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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for April 26th, 2013

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### Electric Scotland News

Couple of interesting news items this week which I found in the Herald newspaper....

Clan chiefs go to war over Bannockburn 2014 plans for Diaspora

Scots around the world have been left disenchanted by "watered-down" plans to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, according to clan chiefs.

Some members of the Scottish Diaspora lost money through Stirling Council's decision to cancel a clan gathering event similar to the well-received but financially-challenged Gathering 2009 in Edinburgh, the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs will tell MSPs today.

A separately-organised but related Bannockburn 2014 event has subsequently been expanded to include a clan village, but many international clans view this as a "watered-down" version of the original plan, the council said in a submission to Holyrood's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

Council convener Malcolm MacGregor will appear before the committee today, alongside representatives from Homecoming Scotland, Stirling Council, Bannockburn 2014 and the National Trust for Scotland.

Mr MacGregor said: "The cancellation of Clans 2014 was a huge disappointment, both nationally and internationally.

"The vast majority of the Diaspora who attend these events cannot afford to take the time off, or make an expensive visit to Scotland



more than occasionally.

"They tend to arrange these visits to coincide with clan activities and short notice of major changes of plan has a disproportionately negative effect."

He added: "Some clans which had made travel arrangements and booked accommodation had to cancel them. Some lost money."

The original Gathering in 2009 was "a life-changing experience" for many people, but Mr MacGregor said the collapse of its organising body with debts of £344,000 cast a cloud over its success, and he has called for its creditors to be reimbursed by any future Gathering organiser.

Mr MacGregor said international clan societies were "surprised and disappointed" to hear that Clans 2014 had been replaced, not by a clan event, but by a battle re-enactment.

"Most had anticipated a re-run of Gathering 2009 in Stirling, and the watered-down plans were not well-received," he said.

"As far as the leaders of the US clan network were concerned, 2009 was a magical formula that worked and had considerable worldwide appeal. What was on offer now did not have the same appeal."

He added: "Given the problems associated with 2014, unfortunately many American Scots are generally disenchanted with what is now proposed."

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Sperm quality study a breath of fresh air for kilt-wearing Scotsmen

MEN who wear kilts have better quality sperm and are therefore more fertile, Scottish researchers claim.

They say that wearing a kilt traditionally – without underpants – could provide the ideal environment for sperm.

For testicles to produce adequate levels of sperm, they need to be three degrees Celsius lower than body temperature.

But recent research has shown there has been a global decline in the quality of men's semen over the past 50 years.

In addition to this, there has been a decline in fertility rates across the industrialised world.

Although the reasons for this are many and complex, it is thought that a reduction in sperm quality has played a role.

It is not fully understood why sperm quality is deteriorating but changes in lifestyle and increased pollution have been suggested as possible factors.

But, the new research, published in the Scottish Medical Journal, could provide men with a solution to their poor quality sperm. It said that since the 1980s scientists have linked tight-fitting underwear to impaired male fertility.

This was proven in 1990 when experts found tight pants increased the temperature deep inside the testicles.

Experts say that tight-fitting pants are partly responsible for declining fertility.

On average, tight undergarments increased the temperature of the air surrounding the testicles by 3.5 degrees Celsius.

Dr Erwin Kompanje, who wrote the review, said a recent study found that there are even more serious effects of not airing a man's groin. Not only did it slow production, but it caused the testicles to produce substandard sperm which could not swim to fertilise the egg.

The study said: "It seems plausible that men should wear skirts and avoid trousers, at least during the period during which they plan to conceive."

The study added that wearing a kilt provides strong psychological benefits to men too as "it will get you noticed no matter where you are".

Ellen Thomas

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## PDF Books

I've posted up a couple of pdf books this week which compliment small biographies I already have up in our Famous Scots section...

John Wilson who was a major contributor to the famous Blackwoods magazine which you can get to at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/wilson\\_john.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/wilson_john.htm)

and

John Stuart who was the first Scottish Prime Minister of Great Britain which you can get to at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/stuart\\_john.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/stuart_john.htm)

I added the books to the foot of each page.

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## Electric Scotland Logo

I confess I've always had a soft spot for the original logo I created way back when I started the web site but as you may know we lost the graphic and have been unable to recreate it. Well I met a lass in Chatham the other day and she does graphic design work for a living and volunteered to try and recreate it for me.

I just wondered if you could give me your thoughts on it?



Original Version



New Version

The idea of the original logo was to reflect the "Electric" of Electric Scotland and hence the lightning bolts and to use the piper to reflect Scotland. Also the crossed lightning bolts somehow also produced a kind of Saltire flag effect.

