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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for December 18th, 2020



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

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

Electric Scotland News

While Trump is still contesting the election results it would seem that in general Biden is now considered to have won the election. Mitch McConnell: Top Trump ally breaks silence to congratulate Biden. Senator McConnell spoke after the electoral college formally confirmed Mr Biden's victory over Mr Trump. Watch a video clip at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-55334234>

US snowstorm: Tens of millions on East Coast to be affected. Also in my home in Chatham, ON., we also received some snow with more predicted over the next couple of days. See a video clip at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55343207>

With two anti-virus vaccines now approved for use in the UK with more expected we now see approvals granted in the US and Canada. While this is good news there is some way still to go and it will likely be well into the Summer of 2021 before there will be sufficient uptake to make a major difference.

I also note that one of the YouTube channels I watch on homesteading have reported getting the virus. What most interested me in this case is that both husband and wife have lost their sense of smell and taste although otherwise are now healthy.

Also a new strain of the virus is now reported in the South of England and Glasgow in Scotland and as yet we don't know if the vaccine will have any affect on this new strain. Learn more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55312505>

Flash is to end it's life on 31st December 2020 which means all those Flash games a lot of us enjoyed playing will no longer be available. I note that the Internet Archive have been working on this and you will still be able to play them on their web site. Read an article on this at:

<http://blog.archive.org/2020/11/19/flash-animations-live-forever-at-the-internet-archive/>

This now means that our own arcade will no longer work or our famous "Dress the Chief" game. I am trying to get the Internet Archive to accept this one for their own archive.

I have updated my list of YouTube channels that I watch on a somewhat regular basis. You can see this list at: <https://electricScotland.com/lifestyle/youtube.htm> and you might also be interested to note that on this list is the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland where you can follow there many lectures.

Would be happy to receive any recommendations you may have for additional viewing.

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.

Nationalist propaganda disguised as history for school children is a worrying sign about where Scotland is heading - Brian Wilson

All nationalisms rely on revising history to their own glorification and Scotland's is certainly no exception.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/nationalist-propaganda-disguised-history-school-children-worrying-sign-about-where-scotland-heading-brian-wilson-3065384>

The UK's quest for affordable fusion by 2040

For decades, fusion has been the alchemy of our technological age. So, how feasible is the UK's plan to build a commercially viable fusion power plant by 2040?

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201214-the-uks-quest-for-affordable-fusion-by-2040>

Germany Is Faring Poorly in the Second Wave of the Coronavirus

Germany has squandered the gains it made this spring in dealing with the coronavirus. A series of miscalculations by politicians in the fall has contributed to a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections in recent days. A second lockdown is coming.

Read more at:

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/germany-is-faring-poorly-in-the-second-wave-of-the-coronavirus-a-afc634db-9220-496b-8aca-fd19f2e0962f>

Maybe Brexit isn't so bad after all

With the end of the year approaching, I have been thinking about which of my views have changed over the last 12 months. Here's one: I no longer think Brexit is a bad idea.

Read more at:

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/12/13/commentary/world-commentary/maybe-brexit-isnt-bad>

Thousands of indigenous children in Canada were forcibly removed from their families between the 1950s and 1980s, in what is known as the Sixties Scoop.

They were put into non-indigenous homes by welfare agencies, in an attempt to assimilate them into mainstream culture.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-55269251>

Kangaroos can communicate with humans, study finds

The research challenges the notion that only domesticated animals display this behaviour, co-authors from the UK and Australia tell the BBC.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-australia-55312356>

Scotland's best archaeological discoveries of 2020

From a massive hilltop Pictish fort to hundreds of medieval skeletons found beneath the streets of Edinburgh, a number of key archaeological digs in 2020 have helped to further our understanding of the people and places of Scotland through time.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/scotlands-best-archaeological-discoveries-2020-3069359>

To Sutherland and beyond

Nasa veteran reveals how grandfather would have been proud of Scotland's race to space

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/to-sutherland-and-beyond-nasa-veteran-reveals-how-grandfather-would-have-been-proud-of-scotlands-race-to-space>

Taxation and the UK single market

My speech during the debate on the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Bill, 15 December 2020 by Sir John Redwood MP

Read more at;

<http://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2020/12/17/taxation-and-the-uk-single-market>

UK designer's wheelchair innovation wins \$1m Toyota prize

Andrew Slorance, who uses a wheelchair himself, won the Toyota-run global Mobility Unlimited Challenge.

Read more at;

<https://www.bbc.com/news/disability-55315442>

Nicola Sturgeon says Scottish drug deaths record indefensible

The number of deaths rose to a record 1,264 in 2019 - double the number in 2014 and the worst rate in Europe.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-55347091>

Fessin-up to being indy-curious - what's changed?

