



NEWSLETTER

Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

Dear Member,

Spring is just around the corner and we look forward to the start of the second half of our 2014/15 Branch programme. After the **last of our lunches** on Saturday 7 March, we are all encouraged to attend the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** on Wednesday 18 March, the **Annual Dinner** on Friday 1 May and the **Branch AGM** on Friday 15 May – followed by a talk (details of all the speakers and subjects on **page 4** of this newsletter). Our last event of the programme is the **Summer Outing to Abbotsford** on Saturday 6 June. This will be an excellent opportunity to visit, or perhaps for some of you re-visit, the former home of Sir Walter Scott after their extensive refurbishments. Full details of the excursion on the enclosed **separate booking form**. Lastly, starting from this issue we are introducing a couple of new items. The first, entitled **“What they say about...”**, will include short quotations about places and people in Scotland. In the second, called **“News Digest”** we will bring you short snippets of information on various topics relevant or connected to the Branch. We hope to continue both sections for the future provided we have enough material and space. Contributions and suggestions for future issues are always welcome!

Laura Scott
Editor

Report from Council and HQ Update

Ian Brown has succeeded David Ward as **National Convener**. The **Saltire Trust and Saltire Circle** received their London launch at a Burns-themed reception hosted by the Secretary of State in Dover House on 27 January. Council recently agreed to award **Honorary Membership** to Scottish film-makers **Jim Wilson** and **Douglas Eadie** with a reception on 5 February, while on 19 February great-great niece Jean Findlay gave a talk about the life of **C K Scott-Moncrieff**, soldier, spy and translator. **Professor Ian Campbell** will be appointed **Honorary President** of the Society at a ceremony at the Storytelling Centre on 17 March. The **Outstanding Women of Scotland Project** has been a great success and HQ will soon announce the ten women who will be celebrated on International Women’s Day on the 8th of March. This is a project developed in partnership with the Glasgow Women’s Library. A full update from HQ is enclosed with this newsletter.

John Yellowlees
Branch Representative

Branch AGM Calling Notice

The **Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Branch** will be held on **Friday 15 May 2015 at 7pm** at the Royal Over-Seas League, 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

The **Agenda** will be as follows:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM on 16 May 2014
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 2016 AGM

Members are invited to give their support to the Branch by attending. Nominations to stand for the Committee are also welcome.

The meeting will be followed by a talk on *Elisabeth Melville, Lady Culross* presented by Jamie Reid Baxter (see page 4 for details)

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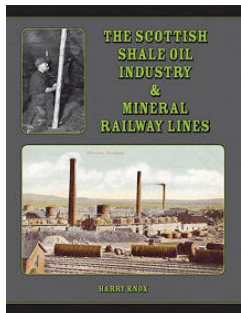
Branch events from the Autumn/Winter

(John Yellowlees, Secretary)



In her **start-of-season** evening lecture. Elspeth Smith explained that, founded just over forty years ago, the Woodland Trust has sought to lead by example and uses two main approaches to redressing the decline in Scotland's forest cover -

encouraging natural regeneration and planting new woodland. A management plan for the 12000-acre estate of denuded deer forest at Glen Finglas in the Trossachs bought in 1996 has seen reduction in sheep to a "flying flock" for tackling areas of coarse grass but introduction of self-reliant Luing cattle. At Glendevon it was necessary to survey soil types and drainage, assessing exposure to wind and frost before commencing planting of trees in mounds rather than the more usual destructive ridge-and-furrow. Mixed planting of broadleaf and coniferous species improves the attractiveness of the landscape, and drystone dyking has restored a traditional feature of the Scottish countryside. Now the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, the Woodland Trust believes that every young person should experience planting a tree, and current projects include creating Scotland's First World War Centenary Wood on military training ground in the Pentland Hills.



At our **October** lunch Harry Knox told us that no-one brought up in West Lothian could ignore shale-oil which was what made the area unique. In 1851 Dr James Young opened the world's first oil refinery at Bathgate before deciding to concentrate on shale production, in 1861 opening a new refinery at Addiewell which became the largest in the world. Miners had to buy their own explosives and to pay workers called drawers to bring their

output to the surface. Underground shale mining was less unhealthy than coal because it was classed as gas-free with canaries on hand to test if there was any doubt. An influx of Irish workers brought social problems, and oil companies built new villages, but roads were unsurfaced and the housing was often very poor, but the very full social life of shale-mining communities included whippets and pigeons, flower-shows, village galas, pipe bands, amateur dramatic groups and sports such as quoits and curling. The end for shale oil came quickly when in 1962 the Government removed its tax concessions, ordering the British Motor Corporation to relocate a new truck plant to Bathgate where it turned out to be too far from the industry's heartland in the English Midlands. The distinctive landscape faded as material from bings soon proved attractive in the construction of new motorways, but most of the shale is still there under the ground.

