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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 1st, 2025

Electric Scotland News

Scotland's political orphanage

We need to start thinking of a republican front of progressives at Holyrood to run the country and deliver that all-elusive change by David Gow Jul 29, 2025

"We are on the precipice of a new global age and that demands a bold new path for Scotland," proclaimed the First Minister. "Others speak glibly of a new direction or for the need for reform, but the change Scotland needs is more fundamental...To meet the challenges of this new age, we need a Scotland that is reborn." (John Swinney, The National).

The Holyrood elections are just over nine months away or easily long enough for Labour's declining fortunes at UK and Scottish level to get worse; Rachel Reeves's Autumn Budget could put paid to her party's dwindling hopes of recovery while accelerating stagflation and exposing her government to the mercies of the unforgiving bond market. Fertile ground for the SNP to boost its electoral support in Scotland – and for Reform UK to catch up in Scotland on its performance so far south of the border.

What we know so far about the SNP's vision of a reborn Scotland is pretty slim pickings. Swinney's three-pronged approach is axed around, yet again, independence after focussing for the past year on cost-of-living crisis (with his lieutenants going for Labour's alleged hypocrisy, treachery, lying, shame, betrayal...). Now he's talking about independence as a sweet alternative to a "broken" Britain, aiming to win over a million young people (who could not vote in 2014) and others; as the right to self-determination now stolen from Scots; and as deliverable only by the SNP despite polling showing a sizeable gap between popular support for independence (often over 50%) and that for his party (30-odd%).

This is such a venerable approach over the past decade it has verdigris on it. Worse, the future vision could have been peddled by Harold Wilson 60 years ago (modernisation and the like). Not only has the SNP had 18 years to deliver more than baby boxes and the child payment in the form of reformed health and education systems delivering better health outcomes and attainment, especially for disadvantaged children, and a more dynamic, productive economic and business environment. Despite almost a dozen Scottish Government papers on key issues raised by independence, now discontinued and discarded, we're no nearer discovering how a SNP-led independent country would (like to) perform economically, socially, fiscally than we were ten years ago. Indy remains a leap in the dark.

What choice for 'progressives'?

This liberal left ancien combattant can only feel as if living in a political orphanage called Scotland. It's not just that the SNP is failing to deliver "the change we need," it's that it's boring, vision-less, intellectually vapid, policy-lite...It presides over the parochialisation of our country and society. Its latest external policy démarche – closing

down Scotland Europa in Brussels, the country's window on the EU, after some 30 years – speaks volumes. This is a government that proclaims it is wedded to "dynamic alignment" with Europe but is absenting itself.

On current form, the SNP will be unable – constitutionally and legally – to deliver independence nor independence in Europe. The Scottish Greens, its leadership in some disarray, is more interested in identity politics above all else (but commands as much as 15% on the regional list and could win up to 15/16 seats according to polls of polls). I remain as much in the dark about what the Scottish LibDems really stand for in the run-up to Holyrood 2026 as I did when I came back to live here a dozen years ago. Scottish Labour, hobbled by its supine subservience to Starmer's failing government, needs to "grow a pair" over the next few months and assert a policy programme that works for Scotland. (That's a story for another day – as is Corbyn/Sultana's proposed answer to Die Linke).

Like many of my ilk, my main focus is to "stop" Farage's Reform UK which is leading south of the border and could, on current showing, win in Wales next May. Here in Scotland, it is polling considerably below its levels in England where its relentless anti-immigration stance pays off among both disenchanted Conservative and Labour voters at, say, 16%. It would be self-deluding to think that's because we're significantly more pro-immigrant/anti-racist (though we are somewhat) and it's a moot question whether Reform can seize on Labour's failures and the SNP's failings to take substantial votes from the latter.

The net effect for me is a profound sense of frustration with the Scottish polity and a growing belief, shared with some others, that *faute de mieux* a popular front-style government - on the lines of the French republican front in the 2024 national assembly elections - at Holyrood would be the most desirable outcome. An even more protracted stay in Scotland's political orphanage is unpalatable.

LiveMemory™ Brings Your Photos to Life, Now with Fun New Effects and Improved AI Technology

We've added 11 creative new effects to the feature that turns your family photos into short, animated video clips. From Selfie with Lincoln to Deep-sea Diver and Synchronized Dance, these additions bring even more personality and fun to your old family snapshots. Plus, the AI tech behind LiveMemory™ has been upgraded, so the animations now look more lifelike and stay truer to facial features.

