

**THE BOOK
OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH
CLUB**

The Journal for
Edinburgh History



Various Authors, 'Book Reviews,
Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, New Series, 5 (2002), pp. 117–129

~~~~~

This article is extracted from **The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, The Journal for  
Edinburgh History** ISSN 2634-2618

Content © The Old Edinburgh Club and contributors. All rights reserved.

For information about The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC), including contents of  
previous issues and indexes, see <https://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/boec>.

**This article is made available for your personal research and private study only.**

For any further uses of BOEC material, please contact the Editor, The Book of the Old  
Edinburgh Club, at [editor@oldedinburghclub.org.uk](mailto:editor@oldedinburghclub.org.uk). The Club has a Take-Down Policy  
covering potential rights infringements. Please see [http://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/oec-  
take-down-policy](http://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/oec-take-down-policy).



*Digitised by the Centre for Research  
Collections, Edinburgh University  
Library from the copy in the Library  
Collection*



## Book Reviews

James Moray Calder, edited by George A. Robertson, **The Edinburgh Highland Reel and Strathspey Society: A History.** East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001, pp. xiii + 129, illus. Paperback, £14.99, 1-86232-144-2.

The Edinburgh Highland Reel and Strathspey Society is one of those clubs and organisations which have become an institution without one knowing how or when. Edinburgh citizens may feel it has always been there, its massed strings entertaining at the Annual Concert in the Usher Hall and numerous fundraising performances, yet when founded in 1881 it was the first of its kind anywhere, and came into being not so much because of the popularity of Highland fiddle music as from the fear that the traditional forms of singing and dancing, as well as playing, were fast disappearing in the face of foreign influences and fashions such as the waltz. For over a century the Society has played an important role in upholding Scottish musical tradition.

Two families contributed outstandingly. Archibald Menzies, one of the five co-founders, conducted from 1889 until his death in 1914, followed by his son Ian until he died in 1949. For 50 years, from 1903, Alexander Calder served as secretary, and his late son, the author of this history, as conductor from 1949 to 1991. Significantly, both families migrated from regions where the fiddle playing tradition was particularly strong: Alex Calder from Moray, and Archibald Menzies from Aberfeldy, a town which, along with neighbouring Dunkeld, had long been a centre of Highland fiddling. James Stewart Robertson from Perthshire, another founder member and the first president, compiled 'The Athole Collection', a selection of tunes which long formed the basis of the group's repertoire. The third leading light in the Society's inception was William Simpson from Moray, who led the orchestra for 35 years until his death in 1920. As a member of staff of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, Simpson used its declared interest in 'the preservation of the language, poetry and music of the Highlands' to secure not only many decades of support, but also a free practice venue at its George IV Bridge premises until 1928.

The early members continued the tradition of the great eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiddlers, their repertoire largely comprising strathspeys and reels played in sets together, the fiddles supported by

the lower strings. Tradition was the byword. 'The Athole Collection' and the tunes of Gow and Marshall were championed, whereas James Scott Skinner's compositions, considered by some to be 'modern rubbish', were not played until 1953. However, arrangements of popular Scots airs set for quartets or other small groups, were popular from the early days, and members of the orchestra have always played in smaller groupings or solo.

The consistent leadership reflected other constants: Monday night meetings for almost its entire life, and for over 80 years unaltered fees of two guineas for life members, and five shillings annually for ordinary playing members. Hitherto permitted only as guest singers or accompanists, in the 1960s women first became active playing members. As honorary members of the audience in the early years, women often outnumbered the players, so that their presence at practices was soon restricted to once monthly. There were also social occasions, dinners, informal 'smoking concerts', competitions and a golf club. Beginning with only a handful of playing members, by 1904 an orchestra of 62 players performed at the Annual Concert in Edinburgh's Music Hall, and by 1922 95 players were on stage, two cornets and a flute included. From 1979-81 the Society was so popular that it staged four annual concerts. The first concert, marking the end of the 1883-84 winter season, had established the format, maintained to this day, of a selected programme with guest artistes. The guests have been varied, from Miss Campbell of Killin (whose 'novel item' in the 1901 concert, playing on the 'Great Highland Bagpipes', was much admired for the way she 'screwed the pipes' and 'gart them skirl'), an 'Elocutionist' reciting in 1922, to the boys of the Queen Victoria School dancing 'with grace and skill' in 1985.

Despite the almost exclusively enthusiastic comments quoted from press reviews – mostly from *The Scotsman* and *The Oban Times* – there have been ups and downs along the way, private and public. In the very early days 'things were very flat' and the first leader (and only professional player?) resigned. Soon afterwards an altercation led to a player's exclusion, and the Society was prosecuted in 1918 for not having levied the wartime entertainment tax on subscribers' tickets. During the 1930s, with the advent of radio and the popularity of cinema, audiences declined, yet this was also a period when the Society played for



broadcasts and recordings, and supported the founding of numerous kindred societies from Tain to Toronto.

The book is very readable, especially the account of the earlier years, but the enumeration of recent names and events reads a little like a report and lacks the human element. Nonetheless the volume is amply illustrated with photographs of members, concerts and programmes, music title pages and tunes. Four appendices list the Society's office bearers, competition winners, recordings and the names of seven great Highland fiddlers whose legacy the Society has inherited and nurtured. Unlike many other aspects of traditional Scottish music, which have parallel developments in other Celtic cultures, the playing of strathspey and reel sets on the fiddle is a very Scottish phenomenon. It is certainly an asset to have a record of the significant part played by the Edinburgh Highland Reel and Strathspey Society in maintaining this particular tradition.

