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WHATS NEW

Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for December 18th, 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

Greyfriars Bobby and the One o'clock Gun

Greyfriars Bobby was a Skye Terrier known to have spent fourteen years guarding the grave of his owner. This remarkable demonstration of loyalty caused him to be the subject of countless books and even movies. To this day, thousands of tourists visit Bobby's monument and pay homage to his inspiring life.

In Greyfriars Bobby and the One o'clock Gun, George Robinson brings to life Bobby's inspiring story in unprecedented depth. Based on the facts and press reports published during the period, it features some of the important people that became part of Bobby's life including Colour Sergeant Scott, the Traill family who looked after and fed Bobby and Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the richest woman in the United Kingdom.

By turns heartwarming, incredible and ultimately unforgettable, Greyfriars Bobby and the One o'clock Gun is an extraordinary tale of friendship and an insightful glimpse into life in 19th century Edinburgh.

Visit his site at <http://www.bobby-oneoclockgun.com/>

Free Robert Burns Online Course!

If you've ever welcomed in the New Year with a rendition of "Auld Lang Syne" or enjoyed a whisky and haggis on 25 January, you're likely to be one of the thousands, nay millions, of fans of Robert Burns around the world.

Now you can celebrate the poems, songs, and legacy of the great Scottish poet in a new way - with this free online course from the University of Glasgow, which begins on Burns Night 2016.

Learn how an 18th-century Scottish poet became a global icon

Over three weeks, we'll introduce you to the life and works of Robert ("Rabbie" or "Robbie") Burns, exploring three core questions:

- Who was Robert Burns?
- What made Robert Burns a poetic genius?
- And what made Robert Burns a global icon?

In the process, you'll examine archive material, original publications and manuscripts by Burns himself, recordings of Burns songs and examples of objects used to commemorate the poet. You'll also look at and learn to interpret a selection of Robert Burns's works in the context of Scottish history and culture. Poems and songs covered in the course include:

- Auld Lang Syne
- To a Mouse
- To a Haggis

- Ae Fond Kiss
- A Red Red Rose
- Scots Wha Hae
- A Man's a Man for a' That
- The Vision

Setting things in a wider context, you'll also develop your understanding of Robert Burns's reputation - from the rise of Burns Clubs and Burns Suppers following his death, to the continuing celebration of the poet today through Burns Night, Hogmanay (New Year) and beyond.

Read more about this and click on the links provided to sign up at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives229.htm

Scottish Independence

Due to a wee discussion about the SNP in Scotland I decided to transfer the discussion to a special thread and am hoping we can get a real discussion going on the subject matter.

You can get to this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5005-Newsletter-discussion-11th-December-2015>

You do need to be a member to post messages but if you are not a member you can still email me to participate and I'll copy your email into the forum for you.

News from the Scottish Papers this week...

Guardian reports on mounting Scottish debt

There were a number of articles so I put them together in a thread which you can view at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/showthread.php/5006-Guardian-reports-on-mounting-Scottish-Debt>

John Swinney dodged another bullet

John Swinney will hand over the tricky job of economic forecasting to an independent body by 2017.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/bill-jamieson-john-swinney-dodged-another-bullet-1-3977781>

Sturgeon and Cameron mistletoe joke delights MSPs

The political banter provoked laughter across the political divide during the last first minister's questions of the year.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-35120539>

New social enterprises add £1.7 billion to Scotland

Scotland is a world-leading nation when it comes to social enterprise.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/business/markets-economy/new-social-enterprises-add-1-7-billion-to-scotland-1-3976519>

15,000 council jobs at risk following Scottish budget

Council leaders have warned that 15,000 local authority jobs will be lost as a result of budget cuts.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/15-000-council-jobs-at-risk-following-scottish-budget-1-3977595>

What does Curriculum for Excellence mean

How Scottish schools are performing has come under the spotlight as part of a review of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-35113801>

Independent Scotland would be entirely bankrupt

Scotland would be entirely bankrupt and probably scuttling for help had it secured independence.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/independent-scotland-would-be-entirely-bankrupt-1-3976340>

On tiny Fair Isle, a cottage industry enjoys the sweet smell of success

The Shetland island's knitwear designers are quietly pleased at the attention they won when Chanel was obliged to say sorry for copying their designs.

