



NEWSLETTER

Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

Dear Member,

Six months is a long time in the life of the Edinburgh Branch newsletter. By the time the next issue is due there is never a shortage of topics to comment on.

Regretfully we must start on a sad note. We were very sorry to learn that three members of the Society, and of the Branch, passed away towards the end of last year, **Margaret Hilton, Margaret Street** and **Moira Stratton** (see page 4). They all played an active part in the life of the Society for many years and contributed hugely to its development and success. Their legacy will be remembered at the Society's AGM in September.

As far as our Spring/Summer programme we look forward to our remaining events, **the lunch on 6 April** when **Mike Robinson** of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society will be our speaker, then the **Annual Dinner on the 3 May** when we will hear Professor David Purdie of Edinburgh University talking about **The Scottish Enlightenment**. Our AGM will be on **17 May** and will be followed by the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** given this year by **Pat Clark** on the topic of **The Life and Art of Charles H Mackie**. Finally our **Summer Outing** will be on **Saturday 8 June** and this year it will take us to the **John Buchan Museum in Peebles** (for more details on this please see separate yellow information sheet).

For a list of all the events please see page 4 of this Newsletter.

We do hope you will find the programme interesting and that you will be able to attend some of our events and support the Branch.

Laura Scott
Editor

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Report from Saltire Council and HQ Update

Literary Awards: among the winners of the eleven categories for the Awards held last November we like to mention the following:

Book of the Year : Les Wilson "The Drowned and the Saved : When the War Came to the Hebrides"

Best of the First : Louise Welsh

Poetry Book of the Year : Jay Whittaker "Wristwatch"

First Book of the Year : Mick Kitson "Sal"

Non-Fiction Book of the Year : Sue Black "All That Remains : A Life in Death"

Fiction Book of the Year : Leila Aboulela "Elsewhere, Home"

Saltire Book of the Year : Sue Black "All That Remains : A Life in Death"

(You can read more on the other Saltire awards on page 4)

Janet Archer, former chief executive of Creative Scotland, has joined the Saltire Society as a trustee. **Ashley Stein** has left HQ to concentrate on her studies and on writing a novel. The recent sale of a painting of James VI will permit the appointment of two new members of staff. A new volunteer will work on the website for three months.

Sir Geoff Palmer was commended as worthy of the Society's recognition with the offer of an Honorary Membership.

The recent passing of so many Edinburgh members was reported, and it was revealed that **Moira Stratton** had left the Society a legacy. **The Society AGM in September** would provide an opportunity to salute their contribution. **The Dumfries Branch** is dormant, and will require reinvigoration if it is to continue. This year's meetings are 29 May, 14 August and 14 or 21 September (before the Society AGM).

John Yellowlees, Branch Representative

Branch AGM Calling Notice

The **Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Branch** will be held on **Friday 17 May 2019 at 7pm** at the Royal Scots Club, 29-31 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh.

The **Agenda** will be as follows:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM on 18 May 2018
3. Matters arising not on the agenda
4. Reports
 - a) Chairman's Report
 - b) Secretary's Report
 - c) Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Office Bearers and Committee
6. Any Other Competent Business
7. Date of 2020 AGM

Members are invited to give their support to the Branch by attending. Volunteers and/or nominations to stand on the Committee are always welcome.

The meeting will be followed by the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** given by **Pat Clark** on **The Life and Art of Charles H Mackie** (see page 4)

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Branch events from the Autumn/Winter
(John Yellowlees, Secretary)

At our first lunch of the season on 6 **October**, **Dr Conor Snowden** told us that the British Council is the UK's agency for cultural relations and is about engaging with the world on what we are good at – arts, science, technology and languages in schools and universities. Soft power derives from engaging with people in the countries that matter, with some of which we have a trust deficit. The Council is also active in areas of conflict, helping support fragile societies by sharing British values in partnership working which embraces online or other contact with nearly 1 in 14 of the world's population. The



British Council has been active in Scotland for seventy years embracing themes of the arts and education, society, justice and governance, and in 2018 was closely aligning with the Scottish Government's Year of Young People. By bringing arts agencies to Scotland during times of the year such as the Edinburgh Festivals or Celtic Connections, the British Council helps new artists here to engage globally, also taking them abroad. Future News Worldwide is a partnership programme between the British Council and some of the world's leading media organisations which identifies, trains and connects the next generation of global journalists.



