

THE BOOK
OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH
CLUB

The Journal for
Edinburgh History



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THE BOOK OF THE OLD EDINBURGH CLUB
NEW SERIES

The original series of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* was published in 35 volumes between 1908 and 1985; *BOEC* was relaunched in a New Series in 1991.

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NEW SERIES
Volume 7

2008

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C O V E R

An Old Edinburgh Club Excursion at the foot of Blackfriars Street

From an original Photograph in the Edinburgh Room, Edinburgh City Libraries

Unfortunately there is no information about the photographer or provenance of this fascinating photograph, which is recorded simply as a meeting of the Old Edinburgh Club in 1913. The meeting is at the Cowgate end of Blackfriars Street, site of the demolished Cardinal Beaton's House, and the fashionable clothes and headgear fit well with a visit by a group interested in the surviving relics of the Old Town at this period. There is a problem, however, as there is no record of such an expedition by the Old Edinburgh Club in 1913.

The Club was founded in January 1908 and published accounts of its lectures and visits in the Annual Reports at the end of the published volumes of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*. The first article in the first volume contained the map of Edinburgh by Bruce J. Home showing the remaining old buildings in the Old Town. The Club's first walk, in July 1908, followed the line of the old walls of the City, held jointly with the Survey Section of the Edinburgh Photographic Society. In 1909 the Club organised walks down the Royal Mile, first from Castlehill to Netherbow, then Netherbow to Holyrood, then a visit to Holyrood itself, with a fourth expedition further afield to Coates House and Donaldson's Hospital. The first walk in 1910, for a group of around 100, was on 11 June, from the West Port through the Grassmarket and up into Greyfriars Churchyard, but the second walk, on 25 June, a continuation along the Cowgate, seems the most likely to have been caught in our photograph. The walk was led by Bruce Home and Robert T. Skinner, taking in the Magdalene Chapel, Tailors' Hall and St Cecilia's Hall, and pausing at 'the Beatons' Palace', before heading up St John Street to end at the Canongate Churchyard. These early walks covered the Old Town fairly systematically, and later visits were usually to specific buildings: the Castle, and Moubray House, in 1910; the Cities and Town Planning Exhibition in the Outlook Tower, and Heriot's Hospital, in 1911; Duddingston, Castlehill to Netherbow (again), and Restalrig, in 1912. The record is clear for 1913: only a visit in June to the Council Chambers, City Museum and Lady Stair's House (all in High Street/Lawnmarket), and an expedition to Inveresk and Musselburgh in July. And there is no return to the Cowgate in the next few years either.

So, we cannot be certain, but it seems likely that the photograph records the Old Edinburgh Club's summer parade along the Cowgate in June 1910, one of a series of expeditions to familiarise the respectable members of the Club with the sites of vanished buildings and the remnants of Old Edinburgh that still survived — and should be preserved — amidst the squalor of the Old Town.

A.G.F.

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THE OLD EDINBURGH CLUB
2007–2008

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THE OLD EDINBURGH CLUB was founded in 1908, under the patronage of the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of the City of Edinburgh.

The aims of the Club are the study of all aspects of the history of Edinburgh and the promotion and encouragement of interest in the city by means of lectures, visits and publication of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*. A programme of monthly talks and lectures is organised each winter, followed by a number of guided tours and visits during the summer. Membership is open to all interested in the objects of the Club and all members receive a copy of all works published.

For further information and membership enquiries
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NEW SERIES
Volume 7

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Authors are invited to send a preliminary letter outlining the proposed contribution to Dr Fraser at the above address. An early indication of the illustrations envisaged would be helpful.
2. Contributions should be supplied in digital form, with a printout on one side of A4 paper, with wide margins. Consult recent volumes for details of house style.
3. Notes and references should follow the text, with arabic numerals inserted consecutively at the appropriate places in the text.
4. References to printed sources should be set out as in the following examples:

Sir Daniel Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1891), II, p. 59.

J. B. Morrell, 'Medicine and Science in the Eighteenth Century', in Gordon Donaldson (ed.), *Four Centuries: Edinburgh University Life, 1583-1983* (Edinburgh 1983), pp. 38-52.

R. K. Hannay and G. P. H. Watson, 'The Building of the Parliament House', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 13 (1924), pp. 1-78.

5. References to manuscript sources should be in accordance with the practice of the repository in which the documents are housed. Examples are:

Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Town Council Minutes, 12 August 1752.

National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS. 638, ff. 9-10.

