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WHATS NEW

Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for December 9th, 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

Thursday 8th December saw the first fall of snow in Chatham. Only a few centimeters so nothing to worry about.

This week I've been trying to contact several people for information and this has reminded me how poor we all are at responding to emails. Very large corporate companies, governments and local councils, clan organisations and just ordinary folk. Send them an email and you get nothing back at all. The odd time you might get an automated email back saying your email has been received and it could take up to 2 business days for them to get back to you but then they seldom do.

Certainly if you are an individual then there is not much that can be done but companies and organisations should be audited to check that staff are doing their jobs correctly.

I will state clearly that all emails received by myself get a reply and so if you have sent me an email and don't get a reply then I simply didn't get it for whatever reason.

I remember Beth Gay wrote some time ago at how poor clans were at replying to emails. I suspect a lot of the problems with them are simply that they don't have charge of their own web sites so if someone new is handling things then the email address on the web site is not being updated.

My system is simple in that I try to respond immediately to all emails I receive. Once I reply the email is deleted. That means any emails left in my inbox have still to be dealt with. The thing here is that most emails I receive take little effort to deal with but there are the odd ones that require a lot more study and thus time to formulate a decent reply. That means that these ones will be dealt with later in the day once I have dealt with my usual daily work. There is the odd email which will likely require some additional correspondence and they will also remain in my inbox but they have been flagged as having been replied to. Once the email chain has been dealt with then they are also deleted. This way my inbox is kept relevant.

I do have a large reference folder so should an email contain information I might want to refer to later than I'll move that to my reference folder.

Anyway... this is just a plea that whether personally or at work you are dealing with emails then please try to do a better job of replying to them. It's the right thing to do.

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.

Nice news

Your favourite stories from around Scotland

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-38173931>

German PoW leaves £384,000 to Perthshire village

Mr Steinmeyer, who died in 2013 aged 90, bequeathed the money in return for the kindness he was shown there.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-38184935>

Scot Government 'ignoring' local wishes on HIE

AN MSP has accused the Scottish Government of "ignoring the wishes of local people" by planning to dismantle the board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Read more at:

<http://www.northern-scot.co.uk/News/MSP-Scot-Government-ignoring-local-wishes-on-HIE-02122016.htm>

Church of England jumped on middle-class Brexit bandwagon

The Church of England would not have been surprised by Brexit had it still been present in the UK's most deprived areas, the Bishop of Burnley has said.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-38195260>

Ex-PM said election of Marine Le Pen would be big body blow for Europe

David Cameron has said the victory of Marine Le Pen in the French presidential elections, would be a 'body blow' for Europe.

Read more at:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3997392/David-Cameron-says-victory-Marine-Le-Pen-French-presidential-election-big-body-blow-Europe.html>

Scottish economy to slow sharply in 2017, warns think-tank

The EY Scottish Item Club report also sharply cuts its forecast for Scottish output growth in 2016 to 0.7 per cent from the 1.2 per cent it predicted last summer.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/business/markets-economy/scottish-economy-to-slow-sharply-in-2017-warns-think-tank-1-4308908>

Italian revolt shows people want control of their parliaments

STRANGE THINGS are happening across the political spectrum but they have a common theme. The old political parties are imploding and electorates are playing a major role in their demise.

Read more at:

http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkliving/articles.html?read_full=12970&article=www.thinkscotland.org

Praet warns euro zone's banking systems pulling dangerously apart

The euro zone's national banking systems are pulling apart, rather than coming closer together, and that is leaving them more exposed to domestic shocks

Read more at:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ecb-banks-praet-idUKKBN13J1WH?il=0>

Oor Wullie fan Nicola Sturgeon puts him on her Christmas card

Nicola Sturgeon has unveiled her official Christmas card.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-38236136>

Education figures are another blot on the SNP's report card

After deriding Labour promises to win votes and power in 2007, the Scottish Government is now wide open to criticism over its own record, writes Scott Macnab

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/scott-macnab-education-figures-are-another-blot-on-the-snp-s-report-card-1-4310640>

Could the European Union fall apart?

