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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for March 1st, 2019

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:

<https://electricscotland.com/scotnews.htm>

### Electric Scotland News

Countdown is on to Tartan Week 2019

The Countdown is on, and the excitement is mounting, for the Tartan Week 2019 and the 21st Annual New York Tartan Day Parade on Saturday April 6th.

This year's Parade is very special to the American-Scottish Foundation as it will mark the 20th Anniversary of the first New York Tartan Day Parade that took place in 1999 - which was led by of our now Chairman Emeritus, Alan Bain.

And what a great Parade it is shaping up to be with the Parade being led by Grand Marshal Sir Billy Connolly.

The Parade which steps off at 2pm from 44th and Sixth Avenue will top off a week full of events. A full list can be found at <http://nyctartanweek.org>

This years Tartan Week celebration is even larger as Carnegie Hall are hosting the Migrations Festival of events - a month long celebration around the influences on American culture from February 28th through April. One of the aspects spotlighted in the programming is the Scots Irish influences on "The Making of America". <https://www.carnegiehall.org/Events/Season-Highlights/Migrations>

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We're now in the final month before we're due to leave the EU. Hopefully we'll just leave on March 29th and then we can get on with negotiating deals with the world and the EU. Time to call a halt on all this mess where many MP's have lied to us.

Frankly we elect MP's to run our country and many of them have done a piss poor job of it and I hope at the next election we'll deselect them and get better people elected to take their place. A lot of them are incapable of running a piss up in a brewery never mind Brexit.

I was interested in reading an article by Conrad Black on Brexit which you might like to read at:

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/conrad-black-theresa-may-will-find-her-way-to-a-victory>

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You can view a video introduction to this newsletter at:

<https://youtu.be/UHchFwSL7sk>

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.

Churches no longer have to hold Sunday services

A weekly Sunday service will no longer be compulsory for churches after a vote to change a 400-year-old law was passed by the Church of England's ruling body.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47326993?>

Better agree No Deal now than accept the weakness and humiliation of the Withdrawal Agreement

Approaching no deal at the eleventh hour, as we may well now be doing, is clearly not ideal. It would have been much better if we had spent the last two years negotiating the Canada+++ free trade deal which was the logical outcome of the 2016 EU referendum.

Read more at:

<https://brexitcentral.com/better-agree-no-deal-now-accept-weakness-humiliation-withdrawal-agreement/>

Scottish independence divorce negotiations would be tougher than Brexit

Scottish independence divorce negotiations over the share of assets and liabilities would be different and much tougher than Brexit, a report published today has found.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/general-election/scottish-independence-divorce-negotiations-would-be-tougher-than-brexit-1-4877559>

What's wrong with the revised hydro schemes in Glen Etive - the Allt Mheuran

Following my post on the revisions to the Glen Etive hydro schemes, on the shortest day I went to take a closer look to compare what is being proposed compared with what is on the ground.

Read more at:

<http://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/2018/12/28/whats-wrong-with-the-revised-hydro-schemes-in-glen-etive-the-allt-mheuran/>

Virgin's Unity plane rockets skyward

Mr Mackay, from Helmsdale, Sutherland, becomes the first Scottish-born pilot to travel to space.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-47336617>

How to build the perfect model railway

This is a miniature world set in central Scotland 60 years ago

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-47163833>

Beavers to become protected species in Scotland

Beavers will become a protected species in Scotland from May, Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has said.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-47337724>

The Department for International Trade's no-deal planning is more advanced than the doomsayers claim

Shanker points out that some of the UK's trading partners have been confused by the UK's EU negotiating strategy - given the potential for being locked into the EU Customs Union or having insufficient regulatory autonomy.

Read more at:

<https://brexitcentral.com/department-international-trades-no-deal-planning-advanced-doomsayers-believe/>

Don't write off a failed entrepreneur

Most attempts to bring something innovative to the market do not work. Accepting and overcoming failure is a large part of

entrepreneurship. Not only do those trying to start something new learn what cannot take off, but the process of opening and closing a business makes success more likely the second time round.

Read more at:

<http://review.chicagobooth.edu/entrepreneurship/2019/article/don-t-write-failed-entrepreneur>

UK and U.S. regulators build Brexit bridge for derivatives

Britain and the United States agreed on Monday a long-term pact to ensure that the \$2 trillion a day transatlantic market in derivatives will not be disrupted by any type of Brexit.

