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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 29th, 2025

### Electric Scotland News

Two announcements from MyHeritage

I wanted to give you a heads up that in honor of Labor Day in the U.S., MyHeritage is opening up access to a massive collection of historical records — over 892 million U.S. and Canadian census records — completely free starting tomorrow, August 27–September 2, 2025.

Search U.S. Census records on MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-1000/census-voter-lists?location=USA>

Search Canadian Census records on MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-1000/census-voter-lists?location=Canada>

The free records include every U.S. federal census from 1790–1950, plus state censuses and Canadian national censuses. It's a great opportunity for your audience to trace the occupations of their ancestors, see where they lived, and follow how their families grew over time.

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Earlier this year we introduced Cousin Finder™, which makes it easy to discover and connect with blood relatives on MyHeritage — no DNA test required. Since launch, it's quickly become a favorite among family history enthusiasts for uncovering long-lost relatives and strengthening family connections.

I'm excited to share that there's a major update: you can now view Cousin Finder™ results not only for yourself, but for any individual in your family tree. That means you can run it for a great-grandparent, a spouse, or even a more distant relative and see their list of cousins, how they're related, and opportunities to connect.

This update makes Cousin Finder™ even more powerful:

- Discover blood relatives tied to a specific ancestor or family member
- Learn exactly how they're related to that person
- Complement DNA Matches by finding cousins who haven't tested
- Zero in on the most relevant Smart Matches™ through a simpler, more focused view

The feature is free to use, available from any profile page in the family tree, and already generating enthusiastic feedback from our users. You can read more about it on our blog at:

<https://blog.myheritage.com/2025/08/cousin-finder-now-available-for-all-individuals-in-the-family-tree/>

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...

Conrad Black: The end of Ukraine war is coming  
Only Trump can see what is needed to end the war

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/r2kYe#selection-2115.0-2115.48>

Correcting imperial myths

Distinguished biochemist Professor Kealey has made the remarkable claim that the British Empire in India 'built too few waterways because they would not be of importance to British businesspeople'. This is bad history. The truth of the matter is that the British built easily the most extensive waterways in the world at that time.

Read more at:

<https://conservativehome.com/2025/08/22/andrew-roberts-the-british-in-india-did-build-huge-waterways-and-arguing-otherwise-is-just-bad-history/>

Changing Scotland - let's start with the teachers

ON TUESDAY 11th August, Dr Stuart Waiton, at a ThinkScotland meeting, spoke of the need for our teachers to believe in civilisation if they were to educate with authority.

Read more at:

<https://thinkscotland.org/2025/08/changing-scotland-lets-start-with-the-teachers/>

Twilight at Westminster and Holyrood - now running on fumes

IF WESTMINSTER were a horse, the humane thing would be to shoot it. Holyrood? I'd send for the knackers' van before lunch. Yet we saddle them both up, point them towards the Grand National, and pretend the smell isn't coming from the stables.

Read more at:

<https://thinkscotland.org/2025/08/westminster-and-holyrood-now-running-on-fumes/>

Scottish island castle goes back on sale for £750,000

A castle on a Hebridean island has gone back on the market after a previous potential sale collapsed in a row between a millionaire businessman and a Scottish government minister. Kinloch Castle on the Isle of Rum is owned by Scottish government agency NatureScot, which also manages most of the island.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c17n170gqkqo>

Whole prehistory of Fife found in one field, experts say

Archaeologists say they have found evidence that a site in a village near St Andrews has been used by people for about 10,000 years. Traces of an ancient hunter gatherers' campsite and remains of grains harvested by some of Fife's first farmers were among items discovered on the land in Guardbridge

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwyp4vx9ydgo>

Conrad Black: B.C. Aboriginal title case underlines what's wrong with reconciliation  
Property rights are under threat

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/TVWeZ>

Significant interest in buying Skye clan castle, sellers say  
Estate agents say there has been "significant interest" in a ruined castle at the centre of a controversial land sale in Skye. Armadale Castle, its gardens – along with offices and visitor facilities - have been on the market for offers over £995,000. The sale, along with the selling off of the wider £6.7m Sleat Peninsula - historic lands of the Clan MacDonald - have been met with protests by some islanders concerned about how the land might be managed in the future.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyvkzmkd64o>

Russia is hurting badly  
Friends of Ukraine must call Vladimir Putin's bluff

Read more at:

<https://thecritic.co.uk/russia-is-hurting-badly/>

France's crisis is a warning for Reeves  
Investors have lost patience with the French state's long-standing habit of spending like Louis XIV lavishly and without restraint. The nation is now staring down a full-blown fiscal crisis. Britain should be alarmed. Things here look only marginally healthier, and if Rachel Reeves refuses to change tack, they will get much worse.