Read more at:

<https://blog.myheritage.com/2025/07/livememory-brings-your-photos-to-life-now-with-fun-new-effects-and-improved-ai-technology>

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland and world news stories that can affect Scotland and as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on search engines it becomes a good resource. I might also add that in a number of newspapers you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish which I do myself from time to time.

Here is what caught my eye this week...

Trump is taking AI seriously - why aren't we?

This week, the US launched its AI Action Plan. What a contrast to the UK. Technology Secretary Peter Kyle thinks we may be four years from artificial general intelligence - which would turn the computational infrastructure powering AI into the world's most valuable currency. Let's start acting like we mean it.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/trump-is-taking-ai-seriously-why-arent-we>

Carved stone head could be more than 900 years old

An intricately-carved sandstone head which could be more than 900 years old has been found on the Orkney island of Rousay.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c98j8rg1ejpo>

Are 7,000 steps a day enough to see health benefits?

Scientists also discovered that walking around 4,000 steps a day still offers more health benefits than people with very low activity and about 2,000 steps a day.

Read more at:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/7000-daily-steps-reduce-chronic-disease-risk-walking-health-benefits>

Historic Scottish golf club to open new course and clubhouse

A Scottish golf club dating back more than 400 years is to open a new clubhouse and course. The move comes as the jewel in the crown course is seeing a record-breaking surge in international demand and advance bookings. Royal Dornoch Golf Club in Sutherland is consistently ranked among the world's finest golf courses, and is now forecasting a 30 per cent rise in advance bookings for the 2026 season compared to the same period last year.

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/03blB#selection-1697.3-1725.202>

Criminal offence warning letters written to 3,500 Scottish crofters

Crofters could be fined for not confirming they live local and work the land.

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/kLiyD>

When the state is afraid of its people, speech becomes a crime

Just as ThinkScotland published my piece Scotland 2025: The End of Delusion, The Start of Recovery, a document exposing the moral bankruptcy of a regime that governs by euphemism and spin, the Daily Telegraph revealed how Whitehall had conceived its latest innovation in self-parody - the National Internet Intelligence Investigations Team.

Read more at:

<https://substack.com/inbox/post/169725002>

One of world's largest offshore wind farms approved

One of the world's largest offshore wind farms has been approved by the Scottish government despite concerns from conservationists that it could kill tens of thousands of seabirds. The Berwick Bank project - to be positioned 23 miles off the east coast in the North Sea - could generate enough electricity to meet the annual energy needs of every household in Scotland twice over.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c74dxm1jzp8o>

Meet the head chef at one of Scotland's most romantic restaurants

Michael Leathley is head chef at The Pierhouse Hotel and Seafood Restaurant in Port Appin. He was awarded

Scotland's 'Chef of the Year' at the 'National Hotels of the Year Scotland Awards' 2025, where The Pierhouse also picked up an accolade for Scotland's 'Romantic Restaurant of the Year.'

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/4WgYl#selection-1459.0-1459.65>

Electric Canadian

My Canadian Experience

Continuing to update my July 2025 entry.

Mind that while I have a lot of videos you can also fast forward when playing them. You can read my entry for July 2025 at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add23.htm

The Beauty, History, Romance and Mystery of the Canadian Lake Region
New and Enlarged Edition by Wilfred Campbell (1914) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/ontario/canadianlakereg00campuoft.pdf>

The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia - A Socio-cultural Inquiry

A study prepared for the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia by Donna Winslow (1997) (pdf)

You can read this report at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/Canadian-Airborne-Regiment-in-Somalia.pdf>

A Compendious History of the Northern part of the Province of New Brunswick
and of the District of Gaspé in Lower Canada by Robert Cooney (1896) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/nb/compendioushisto00coon.pdf>

Forty Years Among the Telugus

A History of the Mission of the Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, Canada, to the Telugus, South India, 1867-1907
by Rev. John Craig, B.A. (1908) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/Forty-Years-Among-the-Telugus.pdf>

Handbook of Polar Discoveries

By A. W. Greely, Brigadier-General, United States Army, Chief Signal Officer of the Army, fifth edition (1910) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/nwt/handbookpolardi00gree.pdf>

Coins Struck in Canada previous to 1840

Read before the Congres International de Nomismatique by M. Robert Wallace McLachlan (1892) (pdf)

You can read this lecture at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/lifestyle/coinsstruckincan00mcla.pdf>