Our **November** lunch heard from **Christine de Luca** that the Edinburgh Makar is a three-year appointment with an honorarium provided by Edinburgh City Council and support from UNESCO City of Literature, the Poetry Library, the Saltire Society and PEN. Better known in her native Shetland, Christine has however lived in the city for over 50 years, working in education and as both a poet and a writer of a novel and of children's stories. Her aim was to be an

ambassador for poetry and to take it into unexpected corners of the city where it had gone uncelebrated. Her Edinburgh Unsung initiative sought to celebrate the people without whose jobs the city would not function, and a visit to the sewage treatment centre earned her the Sun headline "Edinburgh Makar writes about poo". Coverage of the work of binmen meant an early start in a hi-vis jacket, observing performances reminiscent to her of Strictly Come Dancing routines that were watched from windows by children who in a previous era might have been spotted by RLS watching Leerie the Lamplighter. Leith was of particular appeal in view of its forgotten corners but also as the place where Shetlanders had once collected their mail or awaited a berth on a ship to take them home. Tackling John Knox gave her the feeling that he had been hard done by, but she enjoyed capturing the sexless atmosphere of the White Heather Club. Exploring Paolozzi at large in Edinburgh carried the chance to describe the clamjmfrey of his studio.

In **December** **Donald Smith** told us how Scotland's place as a territory with whose land our spiritual connection is millennia old was first brought home to him when in 1993 he was asked to help organise events for the 900th anniversary of St Margaret of Scotland. Our country is blessed with thousands of local traditions concerning wells, chapels, hilltops and islands, which prompted Donald to explore them



by walking the old routes, which he has been doing for 25 years. People often say that they don't have faith while venerating these places, and it became clear that the significance of some long predates Christianity, stretching back to the Stone Age. They regard standing stones as though they are seeking a contemporary spiritual experience, a need that seems to be innate in our very DNA. However we cannot contemplate the landscape without having regard to those who lived there, and there is no substitute for visiting the actual places. Tom Devine's "The Scottish Clearances" is a milestone because it provides a national story for Scotland, avoiding a separate focus on the Highlands which have sometimes been oversentimentally treated but taking the theme from the Lowland and Borders agricultural improvers to the post-Culloden subjugation in the north. In exploring uses made of the land it is fundamental to realise that the idea of people staying put until the twentieth-century wars is a myth: moving to find work is a feature of all history. It is our integral sense of who we are that gives us the strength to respond to the present challenging times when Brexit and "fake news" have distracted us from inequality and poverty, and that is tied to our sense of inspiration from the landscapes to which we have fallen heir.



In **January** we heard from **Barbara McLean** about the child-poet Marjory Fleming who, born at Kirkcaldy in 1803 the daughter of a magistrate and niece of a minister, had an older sister and two brothers and a younger sister, on whose birth she was sent to live with a widowed aunt in Edinburgh's New Town. Aunt Marion Keith's home was on North Charlotte Street in Edinburgh's New Town, then under construction. Only the well-off could afford to live there, and Henry Cockburn wrote of the green

turf with trees leading to woodland along the Water of Leith where the cry could be heard of the corncrake nestling in the grass. There was a family connection with Sir Walter Scott, and Marjory's first editor Dr John Brown wrote an account of Marjory's life in which Scott swept her up in his arms and had her read poetry to him in his home, but Brown's tendency to mawkishness calls the veracity of this into doubt and it seems more likely that he was appealing to the Victorian obsession with the death of children. It was he who introduced the soubriquet Pet, and in the 1930s Robert MacLeod put her rhymes to music, calling her the Little Friend of Sir Walter Scott, which cemented the legend. Marjory's relationship with her aunt's daughter Isabella was a constant theme. Isabella was Marjory's tutor, and together they read adventurously. In history they studied the Stuart kings and especially Mary Queen of Scots who was the subject of her longest poem. Religion was characterised by the devil and the wild leash, and Marjory could roar herself into a temper tantrum, sometimes attributed to an excess of senna, which was followed by an outpouring of remorse to Isabella as her mother-substitute. For the last eighteen months of her life, Marjory kept a diary. After returning to Kirkcaldy in 1811, she was never again to meet Isabella, but her final poem, an "ephibol" - one of those invented words - expressing her love for her cousin was sent from her sick-bed just four days before her death.

At our **February** lunch attended by Society President Sally Mapstone we heard from **Simon Skinner**, chief executive of the National Trust for Scotland,

that as a child of the 1930s like the Saltire Society, its purpose was to protect and promote access and enjoyment of Scotland's heritage. The heritage of Scotland already in its care took many forms, from the 90+ buildings it cares for to the eight national nature reserves it protected, the 100,000 plants in its collection, the 38 visited gardens it maintained, the 11,000 archaeological sites it protected, the 300,000 artefacts it preserved and the 76,000 hectares of landscape it looked after.

