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WHATS NEW

## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for June 30th, 2017

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 spent some time this week on the Canadian site by adding several interesting articles which I hope you will enjoy.

I also got some interesting information on the old St Cuthbert's co-op which is now Scotmid and they kindly let me have a copy of their 150th anniversary book in pdf format which I've now added to the site.

Mind that we are now starting the Highland Games circuit all over the world so do keep an eye out for announcements as there is likely one in your own area.

Our video Introduction to this newsletter can be viewed at:  
<https://youtu.be/z5TJ6UM7oyM>

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.

The romanticism of the Scottish wilderness

Tanera Mor is the largest island in the Summer Isles archipelago, clusters of land that are part of the Scottish Highlands.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-40326233>

The Wolf of Badenoch - Scotland's vilest man?

The cruel rampages of Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, were deadly - and his appetite for destruction of his foes simply terrifying.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/the-wolf-of-badenoch-scotland-s-vilest-man-1-4483886>

Scottish folklore traditions in danger of dying out

They are tales and legends which form the backbone of Scottish culture and heritage, but the nation's rich folklore tradition is under threat.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/scottish-folklore-traditions-in-danger-of-dying-out-1-4483838>

No, Holyrood cannot veto or block Brexit

Does Holyrood have a power of veto over the Great Repeal Bill? Could the Scottish Parliament block Brexit? Bluntly, no.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40373883>

The SNP are great at asking for your views but nobody's listening

The Scottish Government are big on consultations. You name it, they'll consult on it. At present, you can have your say on anything from cremation costs to Improved Parking in Scotland.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/brian-wilson-the-snp-are-great-at-asking-for-your-views-but-nobody-s-listening-1-4483778>

Scotland's carved Pictish stones re-imagined in colour

Archaeologists have been uncovering ornately decorated Pictish stones across northern Scotland for many years.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-40286318>

Harry Potter holiday itinerary unveiled

Scottish tourism chiefs have unveiled their first Harry Potter holiday itinerary to coincide with the 20th anniversary of JK Rowling's famous creation.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/books/harry-potter-holiday-itinerary-unveiled-ahead-of-20th-anniversary-1-4484693>

Reasons to be cheerful despite doom and gloom

It's impossible to listen to any news broadcast these days without becoming even more depressed. Is there anything going right in this country?

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/business/bill-jamieson-reasons-to-be-cheerful-despite-doom-and-gloom-1-4485553>

Canada sees our post-Brexit potential

And so should we

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/james-skinner-canada-sees-post-brexit-potential/>

Leadsom was making a good point

Only the wilful or ignorant could not understand that

Read more at:

[http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read\\_full=13208](http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=13208)

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to visit Edinburgh

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is to meet the Queen in Edinburgh next week.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-40443419>

South Uist flag wins official recognition

SOUTH Uist is to have the first officially recognised community flag in the Outer Hebrides.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/regions/inverness-highlands-islands/south-uist-flag-wins-official-recognition-1-4489830>

## Electric Canadian

EatRight Ontario

Got in a postcard from them and thought I'd phone to learn more which you can read about at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/agriculture/eatright.htm>

Mennonites and Hutterites in Canada

New information I've added to our ethnic histories which includes 2 videos which you can watch at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/Mennonites.htm>

Deadfalls and Snares

I added this book to our Beard collection as I thought it filled a gap in his books. You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/beard/deadfallssnares.pdf>

Indian, Metis and Eskimo Leaders in Contemporary Canada

This collection of 15 biographies was prepared to illustrate, for classroom purposes, some of the well-known contemporary Indian, Eskimo, and Metis people in Canada today. You can read these at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/leaders.pdf>

Moonlight and Six Feet of Romance

Another Beard book which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/beard/moonblight.pdf>

Three Years under the Canadian Flag as a Cavalry Soldier

A Peep behind the scenes of Political, Municipal, Military, and Social Life in Canada which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/cavalry.pdf>

Conrad Black

I've always had a lot of time for Conrad Black and so as he writes from Canada on a number of issues of interest from around the world I'm intending to include links to his writings for you to view. This week we have

Not All Dissent is Created Equal

<http://www.conradblack.com/1308/not-all-dissent-is-created-equal>

## Electric Scotland

The Forfar Directory and Year Book

A most interesting publication with lots of wee stories and articles. I have now added the 1939 edition which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/forfar/direct/> which now completes all the issues I was able to find and here is a wee item from it...

