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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for July 31st, 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

Film-maker turns her lens on the future of crofting in the Highlands

A new film focusing on young crofters and the future of crofting goes live online today (Thursday).

Filmed during the young crofters' gathering in Assynt earlier this year, 'Crofting's New Voices' captures the hopes and fears of the generation as well as insights from the older generation of crofters and was produced and directed by filmmaker and crofter Robin Haig of Dornie.

I might add that if you are interested in crofting you might read an excellent book about it at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/hiStory/crofting/index.htm> where I have also embedded the video above on the page.

New 3D app shows Dundee Waterfront in 2018

A new 3D app which allows users to explore what Dundee Waterfront will look like in 2018 has been launched.

The free app has been developed by Edinburgh-based Luma 3D Interactive and is aimed at giving users a bird's eye view of the area. Dundee Waterfront is a £1bn regeneration project transforming 240 acres of land along the River Tay.

Learn more at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-33674700>

Pictish fort south of Stonehaven 'is Scotland's oldest'

A Pictish fort uncovered during an archaeological dig on the Aberdeenshire coast is believed to be Scotland's oldest.

BBC Scotland has learned that carbon dating tests have pinpointed the origin of the site on the sea stack back to the 3rd or 4th Century.

You can watch a short video and learn more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-33678397>

Exhibition explores links between Scotland and the Nordic nations

FLYING alongside the Saltire outside the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh's Royal Mile from next weekend, the national flags of the Nordic nations – Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark – will signal a pioneering and revelatory exhibition. The Nordic House will feature artworks depicting Arctic landscapes that glimmer with unexpected colour and shadowy seafarers battling the elements, while photographs will show doughty Baltic fisherwomen, an entire Swedish mining town in transit and... huts.

And those huts have a key place in an exhibition which seeks to invite comparisons between ourselves and our northern neighbours and, as the exhibition's director, Lesley Riddoch, puts it, "re-establish a 'north-east passage' of art, ideas and stories between Scotland, Norway, Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Denmark".

Read more about this at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/arts/visual-arts/exhibition-explores-links-between-scotland-and-the-nordic-nations-1-3841409>

SNP media chief quits after revealing the secret of party's stunning success

KEVIN PRINGLE looks back on his time at the heart of the SNP's high command and how he came to understand success at the polls.

Having first worked for the SNP in 1989, leaving my job last week inevitably led to some thinking about how both the party and Scotland have advanced over the last quarter century.

You can read this interesting article at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/snp-media-chief-quits-after-6140431>

Sunset Song to premiere at Toronto

A film adaptation of one of Scotland's most loved novels - Sunset Song - is to get its premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September.

Sunset Song, published in 1932, follows a farming family struggling to eke out a living in north east Scotland in the years leading up to World War One.

It was the first in the author's "A Scots Quair" trilogy.

Read more at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-33695478>

See also below for a feature I have done on the author.

David Cameron rules out second Scottish independence referendum

Prime minister says 'no' to another vote in this parliament after Alex Salmond suggested issues such as a possible Brexit from the EU made it inevitable.

Read more at

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/27/david-cameron-rule-out-second-scottish-independence-referendum>

This has been a big research week as I've been very busy looking for information on a number of people and also doing a lot of emailing to look at whether it would be possible to do "A Year in the Life of a Crofter" the idea being to find a crofter that might be willing to work on this project with us.

Electric Canadian

Hadfield gift to Canada

Bill Upper sent out an email telling us...

Chris Hadfield, you've done it again.....

The retired astronaut created a music video about our country that's sweeter than a double-double from Timmie's. Titled "In Canada," the song was a collaborative effort between Hadfield and his brother Dave in a mission to create "the most Canadian music video ever."

And you know what? They succeeded.

Hadfield uploaded the "polite song" to YouTube on Tuesday, saying it came from "two brothers who are just hoping your day is going okay." And thanks to this song, it'll be a lot better than just "okay." The rapid montage of Canadian culture reminds us of everything we love about this great country. Because at the end of the day, we're just a bunch of exceedingly polite, Timbit-eating winter-lovers.

And we wouldn't have it any other way. Check out the video at <https://youtu.be/zuVsHt3rBnc>

The Historical Relationship Between The Canadian Justice System and Aboriginal People
By Associate Chief Judge Murray Sinclair (1997).

In April 1997, the Aboriginal Justice Learning Network (AJLN) held a gathering of Aboriginal Elders, policy makers and academics in Alymer, Quebec. Associate Chief Judge Murray Sinclair of the Provincial Court of Manitoba presented his views on the historical relationship between the Canadian justice system and Aboriginal peoples at this meeting.

You can read this book at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/murray_sinclair.htm

Flora MacDonald

This significant Canadian woman passed away this week and decided she should be commemorated in our Makers of Canada section.

