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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for June 16th, 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

Clearly there was a lot of news reports on the UK elections this week but I mostly spare you from this in this weeks news reports although there are many on our ScotNews feed on our index page.

Found a grand wee book about the Albany Burns Club and it's an amazing read. I have to say if these Burns Clubs were making the kind of supper available today as they did in their day I'd definitely go.

A video introduction to this newsletter can be viewed at:
https://youtu.be/pX0D_BSnkYQ

And this one is only 13 minutes so getting shorter :-)

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.

Bridie banger surges to victory in Forfar sausage poll

And as dawn broke on Friday, loons (and lassies) were celebrating after a bridie sausage took the honours in the toon's banger ballot.

Read more at:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/angus-mearns/445474/election-special-bridie-banger-surges-to-victory-in-forfar-sausage-poll/>

So long Alex Salmond

You had a very good innings but your era is over

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/long-alex-salmond-you-very-10596093>

Brit scientist could be about to CURE multiple sclerosis

Dr Su Metcalfe and her team at LIFNano believe they have found the cure for the devastating condition, multiple sclerosis

Read more at:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/science-technology/brit-scientist-could-cure-multiple-10572223>

Glasgow murals leave Billy Connolly flabbergasted
The tribute portraits have been created in his native city of Glasgow to mark the Big Yin's 75th birthday.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-40239903>

General Election 2017: The Scottish Constituencies
A quick crunch of the figures and some throwaway observations:

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2017/06/general-election-2017-scottish.html>

White bread: why it's OK to eat it again
That expensive artisan loaf you've been buying? It might be worse for you than sliced white

Read more at:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/times2/white-bread-its-ok-to-eat-it-again-mbf6shpzc>

It's all she's got
The political future of Nicola Sturgeon

Read more at:

<http://www.scottishreview.net/KennethRoy280a.html>

Eigg toasts 20 years since community buyout
Over the 20 years, Eigg's population has grown from 64 to more than 100 residents for the first time in its recent history.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-40258975>

Profile: Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson
But who is she?

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40246332>

SNP accused of systematic avoidance of scrutiny
Only one SNP MSP contributes to debate calling for inquiry into FOI practice

Read more at:

<https://www.holyrood.com/articles/news/snp-accused-%E2%80%98systematic-avoidance-scrutiny%E2%80%99-government?>

Highland Games season underway
Where can you see them?

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/regions/inverness-highlands-islands/highland-games-season-underway-but-where-can-you-see-them-1-4475829>

Grenfell Tower fire: Scottish councils to review fire safety
The catastrophic fire which hit Grenfell Tower in London has prompted action from Scottish authorities to ensure that their high rise residential blocks are safe.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/grenfell-tower-fire-scottish-councils-to-review-fire-safety-1-4476111>

Scottish Police Authority: A turbulent beginning
In May this year, an under-pressure Andrew Flanagan told a committee of MSPs that now was not the time for him to step down as chairman of the Scottish Police Authority

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40275183>

The Scot who founded the Buick motor company

The iconic luxury of Buick motors have the distinction of being the oldest American brand of automobiles, but Scotland has the honour of being home to its founder.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/people-places/the-scot-who-founded-the-buick-motor-company-1-4476790>

Electric Canadian

The Bruce Beckons

The Story Of Lake Huron's Great Peninsula by William Sherwood Fox (1952) which I've added to the foot of our page on the County of Bruce which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/ontario/bruce/Bruce-Beckons.pdf>

The History of the County of Welland in Ontario

There is more to this town that you might imagine and this can be read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/ontario/stories/welland.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

A better week for the Canadian government than their American or British analogues

<http://www.conradblack.com/1302/a-better-week-for-the-canadian-government-than>

Trump Wins Another Battle but the War of Attrition Continues

<http://www.conradblack.com/1303/trump-wins-another-battle-but-the-war>

Electric Scotland

The Forfar Directory and Year Book

A most interesting publication with lots of wee stories and articles. I have now added the 1909 edition which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/forfar/direct/>

Miscellany of the Maitland Club

Consisting of Original Papers and Other Documents illustrative of the History and Literature of Scotland in 3 volumes

I've made the contents pages available for Volume 2 so if any of that interests you then you can download the volume at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/mait.htm>

Recreational Reading and the Reluctant Reader

The primary aim of this project was to stimulate interest in reading for pleasure. You can read this short paper at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/education/reading.pdf>

The People's Year Book for 1918

An annual of useful information prepared by the Co-Operative Press Agency - First Year of Publication. We're adding several issues to the foot of our page on our History of the Barrhead Co-operative Society Ltd. page.

