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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 25th, 2023

## Electric Scotland News

Moray tribute: Donnie Stewart from Lossiemouth



Lossiemouth is mourning an irrepressible character who was a true fountain of knowledge regarding the town's history.

Donnie Stewart, who has died at the age of 91, was deeply fascinated by all aspects of Lossie's past, not least its fishing heritage and its role during the Second World War.

Paying tribute to the man they labelled the town's unofficial historian, Lossiemouth Community Council said: "It is hard to do justice to all the work which Donnie did, with his wonderful sense of charm and good humour.

"He was a Lossie loon who gave his time, his passion and his talent to ensure that future generations will know

so much more about their past.

"Donnie, you may be gone, but your legacy will live on."

Donnie was born in Lossie during 1931.

The youngest of five children, he was descended from at least four generations of fishermen.

Due to being colour blind his father was prevented from becoming a skipper.

However that fact didn't stop Mr Stewart snr from part-owning the boat upon which he worked.

Donnie recalled his family used to eat fish every night of the week except Sunday, when they had sausages.

Asked if he ever grew tired of this, he replied: "What would you want to do? Starve? With five children, if you didn't eat it, it would soon vanish off your plate."

Donnie attended Lossie primary and junior secondary before going on to Elgin Academy.

Meanwhile, one of his elder brothers, Peter, had volunteered for the RAF in 1938 "as soon as he recognized that Hitler meant business".

A flight sergeant on a Wellington bomber, Peter would be killed during a mission over Cologne.

Donnie was much too young to fight, but this didn't stop him from doing his best on the home front.

During Autumn 1940 tank barriers were being put in place along the Moray coastline due to fears that a Nazi invasion was imminent.

These barriers can still be seen today standing on Lossie West Beach, and Donnie and his school pals worked for free to collect flat stones that were used to build their foundations.

He remembered the Luftwaffe bombing the town the following summer. Amongst the four civilians killed, were two people who had moved up from Plymouth because they thought it would be safer.

But that number of fatalities pales completely besides the 384 who lost their lives while learning to fly at Lossiemouth.

Recalling one crash, Donnie said: "We sat and watched this plane take off from the aerodrome near the golf course.

"We saw it swing around, and then the starboard wing fell off and landed on the 17th fairway."

The plane crashed, killing all five of its crew. In addition, a man drowned after swimming out to try to help them.

Donnie spent two years doing his National Service following the war.

Then, in 1953, he went to the University of Aberdeen to study chemistry, eventually earning a master's degree in metallurgy.

For much of his professional life he worked as a lecturer, latterly at Strathclyde University.

After taking early retirement he moved back to Lossiemouth at the age of 60.

The next three decades would see him produce a whole array of written records about the local area, including books on old Lossiemouth and the town's war memorial.

His son Alistair said: "Returning to Lossie seemed to give dad a new lease of energy. He loved the place.

"He wasn't just interested in history, he was interested in people and in their personal stories.

"He wanted to be useful and to help folk learn more about where they were from. That was the educator in him.

"So, for instance, the town's memorial was more than just a list of names to him. It was an opportunity to highlight who they had been, to show their photographs and to tell their stories."

Donnie painstakingly archived old footage on topics such as the fishermen's picnics, the opening of the playing fields in 1957, the beach huts and the old briggie.

In addition, he also helped to organise several exhibitions of old photographs that were held at the town hall.

Meanwhile, his many YouTube contributions included films on the history of Lossie High, The Stotfield Memorial and the opening of the Bunker.

In his 80th year, he duly received the town's Citizen of the Year award.

But Donnie's work was not just confined to the past

He also fundraised for and was the chairman of Elgin and District Cancer Support Group which received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2010.

Ann Ingram, from the Ladybird Group which looks after pre-school children, paid her own heartfelt tribute to the man.

She said: "He was a true gent who had a real soft spot for disadvantaged children. In his own quiet unassuming way, he raised a huge amount of money.

"Lossie has lost a great ambassador and he is going to be a huge loss to the town.

"Rest in peace now Donnie. Your work is done."

Moray MSP Richard Lochhead said: "My thoughts are with his loved ones at this difficult time. I met with Donnie many times over the years and always enjoyed his good company and wonderful stories.

"He was so very proud of his Lossie roots and he leaves behind an incredible legacy.

"I know the community will be deeply saddened by his passing."

Donnie died peacefully last Tuesday.

He leaves behind his partner Mary, son Alistair, daughter-in-law Jackie and grandson Peter, plus many friends.

