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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for July 24th, 2015

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

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

### Electric Scotland News

The Spittal at Glenshee and the MacThomas Clan

I learned this week that the Spittal at Glenshee had been destroyed by fire. I visited there many years ago and did a profile which you can view at <http://www.electricscotland.com/travel/pitlochry/day17.htm>

I'm told the community are looking at rebuilding but have no other information at this time. At the time of my visit Campbell of Glenshee provided me with a wee booklet which he gave me permission to post up on the site and you can read it at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/glenshee.htm>

I also noted that the pictures on the MacThomas web site were different to my own pictures so sent them in an enquiry. I got a reply back...

At the Clan Society's Annual Meeting in 2004 it was agreed that the trees around the Cockstane had reached the end of their life and needed to be replaced.

A couple of years later the trees were felled and new trees planted. The new trees are of types natural in Scotland, such as Oaks, and these are now beginning to grow well. They have taken a little time to establish themselves because the weather in the Glen can be harsh at times. Some of the photographs on the website are a bit dated and I will be taking new ones when I visit Scotland next month. At the same time that the trees were felled the site was reorganised, new paths laid and a small car park created. Visitors no longer have to park on the busy A93 road.

Thank you for your interest in Clan MacThomas.

You can visit the Clan MacThomas web site at <http://www.clanmacthomas.org/>

### Electric Canadian

Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer for the last Fifty Years  
Continuing to add more chapters to this book.

We are now up to Chapter XXXII.

In Chapter XXX there is a paragraph...

In Toronto, anything like opposition to His Excellency's policy was sought to be silenced by the threat of depriving the city of its tenure of the Seat of Government. The offices of the principal city journals, the Patriot and Courier, were besieged by anxious subscribers, entreating that nothing should appear at all distasteful to His Excellency. Therefore it happened, that our little sheet, the Herald, became the only mouth-piece of Toronto dissentients; and was well supplied with satires and criticisms upon the politic manoeuvres

of Government House. We used to issue on New Year's Day a sheet of doggerel verses, styled, "The News Boy's Address to his Patrons," which gave me an opportunity, of which I did not fail to avail myself, of telling His Excellency some wholesome truths in not very complimentary phrase. It is but justice to him to say, that he enjoyed the fun, such as it was, as much as anybody, and sent a servant in livery to our office, for extra copies to be placed on his drawing-room tables for the amusement of New Year's callers, to whom he read them himself. I am sorry that I cannot now treat my readers to extracts from those sheets, which may some centuries hence be unearthed by future Canadian antiquaries, as rare and priceless historical documents.

I am pleased to tell you that I have since found a copy of this publication and there is now a link to it from the page.

You can read this at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/thompson/index.htm>

Enigma Machine

The whole collection can be found at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/enigma>. We're currently working on puzzle 111.

An email from RJC

Got this email in from RJC in which he told me..

The city of Vancouver started life in an area that is now known as Gastown. The Gastown Business Improvement Assoc. (BIA) ran a program for two years that should have been kept going. Approx 1/2 of school age children are not from Canada, let alone Vancouver. One of the consequences is that they don't know anyone who can pass along local history and lore. The BIA started a program free of charge where young children, through the schools, would be invited to Gastown for an outing along with teachers. Tour volunteers would walk the children through the area explaining how Vancouver came into being and what kind of geography and people lived there.

My role as the fire department rep was to meet the group, explain the history in a particular area, pointing out where the eventual fire station was located and explain the fire of 1886 that destroyed Vancouver. Even mentioning the pet deer that lived in the fire hall! Different volunteers would take the group over from the previous guide and so the entire history and the area would be explained. At the end of the tour, a long time restaurant would invite the group in for a rest and a free soft drink. There, a volunteer from the BC Loins football team would give them a motivational talk extolling them to stay in school and do their best.

The program lasted only two years and for reasons unknown to me it ceased.

In a further email I was told that they produced a pdf file of the tour and then just sent it to the schools. We are trying to get a copy so we can add it to the site.

Sheep Raising in British Columbia

An interesting booklet from the Department of Agriculture (pdf) which you can download at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/agriculture/sheepraisinginbr00hopkrich.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

Stories in the Scottish Dialect

This is a collection of stories we're adding over time from the pen of Alexander (Black) Harley. We've added a section for these at the foot of his page. I can only say that this collection is outstanding and in my view a "must read".

