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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for October 24th, 2025

## Electric Scotland News

MyHeritage's ever-growing historical record count has recently jumped by an incredible 1.2 billion — with records added across 24 new and updated collections from the U.S., Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, the U.K., Spain, and Poland.

### My Canadian Experience

Have continued to post up videos most days and have just put up a talk by Canadian Prime Minister on the state of the Nation and what to expect in next weeks budget.

You can visit the October work in progress at:

[http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada\\_add26.htm](http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add26.htm)

## 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...

### AI, creativity and humanity (2): Obstacles

In the second part of his series Douglas Perman examines the risks AI may pose to a trio of issues: copyright, the environment, and employment. Other issues such as privacy feature in Part 3.

Read more at:

<https://sceptical.scot/2025/10/ai-creativity-and-humanity-2-obstacles/>

### AI, Creativity and Humanity (3): Responsibility

In the third and final part of his series, Dougal Perman argues the case for combining creativity and culture with being fluent in AI and staying human.

Read more at:

<https://sceptical.scot/2025/10/ai-creativity-and-humanity-3-responsibility/>

### Were we wrong about Trump's tariffs?

Despite stark warnings from The Economist when Donald Trump unveiled his tariff regime on 'Liberation Day', America's economy continues to grow. Will that continue? Zanny Minton Beddoes, our editor-in-chief, Edward

Carr, deputy editor and a panel of our journalists discuss whether they were wrong about the President's trade policy—or if a reckoning awaits.

Watch this at:

[https://youtu.be/J1\\_z-obLdrl?si=rnVpQkv8mllMVue7](https://youtu.be/J1_z-obLdrl?si=rnVpQkv8mllMVue7)

SpaceX president reveals Something Big happening with Starship Moon Landing after Flight 11 Success

Watch this at:

<https://youtu.be/SKCa7ebdD5k?si=oyjaZr8gA6zYLQV8>

A Hidden Threat Makes This Hike The Hardest One I've Ever Done.  
You should watch this video!

Watch it at:

<https://youtu.be/fOfGTqQotQI?si=a8u7InWW5wSvDxXK>

Briefings for Britain  
Newsletter 19/10/25

Read more at:

<https://www.briefingsforbritain.co.uk/newsletter-19-10-25/>

China Just Hit America with the Ultimate "Trump Card"

China just hit America with a new policy restricting rare earth minerals and this has sent the US government into full panic mode. Why does China dominate rare earths? What can America do to win this trade war? What is the future of US China relations? Let's break it down!

Watch this at:

[https://youtu.be/5Vjoan3u7pw?si=j4tzJVTZy7h8\\_zDU](https://youtu.be/5Vjoan3u7pw?si=j4tzJVTZy7h8_zDU)

Something's Going Seriously Wrong in France  
This video was disseminated on behalf of Liberty Defense,

Watch it at:

<https://youtu.be/2Mu2EJwnOBE?si=phwjSx9DQ3h-C9Co>

The Tariff Vindication That Wasn't

Matthew Lynn has written a powerful essay in which he chastises the economics profession for being so clearly wrong when it came to the effects of Donald Trump's tariffs

Read more at:

<https://lawliberty.org/the-tariff-vindication-that-wasnt/>

Plan approved to build Scotland's first broch in 2,000 years

A plan to recreate an Iron Age broch in Caithness has moved a step forward after the scheme was granted planning permission. Brochs - tall, double-walled drystone towers - have only ever been found in Scotland.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce3x0wpwxw04o>

The Anglican communion has come of age

On the Archbishop of Canterbury's ejection from the worldwide Anglican fellowship

Read more at:

<https://thecritic.co.uk/the-anglican-communion-has-come-of-age/>

It's time for Scotland to embrace hurkle-durkle as Scots phrase is reawakened in US slang after 150 years of slumber  
There is good news for the Scots phrase hurkle-durkle, which is being revived by Gen Z and Gen A on social media.

