



NEWSLETTER

Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

Dear Member,

*In a world increasingly full of uncertainties, it is reassuring to be able to rely on familiar things that bring comfort and enjoyment. The Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch can certainly help in this. It encourages members to come together, spend time relaxing and meeting friends, while perhaps also learning something new through our many different talks. **Kenneth Stewart, our former Treasurer and Events Organiser**, greatly contributed to this very purpose. Sadly, however, after a spell in hospital Kenneth passed away in October 2019. Yet another grave loss for our Branch. You will find an **Appreciation of Kenneth** on page 4. We owe it to him and to all the other stalwarts of the Branch who are no longer with us to make an effort and support Branch events as much as we can.*

*Looking ahead to our Spring/Summer programme in addition to our regular events we have arranged two very interesting extra items which should attract members' attention. On **Wednesday 18 March** Dolina Maclellan and Alan Riach will delight us with a repeat of their **MacDiarmid - A Celebration**, previously presented at the Saltire Society Festival Fringe last August (see adjacent column and page 4 for details). The event is free. Then, on **Tuesday 21 July** we are going on a **Walkabout in Portobello**, following the local Architecture Heritage Trail (see insert on page 3 for details). All sounds very exciting so do pen the dates in your diaries and bring friends! You will find ALL the events in the Spring/Summer programme listed on page 4 of this issue.*

We do hope many of you will be able to join us. The Branch and its activities depend on its members and their vital support!

Laura Scott
Editor

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Report from Saltire Council

At the last meeting on 28 January 2020 two significant decisions were made concerning headquarters and operational management.

- Sarah Mason and her team, Catriona Cox and Heather Palmer carried out a careful assessment and costing of the long overdue maintenance and upgrade of the building: electric works and plaster and painter works as well as a complete overall of the IT software and hardware systems.

- Sarah also critically reviewed the actual extent of her and her small team's tasks and responsibilities. The collected data clearly showed they are all expected to discharge their duties and deliver time efficiently from within the Society Headquarters. In recognition and respect of these findings Council unanimously agreed that Sarah's will formally become *Director* with a working pattern of 4.5 day a week. (She has been shouldering this responsibility informally until now). Both Catriona and Heather's working hours will increase to a 4 days a week and their title will be *Administrator and Event Officers*.

Headquarters upgrade and increased staff hours will obviously incur added financial costs and Council has agreed to secure the required funds through the selling of some shares.

For reports on Autumn events and Awards please go to page 4.

Neville Singh, Branch Representative

Branch AGM Calling Notice

The **Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Branch** will be held on **Thursday 14 May 2020 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 17 May 2019
3. Matters arising not on the agenda
4. Reports
 - a) Chairman's Report
 - b) Secretary's Report
 - c) Treasurer's Report
 - d) Election of Office Bearers and Committee
 - e) Any Other Competent Business
 - f) Date of 2021 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 this year by Professor **Joe Goldblatt** on **Adaptive Hope** (see page 4). **The event is free and it will be given wide circulation.**

EXTRA BRANCH EVENT - NOT TO BE MISSED!

On **Wednesday 18 March** at 6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place, **Dolina Maclellan and Alan Riach** have very kindly agreed to bring back to our members their **Hugh MacDiarmid Tribute by Owen Dudley Edwards** presented at Saltire HQ during the Fringe on 10 August 2019. If you have missed it last year, this is an ideal opportunity to come along and enjoy this excellent performed reading. **The event is free.** We hope for a good attendance. Do bring friends with you!

