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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for February 20th, 2026

Electric Scotland News

My Canadian Experience

Continued my February entry which adds videos on... Carney's Middle-Power Strategy with South Africa, Carney attends vigil for victims of Tumbler Ridge school shooting, What EUROPE Just Did for Ukraine... Will Go Down as the DEFINING Moment of the War , The US Has NO Plan for \$38.6 Trillion in Debt — Canada and Europe Do, Trump Just Banned Canada From the US Dollar — Carney's Response Made History, Inside The Crisis Facing U.S. Auto Giants, How will Trump react to Janice Charette being named as Canada's top trade negotiator?, Carney Just HUMILIATED Trump on Live TV — Canada's Brutal Response Sends Shockwaves, Minister LeBlanc leads a 200-business delegation to strengthen trade with Mexico, Prime Minister Carney launches Canada's first Defence Industrial Strategy to strengthen security, create prosperity, and reinforce strategic autonomy, Prime Minister Mark Carney outlines Canada's 'Buy Canadian' plan and defence strategy, Canada fights back to lead new anti-Trump global trade alliance, India BREAKS With America — Modi Signs \$200B Resource Pact With Canada, Australia, and EU, Samsung KILLS \$15B Texas Chip Plant — Moves EVERYTHING to Canada as Trump's Tech, Carney Just Called London — Britain's Response SHOCKED NATO, Canada Just Broke With the U.S. — And Trump Didn't See It Coming and more.

You can read this as I add more on a regular basis throughout the month at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/canada_add30.htm

I might add that I have now added a horizontal line to separate each weeks entry so it will make it easier to find what I have added since the previous week.

Snow is almost all gone now although the forecast is for some light snow after the weekend.

Got in a letter from Health Canada saying I needed to do my two yearly check for colon (bowel) cancer. They say that after 50 the risk goes up and that early detection means a 90% chance of successful treatment. So just thought I'd let you know about this in case they also have this available where you live in the world.

See <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/colorectal/screening> for further information.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers and other media

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...

Musk Is Building a City on The Moon

Watch this video

You can watch this at:

<https://youtu.be/IFfbneAkXuw?si=Rft8owGJjHm4M8WQ>

What EUROPE Just Did for Ukraine... Will Go Down as the DEFINING Moment of the War
This is the moment the Ukraine war turns on its head. After surviving Russia's attrition strategy, Ukraine now has the money to fight back—and the bill is heading straight for Moscow. The European Union has approved a massive €90 billion loan that strengthens Ukraine while tightening the vise on Vladimir Putin. It's a financial dagger, twisted twice. And Russia won't see the second cut coming.

Watch this at:

<https://youtu.be/HrW-bZhGHml?si=p0ILzimPZPn0MPDX>

Why Europe Is Creating an Alternative to Visa & Mastercard

In this video, we'll explain Europe's new digital payments network, how it aims to replace Visa and Mastercard, and whether it could work.

Watch this at:

<https://youtu.be/rJq9QOo8Ak0?si=OgTihm7nkTXn363D>

The most dangerous place in Scotland to be a woman... Her own home

Violence against women crisis: Shocking increase in domestic attacks has experts asking: Why we are getting it so wrong?

Read more at:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/violence-against-women-for-many-home-is-more-dangerous-than-the-street/>

Conrad Black: In search of a distinct Canadian identity

If we can turn our economy around, there would be no more question of why we are not Americans

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/9dJ7T>

King Charles says 'the law must take its course' after Andrew arrest

King Charles said he "learned with the deepest concern" of his brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's arrest, adding "the law must take its course". Neither he nor Buckingham Palace were informed in advance of the arrest, the BBC understands.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn9e1q4797wo>

US trade deficit hits fresh high despite Trump's tariffs

US goods imports continued to outpace its exports last year, sending the country's trade deficit to a new high despite sweeping tariffs introduced by US President Donald Trump. The gap between the value of goods imported into the US and American products sold to other countries widened by 2.1% compared to 2024, hitting roughly \$1.2 trillion (£890m), official figures show.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4ge4yxwnlno>

Hamas is reasserting control in Gaza despite its heavy losses fighting Israel

When a US-imposed ceasefire halted the Gaza War last October, Hamas's war for survival against Israel switched into a battle for control at home.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c98g1klxnpoxo>

As Trump retreats from climate goals, China is becoming a green superpower
How the world's biggest carbon emitter is now at the helm of a renewables revolution.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idx-8d2b6944-4f7a-45b4-96fd-2d92499ff97d>

Third Conservative Canadian MP defects to Carney's Liberals

A Conservative member of parliament from Alberta has defected to the Liberal Party, bringing Prime Minister Mark Carney closer to a majority in the House of Commons. In a post on social media, Carney announced that Matt Jeneroux, who represents a constituency in Edmonton, has joined the Liberal caucus — the third Conservative to do so in recent months.

