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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for October 13th, 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'd hoped to get some feedback on my Brexit story but sorry to say got none at all.

I am trying to find out if there are any efforts being made in Scotland to promote exports and also to join in when the Commonwealth meeting comes to London next year.

The main problem as I see it is that the SNP is the government but wants independence which means they'll spin anything that can damage Britain in the view that this will make Scots want to vote for independence. That means when it comes to Brexit they want the negotiations to fail as they see it is in their own interest. This is why you simply can't trust them when it comes to anything to do with Brexit.

That said some 40% of SNP members voted to leave and many SNP members want independence but outside the EU. I think that all Scots need to accept Brexit and get on with doing what they can to make a success of it. My story last week was trying to point to where we could look to do new business but the Scottish government needs to play a part in encouraging more aggressive exporting outside the EU. Frankly that's in Scotland's interest whether we are independent or not.

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 GP crisis in Scotland  
The Minister that won't show face

Read more at:

[http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read\\_full=13315](http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=13315)

A short story  
Jock walks the gangplank

Read more at:

[http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkculture/articles.html?read\\_full=13314](http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkculture/articles.html?read_full=13314)

What on earth has happened to Edinburgh Airport?

HAVING TRAVELLED through Edinburgh Airport frequently in the last four weeks I was dismayed at the utter chaos that meets you coming and going from what used to be one of the best airports in the UK.

Read more at:

[http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkculture/articles.html?read\\_full=13309](http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkculture/articles.html?read_full=13309)

The Scottish sisters taking classical music uptown

Two Scottish sisters, who shot to prominence with their version of Mark Ronson's Uptown Funk, are topping the UK classical music charts with their debut album.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-41528172>

Swedish woman wins World Porridge Making Championships

A Swedish woman has been crowned the winner of the 24th World Porridge Making Championships in Carrbridge.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-41539322>

Can you imagine the country without its Kirk?

ALREADY facing relegation to second place, the Church of Scotland is asking how it can avoid sleepwalking to oblivion

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/insight-can-you-imagine-the-country-without-its-kirk-1-4580904>

Brexit Britain can learn from the extraordinary success story of its old friend and partner, Australia

One place Britain can learn from is an old friend and partner, a country that has achieved over 25 years of economic growth, and has higher incomes and where people have longer lives.

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/brexit-britain-learn-success-friend-australia/>

Unaccounted for

Kenneth Roy on Scotland's forgotten victims.

Read more at:

<http://www.scottishreview.net/KennethRoy312a.html>

Brexit is good news for Britain, America and the special relationship

Brexit means the US is regaining an independent ally in trade

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/brexit-is-good-news-for-britain-america-and-the-special-relationship>

Donald Trump to make scaled down visit to UK next year

Such a move would come in the wake of controversy generated by Prime Minister Theresa May's decision to invite Mr Trump to make a full state visit.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/donald-trump-to-make-scaled-down-visit-to-uk-next-year-1-4583904>

## Electric Canadian

Snow-Shoes and Canoes

Or The Early Days of a Fur-Trader in the Hudson Bay Territory by W. K. Kingston (pdf)

I enjoyed this story and hope you do also. You can read this at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/Kingston\\_Snow-Shoes\\_and\\_Canoes.pdf](http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/Kingston_Snow-Shoes_and_Canoes.pdf)

Musical Canada

Added the May, 1909, to April, 1910 edition which you can read at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/music/musical\\_canada.htm](http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/music/musical_canada.htm)

Industrial Canada

Added Volumes 2 and 3 - 1901 and 1902 and also The Woollen Industry in Canada by Watson Griffin reprinted from "Industrial Canada" which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/industrial/index.htm>

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.

