



The Old Edinburgh Club

Minute of the 117th Annual General Meeting

held at the City Chambers on 18 September 2024 at 7pm

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by the Depute Lord Provost, Lezley Marion Cameron on behalf of the Lord Provost and Council of the City of Edinburgh, Honorary Patrons of the Old Edinburgh Club (OEC). She expressed the thanks of the City Council for the work of the Club and complimented us on our longevity as a Club and the progress we have made in the past year. Notably this includes the new OEC website, the Jean Guild Grants programme and the Club's partnerships with the City Council in cataloguing historic manuscripts and making Dean of Guild building records more accessible.

This is an important time for the Council and citizens of Edinburgh in celebrating 900 years since King David I granted its charter as a royal burgh. The Council is pleased that the OEC is participating in the Edinburgh 900 events programme and working on joint activities, including through the Edinburgh Local Heritage Network. Overall, Edinburgh 900 seeks to improve civic and community pride, raise the profile of the City Collections, promote partnerships involving the Council's heritage services, and enhance the resilience and diversity of community heritage groups.

2. Attendance

The AGM was attended by 67 members. We received apologies from 92 members.

3. Minute of the AGM held on 20 September 2023

Approved as an accurate record.

4. Items for inclusion under Other Competent Business

There were no additional items.

5. President's Annual Review

OEC President Edward Duvall thanked the Depute Lord Provost for her address and the Council of the City of Edinburgh in hosting us at the City Chambers. He observed that 2024 has undoubtedly been a vintage year for heritage with Edinburgh 900 and the Club hopes that the celebrations of the City's nonacentenary will continue to be a success and serve to stimulate wider and sustained interest in the City's heritage.

Edward commended our Secretary, Derrick Johnstone, for compiling our comprehensive Annual Report with the assistance of Vice President, Alison Macdonald, Treasurer, Jim Gallacher, and Wilson Smith, Editor of The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC). For context in reviewing the current state of the Club, he had revisited the minute of the first AGM in 1909 when the Secretary submitted the annual report on Council's behalf. This detailed, as it does now, activities undertaken over the previous year. The Honorary President, Lord Rosebery, no less, moved its adoption in a speech taking up four and a half pages of the BOEC. Rosebery managed to get in enough digs at the Council, that in the following year, the Lord Provost, in moving the adoption of the report, was obliged to rebuff his criticisms.

Edward was struck by the changes in Club activities, not only since 1909 but particularly in the last couple of years. In the first session, 1908/09, the principal activity was the production of BOEC. There were two events: a single, illustrated lecture, and a walk around the remnants of the old city walls and even that was organised by the Edinburgh Photographic Society. In the next year there was a single lecture and four visits. Lord Rosebery complained in 1911 that he was unable to attend the most important meetings of the Club, the walks, as they occurred when he was busy with Parliamentary business. He thought, however, that there was a possibility that he might soon be relieved of that burden and he would not propose any change. At this time Lloyd George was threatening to get rid of the hereditary peers as they were blocking his budget!

Over 100 years later the BOEC still occupies a prominent place in our activities, while the lecture programme has increased to six meetings a year, and the visits have continued. Other recent activities such as digitising the Dean of Guild building warrants and creating the on-line Bibliography of Edinburgh History would have been unimaginable in 1909. In the past year, we diversified our activities further into much more active support of research into Edinburgh's history rather than simply promulgating the outputs of it. The successful applicants for the first batch

of research grants funded by the very generous legacy left by Miss Jean Guild were announced at last year's AGM and several feature later this evening. The Council and its Legacy Sub-committee is girding their loins in preparation for the call for another batch of the Jean Guild Grants.

The monies left to the Club by Miss Jean Butchart are being used to fund collaborations with Edinburgh City libraries and to support (so far) two Jean Butchart Bursars, for postgraduate librarianship students. Not only does the Club benefit from the work that they do but it helps to advance their careers.

In 1910 the membership was capped at 300 and there was a waiting list of 50. We now have neither cap nor waiting list but the total membership is still of the order of 350. The Club seeks to increase the membership by raising the Club's profile through engagement on social media, development of the website, Jerry Ozaniec's intriguing calendar of interesting dates, 'Edinburgh in History' in the Edinburgh Reporter, attendance at various heritage-associated meetings and participation in the Edinburgh Local Heritage Network. Edward acknowledged in particular the sterling work of our Vice President Alison Macdonald and our Publicity Officer, Joanne Chapman. Thanks to their efforts we have recruited at least 59 new members in the past year (more than treble average of recent years). We are also intend to pilot free access to the online talks to care homes within the city.

Edward expressed his sincere thanks to all the members of the OEC Council for their hard work in making sure that our Club is as successful as it is. They are definitely a Council of all the talents. He finished by observing that while last year saw the Club in good heart, this year it is developing elite athlete status.

