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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for March 6th, 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

Tartan Day on Ellis Island Returns April 10-12, 2015

Scottish Pirate Captain Kidd Takes Center Stage

New York, NY - "Tartan Day on Ellis Island" – one of the nation's largest Tartan Day celebrations - returns for its 14th annual observance from April 10-12, 2015 when infamous pirate, Captain William Kidd is presented in a new exhibition.

"Tartan Day on Ellis Island" is produced by the Clan Currie Society – one of the country's leading Scottish heritage organizations. The Ellis Island event is a highlight of NY Tartan Week – a city-wide festival of all things Scottish.

Celebrate Tartan Day with Music and Dance

A regular feature of all the Tartan Day on Ellis Island celebrations will be music and dance and the 2015 program will be no exception. Tartan Day on Ellis Island will play host to some of the finest Scottish entertainment in New York City, including the Rampant Lion Pipe Band, kilt maker Bonnie Greene, John the Kilted Juggler and a whole host of Scottish entertainers, traditional musicians and maybe a few pirates!

The 2015 program has been made possible by generous support from ScotlandNow.com.

Visit www.tartandayonellisland.com for additional information. Follow exhibit plans and preparations on Facebook (www.facebook.com/tartandayonellisland) and Twitter, @ClanMhuirich. Celtic Life Magazine is the official media partner of Tartan Day on Ellis Island.

About Captain Kidd

Captain William Kidd was a Scottish sailor who was tried and executed for piracy after returning from a voyage to the Indian Ocean. Some modern historians deem his piratical reputation unjust, as there is evidence that Kidd acted only as a privateer. Kidd's fame springs largely from the sensational circumstances of his questioning before the English Parliament and the ensuing trial. His actual depredations on the high seas, whether piratical or not, were both less destructive and less lucrative than those of many other contemporary pirates and privateers.

Born in Dundee, Scotland in 1645, Kidd emigrated to lower Manhattan, or rather New Amsterdam in 1691. His story checks off all the boxes for a great Ellis Island exhibition – pirate, Scotsman, immigrant, New Yorker, colorful history – it's got it all. And treasure hunters have been searching for Kidd's treasure chest throughout the NY area on the Jersey shore, Gardiner's Island and even up the Connecticut coast.

While we don't normally associate pirates with New York, they were plentiful in the 1600's. Pirate money pulsed through New York. Here's a vivid account of NY in the late 1600s from Edwin G. Burrows' and Mike Wallace's Gotham: "This boodling was worth a

hundred thousand pounds a year to the city...Tavern keepers, whores, retailers and others flourished as buccaneers swaggered through the streets with purses full of hard money — Arabian dinars, Hindustani mohurs, Greek byzants, French louis d'or, Spanish doubloons.”

While Kidd the man left New York in 1696, his historical DNA and even a bit of ectoplasm can still be found throughout the Wall Street area. Ghost hunters have encountered the Captain in the churchyard of Trinity Church, his old haunt at Fraunces Tavern and near the site of his home near what is now the corner of Pearl Street and Hanover Square.

He might even show up on Ellis Island as rumor has it he made an appearance just a stone's throw away on Liberty Island. In 1825, two U.S. Army soldiers, Sergeant Gibbs and Private Woods, thought life had dealt them a winning hand. They were assigned to Fort Wood on Bedloe's Island (later renamed Liberty Island in honor of the Statue of Liberty). They spent their spare time at night hunting for buried treasure. When they opened a heavy metal box, Captain Kidd's spirit emerged. They fainted. When they regained consciousness, all they had was an empty box.

About Tartan Day on Ellis Island

Tartan Day on Ellis Island is one of the principal Scottish heritage events in the United States. Playing host to literally thousands of domestic and international visitors each day, it is the largest Tartan Day celebration in the world. Ellis Island is a fitting place to observe Tartan Day. The island and its historic buildings represent America's "Golden Door."

From 1892 to 1954, more than 12 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island. Although many Scots arrived during the colonial period of our history – helping to build the new nation - an additional half-million Scots came through Ellis Island. It has been estimated that 40% of Americans today can trace at least one ancestor's entry into the United States through Ellis Island.

Describing the annual program, noted Scottish journalist and author Roddy Martine reported that of all the Tartan Day events held in the United States, the Ellis Island observance has, "stood out as a beacon of what USA Tartan Day is all about: the emigrant ancestors of ordinary Americans who over three centuries crossed the Atlantic Ocean to create the world's greatest democracy."