Read more at:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/scotland/hurkle-durkle-scots-gen-z-alpha-slang-revival-5370165>

## Electric Canadian

Let's get to know the MicMac

The contents of this booklet is an introduction to the Micmac way of life, who belong to the Algonquian tribe. The Micmac originate from Nova Scotia and today they stretch along northern New Brunswick and on the east and south coast of Gaspé. (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/micmac/letsgettoknowmic00nati.pdf>

Masters of the Wilderness

By Charles Bert Reed, M.D., Author of "First Great Canadian" (1914) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/mastersofwilder00reed.pdf>

Our Wild Indians

Thirty-three years' personal experience among the red men of the great West. A popular account of their social life, religion, habits, traits, customs, exploits, etc. With thrilling adventures and experiences on the great plains and in the mountains of our wide frontier by Colonel Richard Dodge with an Introduction by General Sherman (1883) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/indiansourwildth00dodgrich.pdf>

The Good Centurion

An example for Scotchmen in Canada, A Sermon, preached before the St. Andrew's Society of Montreal on Monday, December 1st, 1862 by The Rev. William Snodgrass, Chaplain (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/Religion/goodcenturionexa00snod.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 19th day of October 2025 - Changes

By The Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26665-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-19th-day-of-october-2025-changes>

The Beaver Magazine

Added No. 2 Outfit 262 September 1931 (pdf)

You can read this issue at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/TheBeaverSeptember1931.pdf>

## Electric Scotland

### The Stirling Antiquary

Reprinted from "The Stirling Sentinel," Volume 3 1900-1903 (pdf)

Note that I had volume 1 on the site and just discovered that there were two other volumes. I was able to find a copy of volume 3 which I've now added but was unable to find a downloadable copy of volume 2 and so if anyone could acquire a copy would be happy to receive it to add to the site.

You can read volume 3 at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/stirlingshire/stirlingantiqua03unkngoog.pdf>

### Stirling Castle

Inside The Perfectly Preserved Home Of Mary, Queen Of Scots. Added this video to the foot of our page about Stirlingshire.

You can watch this video at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/stirlingshire/index.htm>

### Who Are the Apache?

Dr. Roy Casagrande, Museum of the Future: Lessons from the Past. A video that I've added to the foot of our Native Indian Lore page.

You can watch this video at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/america/donna/lore/index.htm>

### Recollections of My Military Life

By George Thomas Landmann in two volumes (1854)

You can read these volumes at:

<https://electricScotland.com/history/scotreg/recollectionsofmilitarylife.htm>

### The Dominicans in Scotland, 1230-1560

By Richard Oram (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/bible/Oram-Dominicans-in-Scotland.pdf>

### The Order of Friars Preachers in Scotland

By the Rev. David R. Currie, B.D., Ph.D. (1950) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/bible/Oram-Dominicans-in-Scotland.pdf>

### The Poems of James Grahame, John Logan, and William Falconer

With Lives of the authors and a portrait of Grahame (1823) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricScotland.com/poetry/poemsjamesgraha00loga.pdf>

### The Old Forest Ranger

Or, Wild Sports of India on The Neilgherry Hills in the Jungles and on the Plains by Captain Walter Campbell of

Skipness, Late of the Seventh Royal Fusiliers (1842) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/india/oldforestrangero00camp.pdf>

The Life of Alexander Duff, LL.D.

By George Smith, C.I.E., LL.D. with an introduction by Wm. M. Taylor, D.D. in two volumes (1879). Added this to the foot of his page.

You can read these volumes at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/india/duffndx.htm>

John Kenneth MacKenzie

Medical Missionary to China by Mrs. Bryson (second edition) (1891) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/england/johnkennethmacke00brys.pdf>

Knights of the Labarum

Being studies in the lives of Judson, Duff, MacKenzie and MacKay by Harlan P. Beach (1896) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bible/knightsoflabarum00beacrich.pdf>

Fairburn Tower

Built for Murdoch MacKenzie, Master of the Bedchamber to James V and includes a video of its restoration.

YOu can get to this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/webclans/m/fairburn-tower.htm>

History of the 40th Division

By Lieut.-Col F. E. Whittion, C.M.G., P.S.C. (1926) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/scotreg/Hist40thDivision.pdf>

## Story

Christopher Bell, Teacher and Precentor

One of the Guests at the First Burns Supper in Stirling, 27th August, 1787.

