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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for May 8th, 2015

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

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

<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

Electric Scotland News

I see the results are stating to come in for the UK elections. At time of writing the BBC predict the SNP will win 58 of the 59 seats in Scotland and that the Conservatives will be the largest party in the UK with 316 seats which means they are just 7 seats short of a majority. Guess tomorrow we'll see how accurate this exit poll is. Apparently the exit poll in the last election was just about dead on with the prediction so we'll see how they do this time around.

We've moved

We've now moved to our new address and got our new internet line installed. We do have a problem as the speed increase we purchased has not happened and I've noticed the site seems slower than it was so obviously we have an issue that needs to be fixed. I phoned Steve (Thursday) and he said that our telco was on site trying to figure out the problem so hopefully by the time you read this the problem will have been resolved.

Electric Canadian

A History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, Montreal
By the Rev. Robert Campbell, M.A., The Last Pastor (1887) (pdf)

You can read this book at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/Religion/historyofscotchpr00camp.pdf>

The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest campaign of the Second World War and the most important. Canada was a major participant: this country's enormous effort in the struggle was crucial to Allied victory. While the ships and personnel of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) operated across the globe during the war, they are best remembered for their deeds during the Battle of the Atlantic.

You can read more about this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/battleatlantic.htm>

Prime Minister Stephen Harper today issued the following statement to mark the 70th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands:

"It is a privilege to be marking the 70th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands alongside the very same brave Canadian soldiers who participated in this historic military campaign, the Allied countries who fought by our side, and of course the Dutch people, whose resistance fighters provided invaluable support and intelligence to retake their homeland. Our countrymen worked together as brothers in arms to free the country from the grip of Nazi tyranny.

"In the fall of 1944, the First Canadian Army began its assault on the occupying Nazi forces to break their stranglehold on a war-ravaged and starving nation. Reinforced by Dutch and Allied troops, the First Canadian Army endured harsh and gruelling conditions against the entrenched Nazi forces. The flat, Dutch countryside, much of it reclaimed from the sea, was often flooded, caking and

weighing soldiers and their machinery down in mud, and offered little-to-no protection from enemy fire.

“More than 7,600 Canadians were killed during the nine-month offensive with many more injured. A poignant reminder of this cost is the row upon row of headstones of Canadian soldiers laid to rest in the region's hallowed war cemeteries. Thousands of Canadians lie buried far away from the homes and families they left behind.

“Today, the bonds of mutual respect and friendship between our countries endure, forged by the sacrifices made in the name of freedom and strengthened by our shared values of freedom, democracy and rule of law. This is illustrated by our frequent exchanges, including the upcoming visit of Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands to Canada from May 27 to 29, 2015.

“Seventy years ago, the advancing Canadian soldiers were heralded as heroes and greeted by entire towns of grateful Dutch citizens.

“Seventy years later, these same selfless veterans continue to be warmly embraced and welcomed as heroes by a forever grateful Dutch nation. To the Dutch people, we say Dank u wel. Thank you also for the beautiful tulips which bloom each spring in our own nation's capital, Ottawa, a symbol of your gratitude for the refuge Canada provided to members of the Dutch royal family.

“We gratefully acknowledge the service and sacrifices, and honour the achievements of the brave Canadians in uniform who fought and died during the Liberation of the Netherlands. We will remember them.”

Electric Scotland

A Tour in Sutherlandshire

With extracts from the field-books of a Sportsman and Naturalist by Charles St. John, Esq. in two volumes 2nd Edition (1884).

We have now embarked on Volume 2 of this publication which takes us through to September.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/sutherland/index.htm>

The Scottish Historical Review
Added Volume 19.

This is the final volume I have found.

