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## Book Reviews

### NEW TOWN NEW DIMENSIONS

Clarisse Godard Desmarest (ed.), **The New Town of Edinburgh. An Architectural Celebration**, Edinburgh: John Donald, 2019. xvi + 320 pp., illus., hardback, £40.00, ISBN 978 1 910900 35 2.

John D O Fulton, **66. The House that Viewed the World**, Edinburgh: Scotland Street Press, 2019. x + 245 pp., illus., hardback, £19.99, ISBN 978 1 910895 25 2.

Anniversaries are occasions for reflection. 1767 was the year in which the foundation stones of the first house in the New Town of Edinburgh were laid. Its 200 year anniversary was greeted with cautious celebration. 1968 saw the publication of A J Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, an elegant narrative of the processes that created the New Town. Fifty years and a bit later has seen the production of a new edition by Edinburgh University Press. 2019 has seen the publication of two very different sets of essays reflecting on the relationships and meanings which created and sustained the New Town.

First it will be useful to look at the context of the publication of Youngson's book. It was written in the long shadow of the Abercrombie report of 1949.<sup>1</sup> The by now infamous judgments on Princes Street and proposals for its rebuilding summed up the mood of the report. The street was in a 'magnificent setting' but the surviving original buildings, of 'a very minor residential character' only added to the 'general untidy nature of the present development'. This was blamed on 'the *laissez-faire* of Victorian and Edwardian eras.' The report recommended the replacement of the existing buildings under the strict control of the planners. The only buildings 'worthy of retention in such a development scheme are limited to three clubs.'<sup>2</sup> The original was a 'street front of uniform houses of little architectural interest'. Princes Street required rebuilding. This 'one sided shopping street'

was to be accompanied by a three decker roadway – a motorway for through traffic, an access road and a pedestrian deck along the shop fronts. All this was to be guided by the Princes Street Panel established in 1954. The remains of the putative pedestrian deck can still be seen embedded in buildings of that period. The wholesale valuing of Georgian architecture led by Sir John Summerson's *Georgian London* was yet to gain momentum.<sup>3</sup> Any defence of Victorian architecture was regarded as quaintly radical and an occasion for reading John Betjeman's poetry. With a few exceptions Edinburgh spent the 1950s and 1960s demolishing large parts of the Canongate and George Square. Edinburgh was to become a city fit for the motorcar. The potential inner ring road became a scar on the south side of the city, a long standing planning blight which would never funnel traffic to the new Princes Street.

A change in direction was marked in 1970 by a conference on *The Conservation of Georgian Edinburgh* organized by the Scottish Civic Trust (formed in 1967) and others.<sup>4</sup> An international group of opinion formers from the world of architecture and planning gathered in the Assembly Rooms. Sir John Betjeman told them 'Edinburgh is what a city ought to be ... somewhere to live and walk about in ... We know that the policy of destruction is old fashioned and retrogressive.'<sup>5</sup> The conference was one element of change in the early 1970s which saw the turning of the tide against 'planners' and total area redevelopment. Colin Buchanan turned up, he of *Traffic in Towns*.<sup>6</sup> He warned them that 'an assumption that the New Town should be conserved would not pass unquestioned' and gave an account of Edinburgh's traffic congestion. They would be required to produce a cost benefit analysis for this 'suave gentle restrained collection of houses'. Professor Youngson kept it simple. The New Town was 'a product of civilization'.<sup>7</sup>

The years which followed the 1970 conference

saw many additions to the literature on the New Town. There were substantial additions to our knowledge of James Craig and the maps associated with the creation and extension of the New Town.<sup>8</sup> The New Town played a considerable part in studies of the history of the architecture and built environment Edinburgh.<sup>9</sup> The New Town gained a number of neighbourhood studies<sup>10</sup> and has been held up as an inspiring example of planning.<sup>11</sup>

The volume edited by Clarisse Godard Desmarest contains fourteen essays varied in topic and range. Taken together these quietly challenge some of the assumptions made about the New Town, its nature and significance. The New Town is often presented as unique, yet the making of ‘new towns’ had a long and continuing history. David I founded his royal burghs and many lairds founded lesser burghs as part of the economic development of their estates [Aonghus MacKechnie]. Dunedin in New Zealand [Robin Skinner] claimed a likeness to Edinburgh New Town although close examination suggests this was a marketing strategy. Planned agricultural and factory villages [Ophélie Siméon] were widespread. The ideology of the post 1945 ‘new towns’ [Alistair Fair] looked to create a new sort of person. If we add the adjective ‘improvement’ to the narrative it is easier to include Anthony Lewis’s account of Glasgow as well as recent urban history of Scotland.<sup>12</sup> The outcome is to place the New Town in the wider history of Scotland.