Read more at:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-britain-usa-derivatives/uk-and-u-s-regulators-build-brexit-bridge-for-derivatives-idUKKCN1QE15Q>

Scottish Schools' Young Writer of the Year

There were entries from outstanding pupils all over Scotland. It came down to the final 19

Read more at:

<http://www.scottishreview.net/SchoolsReport468a.html>

Dig at one of Scotland's largest hunter-gatherer sites

Evidence of human activity has been found going back 12,000 years to the end of the last ice age.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-47386160>

Wilson-Raybould accuses Trudeau and other top Liberals of political interference over SNC-Lavalin

She said the conversations were clearly inappropriate and included the suggestion that a collision with the Prime Minister on these matters should be avoided. A major story in Canada

Read more at:

[https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/jody-wilson-raybould-testimony-justin-trudeau-pmo?video\\_autoplay=true](https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/jody-wilson-raybould-testimony-justin-trudeau-pmo?video_autoplay=true)

First ever Stornoway-London flights announced by Loganair

Loganair today announced flights between Stornoway and London Southend - the first air link between the Scottish islands and the UK capital.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/first-ever-stornoway-london-flights-announced-by-loganair-1-4880286>

I'd vote Leave more emphatically than in 2016

Three farmers on why they still back Brexit

Read more at:

<https://inews.co.uk/news/brexit/brexit-farmers-vote-leave-eu-referendum/>

## Electric Canadian

Canadian Archive Reports

Added the 1897 report.

You can read this at: [https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/brymner\\_douglas.htm](https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/brymner_douglas.htm)

The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs

The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs for 1920 and you can read this at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/history/annual/index.htm>

The Canadian Horticulturist

Volume 15 (1892) can be read at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/agriculture/Horticulturist.htm>

Canadian Life and Resources

A Monthly Review of the Developed and Undeveloped Wealth of the Dominion of Canada and of Newfoundland Volume 8 (1910) and you can read this at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/canadianlife08.pdf>

The Guide: a Manual for the Canadian Militia (Infantry)  
Compiled by Lt.-Col. W. D. Otter, Commanding the Queen's Own Rifles (1880)

You can read this at: <https://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/manualguide.htm>

Types of Canadian Women and of Women who are or have been connected with Canada

Edited by Henry James Morgan, LL.D., F.R.S.N.A. (1903) (pdf) which you can read at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/typesofcanadianwomen01.pdf>

Men and Women of the Time

A handbook of Canadian Biography edited by Henry James Morgan (1912) which you can read at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/typesofcanadianwomen01.pdf>

Inventory of Military documents in the Canadian Archives

Prepared by Lieut. Col. Cruickshank (1910) (pdf) which can be read at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/cmilitaryindex.pdf>

Roy Thomson, 1st Baron Thomson of Fleet

A Canadian newspaper proprietor who became one of the moguls of Fleet Street and you can read this and watch a documentary about him at: [https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/thomson\\_roy.htm](https://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/thomson_roy.htm)

The Dominion Annual Register and Review

For the Sixteenth Year of the Canadian Union 1882 which can be read at:

<https://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/dominionannual1882.pdf>

Postmedia

A Canadian newsmedia company representing hundreds of brands across multiple print, online, and mobile platforms and you can read about them at: <https://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/media/postmedia.htm>

Conrad Black

The Fatuous Democrats

<http://www.conradblack.com/1448/the-fatuous-democrat>

The Greatest Constitutional Crisis Since the Civil War

<http://www.conradblack.com/1449/the-greatest-constitutional-crisis-since>

The SNC-Lavalin scandal has become absurd, but also magnificently Canadian

<http://www.conradblack.com/1450/the-snc-lavalin-scandal-has-become-absurd-but>

## Electric Scotland

The Scottish Review

Added Volume 26 - July October 1895 for you to read at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/review/index.htm>

Around the Ancient City in six circular Tours

With Notes on the ancient superstitions, Folk lore, Eminent Men, and curious characters in various districts of Forfar and Kincardenshire by David Herschell Edwards (second edition) (1904) (pdf) which you can read at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/aroundancientcity2nd.pdf>

A1: Britain's Longest Road

Which not only follows the traffic police as they patrol the road but it also follows people in everyday life that use the road.