FINDING OUT what motivates the 'indy-curious' - those who voted 'No' in the 2014 referendum but might change their minds if another vote were held - has become fashionable in Scottish politics.

Read more at:

https://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkbusiness/articles.html?read_full=14376

The new fight for fairness

Truss' speech at the Centre for Policy Studies. The focus on groups at the expense of individuals has led to harmful unintended consequences

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/the-new-fight-for-fairness-liz-truss-speech-at-the-centre-for-policy-studies>

The Decimal Point that Blew Up the World

What was the basis of panic that led the lights to darken on civilization?

Read more at:

<https://www.aier.org/article/the-decimal-point-that-blew-up-the-world/>

Electric Canadian

The Kilties souvenir album
Songs and marches of "Auld Scotia"

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/Scotland/kilties.htm>

Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies
By Marius Barbeau, Illustrations by W. Langdon Kihn (1923) (pdf)

You can read this at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/indiandaysintherockies.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday morning - 13th December 2020
By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:
<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5615-Thoughts-on-a-Sunday-Morning-13th-December-2020>

The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada
By Frederick H. Abbott, Secretary of the Board of Indian Commissioners. Report of an investigation made in 1915 under the direction of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1915) (pdf)

You can read this at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/Administration-of-Indian-Affairs-in-Canada.pdf>

Holiday Recipes
By the Little Potato Company (pdf)

You can this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/HolidayRecipesVol2.pdf>

Electric Scotland

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree
Hi Everyone. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

It's getting time for both Christmas and the New Year! Where does the time go? It seems just yesterday that we moved into our house here in Clarkesville, Georgia and it is eight years ago! It seems Tom and I have been m-m-m-m just since the day before yesterday and it is 15 years already! My goodness!

Here is the first part of the first section for 2021. This time, we do have a surprise we hope you enjoy. When folks do something unexpected and wonderful, we just think they should be honoured in some way. They are!

If you would like to see what all the shouting is about, the publication we're talking about won't be up yet for a few days (The Buchanan Banner). There are lots of issues for you to enjoy now. The issue you are looking for is January 2021. It should be at <https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/buchanan>, in the next week or so. In the meantime, enjoy all the things that are there.

We do hear that a vaccine will be available soon. I know everyone is thrilled to know that! We all still have to be patient for us to be injected...and then, it takes, so I have read, about 10 days to be effective. This patience thing has just gone on a long time and will be just a little longer. Hang in there, everyone.

In the meantime, enjoy the current section. The rest of this issue will be up in a couple of weeks at <https://electricscotland.com/bnft>; I hope everyone knows you may visit that URL and browse amongst the archives as much as you wish.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas with friends and family - on the phone or Zoom if you can't yet be in person.

Aye,
beth

Read the January 2021 issue section 2 at: <https://electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Buchanan Banner Newsletter

The Clan Buchanan Society International Newsletter for January 2021 is now available at:
<https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/buchanan/index.htm>

The Indian and Colonial Forces of Her Majesty's Army

A Descriptive Account of the various regiments now comprising the Queen's Forces in India and the Colonies by Walter Richards in two volumes (1891)

Volume 1 <https://electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/Her-Majestys-army01.pdf>

Volume 2 <https://electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/Her-Majestys-army02.pdf>

A Social History of 19th-century Farm Workers and their Families

At Jack's Houses, Kirkliston, Midlothian by Stuart Mitchell, Fay Oliver, and Tim Neighbour, With contributions by S Anderson, M Cressey, G Haggarty & R Murdoch. (2009) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/agriculture/2064-Article%20Text-2046-1-10-20181016.pdf>

Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland

Hitherto unpublished with Explanatory Notes by Peter Buchan reprinted from the Original edition of 1828 in two volumes (1875)

Volume 1 <https://electricscotland.com/music/ancientballads01.pdf>

Volume 2 <https://electricscotland.com/music/ancientballads02.pdf>

Britain and the British Seas

By H. J. Mackinder, M.A. (1902) (pdf)

You can read this at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/britainbritishseas.pdf>

Farm Workers in Scottish Agriculture

Case Studies in the International Seasonal Migrant Labour Market. Commissioned report for the Scottish Government Project No. CR2016/25 (2018) (pdf)

You can read these at: <https://electricscotland.com/agriculture/farmworkers.pdf>

The History of the Scottish Society of Indianapolis (1983-2020)

Carson C. Smith, FSA Scot (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/indianapolis/SSI-History-of-the-Scottish-Society-2020.pdf>

Story

Through the Eye of the Gael – Discovering hidden meaning in Scottish Gaelic words

By Richard Gwynallen

Learning a new language is, at its best, opening new ways of viewing the world. To be sure, it's only glimpses in the beginning, but those glimpses draw the learner into a deeper relationship with the language.

