



# The Old Edinburgh Club

Minute of the 116<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

held at the City Chambers on 20 September 2023 at 7pm

## 1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by the Right Honourable Robert Aldridge, the Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh and Honorary Patron of The Old Edinburgh Club (OEC). He expressed the thanks of the City Council for the work of the Club and complimented us on entering a new chapter with the launch of the Jean Guild Grants programme and collaborations with the City Archives and Library services. The City Council is also pleased to have the OEC as a member of the new Edinburgh Local Heritage Network and looks forward to our participation in the programme celebrating '900 Years of the City of Edinburgh' in 2024.

## 2. Attendance

The AGM was attended by 51 members. We received apologies from 24 members.

## 3. Minute of the AGM held on 21 September 2022

Approved as an accurate record.

## 4. Items for inclusion under Other Competent Business

There were no additional items.

## 5. Annual Report and President's Review

OEC President Edward Duvall opened by commending the Annual Report to members for a full overview of the Club's activities. He proceeded to place the achievements and events of the last year in context.

The Club is in good heart. We have weathered the vicissitudes of Covid-19 and restored a full programme of interesting talks curated by Richard Roger. Particularly welcome was the return of the December meeting with short presentations by members and seasonal refreshments. The introduction of live streaming has opened up a wider audience who cannot attend in person and hopefully will draw in new

members from further afield. We are grateful for the equipment provided by the Augustine United Church and the excellent support of Graham Rule.

One of the signs of a healthy club is a growing membership. In the past year the Marketing Sub-Committee, led by Vice-President Alison Macdonald, has been making strenuous efforts, experiencing substantial success in raising the OEC's profile and increasing the rate of recruitment of new members.

Another sign is the number of people who are willing to take part in running a club. Early in the session we co-opted two members with appropriate experience as Ordinary Council Members. When mid-year we put out a call for volunteers to join Council we were very pleased with the number of people who came forward. We had so many that we nearly had to hold an election. We have been able to fill two vacancies for office-bearers: Jim Gallacher as Treasurer and David Hamilton as Web Manager.

Of current Council members Pat Jones is standing down as Publicity Officer after many years. She has provided sterling service in promoting the Club and managing our presence for lectures at the Augustine United Church, and performing multifarious other tasks, always with unvarying good humour. While she will be very hard to replace, we are delighted that Jo Chapman has stepped forward to fill the role. In addition, Mike Harrison, who had the unenviable task of overseeing the finances of the club during difficult times, is resigning his post as Treasurer. John McAleese, who contributed many interesting ideas to Council, will also be standing down as a Council Member in November, when his term of three years ends. We thank all three for their service to the Club.

Sadly, we must also mark the death in November 2022 of Professor RJ Morris, onetime Editor of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club and an Honorary Vice-President. He is sadly missed.

In the last few years the main focus of the Club has been on its lectures and visits and on the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, with occasional forays into project activity. Recently the Club was the recipient of two very generous legacies from Miss Jean Butchart and Miss Jean Guild. Your Council took the decision that these should be applied to specific projects over a number of years rather than being invested in their entirety to bolster the long-term finances of the Club. We have established a Legacy Group to recommend to Council how best to use these funds to further our aims of promoting the study of, and interest in, the history of Edinburgh.

We want to combine support for research and improving access to historical resources with activities to engage wider audiences. We also seek to ensure that the spending of legacy monies brings vitality and benefits to the Club in raising our profile and growing our membership. This group has been working hard over the last few months, as set out in the Secretary's report.

Edward finished by thanking all the members of Council who have made the session 2022-2023 such a successful year.

## **6. Secretary's Report**

Honorary Secretary, Derrick Johnstone reported on the progress that the Club has made on several fronts.

### **Events**

Our events programme returned to normal, with six lectures and six walks and visits. Talks notably included those by Trevor Griffiths on *Going to the Pictures in Edinburgh*, Rebecca Higgitt on the *Royal Observatory in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, and our Members' Evening in December. Amongst other fascinating content, this revealed the story of the tunnel under the Grassmarket to George Street, memorably introduced by Maurice McIlwrick.

