

Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for July 31st, 2020

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

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

Electric Scotland News

Sorry to get this out later than usual but I lost my connection to my site through my web publishing program on Wednesday. Still not sure what caused it but it also took my hosting support folk a long time to fix it for me. As this goes out it is still a problem.

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 world news stories that can affect Scotland and all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines. I might also add that in a number of newspapers 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 which I do myself from time to time.

Shopify: The Canadian tech champion taking on Amazon

The Canadian company offers the technology for anyone to create an online store and sell their products, with added features such as inventory tracking and software to help understand sales trends.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-53304241>

Is Underground farming the future of food?

A subterranean farm deep inside a South Korean subway station may unlock the secret to food sustainability.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20200723-is-underground-farming-the-future-of-food>

The little cottage that survived the battle of Culloden

It's the lone building that stands sentinel on Culloden - but how much do you know about Old Leanach?

Read more at:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/scotland-now/little-cottage-survived-battle-culloden-22399517>

Lanarkshire churches unveil hands-free Holy Water dispensers in COVID-19 battle

A parishioner who missed being able to bless himself from the fonts came up with the ingenious idea.

Read more at:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/lanarkshire-churches-unveil-hands-free-22409104>

Scotland's Hate Crime Bill is a triumph for the terminally woke

No politician will ever admit their plan is to curb free speech - but that's just what the SNP have planned

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/scotlands-hate-crime-bill-is-a-triumph-for-the-terminally-woke/>

Jackson Carlaw quits as Scottish Conservative leader

Mr Carlaw said he did not believe he was the best person to lead the case for Scotland remaining in the United Kingdom.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-53601518>

Nicola Sturgeon faces serious questions of Covid in care homes - leader comment

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon will have to answer for any mistakes in handling of coronavirus in care homes, where more than half of the deaths from the disease in Scotland took place.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/nicola-sturgeon-faces-serious-questions-covid-care-homes-leader-comment-2927863>

How confirmed cases of coronavirus have spread

Coronavirus is continuing its spread across the world, with more than 17 million confirmed cases in 188 countries. More than 660,000 people have lost their lives.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51235105>

Electric Canadian

The Forty-Niner

January 1948. Official Publication of the Forty-ninth Battalion, The Loyal Edmonton Regiment Association (pdf)

You can read this book at: <https://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/49er1948.pdf>

Canadian Jack

By John Mackie (1913) (pdf)

A good story and if you like it there are others available from the same author.

You can read this at: https://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/canadian_jack.pdf

The 25th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery

(Canadian Militia, 1908-1914) by Frank Hamilton Mewburn (pdf)

You can read this at: <https://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/25tbattery1.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday morning - 26th July 2020 by the Rev. Nola Crewe.

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5560-Thoughts-on-a-Sunday-morning-26th-July-2020>

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The Book of Kells

Described by Sir Edward Sullivan (second edition) (1920) (pdf)

This can be read at: <https://electricscotland.com/books/pdf/TheBookOfKells.pdf>

Clan Munro of Australia

Newsletter for August 2020 which can be read at:

<https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/munro/index.htm>

MacDonald, Allan

Father Allan as a Gaelic scholar, poet and folklorist. Also added the book Songs of the Hebrides to this account due to having some good information about him in the Introduction.

You can read all this at:

https://electricscotland.com/history/other/macdonald_allan.htm

The Scottish Banner

August 2020 edition is available at:

<https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/scottishbanner/ScottishBanner2020-08.pdf>

Added Section 1 of Beth's Newfangled Family Tree for August 2020.

This can be read at: <https://electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

The Tower of Craigietocher brings us the final update of the build.

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/articles/craigietocher18.htm>

Story

I thought I'd give you part of the story about Father Allan MacDonald of Eriskay and you can read the rest of it the link I gave above.

