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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for September 30th, 2016

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

St James Priory Investiture

As this is my Priory I attended the annual investiture last Saturday. A good time was had by all and a new Prior and Chancellor were appointed to take us into the future. I did add a couple of pictures of the event at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/religion/kt.htm>

I left on Friday and returned on Monday which was just in time to greet the tree cutting specialists on the Tuesday who cut down a giant maple tree at the side of the house which was in danger of being toppled in the next high wind. It was quite a task and took 5 hours to complete.

Before leaving for Toronto I got my hair cut and my barber girl asked if I'd been into the bake shop next door. To which I had to ask "What bake shop?". I confess I hadn't noticed it despite being right next door. So on leaving I popped in and learned the owner's parents had come to Canada from Islay. So I purchased a coffee and a muffin which I enjoyed and found that she also makes bread to order. So I ordered one white loaf to see if it was any good and was to pick it up on the Tuesday. She'd forgotten about the order so I was to return on the Wednesday which I did only to be told she'd forgotten to turn on the oven. So I returned on Thursday and they gave me two loaves at no charge to compensate for the hassle. I've tried 1 slice of it so far and I'm afraid while it's not bad it also isn't as good as I hoped so won't be a regular customer for it. However I can say their muffins are excellent.

ScotNews Feed

I have expanded our ScotNews Feed to include news stories from around the EU countries to take account of Brexit. I believe this is important as we need to look at how the other countries are thinking so we can be better prepared to understand what Brexit will mean for Scotland and whether the EU is still relevant. This means I'm viewing the world news section of the BBC and also Reuters news.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page where we list news from the past 1-2 weeks. I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines. I might also add that in newspapers such as the Guardian, Scotsman, Courier, etc. you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish.

Bannan goes global

A Gaelic drama filmed on Skye is to be exported to international audiences through a new distribution deal.

Read more at:

<http://www.whfp.com/2016/09/22/new-series-of-bannan-this-week/>

Senior German lawmaker wants EU market access for post-Brexit Britain

Britain should keep full access to the European Union's internal market after it leaves the bloc, even if it restricts immigration from the

EU, a senior German lawmaker told Reuters.

Read more at:

http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-partnership-idUKKCN11L16U?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=morefromreuters

Thousands of kids to receive Gaelic lessons

Thousands of schoolchildren could receive their first Gaelic language lessons thanks to a Scottish Government funding award

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/education/thousands-of-kids-to-receive-gaelic-lessons-after-government-grant-1-4238563>

Welcome to Barga: the most Scottish town in Italy

High in the Tuscan hills, nestled below the snowy peaks of the Apuan Alps, lies the beautiful 10th century walled town of Barga.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/travel/welcome-to-barga-the-most-scottish-town-in-italy-1-4238742>

Western Isles Fishermen's Association (WIFA) members welcomed the recent Brexit vote

WIFA believes the opportunity to control UK waters out to 200 miles, coupled with enhanced catching opportunities for the inshore fleet operating inside the 12 mile limit, will undoubtedly bring significant economic opportunities to the UK fleet and to coastal communities like the Outer Hebrides.

Read more at:

<http://www.ampapear.org.uk/western-isles-fishermens-association-welcomes-brexit/>

Brexit will enhance Scotland's global standing

Mrs May said Scotland's financial expertise, shipbuilding prowess and food and drink could be global leaders.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-37471933>

SNP scaremongering on NHS sinks to a new low

THERE IS a great deal of nonsense being talked about the NHS and Brexit by the SNP.

Read more at:

http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=12923&article=www.thinkscotland.org

SNP defeated in Holyrood health debate

Opposition parties have defeated the Scottish government in a Holyrood debate on local health services.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-37495811>

Comrie makes top 100 global green destinations list

Comrie is the only place in Scotland to make the top 100 global green destinations list, with eco-friendly activities from wild camping to mountain biking on offer.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/comrie-makes-top-100-global-green-destinations-list-1-4243018>

Dundee's V&A to become a work of art

Dundee's new V&A museum is set to be turned into a glow-in-the-dark work of art - two years before the waterfront attraction opens its doors to the public.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/art/dundee-s-v-a-to-become-a-work-of-art-two-years-before-it-opens-1-4242766>

How much is the public sector worth?

AS WE HAVE MOVED into a new political season, we think it worth reminding taxpayers just how much our public sector has over-traded.