I actually met her at a Highland Games in 2004.

You can read about her at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/macdonald_flora.htm

Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer for the last Fifty Years

Continuing to add more chapters to this book.

We are now up to Chapter XXXVII.

In Chapter XXXVI. The Maple Leaf we learn...

It was in the year 1841, that the Rev. Dr. John McCaul entered upon his duties as Vice-President of King's College, after having been Principal of Upper Canada College since 1838. With this gentleman are closely connected some of the most pleasurable memories of my own life. He was a zealous promoter of public amusement, musical as well as literary. Some of the best concerts ever witnessed in Toronto were those got up by him in honour of the Convocation of the University of Toronto, October 23rd, 1845, and at the several public concerts of the Philharmonic Society, of which he was president, in that and following years. As a member of the managing committee, I had the honour of conducting one of the Society's public concerts, which happened, being a mixed concert of sacred and secular music, to be the most popular and profitable of the series, greatly to my delight.

In 1846, 1847 and 1848, Dr. McCaul edited the Maple Leaf, or Canadian Annual, a handsomely illustrated and bound quarto volume, which has not since been surpassed, if equalled, in combined beauty and literary merit, by any work that has issued from the Canadian press.

Each volume appeared about Christmas day, and was eagerly looked for. The principal contributors were Dr. McCaul himself; the Hon. Chief Justice Hagarty; the late Rev. R. J. McGeorge, then of Streetsville, since of Scotland; the late Hon. Justice Wilson, of London; Miss Page, of Cobourg; the Rev. Dr. Scadding; the late Rev. J. G. D. McKenzie; the late Hon. J. Hillyard Cameron; the Rev. Alex. (now Archdeacon) Dixon, of Guelph; the Rev. Walter Stennett, of Cobourg; C. W. Cooper, Esq., now of Chicago; the late T. C. Breckenridge; the late Judge Cooper, of Goderich; and myself; besides a few whose names are unknown to me.

My own connection, as a writer, with the "Maple Leaf" originated thus: While printing the first volume, I had ventured to send to Dr. McCaul, through the post-office, anonymously, a copy of my poem entitled "Emmeline," as a contribution to the work. It did not appear, and I felt much discouraged in consequence. Some months afterwards, I happened to mention to him my unsuccessful effusion, when he at once said that he had preserved it for the second volume. This was the first ray of encouragement I had ever received as a poet, and it was very welcome to me. He also handed me two or three of the plates intended for the second volume, to try what I could make of them, and most kindly gave me carte-blanche to take up any subject I pleased. The consequence of which was, that I set to work with a new spirit, and supplied four pieces for the second and five for the third volume. Two of my prose pieces--"A Chapter on Chopping," and "A First Day in the Bush"--with two of the poems, I have incorporated in these "Reminiscences:" my other accepted poems, I give below. After this explanation, the reader will not be surprised at the affection with which I regard the "Maple Leaf." I know that the generous encouragement which Dr. McCaul invariably extended to even the humblest rising talent, in his position as head of our Toronto University, has been the means of encouraging many a youthful student to exertions, which have ultimately placed him in the front rank among our public men. Had I met with Dr. McCaul thirty years earlier, he would certainly have made of me a poet by profession.

I also found the first two volumes of this publication and have made them available at the foot of the chapter.

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 strggling to solve the final clue.

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 13. The Twa Texts which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/harley.htm>

I might add that this chapter got me interested in the book Ezra in the Bible and if you want to read it you can find it at <http://www.electricscotland.com/bible/ezra.htm>

Lucy Bethia Colquhoun

Added Chapter XI. The Marriage to this book which you can read at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/sinclair_john.htm

Hope

After finding the Hope book last week I got in an email telling me of another book and also received an engraving of Adrian Hope which I've added to the site. Also found a wee summary about Adrian Hope's service in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders which I've also added.

You can download this book (Viceroy at Bay, Lord Linlithgow in India 1936-1943) at the foot of the page at:

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

Life of Mary Somerville

Added this Scientist to our Women in History section.

Mary Somerville (nee Fairfax) was born at Jedburgh on December 26, 1780, and died on November 30, 1872, at Naples, aged nearly ninety-two years. Also added the book, "Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age of Mary Somerville" by her Daughter Martha Soerville (1874)

You can get to this at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/women/wh60.htm>

Memoir of Alexander Seton, Earl of Dunfermline

By George Seton.

Added this book to the foot of our Seton page at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/seton.htm>

Gigha

Added a little information on the Isle of Gigha to our Gazetteer page along with an audio recording describing the Island.

You can get to this at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol3page86.htm>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in Section 1 of the August 2015 publication.