FR. ALLAN MACDONALD OF ERISKAY

By John Lorne Campbell of Canna

John Lorne Campbell of Canna carried out a great deal of research into the life and work of Father Allan MacDonald. Through various publications he brought the work of Father Allan as a Gaelic scholar, poet and folklorist to the attention of the wider community. In 1954 he published a pamphlet on the life and work of Father Allan (1859 - 1905). The full text of the pamphlet is given below.

BLAIRS AND VALLADOLID

FATHER ALLAN MCDONALD was born in 1859 at Fort William in Lochaber, which is in the heart of the Scottish Highlands. He belonged to the Keppoch branch of the Macdonald Clan. He gave signs of a vocation in early youth, and entered Blairs College in Aberdeenshire in 1871. Blairs College in those days was run on very Spartan lines, with plain living, stern discipline and hard work, and Fr Allan was heard to say in later life that the training he received there had the great advantage of making any hardships connected with parochial work in the Hebrides seem luxurious by comparison. At Blairs one of Fr Allan's teachers was Fr James A. Smith, later to be Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, who noted early the abilities of his young pupil and encouraged in him an interest in philology and languages which Fr Allan kept up throughout his life. In those days there was no formal teaching of Gaelic at Blairs : Gaelic-speaking boys were given Fr MacEachen's Gaelic Dictionary and a copy of the translation of Imitatio Christi and encouraged to pursue the study of Gaelic in their spare time, such as it was. This was less training than might be desired, but at the same time the education given in the study of Latin and Greek trained their minds to undertake the study of their own language, and many priests educated in this way, like Fr Allan, learned Gaelic well and used it effectively.

From Blairs Fr Allan went to the venerable Scots College at Valladolid in Spain, where he continued and completed his studies in an atmosphere that to him was more congenial than that of Blairs. The main influence on Fr Allan's life at Valladolid was that of the Rector, Monsignor David Macdonald, a man remarkable for piety and learning, who spent nearly forty years of his life at the College and improved it greatly. At Valladolid there were several Highland students and they used to produce a holograph Gaelic magazine, of which at least one copy has been preserved. Fr Allan contributed to this, apparently under several different pseudonyms, for his handwriting appears frequently in the surviving copy. Fr Allan later wrote of Valladolid

Thug sinn greis le chéile 'sa Spàinte,
Aite nach bu ghann ar sòlas,
'S bhuain sinn an dearcag fhiona,
'S chaisg sinn ar miann le h.-ubhlan òrbhuidh;
'S chan-eil teagamh nach do dh'fhàs sinn
An geurad inntinn mar bu chòir dhuinn."

"We spent a while together in Spain, a place where our happiness was not little; we picked grapes and ate our fill of oranges, and, no doubt, we grew in keenness of mind as we should have done."

The friend to whom he refers here was Fr John Mackintosh who was later priest of Bornish in South Uist, near Fr Allan, and was famed for his efforts on behalf of the Uist crofters during the days of the land agitation. He was known locally as "Sagart Mór nan Each".

OBAN

In 1882 Fr Allan returned from Spain and was ordained at Glasgow Cathedral by Archbishop Eyre. He was offered a teaching post at Blairs, which he refused: and he was then appointed by Bishop Angus Macdonald to the mission at Oban, where he had to minister to a widely scattered population. Here a warm respect and regard grew between Fr Allan and his Bishop, a Gaelic-speaking Highlander like himself, and here and in the countryside around Oban Fr Allan got full opportunity for practising his Gaelic. The only Catholic family then living in the town of Oban itself was that of Donald McLeod, a native of the Isle of Eigg, and from Donald McLeod Fr Allan recovered traditional hymns, some of which were later printed in the hymn book he published in 1893. This was the beginning of an interest in oral tradition to which Fr Allan applied his energies in his spare time for the next seventeen years, taking down the traditional Gaelic oral lore, prayers, hymns, songs, stories, place names, customs and history, whenever he got the chance.