Read more at:

<https://capx.co/frances-fiscal-crisis-is-a-warning-for-rachel-reeves>

## Electric Canadian

My Canadian Experience

My August 2025 entry is work in progress and updated daily. This week covers Canadian trade and defence with Europe and also some discussions on trade with the USA and also some coverage of the Ukraine war.

You can read this at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada\\_add24.htm](http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add24.htm)

Construction

Volume 9 1916 (pdf)

Added this volume which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/construction.htm>

Proceedings of the Canadian Institute, Third Series

Volume III, 1884 - 85 (pdf)

You can read this volume at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/proceedingsofcan03cana.pdf>

The MacLean Bards

By The Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair in two volumes which I've added to the foot of his page. Poems are in Gaelic but Preface in English.

You can read these volumes at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/sinclair-alexander-maclean.htm>

The Romance of Canadian History

Edited from the Writings of Francis Parkman by Pelham Edgar, Ph.D., Holiday Edition (1902) (pdf)

You can read this edition at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/romanceofcanadia0000park.pdf>

The Stream Runs Fast

My Own Story by Nellie Letitia McClung (1945) (pdf)

You can read her story at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/The-Stream-Runs-Fast.pdf>

Thomas D'Arcy McGee

Sketch of his life and death by Fennings Taylor (1868)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/irish/Thomas-DArcy-McGee.pdf>

Canadian War Cuts & Clippings

Added US Marine Corp. 1956-4 (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/forces/clips.htm>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 24th day of August 2025 - Contemplation

By The Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26649-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-24th-day-of-august-2025-contemplation>

Twenty Years of York Factory 1694 - 1714

Jérémie's Account of Hudson Strait and Bay, translated from the French edition of 1720 with notes and introduction by R. Douglas, M. A. and J. N. Wallace, D.L.S. (1926) (pdf)

You can read this account at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/yorkfactory.pdf>

The Beaver Magazine

Added No. 2 Outfit 260 September 1929 (pdf)

You can read this issue at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/TheBeaverSeptember1929.pdf>

Electric Scotland

## Maine, A History

Centennial Edition, by Editor-in-Chief, Louis Clinton Hatch, Member of Maine Historical Society in three volumes with a fourth volume added as a biographical appendix (1919)

You can read these volumes at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/america/maine.htm>

## The Gaelic Bards

From 1411 to 1517 by the Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair (1890) (pdf)

You can read this issue at:

<https://electricscotland.com/gaelic/Gaelicbards01.pdf>

## The Gaelic Bards

From 1715 to 1765 by the Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair (1892) (pdf)

You can read this issue at:

<https://electricscotland.com/gaelic/Gaelic%20bards.pdf>

## Fun

Selected fun illustrations printed in 1866 (pdf)

You can view these illustrations at:

<https://electricscotland.com/humour/selectedillustra02lond.pdf>

## The Wild Riders of the First Kentucky Cavalry

A History of the regiment in the great war of the rebellion 1861-1865, telling of its origin and organization, etc., a description of the material of which it was composed; its rapid and severe marches, hard service, and fierce conflicts on many a bloody field by Sergeant E. Tarrant (1894) (pdf)

You can learn about their history at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/america/south/wildridersoffirs00tarr.pdf>

## Breakfast, Dinner and Supper

Edited by J. E. White, M.D., and Mrs. M. L. Wanless (1887) (pdf)

You can read these recipes at:

<https://electricscotland.com/food/breakfastdinner01whit.pdf>

## The Writings of William Paterson of Dumfriesshire

And a Citizen of London, Founder of the Bank of England, and of the Darien Colony, edited by Saxe Bannister, M.A., of Queen's College, Oxford, second edition in three volumes (1859)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/other/paterson.htm>

## Three Years of Arctic Service

An account of the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition of 1881 - 84 and the attainment of the farthest North by Adolphus W. Greely, Lieutenant U.S. Army, commanding the expedition (1894) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/america/threeyearsofarct01greeuoft.pdf>

A Scotch Answer to a Yankee Question  
By the Scotch Poetic Genius (1866) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/poetry/whyisitthatscotl00clyd.pdf>

Todd Family

Added a page for this name.

You can view this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/webclans/stoz/todd.htm>

Dunrobin Castle in Scotland

Added a video about this castle.

You can watch this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/webclans/stoz/sutherl4.htm>

## Story

This story comes from our first newsletter in 2012 which was done in pdf format and it brought back many memories so thought I'd include it here...

