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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for June 10th, 2022

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

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

Electric Scotland News

Health check

I've got a doctor's appointment for next week. I used to see her every four months but it's been over 2 years since I last saw her. Been over 2 years since I last had a blood pressure test so am looking forward to getting checked out.

I do see my eye specialist every 6 weeks to get an injection in my eye and so far it's kept my sight working well. You might remember that in January last year I lost my sight and was totally blind for around 6 weeks. That was scary for sure.

My weight has been steady for the past 2 years but it would be good to lose some weight. And since they changed my diabetic medicines I have struggled a bit to maintain a decent blood glucose level but so far I've managed to keep it under 7.0 which is good. I was at around 5.6 before the change and I do get more lows with this new regime.

Hope you guys get your own health checks on a regular basis.

I note also the increasing rate of inflation with food and fuel prices rising. I also note we still waste a lot of food so perhaps it's time to do something about how you purchase and store your food. I noted a wee paragraph in one of the newspapers I read about how any vegetables that start to go of were often used to make soup so nothing was wasted.

Bulk buying of tinned and dry food can be beneficial. Looks like cooking oils in particular are going up fast and are getting scarce. I also noted that some of the YouTube farmers I watch have decided not to grow canola oil this year and some have moved to growing more rye. One farmer is growing a small field of wheat and also oats for domestic use only.

Mind that you can live of potatoes, oats and milk with some vegetables and be healthy as a result.

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.

From council house to royal palace: My life as the Queen's piper

Each morning at exactly nine o'clock, a little-known ritual takes place in grounds of where the Queen is in residence.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-scotland-58476253>

The UK gave away an empire but does not lack a role

By John Redwood MP

Read more at:

<http://johnredwoodsdiary.com/2022/06/04/the-uk-gave-away-an-empire-but-does-not-lack-a-role/>

Conrad Black: Canada not hopeless but desperate for leadership

This column is being composed as I return to Toronto on an Air Canada flight from Vancouver after a very convivial celebration by the Fraser Institute, Canada's leading public policy think tank.

Read more at:

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/conrad-black-canada-not-hopeless-but-desperate-for-leadership>

The case for UK shale is rock solid

Embracing shale would mean energy security, lower emissions and more jobs

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/the-case-for-uk-shale-is-rock-solid/>

Scots girls break record after completing a marathon every day for 106 days

Two women have smashed a world record after running 106 marathons in 106 days – with a little help from their new friends.

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/scots-girls-break-record-after-completing-a-marathon-every-day-for-106-days/>

Warning over paramedics pushed to limit

Medics are beyond breaking point even after receiving a trauma support system pioneered by soldiers on the frontlines of Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a leading emergency medical expert.

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/warning-over-paramedics-pushed-to-limit/>

SNP Green Government criticised over £1.3 billion social security funding gap

Experts revealed the massive difference between social security funding and the amount the Scottish Government plans to spend. Fears also exist that key areas like councils will take the hit to make up any shortfall.

Read more at:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/snp-green-government-criticised-over-27169710>

Government admits funding gap on roads and infrastructure projects

The Scottish government has admitted it does not have the capital funding it needs to meet its public commitments to major infrastructure projects. Spending on infrastructure such as roads faces delay or cancellation under plans currently being drawn up.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-61728712>

Raising the smoking age is a fig leaf for outright prohibition

As if there aren't enough anti-tobacco regulations already, the Government is considering raising the smoking age to 21. But while moral questions about when people reach maturity are powerful, they are irrelevant to the public health lobby who now openly campaigning for outright prohibition.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/raising-the-smoking-age-is-a-fig-leaf-for-outright-prohibition>

Media

By Hamish MacKay in the Scottish Review

Read more at:

<https://www.scottishreview.net/HamishMackay619a.html>

Electric Canadian

The Life of a Backwoodsman

Or Particulars of the Emigrant's Situation in settling on the Wild Land of Canada by a Settler at Strathford, Huron District, Canada West (1843) (pdf)

You can read this short book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/lifeofbackwoodsman.pdf>

A map of the province of Upper Canada

Describing all the new settlements, townships, & cc. with the countries adjacent, from Quebec to Lake Huron : compiled from the original documents in the Surveyor General's office. Creator: Wyld, James, 1812-1887 Date: 1836

An excellent old map which is easy to read and can be found at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/mapofuppercanada.htm>

Letters of a pioneer, Alexander Ross

Edited by George Bryce (1903) (pdf)

Another short book which you can read at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/lettersofpioneer00ross_0.pdf

Meditations of a pioneer backwoodsman

Or, Hints, facts, & figures advocating railway extension from Guelph to Lake Huron by Watkins, F. W. (1867) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/pioneer-backwoodsman.pdf>

Sir William Alexander of Menstrie (1567-1640)

Earl of Stirling, Viscount Canada and Lord Alexander of Tullibody by M. Perceval-Maxwell (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/articles/jamesef,+11.1+Maxwell.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 5th day of June 2022 - The Platinum Jubilee

By the Rev. Nola Crewe

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26216-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-5th-day-of-june-2022-the-platinum-jubilee>

Polson's Probation

A Story of Manitoba by James Morton (1897) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/manitoba/polsonsprobation.pdf>

Electric Scotland

Beth's Video Talks

June 8th, 2022 - Are you organized?