The Decline of American Political Discourse

<http://www.conradblack.com/1339/the-decline-of-american-political-discourse>

Enough with the nonsense: Trump is doing fine

<http://www.conradblack.com/1340/enough-with-the-nonsense-trump-is-doing-fine>

## Electric Scotland

Walks and Scrambles in the Highlands

By Arthur L. Bagley (1914)

You can read this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/travel/walksscrambles.pdf>

Miscellanea Scotica

A collection of Tracts relating to the History, Antiquities, Topography and Literature of Scotland in four volumes (1818/1820)

THE author of this history is not so certainly known; some name Sir James Balfour, Lyon King at Arms, in King Charles I. time, for the author of it, because the original manuscript in the lawyers library at Edinburgh, seems to be the same hand with his annals, which unquestionably is an autograph. But others more probably think that Mr. Henry Maule of Melgum is the author, since he subscribes his name to the copy of verses which is subjoined to this. 'Tis true, they are very general, and little could be inferred from them, if it were not that they run in the same strain with the author's preface.

But the truth is, it is of no great importance which of them was the author, since they were both very learned and worthy gentlemen. I have taken care to compare it exactly with the original, and do not question but that it will meet with kind entertainment, since it bears so near a relation to our Scots history, and may be of use to any who would do some thing more full on the subject.

I might add that this publication is often quoted in specific histories and biographies and you can find these references by using our site search engine.

You can read these volumes at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/miscellaneascotica.htm>

Kew Gardens

Painted by T. Mower Martin, R.C.A., Described by A.R. Hope Moncrieff with 24 Full Page Illustrations in colour (1908) (pdf)

There are many Scots that were all involved with the Garden and so thought this would be an interesting read which you can get to at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/gardening/kewgardens.pdf>

Pollock and Ayton

By Rosaline Masson for the Famous Scots Series (1898) (pdf)

You can read these biographies at: [http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/pollock\\_aytoun.pdf](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/pollock_aytoun.pdf)

Roll of Honour of 1296 men from the Burgh and Parish of Selkirk

Who served in the Navy or Army during the Great War 1914-1918

You can read this publication at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/peebles/selkirkrollofhonour.pdf>

Observations on a tour through the western isles of Scotland

Particularly Staffa and Icolmkill by T. Garnett, M.D. in two volumes (1811). Added a link to these books at the foot of the page.

## PREFACE

It will, perhaps, appear highly presuming in me, to intrude on the world another Tour through the Highlands, after the number that

have been already published. But though we have several well-written journals, I know of none whose object is so extensive as mine, excepting the excellent Tour by Mr. Pennant, a work which will always be read with interest, and remain a monument of the talents and industry of its author. I took the journal of this eminent writer with me, and compared his description with the objects themselves, which, as far as they went, were remarkably accurate; but I soon found that considerable employment was left for a gleaner.

These volumes contain a description of the country, manners and customs of the inhabitants, natural curiosities, antiquities, mineralogy, botany, natural advantages, proposed improvements, and an account of the state of manufactures;- agriculture, fisheries, and political economy, with local history and biography. My object has been to give as perfect an account as possible of every place and every thing I saw: to effect which, I have not ventured to rely entirely on my own' observation, but have freely levied contributions on my predecessors; not, however, without acknowledging my obligations to them.

Among other works, I am particularly indebted to Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, which is undoubtedly the best local history that ever has appeared in any country: it will be an invaluable treasure to posterity, and reflects the highest credit on the ministers who drew up the accounts of the different parishes. As persons resident on the spot must be acquainted with many particulars which will escape the traveller or occasional visitor, I have been enabled, by consulting „this valuable work, to make my accounts much more perfect. In short, I trust, that from all these sources united, I have been able to give a more full and correct account of the districts through which I passed, than has been done before in a work of this kind.

This work is, I hope, adapted to serve as a guide to those who visit the Hebrides, or who make what is called the long tour of the Highlands by Fort William, Fort Augustus, and Inverness; or to those who make only the short tour by Inverary, Dalmary, Dunkeld, and Stirling; or to those who only go to Loch Lomond and the Falls of the Clyde. The only part not described, is the stage in the short tour between Dalmary and Kilfinnin.

