NEWSLETTER – MAY 2022.

HUNTYGOWK!

Sorry this is a bit late but I did not know that this word had gone out of use. When I was at school we would all try to be the first to play a trick on our friends, usually by saying something that wasn’t true, & when they believed it we would say “Huntygowk”. This happened on April 1st, All Fools Day, & meant “Hunt the Gowk”, gowk being the Scots word for fool. I was really surprised at the number of people who did not know & I thought to add it to your vocabulary.

Washday.

When I was about 11 in 1945 we lived in Forth & we did have running water & electricity but the washing was entirely by hand. My Mother would light the fire under the boiler in the boilerhouse next to the cows’ byre to heat the water that had been “pailed” into it earlier. Monday was always washday & the wooden tub was placed on a stand like a large chair, with the wringer attached to its back. The washboards had a wooden frame with a ribbed panel down the middle, initially of aluminium, later of glass. The soap was in a footlong block which my Mother cut a piece from, using a shovel. The washboard had a little ledge along the top for holding the soap. Warm water from the boiler was put in the tub, the clothes were dunked in it then washed by rubbing soap on them & kneading them on the board. When they were clean they were fed through the wringer & dropped in the basket ready for hanging out on the clothesline. When the large items like sheets were dry I would take one end with my Mother & we would fold them carefully, then they would be puy through the mangle to make them nice & smooth, with me at the back to catch them as they came through. The mangle was a brute of a thing, about 4 feet wide & 5 feet tall, made of iron with large wooden rollers which exerted pressure by being attached to a pair of 56 lb weights which lifted up & down when you turned the handle. The rest of the dry clothes were ironed at the kitchen table with a blanket pad on it, as there was no such thing as an ironing table, at least not in our world. I hated in the winter if the washing could not be dried outside, then they had to be hung on the large wooden winterdykes round the range in the kitchen, so that you could not sit near the fire. An amusing anecdote apropos of that was that a farmer friend of my parents used to go to Lanark market every Monday & would have a little tipple while he was there, & as he dare not return to his wife with the drink in him he would stop off at our house to sober up. He was the only one I ever knew to be allowed to sit inside the washing. (He was on foot, of course!)

Grace.