6. Secretary's Report and Marketing Report

Honorary Secretary, Derrick Johnstone reported on the Club's events and projects:

6.1 Events

In the past year our events programme has continued as normal, with six lecture evenings and six walks and visits. All were well-attended, with the lectures averaging 70 people, and with another 100 watching the talks at home, either streamed at the time or later via YouTube. Their topics ranged across the centuries, from religion in Medieval Edinburgh, Covenanting times through to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in the 19th century. We finished with Karen Baston on 'Book Borrowing in Georgian Edinburgh'. Imagine what the borrowers would have made of the fact that, using the associated project database, we can trace today instantly and precisely what they were reading and when.

Our walks featured the Library at the Royal Botanic Garden, the Trinity Apse and General Register House. We wholeheartedly thank our contributors and look forward to the coming year's programme.

6.2 Projects

As Edward mentioned we have progressed a range of projects this year thanks to our legacy monies and the energy of OEC Council members. The principal projects are the Jean Guild Grants, the Jean Butchart Bursary, and the Dean of Guild building warrant records, while we also continue a small number of other projects.

(i) Jean Guild Grants

We launched the pilot programme in May 2023, open to local history/ heritage groups and organisations; schools and colleges; and independent researchers, postgraduate students and early career researchers. We made three Project and four Research awards, and have been extremely pleased with the progress our awardees have made. Full details can be found on our website.

We shall launch a second round in October with a deadline of 10 January 2025. This will be along similar lines to the pilot, with applications again assessed for their quality, practicality and benefits from an OEC perspective.

(ii) Jean Butchart Bursaries

We awarded a second Jean Butchart Bursary to a postgraduate student, following the success of that awarded to Matthew Ferrie who worked on cataloguing manuscripts held by the Edinburgh and Scottish Collection of the Library Service. The new award has been given to Amanda Ramsey. She is working on our project to make it easier to use the digital volumes of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club and make the most of their rich content. Her tasks include splitting 34 PDF volumes of the Original Series published between 1908 and 1985 into single articles and adding cover pages and metadata (citations, subjects and keywords) to these to make the articles easier to find via search engines. This work has been facilitated by making use of the AI tool, ChatGPT, with a carefully crafted prompt to generate accurate results.

(iii) Dean of Guild Court building warrants

We announced last year that we had begun to build on the work, previously supported by the OEC, of Dr Joe Rock in creating a catalogue of building warrants from the 18th and early 19th centuries issued by the Dean of Guild Court, held by the City Archives. These provide remarkable insights into the development and renewal of the city.

There are two strands to this. First, Joe has set out to complete the remaining years, 1710 to 1727, where he had still to photograph and transcribe the records. This task is now nearly done, adding to the 7,000 records already reviewed.

Secondly, we were convinced that 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 the current format in large PDF documents precludes easy access. So we decided to fund the development of a searchable online database intended to 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 how they got on, or not, with their neighbours.

This has proved a complex undertaking, with many wrinkles to iron out. As with many IT projects, it has taken longer than originally expected but, unlike many IT projects, our costs have not overrun.

(iv) Other projects:

We completed an update of our Bibliography of Edinburgh History, undertaken by Malcolm Noble. This included over 600 items, both new and not previously been identified. We appreciate the suggestions that our members have made for items for inclusion. We have decided to move to more frequent, annual updates, the next to appear in May 2025.

We now have a formal donor agreement with the University of Edinburgh regarding our OEC Prize for Edinburgh History, open to Master's students. We hope to receive a nomination from the University for the next award early in 2025.

We still have limited funds reserved for the Edinburgh Southside Graveyard Project which has restored headstones in the Grange Cemetery. These remain available to the Grange Association and Friends of Newington Cemetery.

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.

6.3 Marketing

Vice-President, Alison Macdonald reported on the Club's marketing activities, setting out, first, our objectives in increasing membership in all age bands and ensuring we retain existing members. We look to build our profile through our website which we redesigned during the year, though our extensive use of social media and through building relationships with local organisations and the press. We

are attracting more than double our website users and steadily growing our social media followers, which has contributed to our success in attracting many new members.

Our Marketing Sub-committee leads and co-ordinates our promotional efforts, including across the Jean Guild Grant projects, where awardees have very much welcomed our role in helping to raise awareness of their activities and findings. We look for mutual benefits, for example, in welcoming Karen Baston as one of our guest speakers to introduce us to the project on Georgian Books and Borrowers. We followed up in helping to promote the Glasgow University project website which we were sure would interest our members.

