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WHATS NEW

## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for January 1st, 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

Wishing you all a Very Happy New Year!!!

As I was completing this newsletter I noted that our friends in Australia and New Zealand had already celebrated their New Year.

#### ADVICE ON ENTERING A NEW YEAR

This advice comes from the publication "Good Words", published in 1860, which was edited by Rev. Norman MacLeod, Queen Victoria's Scottish Minister, and in the first editorial of that years publication which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/goodwords/index.htm> he offers some advice...

Here is his advice...

1. Let a short portion of time—say half an hour at least—be spent each day this year in private prayer, in reading God's Word, and, if possible, some devotional book.
2. Let it be the great spiritual work of the year to become better acquainted personally with Jesus Christ as the living and ever-present Friend, Brother, and Saviour.
3. Endeavour to concentrate your efforts to do good upon some definite unselfish work in your family or out of it, which may help others, as it certainly must help yourself.
4. In all things try to live more towards God, seeking His approval of your inner and outer life. The less you talk about yourself or your doings before men, the better for yourself and for them.
5. Aim this year at being a peacemaker between professing Christians; to allay disputes, and to heal breaches among friends and relations; and to make men respect and esteem each other more.
6. Do not leave behind you in the old year guilt unpardoned, but believe in Jesus for the remission of sins; nor enter a new year with sin loved and cherished, but accept of and rely upon His Spirit to sanctify you. Begin the year without enmity to any man on earth, "forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, even so do ye."
7. If you are the head of the house, resolve to read a portion of God's Word once a day at least to the family; and either read or offer up, always with them, a short but hearty prayer.
8. Endeavour to keep an account of your income and expenditure, that you may be able to live justly and generously. Give what you can to assist poor relatives, and poor Christians, and the Church of Christ. Try this one year to tax yourself ten per cent. on your free income for such purposes.

Learn to do these things, and many more will the Lord teach thee to know and do; and may the God of love and peace be with thee!

### Storm in Chatham

Part of a tree fell on my home this week and took down the power line so took around 24 hours to restore the power as it took time to remove the tree so that Hydro could get access. Some minor damage to part of the roof and gutters and the porch which will be dealt with after the New Year.

Now here are stories from the Scottish Press this week...

### Highlands to get Neolithic inspired planetarium

Architect Ian Begg, plans to build a planetarium based on ancient carved stones.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/highlands-to-get-neolithic-inspired-planetarium-1-3988382>

### Alex Salmond: Iran could be valuable ally

Iran is the sleeping economic giant of the Middle East.

Read more at:

<http://www.thecourier.co.uk/opinion/columnists/alex-salmond-iran-could-be-valuable-ally-1.917369>

### More pupils going to school hungry

An increasing number of pupils in Scotland are going to school hungry

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-35196452>

### This place just seeps into your soul

The locals of Easdale in Argyll hope a stunning video and the world stone-skimming contest will encourage more settlers to join them

Read more at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/27/easdale-argyll-video-island-settlers-scotland>

### Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo set for overseas tour

Organisers of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo are preparing to take the event on tour every two years

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/edinburgh/royal-edinburgh-military-tattoo-set-for-overseas-tour-1-3985639>

## Electric Canadian

### Historic Sketches of the Pioneer Work

Missionary, Educational and Benevolent Agencies of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1903)

You can download this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/Religion/historicsketches00canagoog.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

### Lyric Gems of Scotland

A collection of Scottish Songs, original and selected with music.

John Henderson sent me in a copy of this book and we've created a page where you can read and listen to one of the songs in it called "A Guid New Year to Ane and A': which you can get to at:

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

### A Garland of Christmas Carols

A great wee book of Christmas Carols (pdf)

You can download this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/bible/carols.pdf>

A letter on the Murison family

The family are from Scotland and Canada.