Several essays highlight a surprising gap in the literature, namely an account of its varied economic and social history. Stana Nenadic provides an account of the craft businesses located in the New Town. Here the hierarchy, especially Rose Street and Thistle Street, comes into its own with clothing, house building, metalworking and other trades. In 1833 there were three printers and six jewellers in Rose Street. Tony Lewis has already examined the importance of the building trades in the creation of the New Town.<sup>13</sup> We have the beginnings of a true economic history of the New Town and hints of the way in which the demand and supply structures of the market interacted with the cadastral discipline of the grid. The current debate over the part played by slavery and the slavery compensation payments in the financing of the New Town should make us keen to know more about the funding of the building as well as the income flows which created the craft

businesses of Rose Street. Richard Rodger shows that the location of rooms for rent, at least those suitable for inclusion in trade and post office directories, moved from the Old Town [1775] to the New and the South side [1825]. Transport links remained in the Grassmarket in the 1820s. An ungrateful New Town awaited the arrival of the railway and St Andrew bus station.

The New Town has always fitted into the narrative of planning history. Familiar episodes such as the activities of the Earl of Mar are here [Margaret Stewart]. John Lowery takes this forward into the twentieth century to a point where planning is challenged by the idea of conservation and both become tangled with the economic development of the New Town as a central commercial and retail area. Patrick Geddes appears in the only French language contribution [Pierre Chabard]. On the one hand Geddes was inspired by the New Town as an example of what planning could achieve. At the same time he was deeply suspicious of the social division created. That division was as much one of ideology as fact. After all Geddes sent his own children from James Court to school in the New Town. The New Town was how Edinburgh liked to present itself and always featured in Royal welcomes [Giovanna Guidicini]. ‘Planning’ in the New Town was always a learning process. As earlier work by Richard Rodger demonstrated the contribution of Edinburgh Corporation was limited and specific as was the authority of the legal system.<sup>14</sup> The Corporation provided the initial land assembly and the distinctive cadastral structure, the hierarchical grid layout with its squares and those green spaces, some still open to a limited public. This spatial discipline provided considerable flexibility for change of use as the feuurs of Princes Street soon discovered.<sup>15</sup> Interventions by the state and land owners changed over the centuries but the James Craig grid showed an ability to sustain its outline and influence.

Ranald MacInnes and Murray Pittock in different ways see this sense of two cities as a burden both to understanding the New Town and Edinburgh and to sustaining policies which preserve many aspects of value. This takes us to one of the most thought provoking essays in the book provided by the editor at the finish. Clarisse Godard Desmarest reflects on the relative lack of celebration in Edinburgh for this recent anniversary. An exhibition of photographs took

place in the City Art Centre, and this collection was published, in part sponsored by the French Consulate in Edinburgh. This was quite different from the 200th which was celebrated by an exhibition and civic procession as well as the 1970 Civic Trust conference. This led to the creation of a variety of organizations notably the New Town Conservation Committee and the Old Town Renewal Trust. This activity eventually resulted in the inscription of Old and New Towns as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995 and the merging of the two organizations in the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust. The New Town was now immersed in the politics and theology of ‘Outstanding Universal Value ... of importance to all humanity’ with obligations of management and conservation.<sup>16</sup>

The title created a political and cultural asset for those who wanted to conserve the built environment, but what was in fact conserved? The creation of the World Heritage Site affirmed the definition of the New Town as the ‘planned Georgian New Town’. The New Town is celebrated in the history of planning, but as several essays in this book suggest, more curiosity is needed over the specific nature of a plan which asserted an hierarchical cadastral discipline which was then let loose in the market economy. It is a definition which respects the early design history but ignores what came next. The very flexibility of the grid meant that by the end of the nineteenth century the New Town contained one of the finest shopping streets in Europe with an international financial district to the east and lawyers to the west.

