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## Book Reviews

Alyssa Jean Popiel, **A Capital View: The Art of Edinburgh: One Hundred Artworks from the City Birlinn Collection.** *Edinburgh, Birlinn Books, 2014. xiii + 210. Hardback £25. ISBN 978 1 78027 196 5.*

This is a beautifully produced, full colour ‘coffee table’ book with substantial written commentary accompanying whole or cross page high quality illustrations that range from paintings and engravings to nineteenth century photographs and modern photographs of civic statuary. The initiative for the book came from freelance Edinburgh-based writer Alyssa Popiel, but it has been produced with the blessing of the City of Edinburgh Council, whose Collections Manager provides an introduction on the history of funding and bequests that has allowed the city to accumulate its famed collection. Many of the images are well-known, including the view along Princes Street from Calton Hill of George IV’s famous ‘tartan’ procession of 1822, by John Wilson Ewbank (p.45), which also appears on the front cover, but others are less familiar, and there are many here that I have never seen before despite being a regular attendee at City Arts Centre exhibitions.

The book is arranged chronologically, starting with Slezer’s 1690’s engraving of the ‘north prospect of the city’ (p.2) and ending with the 2004 pavement statue by David Annand of Enlightenment poet Robert Fergusson outside the Canongate Kirk (p.205). The images can be roughly categorized into four broad groups - panoramas, cityscapes and buildings, distinguished citizens (all male), curious and picturesque city folk, and critical moments of history and legend. The first group is the largest, which is not surprising given the nature of the collection and the drama that Edinburgh presents in its physical location, street layout and architecture. Of note is David Allan’s coloured engraving of the High Street viewed from the east from the Netherbow Well in 1793 (p.19) showing details of business advertising, tradesmen, women out shopping, fashionable promenaders, carriages, horses, children and dogs that draw you into a noisy and colourful Edinburgh on a summer morning. A ‘north view from [the] Scott Monument’ by Joseph

Woodfall Ebsworth (p.75), a little known Edinburgh artist who spent the second half of his life as an English vicar, is captured at ‘2.45pm, 15 September, 1845’ and shows Princes Street as a buzz of lively commerce. But there are other, darker images such as William Turner’s ‘View of the Great Fire in the Parliament Square taken on the Night of the 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1824’ (p.45), showing the great blaze of that year which ripped through the Old Town, killing thirteen, leaving hundreds homeless and destroying businesses, including the printing office where the fire began. Or the pencil sketch by J. O. Brown titled ‘Collapse of a Tenement, High Street, 24 November 1861’ (p.95) – an event that killed thirty-five people - which is depicted with poignant accuracy showing cupboard doors hanging open, suspended high above the rubble on the gaping internal walls of a five storey building. These contrasts of light and shade, rich and poor, summer and winter thread through many of the images and behind them are stories of residential segregation or commercial zoning that are the familiar subjects of urban history. One of the beauties of this book is that you can interpret some of the complex evolutions in cityscape that took place in certain well-known spaces. One of these is the Mound, built to link old town to the new. For a couple of decades after the construction of the Royal Institution building on Princes Street in the early 1820s, and before the building of the National Gallery of Scotland from the late 1850s, the Mound was occupied by a series of ephemeral structures given over to popular entertainment. So, we have Charles Halkerston’s ‘View of Princes Street from the Mound’ of 1843 (p.73) showing the famous panorama, but also a fun fair, tents and stalls and a travelling menagerie with an elephant (giving rides) and advertising a fireworks display. Just a few years later, in 1854, William Gawin Herdman’s south-facing ‘View of the Mound’ to the newly constructed Free Church College (p.91), shows the old wooden show-ground buildings and the panorama swept away to make space for that monumental civilizing mission in stone and neo-classical design that is the National Gallery. The often-transitory nature of so many parts of the city is revealed elsewhere, as in an early view of Waverley

station under construction in 1848 by John H. Ross (p.77) showing what were originally three separate stations for the three railway companies that served Edinburgh.

This is a rich volume and there are many more themes that could be explored. In addition to the streetscapes, I particularly enjoyed the scenes of Edinburgh folk and characters by working class artists, including the wonderful Walter Geikie, who is so little known outside his native city, and James Howe, a house painter turned horse artist, whose ‘Horse Fair in the Grassmarket’ (p.53) of c.1830 is a highlight. The mix of artists includes amateurs as well as professionals, with some fine canvasses from unknown hands. There is also a good representation of women artists ranging from the celebrated Anne Redpath to the little known Nancy Alexis Brackett, a prominent churchwoman and founder in 1974 of the Christian Aid annual book sale in St Andrew’s and St George’s Church on George Street, whose delightful painting of 1947 of Mrs Dunlop, an organ grinder and her pony ‘Smokey’ (p.177) – which is now in the Museum of Childhood – stands out.

The written commentary in this engaging celebration of Edinburgh is mostly about the scenes depicted, which is fair enough given the likely market and there are well-researched biographical details for many of the artists, along with a useful bibliography at the end.

*Stana Nenadic*

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Paul Laxton and Richard Rodger, **Insanitary City. Henry Littlejohn and the Condition of Edinburgh.** Lancaster, Carnegie Publishing, 2013. xvi + 464. Tables. Figs. Illus. £24.99. ISBN 978 1 85936 220 4.

“Facts are chiels that winna ding...” Robert Burns, 1786

**O**n the grounds that a review ought to be informative, entertaining and erudite I trust you will forgive this humble guide for tilting at only two of these three targets.

In the first place this is a work which anyone with an enquiring mind, an interest in the history of Edinburgh, the development of Public Health or

the growth of cities will both enjoy and remember. Based on decades of intensive, far reaching, original and perceptive research by two redoubtable, internationally respected academics, this work is a tour de force of interpretation, placing the principal work and a little of the remarkable life of the prodigious and astute Sir Henry Duncan Littlejohn in startling perspective.