Tartan Day on Ellis Island is produced by the Clan Currie Society - one of the preeminent Scottish heritage organizations in the United States. The Society began their successful collaboration with the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in 2002 in the coordination and sponsorship of their first Tartan Day celebration.

As part of the celebrations for Tartan Day 2011, the Clan Currie Society commissioned a specially designed Ellis Island Tartan© to mark the 10th Anniversary of Tartan Day on Ellis Island.



This beautiful tartan has been designed to be worn by all individuals that can trace an ancestor through Ellis Island.

Each color in the tartan reflects upon the American immigrant experience. The blue represents the ocean that had to be crossed to

reach the American shores. The copper-green is the color of the Statue of Liberty. The red depicts the bricks of the Ellis Island buildings where 12 million Americans took their first steps towards freedom. The gold is the "golden door" that is the United States of America and the dawn of a new life in America.

A birds eye view of sandy beaches and the Callanish standing stones around the beautiful Isle of Harris and Lewis.

I came across this video in an email I got in and thought you might enjoy it,

See <https://vimeo.com/118572356>

Electric Canadian

Added two videos about cooking and eating Lobsters to our Prince Edward Island page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/pei/index.htm>

The first just shows how to get the meat out and the second shows both how to cook them and how to eat them.

Electric Scotland

George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll K.G., K.T. (1823 - 1900)

Autobiography and Memoirs edited by the Dowager Duchess of Argyll with Portraits and Illustrations in two volumes.

We're now up to Chapter XXIII of Volume 1.

You can read this book as I get it up at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/argyll/argyllindx.htm>

Enigma Machine

Added puzzle 100 which you can get to at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/enigma/enigma100.htm>

As Hugh started at puzzle 11 he's now going to do 1 - 10 to complete the collection. He's also told me that when these are complete he's created a few more new ones to add to the collection.

Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, M.A.

We're now up to Chapter XV of this book. I mentioned in the last newsletter that we were about to publish a chapter on his time in Canada. Here is how that chapter starts...

1844 - 46

This chapter was kindly prepared by the late Rev. Robert Burns, D.D., professor of theology in Knox's College, Toronto, than whom none knew the field of labour better, or had done more to advance the work of Christ throughout its length and breadth. It is given with only such revision as the revered author would himself have given to it had he been spared to impart to it his final touch. Besides him, and chiefly through him, I am indebted also to the following friends who have assisted in furnishing the materials on which the narrative is based, viz. Rev. Alexr. Cameron, of the Free Church, Ardersier, formerly of Canada; Mr. Hector Macpherson, lay missionary at St. Martin's, Perthshire, formerly band-major of the 93d Sutherland Highlanders; Rev. Daniel Clark, of Indian Lands, Glengarry, Canada; Mr. Donald Catanach, of Lochiel, and his sister, Mrs. Kelly; Rev. Alexr. N. Somerville, of Anderston Free Church, Glasgow; Sergeant Long, formerly of the 93d, now of the Gymnasium, Glasgow; Mr. James Hosack, merchant, Quebec; the Rev. John Clugston, formerly of that city, now of Stewarton; Mr. William Macintosh, now of Belleville, C.W.; Rev. Farquhar M'Rae of Knockbain; Mrs. M'Nider, formerly of Montreal, now of Vincent Street, Edinburgh; Messrs. James Court, John Dougal, Thos. Allan, James Orr, R. M'Corkle, Montreal, and Famham.

OUR North American colonies had something like a hereditary claim on the services of Mr. Burns. It has been the lot of two of his near relatives to be engaged for a series of years in the service of the church in that important and thriving province of the British crown. His uncle, Dr. George Burns, of the Free Church at Corstorphine, was in 1817 called to be the first minister of the Church of Scotland in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, and, with a short interval, he laboured in that important sphere for the period of fourteen years; while another uncle, Dr. Robert Burns, formerly of Paisley, was for fifteen years secretary to the Glasgow Society for sending out Ministers and Teachers to the Colonies of British North America, and was himself for a quarter of a century employed, first as pastor, and afterwards as theological professor, at Toronto, in Canada West. The latter having arrived at Montreal in the spring of 1844 as one of the first deputies of the young, fresh, and already renowned Free Church of Scotland, the question was at once put to him, "Have you brought your nephew with you?" In fact, the revivals in Scotland were more spoken of in Canada than in Scotland itself, and the Free Church deputy carried home with him earnest commissions from the good people of Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and almost everywhere, for the presence and labours of Mr. Burns, and others of similar spirit. Written communications to the Colonial