You can read this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/minibios/m/murison.htm>

Elliots

Got in a communication on the Elliots which you can read at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/dtog/markelliott2.htm>

Royalty

I decided to add a wee compilation of videos to our page about Queen Victoria at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/leaves/index.htm>

John Galt

Found a good wee book about John Galt which I've added to his Significant Scot page at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/johngalt.htm>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in Section 1 of the January issue which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Genealogical Notes on the family of Broun

By J. V. Nicoll (1884). Added a link to this book from our page on Brown in the Scottish Nation at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/brown.htm>

Ian MacLaren

Added three more books for you to read by this author at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/History/doctor/index.htm>

## THE STORY

I thought this would make a great story for you to enjoy over New Year as it shows how New Year was celebrated in the Highlands in the old days.

### NEW YEAR IN THE OLD STYLE IN THE HIGHLANDS

Our Mr Chisholm sat at his parlour fire after a hearty New Year dinner. His wife occupied the cosy armchair in the opposite corner; and gathered round them were a bevy of merry grand-children, enjoying New Year as only children can. Their parents were absent at the moment, and the family group was completed by a son and daughter of the old couple.

Mr Chisholm was in a meditative mood, looking into the bright blazing fire. "Well," he observed at last with an air of regret, "The New Year is not observed as it was when we were children, wife. It's dying out, dying out greatly. When these children are as old as we are there will be no trace of a Christmas or a New Year holiday. What did you say you had been doing all day Bill?" he asked, turning to his son.

"Shooting," said Bill, "and deuced cold I was. Catch me trying for the 'silver medal and other prizes' another New Year's Day."

"Shooting may be interesting" said Mr Chisholm, "but as you say it is cold work. We had sometimes a shot at a raffle in my young days, but usually we had more exciting business. Shinty my boy, shinty was our great game," and Mr Chisholm looked as if he greatly pitied the degeneracy of the latter days.

"I have played shinty myself" said Bill, "and I see it is still played in Badenoch and Strathglass, and among wild Highlanders in Edinburgh. But it's too hard on the lungs for me, and besides we never play it here."

"The more's the pity, Bill. There's no game ever I saw I could compare to shinty. Talk about cricket, that's nothing to it. Shinty was suited to a New Year's day; it kept the spirits up and the body warm. I should like to have a turn at it yet—wouldn't I run?" And the old man's heavy frame shook as he chuckled at the idea. "However, there's no use speaking; is tea ready wife?"

"No, and it won't be for half-an-hour yet, perhaps longer" said Mrs Chisholm. "You know we have to wait Bella and John," indicating her married daughter and her husband.

"Then," said the old man, "come here bairns and I shall tell you how I spent one of my early New Year's days."

"Yes, do, grandfather," shouted a happy chorus; "now for a story."

“Not much of a story” replied Mr Chisholm, “but such as it is you shall have it. I was born and bred in the country, you know, my father being a small farmer. The district was half-Lowland, half-Highland, and we mixed the customs of both. At that time shinty was a universal winter game, and greatly we prided ourselves on our smartness at the sport. And it was a sport that required a great deal of smartness, activity, strength, presence of mind, and a quick sure eye. Many a moonlight night did the lads contend for the honour of hailing the ball. On this particular day there was to be a match between two districts, twenty men a-side, and the stake £5 and a gallon of whisky. Our leader was a carpenter, named Paterson, who was the hero of many a keenly contested shinty match.

“The eagerly expected morning at last arrived. The New Year was taken in by the young folk trying for their fortune in ‘sooans.’ Bless me bairns, don’t you know what ‘sooans’ is? No; then the thin sooans was made for drinking like good thick gruel; the thick was like porridge, but that we never took on a Christmas or New Year morning. About four o’clock I came down to the kitchen, and there found my mother superintending the boiling of the ‘sooans,’ and the place filled with the servants, girls, and men, and some of our neighbours. My friend Paterson, who had an eye to one of the servants (a pretty country lassie) had walked four miles to be present. Wishing them all a happy Christmas I sat down to share the ‘sooans’ with the rest.

“‘Well Paterson,’ said I, ‘how do you feel this morning? Nothing, I hope, to interfere with your running powers.’

“‘No thank ye, Willie,’ said he, ‘I’m as supple as a deer.’

“‘Supple enough,’ said one of the men with a grin; ‘he was here first this morning. Wasn’t he, Maggie?’

“‘‘Twould be lang afore ye were first,’ retorted Maggie; ‘the laziest loon on the whole country side.’

