Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for February 13th, 2026

Electric Scotland News

My Canadian Experience

Continued my February entry which adds videos on... We're All In on Electrification, Türkiye Is Canada's SECRET NATO Weapon, Canada Discovers a Massive Graphite Treasure, Prime Minister Carney announces new strategy to transform Canada's auto industry, The nation mourns with you, Carney says after B.C. mass shooting, Germany + Canada: The Industrial Alliance That Could CRUSH U.S. Leverage , Trump Declared War on Canada — Carney's Cold Blooded Response Stunned the World and other videos.

You can read this as I add more on a regular basis throughout the month at:
http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add30.htm

I might add that I have now added a horizontal like to separate each weeks entry so it will make it easier to find what I have added since the previous week.

Lots of snow still sitting this week but the coming week is all above freezing so should clear out soon. I just watched the last video of a Simple Life in Alaska where they were down to -60 <brrrr>

Had a wee chat with Tom and Beth of the old Beth's Family Tree publication. They had some challenges with all the snow but things are looking up for them again. Beth's still not been able to handle computer work any longer so no hope of her coming back with her publication. Tom is looking to do a new line of Scottish Shirts in Rayon with a pocket so when ready I'll tell you all about it.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers and other media

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...

The hotel ice rink producing some of the world's finest curlers

It was the pioneering vision of a Stranraer businessman in 1970 that would go on to produce some of Scotland's most successful curlers on the world stage.

Read more at:
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq5ypxgl1l0o

Reform closes to within five points of SNP in regional vote poll

A dramatic new poll from More in Common shows Reform UK surging to 20% in the regional vote - just five points behind the Scottish National Party — as the unionist vote splinters.

Read more at:
https://archive.is/RYzcW

What are we stumbling into? Reasons for hope and fear again.

This post, inspired by the Stolpersteins ('stumbling stones') of Amsterdam, attracted some surprising (to me) comments when it was first published in April 2019.

Read more at:
https://sceptical.scot/2026/02/what-are-we-stumbling-into-reasons-for-hope-and-fear-again/

A shambles and a disgrace - why have Scotland's high streets declined? Part One

Andrew Neil blames a national scandal of local government failure and incompetence, others argue the rot goes much deeper. In a two-part series for Sceptical Scot, Charlie Ellis explores a complicated landscape:not just a story of bad councils, it's a collision between old-school market beliefs in a modern world of hollowed-out authorities and changing global shopping habits.

Read more at:
https://sceptical.scot/2026/02/a-shambles-and-a-disgrace-why-have-scotlands-high-streets-declined-part-one/

A shambles and a disgrace - saving Scotland's High Streets will take more than the market Part 2

The decline of Princes Street and Sauchiehall Street is no isolated Scottish tragedy; it's a pattern replicated across the UK and beyond. Why? In Part Two Charlie Ellis seeks answers beyond the market.

Read more at:
https://sceptical.scot/2026/02/a-shambles-and-a-disgrace-saving-scotlands-high-streets-will-take-more-than-the-market-part-2/

The Return of Power

From Greenland to Glasgow and the Forgotten Lessons of Magna Carta

Read more at:
https://annemarieward.substack.com/p/the-return-of-power-from-greenland

Reasons to be cheerful

Newsfeeds deliver a daily diet of disasters, wars, fires, floods, political turmoil and technological dread. Fear sells, and pessimism feels intellectually justified. Yet according to a new book, far from being an age of decay, the 21st century may prove to be the most creative and constructive period in human history.

Read more at:
https://www.cityam.com/reasons-to-be-cheerful-in-an-age-of-extraordinary-technological-progress/

US House votes to overturn Trump's tariffs on Canada

The US House of Representatives has voted to rescind US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canadian goods.

