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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for July 13th 2012

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Electric Scotland News

Well I have to say not much news this week after my mega workload last week. I did get in a wee announcement about events planed for the 2014 Homecoming event in Scotland...

This statement was recently posted by the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs and confirms dates for some events in 2014:

Here are the outline plans for Stirling/Bannockburn dates for 2014 in commemoration of 700th anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn.

23 24 June. Opening of the new Bannockburn Visitor Centre by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS).

28 29 June. Re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn by NTS.

11 13 July. International Clan Gathering and Highland Games at Stirling, to include a march, Clan tented village, traditional Highland Games.

Actual locations in Stirling for the various events are to be confirmed as is the route of the march and the organisation and coordination of events. There is plenty of accommodation available at Stirling University should any clan wish to base themselves there and so perhaps time to be considering your 2014 holiday arrangements.

I received an email about a new book (a novel) which is around the mining industry in Scotland.

'Ours, Yours and Mines' is a family saga set in the miners' rows of Ayrshire, Scotland in the mid-1800s to early 1900s. Growing up in Australia, I had always been curious about the country of my father's birth. When I began tracing the McMurdo family history I found a long direct line of coal miners in Ayrshire. I felt a connection to the characters that I unearthed and wanted to find out about their lives. When I discovered that my great-great-grandmother, Mary Hamilton McMurdo, had borne eight children and buried seven of them, I was very upset and wondered how she, and the many women of the time who watched their children die, must have felt.

I have visited the areas around Muirkirk, Hamilton, New Cumnock and Old Cumnock where the McMurdo families lived, and researched life in the mid-1800s to early 1900s to form a picture of how life must have been. The language used in the book is English and Scots/English as I felt it was important to give the characters a voice that was authentic.

This is a story that relates to many people of the time. We often read statistics about the decimation of families due to disease, but there are few accounts of how the loss of family members, and the poor living conditions, must have affected them (particularly the women), emotionally and physically. 'Ours, Yours and Mines' is a tribute to them all. The book is available from www.amazon.com. I would be happy to discuss the book with readers and to hear from anyone whose ancestors worked in the miners' rows.

And it was reading the thread on this book that has made me find a book about Keir Hardy which I'll be working on to add to the site.

Someone sent me in a copy of the newsletter from the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs so added the pdf version into our community which you can read at <http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/3096-Three-Feathers>. I might add I also got in a report from the President of COSCA and I've also added their report to this thread.

ABOUT THE STORIES

Some of the stories in here are just parts of a larger story so do check out the site for the full versions. You can always find the link in our "What's New" section in our site menu and at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm> and also <http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

We try not to point to a pdf file and instead send you to page where the pdf can be downloaded.

Electric Canadian

The Pioneers of Blanshard

With an Historical Sketch of the Township by William Johnston (1899).

We have now got up the concluding chapters of this book which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/ontario/blanshard/index.htm>

Camping in the Canadian Rockies

An Account of Camp Life in the Wilder parts of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, together with a description of the Region about Banff, Lake Louise and Glacier, and a Sketch of the early Explorations by Walter Dwight Wilcox (1896).

Another new book we're starting and here is the Preface...

THE Canadian Rocky Mountains offer exceptional attractions to those who enjoy natural scenery, sport, and camp life. Few regions of the world combining mountain, lake, and forest scenery possess the additional advantage of a delightful summer climate, such as obtains in the Canadian Rockies.

The extremely wild character of this part of the Rocky Mountains, and the very short time since it was opened up to travellers, are probably, in great part, the reasons for the lack of literature and the absence of any thoroughly illustrated publication concerning this region.

During a period of four years, the author has made camping excursions into many of the wilder parts of the mountains and effected a considerable number of ascents. An excellent camera has been an almost inseparable companion in every excursion, so that photographs of the typical scenery have been obtained from every possible point of view. Moreover, throughout all the processes of photographing, no expense of time or labor has been spared in order to obtain true and artistic representations of nature. Nor have these results been obtained without considerable sacrifice, for in many cases the proper light effects on lakes and forests required hours of delay, and frequently, on lofty mountain summits, high winds made it necessary to anchor the camera with stones; while the cold and exposure of those high altitudes made the circumstances unfavorable for successful work.