Added Chapter 12. "Hobbies" which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/harley.htm>

Lucy Bethia Colquhoun

Added Chapter X. The Gay Isle of Bute to this book which you can read at:

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

Recollections of a Highland Subaltern

During the Campaigns of the 93rd Highlanders in India under Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde, in 1857, 1858 and 1859 by Lieut-Colonel W. Gordon-Alexander (1898)

You can download this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/india/recollections.pdf>

Margaret Sheila Mackellar

A great role model in terms of charity work and contributions to nursing during wartime. You can read an article about her at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/women/wh59.htm>

George Hope of Fenton Barns

A Sketch of his life by his daughter (1881) (pdf). Added a link to this book at the foot of the Hope page in the Scottish Nation.

THIS volume was originally printed for private circulation, and in its present form has been but slightly altered. It consists principally of extracts from my father's letters to one of his brothers, with whom he kept up a steady correspondence for more than forty years, and whose care in preserving and kindness in sending the letters have made it possible (by letting my father tell his own story) to give a more vivid picture of his life than could have been done by any other means. The volume also contains statements, in his own words, of his opinions on those subjects in which he took the deepest interest. Whether this record of his life, the life of a tenant-farmer, spent almost 'entirely in his native county can be of interest to any beyond those to whom he was personally known is a question of which I have not felt myself qualified to judge, and it is now published in consequence of the opinions of others as to the probability of its being of interest to a wider circle. To his friends I hoped that it might serve to recall him, but to those to whom he was unknown I fear that it can, after all, convey only a comparatively faint impression of his character. That that impression should at least be truthful has been my earnest endeavour.

You can download this book at the foot of the page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/hope.htm>

Memoirs of British Generals Distinguished During The Peninsular War

By John William Cole in 2 volumes (1856)

The leading object of the work now presented to the Public has been to bring together, in a connected series, and within reasonable compass, an account of the military services of many eminent men who fought in the same wars, under the same leaders, and with the same object. We were then opposed to France—we are now her close ally; and the new-born friendship is as likely to be enduring, as it will assuredly prove advantageous to humanity, civilisation, and the general advancement of the world. But history cannot be falsified, neither is it necessary to forget or gloss over truth, because the shifting tide of events has changed the current of national feeling. We rejoice in the unexpected alteration, and pray that it may be permanent. Let us trust we are true prophets when we apply a line from Shakspeare, and say, "Our children's children shall see this, and bless Heaven!"

You can read this book at: [http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/british\\_generals.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/british_generals.htm)

Toy-Making at Home

How to make a hundred toys from Odds and Ends by Morley Adams

I've actually had this book for a number of years and have at long last decided to add it to the site,

THIS work has been compiled with the assistance of Mr. Walter Higgins, the well-known instructor in woodwork. The volume fulfils a long-felt want in that it supplies fascinating amusement for evenings at home. The making of toys, is an engrossing pastime, and the home-made toy is invariably more novel than the shop -bought article and of superior quality, besides which there is always a satisfaction in "I made it myself."

The purpose of the book is to give simple and easily understood instructions and plain diagrams and sketches for making toys from the odds and ends that are usually discarded as useless. Matches, Match Boxes, Cotton Reels, Cocoa Tins. Cigar Boxes, and even Egg Shells comprise the materials from which are evolved Shops, Working Models, Dolls' Furniture, Boats. Steam Engines, Windmills, and scores of other toys dear to the hearts of boys and girls.

Perhaps the chief charm of the occupation is that literally dozens of toys can be made at a cost of less than a penny. Every toy described in this book is practicable, and can be easily made by anyone possessing the smallest amount of handicraft skill. At the same time the instructions are such as will prove of the utmost value to instructors of handicraft classes.

You can download this book at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/kids/toymaking.htm>

Clan Leslie Society International

Got in the May, June 2015 newsletter which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/leslieint/index.htm>

Harry Gordon

Added this singer to our Famous Scots section and you can read about him at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/gordon\\_harry.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/gordon_harry.htm)

Robert Burns Lives!

Edited by Frank Shaw

One of the great things about having your own website is you can go in different directions trying to get to the same destination. An interesting email came across my desk via computer magic a few months ago and naturally Dr. Gerry Carruthers was involved. May I introduce you to a rather new scholar who is searching for a connection between Scotland's Bard, Robert Burns, and another Scottish poet known as Thomas Burns. Now I can share her email with you after suggesting to Dr. Seal she write a brief article on her subject and ask your help. Everyone is looking for something new about Robert Burns or an original that has been lost, misplaced, or hidden long ago without a trail to follow.

