A Big Thank You to Pat and Jack Hugh!

Dear Member,

Among his many other commitments to the Branch, Jack Hugh has also stepped down from being Editor of the Branch newsletter. For this as well we owe him – and his wife Pat who helped him in this task - a huge debt of gratitude. He has succeeded in producing a very attractive and informative publication which we all enjoyed reading regularly. I have agreed to take over from him, and will do my best to try to continue his excellent work. As this is my first attempt, I am quite sure there is plenty of room for improvement…!

As you notice, the decision was taken to revert to a black and white version due to rising printing costs, However, the good news is that we soon hope to have the original, coloured version up-loaded on to the newly revamped Saltire Society website. So do look out for it on www.saltiresociety.org.uk, in the Edinburgh Branch section!

I would very much like to have your comments and suggestions on this first issue. Do let me know what you think, both about the layout and the content. Would you like to see, perhaps in the future, a “Members’ News” section with short contributions from members, which you might think suitable for inclusion in the newsletter? This is just one possible development still at a very early stage of planning…!

I look forward to hearing from many of you. You can find my contact details at the bottom of page 4. I am confident that, with your help, we shall create an exciting and stimulating publication.

Laura Scott

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- HQ Autumn/Winter Programme
At our March lunch Dr David Clement told us that the diversity of Scottish place-names reflects the successive waves of migration attracted to our shores. In the Dark Ages Scotland was multilingual, but the Gaelic names of the southern Hebrides and Argyll testified to continuity of settlement over many centuries which shows that an invasion by Scots-Irish was a myth. However the arrival from the late eighth century of Vikings around our shores and later in the northern isles brought distinctive new forms of name. Place-names are constantly changing as communities reinvent themselves with new development, and the continuing interest in their evolution is indicated in recent debate over the Scottish Government’s application of Gaelic translations to ScotRail station signs.

Giving the annual Edinburgh Philosophical Institution lecture, Dr Bruce Peter recalled that being an architecture student at the Glasgow School of Art in the early 1990s meant being passionate about the ideals of Le Corbusier - but, resembling a cross between a Mayan temple and a giant pink birthday cake, the intriguing appearance of The Orient Mecca Social Club in the Gallowgate enticed him to join Mecca Bingo so as to investigate what lay within this former cinema. Cinema buildings were not meant to last long in the first place, having ephemeral styles and budget funding from financiers to give local expression to commercial pride - they were cheap to build and offered short paybacks, and their decline was due to loss of faith in cinema itself as mass entertainment. It is therefore perhaps appropriate that faith in some of the surviving buildings has been restored by their conversion to pentecostal churches.

The Guest of Honour at our Annual Dinner was Dr David Caldwell, told us that James IV inspired conflicting emotions, but asked did he deserve defeat so badly at Flodden in 1513. His extensive experience as a military commander in the years before 1513 had to be taken seriously. Despite shortcomings in the Scottish preparations there was no good reason to predict that James would have been defeated - and certainly not to the extent that he lost his life along with his leading nobles and about a quarter of his 20,000 strong army. Of course, as it turned out in the fighting, the English bills (long shafted weapons that could be used for cutting and stabbing) were very effective against the Scottish pikes, but perhaps the main problem for James was luck – of which he had none at all.

Before our AGM Alastair Dinsmor, Chairman of the Glasgow Police Heritage Society, told us that the Glasgow Police Act of 1800 providing for the paving, lighting, cleansing and policing of the city with a commissioner for each ward was Britain’s first Police Act and established the Glasgow Police. The new force’s first Master of Police John Stenhouse paraded his 9 officers and 68 men to show the public what they were paying for and strike fear into the hearts of criminals. An eventful history of having to deal with bodysnatchers, Irish troubles, strikers, gangs, serial killer Peter Manuel and gunmen gave us Britain’s first police box and the world’s first civilian pipe band, and came to an end with local government reorganisation when the last Chief Constable Sir David McNee, who went on to become Metropolitan Commissioner, presided over a final parade on 15 May 1975 which matched the first one 175 years previously.

Other News from the Branch

Branch Committee

We welcome a new member of the Committee: Tommy Turnbull. Originally from an agricultural background, Tommy soon moved on to music, playing piano and singing in a “Rock n’ roll” band—the Castle Kings. A teacher working mostly for Fife Regional Council, after retiring he did private tutoring until recently. Always interested in the arts he has been on stage as an (unpaid!) actor and singer. Preferring Geography to History, he enjoys walking, exploring the countryside and reading.

The composition of the Branch Committee is now as follows:

Mary Fleming – Convenor, Rina Moore – Vice Convenor, John Yellowlees – Secretary, Eric Wishart – Treasurer
Ann Begbie – Events Co-ordinator, Laura Scott - Newsletter Editor, John Forrester, Jean Napier, David Stevenson, Kenneth Stewart, Tommy Turnbull, David Withington

An Invitation to Branch Members from the Scottish Flag Centre at Athelstaneford

The Friends of the Scottish Flag Trust would like to invite members of the Branch to an event which is part of East Lothian Open Day. This will take place on **Sunday 15 September**, starting at 2pm and will include a guided tour of the churchyard, Saltire Memorial, Viewpoint and Heritage Centre. Then teas and cakes in the Village Hall followed by a 45 minutes slide show. Anyone interested in attending please get in touch with the Trust Chairman Dave Williamson at the following email address: davew632@gmail.com or by phoning 07833 241267.
Obituary