This matters because there are many indications that the New Town and indeed Edinburgh face changes as fundamental as those of the early 1970s. An independent banking and financial establishment, once the pride of Scottish capital, is no more.<sup>17</sup> Princes Street, once the pride of Scottish shopping, faces the drift to suburban retail parks and internet retail. The great department stores retain an uneasy identity. The Royal High School building, once the pride of Scottish education, decays gently awaiting its fate under the Reporter of the Scottish government. It remains a test of cultural values – a six star hotel, an educational resource or a long gone relic of economic and social purpose. Public space once fiercely defended by the Princes Street Proprietors is increasingly appropriated by profit seeking enterprises with a notion of culture which has little to do with the City, Scotland or any ‘tradition’ of the New Town.

In part the vulnerability of the New Town is an outcome of the very limited cultural meaning it has acquired over its 250 years and which these essays seek to expand. The New Town lacks the historical symbolism of the Old which is filled with places that represent the history of Scotland. The New Town represents itself, its Georgian self. The cultural education offered to citizens and tourists usually says little of the great department stores, of banking, lawyers and education or the craftspeople of Rose Street. There is a need to think of the New Town as a multi layered environment with a cultural and national history of world extent.

The Old Town presents itself with a glorious mixture of scholarship, ‘fake history’ and guides of various qualities. Did nothing happen in the New Town except the building and planning of the New Town? There are no ghost tours at Mothercare, no Edwardian shopping experience offered at Jenners. The recent restoration of the R W Forsyth globe and enthusiasm for restoring the Binns Clock suggest perhaps the awakening of a broader cultural development for the New Town.<sup>18</sup>

The second book reviewed here offers hints which extend the meaning of the New Town. This collection is disarmingly presented as a series of ‘informative and self contained stories’ connected to people who crossed threshold of 66 Queen Street. It proves much more than that for two reasons. John Fulton provides a considerable depth of historical context as well as a sense of the complex detail of individual relationships in a way in which only a family and property lawyer can do. The stories present a varied cast of representative Scots. The emigrant who made good in North America, the military man Abercrombie, Walter Scott gets a chapter and then there is Dr James Simpson. Anyone who thinks the Scottish enlightenment had run its course by the mid nineteenth century needs to read Morrice McCrae’s recent biography.<sup>19</sup> Simpson worked with evidence and reason, experiment and conclusion guided by compassion for the individuality of pain. He was also an industrious antiquarian. The book is given coherence by the arrival at number 66 in 1856 of the elite law firm of Tods, Murray and Jamieson. The chosen case files draw in several strands of Scottish History. There are several things here to learn about the New Town. The lawyers drew in landed income

to the New Town economy as they managed landed estates across Scotland. The partners helped many who knew more about horse racing than estate management. They helped sort out the tangled marriage relationships of leading aristocracy. Like many professional families the firm was crossed by the losses of 1914–18. The New Town was not so much a place of wealth, although there was plenty of wealth there, from trade, industry, investment as well as land. It was a place of specific forms of influence. It was also a place centred upon world networks of trade and empire. Pick any one of the chapters and the network rapidly moves to London, South America, to rulers of the Indian Empire in all its stages, to the socialites, moving around European resorts. To sit in a New Town office or drawing room

was to sit within a world network. Fulton judges these as an enlightenment man, evidence, reason and individuality – the individuality of the Adam Smith of *Moral Sentiments*. His confidence in the financial and legal authority of the New Town and hence Scotland is being tested by the recent mass amalgamations of legal firms and the recent loss of independent financial firms.

These two books add many dimensions to an understanding of the New Town, dimensions that not only involve interaction with the Old Town but extend well beyond the boundaries of a world heritage site.

