



## NEWSLETTER

### Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

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#### Scotland on the international stage (the year so far....)

Dear Member,

Here we are, more than half way through this extraordinary year. Many of the events planned to take place during 2014 have now come and gone. Glasgow has been very much in the limelight. The success of the **Commonwealth Games** is still talked about today. The crowds were enthusiastic, the atmosphere friendly and the feel-good factor generated by the event will linger on for a long time to come. But culture has also been present in Glasgow, both as part of the **Commonwealth Games** and again thanks to the city playing host in July to the first **World Congress of Scottish Literature**. Some of the most distinguished world academics joined Scottish writers and scholars at its ancient University, and all debated and celebrated the place of Scottish literature worldwide.

Edinburgh also has been busy. In August the city embraced the traditional multitude of summer festivals filling venues and streets with artistic talents from all over the world. 2014 has been the farewell year for Jonathan Mills as Director of the **Edinburgh International Festival**. Acclaimed as an outstanding year for the Festival, there have been critical and popular successes such as, among many others, *The James Plays* by Rhona Munro, produced jointly by the National Theatre of Scotland and the National Theatre of Great Britain. Audiences have packed theatres across the city. The **Fringe** has seen this year more events and participants than ever before. And the **Book Festival** filled the gardens in Charlotte Square with thousands of visitors eager to meet their favourite authors and to listen and take part in debates. Edinburgh in August is indeed a very special place.

But as we go into the Autumn, we are approaching perhaps the most important event for the whole of Scotland: the **Referendum on Independence** on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. It has been such a significant journey for Scotland and whichever side of the debate you are on it is quite evident that people have been involved and engaged in the democratic process and this can only be a positive thing!

September also see the start of the **Branch 2014/2015 programme** with an excellent variety of speakers for our lunches and lectures. They include, among others, Linlithgow-based author and former railway manager Harry Knox talking about shale-mining in West Lothian; librarian, author and Scottish Local History editor Don Martin giving us an insight on how to chronicling Scottish local history; Kinghorn-based sculptor Kenny Munro will share his thoughts on sculpting for Scotland, and Ian Forbes, Manager of the Blairs Museum, will take us on a tour of its treasures. **For details on all events please see page 4 of this issue.**

Laura Scott  
Editor

#### Branch AGM and Committee

Our **Branch AGM** provided an opportunity to express thanks to **Ann Begbie**, who stood down as our hard-working Events Coordinator while remaining on the Committee: that role passes to **Kenneth Stewart** who will combine it with his responsibility for liaising with St Andrew Societies around the world. The musical introduction trialled at our recent lunches will become a feature of the December one in celebration of its proximity to St Andrew's Day. There was discussion about the dilemma that while the evening lectures in September and March provide events at no further cost to members, turnout to them is poor compared to the lunches. It was decided for 2015/6 to trial replacement of these evening events by a seventh lunch in April.

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- HQ Autumn/Winter Programme

**Branch events from the Spring/Summer**

(John Yellowlees, Secretary)



At our **final lunch** of the winter season, Alastair Alexander told us how the mission of U-33 to strike at the Clyde in 1940 was halted when its engine-noise was detected by the new echo-detecting Sonar technology aboard HMS Gleaner on her patrol between Pladda and Ailsa Craig. Specialist divers seeking an Enigma machine following the discovery of its wheels in a German's pocket found the scuttled wreck easily because it was sitting on a shale-surfaced area of the seabed which was therefore seaweed-free. The salvage operation brought up rotors and other vital components, the first time that any parts of an Enigma machine had been recovered in wartime, and they were despatched in great secrecy to Bletchley Park for cracking of its codes by the intelligence boffins.