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- Saltire HQ report on Autumn events

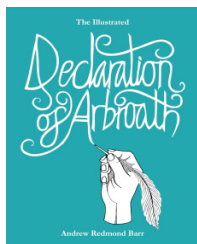
- Branch Spring/Summer Programme

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



At our **October lunch**, **Paul Sizeland** told us that **Scottish Natural Heritage's** strapline is 'All of nature for all of Scotland'. Through its volunteering programmes people of all ages are able to engage with nature through, for example doing counts of birds or insects, developing our

walking and cycling network, participating in outdoor learning activities and transforming spaces through funding from landscape partnerships and a green infrastructure fund. SNH leads delivery of Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy that includes managing and safeguarding the national matrix of protected areas like National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and areas of European and global designations. SNH also influences and promotes the value of the natural environment's contribution to economic development, sustainable strategies for food and drink production that work towards a low-carbon economy and responsible tourism while also combating wildlife crime. Our oceans occupy six times our land mass, 22% of which comprises protected area status, which is more than the 17% of our land area that is under some form of statutory protection. Of our 90k animal and plant species, over 24k are invertebrates and 6 are unique to Scotland found nowhere else on earth. Scotland has at the Bass Rock the world's largest gannetry. The machair with its corncrakes and yellow bumblebees is unique to Scotland and Ireland. We boast the world's largest freshwater pearl musselbeds and rare fish species including the Char, Vendace and Powan. Beinn Eighe is the first genetic reserve for the Scots pine. We are home to an incredible 750k deer that with no natural predation put much pressure on woodland regeneration. For its size, Scotland has the greatest diversity of geology and landforms in the world, and is widely viewed as the birthplace of modern geology. The recent Nature Conservation Order for Skye's Middle Jurassic rocks is a key piece of legislation to help protect internationally important dinosaur remains. A recent State of Nature report documenting a fall by one-quarter in Scottish wildlife over the last twenty-five years has shown the scale of the challenge with 40% of mammal species at risk of extinction, but there are also successes. Svalbard geese numbers wintering at Caerlaverock have increased tenfold since the war. The pine crossbill and the Scots primrose remain uniquely Scottish species, while the wildcat is at the edge of its range. Beavers and sea-eagles have returned, and the Flow Country is the world's best blanket bog and may soon become a world heritage site.



In **November**, **Andrew Redmond Barr** giving us a preview of his new book explained that **The Declaration of Arbroath** was a diplomatic letter to Pope John XXII in Avignon at a time when ideas of Scottish identity were under threat. With victory at Bannockburn at 1314, the time had come to drop the sword and pick up the pen. The Church was literate and able to capture sentiments that might catch the Pope's attention. The ideals of people, power and

liberty having been secured in war, John Barbour's Freedom is a Noble Thing signalled that a time had come to enjoy the smaller pleasures too, including the rights of the citizen. The nation was on the brink of transformation, full of stories about its past but looking forward to a clear identity in the wider world. The Pope was in those days like a sort of United Nations, the highest diplomatic authority in Europe, so was inundated by letters pleading for special favours. Presenting Scotland as being under the protection of St Andrew and ruled in his name by Robert the Bruce, the Declaration starts off in a fawning manner, but ends up being blunt and direct in its life and death appeal for protection against the English. It was compiled at Arbroath because here was an Abbey well away from the frontier but by the sea, so that it could be couriered by ship to the Continent. The commitment to Robert the Bruce was conditional on him continuing to do a good job in the name of the whole community, and the plea was for the Pope to urge the English king to call off the continuing threat of invasion. The response from the papal court was tentatively encouraging, Pope John himself writing to the English king quoting from the Declaration, telling him to halt the invasion and make peace with his northern neighbour. Anecdotes show how the Declaration's place in our official history continues to inspire but remains contested by both sides of the political divide. Offering a vision of a Scotland that is honest and sincere but bold in purpose, it speaks of a nation transformed by the power of words, of hope and a reminder of Scotland's place in the world but the importance of community and the origin of our democratic ideals.



Our **December** speaker was author and **publisher Jean Findlay** who told us that in a relatively short but surprisingly happy life, the son of a sheriff and a short-story writer **Charles Kenneth Scott Moncrieff** found the time and energy to translate Marcel Proust's seven volumes in seven years. A Winchester-educated poet and member of the Oscar Wilde set who was invalided out of the Great War, he moved to Italy where his spying uncovered Mussolini's export of arms to destabilise the British protectorate of Yemen. A homosexual whose

loves included Wilfred Owen, Scott-Moncrieff nevertheless was centre-stage in his extended family, funding the education of his nephews and nieces through his writings. His image hangs in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, and his signet ring was worn to our lunch by his great-nephew, the Saltire Society's new National Convenor John Scott Moncrieff.



