



# newsletter

March 2016

of the Edinburgh Festival Voluntary Guides Association

## HELLO EVERYONE

I hope you are well and that no-one has suffered from the exceptionally heavy rainfall of the winter.

Christmas and New Year have been and gone again and thoughts are now turning to summer holidays.

Plans are underway for our 2016 guiding season and as usual, at this time of year, we are preparing for the A.G.M.

Best wishes  
George

## 68<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 2016 A.G.M.  
will be held in the City Chambers  
on Wednesday 23 March  
Commencing 7.00pm

Please remember to wear your name badge.

## CONTACT DETAILS

The use of email for correspondence is so much easier, faster and cheaper and it will allow me to keep you up to date with current events rather than having to wait until the next Newsletter. If you have an email address of which I am not aware, I would be grateful if I could have a note of it. And remember, please, to let me know if you change your postal address, email address or your telephone number.

## CHRISTMAS SOIRÉE

Our Christmas Soirée in the Story Telling Centre was considered to be a great success in an excellent venue which will be considered again for 2016.

We intended that the charges made be donated to a Children's charity in the Royal Mile but none seems to exist so the cash was topped up to £100.00 and donated to the Royal Mile Primary School.

## ILLUSTRATED TALKS PROGRAMME 2016

### Friday 5 August

Robin Barnes "Making Tracks"  
Edinburgh's first tram system.

### Thursday 11 August

Mark Mclean "A Clearer Light"  
Lord Hailes and the Enlightenment.

### Monday 15 August

Hamish Coghill "It's a Dog's Life"  
Dog statues, cemeteries and tales.

### Tuesday 23 August

Eric Melvin "The Royal Jaunt"  
King George IV's visit to Edinburgh, 1822.

## **GUIDE NEWS**

### **NEW GUIDES**

Since the last newsletter we have not appointed any new guides.

### **HONORARY GUIDE DEATH**

Joan Stewart died in a care home - date unknown.

### **HONORARY GUIDE MISLAID**

Louise Sinclair. If anyone knows the whereabouts of Louise please advise the Secretary. Her last known address was 6 Douglas Crescent.

### **GUIDE TRAINING**

We currently have around 10 trainees at various stages, although not the same group as at the last newsletter, having lost a few who found the training too much.

We do need to try to increase our numbers to keep pace with retirements so if you have any friends or colleagues who might like to become guides please sell it to them and arrange to pass their contact details to Seonaid Martin

As always the Committee would like to record its appreciation and thanks to those guides who have willingly given up their time to be mentors and examiners to/for our trainee guides.

### **OUT OF SEASON TOURS**

Sample tours of the Grassmarket and the New Town have been completed and a few enthusiastic guides are now leading tours in these areas.

In 2015 we led tours of Royal Mile, New Town and Grassmarket and also Greyfriars for schoolchildren, majoring, of course, on Bobby. In addition Eric Melvin organised tours of the Royal Mile and the New Town for a party of Danes and Icelanders and Richard Richardson led a tour of the Royal Mile for 26 senior churchmen including archbishops and bishops. The rumour that the ghost of Archbishop Laud of Canterbury was seen in St.Giles is untrue.

We have three tours on the stocks for 2016 (Royal Mile, New Town, Greyfriars Kirkyard) but volunteer guides have not yet been requested.

If you would like to guide out-of-season, please contact the Secretary, if you have not already done so, with a note of any foreign languages in which you are fluent. A foreign language is by no means essential but can often be beneficial when we have groups from France, Germany etc.

## SEASON 2016

### 2016 Festivals

International Science Festival	26 March - 10 April
TradFest Edinburgh	27 April - 8 May
Beltane Fire Festival	30 April
Imagine Festival	30 May - 5 Jun
Leith Festival	11 - 19 June
The Edinburgh Festival of Cycling	11 - 19 June
Edinburgh International Film Festival	15 - 26 June
Edinburgh International Magic Festival	1 - 8 July
Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival	15 - 24 July
Edinburgh Art Festival	28 July - 28 August
Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo	5 - 27 August
Just Festival	5 - 28 August
Edinburgh Fringe Festival	5 - 29 August
<b>EDINBURGH FESTIVAL GUIDES</b>	<b>5 - 29 August</b>
Edinburgh International Book Festival	13 - 29 August
Edinburgh Mela Festival	27 - 28 August
Scottish Story Telling Festival	24 October-2 November
Samhuinn Fire Festival	31 October
Edinburgh's Christmas	20 November - 4 January
Edinburgh's Hogmanay	30 December - 1 January

### EDINBURGH ARTS and ENTERTAINMENT (EAE)

Statistics from 2015 showed that using EAE to distribute flyers was a successful venture.

We will use EAE again in 2016 and consider the city-wide distribution plan. In 2015 we used city-centre distribution.