Read more at:
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyz2142e77o

Conrad Black: Harper, Poilievre show us what conservatism is all about

The cause was given an exception boost this week

Read more at:
https://archive.is/3sBXL

Electric Canadian

The Pioneer
A publication of Peace River School (pdf)

You can read this at:
http://www.electriccanadian.com/children/thepioneer.pdf

Sheridan Lawrence
Emperor of the Peace, 1870 - 1952 (pdf)

You can read about him at:
http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/Sheridan-Lawrence.pdf

The Anglo-American Magazine
Added Volume 4 January - July 1954

You can read this volume at:
http://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/angloamerican.htm

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 8th day of February 2026 - "If Only..."
By The Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:
http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26697-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-8th-day-of-february-2026-if-only

Canadians At War
From the icy fields of Europe to the jungles of the Pacific, we uncover the untold stories of Canadian soldiers, nurses, pilots, and everyday citizens who changed the course of WWII. Discover acts of courage, kindness, sacrifice, and impossible bravery — the moments that made the world respect the Maple Leaf forever. These are the stories history almost forgot… until now.

You can watch this at:
https://www.youtube.com/@CanadiansAtWar

The Beaver Magazine
Added No. 2 Outfit 266 September 1935 (pdf)

You can read this issue at:
http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/TheBeaverSeptember1935.pdf

Electric Scotland

Scotland Released Just 11 Beavers Into a Dying River
15 Years Later, the Results Defied Logic

You can watch this at:
https://electricscotland.com/nature/beavers.htm

Magna Carta
A Commentary on the great Charter of King John with an historical introduction by William Sharp McKechnie, M.A., LL.B., D. Phil., Lecturer on Consitutional Law and History in the University of Glasgow (second edition) (1914) (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/england/bwb_W9-DBJ-857.pdf

The New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote
Religious and Moral, Origional and Selected with Introduction by The Rev. Donald MacLeod, D.D., Chaplain to Her Majesty, and Editor of "Good Words" (1872) (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/bible/newcyclopdiaill00p.pdf

An Inquiry into the Origin, Pedigree, & History of the Family, or Clan, of Aitons
In Scotland; collected from various sources of information by William Aitonm Ex-Sheriff Substitute in Hamilton (1830) (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/webclans/atoc/history-of-the-family-or-clan,-of-Aitons.pdf

Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, K.G., K.T.
Volume 1 & 2 (2 vol in 1) (1899) (pdf)

You can read these volumes at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/records/buccleuchqueensb0102greauoft.pdf

Reports on the Manuscripts
Of the Earl of Eglinton, Sir J. Stirling Maxwell, Bart., C.S.H. Drummond, Esq., C.F. Weston Underwood, Esq, and G. Wingfield Digby, Esq. (1885) (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/records/reportofroyalcommaxwell.pdf

Tenth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
Published in 1885 and Re-Issued in 1906 (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/records/reportofroyalcom10grea.pdf

Scottish Society of Louisville
Got in their February 2025 newsletter

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/Louisville/index.htm

The Story of the Barony of Gorbals
By John Ord (1919) (pdf)

You can read this at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/glasgow/storyofbaronyofg00ordj.pdf

Keir, James
Burgess of Edinburgh, Sketch of his life (pdf)

You can read about him at:
https://electricscotland.com/history/Sketch-of-the-life-of-James-Keir.pdf

Story

Fishermen's Superstitions

THE Sons of the sea rovers, though aware of the danger of their calling, were never afraid to face the billows. They saw their fathers set forth, ofttimes never to return, but, undeterred by knowing full well that after a life of toil a watery grave awaited them, they too invariably adopted the same precarious profession. In the West of Scotland a pretty legend exists to account for this hereditary perverseness. A man had become enamoured of a mermaid whom he first espied combing her "ling lang yellow locks" while he was wandering along the shore. He was warned by a sea god that swift death awaited him if he pursued his suit. Finally he was persuaded by threats and bribes to turn his attention back to one of his own race who had tarried for him inland. The lover told his adviser, though he would do as he was bidden he would not forget the halcyon days of summer he had spent, lingering by the tide with the fair lady of the sea who had entranced him. The merman, struck by the landsman's fondness for all that appertained to his watery realm, promised him that his descendants would likewise be ocean lovers. Before the earth dweller turned his steps inland to woods and fields the sea god baptised him with the splash of a wave. His race in this country grew and increased, and sure enough, the fascination for the salt water never left them. They stand on our shores to-day, like the deep ocean, dressed in dark blue, scanning with keen eyes the dancing waves, and never, how far inland they may go, able to cast off their desire to roam over the world of waters. The sea is to them as a woman whose beauty attracts, but her favours or her frowns alike bring trouble. Her smiles lure the sailor forth, and then she swoops down on him like a fury. In the West of Scotland, to ward off disaster from the siren of the seas, children, before they were twenty-one clays old, had their right hand baptised in the waves. If done at the flow it averted death by drowning. The watery grave of those who by misadventure had their tiny baby fists dipped into the briny, hungry waves at ebb-tide is chronicled to-day.