We arranged three sets of walks and visits this summer. These featured the spectacular Phoebe Anna Traquair murals of the Mansfield Traquair Centre, the industrial heritage of Abbeyhill and Lochend, and the third combined a trip on the newly opened tram line to explore the history of railways in Leith.

We wholeheartedly thank our contributors and look forward to the coming year's programme.

### **Projects**

As our President mentioned we have been able to develop new projects thanks to our legacy monies: the Jean Guild grants programme and our collaborations with the Library and Archives services of the City Council.

We have been delighted with the number, quality and range of applications to the **Jean Guild Grants programme**, some 20 in total. This was open to local history or heritage groups and organisations; schools and colleges; and independent researchers, postgraduate students and early career researchers.

Applications were assessed and scored by OEC trustees, with members of our Legacy Group making final recommendations to our full Council. We carefully considered the quality and intended results of each application, their practicality and the

potential benefits from an OEC perspective. We wanted to enable excellent projects which might not happen otherwise or have less impact.

The Edinburgh and Scottish Collection of the Library Service has over the years gathered a substantial and eclectic assortment of manuscripts which are rarely accessed. A card index provides little indication of the contents of each item. Our joint project has supported the digital cataloguing of the manuscripts through awarding a **Jean Butchart Bursary** to give practical experience to a postgraduate student. The name of the Bursary recognises our second benefactor who had a long association with the Club and a family connection to the Library Service. With the Library, we are promoting interesting finds and we encourage members to look out for stories on social media and the local press as they emerge.

Our current involvement with the City Archives revolves around the building records of the **Dean of Guild** which provide remarkable insights into the development and renewal of the city. The Club had the foresight in 2013 and 2017 to support Dr Joe Rock in a huge endeavour to catalogue building warrants issued in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Joe has now completed transcriptions for the substantial majority of years, some 7,000 records in all. With further support from the OEC he is now embarking on the remaining period, 1712-1727.

This is a resource which could be much more widely used. It has proved valuable to architects and other building professionals as well as the City Archives themselves but its current format in large PDF documents precludes easy access. We are funding the development of a searchable online database which will open the resource to many more users, not just those interested in the buildings of Edinburgh but also to individuals tracing the histories of families and houses. The records are rich in social history, providing insights into how people lived – and got on or not with their neighbours.

Additionally, we shall be completing an update of our **Bibliography of Edinburgh History**, undertaken by Malcolm Noble. This includes publications appearing since 2021 and others that have not previously been identified.

We are coming to the end of our support for the **Edinburgh Southside Graveyard Project** which has restored headstones which had been laid flat for safety reasons. The project has been in abeyance for some time because of City Council staff shortages. Limited funds now remain available to the Grange Association and Friends of Newington Cemetery.

Arrangements for awarding the **OEC Prize** at the University of Edinburgh, open to Master's students, have been revised and we expect to receive a nomination for the next award early in 2024.

### **Membership and Promoting the Club**

We indicated at last year's AGM that we needed to do more to promote the Club and set our membership numbers on an upward trend. Our efforts have borne fruit in an increased profile on social media, 50% more visits to our website, and success in more than trebling our rate of attracting new members (55 compared to an average of 15 p.a. over the past four years).

Derrick closed by saying thank you to all members present for supporting the Club and to his fellow Council members for their help behind the scenes.

## **7. Editor's Report**

The Editor of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Wilson Smith, introduced the latest issue, Volume 18 of the New Series, which had been published in March and distributed to members by post. He highlighted the diversity of the volume's content: its eight articles included an appreciation of Professor R. J. Morris, our late Editor Emeritus, Robert Pirrie's re-reading of George IV's 1822 visit to Edinburgh, and pieces on Scotch Baronial Edinburgh and the role of Sir Walter Scott by Aonghus MacKechnie; Edinburgh and Slavery by Jennifer Melville; and the Edinburgh Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor by Joan Fraser. More recent social issues were tackled by Michael Gall's study into the effects of the Edinburgh University Comprehensive Development Area scheme.