The reader will find several philosophical notes, which he may, perhaps, think had better have been omitted; but I was induced by the example of Dr. Darwit to hope, that by this mean some readers might be allured from the straight path of the tour, to take a glance at the secret operations of Nature, and that the slight taste which they would thus have of her dainties, might give them a relish for a more sumptuous repast. It is only to the general reader that they are addressed; the philosopher will find scarcely any thing new in them; and those who have an absolute dislike to all philosophical investigations, may pass them over. I have generally thrown the natural history as well as the biography into the form of notes, that they might not terrify or impede the progress of the light reader, but be in readiness to satisfy the curiosity of the inquirer.

Should it be asked why I have inserted many historical facts, such as the massacre of Glencoe, Gowrie's conspiracy, &c. by way of episodical digressions; I can only say; that though these facts stand recorded in- history, I have thought proper to insert them, because it makes the place infinitely more interesting to the traveller to have an account of every remarkable circumstance relating to it before his eye: besides, many persons visit these scenes who are not well versed in history, or who may not recollect what is connected with the places they examine.

I expect that what I have said of the wretched situation of the inhabitants in the Highlands, will give offence to some persons, and particularly to those -who have it in their power to ameliorate their condition; but I was actuated only by a desire to increase the comforts, and remove the distresses of the natives. I have in no instance, knowingly, lost sight of truth; it has been my wish and endeavour to speak of them as they are,

"Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice."

I cannot let slip an opportunity of paying a slight tribute to the Companion of my tour, whose lively disposition, civility, and good nature, contributed not a little to the pleasure I received, and the productions of whose pencil form so valuable a part of this work.

This work was composed at Glasgow, some time before I was offered the situation I now have the honour to hold in the Royal Institution of Great Britain. This the reader will perceive, from the manner -in which I have mentioned Anderson's Institution. I have not, however, thought it necessary to alter what I have there said, especially as the work was prepared for the press, and sent to London,-before I had an idea of leaving Scotland.

This work comes before the world very different from what I once expected it would. It was not written when the mind was cheerful and at ease, but in the midst of domestic distress, the most severe that the human heart can feel: it was frequently interrupted by lowness of spirits, occasioned by the sudden death of a beloved wife, the companion of my studies, and partner off my literary labours; and it was only resumed at intervals with a view to relieve a mind oppressed by grief, a state ill suited to composition. It likewise wants the polish which it would have received from the hand of one whose taste and style were infinitely superior to my own; and this is the only rational apology I have to offer for intruding on others my private afflictions, the force of which is yet unabated; and though removed from the sad scene, the deadly arrow sticks in the wound, which in recollection bleeds as fresh as ever.

The face with rapture view'd, I view no more;  
The voice with rapture heard, no more I hear:

Yet the lov'd features memory's eyes explore;  
Yet the lov'd accents fall on memory's car.

ROYAL INSTITUTION, London, Feb. 1st, 1800.

You can read these volumes at: [http://www.electricscotland.com/history/western\\_isles.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/western_isles.htm)

## The Story

This story comes from an old issue of the Historical Review.

Peasant Life in Argyllshire in the End of the Eighteenth Century

I WAS born in the year 1774 at Barichreil, a small village of Nether Lorn.

My father was a descendant of that McCallum of Colagin, the sight of whom, as he entered Kilbride Church one Sunday, followed by his twelve sons in order of their age, provoked the Lady of Dunollie to exclaim: 'A third of Albyn were none too much for McCallum of Colagin!'

My mother's family, the Macnabs, belonged to Glenorchy. Her forefathers had been armourers and silversmiths for seven hundred years, the son stepping into the father's place throughout the whole of that long period.

My mother had a training such as fell to the lot of few Highland girls of the period in which she lived. In early girlhood she went to live in the family of a relative, whose wife had been educated in one of the best schools in Edinburgh. This lady delighted to teach my mother not only all that a good housewife ought to know but also the spinning of wool and flax, and the working up of both from the raw material to the finished web.