“By this time the ‘sooans’ were ready, and we were all unceremoniously turned out of doors. In our absence ten bowls were filled. In two of these a ring was placed, signifying, of course, speedy marriage; a shilling put into two others represented the old bachelor or old maid; and a half-crown in another represented riches. Called in, we had each to choose a dish, beginning at the youngest. Great was the merriment as we drained our dishes, but at the last mouthful or two we paused, as if afraid to peer into dark futurity.

“‘Here goes,’ exclaimed Paterson first of all, and he emptied his dish. At the bottom lay a shilling, which he exhibited amidst a general shout of laughter.

“‘What have you got Maggie,’ was the next exclamation. With a titter Maggie produced a ring.

“‘And here’s the other ring’ cried Jock, the ‘laziest loon in the country side.’ ‘Maggie, you’re my lass for this year anyway.’

“Maggie tossed her head in superb disdain.

“‘I’ll try my luck now,’ said I, and drained my dish. My luck was to get the second shilling. So you see wife, though I got you I was intended to be a bachelor. The half-crown, I think, fell to a man who could never keep a sixpence in his purse.

“After breakfast we started for the place of meeting. Our men joined us one by one, and many more came to see the game. As we passed the cottages the girls called to us to see that we supported the honour of the place, and returned victorious, to which we replied ‘ay, that we will,’ and flourished our clubs with vigour. Before we reached the appointed ground the procession had greatly increased in numbers, and a large crowd at the spot welcomed us with tossing up of bonnets and rounds of cheering. Soon afterwards our opponents arrived, headed by a piper, and their leader Jack Macdonald. Their appearance also excited hearty cheering, and preliminaries were soon arranged.

“The sides were very equally matched. Macdonald was an active young ploughman, who came neatly dressed in a velveteen jacket and corduroy trousers, the latter adorned with rows of buttons. Paterson, of course, was our mainstay; and besides him, we had an innkeeper, as stout and round as one of his own barrels, who, singular to say, was a capital shinty player. Our opponents had the assistance of an enthusiastic schoolmaster, who, even in those days, encouraged sports among his pupils, in spite of the remonstrances of some of the wiseacres. Our clubs were carefully selected. Some preferred a sharp square crook, some a round one, just as they happened to excel in hitting or ‘birling’—that is, in getting the ball within the bend, and running it along upon the ground. The ball, composed of cork and worsted, was at once strong and elastic.

“The hails, four hundred yards apart, were duly measured out and marked by upright poles. Then the players ranged themselves in the centre of the field, Macdonald and Paterson hand to hand; and at the understood sign the ball was thrown down and the strife commenced. I don’t know whether the rules were the same in all places, but with us no kicking or throwing of the ball was allowed. We could stop it by any means we pleased, but we could strike it forward only with our clubs. The players were ranged in opposing ranks; and it was against all rule for a player, even in the heat of contest, to turn round to his opponents’ side, though he might, by so doing, obtain a more convenient stroke. Should such a thing happen, the roar of “Clipsides ye” from a dozen throats, and the thwack of two or three clubs on his legs would soon apprise the unlucky individual of his fault.

“As long as the ball was in the midst of the players there was great scrambling and confusion. The lads pushed and shouted; club stuck fast in club; and the ball was tossed from side to side without any advantage to either party. Paterson watched his opportunity, and cleverly picking the ball from the other clubs, he gave it a hasty stroke which brought it close to me, eagerly waiting for it outside the thick of battle. In a moment I had caught it, and sped along the field, ‘birling’ rather than hitting, followed by the whole troop, cheered by my friends and stormed at by my opponents. Macdonald, rushing fast and furious, first came up and seized my club with his as I was about to administer a stroke. For a second or two we were both helpless; Macdonald first succeeded in extricating his weapon, and struck the ball backwards two or three yards. The other players were almost upon us, when I struck up Macdonald’s club, caught the ball again and shot a-head. Macdonald overtook me with a few bounds, for he was now thoroughly roused and heated; but stretching too far to hit the ball he fell on his knee. The schoolmaster, however, was now upon me, and the ball was hurled back by him among the troop of players. Macdonald had sprung to his feet almost in an instant, and darted back to the contest.