### THE QUEEN

Her Majesty the Queen, whose portrait is given on our front page, was Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, of the Scottish family of Strathmore, which goes back to the fourteenth century, and has played a considerable part in the history of this country. Her ancestral home is Glamis Castle, in Forfarshire, the majestic proportions of which make the story quite creditable that when Prince Charles Edward slept there in 1715, eighty beds were made up for his followers. The marriage of the Lady Elizabeth with the Duke of York (King George VI) took place in 1923, and both as Duchess of York and as Queen Elizabeth her Majesty has won the hearts of the people to an exceptional degree.

See also the article on "Hints on Health for every home" one of which is...

Bleeding from a cut finger or hand can be stopped almost at once by the application of a little lemon juice. Damp a clean piece of lint or any soft material with the juice and apply it at once to the cut, pressing it on firmly.

The British Colonial Library

History of Southern Africa By R. Montgomery Martin, F.S.S.

As many Scots settled in South Africa I felt it was time to add a history of the place and you can read this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/africa/BritishColonial.pdf>

Life of Sir Roderick I. Murchison

By Archibald Geikie, LL.D., F.R.S. (1875) in 2 volumes. Added links to these volumes at the foot of our Murchison page.

Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, D.C.L., of this family, has distinguished himself as a geologist. The eldest son of Kenneth Murchison,

Esq. of Tarradale, Ross-shire, by his wife, the sister of General Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Bart., G.C.H., he was born at Tarradale, in 1792. Educated at Durham Grammar School and at the military College of Marlow, he received the honorary degree of M.A. from the universities of Cambridge and Durham. In 1807 he entered the army as an officer in the 36th foot, and took part in the battles of Vimeira and Corunna, &c. He was afterwards on the staff of his uncle, General Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and, lastly, was captain 6th Dragoons. In 1816 he left the army, and was induced, about 1818, by Sir Humphry Davy to devote himself to science. In 1828, in company with Sir Charles Lyall, he examined the extinct volcanoes of Auvergne, &c. In 1831, he applied himself to a systematic examination of the older sedimentary deposits in England and Wales, and after five years' labour, succeeded in establishing what he named (from occupying those counties which formed the ancient kingdom of the Silures) the Silurian system, comprehending a succession of strata lying beneath the old red sandstone, and seeming to lie in close approximation to the deposits that preceded the existence of plants and animals. In 1837, he published his 'Silurian system of Rocks.' In 1841, the Czar Nicholas decorated him with the order of the second class of St. Anne, in diamonds, and subsequently gave him a magnificent colossal vase of Siberian aventurine, mounted on a column of porphyry, with this inscription, "Gratia Imperatoris totius Rossiae, Roderico Murchison, Geologiae Rossiae Exploratori, 1842."

In 1846, under the countenance of the Imperial government, in company with Professor Sedgwick and M. de Verneuil, he commenced a geological survey of the Russian empire; on completing which the emperor conferred upon him the grand cross of the order of St. Stanislaus. In 1845, he published, in two vols, his 'Russia in Europe and the Ural Mountains,' and in 1846, he received the royal license to accept the Russian orders, and was knighted. To the transactions of various scientific bodies, Sir Roderick has contributed upwards of 100 memoirs. In 1844, he instituted a comparison between the rocks of Eastern Australia and those of the auriferous Ural mountains, and was the first who publicly declared his opinion that gold must exist in Australia. Has been four times president of the Geological Society, and also of the Royal Geographical Society. IN 1846, he was president of the British Association. He is a fellow of the Royal and Linnaean Societies, member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, and the Academies of Berlin, Copenhagen, &c., corresponding member of the Institute of France, and honorary member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Royal Irish Academy, &c. In 1855, he succeeded Sir H. de la Beche, in the office of director of the Museum of Practical Geology.