My childhood was cast in that transition period when the domestic life of the Highland people was gradually adapting itself to modern civilisation. To-day one can hardly realise a time when there were no railways, no steamboats, no penny post, no telegraph, no looms driven by machinery, no wheaten bread nor tea in country districts, no newspapers giving us the news of the wide world.

Clive had just laid the foundation of our Indian Empire. Canada had become one of our possessions. The first ominous mutterings were heard of the storm about to break over our American colonies. Australia and New Zealand began to loom on the horizon. That was abroad. At home the forces which were to overturn social life were already set in motion. Watt was busy improving his steam-engine. Arkwright's spinning-jenny had penetrated into the Scottish Lowlands.

In the Highlands the spinning-wheel was beginning to supersede the spindle and distaff; schools were being established in every parish; the New Testament was translated into Gaelic, and the books of the Old Testament were in capable hands for translation.

At the same time the daily life of the people continued to be what it had been for ages. They had not outlived the simple life which had been theirs from time immemorial; the shielings were still theirs; nor were they restricted from fishing the rivers, or from taking a hare from the hill.

Our village was an important place in its own estimation. It consisted of a group of sixteen thriving families, whose boast it was that every known trade required in the district was represented among the men. That was something to be proud of in those days, when to be a first-rate tradesman meant that a man possessed as thorough a knowledge of every branch of his craft as a master-workman is expected to have in these days.

The town of Oban did not exist except in the brain of the then Duke of Argyll and his Chamberlain. The first time I walked into Oban there were but three houses on the bay: the Custom House, the Inn, and a farmhouse.

The edict that made the wearing of our national costume punishable made a tailor of my father. The finest linen underwear as well as upper garments were made at that time by the tailor. When some thrifty dame brought a web of linen and another of woollen material to be made up, my father turned the web of linen over to my mother, who could manipulate it as well as any tailor. When, on the other hand, my father was out boarding with a family till all the household sewing was finished, he received 7<sup>s</sup> per day, which sum was considered to be very good pay.

When I was old enough to attend school my brothers pled with mother to allow me to accompany them. It was an unheard of thing for girls except the daughters of 'gentlemen' to be sent to school. But my mother came of a family that loved learning, and she knew how to value education, so it did not take much coaxing to get her to consent to my taking a winter at school.

So I trudged there and back in company with my kind brothers, who, if the weather proved severe, took turns in carrying me, so that I might sit dry and cosy at school.

It was always during the six winter months that we attended school. Each boy carried a peat under his arm to keep the fire blazing. One of the older lads provided a good broom of long, wiry-stemmed moss from the marsh, wherewith to sweep the earthen floor. All had helped to gather the thatch and cover the roof before the winter session began.

That season in school would, I was confident, enable me to go on by myself afterwards, so I made the most of my time. For I doubted whether there would come another opportunity. When could a woman find time for schooling with the clothing of the whole family dependent upon her knowledge and skill in working wool and flax; even the sewing thread had to be manufactured by her deft fingers. The women had also the care of the cattle to a great extent, and oftentimes they were obliged to grind the meal before baking it. How could time be spared to read and write?

When my eldest brother was old enough he was allowed to go to the harvest work in the Lowlands. On his return he brought with him an English Bible ; he read it aloud to us in the evening, not in English but as if written in Gaelic.

My brothers learned trades. John became a farmer; another brother built many of the houses in Oban and the Congregational Chapel, which was the first place of worship in Oban. He erected also the high wall around Iain Ciar's grave.

One morning our quiet village was greatly startled by a rumour that we might have a visit from the press-gang. A friendly warning was sent us to the effect that the press-gang were in the vicinity and would be certain to pay us a call in the passing as we were quite near the highway.

The good wives of Barichreil were not in the habit of overstepping the bounds of modest conventional womanhood, but on this occasion they took the law into their own hands. The husbands, with all the sons and brothers old enough to be impressed, were ordered off to make peats, and forbidden to return until sent for. Boy scouts were stationed here and there to keep us women informed of the appearance of the enemy, and report his movements. Meanwhile, a supply of ammunition was prepared in the shape of clods and turf.

