

# The elephant and the rope



by Gordon Craigie



HERE'S A WEE thought provoker for iScot readers – the *Parable of the Elephant and the Rope*. This story is widely available on the internet with various interpretations of its meaning. Apparently, circus trainers, and others who happen to 'own' an elephant (?), follow this procedure to help ensure that their elephants never escape or rebel – our question is, is there a message here for us Scots?

The story goes that when the elephant is very young, it is tethered to a tree or some other immovable object by a very thick rope. The rope is strong enough so that any time the baby elephant tries to escape, it can't. As the animal grows up it naturally gets

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bigger and stronger, but the rope is still strong enough to keep the elephant restrained no matter how hard, or how often, it tries to get free. Eventually the young elephant accepts that the rope will always be too strong and so it gives up even trying to escape.

Even when it is fully grown, the adult elephant remembers how it had wasted its time and energy on those multiple attempts to break free. At this point, the trainer or owner can replace the sturdy rope with a bit of string and tie the elephant to a broom handle, safe in the knowledge that the elephant will make no further attempts to gain its freedom.

Elephants are incredibly intelligent creatures – they have the largest brains of any land animal and are thought to mimic many human emotions and societal structures. Yet these captive elephants are fooled by this simple piece of conditioning. They have been taught from birth that trying to escape is futile and that they must accept

what is provided for them. Is this ringing any bells yet?

When our next opportunity to regain our independence comes around, as it will, then surely a sufficient percentage of our fellow citizens will realise that the supposed ties binding us to the failed circus that is Great Britain are as weak and useless as the string tying the adult elephant to the shooonly peg? It is long past time that we realised this collectively – why did enough of us not see that in 2014? It is time for the Scots to break free and rebuild our country and society in line with our beliefs into a modern, progressive, outward-looking, international, egalitarian nation state. We can learn from the parable of the elephant and the rope – now is the time to unchain the unicorn.