It has been a dreadful year for the European Union. It has just got a lot worse. Next year could transform a looming existential threat into a terminal reality.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38212049>

Reconstructed face of Robert the Bruce is unveiled

Historians have unveiled a digitally-reconstructed image of the face of Robert the Bruce almost 700 years after his death.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-38242781>

Changing The Rules of The Game

If, like me, you're unsettled by this, maybe ask yourself how well the current rules of the game have suited you

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2016/12/changing-rules-of-game.html>

Article 50 amendment proposed by the Government and accepted by the Commons

May prove to be a political and legal masterstroke

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/governments-article-50-amendment-masterstroke/>

Electric Canadian

Chronicles of Canada

Added Volume 8 - The Great Fortress. A Chronicle of Louisbourg 1720-1760

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

A Cyclopedia of Canadian Biography

Being Chiefly Men of the Time, A Collection of Persons Distinguished in Professional and Political Life; Leaders in the Commerce and Industry of Canada, and Successful Pioneers. Edited by Geo. MacLean Rose (1888)

You can view this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/cyclopaedia.pdf>

Caldwell First Nations

Happened to notice an article about them in the local newspaper and so did some research and added a page for them within our First Nations section.

You can view this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/caldwell.htm>

Electric Scotland

Tomintoul

The Highest Town in the Highlands and the Healthiest. You can read this book at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/travel/Tomintoul.pdf>

Clan Munro of Australia

Got in their newsletter for December 2016 which you can read at:

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

The story of Mary Slessor for young people

The white queen of Okayong By William Livingstone (1917)

I found a good picture of her and added that to our page about here but then I also found this book so thought I'd add a link to it on the page so you can find this at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/women/slessor_mary.htm

The Tourists Handy Guide to Scotland

An interesting guide produced in 1872 which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/travel/touristguide.pdf>

Records of the Scots Colleges

At Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon, Aberdeen, (1906).

This is a book for researchers as it's not really readable for ordinary folks but you can view it at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/bible/recordsscotscolleges.pdf>

Robert Milligan's Difficulties

Or Struggle and Triumph, A Scotch Life Story by Rev. William Adamson, D.D. (1891)

You can read this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/scottishlifestory.pdf>

Lectures on the Mountains or the Highlands and Highlanders

As they were and as they are (1860) by William Grant Stewart. I judge this to be around the best description of the people and how they lived so highly recommend this book to you.

You can read it at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/lectures.pdf>

The Story

As I rate the above mentioned book very highly I thought I'd provide chapter 1 as the story for this week.

Lectures on the Mountains or the Highlands and Highlanders - Chapter 1

The districts of Strathavon and Glenlivet, forth the south-western extremity of the county of Banff, including two angles of the counties of Inverness and Moray, called Glenbroun and Glenloch, being parts of the parish of Abernethy, but locally situated in the country of Strathavon. The districts of Strathavon and Glenlivet wholly belong in property to his grace the Duke of Richmond, forming part of the Gordon Richmond domains, with the exception of the lands of Lynchork and Delnabo, Glenbronn and Glenloch, belonging in property to the right honorable the Earl of Seafield.

In the ancient annals of the highlands of Banffshire there is much matter for the antiquarian and historian. In those stormy times, when chief contended against chief and lord against lord, the Grampian mountaineers were known to descend in great numbers and take their places' under the banners of the great Gordon family, who, in times ancient and modern, were the lords of Strathavon and Glenlivet. But how those redoubted warriors, to use an American phrase, were "raised" and maintained, is not matter of record. He who traverses these glens and uplands will find traces of agricultural operations—ridges and furrows, indicating greater skill in the ploughman than what we have seen in our day in the same locality. Why the people of antiquity left the low valleys to operate upon the uplands is a matter of discussion among the antiquarians of our country. Some say it was on account of impervious woods; some say it was on account of wild beasts; but whatever may have been the ruling cause, the aboriginal agriculturists of Strathavon evidently preferred the high grounds to the low valleys; and we are apt to believe that the fanning operations of olden times must have been on a very limited scale, and the produce very precarious and uncertain.

