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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for March 18th, 2022

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

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

## Electric Scotland News

I must confess that I've been very impressed with the Canadian media response by cabinet officials. They give great answers to journalists questions and have been very transparent on the response to all questions. For example when asked if we will impose a no fly zone they have said that would be an escalation of the war which would not be beneficial to anyone. It might even encourage Putin to use nuclear weapons and that would be a disaster.

I also note that while Canada has been one of the countries that has not paid into the 2% contribution to NATO defense it now looks like they will now do so and they are at last starting to look to better defense of the Arctic region. Canada has no nuclear defense capability.

This has been a wake up call to all NATO members and even Germany is now looking to increase its defense budget.

There are also questions on sanctions as they do hurt ordinary Russians BUT there is also the consideration that ordinary Russians do support their leader so they should also suffer.

The Ukrainian leader has also addressed the parliaments of the UK and Canada and also to the USA although the USA has been critical of him appearing in a T-Shirt.

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There are now facts that show Covid is now less lethal for people with three doses of the vaccine. This now looks like definite proof that people who have had the two vaccines and the booster are very unlikely to die in the event they contract Covid. See the Daily Mail news item below for more details. "Omicron death rates are 14 TIMES lower after a booster vaccine and just THIRTY triple-jabbed under 50s have died, official data shows"

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Attended the Zoom meeting of the Canadian members of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland at 1 pm EST on Thursday and enjoyed the talk by Dr Callum Watson on "To stand against their foe's might, sometimes with strength and sometimes with 'slycht': prudence and cunning in Scottish chivalric literature"

He talked about the life of King Robert the Bruce and Balfours account of his life. One question for him was how he could be called Chivalric due to the murder of his main opposition contender and he said that Balfour made it seem that his life for several years after that meant he had paid the price for that and he then moved on. An interesting take and well worth listening to.

Callum completed his PhD thesis titled 'Attitudes towards chivalry in Barbour's Bruce and Hary's Wallace' at the University of Edinburgh in 2016. Since then he has worked for the National Trust for Scotland at the Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre. He also runs a blog on Scottish medieval history and has appeared in history documentaries on the BBC and Channel 5.

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 and world news stories that can affect Scotland and as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines it becomes a good resource. 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.

There is ample coverage on Ukraine across all media so don't intend to cover it within here although I will add the odd story...

Covid in Scotland: Virus infection levels hit new record high

Almost 300,000 people in Scotland had Covid last week, the highest figure since estimates began in autumn 2020. It means about one in 18 people has the virus, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-60707979>

Turkish yard wins contract to build Islay ferries

The £110m contract to build two new CalMac ferries for Islay is likely to be awarded to a shipyard in Turkey.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-60706915>

EU summit chaos: Five furious nations tear up VDL's Putin plan

EU over dependence on Russia for it's energy needs.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/science/1579001/eu-summit-update-von-der-leyen-versailles-russia-energy-ukraine>

Crumbling road fears as pothole bill hits £1.7bn

The cost of fixing potholes on Scotland's roads is claimed to be almost £1.7bn. Figures were obtained from local authorities via a freedom of information request and suggest council repair backlogs run into hundreds of millions of pounds.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-60727955>

Consigning the SNP to ancient history

Some thoughts mainly on Scottish politics

Read more at:

<https://www.affiedeans.com/2022/03/consigning-snp-to-ancient-history.html>

Waiting times grow for Scotland's child mental health services

The Scottish Children's Services Coalition (SCSC) said services were struggling to keep up with demand

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-60750321>

Canada's rare new skiing adventure

A world-renowned guide has put together the most eco-friendly, self-propelled ski adventure possible, teaching travellers to lower their carbon footprint along the way.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20220314-canadas-rare-new-skiing-adventure>

Inquiry urged as drug given to forced adoption mothers triggers legal action around the world

The Scottish Government estimates that up to 250,000 families may have been affected by forced adoption when babies were given away, usually because their mothers were not married.

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/forced-adoption-mothers-drug>

RTS Scotland Awards, circulation figures of Scottish weekly newspapers, and more  
Martin Clarke, largely responsible for making Mail Online one of the leading and most read news websites in the world, is stepping down to explore pastures new.

Read more at:

<https://www.scottishreview.net/HamishMackay608a.html>

Omicron death rates are 14 TIMES lower after a booster vaccine and just THIRTY triple-jabbed under 50s have died, official data shows

An Office for National Statistics (ONS) report published today showed elderly groups who are most vulnerable to Covid saw the biggest drops in death rates after a third jab.