Economic implications of an independent Scotland  
5 April 2012, 11:38

I spotted a copy of this talk given by Alan Bain and thought I'd copy it here. This is the full text of the speech Alan Bain made to the National Tartan Day Congressional Reception, Washington DC March 28, 2012.

By Alan Bain, president of the American-Scottish Foundation: The economic implications of an independent Scotland.

Without having a clear picture as to how Scotland would position itself as an independent nation vis a vis its former partners in the British coalition and, equally importantly, would be viewed by them, it is difficult to forecast what the Political and Economic implications for the United States will be should Scotland achieve independent status.

Consequently, I have chosen to address the question by looking at any current political and economic impact that Scotland may have on the United States and have viewed the question from my own personal perspective, one that has been informed by a twenty year involvement in Scottish American activities, initially as President of the American-Scottish Foundation, and, for the past seven years, also as an investor in a globally branded Scottish textile company.

We already know that uncertainty of outcome of an independent Scotland is a concern, particularly to business which likes order and certainty. This concern is likely to increase as Unionist and Nationalist supporters battle it out in the public arena.

The damage such public battles can inflict is exemplified in current concerns of Republican Party strategists as their Party's Presidential candidates vie with one another to become the Party's choice. I would suggest that it is

the prospect of the public airing of such potentially divisive issues that is fueling the clamor for DevoMax rather than Independence.

In order to address the question before us, I submit it is essential to consider what sort of Scotland might result after achieving independence – be careful what you wish for is a saying of relevance.

The following are questions I ask myself:

\*\* How will those Scots who have opposed independence react? Will they, like their ancestors, who found themselves on the wrong side of the American independence struggle, leave or be driven out?

\*\* Where will Scotland stand in the “special relationship” that continues to exist between the U.S. and Great Britain? I think with trepidation of the “Banana Wars” scenario when Scotland was the subject of punitive congressional legislation. To indicate congress’ displeasure, import duties were imposed on Scottish products in order to encourage the U.K. government to rescind import preferences on items sourced from former U.K. colonies. I also vividly remember the public outcry and threatening letters received by ASF that followed the release of the Lockerbie bomber.

\*\* What actions might the U.S. take should an independent Scotland carry out its plan to remove Trident submarines from its waters or withdraw from NATO?

How Scotland presents these decisions to the world will, likely, be critical to its standing with the U.S. and, if not presented well, could materially diminish its influence in the world, particularly in geographic areas such as the U.S. where Scotland has long enjoyed special status.

\*\* How will Scotland stand within Europe? Even if accepted within the Union, what benefits will it enjoy? What influence will it have? The answers will, likely, establish its status here and elsewhere, again for better or worse.

\*\* Closer to home but perhaps even more pertinent, will independence be a galvanizing force for the country and its people stimulating them to capitalize on and strengthen the reputation Scotland gained while part of Great Britain?

\*\* Will independence serve to keep its best and brightest at home, rather than going south of the border or abroad as many do now?

\*\* Will Scotland, as an independent Nation, continue to attract world class talent to its Universities as it does now based on the quality of life and professional opportunities Scotland offers currently as part of a larger community?

\*\* Will independence motivate Scotland to be more aggressive in monetizing its inventiveness and creativity keeping the added value benefits in Scotland as opposed to assigning them to outsiders through licenses?

\*\* Will Scotland and its people think bigger and act more collaboratively among themselves and with others? Will they become more entrepreneurial?

\*\* Will Scotland be more encouraging and accepting of success and more tolerant and understanding of failure?

\*\* Will the Scottish people be willing to be less reliant on its government and become more self reliant?

\*\* Will Scotland’s press act more wisely and more maturely becoming a constructive rather than destructive force?



**\*\* How will Scotland view its Diaspora?**

**\*\* How will its Diaspora view Scotland?** As I can attest a real asset exists but it is not well understood, poorly served and its capabilities are underutilized.

It is dangerous to think, as many do, of an established, cohesive and influential American-Scottish community. Such a view is misguided. The opposite is more reflective of reality. Such community as exists is unconnected, independent and inward looking. For Political and Economic influence here one must look to the American Irish and Jewish communities, in particular. There are historic reasons why this is so. Scotland's history in the U.S. is very different.

Will we, American-Scots be motivated to engage politically on behalf of an independent Scotland? I have my doubts.

**\*\* How will Scotland's private sector respond to Scotland's independence and the economic policies that ensue?**

For better or worse, the answer to these questions may, if amplified locally, influence the Scottish Congressional Caucus one way or another and thereby impact the political and economic consequences of Scotland's independence here.