The narrative rewardingly reveals the impoverished environment of the Edinburgh before his appointment and quite properly recounts the work of his professional contemporaries and those whose previous efforts had both improved and blighted the city. For example in the machinations leading to his appointment as Medical Officer of Health in 1862 the bitter factional and sectarian divides which habitually haunt the corridors of power are engagingly presented. Later in the text we are treated to the nugget of the contemporary comment (1856) that unlike the Protestant – Catholic divisions afflicting Glasgow, Belfast or Liverpool Edinburgh’s religious animosity “was between different bodies of Presbyterians.” (p193 footnote 142). Poignant to note that as recently as the 1960’s the election of Councillor John Cormack ensured such views were still officially represented at highest level of Edinburgh’s civic life.

The account of Edinburgh rendered in Dr Henry Littlejohn’s 1865 “Report on the Sanitary Condition of Edinburgh” has already been described as ‘the most comprehensive and detailed report of the health and related circumstances of any town in Scotland, and possibly in Great Britain... a model report, and one which has been approached in no time since...’ (Womersley 1987) – *Insanitary City – the Condition of Edinburgh* explains why.

Published three years into his extraordinary 46 year career as Medical Officer of Health for Edinburgh [one of his other four posts was as Edinburgh’s Police Surgeon for the even more remarkable tenure of 54 years] Dr Henry Duncan Littlejohn’s 1865 report is an exceptionally researched and forensically accurate exposition of the insanitary condition of Edinburgh in the mid-nineteenth Century. From the nitty-gritty nuts and bolts of water closets, accommodation, cess pits, cow byres, milk quality, water supply, morbidity, drains and diseases the report is not merely a meticulous and exquisitely crafted dissection of Edinburgh but as Professor Rodger and Dr Laxton lucidly demonstrate it was a landmark edifice of

evidence designed to convince, cajole and exhort both private opinion and the public authorities to sustained action on a whole host of fronts.

From radical property reform (see the City Improvement Acts of 1867) to Royal Commissions on Sewage, the Relief of the Poor, the public debate concerning diseased meat (shades of John Selwyn Gummer, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and Irish horse meat) the Report records and relates significant detail about employment, poverty, social policy, religious perspectives, public administration, interment, landlords and builders.

Not only was this invaluable information and ammunition for Dr Littlejohn but the data and scientific discipline it enshrined informed, galvanised and armed allies such as John Gamgee and William Chambers and colleagues such as the City Architect and Superintendent of Works David Cousin who by and large stood with Littlejohn in their efforts to address the ills of the dreadful sanitation, grossly deficient water supply, poor housing, insufficient burial space and the scourge of infectious diseases which had routinely plagued the city and its inhabitants. Although Littlejohn's devil was indeed in his forensic detail (on a breath-taking scale) it was his holistic approach to the health of the city, "the well-being of its society" and the recognition that all of the many medical, social, economic, religious and political factors were of significance which marks his work out as exceptional and ground breaking.

What the present authors have done in 'Insanitary City' is to elaborate, interpret and present the report in its proper context. Not only does this reveal the dynamic diversity and challenge of life of mid-Victorian Edinburgh where cowsheds and dairies mingled with bakeries, breweries and domestic dwellings, it also narrates and illustrates many issues which required Dr Littlejohn to tackle civic ignorance, indifference or intransigence - with a degree of success present day inhabitants might marvel at.

From bitter public disputes about complacent, ill-informed and reactionary attitudes to matters such as diseased cattle and consumption of their meat as propounded by distinguished members of the Edinburgh establishment (Professor and Town Councillor William Dick, founder of the Edinburgh Veterinary School) to the fact that despite his endeavours Dr Littlejohn's salary remained utterly

unchanged for 13 years (between 1862 and 1875) this is not a tale of untroubled progress but rather the story of a singular General plotting the course of a campaign he knew would take years and throughout the many, many battles determinedly sticking to his guns at every pass.

Of lesser import but almost equal satisfaction as the tale of Dr Littlejohn's extraordinary work and dedication which transformed the health of the City and most importantly the life of the majority of its inhabitants is the very obvious care and concern the authors have taken in respect of the production of this book. From the utterly sensible inclusion of footnotes at the bottom of every page (thereby sparing the reader much tiresome thumbing through the end pages to locate the relevant reference) to the quality of the paper and the binding, from the range and quality of the illustrations to the extent of the bibliographic research undertaken the book puts most contemporary academic publications to shame in its accessibility and its appearance. Apart from anything else it gloriously departs from the current trend of ludicrously expensive 'academic' texts which ordinary readers might wish to read or acquire but which seem forever reserved for the cloistered aesthetes and institutions that produced them.

Is it too much to hope that one day an authoritative biography of Sir Henry; father of thirteen children and indisputably associated with Arthur Conan Doyle's most famous literary creation, might also grace our bookshelves?

*Richard Hunter*

Edinburgh City Archives

**John Chalmers, *Duel Personalities: James Stuart versus Sir Alexander Boswell.* Edinburgh: Newbattle Publishing, 2014, pp. 174, illus. Paperback, £8, 978-0-9928676-0-7.**

This is a thorough and scholarly telling of the events preceding, surrounding and succeeding the famous duel, which resulted in the death of Sir Alexander Boswell, the son of the more famous James. The story has been told before. Lovers of Edinburgh will have first read of these events, bizarre even by the standard of the time, in Cockburn's *Memorials*, although that author does not identify Boswell as the son of the biographer. No doubt at the

time James Boswell had temporarily lost the celebrity he had previously had and has now recovered. More recently, the story has been told in Roger Craik's enjoyable book about the Boswell family. However, there can be no doubt that Mr Chalmers has, in this study, provided the definitive version.