And so would appreciate your comments.

## Electric Canadian

### Canada and its Provinces

I have now started to add these volumes and the idea is to make one volume available each week until complete. Should you be interested in this series then you'll be able to dip into each volume during the week and thus be ready for the next volume appearing.

Now added The Province of Quebec Volume 15 - Section VIII

You can get to this collection towards the foot of our Canadian History page at

<http://www.electricenseanadian.com/history/canada/index.htm>

Rita MacNeil

A Great Canadian Singer who died this week.

We added a tribute to her which you can find at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/music/rita\\_macneil.htm](http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/music/rita_macneil.htm)

The Canadian Press in the old days

A while ago I posted up a page about the death of Harold Nelson. Well the other day his wife Nola gave me a copy of a letter she'd received after the funeral. With it were three chapters of a book the person was writing and thought Nola might enjoy reading them as Harold was mentioned but also it described some of the life Harold would have also experienced with mention of lots of people that Harold and Nola would have known.

I've now added that to his page which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/media/cbc.htm#Nola>

Looking for Volunteers

I started the site for two reasons... The first was due to reading that Globe and Mail article on how most Canadian children know little or nothing about their own countries history. As I had a lot of Canadian history in-house which I had used to extract the history of the Scots in Canada I felt that all that history was now just gathering dust so thought I'd make it available and hence the web site.

The second reason was that I was aware that Canadians are very good at volunteering and in fact I learned just today that 45% of Canadians do some kind of voluntary work each year and that rises to 55% with young Canadians. I had thus hoped that Canadians out there might get in touch to help build the site.

It's been obvious to me over the past several weeks that I know nothing about Canadian singers and hence you'll have seen the articles on Stompin' Tom Connors and now Rita MacNeil. I am sure someone out there and perhaps many of you know a lot more about these Canadian icons and thus I hope you might help in sharing your knowledge. All I'm trying to do is make sure there is a resource available so that Canadians and others become aware of them. Usually I would just find a small bio of them on the web and then try to find a couple of decent YouTube videos to put with their bio and where appropriate add a link to their web site.

So that's just one way you can help the site. Of course there are many other aspects to the history of Canada and so if you know some interesting information on any aspect of Canada from culture to commerce to tourism and history you might share that with us?

Stewart Publishing has been very helpful on helping me add some autobiographies to the site for which I am most appreciative. Robert has even chased up those people for me to help persuade them to provide a copy for the site.

I also figured that while some of you will be retired some of you must have worked for someone and so perhaps you have some knowledge you can share on the industry that employed you or indeed be able to write up some reminiscences of your work experience?

And so if you can help in any way with this type of work I'd love to hear from you.

## The Flag in the Wind

This weeks edition was Compiled by Margaret Hamilton. In her column she's discussing how to reach people as she's finding it challenging.

You can read this issue at <http://www.scotsindependent.org>

## Electric Scotland

The Scottish Historical Review

We have now started on Volume 5 and added this week April 1908. You can get to this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/review/volume05.htm>

You can read the previous issues at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/review/>

Songs Of Scotland, Prior To Burns

This book is by Robert Chambers who is famous for collecting old Scottish Songs.

Added this week are...

An Ye Were Dead Guidman

The Brisk Young Lad

Our Guidman Cam Hame At E'en

You can get to this book at the foot of the page at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/chambers\\_robert.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/chambers_robert.htm)

Songs by John Henderson

John sent in two new songs which you can find at the foot of his page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerels.htm>

The Annals of Scottish Natural History

Now added Volume 6

You can read this at the foot of the page at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/nature/natural\\_history.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/nature/natural_history.htm)

Tasmina Ahmed Sheikh

We now have her next column which deals with Women in Politics.

This column can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/lifestyle/tasmina/130424.htm>

You can read all her articles at <http://www.electricscotland.com/lifestyle/tasmina/>

The History of Sanquhar

By James Brown (1891)

We now have up the following chapters...

Chapter IX.—Curling

Chapter X.—Industries

Chapter XI.—Ecclesiastical

Chapter XII.—Parochial Economy

Chapter XIII.—Wanlockhead.

The Flora and Fauna of the District

Appendices (pdf)

And this now completes the book.

You can read these chapters at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/sanquhar/index.htm>

Classical Music in Scotland

Last week we got in the first article on Classical music in Scotland to which we've now added some additional information on James Oswald - Composer.

This week we've continued to look for suitable material and have found 5 books in pdf format which all make interesting reading and includes two very good biographies. We've added these to the foot of the page.