Some of you might remember the DIVY book that the Scottish Co-op gave out. This was usually the property of the woman of the house as she would present the book when paying for the groceries and any other services the local co-op offered. In my families case we used the co-op painter to do painting work in the home and they also had furniture stores, travel agents and funeral parlours. The co-op movement was very powerful in Scotland so when I found this year book I decided it would be of interest so added a link to it from the foot of our existing book which you can read at:

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

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in the July 2017 section 2

Beth has done a feature story about Romilly Squire of Rubislaw, heraldic artist, who died December last year.

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

The Albany Burns Club
By David M. Kinnear (1919) (pdf)

Truly great wee book and they are reckoned to be the oldest Burns Club in America.

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

The Story

I keep getting asked about what a "hard" as opposed to a "soft" Brexit means. I found this article and thought it did an excellent job of explaining things so here it is...

There is no "soft Brexit": it does not exist as a serious or credible option
Written by Martin Howe QC

[Martin Howe is a leading barrister in the fields of intellectual property and EU law. He was called to the bar in 1978 and became a QC in 1996. He is Chairman of Lawyers for Britain.]

Just under two months ago, the UK looked as if it was on a strong and stable path to a good exit from the European Union. This would restore our legal and constitutional independence, and also restore independence in economic choices over our domestic economy and our trade with the fast growing and ever more important markets in the rest of the world. The Act of Parliament authorising Article 50 notification was passed in the end with large majorities in both the Commons and the recalcitrant Lords. Article 50 notification was given to the European Council, triggering our automatic exit from the EU on 29th March 2019.

It was foreseeable that there would be bumps in the road, both in negotiations over exit terms and future relations with the EU, and with the complex legislation necessary to implement Brexit. It was foreseeable that there could be difficulties in the Commons and the Lords, but with a nominal overall majority of 12, and the ability to supplement that if called upon with the aid of other allies from Northern Ireland and some Brexit supporters on the Opposition benches, these were difficulties that could and should have been weathered.

On 18th April, the Prime Minister reversed her previously much-repeated position that there was no need for a General Election until 2020, and announced a snap election for 8th June. She gave as her reason that it was "necessary to secure the strong and stable leadership in the national interest" in order that the Government's plans for Brexit could be carried through with the support of a greater majority in the House of Commons.

The General Election results speak for themselves. A General Election has been held for which there was no need, and it has resulted in the elimination of the Government's previous overall majority. What may yet prevent this calamitous and entirely self-inflicted disaster from turning into a catastrophe is the prospect of the pro-Brexit Democratic Unionist Party entering into a support arrangement with a Conservative minority government. On a wing and a prayer, this could be just enough to enable the government to keep going through to Brexit day on 29th March 2019 and to get the necessary legislation through Parliament.

It is a matter between the Conservative Party and its leader to assess the competence with which the Conservative election campaign was conducted and indeed whether it is now possible for her to continue in office as Prime Minister. As a non-party/cross-party group, Lawyers for Britain does not express opinions on these subjects. However, we do have strong opinions on the merits of the Brexit-related issues which featured, or rather did not feature, during the campaign.

Although Brexit was supposedly central to the election campaign, it is quite remarkable how little the Conservative campaign, or speeches by the Prime Minister or other Ministers, featured the actual merits of the Government's Brexit policies as compared with the Brexit policies of the opposition parties. The focus was almost entirely on the personal qualities of the Prime Minister versus Jeremy Corbyn to conduct negotiations with the EU.

As we pointed out in our own pre-election analysis of the manifestos, there was a massive difference between the kinds of post-Brexit arrangements favoured by the Government and those favoured by the opposition parties. The Conservatives advocated seeking a comprehensive free trade agreement with special customs arrangements, and Labour and the Lib Dems sought to stay inside the EU's customs union and the EU single market after we cease to be an EU Member State.

Admittedly the differences between customs unions, internal markets and external trade agreements are highly technical matters to

explain to the general public. But the British public are a great deal more intelligent than some politicians give them credit for. The Government reached the decision not to seek to remain in either the EU customs union or the internal market before the Prime Minister's Lancaster House speech in January 2017, but little attempt was made to explain to the media or the public the reasons for this decision. It is a crying shame that no serious attempt was made to explain and expose the massive consequences for this country if it were to stay inside the customs union or the single market, either before or during the General Election campaign.

