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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 21st, 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

I was reading an article about Finland where they are considering a social experiment. I confess I've been thinking for several years now that this might be a possible way forward to get people into work and drastically reduce the cost of social security. So was delighted to read that someone else thought the same way. The article can be read at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33977636>

Ex-SNP leader calls for break up of Police Scotland

THE former SNP leader Gordon Wilson has launched a scathing attack on Police Scotland's failures, and says his party's ministers must take their share of responsibility for creating the centralised force.

Mr Wilson called for a "root and branch" reform of the service following the succession of crises to have engulfed Police Scotland, claiming the beleaguered single force should be broken up.

You can read more of this article at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/ex-snp-leader-calls-for-break-up-of-police-scotland-1-3863160>

Crude awakening

The price of a barrel of Brent crude oil fell nearly 4% on Wednesday, to \$47. It's taking a mighty toll on companies in the sector.

Yet even if the price were to double, we learned today that it would continue to fall a long way short of filling the yawning deficit in Scotland's public finances.

You can read this article at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-33994961>

Flower of Scotland anthem will never be replaced

IT has been the rallying cry for Scotland's international football and rugby teams for decades - but has never been adopted as an official anthem.

Now the singer who will forever be associated with "Flower of Scotland" has insisted it will never be toppled as the nation's favourite song - even though he has vowed never to perform it again.

You can read this article at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/arts/news/flower-of-scotland-anthem-will-never-be-replaced-1-3861346>

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 L.

In Chapter XLVI we read...

My house on the Davenport Road was a very pleasant residence, with a fine lawn ornamented with trees chiefly planted by my own hands, and was supplied with all the necessaries for modest competence. It is worth recording, that some of the saplings--silver poplars (abeles) planted by me, grew in twelve years to be eighteen inches thick at the butt, and sixty feet in spread of branches; while maples and other hardwoods did not attain more than half that size. Thus it would seem, that our North-West prairies might be all re-clothed with full-grown ash-leaved maples--their natural timber--in twenty-five years, or with balm of Gilead and abele poplars in half that time. Would it not be wise to enact laws at once, having that object in view?

I have been an amateur gardener since early childhood; and at Carlton indulged my taste to the full by collecting all kinds of flowers cultivated and wild. I still envy the man who, settling in the new lands, say in the milder climates of Vancouver's Island or British Columbia, may utilize to the full his abundant opportunities of gathering into one group the endless floral riches of the Canadian wilderness. We find exquisite lobelias, scarlet, blue and lilac; orchises with pellucid stems and fairy elegance of blossom; lovely prairie roses; cacti of infinite delicacy and the richest hues. Then as to shrubs--the papaw, the xeranthemum of many varieties, the Indian pear (or saskatoon of the North-West), spiræa prunifolia of several kinds, shrubby St. John's-wort, oenothera grandiflora, cum multis aliis.

Now that the taste for wild-flower gardens has become the fashion in Great Britain, it will doubtless soon spread to this Continent. No English park is considered complete without its special garden for wild flowers, carefully tended and kept as free from stray weeds as the more formal parterre of the front lawn. Our wealthier Canadian families cannot do better than follow the example of the Old Country in this respect, and assuredly they will be abundantly repaid for the little trouble and expenditure required.

You can read the new chapters 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've now completed the final puzzle 114 in this series so hope you enjoyed them.

Our many thanks to Doug Ross for creating this series and providing us with 100 puzzles to solve and then to Hugh Sutherland who created the next 14. And our special thanks go to Hugh for working through all 114 of them in our community giving hints to us so we could solve them over the past 114 weeks.

Living On Yukon Time

I came across this 2 part video which I added to our History of Yukon page at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/yukon/index.htm>

Beaucéant August 2015

This is a publication of the Knights Templar of England & Wales.