From "coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wilderness" no other charity or government agency had this depth and range of heritage responsibility, but NTS had to widen its appeal and relevance beyond the 4% of the population who were already members and beyond its typical membership demographic of the elderly and young families. Young people did not see the Trust as a charity, but rather a well-funded arm of government (from which less than 4% of the Trust's £60M operating costs actually came). They also thought of the Trust as "stuffy, staid and all about castles, not countryside" - when in fact some of the most iconic places such as Glencoe, Ben Lawers, Ben Lomond, Kintail, Staffa, St Kilda and Mar Lodge were in its ownership.

Between 2007 and 2015 there had been a steady decline in visitation to the Trust, and that to reverse this trend it had invested £11M in building new attractions, restructuring around six regions - bringing decisioning closer to the properties - and introducing new commercial competencies to manage the capital spend and increase income from catering, retail and conversion to membership. With a further £57M to follow, NTS's targets corresponded to four strategic objectives: to 'protect' and care for Scotland's heritage; to provide opportunities for everyone to 'experience' and value heritage; to 'promote' the benefits of heritage conservation; and to create an efficient and sustainable business which 'supports' its conservation needs. An internal target was to move the Trust to a point where its operational income and membership income matched its operational expenditure, and Simon cited four developments about to be delivered: encasement of the Hill House in a protective mesh to allow the building to dry out; the 'Window on the World' viewing tower at Inverewe Gardens; the reopened Brodick Castle and new 'Isle be Wild' play park; and the refurbished Glencoe Visitor Centre - a refurbished stopping point in the valley, with new interpretation and vastly improved retail and catering offers.





On 21st February we paid a visit to James Clerk Maxwell's house in India Street. Prof Chris Eilbeck from Heriott Watt University hosted the event. He told us that Scotland's greatest scientist, the Father of Modern Technology, was born at 14 India Street in 1831. Two years later the family moved to what became Glenlair House in Galloway, where his mother died of stomach cancer when he was 8 and he did not like his tutor so ran away. Sent to Edinburgh Academy, he had an accent that made him at first unpopular. From Edinburgh University he went to Trinity College Cambridge, becoming a fellow and thence to a professor at Aberdeen's Marischal College but a merger cost him his job so he left, marrying the principal's daughter for London. People did not in those days fully understand the connection between electricity and magnetism, so Maxwell worked out the equations. His study of wave propagation derived a theory for the nature of light, and he predicted the existence of wireless waves and the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum. Maxwell was interested in colour and colour blindness, using a lightbox to improve on Newton's work and creating the first-ever colour projection. He developed control theory to maximise performance while not running out of fuel, and started the study of statistical physics to predict the behaviour of particles. His was the sole entry to a Cambridge competition on the structure of Saturn's rings. Retiring to Glenlair in 1865, he wrote most of his great treatise on electricity there before founding the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge. Maxwell died aged only 48 and also of stomach cancer. He was buried in Galloway at Parton Church, and a statue by Sandy Stoddart in George Street shows him with his dog and a ring. Einstein had a picture of Maxwell in his studio at Princeton, and said that he stood on the shoulders of Maxwell. Glenlair burned down in 1929 but has been partially restored, and in 1993 the James Clerk Maxwell Foundation bought 14 India Street.

A Concert to Remember

As we are going to press our friends at **The City of Edinburgh Music School at Broughton High School** have notified us that a concert of remembrance in honour of former pupil **Martyn Bennett** is taking place on Monday 4th of March at the Queen's Hall as part of the 40th years anniversary celebrations of the venue.

The piece, entitled **Homecoming 2 - The Return of Mackay's Memoirs**, was Martyn Bennett's final composition before his untimely death twenty years ago and was written to commemorate the centenary of his alma mater, Broughton High School. It was also used for the Opening Ceremony of the New Scottish Parliament in Princes Street Gardens on the 1st of July 1999 and televised live from the gardens as the Red Arrows flew over.

The concert will see the collaboration of the some of the original musicians, as well as students and former students of the Music School.

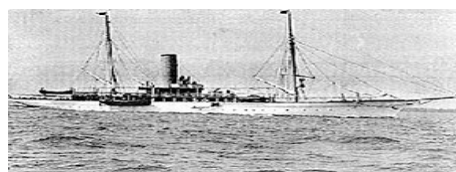
A fitting tribute to Martyn and the Broughton High School.

What they say about.....the Scots

....."a rough-witted fearless race, more inclined to pass shrewd remarks upon their superiors in wealth and station, than to pay a slavish homage."

George Allan: *Life of Sir Walter Scott*
(Edinburgh, 1834), p 48

Poetry Corner



Edinburgh Branch member Damian Boyd-Otley has written a poem about the HM Y Iolaire tragedy, the centenary of which has been commemorated in January. The poem was read by Iain Anderson in his BBC Radio Scotland programme on 23rd December last year.

HM Y IOLAIRE - 1st January 1919

*Promise of hope on the morning tide;
but first-foot of Neptune
brought horror and doom.*

Look! See tragic harvest from the sea!