You can read the two volumes at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/murchison2.htm>

Robert Burns and the Scotch Excise Board

Was Burns ever reprimanded, suspended, or dismissed by the Board of Excise?. A great article which I found and have made into a pdf file which you can read at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/burns\\_excise.pdf](http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/burns_excise.pdf)

Early Critical Reviews on Robert Burns

Edited by John D. Ross, LL.D. (1900)

You can read this at: [http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/burns\\_reviews.pdf](http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/burns_reviews.pdf)

Burns holograph manuscripts in the Kilmarnock monument museum

With notes. Compiled and Edited by David Sneddon (1889).

You can read this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/burns/burnsholograph.pdf>

The People's Year Book for 1920

An annual of useful information prepared by the Co-Operative Press Agency. Added the 1920 edition along with a brief bio of Sir William Maxwell to the end of this page. Lots more excellent information in this issue.

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

ScotMid

The Edinburgh based Co-operative society and its history. I also got in a pdf of their 150th anniversary book. You can read all about them at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/business/coop/scotmid.htm>

Migrants in Scotland's population histories since 1850

By Professor Michael Anderson FBA, FRSE Professor Emeritus of Economic History and Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Edinburgh.

You can study this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/rgar-2015.pdf>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Added section 1 of the July 2017

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

## The Story

As I've noted elsewhere not many people read history books. To many history means learning dates of special events or battles. However history is so much more than that. It shows a way of life that is no longer here and it should make you think about how your life today compares. Compare your life today with older times when there were no cell phones, electricity, roads, rail or cars or computers and of course no Internet.

Here I bring you the introduction to this story and I hope you will go on to read the entire book and then let me know what you think about it by adding a comment to the index page of the book.

The McGregors. by Robert Laidlaw

This novel of the three generations of the McGregor family and their life in Southwestern Ontario from the 1840s to the 1920s is a classic tale of pioneer life.

"Black Jim" McGregor was only a small boy when he arrived with his father, the reprobate Rory, his mother, and his brothers and sisters, on the Huron Tract (that area of Southwestern Ontario where towns like Guelph, Stratford, Clinton, and Goderich are today). But he was to spend the next seventy years there and witness first-hand the struggle to turn some of the wildest land in the country into pleasant farms, villages, and towns. As a young man he roamed the country with a framing gang, raising barns and homes, and then, with his lively wife Janet, he created his own farm out of the Ontario bushland. Through Jim's eyes these indomitable people, who faced the wilderness with such wry humour and matter-of-factness, come to life.

As well as telling a compelling story about the people who settled the Huron Tract, The McGregors is full of accurate, fascinating details about pioneering: about how the first crops were harvested, the huge barns raised, and the homes built; about how quilts, furniture, and fences were made; and about the strong sense of community that held everyone together.

The McGregors is also about how a community is created, about how people start to take root in a place—to take from the land a sense of character as well as a livelihood. It cuts across the generalities which abound about pioneer life in this country and gives us an accurate picture of a time in our history when, farm by farm, street by street, a nation was being built.

Robert Laidlaw was himself a descendant of the pioneers that he writes about in this book. In fact, this story is based on the memories of his grandparents, as well as on his own recollections. And while The McGregors is bound to be of special interest to people living in the towns, cities, and farms of Southwestern Ontario, it is also a must for people who love old-fashioned novels that celebrate the timeless virtues of family, home, and tradition.

## Preface

This book is dedicated to the courteous, friendly people who lived in the area described herein during the 1930s and the 1940s.

My purpose in writing the book was to give a partial history of this part of South Bruce and North Huron counties through an imaginary account of a man's life from the 1850s to the 1920s. The names of the characters were chosen at random and have no connection with any real persons, living or dead; the village is a combination of Lucknow and of Blyth where I grew up.

I have tried to give an account of what it must have been like for the first settlers, of how they lived and worked and what they worked with. As the book progressed I was able to rely on my own memories and impressions, but the early pages are largely based on memories of conversations with parents and grandparents. Nothing much has been written of the history of this area as yet and I think it is important to make a record before the lives of these people have been forgotten. If reading The McGregors gives pleasure to a few, that is all the recompense I ask.

