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BUSINESS
CHILDREN'S STORIES
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DONNA'S PAGE
ELECTRICSCOTLAND.NET
FAMOUS SCOTS
FAMILYTREE
FORUMS
FOOD & DRINK
GAMES

GAZETTEER
GENEOLOGY
HISTORIC PLACES
HISTORY
HUMOR
JOHN'S PAGE
KIDS
LIFESTYLE
MUSIC

NEWSLETTER
PICTURES
POETRY
POSTCARDS
RELIGION
ROBERT BURNS
SCOTS IRISH
SCOTS REGIMENTS
SERVICES

SHOPPING
SONGS
SPORT
SCOTS DIASPORA
TARTANS
TRAVEL
TRIVIA
VIDEOS
WHATS NEW

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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for February 5th, 2021

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

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

Electric Scotland News

Reached my three score years and ten on Sunday 31st so a bit of a landmark event as they say in the Bible that is the age we should reach. So now it's a lottery on how much longer I'll make it. Given that the Scots are now only living to 61 years as healthy living men and women guess we'll have to see.

I decided I'd celebrate this event with another entry in my Canadian Journal...

Report for January 2021

A wee summary of the state of play after the first month of 2021 and the early roll out of the vaccines which I've added to my Canadian Journal.

Read this at: http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add5.htm

KING WILLIAM AND THE "THUMBIKINS."

"I have heard," said King William, to Principal Carstairs, "that you were tortured with something they call 'thumbikins;' pray what sort of instrument of torture is it?"

"I will show it you," replied Carstairs, "the next time I have the honour to wait upon your Majesty."

The Principal was as good as his word. "I must try them," said the King. "I must put in my thumbs here — now, Principal, turn the screw. Oh! not so gently—another turn—another — stop! stop! no more. Another turn, I'm afraid, would make me confess anything." — Statistical Account.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page where we list news from the past 1-2 weeks. I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland and world news stories that can affect Scotland and as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines it becomes a good resource. I might also add that in a number of newspapers you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish which I do myself from time to time.

There are a huge number of stories this week on the continuing breakdown in the EU over the vaccine chaos. Speculation about Sweden and Italy leaving the EU and even Germany as a new chancellor is due to be appointed later this year. France is also coming under pressure to leave the EU with the right wing looking to possibly take control after the elections next year. All kinds of speculations going on.

Continued spats on Brexit with the EU still trying to punish Britain for daring to leave and at the same time seeming to be doing very well as a result.

On top of all that the US is coming under huge pressure from China and Iran and also at odds with the EU where they are doing deals with China against the US interests. I just hope Biden is strong enough to handle all this.

Also a lot of anti-Sturgeon rhetoric although you'd never know it if you just read the main Scottish newspapers.

I have covered all of that in our main ScotNews Feed at: <https://electricScotland.com/scotnews.htm> but have decided not to cover this in our newsletter this week.

Brexit Britain to join £9 TRILLION free trade area in devastating blow to EU.
BRITAIN is set to cash in on one of the world's biggest trade deals as it formally opens its application to join the massive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1391319/brexit-news-boris-johnson-eu-latest-trade-deal-trans-pacific-partnership-tpp>

National Trust used £100,000 of public money to fund campaign ATTACKING Britain
A CONTROVERSIAL study by the National Trust which besmirched British history was partly funded with almost £100,000 of Lottery money, it has been revealed.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1391227/national-trust-lottery-lotto-arts-council-colonial-countryside-project>

Global Britain is taking shape
The caricature of Brexiteers as inward-looking nationalists has never looked more misplaced

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/from-cptpp-to-welcoming-the-hongkongers-global-britain-is-taking-shape>

How authoritarian is the SNP's rule in Scotland?
By Jill Stephenson in Think Scotland

Read more at:

https://www.thinkscotland.org/todays-thinking/articles.html?read_full=14428

The SNP's creation of a single state police force has failed us
By Max Young in Think Scotland

Read more at:

https://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=14427

By how much will we gain by choosing our own vaccination programme, not the EU's? Let's start at £100 billion.

I've been looking at the Office for Budget Responsibility's data, and comparing the vaccination trajectories of the UK and EU. And it is possible that our decision to go it alone will be one of the most economically beneficial decisions any government has ever made - with the £12 billion the UK is reportedly spending on vaccines delivering a potential return by the end of 2021 in the hundreds of billions of pounds.

