

# The Chronicles of St.Abb

## The Self-Sanctified.

PATRON SAINT OF THE DE-FROCKED.

### Second Epistle

Well..... Onward and with magnificence we thundered across the Waikato plains...A gaudy legion of men metal and horse-meat.....with me up front making a hell of a racket... Hamilton of course didn't notice.....although many a dame of Cambridge was drawn to her window for a curtained peek...It was at Matamata that the pile-up happened:

We were approaching the Equine Hospital and Veterinary Centre when the mounts of my black-stallioned knights in the second rank simultaneously caught a passing whiff of pre menstrual mare...A dozen front hooves firmly anchored to the fetlocks in the soft earth, launching all that wasn't horse-meat skyward.....My beastly steed was oblivious to all this.....it was oblivious to everything except running fast. I was a furlong in front already as I looked back upon the continuing carnage. Even the foot-soldiers had to pull up sharp..... I could clearly hear the cries of those who were seriously upset and wanted to go home.

By the time we reached the foothills the horse was all of a lather, and I was so far out in front that I started to get a bit windy.... So discretion being the better part of valour I reined in a bit and did a few lofty twirls just to check how far ahead I was: and got a bit of a fright. Way in the distance I could see that the foot soldiers had packed it in all together, and were sitting around in small circles making tea....

The horsemen were a few miles in front but they too had had enough, and were "more milling around" than galloping forwards. As I watched, the streaming dust trail once their wake, became a rising grey plume through which the sun glistened off the occasional teapot....

Straining and snorting the horse decided to reclaim control... and off we bolted. I was losing my enthusiasm by this time....there was nobody to shout to: the armor was starting to pinch: the sword was getting really heavy: So I decided to ditch the hardware. Taking the armor off at full gallop had some scary moments, although I managed to unburden myself of most of it.

I could now hang on better: one hand on the reins, the other wrapped round the horses neck. My face was firmly pressed into its left ear... I considered a bit of horse-whispering..... Try to make friends with the beast: but then I remembered the "the spurring earlier on....." Ohh... it must have *really hurt* Neddy.....*horse whisper*.... I can truly empathise with how you must be feeling right now.....*horse whisper*.....*horse whisper*.....I didn't know they were so sharp mate. Honest.... it was as much of a jolt

to me as it was to you! ...straight up mate!" ..... *horse-whisper.....horse-whisper.....*  
... "Whichever smithy made those things should have his license revoked! I mean... They're not spurs... they're bayonets!..... I'll see to it directly we get back pal, I promise" .....*horse-whisper.....horse-whisper.*  
.I was getting desperate: Think..... Problem- solve....consider other options.

For a fleeting moment I considered biting its ear off...but the vision of a toothless corpse at the roadside led me to believe this would serve no useful purpose. I decided upon a gesture of goodwill. I kicked off the spurs with a flourish, generally making a big show of it.

I was starting to lose my grip!!..... I sidled up its neck a further few inches.... felt myself lean back in exhaustion.....and then realized that I **was** leaning back.....and not having to hold on so tight!.....Slowly his pace was adjusting to the contours of my body....  
...There was little reduction in speed however.....just enough to make it tolerable as opposed to comfortable.....

So..... I adjusted myself the best I could inside my chain-mail body suit, and decided to try and enjoy the ride. It was after all a beautiful late -summer evening and I was looking back on a golden Waikato sunset. Onwards we thundered. Surely it must get tired soon.... it will have to stop for a drink and a nose-bag or something? As though to answer my question we suddenly flashed past the Te Poi Garage..... Pond in the adjacent paddock, water pump out front..... Now I know I don't stop there often because of the awful service..... But we'd been flat out for at least two hrs... and my steed?

Nary a sideways glance...

With nothing happening immediately other than extreme speed....I decided to take stock. The 'living- saint- thing' seemed a good idea at the time, but I was beginning to wonder if the principal meaning of half-cocked was what I had gone off in. ...Too late now though...I'm nothing if not committed.

The sun was starting to go down as we rose up through the foothills....I shivered a bit...It was starting to get cold.... Onwards and upwards.....the beast ate gradient.....upwards into a cold clingy, increasingly dense Kaimai mist. I was really starting to fear for my safety..... Exhausted, I knew I couldn't hold on much longer...and to fall off at this lick would be at the very least, and the very worse, fatal.