### YOUR NEWSLETTER

This is **your** newsletter. If you have any articles which you would like to share with your fellow guides, please pass them to the Secretary. I will be delighted to publish them in future newsletters.

### TO TICKET

#### OR NOT TO TICKET?

That is the question!

To try to clarify matters for our customers we investigated ticketing. The Fringe organises tickets at no extra cost and we found we could advertise as 'free but ticketed'.

However we decided to abandon the idea, at least for 2016. The decisive argument was that, because our tickets would be free, customers would not need to use a card to purchase them and therefore not be able to use a card to obtain them. This would mean queuing and a huge hassle.

### EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Kate has organised a visit to Britannia for 22 March. There are still a few places available for this tour. A Moray House tour is being planned for May. The National Library, Gilmerton Cove, Drum House and Arniston House are on the list.

Regrettably the Royal College of Surgeons no longer runs organised tours.

## **OBITUARY - JOHN FEE** (former guide)

Courtesy of Carluke Gazette and Seonaid Martin

John Fee, storyteller and historian.

Born: 16 December 1930.

Died: 9 January 2011 in Edinburgh, aged 80.

The death of John Fee deprives Scotland of an important urban tradition bearer. Nurtured in Edinburgh's Old Town as part of its thriving Irish-Scottish community, John was a supreme entertainer immersed in the history of his community.

Born in 1930 to parents Paddy and Catherine, he was one of eight children.

Neatly made and a natural athlete, John followed in his father's footsteps as a champion boxer, winning the Scottish amateur lightweight crown in 1949. He also followed his father into the army, undertaking National Service in Hong Kong with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, in which Paddy Fee had also served.

From the start, however, John Fee had creative leanings and a series of jobs in the 1950s included scene painting for the capital's King's Theatre and singing in the opera chorus.

While at the King's, John produced a daily cartoon commenting on current goings on in the theatre, which proved more popular with some cast and crew than others.

In 1955, he married Mona, forming a lifelong partnership. Being a father stimulated a passion for education which was to characterise the rest of his life.

As his daughters recall: "He taught us how to paint, draw, write, pray, think... and look, on long walks all over Edinburgh, Pentlands, Hermitage, Cramond, Dean Village, and on hostelling holidays to the west coast of Scotland."

Education for John was not just book-learning but exploration, observation and participation in all aspects of community life, including its stories and songs. Nonetheless, in 1967 he went to Edinburgh University as a full-time mature student, gaining an honours degree in history and going on to teach history and modern studies.

As a teacher, he was legendary - meticulous in preparation, dry of wit, demanding the best, yet above all compassionate and understanding, as if every youngster were part of his family network and destined to succeed. Retiring eventually as head of history and modern studies at Ainslie Park Secondary School, John began a new creative career founded on his passion for Edinburgh's social history. In a unique blend of teacher and entertainer, which few could have carried, he reached out to every kind of community group.

As the storytelling revival began at The Netherbow in Edinburgh's High Street, John quickly gained recognition as a master of the art and as someone connected with an urban tradition of song, story and ceilidh which had been pushed into the shadows. He helped bring it back into the light.

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## **OBITUARY JOHN FEE Continued**

Regaling packed audiences in The Waverley Bar's Guid Crack Club, pacing the Netherbow stage, hat clamped firmly to his head, or leading gaggles of children and adults on storytelling tours, John was in his element. Ever the master of dry understatement, while pointing out comic absurdity, John's diminutive figure as he talked became commanding and his flow compulsive.

On one occasion he brought the house down with a long disquisition on the need for a new national anthem for Scotland, concluding with an impassioned appeal for "Stop Your Tickling, Jock".

Yet behind the entertainer was a deeply

serious student of humanity, a person full of sincere religion truly lived out, a wise and generous man, whose goodness seeped through every pore, attracting respect, love and admiration.

Weeks before his death, after a long and hard fought battle against cancer, John was still working on one of his stories - the tale of Ned Holt, painter and performer in Edinburgh's Old Town in the 19th century - an artist of the people whom John did not want forgotten.

In the words of the folk song, John Fee was "a man you don't meet every day" and he leaves a rich legacy of memories along with some fine publications.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Mona, and daughters Angela and Lorna.

## **EFVGA WEBSITE**

The 'Guides Only' page, is password protected. If you are having problems opening it, please contact the Secretary.

AGM information, Training material and Newsletters have been loaded but there is currently a technical problem with the Illustrations page in that while the illustrations look fine on the website, they are not satisfactory when downloaded.

Pages relevant to the public have been updated for 2016.

Is there anything else you would like to see on our website? If so, please contact the Secretary.

## **ROYAL COMMISSION FOR ANCIENT AND HISTORIC MONUMENTS (RCAHM)**

The last newsletter intimated that RCAHMs had been renamed 'Historic Scotland Archives Division'.

This was incorrect.

The revised name is 'Historical Environment Scotland.'

Apologies for this error.

George Laing  
Secretary  
EFVGA