Read more at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqxd495pvy5o>

Scottish shipyard owner hails biggest UK warship export

A Scottish shipyard owner has hailed the biggest UK warship export deal by value. BAE Systems highlighted the £10 billion deal to build warships for Norway in Scotland as it posted a rise in sales and profit.

Read more at:

<https://archive.is/oGPYS>

Electric Canadian

The Trans-Canada Highway

The ENTIRE History Of The Trans-Canada Highway (62 Years in 51 Minutes)

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/transcanadahighway.htm>

Social Organization of the Blackfoot Indians

By Rev. John MacLean, M.A., Ph.D. (Read 19th November, 1892) (pdf)

You can read this at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/Blackfoot-Indians.pdf>

Three Arrows

The Young Buffalo Hunters by E. Ryerson Young (1932) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/children/threearrows.pdf>

John Bethune

Ontario's pioneer Presbyterian preacher. Added a video about him to his page.

You can learn about him at:

http://www.electriccanadian.com/makers/john_bethune.htm

The Anglo-American Magazine

Volume 5 Jan - July 1901

The United Nations, An Ideal Worth Laboring For, Lord Rosebery and the Liberal Leadership, The Glasgow International Exhibition, AN Attempt to Define Religion, The Queen's Reign, The Passing of Queen Victoria, The Present-Day French-Canadian, Etc. (pdf)

You can read this volume at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/magazines/proceedingsofcan45bcana.pdf>

Thoughts on a Sunday Morning - the 15th day of February 2026

By The Rev. Nola Crewe

You can watch this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.org/forum/communities/rev-nola-crewe/26699-thoughts-on-a-sunday-morning-the-15th-day-of-february-2026>

The Beaver Magazine

Added No. 3 Outfit 266 December 1935 (pdf)

YOu can read this issue at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/hudsonbay/TheBeaverDecember1935.pdf>

Electric Scotland

The Cloud of Witnesses

Or Scotch Martyrology by William Anderson, LL.D. (1753) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

<https://electricscotland.com/bible/cloudofwitnesses00ande.pdf>

The Scots Brigade

And other tales by James Grant (1882) (pdf)

You can read this book at:

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

The Steam-Boat Companion

Betwixt Perth and Dundee by George Buist (1838)

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/perth/steamboat.htm>

Quarterly Review Volume 1 (1809)

Includes an article Reliques of Robert Burns, consisting chiefly of original Letters, Poems, and Critical Observations on Scottish Songs; collected and published, by R. H. Cromek. (pdf)

You can read this at:

https://electricscotland.com/burns/quarterly-review-1809_1809-02_1_1.pdf

The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart

By Andrew Lang in two volumes (1897)

You can read these volumes at:

https://electricscotland.com/history/other/lockhart_john.htm

Scroggie, William Sydney

Soldier and Editor. Includes a pdf file about the Loyal Scouts in World war II.

You can read this at:

<https://electricscotland.com/history/other/Sydney-Scroggie.htm>

You can read this at:

<https://electricScotland.com/education/englishcomposition.htm>

Story

Beltane and the Vanished Races

THE study of the folk lore of Lowland Scotland reveals to us in scanty uncertain glimmers some shadowy conception of the aboriginal inhabitants of what was in sober truth a stern and wild Caledonia. Ancient haunts of men have numberless tongues for those who know how to hear them speak. But it is not the uncouth monoliths like giant mile-stones, looming forth on heights and dark moorlands, but the place names our deluvian ancestors bequeathed to us, which guide us to the knowledge from whence they had wandered to the north. Those that run may not read, but those who pause, and with careful patience clear away the dust of bygone ages, can decipher, despite the obstructions of centuries of progress, traces which, like a blazed trail, lead us beyond the even track of written history into the forest primeval of Scotland's story. Amid all our vaunted complicated civilisation is it not somewhat startling to find we, who consider ourselves so advanced in religious knowledge, adhere to usages descended to us from the sanguinary creed of our blue-woaded ancestors?