Allan McLean told us in **November** that Edinburgh, not Burton-on-Trent was the world capital of ale-brewing with at its peak dozens of breweries, and while today just the Caledonian Brewery survives from the nineteenth century, Heriot-Watt University's Institute of



Brewing and Distilling continues to promote Edinburgh as a leading international centre of expertise. The Scottish Brewing Archive is at the University of Glasgow where the Scottish Brewing Archive Association publishes an annual Journal and regular newsletters. Although the oldest item in the Scottish Brewing Archive is a petition against the malt tax signed by Edinburgh brewers in

1725, it is known that ale was brewed for the Coronation of King James IV in 1488. The name of Tennent has been associated with brewing at Wellpark, Glasgow, since 1556, and although the Belhaven Brewery can trace its direct history to 1719, brewing was known at the site in East Lothian in the 1550s. There has been a proliferation of new brewers in recent years, and Scotland is now thought to have 100 breweries including one at Summerhall, recalling that which existed before the site became home to the former Royal Dick Veterinary School. Beer can be matured in contact with whisky-aged oak, and thus the brewing and distilling industries maintain links with each other, although many visitors to Scotland know only of the whiskies.



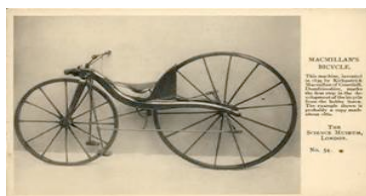
In **December** Don Martin and Douglas Lockhart explained that the thrice-yearly journal Scottish Local History offers local societies and university academics articles of appropriate quality that must be properly referenced. A pilot issue led the way with Prof Tom Devine providing an introduction

that deplored too much past local history as having been arid and parochial, lacking any context - which was a pity since the varied mosaics of local tradition were the building-blocks of a nation's history. Graeme Clark writing on the Black Isle School Logbooks during 1875-1935 won an award from the British Association of Local History Societies for best short article, and David Ritchie recounting the 1935 Morningside riots found the streets too narrow to support a contemporary account of how the disturbance fomented by Protestant rabble-rouser John Cormack had spread. Planned villages are a particularly rich theme since so many documents have survived, tracing the evolution of communities from the landlord's offering of lots to the emergence of attractive places that today are well worth visiting. The Highland Archive Network provides a hub that links local centres across an area larger than Wales, and many photographic collections have been digitised, but the Journal felt it necessary to make a political point by recording the loss of access to national records when West Register House closed in 2011. In a book about St Andrews in the 1840s Professor Robert Crawford has suggested that it is 'through acts of local fidelity that we find ways to speak for the planet as a whole'.

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What they say about..... "Edinburgh"

"Edinburgh (in 1820) was a true capital, a clearing-house for the world's culture and a jealous repository of Scottish traditions."

John Buchan: *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1932, 8th Ed, 1961)



In January Nicholas Oddy explained that the history of cycling in Scotland follows that of everywhere else. Our famous contribution, Kirkpatrick Macmillan's lever-framed bicycle of 1839, unfortunately probably never existed and was much more likely to have been a three wheeler. A half-Scot John Boyd Dunlop patented the pneumatic tyre, which with the wire-spoked wheel and gearing by a sprocket chain allowed the 'safety' bicycle to outpace a high bicycle with ease. The patent became hugely important for the cycle industry, prompting the Michelin bothers to mount a successful challenge Dunlop's monopoly by coming up with another Scot Robert Thomson's patent of a pneumatic tyre for cart and carriage wheels taken out in 1845, that up until then had been forgotten.

Cyclists now presented themselves as less formal, no longer wearing club uniforms and appearing in the manner of cavalry or adopting a more louche outlook. In a new world of licensing laws, locations like the Leadburn Inn on the far side of a county boundary became meeting-points because they allowed Sunday cyclists to qualify as bona-fide travellers. A generation had to be taught how to cycle, and Walter Hislop's cycle-riding academy was to be found in Edinburgh's Forrest Road drill-hall in 1897 before the entrepreneur moved on to other fashionable opportunities such as golf and tennis. The first state-legislated road signs, introduced in 1904 under the terms of The Motor Car Act excluded cyclists who, being placed outwith the legislation, decided not to engage with it. By the 1930s cycling was a working-class activity and was largely utilitarian. Although cycling is once again fashionable, this is mainly amongst white, middle-class enthusiasts who, riding the streets as if in a time-trial and conveying cycles on the roofs of their cars signify that too much of today's cycling is about fitness and leisure, not transport.