The fisherfolk remain strangely conservative in their ways, though their minds are enlarged, their wits sharpened by their voyagings. A modern writer explains that one reason why the Russian peasants have remained so stolid, dumbly enduring abuse, is because in their country they had no seaboard, therefore never any new ideas come to them. They have no wish to penetrate beyond their forests, and this stay-at-homeness has kept them for generations unprogressive. The population on our shores, on the other hand, was for ever open to new impressions, and with wits alert ready to receive such. Our fisherfolk are more than usually intelligent, keeping abreast of the times, although they rigidly adhere to certain customs and seemingly childish superstitions. They judge of the atmospheric changes by symbols taught to their forebears in ages past. The fleecy, mackerel-backed cloud which indicates more than a capful of wind, and seagulls flying inland when skies are fair, they note as a storm warning. Sir Patrick Spens, King Alexander's skeely skipper, misliked seeing "the new moon wi' the auld moon in her arm," and sure enough, he and all the good Scotch lords who sailed with him from Norroway, "never mair cam hame." A halo round the sun or moon was not welcome; brocks they are called.

"When the sun sets in a brock
He'll rise in a slauch;
But if the brock dees awa'
Ere he sets in the sea,
He'll rise in the morning
Wi' a clear e'e,"

says one adage. Rainbows were not welcome unless they came when there was clear shining after rain. The broken ends of the bow foretold uncertain weather, as also did the " merry dancers " - the aurora borealis. The fishers noted the coming storm in the cat's tail. When grimalkin was playful he chased his own brush. The furniture cracking, the beasts scratching themselves, told of a change. The tribe of the sea read the face of the waters as if it were a printed book. They were forced to be weather-wise long before the days of barometers, barographs or telegraphed storm warnings. They had to study the ocean and sky not only for food and money, as the farmer does, but for their safety when on the deep. Harvesting the hale- some faring of the sea costs lives of men, however skilful mariners may be. Harbours before last century were few, and the crafts of days of yore seemed, to modern ideas, but poorly equipped to face the billows. The ancient Britons had learned to stretch the skins of beasts on a slim framework, and these cunningly- fashioned wood and hide boats imitated the shape of the sea birds which, while resting on the waves, breasted their undulations. Even now on the west coast of Ireland, where the long rolling billows of the Atlantic break, the boats used there are these light coracles. They face the swell and the surf and float over the mountainous sea with a bird-like grace and ease, whereas a modern-shaped, low-bowed boat would fill and swamp. The Vikings built their

galleys high- p rowed, shaped like swan or gull. Far indeed over the ocean they sped if the surmise in regard to that round tower at Newport on America's shore be as Longfellow sang of it and antiquarians conjectured, namely, that it was built by some venturesome Berserker whom the wind of God " had sent scudding across the Atlantic before Columbus's day. There the skeleton in armour built the lofty tower for his wife's bower on the fringe of the undiscovered great world. Despite their long voyages the Vikings and our mariners of old were discreet. They rested in winter. All their weather-wise lore could not preserve them from the season of gales, so in this land statutes were in force which forbade the lieges of the kings of Scotland risking their lives sailing oil seas in the darksome, turbulent months between St. Jude's Day and Candlemas.