Volume 19 includes: The Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords and the Poverty Problem. By Margaret I. Adam; The Daughter of Anne of Denmark's Secretary. By E. Margaret Thompson; The Western Highlands in the Eighteenth Century. By the Rev. Canon Roderick C. MacLeod; An Unpublished Letter of Sir Thomas Browne, M.D., 1659. By Professor T. K. Monro. With two fat miles; Three Aikenhead and Hagthornhill Deeds, 1508-1545, Langside Battlefield. By George Ne?lson; Documents relating to Coal Mining in the Saltcoats District in the First Quarter of the Eighteenth Century. By N. M. Scott; Robert Owen and the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1818. By Albert T. Volwiler; Minutes of the Diocesan Synod of Lothian held on the 19th and 20th of March, 1611. With note by D. Hay Fleming; A Note on a Moray Charter. By David Baird Smith; Glasgow in the Pre-Reformation Period. By John Edwards. With two illustrations; Aesculapius in Fife: a Study of the Early Eighteenth Century. By Sir Bruce Seton, Bart; Letters from Queen Anne to Godolphin. By G. Davies; Bellenden's Translation of the History of Hector Boece. By R. W. Chambers and Walter Seton; Rent-Rolls of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in Scotland. By John Edwards; The Professional Pricker and his Test for Witchcraft. By the Rev. W. N. Neill, B.D.; A Franco-Scottish Conspiracy in Sweden. By Hon. George A. Sinclair; Sir Archibald Lawrie's Charter Collections. By George Neilson; Relation of the Manner of Judicatories of Scotland. By J. D. Mackie and W. C. Dickinson; St. Helena in 1817. By Admiral Colin Campbell. With Introduction by David Baird Smith; Roman Advance in Britain and the City of Perth. By Sir J. H. Ramsay, Bart. With two maps; Reviews of Books; Notes and Communications.

You can get to this volume at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/review/index.htm>

The Descendants of John Thomson
Pioneer Scotch Covenanter.

The compiler believes he is correct in stating that, without a single exception, every item of the above-described nature submitted by any descendant of John Thomson has been utilized in the present book—not always, however, in the exact form in which it was submitted. To all those contributing to these records, and especially to those few who have supplied material relating to branches or sub-branches other than their own, the compiler desires to express his sincere thanks and appreciation.

You can download this book from the link I placed on the Clan Thomson page at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/stoz/thomson.html>

Dissertation on Heirs Male

When used as a clause of Remainder in Grants of Scotch Peerages with some Incidental discussions by Alexander Sinclair (1837) (pdf). Added a link to this book at the foot of our legal page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/law/>

Donald McElroy, Scotch Irishman

By W. W. Caldwell. I added a link to this book at the foot of our Scots-Irish page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/scotsirish/scotsirishndx.htm>

Elizabethan Ulster

By Lord Ernest Hamilton. Added a link to this pdf book between the videos on our Ulster page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/ulster/>

The History of Normandy and of England

By Sir Francis Palgrave. Added links toward the foot of the page to download this 4 volume set as so many Scottish clans trace their ancestry to Normandy. You can get to this set at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/england/>

The Emigrant's Family, Scotland and Australia

A Tale founded on real life and other poems by William Jamie (1853) (pdf). You can download this book at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/emigrantsfamily.pdf>

The Eugenics of PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN

His German-Scotch Ancestry Irrefutably Established from Recently Discovered Documents by James Caswell Coggins, A.M., S.T.D., Ph.D., LL.D. (pdf).

You can download this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/abrahamlincoln.pdf>

The Scotch Ancestors of President McKinley

Found this wee book and added a link to it from our American history page but you can download it at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/mckinlayancestors.pdf>

Great Words from Great Americans

Thought our American visitors might enjoy reading this. You can get to this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/america/words.htm>

The Home of the Heart

And Other Poems, Moral and Religious, by Miss Aird. You can download this book at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/homeheart.pdf>

Keppoch Song

A Poem in five cantos: Being the Origin and History of the Family by John Paul MacDonald (1815). You can download this book at

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/macdonald/keppoch.pdf>

On The Whisky Trail

Added a 54 minute video to our article on Whisky at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/whisky.htm>

Alexander (Black) Harley

Teacher of Elocution and editor of many books.

Provided a feature for him with a selection of poems which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/harley.htm>

THE STORY

Highland Croft Cultivation

As I object entirely to the popular assertion, that our climate, and average soil, render a crofter's existence in the Highlands, miserable, or even impossible unless he cultivates at least 10 arable acres, I shall now try to show that such assertions arise merely from ignorance of agriculture.

For, the usual crops, grown on our large Highland farms (wheat and mangold excepted, unless in sunny seasons) are about in every way equal to similar crops anywhere in Britain, or abroad. And on such Highland-grown crops, for generations, as fine a race of people physically, and morally, as the world can produce, have grown up. And yet we read, and too many believe, that "Crofters cannot live and thrive, where our farmers prosper!"