NOTE ON PREDECIMAL CURRENCY

Before the present decimal currency was introduced in 1971 the system of currency in Great Britain divided the pound into 20 shillings and the shilling into 12 pennies. This was expressed as £ s d, or pounds, shillings and pence (from Latin *librae, solidi, denarii*). Conventions varied but amounts were usually expressed thus: £5 13s 11d, or £5. 13. 11, i.e. five pounds, thirteen shillings and eleven pence. Shillings could be expressed as e.g. 5s or 5/-, and shillings and pence as e.g. 5s 6d or 5/6. The penny was further subdivided into two halfpennies or four farthings. One guinea was 21 shillings, or £1. 1. 0. A crown was five shillings and a florin two shillings.

The pound Scots was originally the same as the English pound (pound sterling), but by the seventeenth century had declined in value to one-twelfth of the pound sterling. The Scots merk or mark was 13s 4d Scots. Scots money was abolished by the Act of Union in 1707 but calculations in pounds Scots remained current in Scotland till late in the eighteenth century.

Information on pre-decimal currency, and on pre-metric systems of weights and measures, is given in Colin R. Chapman, *How Heavy, How Much and How Long? Weights, Money and other Measures used by our Ancestors* (Lochin Publishing 1995). For the separate system of Scottish weights and measures see A. D. C. Simpson and R. D. Connor, 'Interpreting Scots Measurement Units', in Glen L. Pryde, *Dictionary of Scottish Building* (Edinburgh 1996), pp. 104-105.

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IAIN GORDON BROWN is Principal Curator of Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland. He is author of a substantial number of books and monographs on a wide variety of subjects, and has published articles in many leading research journals. His most recent work will appear as three separate contributions to the second volume of the major *Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press 2008). An essay on the varying significance of London for Sir John Clerk of Penicuik at different points of his long life, at times political and at others cultural (and sometimes both), will be included in Stana Nenadic (ed.), *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century* (Bucknell University Press 2008).

D. J. BRYDEN, BSc (Leicester), Dip.Hist.&Phil.Sc. (Oxford), MA (Cambridge), PhD (Cambridge), FSA, joined the curatorial staff of the Royal Scottish Museum in 1966. His peripatetic career, largely in national and university museums, included a further period in Edinburgh for the National Museums of Scotland. Prior to retirement he worked for the National Trust in Norfolk. He now lives in rural Worcestershire and when not growing tasty tomatoes or sailing, investigates the history of scientific instruments.

KITTY CRUFT, OBE, retired as Curator of the National Monuments Record of Scotland in 1991, and was co-author of the *Borders* volume in the *Buildings of Scotland* series (Yale 2006). A long-time member of the Old Edinburgh Club, she served as Honorary Secretary from 1966 to 1985, Vice President from 1990 to 2004, and President from 2004 to 2007.

OWEN DUDLEY EDWARDS is an Honorary Fellow of the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, since 2005. He was a member of Council, Old Edinburgh Club, 2004–07. He was Irish for his first 28 years and has also been Scottish since 1966. He taught History at the University of Edinburgh 1968–2005. His most recent book is *British Children's Fiction in the Second World War* (2007), but he has previously written about Edinburgh people such as Scott, Stevenson, Conan Doyle, James Connolly, William Burke, William Hare, etc.

GRAHAM PALMER is a writer, educationalist and researcher. He has had three educational books published by Cambridge University Press, and was awarded the first Judge John MacGregor Memorial Genealogy Bursary by the Clan Gregor Society. He is currently researching a book on the MacGregors and the 1745 Rebellion.

PROFESSOR DAVID W. PURDIE, MD, FRCPE, FSA Scot, is a Professor Emeritus of the Medical School of Hull University of which he was foundation Postgraduate Dean. He is Chairman of the Walter Scott Society, a past President of the Boswell Society and a member of the British Society for the History of Philosophy. He contributes to the broadsheets on medical and literary matters, and is a parliamentary speechwriter for several members of the House of Commons.

UNA A. ROBERTSON is a freelance historian specialising in social and domestic history. For many years she has given lectures for the University of Edinburgh's Office of Lifelong Learning (previously Extra-Mural Department) and other organisations, and has been a voluntary guide for the National Trust for Scotland and the Hopetoun House Preservation Trust. She is author of two books and several booklets, and has contributed numerous articles to publications both here and abroad. She was also a hands-on beekeeper, keeping the bees in her Edinburgh garden, and then became involved in administration at both local and national level.

JOE ROCK is an independent scholar and photographer, and has published a number of articles on Scottish material culture. He has recently been in Jerusalem taking photographs for a book on its Ayyubid architecture, and in Egypt to photograph the Coptic Monastery of St Shenouda. He is currently working on Scottish book illustration and writing an article for the forthcoming *Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, vol. II, 1707–1800.