In **January** we heard from **Jamie Jauncey** about his great-great uncle **Robert Bontine Cunningham-Graham "Don Roberto"** whose comfortable childhood and schooling at Harrow were shattered by his father's mental illness. Lured by false promise to Argentina, he found himself having to learn the survival skills of a gaucho in the midst of a civil war. His Velasquez looks came from a Spanish grandmother, but politics were

also in his blood, and aged 34 he became Liberal MP for North Lanarkshire on a radical platform of Home Rule, Lords abolition, universal suffrage, nationalisation, an eight-hour day and free school meals. He rode his Argentinian horse in Rotten Row dressed as a gaucho, and three times was suspended from the Commons, once was swearing (he said "damn"!), then for insulting the House and finally for rioting on Bloody Sunday after which he spent six weeks in Pentonville. Cofounding the Scottish Labour Party with Keir Hardie, he however lost his seat, though many years later would become one of the founders of the National Party of Scotland. Turning to writing when in his forties, Don Roberto produced over forty books, one of which about Jesuits in Paraguay provided the basis of the film "The Mission". His wife Gabriella was shrouded in mystery for despite claiming to be a French-Chilean actress she was actually a doctor's daughter from Yorkshire. She predeceased him by thirty years, but they lie buried together on the island of Inchmahome on the lake of Menteith.



On a **visit to Trinity House with Adam Gorysz on 16 January**, we were reminded of how busy Leith had been busy from medieval times with trades including coal exports, timber imports and whaling, and because life at sea was harsh the Incorporation of Masters and Mariners founded Trinity House in 1380 as a charitable foundation to assist seafarers who could no longer support themselves and the widows and children of those killed at sea. To pay for this,

prime gilt was a levy on imports and exports which was enshrined in law by Mary Queen of Scots in 1566, and Trinity House also supported the establishment of local churches and the training and licensing of pilots who guided ships in and out of the Forth. A sixteenth-century almshouse at the present location was becoming unstable, and the Masters commissioned architect Thomas Brown to build a new guild house completed in 1817 to provide a meeting-place for their growing membership and a secure home for their treasured possessions and papers. With a boardroom and records store downstairs, the upstairs housed the Convening Room with a long mahogany table which today displays Trinity House's eclectic collection. Over 150 paintings and drawings are in the possession of Trinity House, with some early views of the Port of Leith, several portraits by Sir Henry Raeburn including one of Admiral Adam Duncan, victor at Camperdown in 1797, and Scotland's largest painting entitled "Vasco de Gama Encountering the Spirit of the Sea" by Edinburgh artist David Scott which was purchased by public subscription in 1842, the first painting in Scotland to be acquired in this way. Nautical artefacts include many navigational instruments donated by Leith Nautical College when it closed in 1987. There are curiosities such as narwhal horns, a penguin egg collected by whalers near Leith Harbour in South Georgia and a ticket to witness the landing of George IV at Leith in 1822. Trade declined with the coming of the railways and the change brought about by Empire to trading patterns which favoured west coast ports, while rival Trinity Houses in London, Hull and Newcastle eroded its role in controlling piloting. There was less need for Trinity House's charity functions with the coming of the welfare state, and in 2004 the building passed into the ownership of what is now Historic Environment Scotland.



At our **February lunch Susan Kruse** told us that **community archaeology** involves communities in the planning and carrying out of research projects that are of direct interest to them, and is not just about digging since other skills including aerial photography have their part to play. Unlike history which is derived from a static set of documents, archaeology is always changing as new finds come to light. The size of Belgium, the Highlands have over 1200 scheduled monuments, whose condition reflects the area's history of fitful activity and depopulation. The earliest traces of human activity had now been found to date from Palaeolithic times around 12500 BC, before the last Ice Age, when Scotland's first settlers have left us a legacy of their rubbish including discarded arrowheads since no bones or dwellings survive. The Mesolithic Age featured hunters, gatherers and fishermen, whose lives in Easter Ross are being traced by the Tarradale Project. Advent of the Neolithic Age brought about the arrival of farming and pottery skills, with chambered cairns, timber houses and rock art. In the Bronze Age