Some of the fishermen's customs still in vogue date back to prehistoric times. A rite of those who live by the sea was practised oil western shores till lately. The people by the ocean depended on great waters not only for fish but for manure for their fields of grain, so on Hallowmas, and some say oil Columba's Eve, they offered libations of ale and gruel to the god of the sea. A man at midnight between Wednesday night and the eve of Maunday Thursday walked waist deep into the tide and chanted the following prayer, while those on land took up the refrain

"O God of the sea,
Put weed in the drawing wave,
To enrich the ground,
To shower on us food."

So we see along our coast there lingers the ritual of fire and oblations, and the fisher who pleads from the sea sustenance looks from his boat at the monoliths which, looming through the mist, look "like a company of stolid canines met in council." The sea god to whom toll was paid was in some parts called Shoney. It was a chill period in which to walk into his territory and pay tribute. The people were wretchedly poor on the land side of his sovereignty, but they combined to brew ale for the ceremony. They held a prayerful service in a church by the shore first, then proceeded to watch the beaker of thir home-brewed ale being poured on the waves while they chanted the lines with their chosen agent, after which they returned to the church, where a candle burned, and at a signal its feeble light was extinguished. Then, armed with provisions not wasted on Shoney, they adjourned to some field, where they ate and drank and sang till dawn. The church, like most since Columba's time, when he, the pioneer missionary, first lit the eternal light of Christianity on his lone islet on the western fringe of Scotland, had evidently decided to pander to the god of the sea and allow his worship.

A custom dating back to dim, distant days is the annual burning and making of the clavie at Burghead, in Morayshire. And what was the origin of the word clavie, or the meaning of the belief adhering to it, no one knows. On Yule night, according to past dating, they make this unique clavie, i.e., a barrel sawn in two, to the lower half of which there is affixed a long handle. In the manufacture of the clavie it is all-important that no iron hammer is to be used, but a stone does in its stead. The barrel is filled with wood dipped in tar and piled so as to form a pyramid with a hollow in it. Into the centre of the pyre is placed a burning peat. Another rule as well as that no metal hammer is allowed, is that no light be set to the tarry pile except by a brand already ablaze, and a modern match is sternly excluded. The clavie set aglow, a further libation of tar is poured upon it, and, regardless of flame and smoke, a man shoulders the flaring clavie. If he falls, or even stumbles, it augurs ill for the town, so a bearer strong thewed is carefully selected. When a bearer is wearied, or is choked by smoke, another is always there eager to carry the clavie. One after another they step forth until the town has been encompassed by the flaring barrel. Then they march to a hillock called the Doorie, where on a stone the remaining blaze is placed and more fuel added. In past centuries it was fed all night long till a new day dawned, but in this hurrying age time is money to the fisherfolk, so now they let the fire burn on the altar but for a brief space and proceed to roll what remains of the smouldering barrel adown the western slope. On its last journey a scramble is made by the onlookers, for every one in the crowd wishes to seize a brand from the descending, dying clavie. One secured, the possessor bears it home in triumph, for it is credited with the power of preserving those under the roof tree that shelters it from ill for a year. In bygone times one strong man was selected to carry the clavie around the town, but now the post of honour is shared among several of the able-bodied. Also in days of yore the ships in the harbour were visited by the clavie. Indeed as late as 1875 the clavie was carried on board one vessel about to make her first voyage. Grain was showered on her deck, and then with a sprinkling of fire and water she was named Doorie. The town has grown greatly and assumed bigger proportions than the fiery clavie can encircle, so only the older part is girded by the burning barrel. What the meaning of this clavic ceremony is we can only conjecture, from some of its rites, that its origin was in the pagan past, and instituted by an extinct race to protect their homes and persons by sea and

land.