A child might see that were there any truth in this assertion, the soil and climate is not to blame, and that the crofter either mismanages matters, or has not enough land to allow him to thrive; while the simple truth is, that our crofters are bad cultivators, and consequently cannot be expected to produce as good crops as that of the well cultivated neighbouring large farm, which is often merely separated from the croft by a fence. Yet, on no better grounds for criticism than mere hasty eye-service, the thoughtless are assured that crofting means no rents, and pauperism.

Now I assert, that, as a rule, crofters properly cared for, can easily pay a good rent for their land, and live on it in comfort quite unknown to townfolk of the same rank in society. But, everything depends on their cultivating their land wisely, and as a wise landlord ought to teach them; and as I write for all concerned, I may here detail what I mean by wise cultivation.

In the first place, the croft, not above 5 acres in extent (because no average family can cultivate properly, more than this, and can live in humble comfort on an average croft of this size, or even less), must be properly trenched, cleared, drained, and limed, without which good crops need not be expected.

2d. The land must be cultivated by the spade, grape, and hoe, only. Horse-laboured land is not cared for as land ought to be cultivated for full profit. Yet, as in Belgium, the cow may be employed in a light cart, to bring home crop and carry out manure, for some hours daily, without any injury whatever.

3d. A proper stable for feeding and manure-making, must be provided about the centre of the croft, attached to the cottage and barn. These buildings in a corner of the croft will involve an enormously greater amount of daily labour than if in its centre.

A small liquid manure tank (for "the mother of heavy crops") must also be provided, to which, all liquid manure will flow, for daily use, either where crop has just been removed, or crop is to be laid down, or, as constantly seen in Belgium and Switzerland, whence the invaluable manure is to be poured over the top of a carefully-built solid manure stack beside and a little higher than the tank, till, in a short time, such a stack becomes a mass of greasy black paste ready to delight the heart of every plant allowed to make its acquaintance, and beyond all comparison more valuable than the ordinary large farm dunghills.

I say small tank, because a large one tempts its owner not to empty it daily, as he ought to do. I have heard of one, so arranged with an overflow pipe ending in the kitchen fire, that any overflow of the tank damped that fire, and made its owner look alive.

4th. The crofter must be taught that till winter stops the growth of plants, a bit of the croft without crop of some kind or other, tells that he is either ignorant of farming, or an invalid, or too rich. Otherwise, no sooner has a wise crofter (like a market gardener) gathered one early flying crop from his land, than another crop is ready, prepared beforehand, to replace it. So that some of his land thus gives him several crops in the year, instead of the one that contents the untaught crofter or large farmer.

For instance, when the croft strawberry bed ends its crop in July, the crofter should have seed-beds with varieties of the cabbage and lettuce tribe, frequently and carefully lifted and replanted, in order that their roots may become so bushy, that, when planted out anywhere and watered in with tank soup, they will grow away as cheerfully as if they never had been lifted. Such prepared plants should go to carefully-dug pits between the strawberry rows, where, before winter, they will give much excellent food for man or beast. Then, before November, the strawberry rows, too old to be left for a crop next year, should be carefully dug down with plenty old manure; and rye sown (in drills) over them, to produce the earliest green spring cattle food, no British winter preventing such rye affording three heavy cuts of excellent forage before June.

In spring, moreover, when the stolen crop planted between the strawberry rows in the previous July has been eaten, early potato cuts should be dribbled in their place, so as to be coming on for summer use, when the consumed rows of rye will be carefully dug down to form excellent manure for the early potatoes.

Then, every day that a potato plant sends its crop to market, some kind of properly prepared cabbage or lettuce plant from the seed-bed must take its place, thus giving always three good crops from that land in the year, viz., rye, early potatoes, cabbage (or lettuce loved by pigs and people), or perhaps a late but valuable crop of carrots to be drawn as required during winter. And so with other parts of the croft, land not under some kind of crop being quite offensive to a well-taught gardening crofter's eye, so long as the weather permits plants to grow.

And, except to cut green for the cow's hay, no wise crofter will sow wheat, barley, or oats, but leaves that to rich people who don't care to take out of their land as much as a crofter should do. And if he cannot so manage his crops, and cows, and pigs, and tank, and manure, on a five acre croft, it is clear that his croft is too large, part of it not being properly and profitably cultivated.