After you have read the article below from Dr. Seal, maybe you can lend her a bit of help. If you run across anything that may of interest, she would appreciate your sending it to me to be passed along. Yes, I know, it could be like reading the old testament with all the "begats" when so many with the same name can pop up! But then again, who knows. One bit of information might be the one thing to help Christine in her search. As I was writing this brief introduction, I kept going back to the lovely picture Dr. Seal sent me and wondered why there is a handle and a keyhole in the picture. You may have the key to open the door. Maybe that is why both keyhole and handle ended up in the picture - for you to do your part so Christine can do her part. Many thanks to Christine and to you, dear readers. A final word of encouragement, for those of you so inclined, forward me another article on Robert Burns! We need more to come in so more can be shared. The pantry has been empty far too long, so help out *Robert Burns Lives!* Cheers. (FRS)

You can read this article: The Life and Poetry of Thomas Burns by Dr Christine Seal at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns\\_lives218.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives218.htm)

## THE STORY

The Highland Ceilidh  
By Alastair Og

This is taken from the Celtic Magazine volumes 1 - 4. The following will serve as an introduction and then we'll make available 3 pdf files where you can read the rest of this story. We might note that part of this story is only in the Gaelic language but some such also have English translations.

WE are in a west coast village or township, cut off from all communication with the outer world, without Steamers, Railways, or even Roads. We grow our own corn, and produce our beef, our mutton, our butter, our cheese, and our wool. We do our own carding, our spinning, and our weaving. We marry and are taken in marriage by, and among, our own kith and kin. In short, we are almost entirely independent of the more civilized and more favoured south. The few articles we do not produce tobacco and tea, our local merchant, the only one in a district about forty square miles in extent, carries on his back, once a month or so, from the Capital of the Highlands. We occasionally indulge in a little whisky at Christmas and the New Year, at our weddings and our balls. We make it too, and we make it well. The Salmon Fishery Acts are, as yet, not strictly enforced, and we can occasionally shoot sometimes even in our gardens and carry home, without fear of serious molestation, the monarch of the forest. We are not overworked. We live plainly but well, on fresh fish, potatoes and herring, porridge and milk, beef and mutton, eggs, butter, and cheese. Modern pickles and spices are as unknown as they are unnecessary. True, our houses are built not according to the most modern principles of architecture. They are, in most cases, built of undressed stone and moss (coinneach), thatched with turf or divots, generally covered over with straw or ferns held on by a covering of old herring nets, straw, and rope, or siaman.

The houses are usually divided into three apartments one door in the byre end leading to the whole. Immediately we enter we find ourselves among the cattle. A stone wall, or sometimes a partition of clay and straw separates the byre from the kitchen. Another partition, usually of a more elegant description, separates the latter from the Culaist or sleeping apartment. In the centre of the kitchen a pavement of three or four feet in diameter is laid, slightly raised towards the middle, on which is placed the peat fire. The smoke, by a kind of instinct peculiar to peat smoke, finds its way to a hole in the roof called the falas, and makes its escape. The fire in the centre of the room was almost a necessity of the good old Ceilidh days. When the people congregated in the evening, the circle could be extended to the full capacity of the room, and occasionally it became necessary to have a circle within a circle. A few extra peats on the fire would, at any time, by the additional heat produced, cause an extension of the circle, and at the same time send its warming influences to the utmost recesses of the apartment. The circle became extended by merely pushing back the seats, and this arrangement became absolutely necessary in the houses which were most celebrated as the great Ceilidh centres of the district.

The Ceilidh rendezvous is the house in which all the Folk-lore of the country, all the old sgeulaclulan or stories, the ancient poetry known to the bards or Seanachaidfian, and old riddles and proverbs are recited from night to night by old and young. All who took an interest in such questions congregated in the evening in these centres of song and story. They were also great centres of local industry. Net-making the staple occupation, at which the younger members of the circle had to take a spell in turn. Five or six nets were attached in different corners of the apartment to a chair, a bedstead or post set up for the purpose, and an equal number of young gossippers nimbly plied their fingers at the rate of a pound of yarn a day. Thus, a large number of nets were turned out during the winter months, the proceeds of which, when the nets were not made for the members of the household, went to pay for tobacco and other luxuries for the older and most necessitous members of the circle.

With these preliminary remarks we shall now introduce the readers of the Celtic Magazine to the most famous Ceilidh house in the district, and ask them to follow us from month to month while we introduce the principal members of the celebrated circle.

You can read these chapters at: [http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/highland\\_ceilidh.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/highland_ceilidh.htm)

And that's it for this week and hope you all enjoy your weekend.

Alastair