Far from Samuel Johnson's characterization of Gaelic as the "rude speech of a barbarous people," Scottish Gaelic is a poetic language with complex concepts of time, and the intersection of people and place, embedded within the grammar and vocabulary.

Although the student of Scottish Gaelic may well find its grammar complex and challenging, deeper study reveals, embedded within its grammar, a different way of viewing the world that requires some conversion to its philosophy in order to understand it.

Scottish Gaelic sayings and word combinations are also rich in meaning. However, even single words can unlock a new way of seeing and relating to the world.

If grammar is the path we walk, and sayings and phrases are the landscape itself, words may be like stones along the path that opens ultimately to a new horizon. They speak to us of both Scottish Gaelic culture and mindset.

Academic linguists may take issue with my interpretations. But in this essay, I will offer a few of the terms that I think reflect the relationship of the speaker to his or her community, and suggest how even a single word can convey a different way of viewing our reality that is entirely unique to the Scottish Gaelic language. I caution that this is but a smattering of the possibilities.

Let's take as our first example one of the Scottish Gaelic terms best known to English speakers: céilidh.

Céilidh – the word resounds with joy, fun, and music even to those who have no intention of learning the language. For many readers, the term may immediately conjure up a band, dancing, and lots of beer. Or perhaps a concert or performance with several singers or musicians taking turns on a stage.

However, the basic meaning of the term is to visit. It refers also to a gathering at a “céilidh house” where songs, poems, stories, and news are shared, usually amongst people who know each other well; an expanded form of a visit and an expanded form of what might happen in a visit with a friend or relation.

The poet, Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn, or in English Iain Crichton Smith, described his view of the traditional céilidh:

“The traditional ceilidh which was held in the village in the village ceilidh house was a celebration of the happenings of the village, it was alive, it was a diary and a repeated record.” (Real People in a Real Place, p. 23) “. . . the ceilidh represented the community that joined together in entertainment created from within itself. Stories would be told, songs would be sung.” (Real People in a Real Place, p. 21)

The traditional céilidh also reinforced bonds. And for the exile, it evoked home and warmth. At the end of the song ‘S fhada leam an oidche gheamhraidh, Murchadh MacPhàrlain writes that he is “Far ‘m bu mhiann leam dhol a chèilidh” (“far from where I would like to be ‘céilidhing.”). In this context, céilidh, implies “belonging”, being in a place where you feel connected, wanted, and a part of the fabric of community.

Before proceeding into anything more esoteric, we can visit another Scottish Gaelic term also well known to English speakers: slàinte.

Slàinte! the crowd shouts as glasses are raised. If we ask a group of people at an Irish pub the meaning of slàinte we are likely to get “Cheers.” Perhaps a few will say it actually means “health”, and they would be correct. Slàinte directly translates as “health”. Slàinte Mhath! Good Health. Air do shlàinte! To your good health! Òlaidh sinn do dheoch-slàinte. We drink your health!

The root of the word, however, is slàn. The root word, of course, also refers to health. An slàn dhut? Are you well? Guma slàn a chì mi thu. May I see you well. However, it also means “whole,” as in the poem, An Roghainn (The Choice), by Somhairle MacGill-Eain (also known by his English name Sorley MacLean):

Ach nan robh ‘ roghainn rithist dhomh
'S mi 'm sheasamh air an àird,
Leumainn à nèamh no iutharna
Le spiorad 's chridhe slàn.

MacGill-Eain translates that part of the poem as:

But had I the choice again,
And stood on that headland,
I should leap from heaven or hell
With a whole spirit and heart.

So what are we really saying when we toast with the term “slàinte”? We're wishing upon others wholeness, represented as health, and including all those things that constitute health and wholeness: physical and mental health, vibrancy, love, family, community, livelihood, and peace.

Next up...

Dùthchas is a term that resists easy explanation, as it represents a set of ideas. The origins of any language reflect the intersection of people with their land. “Place” is a very important concept in Gaelic.

Dùthaich refers to land, but specifically to one's native land, the land with which one has an intimate connection. In the form dùthchas, the word refers to the place of one's origin and, specifically, to hereditary temperament, spirit, or rights derived from that connection. In the form dùthchasach, it refers specifically to indigeneity, as well as traditions or customs that derive from that indigeneity and a love for one's native land.

All these terms refer to an intersection between people and land that go beyond the place you were born or places you've lived.

In Michael Newton's words, dùthchas is the idea that "people belong to places rather than places belonging to people." Indigeneity is based on a shared history, experience, and interaction with that land. The right to it is rooted in daily habits and activities and it is bound up with relationships to others, and responsibilities.

And how would you want to be known in your community? In traditional Gaelic communities you would want to have cliù.

