



Newsletter

June 2018

Changes for the 2018 Festival Season

In January, we issued a special newsletter in which we asked for your views on some important changes that the committee was proposing. Many thanks to all those who replied, and also to those who contributed to the lively discussion on the subject at our AGM in March.

Here is a summary of the changes that have now been agreed. If you have any questions, please contact any committee member*.

Start times

The biggest change is to the start times of our tours. Starting this year, **all our tours will start at 10 am or 2 pm** – not at intervals during half-hour slots as before. This should make it easier to organise visitors into groups and to assign guides to groups. It should mean less waiting around both for visitors and guides, and less chance of guides having to go home without a tour (which happened far too often last year).

We will ask guides to **arrive at the City Chambers at least 20 minutes before the above start times.**

'Pole duty'

When customers arrive at the City Chambers to join a tour, they often have difficulty identifying us amid the hubbub and confusion of the High Street. To this end, we are looking at ways of improving our visibility on the street. And we now asking the guides on 'pole duty' to stand close to the entrance to the quadrangle and to **focus on helping visitors to find our meeting point.** This is more important than trying to persuade passers-by to join a tour or to hand out leaflets to all and sundry (although these are also useful tasks).

Continued on page 2

Our 70th AGM

Twenty-seven members attended our 2018 AGM and civic reception, which was held on 21st March in the City Chambers. Cllr. Frank Ross, the new Lord Provost, was unable to attend, but we were pleased to welcome his deputy, Cllr. Joan Griffiths, in his place. Cllr. Griffiths spoke of how privileged she felt to live in our beautiful city so rich in history and to work in the splendid City Chambers. She thanked the guides for their dedication and hard-work in sharing that history with so many visitors over the 70 years of our existence.

Earlier in the evening, Association chairman Christine Stevenson reported on our recent activities. Highlights included our successful 70th anniversary dinner last May, the ongoing programme of educational visits for our guides, and the large number of custom tours that we

have run. Although numbers were down for our Festival tours, the feedback on these tours was very good, including many complimentary reviews on TripAdvisor.

Continued on page 2



*For all contact details, see the box on page 4.

Newsletter

Educational visit to the Mansfield Traquair Centre

By Val Baker

Last November, a group of our guides visited the Mansfield Traquair Centre to see and hear about the Phoebe Traquair murals. Our knowledgeable host was Morag Austin who gave us an informative and entertaining insight into the life and work of the remarkable Phoebe Traquair (1852-1936). Ms Austin explained the changes in the colour and style of the murals, along with the stories depicted in each block and the frequent humour portrayed in the works. These reflect scenes from the Old and New Testaments as well as parables and elements of worship. The murals and the building itself are among Edinburgh's great treasures and a visit is highly recommended. The centre is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month.

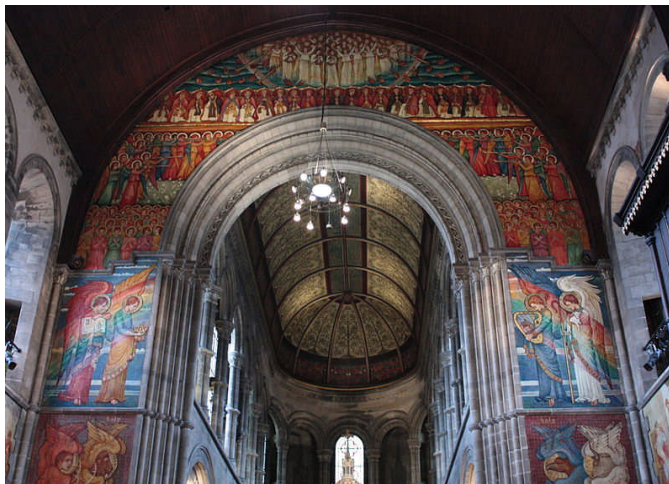


Photo: Stephen Dickson

- Please contact Val* if you have any suggestions or requests for future educational visits.