A map is not included in the volume, as, owing to the wildness of the country, there are no detailed maps covering this region that are entirely satisfactory. The best map, and, in fact, the only one available, is published in Dr. Dawson's Preliminary Report on this part of the Rocky Mountains.

The author makes grateful acknowledgment of the assistance received from many friends in the preparation of this book. Special thanks are due to Prof. J. H. Gore, of Columbian University, and to the Hon. Chas. D. Walcott, Director of the United States Geological

“Rise, honest muse, and sing the man of Rosa.”—Pope.

In the letter in which Junius accuses the Duke of Grafton of having sold a patent place in the collection of customs to one Mr. Hine, he informs the reader that the person employed by his Grace in negotiating the business, was “George Ross, the Scotch Agent and worthy confidant of Lord Mansfield. And no sale by the candle,” he adds, “was ever conducted with greater formality.” Now, slight as this notice is, there is something in it sufficiently tangible for the imagination to lay hold of. If the reader thinks of the Scotch Agent at all, he probably thinks of him as one of those convenient creatures so necessary to the practical statesman, whose merit does not consist more in their being ingenious in a great degree, than in their being honest in a small one. So mixed a thing is poor human nature, however, that though the statement of Junius has never been fairly controverted, no possible estimate of character could be more unjust. The Scotch Agent, whatever may have been the nature of his services to the Duke of Grafton, was in reality a high-minded, and, what is more, a truly patriotic man; so good a person indeed, that, in a period of political heats and animosities like the present, his story, fairly told, may teach us a lesson of charity and moderation. I wish I could transport the reader to where his portrait hangs, side by side with that of his friend the Lord Chief-Justice, in the drawing-room of Cromarty House. The air of dignified benevolence impressed on the features of the handsome old man, with his grey hair curling round his temples, would secure a fair hearing for him from even the sturdiest of the class who hate their neighbours for the good of their country. Besides, the very presence of the noble-looking lawyer, so much more like the Murray eulogized by Pope and Lyttelton, than the Mansfield denounced by Junius, would of itself serve as a sort of guarantee for the honour of his friend.'

George Ross was the son of a petty proprietor of Easter-Ross, and succeeded, on the death of his father, to the few barren acres on which, for a century or two before, the family had been ingenious enough to live. But he possessed besides what was more valuable than twenty such patrimonies—an untiring energy of disposition, based on a substratum of sound good sense; and, what was scarcely less important than either, ambition enough to turn his capacity of employment to the best account. Ross-shire, a century ago, was no place for such a man ; and as the only road to preferment at this period was the road that led south, George Ross left, when very young, his mother's cottage for England, where he spent nearly fifty years amongst statesmen, and courtiers, and in the enjoyment of the friendship of such men as President Forbes and Lord Mansfield. At length he returned, when an old greyheaded man, to rank amongst the greatest capitalists and proprietors of the county; and purchased, with other lesser properties in the neighbourhood, the whole estate of Cromarty. Perhaps he had come to rest him ere he died; but there seems to be no such thing as changing one's natural bent when confirmed by the habits of half a lifetime ; and the energies of the Scotch Agent, now that they had gained him fortune and influence, were as little disposed to fall asleep as they had been forty years before. As it was no longer necessary, however, that they should be employed on his own account, he gave them full scope in behalf of his poorer neighbours. The country around him lay dead. There were no manufactories, no knowledge of agriculture, no consciousness that matters were ill, and consequently no desire of making them better; and the herculean task imposed upon himself by the Scotch Agent, now considerably turned of sixty, was to animate and revolutionize the whole. And such was his statesmanlike sagacity in developing the hitherto undiscovered resources of the country, joined to a high-minded zeal that could sow liberally, in the hope of a late harvest for others to reap, that he fully succeeded.