We have good grounds for believing that it was not on their meal gimels that the ancient inhabitants of those mountainous regions depended for sustentation. We are more inclined to believe that, reversing the order of modern times, the ancient sons of the mist made preserves of their woods and valleys for creeping things, tending to the sustentation of the human tabernacle, as hills and glens are now preserved for deer forests. That, instead of going to the hills, the ancient Highlanders went into the valleys to procure supplies for their commissariat department, which were chiefly animal and not farinaceous. Had the great historian, Baron Macaulay, and his veracious authorities, Messrs. Birt and Co., lived in the era of the Fingalians, there might have been some foundation for the outre bill of fare of the Highlanders of the last century given in the last-published volumes of the baron's national history. For we believe that in those days of primitive simplicity the blood of cattle, sheep, and animals of the forest, might form a part of human nourishment at particular times and seasons; but we do not believe that even in those days of darkness, when cookery in all its branches was little studied and little known, the natives went forth to tap the hide of a quadruped for a present supply of blood for his breakfast or dinner, as a Spaniard would tap his wine-skin for a supply of the juice of the grape; and we know that although farm-

cattle may be the better, for losing a little blood at the commencement of the summer season, when they are sent to grass, (a practice sixty years ago quite common with the principal farmers in the Highlands, on sending their young stock to grazing,) any four-footed animal would be very much deteriorated in its condition by a repetition of the process of depletion, blood being the vital stream that supports man and beast. And we hope the learned lord, in his next edition, will repudiate the fictions imposed upon him by his authorities, as false as they are malicious, and set himself right with truth and the people from whom he himself has the honour to be descended. And we can assure his lordship that we have seen some of the blood taken from cattle when going to grass converted into savoury messes, like the compositions of puddings and sausages, which he himself, if well appetized, would consider no small dainty. With this episode in defence of the habits of our Highland ancestors, we are free to admit that the Grampian Highlands, to a very late period, was no %ld for agricultural and rural improvements.

Sixty years ago, although the modern Highlanders had reversed the order of things pursued by their ancestors, by transferring their farming operations to the alluvial soils of their valleys, their system of husbandry deserved no premiums from an agricultural society. The cereal crops consisted chiefly of oats and bear or bigg—a sort of barley, having four rows on the head instead of two. But the four rows were shorter than the two rows on the heads of barley, so that the produce was much about the same. The oats were what is called either white or black—the black oats, raised on high, light soils, being very light in weight, requiring double the measure of good oats to yield a boll of meal. In those days potatoes were planted in quantities only sufficient to supply the family for some months in the year, as they were supposed to be unfit for human food on the return of spring, when they began to sprout. And in regard to turnips—with the exception of a few principal tacksmen, the common farmers only sowed a ridge or two of what were called Swedish turnips, of a saccharine taste, for household consumption, and perhaps an occasional bon bouche to a cow lying-in, or some such particular occasion.

Sixty years ago the process of fallowing land was scarcely known in this country. We have heard of one who, having received the second sight from visiting foreign parts, commenced fallowing his lands, but the operation was so unprofitable in the eyes of his primitive neighbours that they, sotto voce, affirmed that he was under a delusion of intellect. For potatoes and bear, and a modicum of turnips, the land was twice ploughed and manured, according to ability. But no system or rotation of cropping was followed, excepting that potatoes were succeeded by bear, and bear by oats, repeated as often as the ground would yield anything in the shape of a crop. In those days the common tenants sowed no clover or rye-grass, but when the land required what is called a long rest, it was let out into lea ground for some years, and then, with a sprinkling of manure, ploughed up and sown with oats, year after year, until again completely exhausted. In those days of Highland liberty the tenant was not bound down to follow a system which might not accord with his inclinations. Like the Israelites of old, "when there was no king in Israel, each did what was right in his own eyes," and we remember to have seen the last of eight or ten successive crops taken from lands possessed by the author's own family on the farm of Lynchork. But it so happened that that farm had been lying long lea, in the possession of a Strathdon laird, as grazing for farm-stock. To this unprofitable system of farming was added the baneful practice of subletting, where the patriarch of a Highland family, proceeding on the Irish system, allocated a portion of his holding to his sons and daughters on their marriage, so that, as in the cases of the Gaulriggs and Balentomb, in the braes of the country, small farms were ultimately split into sorts of run-rigg holdings—the out-pasture being a commonty, with a large population squatted in black towns or hamlets, living—or rather existing—as they best could. We remember seeing, and often visiting, the houses of four families living on the beautiful haugh of Delnabo, consisting of what was called a davoch of land, affording sustentation to thirty or forty persons, all the progeny of worthy old Donald Grant, whose memory the author still reveres as the best senachie of his day.