As an aside, one important area in which we American Scots should, organizationally as well as individually, be soliciting The Caucus' active support is in backing the establishment of The National Museum of the American People . The Museum, if brought into being, will allow the story of the Scots in America to be told in a way that we feel it deserves to be told.

I encourage those present today, who represent organizations that have not already signed up to support the establishment of the Museum, to do so right away and to find out if there are ways in which they can be politically helpful.

A more immediate visibility and revenue generating opportunity for our respective organizations lies in a recent agreement that ASF negotiated with the Disney Corporation to assist it in a national outreach to a Scottish American audience to promote its animated Scottish themed film "Brave". ASF will be reaching out to The Scottish Coalition, of which it is a founding member and currently serves as Treasurer, and to other individual American Scottish organizations around the country. Details can be found [here](#).

Success with these two programs will demonstrate our ability to act collectively and collegially; a result that will be both in our own collective interest as well as that of Scotland, whether or not an independent Nation.

Inspirational leadership with a clear vision of Scotland's role and aspirations as an independent Nation will be critical as will a resurgence of the spirit and toughness of the Scottish people and their willing acceptance not only of the responsibilities assigned them but also of the many challenges that independence will certainly bring.

Scotland has a storied history of strength achieved in adversity. If independence is what Scotland chooses, there is every hope that history will repeat itself and that Scotland will rise to the challenge.

What are the specific challenges that I have experienced from my involvement with Scotland through the American-Scottish Foundation since 1991 and through doing business there since 2005?

Insight into the challenge that Scotland currently faces in engaging with elements of its Diaspora is evidenced in the following a quote from a letter received by ASF from another American-Scottish organization in 2003 and that ASF included in its response to a Scottish Parliamentary body inquiring into "the external relation policy, strategy and activities of the Scottish Executive."



“We've been in this business a long time, have an active, growing membership of over 400 men, and are financially rather secure. We are also very American, and do not identify much with Scottish leaders. We have a hard time identifying a need for a First Secretary for Scottish affairs in Washington, to tell the truth.”

In ASF's response it also highlighted important steps that had been taken by Scotland to engage more fully with its Diaspora while, at the same time, noting issues of real concern in that context.

On a positive note the letter acknowledged Scottish:

- \*\* Recognition of Tartan Day's potential and participation therein;
- \*\* Appointment and installation in the USA of First Secretary, Scottish Affairs;
- \*\* Initiation of Scottish International Forum;
- \*\* Unification under the Scottish Executive of the responsibility to promote Scotland abroad;
- \*\* Establishment and operation of the Global Scot-Network.

But, the response also observed that: “The Scottish Executive and its agencies do not consult, coordinate or communicate adequately with Tartan Day planners in the U.S. The advent of the First Secretary's Office has resulted in a marked improvement in this regard but the Office appears under resourced given the magnitude and importance of the task.”

The improvements noted then have continued apace but the office still appears to remain under resourced to handle its continually growing task.

If the Diaspora remains a centrepiece of an independent Scotland's strategic plans, the roles of this office will require substantial thought as well as investment.

The response continued: “The Scottish Executive and its agencies engage Scottish based entities to implement its Tartan Day programming in the U.S. without mandating either that: (i) they work with the local Tartan Day organizers, or (ii) they budget for the support that they either take advantage of or require of the local American-Scottish community to be successful in markets with which they are unfamiliar.”

The above observation not only applies to Scotland's Government and its agencies but it also now, more significantly, applies to Scottish organizations and institutions of every stripe that seek to engage here, particularly to fund- and friend-raise, counting on the advice, support and introductions of the local community to further their aim.

Again, matters are improving but there is need for a clearer understanding in Scotland of the burdens being placed on American Scottish charitable organizations as a result of their desire to be responsive, most of which are underfunded without endowment and volunteer driven. This is particularly the case with ASF because of its unique transatlantic mission and active engagement and presence in and with Scotland.

\*\* As an investor, I have noted a seemingly fatalistic acceptance of disappointment and an unwillingness to fight for change against entrenched interests or traditional ways of doing business.

I have often been disturbed at a lack of ability and true commitment from governmental agencies to fulfill their mandates. This stems not from incompetence but lack of confidence, appropriate experience and training. Unless changed these attributes will be a serious impediment to the full realization of the potential benefits of

independence.