DALIBROG

In 1884 Fr Allan was appointed to the mission of Dalibrog in South Uist, then the most populous, as well as the poorest, island in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. Dalibrog in those days could only be reached by steamer from Oban or Glasgow - a full day's sail in the first case. Here Fr Allan landed in July 1884. His congregation was one living on the very margin of existence. Nearly all the best land in the island had been taken, within the preceding three generations, for big sheep farms, and the people had either been evicted or forced, in many cases, to occupy miserable holdings near the shore with a view to pursuing the kelp or fishing industries, the first of which had long ago failed, while very few of them had enough capital to pursue the fishing. The then owner of South Uist, Lady Gordon Cathcart, was an absentee who is said to have visited the island only once in her life. She was obsessed with the idea that the only way the people could benefit themselves was by emigration, and with that idea fixed in her mind she was very unwilling to spend money on improving conditions in South Uist, feeling that anything she did in that line would have the effect of encouraging the people to stay there, which she did not want them to do.

In her absence the island was, like other such estates, ruled by a tight little oligarchy, composed of her factor or agent, the large farmers, and the parish minister. In bodies connected with local government, the representatives of the Catholics, who formed about 80 per cent. of the population, were carefully kept in the minority.*1) This did not prevent friendly relations between individuals in many cases, and it is much to the credit of South Uist that at the height of the land controversy, when very strong feelings were aroused on both sides, no violent actions took place.

When Fr Allan arrived in South Uist, this controversy was at its strongest. The Crofters' Commission had visited many places in the Hebrides, including South Uist, during the preceding year, and had taken much evidence on rack-renting, evictions, oppressive estate managements, obligatory sale or barter, inadequate small-holdings, lack of medical services, and so on. Conditions in Uist, where Fr John Mackintosh had made a strong statement to the Commission on behalf of the crofters, were particularly bad. Legislation was expected, and did follow two years later. Meanwhile the people still had no security of tenure, and without it were terrified of taking an independent line, and often even were afraid to support their own representatives in public.

There was also the question of the local schools. South Uist was and is an overwhelmingly Catholic island, but Lady Gordon Cathcart was not a Catholic, and the minority who were running the island and who composed the great majority of the then School and Parochial Boards had systematically refused to select any Catholic teachers for the national schools on the island set up by the Education Act of 1872. Not until 1888 did the Catholic majority in South Uist obtain its rightful representation on the local School Board. In both the land question and the schools question, Fr Allan and his fellow priests had to explain to a Gaelic-speaking population what its rights were, and had to encourage them to overcome fear of eviction and habitual diffidence and to make a stand and demand these rights - which in practice often meant voting against the factor or the big farmers at Parochial or School Board elections - while on the other hand they had to explain to a not always understanding or sympathetic outside world the position and point of view of a Gaelic-speaking Catholic peasant population. It was a difficult task which often demanded heroic patience, tact, and self-restraint, yet Fr Allan carried it out so well that in South Uist his memory is to-day as warmly regarded by Protestants as it is by Catholics.

In spiritual matters there were equally great difficulties to be overcome. The present generation, even in the

Isles themselves, can hardly visualise the difficulties involved in the work of a priest in the days before the coming of the motor car, motor boat, the telephone and the telegraph. Fr Allan's parish, about forty square miles, is completely exposed to the wild storms which sweep across the Atlantic:

Side chorrach ghruamach,
Mar bu dual dhith 'san Fhaoilleach
Sioban geal nam bruach
'Ga fhuadach feadh an t-saoghail,
Marcan-sine luaithreach
'Na ruaig thar a' chaolais,
Sgrath is sglìot 'gam fuasgladh
Le luathbheum na gaoithe.

Frasan garbh a tuath
Toirt crathadh air gach stuagh,
Clachan meallain cruaidh
A bheumadh barr nan cluas;
Daoine laithte fuar,
Nach fhaod iad sealltuinn bhuap',
A stigh an oir a' luaith
'Gan caibhleachadh.