Committee at Edinburgh had also preceded him; and when he reached Scotland in June of that year, he found that the proposal to visit Canada had been made to Mr. Burns, and that proposal having been seconded by the full information now given him, all difficulties were removed, and in the course of a few weeks Mr. Burns embarked in the brig Mary for Montreal, a free passage to and from Canada having been guaranteed to him by the generous Christian proprietors of the vessel. Mr. Burns sailed from Greenock to Montreal on the 10th August, 1844, and reached Montreal on Thursday, September 26th, of the same year. In this connection the names of Mr. James R. Orr, merchant in Montreal, and of Captain Kelso, the commander and proprietor of the vessel, deserve honourable mention. With the first of these gentlemen Mr. Burns stayed during the greater part of his residence in Montreal; and the names of both are associated with the first propitious dawning of the Free Church era in Canada.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/china/burns/index.htm>

Robert Burns Lives!

Edited by Frank Shaw

For those of you who have not seen the newsletter below, you will find it a small but true representation of how our Scottish Bard is celebrated in different places around the globe. It was thrilling to me to read the accounts and view the pictures. I am grateful to Mike Duguid for sharing the newsletter he is editor of and for his willingness to help shed more light on what the Burns Federation is about. Mike is a great guy and an excellent speaker on behalf of Burns and it is an honor to call him my friend. Thanks Mike and as I address the University of Glasgow graduates who are meeting in Washington, D C tonight and who have made this part of America their home, I will speak highly of you, which is not hard to do! FRS:3.5.15)

You can read this newsletter at http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives213.htm

Poetry by John Henderson

John has sent in a new poem, The BOVA Shows at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerels.htm>

Clan Wallace Society

Added their Winter 2015 newsletter at:

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

Robert Chambers

Added a number of books by this author which all provide really great information. Here are the books I added...

"**The Poetical Remains of Robert Chambers**" which I've added to the foot of his page at:

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

I've just added a link to the pdf book.

Also...

"**Select Writings of Robert Chamber's Popular Rhymes of Scotland**" (1847). I'm starting to add this book to his page and have added the first four sections.

John discovered this book and is sending it in chapter by chapter.

Also...

"**Traditions of Edinburgh**" which I've added to our page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/council/edinburgh.htm> as it provides some great reading about Edinburgh.

Also...

"**Picture of Scotland**" in 2 volumes (1827). I've added this publication to our Domestic Annals of Scotland page as there is great synergy with that publication as he also wrote that book as well.

An outstanding publication and here is the Preface to read here...

The complaint of Johnson regarding the hopelessness of fame which attended his lexicographical labours, has hitherto been common to the Industrious Obscure who busy themselves in the compilation of Tourist's Guides, Peerages, School-Books, and Almanacks. Such publications are usually anonymous, and the purchaser thinks no more of the unknown author than he thinks of the man who made his hat or tanned the leather of his shoes. Even when they bear an author's name, no distinct idea is attached to the words—

Philips perhaps, or Cafrey, or Goldsmith, or Debrett—any more than to the maker's name on the blade of a table-knife, or the still more hopeless initials so carefully impressed upon his work by the goldsmith.

An attempt is here made to elevate a topographical work into the superior region of the belles lettres. It has been forced upon the notice of the present author by the success of several similar but less comprehensive works, that an interest may attach to localities of such a sort as to excite and bring into play many of the higher order of sentiments which pervade our common nature. Cities are more than mere collections of houses and men; hills are not merely accidental eminences of the earth; rivers, fortuitous confluences of running waters ; stones, mere blocks. Such they might be when the primeval savage first set his foot amongst them; but such they are not now, after so long a connexion with the fortunes and feelings of civilised man. What is it that gives the sculptured stones of Greece a superior value to the unquarried marble over which they have risen? It is because, though both are alike as old as the creation, the former have received attentions at the hands of men a hundred ages agd, have been looked upon with veneration by millions of human beings, and yet remain monuments of their early power and ingenuity. A house may thus be more than a domicile, a hill more than an eminence, a river more than a stream of flowing water; and thus it is that, in the words of one who must have been perfectly acquainted with this occult philosophy, we may find

Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

Under these impressions, I have in this work, endeavoured to direct attention almost exclusively to what may be supposed capable of exciting the moral and imaginative faculties of my countrymen. Whatever places derive an interest from the associations of history; whatever places enjoy a reputation from popular poetry and song; wherever man has fought, or loved, or sung; wherever human nature has appeared in circumstances of extraordinary peril or pain, innocence or degradation; wherever talent has arisen or virtue flourished, magnificence dwelt or misery groaned; the fanes of religion, the scenery of passion, the infant-land of genius, the graves of the good; whatever has been associated with what man most delights to observe; whatever is capable, on being mentioned, of exciting an interest in his bosom; these places, and these things, receive most attention in the following pages.

