



NEWSLETTER

Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

Dear Member,

Summer is drawing to a close, at least according to the calendar....not that we have seen much of it this year! While we are still hoping for a spell of good weather (perhaps an Indian summer..?) Edinburgh has once again played host to its annual multiplicity of Festivals offering all sorts of delights to the "aficionados" of the arts and filling the city with crowds of international visitors. As for the Branch we look forward to an excellent Autumn/Winter programme (see page 4). You will notice that from this year we have replaced what was the first September lecture with an extra lunch and moved the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture to follow our AGM in May 2016. We continue the new features of "What they say about..." and the "News Digest" which seem to prove popular with members. We hope you will find this issue of the newsletter interesting and enjoy reading it.

Laura Scott
Editor

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Report from Saltire Council and HQ Update

The Society has received one-year support from Creative Scotland for our Literary Awards, which will be announced at Waterstones stores simultaneously in Edinburgh and London on 22 October. John Beattie will be the new guest chair and MC at the Civil Engineering Awards in the National Museum on 28 October. HQ have been involved in the planning forum for the Festival of Architecture, Innovation and Design in 2016, and are delighted to have been awarded an in-principle contribution towards events to coincide with our own 80th anniversary. **Cameron Foster** is the Society's new events assistant. During the Edinburgh Festivals, HQ hosted an exhibition of work by Jamie Davidson inspired by his Arts and Crafts in Architecture International Travel Bursary which took him to Japan, while three music and poetry events **The Heretics** recalled heroes of the past and looked to the next generation. At a **Branch Development Day** on 12 August representatives of all the branches expressed their concerns and aspirations for the future. There were also discussions on the potential of the social media to enlist the interest of a younger generation in our activities. The **Society AGM on 12 September in Glasgow** will be followed by the announcement of the 2015 Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun Awards. There will be an event at HQ on 29 October to mark the Saltire Series joint venture with the Baring Foundation, Scottish Poetry Library and Luminare featuring poets Douglas Dunn, Vicki Feaver and Diana Hendry.

John Yellowlees, Branch Representative

Report from the Branch AGM on Friday 15 May 2015

Our AGM in May was very well attended. Mary Fleming welcomed those present and expressed her thanks to the Committee for their support and contribution to the smooth running of the Branch. She agreed to continue in office for another year but it is her ultimate intention to stand down as Convenor in 2016. Ann Begbie, former Events Coordinator, also decided to remain on the Committee. Secretary John Yellowlees gave us a preview of the Branch programme for 2015/16. Treasurer Eric Wishart confirmed that total income from Branch activities had been at similar levels to last year, while the most recent Branch donation to young musician Calum Macleod was recognised as a positive involvement and an encouragement for the future to consider helping the City of Edinburgh Music School in purchasing instruments useful to the pupils (see *News Digest* on page 3).

The composition of the Branch Committee is as follows:

Convenor Mary Fleming, Vice-Convenor Rina Moore, Secretary and Council Representative John Yellowlees, Treasurer Eric Wishart, Events Coordinator Kenneth Stewart, Newsletter Editor Laura Scott, also members Ann Begbie, John Forrester, Jean Napier, David Stevenson, Tommy Turnbull, David Withington.

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Branch events from the Spring/Summer

(John Yellowlees, Secretary)



At our **March** lunch, manager Ian Forbes - himself a former pupil - told us that Blairs Museum commemorates St Mary's College situated on the South Deeside Road five miles west of Aberdeen which was Scotland's national seminary, a boarding school for secondary boys from all over the country thinking of becoming priests.

Blairs had a library of 27,000 volumes which was at the National Library of Scotland from 1972 to 2014 before going to the University of Aberdeen. With falling numbers the school closed in 1986, leaving just the chapel and museum in use, and ownership passed in 1994 to a developer with plans for the college to become a hotel supported by housing and a golf course. With no-one to curate their origins, the sources of many artefacts at the Museum are unknown. Best known of all is the memorial portrait of Mary Queen of Scots loaned to the National Museum as the centre-piece of its 2013 exhibition painted posthumously in about 1600 as a political statement since it showed the Queen still regal after 19 years' imprisonment on her way to execution.

In her **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** – our last to be held on a March evening – Catharine Walker explained that the War Poets



Collection comprises books, journals, photographs, letters and film established by Edinburgh Napier University at their Craiglockhart Campus. The building opened as a Hydropathic in 1880, being requisitioned for use as a war hospital for shell-shocked officers and subsequently a convent and teacher training

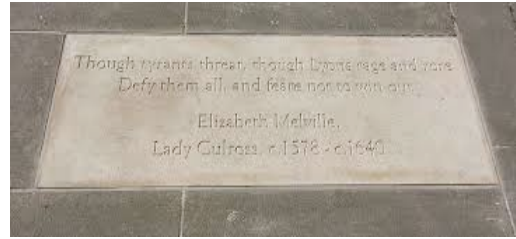
college from 1920 to 1984. Its most famous patients were the poets, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, who met there in 1917. Owen edited six of the hospital's magazine *The Hydra's* twelve issues, and having arrived "slightly ill" found himself getting "dangerously well". Sassoon was taken care of by Dr William Halse Rivers, a father-figure who became a friend but didn't like the regime, calling the Hospital "Dotyville" while Owen's term of endearment was "this excellent concentration camp". Poems written by Owen at Craiglockhart including *Dulce et Decorum Est* and *Anthem for Doomed Youth* were published posthumously, for he became well enough to return to the front where he died seven days before the end of the war.