metal was worked and burials took place in cists, with a change in DNA to dark skin and hair which begs the question whether the Highlands had been invaded or were genes bred through migration into the population. With the coming of the Iron Age, an absence of burials suggested the impact of a new religion, and while there were increased indications of people meeting a violent death, dwelling types proliferated to include roundhouses, crannogs, brochs and hill forts whose vitrification may be for fortification or as a result of the site being destroyed. In the early historic period from 300 AD onwards Christianity brought literacy to the Picts, with Portmahomack producing gospel books and Rogart yielding a dozen brooches. After 800 AD the Viking era saw a reversion to pagan burials and the concealment of bullion hoards. The medieval period was quite different from in the South of Scotland since the Western Isles remained Norse until 1200s, Orkney and Shetland until 1400s AD. In post-medieval times pacification of the Highlands required military presences like Fort George, but tower houses gave way to mansions and many abandoned townships remain in the landscape, waiting to be excavated. Roadbuilding begun with the military was consolidated by Thomas Telford and by landowners, while rail made the eastern Highlands better connected in 1900 than now. Maritime transport gave us ferry ports, fishing harbours and lighthouses, and the legacy of aviation is RAF air bases as well as civilian airfields. Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) was set up in January 2009 to provide a range of exciting and innovative community archaeology projects. Its activities bring together different skills, providing sociable activity and exercise that is both mentally and physically stimulating, under the direction of a tutor whose role is to ensure that projects are delivered in a quality and responsible way.

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News Digest

A showcase of Musical Excellence!

A concert which will see pupils from the four Scottish Centre of Excellence in Music, Aberdeen City Music School, The City of Edinburgh Music School, The Music School of Douglas Academy and The National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music will take place on **Monday, 9 March at the Queen's Hall, at 7pm.** Scotland's finest young musical talents will perform a varied programme of solo and ensemble pieces, wind and string instruments as well as vocal pieces. The concert will culminate in students from the four centres performing together. To book tickets please phone **The Queen's Hall on 0131 6682019** or email them at boxoffice@queenshalledinburgh.org

Have you visited Edinburgh latest bookshop?



Since last year **Toppings & Company Booksellers** have opened a new independent bookshop in Edinburgh, taking over the 4000sq/m former RBS site at 2 Blenheim Place, with rolling ladders and room for 70,000 titles. They have a full programme of events, speakers include novelists, politicians, comedians, chefs and more. And complimentary coffee and tea is served amidst the stacks of books! For more information visit www.toppingbooks.co.uk/events/edinburgh

EXTRA SUMMER BRANCH EVENT!



WALKABOUT EXPLORING PORTOBELLO
Tuesday 21 July 2020, meeting 11am at Portobello Town Hall.

Enjoy a seaside stroll following Portobello Amenity Society's local Architecture Heritage Trail. There are 21 points of heritage interest within a 2 mile walk lasting an hour and a half. Hear of how Portobello won the Academy of Urbanism's UK-wide award as "The Great Neighbourhood" for 2020.

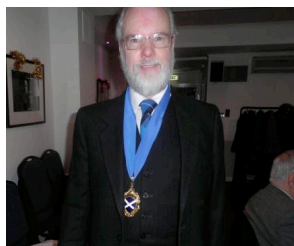
We are grateful to Eric Wishart for suggesting the outing and hope that many of you will join us in exploring this historical area!

"What they say about.....Democracy"

"Democracy has consequently been abandoned to its savage instincts, and it has grown up like those children who have no parental guidance who receive their education in the public streets...."