His funeral service will take place at 1.30pm on Thursday at Steven Thomson and Son on Clifton Road, Lossiemouth.

Donnie is set to be interred next to his late wife Anita at Lossiemouth Town Cemetery.

From there well-wishers are also invited to the Stotfield Hotel.

### Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

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 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. Here is what caught my eye this week...

#### How Canada's wildfires are warming the stratosphere

Extreme wildfires are increasing due to rising emissions, but they also disrupt the climate in return. Weighing up the overall impact, however, is trickier than it seems.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230817-how-wildfires-push-up-temperatures-long-after-they-are-extinguished>

#### Canada, the freest country on Earth?

This year on Canada Day, July 1, it took an act of faith to find something to celebrate. We are eight years into the post-national regime of Justin Trudeau. The government elected in 2021 is a minority: technically, it could fall at any time.

Read more at:

<https://lawliberty.org/book-review/the-freest-country-on-earth/>

#### The drone factor

Drone strikes such as today's attack in central Moscow have become increasingly central to Ukraine's war effort. It's not just a military tactic, but a front in the crucial information war, demonstrating to ordinary Russians that Ukraine can bring the war to their doorstep, even in their most protected city.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/ukraine-war-drones-are-changing-the-conflict-both-on-the-frontline-and-beyond>

#### GERS: What You Need To Know

This year's data tells essentially the same story as every other for the last decade, except that due to the Ukraine war, there's been a bit of an uptick in oil revenues. But the underlying message is the same.

Read more at:

<https://ourscottishfuture.org/gers-what-you-need-to-know/>

#### Winners announced in World Pipe Band Championships

Peoples Ford Boghall and Bathgate were crowned the 2023 winners at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow. There were jubilant scenes as the band won the title for the first time in its history.

Read more and watch a video at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-scotland-66563665>

#### Murray Foote appointed as new SNP chief executive

The SNP has appointed its former head of communications Murray Foote as its new chief executive. Mr Foote resigned from his previous role in March amid a row over the party's membership numbers.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-66596560>

MSP Forbes' ultimatum to NHS board over north Skye health care

The board of NHS Highland should consider their positions if they don't reopen 24-hour urgent care in Portree Hospital, MSP Kate Forbes said this week.

Read more at:

<http://www.whfp.com/2023/08/18/deliver-or-resign-msp-forbes-ultimatum-to-nhs-board-over-north-skye-health-care/>

SNP accounts show deficit of more than £800,000

It is the second biggest deficit the party has recorded - and its largest in a year with no parliamentary election.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-66605391>

## Electric Canadian

The Scottish Factor in Nineteenth-Century Canada:

An Interpretation by Sir Tom Devine, a YouTube video which I've added to the foot of our page on Sir Tom Devine at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/other/tomdevine.htm>

We are now Six

By A. A. Milne with Decorations by Ernest H. Shepard (1935) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/children/nowwearesix.pdf>

A Monthly Review, The Bystandar

Of Current Events, Canadian and General, October, 1889 to September, 1890 (pdf)

An interesting read which you can get to at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/trent\\_0116402916542.pdf](http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/trent_0116402916542.pdf)

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 20th day of August - War

By the Rev Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26386-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-20th-day-of-august-war>

Earth's Enigmas

By Charles G. D. Roberts (1903) (pdf)

Most of the stories in this collection attempt to present one or another of those problems of life or nature to which, as it appears to many of us, there is no adequate solution within sight. Others are the almost literal transcript of dreams which seemed to me to have a coherency, completeness, and symbolic significance sufficiently marked to justify me in setting them down. The rest are scenes from that simple life of Canadian backwoods and tide-country with which my earlier years made me familiar. This edition is enlarged by the inclusion of three new stories, entitled "The House at Stony Lonesome," "The Hill of Chastisement," and "On the Tantramar Dyke;" and what is more important, it is enriched by the drawings of Mr. Charles Livingston Bull,



for whose sympathetic interpretations I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude.

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/earthsenigmasill00robeuoft.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

Hylton Newsletter

Got in a two page newsletter for August 2023 which reveals some interesting Masonic information which you can read at:

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

Chicago Scots 175th Final Cut

Chicago Scots 175th Anniversary Celebration "Feast of the Haggis" I added this YouTube video which is two and a half hours in length to the foot of our page about Gus Noble at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/america/gusnoble.htm>

Smith, Nigel

Businessman and long-time supporter and campaigner for decentralisation and devolution added to our Significant Scots section which includes a link to a pamphlet on The Scottish Parliament: Partial Success: Could do Better? A personal assessment of the twenty years since the 1997 referendum establishing the Scottish Parliament and some possible reforms by Nigel Smith (2022) (pdf)

You can get to this at:

[https://electricScotland.com/history/other/smith\\_nigel.htm](https://electricScotland.com/history/other/smith_nigel.htm)

Murray, Sir Charles

Diplomatist, scholar, traveller, courtier, and sportsman added to our Significant Scots section.