You can view this talk at: <https://electricScotland.com/bnft>

Lord Rosebery

By The Marquess of Crewe, K.G., in two volumes (1931) (pdf). I added this to the foot of his page in our Scottish Nation section at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/nation/rosebery.htm>

Murdoch

Did an update of our Murdoch page in our Clans and Families section at:

<https://electricScotland.com/webclans/m/murdoch.html>

Scottish Banner

Got in their June 2022 issue which you can read at:

<https://electricScotland.com/familytree/newsletters/scottishbanner/index.htm>

James Murdoch

Professor of Oriental Studies in the University of Sydney added to our Significant Scots section at:

https://electricScotland.com/history/other/murdoch_james.htm

James Mill

A Biography by Alexander Bain, LL.D., Professor of Logic in the University of Aberdeen (1882) (pdf). I've added this book to our page about him to the foot of the page at: https://electricScotland.com/history/other/mill_james.htm

Scottish Life and Poetry

By Lauchlan MacLean Watt (1912)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/lifestyle/scottishlifepoetry.htm>

Scottish Society of Indianapolis

Got in their May 2022 newsletter which you can read at:

<https://electricScotland.com/familytree/newsletters/indianapolis/index.htm>

William Smellie

I added some books about him to his page in our Significant Scots section at:

https://electricScotland.com/history/other/smellie_william.htm

Aberdeen University Review

Added volume 1 to this page for local download in pdf format. You can get to it at the foot of the page at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/aberdeen/Aberdeen-University-Review.htm>

The Real Bannockburn

A review of the book "The Battle of Bannockburn", A Study in Mediaeval Warfare. By W. M. Mackenzie, M. A.

1913 along with a link to the book. You can find this towards the foot of the page on our page about "The Bruce" Being the Metrical History of Robert the Bruce King of Scots Compiled A.D. 1375 by Master John Barbour Archdeacon of Aberdeen and Translated by George Eyre-Todd.

You can read this at: <https://electricScotland.com/history/brucendx.htm>

Story

The Homes of the Rural Students, 1866-1870

I WRITE only about my own period, and the parishes I have known from my childhood. These were mostly remote from railways—Auchin-doir, Kildrummy, Towie, Leochel-Cushnie, Glenbucket, Strathdon, Clatt, Rhynie, and the Cabrach. In 1866, these were renowned for their schoolmasters. All were University graduates proud of their degrees. The University of Aberdeen was like a great lamp illuminating these far-off hills and valleys. In the schools the clever sons of the poorest parents had their chance. They were prepared by careful masters for the bursary competition, one of the principal events of the year. The fact that there was a straight road to college from their doors raised the whole character of the schools and schoolmasters. There were little universities scattered all over the county. I may specify Clatt, to which the Rev. John Minto's reputation brought pupils from far and near. The minister of Clatt for many years kept a boarding-house for boys attending Mr. Minto's school. Mr. Minto showed the utmost kindness to any clever boys, and was always ready to help them in every way. But he did not neglect the others. He interested himself in all the children, and was loved by every one. When Mr. Minto began his long and honourable career, his salary was but £25 and the fees. Afterwards came better days. He and my father were of the first batch of schoolmasters who were examined for the Dick Bequest. They were told nothing of the subjects of examination, and for a long time they met on Saturdays and discussed the possibilities. Both of them passed triumphantly, and received a most welcome addition to their salaries. Mr. Minto, after his retirement, was allowed to live on in the schoolhouse with his devoted sister, and acted as clerk to the school board. That sister, careful and troubled about many things, was especially concerned with the question which of them would die first. If her brother did, she would have to leave the schoolhouse, and if she were the first to go, there would be no one to look after him. Like so many fears hers were needless, for they both died of influenza in one day. There was the school at Kildrummy, where the Christies taught so efficiently and so long. Other parishes were not behind. In the second parish school of Auchindoir, Henry Stephen, long a most successful Professor of Philosophy at Calcutta, and R. W. Reid, now the distinguished Professor of Anatomy in the University, began Latin with me under Mr. Wilson, now Dr. Wilson of Banff. He was my first teacher, and in many respects the best. He set us to think for ourselves, and he criticized what we were reading. Thus, when we had gone over Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," he asked us to sum up and review Goldsmith's political economy. I thought then as I think now that Goldsmith was not far wrong.