Read more at:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10618723/Omicron-death-rates-14-TIMES-lower-booster-official-data.html>

SNP shamed

Nicola Sturgeon pledged ahead of the 2016 Holyrood election to deliver 100 percent superfast broadband coverage by spring 2021. However, Scotland's Auditor General, Stephen Boyle, has found that the devolved administration is woefully off target.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1581085/snp-news-nicola-sturgeon-update-scotland-superfast-broadband-delay>

Search for hunter-gatherer sites high in the Cairngorms

A new project has been set up to help uncover ancient hunter-gatherer sites high in the Cairngorm mountains. Scotland was home to hunter-gatherers from about 10,000 years ago, after the end of the last ice age.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-60755710>

## Electric Canadian

The Literary Faculty of the Native Races of America

By John Reade (1884) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/facultynativeraces.pdf>

Making of Canada

An article by John Reade (1884) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/articles/makingofcanada.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 13th day of March 2022 - Lent II

By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26173-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-13th->

[day-of-march-2022-lent-ii](#)

The Huron – Iroquois of Canada, a Typical Race of American Aborigines  
By Daniel Wilson, LL.D., F.R.S.E. , President of University College, Toronto (1884) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/huron-iroquois.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

Beth's Video Talks

March 16th 2022 - Epidemics and genealogy

You can watch this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Thimblers Out-Thimbled

Aberdeen Journal

An interesting wee article which you can read at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/articles/thimblers.htm>

Smuggling in North East Scotland

A video by Alan Hay (Password SSL2021)

A very good talk which you will enjoy at:

<https://tinyurl.com/uh65urfb>

Clan Buchanan Society International

Got in their April 2022 newsletter at:

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

Reminiscences of a literary life

by MacFarlane, Charles, 1799-1858; Edited by Tattersall, John F (1917) (pdf)

You can read this at:

[https://electricscotland.com/history/other/macfarlane\\_charles.htm](https://electricscotland.com/history/other/macfarlane_charles.htm)

Official Guide To the Abbey-Church, Palace, and Environs of Holyroodhouse

With an Historical Sketch by the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell. Bart. F.R.S., LL.D.. President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (1908) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/historic/officialguidetoholyroodhouse.pdf>

In the By-Ways of Life

A Series of Sketches of Forfarshire Characters by J. S. Neish (1881) (pdf)

You can read these at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/forfar/inbywayslife.pdf>

Campervans in Scotland 2022

An update on the legal situation in Scotland, where you can and can't park up for the night and a look at how things have improved greatly.

You can watch this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/travel/Campervans1.htm>

Primitive Culture

Researches into the development of Mythology, Religion, Language, Art and Custom by Edward B. Taylor, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., Professor of Anthropology in the University of Oxford in two volumes (Fourth Edition) (1903)

You can read these volumes at:

<https://electricscotland.com/lifestyle/primitive-culture.htm>

## Story

Kildonan Gathering

A celebration of Scots from Canada and Helmsdale, Scotland

Our thanks to Heather for providing us with this information.

Standing in a park overlooking the east Sutherland village of Helmsdale, a statue depicts a young 19th century family, with the father looking out to the North Sea, while the mother faces inland casting a final glance at her beloved Strath of Kildonan.

The Emigrants is a tangible tribute to the thousands of courageous Highlanders who sailed to the New World after being evicted from their homes during the Clearances in the 19th century.

Between 1807 and 1820, approximately 2000 people were removed from their homes in Kildonan to make way for more profitable sheep farming. These traumatic and life changing events are still passionately talked about and remembered by descendants.

Two hundred years on from this turbulent period of history, Timespan Museum & Arts Centre in Helmsdale, is marking the bi-centenary of the Kildonan Clearances with a Translocation Festival which will see the locals and the Diaspora uniting in a series of creative and historic events.

The festival is as much a celebration of the human spirit as it is a commemoration - from a service in the tiny Kildonan church where the evicted heard their final sermon before leaving the Strath, to sending out candles from Helmsdale harbour, bearing the names of the evicted who had no choice but to set sail for Canada on 12 August 1813.

Timespan's historian, Jacquie Aitken says that for some families, the link to their Clearances ancestors is only a couple of generations away and can be seen in the eyes of their forbearers staring out from old family photographs.

"The stories and oral histories which have survived from that time are an important reminder that these were 'real' people with the same thoughts and feelings as us," points out Jacquie. "They faced incredible difficulties as they were forced to make life changing decisions.

"Their choices were limited to either moving to the coast and becoming fishermen or growing crops on steep uncultivated hillsides, or leaving family and friends behind for a new life thousands of miles away."

The Clearances took place across the Gaeltacht, but my fascination with the story of the Strath of Kildonan stems from the fact that my great-grandfather was a hill shepherd there in the 1870s and my family has lived in Helmsdale for generations.

Helmsdale was featured in Neil Gunn's classic novel *The Silver Darlings*, and the film of same name will be screened during the festival. Musician Edwyn Collins, who has strong family connections with the village, features Helmsdale as it is today in the video of his new album.

The festival is the culmination of a year-long project, including the excavation of a longhouse at Caen township just

outside Helmsdale. It was initiated by Timespan in response to the local community who wanted to learn more about the people of the Clearances.

The longhouse was the hub for the family at work, sleep and play and many stories were told around the peat fire which was eventually put out for the last time when the family was evicted.