ALISON HILEY

Malcolm Cant, **The District of Greenbank in Edinburgh.** *Edinburgh: Malcolm Cant Publications, 1998, pp. 166, illus. Paperback, £9.95, 0-9526099-2-4.*

Malcolm Cant, a respected local historian, has carried out an intensive study of Edinburgh's Greenbank district. His meticulous research relates the topography of the area and the principal building development, especially on the fields of the well-known farm of Greenbank, with its neat cluster of house and steadings. Social change plays a prominent part in Cant's study, which begins with the history of the area, with particular emphasis on Greenbank Farm, which disappeared under the relentless march of the 'The Bungalow'. The first proposals to feu the area between the City Hospital and Pentland Terrace belonging to the Trotters of Mortonhall, were made in 1886, and are shown on a feuing plan by the architect Robert R. Raeburn. As with most developments, progress was slow. It was 1908 before Major Richard Trotter drew up feu charters and a scheme was implemented for houses, mostly traditional semi-detached and detached late Victorian sandstone villas, of which some of the best examples can be seen along Greenbank Crescent and in the Braidburn Terrace area. Cant gives the

names of the architects and builders, which include some well-known Edinburgh figures. Building continued with interruptions, mostly caused by the First World War, and it was not until the decade 1930-1940 that the detached bungalow arrived on the site of the farm, and 400 spacious houses were completed to individual demands from a middle-class clientèle. Most were built by Hepburn Brothers Ltd, Richard Robinson and his son, and Irvine and Keppie, the latter a cousin of the Glasgow architect, John Keppie. Interest in such building activities has been generated recently by *Home Builders: Mactaggart & Mickel and the Scottish Housebuilding Industry*, edited by Miles Glendinning and Diane Watters (RCAHMS, 1999), which provides a general history of the firm and the housebuilding industry, alongside which Cant's book fits very neatly. It is to be hoped that the author will go on to explore the development of similar sites, such as Craightinny, which would merit an in-depth approach.

The book is very well illustrated with family photographs of builders and the indigenous population, old and new. The aerial views of the City Hospital and the Greenbank fields are particularly significant. It is satisfying that so much of this book is based on archive material and oral tradition, which makes it of interest to students of local history and social historians, and, with the author's emphasis on the builders and architects, to architectural historians. It also means that Edinburgh residents generally will find this book stimulating, and will look forward to future volumes covering their own areas.

KITTY CRUFT

Malcolm Cant, **Marchmont, Sciennes and the Grange.** *Edinburgh: Malcolm Cant Publications, 2001, pp. xi + 132, illus. Hardback, £16.99, 0-9526099-5-9.*

Malcolm Cant is an Edinburgh historian of some standing who has already published studies of both Marchmont, and Sciennes and the Grange. The present book does not replace these earlier, more thorough investigations, but rather supplements them.

The volume is essentially a compilation of illustrations, mostly previously unpublished photographs of the areas. It is split into six sections:

historical introduction; places of religion; schools; commercial and institutional development; the passing scene; people and their houses. In addition a substantial central section consists of modern colour photographs. In many cases we get potted histories of a house, a school, a church, a business, with a range of illustrations to give life to the text. However, this satisfying arrangement breaks down occasionally. The last two sections, especially, containing a flurry of photographs, often donated to the author by interested individuals, lack the coherence of the earlier ones. However, there is a mass of information here concerning a part of Edinburgh, which, because of its situation and character, has always been highly desirable and attractive to live in.

The author started out as what used to be termed an amateur historian. Circumstances have dictated that now he not only writes books, but publishes them as well. Thus he must look for gaps in the market and take commercial as well as artistic decisions. Such considerations have, it seems certain, been important in the production of this book. It will appeal to the substantial number of people who already have connections with the areas portrayed, or those who will have in the future.

JIMMY HOGG

*Edinburgh Central Library*

Bill Yule, **Matrons, Medics and Maladies: Inside Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in the 1840s**. *East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999, pp. xiv + 236, illus. Paperback, £12.90, 1-86232-091-8.*

This is a somewhat puzzling book, and the intended readership is not immediately clear. The author, a retired doctor, disclaims the intention of producing a 'ponderous, carefully balanced history of a great British hospital', offering instead 'a sort of nineteenth century fly on the wall documentary, using drawings instead of television' to follow the progress of patients through the wards of the Royal Infirmary in the 1840s. Its great virtue is a remarkable variety of detailed case histories taken from the Infirmary's records held in the Lothian Health Services Archive at Edinburgh University Library.

The 1840s was an interesting time in Edinburgh medicine, with James Syme one of the foremost

surgeons in Britain, and James Young Simpson world-famous for introducing chloroform anaesthesia in 1847. Edinburgh no longer dominated the medical world as completely as in the eighteenth century, but remained one of the great centres of clinical teaching and practice. The book reflects early developments in medical and surgical specialisation, in eye surgery, trauma, pathology and treatment of various fevers and sexually transmitted diseases. The decade also saw the Disruption of the Church of Scotland, new poor laws, the potato famine, an outbreak of cholera and an influx of Irish navvies to build the railways, all of which affected the running of the hospital. Much has been written about the major professional figures in the Infirmary and University, and not nearly enough about the social background and patients' experience.

The case records - rich sources for Edinburgh social history - give the patient's age and occupation, history and symptoms, the diagnoses made and treatments prescribed. Progress can be followed in periodic summaries and the final outcome, surprisingly often noted as 'dismissed cured' or at least 'relieved' after weeks or months in hospital. Yule uses a contemporary *Pharmacopoeia* and other textbooks to interpret the Latin abbreviations and prescriptions, and comments on the intended effects of the mixtures and treatments used. Other medical terms, such as reports of diaphoresis, creps and râles, phthisis, opisthotonus, subsaltus tendinorum or embryulcia, go largely unexplained. Disappointingly, Yule seldom comments on the appropriateness of diagnosis or treatment, though there are general discussions on the problems of distinguishing typhus, typhoid and similar infections retrospectively, and he highlights the failure to give lemon juice in scurvy at this late date.

The medical wards were still housed in William Adam's hospital in Infirmary Street, built a century previously, but the surgical hospital had been decanted into the adjacent Old High School and other adapted buildings around High School Yards. The book brings these rambling old buildings to life, populating them not just with poor patients and famous consultants, but with nurses, domestic servants, apothecaries, junior doctors, dressers and students. Extracts from the Board of Management minutes provide an insight into the financial problems of running a charitable hospital, and the sometimes-troubled relations with other authorities in relation to fever epidemics or relief of the poor. They also give intriguing glimpses of minor



domestic incidents, such as the disciplining of resident doctors returning late at night by climbing through a window, the matron dismissed for nepotism and financial irregularities, or the complaints of the chaplain and matron shocked and excluded by the 'improper language' of the junior doctors' mess.