The last Sunday and Monday of August, 1787, were two eventful and happy days in the existence—all too brief, alas!—of Robert Burns. On the Sunday morning the poet, in company with his friend and fellow-traveller, William Nicol, had visited the old churchyard of Falkirk, and there had knelt in patriotic devotion at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of Sir William Wallace. Continuing his journey, Burns called at Auchenbowie House, where he dined with the laird, Mr Monro, and his daughter. Then he drove to the field of Bannockburn, and, as he wrote to his friend, Robert Muir, said a fervent prayer for Old Caledonia over the bole of a blue whinstone where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn. An hour later he was standing on the battlements of Stirling Castle viewing the glorious prospect of the windings of the Forth through the rich Carse of Stirling, in the purple light of the setting sun. For that night and the following one the newly-erected inn below the Mealmarket, and near the New Port, the inner defence of our ancient burgh. It may be noted that the fact that it was on Sunday evening that Burns visited the Castle disposes of the story told by Mr

John Dick of Craigengelt to the effect that his uncle, Provost Dick, saw the poet in Broad Street as he came down from the Castle one day on which, for some reason or other, the schoolboys (of whom the Provost was one) had got a holiday, and the town bells were rung. If the incident occurred on the occasion of Burns's last visit to Stirling, it must have been the church belle that young Dick heard ringing, but the mention of Ramsay of Octertyre in connection with the story points to the occasion being the Bard's second visit to the town in the October following. After a day so full of interest, it may be surmised that Burns did not sleep very soundly. His visit to the historic battlefield had fired his imagination. He fancied to himself, as he writes in his *Commonplace Book*, that he saw his gallant heroic countrymen coming over the hill and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers, noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striving more and more eagerly as they approached the oppressive, insulting, bloodthirsty foe. He saw them meet in glorious triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence. In after years these glowing visions, which had never been forgotten, produced at the proper moment the stirring war ode, *Scots Wha Hae?* the best, as Carlyle says, that was ever written by any pen. Alternating with these patriotic emotions, there surged in the poet's mind a feeling of intense indignation that Stirling Castle, for the possession of which Bruce had risked so much and fought so well, should be so shamefully neglected by Bruce's successors on the Scottish throne, and, no doubt, before tired nature's sweet restorer visited his pillow, he had composed the vehement lines which next morning, before his companion came downstairs to breakfast, he scratched with a diamond on a pane of glass in the window of the public room looking into the yard of the inn. In the political turmoil of the time, these lines were apt to tell against their author, and in a cooler moment Burns took an opportunity of destroying the telltale glass, but that he did not retract his opinions is proved by the fact that he wrote several copies of the verses and made no attempt to conceal their authorship. There can be little doubt, however, that they hindered his promotion in the Excise. Before his appointment as an exciseman, Burns tells us that he was questioned like a child about his personal matters, and blamed and schooled for his inscription on the Stirling window.

The Monday thus begun was spent by the poet with some Ayrshire friends who were living at Harvilstoun. The dear winding Devon had many attractions for Burns, who seems also to have been fascinated by the charms of a lovely girl, to the influence of which he was always very susceptible. The day, he says, was one of the most pleasant he ever had in his life, and he returned to Stirling in the evening in high good humour. It may have been on that night he paid a brief visit to the local Lodge of Freemasons, Ancient 30, and signed the Attendance Register which is said to have disappeared, but not before the bold signature of our national Bard had been wantonly cut out. The crowded day finished fittingly with a symposium in Wingate's Inn, excelling, as one may easily suppose, in wit and wisdom, in poesy and song, any of the Nocteg Ambrogiana of which a later poet was the bright particular star. Henley, in his odious manner, would have us believe that this, the first Burns supper in Stirling, was not only as stupid as the average festive gatherings on the 25th January, but was simply a jollification or "drunken spree," and that it was this that inspired the "Lines on a Window in Stirling." But, as we have seen, the lines were composed before the supper, and that this meeting was no debauch is proved, not only by the company who were present, but by the fact that at an early hour on the following day, Burns wrote a beautiful letter in the inn to his friend, Gavin Hamilton, a letter which it is safe to say no person who had been guilty of excess the night before could have been in a condition to indite. Burns's own note of the occasion in his *Commonplace Book* is very brief.