*Where Lapwings swoop above the
pebbled beach;*

*See! Noble flowers,
tarpaulin-draped upon*

God's Sacred Machair.

*They left home as boys;
and returned to us as Martyrs.*

*Shining silver sea;
weeps.....dark with death.*

How many tearful prayers

.....can grant us peace?

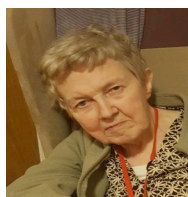
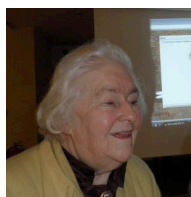
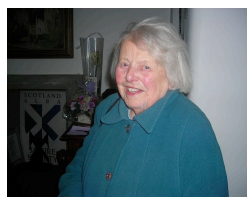
*Only the crying Gulls
can heed*

our silent sorrow.

Behold! Today!

The death....of our tomorrow.

Branch Membership News



Near the start of our season we mourned the loss of three veritable pillars of the Society: **Margaret Hilton** who had chaired its International Committee, former National Convenor **Margaret Street MBE** and **Moira Stratton** who was for some years our representative on the Council. Their legacy will be remembered by the Society at their next AGM in September.

We also bade farewell to **Dr Joanna Kitchen** who for many years checked the tickets at our lunches in St John's Church at the West End and to **Andrew Ivor MacDonald**, who had joined the Society at 18 and 70 years later came on our summer outing last year on the Borders Railway.

After many years of stalwart attendance **Dr Derek and Sheila Wagg** and **Anthony and Miriam Dilworth** have cancelled their membership owing to ill health. The Branch is grateful for their past support and will miss their presence at our events.

The Branch send best wishes for a speedy recovery to **Robin MacCormick** who is currently receiving care in the Western General Hospital. We also had news that **Isobel Wilkie** has recently left the Royal Victoria Hospital and moved to Ferryfield Hospital.

News from HQ – Saltire Awards

Saltire Outstanding Women of Scotland - At the Glasgow Women's Library on **20 October** ten inductees were announced:

- **Maureen Beattie** – prominent stage and screen actor and President of Equity.
- **Jenny Brown** – Prominent literary agent, former Head of Literature at the Scottish Arts Council, founder Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Chair of Bloody Scotland crime writing festival.
- **Mhairi Black** – Member of Parliament for Paisley & Renfrewshire South and the youngest member in the House of Commons.
- **Karyn McCluskey** – Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland, notably championed a public health approach to violence reduction and is a world-leading expert in this field.
- **Isabel McCue MBE** – mental health campaigner and founder of Theatre Nemo.
- **Beth Morrison** – award-winning campaigner for the care, wellbeing and rights of children with special and complex needs.
- **Janice Parker** – award-winning independent choreographer and dance-maker.
- **Professor Sarah Wanless** – highly regarded scientist with international recognition whose work has been essential to the conservation of marine ecosystems, a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Honorary professor at the University of Aberdeen.
- **Rosemary Ward** – Director of Programmes at the Scottish Book Trust, former Director of the Gaelic Book Council and notable figure in the fields of Gaelic education, literature and culture.
- **Talat Yaqoob** – Director of Equate Scotland and campaigner for gender, race and religious equality in Scotland.

Saltire Infrastructure Awards - Presented on **24 October** by Magnus Linklater and public finance and digital economy minister Kate Forbes MSP, the awards went to:

- the Greatest Contribution to Scotland : the Forth Replacement Crossing
- the Infrastructure Award : Shieldhall Tunnel
- the Designed in Scotland Award : the new health centre on Tristan da Cunha
- the Building Award : the Macallan Distillery
- the Regeneration Award : Sighthill regeneration

Branch Programme Spring/Summer 2019

A reminder to members of the **Spring/Summer events**. Please note that the evening lecture following the AGM is free but the **Annual Dinner** must be booked and paid in advance (a separate booking form is enclosed). This year the **Summer Outing** will be an open day, no booking required. Please see separate information sheet for all details. **Do come along and bring friends with you! We do hope to see many of you!**

Last lunch of the 2018/2019 series:

Saturday 6 April 2019

12.15 for 12.30pm at the Royal Scots Club

Mike Robinson, Chief Executive of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society

Annual Dinner

Friday 4 May 2019

6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club

Professor David Purdie on *The Scottish Enlightenment*

Branch AGM

Friday 17 May 2019

7pm at the Royal Scots Club

followed by the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture at 7.30pm**

Our speaker will be Pat Clark on *The Life and Art of Charles H Mackie*

Summer outing

Saturday 8 June 2019 **(New date!)**

The John Buchan Museum, Peebles

For details on the excursion please see **separate information sheet**

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