One chief and most abiding indication of their, and consequently of our, Oriental origin, are the relics left by these extinct races of their worship of the great lights of heaven. Fire has had a fascination for the human species from time immemorial. Naturally, those who were forced to dwell in the north craved the most for warmth, but whether the blaze is lit by a hearth-stone, or in the open under the roof of heaven, man, civilised or savage, is allured by and gathers round a fire. The glowing flames for the time being become the home centre. In far past ages the inhabitants of Scotland wielded weapons of stone, but later, when the hidden metals had been tracked to their lair, the natives learned to forge bronze swords, the sun, moon, and stars above them were all important mystic factors in their lives—gods to be propitiated. They had to live preying, and being preyed upon by the four-footed people who shared the woods with them. Their roof was a tree, and in winter they sought, like the foxes, shelter in Mother Earth. For all their weather-hardened skins, or robes of deer hide fastened with horn pins, they were a-cold. They looked on the forces of nature as the smiles or frowns of a beneficent or an angered Being. They sought to curry favour with the Power above that gave to them light and heat. From the East they had brought along with them their language, as well as their reverence for Baal. Fire was his earthly symbol, and from his name Baal, Lord, and the Celtic *lein*, fire, comes Beltane - a word which lingers as a beacon light in Scottish place names. Beltane is also linked with our traditional customs, legends, and poetry. To be nearer to their God on the mountaintops, they built up fires to do him honour. As Solomon says, "It is a blessed thing for the eyes to behold the sun." When the drear-nighted winter was over, the heat of the great orb's rays were doubly welcome. We read in the Old Testament of this worship of Baal, and the manner in which sacrifices of men and beasts were offered to appease or please him. The rites were the same in North Britain as in Tophet, the Valley of Slaughter, when the Lord complained they broke His law. The Druids, those all-powerful priests who swayed the people of this country, appointed certain seasons in which to pay their chiefmost deity homage. These days have remained our national festivals, 1st May, Midsummer, the eve of November, and Yuletide. Besides the white bulls slain in honour of Baal, the Men of the Oaks decreed that a huge wicker cage in the form of a colossal mortal should be woven, and in it were cast a holocaust of human victims. These were not only prisoners, but the worshippers' hearts'-blood, for parents gave their best beloved. Rude music made by striking tightly-stretched hides deadened their dolorous cries. When they had thus paid sanguinary homage to their god, when the lurid flames, lit in his honour, had devoured the giant cageful of their choicest and fairest, the assembled company held high revel, danced and caroused, partaking of peculiarly-prepared food and drink. The foregoing is a brief outline of how the ritual of the sun-worship of the Druids was conducted on the high-placed rude altars on the moorlands, and by others who lived in the old time before them.

We have to surmise much regarding the ways of our ancient ancestors, but the first authentic history of a nation is the history of its tongue. Mountains and rivers still murmur the voices of a people long denationalised or extirpated, so it

happens the prehistoric race, who lived in what is now epic Scotland, have left in place names, and also in surviving observances, hints which enable us to grope our way back to embryo eras in our country's chronicle.

The coming of the Romans wrought many changes. They uprooted Druidism, for these conquerors did exactly as was done in the East in King Josiah's time. "They broke in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and forbade that any man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire to Moloch."

But the old beliefs lingered, though the priests were scattered. Superstition is enduring, especially when mingled with a religious creed. Dr. Jameson mentions that an old Highlander, so lately as the end of the eighteenth century, was in the habit of addressing the Deity under the title of "The Arch Druid." These specified seasons for sacrifices and foul orgies of heathen darkness held by our pagan predecessors are still holidays in this Christian land of ours. When the thorn was white with blossom Merrie England frolicked round the bedecked maypole. In Lowland Scotland, however, the mode and manner of welcoming the spring-time followed more closely customs instituted by those who placed "the grey recumbent tombs of the dead in the desert places; standing stones on the vacant wine-red moor."

Even from ballad history we glean how much in vogue was the keeping of Beltane. The royal poet, James I., pictures for us how, from far and near, the people thronged to the May-day fair at Peebles. This carnival to hail spring was a landmark of time for the lowland Scot even until our own day. The origin of our saying, "Peebles for Pleasure," comes from this spring gathering. James I., in *The King's Quhair*, tells how

At Beltane when ilke bodie hownis
To Peblis to the play.
To heir the singing and the soundis
The solace suth to say."