"Ceann na beinn' ud shuas
Air a shuaineadh 'san anart,
Bho na mharbhadh leis an fhuachd
Na bha bhuidhannan oirr' an ceangal;
Chaill i gu buileach a tuar,
Thàinig suain a' bhàis 'na caraibh,
'S chan-eil coltas oirre gluasad,
Mur fuasgail am blàths a h-anail."

"Rough, gloomy weather, as is usual in early February; white spindrift off the sandbanks driven everywhere; spray like ashes driven across the Sound; sod and slate loosened by the quick blows of the wind. Fierce squalls from the north shaking every gable, hard hailstones which would cut the top off one's ears, men so chilled with cold that they cannot look outside, huddled indoors at the edge of the ashes. The head of yonder hill above is sheathed in a shroud, since the cold has killed her natural virtues. She has lost her appearance entirely, the sleep of death has come on her, and there is no likelihood of her moving until the warmth of spring unbinds her."
(Written on 13th February 1898.)

His parishioners were scattered, some villages being only approached by rough tracks; three hundred or so of his congregation of 2300 lived on the Island of Eriskay, separated from South Uist by half a mile of reef-strewn sea with strong tidal currents. To answer a sick call on Eriskay Fr Allan had to walk six or seven miles, often in the rain, to Eriskay Sound and there make a fire on the shore so that the Eriskay boatmen would know to sail over and fetch him. On one of these crossings he was in danger of being drowned. All the duties which fall on the shoulders of a parish priest in a large, poor, scattered and exposed rural parish were on Fr Allan's shoulders: Sunday work, confessions, instructions, sick calls, the repair of Dalibrog Church, the teaching of the children (in which Fr Allan was particularly interested). The foundation of Dalibrog Hospital, built by the Marquis of Bute, sprang from a suggestion put forward by Fr Allan and Fr Mackintosh.

Fr. Alexander Campbell

When Fr Allan first came to South Uist an old priest, Fr Alexander Campbell, a native of the island, was living in retirement at Dalibrog. Fr Campbell was a mine of information on the traditions of South Uist and it was probably he who interested Fr Allan in them. At any rate from 1887 on, once he was settled in and had mastered the local Gaelic dialect, Fr Allan kept a series of note-books in which he jotted down whatever of interest he heard and had time to record, for instance, when spending nights away from home after sick calls to remote places. In 1889 he printed a little book containing the words of the sung Gaelic Mass, part of which he recovered traditionally and part of which he seems to have translated himself. In 1893 this was reprinted with the addition of many Gaelic

hymns. Some of these were composed by known writers who lived before Fr Allan, some were traditional, and others again appear to be his own work or his translations from Latin or English. He was quick to see the immense interest, both religious and secular, of the vast but sometimes ignorantly despised Gaelic oral tradition, of which Uist was then, as it is now, the main storehouse, and his efforts to rescue what he could from the danger of oblivion and to incorporate the traditional religious material into modern devotional literature were worthy of the greatest praise.

Failing health

All his labour, both mental and physical, could have only one effect: within ten years at Dalibrog, Fr Allan had worn out his strength and impaired his constitution. His health broke down: and after a vacation and rest, he was transferred to the Island of Eriskay as its first resident priest. Here he was destined to spend the remaining twelve years of his life, and to have considerably greater opportunity for the pursuit of his literary and folklore researches than hitherto. From some points of view it was unfortunate that at the same time Bishop Angus Macdonald left Oban to become Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh and was followed by a successor who, although a man of holy personality, knew no Gaelic and took little, if any, interest in Fr Allan's work in this field.

END.

And that's it for this week and hope you all have a great weekend and mind and keep your distance, wash your hands and stay safe. Don't be stupid or selfish and instead be considerate of others and wear a mask if going shopping or into a crowded place and consider whether you should indeed go into a crowded space in the first place.

Alastair