I posted up the first episode for you to watch and from there you can get many others and you can find this in our Community at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5400-A1-Britain-s-Longest-Road>

Murdoch Stanley McLeod (1893-1981)

Businessman and philanthropist, was born on 18 October 1893 at Carrieton, South Australia and you can read about him at:

[https://electricscotland.com/history/australia/mcleod\\_murdoch.htm](https://electricscotland.com/history/australia/mcleod_murdoch.htm)

Glasgow to Edinburgh-on board an INTERCITY 225

An hour or so train journey from Glasgow to Edinburgh which can be watched in our Community at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5401-Glasgow-to-Edinburgh-on-board-an-INTERCITY-225>

Poems by Stanley Bruce

Stan sent in two poems about shipbuilding which we've added to his shipbuilding in Aberdeen page. Ships Fer A' O'er 'e World and I'm Prood! and you can both read them and listen to them at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/aberdeen/aberdeenshipbuilding.htm>

Memoir of Alexander, Bishop of Brechin

With a brief notice of his brother the Rev. George Hay Forbes (1875) (pdf) and you can read this at:

[https://electricscotland.com/history/other/alexander\\_bishop.htm](https://electricscotland.com/history/other/alexander_bishop.htm)

Biggar and the House of Fleming

Added a couple of short videos to this page which you can watch at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/biggar/index.htm>

The Brechin Almanac and Directory

Added the issues for 1892 and 1914 to the foot of our page on Brechin at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/brechin/index.htm>

British Nuclear Testing in Australia gets 50,000 views in our Community!

Gordon posted a message on this topic noting it had now received 50,000 views! It is a great store of information for anyone interested in the fall out from British nuclear testing in Australia and the seeking for compensation for the people affected. The first post went up on 7th August 2010 and has been added to continually up to the last post made on 19th January 2019. Of course there are some videos no longer displaying thanks to YouTube but the information is all there is you want to do some seriously good research.

You can read this in our Community at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/553-British-Nuclear-Testing-in-Australia>

## The Story

Fragments of Caithness Folk-Lore

By Frank Binder

THE Folk-Lore Society has done much admirable work since its inception twenty years ago. In almost every part of the world persons are now engaged in collecting, collating, and comparing legends, popular customs and sayings, in order that light may be thrown upon events of the past and beliefs of the present. The ardent folk-lore investigator in true scientific fashion; scrupulous heed is given to every detail and variation, infinite pains are taken to separate, as far as may be, the ancient myth from the modern overgrowth. It is well that a systematic effort of this kind was instituted in time to rescue many of the oral traditions from the inevitable destruction which awaited them—the destruction incidental to the prevalence of the railroad, the school board, and the nineteenth century spirit of questioning. The rational claim advanced by many eminent folk-lore investigators that the study should be ranked as a science, is, however, coincident with the disappearance of not a little of romance. It is difficult, for attention to be concentrated upon the lessons of folk-lore, and at the same time to preserve a keen appreciation of the colour, the picturesque suggestiveness of those old-world thoughts and beliefs which have for generations been guarded by the unlettered, and whose emotional roots stretch back into the past. Analysis and romance are to a great extent incongruous. To employ the one, we must, almost of necessity, forego the other.

No attempt is made in this paper to investigate scientifically the lore of the North. The aim of the writer is to recall, and present simply, a few fragments from that great storehouse of popular wisdom and tradition.

The Celt of the Western Highlands and the Isles preserves his hold on the past largely by means of that elemental imagination, and that ardent love of his birthplace and all connected therewith, which are his dominant characteristics. The folk of Caithness, Sutherland, and the Northern Isles, on the other hand, treasure with a quiet simplicity the lore which has come down to them, with also an unquestioning faith that is touching as well as beautiful. The modern spirit is here confronted by barriers of old-world wisdom, of prejudice if one will, which, unimportant as they may seem, have incalculable powers of resistance.

From the shepherd who spends his days on the wide moors of Caithness, from the fisher who plies his craft on the turbulent water of the Pentland Firth, from the midwife who, almost destitute of modern knowledge, attends with marvellous skill alike at cottage and farmstead, from these people and such as these the writer has gleaned much that is here set down.

Caithness (Gaelic Gollabh), Catteynes, the Land of the Stranger, and Suderland, the South Land, are steeped in strange superstitions, some traceable to Norse, others to Celtic influence. The lone, wind-swept home of the Clan of the Catts, with its miles of moorland and peat fields, its bold rocky coast, this county, with Sutherland, and the groups of islands to the north, are in a peculiar sense the home of folk-lore, legend, myth, and peasant wisdom. To this day the older members of the fishing community take off their bonnets as they row past the Head of Whailagoe, and thus express, in their simple way, the deep reverence which they feel for the 'great mither' on whose breast they are tossed. The lassies of Freswiek dress their hair before sunrise on pain of causing their sweethearts to be lashed with these silken tresses by the evil kelpies of the pool. The farmer of to-day lights the bonfire at midnight on New Year's Eve, and passes his kye through the flames to secure them from disease, while the herd-boys jump over the flaming peats for good luck. Changeling children are regarded with the same awe as of old, and witches, elfins<sup>^</sup> and sprites can, it is said, be discerned around the Maiden Paps weaving the threads of fate.