The first impression is of a cheerful, entertaining, but perhaps superficial and anecdotal book, imaginatively illustrated by many cartoon-type drawings by John Johnstone, although how much these add to the stories is debatable. The case histories are somewhat unnervingly set in black margins so that one anticipates an obituary rather than a tale with, quite often, a happy ending. Nor is it clear whether these reports are literal transcripts, or how much they have been edited and modernised. However, a close reading reveals much diligent archival research and a wealth of primary material that fills out the picture in other more formal accounts. There could be many minor quibbles (for example, James Syme is misnamed Robert), and the book is not as easy reading as the format might seem to promise, but the result is a valuable if kaleidoscopic picture of life in the hospital during an eventful decade.

This idiosyncratic book has been produced by an enthusiast, and fellow enthusiasts will find in it a great deal of interest and value. Others with less grounding may be driven back to the older literature to consolidate after this unorthodox but stimulating introduction.

ANDREW FRASER

*Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh*

Christopher Lawrence, Paul Lucier and Christopher C. Booth (eds), **'Take Time by the Forelock': The Letters of Anthony Fothergill to James Woodforde, 1789–1813** (*Medical History, Supplement No. 17*). London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1997, pp. xxiv + 120. Hardback, £35.00, 0-85484-066-4.

Anthony Fothergill (1737–1813) was a medical student in Edinburgh in 1760–64. When he had become a successful physician in Bath he wrote to the young James Woodforde (1771–1837) advising him on his medical career, and providing him with guidance and financial help while he in turn was at Edinburgh in 1791–94. Of the 91 letters published here, the first 36

relate to Woodforde's medical training. The originals are held by the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia.

'When you arrive in Edinburgh you will meet many dissipate sons of fortune who will strive to throw every serious and laudable pursuit into ridicule and render you as ignorant and profligate as themselves', wrote Fothergill, but the warning was unnecessary. Woodforde seems to have been studious – his side of the correspondence does not survive – and the early letters consist largely of comments on various books and the order in which they should be read. Full annotation identifies almost all the works mentioned. To the medical historian all this is of value; the general reader will find it rather dry.

As an undergraduate Woodforde had little money. 'You must live upon air', Fothergill told him, 'and content yourself with intellectual food. But as fasting wonderfully sharpens the senses, and quickens all the mental faculties, I can easily account for the rapid progress you are making in your studies.' Progress he did, and became a country doctor in Somerset. He had sufficient income to send two of his sons to Edinburgh, the elder of whom, also James, was the author of the *Catalogue of Indigenous Phenogamic Plants Growing in the Neighbourhood of Edinburgh* (1824).

JOHN BURNETT

*National Museums of Scotland*

Andrew A. McMillan, Richard J. Gillanders and John A. Fairhurst, **Building Stones of Edinburgh**. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Geological Society, 2nd edn, 1999, pp. xx + 235, illus. Paperback, £9.50, 0-904440-10-9.

Here we have the second and most welcome edition of this valuable reference source. The aim of the book, when first published in 1987, was to present a synthesis of all aspects of sandstone building in Edinburgh. The new edition takes this further with two additional chapters listing and locating some of the best of the city's sandstone buildings, with the help of two very useful maps. Other chapters are retitled and enlarged, with an improved format, colour illustrations and a greatly expanded index.

Although careful to encourage and guide the general reader, the book's biggest following must surely continue to be from those in the building industry. For a future edition the authors might therefore consider rising to the challenge of an additional chapter illustrating the weathering and performance of our sandstone in use over time, and particularly on the performance of copings, strings, base courses and cills, in relation to orientation, frost and exposure. Is it not also time for Historic Scotland to take its cue from this book and to make arrangements with the City authorities for storing the hundreds of tonnes of reusable sandstone from our demolished buildings each year, instead of allowing it to be carted to tip and wasted?

The whole of this book's enterprise stems from an initiative by Dr John Millar and his students in Edinburgh University's former Department of Extramural Studies. We owe special thanks to him, to the late Ian Bunyan for his follow-up, and to the energies of the present authors.

JOHN BYROM

Hugh M. Milne (ed.), **Boswell's Edinburgh Journals, 1767–1786**. Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2001, pp. xiii + 607. Paperback, £12.99, 1-84183-020-8.

James Boswell was known to his contemporaries as author of the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1773) and his great biography, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (1791). Today he is also known as one of the greatest of diarists, chronicling the doings, conversations and thoughts of his adult life, serious and trivial, in astonishing and revealing detail. The Yale editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell, (in 13 volumes, 1950–1989) was one of the great publishing enterprises of the twentieth century. Much of Boswell's life revolved around Edinburgh, and the journal entries for his times there are a splendid source of information about Edinburgh people and places in the later eighteenth century.

Few have ready access to a complete set of the journals, but Hugh Milne has now reproduced in a single handy volume the entries relating to Boswell's life in Edinburgh from 1767 to 1786, during the years when he set himself to practice at the Scottish bar. The

book contains virtually the whole of the Edinburgh text from the eight volumes of the Yale edition covering these years – the editor has silently suppressed some entries that were judged repetitious or of little interest, but the rest is given *verbatim*. He has retained many of the notes from the original volumes, while adding many more of his own, particularly in relation to details of Boswell's legal life. He has used the Yale edition to supply an introduction outlining Boswell's earlier life, linking passages covering absences from Edinburgh, and an epilogue taking the story on till his death in 1795. An appendix gives useful biographical notes about some of Boswell's legal contemporaries. The text is fully indexed, and sources and references scrupulously noted.

Although this book tells the story of Boswell's life, the editor has not attempted a conventional biography. His main concern is to make available the details of Boswell's Edinburgh life and the wealth of incidental information to be found in the journals. Milne aimed to produce a 'reading edition' of the Yale volumes, conveying 'a fair representation of every aspect of Boswell's life during the relevant period'. In this he succeeds splendidly, and this book will be a welcome addition to the shelves of all who are intrigued by Boswell and the Edinburgh of his day.