Guest of Honour at our **Annual Dinner** Roger Kelly told us how in their



finest form after 1870 the gardens at Penicuik grew grapes and peaches in glasshouses reached through the Tympany Gates with vegetables grown in areas divided by brick walls. Bank collapses in the 1880s however brought difficult times, and the gardens were unsuccessfully

put up for sale : then in 1899 Penicuik House caught fire, and a meal was served to the Clerks as they sat on the lawn watching their home burn down. They moved into the stables letting the Gardens as a business which was owned by a succession of families. With changes in food retailing it became no longer viable as vegetables and flowers were imported from Spain and the Netherlands. Then in 2005 a trust was formed to save Penicuik Town Hall and, having succeeded in that aim, went on to tackle the Gardens by starting in 2012 on restoring a glasshouse built by Mackenzie & Moncur. Last year 1.6 tonnes of potatoes were sold, and now Roger leads tours of the Gardens at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month.



The inscription on the stone in Makars' Court reads:
*Though tyrants threat, though Lyons rage and ror
Defy them all, and feare not to win out*
Elizabeth Melville,
Lady Culross, 1578-1640

Accompanied by a singer and lute-player, Jamie Reid Baxter told us after **AGM** that Elizabeth Melville Lady Culross (1578-1640) was as good as Robert Burns at fitting poetry to traditional tunes. She was a product of her times, but her religious poetry can still talk to us even in this non-religious age. A militant Presbyterian, her poetry addressed the victims of James VI's imprisonment of ministers for not accepting his imposition of bishops. Thoroughly trained in Calvinist theology, her songs are sermons but no woman would preach in a Scottish pulpit until 1935. Hers is one of six flagstones in Makars' Court dedicated to Scottish women out of a total of 32 - all the other five lived in the twentieth century. Her poem parodying a love song in *Twelfth Night* on the Melville Mausoleum at Collessie confirms her status as a Presbyterian recusant.



Our **summer outing** on a blustery 6 June was to Abbotsford, one of the most famous literary homes in the world. The entrance-hall displays the breadth of Sir Walter Scott's interest as an antiquarian and collector, and the study was where he wrote his later novels, while the library of 7000 books is perhaps the world's finest amassed by an author since he was an avid collector and remarkably the contents are unchanged since his death. The drawing-room's wallpaper was hand-painted in China, with a Raeburn portrait showing Scott at Hermitage with his dogs, and the armoury contains Montrose's sword, Claverhouse's pistol and Rob Roy's gun, sword, dirk and sporran. The dining-room was where Sir Walter died in September 1832 on his return from a Mediterranean tour, and was restyled after 1928 by his great great grandson's second wife, an American socialite. The house was one of the first in Scotland to be lit by gas, and is set in 110 acres of gardens and woodland designed by Sir Walter himself.

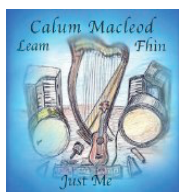
What they say about....."the Scots Language"

"The Scottish language is being lost every day, and in a short time will become quite unintelligible.....To me, who have the true patriotic soul of an old Scotsman, that would seem a pity".

James Boswell describing his plan for a *Scots Dictionary*, 24 February 1764 in *Boswell in Holland*, 1763-1764 (F.A.Pottle, 1952)

News Digest

Supporting Music in Scotland



With financial support from the Edinburgh Branch young musician **Calum MacLeod** has recently brought out his new CD *Leam Fhin (Only Me)* comparing traditional Scottish and Nova Scotian music. The CD was launched at the Royal Overseas League on 22 May with great success and revealed the young musician's wide range of musical tastes. The Branch has also arranged a donation for the purchase and insurance of a cello for the City of Edinburgh Junior Music School based at the Flora Stevenson Primary School. It is hoped that this will attract more young people to study music.



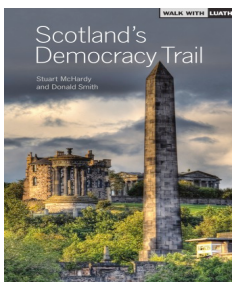
First ever official *Scots Scriever*!