Read more at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/13/fair-isle-knitwear-chanel-triumph>

New Stirling-London direct train service launched

A NEW direct train service connecting Stirling and Falkirk to London will boost business and tourism.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/new-stirling-london-direct-train-service-launched-1-3975015>

Scotland still lacks key science adviser

The Scottish government is still without a chief scientific adviser, a year after the previous post-holder left the job.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-35092649>

The Scottish press is in decline could it hold an independent Scotland to account?

I thought this was an interesting article on the press in Scotland.

Read more at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/02/scottish-press-decline-hold-independent-scotland-to-account>

Record sales of electric cars in Scotland

Sales of electric cars in Scotland have reached a new record.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-35072389>

Swinney: Confused or Aiming to Confuse?

Last night (16/12/2015) on the BBC's Scotland 2015 programme John Swinney was asked why he had chosen not to use the Scottish Rate of Income Tax (SRIT) to mitigate the pressure on public spending driven by Westminster's austerity policies.

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2015/12/swinney-confused-or-aiming-to-confuse.html>

Electric Canadian

Works of Joshua Fraser, Military Chaplain

Came across this author of two interesting books which I've added to the site.

Three Months among the Moose

"A Winter's Tale" of the Northern Wilds of Canada by a Military Chaplain

and

Shanty Forest and River Life in the Backwoods of Canada (1883).

You can read these at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/joshuafraser.htm>

The Loonie is tanking

Given that the US to Canadian dollar was at parity at the start of the year we are now down to just 72 cents with forecasts saying we may dip to 69 cents due to the interest rise in the USA. Sounds like a great time for folk to take a holiday in Canada!

Electric Scotland

Snippets from the Glasgow Herald

This is the section we've created thanks to John Henderson who has gained access to their archives from 1800 to 1990.

Professor Blackie on Education

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/snippets/education/18700115.htm>

Trades is another new category added to our Snippets at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/snippets/trades/index.htm>

Colville of the Guards

By James Grant, a novel in 3 volumes published in 1885.

You can read a little about him and download this book at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/grant_james.htm

Clan Leslie Society of New Zealand & Australia

Got in the Christmas 2015 newsletter which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/leslie/index.htm>

Polka Time

A new song from John Henderson which you can get to at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/doggerel601.htm>

Bothwell Castle

The Story of Bothwell Castle by H. C. Shelley.

Preface...

The present so persistently claims our attention that we are in constant danger of forgetting altogether that past in which it has its roots; and our loss in so doing is by no means insignificant. Those students of antiquity who do not allow their interest in the past to blind them to the claims of the present are continually emphasising the continuity of all life, and protesting against the habit into which some scholars have fallen of dealing only with phases of life. This is a protest which cannot be too often repeated. The heroic days of old are as if they were not, and we deliberately blind ourselves to every vision which would make us prize more highly both our heritages and our privileges. There are many ways by which we may preserve our historical continuity, but hardly any method is likely to be so effectual as purposeful visits to those ancient castles which remain as silent witnesses of an age that has passed away.

Happily this method of preserving our touch with the past is as agreeable to most men as it is effectual. There are few people capable of resisting the fascination of an old building, especially if that building has borne a part in some of the best-remembered episodes of a nation's history. But, even apart from known historical associations, an old building, because it is old, possesses an irresistible charm, the psychology of which Mr. Ruskin analyses in his own inimitable way. "The greatest glory of a building," he says, "is not in its stones nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voice-fulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. It is in their lasting witness against men, in their quiet contrast with the transitional character of all things, in the strength which, through the lapse of seasons and times, and the decline and birth of dynasties, and the changing of the face of the earth, and of the limits of the sea, maintains its sculptured shapeliness for a time insuperable, connects forgotten and following ages with each other, and half constitutes the identity, as it concentrates the sympathy, of nations: it is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture; and it is not until a building has assumed this character, till it has been entrusted with the fame, and hallowed by -the deeds of men, till its walls have been witnesses of suffering, and its pillars rise out of the shadows of death, that its existence, more lasting as it is than that of the natural objects of the world around it, can be gifted with even so much as these possess, of language and of life."