5th. A well manured plot of land, sown with Lucern or Italian ryegrass early in march, will (if tanked after each cut), in ordinary seasons, give several heavy cuts before winter. Next year the Italian ryegrass, well tanked, will give more heavy cuts before winter than those who have not seen such farming would believe. It can almost be seen to grow when properly tanked, and will become a perfectly matted covering to the ground, which then can hardly be seen. I have seen such tanked grass yielding, in December, what its industrious owner assured me was the eighth crop in that year. A cart was then being loaded with the ryegrass, cut from a space about four times its own size, on very sandy soil, but irrigated with tank liquor after every cut. Indeed, it is not easy to exaggerate the quantity of Italian ryegrass that irrigation with liquid manure will produce in a year. An idea may be formed of what an amount of food irrigated common grass even will produce, when cowfeeders cheerfully give £30 to £40 an acre for such a crop! Will any reader of this "good news to crofters" show why a crofter cannot do in this matter what others have done and do daily, merely from irrigating with liquid manure? Lucern also, untanked, in common soil, may be depended on for four cuts yearly, each about two feet high; for ten years from sowing if kept free of weeds.

Here I may also notice a newer, valuable, and quite hardy green crop plant, viz., Prickly comfrey, which all who care for green food for cows or horses from April to November should cultivate. It will grow anywhere, although it grows best in deep strong land, and will give a cut about three feet high, three or four times yearly, in ordinary seasons, even without being tanked. Moreover, it can hardly be rooted out of the land in which it has once been planted, although weeds will injure its growth.

But I may now leave details of cropping the land, except mentioning that, while grain crops may easily be over-manured, and are constantly damaged or destroyed by rain, green crops never suffer from water, even in our wet Highland west coast, and I shall be much surprised by hearing of clover, ryegrass, Lucern, comfrey, and drumhead cabbage being over-manured. Hence, the crofter who grows green crops only, is nearly free from all anxiety about losing his crops, which too often makes the grain-grower (at least in the Highlands) careworn and hungry. But I must now halt till next month, when I expect to conclude about crops, and wind up with cheap cottage-building practical views.

WISE landlords, in the light of what has been already stated, will see their crofters fairly started on a rational, profitable plan of cultivation, and they will soon learn to persevere in its simple rules when they observe the wonderful returns got from green crop farming.

I am assured also that a good strawberry crop has returned £100 per acre, near Inverness, and wherever there is a thriving population, there is little fear of too many strawberries being grown for the demand; just like milk and eggs. And the growing and selling a strawberry crop will leave the owner at liberty to attend to other occupations most of the year. Should he be far from a fruiterer, he may easily convert the crop into jam, which, if well made, will be always most saleable, and return a price for the pound of strawberries, even deducting the cost of the sugar, that will surprise the grower and maker. Indeed few crops will pay better than strawberries, gooseberries, and currants, made into preserves by the crofter.

Much money can also be made by growing eggs, provided the best breed of egg-laying poultry is only kept, and the hens are carefully fed and housed by their own special attendant, and as many kept as will give full daily employment to the henwife; for, keeping fewer than this, is sure to disappoint the owner in the vigorous health of the poultry and their crop of eggs. As to the most profitable breed to keep that can easily be discovered. It is enough here to say, that while a popular kind like the handsome Dorking hens are proud of laying, say 60 to 80 eggs in the year, and then proceed to hatch, or black Hamburg thinks little of laying even up to 250 eggs in the year, if properly cared for, and leaves hatching to hens that have nothing better to do. The trouble and expense of feeding is the same for both breeds, while the profit from each kind differs marvellously.

Bees also, properly managed, ask for very little outlay, and although there are bad as well as good years for honey, may almost certainly be looked upon as coiners of money for their owners, if he or she is wise.

And one great advantage of crofting, with its many sources of income, is, that supposing the breadwinner (as he is often called) being sent for from above, hands weaker than his (who ought to have been about him) of all ages can quite well carry on the concern profitably; the labour being so light and divided in comparison of the large farm—rough horse and plough work.

To those who may object to the cultivation here proposed that it is market-gardening, I ask why should not a croft be managed like a garden, if it will thus produce very much more food than crofts usually do, and employ far more hands profitably? Depending, in the one case, in the old way sadly on weather for success, while under the green crop gardening plan, fine weather is of much less consequence, and, with irrigation, the Highland garden crofter is nearly independent of weather, in all ordinary seasons.

A landlord owning crofters then, and wishing them to commence thriving, should at once see that no one has more than five acres, with the cottage, stable, and barn in the centre of the land as this will save a vast amount of labour taking home food and taking out manure, all the year round. And when all is rightly settled, he should get an intelligent, good-tempered gardener to see that the crofters, however prejudiced at first, carried out the rules of management in every way—till the pupils, old or young, became so prosperous as to induce their landlord to thank God for their prosperity.