From birth-time to death, dwellers in the remote northcountry are more or less subject to the fantastic and frequently contradictory precepts of folk-lore. In some districts it is customary to fry a bannock, which, with a Bible, is placed under the pillow of the woman who has just given birth to a child; a fir candle is then lighted and whirled three times over the bed, while the watchmen call down a blessing in these words: 'May the Almighty debar a' ill fae this woman, an' be about ir, an' bless ir an' ir bairn.' Pieces of bannock are afterwards distributed among the friends who have assembled to wish well to mother and child. The greater the number of wellwishers, the greater the happiness of the child in after life. There still lingers a widespread belief that the 'fair folk' or 'gweed neebors,' as the fairies are called, have a craving for human milk, and during the first days of convalescence a mother must be zealously guarded lest one of the 'wee people' come and rob the child of its nourishment. Sometimes they succeed in carrying off a mother. Tradition tells of the wife of a farmer who was spirited to the palace of the fairies in a large cave on a remote part of the Caithness coast. Notwithstanding the kindness of the fair folk, the woman pined for her home, and offered as a ransom the finest milk cow in her gweed man's byre: she was permitted to return to the homestead, and the cow was led to the fairy hillock. It disappeared, but, later, returned dead and weak. On occasions, too, the child is stolen, for have not the fairies once in every seven years to pay 'the teind to hell'? They then endeavour to sacrifice a human babe rather than one of their own number. A north country fisher had a fine child. One evening a beggar woman entered the hut and went up to the cradle to gaze into the eyes of the babe. From that time good health left it, a strange look came into its face, and the mother was troubled. An old man begging for food passed that way. When he caught sight of the child, he cried, 'That's nae a bairn; it's an image, and the gweed folk has stoun his speerit.' Thereupon he set to work to recall the fisher's bairn. A peat fire was heaped high on the hearth and a black hen held over it at such a distance that it was singed and not killed. After some struggling the hen escaped up the lum. A few moments elapsed, and then the parents were gladdened by the sight of a happy expression once more on the child's face. It thrived from that day forward.

The young mother of the north is beset with a host of difficulties; to forget one only of the birthtide precepts is to induce an evil of some kind. For example, if the child be a boy, he must be wrapped in a woman's gown, if a girl, a man's garment should be used: otherwise the children can never marry. Again, the palms of a new-born infant must not be touched with water, or poverty will be his lot. Occasionally, a piece of live peat is thrown into the washing vessel, and the water after use is poured at the base of the cottage walls, or drunk to strengthen the memory; in these ways a happy future is assured to the child. Grave concern is felt for children of different sexes who are to be baptised at the same time: if, by any chance, the minister sprinkles the boy first, his beard will remain in the water and be transferred to the girl. In Orkney, Caithness, and Sutherland, a child is said to be 'forespoken' if sickness come without visible cause. The spell may be worked by an evil minded person using such a phrase as 'He's a bonny bairn,' without adding, 'God save the wee thing.' One charm for this must be repeated over a vessel of water

'Father, Son, Holy Ghost,  
Bitten sail they be  
Wha have bitten thee  
Care to their near vein,  
Until thou getst thy health again,  
Mend thou in God's name.'

Again, many 'howdies' guard an infant from being 'forespoken' by passing it three times through the mother's petticoat, or by placing a heart-shaped brooch on the back of its little robe. Douce nurses are full of strange ideas concerning the 'bit girlies and laddies' under their charge. According to some, a child does not break the fairy spell until it has sneezed once, and the greatest concern is evinced until this sign of good omen takes place. A wise 'howdie' who assisted at the birth of the present writer, treasured a long string to which she attached a piece of print for each child she helped to bring into the world. This leal-hearted, pious woman could associate most, if not all, of the coloured strips with the names of the children, and it was her wont to pray for her 'fine laddies and lassies' calling each by name as she touched the dud connected with him. The same old body was convinced that the moment an infant was born, and for an hour afterwards, it bore such an unmistakeable resemblance to the father that it was impossible to be misled as to the parentage. She believed, also, that those destined to be drowned at sea came into the world with a slight indentation on the forehead which gradually filled up, until, when the allotted number of days had passed, it was indistinguishable.

Innumerable quaint sayings attach to boys and their doings; a characteristic example, used to seal a bargain, runs thus...

'As sure's death  
Cut ma breath  
Ten miles aneath the earth,  
Fite man, black man,  
Burn me t' death.'