You can download this at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/religion/ktew/index.htm>

Electric Scotland

Lucy Bethia Colquhoun

Have now added the final chapters which you can read at:
http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/sinclair_john.htm

Mackie

Two very interesting families in Dunfermline, Fife MACKIE and SYME where a member of each of three generations contribute significantly to Scottish literature in prose, poetry and history. We've also added a variety of books that they wrote and you can read all this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/mackie.htm>

One of the publications is a Biography written of the Life of Duncan McLaren and last week I mentioned that we had the two volumes up for you to read which was in fact incorrect. I had actually put up the first volume in 2 parts. So have now added the 2nd volume also in 2 parts to complete the story.

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in Section 2 of the September 2015 issue which you can read in pdf format at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/archives/BNFTSeptember2015B.pdf>

The Gaelic Songs of the Late Dr MacLachlan - Rahoy
With Prefatory Biography by H. C. Gillies (1880).

I've added a link to this book at the foot of the page about him at
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/clearances/40.htm>

Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band
The new World Champions for 2015 and you can watch their performance at:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02zs0t6>

Maurice Elwin of Scotland
Gaelic Singer, Crooner of Popular Ballads, and a Teacher of Music.

Norman's obituary in the local Hampstead paper in 1975 describes him as, one of the most recorded artists in the world and that he had made hundreds of 78rpm recordings under many pseudonyms.

I have added several of his songs to the page but also got in another wee collection of more of his music but I think I'm having a senior moment in that for the life of me I can't get the songs to play as it keeps coming up with a 404 error but I know the songs are on the server. I've clearly got an error in the coding but for the life of me I can't find what the problem is.

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

Robert Burns Lives!
Edited by Frank Shaw

Our chapter this week is about Robert Aiken - Orator Bob by Dr. Clark McGinn and here is what Frank has to say about it...

Any day I receive an article from Dr. Clark McGinn is a very good day for me as I know he will write as if the article may be the last one he ever writes. I will use a baseball analogy about Clark to express my feelings about him. He is a tremendous speaker, an excellent writer, an oft-quoted Burnsian in the Scottish press, and one of Scotland's most sought after Burns speakers. As a result, I have never heard him strike-out giving a speech or writing an article on Robert Burns. He does the unthinkable and that is he hits a homerun every time he speaks about Burns.

Thus, this year I had the task of filling in for Clark in Washington, DC for a Burns Supper sponsored by The University of Glasgow and The Robert Burns Centre that business kept him from fulfilling. Mother nature dealt us a severe blow by allowing two feet of snow to redecorate the Washington streets and shrubbery with the whiteness of angels. I figured I would slip down to the Ritz Carlton Pentagon City Hotel banquet room, shake a few hands who had braved the cold, and what was now ice to say a few words if they wanted me to and head back to Atlanta early the next morning. People in the South do not know much about driving in weather like this and to my surprise the place was nearly packed, not standing room only, but not far from it! We had a marvelous time, I pretty much kept to my allotted time and the food, band and music were wonderful. Most importantly to me I got to take the presentation haggis to my room, enjoy myself a bit before bedtime, and share it with son Scott the following night back in Atlanta.

Now here is your surprise, the article below is a part of a series Clark has been writing for Robert Burns Lives! regarding the men who celebrated the first Robert Burns Supper ever held. Thanks, Clark, for another homerun article about men who cherished their relationships with Scotland's National Bard. (FRS: 8.20.15)

You can read this article at: http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives220.htm

Genealogical Collections
Concerning Families in Scotland made by Walter MacFarlane 1750-1751

I've found this 2 volume publication and have ocr'd the files so the pdf files are searchable. You can see the contents pages which show the names featured and download them at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/families.htm>

THE STORY

As any student of history knows the early accounts of Scotland can be hard to find when it relates to how people lived and worked. The story below is one of the earliest ones I added to the site back in 1998 and I confess I'd like to get my hands of the actual publication but so far have failed to find a copy. That said this article does provide some excellent information and I hope you enjoy

it.

JAMES ROBERTSON'S TOUR THROUGH SOME OF THE WESTERN ISLANDS, ETC., OF SCOTLAND IN 1768. By SIR ARTHUR MITCHELL, K.G.B., M.D., LL.D., FOREIGN SECRETARY.