You can read them at <http://www.electricscotland.com/music/classical.htm>

Caledonia Monthly Magazine

Have added additional articles from this magazine...

The Carlin's Cairn and Polmaddy Mill

A tale of the days of Bruce

Burns and Beggar Life

The Murder of Cairn-O'-Mount

Cessnock Castle, Ayrshire by John Mackintosh

You can get to these at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/newspapers/caledonia>

Robert Burns Lives!

Edited by Frank Shaw

Got in another article in this series "On Finding A Battered Copy of Burns' Poems by Stephen A. Hammock"

Last week I had the privilege of introducing you to Stephen Hammock, a young man who is working on his doctorate at England's Oxford University. Stephen is an engaging individual with a great future ahead of him, and it has been a joy getting to know him while attending monthly meetings at our Burns Club of Atlanta and through email since he moved to study abroad. There are many good reasons to like Stephen and, suffice it to say, he is a gentleman and a scholar and will succeed at whatever field of work he chooses after his days at Oxford have been completed two years from now.

One of his outstanding features is his love of Robert Burns as most young people today are not so inclined. I look forward to more meetings with him, sharing emails, and enjoying conversations as we both journey down the "Burnsian Path" in the years ahead.

Before leaving for Oxford last fall, he told a brief story at one of our Burns Club meetings during the introduction of members and their guests and also read a poem he had written. I was impressed with both and later asked him to share them with me in order for me to share them with our readers. Here is the story and the poem for your enjoyment. (FRS: 4.22.13)

You can read this at [http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns\\_lives171.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives171.htm)

Other articles in the series can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns.htm>

## Lewsiana

Or Life in the Outer Hebrides by W. Anderson Smith (1875). A new book we're starting.

I just noted that I've been numbering these chapters incorrectly on our What's New page and have now fixed that. Mind you as no-one has told me about it I can only assume you are not reading the book which is a shame as it's an excellent read and really gives us an insight into how the islanders lived all these years ago. Many of these islanders emigrated all over the world so likely some of you will have them for ancestors.

We now have up the following chapters...

How we lived in the Lews

The Lews

The Sea

Food and Clothes

Farming and Fishing

A Wedding in the West

A Funeral in the West

Here is how the chapter starts on Food and Clothes...

THE economy, or want of economy, domestic and otherwise, of the inhabitants of this northern desert may well be a source both of interest and instruction. Ways and customs long since banished from the more accessible portions of the empire yet hold their ground in the remoter districts, and the celebrated and still prolific mother of invention brings forth her peculiar offspring.

As you pass along some quiet path, a bevy of strapping damsels with uncovered limbs issues from the rude doorway of a "black house." Those same limbs have been dexterously plied "wauling" a new-made strip of blanketing, or so-called "kilt," as they name the homemade cloth of any or no colour, whether for the trews of the master, or the petticoat or skirt of his dame.

Towards the north-east the spindle and distaff may still be constantly seen at work, but in our immediate neighbourhood the spindle is only used in twisting the thread, the wheel having entirely superseded the more primitive distaff as a spinner. Formerly the girls, when employed out of doors during the summer, made the warp with the distaff and spindle, as it made a more regular and better warp than the wheel, and could be worked at by fits and starts between other outdoor labours. Then, during the winter, they worked at the weft on the wheel itself, by which to complete the materials for the weaver.

Near the mouth of Loch Carlo way is a long cliff, barely out of the perpendicular, which was pointed out to us as having been scaled by a woman, who continued to work her distaff and spindle during the ascent. Although the rocks were very smooth and exceedingly steep, we can almost credit the tale, as we have ourselves seen women carrying creels of seaware up almost inaccessible cliffs. Of course, they are greatly assisted by the prehensile action of the bare feet—boots being too valuable to be worn among rocks or on the moor.

Place aux dames; let us first consider in detail the domestic arrangements in the hands of the women, and trace in order the result of their industry, which is untiring, if not always regulated to the best advantage.

You can read the rest of this chapter at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/lewsiana/chapter04.htm>



You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/lewsiana>

British Artisan Expedition to America

Equipped and sent out by and at the expense of the Dundee Courier and Dundee Weekly News Newspapers.

We've now added further chapters to this book and so now have up...

Chapter 1 - Preliminary Announcement

Chapter 2 - Election of Delegates

Chapter 3 - Extension Notes

Chapter 4 - Journey Across

Chapter 5 - Montreal, Niagara, Toronto,, Chicago

Chapter 6 - The World's Fair

Chapter 7 - Visit to Pullman City and Chicago

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/expedition.htm>

The Criminal and The Community

This is a new book we're starting and have the first chapter up now.