**For this year's Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture**

the curator of Abbotsford Matthew Withey told us how Sir Walter Scott's legacy stayed intact until sisters Patricia and Jean Hope-Scott died in 1996 and 2004. Trustees then set about securing its sustainability by creating a visitor centre, shop and restaurant sitting low in the landscape of the House, which is now Grade A-listed with the Hope Scott Wing converted into a hotel. The ambience retains its shabby-chic lived-in look, with Scott's bust prominent in the study, the Byron Urn reinstated in the library and the armoury tastefully restored with its Celtic sword. The dining room which had not joined the public tour until the 1960s has been lightened up, and an opportunity exists for sponsors to "save a shield" on the ceiling.



After our **AGM** Jim Summers told us about the Scottish Railway Collection at Bo'ness underlying whose success was a continual struggle, not just of finding resources, but of conservation versus preservation or restoration, or not bothering at all. There was so much more to the operation than just steam engines, and the fleet of classic carriages with which the Society operated its popular railtours needed maintenance and equipment to the same up-to-date modern standards as those of main line railway companies. The Scottish Railway Preservation Society had won an award for its recreation of the telegraph-pole route along its heritage line - once a feature of the landscape and railways, only one such pole route remained in the entire country, and a whole somewhat intrepid profession of telegraphic linesman was now nearly gone.



At our **Annual Dinner** the Convenor of the Highland Branch Roy Pedersen told us how his father's career in harbour management gave him an interest in transport. The civil service in London proved to be not for him, so he immersed himself in learning Gaelic, spending much time at the British Museum creating and publishing the first Gaelic map of Scotland. Moving to Inverness and the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB), he found a wonderful world which was helping transform its area into the dynamic region that it now is, moving Scotland's centre of gravity northward. He wrote Pentland Hero about Andrew Banks whose unsubsidised ferry the Pentalina on the short crossing to Orkney now carries more traffic than the Northlink routes. This true account proved to be a ripping yarn, so he moved into fiction, introducing the character of Brother Richard whom he set in Galloway because he felt it to be a neglected part of Scotland.



Begun in 1786 on the initiative of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atholl to establish cotton manufacturing, Stanley Mills which we visited on our **summer outing** were founded on a peninsula formed by a hairpin bend in the Tay, the UK's fastest-flowing river, by Perth merchants with technical and financial support from Richard Arkwright.

People cleared to make way for sheep on the Atholl and Breadalbane estates were settled in the purpose-built village of Stanley and sent to Arkwright's pioneering water-powered mill at Cromford for training. As demands changed and technologies developed, buildings were added, adapted, expanded, destroyed by fire, rebuilt, shut down, reopened and demolished. Machinery came and went, powered initially by water wheels and latterly by electricity generated by water-powered turbines on site. Indian independence lost a major export market, and with the market for cotton belting also in decline the final new venture was into acrylic fibres - but a management buyout in 1979 was not enough to avert closure ten years later. In 1995 after a fire the site was bought by Historic Scotland, and thanks to grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a collaboration with the Phoenix Trust creating 39 private residences it has been possible to restore Stanley Mills to their present condition.

**Membership news**

We extend a warm welcome to the following **new members** who have joined the Branch since the last issue of the Newsletter. We do hope to see them at some of our future events:

**John E Arnott, Christine De Luca, Robin Harper, Catriona M Johnstone, D A D MacLeod, David Williamson & Isobel Knox and Maud Wilson.**

## Obituaries

### Margaret Yellowlees – *Farewell to a friend of the Branch*



It is with great sadness that we report the death on 24 June of Margaret Yellowlees, dear wife of our secretary John with whom she is seen here at their silver wedding celebration two years ago at Bo'ness. Tall and with an Aberdonian lilt that laced her pawky humour, Margaret was for a dozen years a weel-kent face at our lunches until infirmity began to take its toll. We shall all miss her presence at Branch events and convey to John our deepest sympathy for his personal loss.

We also have to record the death, in October last year, of **Lilias Scott Forbes**. Lilias was the daughter of renowned Scottish composer Francis George Scott and a distinguished poet in her own right.