Pioneer Laymen of North America
By The Rev. T. J. Campbell, S. J. in two volumes (1915)

You can read these volumes at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/Religion/pioneer-laymen.htm>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - 2025 July 27 - Time
By The Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/Thoughts%20on%20a%20Sunday%20Morning%20-%202025%20July%2027%20-%20Time>

Suzy Lake
Life & Work by Erin Silver (2021) (pdf)

You can learn about her at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/Art-Canada-Institute-Suzy-Lake.pdf>

Gershow Iskowitz
Life a Work By Ihor Holubizky (2019) (pdf)

You can learn more about him at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/art-canada-institute-gershon-iskowitz-life-and-work-art-book.pdf>

The Beaver Magazine
Added No. 2 Outfit 259 September 1928 (pdf)

You can read this issue at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/TheBeaverSeptember1928.pdf>

Electric Scotland

A History of British Fishes
By William Yarrell, F.L.S., V.P.Z.S., Third Edition edited by Sir John Richardson, C.B., in two volumes (1859)

You can read these volumes at:
<https://electricScotland.com/history/sport/britishfishes.htm>

Scotland 2025: the end of delusion, the start of recovery?
First written and published for ThinkScotland.org by Annemarie Ward Jul 30, 2025

You can read this article at:
<https://electricScotland.com/independence/sip/scotland2025.htm>

Portraits of Illustrious Personalities of Great Britain
Engraved from Authentic pictures in the galleries of the Nobility and the public collections of the country with biographical and historical memoirs of their lives and actions by Edmund Lodge, Esq., F.S.A., in twelve volumes (1835)

You can read all 12 volumes, and note that in Volume 1 you'll find the contents of all volumes so worth a read of volume 1 at least just to see who is featured, at:

<https://electricScotland.com/books/pdf/portraits.htm>

The Last Earl of Seaforth

A Tribute by Andrew McKenzie, a video which I added to the foot of the page at:

<https://electricScotland.com/webclans/m/mackenz2.html>

The Reay Fencibles

Or, Lord Reay's Highlanders, compiled from documents supplied by the War Office; "Musgrave's History of the Irish Rebellion of 1798", "History of the House and Clan of MacKay," and other documents by John MacKay, Hereford (1890) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/scotreg/mackay/reayfenciblesor00socigoog.pdf>

The Poetical Works of Rogers, Campbell, J. Montgomery, Lamb and Kirke White
In one volume (1836) (pdf)

You can read this volume at:

<https://electricScotland.com/poetry/po00eticalworksofrogerich.pdf>

Mary Aloysia Hardey

Religious of the Sacred Heart 1809 - 1886 with an Introduction by Mary Garvey and the Rev. Thomas Joseph Campbell, S.J. (1910) (pdf)

You can learn about her at:

https://electricScotland.com/history/america/MaryAloysiaHardey_text.pdf

Rail's Last Chance

A four-point plan to save the railways by Tony Lodge (pdf)

You can read this report at:

<https://electricScotland.com/independence/sip/cps-rails-last-chance.pdf>

The Jesuits 1534-1921

A History of the Society of Jesus from Its Foundation to the Present Time by Thomas J. Campbell, S.J. in two volumes (1921)

You can read these volumes at:

<https://electricScotland.com/bible/jesuits.htm>

The College of St. Francis Xavier

A Memorial and a Retrospect 1847-1897 (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/america/CollegeOfStFrancisXavierAMemorial.pdf>

Charles Thomas Campbell

Was a United States Army soldier, and a legislator, businessman, and town mayor (pdf)

You can learn about him at:

https://electricscotland.com/history/america/Charles_Thomas_Campbell.pdf

The Portent

A story of the Inner Vision of the Highlanders, commonly called the Second Sight, by George MacDonald (1864) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/folklore/portentstoryofin00macduoft.pdf>

The Pioneers of Morgan County

Memoirs of Noah J. Major edited by Logan Esarey, Ph. D., secretary of the Indiana Historical Survey, Indiana University (1915) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/america/pioneersofmorgan55majo.pdf>

Russia

Added 4 videos to our Russia page at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/russia/index.htm>

Story

JOTTINGS FROM THE RECORDS OF A FARMING SOCIETY IN THE COUNTY OF FORFAR, 1803-1814, UNDER THE PERPETUAL PRESIDENCY OF ITS ORIGINATOR THE CELEBRATED GEORGE DEMPSTER OF DUNNICHEN. By THE REV. CHARLES ROGERS, D.D., LL.D., F.S.A. Scot