Peculiar to another seaport town is a rite unique as that of the clavie. At Queensferry, within ten miles of Scotland's capital, every year saw the upkeeping of a singular practice. It is thought to commemorate the arrival of Margaret Atheling and her marriage with Malcolm Canmore. It was lucky for that widowed king that so well-dowered, well-born a princess was driven by stress of storm to seek shelter in the Firth of Forth at his very doors, for in those days the "king sat in Dunfermline tower, drinking the blude-red wine." He could not leave his distraught realm to seek a helpmate. England barred him to the landward, and it needed time and fine weather to journey overseas to woo a fitting wife. Margaret Atheling, by one chronicler, is reported to have been vivacious, but we know her best as the queen muchly given to good works—a most zealous Catholic, intolerant of other sects. She thought the lives of her monkish emissaries were endangered traversing the Firth, so at the strait where her vessel had first anchored, she instituted a boat to cross in, and the place was named after the royal lady. At the village of the Queen's ferry, the port of the passage between Edinburgh and Dunfermline, yearly, in early August, on the day preceding the fair, the inhabitants bedecked the burry man. The chiefmost figure was a lad dressed in loose garments, which were covered over with burrs from the thistle or burdock (the arctomus bardana). They grow near Hopetoun and further up the Firth at Blackness in plenty, and were collected for the occasion—"so essential are they deemed to the maintenance of this curious ceremony, the origin and object of which are lost in antiquity and long ago foiled the antiquarian research of even Sir Walter Scott. The custom in question can be traced back to the period of the last battle of Falkirk, for an old woman of eighty, whose dead mother was aged thirteen at the date of the battle (1746) stated that the observance has been unaltered from then till now (1885)." When the burry man, encased as if he were in armour in his suit of close-sticking burrs, grasping staves adorned with flowers, marched through the town, shouts were raised at every door, and the dwellers came forth with greeting and money to wish him well. The revenue thus accrued was divided between the chief actor and the lads who helped to yearly resurrect the burry man of Old Queensferry.

Conservative in its ways, sticking to dress and vogues of its own, is the fishing village of Newhaven, almost within hail of " High Dunedin's castled rock. Villas have encroached on it and nearly crowded it into the Firth, by whose margin it grew many centuries ago. Some think the originators of these sterling fisherfolk were of Flemish extraction. Howbeit the wives, creel on back and much be-petticoated (wearing sometimes fifteen short skirts) cry their wares, caller o'o and caller herring, with clear-voiced strength through Edinburgh's grey streets, and their men in the blue clothes bring a smack of the salt water into twentieth - century Princes Street. Newhaven was a fishing hamlet in James III.'s reign, and his son, liking the looks of the tribe of the sea who dwelt near to his "1-louse of Kings " at Holyrood, established a rope walk there and finally enlarged the place, for this gallant Stuart king was the first after Bruce to foresee Scotland, hemmed in by our auld enemies, the English, would have to form a navy if she wished to become a power and hold her own among the nations. He added houses to the fishing village for his workmen. Instead of being known as Our Lady's Port of Grace, by which title it had heretofore been named, James's dockyard was dubbed The New Haven. Blackness, so much further up the long-armed Firth, was the old port which, till then, had done much trade.; for it was nearer Dunfermline and Linlithgow, where the Court held its revels. Holyrood became, as Stuart rapidly succeeded Stuart, a favoured residence, and when James resolved to found a navy, he determined to see his ships grow rib by rib under his own eye. To escape from toils of state, from the revels he perforce held, he with his train of nobles ambled down by Bonnington to his chosen haven, and watched the men at work and heard their hammers ring and their saws rasp. James's interest in the building of his huge ship, the Great Michael, gave an impetus to the sea village he had patronised. It was endowed with certain burghal rights, and in its midst was built a chapel called St. Mary's. We cannot picture the jacketless, blue-dressed fishermen, or their buxom, independent wives worshipping as Romanists. However, a generation later, along with the timber for Mary of Lorraine's palace on the castle hill, came Lutheran literature, which landed close by Newhaven. The flsherfolk, early in Reformation times, became staunch Presbyterians. Yet so tenacious are the hits of folk lore, in their children's songs there remains still a trace of the Catholic ways and days. The wee lasses and lads at one game sing—

"My coffin shall be black,
Six angels at my back,
Two to sing and two to pray
And two to carry my soul away."

These fisher-bairns, playing with the cordage on the shore, looking out on the devouring sea which has been often in generations past their paternal breadwinners' grave, end this rhyme peculiar to Newhaven with the verse:-

Ding dong knell,
The passing bell,
And good-bye to you, my darling.
Bury me in yon old churchyard
Beside my own dear mother."