To alleviate as much as possible, the gravity inseparable from topographical details, I have moreover interspersed thtt work with innumerable local anecdotes and stories, some of which are merely humorous, while others have the more valuable property of illustrating the manners and condition of the country in former times. In all that relates to the selection of materials, it has been my prime and governing object to be original; to say as little as possible where I could say nothing new, and to be as copious as my limits would allow, when I possessed information that was at once novel and agreeable.

It will be readily conceded, that these objects have not been attained without the employment of considerable pains. It would have been easy to copy the humdrum details and innumerable errors of my predecessors, as each and all of them have done in their turn. But to produce a work aiming at so much originality and correctness required a very different process. It scarcely becomes an author to speak at all, and far less with wide, of his labours; but it is perhaps allowable to Say something in the present case, in order that the reader may know to what extent ho is to rely upon the accuracy of the details which he has condescended to peruse.

Without alluding to previous historical studies, I may be permitted to state, that after employing several months of the last year in the perusal of former topographical publications and manuscripts, I began, in the early part of summer, to make a round of deliberate pedestrian tours through the country. Instead of the pilgrim's scallop in my hat, I took for motto the glowing expression of Burns, " I have no dearer aim than to make leisurely journeys through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her streams; and to muse by the stately towers of venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes." In order to secure an acquaintance with every remarkable locality, and with its popular legends, I carried letters from my city friends, giving me a claim upon the best offices of the most intelligent persons resident in the districts which I was to visit. I was thus generally successful in eliciting, over and above the kindness of many a worthy and true-hearted Scot, the best information that was to be had regarding all the more attractive localities of my native land.

Goldsmith speaks with just contempt of the travellers who are whirled through Europe in a post-chaise. I sedulously eschewed this practical absurdity. Except in cases where stage-coaches could convey me over a desolate and uninteresting tract, I constantly adopted the more deliberate and independent mode of locomotion, of which nature supplies the means. I had thus an opportunity of becoming familiarly acquainted at once with the face of the country and the traditions of the people; I could move fast or slow as I pleased, and make such digressions from the main route as seemed necessary. I traversed almost every vale in the lowlands of Scotland, and a greater proportion of those in the more northerly region. I saw all the towns except three or four. My peregrinations occupied upwards of five months, and extended to between two and three thousand miles.

In presenting this array of doings and sufferings to the public, I disclaim being influenced by the sentiment which caused Dogberry to assert himself "one that had bad losses." What I say is mere naked truth, told for the simple purpose of assuring the reader, that the work, he has now got into his hands is not the catch-penny compilation of a bookseller's bock shop ; no patched and contorted tissue of stolen rags, like too many similar publications; that it is not the crude fruit of a literary hot-bed, inflated into premature perfection by the bribe of a greedy publisher; but the result of an honest enthusiasm; an enthusiasm which the consideration of pecuniary profit could neither nourish nor inspire. I consider these assurances, moreover, the more necessary, because almost all the statements in

the following pages rest solely upon my personal credit —upon the idea which the public shall form of the pains I have taken, and the opportunities of observation I may be supposed to have enjoyed.

To say that enthusiasm could insure the production of a good work would be palpably absurd. It may however, be asserted, that it is indispensably requisite to the production of a work deserving that appellation in its best sense. Money alone, though a powerful, is after all but an imperfect inspiration; and the hooks which it creates are no more like the productions of a purer motive, than the dowdy flowers of a secluded city dunghill resemble those which spring from the fair primeval earth, generated by the natural juices of the ground, and freshened by the nightly risks of the loving dew.

It is not the intention of the present writer to say, that because he was not conducted through his labours by the hope of gain, he has found every difficulty successfully overcome by the mere ardour of his mind. He is certain, however, that that is the burning liquid which can melt down the obstructions upon which harder instruments had been tried in vain, and that, though it may not in this case have secured, its influence must at least give the chance of, success. It has been his wish from earliest boyhood, in the words of Burns,

"That he, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or book could make."

He has already done more than perhaps his years would give to expect, towards the preservation of what is dearest to her; the memory of her ancient simple manners and virtues; the celebration of her native wit and humour; and in a more extended view of the subject, for the reclamation of that which is altogether poetry—the wonderful, beautiful, glorious past. In the present work, he has steadily pursued the same object; conscious and certain that, though many of his own generation may not give him credit for so exalted a purpose, the people who shall afterwards inhabit this - romantic land will appreciate what could not have been preserved but with a view to their gratification.