Now in this twentieth century, except for those who rise to wash their faces in the dew on Mayday, Beltane has been well nigh forgotten, even among the shepherds, who kept up this feast and its customs, for only in the latter end of the Victorian era has it fallen into abeyance. Still many scale Arthur's Seat on May-morning, for tradition had so imbued the citizens of Edinburgh with the custom that they yet adhere to it. Even amid the rush of our present-day life, we have to pause, however briefly, to recruit when winter is past and the time of the singing of birds has come. We feel the need of a chance to enjoy the returning strength of the sun, although the old way of keeping Beltane, even among the conservative rustics, has gone, and the religious rest time, "the Preachings," have disappeared. These holydays have been superseded by the more prosaic and scrimp Spring Holiday, a day on which the populace can go forth and see the advent of summer. Mr. Guthrie in his *Old Scottish Customs*, published in 1885, tells how he remembers the manner in which Beltane used to be kept. "The shepherds met ere the dawn of May on some neighbouring heights and round a trench which they cut in a huge ring. They went through certain ceremonies, the formulary of which had been handed down from Baal's votaries. They made a fire of wood, on which they dressed a caudle of eggs, butter, oatmeal, and milk. Each of the company brought, besides the ingredients for making the caudle, plenty of beer and whisky. The rites began by spilling some of the caudle on the ground by way of libation. That done, every one took a cake of oatmeal, upon which were raised knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preservers of their flocks and herds, or to some animal, the real destroyer of them. Each person then turned his face to the fire, broke off a knob, and throwing it over his left shoulder, said: 'This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses; this to thee, preserve thou my sheep,' and so on. After this they used the same rites to the noxious animals. 'This I give to thee, O fox; this to thee, O hooded crow; this to thee, O eagle.' When the ceremony was over they dined on the caudle, and after the feast was finished what was left was carefully hidden away by two persons deputed for that purpose, but on the following Sunday the herdsmen reassembled and finished the remains of the former feast." Having gone through many peculiar forms of frolic and mummary, the keepers of Beltane fed and made merry. Then lots were cast by breaking up the oaten cakes and blacking one knob. The drawer of the charcoaled piece from the hat was bound to leap through the blaze three times. Those who, amid the laughter of the onlookers, sprang over the flaring embers with as little scaith as possible would not in times past have escaped with a bound above the burning heat, but have been devoured by the red-tongued flames to propitiate the God of Light. It was also customary at these gatherings for fathers to pass over the fire with their children in their arms to ensure their offspring immunity from ill. Milton touches on the origin of this custom in *Paradise Lost*:-

Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud

Their children's cries unheard, that passed through the fire
To his grim idol."

There is a Gaelic proverb which speaks of being in "the jeopardy of Baal." This arose from the practice of lighting two contingent fires and driving those to be sacrificed between them to be consecrated before death. To be between Baal's fire came in local parlance to much the same thing as being between the deep sea and the devil, without hope of escape. The idea of thus purifying the flocks by cleansing fires still dwells with us. In parts of Perthshire in 1810 "the inhabitants collected and kindled a fire by friction, and through the fire thus kindled they drove their cattle in order to protect them against disease." In other parts of Scotland the horses are herded between the two bonfires, thus still unconsciously dedicating them to the sun. Penant, in his *Tour in Scotland*, mentions seeing the hill-tops aglow in honour of Beltane, and Mr. Napier in his book on folk lore, published in 1879, says, "Many think the superstitions of last century died with the century, but this is not so; and as these notions are curious and in many cases important historical factors, I have thought it worth while to jot down what of this folk lore has come under my observation during these last sixty years." He mentions isolated districts where the rural people still held to the observances of Beltane, and talked with those who recollected it when it was more of a national feast day. All fires in Druidical times were quenched on the last night of April. The priests on a neighbouring hill dedicated to the solar worship, from the pyres they lit to welcome May, gave to the people kindling from their sacred beacon wherewith to relight the social watchfires on their own hearths.

Midsummer was the season next set aside to propitiate Baal, but it fell sooner into oblivion than the other specially-appointed feast days. The light was long in June, the sun strong; the flocks fattened on the new luscious grass, for heat and consequently food were plentiful. There was no need to fawn and curry favour with a bountiful patron, so then as now, when all things were going easily and smoothly, man took the benefit as his due and paid small court to the Powers above. A well-known proverb shows the frailty of human beings and the strategy of Satan:-

"When the devil was ill, the devil a saint would be,
When the devil was well, devil a saint was he."