ANDREW FRASER

Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Ann Mitchell, **'No More Corncraiks': Lord Moray's Feuars in Edinburgh's New Town**. Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1998, pp. xiv + 223, illus. Paperback, £12.95, 1-84017-017-4.

In 1821 the 10th Earl of Moray decided to demolish Drumsheugh or Moray House on the outskirts of Edinburgh and feu the thirteen acres on which it stood. The strict conditions of the articles of roup determined the residential character of the subsequent development – a landscaped area of dwelling houses and flats with a minimum of shops or other commercial properties. The architect James Gillespie Graham was engaged to design the layout. Lord Cockburn regretted the loss of the countryside: he had enjoyed listening to 'the ceaseless rural corn-craiks nestling happily in the dewy grass'.

The Moray estate was a prestigious address from the beginning. The census official recording St Colme



Street in 1841 was pleased to describe himself as 'the enumerator of this fashionable district'. It is the first inhabitants of these streets who are the particular subject of Ann Mitchell's book. Taking us street by street, house by house, with brief biographies of their more illustrious occupants, her survey reads as a distinguished roll call of the nineteenth century, including Rev. Professor John Lee, Principal of Edinburgh University, Karl Froebel who started the kindergarten system, Lord Jeffrey, John Hope the philanthropist, David Octavius Hill the photographer, Robert Chambers the writer and publisher, William Blackwood, Dean Ramsay, Louisa and Flora Stevenson, and the Rev. Thomas Chalmers.

After each section on a particular street Mitchell lists the names of all the householders. The occupants were an eclectic mix of the Edinburgh establishment, perhaps similar to the present day: members of the Scottish aristocracy and landed gentry, advocates, accountants, writers to the signet, university professors and medical men, artists, writers and musicians. Organising information in this way reveals fascinating coincidences, which suggest possible social connections. For example, in Great Stuart Street in the 1830s, the architects David Bryce (no. 8) and William Playfair (no. 17) rubbed shoulders with the surgeon Alexander Monro tertius at no. 1, Signor Joseph Rampini an Italian teacher (no. 6), Signor Theophilus Bucher a singing teacher and composer (no. 2) and Sir Patrick Murray of Ochertyre (no. 4). Also in the same street flourished, before its move to Moray Place, the Scottish Institution, the school for 'young ladies' founded by Dr William Graham.

Many of the first inhabitants of these houses had moved out from the first New Town to the Moray estate. What is particularly striking is the frequent movement of families within it – family groupings breaking away and reforming, and relatives moving in further down the street. Alexander Pringle of Whytbank and Yair, for example, lived at 2 Forres Street from 1846–47 and then at 4 Randolph Crescent until 1854. He and his family then joined his two unmarried sisters at 2 Randolph Cliff and 2 years later they all moved to no. 5. His brother's widow and her three adult daughters moved next door in 1859. Mitchell's primary sources are the nineteenth century census returns and post office directories and these have imposed their own limitations. A study of the valuation rolls for the period after 1855 would reveal

whether inhabitants like the Pringles owned or rented their properties, which might explain the frequency of moving house.

The author hopes that the browser will use her book as a guide when walking the streets of the Moray Feu. This is certainly a book for dipping into and not devouring in one go. The numerous fascinating anecdotes and tidbits of information on the individuals highlighted in her study are mainly drawn from printed memoirs, though these are not always credited and the bibliography is limited. So while it does not aim to be a work of academic social history, there is a host of valuable information in its pages, and it can be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in the history of Edinburgh.

ALISON ROSIE

*National Archives of Scotland*

Richard Rodger, **The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. xviii + 540, illus. Hardback, £55.00, 0-521-78024-1.

This is the most important book on post-1760 Edinburgh since A. J. Youngson's *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (1966), and in its breadth and depth of coverage, sophisticated arguments and mastery of difficult primary sources, may be said to exceed the achievement of that pioneering work.

The author sets out to show the significance of trusts, educational endowments and charitable institutions in developing Edinburgh during the nineteenth century. In exploring 'the legal and institutional structures within which urban development took place', Rodger takes us on a fascinating journey. We enter the closed doors of some of Edinburgh's venerable foundations, such as George Heriot's Hospital. George Watson's Hospital and the Merchant Company, as they strove to fulfil their founders' aims by financial strategies involving the Edinburgh property market. We peer over the shoulders of their trustees as they assess their options and formulate plans, and we examine their minute books and accounts to judge their success.

For the reader with local interests the most significant parts of this broad-ranging work will be the

lucid accounts of how the unappealing-sounding world of trust incomes had a powerful and direct bearing on the growth of various Edinburgh districts. For example, the stagnation in the housing market of the late 1820s caused the postponement of feuing projects such as that projected for the Grange estate. Institutions instead acquired land to the north and west of the city, hence the remarkable cluster of their buildings still extant: Donaldson's Hospital, John Watson's, the Dean Orphanage, Daniel Stewart's and Fettes College. In their turn these sites constrained housing development, so that in the 1850s and 1860s the pent-up demand for villas and flats was met in areas such as Merchiston and the Grange. Rodger provides copious and detailed accounts of how these and many other areas of the city came to be transformed from gardens and fields into housing stock for different strata of society, and into areas for industry.

The system of feu duties lay at the heart of property values and the income which could be derived from land. Investors, whether charitable or private trusts alike, could confidently profit from feu duties paid to them as superiors by their vassals, or by the higher price of property on which duties were payable under 'sub-infeudation', for example by a sub-feuar such as a builder or actual occupier. Fortunes were also made by builders buying land in Edinburgh, then either re-feuing or developing it themselves to achieve a higher feu duty. Feu duties were an attractive security because in the event of death or bankruptcy, their payment was a 'first charge', having priority over other debts. This assurance injected investment into property by encouraging loans from banks and individuals.