Edinburgh; February 8, 1827.

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

Mackintosh's Cairn in Glentilt and its Legend

Found this wee pdf version of this article and have added it to our MacKintosh page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/mackint.html>

Scottish Society of Indianapolis

Got in a copy of their Spring 2015 newsletter which you can read at:

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

Picture of Edinburgh

Fourth Edition, By J. Stark (1825).

THE favourable reception which the PICTURE of EDINBURGH has already met with, has induced the Author and Publishers to render the present Edition still more deserving of Public attention. New and interesting details regarding the Public Institutions have been given, as well as accurate descriptions of the extensive recent and projected Improvements in and around the City. The Plan of Edinburgh by Mr KNOX has also been considerably improved.

Added this to the foot of our Edinburgh page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/History/edinburgh/>

Clans of the Brea d'Alban

A collection of Scottish Histories on Macnab, Dewar, Macnish and Associated Families Compiled and edited by David Rorer.

I got this letter in...

DAVID RORER

February 16, 2015

Alastair McIntyre Electric Scotland 167 Raleigh St Chatham, Ontario N7M 2NA Canada

Alastair:

On the enclosed CD, with the rather pretentious label of "Clans of the Brea d'Albane, a collection of Scottish Histories," you will find a series of documents that I think will make an excellent addition to the Electric Scotland Website. As the label indicates, these are

histories of the Clan Macnab, the Dewars of St. Fillian and the Clan Macnish of Bredalbane. MacNab, Dewar and Mcnishe each have separate folders. Within each folder, the number at the beginning of each individual file name indicates the order in which the documents are meant to be read.

Some of the Macnish documents are in PDF format the rest are in Microsoft Word .doc format. These are not copies of the original documents but my own versions, based on the originals. To aid the reader, footnotes and annotations have been added, to explain the historical context of events and the meaning of words with which the average reader may be unfamiliar.

This collection of documents represents nearly two decades of effort, which began as a project to share the, then out of print, history of the Clan MacNab with my own family. I started by turning that brief history into a Word document, then, to add to that outline, I began searching out other published sources and the project eventually grew to the comprehensive set of histories which you will find on the CD.

Unfortunately the entire project came to an end when the owners of the two Clan MacNab websites turned out to be total #####'s.... and I cut off all contact with them. I also came to the realization that much of the Clan MacNab history was fraudulent, as was set out by the Rev. William A. Gilles in his book "In Famed Breadalbane". The whole sordid story is set out in the file 001 .A Resignation in the Clan Macnab folder.

You have my permission to post as much or as little of the enclosed material on Electric Scotland in the form presented on the CD or modified however you see fit — I hope you will publish it all - and you may assign credit, also as you see fit.

If you do decide to upload any of this material to the Electric Scotland website please let me know — you can contact me at the e-mail address at...

David Rorer
Former Clan Macnab Clan Society Historian (Resigned)

And thus I now make available the documents David sent in by compiling each of the three collections into its own pdf file which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/rorer/index.htm>

The Bass Rock

It's History and Romance by R. P. Phillimore B. A. (1911). Added this book to our Lauders of Bass page at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/htol/lauder6.htm>

Hawick Songs and Songwriters

By Robert Murray, 3rd Edition, Published in 1897 which I've added to the foot of our Hawick page at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/hawick/>

Early Shipping in Scotland

I got a couple of emails in which brought up topics I had no information on...

Email 1.

Dear Mr. McIntyre,

I came across something in my research for a novel that involves Medieval Scotland that I was wondering if you could help learn more about. In his book Birlinn: Longships of the Hebrides (foreword by Magnus Magnusson), John Macaulay mentions the tairsearan fairge, also known as the Clann 'ic Mhanuis or the Clann 'ic Odrum nan Ron. He says they served as police over sailing traffic for the Lords of the Isles and did whaling and basking-sharking in the Atlantic from their base at Ha'sgeir. They sound like fascinating people, and I would love to include them in my novel, but I can't find anything else about them. A Google search for "Tairsearan fairge" brings up nothing. Can you help me with this?

Douglas Brown

Email 2

Dear Mr. McIntyre,

I came across another technical question in my research I was hoping you could help me with. My novel involves the Lordship of the Isles and especially its ships. I want to use the right terminology, but my sources are very contradictory as to what constitutes a birlinn, nyvaig, longfada, etc. It seems to always have something to do with number of oars, but they assign different numbers to each class of vessel. Moreover, I can't find a technical term for the 26-oar ships Robert the Bruce was so fond of requiring from his magnates or

for the 40-oar vessel the Campbells built. Can you give me any guidance here? Thank you.