Read more at:

http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkliving/articles.html?read_full=12924&article=www.thinkscotland.org

The "had enough" Scots
Kenneth Roy on democracy

Read more at:

<http://www.scottishreview.net/KennethRoy81a.html>

Britain to seek independent membership of WTO after Brexit
Britain intends to become an independent member of the World Trade Organisation when it leaves the European Union

Read more at:

http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-fox-idUKKCN11V0C7?il=0&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=morefromreuters

Electric Canada

Prince William and Kate arrive in Canada for royal tour
Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, and Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, along with their children Prince George and Princess Charlotte arrive in Victoria, British Columbia for the start of their week-long tour in Canada.

Watch a 3 hour video on the preparations and the visit at: https://youtu.be/Ej1x_laOZjU

Prince William and Kate arrive in Vancouver on Day 2 of their visit to Canada at:

<https://youtu.be/ei-nlYFwJtg>

Canadian academic next Cambridge vice-chancellor
The Canadian academic, with an expertise in international law, was a postgraduate student at Cambridge in the 1980s.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/education-37472046>

Canadian Family of Eric Liddell

You can view this article at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/liddell_eric.htm

Pierre Berton

The historian who shaped Canadian identity more than any other. Also included on the page is an 8 part video of his "The National Dream" which tells the story of the Trans Pacific Railroad which he wrote and then was filmed by the CBC with him narrating. The video is in 8 parts with 55 minutes of viewing each so almost 8 hours in all.

You can view this at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/berthon_pierre.htm

Electric Scotland

The Tower of Craigietocher

Got in an update with pictures taken in August 2016. Looks like they might move in during the Summer of 2017 but given how this has taken who knows!

You can see this at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/craigietocher15.htm>

David Smail of Cape Town

A borderer in South Africa whom you can read about at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/africa/smail_david.htm

Tom Speedy

Sportsman and Naturalist whom I've added to our Significant Scots section along with links to two of his books.

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

George Stewart

A Border worthy who emigrated to America whom you can read about at:

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

Sir Edward P. Tennant, Bart of the Glen and of St. Rollox

Also a Member of Parliament whom you can read about at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/men/tennant_edward.htm

The Story

How Scottish villagers bought their harbour – and saved their future

By Hazel Sheffield writing in the Guardian Newspaper <https://vimeo.com/hazel/sheffield>

Residents who raised money to buy Portpatrick harbour are at the vanguard of poor, coastal communities taking control of their future.

Coastal towns often face higher levels of inequality, lower wages and higher unemployment than other parts of the UK. The top five areas voting to leave the EU were all coastal communities in Essex, East Anglia and Lincolnshire. Dumfries and Galloway, on the west coast of Scotland, voted to remain but only by a slim margin.

In Portpatrick, a local seaside village, tiers of pastel houses stretch down to a small harbour where boats are moored. The place is so picture-postcard pretty, it's hard to imagine that the harbour was almost left to rot – and with it, the future of the village – until local residents raised enough money a year ago to buy it.

As the closest port to Northern Ireland, Portpatrick was once the main crossing to Donaghadee. But over time the ocean smashed away two grand piers as well as Portpatrick's future as a transport hub. When the crossing moved to nearby Stranraer, sailor numbers dwindled. Villagers knew that to get them back, they needed to improve the harbour with modern moorings and improved toilet facilities while keeping its charm, or risk losing precious tourist revenue to competing harbours up and down the coast.

The harbour's private owners, Portpatrick Harbour Ltd, had applied in 2007 to build a 57-berth marina and fix pontoons to the listed harbour floor. Councillors quashed the plans, saying it was "completely inappropriate for the conservation of the area". Locals then looked for a way to bring the harbour into community ownership where it could be maintained and improved in keeping with the village. They formed a trust, and by 2012 the villagers had reached an agreement with the owners to buy it for £350,000, financed through money from a local windfarm and a £125,000 loan from the owners themselves, which had to be repaid by 2015.

Banks and other lending institutions had balked at lending the trust the money to repay the loan for a harbour that had, since its purchase, been valued at only £75,000. And because it needed to finance debt, the trust wasn't eligible for government grants or other types of non-profit funding like the marine coastal communities fund set up by Danny Alexander, then deputy treasurer in the coalition government, to address the desperate plight of declining seaside towns.

When Calum Currie, an offshore oil technician born and bred in the village, joined the trust in December 2014, he realised there was no way the community would be able to pay back the loan by the deadline. Currie sent a letter round calling locals to the village hall for an extraordinary general meeting. In January 2015, 160 people gathered to discuss what to do next.