You can read about him at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/scots/sircharlesmurray.pdf>

Sunday Magazine of the Boston Sunday Post  
August 30, 1905 (pdf)

You can read this magazine at:

[https://electricScotland.com/history/america/Sunday%20Magazine%20\[1905-08-20\]%20\(LOC-autolyucus0152\).pdf](https://electricScotland.com/history/america/Sunday%20Magazine%20[1905-08-20]%20(LOC-autolyucus0152).pdf)

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

A List of Travels, Tours, Journeys, Voyages, Cruises, Excursions, Wanderings, Rambles, Visits, etc., relating to Scotland. By Sir A. Mitchell, K.C.B., M.D., LL.D., F.S.A. Scot. from the 1900 - 1901 Proceedings (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/travelsinscotland.pdf>

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland  
Volume 8 (1871) (pdf)

You can read this issue at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/proceedingsvol8.pdf>

## Stable Economy

A Treatise on the Management of Horses in relation to Stabling, Grooming, Feeding, Watering and Working by John Stewart (second edition) (1838) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/agriculture/stable-economy.pdf>

## Advice to Purchasers of Horses

Being a short and familiar treatise on the external conformation of the Horse; the nature of soundness & unsoundness and the Laws relating to Sale and Warranty; with copious directions for discovering prior to purchasing by J. Stewart, Veterinary Surgeon and Professor of Veterinary surgery in the Andereonian University (Fourth edition) (1836) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/agriculture/stable02.pdf>

## Story

### Sir Walter Scott and his Country By Handasyde

FROM the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, but specially from

"The west, from the west.  
From the land of the free,  
Where the mighty Missouri  
Rolls down to the sea,"

do pilgrims come to worship at the shrine of the first Scottish storyteller, who, though he be dead, shall yet speak for ever.

Any intelligent traveller or ordinary guidebook can give a sufficiently good account of Abbotsford, of Melrose, of Dryburgh where Scott lies sleeping; but it is when leaving these well-trodden highways for the quiet country byways that many unsuspected memories and influences can yet be found.

It was on the verge of a steep hill, close against the sky, that the old man who had seen "Sir Walter," spent most of his days. A fitting thing it seemed on this countryside thus to meet with such an old man.

He was fumbling with the rusty fastening of a moss-grown gate, and with his weatherbeaten face and clothing appeared some gnarled excrescence of the shaggy hawthorn hedge which shut in his high strip of pasturage.

"Is't what ye ca' a picnic?" he asked, as a light at length broke over his mystified bee. And with friendly zeal he hastened then to open wide the gate.

That he was "unco' deaf" was too evident to need his toothless apology, as it was long before he could be got to understand that fears were entertained of passing his alarming red cow grazing close by.

"O, it will no' hurt ye! It's a canny beast. It will no' meddle ye, it's a canny beast, yon," he made emphatic assurance. And still lingering around he set himself to help collect dry sticks and fir-cones, and to set the fire alight. Though mellowed by tone, his features still were comely; and his good Scotch eyes were keen and piercing yet, as he stood leaning on his staff and gazing like The-stag-at-ave, over the varied realm extending far beneath. Much he had to tell of this wide prospect: where the winding roads led to, and what gentry lived in

the big houses.

"I have the honour to be ae year's bairn wi' Her Majesty the Queen," he said; so he had known this land, man and boy, through a long life."

Yes, he minded Sir Walter fine. "I seen him driving out in his carriage and pair with Tom Purdie on the box-seat. He had on a shepherd's tartan plaid, and a glengarry cap with two black ribbons hanging down the back. I mind his dog too; Maida he ca'ed it, and a muckle work he made over it! But he was as pleasant a man as you could speak to, though he wasna thought muckle of as a pleader when they made him sheriff of Selkirk. Is it his works ye're speiring on? Ou aye, I've got all his works ben the hoose."

Not altogether the case of a prophet and his own country! though the aged man clearly considered the making of many books as but a poor substitute for failure in the law courts; having his own share of the typical caution, which constitutes Scotchmen a ready-made nation of lawyers.