Douglas Brown

I emailed David Thomson for help and he copied my email to a couple of his contacts one of which Alastair McIntosh sent on the email to John MacAuley.

John got back to us saying...

I am addressing this reply to yourself, which you can forward to one or all of the names below. I am not clear on who is doing what.

The source for what I wrote about the 'tarsairean fairge' is from the work of Angus J MacDonald and Professor Donald Fergusson:

Beyond the Hebrides. 1977

From the Furthest Hebrides. 1978

The Hebridean Connection. 1984

On Hebridean ship terminology, there is only one definitive term, 'BIRLINN', regardless of size or the number of oars, larger than a ten-oared vessel.

The term 'long-fada' pronounced lowngfada is a long-ship - a Norse vessel.

The term 'birlinn' pronounced beerlin, came from the Norse byrthing which differed to a long-ship in that it could be used for carrying cargo.

Many other names have appeared through translations from both Scottish and Irish Gaelic by non Gaidhlig speaking writers.

I hope this is helpful.

Regards,

John M.

And so many thanks to David and Alastair for helping and John for taking time to provide the information. This is how various articles get onto Electric Scotland and shows how many people help to obtain information which I then share on the site. All this happened within 24 hours of receiving the emails.

THE STORY

Rolfin's Orb

Rolfin's Orb is a story about three Scottish children who find a book and an orb in an abandoned castle. After studying the book, with help of their uncle, the children travel around the world, using a magic spell, to gather 12 stones to put in the orb and save the world from the evil wizard, Phelan. Come with them on their adventures as they battle monsters, ghosts and goblins.

I thought I'd give you the first chapter of this story as the whole collection consists of 13 books with 12-19 chapters per book and so this is Chapter 1 of the first book which helps to set the scene...

"Why does it always rain here?" Fiona complained to her mum. "I don't think we've had a dry day all year."

Mairi McAllister looked out the window, straining to see through the words, MacDunnie's Tea Room and an assortment of flowers and leaves painted with lavender and green paint across the glass. "Fiona, you know you love it here. Where else can you see rhododendrons that shade of pink?" She stood on her tiptoes for a better view, pointing to a flowering bush across the street. "Let's sit and have our tea."

The hostess seated them and brought two cups of steaming hot English tea. "Thank you, Flora. I know it's pretty here, Mum, but it's so boring. All it does is rain and there's nothing to do." Fiona sipped her tea and took a bite of a butter smothered raisin scone. "Pass me some of Mrs. MacDunnie's homemade orange marmalade, please."

"You'll not find scones and marmalade as tasty as this in a big city. I grew up not far from here and I survived just fine and so will

you." Mairi dabbed her mouth with the corner of her paper napkin.

Fiona took another bite of her scone and watched the oyster-gray clouds speed by, dropping rain from their puffy underbellies. "Don't get me wrong; I love it here in Inveralba, in a way. It's just that everyone is related to everyone else. I'd rather live in a big city where I could meet new people. Look around you, Mum. We're the only two people in here. It's always like this, boring."

An open sooty-black umbrella stopped in front of the door. As it folded up, Nellie McAllister Crawford pushed on the door and stepped inside. "Och, it's coming down in sheets." She shook the water off the umbrella. "Good day to you Fiona and to you too, Mairi. Do you mind if I sit down here with you?"

"Of course not, Nellie." Mairi pulled the third wobbly wooden chair out from under the table.

Nellie slipped the umbrella into the rack, put her raincoat over the back of the chair and sat down. "I think I'll have some tea and shortbread." Nellie looked up at Mrs. MacDunnie, who hovered about waiting for her order. After she'd left to get the hot tea, Nellie whispered to Fiona. "Her shortbread's nice, but not as good as mine."

Fiona giggled. "I know."

"How's my wee Fiona getting on these days?"

When she opened her mouth to answer, her mum interrupted her. "Fiona's tired of the rain and now she thinks she wants to live in the big city."

"Och, we all feel that way from time to time dear, but it will pass. I travel a lot, but I'm always glad to come home to Inveralba." Nellie patted Fiona's hand.

Fiona's eyes brightened. "You've traveled a lot? Have you been to Africa, or Australia, or America?"

Mrs. MacDunnie brought the tea and shortbread and set it on the table.

Nellie picked up a piece of the sugar sprinkled, buttery sweet and took a bite. "Very nice, Flora," she said, smiling at the shop owner.

Mairi couldn't help but chuckle.

