at vintage-style typographic posters. They seemed a good way to combine word-heavy messages with eye-catching design. The vintage look has been popular in recent years and – more importantly – gives the messages an air of having been around for a long time. For this reason, I used old paper backgrounds on most of my designs from this point onwards.

Opposite: Just before I joined Yes Scotland staff at the end of October, I realised I was free to take inspiration from any moment of design history that appealed to me. Within an hour of this revelation, I had created a Alphonse Mucha-inspired poster. I consciously added to it what some might see as kitsch Scottish elements, in an attempt to intentionally challenge the validity of the ‘Scottish Cringe’.



This page: At the same time as I found the freedom to draw inspiration from any part of design history, here including Art Deco, Bauhaus (top left) and silent movie captions (above), I also began to hone my messaging skills.

This page: It seemed a basic point, yet one worth making, when the No camp and their attendant media continually conflated the desire for Scottish independence with supporting Alex Salmond. Opposite: In the style of the hugely-influential US designer Saul Bass, with just a hint of Alexander Rodchenko by way of Franz Ferdinand.



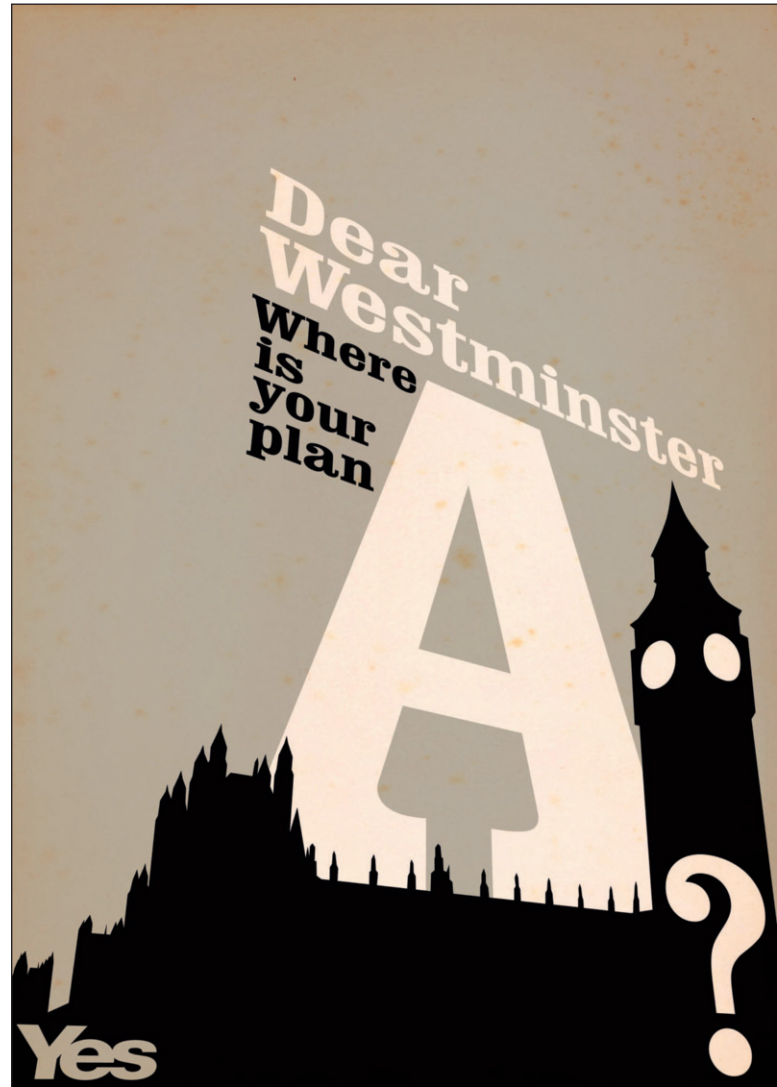


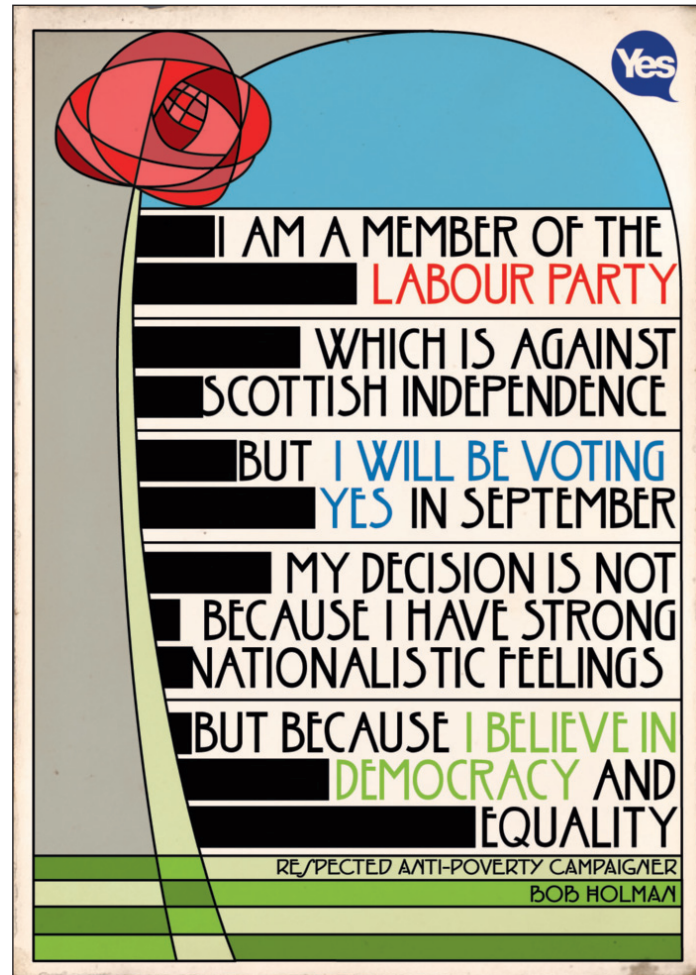
December 2013

AT THE beginning of the month, George Osborne delivered his autumn budget statement. He revealed that the economy was recovering, even though it had shrunk and borrowing had grown massively since he became Chancellor. And he neglected to mention the half-million people in the UK who were dependent on foodbanks.

After previously claiming that we might not be allowed to watch the BBC in an independent Scotland and that stamps might cost more, the No camp continued to turn over every stone in their quest to scare. This time they announced that supermarkets might charge us more for food and that, in marketing terms, 'brand Britain' would lose value.