Read more at:

<https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2021/02/jethro-elsden-by-how-much-will-we-gain-by-choosing-our-own-vaccination-programme-not-the-eus-lets-start-at-100-billion.html>

Denaming David Hume
By T M Devine in the Scottish Review

Read more at:

<https://www.scottishreview.net/TomDevine556a.html>

I could easily have been Jamie and Jamie could easily have been me
MSP Miles Briggs on the childhood friend lost in Scotland's drugs maelstrom

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/i-could-easily-have-been-jamie-and-jamie-could-easily-have-been-me-msp-miles-briggs-on-the->

[childhood-friend-lost-in-scotlands-drugs-maelstrom/](#)

There's much to celebrate in Sir John A. Macdonald's legacy
Macdonald ended Canada's colonial status and was the benign and democratically elevated patriarch of the country he chiefly founded, including all of its races and ethnicities

Read more at:

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/conrad-black-theres-much-to-celebrate-in-sir-john-a-macdonalds-legacy>

Sorry Merkel! Cadbury to move Dairy Milk plant from Germany back to UK - £15m investment
While the move will create no new jobs, the relocation of production will be viewed as a boost for Brexit Britain and proof companies won't relocate en masse to the continent now the UK is out of the single market.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1393462/brexit-news-cadbury-plant-germany-uk-bournville-dairy-milk-plant-uk-economy>

Stonehenge's extraordinary secrets exposed after scan breakthrough
The ancient stone arrangement found in the fields of Wiltshire dates back more than 5,000 years and continues to baffle researchers.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1389630/stonehenge-breakthrough-scan-wiltshire-neolithic-britain-archaeology-stone-age-find-spt>

Huge potential in India: UK closes in on £100billion trade deal as minister arrives
BREXIT Britain is closing in on a bumper trade deal with India - with Liz Truss arriving there today for talks aimed at sealing an agreement which experts estimate could be worth as much as £100billion.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1393457/brexit-news-india-trade-deal-uk-liz-truss-boris-johnson-cptpp-eu>

Sturgeon shamed for failing to deploy 100% of Brexit funds to help Scottish fishermen
NICOLA STURGEON has been exposed for failing to spend 100 percent of the Brexit funds she received from the UK Government to help Scottish fishermen with any teething issues.

Read more at:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1393506/nicola-sturgeon-brexit-news-douglas-ross-scottish-independence-indyref2-latest-vn>

More than 2,000 items head to auction following 'clear out' of Highland castle
More than 2,000 individual items will go up for sale at Bonhams auction in April after the attics and cellars of Dunrobin Castle in Sutherland were opened up for the first time in many years.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/more-2000-items-head-auction-following-clear-out-highland-castle-3123013>

Bank of England: Economy to rebound strongly due to vaccine
The UK's rapid Covid-19 vaccination programme will help the economy bounce back strongly this year, according to the Bank of England.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-55934405>

Electric Canadian

My Dogs in the Northland
By Egerton R. Young (1902) (pdf)

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/mydogsinnorthlan.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday morning - 31st January 2021

By the Rev. Nola Crewe.

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/25952-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-31st-january-2021>

Fur-Farming in Canada

By J. Walter Jones. B.S.A. (1913) (pdf)

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/agriculture/furfarmingincana.pdf>

Canada: As I remember it, and as it is

By the Rev. Donald Fraser, D.D. (1876) (pdf)

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/canadaasirememberit.pdf>

Electric Scotland

Skye Stories: Volume 1 The Linicro Years

By Raymond Moore

I purchased this book and really enjoyed it. The Kindle edition is available now and the paperback will be available shortly and can be pre-ordered at Amazon. For further information see: <https://electricscotland.com/history/skye/Linicro.htm>

Alexander Hall & Co. Shipbuilders, FootDee, Aberdeen. The 1860's Boom to Bust.

A new book in the series from Stan Bruce which is the 14th book with I'm told 3 more to come.