*R J Morris*

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Patrick Abercrombie and Derek Plumstead, *A Civic Survey and Plan for the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1949).
- 2 Abercrombie, *Survey*, plate XXXI opposite p. 61.
- 3 Published in 1945 but its widespread influence was marked by the Pelican Book publication in 1962.
- 4 Sir Robert Matthew, John Reid and Maurice Lindsay (eds.), *The Conservation of Georgian Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1972).
- 5 *The Conservation of Georgian Edinburgh*, p. 32.
- 6 *Traffic in Towns. A study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* (London 1963). Buchanan led the steering group which produced the report. A specially shortened edition was published as a Penguin Special the following year.
- 7 *The Conservation of Georgian Edinburgh*, pp. 34 and 53.
- 8 M.K.Meade, 'Plans of the New Town of Edinburgh', *Architectural History*, vol.114 (1971) pp. 40-52 and 142-148; Kitty Cruft and Andrew Fraser (eds.), *James Craig, 1744–1795*, (Edinburgh 1995); Christopher Fleet and Daniel MacCannell, *Edinburgh. Mapping the City* (Edinburgh 2014), p. 69 et seq.
- 9 John Gifford, Colin McWilliam and David Walker, *Edinburgh*, Penguin Buildings of Scotland (London 1984); Charles McKean, 'Twinning Cities: Modernization Versus Improvement in the Two Towns of Edinburgh, 1750–1920', in Brian Edwards and Paul Jenkins (eds.), *Edinburgh. The Making of a Capital City* (Edinburgh 2005); Charles McKean, *Edinburgh: An Illustrated Architectural Guide* (Edinburgh 1992).
- 10 Ann Mitchell, *No More Corncrakes. Lord Moray's Feuars in Edinburgh's New Town* (Edinburgh 1998); Stuart McHardy and Donald Smith, *Calton Hill: Journeys and Evocations* (Edinburgh 2013).
- 11 Michael Carley, Robert Dalziel, Pat Dargan and Simon Laird, *Edinburgh New Town. A Model City* (Stroud 2015).
- 12 Bob Harris and Charles McKean *The Scottish Town in the Age of Enlightenment* (Edinburgh 2014).
- 13 Anthony Lewis, *The Builders of Edinburgh New Town, 1767–1795* (Reading 2014).
- 14 Richard Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh. Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 2001), pp. 30-68.
- 15 David Robertson and Marguerite Wood, *Castle and Town. Chapters in the History of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1928), pp. 1-51; David Robertson, *The Princes Street Proprietors and Other Chapters in the History of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1935), pp. 1-61. The work of the one time Town Clerk and the Keeper of City Records is still important.
- 16 *The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh. World Heritage Site. Management Plan 2011–2016 and Management Plan 2017–2022*.
- 17 Ray Perman, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Money: A Financial History of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 2019).
- 18 I am indebted to Roger Emmerson for information on the Globe; for Binns Clock see *Edinburgh Evening News*, 4 January 2020.
- 19 Morrice McCrae, *Simpson. The Turbulent Life of a Medical Pioneer* (Edinburgh 2011).



Kirsten Carter McKee, **Calton Hill: And the plans for Edinburgh's Third New Town**, Edinburgh: John Donald, 2018. 224 pp., illus., hardback, £25.00, ISBN: 978 1 91 090017 8

Nothing says 'Edinburgh' quite like Calton Hill. From its summit the city reveals itself in a 360-degree sweep. Small wonder that the panorama was invented here. One prospect in particular, taking in the Old Town and the New with a neoclassical monument as its foreground, has become one of Edinburgh's unofficial logos: the stuff of endless publicity leaflets and TV backdrops. On the other hand, the Hill is a view as well as a viewpoint. What appears in close-up as a disparate and scattered assortment of constructions resolves into a dramatic ensemble, a picture-postcard subject, when seen from a distance. The development of Calton Hill and the meaning of this Edinburgh emblem are investigated by Kirsten Carter McKee in this book based on her University of Edinburgh PhD thesis.

Calton Hill's formidable topography proved no barrier to the processes of nineteenth-century urbanisation. The construction of Waterloo Place and the Regent Bridge opened up the approach from the west. Regent Road curved round the Hill to the south, past Robert Adam's Bridewell – an early experiment in panopticism – and the new Calton Jail. To the north, the suburb planned to fill the gap between Edinburgh and Leith – the Third New Town of McKee's subtitle – remained largely unbuilt. On the Hill, however, Playfair's masterplan produced three of Edinburgh's grandest terraces, at the same time enclosing an extensive tract as a pleasure ground for their well-off residents.

What remained was to be left as open, public space. Here an idiosyncratic array of structures was erected. There were public buildings. The City Observatory was constructed, naturally, close to the summit. Lower down, the new High School, Thomas Hamilton's Greek revival masterpiece, was positioned to accept scholars from both Old and New Towns. And a new graveyard was designed on modern principles to fill a pressing need in the expanding city.