The following rhymes anent the rainbow come from the two northern counties. In Caithness, boys cry...

'Rainbowie, rainbowie,  
Dinna rain o' me,  
Rain o' John o' Groat's house,  
Or far beyond the sea.'

The Sutherland riddle is:—

'I see to me,  
I see from me,  
Two miles over the sea,  
A little blue man,  
In a green boatee;  
His shirt is lined with a skein of red.'

The boys of Sutherland will never allow a beetle to escape them; they stamp on the insect and cry: 'Beetle, beetle, you won't see tomorrow.' The practice is without doubt connected with a legend which may be heard in the counties, a legend of special interest as a type of those curious Scottish stories wherein New Testament history and modern realism are interblent. Here it is...

As they fled into Egypt, Joseph and Mary and the child Christ passed through a field where men scattered corn seeds. The Virgin said to the men: 'Should any ask of you if we have journeyed this way, make answer, "A man, a woman, and a child crossed the field as we sowed the corn."' The men promised to do her bidding. That night the grain sprouted, grew rapidly, and ripened, so that next day the labourers brought their sickles and began to reap it. Now a band of soldiers came and questioned them: 'Have you seen a mother and child on an ass with a man leading it, go this way?' The men replied: 'As we sowed the corn which we now reap, they passed.' When they heard these words, the messengers of the King were about to turn back, but a black beetle cried aloud: 'Yesterday, yesterday, the corn was sown, and the Son of God passed through the field.'

It is but fitting that round an incident of such importance as marriage should accumulate folk-sayings and superstitions in number. A northern maid could at one time ascertain who was to be her future husband by a simple process. Immediately after supper she read the third chapter of Ruth, then washed the dishes, and, without opening her lips, went to bed with the Bible under her pillow, and a pin stuck through the chapter. The man then appeared to her in a vision. To test his loyalty she was enjoined to take three stalks of the 'carl-doddie' in bloom, strip off the blossom, lay the stalks in her left shoe, and place this under her pillow. If the lover was to prove faithful, the flowers blossomed anew. Another method of calling up an apparition of the husband to be, to which allusion is made in Burns' 'Halloween,' was for the lass to make her way in the twilight, unnoticed, to a fallow-field, and there scatter several handfuls of lint-seed, as she repeated:

'Lint-seed I saw ye,  
Lint-seed I saw ye;  
Lat's him it's to be my lad  
Come aif ter me and draw me.'

Over her left shoulder she would then discern her future mate coming towards her. There is a Charm, which commands the anxious inquirer to go to a south running stream, and there wash the left sleeve of her shift. On her return home this should be hung before the cottage fire, and at night-fall the figure of her laddie will come and turn the damp sleeve. A curse falls upon a changeable suitor if the nineteenth Psalm be copied out and sent to him, and the receipt of this spell is even now regarded with some dread. It is considered essential to happiness for a couple to be married during the waxing moon, and every stage in the preparations, from the purchase of the bonny brows at the neighbouring village to the final feast, has its own special significance. A graceful practice at one time widespread, was for the bride and bridegroom elect to go, hand in hand, to the cottages of their friends and bid them to the wedding; a white chalk mark on the door betokened to those who were not at home that they had been invited. Another prenuptial custom full of simple significance, which still survives, is for the most intimate friends of the bridegroom to assemble at his house the night before the marriage, fill a tub with stream-water, and wash his feet and legs; each comrade takes his turn at this mystic rite. In



some districts it is believed that the one of the married couple who first falls asleep will be the first to pass. An old wife thus expressed herself on the subject:—

Weel a myne, he was the first to fa' asleep; a speer't at widow Macpherson's gehn she my nt filk o' them fa'd asleep first, but she didna' myne? The bride is greeted at her new home by two friends, one of whom carries a towel, the other a plate of cakes. The towel is spread over the bride's head, and the cakes, or hard Caithness cheese, which has been partially sawn through with a jack-knife, is broken on her head. In olden times it was the wont to lead the new-made wife to the hearth: the peat fire was then scattered, and she re-made it, that good-will might be in the house.