We have a marketing plan and calendar, seeking to space our activities throughout the year. We recognise the potential of publicising historical anniversaries (such as the 400th of the foundation of George Heriot's School and the 250th anniversary of laying the foundation stone of General Register House) and look to feature some of these events on our website. Other activities have included taking stands at Augustine United Church on Doors Open Day and at the Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Archaeology Conference.

We are keen to improve our communications with Club members in ways which go beyond our use of Facebook and X/Twitter. We are trialling the use of a Club newsletter and would appreciate feedback on this. More broadly we welcome contributions from members and others for the 'News and Views' section on our website, and are happy to review new books relating on the history of Edinburgh. We will listen to ideas you have for growing the Club and enhancing benefits for members.

Alison finished by thanking members the OEC Council and especially those in the Marketing Sub-committee for their support. She went on to stress how important it is to spread the word of what the Club is now doing and hoped that our members would help in this.

7. Editor's Report

Wilson Smith, Editor of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, introduced the latest issue, volume 19, which appeared in March and was circulated to members by post. He outlined the volume's contents, commending the Book's customary mix of originality, interest and entertainment, and adding his thanks and congratulations to all contributing authors.

Wilson went on to acknowledge the contributions of Club members to the Book, both previously and to the current volume. He encouraged members with a topic in mind to consider making a submission.

As further evidence of links between the Club and the Book, Wilson highlighted the inclusion of a report by Matthew Ferrie, our first Jean Butchart Bursary awardee, on his work on the Manuscript Cataloguing Project at Edinburgh City Libraries.

With the institution of the Jean Guild Grants programme Wilson looked forward to contributions to the Book based on some of these research projects. The resumption of the OEC Prize also held out the prospect of original articles from this source.

Wilson closed his remarks by welcoming the initiatives set in motion by our Secretary Derrick Johnstone to improve online searching of the Book's content. The use of up-to-date technology to access this treasure trove could only be a huge benefit to researchers both within the Club and in the wider Edinburgh history community.

8. Treasurer's Report

OEC Treasurer, Jim Gallacher reviewed the overall financial health of the Club. We have been incurring annual losses on our operational activities (primarily on the production of the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club and our events) which led us to our Special General Meeting in March 2023 when members agreed to increase subscription rates by about 50%, effective from 1 September 2023. These had remained unchanged since 2012.

With the number of new members outweighing the departure of others, and despite further rising costs, we have succeeded in achieving an operating surplus this year of £247. This would have been greater had it not been for exceptional expenditure on the redesign of our website.

Overall, our accounts show a deficit. However, this is accounted for by our grant-giving, as we deploy our legacy funds from Jean Butchart and Jean Guild on projects.

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

Approved.

10. Amendment to the Club Constitution

In view of the importance to the Club of building and sustaining our marketing efforts, an amendment was proposed to Clause 6 of our Constitution, creating an office of Vice President (Marketing) with no time limit on the appointment (as in the

case, for example, of Secretary and Treasurer). The proposal was to amend the final sentence of the Clause from *“The President and Vice Presidents shall hold office for no more than three years”* to *“The President and one Vice-President shall hold office for no more than three years. The term of office of the second Vice-President (Marketing) is not limited.”*

It was pointed out from the floor that the Club Constitution allows the possibility of having more than two Vice-Presidents. The proposed wording was revised to *“The President and Vice-President(s) shall hold office for no more than three years, excepting that of Vice-President (Marketing) whose term is not limited.”* This was approved by the AGM.

11. Election of Office Bearers and Council

Members approved the nomination of Office Bearers and Council Members to continue in their current roles, with Alison Macdonald accepting the new role of Vice-President (Marketing):

Honorary President:	Lord Cullen of Whitekirk
Honorary Vice President:	Iain Gordon Brown
President:	Edward Duvall
Vice-President (Marketing):	Alison Macdonald
Vice President:	Steven Robb
Treasurer:	Jim Gallacher
Secretary:	Derrick Johnstone
Editor:	Wilson Smith
Membership Secretary:	Jerry Ozaniec
Programme Secretary:	Richard Rodger
Publicity Officer:	Joanne Chapman
Web Manager:	Vacant (post in abeyance)
Council Members:	Andrew Boyd (elected September 2022) Fiona Alexander (co-opted July 2023) Hetty Lancaster (co-opted July 2023) Alison Moodie (elected September 2023)

12. Other competent business

There was no other competent business.

13. 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 presentations from four of the successful Jean Guild Grant awardees:

- Charlie Ellis, on the social history of Table Tennis in Edinburgh
- Jill Harrison, on the Trinity Stones project
- Donna MacIver, on Gaelic in Edinburgh (James Gillespie’s High School)
- Robert Sproul-Cran, on ‘Old Edinburgh Reborn’

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This minute was agreed by the Council of the Old Edinburgh Club, 22 October 2024.



Edward Duvall
President, The Old Edinburgh Club