The father's resting-place was doubtful, but in the God's acre in the midst of the village the sturdy wives, the true helpmates of the fishermen, were of a surety laid. In this enclosure, at the times of burial there, Mrs. Cupples, writing in 1888 and recalling Newhaven as she had seen it in her childhood, says: "In the grass-grown, ancient enclosure just now referred to, when a funeral took place, it was very noticeable how the coffin was borne along, in crowded procession, on poles held by the chief mourners; and how, as it passed within the said old burying-ground, each follower dropped into a plate beside the entrance his contribution in silver, its purpose being to defray all necessary expenses." "Dwelling," says a writer in 1865, "only a few bow-shots from the metropolis of an ancient kingdom, this people remain isolated, apart, distinct in costume and dialect, in manners and mode of thinking. The customs, laws, and traditions of their forefathers appear as if they had been stereotyped for their use. To think of dogs is unlucky; of hares terrible! Should a reference be made to a minister' as such, vague and undefined terror fills every bronzed visage, as he should be spoken of only as 'the man in the black coat'; and Friday is an unlucky day for everything but getting married, and to talk of a certain man named Brounger is sure to produce consternation." This John Brounger, who is unmentionable, was an age-enfeebled fisher of Newhaven, who, when too frail to go to sea used to beg of some of the able-bodied boys in blue oysters from their catch. If they refused his demand he cursed them and wished them on their next trip ill-luck. The curse was sometimes fulfilled, so to propitiate him he as a rule got his toll of oysters as an established right. Hence it came to pass if a fisherman said, John Brounger is in your head sheets, or aboard, the crew pulled in their nets and putting out their oars circled round thrice to break the spell.

The strapping women of Newhaven and Cockenzie have so big a share in the work of earning a livelihood, when they hear of one of their men marrying out of their circle they exclaim contemptuously, " Her! what wad she do xvi' a man that canna win a man's bread?" In a community that seldom marries with the outer world, the same names are common, and the fishermen are distinguished by having their wives' Christian names added to their surnames, such as Maggie's Flucker. An old ballad tells of a Newhaven wedding, on the lucky day:—

"Weel Friday cam', the growing moon
Shone beautifully clear,
An' a' the boats wi' flags were drest
Frae Annfield to the pier.
An' Doctor Johnston, worthy man,
Had twa-three hours to spare,
Sae he toddled to Newhaven
An' spliced the happy pair."

Above Newhaven's red roofs there appeared, till recently, a giant willow. The legend of its origin has been preserved. It grew to be a towering tree seen from afar on the summit of the Whale Brae, a steep street where once an inquisitive monster of the deep ran ashore. Judging by the girth of the willow it must have been long, long ago that a fisher-wife with her bairn, cradled in the skull of her creel, sat one spring waiting for her man's sail to heave in sight. She would doubtless be busy knitting, and, like her Newhaven sisters, would be an accomplished weaver of wool, so she could scan the Firth for her gudeman's craft, or turn and look on her babe while her quick fingers all the while webbed the wool into warm garments for her sea-rover. At last she spied his boat come raking through the spray, and rose to shoulder her creel and meet it, when a blizzard loured down and hid the Firth from sight. When the squall had swept past no sail was visible. She realised what had happened: she was a widow and her bonnie bairn orphaned. She sank in a swoon of despair by its osier, fishy cradle. The wild winds of March were heavily laden with icy cold from the north. On the track of the blast that had wrecked the boat and blighted the life of the fisherman's hostages to fortune, as the new-made widow lay unconscious, clasping her babe, there came a snowstorm and swathed the grief-smitten woman and her little child in a white pall. The bank below whose bield she had sat slipped and buried them. The fishers, when the snows melted, sought and found her and her babe on this hill by the sea above their Port of Grace, now a gardened suburb. They buried them in the old churchyard—the churchyard which is now a drying-green wedged among houses