In my view the following actions need to be taken to ensure that an independent Scotland has the best chance for making an impact on the United States whether politically or economically or, indeed, in any other sphere of interest:

**\*\* Break down the silo mentality that currently pervades parliamentary and bureaucratic thinking.**

**\*\* Focus on long-term strategic goals that have bipartisan support and dedicate the human and financial resources, over the time necessary, for their achievement.**

**\*\* Motivate cross sector thinking and recognize and reward all participants in successful collaborations of all kinds.**

**\*\* Put the needs of Scotland's clients first rather than tolerate bureaucratic turf building or protection.**

**\*\* Engage with the Diaspora in a respectful and jointly beneficial way; harness its passion, energy and expertise in support of Scotland's goals and objectives.**

**\*\* Make better use of those in the Diaspora willing to mentor, advise and facilitate in their areas of expertise.**

My involvement in the textile mill and support of other efforts to sustain fragile Western Island economies leaves me with a real concern that the risk adverse, placid and unemotional nature of many Scots that I encounter will be hard to overcome, as it must be, if Scotland is to succeed as an independent nation. A cultural sea change is vital. Such a change will be challenging for a small country whose people seem to prefer the status quo and choose not to offend.

In closing, I speak of two personal experiences; the outcomes of each were radically different and the reasons for and results of that difference may well signal what kind of Scotland will result from independence and thus determine, what kind of impact it will have as an independent nation whether on this country or elsewhere.

In the first instance, ASF was collaborating with the organizers of a NY City Trade and Cultural Festival, "UK in NY". The Festival was to take place in October 2001. ASF had secured the Scottish participation.

Following 9/11 the Festival's name was changed to "UK with NY", and, regretfully, ASF's event was no longer appropriate in the immediate post 9/11 environment. We needed an alternative and quickly. Three telephone calls secured the commitment of The Regimental Band of the Coldstream Guards and The Pipes and Drums of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards to be in NY City for a four day tour of "Unity, Solace and Hope" as well as the financing to make the visit possible. At the eleventh hour, a fourth call was required to avert a visa crisis. That call secured a NATO directive for the Bands to be in the U.S. thereby obviating the need for visas.

Moral of the story – if those involved want badly enough to achieve a desired result they will, despite obstacles.

In the Second instance, ASF was a participant in "The Gathering", a key component of Scotland's Year of the Homecoming. (In the interest of full disclosure, The Gathering's organizer, Lord Sempill, is a recent addition to ASF's Board).

By any measure, other than financial for the event's organizer, the event was a rousing success. Even the reporting of Scotland's rather jaded journalists recognized this fact. Its financial contribution to both the Country and the City of Edinburgh were fulsomely and officially recognized.

The event, though, lost money and vendors were hurt. As a consequence, the organizer was pilloried in the

Press and elsewhere in the aftermath and continues to be so even as recently as this month as preparations were announced for the next Gathering in 2014. Why? What constructive purpose did and does such reporting serve? Is Lord Sempill's entrepreneurial spirit and can do attitude either not recognized or appreciated or does some other unstated editorial or other purpose exist? Sadly, I had personal experience of such an unwarranted attack in my capacity as President of ASF. I had to resort to legal action to force a retraction and to recoup my expenses!

Excuses were made why the official bodies, who do not deny the benefits received, declined to help. Little attention, sadly, has been given to the important facts of the case. It was a massive undertaking – the first of its kind. Clans from around the world returned to their ancestral home and united under their Clan banners and, together with their respective Chiefs, marched from Holyrood Palace to The Castle. – a magnificent and stirring spectacle!

The Gathering was the kind of spectacular event that the planners had reasonably expected the private sector to rally around and sponsor.

Regrettably, the unforeseen and ill timed unfolding of a global economic crisis coupled with the risk adverse nature of the Scottish psyche impacted the ability/willingness of those solicited to support the event and immediately caused it severe economic difficulties from which the event was never able to recover.

However, by every other measure, the Gathering was a resounding success. Not only is the Gathering to be repeated in 2014 in Scotland but the idea has been adopted by Ireland for 2013. Had this effort been supported, even after the fact, it might have led to a role for Scotland to provide expertise to other countries, in addition to Ireland, as they saw, or could be persuaded to see, the value of cultivating their own Diaspora.

The actual result reflects a worrisome pettiness and divisiveness to those of us, who, like myself, had found the experience so uplifting and transforming in many important and lasting ways.

Moral of the story: success has many fathers, failure is an orphan.

The lesson to be learned from it: a positive experience for Scotland and its Diaspora has been diminished and tainted by internal bickering and finger pointing and the reputation of both Scotland and of a good Scot and friend to the Diaspora has and continues to be damaged to the detriment of both. In business, I have learned the truism that you can profit more from a failure or mistake by responding openly, quickly and positively to a problem than by looking around for exculpatory excuses.