Wilson noted that the online presence of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club had been enhanced by the addition of content from volumes 1 to 7 of the New Series (covering 1991 to 2005) to the Club website. This joins all volumes of the BOEC Original Series (1908 to 1985) making 53 volumes in all, a total of 414 articles, available for download.

## **8. Treasurer's Report**

Unfortunately our Treasurer, Mike Harrison was unable to attend to give his report in person. Secretary Derrick Johnstone stood in and made the following remarks on the Club's accounts contained in the Annual Report.

Our finances are very healthy, given the legacies we have received.

Our principal operating income is from subscriptions due each September. Most are paid by standing order and mainly come with Gift Aid. Our largest associated

expenditure is on the printing and distribution of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, which has been subject to significant inflation.

We reviewed our **subscription policy** and concluded that we needed to increase our rates. These had remained unchanged since 2012, during which time prices have risen by over one third. Our new rates, such as joint membership for £35, align with this, and we have kept the young persons' rate at £15. Members approved these at our Special General Meeting on 15 March.

We seek an appropriate return on our **unallocated legacy monies**. Led by the work of Council Member, Andrew Boyd, we have opened an account with CAF Flagstone, an initiative of the Charities Aid Foundation which enables voluntary organisations to take advantage of a selection of shorter to longer term savings accounts on attractive rates of interest. This also allows us to spread our monies in more than one account such that all are covered by the Government's Financial Services Compensation Scheme. In July we transferred £115,000 to this account.

We have strengthened our **arrangements for making financial payments**, with dual authorisation required. We have closed our passbook savings account, enabling us to manage all our finances online. We have reestablished a **PayPal account** for online transactions and the ability to take payments in person using a card reader at OEC events and on other occasions.

Our **Gift Aid** claims are up-to-date and we have received £530 through the Publishers Licensing Services scheme. This redistributes fees paid by institutions to the Copyright Licensing Agency to allow copying, usually for educational purposes.

During the course of the year we investigated expenditure on the **Southside Graveyards Project** and established that there was £899 left in an account held by Jewsons, the building merchants, to be drawn down as required for materials for the project. This money has now been returned to the Club and remains earmarked for the Graveyards Project.

## **9. Re-election of our Independent Examiner, Stuart Lockhart**

Approved.

## **10. Election of Office Bearers and Council**

The President reported that, with impending vacancies on the Council as several trustees were standing down, we had sought both new office-bearers and Ordinary Members during the year.

Members ratified the decisions of the Club Council to co-opt the following:

*Office-bearers:*

- Jim Gallacher as Treasurer, replacing Mike Harrison
- David Hamilton as Web Manager (a new post, approved in 2022)

*Ordinary members:*

- Fiona Alexander (with effect from July 2023)
- Hetty Lancaster (with effect from July 2023)

Members also confirmed the nomination of:

*Office-bearer:*

- Jo Chapman as Publicity Officer, replacing Pat Jones

and accepted the nominations of:

*Ordinary Members*

- Maurice McIlwrick
- Alison Moodie

The following office-bearers continue in their current roles:

Honorary President:	Lord Cullen of Whitekirk
Honorary Vice President:	Iain Gordon Brown
President:	Edward Duvall
Vice Presidents:	Alison Macdonald Steven Robb
Secretary:	Derrick Johnstone
Editor:	Dr Wilson Smith
Membership Secretary:	Jerry Ozaniec
Programme Secretary:	Prof Richard Rodger

John McAleese remains an Ordinary Member until his three-year term of office comes to an end in November 2023.

## 11. Closing remarks

The President closed the meeting by thanking all members participating and looked forward to another successful year in the life of the Club.

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The AGM was followed by the announcement of the first awards of Jean Guild Grants and an informative talk by Henry Sullivan, Information Asset Manager, City of Edinburgh Council on the activities and plans of the City Archives.



Edward Duvall  
President, The Old Edinburgh Club