Nearly eighty years ago, namely on the 4th July 1803, was held, under the auspices of Mr. George Dempster of Dunnichen, the initiatory meeting of "The Lunan and Vinney Water Farmer Society." Invitations had been issued to twenty-six persons, but such was Mr. Dempster's popularity, that thirty-four attended, of whom eleven were landowners. Among those who met was the Rev. James Rogers, author of the Agricultural Survey of the County, father of the present writer. On Mr. Dempster's proposal, he was chosen secretary, and the records were afterwards kept by him. It is from the Minutes which he prepared, under Mr. Dempster's approval, that these present jottings are drawn.

In the minute which records Mr. Dempster's appointment as "Perpetual Preses," that gentleman is described as possessing "the same ardour of patriotism, as when he filled a public station." [Mr. Dempster was in early friendship with David Hume, John Home, author of "Douglas," Principal William Robertson, and Dr. Adam Ferguson. He latterly associated at London with Dr. Samuel Johnson and other literary notables. He represented in Parliament the Fife and Forfar burghs from 1762 till 1790, and latterly devoted himself to agricultural pursuits. His sterling independence as a politician procured him the designation of "Honest George;" he is as such celebrated by Burns, who deemed him worthy of a title. He was an ardent and successful promoter of the Scottish Fisheries. His long career of ardent patriotism and active usefulness was terminated by death on the 13th February 1818, when he had reached his eighty-fourth year.] In opening the Society's business, he expatiated on the importance of maintaining superior breeds of cattle and horses, on the duty of extirpating weeds, on the necessity of a stern resistance to smuggling, and on the desirableness of upholding the constitution. With his cordial approval, it was arranged that the Society should assemble at least once a year, that its proceedings should be accompanied by a modest feast at 1s. 6d., afterwards 2s. 6d. a head, and that on each occasion liquor of native manufacture should be used exclusively. The only practical business of the first meeting consisted in adopting the recommendation of a committee, that no member should hire a servant without obtaining a recommendation of him from his former employer.

At the second meeting, held in July 1804, Mr Dempster invited attention to the rotation of crops; suggesting various methods, and maintaining that by a proper alternation of green and grain crops, fallowing might be dispensed with. To each member he handed a slip of rules, which he termed golden; they consisted of injunctions to keep the land rich and clean and dry, to use efficient manure, and to avoid two grain crops in succession. Poultry and hogs, he maintained, should be largely reared. The Secretary read an essay on the rearing of horses and cattle. Prior to the reign of James I., he said Alexander, Earl of Mar, imported horses from Hungary; while James I. was himself a promoter of farm stock, by introducing on his lands at Falkland a superior species of milch cows. In reference to grazing, he remarked that one of the members had recently sold farm cattle of three years old at £18 each, while another member had reaped from about an acre a quantity of red clover which produced 154 lbs. of seed. At the meetings held in August 1805, and in July 1806, Mr Dempster recommended the cultivation of Swedish turnips, and suggested that the tops of the carrot should be used in feeding milch cows. His former proposal as to the disuse of fallow ground was disapproved, it being strongly held that the land required rest at least every tenth year. It was agreed, on his recommendation, that wheat should be more extensively cultivated, and that it should be sown late in August or early in September. At the close of the meeting an indigent person, formerly a farmer, and then said to be in his 106th year, was awarded a little money.

The fifth meeting, held in August 1807, was attended with an exhibition of live stock. Various subjects were discussed. Gypsum as a manure, recommended by the Board of Agriculture, was, on the motion of the Rev. James Headrick, [This reverend gentleman was then assistant in the parish; he was ordained to the cure 11th August 1807. He had recommended himself to Mr. Dempster by his agricultural papers in the Farmer's Magazine. His best known work, "View of the Mineralogy, &c. of the Isle of Arran, entitles him to special notice. He died on the 31st March 1841, in his eighty-third year.] disapproved. Flax-raising was commended by several members, and by others styled unprofitable. The question as to whether carcasses of meat might be transmitted to distances packed in ice, was mooted and generally affirmed.