Finds in the Caen longhouse confirmed that people were forced to leave in a hurry. According to Keir Strickland, archeology lecturer at Orkney College UHI: "We have found an unprecedented amount of broken pottery, glass and metal, along with more personal finds such as a button, a metal buckle, a clay pipe as well pieces of copper with rivets from a probable illicit whiskey still".

Visitors to Timespan can navigate life in the original Caen township in a virtual world using digital gaming technology created by St Andrews University.

## The Evictions

'The preacher ceased to speak, the people to listen. All lifted up their voices and wept, mingling tears together. It was indeed the place of parting and the hour.'

This was a moving description of the last service held at Achness and Ach n'a h-uai in May 1818, the church by the Rev Alexander Sage whose son Donald wrote 'Gloomy Memories', an early definitive account of the Clearances. While Alexander was supportive of his parishioners, many ministers were discouraged from interfering in estate management.

By the end of the 18th century wool prices had soared and there was an ever increasing need for good hill pasture. In 1805, the Countess of Sutherland visited her holiday residence, Dunrobin Castle in Golspie and set in motion 'the perfect plan' which by 1840 resulted in over a thousand tenants displaced by 18,000 sheep on the Strath.

In January 1813, the Kildonan tenants came together to try and resist the eviction with a list of proposals which included agreeing to rent increases, if they could stay.

On two occasions riots broke out and for 12 weeks no one from the estate would set foot in the Strath for fear of their lives. The tenants tried attempts to negotiate proved futile, including sending a petition to the London based landowners.

The policy of the Sutherland estate was to set fire to the timbers of the longhouse roofs to prevent tenants from returning to their homes. One of the most infamous estate factors, Patrick Sellar, was briefly imprisoned on the charge of culpable homicide of an elderly woman in 1814 but was later acquitted.

"This was a time of physical and cultural translocation," says Jacquie, "which impacted in many ways on the lives of those displaced, including emigration trails to North America."

The first evictions in Kildonan took place on Whitsunday in May when the leases expired and those who had received summons of removing had to leave their homes. Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk, offered them a lifeline in the form of assisted passage on The Prince of Wales to his newly created agricultural settlement on the banks of the Red River in Canada.

From the original 500 or so who had signed up to the scheme, around 100 people, predominately made up of family groups, could be accommodated in the ship provided by the Hudson Bay's Company, which sailed from Stromness in June.

The voyage was hazardous and typhoid soon took a grip of the crew and passengers. In August, the ship landed on the coast of Hudson Bay as the onset of winter approached.

Over 200 of those displaced people were among the founding population that arrived at the Red River Settlement in

1813 and 1815, which developed into the City of Winnipeg.

Canadian Phyllis Fraser who recently visited the Caen dig from Canada, is a direct descendent from one of the evicted Caen families. "As the first group of Selkirk settlers arrived in the Red River in October 1812 we in Manitoba marked the 200th anniversary last year.

"The Kildonan group is particularly significant to us in Winnipeg as it is this group who largely stayed in the settlement and whose descendants are still here, many still farming the land as their ancestors did on their arrival.

"My ancestors who came from the Caen area were Mathesons, Alex and Ann, their children, and Alex's widowed mother Janet. Their young son John was only six months old at the time of their departure from Sutherland in mid-August, 1815."

Phyllis gave a detailed account of the hardships her forbearers faced on arriving at the Red River Settlement on 3 November. "The winters were hard and food and shelter were not in abundant supply so the settlers had to journey a further 100 miles south to winter at Fort Daer, returning in the spring to plant crops and build homes.

"Each family was given a long narrow lot of land which bordered on the Red River. Lord Selkirk encouraged them to build homes and break the land to prepare it for agriculture.

"After being forced off the land in Scotland, the settlers would have had high hopes for a better life in Canada, but instead found themselves caught in the middle of a fur trade war between the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company.

"Their homes were destroyed by those who wanted them gone and the locusts did the same to their crops. Hostilities came to a head in 1816 when 20 of the colonists, including Governor Semple were killed by the Northwest Company in the Battle of Seven Oaks.

"Although the two rival fur trading companies amalgamated in 1821, the challenges continued with a huge flood in 1826, but in spite of these hardships, the settlement survived and eventually prospered. The settlers were grateful to Chief Peguis and his people for keeping them from starvation and other hardships on many occasions."

"Last year many of the settlers' descendants travelled to Winnipeg from across North America to join in a week of commemoration. I know some of these descendants will visit Helmsdale this August to take part in the festival."

It's a tribute to the spirit of the Kildonan tenants that as part of the Translocation Festival at The Gathering on 10 August, the people of Helmsdale and Winnipeg will simultaneously dance a Strip the Willow – a dance of the Diaspora.

None of this could have taken place without the work of Timespan which has been the heritage and cultural hub for a generation. Timespan's fundraising endowment appeal will allow this meeting place of the past, present and future to survive for generations to come. After all that their ancestors endured, the young generation must be allowed to keep this heritage alive and have their voices heard.

END

Weekend is almost here and hope it's a good one for you.

Alastair

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