At length the press-gang arrived, and looked greatly astonished on finding a village composed of women and children only. Before they had time to ask, 'Where are the men?' the wives attacked them with such a volley of clods and turf that they wheeled right about and marched off, the officer saying he 'wasn't going to fight with women,' and there was no time to go about the hills searching for the men.

Our village lay in a green glade, flanked by two low, brown hills. The houses were clustered on both sides of a burn that divided the glade in two and fell into the river Euachir just below the highway. The Euachir is a fine salmon stream running through a deep channel between steep banks covered with birch and hazel.

My brothers were keen fishers. There was a beautiful salmon that haunted a deep pool in the Euachir; all the fishermen about had tried in vain to catch it. My brothers were determined not to be baffled; they would blaze the river. They got up during the night and sallied forth with torches and fish-spears. I was suddenly awakened at daybreak by the call, 'Get up and see our fishing!' In a twinkling I was up, dressed, and in their midst. There among smaller fish was the great big beauty !

Salmon was so plentiful that when a farmer engaged a ploughman he was bound to promise not to give him salmon oftener than four days in the week.

Each family in Barichreil owned a few sheep and cows. The sheep provided us with wool for clothing, the cows with milk, butter and cheese.

The sheep were the native sheep of the Highlands ; small, intelligent creatures covered with fine wool, each answering to its name, and milked as well as the cows. We were obliged to fold them at night, because of the numerous foxes and wild cats that prowled about freely. Our fowls, too, had to be carefully closed in for protection.

Our household utensils were made of wood and a few of pewter. Bowls of all sizes were made of hard wood, preferably birch, because of its sweetness, also because it was easily kept clean. Tubs, too, were of all sizes; shallow tubs for holding milk and for working butter in, as well as wash-tubs such as are still in use. There were cogues for milking, luggies for feeding calves, pails and stoups for bringing water from the well. Our spoons were of horn, some thin and finely ornamented, and used only on special occasions.

Each croft had a plot set apart for the cultivation of flax. On it we depended for linen for household use as well as for underwear.

The cloth of which the men's suits were made was very much the same as that called tweed or homespun nowadays. The women wore drugget. Their best dresses, as well as the cloaks of the men, consisted of a firm shiny material called temin, which lasted a lifetime, being manufactured of the longest and finest wool, and treated in the working exactly as flax was. The temin for dresses was often watered to look like silk. A softer cloth was called caimleid, which was as fine as temin. It was, however, dyed in the web, and dressed so as to have a nap on the cloth.

The dye-stuffs for all kinds of cloth were gathered, each in its season, all the year round. Berries, flowers, leaves, bark, roots, heather, and lichens formed our principal stores of dyes. There was hardly a plant on hill or meadow that was not laid under contribution for dye, or medicine, or food. Even the autumn crowfoot had its use as a substitute for rennet, when no rennet could be had; nettles were prized when the 'curly kale' was exhausted in spring.

The fulling of a web of woollen material was the least agreeable as also the most toilsome labour connected with the manufacture of cloth. When the web came home from the weaver, word was sent out to the most experienced women and girls to the number of from sixteen to eighteen. A fulling-frame of fine wicker—the common property of the village—was set on trestles of the proper height. It was from two-and-a-half to three feet wide, and eight or nine feet long. The most experienced and careful woman was installed mistress of ceremonies at the head of the frame, to deal out the web and watch over the working.

Seven women stood on each side of the frame, care being taken that each couple were of the same length of arm. There was one at the foot of the frame to fold the cloth as it was passed along, and to attend to it being kept soaked with liquid as it was being thickened.

About a yard of the cloth was unrolled to begin with, by her who stood at the head. It was soaked at once with ammoniated liquid, then drawn slantwise across the frame; that is No. one on the hither side worked with No. two on the opposite side—not with the woman directly in front of her, for that would bring no nap on the cloth, and it would be streaky, because the treatment would not be equal. Then the cloth was rubbed and pounded to thicken it, and drawn backwards and forwards till it was ready to be passed on for the next two couples to thump, and rub and see-saw it and pass it down farther to undergo the same process.