You can read the rest of this chapter at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/cromarty/chapter30.htm>

The other chapters can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/cromarty/index.htm>

The Life and Work of James Abernethy, C.E., F.R.S.E.

Past President of the Institution of Civil Engineers by his son John S. Abernethy (1867).

Added this week are chapters on...

Cardiff (Mon.)

Belgium, 1880-1

Hull, 1880-5

Boston

Manchester Ship Canal, 1880-93

Fraserburgh

The chapter on Fraserburgh starts...

ONE more harbour work of importance remains to be mentioned, and that is Fraserburgh, the chief Scottish port of the herring fishery, some fifty miles north of Aberdeen.

It is just forty years since the engineer whose career has been given in this Biography, was first consulted with reference to Fraserburgh Harbour, and although this long association would naturally suggest the propriety of an earlier mention, it appears to occupy a more appropriate place in the book as last on the special list, inasmuch as the advice given in 1857 has only within the past two years been fully carried out, and also because it was the last work upon which he was actually engaged.

In the year 1857 he recommended to the Harbour Commissioners an extension of the Balaclava East Pier, built in 1851, in an easterly direction, by forming a breakwater 720 feet in length, reaching to the further edge of the Outer Bush Rock, with a view to sheltering the Balaclava and North Harbours. Sixteen years later, in 1873 a Provisional Order was obtained in order to carry out the recommendations of the report, and a loan of £60,000 was granted by the Public Works' Loan Commission for the construction of the works. These comprised a breakwater, extending east-south-east for 680 feet, and then turning south-east for 180 feet, and terminating on the outer Bush Rock, and the widening of the Balaclava East Pier, on the sea side, to the extent of 16 feet along its entire length of 1400 feet, so as to give width for a roadway to convey materials to the breakwater without encroaching upon the quay space or reducing the area of the basin. As the breakwater was to be exposed to the heavy seas raised by north and north-east gales, it was designed to be formed of a solid mass of concrete in position above low water, 30 feet wide, and having its quay 10 feet above high water protected by a parapet feet high. Mr. J. H. Bostock, M.I.C.E., carried out the work, as resident engineer. The widening of the Balaclava Pier, the first of the two works executed under the loan, was commenced at the end of 1875, and completed in October, 1877, and contains 15,300 cubic yards of concrete. The breakwater, begun in the spring of 1878, was completed in the autumn of 1882. It consisted of 15,274 cubic yards of concrete in bags, and 25,106 cubic yards of concrete in position, or a total of 40,380 cubic yards, and the total cost of the works amounted to £69,000. Thus a good deal had been done to give the harbour better protection, but much that had been advised, had to remain undone until the Harbour Commissioners could see their way to apply for a fresh loan. This came to pass in 1894, when extensive works were undertaken, embracing, not only deepening the large area of harbour four feet in the hard rock, and the erection of jetties, but also the deepening of the entrance to the channel, the formation of a new breakwater at the south side, the strengthening of Balaclava Breakwater, and the building of a dry dock, three and a half acres, the largest of its kind in Scotland, and intended for wintering the large local fleet of first class fishing boats. These boats have hitherto been drawn up in winter on the piers, a process which frequently strained them, and the Harbour Commissioners by making this provision for their fishermen, have shown a timely consideration for them on the first occasion when it has been in their power to do so.

You can read the rest of this chapter at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/abernethy/chapter24.htm>

You can read the other chapters at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/abernethy/index.htm>

St. Kilda, Past and Present

By George Seton (1848)

We have now completed this book and here is how Chapter XII on Music, Customs, and Antiquities...