Henry Cockburn was a partisan and one of Stuart's counsel in his trial for murder. His views on the matter may therefore be regarded as one-sided, but John Chalmers has amply demonstrated the intolerable behavior of Boswell and his Tory friends, including not only the Lord Advocate, Sir William Rae, but also the revered, and indeed loved, figure of Sir Walter Scott. It is difficult to explain this behaviour, but it was a time when the old unchallenged Tory order was about to change, yielding place, with great travail, to the new. The Whigs were at last committed to parliamentary reform and the old system of electoral manipulation would soon cease to work. Maybe, like the Devil in the Book of Revelation, the old order had great wrath because they knew that they had but a short time. However, why did the bullies focus on Stuart rather than the other prominent Edinburgh Whigs? Jeffrey, Cockburn and Murray were by that time too prominent and too familiar with such figures as Lord President Hope and Scott. James Gibson was also probably too secure, but John Chalmers in his discussion of Stuart's later life gives some clues. Stuart was, like Dreyfus much later, a convenient scapegoat because he was an unsympathetic figure. His later life was certainly unsatisfactory. He embezzled the W.S. Widows' Fund and later pestered Brougham for a job, eventually wearing down even that resilient character into nominating him as one of the first Factories Inspectors. In this job Stuart proved unsatisfactory, going far to negating the benefits of the new legislation as far as his geographical area was concerned. So perhaps he was always seen as someone peculiarly vulnerable to attack.

As far as the duel itself was concerned, John Chalmers has come to the likely conclusion that Boswell, the more experienced shot, aimed to miss, while Stuart, whether deliberately or even inadvertently hit his man with fatal results.

The whole background is narrated with great clarity. To any lover of Edinburgh at this period in its history it is of huge interest to spell out the way for instance in which Stuart made his way round the still very new New Town on the night before the

fatal day. We could easily trace his route today. The meeting itself was of course in Fife. It is tempting to see this as a typical Edinburgh effort to wash its dirty linen well away for its own front doors, but of course Fife was where both the contestants had connections. We then come to the fascinating details of the trial. It is interesting to us in this age, when the legal profession tends somewhat self-righteously to regard court proceeding as immune to, and perhaps above, political considerations, to realize to what extent the case was really political as well as legal. Like the vastly different Disruption cases not so long after you can tell the views of counsel by which side they appear on. The deeply flawed figure of Sir William Rae perhaps had to prosecute as Lord Advocate and Jeffrey and Cockburn were by that stage undoubtedly the leading defence advocates, but it is difficult to image the set-up being the same if the duel had gone the other way! Lord Justice Clerk Boyle was however admirably impartial.

John Chalmers gives us an overview of duelling at the time He might have mentioned that there was nearly a duel between a very senior judge and a leading member of the bar over remarks made in court. The details may be found in Cockburn's Journal for 13 February 1848 (although the event happened long before)

Mr Chalmers has produced a remarkable book which will undoubtedly prove the definitive narrative of these strange events, which are in an odd way typical of the febrile atmosphere of the transient period in which they were set. It is well produced and reasonably priced and can be recommended.

*Andrew Bell*

Keith Anderson, **Edinburgh Trams Through Time**. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014, pp. [iv], [96], illus. Paperback, £14.99, ISBN 978-1-4456-4362-5.

Brian Patton, **Via Mound and Tollcross: Transport in Edinburgh 1854-2014**. Scotland: the author, 2014, pp. viii, 170, illus. Paperback, £15.00, ISBN 978-0-9564288-4-4.

Edinburgh's first trams, horse-drawn, ran from Princes Street to Leith in 1871. From 1888 a cable-hauled network developed, the tramcars drawn by a rope which ran constantly beneath a slot between the rails. When the driver wanted to start moving, he closed a gripper on the rope, and the vehicle lurched into motion. The power came from stationary steam engines: the façade survives of the building in Henderson Row which housed some of them. The cable trams were operated by private companies which were taken over by the Corporation in 1919, and in 1922-23 it electrified the whole network, using cheap power from the new generating station at Portobello. The decision to replace trams with buses was taken in 1952 and the last tram ran in 1956.

In Keith Anderson's book, the history to this point is covered in 50 pages, setting out events clearly and concisely. The photographs are interesting and varied, and modern printing technology enables the sharper images to come out very well indeed, although at quite small size. This part of the book will appeal to both tram enthusiasts and those who care about the history of Edinburgh. The reintroduction of trams, for which planning started in 2003, occupies another 40 pages, including a description of each halt, with copious colour illustrations. This section will be of interest more to the tramway or 'light rail' world. The pictures show many details of the new line, but unlike the earlier ones, give almost no sense of its context. The story of the twistings and turnings towards the new service in 2014 is well summarised, though there will be more to say when the reasons for the colossal cost overrun are made public.

The book contains a few glitches. Thus we have places called 'Slatford', 'Wester Hails', and the 'Carlton jail'. The present tram stop in Princes Street is not beside the National Gallery of Scotland but the Royal Scottish Academy. Edinburgh appears as a 'borough', and an 'etching' which is reproduced

is in fact a wood engraving. One caption refers to 'Seamlessly blended rails between South St Andrew Street and Princes Street'. What does this mean? What are the rails blended into? The lower photograph on p.47 is reproduced the wrong way round. Finally, although the list of contents indicates that it was intended to number the pages, this has not been done.

According to the back cover, the closing of the Edinburgh tram network saw 'the scrapping of the fifth-largest tramway in the world'. This is a puzzling claim, for there had been more substantial systems in many places, including Berlin, Buenos Aires and Glasgow. Perhaps it refers to Edinburgh having once had, after San Francisco and other cities, the fourth or fifth largest *cable* tramway network.