As some folks prefer to act as others direct, and some landlord may shrink from the prospect of great outlay in housing their crofters suitably, it may perhaps be of use that I now touch on this subject, and show that few landlords need be alarmed by the prospect of the cost of crofters' buildings. As to attracting the evicted people back to the country, the usual excuses for not attempting this blessed revolution are that "they are now beyond reach," or "they prefer a town life," or "their crofts now are part of large farms," or "they have no money for their required buildings."

The last is the only excuse worth notice. It is true that architects' cottages are too often very expensive. But, till evicted, thousands of crofters and cottars lived in health and happiness in very humble bothies in the Highlands, generally built by their own hands; and similar cottages, built by themselves or their landlords, would, on reasonable terms, soon again find thriving, happy tenants.

Let a landlord mark out a croft, and offer a lease of it at a reasonable rent, either building on it, or agreeing to the tenant's buildings, on plans approved by the landlord, who will pay their value up to a fixed sum at the tenant's outgoing. Let this be made fully known in the district, and there must be some serious objection to the locality or to the landlord if many applicants do not soon come forward—tired of a town or village life, with its searching for precarious employment, often far from the dwelling, which is generally expensive, and in many respects inferior to a country cottage.

Supposing then that it is desired to attract the labouring classes in towns back to the country, I shall try to remove the landlord's dread of great consequent outlay in building cottages, by detailing my own experience in this matter.

When I entered on a large farm in the north-west, I found only three very small and miserable turf bothies upon it, with only three or four persons capable of helping in the farm work, and no other labourers within reasonable distance. So I was obliged to attract other families by building cottages for them—and, my landlord being a minor, and his guardians averse to such outlay, and my bank credit being slender, I was obliged to plan and build in a style that would shock most architects.

Having much newly trenched land requiring to be cleared of its stones, which dyke builders were busy erecting into enclosing walls, I carted the required stones to the site of the four cottages I resolved to build, and employed my "dykers" to set up the walls, which they did, if not so neatly as regular masons would have done, quite as strongly, and at a very different price; very little more than I was paying them for the running yard of the dykes enclosing the fields. But I provided them with a labourer, and with clay to fill up the openings in the centre of the wall, leaving the outside chinks till I got a mason and some lime to "point" them up. And when the roof was on, he also clay-plastered the inside walls to a level surface, which in due time was whitewashed, and looked quite tidy. And these walls, six feet high, were as wind and water-tight as if they had cost £10 the rod, and quite strong enough for their roof, which was made of larch poles, covered with turf, and thatched.

Each cottage was 26 feet long by 12 feet 6 inches wide inside the walls. The centre living room was 12 feet by 12 feet 6 inches, with clay floor, and was entered direct from the outside, without any porch. Not solely from economy, but because when there are two doors to such a room both of which are never shut at the same time; and, when in the army, I lived most comfortably during the severe winter of 1826, in a cottage in an English village, the parlour of which had only one door between it and the road. And when my cottages were occupied, although the prophets said the plan would never answer, my four families (from different parts of the country), were quite agreed that but for having often to shut the outer door, they never lived in such comfortable houses.

One window, built into the wall by my dykers, having two panes of thick glass, each about 2 feet long by 18 inches wide, and a wooden one of the same size, hinged to open when required, gave ample light and sufficient air to the living room.

Each end of the cottage was divided from this room by about six inches thick "cat and clay" partitions, (i.e., larch poles between the floor and the roof, having straw ropes, thoroughly coated and mixed with clay, wattled between them, and plastered smoothly on each side); giving thus, at first, 3 rooms to the cottage, each end-one 6 feet 6 inches wide between the gable wall and cat and clay partition. A similar partition divided one of the end rooms into two of equal size, giving thus three bedrooms and one living room to the cottage. The two closets were therefore 6 feet by 6 feet 6 inches, 6 inches of the width of the house being allowed for the centre cat and clay partition between the closets. And in these small bedrooms, with a door opening from the living room to each; and windows with one glass and one wooden pane, and floored between the three feet wide bed shelf and the cottage wall, with suitable shelves and pin boards for hanging up clothes, &c., my labouring friends lived and slept as well as they would have done in rooms four times the size, and that had cost £100 each. I would, of course, have preferred larger rooms, only I could not afford to build such, and having lived at sea in far less cosy berths, I knew such closets were quite sufficient on land for decency and health.