ALLEN SIMPSON is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh, and was formerly Senior Principal Curator and then Research

Fellow at the National Museums of Scotland, where his main interests were in precision mechanisms. His recent volume *Weights and Measures in Scotland: A European Perspective* (with R. D. Connor) won the Saltire Society/National Library of Scotland Research Book award for 2005.

DAVID B. SMITH graduated in classics at Glasgow in 1958 and in law at Edinburgh in 1961. He passed advocate in 1961 and in 1975 was appointed Sheriff of North Strathclyde at Kilmarnock. He retired in 2001. He is Vice-Chairman of the Stair Society, was a member of the Scottish Records Advisory Council until it was brought to an end in 2008, and is a member of the Scottish Language Dictionaries Advisory Committee. For over twenty years he was president of Kilmarnock and District History Group. He has played the game of curling for nearly forty five years, becoming first a member of Coates Curling Club, the actual if not the legal successor of the Duddingston Curling Society. His *Curling: An Illustrated History* was published in 1981. He has had papers on historical aspects of curling published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, and received the R. B. K. Stevenson Award for one of these. He also has a large

collection of curling stones, medals, pictures and other paraphernalia of the game.

CHRIS TABRAHAM is the Principal Historian with Historic Scotland. An archaeologist by profession, during his 38-year career he has excavated widely throughout Scotland, mostly on castle sites, and published extensively. His works include *Fortress Scotland and the Jacobites* (1995), *Scotland's Castles* (1997: revised 2005), *The Illustrated History of Scotland* (2003: revised 2007), and *Castles of Scotland: A Voyage through the Centuries* (2005). He is also author of the official guidebook to Edinburgh Castle and *The Edinburgh Visitor Guide* (2004: revised 2008). A Cumbrian by birth, he lives in North Berwick, East Lothian.

ROBIN TAIT is a graduate in Physics from the University of Edinburgh, and has been a member of the Old Edinburgh Club for over four decades. He has recently undertaken studies which re-visit the history of several well known old Edinburgh dwellings, as well as investigating the early development of the burgh. The present paper reports one part of that investigation.

FOREWORD

It gives me very great pleasure to introduce this seventh volume of the New Series of *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, published in our Centenary year.

The Club was established in 1908. The anniversary has been commemorated in a variety of ways throughout 2008. Our major centenary event, the conference on the theme of 'Edinburgh 1908-2008: Once and Future Capital' still lies ahead as I write these words. We hope for a stimulating and memorable day. The re-creation of the Club's first outing, an exploration of the line and surviving portions of the walls of Edinburgh, has taken place, exactly a century on from the very day in July 1908. This re-visitation of past history, the brainchild of Graeme Cruickshank and organised by Alan McKinney, proved so popular that a second 're-creation' was arranged for the following day. But time does not stand still. At the last minute, the City Council's closure of the Castle Esplanade and the streets leading to it for pop concerts meant that some quick adjustments had to be made for both days. Nevertheless, for those of us who might have been initially confused, in the context of Edinburgh Castle, by the meaning and precise nature of a 'rock' concert, it takes more than Boyzone and Girls Aloud to put us off our stroke. Little did our predecessors in 1908 think of a world where such things could happen. One wonders what impediments our successors in 2108 will have to contend with, should ever they seek to re-visit our current celebrations! The cover illustration of this volume of *BOEC* shows an early Club outing to the Cowgate area of the city, probably in 1910. The girls at the front left of this party are giggling. Maybe they would have been more at ease than some of us at the musical events of 2008. Maybe, also, they snigger at the very thought that a Club such as their parents belonged to could exist even then, let alone survive healthily and happily a century later.

Consideration has been given, in the run-up to our celebrations, to the possibility of the Club's erecting a plaque of some kind at some suitable location, thus doing honour both to the place or monument selected and to the Club itself on the occasion of its Centenary. An opportunity has now presented itself for the Club

to set up such a plaque that would draw attention both to a significant and presently unmarked reminder of the course of the Flodden Wall and to the Club's role in keeping alive such memorials of the vanished past of Old Edinburgh, not least in our re-creation of the Wall 'ramble' on 18 and 19 July. This is a project that will take time and will require negotiation, but it is an attractive one for the membership to look forward to, and one that may serve to keep alive the commemorative effort and events of 2008.