The enduring role of the tenement in providing higher buildings and smaller floor areas than in England is accounted for by the fact that, owing to the legal framework for property development and the availability of investment capital, land had to be more densely built on to cover the charges on it than in England. The book is full of well-illustrated examples of the transformation of the city by continued tenement construction, whether for working class occupancy in Dalry, or for the lower middle class in Comely Bank. An exception to flattened development was the co-operative housing movement's housing stock. Following his earlier work, Rodger describes its role in the provision of working class colony housing across the city, based on shareholder funding, and its later attempt to diversify into middle class housing.

In addition to describing the legal and financial framework, and the challenges imposed by the city's demanding topography, the book's chief strength is its analysis of the complex interaction of social and economic trends, demography, and the role of leading institutions and individuals in the evolution of the city. The doubling of the population to 120,000 between 1790 and 1820 was a key factor in the demand for housing, so the slump of the 1820s both prolonged and exacerbated the overcrowding in housing in the Old Town. In a fascinating chapter the author charts the consequences for public health and the civic response of improvements by slum clearance and the provision of water and sanitation. Despite such measures there remained grievous differences between sections of the population. In 1906 the children of skilled workers in Broughton were on average one to three inches taller than those of casually-employed and unskilled workers of the Canongate.

Of the key players, the most closely studied is Sir James Steel (1829-1904), a Glasgow builder who overcame bankruptcy and set up again in Edinburgh. In 1866-68 his rapid development of the unfeued part of the Drumdryan lands at Tollcross proved pivotal in founding his considerable fortune. Selling the heritable securities for almost twice his original outlay, he went on to develop streets along the south of the Meadows, and at Coates, Dalry and elsewhere. His rags-to-riches story concluded with his provostship, election to parliament and a knighthood, but curiously there is no commemorative street name in the capital he did so much to develop. The helpful purchaser of the Drumdryan securities was one of the foremost investors in heritable property and an institutional player of great importance, the Endowment Subcommittee of the Church of Scotland. Rodger makes adept use of its records to reveal the Kirk's successful strategy of using the income from its considerable portfolio of securities to fund its church extension programme after the Disruption. The author also examines many private trusts' records to assess their role in the property market.

The author successfully demonstrates the significance of the trusts and institutions in Edinburgh's urban development, alongside the growth of municipal institutions. Granted that they represented relative continuity in the changing economic and political environment, would the trusts' operations appear as consensual as the author argues if the records of litigation in the Court of Session were



examined? Nevertheless his analysis of the financial and legal mechanisms which facilitated property development and influenced Edinburgh's built fabric is very persuasive. The feuing system was consolidated by a landmark decision by the House of Lords in 1818 which ensured that feu conditions would thenceforth be tightly drawn so as to prevent undesirable alterations to properties. This helped give developers and purchasers confidence in the market, for ownership of property rights facilitated access to capital. Little wonder that the author, with deliberate irony in view of fundamental changes in the present day, concludes that 'urban development in Scotland was liberated by the feuing system'.

**TRISTRAM CLARKE**  
*National Archives of Scotland*

Charles J. Smith, **Looking Back: An Autobiographical Journey through South Edinburgh and Beyond.** *Edinburgh: Malcolm Cant Publications, 2000, pp. xi + 116, illus. Hardback, £12.00, 0-9526099-4-0.*

The book's subtitle highlights the basic dichotomy of a work like this, for it is more than autobiography but less than a local history. The foreword describes Charles Smith as 'Mr Morningside', and the publisher, himself something of an expert in the field, calls him 'the undisputed king of local history'. That these somewhat grandiose epithets are not misplaced will be evident to all those who are aware of the author's prodigious local knowledge and publishing output. In his introduction, Smith demurely asserts 'The very last thing I wanted was for this venture to look like an ego trip'; but we all have egos, and giving them a controlled outing now and then does no harm – indeed, an autobiography would be a dull read if it did not contain a sprinkling of just such an ingredient.

Nevertheless, some of the sections dealing with family history, especially discussions of the lives of relatives before the author's birth, may be regarded as a little self-indulgent. The text in various places, and many of the photographs, are intensely personal and doubtless significant to the author and his relations, but of less interest to the general reader. Some sections provoked an uneasy feeling of intrusion into the author's privacy, notwithstanding his willingness to share information with his readers. Much happier, and

of greater benefit, are the sections where the narrative delves into local history, the author's personal reminiscences giving added vitality and validity to the historical accounts being related.

Although the book contains many specific local references, it is more of a social than a local history. Smith is especially strong in his description of boyhood street games; 'cuddie-loups' sounds like great fun (I wasn't aware of it in my young day – it seems as if I had a deprived childhood). The chapter on the Boys' Brigade is written with a degree of emotional intensity which reinforces the author's assertion of its character-building qualities. There is an amusing description of the effects of the Hearts versus Hibs Ne'erday derbies. Many another little gem may be extracted: the reason for Monday being washday, the social implications of daily shopping, the various ways in which perishable food was kept fresh, and so on.

Occasionally one is left wanting to know more. For example: 'Before the age of ready-packaged items, commodities such as sugar, flour, lentils and peas were weighed out from large sacks, as required, and tipped into thick brown paper bags, the tops of which were neatly folded and tucked in by the person serving, usually with great speed and dexterity.' But what happened next? How were these foodstuffs stored in the home? Did housewives still use pottery containers with the name of the contents emblazoned on the side, such as the stoneware vessels made in Portobello by both Buchan and Gray, in Glasgow by Grosvenor, and, most popular of all, the colourful majolica barrels produced by the Rosslyn Pottery in Kirkcaldy? It would have been interesting to know if these kitchen containers, so beloved of Victorian and Edwardian housewives, still featured in the Smith household or in those of their neighbours.

The book is produced with a high level of polished professionalism. My only quibble is that the well-reproduced, but un-numbered and unlisted, photographic plates are grouped together and therefore mostly separated from the narrative they illustrate, with no cross-referencing to aid the reader. *Looking Back* is a pleasant, if not quite a compelling read, with moments of engaging recollection and informative comment. Written in Charles Smith's characteristic light and breezy style, with the occasional dash of humour, it happily avoids the clichés which are too often encountered in works of reminiscence.