EDGAR POE quotes from memory an idea which he found in an old English tale relative to the "springheade and origine" of music—viz., "the verie pleasaunte sounde which the trees of the forest do make when they growe." In that view of the matter, it is difficult to conceive how the inhabitants of Hirta could ever have become amenable to the charms of the "heavenly maid;" but more than one poet has indicated other sources of the divine science—the dawning morn, the twilight cloud, the depth of night, the sighing of a reed, and the gushing of a rill—from one or more of which the remote islanders doubtless derived their appreciation of music. Martin informs us that he found St Kildans of both sexes "who have a genius for poetry, and are great admirers of music. The trump or Jewish harp," he adds, "is all the musical instrument they have, which disposes them to dance mightily." Elsewhere, however, he refers to the use of the bagpipe at their marriage festivals. In alluding to the use of the distaff by the women, he states that "they sing and jest for diversion, and in their way understand poetry, and make rhymes in their language." Macaulay bears still stronger testimony to the islanders' love of music. "They are enthusiastically fond of it," he says, "whether in the vocal or instrumental way : the very lowest tinklings of the latter throws them into ecstasy of joy. I have seen them dancing to a bad violin much to my satisfaction: even the old women in the isle act their part in the great assemblies, and the most agile dancers are here, as well as everywhere else, very great favourites. They delight much in singing, and their voices are abundantly tuneful. The women, while cutting down their barley in a field, or grinding their grain on their hand-mills in the house, are almost constantly employed in that way; and the men, if pulling at the oar, exert all the strength of their skill in animating the party, by chanting away some spirited songs adapted to the business in hand. The seamen of Athens practised the same custdm."

You can read the rest of this chapter at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/stkilda/chapter12.htm>

You can read the other chapters at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/stkilda/index.htm>

The Story of Edinburgh Castle

By Louis Weirter (1913)

A new book we're starting and here is the Foreword...

ALTHOUGH much has been written about Edinburgh Castle, the historical interest attaching to the ancient fortress is so great that perhaps the appearance of another book on the part it played in the romantic history of Scotland is not without justification. This attempt to collect the strands of history from the web wherein the story of the Castle is woven was not undertaken with any intention of writing a 'guide-book. My desire has been to entertain those who dwell within the shadows of the grey fortress and to give to others

who may visit its ancient battlements food for the inspiration which from my earliest days I have received from them.

I have pleasure in expressing my indebtedness to, among present-day authorities, Mr. C. G. Cash, F.R.S.G.S., and Mr. John Geddie; also to the monumental work edited by the late Rev. Dr. Taylor. My thanks are due to my friend Professor Patrick Geddes, who has kindly furnished the book with an Introduction, and to Mr. William J. Hay, who read the proofs with much care.

LOUIS WEIRTER
August 1913

There is also a very good Introduction to set the scene and this can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/edinburgh/castle.htm>

Highlander and his Books

By Frank Shaw

A review of "How to do things with books in Victorian Britain" By Leah Price.

You can read this review at http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/victorian_books.htm

John Paul Jones

Got in a very good article about him and I also recorded this as a video. You can get to this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/3080-John-Paul-Jones>

Songs by John Henderson

John sent us in another of his songs, Striviling, which you can read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerel445.htm>

And finally...

The DFA What's That?

The Scottish Government's Recently Created Department, the Department of Festive Affairs, announced that in future, a Christmas Day limit of 12,000 calories may have to be introduced. Many Scots consumed their full five a day: an entire Cadbury's selection box, a pyramid of Ferrero-Rocher, a bag of Mrs Tilly's tablet from Tesco, a tin of Celebrations, and a chocolate partridge in a pear tree. These sweeties were in addition to a large Christmas lunch which, statistics show, typically featured sage and onion stuffing inside a turkey wrapped in streaky bacon inside an oven at gas mark 7. "Turkey's popularity remains a puzzle, a mystery and an enigma," said the DFA spokesperson who prefers a rib of beef. He also noted "The decrease in this festive fumbling is partly due to fewer people having office jobs and fewer companies holding parties. The main reason is that with paperless technology, offices no longer have big enough stationery cupboards."

And that's all for now and hope you all have a great weekend.

Alastair