You can read this at <http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Lewis Grassic Gibbon

Added to our Famous Scots page together with one of his books from the Scots Quair trilogy. I might also add that I found 2 videos containing a 6 part series of his book "Sunset Song" which was the first book in the trilogy.

In 2005 Sunset Song was named the "Best Scottish Book of All Time" at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

You can get to this at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/lgg.htm>

Historical Records of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders

Now the 2nd Battalion Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Compiled and Edited by Roderick Hamilton Burgoyne, Later 93rd Highlanders (1883)

I've added a link to this book at the foot of the page on the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders Sketch at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/sketches/highlandsketches84.htm>

Videos

Added a few videos to the site in our Gazetteer section...

Fair Isle at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol3page1.htm>

Canna at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol1page232.htm> and

Carnoustie at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol1page240.htm>

Robert Burns Lives!
Edited by Frank Shaw

Those of us who love and celebrate Robert Burns do so in many ways. My own Burns Club in Atlanta, GA does so by meeting monthly in a building that is a replica of the home where Burns was born in Scotland right down to crossing every "t" and dotting every "i". The early group of Atlanta Burnsians got tired of meeting in member homes (too small) or hotels (too expensive) downtown, so they built their own meeting place and held their first meeting in the Burns cottage in 1911. Usually the physical tribute to Burns takes the form of a statue or a Burns bust and there are many of them around the world. Some actually argue about which writer has the most statues. Burns is usually a part of that argument and ends up in the top two or three, but I must confess I know who my favorite writer/poet is no matter where he places in that argument.

Alastair McIntyre, my "boss", passed on to me this week an article he found about a celebration of Burns in Albany, New York that is unique and would be a pleasure to attend in the capital of New York State. I will not try to explain it to you as the article below does a good job of doing so. I have asked contact Dan Wilcox for information about this event to write a brief article about this two-decade-old celebration. We look forward to an article by Mr. Wilcox in the near future. (FRS 7.30.15)

Read the article "Burns in the Park 2015" at:
http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives219.htm

THE STORY

Across The Threshold by Jack Bode

This is a departure from my normal history story this week. This came about due to a correspondence I had with an SF author where I was joining his mailing list to ensure I got to know when he published a new title. I had given him a url to my wee Science Fiction section on the site. He had commented about one of the authors featured there saying that he enjoyed his books as well. That made me take another look at what I'd put up there and that was when I noticed the formatting of the Jack Bode section looked terrible. I decided I just had to reformat the pages and so 33 pages later I completed the work. And having done so I thought as I had his entire first book up on the site you might like to read it and so here is the prologue along with chapter 1 and part of chapter 2 to read here and I might add he sold lots of his books to Canadian schools.

Prologue

My name is Carl Kester. I am an ordinary person. I have no special talents save that I can fit into almost any situation. But I suspect that many people are able to do that.

The first time I met Petra Baird was near Narvik in northern Norway. It was in late winter or very early spring in that part of the world. The snow was still rather deep although during the daytime it had already begun to melt. Petra Baird was a nurse on the staff of Dr. Pershing, a field surgeon. Unfortunately I only knew her for about six weeks when our ways parted.

The next time I ran into her was on a ship. Again we became friends. This time we stayed together for several months. Yet once more fate pulled us apart. I had a difficult time accepting the separation as at the time it seemed to be permanent. Over the ensuing months and years, actually only about a year and a half, I often thought of what might have been.

And then one day, quite unexpectedly, we met once more. It was in a rather strange location, on an abandoned farm, quite far away from civilization as we normally understand the concept. We spent the next two years together. But let me tell you in greater detail what has come to pass.

Chapter 1

It was Saturday afternoon. I looked at the clock hanging on the wall above a picture of a mountain scene. Almost ten to three. There were a few things I needed from the Miracle Mart across the road. Might as well go over right now and stock up on cereal, bread and milk, I thought. I grabbed my wallet and the keys lying on the counter.

Looking through the kitchen window I peered at the wind driven sleet. It looked like the middle of January, not one bit as if spring was well under way. I could dimly make out five moving vans waiting their turn to unload their contents. They'll probably have two of the three elevators tied up, I thought.

It was the end of April, and like every month end, people were moving in and out of the building. Having two out of the three elevators on service was the only unpleasant aspect of living in an apartment building on the fifteenth floor. Well, you can't have

everything, I told myself.

I slipped into my parka and put on my beret. On impulse I grabbed the umbrella hanging by the door. Then I stepped into the corridor, carefully locking the door behind me.

At precisely 2:50 I pushed button for the elevator in the hallway and prepared myself for a lengthy wait. I was greatly surprised when the elevator door opened before I had taken two steps towards the window from where on a clear day one could see busy Warden Avenue and the traffic light at the corner. I found it even more astonishing that the elevator was empty.