Alexis de Tocqueville (French aristocrat, diplomat, historian, 1805-1859) from *Democracy in America* (1831)

Branch Membership News



Obituary – Kenneth Stewart

In October 2019 the Branch suffered another grievous loss with the passing of our **Treasurer and Events Organiser Kenneth Stewart**. Coming to us from the St Andrew Society of Edinburgh, Kenneth was soon to be a well-known figure by his reading of annual telegrams from St Andrew Societies at our lunch nearest to St Andrew's Day each year. He was as efficient as he was self-effacing, and as Events Organiser saw to the arrangements for our lunches including the smooth transfer from the Royal Overseas League to the Royal Scots Club. When our previous Treasurer Eric Wishart became too unwell to carry on, Kenneth stepped into the breach and the Committee will miss him for his succinct contributions. We are grateful to Eric, who has recovered sufficiently to return to our rescue.

We are sad to record the passing of Bunny Wilson, widow of Professor Peter Wilson, both of whom had once been stalwarts of the Branch

SALTIRE HQ. reports on Autumn events

Scotland Outstanding Women of Scotland –10 new inductees were announced at Perth Concert Hall on **5 October 2019**, as part of WOW What Now:

Jill Belch, FRCP, MD, OBE, FR(E), FAMedSci, Professor of Vascular Medicine Ninewells Hospital and Medical School Dundee
Margaret Bennett, Professor, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow
Jackie Brierton MBE, CEO of GrowBiz
Fiona Dalgetty, Ceannard / Chief Executive, Fèis Rois
Joy Hendry, Editor of Chapman
Celia Hodson, Founder of Hey Girls
Louise Macdonald OBE, Chief Executive Young Scot
Zakia Moulouai, Founder & CEO at Invisible Cities
Emma Ritch, Executive Director of Engender
Heather Stewart, Creative Director, British Film Institute

The Saltire Literary Awards 2019 were held at the National Museum of Scotland on 30 November last year.

The Book of the Year went to **Kirstie Blair** for her study of "Working Verse in Victorian Scotland", which also won **Research Book of the Year**. **Recipient of the new Lifetime Achievement Award was Alasdair Gray**, who sadly passed away a month later. **Fiction Book of the Year** was "Nina X" by **Ewan Morrison**, and Non-Fiction Book was **Melanie Reid's "The World I Fell Out Of"**. **Emerging Publisher of the Year** went jointly to Kay Farrell of **Sandstone Press** and Alan Windram of **Little Door Books**, and **Publisher of the Year** was **Sandstone Press**. **Book Cover of the Year** was by Pablo Font for "The Wind That Lays Waste". **History Book of the Year** was on Alexander III by **Norman Reid**, and **Poetry Book of the Year** was "Hand Over Mouth Music" by **Janette Ayachi**. **First Book of the Year** was won jointly by **Clare Hunter** for "Threads of Life" and **Stephen Rutt** for "The Seafarers : A Journey Among Birds". The **Ross Roy Medal for outstanding contribution** was awarded to **Roseannah Murphy** from the University of Strathclyde, and the **Callum MacDonald Memorial Award** for best poetry pamphlet went to "**Glisk**" by Sarah Stewart

Branch Programme for Spring/Summer 2020

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!**

PLEASE NOTE TWO EXTRA EVENTS IN MARCH AND JULY!

Wednesday 18 March	6.30pm for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club Professor Alan Riach and Dolina Maclellan – Tribute to Hugh MacDiarmid - FREE
Last lunch of the 2019/2020 series:	12.15 for 12.30pm at the Royal Scots Club
Saturday 4 April 2020	Anne Pia on her <i>Scots-Italian Heritage</i>
Annual Dinner	6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club
Friday 1 May 2020	Duncan Hendry, retiring Chief Executive of the Capital Theatres Trust
Branch AGM	7pm at the Royal Scots Club
Thursday 14 May 2020	followed by the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture at 7.30pm - FREE Our speaker will be Professor Joe Goldblatt on <i>Adaptive Hope</i>
Summer outing	V&A Museum in Dundee
Saturday 13 June 2020	For details on the excursion please see separate information sheet
Walkabout in Portobello	Meeting at 11am at Portobello Town Hall
Tuesday 21 July 2020	(please see details on page 3)

Editor: Laura Scott, 33 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7RN – Tel.0131 2251038
e-mail: scott.fiore@virgin.net