Brian Patton's subject is similar, but he uses a different structure for his book, following a short introduction with 300 photographs, most of them with long captions. This strategy works because he has assembled a good selection of images in which trams predominate but do not dominate: there are also buses and boats, but no trains. Many of the older photographs show the context for the transport, including the ocean of cobbles which once stretched east from Tollcross to the fork of Lauriston Place and the High Riggs. This vista is intriguing because it includes an array of Victorian buildings, almost all of which have been demolished. Often, Brian Patton matches an earlier photograph of a place with a twenty-first century one taken by himself, and the preparation of the new tramlines is covered thoroughly. He emphasises the history of the routes and the kinds vehicle that were used on them: the chapters include 'Service 23 – Via Mound and Tollcross' and 'The Royal Mile and Service 1', and the individual captions often discuss when routes were introduced, or shortened or lengthened. It is a step from there (which the author does not take) to see how transport has related to the growth and reshaping of the city in the last century and a half.

Both books end with a short bibliographies, which rightly includes D.L.G. Hunter's two carefully-researched volumes on Edinburgh transport, which remain the standard work on the period before 1975.

*John Burnett*

Jack Gillon and Paul McAuley, **Monumental Edinburgh**, Stroud, Amberley Publishing, 2015. Pp.96. Paperback £14.99. ISBN 978 1 4456 5007 4.

Jack Gillon and Paul McAuley are amongst the many people who preserve, promote and provide materials which help us explore history and change in Edinburgh. Jack through his photographs and post card collection, many of which are part of the internet universe and Paul through his work in the museums service. In this little book they look at an aspect of Edinburgh which we often taken for granted, the huge number of statues and monuments in Edinburgh streets and spaces. This is a cheerful book and takes a straight forward approach. They take each area of the town and look at monuments much as we do when walking the town, - no attempt at chronology or periodization but each chosen item is given a description, an account of its subject and its creator. Now you either like this time line discontinuity or you do not but the book informs, entertains and compels us to think about one of the ways in which Scotland learns its national history. This is after all the national capital of what was a stateless nation for over 300 years.

When I first came to Scotland, I learnt a lot from statues and monuments. I learnt that the Scots who mattered enough to be commemorated were poets, novelists, ministers and soldiers. You might conduct a literature seminar and a workshop on imperial history from these statues. After a pause for thought, some odd features emerge. There seem to be few women, - Queen Victoria turns up in Leith, an African lady in Lothian Road invites thoughts on apartheid and the genius of architecture inhabits Princes St Gardens. Blind singer, Helen Acquell got a fountain. Catherine Sinclair is left to represent the many female philanthropists of Edinburgh with a rather anonymous Gothic spike. The only real citizen statue goes to Helen Crummy founding the Craigmillar festival. There is a fairly sparse representation of Edinburgh's important industrialists. William Chambers, printer appears in his Lord Provost robes but the brewers seem to have spent their wealth on a university and a concert hall.

There remains a lot to think about in this little book.

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Angela Bartie, **The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-war Britain**. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press, 2014. ix + 258. Paperback £19.99. ISBN 978 0 7486 9405 1.

Angela Bartie's history of Edinburgh's summer festivals, from their post-war creation to the early years of the 1970s, deserves to become established as the pre-eminent text on its subject. Written with an eye for detail, an authoritative tone and frequent footnoted references to a broad range of sources, Bartie's history sets itself apart from many of the previous histories of the festivals. The bibliography which accompanies *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-war Britain* reflects two main strands of analysis. On the one hand books, chapters, articles and reports have made their way into both the academic and popular press, with a limited focus on a particular art form, venue or other discrete topic. Some, such as Tom Nairn's *Festival of the Dead*, in 1967, causing no small amount of controversy in the process. A second category of works is based upon the autobiographical memoirs of those who have played a part in the festivals' development, or been witness to it. In this new publication we have an accessible, yet meticulous, account of the Edinburgh festivals' first quarter century. Additionally, as thorough as Bartie's analysis of her main focus is the contextualisation she provides, primarily the shifting relationships between the festivals and post-war culture, morality and public sector support for the arts. These factors help elevate this text beyond an analysis of the festivals and position it as a history of Edinburgh and of Scotland in this period.

Between introduction and conclusion the book follows a chronological structure, demarcating chapters in the establishment and consolidation of the Edinburgh International Festival, the challenge delivered by the Fringe, and a series of well documented events that no history of the festivals can ignore. A complex mix of characters is introduced, each with views on what a festival of the arts could and should be. Sir Rudolph Bing, the International Festival's first Director, is portrayed as a vital catalyst in the stimulation of activity and energy from the mid-1940s, with Bartie noting that he also played a

part in overcoming the rationing restrictions to help Edinburgh get itself in shape for the inaugural event in 1947. Alongside Bing, Sir John Falconer (the Lord Provost) helps represent the more instrumental ambitions of some, recognising what could be done to raise the city's profile, attract tourism and encourage a new age of enlightenment within the city's populace. In doing so Bartie is also reflecting the ambitions of 21st century politicians and event producers, as they seek to use artistic, cultural and sporting events to further the interests of their cities and stakeholders. That these individuals, and many others, were able to subscribe to a united vision and deliver a coherent programme in a time of great austerity is an achievement of which Edinburgh continues to reap the benefits.

The unintended emergence and evolution of a cultural challenge to the rather establishment focused International Festival is a recurring theme. Bartie's references to Hugh MacDiarmid, James Bridie, Glasgow Unity Theatre, Richard Demarco, Jim Haynes, the Traverse Theatre Club and, ultimately, the Fringe demonstrate that responses to the Festival could take many forms and be all the richer for it. In the space of just two years Edinburgh played host to: a seminal Writers' Conference in 1962 (repeated fifty years later by the Edinburgh International Book Festival and other literary events around the world); the founding of the Traverse Theatre Club at the turn of the year; and the (in)famous 1963 Drama Conference. Each episode is here retold through a combination of contemporary media reports, published sources and the author's own interviews with key figures. The resulting accounts bring to life the happenings, performances, protests and outcries that characterised this stage in the history of the festivals. Though the consequences of these events have now played themselves out, they were live debates to those who contributed to them and Bartie has captured much of the uncertainty that this engendered. To some this was a time of great potential, to others a risk, an attack, on their sense of a morality and the continued survival of the institutions they held dear.