"At Stirling—Supper—Messrs Doig, the schoolmaster; Bell, and Captain Forrester of the Castle. Doig, a queerish figure and something of a pedant; Bell, a joyous fellow who sings a good song; Forrester, a merry swearing kind of man, with a dash of the 'sodger.'

To this trio have to be added William Nicol, and Burns himself, so that the Army, education, and literature were well represented in the little company. Of Dr Doig it is unnecessary to speak. The learned Sector of the Grammar School of Stirling, who had disputed, not unsuccessfully, with Lord Kames about the savage state of man, and was himself an aspirant to poetic fame, must have keenly enjoyed the full-blooded flow of Burns's conversation. As for Forrester, the fact that Burns notes that he was a swearing kind of man, is proof that the habit of profane swearing, common enough at the time, was not one of the poet's faults. But what of Bell, the joyous fellow who sang a good song? Mr W. Harvey, in his recently-published work entitled "Robert Burns in

Stirlingshire,” says, “Regarding Bell of the company, there is some doubt. Beyond his name Burns gives no information, but it is likely that he was Christopher Bell, who was a schoolmaster in Stirling at the time.” But there is really no doubt of the fact, and there never could be any in the mind of a person familiar with the Stirling of the period. Out of the four thousand six hundred souls or thereby who then composed the entire population of the burgh, there was only one Bell who could answer Burns’s description. This description, and the company he was in, are two sure marks of identification, independently of Christopher Bell’s friendship with Forrester. He was in company with Mr David Doig, schoolmaster, and he could sing a good song. Both as English teacher and as precentor, Bell was doubtless well known to Nicol, who was a teacher in the High School of Edinburgh, and who may be credited with suggesting the choice of guests for the evening. Like Burns himself, Mr Harvey gives no information about Bell beyond his name and designation, and while there was no call for Burns to do more than he did, or even so much, it was, in our opinion, clearly the duty of the author of a book on Burns in Stirlingshire to take a little trouble to try and find out something more about the guests at the famous Stirling supper. The following sketch of one of them is compiled from materials which have lain beside us for some year, and were derived from sources open to any inquirer.

Christopher Bell, before coming to Stirling, was schoolmaster at Campsie. We have satisfied ourselves that he did not belong to the Bells of Antermoney, but we think it probable he was a son of the Rev. William Bell, minister of the parish of Campsie from 1749 to 1783. Dr Scott, in his states that Mr Bell was married, but does not mention any children of the marriage. Christopher’s appointment in Stirling is dated 23rd February, 1771, when he succeeded the deceased Mr John M’Inlay. The educational arrangements in Stirling prior to Mr Bell’s appointment seem to have been these: Mr David Doig conducted the Grammar School with the assistance of a doctor of Latin, and he had liberty to teach a class of such English scholars as were far advanced, if they intended to learn Latin and other languages; Mr Douglas was teacher of one of the English Schools, carried on in Cowane’s Hospital; Mr M’Inlay, a former assistant of Mr Douglas’s predecessor, Mr Burns, before the English School was divided into two in 1763, conducted the other school in the house in Baker Street now belonging to Mr William Boswell, bootmaker; and Mr Daniel Manson was writing master and teacher of arithmetic and book-keeping. Mr Manson was also precentor in the Parish Church and music master, receiving fees for his teaching of music in the English Schools, but being bound to attend the Grammar School and teach the scholars there gratis. The Rector and his Latin doctor were allowed to charge for teaching English as well as the dead languages, and in addition, Mr Doig had a salary of £40 per annum and a free house. Mr Burns had perhaps £20 after the division of the schools, and the fees; Mr M’Inlay, £16 and the fees; and Mr Manson, £200 Scots (£16 13s 4d) and the fees. When Christopher Bell succeeded Mr M’Inlay in 1771, he was also appointed to precent in the church for Mr Manson, and to act as music master, Mr Manson giving up all the emoluments arising from the teaching of vocal music in the burgh. About 1777, Mr Bell married one of the Littlejohn family, and was admitted a burges yua guild brother in right of his wife. In 1786, the school in Baxter’s Wynd, with shop below, was ordered to be sold by public roup, new writing and English schools being erected in Cowane’s Yard on part of the site now occupied by the High School. On the death of Mr Manson in 1791, Mr Thomae Smith, St Andrews, was appointed his successor, but he was not to teach music, Mr Bell being again appointed precentor and teacher of church music. The Council evidently thought this a good opportunity of reuniting the two English Schools, and they offered Mr Archibald Douglas, if he would resign, an annuity of £16, and £5 to carry him to the place in which he meant to reside, but if he stopped in Stirling his annuity was to stop also. The English School, it was arranged, was to be conducted under the joint care of Mr Bell and Mr M’Leran. These resolutions, however, did not please Mr Douglas, and he held on to his office for two years longer, when the Council allowed him on resignation his salary for life, and provided an assistant for Mr Bell, both the English Schools being thrown into one. This arrangement seems to have worked satisfactorily, as we find that both Mr Bell and his assistant, David Jameson, received an addition of £5 to their salary in 1797.