It is a crying a shame because the vacuum has allowed a total myth to be propagated. That myth is that it would be economically better for the UK to stay inside the customs union and/or the single market, and that it is only pointless ideology or an obsession with curbing immigration at all costs which accounts for the Government's rejection of these options. In addition, an ill-thought out notion is gaining ground that post-Brexit membership of the customs union and/or single market in some way represents a "soft" Brexit which is a concession to the wishes of those who voted Remain, as compared with a supposedly damaging "hard" Brexit.

It is a crying shame because none of these arguments withstands a moment's serious scrutiny and analysis. Post-exit membership of the EU internal market and of the customs union would put us in a limbo-land where we would be rule-takers, bound by huge restrictions on our economic and political freedom of action according to rules on which we would no longer have a vote, and which could be altered seriously to our disadvantage in future.

Since we would no longer have a vote on the internal market rules on financial services, we would be powerless to prevent them being changed even further to the disadvantage of our financial services industry in the City and in other major centres such as Edinburgh in furtherance of a misguided protectionist attempt to bolster Eurozone financial services. And we would be totally prevented from undertaking supply-side reforms of the regulatory burdens imposed on our domestic economy and international trade by the EU internal market rules. We would be required to submit to our laws to being automatically overturned by rulings of the EFTA court which simply shadows the ECJ,

Customs union membership would oblige us to continue to charge high tariffs on types of goods where we have no UK industry to protect, for the sole advantage of producers in EU states. British consumers would pay the cost of the tariffs through higher prices, but we would have to continue to hand over to Brussels 75% of the tariffs borne by our consumers. Even more catastrophically, customs union membership would totally prevent us from entering into trade agreements with non-EU countries who now represent over 55% (and growing) of our export markets.

On the other side of the ledger, the supposed economic advantages of customs union and internal market membership are grossly oversold. Tariff-free trade between the UK and the EU can continue after Brexit under a free trade agreement which preserves our ability to decide on our own levels of external tariffs and to reach trade agreements with non-EU countries. Modern "friction-free" and "virtual border" customs arrangements can ease the flow of goods at the Channel ports and avoid the need for physical customs posts on the Northern Ireland land border. And mutual recognition of standards based on a starting point where we are in line with the EU internal market rules can ease the flow of goods and services between us and the EU after Brexit.

The idea that single market membership would somehow be easier to negotiate than a free trade agreement is another total myth. If the UK wanted to belong to the single market after EU exit, we would need to apply to join the European Economic Area Agreement as a non-EC member. In order to join the EEA we would need the consent of 30 states (the EU members plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), all of whom would need to ratify the necessary treaty changes in accordance with their respective national constitutional requirements. This is actually a bigger barrier than what is need to secure agreement to a free trade agreement with the EU.

The reality is that there is no "soft Brexit". It does not exist as a serious or credible option. Half-way house arrangements in which we are subject to EU rules but have no say in setting them are the worst of all worlds, which would continue to subject us to all the disadvantages of EU membership but not give us the freedom and opportunities of leaving the EU in shaping our laws, controlling our borders and taking advantage of global trading opportunities. The only softness is in the heads of the people who advocate such half-baked and ill-thought out notions.

When fully examined, the overwhelming economic and constitutional drawbacks of the limbo-lands of post-Brexit customs union and internal market membership are glaringly apparent. In these fluid times when the Prime Minister's electoral miscalculation and failure to explain her Brexit policies has once more thrown open the door to these notions, it is vital that the real consequences of these choices should be fully understood, in order to prevent this needless election disaster turning into a catastrophe for our country.

END.

And there are five excellent articles about why Britain needs to leave the customs union which you can read at:

Shanker Singham: Why we must leave the Customs Union
<http://brexitcentral.com/must-leave-customs-union/>

Lord Leigh of Hurley: We must leave the Customs Union if we are to escape the protectionist whims of the EU
<http://brexitcentral.com/lord-leigh-hurley-must-leave-customs-union-escape-protectionist-whims-eu/>

Dan Lewis: New 16% import tariffs on oranges show why we must leave the Customs Union
<http://brexitcentral.com/dan-lewis-new-16-import-tariffs-oranges-show-must-leave-customs-union/>

John Longworth: Leaving the EU's customs union could make us the world leader in effective trade
<http://brexitcentral.com/leaving-eus-customs-union-make-us-world-leader-effective-trade/>

Brian Monteith: Why Brexit is the best thing that could have happened for the world's developing nations
<http://brexitcentral.com/brian-monteith-brexit-best-thing-happened-worlds-developing-nations/>

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

Alastair