I.

In the homes from which came the rural students there was a great reverence for learning apart from its rewards. The temper of the communities was the same as that of Emerson's New England. The scholar was a hero and respected as such. This gave the teachers a very high rank in the parish. They were looked up to for their knowledge. Looking back it seems to me that there was more reading and more book buying than there is now. In my time there were lamps and candles, but before that the evening light was supplied partly by the huge peat fires and partly by home-made candles and fir candles made of splinters of "rosety" fir. These had to be held by some one, generally by the herd "loon," or the travelling beggar who often got a seat by the fireside. A stand sometimes used for holding these fir candles was called a "peer man". Oil lamps or cruises with rush wicks were also used, but their illuminating power was not great. The short working days of winter were followed by a long "forenicht". This was often spent in visiting neighbours—"giein' them a forenicht"—getting and/giving the news, and entertaining one another variously. Draughts was the favourite game, and there would be singing and story-telling. But in some houses at any rate, a great deal of reading was done. At first books were read, and of these there was greater choice than might be supposed. Erskine's "Sermons," "Josephus" (a special favourite), the publications of Messrs. Chambers, and latterly the Cottage Library, published by Milner & Sowerby in Halifax,

were to be seen frequently. A carpenter in my native parish had got together about 500 volumes, and he knew them. The pedlars brought round little penny books of story and song which were often bound together. The older inhabitants had an intense prejudice against novels, or, as they pronounced them, "novelles"—the accent on the second syllable. But in my boyhood, Sir Walter Scott had partly overcome this dislike, and cheap editions of the "Waverley Novels" were to be found. But the book of all books that fascinated and thrilled our village in the early sixties was a translation of Eugene Sue's "Wandering Jew".

Newspapers were few and expensive, but they were read with singular earnestness. My granduncle subscribed to the "Aberdeen Journal," then a weekly of eight pages with advertisements on the first page and leaders on the last. When he received the paper he commenced at the beginning, reading all the advertisements carefully through, and pursued this way page by page and column by column to the end. In the houses at night some one would read the paper to the rest, and the leading articles in particular. "The able editor" was powerful in these days. When I first went to Aberdeen I was far more interested in seeing the editors than in seeing the professors, and the first grasp of the hand from William Forsyth made me very proud.

II.

Nearly all the homes were poor, but the poverty was honourable, and not often oppressive. As one put it to me, "there was always plenty of milk and meal". There was very little money, and rents were paid with difficulty. But almost everything used by the people grew on the farm. They had oatmeal and beremeal for porridge and bread. The yearly "mairt" provided beef for the Sunday dinner and tallow for candles. Now and then a sheep was killed. There were fowls and eggs, butter, and cheese. In years of bad harvest and frosted corn, things were not so well. Before the repeal of the Corn Laws, remoter districts like the Cabrach were often on the verge of a famine. I have heard of meal being sold at Clova at a boll, and often it could not be had anywhere. I remember a man saying that one had to be very hungry before he relished bread made from frosted here. Sugar, tea, and white bread were luxuries seldom enjoyed. Clothing as well as food was largely home-grown and made. At the sheep clipping wool was kept for family use, and lint was largely grown. From the lint was made all the family underclothing, and bed and table-linen. In this way the necessary everyday clothing was provided, and for the Sabbath day there were dresses of silk which often lasted their owners a lifetime. There were travelling tailors who went round from house to house and stayed till the family wardrobe was complete for the season. Some of our students came from cottars' houses, and there I believe the poverty was often severe.

It was when we came to Aberdeen that we felt the pinch. Parents generously supplied meal, and oatcakes, and potatoes, and eggs, but they had little money to give us. When two students went together, lodgings could be had at 2s. 6d. a week, and it was difficult to bring food below 4s. even with the provision from home. Those of us who had bursaries found that a great part was taken away for fees. If there had been a Carnegie in these days we should have paid him royal honours. My bosom friend at College was the late Dr. R. A. Neil of Cambridge, and he and I bought regularly a penny tart in Old Aberdeen at an interval between classes. By the middle of January we found that we could not, and we had to go without till February when our bursaries were paid. Neil after that used to rattle the silver pieces in his trouser pocket and declare himself to be "in easy if not affluent circumstances". We made no complaint of our poor fare, and took things as they came, but there was a tragic element in them. When the potatoes gave out and only the meal was left brave hearts sank, and I know of at least one case where a student was practically starved to death with a huge empty oatmeal barrel beside him in his little garret. Neil used to say, looking back, "We were so young and so poor". In spite of our happiness, and it was very real, I think now that we were too young and too poor.