"In answer to your question, Fiona, I'm afraid I have to disappoint you. The furthest away from Inveralba I've been is to Land's End in Cornwall. I go there now and then to visit my sister, Penelope. Och, it's lovely down there. I didn't have much time for travel while I was teaching school, but since my dear husband, Gavin, passed away, I've traveled a bit more. I've seen most of Britain and I've even been to Ireland, but never to Africa. It was your gran and granddad on your mum's side who did all the traveling." She looked over at Mairi and saw the sadness fall upon her face. "I'm sorry lass to mention your mum and dad. I know it's not been easy for you since Ian and Heather passed away in that horrible boating accident."

"It's all right, Nellie. Don't worry. They've been gone a long time. They did love to travel. Mum always said her favorite place was Egypt, but dad always said his was South Africa." Mairi smiled at the memory.

"You see, Fiona, I've been nowhere compared to them. Och no lassie." Nellie bit into another piece of shortbread.

They spent the next hour chatting away. Fiona listened to her mum and great aunt talk about roses, pansies, and the newest shades of wool. She sighed with boredom. When Nellie started talking about her sister, Catriona, Fiona's grandmother, Fiona lay her head down on her arms. Her father, Kenneth, had passed away five years ago in an accident. She'd heard the same stories over and over again. "Mum, where are all your relatives? I know Gran and Granddad died, but what about the rest of your family. Everyone here is related to Dad. When am I going to get to meet one of your cousins?"

"You will, someday." Mairi sipped her tea.

Fiona saw her mum's eyes puddle with tears, so she changed the conversation. "Callum and Elspet were born here too, weren't they, Mum?"

"They're McAllisters, aren't they? You're right, Fiona. We are all related." Seeing Fiona's evident boredom, Mairi said, "Oh good. I think the rain's stopped."

Fiona stood up and went to the window, wiping the condensation away with the sleeve of her blouse. "It has, Mum. Can we go now?"

Mairi said her goodbyes, paid the bill and then she and Fiona left. "The air smells so fresh here. Just look at this place. Tourists come from all over the world just to fish in our lochs and rivers and hike through our heather-covered hills." Mairi took a deep breath of the Scottish highland air. "Look at the River Alba. It's full of trout and sparkles in the sunlight. How many times have you gone fishing, or swimming in Loch Drool? Admit it, Fiona. You do love it here. I know you do." She watched the river flow under a stone bridge. "Dandelon Bridge has stood there for seven hundred years. They say the bridge was built about the same time as Castle Athdara, but I don't think it's been there that long."

Fiona couldn't argue. "There is nowhere on earth as beautiful as here. I know that, Mum." She looked at Loch Doon. Small islands dotted its ebony waters, each covered with oaks, aspen, birch and pine, now displaying their fall colors.

"Listen to the birds, Fiona. Have you ever heard a melody like that?"

"Okay, Mum. I get it. Yes, Inveralba is a wonderful place to live." Fiona burst out laughing when her mum looked at her with a shocked expression on her face. They walked hand in hand through the center of town. "Mum, have you ever been over to Castle Athdara?" Fiona saw the ruins in the middle of one of the larger islands.

"For all the years I've lived here, I've never stepped foot in that castle. There's something about it that gives me chills. I don't want you going there either, Fiona. It's an eerie place." The two of them stood in silence, staring at the crumbling ruins. Trying to brighten the conversation, Mairi said, "There's Dougal's Woolens." She squeezed Fiona's hand and ran across the street. They looked in the window. "Look how lovely these are. I love Arran cardigans and jumpers, don't you? Maybe we can ask Callum's mum to make you one for the winter. Would you like that?"

"I'd love one, Mum, but why don't you knit it for me? Elspet's and Callum's mums both knit. Almost everyone's mum in Inveralba knits, except mine." Fiona's eyebrows arched in disapproval.

"I like to think of myself as being unique. Knitting's just not my cup of tea. I prefer to do other things." Mairi walked on. "Take this shop, for instance, It Makes Scents. What a creative name for a shop that sells perfumed soap. I love going in here. Do you mind?"

"No, I don't mind. I think it's cool the way the soap is shaped like flowers and ducks and things. It smells nice too. My favorite is Morning Rose. It really smells like roses." When they went inside a bell tinkled. Fiona shut the door behind her. "It's like a flower garden in here."

"It does smell lovely, but I prefer the fragrance of the fresh flowers in our own garden. Have you ever gotten up early in the morning after it's rained all night and stood next to the rose bushes? It's heavenly, but you're right, the soap does smell nice." Mairi bought a bar of the rose-scented soap for her daughter and a bar of English Lavender for herself. As Arthur Dunn rang it up, Mairi whispered to Fiona. "It's for my underwear drawer. I like my under-things to smell pretty."