But it was the monuments that provided, and provide, the Hill's distinction. The victories of the Napoleonic Wars were commemorated in the Nelson and the National Monuments, the latter planned as a full-scale reproduction Parthenon to

honour the Scots dead in the conflict. Memorials to meritorious individuals proliferated. First came David Hume in the Old Calton Burial Ground; then the astronomer John Playfair, another philosopher, Dugald Stewart, and finally the national bard Robert Burns, all at carefully chosen sites on the Hill. The prospect of a national pantheon or cultural Valhalla beckoned. These constructions were funded by public subscription amongst Edinburgh's elite: although, famously, in the case of the National Monument the money ran out and the Parthenon was abandoned, perhaps fortunately, as an elegant folly.

McKee interprets this flurry of building as a product of the interplay of elite loyalties – to city, nation, Union and Empire – that has so often been a theme in Scottish history writing, and which forms the major focus of her book. Thus, in this heroic phase, British patriotism and attachment to the Union were manifested in the commemorations of victory over France; while the grand urban designs and the memorials to local heroes were intended to assert Edinburgh's place in the culture of the Union state.

In the course of her analysis McKee fruitfully revisits some well-travelled territory: the Edinburgh elite's need to keep up with developments in London, for example, or their vision of Edinburgh-as-Athens and the meanings of the Athenian idiom in architecture. Other excursions explore less familiar ground: such as the imperial echoes McKee finds in the design of the New Calton Burial Ground and in its first occupants; or the Union-wide ramifications for upper-class education she sees behind the rivalry between the projectors of Edinburgh Academy and the new High School.

Calton Hill's heroic period ended abruptly after less than two decades. The bank crash of the mid 1820s did for the plans for the Third New Town and hindered the construction of the terraces for a generation, while financial mismanagement left the old Town Council bankrupt a few years later. The new reformed and more representative Council had to assume the debts and a more constrained view of municipal finance. One further Calton Hill memorial marks this transition. The Political Martyr's Monument in the Old Calton Burial Ground is relegated to a footnote by McKee: although she does reproduce a stunning Hill and Adamson calotype of the obelisk under construction. Here political rather than national loyalties were on display. The Monument was erected

with the support of the reformed Town Council after a campaign largely led from London, a bitter protest in the age of Chartism against a notorious injustice of the *ancien régime*.

The rest of the story, monumentally at least, descends into something of an anti-climax. McKee documents a parade of proposals – to complete the National Monument, to resurrect the idea of the national Valhalla, or to commemorate more recent wars – that all came to nothing. The one building that did prosper, although McKee makes little of this, was the Calton Jail, which developed into the largest prison in Scotland and which for more than a century dominated one view of the Hill and its monuments. The sheer visibility of this site of discipline and punishment in Edinburgh’s daily life is surely worthy of some reflection. Now only the castellated Governor’s House remains: but the prison’s massive foundations were retained for St Andrew’s House, art deco masterpiece and for McKee a celebration of Scottish administration within the Union.

The changing temper of subsequent Scottish politics provides McKee with a coda to her account, in the Hill’s significance for the movements for political devolution and independence. The pretext, the re-purposing of the redundant Royal High School building as a home for the proposed Scottish Assembly, was another Calton Hill plan that failed to materialise. With the establishment of a working Scottish parliament at Holyrood, the caravan has – literally – moved on, leaving only the Democracy Cairn as the Hill’s latest memorial.

More recent developments lie outside McKee’s chosen timescale. The Collective Gallery project has restored Playfair’s City Observatory to something like its former glory, although an accompanying restaurant building has created a new – and still rather brash – intervention on the Hill’s skyline. Much less positively, and as most readers will be only too aware, the ill-judged proposals to use the High School building – still empty after all these years – as the centrepiece of an overscale hotel complex have revealed twenty-first century commercial pressures on the Calton Hill landscape. Despite the ensuing storm of protest, the threat is still there.

These issues aside, this well-produced book is an absorbing and enjoyable contribution to Edinburgh history. McKee makes good use of the work of previous writers: extensive notes and a full

bibliography demonstrate the range of her sources and provide a basis for further reading. The copious illustrations are particularly noteworthy, generously laid out and reproduced with a precision that does them justice. McKee is most at home in her analysis of the architectural and the urban design aspects of her subject. Less tangible concepts of identity – however defined – sometimes seem less than strong enough to hold the different strands of her discussion together. But McKee’s continuing focus on the site, and her sense of the Hill as a place shine through. This book allows us to view, and explore, Calton Hill anew.