**GRAEME CRUICKSHANK**  
*Edinburgh Historical Enterprises*

Walter M. Stephen, **Fabric and Function: A Century of School Building in Edinburgh, 1872-1972.** *Edinburgh: Hills of Home, 1996, pp. 118, illus. Paperback, £5.99, no ISBN number.*

The author examines the influences which various factors have had on the design and provision of local authority school buildings between the passing of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 and the reform of local government which saw education pass out of the city's hands into those of Lothian Regional Council in 1975. Progress has been fuelled by the growth, decay and movement of the city's population, and by class size, leaving age, the range and type of subjects taught, and the strictures of government policy. Educational theory and architectural vogues have also been of importance. The author indicates the use of education as a political football, but could perhaps have gone into this more. The influence of social class in a city with an established fee-paying tradition is there, literally, to be seen.

The book started out in 1979 as a university dissertation, and the author has ended up publishing it himself. My one quibble is that he did not take the opportunity to revise and extend it. However, we should be grateful for what the author has achieved. General books on the history of education in Edinburgh are thin on the ground. This book is a worthwhile study of a very interesting and topical subject.

JIMMY HOGG

*Edinburgh Central Library*

Colin Sutherland and Roger Craik (eds), **Parliament House Portraits: The Art Collection of the Faculty of Advocates.** *Edinburgh: Faculty of Advocates, 2000, unpaginated, 0-09537497-0-3.*

The art collection of the Faculty of Advocates is half-visible to the public in Parliament Hall and the Supreme Courts' corridors, and half-hidden in the Faculty's private apartments. The present work is intended to supplement and replace A. Grainger Stewart's descriptive work of 1907. It contains biographical descriptions of the subjects of the portraits, with notes on the artists by Dr Duncan

Thomson. The biographies are of variable length and quality, and their interest ranges from the parochial to lives of national importance. Some entries covering well-known careers, such as Walter Scott's, contain little fresh insight, and others, for example the political manager Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, are treated more slightly than might be expected. Too many memoirs contain irrelevant, pedestrian or ill-digested information.

Nevertheless readers will enjoy many of the fascinating pen portraits (and also the very high quality illustrations of the portraits themselves) of living and dead members of the Scottish bar and bench, including the late Lord Cameron, steely and imposing in Thistle robes, and Paolozzi's head of John Smith MP, who might have been the Faculty's first prime minister. Most glamorous is Robert Aberdein (1744-1840), an utterly undistinguished advocate portrayed as Grand Tourist in an exotic painting attributed to Batoni. Comparisons between painting and sculpture are possible in several cases, most notably that of Duncan Forbes of Culloden, seen in Jeremiah Davison's canvas and Roubiliac's superb statue, but also in the early nineteenth century trio of Jeffrey, Moncrieff and Cockburn.

The introductory essay on the development of the buildings and institutions housed in the complex of buildings in and around the Supreme Courts, including the Parliament Hall and the Advocates' and present-day Signet Libraries, is unsatisfactory. The reader is better served by standard works such as Lord Cullen's excellent booklet on Parliament House (1992). Although parts of *Parliament House Portraits* could have been improved upon, we are at least able to see more than previously of the Faculty's fine collections.

IAIN GORDON BROWN

*National Library of Scotland*

Patricia Taylor, **Thomas Blaikie: The Capability Brown of France, 1751-1838.** *East Linton: Tuckwell Press, pp. xvi + 256, illus. Paperback, £20.00, 1-86232-110-8.*

Thomas Blaikie, son of a gardener who owned a smallholding and nursery on the slopes of Corstorphine Hill (on land where the Post House Hotel now stands), spent most of his adult life living and working in France, his stay inadvertently prolonged by France's descent into revolutionary politics and the



Napoleonic Wars. He might well have joined the ranks of those multi-faceted Scottish gardeners-cum-landscape designers-cum-botanical collectors and horticulturalists who ventured south and to foreign climes seeking employment, often very successfully, but whose lives thereafter slipped into obscurity. Fate, however, has been rather kinder to Blaikie. By luck his diary covering the years 1775–92 has survived, and was published in 1931 as *Diary of a Scotch Gardener at the French Court* (ed. Francis Birrell). It covered the early and often dangerous adventures of a young Blaikie sent to Switzerland by two London physicians to collect 'rare and curious plants'. As Britain's first professional plant collector in the Alps, his pioneering expeditions crossing the mountain slopes resulted in several 'finds', which were later shipped back to England. The rest of the diary covers the later period of his life when he created English gardens, the best known being Bagatelle, for various French nobles. In this he established an outstanding reputation, and despite experiencing acute hardships during and after the Revolution, he managed to survive and remain involved with garden design practically until the end of his life.

This exceedingly well researched book by Patricia Taylor adds to the diary by providing much greater detail about the estates and gardens with which he was associated, the aristocracy who employed him, the other gardeners and individuals who entered his life (including Scottish gardeners and his associations with the Caledonian Horticultural Society), and the latter period beyond his diary. Our knowledge of Blaikie and his achievements is considerably enhanced and placed firmly in their social and political context. We see him as a true survivor, practical, knowledgeable, a friendly and likeable man, but not afraid to speak his own mind, and capable of managing large landscape projects, which he carried out with great sensitivity. Sadly very little remains of the gardens he created. The author has added more colour to an already colourful life, and Blaikie could not have wished for a better sleuth to rediscover his work. One or two location plans would not have been amiss, and perhaps an overall chronology of his life might have proved a helpful reference, but these are small gripes with what must surely become the definitive work on the subject.

CONNIE BYROM

**Edinburgh University Worthies: Biographies of Selected Pre-1901 Alumni and Staff of the University of Edinburgh.** *Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Library, 1999, pp. 55, illus. Paperback, £9.95, 0-907182-29-1.*

Reginald Passmore, **Fellows of Edinburgh's College of Physicians during the Scottish Enlightenment.** *Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians, 2001, pp. 132, illus. Paperback, £10.00, 0-85405-057-4.*

*Edinburgh University Worthies* was published in conjunction with an exhibition in the University Library entitled 'Edinburgh University Worthies in Print', to celebrate the conversion of the pre-1901 Library catalogues to a computerised on-line system. By bringing together 'some of the key works of a wide ranging selection of 18th and 19th century authors, all of whom were University alumni or staff', it was hoped that the book would 'encourage researchers to delve deeper into Edinburgh University Library's pre-1901 collections' (through website <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/>).