But right on cue, as though to assuage my rising panic.... we suddenly round a corner and arrive at the summit rest area: Lo and behold.... ..Flika slows to an ordinary gallop, then a canter... then a trot...and then miraculously....Inertia. Just stands there quiet-like.....inviting me to dismount.....it wasn't even breathing heavily now.....

Well I didn't need a second invitation and was out of the saddle and on solid ground in the blink of an eye. Having peed on the horse earlier on, I staggered over to the white boundary fence to relieve a recently acquired travel sickness... and hung there for a moment exhausted, trying to compose myself.....

Right. OK. Now what?

I turned to look back at the horse.... It had it's tail to me..... and was starting to shuffle about...then it turned it's head, looked directly at me, and with profiled eyelashes as only a horse turned sideways can have:

It winked. Then it spoke.

"Thanks for the ride old chap. I shall trot across to that spring over the road directly. I am given to understand that a gentleman will meet you shortly.....Now don't you fret about the spurs!.....get it all the time on these long haul jobs.....and I dare say I need a bit of a tune up now and then..... The piddling is quite another matter entirely however..... I shall wear a Kylie under-blanket next time we meet .....Anyway I must get along now so... Ta Ta old sport.".....

Then it smiled at me: winked again: and trotted off into the mist.

I weakened at the knees and slowly sank to the ground, squatting on the tar-seal, my head in my hands . The wink had given me a fright: The smile was horrible, all mobile lips and teeth: but what really shook me was the voice. I recognized it. It was Helen Clark.

Now.... I really was serious about 'the mental health nursing thing,'.... and it did seem like The Tauranga Psych Unit was a good place to start: it having been in the papers at the time.... But now look. Barely a few hours into it and I'd lost all of my troops.. the cavalry... my sword ... armor.. horse: If it wasn't for my chain mail body suit and shoes I'd be naked.....The lot.

Gone.

Even my spurs....

I was all alone on top of the Kaimais in the mist and the temperature was dropping quickly. There was little traffic, and who would give a lift to an unhorsed chain-mailed Saint at this time of night? I sought what shelter I could find, jumping over the fence into bush where I could see a large boulder that might provide some protection...I was shivering now, and the terrain was rugged to say the least. Twice I stumbled into blackberry.. and the boulder was further away than it looked .As I got closer I was heartened to see the warm glow of a camp fire some distance beyond ...and my nostrils flared as they sensed the faint but very tangible smell of cooking.....I approached cautiously through the pungas, lifting my chain-mail skirt so as not to rattle..... It had been terrific to start with, all the charging especially, but I was now exhausted scratched bruised, and very cold. The sight of the campfire initially brought a sigh of relief, but as I got closer apprehension returned.

Who would light a bonfire in the bush this time of night?

Doubt and fear began to prowl my innards.

St.Abbs inaugural crusade hadn't been exactly successful so far....In fact the way things were going ...it's probably The Balrog having a tea-party.

Soon I could see the entrance to a small cave, the source of the fire. The food -smoke jangled my taste buds reminding me that I hadn't eaten for ages..... I could make out a voice, and then giggling.... I entered further into the cave....

"French cheese eh! Saint French Cheese!! He! .Hee..

Now St Wolfgang!..... there's a good one.....

and St Rudolph!! .....there's another! ....

.But St .French Cheese takes the biscuit ....

Water biscuits probably !!

Ho. haa! ...Tee He!" .....

He had his back to me and was stirring a large metal pot suspended over an open fire.....  
An old Maori man: the agelessly old type, trim, wiry. He smiled constantly, chatting to himself..... the light of the fire reflecting off his solitary front tooth .....he ranted...  
laughed, and stirred the pot .....I leaned a little further into the cave: fascinated but cautious.....Suddenly, without turning his head, he raised his voice ....

"Ah... Kia ora! .... You 're here! Come on in... come on in by the fire!..... Ramsden's the name....Ole' Ramsden ...Local lad... Tangata Whenua .....I'm a Saint too.... but I'm not a one to stand on all that ceremony stuff, ... eh! Ole' Ramsden suits me fine.....I' got some kai ready for you.. and I made a bed up....Of course you'll need to stay the night.....it gets really cold up here at night!.....

Here ends the second epistle of French -Cheese St. Abb..... the slightly doubtful.....