Bartie's portraits of Edinburgh, Scotland and the UK over this period are incisive and thorough, to the extent that this story is only partly about the festivals. Religion, the acceptability of different cultural forms, and the role of the state are frequent reference points.

Indeed if there is a criticism to be made of the book, it is that the depth of coverage devoted to the Church of Scotland's deliberations on morality can distract from the main narrative of the text. The Church's importance cannot be denied however, as Bartie identifies its close connections to local councillors (those partly responsible for funding the Festival) and the importance of the General Assembly in contemporary Scottish civil society. While many Church leaders contributed to a conservative orthodoxy against which some actively rebelled, the book also identifies Edinburgh's Gateway Theatre as an outlet through which the Church sought to reach new audiences.

By the close of the book established ideas about the order of society have been challenged, debated and undermined through the 'High Sixties'. A counter-reformation under a Conservative Prime Minister is then seen asserting itself, thus providing a new edifice against which others might define themselves in opposition. The Edinburgh Festivals reflected these trends, with the Fringe symbolising a democratisation of culture just as the International Festival had heralded a new spirit of harmony across Europe a generation before. Bartie is determined that Edinburgh's Festivals be recognised for the roles they have played in the histories of both Scottish society and British theatre. With this text she has shown that the Festivals were Edinburgh's window onto a changing world and a stage on which the host nation reached an international audience.

*David Jarman*

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Graeme Cruickshank, Ian Robertson and Henry Steuart Fotheringham, **Flodden and the Blue Blanket: A Narrative of the Battle of Flodden with an Account of the Blue Blanket**, pbk, 61pp, illus., privately printed, *Convenery of the Trades of Edinburgh*, 2013. £12 + p&p [variable according to destination] from *Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh*, Ashfield, 61 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7HL; for details see <http://edinburghtrades.org/>

This is a welcome survey of the history and myth surrounding the 'Blue Blanket', the banner



preserved by Edinburgh's incorporated trades organisation as an essential symbol of identity, and its traditional association with the Battle of Flodden in 1513. The Blanket attests to the Trades' historic loyalty to the crown with its emblems of the saltire, crown and thistle, and a motto pledging support to the death. The date of the faded artefact itself is briefly alluded to, but not the evidence for dating it to the Restoration period, circa 1660-1690. Instead the authors concentrate on tracing the origins of the Blue Blanket, as well as its significance and role in the history of the trades, of Edinburgh and indeed of Scotland. The existence is mentioned of blue blankets connected with other burghs, as well as the Edinburgh merchants' own banner, preserved in the National Museum of Scotland, but this is not a comparative study.

Henry Steuart Fotheringham begins with a somewhat discursive account of the circumstances of the Battle of Flodden, where tradition places the Blue Blanket, borne by the company of Edinburgh craftsmen who formed part of James IV's muster. Wisely he goes no further than stating that they would have had carried some sort of flag, and that the episode of the Blue Blanket being carried back to Edinburgh by the captain of the city guard after the defeat at Flodden is merely a story. An interesting observation in this section is that the Flodden Wall built around Edinburgh led to the upward growth of tenements as the only direction possible within the walls. Another is that badly hit as Edinburgh's merchant and craftsmen were by the losses at Flodden, casualties at Pinkie in 1547 were almost as bad.

Graeme Cruickshank lays out the evidence for the origins and history of the Blue Blanket before 1800. It is said to have been a set of privileges and a symbolic banner granted in 1482 to the Edinburgh tradesmen for their role in liberating James III from imprisonment in Edinburgh Castle at a time of national turmoil. Subsequently, at various crises the trades would bring out the blanket to assert their rights. The source for this and much of the history of the Blue Blanket before 1600 is Alexander Pennecuik's *Historical Account*, first published in 1722. Unfortunately none of the manuscript sources and historians he claimed to have drawn upon has been traced in this study. Perhaps evidence may still emerge from the thickets of unpublished early modern antiquarians' writings. Surprisingly, the earliest verifiable reference is by

James VI, who in his royal manual *Basilikon Doron* (1599) refers disparagingly to the trades' propensity to raise the Blue Blanket whenever attempts were made to control them and the quality of their work.

This could happen as a result of the long-standing rivalry and friction between the trades and Edinburgh's merchants. The self-interest of the trades incorporation may help explain episodes when the Blue Blanket did not appear, which puzzle Cruickshank as he surveys Edinburgh's history, using the displaying of the Blanket as a litmus test of the trades' activities. Sometimes the Blanket appears as if it were an actor in its own right, at others as a quasi-magic totem to which the tradesmen turned in times of need. It was last used 'in anger' during the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots in 1779.

The Blanket possessed enduring symbolic value, as Ian Robertson demonstrates in an interesting final chapter on its post-1800 history. Displayed as part of the civic homage to George IV on his visit in 1822, the Blanket was later repaired before being appropriated by the operative masons. Between 1858 and 1870 it was proudly displayed during foundation-stone ceremonies, including that of the Wallace Monument in 1861. Queen Victoria noticed the Trades and their emblem of loyalty during her visit to the International Exhibition in Edinburgh in 1886. During the First World War postcards of the Blanket were sold to pay for servicemen's comforts, and as an actual banner it was resurrected in 1971 for protests against government policy that excluded Edinburgh from development grants. The new banner featured symbols of many trades, a far cry from the crown and thistle on the earlier Blanket. Here, as with earlier episodes in the history of the Incorporated Trades, for example the Reform Act of 1832, the relationship with the labour force and trade unions goes unexplored.

