



NEWSLETTER

Saltire Society Edinburgh Branch

Dear Member,

After what has been an exceptional summer weather wise we now seem to have gone back to our usual Scottish seasonal normal. The various Festivals in Edinburgh have come and gone with the customary concentration of arts and visiting tourists and now, as by magic, Autumn is knocking at our doors. The Branch is ready to get started with its **Autumn/Winter programme** and what an interesting list of speakers and subjects we are being offered! From a Representative of the British Council Scotland to the current Edinburgh Makar **Christine De Luca**, from **Donald Smith** on his latest book on "Sacred Scotland" to not one, but two speakers from the National Trust for Scotland. Then, the Speaker for our **Annual Dinner** in May will be our own member **Professor David Purdie** who will address us on **The Scottish Enlightenment**. And lastly, following our AGM on the 17 May, the **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** will be delivered by **Pat Clark** on the **Life ad Art of Charles H Mackie**. (Details of all the events on Page 4). We do hope to see many of you!

As for the **Poetry Corner**, something a little different this time. You will forgive me if I pay homage to my own native city of Genoa, in Italy, in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy of the collapsed Morandi Bridge, I like to share with you a few lines by the 14th century Italian poet Francesco Petrarca who captured the setting and character of the place during his own time.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of the newsletter and continue to support the Branch in all its activities.

Laura Scott
Editor

Report from Saltire Council and HQ Update

On 1 June Magnus Linklater has handed over the Presidency of the Society to **Prof Sally Mapstone**, Principal of St Andrews University. In her gracious acceptance speech Prof. Mapstone, who is a Mediaeval Scottish poetry scholar, said she was honoured to be elected as President and was looking forward to immerse herself in all aspect of the Society's work. **Leith Fort** had come top in the Housing Awards presented by Alan Little on 20 June (see separate item on page 3). The 6th of August was the closing date for submissions to the Literary Awards. During the Festival HQ hosted several events, from **The Heretics** and a **Celebration of Hugh MacDiarmid** with Dolina MacLennan and Alan Riach, to **Why the Birds Sing** with Ian MacFadyen and **New Zealand National Poetry Day**. The Society AGM will be held at HQ on Saturday 22 September. For details of all other HQ Autumn events please go to page 4 of the newsletter.

John Yellowlees, Branch Representative

MESSAGE FROM THE CONVENOR

When the heavens eventually opened to give our gardens a much-needed soaking, a bus-driver quipped to me "Summer's back!", and I thought that he just about summed up 2018's extraordinary cycle of weather from the Beast from the East through Storm Hector to the weeks of gorgeous sunshine that characterised especially July. I trust that you were able to enjoy the summer, including the Saltire events during the Festival, and am delighted to welcome you to our 2018/9 programme at our new (but already much-appreciated) home the Royal Scots Club. But before the lunches start, this year the Saltire Society National AGM will be held in Edinburgh at Society Headquarters on Saturday 22 September from 12 noon, followed by the 2018 Fletcher of Saltoun Awards. Lunch is included in the ticket : I do hope that you will be able to book with HQ to come along and support the Society.

Report from the Branch AGM on 18 May 2018

At the Branch AGM our Treasurer Kenneth Stewart advised that lunches at the Royal Scots Club were offering better value while being more expensive, with the increase covered out of Branch funds during 2017/8, and to help sustain turnout the Committee had decided to peg the price at the real cost of £17.50 for 2018/9. Savings would be made by holding committee meetings at HQ. Willie Archibald thanked the Committee for its wise choice of speakers which the Convenor said represented a team effort.