All very laudable, but it is not easy to grasp the selection criteria for the 37 chosen 'worthies', whether bibliographical interest, variety or entertainment. Some are well known (Charles Darwin, James Young Simpson) while others are relatively obscure, but why J. M. Barrie rather than Walter Scott, or the lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson rather than his grandson RLS? Why both geologist Geikie brothers? The one African student (James Africanus Beale Horton) is outnumbered by several white explorers. The 1901 cut-off date permits only one unambiguous woman (Sophia Jex-Blake), but with the enigma of James Miranda Barry's true nature thrown in too. The essays are arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically, which increases the haphazard feeling. A few details might be questioned – Robert Knox, the anatomist involved with Burke and Hare, left Edinburgh in the early 1840s rather than 1856; Robert Jameson's scandalous neglect of James Hutton's geological collection is not confessed. The bibliography is a general list of works consulted but it would not be easy to check specific details in the text (nor are the illustrations referenced).

The book makes sense mainly in the context of the exhibition. However it is not a dry catalogue of the works exhibited, but a cheerful collection of brief biographical notes on the chosen authors, usually with an associated portrait, print or caricature. The layout

(in landscape A4) has its quirks, but in general makes for easy reading. The essential information about dates, education and career, major publications and achievements is set out in lively style, with room for curious anecdote and amusing asides. Many of the characters had adventurous lives, and developed their talents in unexpected ways. Their stories are varied and colourful, and most readers will happily browse through the book, picking up much to interest and entertain.

By contrast, *Fellows of Edinburgh's College of Physicians during the Scottish Enlightenment* is a model of clarity, delivering very much what the title promises, this time with individual biographies in chronological order, topped and tailed with supporting essays and appendices to keep them in context. Edinburgh medicine and science played an integral part in the Scottish Enlightenment, alongside the better known philosophy, sociology, economics, history, literature and art, and medical men in the University and College of Physicians were prominent in the Edinburgh society that nurtured that cultural explosion (Sir Alexander Dick is better remembered now as learned host at Prestonfield than as President of the College). Much has been written about the rise of the Edinburgh Medical School to international pre-eminence during the 18th century, and much of this in very specialised fields, but this little book provides an accessible way into the topic for medical and non-medical readers alike.

The origins of the 18th century enlightenment were laid at the end of the 17th century, and tribute is paid to the pioneering role of Sir Robert Sibbald, whose wide ranging achievements included the founding of the Physic (Botanic) Garden in 1670 and of the Royal College of Physicians in 1681. The 16 biographical essays in the book deal with Fellows of the College who were active at different periods throughout the 18th century. Most had careers mainly in Edinburgh, though James Lind (who introduced lemon juice for prevention of scurvy in the navy) and Sir John Pringle (pioneer of military medicine) made their marks elsewhere. Edinburgh had a number of medical dynasties: the book includes the first two of the three Alexander Monros (father, son and grandson) who successively held the chair of Anatomy for 126 years; and John (father) and Daniel (son) Rutherford, the one the first to give clinical lectures in the Royal Infirmary and the other the discoverer of nitrogen; and John (father) and James (son) of the famous, if confusing, Academic Gregory clan. The omnipresent Andrew Duncan senior was a much loved Edinburgh figure, also to be followed by his son, Andrew junior. Sir

Stuart Threipland is remembered as a Jacobite and physician to Bonnie Prince Charlie during the 1745 Rebellion. Robert Whytt was a pioneer physiologist, and John Hope a major force in the development of botany and Edinburgh's Botanic Garden. The 19 editions of William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, plus many translations and foreign editions, make his one of the most successful textbooks of all time. William Cullen was one of the most influential teachers in 18th century Europe, and Joseph Black of world fame in chemistry.

The book was commissioned by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and was written by Dr Reg Passmore, a distinguished physiologist, and Honorary Historian of the College from 1996. Unfortunately, Passmore died just before completing the book, but it was seen through the press by Dr Andrew Doig and other colleagues. It makes excellent use of the facilities of the College of Physicians and its splendid library and collection of portraits, and the book is a very satisfying tribute to Passmore's careful researches and lively writing.

ANDREW FRASER

Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Gray, James A., *The Edinburgh City Hospital*. East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999, pp. xviii + 468, illus. Hardback, £20.00, 1-86232-096-9.

The opening of the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in 2002-03 marks a major reorganisation of the hospitals in Lothian, with adult acute care concentrated on two sites, at the new Royal at Little France on the south of the city, and the redeveloped Western General on the north. The need to centralise expensive modern equipment and round-the-clock intensive care inevitably brings the closure of other much loved hospitals, each with its own proud traditions and history, including the City Hospital as well as the Princess Margaret Rose and the old Royal Infirmary. Part of the funding for new developments comes from selling the old hospital sites. Fortunately, the best of the historic buildings will be adapted for other uses and survive as physical memorials to past glories, but it is important that these chapters in Edinburgh's medical history are properly recorded as they come to a close. Dr Jim Gray was a consultant communicable diseases physician at the City Hospital for 26 years until his retirement in 1995, and the ideal person to put together this history of the City Hospital.

The name of the hospital stems from the formal assumption of responsibility for infectious diseases by



the City of Edinburgh in 1885, in response to increasing nineteenth century Public Health legislation. Edinburgh's pioneering Medical Officer of Health, Dr Henry Littlejohn, had highlighted the interlinked problems of poverty, poor sanitation, overcrowding and disease. The Royal Infirmary, a voluntary charitable institution, was always reluctant to admit infectious patients to the main hospital, and Dr Gray traces the prehistory of the City Hospital in the various temporary expedients used to cope with fevers and epidemics, from isolation camps on the Burgh Muir and Queen's Park, to emergency hospitals in Queensberry House and Old Surgeons' Hall. After the Royal Infirmary moved to its new home at Lauriston in 1879 the town acquired the cramped old Surgical Hospital buildings around High School Yards for their fever hospital, and for the next decade the City authorities struggled there to cope with their new responsibilities – scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, typhoid, smallpox, etc.