Cliù appears in the dictionary as "1 Fame, renown. 2 Praise. 3 Character, reputation." Such as, Fo dheagh chliù. Under a good character.

But in context of the culture, what does "character" or "reputation" mean? What does it mean to you, the reader, to have a good reputation? Is it "honesty," "kindness," or other traits?

Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn (Iain Crichton Smith) describes cliù like this:

"The Highlander has a concept of cliù, which roughly means 'reputation,' and such a concept implies that a man who has it may be considered useful to the community, not glorified, but respected. . . . he wishes to be known as one who belongs to a community and who does service to that community." (Real People in a Real Place, p 19)

This particular concept of having a good reputation is rooted in the idea that the individual is part of a community.

With that, let's begin to wander the path a bit outside the physical world of the community. Take, for example, aiteal.

Aiteal is a very small quantity of something, but it can also be a glimpse of something, a breath, a breeze, a ray of light, or briefly heard speech. All of these are fleeting experiences that imply that something much larger exists, glimpses, if you will, for those who want to follow further, prods to take the next step.

A word like aiteal can swing you from the seemingly insignificant, to passing things like a breeze or a ray of light that sharpen momentary awareness of life, to breath, and to the glimpse of something that lies behind and beyond all of that.

Some words combine the most unexpected things, like dust and atoms.

Smùirnean refers to truly tiny things... a mote, an atom, a particle of dust – things that range from having no importance to us (except maybe the need to clean it away), to unseen building blocks of life. But it is also the small, even uneasy, feelings we get when we are on the point of realizing something; a tingle, a shiver, a slight sense of unease or heightened awareness, perhaps of the interconnected nature of life. Dust and atoms – all parts of a whole.

And some words have the potential to upend our understanding of reality, like crith.

Crith reminds us that our understanding of the world we see is limited. Crith refers to trembling or shivering. It could be from fear or cold, but not just from fear or cold. It's the vulnerability and insubstantiality of solid objects – the tremor from an earthquake, or the shimmering in the air one sees as part of a heat haze, or the ghost light of a will-o'-the-wisp, (those mysterious atmospheric lights seen by travelers at night, especially over bogs, swamps, or marshes). It's the layer of floating moss on top of clear water in a quaking or quivering bog. It's the crumbling earth from a ploughed and dry field.

Seen this way, crith reminds us that our material world is shifting, that what seems substantial can change, that a glimpse of something on the other side of the veil is not only possible but also very near at hand. And that shiver might be the beginnings of understanding.

Scottish Gaelic has many ways of hinting that our world is not as rigid or stable as we like to believe. Science has started to catch up with such indigenous knowledge with our growing awareness of quantum physics and how electrons are in continual movement... materialising, dematerialising, then rematerializing somewhere else.

The fact that any solid, dependable mass that starts to quiver or falter can be referred to as crith makes it an ideal word for the unpredictable and infinitesimal particles that we have delineated as the building blocks of all life.

It isn't just trembling and quaking that gives a hint that something else is to be glimpsed, as lannair indicates.

Lannair is a beautiful example of a word that leads from an experience of physical sight to innersight. It means a glittering or gleaming, but not like glitter thrown on art projects, or lights hung about the room. It's the reflection of rays from a polished surface, the phosphoric glitter from fish scales in the dark, or the calm or glitter caused by oil on water. It's the quicksilver flash of the salmon in stirred waters.

At the same time, lannair can be a great flame, and not just a bonfire. It may refer to an inner flame: Thàinig lannair ann an sùil Chaluum (a gleam came into Calum's eyes, Calum's eyes shone with an inner fire/light). Understanding lies just beyond the glitter.

Finally, I will leave you with one of my favorite words in the language, deò.

Deò is breath, but also air. It's a ray of light, but also the vital spark of life. It's vision, but not just sight. It's vision that allows one to see beyond, even beyond the veil. And it is the place where a stream falls into the sea, where one life or path merges with the infinite, where we are all connected. Deò is almost like a mantra, a chant that draws you to that point where the stream lets out into the sea, a place between worlds, a gateway through which past and future both flow.

The beauty and the deep meaning of Gaelic words can enliven our language learning as we weave through lenition, the genitive case, and grammatical challenges. However, it can also be a path to reorient us, to turn us back to what we have forgotten about our connection to the earth, to each other, and to how we view our world.

If we dare to dive in and escape the confines that language and modernity has placed upon us, there are whole worlds of new experiences awaiting.

Article taken from:

<https://sgoigaidhlig.org/why-learn-gaidhlig/through-the-eye-of-the-gael-tro-shuil-nan-gaidheal/>

END.

And that's it for this week and hope you all have a great weekend and I take this opportunity to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas despite the lockdown and a Very Happy New Year as they roll out the vaccines.

Alastair