John Yellowlees, Convenor

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Branch events from the Spring/Summer

(John Yellowlees, Secretary)



Our **March** lunch enabled us to resume our connection with the City of Edinburgh Music School whose Susan Emslie told us that when she joined the primary department attached to Flora Stevenson School teaching violin in 1988, it had 6 pupils – now there are 22 in what is the only primary music school in the UK. Pupils spent two half-hours daily receiving individual lessons, supervised practice and accompaniment plus small group sessions for theory, aural and general musicianship. All play the piano and one other instrument which is normally the flute or recorder at P1 with others such as cello, clarsach or percussion offered later as their hand skills develop. They find the time to do this by being taken out of classes such as physical education or art and project-work or by staying on late, but care is taken to ensure that their general education does not suffer should they decide (as very few do) not to pursue their musical studies. Performance opportunities include Christmas and summer recitals, piano solos at Friday assembly, outreach concerts, open days and the City Council's Resonate series of concerts at the Queen's Hall. Primary pupils take part in Broughton concerts and are encouraged to audition for the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. Pupils are encouraged to write and perform their own compositions.

The pupil's family must reside in Edinburgh, and some parents have relocated here, drawn to the city from as far away as Portugal and Malta – indeed parental commitment is a key feature of school life. Conservatoires in Glasgow, Manchester and London offer performance-based courses as an alternative to the more academic musical further education available at universities. The Edinburgh Branch had already funded a cello, guitar and percussion kit for the School, and we have now met the cost of new strings.



Moya McDonald told our **April** lunch that the key role played in the early film industry by Orcadian emigrant James Petrie Chalmers was not as an actor, nor a director nor a movie mogul, but as creator in 1907 of "The Moving Picture World," the film industry's first independent trade journal which covered all aspects of the cinema business, from the choice of seats and flooring to the latest projector or movie camera, highlighting all new inventions, safety standards and reviewing new films, therefore allowing access to information for the whole industry and rallying against fraud and monopolies. 12,000 copies of the first issue were printed – and within a week, they were all sold. At

this time the fledgling industry was being pressured on two sides; by those who saw it as corrupt and an attack on morals, and those who wished to monopolise and control it. Chalmers took on both by fighting the corner for an independent industry of quality and a tool for education. Moving Picture World became an industry powerhouse, maintaining its independence from the film studios. Its reviews illustrate the standards and tastes of film in its infancy, and shed light on story content in those early days. While attending an annual film convention at Dayton Ohio in 1912 Chalmers went to find the projection room, mistakenly opened the wrong door and fell to his death down a lift-shaft. His family continued publication so as to honour his memory until 1927 when it merged to create the Motion Picture Herald. Chalmers was forgotten in Orkney where he had left nothing behind, and the first cinema there opened two years after his death. Indeed so early was his influence that his lifetime preceded even Charlie Chaplin's debut, but Moving Picture World became the voice of the fledgling industry in those silent days and set the scene for the vibrant film-making community that would emerge in Hollywood, far from the controlling influence of the American establishment.

Guest of Honour at our **Annual Dinner** was Prof Jim Hunter for whom the academic take while studying history at Aberdeen did not connect in him with the sense that he picked up in Highland localities of how people thought about their heritage. Whole generations had been taught to think that their inheritance starting with the Gaelic language was second-rate, and if diminished self-esteem translates into low self-confidence there is undoubtedly a link with economic and social development. Edward Thompson wrote about the industrial revolution from the perspective of the workforce, rescuing them from the condescension of posterity, and it was in such a spirit that Jim wanted to



explore the Sutherland Clearances. In *Set Adrift Upon the World*, Jim tells their history of the Clearances as it occurred on the ground. Jessie Ross's daughter died of whooping cough a few weeks after her family were evicted from its croft, but her husband wrote angrily to the Marquess of Stafford about the family's clearance and after efforts to discredit them led to a nervous breakdown a son was born whom (in behaviour reminiscent of Orwell's Winston Smith falling in love with the dictator) he named after the Marquess! John Sutherland a tenant in the Strath of Kildonan made ends meet from cattle and illicit distilling, and was steeped in the Fenian sagas which he could recite from memory for several hours. In 1813 he and his family left for Canada, having to winter at Churchill on Hudson Bay where he died and is commemorated by a boulder : the rest of the family reached what is now Winnipeg, where there is a locality called Kildonan. A lawyer from Elgin, the villainous Patrick Sellar was also a superb agriculturalist in the rearing of sheep for their wool, which is now worthless but was then the main cash crop. Women were to the fore in any riots, egging their men on to resist the Clearances which were planned in person by the Countess - who called them Improvements - in Sutherland during her summer visits to Dunrobin from where she wrote letters which have survived to her ailing husband in London. Reading them, Jim found that he was becoming rather fond of her!