Currie contacted Community Shares Scotland (CSS) – a scheme funded by the Big Lottery Fund Scotland and Carnegie UK Trust. He hoped Portpatrick Trust might be eligible to become Scotland's first community benefits society, which would allow it to sell shares in the harbour to secure it into community ownership.

Since 2009, more than 100,000 people have invested £120m of share capital into 400 community businesses across the UK. Dozens more schemes are in the pipeline, funding everything from local pubs to huge renewable energy schemes. Hastings, a deprived coastal town in south-east England, recently used shares to help give residents a stake in its restored historic pier.

Kelly McIntyre, programme director of CSS, advised Currie to mobilise locals to buy shares to save the harbour. Emails were sent to regular visitors. Shops and stores advertised the share sale to tourists. The launch date was set for the annual folk festival in September, when the harbour would likely be full.

Robert Erskine, a lifeboat coxswain at Portpatrick since 1984, was among those going between the boats at the festival selling shares in the harbour for a minimum of £25. Each shareholder got one vote, no matter how many shares they bought. This key difference from other kinds of ownership structures prevents large investors from taking over. But few investors buy community shares to make money or wrest control. "A lot of people bought shares for their grandchildren," Erskine says. "It made people feel part of the community."

In just three weeks, Portpatrick had raised enough money to save the harbour, with the 554 shareholders coming from as far away as Canada and Bermuda. Currie was elected chair of the Portpatrick Harbour Community Benefit Society. "Without community shares we

would have been dead in the water,” he says. “The financial benefits of the community share sale allowed us to find a future when there were no other avenues open to us.”

In Scotland’s more remote communities, radical action has a rich history. “Many Scottish communities are remote enough that they’ve just got to get on and find a way to make things happen,” says McIntyre. These projects aren’t always in response to budget cuts, but the result of positive changes in the way people look at community ownership, according to Jim Metcalf, head of practice at Carnegie UK. “Communities are finding ways to fund things that would have never happened without public support,” he says.

The community shares network runs parallel with an active Scottish community land movement, which started not long after the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust was formed in 1997 to save the island from centuries of absentee landlords. The Scottish government got its Community Land Act through Holyrood earlier this year and has recently allocated £10m a year until 2020 to support communities trying to invest in land buyouts.

Holyrood has also bolstered asset buyouts with a Community Empowerment Act, passed last year, to help people take control of local assets when council resources fall short. Portpatrick wanted to use the act to acquire a strip of overgrown wasteland by the harbour to tidy it up and turn it into a picnic area. But the act was so new that the council didn’t have the paperwork. So Currie negotiated directly with them instead. “We said that we’re not the kind for hanging around, and – fair play to them – they worked with us,” he says.

By employing members of the community, the benefits society has turned the wasteland into freshly mown lawn and installed new moorings in the harbour. It is negotiating with the council to take over the running of some communal toilets and to modernise facilities.

Currie dreams of fixing up the village hall using the money earned from mooring fees; expected to be £20,000 this financial year. “What better way to save your community hall than off the back of your harbour. Together the two of them are stronger, and we could go on to save something else,” he says.

With each small improvement, the society must make sure the harbour is running a profit, so shareholders can get their money back if they want it. “Now we know the harbour won’t get spoiled or used for some individual’s private gain,” Currie says.

A year on from the share offer, Portpatrick is becoming the poster child for community action. Currie has been invited to give evidence to Scottish parliamentary committees about community ownership models. Kevin Stewart, the SNP minister for local government and housing, sees the harbour as part of a broader movement of local residents doing things for themselves.

“Portpatrick shows how a community can take control of its own future,” he says. “Handing decision-making to local people, especially in choosing local spending priorities, is exactly the type of activity we want to see more of.”

Not-for-profit organisations are also watching closely. “The Portpatrick Harbour Community Benefit Society is an inspiration. It is this kind of new political and economic energy that is needed to reverse years of neglect and decline,” says Fernanda Balata, project lead on coastal and marine environment at the New Economics Foundation think tank. Nef is putting together the Blue New Deal, which advises coastal communities across the UK that lack funding and are looking for other means to help themselves.

Currie says that for the communities at the heart of the movement, it’s not all about the money. “For the community to have control of the harbour and for everyone to have a voice, that’s priceless,” he says.

You can see a video at <https://vimeo.com/184368484>

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

Alastair