2018 Changes: Continued from page 1

Length of tours

We are now advertising that **our tours will last two hours**, that is, from 10 am to 12 noon and from 2 pm to 4 pm. Our feedback suggests that this is the longest that many visitors want to spend on a tour. And by fixing a definite end time, we will make it easier for Festival-goers to plan their day.

If you feel you can't cover the whole of the Royal Mile in two hours, don't worry. There is no obligation to do the entire stretch between the Castle and the Palace. There are plenty of interesting sites to focus on even if it means finishing your tour well short of Holyrood (as many guides already do).

Free tours

Our tours will of course always be free (during the Festival). But we are no longer emphasising that fact in our publicity. Guides have told us that the word 'free' is actually a turn-off, as some people take it to mean 'of no value' or might even suspect a scam.

It remains to be seen how well these new arrangements will work in practice. Please continue to give your feedback to the committee so that we can review the changes in future years.

AGM: Continued from page 1

Christine also reported on a fruitful meeting that she and Eric Melvin had had with the Lord Provost. Cllr. Ross had appeared to be very supportive of our work and had offered to help us in several ways.

Christine went on to thank the guides for all their efforts in leading tours and in helping the Association in many other ways.

Other points:

- Association treasurer Richard Richardson reported that our finances were in a sound state, with an increased surplus of £507.
- As no nominations to the committee had been received, the existing members and office-bearers will all be continuing in their posts.
- The Deputy Lord Provost presented our two new guides with their badges. They were Elspeth McLean, who qualified in January (see page 3), and Jim Eunson, who has already completed a season of guiding with us.

**For all contact details, see the box on page 4.*

Newsletter

GUIDE NEWS



We are pleased to welcome **Elspeth McLean** (left) as the latest guide to join our ranks. Elspeth is from the Highlands, with family roots in Dornoch. She lived for many years in Nairn, working as a tour designer for visitors to France, as well as being a guide for French visitors to

the Highlands – all good uses for her language skills. She passed her EFVGA assessment test in January and, along with Jim Eunson, was presented with her badge at this year's AGM (see page 2).

Jan Wallace has resigned as an active guide because of clashes with other activities. Jan was a guide for four years and served for a short time on the committee. She has now joined the ranks of honorary guides.

The Association's Secretary, **Sandy Cameron**, has unfortunately been unwell for some time, and has temporarily had to withdraw from his guiding activities. **Eric Melvin** is serving as Acting Secretary during Sandy's absence.

We are sorry to report that one of our very long-standing members, **Jean Thompson**, passed away in April. Jean was an active guide from 1979 to 2001, and served for several years as the Association's treasurer. Those who knew her describe her as a dedicated guide with a wealth of knowledge and a great sense of humour.

Eric Melvin has followed up his 2017 talk on **John Kay** with a book about this remarkable artist, engraver and some-time barber who, over a period of 38 years, sketched many of the colourful characters who passed by his workshop in Parliament Close. Kay's work provides a unique record of social life during the Scottish Enlightenment.

The Edinburgh of John Kay is available for £12.99 from local bookshops, on-line from Amazon, and direct from the author. ISBN 0995637806.

2018 Illustrated Talks

Robert Burns, George Drummond and Burke & Hare are among the people examined in our programme of illustrated talks during this year's Festival season.

The talks take place at 7.30 pm in the City Chambers (doors open 7.00 pm). The talks are free and open to all.

Thanks to Maureen McMillan for arranging these events. There are more details of the subjects and speakers on our website.

The full programme is as follows:

Friday 3rd August: Robert Burns in Edinburgh

Covering all aspects of the poet's life in the capital, from his father's work on the landscaping of The Meadows to Burns' final visit in 1791. *Speaker:* David Purdie.