The **Edinburgh Philosophical Institution Lecture** after our AGM was given by Sian Bevan, who told us that in 2004 Edinburgh became the world's first UNESCO City of Literature, a concept thought up by booklovers to celebrate our printed heritage. There are now 128 cities worldwide that have been designated by UNESCO, and these include Glasgow for music and Dundee

for design. The Stars and Stories Project has brought illuminated quotations to dark corners of the Royal Mile, seeking to provide inspiration during the winter months that might prompt people into meandering into their own explorations of its closes. One lightbox next to Saltire Society HQ remembered Tessa Ransford, while another "nothing but time" at Our Dynamic Earth was for father of geology James Hutton and "nobody left home hatless" recalled Muriel Spark's observation of Edinburgh's divided society.

For our **Summer Outing** we took the Borders Railway, Britain's longest new domestic line in a hundred years when it opened in September 2015, the 35 miles from Waverley, the word's only railway station named after a novel, to Tweedbank where some of us headed with David Purdie to visit its author Scott's home at nearby Abbotsford. The rest enjoyed lunch at Herge's on the Loch, a light and airy restaurant named after the Belgian cartoonist with a fine view of swans and ducks. An open-top bus failed to stop for us, but some took the scheduled service to Melrose, where we visited Priorwood Garden and the Abbey and one of us climbed the stair, similar to the one up the Scott Monument, to take in the view from the roof.





Finally, **in July** we visited at Simon Fairnie's invitation **Musselburgh Museum**, where this summer's exhibition seeks to promote recognition of the Honest Toun's status as the Cradle of Golf. The first recorded game in the world was here in 1672, and it was an application from the Honourable Company of Leith Golfers in 1714 to form the first club that led to promulgation of the game's rules. When the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers decided in 1836 to move to Musselburgh because of encroachment on their original home, they started a movement that would transform not only the town but also golf itself. With them they brought the other Edinburgh clubs including the Royal Burgess, Bruntsfield and Warrender, and this concentration created work for local clubmakers, ballmakers and caddies who found employment in large numbers. From these master craftsmen came generations of innovators and talented players who kept golf alive until the coming of the latex-rubber gutta percha ball which democratised and revolutionised the game.

News Digest

Saltire Society Housing Award



Alan Little was guest presenter at the Housing Awards now in their 81st year on 20 June. The Saltire Medal went to Collective Architecture for Leith Fort (see left), which he hailed as an exceptional project that has regenerated a historic site with a mix of mid-market and social rent housing which connects well with surrounding streets. The Award for Innovation was won by Kraft Architecture for Linkwood View, a care facility in Elgin constructed in timber round a central courtyard. The Good Building Award went to John Gilbert Architects for Claddens Holdings in Lenzie, which addresses with great rigour the ecological choices to be made to be made in building materials and finishes. The Royal Incorporation of Architects has since shortlisted Leith Fort for the Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland Award with these words : "Clever interpretation of traditional Edinburgh Colony Housing for a modern development. Excellent realisation of a masterplan into a cohesive and well built "place". Materials and detailing on the buildings were excellent."

A progressive and open-minded Scot



Jamaican born **Professor Sir Geoff Palmer** who was Guest of Honour at the Branch Annual Dinner in 2011 and who was knighted five years ago for services to science, human rights and charity has again been in the limelight back in May for delivering a keynote speech on a the pivotal role that a Scottish politician had in the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. This was to coincide with exhibition at Heriot-Watt University to honour the efforts of **William Gibson-Craig** whose family home was the Riccarton Estate and who was MP from 1837 to 1852. A chance discovery by Professor Palmer in a box of correspondence in the University's archives of a letter that Gibson-Craig wrote to his father shows how he voted in favour of abolition in the final stages of the debate. The legislation which secured the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies was passed in 1838 by only three votes.