You can read this one at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/aberdeen/1860s-Alexander-Hall-BRUCE.pdf>

and the whole series can be read at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/aberdeen/aberdeenshipbuilding.htm>

Queen Elizabeth and Her Times

A series of original letters selected from the inedited private correspondence of the Lord Treasurer Burghley, the Earl of Leicester, the Secretaries Walsingham and Smith, Sir Christopher Hatton and most of the distinguished persons of the period edited by Thomas Wright, M.A., FSA. &c. of Trinity College, Cambridge, in two volumes (1838)

You can get to these at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/england/queenelizabeth.htm>

Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII

Selection of Dispatches written by the Venetian Ambassador, Sebastian Giustinian, and addressed to the Signatory of Venice, January 12th, 1515 to July 26th, 1519. Translated by Rawdon Brown in two volumes (1854)

THE archives of Venice, as might be anticipated from the nature of her ancient institutions, are singularly rich in the materials of history: the machinery of a republican government, whose executive committees kept minutes of their proceedings, and whose legislative assemblies required numerous reports for their information, had the effect of rapidly multiplying State papers.

The department of foreign affairs possesses unusually ample documents. The ambassadors of the Republic kept up a double correspondence with the Doge (to whom, by official etiquette, all their communications were addressed): the ordinary and ostensible despatches were intended for the information of the College and Senate, while the more secret and confidential were reserved for the Doge and the Council of Ten.

When you load these volumes do a search for "Scotland" and "Scotch" and you'll find quite a few entries.

You can get to these volumes at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/england/fouryears.htm>

Musings of a Tank Commander

Part 25 Medals, Mark Urban and the Man from Oz

You can read this and other chapters in the series at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/tank/index.htm>

Story

A Summer in Skye
by Alexander Smith

Introduction

IT may seem a bold thing to say that the memory of Alexander Smith is kept green by one book, but who that knows dare contradict? Nobody nowadays lingers over the florid passages of the once belauded *A Life Drama*, a poem which some were wont in the first flush of enthusiasm to place alongside of Keats' best work. And what shall we say of *Dreamthorp* — that delightful volume of essays, the reading of which marked an era in the career of many a young writer of a former generation? It, too, has fallen on ill-fated days, though its admirers are admittedly much more numerous than those of *A Life Drama*. But, be the state of our literary education what it may, most of us are unswervingly loyal to *A Summer in Skye*.

Forty-seven years have passed since that charming book was first published, but it is still read and re-read with much of the old zest. One might almost say of *A Summer in Skye* what Smith so finely said of Edinburgh, "Nothing can stale its infinite variety." It is still along its own lines incomparably the best book on the subject. It still captivates heart and imagination, still sends hundreds every year "over the sea to Skye." Indeed, any tolerably well-educated person would as soon think of visiting Palestine without an intimate knowledge of the Bible as of visiting Skye without having read Smith's classic. It is only the language of sober fact to say that *A Summer in Skye* has done for the misty Hebridean isle what Scott's *Lady of the Lake* has done for the Trossachs, which is saying much. No Skye hotel-keeper or shop-keeper needs to be told that Smith's book has been long one of his most valuable assets.

And yet, strange to say, the book that is most deeply imbued with the "spiritual atmosphere" of Skye—that sense of unfathomable mystery which seems to brood over the place, was written by one who was not a Skyeman, not even a Highlander. Smith was a Lowlander, born and bred, though, if the whole truth be told, his affinities, mental and moral, were rather with the men of the north. In him dwelt the Celtic imagination, and in his heart burned Celtic fires. It was late, however, in his comparatively short life ere these characteristics were fully matured. What hastened their ripening more than anything else was his happy marriage, in 1857, to a Skye lady, Flora Macdonald by name, and a blood relation of the renowned protectress of Prince Charles Edward. From that time till his death, ten years later, Smith's love of Highlanders and things Highland amounted to infatuation. Skye became to him the dearest spot on earth. It braced his powers of thought and action, it enriched his poetic fancy, it warmed his heart. The romance and glamour of the "misty isle" became a permanent intellectual possession, and in *A Summer in Skye* we have the true genius loci of the island delineated by an unerring hand.

Let it be said at once that *A Summer in Skye* is not a guide-book summing up the hasty impressions of a scribbling hireling. It is not a colourless and fragmentary account of the people and history of Skye compiled in the interest of the tourist who only scampers through the island. It is something infinitely better—the outcome, one may say, of a unique combination of gifts and circumstances. The book may fitly be described as a prose poem—an idealisation of those aspects of Skye life, scenery, and history which appeal to the poetical and historical imagination. Smith is anything but systematic in the treatment of his theme. He wanders about and descants upon many subjects which have a very remote connection with Skye. For one thing, he is in no hurry, as he himself avows, to take us there. Nearly a hundred pages are taken up with painting a picture of historical, literary, and social Edinburgh; but what a picture! No more fascinating description of Scotland's capital has ever been penned, and, in saying this, I do not, of course, forget Robert Louis Stevenson. Yes, Smith is discursive, but then we welcome discursiveness in an author who is always interesting, always full of life and colour, never obscure. Smith has the vigilant eye, the hearing ear, and the understanding heart, and how well he employs all three! Then, that bewitching style which carries you on in spite of yourself, who that has felt its spell can ever forget it? Smith was, indeed, a stylist of a high order, and the proof of it is nowhere shown more convincingly than in *A Summer in Skye*.