The most familiar and enduring images of the Blue Blanket's history are paintings in the City Council's possession. R Hope depicts the presentation of the Blanket by James III and his Queen, an event for which no corroborative evidence has appeared. Likewise W B Hole's *After Flodden* shows Randolph Murray's return to Edinburgh with the Blanket, as described in W E Aytoun's poem 'Edinburgh After Flodden' (1849). Paintings and poem essentially narrate an unproven tradition, which is fascinatingly unpicked in this study's eventful tale of a corporate symbol. It makes for interesting reading, although it

bears signs of being written for the institution and, as Cruikshank acknowledges, leaves fundamental questions about the Blanket's origins still in need of answers.

*Tristram Clarke*

Michael Carley, Robert Dalziel, Pat Dargan and Simon Laird, **Edinburgh New Town. A Model City**, Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015. pp.192, illus. figs. Maps, Hardback, £20, 978 1 4456 3948 2.

Those who seek to understand and appreciate the New Town of Edinburgh have been well served recently. First we had Tony Lewis's *The Builders of Edinburgh New Town, 1767-1795*. This was the museum man's book giving central place to the builders and craftsmen who created the material fabric of the New Town. Here we have the planners' and architects' book. This group is fascinated by the success of the New Town, and asks why it was able to survive, adapt, and remain a much valued urban environment. The authors derive much of this success from the 'planned' status of the basic grid and the 'enlightenment' values of order and rationality on which it was based. They have a keen eye for the spatial and visual outcomes of such values, the many axial structures which often end in a public building, the hierarchy of streets which matched the ideal society, the order of the street with flagstones for pedestrians and granite setts for the carriageway. Within this overall structure the New Town was a place of modest scale and high density. From the beginning this enabled adaptability within the overall structure. At the start it was to be an elite residential suburb but rapidly, as builders and developers responded to market needs, produced a great variety of housing. The Scottish traditions of tenement, main door flat and common stair were especially useful, often filling corner plots alongside the high status single houses.

The authors draw attention to a wide range of detail of layout Chapter 4, is in many ways the most interesting and challenging. The New Town responded to familiar urban pressures by changing functions, to retail, fitting in public buildings, to commercial and institutional, and back to residential. A detailed account of Moray Place sees the commercial and institutional come and go and the residential re-

appear but with more sub division, but the 'new town' is still there (just) with its modest scale, high density and axial views.

How was this possible? They place much of the credit on the feu system and the control of owners and City Council. Such analysis needs care. Richard Rodger (*The Transformation of Edinburgh*) has shown that the feu system was developed slowly over the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Key court cases of the 1810's indicated that the initial developers's obligations were to build to plan and link up to the sewers. It was only later that Heriot's Trust and the Moray Estate devised feu charters with elaborate and detailed conditions that would endure beyond the initial contract. We need to ask if the perpetual lease of the feu charter was any different from the long leases which obtained in parts of many English towns, such as the Calthorpe estate in Birmingham. Even here such control only worked where there was a market for such a disciplined environment, as indicated by the failure of the Duke of Norfolk to complete Paradise Square in Sheffield.

Considerable credit is given to the control which landowners and City Council exercised. Such control was again something which was learnt over time. The legislation was revised, notably in 1785, to increase control especially over detail such as dormer windows. At the very start Lawrence Dundas appropriated the site planned for a church and used it for his front garden. Outcomes were decided in the political battles of the Edinburgh Corporation as well as the law courts. The success of this high density, varied function environment depended upon each owner and occupier being able to rely on the externalities of neighbourhood. The North British Railway was an early invader of the 'enlightenment' environment and the North British Hotel and Post Office buildings challenge the axial vista along North Bridge to Register House. More subtle and recent challenges include the density of motor traffic and the paradox of the trees in the much valued squares and gardens. They cut out many vistas and views whatever the feu charter may say.

The authors come back several times to 'enlightenment' values as the basis of the success, survival and adaptability of the New Town. They briefly visit the Abercrombie Report of 1949 and reproduce the notorious plan to replace Princes Street with a three decker motorway and enforce a

modern orderly rebuilding. The Report suggested the need to ‘correct’ the existing architecture, dismissing surviving original buildings as only contributing to the ‘general untidy nature of the present development’ (*Report*, p.61). The only buildings felt to be worth retention were the three clubs, which makes you wonder where they had lunch. For a while planner discipline was sustained and a start was made on a pedestrian walkway along the uniformity of the street. This was a decade in which the ‘enlightenment’ produced modern values. The past was a dirty, untidy place and needed to be replaced. By the late 1960s values had changed. Sir Robert Matthew, a modernist of considerable eminence, gathered a distinguished group together and made a careful survey of the condition and conservation needs of the New Town (*The Conservation of Georgian Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1972). The outcome was the formation of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee which in a complex process would eventually morph into the World Heritage Trust and World Heritage status. Is the New Town then ‘safe’? The lesson of this account is that the New Town is and was as it is and will be because those with power, owners, occupiers, politicians, opinion formers and judicial decision makers wanted it to be so. At present we have no feudal system and a political structure dominated by those who appear to value ‘heritage’ for its marketability in an international tourist market. This little book sets out what is at stake and leaves us much to think about.

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Christopher Fleet and Daniel MacCannell, **Edinburgh: Mapping the City**. Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2014, pp.xv + 303, illus. Hardback, £30, 978-1-7802-7245-0.