In 1895 plans to rebuild the City Hospital on the High School Yards site were abandoned in favour of a move to a large open suburban site at Colinton Mains farm, prompted partly by the extra problems of coping with a serious smallpox epidemic in 1892–95. The new hospital, not opened till 1903, was built on the most advanced principles, with a range of well separated pavilion wards for each of the major infections, linked by breezy open corridors. The project became overdue and over-budget (ending with a lawsuit), but the result was a model for efficient treatment of infectious diseases. Mortality figures for the common childhood fevers dropped gratifyingly and progressively in the early decades of the twentieth century. Nursing and immunisation procedures kept infections of staff to a minimum – though scrupulously recorded in the Annual Reports. Strict quarantine regulations for visitors helped limit spread within families and the community. Improving ambulance arrangements, and daily newspaper bulletins on patients' progress, reduced the problems of distance from the town.

Dr Gray gives a very readable and full account of nearly a century of the life of the hospital, with its changing roles as the coming of vaccines, antibiotics and general sanitary improvements altered the pattern of the original infections. Tribute is paid to the four Medical Superintendents who guided the evolution of the hospital, and the story is told through their successive eras. The City Hospital played an important role in the isolation and treatment of tuberculosis, with the co-ordination of hospital and public health care established by Sir Robert Philip a model for other

centres world-wide. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s Professor Sir John Crofton's work established the principles of triple drug therapy that still underlie the successful treatment and prevention of drug resistance in tuberculosis. Increasingly, other aspects of respiratory medicine and thoracic surgery grew up on the City Hospital site, and ear, nose and throat, tropical diseases and geriatric medicine were also concentrated there.

Infectious diseases remained a core discipline, with the last Edinburgh smallpox outbreak in 1942 a significant triumph. War-time challenges are explained, and the relatively smooth transfer from the City to the new National Health Service in 1948. Teaching of medical students, doctors and nurses was an important constant in hospital life. The rise of poliomyelitis after the Second World War was controlled as vaccination was introduced. The field of study spread beyond the classic fevers to pyelonephritis and hospital infections. X-Ray facilities were developed, and the original Bacteriology Laboratory was joined by the Regional Virology Laboratory as knowledge of infectious agents broadened. The continuing appearance of new challenges reached a peak when Edinburgh's unique pattern of HIV/AIDS infection became apparent, and the City Hospital played a major part in the investigation and care of this new and devastating epidemic. Eventually, however, bowing to the inevitable, the various units at the City were dispersed elsewhere, respiratory medicine and thoracic surgery returning to the embrace of the Royal, while the Regional Infectious Diseases Unit found a new home at the Western General in 1998.

Dr Gray's meticulously researched work tells the story of the rise and fall of the City Hospital in a satisfyingly thick book, well illustrated and well produced. The detailed statistics from the Annual Reports are a bit daunting at times, but chart the successes and setbacks decade by decade. A particular strength is the wealth of personal recollections that are included, capturing the experience of those who worked in the building, and bringing to life the variety of people involved with this cherished hospital, not just its doctors, nurses, administrators and laboratory workers, but the whole range of ancillary staff, from pharmacists, physiotherapists, librarians and occupational therapists to engineers, porters, catering staff and social workers. This book will appeal to all who knew the City Hospital in its heyday, and will be invaluable to future researchers assessing the history of Edinburgh medicine in the twentieth century.

ANDREW FRASER

*Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh*

Sam McKinstry, **Twenty Seven Queen Street, Edinburgh, Home of the Scottish Chartered Accountants, 1891–2000**. *Edinburgh: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, 2000, pp. xx + 194, illus. Hardback, £20.00, 1–871250–79–X.*

This engaging history of the occupation of No. 27 Queen Street by the Scottish Chartered Accountants has a wider general interest because the author is not only a historian of accountancy but also a distinguished architectural historian. It was a measure of the success of Craig's New Town that businesses and public bodies sought out former grand town houses for their own occupation. The Society of Accountants had been founded in 1853 and were thus relative newcomers among the city's professional bodies, but the imposition of their needs on No. 27 Queen Street was typical enough, so this study has a generic interest for Edinburgh. It embraces the history of the four contiguous houses, Nos 26–29, which the Accountants had outgrown when the decision was made to find new premises in 2000. The architect Thomas Leadbetter was retained in 1891 to carry out the essential alterations and in one respect his approach was both radical and extraordinary for Edinburgh, in that he moved the staircase several feet south into the bowed ante-drawing room of No. 27 to free the entire first floor for a new hall in place of the original circuit of drawing rooms arranged around a central stair. The new curving stair, unusually well lit from the old south facing windows, was given a handsome wrought-iron handrail with intertwining tendrils, which betrays a familiarity with the late seventeenth century staircase at Caroline Park – one of the great masterpieces of Scottish decorative art.

No. 29 has the very considerable additional historical interest of having been the home of Jessy Allan, whose life there is recorded in her journals, first published in the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* (Original Series, Vol. 30, pp. 60–118), and one of the most precious contemporary records of life in the New Town. Since she married the amateur artist, John Harden, her words can be related to his artistic impressions of their daily life in the house. Their touchingly romantic joint signatures, scratched on the window pane of what was presumably their bedroom on the 'top floor' is illustrated here as part of an extensive photographic record of all four houses undertaken by the National Monuments Record of Scotland before the Accountants moved out. Both Nos 28 and 29 have exceptional cycles of decorative plasterwork, and the fact that James Nisbet, the plasterer, was involved in their construction at the outset is surely the reason.

The Foreword is a very lively 'day in the life' memoir of No. 27 by Tom Lee, who first set foot in the building as an apprentice in 1959. Although describing the particular re-use of the Allans' home by a corporate body, his account has the quality of an archetype of countless New Town houses turned into offices in the twentieth century with their caretakers and sandwich makers, cold and damp, with the archives accumulating in the cellars. In the same way, one can now see that the practice of hanging staircases with mezzotints of the great and the good of the Modern Athens in broad rosewood frames may be another generic Old Edinburgh tradition.

IAN GOW

*National Trust for Scotland*