The final event of our Centenary year will be the Civic Reception at the City Chambers on 2 December. The kindness of our patrons, the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of the City of Edinburgh, is greatly appreciated. They have supported the Club loyally through the years, and we look forward to a continuing fruitful relationship. Our patrons have given their blessing to the Club's commissioning of a Presidential badge of office. We have never had any symbol of authority, and I was keen that something be produced to mark the Centenary moment. A silver badge, bearing the City arms and suspended on a ribbon of the City colours, has accordingly been made. It seemed a nice touch to commission a piece of silver that would bear the marks for 2008, the 550th anniversary of the establishment of hallmarking in Scotland. This badge was worn for the first time on 4 July 2008 at the unveiling of the Adam Smith statue in the High Street. In due course, this fine statue by Alexander Stoddart will feature in the Edinburgh volume of the *Public Sculpture of Britain* series, an authoritative undertaking by the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, the volumes of which are magnificently published by Liverpool University Press. The Centenary Committee and Council of the Club felt that a commemorative Centenary venture of enduring value would be to support the work of the editors of the forthcoming Edinburgh volume in this splendid series by a grant that would allow further research towards the completion of this project and the eagerly-awaited book. The £5000 that the Club has given to PMSA will encourage progress on recording the sculptural heritage of the City, whether that be in the statues which stand in our streets and squares, buildings or structures richly adorned by sculpture

such as the Scott Monument or the National Portrait Gallery, or merely those decorative tablets and carved architectural details that the casual passer-by so often fails to notice.

In celebrating its centenary in 2008 the Club has been conscious that the year is also the 500th anniversary of printing in Scotland. We have been pleased to support an enterprise of the Scottish Printing Archival Trust. This is a substantial 'print trail' leaflet guiding the visitor round the sites of Edinburgh connected with the printing trade that once made the city universally renowned as a centre of excellence in the craft underpinning Edinburgh's equally distinguished reputation as a publishing capital. This comprehensive guide to a sadly lost world bears our Club logo. Our sponsorship serves further to establish the OEC as a body concerned for the heritage, traditions and the lives and livelihoods of past citizens.

In the realm of printing and publishing, the Club's own enduring monument has long been *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* itself. We can, I think, be proud of our publication record. On our formation, the Club's objects were stated as including 'the collection and authentication of oral and written statements or documentary evidence relating to Edinburgh; the gathering of existing traditions, legends, and historical data; and the selection and publication of material desirable for future reference'. Since publication of the first volume in 1909, we have held true to this aim. With this seventh volume of the New Series we continue our long and honourable tradition, and we offer these latest historical contributions to the membership of the Club, to the people of Edinburgh and Scotland and, indeed, to scholars all over the world who may read our publications in subscribing libraries. The present volume continues the tradition of its predecessors with its mix of scholarly articles both long and short, and includes a fascinating re-examination of the origins of the Club and Lord Rosebery's part in it by Owen Dudley Edwards. We hope that 2009 (centenary of the appearance of the first volume of *BOEC*) will see the publication, as NS, Volume 8, of the proceedings of the 'Once and Future Capital' conference. So, in a way, we shall have *two* centenary volumes. That *BOEC* appears at all is due, of course, to those who research and write for it. But the work of Dr Andrew Fraser, our energetic and patient

Editor, and the Editorial Board who assist him ably in his labours, is invaluable and we pay tribute to it now.

One of the objects of the Centenary Committee over the last three years, and more generally of the Council, has been to raise the profile of the Club and to increase both membership and public awareness of our activities. Our Secretary, Dr Alan Borthwick, has been indefatigable in his efforts on behalf of the Club. The workload has been particularly heavy in the run-up to the conference. Colin Warwick has contributed much in terms of website development and advertising of lectures and events by means of effective posters, handbills, and so on. This year a number of articles and press reports has publicised the past history and current activities of the Club. We are also working to make stronger connections and to forge new links, for example with the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, for I am convinced that the Club can play a greater part in the life of the City than it has yet done. It should be recorded that the Centenary Committee has consisted of Alan Borthwick and myself, Cecilia Cavaye, Tristram Clarke, Graeme Cruickshank, Owen Dudley Edwards, David Purdie and Joanna O'Rourke.

A great, though of course entirely coincidental and indirect honour, is our Honorary Vice-President's appointment as a Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle. Lord Cullen of Whitekirk's creation increases the Club's representation in the Thistle to two, our Honorary President, the Earl of Wemyss and March (himself almost as old as the Club!), being the senior Knight of the Order. It is surely not bad for a local history society to have among its Officers one eighth of the entire complement of our greatest order of chivalry! It was an enormous privilege to attend Douglas Cullen's installation. We offer him our warmest congratulations.

Retrospection at a centenary moment is entirely normal, necessary and desirable. But so, equally, is prospection. As I have said elsewhere, the best centenary monument will be the Club's continuing and lively existence into the future. Let us all bear in mind the final line of Stevenson's moving poem of home-thought from afar, where, exiled from the city of his youth, he proclaims the rousing rallying-call of loyalty: 'Auld Reekie, still and on!'

Iain Gordon Brown,
President