Thanks are due to my wife, Mary Etta, who corrected my spelling, and to my daughter, Alice Munro, (Alice Ann Munro née Laidlaw; born 10 July 1931 is a Canadian short story writer and Nobel Prize winner) without whose encouragement this book would not have been written.

Robert Eric Laidlaw

## Introduction

The McGregors, by Robert Laidlaw, is like a good country meal. It's not fancy, but the ingredients are pure and fresh and it's something to be savoured. A lot of practical knowledge and affection went into the writing about the Scottish people ("the Scotch"),

Lowland and Highland, who left their mark in that part of the province of Ontario snuggled up to Lake Huron south of the Bruce Peninsula. Many of their descendants are still there, and place names such as Kincardine, Lochalsh, and Lucknow are their memorial.

I know the country well. I grew up in Huron County, just south of the Bruce. In that area my forefathers had a habit of dubbing their crossroad hamlets with the names of saints, while our Ulster brethren used ones like Donnybrook, Dungannon, and Belfast. Scotch or Irish, Catholic or Protestant, the early settlers tamed the land and the taming marked them all. I like Laidlaw's perception when he tells us of James McGregor and Janet Ellis courting in a cutter and says wryly, "There was never a chaperone to equal a Canadian winter."

If you were born and raised in the country, and if like me your first home was a log cabin built by a grandfather in the middle of the eighteen-hundreds, you'll be fascinated by this story, and especially by the way the author has dealt with the experiences and hardships and joys of people who had to "make do". These people had little, could afford less, and somehow found the skills to make what they needed. The next time you encounter a pioneer's cradle, cabinet, or chair, collected to decorate a modern house, remember how it was made. Objects like these are perfect illustrations of how an early settler was forced by necessity to discover skills he had never been aware of—and, in doing so, made articles of genuine artistic worth.

Laidlaw captures the quality of strong men, shy in the presence of women. He portrays the quiet, iron determination of women faced with unending work, who also had to cope with disasters such as a sudden accident crippling a husband forever, with trying to make certain that their children captured some education, and with the loneliness of their isolation in the bush. Remember, these were women capable of fending off wolves and bears coming to prey on precious livestock. It was all in a day's work.

The McGregors is genuine. In fact it reads like a true chronicle. Laidlaw knows about barn framings, about the value of good land, about rowdiness and rough pleasure and stern, long—winded preachers. He delineates the pride of workmanship in a Scottish stone—mason, descended from a line of men with the same principles, summed up in the words: "When you build with stone you build forever: it must be true, it must be right, or it is there to shame your memory forever and a day."

The forever and a day is only a figure of speech, but those houses are still around in Western Ontario. Travel the back roads and concessions of Bruce or Huron counties and you'll see them, as true and right as the day they were finished.

In a sense this book is something like those products of the early stone-masons. Solid and substantial, with a rough grace, it is a volume that will last 'forever and a day' in your memory. It's not a flossy love story and yet it's touching. The language is unpretentious, but that's in keeping: they were unpretentious people.

For those of my vintage this book is like a tonic. I hope younger Canadians will read it, because it is one of the most straightforward and unbiased accounts of the particular time in our country that I can recall. If you want to know what it was like living on a cleared farm in the middle 1800s in Western Ontario, through into the next century, you'll get a splendid account in *The McGregors*. It was a time when English, Irish, and Scotch, who had fled their homelands because of privation, were beginning the slow assimilation into being Canadians.

If you're a Canadian literature buff, you'll also get a clue to the perceptive, incisive way Alice Munro portrays the characters she grew up with. Her father, Robert Laidlaw, wrote *The McGregors*. She has every reason to be proud and grateful for her heritage.

Harry J. Boyle (A Canadian broadcaster and writer.)  
Toronto, Ontario  
October 17, 1978

You can read the entire book at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/mcgregors/index.htm>

And that's it for this week and I hope you all have a great weekend.

Alastair