The coming harvest caused some anxiety, but Midsummer Day and its never dark night and clear skies did not lend itself to Baal worship. When the summer was over and winter had to be faced, man bethought himself again of courting favour. The exit of October became, and still from custom and tradition's sake remains, a marked day. The Celtic name for this Hallowmass was Sham-in, the fire of Baal. The Irish called it Sain-fuin - sam, summer, and fuin, end—i.e., the end of summer. It was at this season that the Druids usually met in the most central places of their surrounding country and administered justice and adjusted disputes. Those who did not make their peace were not given the brand from the consecrated fire and had a sentence of excommunication passed on them. "Dr. Arthur Mitchell," says an antiquarian, writing in 1867, "informs me that a few years ago he counted within sight of a railway station in Perthshire a dozen of these Samhain fires burning in different directions on a Hallowe'en night. On the eve of the first day of November there were such fires kindled as on May-day, accompanied as they continually were by sacrifices and feastings." The name Hallowe'en for this late autumnal feast in Christian times superseded Samhain. The Romans had a festival called Fernalia in February, when they visited the graves of their friends and offered up oblations. The spirits of the dead were then believed to be free to roam in their whilom earthly haunts, and if not propitiated would, during the ensuing year, haunt their neglectful relatives. Eventually to cloak pagan Samhain with a semblance of Christianity, the Church mingled the two feasts into Hallowmass. On the eve of November it was believed the veil was lifted and a peep into futurity given. Gradually All-Hallow observances were not held on hill-tops, but centred round the people's own fireside, and there nuts were burnt and apples ducked for. Apples have taken root in the superstitions of the people may be from the day of their forbiddenness. A tree of them is said to be lucky near a house, and apples are credited with holding a special sway over the affairs of the affections. One common Hallowe'en custom is for a girl to pare an apple and fling the skin over her shoulder to read from its twists the initial letter of her lover's name. This divination of the future by contortions and signs rose from out of the blood-bestained smoke of Baal's fire. The oak-wreathed Druids learned to draw conclusions as to the future by watching the writhings of their victims, whether bull or man, under their knife, and the way they fell in their dying agony. A less blood-thirsty age reads what is to come in apple skins. From Hallowe'en hankerings for future insight any bold lover had but to be alert, or have a friend to give him a hint when to appear, to score a success. Most of the charms had to be worked out alone, some had to be tested in a solitude of two, which gave a quick-witted youth every opportunity of advancing his suit. There was the pulling of green kail stocks from out of a spinster's or bachelor's garden, when a couple went with shut eyes, hand in hand, among the cabbages. If the runts

were of goodly growth, stout of stem, all was well for the pullers. Their mates would be well favoured in person and purse. If the roots were unclogged with earth, they would be lacking in comeliness and poverty-stricken. If the kernel of the stock was sweet or sour to taste, so would be the temper of the future consort. The stocks were hung about the doors, and the next person crossing the threshold was held to bear the name of the future wife or husband. It was thus made easy for a lover to come in at an opportune moment, or to persuade the lady of his choice not to fly in the face of fate, when such opportunities as walking in the dark, with eyes shut, hand in hand, were strewn by tradition in their path. For instance, on this night when the future was seen face to face, maidens oftentimes, while combing their locks, ate an apple alone at midnight, threw one piece over their left shoulder, and while munching the rest, they looked through their veil of hair and saw the reflection of their ordained spouse in the mirror. There is also the old custom of the sowing of hemp. It was also done at midnight by a lass scattering the seed saying, "Hemp seed I sow thee, hemp seed I sow thee; and he that is my true love come behind and harrow thee." A youth who was too fainthearted to take advantage of such a chance was not worthy to win a fair lady. The winnowing of corn at mirk midnight offered yet another opportunity, also the measuring of the beanstalk. The order in regard to the latter spell was to go three times round a beanstalk with outstretched arms, as if measuring it, and the third time the votary will clasp in her arms the shade of her future partner. It is easy to see how the shadow with a little tact might become substance.

You can read more on this at:

<https://www.electricscotland.com/history/folklore/folklore1.htm>

END.

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

Alastair