And this man had really seen Sir Walter! Had, indeed, attended weekly at Abbotsford on business with the gamekeeper; and while waiting in the large kitchen used to spell out the letters over the fireplace, "Waste not, want not."

Doubtless he had been personally addressed by the great man himself, who in kindly feudal fashion took account of all in any way connected with his household; and would even break off his world-wide occupation to correct the stable-boy's blotted copybook, or hear the under-gardener stumble through a column of spelling.

Many thanks were due this ancient link with an immemorial past, though he waved it all aside with the gracious country courtesy, "You're very welcome."

Felicitously chosen phrase when Sir Walter called this "Such a livable country."

In springtime the little village of Gatton-side is a pink place, smothered with the glorious "flourish" on the orchard trees. The hills behind shine gold like the New Jerusalem. Echoes of the minstrel sor are in the air.

"O, the broom, and the bonny, bonny broom.  
And the broom of the Cowdenknowes."

the rushing voice of the silver Tweed takin up and prolonging the tones.

It was in blossom-time, one beautiful afternoon in May, Sir Walter laid the mother of his children, asleep in her deep sleep, by the grey ruins of Dryburgh. The whole scene floating as a dream before his eyes and her last words still ringing in his ears "You all have such melancholy faces."

A godforsaken lonely air there is about the ruined Smailholm Tower where the bolt baron rose with the day. The child Waite Scott has it stamped on his mind from early days, when weak and crippled, he lay on the grassy lea while the flocks of sheep from Sandyknowe Farm grazed around.

Ercildoune is near by where lived True Thomas; he who sat under the Eildon tree on a stone which still remains, and in oracular manner gave forth the rhyming prophecies. This second sight he learnt from the Queen of the Fairies who met him in the Glen one day and carried him off to Fair Elfland. But an uncertain tenure he held on mortal life afterwards; and when the mystical pair, the snow-white hind and hart, appeared in the gloaming, he saw the sign, he knew his hour had come, and vanished from the haunts of men for evermore.

Sir Walter walked often in this Rhymer's Glen, and, if a simple faith and a childlike heart make the vision plain,



doubtless he too may have seen the bonny road winding by the fernie brae, and held communion with the fairies; though quietly keeping his own counsel the while.

Perhaps he told Johnnie Hugh, the little invalid grandchild, with the pale face and old-fashioned ways. "The poor dear love," who was almost too good for this world. A tender, suffering, baby child, listening in the summer home, Chiefswood, to these fond tales of an immortal grandfather. This picture of Sir Walter is the saddest, prettiest of all his love for his children's children crowning his latter years.

Nature changes a landscape more gracefully than man. Were he to return to life he still could easily find his way through the "brown heath and shaggy wood" as he did so often of a dewy summer morning, thus escaping for the day to Chiefswood, when grown wearied of playing host to all Scotland.

Still it would scarcely seem surprising here to meet and recognise that genial, honest face with smooth hair straggling on his forehead—that slightly limping figure clad in the cut-away coat, the plain, leather shoes, and tall, white hat, before they were put away in the glass case at Abbotsford.

When with every year the heath grew somewhat heavier, Sir Walter gave up his yellow cane with the silver top, and leant on the shoulder of faithful Tom Purdie. And for this man who "lived upon love" the filial welcome always waiting at Chiefswood must have been sweeter even than the applause of the world.

"For love is heaven, and heaven is love."

Here he brought the tangled creepers taken when the old porch at Abbotsford was pulled down; and with his own hands he planted the pink roses and honeysuckle, training them over his daughter's cottage doorway, Sophia going and coming the while busied in laying the dinner-table under the shade of the trees, for the open-air, informal meal he loved so well. And Lockhart looking on, little knew his quiet observation was to tell a tale to ages yet unborn.

Ripe September hours of Summer's decline, when the flowers still were bright in the garden beds. When good John Lockhart read aloud of the Many Mansions, and pausing, closed the Book.

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day," when the mile-long procession set off from Abbotsford. The nodding of black plumes, the slow pace of the horses, and the one common voice of lamentation, for the blinds of a kingdom were drawn down that day.

Pure pathos in that unexplained pause on the brow of the Bemerside Hill. There where he loved so well to gaze on the prospect; and where from constant habit his carriage horses had learnt to halt of themselves.

Bleak and stormy autumn day, with an impenetrable grey sky frowning over a lowering landscape, when Caledonia stern and wild received into her arms her marvellous well-loved child.

END.

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

Alastair