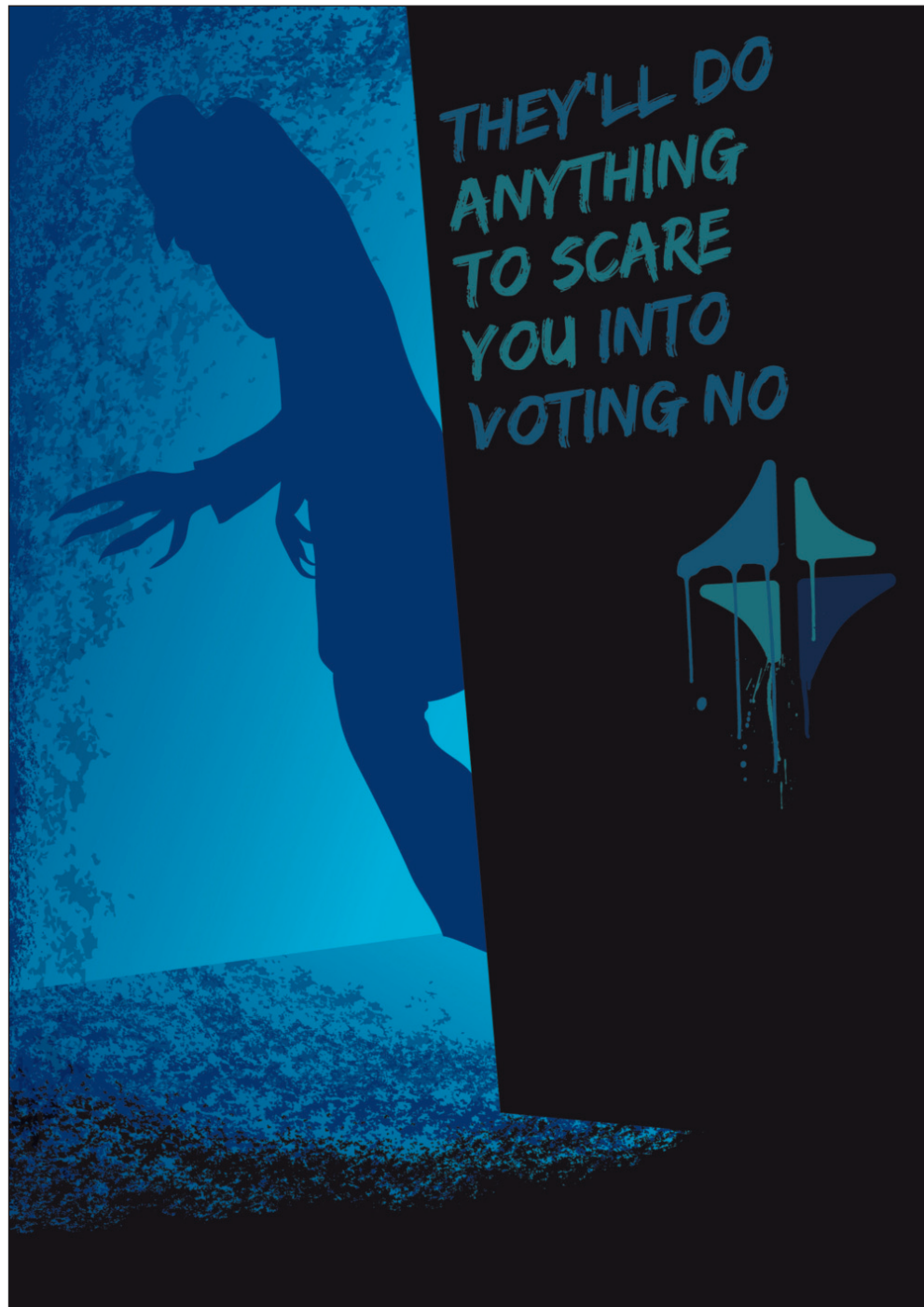
As the year of the referendum loomed, the positive case for the Union remained elusive.





Bringing art into politics was one of my favourite activities – when there was time! Above left: To emphasise the distorting effect of the UK media's lens, I borrowed from Bridget Riley's early monotonal Op Art. Above right: Charles Rennie Mackintosh's style seemed a good way to emphasise the Glaswegian roots of both the Labour Party and this campaigner.

We directly called out the scare tactics of the No camp, which by this time were in full effect. The sinister shape emerging from this alley served as a visual representation of the No camp. Vintage movie fans may recognise it as Nosferatu, from the 1922 film of the same name.







This is another entry for *Bella Caledonia's* indyref poster competition. It features mythological Greek goddess Hecate, who in one form is associated with crossroads – a symbol I thought appropriate to this period of Scotland's history. To give Hecate a local flavour, I surrounded her with Scottish symbols and have her standing atop Sgùrr Dearg – the Inaccessible Pinnacle – a famously difficult-to-reach mountain peak on Skye.




I'm voting Yes because
I want to live in a fairer Scotland




I'm voting Yes because
I want to live in a country that seeks equality




I'm voting Yes because
I don't believe the poor should pay for the mistakes of the rich




I'm voting Yes because
having the world's second largest unelected parliamentary chamber is a disgrace



I'm voting Yes because
Westminster has no appetite to address its corruption




I'm voting Yes because
it's the best chance we have of being rid of the monarchy




I'm voting Yes because
Westminster is run by and for the rich




I'm voting Yes because
I want to live in a country that prizes social justice




I'm voting Yes because
I don't want to live in a country whose foreign policy is enforced at gun point



I'm voting Yes because
bankers should not be able to hold my country to ransom




I'm voting Yes because
I don't want my tax payments used to bail out the next banking crash



I'm voting Yes because
I believe free healthcare is the cornerstone of a just country



I'm voting Yes because
we can finally create a constitution for our country



I'm voting Yes because
I am sick of living under Thatcherism



I'm voting Yes because
I don't want to live in a country that believes in nuclear weapons