Poetry Corner

The 14th Century Italian poet **Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch)** after a visit to Genoa (Italy) in 1353 described the city with the words which follow below. "*La Superba*" (*The Proud*) is the name by which Genoa is still known today.

Vedrai una citta' regale
addossata ad una
collina alpestre, superba
per uomini e per mura,
Il cui solo aspetto la indica
Signora del mare.

(Translation)
You will see a royal town
leaning against
an alpine hill, proud
for its inhabitants and walls
By her appearance alone truly
Mistress of the Sea

"What they say about"Scotland

"...(Scotland) can only live in the character of the people, in its native literature, and in its picturesque and delightful language. The gradual disappearance of the Scots accent and dialect is a national calamity."

Henry Cockburn (1779-1854) *Journal*
Entry for 10 July 1853, Vol II, page 295

Branch News

We welcome **two new members**, **Mrs Miranda Johnson** and **Mr Richard Munro** and we hope they will be able to attend some of the Branch future events.

Sadly, we have to report the death of the following members, **Ms P J Webster**, **Mr Colin McClory** and influential former civil servant **Ronnie Cramond**.

The Branch sends warm wishes to **Isabel Wilkie** who is currently in the Royal Victoria Building. We hope she will soon be able to go back home. And a welcome return home to **Paul Scott** who has been recently discharged from the same hospital after a three months stay there. Also **Margaret Street** is now back in her own house after a fall, while **Moira Stratton** has moved to Murrayfield Care Home, and **Margaret Hilton** is a resident of Strachan House. Fond thoughts and greetings to all our long standing members!

We were sorry to hear of the death of **Professor Cairn Aitken**, renown psychiatrist who played a major role in the creation of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and who spoke to the Branch after the 2007 AGM about the Scottish landscapes seen by Bonnie Prince Charlie and as they appear today in the twentieth-first century.

Branch Programme 2018-2019

For its **Autumn/Winter Programme** the Branch has arranged a superb collection of speakers who will address us on a variety of interesting topics. We do hope members will support it by attending in good numbers. The EPIL is free but lunches must be booked and paid in advance by returning the enclosed booking form to our Events Coordinator, Kenneth Stewart. **Friends and guests are always welcome!**

Lunches

Saturday 6 October 2018

12.15 for 12.30pm at the Royal Scots Club

Jordan Ogg, Communications and External Relations Manager,
on the *British Council Scotland*

Saturday 3 November 2018

Christine De Luca on *Being the Edinburgh Makar*

Saturday 8 December 2018

Donald Smith on *Sacred Scotland: Land, People, Spirit*

Saturday 5 January 2019

Barbara McLean on *Pet Marjorie*

Saturday 2 February 2019

Simon Skinner on *The Work of the National Trust for Scotland*

Saturday 2 March 2019

Diana Watters HES on the *NTS Small Houses*

Saturday 6 April 2019

Mike Robinson RSGS

Annual Dinner

6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club

Friday 3 May 2019

Guest of Honour Professor David Purdie on *The Scottish Enlightenment*

Branch AGM

6.30 for 7pm at the Royal Scots Club

Friday 17 May 2019

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 2018 - Destination to be advised

Saltire Society HQ Autumn Programme

Annual General Meeting & Fletcher of Saltoun Awards Ceremony

Saturday 22 September 2018, Saltire Society HQ, 12 noon

Outstanding Women of Scotland

Saturday 20 October 2018. Glasgow Women's Library, 1pm

Literary Award Shortlist Announcement,

Monday 22 October 2018, Waterstones, Princes Street West End, 6pm

Saltire Society Infrastructure Awards 2018 Awards (formerly Civil Engineering Awards)

Wednesday 24 October 2018, National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, time TBC

Saltire Literary Awards 2018 Ceremony

Date, time and location TBC

Christmas Drinks, 14 December 2018 at HQ from 5pm

Editor: Laura Scott, 33 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7RN – Tel. 0131 2251038

e-mail: scott.fiore@virgin.net