It is axiomatic that no one will discover the fascination of Skye who is devoid of the imaginative faculty and the historic sense. There is an indescribable charm about the isle of which the matter-of-fact, garrulous tourist knows nothing, and can know nothing. You cannot "do" Skye as you would "do" the sights of London or Paris. It is an inviolable condition that heart and mind must be attuned to the spirit of the place. Remember what a visit to this Hebridean isle means. "To visit Skye," says Smith with truth, "is to make a progress into 'the dark backward and abysm of time.' You turn your back on the present, and walk into antiquity. You see everything in the light of Ossian, as in the light of a mournful sunset." And as you read *A Summer in Skye* this impression is always uppermost. In a language and imagery of singular vividness Smith visualises, as far as this can be done through the medium of words, those features of Skye life and scenery which constitute its subtle and mysterious charm.

Furthermore, Smith shows in many a fascinating page how the wild grandeur and weirdness of Skye mountain, loch, and glen have left an indelible impress upon the character of the islanders. As Smith viewed the "monstrous peak" of Blaavin where the eagle has its eyrie, or traversed the solitary Glen Sligachan, or looked into the dark waters of Loch Coruisk, or gazed upon the awesome surroundings of this, the dreariest of Scottish lochs, there arose within him a haunting sense of the littleness and transitoriness of human life, and of its inscrutable mystery. And from many points of view he makes clear the intimate relationship subsisting

between the prevailing austerity of the physical features of the island, and the sombre and superstitious note to be found in the typical Skye man. No doubt, the changes of the last forty years have blunted the keen edge of Smith's narrative, but when all allowances have been made, Skye remains substantially the same. However much the outward aspect of things may change, the romance and glamour do not, cannot pass away. Skye is still a region of hoary tradition, of Ossianic legend, of ghosts and fairies, and of the weirdly supernatural. Round the peat fire of a winter evening, you may still hear tales "full of witches and wizards; of great wild giants crying out, 'Hiv! Haw Hoagraich! It is a drink of thy blood that quenches my thirst this night'; of wonderful castles with turrets and banqueting halls; of magic spells, and the souls of men and women dolefully imprisoned in shapes of beast and bird."

All this enchantment is artistically reflected in the pages of *A Summer in Skye*. That the average Skye man, a generation ago, was amazingly superstitious, is patent to all who have read Father M'Crimmon's story, surely one of the most perfect examples of the literature of the second sight. No one after perusing that eerie tale can have any difficulty in appreciating Smith's remark that "it is almost as perilous to doubt the existence of a Skye man's ghost, as to doubt the existence of a Skye man's ancestor."

For deep and sympathetic insight, Smith's sketches of Skye character are unsurpassed. A keen observer of the islanders, both at work and at play, he has set forth their outstanding traits in a series of masterly portraits. How sharply does the venerable form of Mr M'Ian stand out before us! Then there is Father M'Crimmon, "the gaunt, solemn-voiced, melancholy-eyed" priest who believed in the existence of ghosts, just as he believed in the existence of America; and John Kelly, the taciturn shepherd whose performances in the consumption of strong drink amazed everybody, and probably himself; and Lachlan Roy, who knew "the points of a sheep or a stirk as well as any man in the island"; and the phlegmatic Angus-with-the-dogs, ever a lover of the canine species, "the sworn foe of polecats, foxes, and ravens," and "an authority on rifles and fowling-pieces."

And if we turn from individual to social life, what a wonderfully vivid picture is that of the uproarious scene in Mr M'Ian's kitchen on the winter evening when the farm lads and lassies "dashed into the whirlwind of the reel of Hoolichan and M'Ian clapped his hands and shouted, and the stranger was forced to mount the dresser to get out of the way of whirling kilt and tempestuous petticoat." There is an undercurrent of sadness in the Skye man, but there are times when he gives rein to mirth and jollity like the rest of us; and it is a merit of Smith that he depicts the one side with as much fidelity as the other.