I leave you with the thought: which outcome will Independence, if achieved, provoke?

Re: Economic implications of an independent Scotland

The above article is of course from a Diaspora point of view and as it happens there was another article from A Broad Scot magazine which is also interesting as it discusses networking with the Diaspora...

Scots are web-savvy or self-deceptive?  
By Paul McCormack

Some might say that Scots invented international networking along with everything else! But despite the recent proliferation of 'Scottishness' on the internet, are we not missing the crucial point? Networking!

Whether it represents an online renaissance or a virtual gathering of the clans, Scottish themed online networking is growing at an astonishing rate. The number of groups displaying the Saltire online has grown considerably in the last five years. From commercial ventures that seek to connect Scots and those of Scottish descent in a shared sense of belonging, to government sponsored organizations that aim to further Scottish

business and culture abroad, the explosion in “Scottishness” is a phenomenon that deserves closer examination. Is today’s proliferation of Scottish themed networking unique or just a reincarnation of days gone by? Further, is it effective at advancing the Scottish brand on the world stage?

To answer some of these questions, I was privileged to speak with Billy Kay, a renowned Scottish writer and broadcaster. According to Billy, the Scottish Diaspora finding and connecting with each other in distant lands is nothing new. In his book, “The Scottish World” Kay provides many examples of Scots venturing abroad and forming networking organizations. Billy views today’s Scottish themed online networking as “a modern way for exiled groups to organize”. During our discussion he provided a fascinating overview of a chapter in his book called “A Forgotten Diaspora”. In that chapter, Billy details the migration of Scots to Poland in the 17th century and the formation of a self-help society called the “Scottish Brotherhood”. The Brotherhood, which eventually had twelve branches spread throughout the region, settled civil disputes, assessed penalties, allowed Scots to borrow excess funds, and funded local churches and the ministry. Arguably, the Brotherhood provides an early example of a Scottish networking at its finest.

Billy also shared the story of Patrick Gordon, a 17th century Scottish soldier of fortune who traveled extensively throughout the Baltic region. Gordon kept a diary where he noted the following meeting of Scots that took place in Poznan, Poland in 1654:

“During my abode in this place I was kindly entertained by my countreyemen, to witt, Robert Ferquhar, James Ferguson, James Lindesay, James White, James Watson and others. I was afterwards by their recommendation entertained in the suit of a yong nobleman called Oppalinsky, who was according to the custome of the Polonian nobility going to visitt forreigne countreyes. At my departure my kind countreyemen furnished me with money and other necessaries very liberally, so that I was better stocked now as I had been since I cam from my parents....”

The Diaspora in the 17th century were “networking” and forming systems of governance long before the advent of technology. Is today’s Scottish themed networking unique or a 21st reincarnation of the “Brotherhood”? Why are Scots and those of Scottish descent seeking out the Saltire online? What discussions take place within these virtual gatherings?

In 2004, having lived in the US for ten years by that point, I founded the “Scottish American Network” group on LinkedIn. It was actually born out of idle curiosity. I was genuinely curious to learn how Scottish expats adapted to life in America. What careers did they choose to pursue? Were they successful? How long did they stay in America? What part of the country did they live? How did they adapt to American life? Today, the group includes approximately 600 members from all walks of life. To encourage connections with Scotland, in the last year, I opened the group to individuals that currently reside in Scotland. The discussions within the group have ranged from business, life in the US, culture, the arts, food, whisky, and of course golf and football (we don’t call it soccer – ever!). Business and personal connections are routinely made and the members appear to enjoy gathering as a virtual clan to discuss all things Scottish. I would estimate that 25% of the membership is second, third, or fourth generation Scots that are interested in learning more about their heritage. 60% are Scots that reside overseas, with the balance made up of people that live in Scotland and have an interest in America business and culture. The conversations that result offer a nice balance between Scotland’s past, its present, and future. I can happily report that Scots in the US as a group are highly successful, well received by Americans and generally very happy in their new found home land.

Like many Scots living in the U.S., hardly a week goes by without an American sharing their connection to Scotland. An astonishing number of people profess to be “Scattish” as their great great grandfather had come over here from over there “some time ago”. To be honest, when I first heard people claim to be Scottish, it annoyed me. Since they were not born in the country, had seldom visited the country – if at all, how could they be Scottish? Now, I recognize that it is in fact a cause for celebration that so many people want to identify with my home. In fact, because Scotland is loved and admired by Americans, moving to this country, although confusing at first, was ultimately very easy and comforting. So many Americans could identify with the country I

had left behind. In all honesty, I hadn't left the country behind, it had come with me. I just didn't know it. There is a fun side to the wealth of Scots on this side of the Atlantic. Billy Kay and I joked about the fact that so many people claim to be related to a Jacobite, that if it were true, Culloden would have turned out very differently!