As well as conveying much of informative value, maps and plans can also be items of great beauty. Much the same can be said for this impressively-constructed and appealing volume. The illustrations are of a universally high quality and have an immediate impact. This is increased by the authors’ decision to show extracted details from much larger maps which draw the reader’s attention

to the interesting features they contain. In this, and in many other ways, this is much more than a ‘coffee table book’.

Fleet and MacCannell are more than qualified to put together such a work. In particular it is worth noting Fleet’s previous co-authorship of the impressive *Scotland: Mapping the Nation*, which makes him ideally placed to develop the theme: taking us from mapping a nation to mapping a particular city. The authors are to be praised for their decision to concentrate upon a reasonably small selection of maps (71 in all) thus leaving more room for commentary on the individual maps than is often found in similarly-themed works. Moreover, the information in the commentaries is pertinent and useful – highlighting not only details about the items in question, but providing some context regarding the motivations of those creating the maps as well as background to the lives of the mapmakers themselves. If, in places, the reader is left perhaps wanting a little more analysis, this must be weighed alongside the recognition that the authors have produced a volume of a manageable size, which will be of interest to the layperson, and which still covers a substantial amount of ground.

The selection process of the maps for the book was, as the authors admit, ‘ultimately personal’ and is biased somewhat towards the collections held by their collaborating institution, the National Library of Scotland. This is understandable, and every reader will no doubt have their own opinions of the merits or otherwise of the inclusion of certain items. From a personal perspective this reader regrets that more examples of original manuscript maps were not included. That being said, there are some notable examples within the book: the ‘bird’s-eye views’ of the murder of Lord Darnley and of the Earl of Hertford’s assault are both excellent early representations of the city and are of considerable interest in their own right, and David Crawford’s 1826 plan of Ravelston is also noteworthy.

In the introduction, Fleet and MacCannell admit that their definition of how mapping can be defined is ‘deliberately broad’ and, although some may dispute whether some of the items are actually examples of ‘mapping’, this reader feels that it is this breadth of material that provides one of the key strengths of this work: taking it from what could have been an attractive but unremarkable collection of traditional ‘maps’ to a more satisfying and coherent account of

how a city is perceived by those who saw it, lived in it, and drew it. Although it may be possible to question the inclusion or exclusion of particular maps in this collection, there can be little doubt that each map adds something to the work as a whole.

The authors argue that ‘we more often see Edinburgh altering more in the eyes of its beholders than on the ground’ and the selection of images that they present certainly go a long way to supporting this claim. The breadth of their approach means that we do truly get a sense of the motivations which drove some of the earliest creators of maps, many of which were drawn with a primary purpose other than to assist people with finding their way around. Thus the book covers subject matter which may be somewhat unexpected in a work which is ostensibly ‘all about maps’. We have sections relating to World War Two bombing raids, the Temperance movement, the Cold War, disease, the politics of drainage, and the establishment of the city’s zoo.

These sections highlight one of the particularly successful features of this book – namely the mixture of continuity and change that is represented throughout. The vast majority of the maps are used to elucidate particular themes and, in many ways, this makes this book as much a source for social history as it does for the geography of the city. Such an approach is to be sincerely applauded and it is to be hoped that similar works on other Scottish cities may choose to follow this lead.

*Kirsteen M Mulhern*

National Records of Scotland

Mungo Campbell, with Anne Dulau, and essays by Melanie Buntin and Rhona Brown, John Bonehill and Rica Jones, Allan Ramsay. **Portraits of the Enlightenment.** *Prestel, Munich, London and New York, 2013. 128 pp., including 85 illustrations. £35. ISBN 978-3-7913-4878-0.*

**T**he tercentenary of the birth in 1713 of the portrait painter Allan Ramsay should have been better recognized and celebrated in Edinburgh, his native city, than it was. The Scottish National Gallery mounted a display selected from its incomparable collection of Ramsay’s exquisite drawings which formed such a vital and exceptional part of his

portrait practice. But that was all. Perhaps the city still remembered, and relied upon, the important exhibition of 1992 held at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, the work of the late Alastair Smart, and his magisterial biography *Allan Ramsay: Painter, Essayist and Man of the Enlightenment*. Behind that lay ‘Poet & Painter: Allan Ramsay, Father & Son, 1684-1784’, an exhibition at the National Library of Scotland curated by the present reviewer, and a monograph, which commemorated the bicentenary in 1984 of the *death* of Ramsay the painter and the tercentenary of the *birth* of his father, the poet.

Glasgow, to its credit, seized the chance to commemorate the tercentenary in a stylish and instructive exhibition at the Hunterian Art Gallery. To accompany this, *Allan Ramsay: Portraits of the Enlightenment* was published. The book deserves attention as the only published tribute to Ramsay, son of Edinburgh, on his tercentenary. The exhibition brought together a wonderful series of some of Ramsay’s greatest portraits, some weel-kent, others much less so. A group of familiar images of the Edinburgh literati, all friends of Ramsay, was assembled for the exhibition, among them David Hume, Alexander Monro, James Adam - and Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, so shrewd and knowing, and not just about his rhubarb.

*Allan Ramsay: Portraits of the Enlightenment* is a handsome production, designed by Edinburgh’s Robert Dalrymple. The images are reproduced to a high standard, and the plates form a very agreeable portfolio of images illustrating some of the best examples of Ramsay’s elegant and perceptive art. It is, nevertheless, a somewhat unsatisfactory work. First, it is described at a catalogue, but there is no ‘catalogue’ element. Second, though the book is made up of essays more or less connected with the themes of the exhibition, these are of varying levels of originality. All should be of interest to those who know little of Ramsay and his work and world. Mungo Campbell’s introductory essay discusses general points bearing on the painter’s career and practice as a whole. Three other pieces investigate Ramsay’s connections with Scotland, with France and with Italy, but even the latter two have a Scottish, indeed an Edinburgh dimension. On those levels, the book will be a useful introduction to the art and to the social and intellectual life of Ramsay - one of the most sensitive of all British portraitists, and an

extremely well-connected man of remarkably broad cultural interests. Except that we really do know all this already from the fundamental work of Alastair Smart; from Duncan Macmillan's perceptive writing on the artist and the age; and from this reviewer's work on aspects of Ramsay the younger's career as that was linked to or played off against that of his poet father. So the book is to a large extent a case of 'Ramsay revisited' in the way it deals with significant, but well-known and already thoroughly-investigated, interconnections in culture and society.