The whole of this toil was set to music. Every movement of the hand was regulated by a waulking-song, sung in perfect tune by all. If a part (or the whole) of the cloth needed more working, the women never said, 'It will take another half-hour, or hour's work,' but 'It will take another song,' or 'It will take so many more songs.'

The tweed being thickened and smoothed to the satisfaction of the experts, a thin straight board three inches wide was brought, on which to wind the web. This process was called 'winding the cloth into a candle.' The board was necessarily a little longer than the width of the cloth. The winding of the web was done with the minutest care, lest there should be a crease or a wrinkle or an unequal overlapping of the selvages anywhere. In this winding the cloth, the women kept slapping every inch of each fold with all their might, with the open palms of their hands. The song sung during this performance required a different measure from the other. It was called Port-nam-bas, the palm-chant, or rather palming-chant. Those who sang it were well acquainted with the gossip of the country-side. They knew who was the favoured laddie of each lassie, present or absent. In the song the names of the maidens and their real or supposed sweethearts were coupled, thus adding to the merriment and the interest. Such songs are termed 'pairing' songs.

The candle of the cloth was left lying as it was till next day, when it was soused in water and left to dry.

Here is a specimen of one of the 'pairing songs' sung on such an occasion. The title is, 'An Long Eirionnach,' The Irish Ship. It begins with the lines:—

Ho! co 'bheir mi leam, air an luing Eirionnach,  
Leis an fhidhil, leis an truibh, air an luing Eirionnach?

The rhythm of the words requires that it be translated :

Ho! who sails with me, on the ship 'Irishman,'  
With a fiddle, with a harp, on the ship 'Irishman'?

Ho ! who goes with me, on the ship 'Irishman'?  
Mbrag I'll take with me, on the ship 'Irishman'!

Ho! who sails with me, on the ship 'Irishman' ?  
Donald I'll take with me, on the ship 'Irishman'!  
O'er the billows riding free, on the ship 'Irishman'.



And so on to any number of couplets, as long as there were names in the district to be linked together. When those gave out the next district yielded a fresh supply, till the web was rolled into a 'candle.'

Very gradually during these years, potatoes were becoming more and more an article of diet, but so little were they used that we set aside only one creelful as seed potatoes against the following spring. Turnips, too, were slowly coming into general use. Tea was still a rare treat; baker's bread—soft, spongy stuff!—was not to be thought of. Until then it was honey that was used for sweetening. Salt was very expensive, being taxed to more than forty times its value.

There was one kind of food used occasionally which is probably unknown nowadays. Some of the stronger cattle were bled in spring by an expert; the blood was carefully prepared, salted in a tub and set aside for use. We called it black pudding.

We had no winnowed rye-grass or turnips in those days to feed the cattle ; we were entirely dependent on the natural grass. When the lower pastures became bare it was necessary to take the cattle to be fed once, or in some districts twice, a year to those higher pastures where sweet hill grass was plentiful. This relieved the lower pastures, allowing the grass on them to grow afresh.

A green, grassy hill was called an Airigh (pronounced ah-ry). When spring work was over, the men of the village went to the airigh to get the sheilings, that is the huts, into order. Being built of turf they required to be put into thorough repair, so as to make them habitable after the storms of winter and the rains of spring, which were sure to dismantle the roofs.

One end of every hut was banked up some eighteen inches from the rest of the floor, and part of it covered with heather-tops for a bed. The heather made a fragrant springy couch, and, as it was to be used in June weather, a thin blanket to cover it, and another to cover the sleeper, were all that were needed for comfort. The remainder of the banked up space served for a seat. We did with as little furniture as possible for our six weeks' picnic.

The little village of turf huts was a woman's township. Only one man, the aireach (herdsman) was there to help about the cattle in all matters that needed such experienced aid as his special knowledge could afford.