You can read this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/historic/castles/bothwell.htm>

Picts

Added a short video about the Pictish Stones to the foot of the page at:

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

Scottish DNA & Ethnic Groups

A short video of an analysis of Scotland's genetic diversity & historical ethnic groups. Also added a video lecture on Scottish DNA - Clans, Families, and Surnames.

You can get to these at: http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/dna_project.htm

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in section 2 of the January 2016 issue which you can get to at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

Robert Burns Lives!

Free online course on Burns that the Centre for Robert Burns Studies at Glasgow University is launching in January.

Please join me in participating in this exciting cost-free study of the poems, songs, and legacy of our Bard. My personal thanks to Ronnie and Terry McGuire for providing the details below on the three-week course. It will be well worth even the busiest of us taking the time to involve ourselves. (FRS: 12.15.15)

Learn more at: http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/frank/burns_lives229.htm

Clan Wallace Society

Got in their Winter 2015 newsletter. which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/wallace/index.htm>

Burt's Letters from The North of Scotland

With Facsimiles of the Original Engravings with an Introduction by R. Jamieson and the History of Donald the Hammerer.

THE EDITOR TO THE READER

I AM apt to imagine you may be curious to know by what Means the following Letters came to my Hands, after the Space of between twenty and thirty Years.

The Gentleman in whose Possession they were, died some Time ago, and through Losses, unsuccessful Law-Suits, and other Disappointments, left his Family in none of the best of Circumstances; and, therefore you will believe I could obtain them no otherwise than by a mineral Interest.

The Person who writ them, has not set his Name to any one of them, and, it is very probable, he made Use of that Caution for Reasons given in his introductory Letter; but this is not very material, because, if I had known the Name, in all Likelihood I might have thought myself under an Obligation to conceal it.

I cannot but think the Writer has kept this Promise he made his Friend, of Writing without Prejudice or Partiality ; and this I the rather believe, because, at my first Perusal of these Letters, I met with several Facts and Descriptions, pretty nearly resembling others I had heard from Officers of the Army, and Revenue, who had been in that Part of the Country; but their Stories would have been the same, or very near it, if they had been free from the ludicrous and satirical Manner in which they were delivered.

Ill-nature will excite in its unhappy Vassals, a malignant Satisfaction to find the Truth (especially relating to Mankind) disguised in an antick Dress; and there is nothing more easy than to furnish out the Masquerade with ridiculous outward Appearances. But neither of our Correspondents seems to have been inclined that Way; for if the Person, to whom these Epistles were addressed, had been of that Troupe, there is no Doubt but the Writer, who took so much Pains for his Information, would likewise have gratified him in that Particular.

It must be owned, there are some few Strokes that savour a little of the Satyrical, but they are very few, yet just enough to shew, that if Inclination had prompted, Humour would not have been wanting; and even those few are only relating to such Vices and Vanities as might easily be reformed; and, as they are now made publick, they may serve as Admonitions to such as apply them to themselves.

What shameful Portraits have been drawn for a Highlander! I shall only mention one, and that is, in the True-born Englishman.

His Description is much more shocking than entertaining to any one who has the least Humanity. But the owner of a chaste Mind might have been well pleased to see the unknown Face divested of the odious Vizor.

It may be said--That Poem is a profest Satyr, but I even deny it to be one; for a true Satyr is too delicate to Lash with a Flail.

There be some who have made a Reproach of unavoidable Poverty, and of Customs and Methods of acting, which, (I now find) according to the Nature of the Country, and Circumstances of the Inhabitants, could not be changed for others to be more reasonable and commodious. But, far otherwise, the Writer of these Letters. lie seems to have caught at all Opportunities for Excuse, and even Commendation, and has not spared his own Country, or Countrymen, when the one deserved his Animadversion, or the other required an Acknowledgment; so far has he been from invidious Comparisons.

I must own he has likewise kept his Word in observing little Order or Method, for it plainly appears he took no Pains about either; But then that very Neglect has been the Cause of more sudden Variety, (to use his Correspondent's Phrase) and the little Stories that are scattered here and there, (I think not much known in England) serve now and then to break, as the Painter says, a too-long-continued Line of Description.

I shall say no more in Relation to his Style, than that a Nicety is seldom much regarded in familiar Epistles from Friend to Friend, especially in long Relations of Facts, or other Narrations; besides, he says himself, it would have taken up too much of his Time to smooth his Periods; and we all know that Words and Phrases will not dance into elegant order at the Sound of a Fiddle.