bordering on the electric-carred roadway. It was springtime, warm days had come, and the wicker creel the baby had lain in had been freshly woven. It had been cast aside, but one of the wands rooted in the vernal brown earth had sprouted. An old woman from the village noted it and prophesied that the wand from the new-made wicker cradle would grow into a great tree—a landmark for the homeward-bound mariner. Generation after generation of fisher-lads would sport below the tree or climb its branches. This strangely-planted willow would grow and flourish while the trade and prosperity of the village increased. But the soothsayer added it would fall either when the fishing trade left Newhaven, or when boats, great decked boats fit to face the German Ocean even in winter, set sail from the harbour over which the tree kept sentinel. When the willow grew hoary with years, houses compassed it about, but with the title deeds of the site on the brae head called "Willow Bank " went instructions that the tree was not to be destroyed. The better to preserve it, it was girded round with an iron railing, and its legend put into rhyme. In the mid-Victorian era trawling began to lessen the fishermen's gains. Down one wintry night came a great arm of the watchful willow, and the men taking this as an evil omen, were with difficulty restrained from attacking the trawlers to save their sea trade. Luckily for law and order, for generations they had at Newhaven been shepherded by good divines. Mr. David Johnston of St. Ninian's, North Leith, for fifty-nine years (1765-1824) had ministered to them. When Leith was in a panic over the threatened invasion by the renegade, Paul Jones, he not only exhorted his people to pray for protection, but, being a practical man, who believed that the Lord would the better help those who tried to help themselves, he urged the fishers to form themselves into a band of sea volunteers, and he was the first to enlist. He may have married the young fisher-wife who watched from the green hill by the sea and saw her husband's boat sink; at any rate Mr. Johnston knew the willow which grew into a landmark for the home-steering rovers. When the tree broke in twain the Rev. James Fairbairn administered to the spiritual welfare of the red-tiled village which Edinburgh, "flinging her white arms to the sea," had encroached on. He reminded the people there was a saving clause in the soothsayer's prophecy. When she saw the wand, tenacious of life, first shoot, she said it would survive till the trade left the village, or till decked boats bore with their crews out of harbour. He urged his people to set to work to get bigger craft. He opened up the means for them to do so. He loaned money when they collected enough to meet him half-way. He borrowed more on his own security for them. Gradually a well-equipped fleet of big brown-sailed, decked smacks, headed by the James Fairbairn, sailed from Newhaven, and so prosperous were they they elbowed the small boats out of the harbour. When the last of the obsolete smacks was finally superseded, the huge, prophetic willow, first watered by the young widow's storm of tears, fell in the sixties of last century, its mission fulfilled.

Sailor-men all along our coast share a dislike to meeting when the Blue Peter is flying, or mentioning while under canvas pigs or parsons. At Cockenzie a stranger's well-intentioned "Good- morning" to a fisher on his way to his boat would make him remain at home, as it was interpreted to be an evil omen. Superstition makes the fishers clap a guard on their tongue, for God's name taken in vain, specially on entering or leaving a port, will make the crew shudder and cry for cold iron to grasp to remove the ill-luck. How they ever get to sea at all with pigs and cats to cross their path is a wonder. A hare too is an unchancy beast to meet when seaward bound. In this our present century, one day in the Scosman there was the notice of a case of malicious mischief. Some youths had caught a wounded hare and stowed it away in a fisherman's boat, so that when he set sail it would inevitably be found. The witch-absorbing quality of a hare, the universally - credited unluckiness befalling any one if it crossed their path when setting forth on a venture, is well known. This hare the lads secreted on board the smack, when its limping forth from its hiding-place would strike terror into the crew, for who would, however prosperous the weather looked, sail in a witch-ridden boat? So serious were the consequences of this prank, the originators were had up before the sheriff for "conspiracy." Friday is avoided by the fishermen for setting out on any enterprise except on a matrimonial venture. Maybe the idea of being dangerous to sail upon had arisen as it was the day the fairies were rife, but now, in times of keen competition, men have to hoist their sail on a Friday. The lottery of fish- catching, its precariousness, the hazards on the changeful sea, fostered a belief in the sailors of omens, for which they still look before they depart from the firm land. "When a fisherman left his house to proceed to his boat it was considered unlucky to call after him, even though he had forgotten something essential. If he was a Shetlander he was ' particular as to meeting a person by the way lest they should have an evil eye, or some accidental malformation.' It was considered a good omen to meet an imbecile or a person deformed from the birth," These were called by the Shetlander Gude's poor, and being of God's making they were not despised. After meeting one such when setting sail, if the ship prospered, to God's poor was given an aamas or kjoab, i.e., a dole. As in the case of John Brounger of Newhaven, folk lore or superstition made the fishers give of their store to the poor, the needy, and those whom Providence had afflicted. It was believed any one who crossed a fisherman's path when he was on his way to his boat intended to scathe him. When the fisher came to the spot where his way had been crossed, he took out his knife and scratched the ground in the form a cross, uttering the word twee-to-see-die ' and spat on the place. The sign of the cross was considered an antidote against the intended evil, and the spittle an emphatic expression of