The superstitions connected with death in the Land o' the Catts are weird and numerous; if a single individual paid heed to all of them his life journey would indeed be a gloomy one. Among fateful presages the death-drap holds a prominent place; the eerie sound known by this name was generally heard in the quiet of the night by one person who was thus called, and then by all those who touched him. It was as if single drops of water fell with the utmost regularity, and sometimes this haunting summons continued for many hours. There are peasants who tell that they have heard the dull thud of a coffin laid at their door prior to the death of a dear one, and others who aver that the murmur of countless human voices, borne on the wind from no whither, is an unerring token that death is at hand. A housewife of Cannisbay told the present writer that, prior to the passing of a neighbour, she observed a strange candlelight flitting about his cottage; it was carried by no human hand, and its fitful wanderings told her of what was to come. A method, much in vogue at one time, of ascertaining whether a sickness would prove fatal, was to dig two holes in the ground, one called the quick grave, the other the dead hole; the sufferer was then placed between the two, and the hole towards which he turned indicated what would be the outcome of his malady. Sometimes a piece of rock was broken over the head of a person whose last agonies were painful alike to himself and to those who witnessed them. It was believed that the heart of the sick man would thus be broken and his release hastened. Windows and doors are always thrown wide open in order that the departing spirit may have free egress from the house, and escape from the evil ones that hover around eager to enthrall his soul. During the interval between death and burial hens and cats were kept carefully shut up; a person meeting these animals at such a juncture was doomed to blindness in the future: moreover, unless a stream divided the two houses, farmers frequently refrained from yoking their oxen or horses before the body was 'laid under the turf of truth.' Many women preserved with the greatest reverence their bridal attire to cover them in the coffin. Bread and water were placed in the chamber of death, for during the night prior to the burial the spirit of the departed one came to partake of them. Still-born children, and little ones who had not been blessed by the minister, were buried before sunrise. In this way their admission to the land of promise was assured. Not to observe the practice was to destine the souls of these bairns to wander homeless and disconsolate. The fate of the suicide is lamentable. His body cannot rest in the kirkyard, for it would taint the souls of those who lie therein; frequently he was buried in a lone dyke which separated two lairds' estates, and passers-by were expected to cast a pebble at the rude stone which marked the place. The graveyard is not without its many strange superstitions. Here it is that persons in league with the powers of darkness steal at dead of night, and sell their souls to the devil; in awed whispers stories are told of his appearance and wild words on such occasions. To the burying place those also g<> who would gain the power to arrest the progress of animals and man; while they open a coffin and take from it a screw, the Lord's Prayer must be repeated backwards. If a screw thus obtained be placed in the footprint of an animal or a human being, and the charm muttered below the breath, the progress of friend or foe is stayed.

No section of the folk-lore of these northern regions is so rich in nature myth, in floating wreckage of pagan times, and in mutilated fragments of the age of the Finn and the Norse rovers, as that connected with the sea. The sea has been called 'the restless mother of the world' ever forming and reforming, casting up and swallowing again, as it does, islands and even vast continents. The epithet is peculiarly applicable to the waters of the North, for the population the Land of the Stranger, in the past, depended almost rely on the sea for the necessaries of life. The older generation of fishers, who navigated these skerries and firths relied mainly on traditional knowledge for their guidance. In Orkney, the ebb and flow of the tides whs attributed to the breathing of a sea-monster which lay outstretched on the confines of the world. So gigantic was he, that the simple acts of expiration and inspiration took twelve hours to perform. The resemblance between this nature myth and that of the Greeks is very remarkable. North country sailors scorned at one time to use a compass, for, by the motion of the ninth wave, the Mother Wave, they could, even in the densest fog, ascertain their exact whereabouts, and gain the shore in safety. The launching of a Wick smack was, for years, regarded as unlucky unless the words which follow were repeated by the onlookers...

'Fae rocks an' saans,  
An' barren lan's  
Keep's free.  
Weel oot, weel in,  
Wi' a' gweed shot.'

Harmful, if not fatal, results are believed to follow the utterance of certain words at sea. The salmon is ever a 'fine bit fish,' and swine, minister, kirk, hare, and numerous other words are solemnly interdicted. The presence of a minister in a boat is, by many, regarded with grave concern, and it is sometimes with the utmost difficulty that a crew can be induced to go to sea if a minister is on board. Those who have sailed with these half-Norse, half-Celtic fishers, must have taken note of the method adopted to raise the 'wun;' the main mast is scratched energetically, and the men 'whistle' the while. Suspicious or unwelcome visitors are, on no consideration, admitted to a fisherman's hut while the lines are baited, and to count the number of a haul is equally unlucky; if the catch be a good



one, an inquirer is never vouchsafed more information than 'we hae a gae puckle'. Water from the crest of the third wave, or 'die,' as Shetland folk call it, is deemed efficacious for the cure of divers ailments, notably that of 'worm,' or toothache. Another superstitious belief which obtains is, that 'the greatest witch in the world' the sea, should never be directly mentioned, but referred to as 'her' or the 'holy toy'? An inhuman prejudice warns the fisher that it is dangerous to Rave a drowning man: the sea 'mun hae her nummer' and one of the rescuers has to pay the penalty of his faithlessness to tradition with his own life. A man, moreover, who has survived shipwreck more than once is said to have 'the ee o' the deep' upon him, he is 'like a taed's bird, the aulder the waur' There now lives a Caithness sailor who, alone of his crew, has been saved so many times that no captain will have him on board. The old objection to destroy the bones of a fish which has been eaten, lingers in the north. One version of it runs thus...