It may possibly be said, by some of the Northern People, that the Writer has borne too hard upon a Part of the then Inhabitants of Inverness. Of that I cannot pretend to make myself a Judge, only that, as a Reader, it does not seem to me to be so by the Tenor of his other Fetters, and particularly by his Appeal to the Officers of the Army who had been in those Quarters; and surely this he would not have done (when he might have been so easily disproved) if he was conscious of Untruths, and had the least Regard to his Friend's Opinion of his Veracity.

To conclude: If the Facts, Circumstances, and Descriptions, contained in the following Letters, are allowed to be just and genuine (as I really believe they are) may they not be given in Evidence, against such as are fond of shewing the Wantonness of Invention and Drollery, upon Objects altogether improper for that Purpose! and might not any one reasonably conclude, that such Jokers believe all Mankind to be ridiculous, who have not an Affluence of Fortune, or that entertain a Garb, or Customs different from their own, and were not born in the same Parish? And, if so, I think they themselves are the fittest Subjects of Ridicule.

I am,

The impartial Reader's
Obedient humble Servant,
THE EDITOR

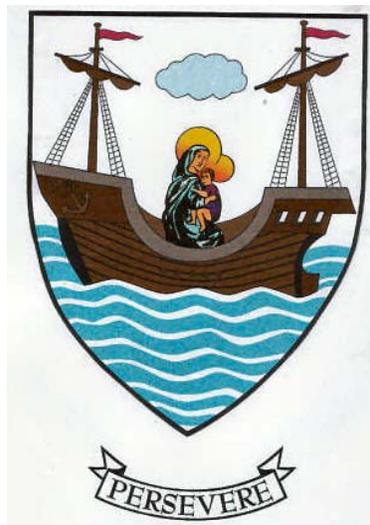
The author of the following letters (the genuineness of which has never been questioned in the country where the accuracy of his delineations may best be appreciated) is commonly understood to have been Captain Burt, an officer of engineers, who, about 1730, was sent into Scotland as a contractor, &c. The character of the work is long since decided by the general approbation of those who are most masters of the subject.

You can read this book at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/burts.htm>

THE STORY

The author of this article died last year and was also one of the founding members of the then Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA). It does show how one determined individual can make a difference!

The Leith Flag
By Alexander Wilson



Leith, ah Leith, that wee un-loved gem nestling on the shore north of your big neighbor - Edinburgh, whatever went wrong, another

forced marriage between unequal partners, sad really, history repeating itself again, isn't it ?. When did it all go wrong?.

Answer, in 1920. At long last Edinburgh got her wish and subsumed Leith into it's grasp. Leith and its proud citizens who were and are always Leithers first, and Edinburghers last, gave up the ghost and knuckled under. In all the bru-ha-ha, the one single important symbol of Leith's unique status as a newish burgh and an ancient town was lost, seemingly forever, their historic emblem, their unique flag !.

Fault can be laid at the door of the then councillors of Leith for not recognizing that in giving up their individual identity also meant losing their special flag. In the same vein, the councillors of Edinburgh, equally were deficient in not recognizing the great identifier that the Leith flag was, not only for Leith but for the city as a whole. So, in all the administrative details that had to be attended to, the flag was overlooked but not by everybody.

The crown, who have some role in these things took it upon itself to grab title to the emblem of Leith as they invoked their authority on what they regarded as a crest and therefore an heraldic symbol of Leith and it's former status as a burgh. So, since 1920 the ancient flag of Leith has been crown property and illegal to be flown over the town of Leith, or anywhere else for that matter.

This situation was felt by the writer to be unconscionable and needed re-dressing. How to go about it?. Perhaps go to source?. So a visit to the office of the Lord Lyon was in order. The Lord Lyon, the Queens representative in Scotland on such matters is a fairly formidable person to take on but after 90 years, it was time. Initially, polite but unhelpful their resistance faded when I threatened to call Lizzie to demand the flag back as clearly, she had no need for it. Suddenly, the Lord Lyon's office became more helpful. Having detailed out a mechanism as to how the flag could be retrieved for Leith the writer made his way back towards Leith mulling over the implications of the advice and how to create a mechanism as to how to potentially retrieve the return of the flag with some local involvement.