In 1788 Sir James Foulis, Bart., of Colinton, communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland a paper entitled "Remarks made in a Tour through several of the Western Isles and West Coast of Scotland, By Mr James Robertson."

The reading of this paper was spread over six meetings of the Society in that year—on the 12th of June, the 1st, 15th, and 29th of July, the 4th of November, and the 16th of December. It was not printed in the Archaeologia Section, but the paper itself has been preserved, and it is regarded as of sufficient interest to justify the preparation—exactly one hundred years after the paper was read—of a short notice, with extracts, for insertion in the Proceedings.

As I have stated, the account of the tour was communicated to the Society in 1788, but the tour itself was made twenty years earlier, namely, in 1768, and it occupied the period between the 10th of May and the 17th of October.

I have not been able to discover who Mr James Robertson was, but the opening sentence of the narrative discloses two things: (1) that he made the tour under "directions," and (2) that he was regarded as competent to "examine the marine plants" of the west coast of Scotland. His first sentence is as follows:—"Edinburgh, May 10th, 1768. In compliance with the directions I had received to make all convenient haste to the western coast, there to examine the marine plants, I set out to Irvine by Hamilton, Loudenhouse, and Kilmarnock."

For a week or two at the commencement of the tour the narrative is full of references to the plants he found; but further on, such references become fewer, and there is then but little to show that the tourist had a botanical mission. All through the narrative, no doubt, there is evidence that Mr Robertson had a knowledge of plants of all sorts, and was much interested in them, but his observations took many directions as he journeyed. The record, indeed, is largely made up of an account of the customs, mode of living, superstitions, diseases, and surroundings of the people among whom he travelled, and a part of what he says about these things deserves to be made accessible by appearing in the Proceedings of the Society.

For instance, his description of the basket-houses and basket-barns in Arasaik and Conton may be regarded as an addition to knowledge. So far, at least, as I am aware, no such precise description is elsewhere to be found. I have never myself seen houses so constructed, but I have more than once seen the form of wattling, which he tells us was employed in the erection of barns, used to form partitions in houses; the only difference being that there were two faces of wattling a few inches apart, with the space between filled with dry moss.

The beds made of heath I have often seen, and I know that tired men think them comfortable. Thatching with barley straw plucked up by the root continued, I believe, long after Mr Robertson's day, but it is of value to have this definite account.

Mr Robertson describes the graddaning of corn with much fulness, but I confess that I am not quite able to understand all the steps of the process. Indeed, he seems sometimes to have been conscious of an inability to describe clearly what he saw, and he acknowledges this when he gives the account of the "rude and disagreeable" way of making butter, which he witnessed.

It is not easy to see what is gained by the mode of preparing whey for food, which he describes. The way of preserving yeast and getting fresh barm is interesting, but here, again, there is a difficulty in fully understanding the details of what is done. The same difficulty, to a small extent, is felt when he writes about the wauking of cloth. Few men find it easy to describe with fulness and lucidity such processes as I have been referring to, but, notwithstanding this, there may be something that is new and instructive in the description they give, and it may help to a better understanding of descriptions given by other travellers.

At the time of Robertson's visit in 1768, the Highland dress was worn in Skye and Mull, that is, "the bonnet, short coat, kilt, hose, and brogs." But in both islands, he says that the plaid had gone out of fashion.

He writes at some length of the diseases which prevailed among the inhabitants of Mull, Skye, Arran, and Bute. There appears to have been an epidemic of small-pox every sixth or seventh year in these islands, and the disease must have attacked the people very widely, if we accept this as a correct inference from its being stated as remarkable that there were "several old people" then living in Arran "who never had the small-pox." Inoculation was practised, but not extensively, and Robertson writes of it to some extent as one would now write of the islands if vaccination were neglected in them.