THE importance of the subjects handled in this volume requires no demonstration. Already, and for long, the treatment of them has naturally engaged the sympathetic study of philanthropists, and more recently it has attracted the earnest attention of scientific inquirers. Hitherto, however, the results have been far from satisfactory; and there is ample room for further discussion, especially from the standpoint of a thoroughly practical man with large experience both of criminals and of the social conditions that breed them.

Nowadays there is a growing sense of social interdependence; there is a more general and a more definitely realized aim to elevate the condition of the less fortunate of our fellow-citizens; there are express efforts of scientific investigators to discover a firm basis for practical reforms; and practical reforms are urgent. Such tendencies of thought and feeling may be expected to go far to ensure a warm welcome to this volume.

Dr. Devon's book is executed on a breadth of scale never before attempted. It has three distinct parts: The Criminal; Common Factors in the Causation of Crime; The Treatment of the Criminal. His exposition is perfectly clear; he sees precisely, and he states directly, simply, and definitely what he sees and what he thinks about it, very frequently driving home a point with epigrammatic force. If he throws overboard unceremoniously what he regards as mere lumber accumulated by the industry of speculation divorced from experience; if he betrays some impatience with existing theories and systems; if he advances his own views with confidence—the handling is at any rate piquant, and brings the matter promptly to a head.

The above is part of the Introduction which can be read on the index page of the book which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/criminal/>

Society of Antiquarians Scotland

Should you get in a personal email from me you'll note that after my name I show FSA Scot which of course tells you I am a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland.

It really is an excellent society that pursues the study of the antiquities and history of Scotland through various means, including high-quality publications, lectures, local, national and international conferences, workshops and seminars, and by providing prizes, grants and other awards.

The annual membership is actually very low indeed and with it you get sent their regular newsletter and also once a year their Proceedings which is a handsome book although they are now also offering it in pdf format. You do need to be sponsored for membership and I'd be happy to be a sponsor if you need such.

In Scotland they put on a number of free lectures and events which are usually well attended and include the annual Rhind lecture which go back over 100 years. They are now videoing some of these lectures and some of them are now available on their web site at <http://www.socantscot.org/>

However the purpose of me mentioning this is that in this current newsletter is an interesting article about the Scotland learning room at Pittsburgh University which I'd never hear of myself so thought I'd copy this for you so you too can learn about it. To that I've added another article which shows how they are using hi-tech for a project to do with a Scottish coastal archeological survey.

I've simply scanned in the three pages so when you go to the page just click on each of the graphics and you'll get a larger scan to read.

Hope you enjoy them and you can get to these at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/pittsburgh.htm>

The Working Life of Christina McKelvie MSP

Christina has now resumed her weekly column with us and when you visit her index page immediately below the wee bio of her you'll see...

Current Column

19th April 2013

First of the new column

25th April 2013

Christina McKelvie is on the street

Where we're now adding links to her current column. Below this you'll find copies of her old column.

So this week she is writing on The Street which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/mckelvie/130424.htm>

Her index page is at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/mckelvie/index.htm>

Captain 'Winkle' Brown: Is he the greatest pilot ever?

By Emma Ailes BBC Scotland

Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown has flown more types of aircraft than anyone in history, survived 11 crashes, interrogated high-ranking Nazis, and met everyone from wartime leader Winston Churchill to first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong.

He is a war hero in the truest sense of the word. Now aged 94, the Edinburgh-born fighter pilot says he has finally "buckled down to domestic life".

Robert Stewart send me in an email telling me of this story on the BBC web site and thought you'd enjoy the read. You can get to this story at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-22254048>

And finally...

Limited Ambition

A friend told me about his 60-year-old uncle who went for an interview as a college caretaker and was asked by the bright-spark human resources woman:

"So, Tom, where do you see yourself in five years?"

Tom, who was expecting to be quizzed on his jannie-type skills such as how to board up broken windows, fix leaky taps and replace dodgy light bulbs, looked thoughtful for a second, and then replied:

"Well, I think the Principal's job is safe."

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Fans

After getting home from a break in Dublin, Jimmy told me later that he had got on a crowded commuter train which was held up as even more folk tried to squeeze on board. Eventually the driver came on the public address system to announce:

"There's no point in trying to push on, there's another one right behind. The driver is Tom Cruise and the ticket inspector is Pamela Anderson."

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

Alastair