'Roast me weel, or boil me weel,  
But dinna burn my behns,  
Or else a'll grow scarcer  
About yer herth-stehns.'

Like his Shetland neighbour, the Caithness sailor is careful to turn his boat 'withershins,' that is sunways, or he will have no luck with his nets.

The belief in the power of witches to control the sea was widespread, and seamen to this day purchase fair winds from mysterious hags for a consideration. In Shetland, and to some extent in Caithness, fishers regard the halibut in a manner which is worthy of note. Silence is enjoined on the boat immediately the man at the line feels the fish; if, by some mischance, a youth speaks, and, above all, if he utters the name halibut, calamity falls on all hands - on board. The 'blugga-banes,' breast bones, of the turbot were carefully preserved in an out-of-the-way chink of the fisherman's cottage; prosperity was thereby assured to the occupants. It is probable that the fish was thought to be under the special protection of Thor, the divine genius of the butt tribe.

Legends and superstitions without number are associated with the holy wells and lochs of Scotland, and several examples of this lore are to be found in Caithness, Sutherland, and the Northern Isles. St. John's Loch, or the Holy Loch, at Dunnet, possesses a mysterious power for the allaying of diseases of divers kinds; ere the sufferer can be healed, he must walk thrice round the water before sunrise. On the surface of a well at Halkirk lies a filmy veil, the colours of which in the sunlight are brilliant and varied as the plurnage of a peacock. To the faithful only is it given to see this phenomenon. Many a Caithness peasant believes in the efficacy of 'casting the heart' for the cure of sickness. Into water, drawn from certain wells and running streams, some melted lead is dropped; portions of the metal formed into heart-shaped pieces, and if one of the lead hearts be put in all beverages drunk by the ailing person, health is restored. This cure can, however, be effected on certain days only in each raith, or quarter. St. Tred well's Loch, in Papa-Westray, evidently one of the many centres of the ancient hermits of Papa, had of yore a wide fame, in part because its waters turned red as a prognostic of any important event in the Royal Family, in part because of its marvellous curative powers. A large number of coins, chiefly of the seventeenth century, have been found at the chapel hard by, offerings of gratitude, doubtless, from those who were healed by washing in the loch, or by walking silently round the edge. A typical example of water worship survives in the north. The maiden who, on New Year's morning, first draws a pailful of water from the village well is accounted singularly fortunate. She has, in truth, secured the 'flower o' the well' and will be happy for the succeeding year. The lassies often sing this couplet:—

'The flower o' the well to our bowse gaes,  
And the bonniest lad'll be mine.'

The water-kelpies of the north of Scotland are not less mischievous than those of other districts. They dwell in deep pools, or preside over mill-streams and fords; strange sounds heard near such places are attributed to them. At times they assume the form of a horse, and graze quietly by the riverside, but woe-betide the unwary traveller who mounts, for he is spirited away, maybe to become a kelpie himself. In Orkney, these weird steeds are often snow-white, and are then called 'muggles.' The impossible task of training a water horse has frequently been attempted, but, although apparently successful for a time, a heavy penalty attaches to such daring. Mouths, perhaps years, pass, during which the kelpie does good work, but, finally, he turns fiercely upon his would-be master. When wroth, the kelpie gallops wildly about, screaming hideously; if any one cross his path he tramples him or her to death. .

The land spirits are called 'dressed fairies'in Sutherland-shire. They are found all over the county, but their favourite haunts are three conical hills, two of which go by the name of Torr Berrichan. These little people, clad in green, hunt merrily in the forest glades with horns and hounds, and peasants tell that, as evening falls, the 'horns of elfland' grow fainter and fainter in the distance and the hounds go wearily homeward. The fairies of Caithness dwell in caves which run for many miles inland from the sea. In certain homesteads, midway between Castletown and Wick, the labourers, when cutting peats with the shed, hear the wee folk busily at work in their underground retreat. For the most part these 'dressed fairies' are kind to those who treat them well, but that they are occasionally mischievous the following tale shows. A woman of Sutherland passed one day through Glen Craig, in Strath Carron. She carried her infant in her plaid. The wild solitude of the place haunted her, and, as she trod the path which runs beside the deep ravine of Glen Dun, the bairn, scarce twelve months old, spoke these words:

'Many is the dun hummel cow. each having a calf', I have seen milked

In the opposite Dun Glen Without the aid of dog, Orman, or woman, or gillie, One man excepted, And he grey

The terrified mother dropped the infant and hurried homeward, where, to her great joy, she found her baby crooning happily by the peat glow. The fairies had befooled her. Nearly every family in the North could boast of a brownie, and offerings of milk and meal were frequently made to them. Special screws, stacks of corn, were under their protection, and not a few farmers tell that their forbears received valuable aid from the brownies who, unseen, worked vigorously with the flail.' , .

So lately as the middle of this century, a girl of Louisburgh, near Wick, was accused of being in league with the 'pooers o' mischief,' and a remedy akin to that recently practised with such tragic results in Ireland was devised. She was placed in a basket lined with shavings of wood, which was then hung over a fire. The issue in this case was not fatal, but the folk averred that she was not 'half so witch-like' after she had been singed. A hag of the Northern Isles was, at times, thought to be metamorphosed into a porpoise, and in fair weather she would dive under and overturn a fishing boat, against whose skipper she bore a grudge. On one occasion, she was made to place her hand on the bodies of several men who had met their death in such a way, and, in the words of the old chronicler, one 'bled at the collir bane,' another 'in the hands and fingers, gushing out bluid thairat to the great admiration of the beholders and revelation of the judgment of the Almychtie.' A host of stories tell of northern witches who have given diseases to horses, oxen, and flocks of moorland sheep. Herdsmen to this day distrust unknown persons who touch the food of their kye, lest it be poisoned. In Shetland the cat or vaneja is regarded as an animal which brings good luck; if she is seen to run towards the boat's mast, there is sure to be a good catch. In Caithness, on the contrary, witches frequently appear in the form of cats. A carpenter of Scrabster in olden times was systematically robbed of his meal and cakes. He thought it 'cu'na be cannie,' and one night as he watched he saw a number of cats devouring his property. In a trice he cut off the right leg of one of them, whereupon they made their escape with a rapidity which confirmed his former suspicions. Shortly afterwards an old woman, who had always been looked upon with disfavour, was found dead in her lone cottage, bereft of her right leg.

Here is another story of the supernatural. Not many years ago, in a kirk near Thurso, a name which indicates the influence of the Norse mythology, the minister, much to the surprise of the devout if somewhat sleepy folk who sat under him, was overcome with laughter during the sermon, his eyes meantime being fixed on one of the old beams which supported the roof. Service over, he was eagerly interrogated on the subject, and proceeded to give a graphic description of the 'auld black een' who sat cross-legged on the rafter busily inscribing the names of those who slept during the sermon. The thick scroll of parchment was not long enough to hold all the names, and the 'mischief' put one end between his feet, and hauled vigorously at the other with his claw-like hands for the purpose of stretching it. Of a sudden, he lost grip with his hands, and the parchment sprang back with such force that he fell from his perch and vanished through a hole in the wall.

'Health comes slowly, but in huge billows cometh ailment,' is a Gaelic saying used by the folk of Caithness and Sutherland. Traditional cures abound in these parts where, for generations, doctors were practically unknown. Quite recently only, the present writer was recommended by a Caithness man to cure a sty in the following manner. At sunrise, walk to a place where two roads cross, pluck a thorn from the hedge, stick it into the swelling, and afterwards throw the thorn over the left shoulder. Warts, according to a native, gradually disappear if a piece of raw beef be laid upon the excrescence and then placed in a mouse's hole. One of the most general, as well as one of the most potent, of cures was the casting of knots; various diseases were subject to this spell, and those who had the 'sicht' could also bind up the winds, or loosen the tempests by tying certain nooses on a rope. An epileptic is told to exhume the skull of a suicide, fill it with well-water, and take a long draught. A Sutherland stalker of the last generation had a remedy for toothache which never failed. In perfect good faith the following words were written on a scrap of linen or paper

'Peter sat on a stone weeping.  
Christ came past and said, 'What aileth thee Peter?'"  
'O my Lord, my tooth doth ache'  
Christ said, 'Rise, Peter, thy tooth shall ache no more.'"

This charm was worn round the neck until eventually the worm was driven out of the tooth.

The foregoing pages contain representative gleanings only of the folk-lore of those remote counties where, in time past, oral tradition took the place of books, and peasant wisdom fulfilled the wants of the age. One and all are characteristic of the people, and in this lies their claim to interest.

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

Alastair