Thursday 9th August: The Battle of Pinkie 1547

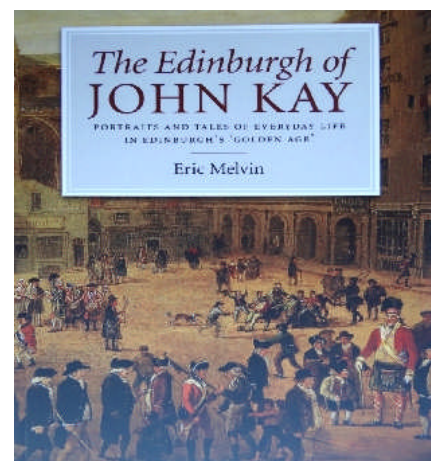
One of the biggest and most dramatic of the battles between Scotland and England, and one of the first modern battles to be fought on British soil. *Speaker:* Arran Johnston.

Wednesday 15th August: Burke and Hare

The brutal story of the city's worst serial killers. But were they unique to Edinburgh? *Speaker:* Eric Melvin.

Tuesday 21st August: George Drummond

A man of great vision and immense influence who changed Edinburgh forever. Was he Edinburgh's greatest lord provost? *Speaker:* Hamish Coghill.



Newsletter

ROYAL MILE NEWS



Edinburgh Council is to **ban all pavement advertising boards** in the city, including the oversize A-boards that advertise 'free' walking tours, ghost tours and pub crawls in the Royal Mile.

This follows a complaint by the Old Town Community Council which describes pavement advertising as a 'serious obstruction of the footpath'. The ban, which is due to come into force later this year, will be enforced by wardens.

The Community Council has also called for a ban on tour buses around the Royal Mile and the Grassmarket. They say the buses are too large and are rarely more than half full.

- Work is under way on a major renovation project for the buildings on the north side of the **Abbey Strand**, parts of which date from the 15th Century. The restored buildings will house a centre where visitors will be able to 'learn about and engage with the Palace and the Royal Collection'. The project is part of a £10 million investment by the Royal Collection Trust which also includes the creation of a public garden behind the buildings. This is an echo of the 17th-century physic garden in nearby St. Anne's Yard which was a forerunner of the Royal Botanic Garden.
- The **Mercat Cross** is now visible again after a three-month conservation project. The work included repainting the heraldic decorations, replacing the asphalt roof and repointing the stonework.
- Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) has taken over the running of the **Tron Kirk**. During the summer, the Category A listed building will host an exhibition about Edinburgh and other World Heritage sites in Scotland. In the longer term, EWH hopes to carry out a full refurbishment, creating educational and community facilities

Keeping in Touch

Please be sure to keep the Acting Secretary up to date with any changes to your address, phone numbers (including mobile) or email address.

The use of email for correspondence is very much easier, faster and cheaper than conventional mail, so if you have an email address but haven't yet given it to the Secretary, please do so.

You can use the following contact details to get in touch with committee members:

- For information about guides' training, or for enquiries from potential new guides, contact Val Baker:
training@edinburghfestivalguides.org or phone 0131 669 3767.
- For enquiries about custom (bespoke) tours, contact Maureen McMillan:
tours@edinburghfestivalguides.org
- For queries about our website and for contributions to the newsletter, contact Mike Lewis:
webmaster@edinburghfestivalguides.org or phone 0131 623 4198.
- To notify changes to your contact details and for all other correspondence, contact the Acting Secretary, Eric Melvin:
info@edinburghfestivalguides.org

The above email addresses may be considered permanent. Even if the committee roles change, the email addresses will remain the same.

Postal address: EFVGA, c/o 33/3 Blackford Road, Edinburgh EH9 2DT.

www.edinburghfestivalguides.org

Our website includes a password-protected 'guides only' section. If you have forgotten the password, contact Mike Lewis.

Jim Eunson and Vic Aitken are working to improve the Association's presence on Facebook. We'll give you more news of this useful initiative as it progresses.