contempt for the unchancy hag."

The short sward of the links shorn close on the east coast of Scotland by the keen winds is useful for other purposes than golf, ancient though the royal game be. May is a month evidently from pagan times that is sacred to many rites. To the Douny Dell in the Bay of Nigg in Kincardineshire there was a narrow way from the mainland called the Brig of ae Hair, which led to the green knowe which was all but an island. Across this hair-breadth bridge in the merrie month the young folks went to carve their names in the turf. There was a well there dedicated to St. Fittick, and it was evidently deemed expedient to let him know whose names were associated, not writ on water, but cut side by side on the grass on his semi-isle.

Herrings in folk lore seem to be quick to hear, and discordant notes jarred on them. The church bell of St. Monance (which hung on a tree) must have sounded harshly, evidently not attuned to musical ears, for when the herring were around the coast it was not rung because it was averred the silvery harvest of the sea were frightened from the shores of Fife by its jangling knell. Herring, according to the fishers, are among the blessed in this world, at any rate they make for peace, fleeing when they hear a war of words, and withdrawing from the land where quarrels are rife. Where blood is shed they do not return that season. Their mode of procedure should make the fisherfolk beware of entrance to a quarrel. The sea-ploughing Manxman adds in the litany after the prayer for the fruits of the earth a petition for the continuance of the blessings of the sea, for the harvesting of herring is as important to them as the garnering of grain. They are a truly religious community, our fisherfolk. The dangers of their calling make them realise how unstable is their tenure on this life, and during it how hard it is to procure a livelihood. They taste to the bitter dregs the sorrows of the sea; but they scan it with calm, unflinching gaze. Nature has whispered the secret to the trees how to withstand the gales. She has made them throw out their roots in the direction from which time prevailing winds assail them, grip the ground and defy the assaults of the blasts. So with the fisherfolk. They know their storm of fate will inevitably come from the turbulent temper of the sea they love, but from generation to generation they have so builded up their forceful characters that even women and children look with unflinching bravery over the ocean, prepared to bow but not to break before the felling blows of fate; and the men, however loud the winds howl as they speed over the rising waves, lustily sing:-

"We put our trust in Providence
And trust His gracious aid."

In many parts of our shores before the men set out on their quest they gather in the church for a farewell service, and in some parts the minister blesses the nets and prays that they may be filled.

The sailors the world over believe in the sweet little cherub which sits up aloft to watch over Jack at sea. He has not to climb very high on the fishing boats, but he has these mariners' fortunes at heart. Watts, the great artist of our day, realised this, for one of his most popular pictures is that of the curly-headed cherub fluttering over the green waves. In his plump little hands he holds the end of the brown lines. His knees are bent as if asking a favour. "Good luck to the fishing," he pleads.

"Weel may the boatie row
That wins the bairnies' bread,"

sing the fisherfolk, watching the brown sails scudding along. Every hope for man's good is a gain, and the fairies and folk lore teach us a benison falls also on well-wishers, and so the song ends by asserting—

"And happy be the lot of all
That wish the boatie speed."

END.

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

Alastair