Sixty years ago, with the principal tacksmen and better classes of farmers, the mode of husbandry was more respectable, in so far as regarded horses, cattle, and implements of husbandry. With the better classes oxen were much used as ploughing animals. The oxen were the largest that could be had, and as uniform in size as might be, so as to be suitable pairs in the yoke. We still remember with pleasure the imposing display made by those noble animals, yoked two and two side by side, sometimes six, sometimes eight, and even sometimes twelve (the number sufficient for two ploughs), when the "sturdy glebe" required the force and strength of so many animals. Those sagacious and docile animals, like the camel or the elephant, were trained to know their appointed places in the far-extending yoke, and, like the war-horse rejoicing in his strength, the associated pairs, with bended heads and measured steps, seemed to take pleasure in their vocations. The driver, armed with a long goad like a fishing-rod with a cobbler's awl inserted in its point, moved midway of the procession, always giving forth a clear, loud whistle, modulated into rising and falling notes, like one, two, three, four, in the ascending, and one, two, three, four, in the descending scale, of the ploughman's gamut,—certainly, to ears polite, not a very musical entertainment. But as man relishes the monotonous notes of the summer-bird, the cuckoo, so the oxen, by force of habit, would not want their sober ditty. And when the driver, from exhaustion, would stop his notes, we have seen the oxen stop their progress, until the ploughman would take up the song of the driver. It was a pleasant sight to see the noble quadrupeds wheeling at the end of the ridge, like soldiers on parade, into their appointed furrow. And many a day, with ecstatic delight, the author has sitten on the dock of the plough of the "Oxenmore" But, like most other things, the oxen suffered a decadence in the farmer's estimation. The yokes and bows, and tingling chains, gave place to collars and horse harness, and large oxen in pairs were condemned to do the labour which formerly devolved upon half a dozen, and in course of time the ox was superseded by his more useful contemporary, the horse. The class of horses used by the principal tenants was respectable—hardy, useful animals, easily sustained during the winter months; and to them was added a stock of hardy Highland ponies, which were left to shift for themselves in the meadows and glens during the most part of the year.

With respect to the second class of tenants, paying rents from £5 to £20, they were as various in their modes of farming, as their

means and opportunities. With them, their farming implements and animals partook very much of the description of Irish husbandry some years ago. The author himself has seen yoked side by side abreast, a horse, or two horses, a stot, and a cow, and sometimes more animals, according to the circumstances of the case. The plough, frequently the workmanship of a native artisan; the beam and stilts "twisted right and twisted left, to balance fair in ilka quarter." The tackle or harness consisted of ropes, and sometimes of twisted woodies. The collars consisted of straw, and the wooden hems were tied by ropes of various devices. The animals, horses and cattle, with horse-hair halters, were held in the hands of the conductor or driver, who moved forwards, backwards with his face to the cattle, pulling the animals, as near as might be, in a straight line, with many reproofs and ejaculations urging on the laggards in the yoke; while the ploughman, with a long stick called in Gaelic "slackkan," contrived "a double debt to pay"—now applied to rid the Sock and coulter of earth and choking weeds, and now to belabouring the hides of the recusant animals; while oaths of the most emphatic description in Gaelic, and sometimes in English (which is supposed to be the native language of the horse), were freely bestowed on all the parties concerned, including the unfortunate conductor, who often was the ploughman's wife or daughter. And we have seen disruptions of such incongruous associations frequently taking place, in spite of the driver and guard—the animals going into parties, one taking the right and one taking the left, amidst a shower of the most earnest curses and imprecations. With such ploughing .gear it would be vain to expect a long and .straight farrow, a performance no way attempted, and if the whole party managed to overturn a small ridge of ground at a yoking, the husbandman's hopes were realised. We have not seem wooden harrows with wooden teeth, though such had been in "use and wont" in our native land. But we have seen substitutes for carts and conveyances in the shape of creels, suspended on horses' backs by wooden crooks fastened to the horses' backs by belly-bands or girths, the contents of the creels being evacuated through the bottom by the removal of a wooden bar; and in the shape of large circular creels of a conical form, drawn upon wooden sledges, which, with the creels, had to be overturned on every evacuation.