In three of the islands the "eight days' sickness" appears to have been fatal to children at the time of Robertson's visit, though it is said to have been disappearing from Skye. It is a disease unknown at the present time in these islands. It was attributed to the "unskillfulness of the midwives"; and one of their practices, which is described, he calls "barbarous and inhuman." He tells us, without any allusion to the criminality of their conduct, that "girls, when they happen to prove with child, unmarried, are said to use a decoction of the Lycopodiurn selago in order to effect an abortion." The plant is elsewhere in the narrative said to be a very strong

purge.

He gives "sibbens" as one of the diseases to which the people of Arran were subject; and he says that in Bute, twenty years before his visit, this disease was very prevalent, but that when he was there it was "seldom to be met with."

The word "perhaps" saves his remark about the great rarity of bodily defects in Skye and the early ability of the children there to walk, from being an illustration of a traveller's readiness to state things as true which could not be within the knowledge either of an informant or of himself.

The libation to "Browny" is an interesting Highland superstition well worth recording. The story of the opposition to using Browny's stone in building a dyke derives value from its circumstantiality.

Mr Robertson says that the arrow-heads which had been found in the island of Arran are, upon comparison, found to be made of an uncommon kind of rock, which occurs about half a mile to the northeast side of Kilbride. He probably refers to pitchstone, but, if so, I think he must be wrong in the opinion that the arrow-heads found in the island were made of that material, and not of flint.

It is interesting and instructive to find Mr Robertson, without any hesitation, giving to the brass or bronze implements discovered by Mr Gershom Stewart the designation of "instruments for sacrifice" used by the Druids, and naming one of these implements a "flesh fork." It may be safely asserted that there was nothing known to Robertson which justified his assigning such uses and giving such names to these objects, and it is difficult to understand how a man with scientific training could have done so. But he does not stand alone among early travellers in committing this sort of mischievous mistake. Unfortunately the same thing frequently occurs in accounts of recent travel, and does harm to the position of archaeology among the sciences.

In the following extracts from Mr Robertson's tour, I have retained, to a large extent, his spelling and punctuation.

Arasaik.—Basket Houses. "The inhabitants live miserable lives, both with respect to their food and habitations. The houses in which they live they call basket houses. The method of building them is this :—They first mark out both breadth and length of the house, then drive stakes of wood at 9 inches or a foot distance from each other, leaving 4 or 5 feet of them above ground, then wattle them up with heath and small branches of wood, upon the outside of which they pin on very thin turf, much in the same manner that slates are laid. Alongst the top of these stakes runs a beam, which supports the couples, and what they call cabers, and this either covered with turf, heath, or straw." (p. 22.)

Conton.—"Their barns and houses are built in the same manner as hath been described (when speaking of the basket houses at Arasaik), only the former have no turf fastened on their outer side from the around lip to the easing, so that the wind blows through all parts of the barn with freedom, and dries their corn." (p. 47.)

Skye.—Dwellings. "The dwellings of the common people are for the most mean. They generally lie in blankets upon beds of heath or straw, which are laid either upon the floor or upon benches. Their beds made after their way with the tops of the heath uppermost are almost as soft as a feather bed, and in the morning when you rise it returns like a spring to its former state when the pressure is removed." (p. 36.)

Skye.—Thatching—Barley plucked up by the root, and ears cut off to get suitable straw. "Through the most of Skye they do not cut their barley, but pluck it up by the roots. Is not this custom very hurtful to the ground? The only reason they assign for this is that they have no other kind of thatch for their houses, and if they were to cut it, it would be rendered a good deal shorter, and they would likewise lose the strongest part of the straw; and what they intend for this purpose they only cut away the ears, and do not thrash it, so the straw is not broken, which must make it more serviceable. But both their method and thatchers are bad. They only spread the straw loosely and of no great thickness. Indeed they have excellent ropes of heath, which they run from one side of the house across to the other, and these about a foot distance, and generally they fasten a stone to each end, which always keeps the ropes at full stretch." (p. 40.)