“Again the scene of confusion recommenced. Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, swayed the excited crowd, every face flushed, and every muscle strained to the utmost. Shins and arms received some awkward blows in the strife, but no one cared as long as the injuries were unimportant. Macdonald at last succeeded in pulling out the ball, and getting it for a moment into a clear space, he delivered a tremendous blow, which drove it far on the road to hail. There was a race who should reach it first. Paterson succeeded, and drove the ball far down the field, but out of the direct way and into a whin bush. ‘Hands,’ shouted his nearest opponent; and at this call the stout innkeeper, who was nearest the bush, caught up the ball and brought it into the open field.

“‘High or low’ said the innkeeper, holding his club in his right hand and the ball in his left.

“‘High,’ said his opponent.

“The ball was immediately thrown into the air and both tried to strike it as it fell. The innkeeper was successful, but the blow was necessarily a feeble one, and carried the ball but a few yards.

“The contest continued during the greater part of the day, neither side being able to claim a decided advantage. During a momentary pause Paterson flung off his boots, sharp frost as it was, and was followed by Macdonald, the innkeeper, and myself. The innkeeper freely regaled himself from his pocket-flask, and actually became more eager and active. Late in the afternoon he got a-head with the ball, and skipped forward, sometimes ‘birling’ and sometimes hitting it, until he was within twenty yards of hail. Another blow would have finished the match, when Macdonald caught the ball and ran back with it, most wonderfully eluding all the clubs, now wielded by arms for the most part greatly fatigued. Paterson, thrown off his guard by the suddenness of the movement, was left behind. The innkeeper pursued Macdonald closely—so closely, indeed, that his bulky body obstructed all movements but his own. Macdonald was in high spirits, when, running against an opponent in front, he turned round for a moment to our side to secure a better stroke. The innkeeper, foaming with rage and disappointment, roared out ‘Clip-sides ye,’ and administered a blow to Macdonald’s leg that caused him to halt for an instant. That halt was fatal. I darted past and hoisted the ball to Paterson, who seized it and carried it easily through the now scattered ranks of our opponents. Once out into the open field it was a direct chase. Paterson had better wind than any man on the field, and having got so far ahead he made the most of his advantage. Macdonald pursued him hotly. Twice he came up with Paterson, twice he struck at the ball, and both times struck the ground just as the object of his pursuit was carried forward by our leader’s weapon. After that all was over. Paterson took the ball to within twenty yards of hail, and then with a well-directed blow sent it between the winning posts. A loud shout rent the air. In the excitement of the moment I attempted leapfrog over the stout innkeeper, and both came to the ground.

“After this the whisky was broached, and mutual healths followed. The game had been so well contested that there was no ill-feeling; and we promised, to give our opponents an opportunity of revenge another day. Late at night we returned to my father’s house, where a good supper was spread for us in the barn. A hearty dance followed, and so New Year’s Day, old style, came to a close. Don’t you think it was a jovial day?”

“Not a doubt about it ” said Bill, “only the sport was rather rough. Do you really mean to say that you threw off your boots for the play?”

“That we did my boy in the heat of the match, and it was not so unusual as you may suppose. Highlanders were tough lads in those days, and they didn’t fear a blow or a bruise.”

“Did many accidents happen?” asked Bill. “When clubs were swinging about freely I should think heads were in danger.”

“Serious accidents were rare” replied Mr Chisholm. “Ankles and legs and hands did get some smart knocks, but heads generally escaped. In the thick of the strife there was no use swinging clubs in the air. We could only push and thrust, and pull the ball out with the crook. In a race we struck as we ran, giving short rapid strokes; and when a player delivered a sweeping blow, he had generally space for the swing of his club. I remember a boy getting his face laid open by an awkward fellow; but such an occurrence was rare among experienced players. We could handle our clubs as you handle your guns—scientifically. There are not usually many casualties at a shooting match—eh Bill?”

“But, grandfather, what came of Paterson?” asked little Mary. “Did he marry Maggie?”

“Oh, that’s the subject of interest to you, lassie. No, he didn’t. Women are always contrary. Maggie married the ‘lazy loon’ Jock; he made the most of his good fortune in getting the ring, and the marriage was long cited as a proof of the unfailing certainty of the oracle.”