Dr David Wilkie, Former Chairman of the Edinburgh Branch

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Dr. David Wilkie, former Chairman of the Edinburgh Branch. David Wilkie was a nuclear physicist whose career was largely at Sellafield. On retiring to Edinburgh two decades ago he soon became Chairman of the Edinburgh Branch, and was elected to the Council in 1994, serving until recently on our committee with his devoted wife Isobel. He was also invited on to the Saltire Society’s Development Committee and Science Award Panel. David’s hero was the father of electromagnetism James Clerk Maxwell, and he strongly supported the initiative by the Royal Society of Edinburgh to commission a statue of the great scientist by Alexander Stoddart which now graces the East end of George Street. When, in 2010, he was awarded Honorary Membership of the Society together with his wife Isobel, their contribution was described as “invaluable” and “an example to others”, dedicated to Scotland and Scottish causes. He will be hugely missed for his gentle wisdom and puky good humour, and our thoughts are with Isobel and their family.

We were also very sorry to read about the death in February of Professor Howard Liddell, who had spoken to us just a year previously about designing for sustainability, when he reminded us that man’s war against nature is a war against himself. Interest had focused on the megafauna, but it was the little creatures that ran the world and went unnoticed and unprotected until it was sometimes too late – for example without bees we would fail to pollinate the plants that feed us. Howard was a pioneering figure in ecological design and community planning whose projects in Aberfeldy and Perth found new ways of integrating place, work and folk in accordance with the legacy of Sir Patrick Geddes.

Edinburgh Branch HQ Update

As the summer progresses we are happily nearing the end of the extensive building works and improvements at Saltire HQ. A new cost effective heating system, damp proofing, redecoration and new seating all conspire to give 9 Fountain Close a new lease of life. It will play host we hope to more small events. One such occasion saw journalist Alan Taylor in conversation with author and Saltire member Richard Holloway on the launch of his essay A Plea for a Secular Scotland. This is the first of our new Saltire Series of pamphlets.

One of the ideas behind the building improvements was of course to make it a resource for members, and now for Affiliate Members. The latter is a new category that has already attracted interest from like-minded cultural bodies such as Scottish PEN and one of the membership benefits is access to our meeting space.

On the awards fronts the various panels of experts have been deliberating over bridges buildings, books and much more. The newest of our awards is the Saltire Publisher of the Year, funded by Creative Scotland and in memory of one of Scotland’s great literary champions, Dr Gavin Wallace. The panel have met and made their decisions which we will be announcing later in August. We are also delighted to be working closely with Glasgow Life who run the Mitchell Library and this will see our Literary Awards and the Fletcher of Saltoun Award both take place in that great institution.

Finally Sarah Mason our Programme Manager has been finalising the details of this year AGM in Perth. We look forward to seeing you there and giving a fuller account of the progress across all of our work.

Jim Tough
Executive Director
Branch Programme 2013 - 2014

The Branch has arranged an excellent Autumn/Winter programme, with a series of lunches and lectures all taking place, as customary, at the Royal Over-Seas League, 100 Princess Street. A very interesting list of speakers on a variety of equally engaging subjects which we hope will attract many members. The evening lectures are free but lunches must be booked and paid in advance. A separate booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Do come along and bring friends and guests with you!

Evening Lecture 7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League (Free event – All welcome!)
Wednesday 25th Sept 2013 Brian Murray on Scottish coal-mining

Lunches 12.30pm at the Royal Overseas League
Saturday 5th Oct 2013 Professor Charles McKeven on The Battle for the North
Saturday 2nd Nov 2013 Kenny Munro and Peter Jewell on Bill Douglas, film-maker
Saturday 7th Dec 2013 Dolina MacLennan on The role of the Land Leagues in the Western Isles
Saturday 4th Jan 2014 David Spaven on The Borders Railway
Saturday 1st Feb 2014 Julie Davidson on Looking for Mrs Livingstone
Saturday 1st Mar 2014 Alastair Alexander on The Clyde in the Second World War

EPIL Lecture 7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League
Wednesday 19th March 2014 Matthew Withey, Curator of Abbotsford, on Abbotsford

Annual Dinner 7.30pm at the Royal Overseas League
Friday 2 May 2014 guest speaker Roy Pedersen, Convener of Highland Branch

Branch AGM 7pm at the Royal Overseas League
Friday 16 May 2014 followed by a lecture: Jim Summers on Progressing Backwards, the Scottish Railway Collection at Bo'ness

Summer outing to be advised

Saltire Society HQ Autumn Programme

Annual General Meeting Saturday 21st September 2013, AK Bell Library, Perth, 11am
Saltire Pamphlets Authors Event 6th/7th October 2013 at Wigtown Book Festival, details TBC
“Saltire Celebrates” on St Andrew’s Day Saturday 30th November 2013, Scottish Story Telling Centre, Edinburgh

Saltire Awards Ceremonies and Associated Events

Saltire Arts and Crafts in Architecture Award. 12th September 2013, The Lighthouse, Glasgow
Saltire Housing Award, 9th (or 16th) September 2013, Venue TBC
Saltire Civil Engineering Award, 31st October 2013, 4.30pm, National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street
Saltire Literary Awards, 14th November 2013, Glasgow Venue TBC

Hands Up for Trad’Hall of Fame Awards, 11 October 2013, Oran Mor, Glasgow

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