The horses and oxen used by the better class of tenants, sixty years ago, have been already described. In those days, Highland farmers living remote from the low country markets, seldom excelled as breeders of stock. There were no Ayrshire bulls or cows then kept on account of their dairy properties. Among a large collection of cattle might be seen representatives of all the breeds then known in Scotland, in the shape of crosses of all sorts and sizes. Among which, the Aberdeenshire humbles or doddies accounted both good for milk and feeding, generally preponderated. The sheep were chiefly of the old aboriginal breed, with long legs, lank flanks, black faces and spiral horns. But a few tacksman improved their own stock, by an occasional purchase of tups and hogs from Linton. Where pigs were kept—ugly as some of these animals are, now-a-days, there were none so ugly as the boars and sows of Strathavon — large, long-legged gruntes, with long necks, large heads, and long snouts, and bristles that would have killed another Dermid. But if those animals kept only by the elite of the land, more for show than for use, were so uninteresting in point of external attractions, the Highlanders of the day, for the most part, abhorred them more when dead, than alive, for no Highland-man, however, acquisitive in respect of other matters, was ever accused of stealing a pig; the old Jewish proscription of the grunting-race having descended in all its integrity to the race of Fingal.

Sixty years ago, the Highlander could adduce several cogent reasons for making the cow and her progeny inmates of his dwelling tabernacle. Besides the great convenience to the housewife of having the cow so near, at milking times, there had been parties who went on excursions of pleasure by the light of the moon (sometimes called Lochiel's lantern, transfeiv ring all sorts of quadrupeds that could conveniently travel, from their native pastures to a change of grass. We are aware that the fastnesses of Strathavon did not offer eligible situations for the exercise of this convenient mode of acquiring property, but the great Creach or Raid of the Mcarns left a very salutary impression in the minds of the sons, of the Avon, that what happened once, might happen again, and that it was a prudent plan to have their four-footed property within the reach of their guns and claymores. Such old traditions and social habits transmitted from father to son, no doubt, tended to keep up the old kindly practice of devoting one end of the house to the cows, and the other to the humans, and, therefore, sixty years ago, those practices did prevail to a small extent among the lower orders. In general, however, each tenant had a barn, a stable, and a byre in one continuation, separate from the dwelling-house. But, with the exception of the leading tacksman and farmers, the offices of this description being black biggmgs, would be comprised at a very small figure by the birley men of the district. With respect to the tacksman and tenants of the first class, their houses and steadings were of a very different order. Men of education, worldly knowledge, and experience, acquired at college or military employments, they were no strangers to the comforts, and even to the luxuries of life. Even in those days, the tacksman's house was substantially built, and comfortably, if not elegantly furnished. His board was crowned with plenty of the best provisions and viands, and whisky and S(nappy brown ale,"—home produce and manufacture—were dispensed with profuse liberality among neighbours and friends. But it must be admitted that the dwellings of wealth and comforts, such as last described, were few and far between, and that the commons either in their houses or modes of living seldom fared sumptuously.

We have read in the lucubrations of a shrewd and amusing writer, on Highland Statistics, that, of old, the Highlanders did not wish that roads should be made into their countries, probably, from the fear of moonlight visitations from some of their free-and-easy neighbouring clansmen—and sixty years ago, Strathavon had not many inlets into its glens and valleys of the description of roads and bridges. It is true that General Wade left a monument to himself, and a specimen of his primitive style of engineering, in forming a road from Perth to Fort George, through Tomintoul and Strathavon, and it is wonderful how his curved humpbacked, bridges withstood the violence of the mountain torrents, and the tear and wear of time; and his formation in those days of isolation was a great boon,—for, with this exception, we remember when neither chaise or gig could safely traverse any line of travelling in this country. The great extent of the Gordon domains did not then admit of much attention to the formation of roads and bridges in this remote and mountainous portion of the Gordon Principality, and the commutation or statute labour of the people, was totally

inadequate to the formation and repair of extensive lines of difficult traverses. But within these last thirty years, a great exertion has placed the roads and bridges in these districts in a very different and satisfactory condition.

If you enjoyed this you can read many more chapters at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/lectures.pdf>

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

Alastair