To seek greater understanding of why people embrace Scottishness online, I asked members of my group the "Scottish American Network" and "Friends of Scotland" (another LinkedIn discussion group) for their thoughts. The answers they shared provide some interesting clues as to why there is more Scottish online networking taking place,

Ian Ruxton, an expat living in Japan summed up why our culture is so easy to identify with,

"The distinctiveness of the badges or marks of Scottish culture - kilts, tartan, bagpipes etc. is pretty much unique and very easily recognised the world over. Why is it so distinctive? In brief I feel it was an effort by our ancestors to distinguish themselves from the English, borne of the feeling of being "in bed with an elephant" over the centuries! "

Colin Smith, based in Dundee had observed an awakening of the past as well as an appreciation for the future.

"The great strength of the groups I am on is that they bring together Scots who are still here with descendants of those who have gone, in some cases many generations ago, and this leads to reawakening of ties and an interest, for the emigrant, in modern Scotland as well as in historical Scotland. "Scottish themes" can be anything from business, arts, culture to fitba!"

Susan McIntosh, an attorney based in Colorado connected the clan system and the Scottish impulse to network,

"While it is true that the traditional clan system had in many fundamental ways disintegrated by 1746 it didn't disappear entirely. One continuing manifestation has been this persistent Scottish impulse to network - and to be somewhat clannish about it - that thrives down to this very day."

In order to gain an even deeper understanding of "Scottishness" on the web, I contacted Alastair McIntyre, an expat, and owner of Electric Scotland ([www.electricscotland.com](http://www.electricscotland.com)) a popular destination for visitors with an interest in Scottish history. I asked Alastair what made Electric Scotland unique.

"Simply put it is the massive volume of content we have on Scottish History and the history of Scots at home and abroad. We probably have more information on the Scots Diaspora in history than any other organisation in the world. The main point here is that we're very open with all our information and frequently share individual pages with other web sites as well as many magazines and other newsletters. The key to the site is that we publish new content every day and so there is always something new to read. We explore all aspects of history and so you'll find history of places, agriculture, poetry, sport, industry, literature, Scottish dancing, and of course a good amount on the Scottish Diaspora, etc."

We know that the Diaspora are connected online, but what about those that live in Scotland? Are those individuals making an effort to connect with their overseas brethren? It would appear that they are, but the evidence is not conclusive as Alastair is faced with a startling problem.

"One thing I can report is that when I look at my visiting traffic report in the old days only some 4% of my traffic came from the UK. Note here that the Scottish Government has done nothing to persuade Google to make stats available for just Scotland and thus you can only get UK traffic reports. If you spend the time you can extrapolate information by getting a city report but that takes a lot of time. If Google can produce stats for US States then surely they can produce Scotland only Stats but they sure aren't going to listen to me but they just might listen to the Scottish Government if they made a request. Today I get some 28% of my traffic from the UK so that tends to suggest many more Scots are interested in finding out more about Scotland in the world."

I can't imagine why Google has not produced statistics for Scotland. If a member of the Scottish government is reading this article, don't you think it is time for Scotland to have its own report?

One of the reasons that I created my networking group on Linked was to find out how the Diaspora fared in their adopted American homeland. Given the global reach and appeal of Electric Scotland, I was curious to hear what Alastair had learned about the Scots that he didn't know before.

"I had absolutely no idea of what Scots did after they left Scotland. That has been the single most important thing I have learnt and it's an amazing story and frankly that story is if anything more important than the history of Scotland in my opinion. It's also by discovering that, that I learnt how Scots did work together to build their businesses in other countries."

However, Alastair view on Scots abroad is not all rosy. He "pulled no punches" regarding his assessment of Scotland's efforts to capitalize on its global successes.

"Given the tremendous opportunities that the web has given us to communicate I feel there is still a total failure to communicate by Scots today. Of course every country in the world has this same failure but I feel given the size of Scotland and its generally favourable impression across the world we are simply not good at communicating. I'm pretty disgusted about how poor we are at promoting exports, tourism and inward investment in Scotland. We should be making billions more than we are but a giant failure to communicate is holding us back. We need to somehow break this mold and do much better."

To underscore his point, Alistair shared a conversation that he had with the CEO and chairman of the Highland Games in Jacksonville.