“Grandfather,” cried Henry, “have you made us the totum? Didn’t you used to play the totum on New Year’s Day?”

“That we did boy ” said Mr Chisholm. “The youngsters thought it a capital game, and the elders did not refuse to join in it. Yes, Harry, I made you the totum, and by-and-bye we shall have a game.”

“Let us have it now ” cried the children springing up in eager excitement. “Let us have it now; we have all brought our pins.”

Mr Chisholm cheerfully acquiesced. The group gathered round a little table, each with a stock of pins displayed, to be staked on the game now about to be commenced. Look at the totum as Harry takes it up and balances it between the thumb and second finger of the right hand. It is only a piece of wood about half an inch long, cut away to a sharp point below, and having a slender spike thrust in at the top to serve as a handle. It is four square, and a letter is carved on each side—namely, “T,” “D,” “N,” and “A.” Each player stakes a single pin, and each in rotation gets his chance of whirling the totum. If, after whirling, the totum falls with the letter “A” uppermost, all the stakes become the prize of the player; if “T” is the uppermost letter he only takes one; if “N” appears he gets nothing at all; while “D” obliges him to contribute a pin from his private stock to the heap in the centre. Every whirl comes to be watched with as much eagerness as if a fortune depended on the result.

The nature of the game having been made sufficiently plain, Mr Chisholm leads off with a whirl which sends the totum spinning round so fast as to be almost invisible; but gradually relaxing its speed it falls at last, exposing upon its upper surface the letter “N,” carved, if not with elegance, at least with sufficient plainness to show that it is a veritable “N” and do other letter of the alphabet.

“Nickle nothing,” shout the children, as they clap their hands with delight.

Then Harry takes his turn. He holds the totum very carefully between his finger and thumb, poising it with intense gravity; then looks at the letter next him, twirls the toy backward and forward, and finally propels it by a sudden jerk from his fingers. It whirls like a top for a few seconds, watched by eager faces, and ultimately falls with the letter “D” uppermost.

“D put down” bursts from the merry group; and the boy looks very disappointed as he withdraws a pin from his private stoek and places it among the general deposit. Grandfather enters into the fun with as much enthusiasm as the children, and the spirit of gambling has taken possession of the New Year party.

The smallest girl—four years old—next takes the totum. She places it between the thumb and forefinger, screws her mouth to make an effort, and placing the point on the table gives it a whirl. It goes round three or four times with a convulsive staggering motion, and at last falls, “A” uppermost, amidst a general shout of laughter and applause.

“A, take them all—Lizzy has got the pins” and the surprised and happy child, proud of her success, gathers the heap to her own stock, while the others each replace a stake.

So the lively little game proceeds amidst varying success. Possessions grow and diminish as the totum makes its rounds; and before the game ends Mr Chisholm is reduced to his last pin. He holds it up with rueful countenance, confessing himself a ruined man, while the children clutch their treasures, and boast of their success.

“Grandfather is beaten — is beaten at the totum” cried Mary as her father and mother at length arrived. “He showed us how to play, and look at the pins we have gained.”

“May you always be as happy with your gains,” said the old man resuming his paternal attitude. “Now you know how we spent our Old New Years. Sooans and shinty, and the totum—they were all simple maybe, but there was pleasure in them all. Many a heart was lost at the ‘sooans’; many a hand made strong at shinty; and many a little head got its first notion of worldly competition from the totum. Take your seats, hoys and girls, for here’s the tea!”

KNOCKFIN.

Should you want to learn more about Shinty visit:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/sport/shinty1.htm>

You can also learn more about the game of Totun at:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teetotum>

A kind of bread used to be baked of mashed potatoes and oat meal. It was baked in the usual way, and had the name of "tatie bread" or "tatie scones." I thought I'd mention this as tattie scones are usually made with potatoes and flour but not oats. This wee fact came from the book "Kilns, mills, millers, meal and bread which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/men/kilnsmillsmiller00greg.pdf>

And that's it for this week and hope you all have a Happy New Year and enjoy your long weekend.

Alastair