The other end of the cottage was also divided from the living room by a cat and clay partition, which was 6 feet 6 inches from the gable, had a window similar to those of the closets, a door in the partition, and, for the cottage master and mistress, a bed-shelf wider than the others. The only ceilings to any of the rooms were spars for putting away boxes, &c., not often required for use.

When the primitive but most efficient fire-place was formed against the centre of the living room partition wall, by fixing strongly to it a square "cat and clay" hanging chimney, coming down to within 3 feet 6 inches of the flat stone on which the fire lay—the bottom of its frame strong enough to bear an iron bar with hooks, on which a pot, or a girdle for cakes, could be hung—the chimney, thus

hanging from the roof and partition, and not coming down to the floor, allowed full enjoyment of the three sides of the fire at once; far better for warming or drying than a fire sunk as usual in a gable wall, and therefore highly esteemed by all concerned round their charming peat fires; and all the more so that, owing perhaps to the position of the outer door, there never was any trouble from smoke in one of my cottages.

Then a cast-iron plate, properly fixed, formed the back of the fire, protecting the partition, and giving sufficient warmth to the bedroom beyond it; thus saving expensive gable vents, that otherwise might have been required. Critics warned me that these hanging vents, ending in a small cask above the thatch, would be sure to take fire, but no one ever heard of a clay plastered vent giving such trouble. A rail fixed along the partition walls 6 inches above the floor, and another 2 feet 6 inches above, allowed 3 feet long thin laths to be nailed to them, protecting the cat and clay near the ground from blows that might easily damage it; and the cottage was then ready for its tenants.

As my own people did the cartage, and I found the straw, clay, &c., my landlord letting me have the larch poles gratis, and I kept no note of days' wages, &c., paid to those employed, I cannot say exactly what each cottage cost me (now well on to 40 years ago), but I am satisfied that each cost well below £20. And most landlords have some one in their service who could easily from my details give a near estimate of what such cottages would cost anywhere in the north. But since I built those mentioned and others, Mr John Rhind, architect, Union Street, Inverness, has built for one of my friends a double cottage on a similar but improved plan, by regular mason's and carpenter's contracts, lime, quarry stones, timber, and everything bought, for, I think, £90 or less; say £45 for a really good cottage, which outlay surely need not deter landlords from planting crofters or cottars on their estates, whether on part of their large farms or on their waste lands. And from such families the farmers would get labour as required, at a very different figure from engaging men and women for the season at almost fancy prices, wet weather or dry; with discontent and discomfort to all concerned, comparatively unknown under the good old cottar system.

Now, when some friend leaves his estate to me, with fine modern offices, but on each farm only a barrack for lads and another for girls for field and farm work, and neither crofters nor cottars on the estate, I should be very much surprised if, after drawing a week's breath of surprise, I was not busy arranging for so many cottages such as I have described for families to take the place of the horrid bothy rooms; with a garden to each cottage, to occupy spare time when there was no farm work in a hurry, the number of cottages depending on the size and number of the farms, and other circumstances. Were there waste moorland on the estate worth being reclaimed, that would be divided into crofts of various sizes, but none exceeding five acres for each family planted there on leases (not required by the cottars on the arable farms), who would need suitable buildings for growing all edible foods except grain.

And when these cottages and crafts were occupied, and the people well directed in their work by my gardener, I would thank God for allowing me to put my hand to a wiser, rational, national plan for growing people to love and serve Him than is the rule at present on most estates, Highland or Lowland.

EILNNACH, INVERNESS. JOHN MACKENZIE, M.D.

There is an excellent book, "Crofting Agriculture" by F. Fraser Darling (1945).

AGRICULTURE in the crofts, the Islands, and West Highlands presents special problems. In this book Dr Fraser Darling explains the principles of putting land into good heart and of growing crops which suit the difficult climate and conditions.

There is no one better qualified to do this than Dr Fraser Darling, who has first-hand experience and a great sympathy with the crofter's problem.

Some of Mr Robert Adams's beautiful photographs of Highland scenery illustrate the book, and this selection shows that he does not neglect to record the arts and crafts of Highland Life.

You can read this book at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/hiStory/crofting/index.htm>

And that's it for this week and hope you all enjoy your weekend.

Alastair