Parts of the work, notably the essay by Melanie Buntin and Rhona Brown, and that by John Bonehill, rehearse material long published, and follow paths and themes that are well-worn, without as much acknowledgement to all those who have trodden or pursued them before as might have been expected: Some of the authors appear unaware of earlier published work in the field - or at any rate do not cite it - such as that on Ramsay's pamphlet publications, or on his father's artistic connections with the Earl of Ilay, as formed in Ramsay's High Street 'closet' over the making of Classical bas-reliefs in 'Paris plaister'. There are quite a few inaccuracies and typographical inconsistencies: copyediting and proofreading has been poor. Among inconsistent and misleading footnotes and citations: the repeated error of 'Martin Burns' for 'Burns Martin', joint-editor of some of Ramsay's *Works*, stands out. There are also some errors of fact or expression. Plate 73 is not the 'frontispiece' of one of Ramsay's pamphlets, unless an obsolete use of that term has been adopted; and the title-page featured in Plate 32 is in fact inscribed by Ramsay, who himself supplies the place of publication in manuscript. Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Lord Minto, is not 'Lord Gilbert Elliot Minto' (p. 119). Sir John Clerk did not erect the Ramsay obelisk at Penicuik: his son James did. The superb portraits which occupy pages 78-79 are not of 'Lord Philip Stanhope' and 'Lady Grisel Stanhope': they are of Philip, second Earl Stanhope and his Countess. The 'desk and fireplace' in the wonderful portrait of Anne, Countess Temple should not necessarily 'remind us that the Countess and his husband, Lord Temple, were patrons of the Adam brothers' (p. 87) - though indeed they were. The items to which attention is drawn are surely not 'Adam': the chimney-piece and pier- or serving-table in the Lady Temple portrait are actually in the style of William Kent, who also

worked at Stowe.

Mungo Campbell stresses the fact that Ramsay was largely disengaged from contemporary artistic rivalries, especially in terms of native British competition, and observes that he compared himself always with European masters. Ramsay was not part of the 'public' sphere of art, standing apart from professional rivalries and the world of the exhibition: he chose his sitters for other than any public success he might gain from painting them, producing quiet paintings for private settings. Indeed he absented himself largely from the usual commercial practice of a portrait-painter's business. His portraits were 'the visual recording of extended personal exchange', and Campbell writes well on the networks of politics and society that brought Ramsay work. Campbell has interesting arguments to make about the way Ramsay continued to exploit the Kinross-shire Bruce family connections of his first wife (though he misses some telling sigillographic evidence), and makes equally perceptive observations about the amount of business that came to Ramsay through both the Scottish and English connections of his second wife's family. Margaret Lindsay's social connections helped Ramsay greatly, even if their marriage alienated him from her family: he lost her father's goodwill but he nevertheless attracted many sitters from among her family circle. Campbell is observant, too, in pointing out that Ramsay's place in intellectual life was assured even though his social position was not.

Ramsay's Edinburgh background, and the place his father had made for himself (and therefore for his son) in the cultural and social world of the city and a contemporary Scotland poised for greatness in the Enlightenment, allowed Ramsay the younger himself to flourish first there, and thereafter in the wider polite world of London and the international realm of the European Enlightenment. The poet father's central role in shaping the painter son's career both in Edinburgh and furth of Scotland is further elaborated by Melanie Buntin and Rhona Brown. Their essay entitled 'Family Resemblance: a Dialogue Between Father and Son' is that which will be of greatest interest to readers of *BOEC*. But, as with John Bonehill on Allan Ramsay's 'Classical Curiosity', 'Family Resemblance' is derivative and makes too much of comparatively little that is new. The point that subscriptions for the work of the poet were translated or transformed into commissions for the work of the young painter, is important, and indicates the

common network of patronage articulating the parallel careers of poet and painter within Edinburgh society. I am not sure that the authors are right (p. 63) to speculate on the younger Ramsay's acquaintanceship with Alexander Pope, nor about how this may have come about – allegedly through Duncan Forbes – if indeed it did. Evidence seems to be lacking. The elder Ramsay was not Pope's 'friend and literary kinsman': they never met, nor did they correspond.

The parallels between the Edinburgh Academy of St Luke and the Foulis Academy of Glasgow are tangible, and the authors are right to stress them. More questionable are the supposed parallels between the Easy Club and the Select Society of Edinburgh. The treatment of the Select Society, founded by the younger Ramsay, is neither very clear nor wholly accurate. The account of André Rouquet and his *Present State of the Arts in England* (1755) overlooks recently-published evidence of the first (London)

Select Society, apparently founded by Ramsay four years before the famous Edinburgh one, and of which Rouquet was a member. The link is significant. Rouquet criticised the tendency of contemporary British painters to mass-produce, and by extension praised the kind of 'thinking painting' that was the hallmark of Ramsay's much more limited and less 'public' practice.

Of the remaining essays, that by Anne Dulau on 'Women of Sense and Education' is the best in the book. Dulau, who is herself French, writes perceptively on the European aspects of Ramsay's style, combining this with helpful discussion of his relationship to some of his female sitters, the women whom (as a contemporary said) he was 'formed to paint'. The final contribution, by Rica Jones, is a useful treatment of Ramsay's painting technique.

*Iain Gordon Brown*