The long walk back home formulated a plan. Firstly, the pupils of Leith Academy wore a version of the Leith flag as their uniform badge, perhaps the school might be interested in supporting a campaign?.

Then, recalling that an old acquaintance was now the Deputy Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, the die was set.

Phone calls were enthusiastically received and meetings arranged. The school were in their 450th year and about to celebrate this historic anniversary later in the year, bingo!. They were all for rolling up their sleeves and supporting the writers campaign. The Deputy Lord Provost too was highly enthusiastic. Game on!.

During 2010 the following occurred. The Academy set about creating a task for their Modern Studies department to prepare a petition to be delivered to the city and upon receipt, the Deputy Lord Provost would then himself petition the office of the Lord Lyon for the return of the flag. Much more clout than the writer on his own could evoke.

June 2010 an 800 signature petition was formally received at the City Chambers, delivered by the pupils and staff of the Academy. This little ceremony was a great experience for the kids and the city laid on a small reception for them in the offices of the Deputy Lord Provost, enjoyed by all.

In some respect, that was the job done by the school but not quite.

Edinburgh, a city of great history could not be allowed to let the 450th anniversary of the school slip by unnoticed. The writer, twisting a few arms, managed to persuade the city to formally honor the school and this proposal was placed before a formal council meeting.

The city embraced the idea with enthusiasm to the extent that they elected to hold a Civic Reception for the school later that year at the main meeting room of the Council Chambers.

In the meantime, the school had to celebrate it's historic anniversary which was scheduled for October. Horror upon horrors. The writer discovered that whilst the school had it's own version of the Leith flag as their school badge, they had never ever had a flag created from it.

A quick check revealed that in providing a dispensation to the school to utilise a derivation of the Leith flag as a school badge that the dispensation also extended to the creation of a flag, something which had never been activated.

A quick proposal to the local business community via the area Business Association produced the necessary funds to provide a flag to coincide with the celebrations. So it was, that on the 450th anniversary of Leith Academy the local Business Association presented to the school in a packed Assembly Hall a stunning hand embroidered 5' x 4' flag to rapturous applause and cheering. Another job done.

The steady hand of the Deputy Lord Provost was now working with the office of the Lord Lyon to secure the return to Leith of its ancient symbol. Monies were paid and done through official channels, unlikely therefore that the Lord Lyon would ignore a formal request from the city whereas he might have summarily dismissed any approach from an impoverished private citizen.

These things move inexorably slowly. Speed is not a word used lightly in the Lord Lyon's exalted establishment. Most of 2011 has

passed as the Lord Lyon considers the request. This time however has not been wasted. The potential return of the properly entitled Flag of the Port of Leith has created many opportunities for a complete re-branding of Leith as a destination within the great historic city of Edinburgh itself a World Heritage site but sadly, for the moment, excluding Leith. Hopefully in time, all that will change, if the writer gets his way !!!.

The whole business community in Leith can see the advantages for Leith in re-identifying itself with it's own symbol. This is not something exclusive to the business community for the flag is for all Leithers not just one section of the town.

A revived sense of community, a re-establishment of local pride and a one up for Leith for so long denied even that by it's larger neighbor is so long overdue. This one action, the return of the flag is the one galvanizing element that has been missing for all these long 90 years and hopefully, soon, it will make a triumphal return to the Port of Leith and it's environs where it can be celebrated with pride and visited by tourists and locals alike keen to understand the highly significant symbol that has been Leith's for nearly 950 years. Who can deny us this history?

The Flag of the Port of Leith is thought to have arrived in Leith in the middle of the 11th century. The flag is not Scottish, far from it and the flag does not depict what people believe it does, that is a whole other story which, if this little expose excites you can be the subject of another article. Save to say that the flag of Leith predates the Saltire, probably by several hundred years although the Saltire was extant at the time of arrival in Leith of what was to become, its adopted flag.

Another article by the same author "A Potted History of the Flag of the Port of Leith" can be read at: http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/leith_flag2.htm

I also noticed I had no videos up about Leith so created a page where I put a few up which you can view at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/History/leith/videos.htm>

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

There will be another newsletter next week but as it will be Christmas Eve when it goes out and you might not have time to read it I thought I'd wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Alastair