"Alastair I can't understand why there is no representation from Scotland at our Games. Do you know that you are the only local Scot here? Why aren't your tourism people or business people represented? I'm also pretty passionate about Scotland being of Scots descent and I'd love to hear about Scottish businesses that I could use to purchase products or services for my company or indeed personally but I have no idea where I can go to find them. Could you not do a write up of a Scottish business each week in your newsletter?"

Alastair took the words to heart and made a concerted effort to trigger interest back in Scotland. His efforts resulted in a "wall of silence" that is frustrating to read and no doubt far more frustrating to experience firsthand.

"I got back to Scotland I contacted some 200 individual Scottish companies that were either already exporting or who could clearly do so. Not one was willing to provide any information. And of course going to Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development international, Scottish Chamber of Commerce and many other organisation got me nowhere. I asked Visit Scotland if they could provide any tourism articles and to date I have received nothing from them. Why are they not doing anything with the some 300 Highland Games held in North America where you can get between 15,000 and 250,000 or so visitors to these events?

Given Alastair's comments and experiences to date, I was curious what he envisioned the future of Scottish online networking may look like. He provided candid feedback which I believe is exceptionally accurate.

"There is of course tremendous scope for networking but in my opinion that can only be achieved by working together and I see no sign of that happening. The Scottish government and agencies such as Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development International, Visit Scotland, Scottish Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Councils, etc. simply won't work with other web sites. Likewise individual web sites of Scottish businesses also won't co-operate as they see their own web site as being the only way they will communicate online. That in my opinion is a massive fault and is why we're seeing no real progress being made. That's not to say this is a Scottish problem as every country in the world is the same including the USA, Canada, Australia and New

Zealand and others.”

Alastair frequently referenced the Scottish government’s ineffectiveness online and on the world stage. Almost everyone I interviewed while preparing this article agreed that it was necessary for the Scottish government to have an online presence. However, as Alastair notes, the Scottish government’s efforts often appear ineffective at best. Not surprisingly, there are a number of Scottish government sponsored sites online. However, from my experience, and the experience of others, rarely does the “right hand know what the left hand is doing”.

GlobalScot, an organization which is funded by the Scottish Executive, is one of the more well know Diaspora networks. It is comprised of executives from around the world and Scottish companies with international aspirations. GlobalScot has a dedicated site as well as a group on LinkedIn. I have been a member of GlobalScot since 2004 and attended the inaugural conference in Edinburgh as well as several other gatherings in the States. I must admit that GlobalScot’s face to face networking events are far more effective than its online presence. GlobalScot’s online presence is a valiant effort that in my opinion has yet to find its feet. Scottish Development International has a dedicated site and there is also [www.scotland.org](http://www.scotland.org) that offers a broad view of Scotland from a historical and cultural perspective. There are many additional Scottish government agencies as well as local governments that have an online portal. The question remains as to whether or not the government and the country as a whole benefits from the government’s online efforts. Measuring the overall effectiveness of any virtual or traditional networking organization is notoriously difficult to do. However, ensuring that all of Scottish government’s online portals and at networking groups are aligned and support each other will be a difficult task.

Ultimately, for Scots abroad online networking provides a little piece of home online. I have often heard from Scottish expats that each time they go “home” the country looks less and less familiar. Plus, let’s not forget our “American” accents. From time to time I’ve be asked by Scots at home if I am from Canada! Talk about taking the wind out of my sails! I believe that Scottish online communities provide an outlet for expat Scots to reconnect with a country that no longer exists. Often our conversations revolve around cultural references from Scotland in the 1990’s. The country may have moved on since then, but we are stuck recalling the same TV shows and football games from our previous life. Keeping the Scottish sense of humor alive having left the country nearly 18 years ago is also challenge. Gathering to watch a Billy Connolly DVD, or sharing jokes that most Americans scratch their head at is certainly good for the soul. Thankfully, in today’s modern age, we no longer rely upon the kindness of others for basic necessities. However, the need to associate with “guid” people has not changed.

From all accounts, we have a very long way to go before we capitalize on the explosion in Scottishness online. Crucial to the success of our efforts is full engagement and cooperation of the Scottish government, private entities, the Diaspora in general and those that remain in Scotland. In short, online networking around the Scottish brand can do so much more than it is accomplishing today. As technology creates more connections between people, so too does it allow the Diaspora to reconnect with their country, former countrymen and women as well as themselves. In the words of George Santayana,

“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

In Scotland’s case, may be our approach to online networking should allow history to repeat itself. May be we still have a lot to learn from the Diaspora in 17th century Poland. They understood the importance of maintaining and fostering a sense of Scottishness abroad, shouldn’t we take the time to do so as well?

END.

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

Alastair