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### Up-date from Saltire HQ

The first ever **Saltire Speakeasy**, which was held over the course of four days in the intimate surroundings of Saltire HQ, saw the Society participate in the Fringe Festival as a venue for Scottish and international poets, authors and musicians. Intended as an opportunity to bring the Society to a wider public it has certainly achieved this to a degree, at least according to the positive feedback from both the artists and those attending. All involved found the eclectic evening programmes very exciting and a real taster of the amazing talent Scotland has to offer. It is hoped that the venture can be repeated in future years. The challenge will be to find interested audiences among the intense Fringe competition.

The **Outstanding Women of Scotland** initiative is progressing well. Sarah and Aly from HQ and Council Member Susan Garnsworthy continue in their effort to bring wider recognition to this project.

The latest two **Saltire Pamphlets** to be published –*Nevertheless* and *Dreaming Scotland*–have been written by two of Scotland most distinguished authors, Allan Massie and William McIlvanney. Both writers took part in a joint event on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July at Central Hall, Edinburgh discussing their thoughts and reading from their pamphlets in front of a packed and interested audience.

Please note the **Society AGM** which will take place on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> of September** at the City Chambers, Edinburgh, **at 11 for 11.30am**, followed by the **Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun Awards at 1.30 for 2pm**. If you wish to attend please book your place by phoning HQ.

**Full details of HQ Autumn/Winter programme on page 4.**

### Branch Programme 2014 -2015

Another very interesting list of events has been arranged for the Branch **Autumn/Winter programme** (...and a preview of Spring/Summer 2015...) The lunches and lectures will take place, as customary, at the Royal Over-Seas League, 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh. Guest speakers will address us on a variety of stimulating topics which we hope will attract many members. The evening lectures are free but lunches must be booked and paid in advance. A separate booking form is enclosed with this newsletter. **Do come along and bring friends and guests with you!**

**Evening Lecture**  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2014

**7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League (Free event – All welcome!..)**  
Elspeth Smith on *The Work of the Woodland Trust*

#### Lunches

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2014  
Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2014  
Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2014  
Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2015  
Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015  
Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> Mar 2015

**12.30pm at the Royal Overseas League**  
Harry Knox on *Shale-mining in West Lothian*  
Allan McLean on *The story of Scottish brewing*  
Don Martin on *Chronicling Scottish local history*  
Dr Nicholas Oddy on *The History of cycling in Scotland*  
Kenny Munro on *Sculpting for Scotland*  
Ian Forbes on *The Treasures of the Blairs Museum*

**EPIL Lecture**  
Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015

**7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League**  
Catherine Walker on *The War Poets Collection at Craiglockhart*

**Annual Dinner**  
Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015

**7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League**  
Guest of Honour Roger Kelly, Saltire Society Vice President, on *The Lost Garden of Penicuik*

**Branch AGM**  
Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

**7pm at the Royal Overseas League**  
followed by a **lecture** : Jamie Reid Baxter on *Elisabeth Melville, Lady Culross*

**Summer outing – Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 – Abbotsford** (details and booking form in next newsletter)

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### Saltire Society HQ Autumn Programme

#### Annul General Meeting & Fletcher of Saltoun Awards Ceremony

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Edinburgh City Chambers, 253 High Street, 11.30am & 2.00pm respectively

#### Wigtown Book Festival

26<sup>th</sup> September – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2014

(on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2014 **Literary and Publisher of the Year Awards Shortlists** announced)

#### Annual Fletcher of Saltoun Lecture

29<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, time TBC

#### “Saltire Celebrates”

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2014, Mitchell Library, North St, Glasgow, Time TBC

#### Saltire Awards Ceremonies

##### Fletcher of Saltoun Awards Ceremony

(see above under AGM)

##### Saltire Civil Engineering Award

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, 5pm, National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, 5pm

##### Saltire Literary Awards Ceremony

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014, Dynamic Earth, 112-116 Holyrood Gait, Edinburgh, Time TBC