One year prior to this event, Robert Burns’s earthly career had closed in gloom and disappointment, and we may feel sure that not the least sincere mourner was Christopher Bell, whose fine voice must have found a new and delightful exercise in the flinging of “Scots Wha Hae” and other masterpieces of his departed friend. In some versions of Burns’s entry in his Commonplace Book of the Stirling Supper, the word “vacant” is introduced after “joyous,” and Bell is described as a “joyous, vacant fellow.” This expression is not in the edition of Burns’s works from which we extracted the entry some twenty years ago, and we do not know the authority for it. But we



submit that if the word is genuine, it does not mean unintelligent, much less idiotic. No such person could sing a song in a way to call forth the poet's praise, and the word "vacant," if used at all, could only have been meant as inexpressive in contrast to Dr Doig's keen intellectual features. Bell's position as English teacher is also against the presumption that he was vacant or empty-headed. That he was really acute and a good man of business, is proved by the fact that he was afterwards appointed Session Clerk, keeper of the registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials, and one of the auditors of the Kirk Session's accounts. It may also be remarked here that his being an elder of the Church is another circumstance disproving the supposition that the Stirling Supper was allowed to degenerate into a debauch.

We now come to an incident in Mr Bell's career which is most honourable to his memory. There is nothing to show that he ever sympathised with Burns's revolutionary sentiments — sentiments which Burns himself renounced, as his Address to the Dumfries Volunteers clearly shows, and in the year 1800, when Napoleon threatened to invade Great Britain, and the country armed to resist him, Christopher Bell was patriotic enough to enrol himself in the corps of Loyal Stirling Volunteers, although he must then have been considerably over fifty years of age. He retired, however, the following year, and did not rejoin in 1803, when a new embodiment of the corps took place. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. Mr Bell continued to fill the office of senior English master till failing health compelled him to resign. A minute of the Town Council, dated 9th October, 1813, records his resignation, and proceeds to state that the Council, in respect of his long and faithful service for above 43 years, allow him to retire on his salary of £50 sterling during his life. It was not, however, till February of the following year that Mr John Weir was appointed his successor. The Kirk Session minute of 16th August, 1813, is the last of the regular series written by Mr Bell from his appointment as Clerk on 3rd November, 1800, but there is one more minute in his handwriting, very shaky in comparison with the others, and kept straight by pencilled lines across the page. It is dated 17th November, 1813, and, no doubt, marks his return to duty after a serious illness. He died in October of the following year, having probably reached the threescore and ten. Stirling has had many worthy teachers, but none more worthy than Christopher Bell, the joyous fellow who sang a good song, and who, patiently and faithfully labouring in his vocation, rejoiced alike in the psalms of David and the songs of Burns.

25th January, 1900. Ed.

END.

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

Alastair