III.

The theory of life in these homes was mainly that of a Christian stoicism. I think there was more happiness than might at first appear. The people were interested in their work, and had pleasure in doing it well. They competed with each other in the harvest field, and at the turnip hoeing. The women used to assemble from various farms to a big spinning and knitting competition. A certain amount of wool was given to each, and the one who spun it first and best was winner. There were no prizes, the honour being sufficient reward. The sheepshearing, too, was a merry time, and was followed in the evening by a feast. Then there were the enjoyments of Yeel or Christmas, New Year, Fastern evening, Clyak supper, and the rest. There were no extravagant ambitions or desires, or at

least these were carefully repressed. I suppose that most proverbs tend to throw cold water on elation and pride. This is so in the famous letter of proverbs written by Lord M. to John Belford in "The History of Clarissa Harlowe". The favourite proverbs of Aberdeenshire point to a sober, moderate, and controlled attitude to life. "Ca' canny and flee laigh" is one of the most characteristic, and there are others like it.

"Mony ane speirs the gait 'at they ken."

"The thing ye dinna ken disna anger ye."

"Better hand oot than pit oot."

"Learn young, learn fair,

Learn auld, learn sair."

"Little wit in the heid makes mony traivels ti the feet"—

said when one has to return for something forgotten.

"Ye nicht see that wi ae ee an' it stappit in wi fog."

The expression of emotion was severely restrained, and decorous love-making was as far as possible enforced. A certain Cabrach farmer in his youth asked a woman named Charlotte to marry him. Charlotte refused him with scorn, and he found another bride. 'After a time his wife died, and he proposed a second time to Charlotte. She again refused him still more scornfully. As he said, "she fufied an' blew at me". He married another and was again left a widower. A third time he went to Charlotte who was now advanced in years. She accepted him with alacrity. As he said, "Fa' was franker than Charlotte?" They were married and she long outlived him.

An elderly man the day before his marriage said to the bride, "Noo Meggie, gin ye binna as willin as me, aye yea an williner, I'm nae seekin' ye". She did not reply like Mr. Benson's heroine, "Utterly and entirely and absolutely proud and happy and content!" They speak more tersely in the Cabrach, but she was "williner" and the marriage proceeded.

It was counted most unlucky to praise a thing very highly. If that was done evil was sure to follow. "Forspeaking" it was called. The idea was, perhaps, that there was a little envy in the mind of the praiser, and although he spoke fair he was wishing ill to befall.

It must not for one moment be supposed that the undemonstrativeness I have spoken of implied a deficiency in affection. The attachments of Northern hearts were deep and tender and faithful. Father, mother, brothers and sisters made heavy sacrifices to help forward the student of their families, and these sacrifices were made with the utmost cheerfulness. I know a farm servant who saved pounds from his wages to send to the brother in Aberdeen.

This temper was continued in the students. We were not hero worshippers, nor addicted to order ourselves lowly and reverently to our betters. The fact that a man was a professor gave him no glamour, but if he was able and did his work well he was warmly recognized. Some of us were too serious. We were like the soldiers of old who went into battle "with no fear and little hope". I lodged for a year with Andrew Craik, who afterwards was fourth wrangler at Cambridge, and died in the hour of his triumph. He confided to me as a great secret that he hoped to be one day Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I said nothing but privately thought he was presumptuous. Once in a moment of enthusiasm a mother said to me of her son, "Henry will be a professor yet," and so it came to pass. But as a rule such outspokenness was exceedingly rare, and most of us were willing to be thankful for a livelihood. "A buddy's glad to get their heid in onywe," was a characteristic saying of the time. We had the blessing of those who expect little and are therefore not disappointed.

IV.

I do not wish to discuss theological questions, but I am strongly of opinion that our great Aberdeenshire genius, George MacDonald, exaggerated the Calvinism of his country. One woman I remember in Lumsden who lost three little children by diphtheria. "You can trust them to God's mercy," said a sympathizing neighbour. "I can trust them to His justice," was the reply.

But I am persuaded that the religion of the period and the place produced some of the noblest types of character I have ever known. All the witnesses are agreed in their testimony to this fact. George MacDonald is one, and that far more typical Aberdonian, William Alexander, is another. Even Mr. Watson who diverged from the Presbyterian creed is generous. Of one believer he says: "Briefly, his life was the Beatitudes in full and fragrant bloom". I can call up one venerable figure after another of whom I could say with assurance, "He never did naething that wasna' well intended". To know the higher natures of the world the students of my time did not need to go beyond their own parishes.

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

END

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

Alastair