A Summer in Skye is full of piquant descriptions of humble life, and of customs that have now practically died out. The account of the patriarchal relations which subsisted between Mr M'Ian and his tenants, and the pen portrait of the landlord who was not only landlord but leech, lawyer, and divine as well, are among the most delightful things in the book. One can hardly imagine that such primitive social conditions should have prevailed in our midst so recently, but prevail they did. Smith, by the way, does not bemoan the lot of the Skye cottar. In their turfen dwellings, "amid surgings of blue smoke," he found health, contentment, piety, and industry. "Depend upon it," he says, "there are worse odours than peat-smoke, worse next-door neighbours than a cow or a brood of poultry."

Again, who can fail to be impressed by the realism of the description of Broadford Fair? How skilfully every detail is brought within the range of the mental vision! As we read we seem to see those hardy Skye farmers assembled on the moorland, with the Cuchullins standing like silent sentinels in the background, and the far-stretching waters of Broadford Bay in front. There they are, those brawny men, with their cattle, and their sheep, and their horses, bargaining and discussing the news of the island since last they forgathered, their voices, stentorian though they are, almost drowned by the bellowing of animals, and the general bustle and commotion. But why attempt to recall a scene which is engraven on the memory of every admirer of *A Summer in Skye*, unless it be to enlist the interest of those who have never read that charming book?

No one could desire a more competent or enthusiastic guide to what is of literary and historical interest in Skye than Smith. To him, the pleasantest of all Hebridean associations was the visit of Dr Johnson and James Boswell. When attending Broadford Fair he must needs leave the hubbub for a time and view the ruins of Corachatachin House in the vicinity. Arrived at the spot, he recalls the "debauch held therein a hundred years ago by a dead Boswell and young Highland bloods." Deeply moved he is, too, by the ruin of the old house of Kingsburgh, to which on a memorable occasion came Flora Macdonald and the fugitive Prince Charles arrayed in female attire. Kilmuir churchyard, in an unkempt grave of which lie the remains of the heroic Flora, stirs poignant feelings. "Skye," he exclaims, "has only one historical grave to dress—and she leaves it so." But it is when he gazes upon the castle of Dunvegan, hallowed by the memories of a thousand years, that his historical imagination gets full play. And yet the sight of this ancient home of the Chief of the Macleods is not wholly an unmixed pleasure, for every step he takes within its spacious rooms seems to startle a ghost. A sense of fear creeps over him which reaches its climax in the Fairy Room, where he cannot laugh lest he should hear strange echoes as if something mocked him.

Smith was passionately fond of Skye scenery, and he has sung its praises in many a purple passage. He is rapturous over the magnificent view from the top of the fantastically-shaped Quirang. The pyramidal rocks known as Macleod's Tables fascinate him no less, and give rise to moralisings on the paltriness of modern wealth compared to an old inheritance of land "which is patent to the eye, which bears your name, around which legends gather." He surveys Loch Coruisk, "the most savage scene of desolation in Britain," with fear and trembling. As for the glories of the Cuchullins, in sunshine and in shadow, who has painted them half so effectively as Smith? And who that has spent a day in wild Glen Sligachan, that veritable *via dolorosa*, can fail to appreciate the

force of Smith's impression? I cannot refrain from quoting a portion:

"In Glen Sligachan . . . the scenery curiously repels you, and drives you in on yourself. You have a quickened sense of your own individuality. The enormous bulks, their gradual recedings to invisible crests, their utter movelessness, their austere silence, daunt you. You are conscious of their presence, and you hardly care to speak lest you be overheard. You can't laugh. You would not crack a joke for the world. Glen Sligachan would be the place to do a little bit of self-examination in."

We lay down *A Summer in Skye* with unfeigned regret. It is a book which lives long in the memory. No one who has watched the mists settle on Blaavin, who has paced the lonely ridges of the Cuchullins, who has trembled at the sight of dark Coruisk, who has felt the eeriness of Glen Sligachan, who has listened to the noise of many waters below hoary Dunvegan, can fail to appreciate its intrinsic worth.

You can read this book at: <https://electricscotland.com/history/skye/> where you can also read other books on Skye and also see lots of pictures and videos of the Island.

END

And that's it for this week and hope you all have a great weekend.

Alastair