As part of the new Scots Language Policy designed to support the language across the arts Creative Scotland, in partnership with the National Library of Scotland, will be funding a two years post of Writer-in-Residence aiming at producing original work in Scots to raise awareness of the language. **Hamish MacDonald**, a poet who started the Dogstar Theatre Company, has been appointed the first *Scots Scriever*. More information on the Scots Language Policy from the Creative Scotland website at www.creativescotland.com

"Thomas Muir 250"



This year marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Muir of Huntershill (1765-1799), the "Father of Scottish Democracy". Some celebrations have already taken place and included an exhibition at the Scottish Parliament in March-April, a "Walk & Talk" event organised by the Scottish Local History Forum in Edinburgh in June, and TV and radio coverage. More events are being planned between August and the end of the year in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other locations in Scotland. Highlights will include a dedicated exhibition at Edinburgh Central Library, a special reception at the Scottish Parliament on the 23 September and a memorial Concert at the University of Glasgow on 20 November. For a full programme go to www.thomasmuir.co.uk/thomasmuir250



A walking tour with a difference!

Arranged by Greenyonder Tours (www.greenyondertours.com) and based on a recent book published by Luath Press written by Stuart McHardy and Donald Smith, the *Scotland's Democracy Trail* follows the emergence of democratic thought and action in Edinburgh from the 16th century onwards, linking pivotal events to locations along the way. A comprehensive timeline, detailed map and photographs throughout will help your journey. The story is told through a guided tour of the landmarks and monuments of Edinburgh, from the top of Calton Hill to the Royal High School, from Edinburgh Castle to the Scottish Parliament and many more.



Two well *kent* faces at the NLS

Billy Kay, who will be the Branch **guest speaker at our December lunch this year**, is appearing at the **National Library of Scotland on Tuesday 15 September 2015 at 6pm** telling the fascinating history of the Scots involvement with claret and the other great wines of the world with stories, poetry, prose and songs.

David Spaven, who spoke to the Branch on 14 January 2014 about the *Borders Railways*, will also be appearing at the NLS on **Tuesday 29 September 2015 at 6pm** discussing his new book *The Scottish Railway Atlas* which examines railway development in Scotland over a period of nearly 200 years.

Branch Membership News

The Branch sends warmest wishes to **Margaret Street** who is recovering at home from a broken arm. We extend our welcome to a **new member, Kirsten Leask**, who joined the Society in March. Sadly, we have to report the **death** in April of **Margery Virtue Turnbull**, a Life Member of the Society since 1978. The **death** has also been recently announced of **Tessa Ransford**, Tessa was a poet, editor, translator and activist. Founder of the Scottish Poetry Library in 1984 she was its Director until 1999. Determined and committed in all that she approached, she was a passionate voice on contemporary Scottish issues, an internationalist, a campaigner for women's rights. A *bonnie fechter* indeed and a sad loss for all who knew her.

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Branch Programme 2015 -2016

The Branch forthcoming **Autumn/Winter programme** promises to be a superb collection of distinguished speakers and fascinating subjects. As explained on page 1 what was the first lecture of the year has been replaced by an extra Saturday lunch, whereas the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture will follow the Branch AGM next May. We hope all our events will stimulate the interest of many members and attract good attendances. The EPIL is free but lunches must be booked and paid in advance. A separate booking form is enclosed with this newsletter. **We do hope to see many of you. Friends and guests are welcome!**

Lunches

12.15 for 12.30pm at the Royal Overseas League

Saturday 3 Oct 2015	Alastair MacDonald and Colin Warwick on <i>Edinburgh's Three Veterinary Colleges</i>
Saturday 7 Nov 2015	Marion Williams of The Cockburn Association on <i>Standing up for Edinburgh</i>
Saturday 5 Dec 2015	Billy Kay on <i>The Scottish World</i>
Saturday 9 Jan 2016	Eric Melvin on <i>The Visit of King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822</i>
Saturday 6 Feb 2016	Michael Hance of the Scots Language Centre on <i>Speaking for Scotland</i>
Saturday 5 Mar 2016	Kellan MacInnes on <i>Caleb's list</i>
Saturday 2 April 2016	Aileen Orr on <i>Wojtek the Bear</i>

Annual Dinner

Friday 6 May 2016

7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League

Guest of Honour Allan Massie (topic TBC)

Branch AGM

Friday 20 May 2016

6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Overseas League

followed by the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture (7.30pm)**

Our speaker will be Sutherland Forsyth on *The Botanic Cottage*

Summer outing – Saturday 5 June 2016 –Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway (details and booking form with next newsletter)

Saltire Society HQ Autumn Programme

Annual General Meeting & Fletcher of Saltoun Awards Ceremony

Saturday 12 September 2015, St. Mungo Museum, 2 Castle Street, Glasgow, from 11.30am

Saltire Series Poetry Pamphlet Launch

Thursday 15 October 2015, Saltire Society Headquarters from 6pm

Saltire Awards Ceremonies

Fletcher of Saltoun Awards Ceremony

(see above under AGM)

Saltire Civil Engineering Award

Wednesday 2^o October 2015, National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, 5pm

Saltire Literary Awards Ceremony

Thursday 26 November 2015, Central Halls, 2 West Tollcross, Edinburgh from 6p

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