Skye.—Graddaning Corn. "Here they still use the ancient way of dressing corn which is called graddaning. If they have any large quantity to dress they chuse a flat piece of ground, where the wind blows fair, to which they bring the sheaves; then two or more women are employed in the operation, and first they lay down some of the shealings of corn on their right hand, in order to prevent the fire from going out. A woman sitting down takes a handful of the corn, holding it by the straw, sets fire to the ears, which presently take flame, observing carefully when all the chaff of the ears is burnt, and having another already kindled, she all at once extinguishes the first lighted against the ground, and throws the remainder of the straw over her shoulder, and so on. Opposite to this woman stands or sits another with a stick, with which she spreads the detached ears untill they are properly burnt, then she rakes them out from the flames in a heap towards the left hand, and so on untill they have graddaned all they intend. As it has layen all this time in one heap since it was taken out of the flames, it is now properly dried, they put it in a large tub, and tread it with their feet, and rub it with their hands, and winnow it four or five times, by which means they separate all the chaff, and leave nothing except the mere cuticle, and now they have no more to do but to carry it to the miln or grind it in their querns. The meal of corn dressed in the above manner is not so fair as that dried in the kiln, but the bread is pleasant to the taste, is light on the stomach, and is easy of

digestion. If the weather is favourable a woman is said to make a boll ready for the miln in a day, for which she receives one peck of the grain for her wages. This barbarous custom is much laid aside since the number of their milns increased, and if it is known that they graddan any it makes a break in their tacks. Nota.—If it be fair weather, not over calm nor over windy, they can work, but contrary they cannot." (p. 33.)

Skye.—Preparation of Whey. "In summer they feed much on milk and fish, especially whey, which is prepared thus:—The whey is put on the fire till it is near boiling, then it is taken off and set down on the floor; the cook then takes an instrument similar to the churn staff, which has some horse-hair railed around the outside of the rim, and so plunging and whirling it about between her hands, she raises a thick scum on the top of the whey. They frequently feed upon this without anything else. This mess they call froth." (p. 35.)

Skye.—Preserving Yeast. "The natives preserve their yeast in the following manner:—They cut a rod of oak four or five inches in circumference, twist it round like a wythe, and steep it in fresh yeast for some hours, then hang it up and dry it. And whenever they need yeast they take down the twisted rod, and put it into a covered vessel amongst two or three pints of luke-warm wort, so in two hours thereafter they have fresh barm fit for immediate use." (p. 43.)

Skye.—Butter-making. "I could not help observing the rude and disagreeable way by which they procured butter. They commonly put the milk into a kit, which serves for a chum, and over the mouth of this they tie a piece of a sheep or goat's skin. Then two women sit down on the floor opposite to each other, and take the churn between them; the woman to whom the mouth of the churn is opposite has a quantity of straw, and a mattress of the same materials spread over her lap, in order to soften the shock, then the one takes hold of the upper edge of the mouth, and the other of the bottom, and then they raise it up more than half from the floor on its bottom edge, and let it down with a very sudden shock in a manner not easily expressed. This throws the milk into a violent agitation, and by breaking against the sides of the vessel, it is at length broken into butter, to obtain which it frequently happens that they are obliged to continue this laborious process for nine or ten hours." (p. 39.)

Skye.—Wauking Cloth. "They use the following methods to wauk their cloth. There is a long piece of basket-work made of wattling, which is laid on the floor, upon which they place the cloth, and on each side sits a row of women, opposite to one another, who very regularly pull the cloth to and fro, and at the same time rub it very hard against the basket-work, and when it is nearly finished, they lean back and violently push it against each other. During all the operation they continue to sing." (p. 42.)

Skye.—Dye Stuffs. "They dye yellow with the tops of the *Erica vulgaris* or common heath, and Alear nut with *Lichen calcarius* or dyer's liverwort (in the Gaelic corkir), and the *Lichen saxatilis* or stone livervort of Lin. (in the Gaelic crotal), and the *Gallium verum* or lady's bedstraw (in the Gaelic Muc) is said to make a better colour than the *Rubia tinctorium* or madder." (p. 43.)

There is more but thought the above was more than enough but you can read the balance of the article at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/1768tour.htm>

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

Alastair