Naturally I expected it to stop at every floor, quickly filling up and then, despite having reached its capacity, still stopping at floor after floor until it arrived at the street level. To my utter surprise it did not halt once. It took precisely thirty seconds to descend the fifteen floors. At street level a number of people were waiting and pressed forward.

I pushed through the crowd and crossed the lobby. My apartment building had a vestibule like many modern apartment buildings have. It was quite large and had a couple of benches along one wall. Usually one could find several people lounging around there, studying the large alphabetical listing of tenants or waiting to meet somebody. On this particular afternoon the vestibule was deserted.

Through the glass of the front door I could barely see the flower beds and the two mountain ashes, only twenty meters away. The wind drove the sleet directly towards the entrance. It was a veritable blizzard. And now, being at ground level, I could see the accumulation of fresh snow on the pavement. The moving vans were parked along the bend in the driveway and were not visible from here.

I pulled my parka tightly around me, making sure that all the buttons were closed. For an instant I was debating with myself whether I should go back upstairs and forget about going to the store. But having come this far I decided against it. I was thankful for having the beret on my head. It seemed to be too stormy outside for the umbrella. Putting on my gloves and turning up the collar of my parka I reached for the door. In the distance I could see a shadowy figure approaching through the swirling snow.

As I stretched out my arm to open the door to the outside I happened to glance at my watch. 2:50:59. I shall never forget the digital display. At precisely the instant when the time changed to 2:51:00 I stepped across the threshold of the door to the outside and ...

Chapter 2

A severe gust of wind pulled the door out of my hand and slammed it shut. As I looked up the view was suddenly changed. There were no flower beds beyond the driveway and there were no mountain ashes. A couple of scrubby looking dwarf birch trees grew a short distance away. I recognized them by their white trunks. Completely bewildered I took several steps forward and then halted.

The building behind me was not the twenty-two story tall apartment building nor was there a glass enclosed vestibule. The only things unchanged were the cold and the driving snow. I took a deep breath. I must not get myself agitated, I told myself. There is bound to be a rational explanation. Yet I was shocked into inaction.

The first thing to do was to look around and observe. I did that very quickly. The apartment building had changed into an ancient looking two story structure. The glass enclosed vestibule was now merely a shabby looking porch badly in need of paint. The driveway had mutated into a road and from where I had stopped I could see five vehicles parked along the bend. Only they were not moving vans. Three of them had tracks instead of wheels and were of a color somewhere between green and grey, and the other two also looked as if they might belong to the military.

The wind driven sleet was thinning out. The shadowy figure approaching was a young man, completely unknown to me. He wore a military uniform, light brown in color. In his right hand he held a Sten gun. I am not sure how I knew, never having seen any gun from close by. He stopped three meters away from me, took the gun in his left hand and came to attention.

"Any word, Sir?" he asked me.

Any word of what? Where was I? I slowly shook my head.

"I thought so," the young soldier in front of me said. "They never tell you a damn thing." He half turned and waved towards the five vehicles. With engines roaring four of them took off down the road towards the mountains. Mountains? I live - or lived - in a large eastern city. The closest mountains were thousands of kilometers away. And then the snow began to fall heavily again, blotting out the view of the surrounding area.

"We might as well get back, Captain," the soldier said, "unless you want to ..."

"No, no," I replied. "Let's get back." In desperation my mind clung to what I had been used to. Surely this was only a bad dream, a nightmare. In another second all this would resolve itself into the familiar parking lot in front of the apartment building and the lawns and the flower beds. But it did not.

For the first time I looked at myself. My feet were covered with sturdy boots, not the well worn shoes I had put on only a few minutes ago. I still wore my beret. But the parka was now of a light brown color and not the cleanest. When I had slipped into it upstairs in my apartment it had been dark blue. My trousers were of the same color as the parka, not the grey they had been when I left home. Suddenly it dawned on me. Like the soldier in front of me I also wore a uniform. And he had addressed me as captain. My eyes fell on the umbrella in my right hand. But it was no longer an umbrella. Somehow it had metamorphosed into a submachine gun. It must have happened as I stepped through the door of the apartment building, at the same time as all the other crazy things had taken place.

Only a second had gone by since I had talked to the soldier. He turned and as he did so I could see the sergeant's stripes on his left sleeve. I was going to ask him where I was, where we were, but changed my mind. Wherever it was it would be best to play along. After all, I told myself, it was only a dream.

Suddenly in the distance to the left of us a bright flash lit up the swirling snow. The sergeant halted, watching.

"They're acting up again," he said. "And it looks as if they're getting closer." He took his Sten gun in both his hands. The click I heard told me that he had flipped off the safety catch. He was ready to fire. I raised my submachine gun as well. It seemed to be an automatic gesture.

And you can read the rest of chapter 2 and the rest of the book at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/books/bode/across.htm>

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

Alastair