In his address to the meeting in July 1808, Mr. Dempster recommended the cultivation of vetches, to be sown in drills. The Chinese method of economising manure was explained and urged by Mr. Headrick; while the importance of draining marshes, described as "magazines of mischief," was duly maintained. At the meeting in 1809, the President remarked that he had lately been making trial of kale, with a view to its more extensive use. He regarded the sowing of spring wheat as worthy of consideration, and exhibited a sample of naked barley, resembling wheat, imported from Egypt, and commended by Sir John Sinclair. By individual members different agricultural topics were submitted for discussion. Mr. Guthrie of Craigie, an important landowner, held that the Swedish was much inferior to the yellow turnip, especially as the latter might be reared on a greater variety of soils. Mr Scott of Reswallie recommended a more general cultivation of barley, and suggested the erection in the district of woollen mills. He condemned the disuse of "the Scottish" or woollen bonnet, and hoped that at next meeting all the members would discard hats and appear bonneted. To this proposal Mr. Dempster expressed an objection. The hat, he held, was not cumbrous, as the bonnet was; it protected the face, and did not retain moisture. As to woollen manufactories, these had been established in East Lothian and elsewhere, and had failed. Manufactories of sailcloth and coarse linen, long common to the district, were, he maintained, worthy of encouragement, and no others. It was suggested that a donation should be presented to Mr. Meikle, inventor of the threshing-machine, who was represented as aged and indigent.

The Society's roll in September 1810 was seventy-four; it increased to eighty. At the anniversary then held, Mr. Dempster remarked, that sixty years ago, the district was covered with furze and broom, while bogs were to be found at every turn; now the fields were clean and well drained, roads were abundant, and wheat was largely cultivated. The establishment of local farming societies he believed was most beneficial, as they brought pleasantly together landlord and tenant, and enabled them to be mutually helpful. Respecting the destruction of weeds, a member remarked that in Strathmore, a riding committee inspected farms every summer, and, as authorised in the leases, imposed fines on those who permitted weeds to grow unchecked. Of spring wheat Mr. Guthrie expressed his disapproval; the grain was inferior, and the straw discoloured and feeble.

There was a competition among exhibitors of live stock in 1811, Mr. Dempster presenting several gold and silver medals to be used as premiums. In his presidential address, he recommended wheat-sowing in drill rather than in broadcast; suggested the use of single-horse carts, and remarked that cattle might be trained for use in the thrashing mill. These proposals were generally approved, especially the drill-sowing of wheat. But naked barley was unfavourably reported upon—a third only of the seed being found to germinate, while the grain could not be thrashed without difficulty. Some members discussed the respective merits of "Angus" and "Potato" oats, but the subject was left open.

In July 1812, the Society held its tenth anniversary. At this meeting wheat-sowing in drill was warmly commended, a member remarking that the produce of wheat sown in this manner was one-third more than under the broadcast system. At the following meeting Mr. Dempster, who had formerly congratulated the members on the general disappearance of field weeds, recommended drainage as "the most necessary of agricultural operations." He pleaded on behalf of crows, that they destroyed grub, and ought to be encouraged, a view strongly supported by Mr. Guthrie, but objected to by Mr Headrick. Fiorin grass had at a former meeting been brought under discussion; the subject was revived, and among those who took part in the discussion was Mr. John Pinkerton, the antiquary, who, being Mr. Dempster's guest, was present as an honorary member. Mr. Pinkerton remarked that Camden had referred to a field of form grass which was so fertile as to be cut four times a year.

At the Society's twelfth anniversary, held in July 1814, Mr. Dempster complimented the clergy as early promoters of agriculture. "Around the monasteries," he said, "the best soil was a garden and the worst a grave." It was remarked by a member that while the Roman Catholic clergy largely cultivated and made use of wheaten-flour, it had since the Reformation been generally disused. This sentiment was confirmed by Mr. Headrick, who stated that his father, who was a farmer in Ayrshire, had endeavoured to introduce wheaten-flour, but without success. A return to the use of oxen in tillage was suggested; the blight in barley, some held, might be prevented by pickling the seed; and the yellow turnip was unanimously ruled to be preferable to the Swedish.

The Society did not re-assemble. Having attained his eightieth year, Mr. Dempster was probably unable longer to discharge the presidential duties, and as his election was for life it may have been deemed ungracious to choose a substitute. It is even probable that Mr. Dempster believed that the object he had in view by the Society's establishment had been attained, and that little if anything remained worthy of special discussion. Perhaps these familiar notes of agricultural proceedings and speculations seventy or eighty years ago, may not be deemed, even in point of antiquarian interest, unworthy of our Society's notice.

You can learn more about George Dempster at:

https://electricScotland.com/history/other/dempster_george.htm

END.

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

Alastair