"Mum! Shh!" Fiona chuckled with embarrassment at the mention of underwear.

After they left the soap shop, they passed The Perfect Bee. "Fiona, I need to run in here for a few minutes and see if they're out of honey. Why don't you stand out here and wait for me. It's always so crowded in there. You can wave at the tourist buses." Mairi winked at her daughter.

While her mum shopped, Fiona peered in the window. She saw boxes of Highland Toffees, Cornish Fudge, tablet, and several jars of her mum's famous heather, bluebell, and thistle honey. A smiling bee darted across each jar's label and the tartan fabric on the tops coordinated with the ribbon tied around the lid. A tour bus drove by; its gears making an awful noise as it climbed the small hill. Fiona saw its reflection in the shop window. She turned around and waved.

"We're okay for another day or two. They've got six jars left. Are you hungry, or still full from your scone?" The bell hanging from the door tinkled as Mairi shut it behind her.

"I don't think I want to go to The Hogshead Inn, Mum. I'm too full for a pub lunch, but it smells good." Fiona knew her mum's favorite place to eat.

"Are you sure you don't want a bittie sandwich?" Mairi took a deep breath, imagining the salted, crispy, deep-fried chips on a bed of soft bread spread with creamy butter. "The fish and chips sound good too, so does the Ploughman's sandwich and shepherd's pie. Never mind, we'll use self control and eat at home."

They passed the Post Office, the railway station with its chugging engines and loud whistles of steam, and then Jimmy Noble's Grocers, which reeked of turnips, onions, potatoes and cabbages.

When Mairi saw the prices marked on the boxes of apples, she gasped. "It's a good thing we've got our own apple trees. Just look at

the cost! Jimmy should be ashamed of himself.” The sugary aroma floating out of McKenzie’s Bakery reminded Mairi she needed to come in to work later in the afternoon.

“Are you working tonight?” Fiona read her mum’s thoughts. “If you do, bring home some pastries and cakes. I really love cake with marzipan icing.”

“Don’t I always bring you a surprise, Fiona? I’m not sure about marzipan icing. We use marzipan mostly for wedding cakes. I’ll see what I can do though. We’d better watch ourselves or we’ll soon be getting fat.” She poked Fiona in the tummy. “Say, there’s McEwan’s Butcher Shop. Would you like haggis for supper tonight?”

Fiona nodded.

“I’ll be right back then.” Mairi disappeared into the shop and came out a few minutes later with a haggis in hand.

“Mum, there’s Elspet and Callum? Can I run and play for a while?” Fiona waved to her friends.

“Go ahead. Don’t be too long. Be home by five for supper. I’ve got to go to work, so please remember.” Mairi kissed Fiona on the cheek and the girl ran off.

“Elspet! Callum!” Fiona shouted, trying to catch their attention. She ran past several typical Highland village, gray stone houses. Water dripped from the black slate roofs, splattering on the cement sidewalks in front and the orange tipped marigolds and blue asters in the flower gardens in back.

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Mairi headed for home. A tour bus pulled up in front of her as she stepped from the curb, about to cross Methven Street.

“Excuse me, Miss.” A man called to her as he jumped from the bus’s open door. “Can you tell me where I might find someone who could show us the best place to fish around here?”

Mairi stopped. He’s a real looker. Embarrassed by her thoughts, she said, “Callum McAllister’s dad, Malcolm, is a gillie. He knows the best hunting and fishing spots in and around Inveralba. Would you like his telephone number?”

“That would be wonderful. My name’s Johnny Thomson. I’m visiting from London. And you are?”

“I’m Mairi McAllister.”

“Hello Mairi.” Johnny squeezed her hand. “You must be related to Malcolm then.”

“Everyone’s related to each other in this town, Mr. Thomson.” Mairi scribbled on a piece of paper she’d pulled from her purse. “Here’s the address. Just tell him Mairi sent you. Will you be in town long?” Why did I ask that?

“My brother, Jimmy, is meeting me here sometime in the next day or two. We’ll be staying here for about a week, maybe longer. I hope to see you again.”

The bus driver stood on the steps and whistled to Johnny, who waved back.

“If you’ll excuse me, Mairi.” He ran to the bus.

I wonder if he’s married. He’s the handsomest man I’ve seen around here in years and no ring either. Stop that, Mairi McAllister. Stop that right now! She waved, crossed the street, and disappeared around the corner.

You can read these books at http://www.electricscotland.com/kids/rolfins_orb/index.htm

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

Alastair