Our Convenor Mary Fleming reminds us that already in the mid-1860s more affluent parts of Edinburgh could enjoy a great selection of recreational activities such as at the **Patent Royal Gymnasium** built on the drained Canonmill Loch, on the way to Inverleith. Here you could use "a 'Rotary Boat' with 600 seated rowers; a Velocipede Paddle Merry-Go-Round, seating 600; a 'Self-Adjusting Trapeze' and a 'Compound Pendulum Swing' for 100 people. In winter the ground was prepared for skaters. There was also an athletic hall with attendants and the largest velocipede training school in Scotland". (Extract from "From Sedan Chair to Parking Meter - History of 42 Heriot Row", Scottish Women's Rural Institute)



February brought back a weel-kent Saltire face Kenny Munro who at HQ just two nights previously had led the tribute to documentary-maker Jim Wilson on his award of the Society's honorary membership. Kenny took us through forty years of "keeping the bank-manager at bay" during which, filming with Jim, he imagined RLS using the newly-invented telephone to put in a call from Samoa to the inventors of cinema in California! His sculptures have raised the profiles of under-celebrated Scots like Bill Douglas, and causes included restoring the family home of John Buchan in Perth, the city of his birth. Collaborators in Kenny's adventures have included George Wyllie and Murray Grigor, and a particular favourite for his attention is Sir Patrick Geddes, too often presented as a hoary old scientist who enhanced the sense of Edinburgh as an international hub but, by being too close to anarchist geographers and Darwin's theory of evolution to find favour with the Churches, took his passion for gardening and pageantry to India and then Montpellier where his Scots College deserves restoration as an educational centre.

Membership

We warmly welcome the following **new members** to the Branch: **Norah Smith, Alastair Yellowlees, Mary Ellen Herdman, Callum Anderson** (Young Person Membership) **and Anne Packard.**

Sadly, the **death** occurred in December 2014 of **Dr David Purves**, scientist and enthusiast for the Scots language. Former editor of *Lallans*, the journal of the Scots Language Society, past President of the SLS, playwright (*The Princess and the Puddock*), and author of the Saltire Pamphlet *A Scots Grammar*, published in 1997.

Former Branch member **Ted Ruddock** passed away in January. A building conservation engineer, expert on stone bridges, and Lecturer at Edinburgh University, he was also member of the Saltire Society Civic Engineer Award panel.

Also in December last year the **death** was announced of **Brian Lambie** MBE. Brian was the last surviving Lord Provost of Biggar, a Churchill Fellow since 1979 and helped create six museums. He spoke to the Branch in 2004 about *Biggar and the Albion Archive*, a section of the Biggar Museum Trust.

News Digest



The Great Polish Map of Scotland – A vast 3D concrete representation of Scotland in the grounds of Barony Castle Hotel at Eddleston, built by a group of Polish nationals in 1974 to thank the Scots for their hospitality towards Polish soldiers during World War Two. The Great Polish Map of Scotland is claimed to be the world's largest terrain relief model. The Branch has made a financial contribution towards the restoration of the Map. Following is a Progress Report by the Steering Group.

During the year we have removed over 120 tonnes of soil, vegetation and concrete rubble from the pit. This was helped enormously during the spring by the involvement of the No. 2 Scots Royal Regiment of Scotland from Glencorse Barracks in Penicuik. Their return to Afghanistan for more important duties was a sad loss to us. However, their return will hopefully mean we can re-establish our alliance with them. A new pressure washer augmented our manual cleaning operation and accelerated the removal of 40 years of moss, weeds and atmospheric pollution staining of the concrete. At year-end we are about 95% complete with major surface clean up. (December 2014)



Interested in the Scots Language?

Ishbel McFarlane, who entertained the Society's 75th anniversary celebration at HQ four years ago with her extracts from her on-train show *Even in Edinburgh/Glasgow*, will be at **The Traverse Theatre on 23-25 April** with *O is for Hoolet* in which by interrogating the history of Scots and the ways in which it is taught and subdued, the audience is invited to question the way forward for minority language.



Closure of the Danish Cultural Institute in Edinburgh

We regret the announcement that the **Danish Cultural Institute** is closing down in the UK and 2015 will be its last year of operation. The house with office and venue space in Edinburgh's New Town is being sold and is expected to close during the Spring of 2015. The Institute, however, will continue to operate in the UK throughout 2015, partnering with festivals and venues as before. The exit from the UK follows similar closures in Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia in the last couple of years as the organization has moved resources out of Europe into the developing world and the emerging economies of Brazil, China, India and Turkey. One of the Institute previous Edinburgh Directors, **Kim Caspersen**, spoke to the Branch in 2005

Branch Programme Spring/Summer 2015

A reminder to members of the **Spring/Summer events**. Please note that the evening lectures are free but the **Annual Dinner** and the **Summer Outing** must be booked and paid in advance. Separate booking forms for both events are enclosed with this newsletter. **Please also note the revised starting time of the Annual Dinner! Do join us. We hope to see many of you!**

Last lunch of the 2014/2015 series:

Saturday 7 March

12.15 for 12.30pm at the Royal Overseas League

Ian Forbes on *The Treasures of the Blairs Museum*

Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture

Wednesday 18 March 2015

7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League

Catherine Walker on *The War Poets Collection at Craiglockhart*

Annual Dinner

Friday 1 May 2015

New Time! 6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Overseas League

Guest of Honour Roger Kelly, Saltire Society Vice President, on *The Lost Garden of Penicuik*

Branch AGM

Friday 15 May 2015

7pm at the Royal Overseas League

followed by a **lecture**: Jamie Reid Baxter on *Elisabeth Melville, Lady Culross*

Summer outing

Saturday 6 June 2015

Abbotsford

For details on the excursion please see **separate booking form**