*Wilson Smith*

John N. Amooore, **A Journey with Edinburgh’s Monuments**, Edinburgh: John N. Amooore/CreateSpace, 2018. 180 pp., illus, softbound, £21.00, ISBN: 978 1 98690029 4

*A Journey with Edinburgh’s Monuments* fills an important gap in the growing local history market. As Amooore notes, Edinburgh’s monuments are part of our everyday - but, beyond the iconic exceptions, how many monuments can you confidently name and explain? And that question applies to both residents and visitors. Amooore has done the homework for us, and with this guide we may now walk the city with new eyes and new understanding.

The book is arranged in eight main chapters. Six deal with specific geographical areas, one with plaques on benches, trees and flower-beds, and the eighth draws issues together. The book is nicely illustrated with photographs (in which, incidentally, the sun is always shining and the sky always blue).

Amooore provides an interesting discussion of the dilemmas of what to include in a book on ‘monuments’ - monuments inside buildings? And what about monuments in graveyards? The inclusion of plaques on benches, trees and flower-beds is perhaps the least satisfactory chapter in that these are, for the most part, love tokens from family and friends rather than any indication of wider public recognition (albeit often forgotten today).

The monuments as a record of public recognition and contemporary value is the underlying story running through the book and one which Amooore might perhaps want to examine further. The people

and the activities we honour say so much about values at particular times. Why these people? Why not those people? Why these achievements and not those? It would be fascinating to know more about the process of nomination, acceptance and funding, and about who was suggested and rejected, and who was accepted and then removed, when and why? What were the debates around design, size and site? Edinburgh has a record of disagreements about ‘distasteful’ designs and ‘inappropriate’ sites (eg the Ross Fountain). Every monument must have its own story to tell.

It is no surprise that this is largely - very, very largely - a story of men. A few female monarchs, Catherine Sinclair, Elsie Inglis and Alison Dunlop are among the very few exceptions. Maybe Edinburgh needs its own version of the Dundee Women’s Trail?

*Diana Leat*

Jack Gillon, **Secret Leith**, Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2019. 96 pp., illus, softbound, £14.99, ISBN: 978 1 44568609 7

The author tells the reader in the introductory two pages that some of the stories have already been told by accomplished historians before him. He hopes by having uncovered other early sources, media reports contemporary with events, and a mix of old and new images to inform the reader of some fresh aspects of the history of Leith even if they know Leith well. Indeed, the book is full of information of the history of Leith from its early times as the port for Edinburgh, its independence from Edinburgh in 1833 and back to its reconnection with Edinburgh in 1920. The ‘Muddle’, the invisible boundary line between Edinburgh and Leith at Pilrig which gave rise to anomalies in both licensing laws and public transport, makes amusing reading. Included in the stories is the development of Leith as an industrial port and the many industries

and manufactures which were housed within Leith. The author covers people and places and there are some interesting pictures of old buildings which no longer exist alongside those which remain to this day.

The reader learns of the impact of war, the building of the Martello Tower in Napoleonic times and the Zeppelin Raid in 1916. People stories include the Gladstone family, Robert Burns and an interesting story about an ‘Eskimo’ called John Sakeouse, who was brought to Leith but was not born there.

It is a ‘light’ read and sometimes lacks sources of information or research and has no notes or references at the end of book. It has many interesting photographs and pictures helping to create a colourful image. The photographs do not detail or acknowledge their source, which I found unusual and is a pity for any reader wishing to look for further information on photographic collections of Leith.

For those readers who know Leith well, as I do, it’s relatively easy to identify the streets from one’s own knowledge or childhood memories. For a reader who does not know Leith it may prove harder to imagine it as a separate place from Edinburgh. To help the reader visualise this it would have been helpful to include a map or maps, recent or early to help the reader identify Leith in its own right. It also misses out on telling the reader of the strong sense of belonging and pride of being a Leither, as opposed to being a native of Edinburgh, that I know existed.

I was also surprised to read of Leith being described today as a busy port, when the port and the dockland area have declined substantially, being replaced by housing developments, Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre to name but a few. However, I do concede it is a port for the tourists as they arrive on luxury liners nowadays.

Overall an interesting ‘light’ read, however there were only a few new stories that were uncovered for me.

*Alison Macdonald*