The sheilings were generally ready for occupation by the first week of June; then a day was fixed upon for the setting out. Of course the whole village set out together. The children were welcome, boys as well as girls, at that first outset. There were so many articles to be carried that all alike could be of help. There were the utensils and implements needed for making butter and cheese—cogues, churns, luggies, milk-tubs, cheese-vats, a large iron pot for heating the milk in, and a block of iron which, when heated red-hot, was used to sterilise the milk. The women took their distaffs and wool, for they were in the habit of going among their flocks twirling their distaffs as they minded them. Household provisions were taken, clothing too, and a few dishes and cooking utensils, and each company carried a milking-stool.

The cows and the little sheep knew the way and gave little or no trouble. To prevent any bother about the calves, a churn called an imideal (butterer) was carried on the back. This special make of churn was flat on one side, so as to fit on to the back, and was covered with a skin. The lid also was secured with a skin round it; but on such an occasion as this setting out it was not so tightly fastened but that a few drops of milk were jolted out of it while climbing the hill, and trickled down over the skin covering. The calves, lured by the dropping milk, followed the imideals of their respective owners, licking the skin as often as they were able to overtake the climber, and thus they arrived at the airigh.

There were frequent journeys to and from home during those six weeks. As often as a certain quantity of butter and cheese was ready it was carried home to be stored for future use. When the home was not too distant some of the stronger young women were accustomed to put the proper amount of cream into the imideal, then, strapping it on to their backs, they thus carried it to its destination, the churning being done by the jolting in going down the braes. The butter in this case was washed and salted after arrival. The churn did not slip off when it was bumped up and down so much, because it was held securely by two stout straps, and rested on the bunched gathers of the drugget skirt as on a cushion. When several of those heavy drugget and plaiding skirts were worn, as was the habit then, there was quite a shelf for the churn to rest on.

Every meal taken in the open air was a feast. We rarely took our food indoors. We had whey porridge very often, which I liked better than the rich milk porridge, which was our Sunday treat. What a wealth there was of wild strawberries and blaeberrries, as many as we could eat! We had children's rhymes to repeat too for almost everything we met.

When we children came upon a bed of cuckoo-stockings and primroses, we sang out:

Primrose, cow-sorrel, wood-sorrel, white clover;  
Food for all the little children all the bright summer over !

Did we come upon a bird's nest, we covered our mouths, believing that if our breath came near the eggs it would taint them and so scare the bird away. In leaving the nest we sang:



Tweet-tweet-tweet-O,  
Who spoiled my nest so sweet, O ?  
Should he be a tall man,  
Fling him headlong from the keep!  
Should he be a small man  
Toss him from the rocky steep!  
But a clown—who doesn't care !  
Turn him over to his mother  
And leave him there !

If a corra-chbsag—a wood-lose—crossed our path, we instantly stopped and asked it gravely:

O, corra-chorra-chosag, pray,  
Will to-morrow be a lovely day?  
If you tell me quick and true,  
A pair of brogues I'll make for you!

When the cuckoo was due to return in April we were careful to eat a bit of bread before turning out in the early morning, as it was deemed unlucky to hear it for the first time in each season with our fast unbroken. But in June, it was bound to forsake its summer haunts, so we addressed it thus:

'Cuckoo!' cried the gowk on a spray,  
'I've missed thee yestre'en and to-day';  
'Cuckoo!' cried the cuckoo, 'farewell!  
By the hunter I'm chased from the dell! '

The little blue scabious was treated rudely, I don't know why. Holding it by the neck firmly between the root of the thumb and the palm of the hand, we twisted the stem with the other hand, then, loosening the pressure of the thumb, the flower began to turn slowly round. As the flower began to turn round we repeated:

Gillie, gillie blue-boy, if thou turn not round, down comes my fist upon thee.

Suiting the action to the word, at the emphatically pronounced word 'down' we crushed the head of the flower by the violence of the blow.

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

Alastair