



newsletter

October 2015

of the Edinburgh Festival Voluntary Guides Association

HELLO EVERYONE

I hope you are all in good health and have enjoyed your summer holidays with visits to some exciting places.

If you're wondering what happened to the summer edition of your Newsletter then rest easy. You didn't miss it because I didn't write it. There always seemed to be something more important to do and then suddenly July was here and another season was about to take off. I do apologise for this and assure you that any news which would have been inserted in that edition will be given in this one.

Best wishes

George

SANTA'S COMING SOON



CHRISTMAS SOIRÉE

You and your partner are cordially invited
to attend our Christmas Soirée in the

Story Telling Centre

on Friday 11 December.

6.00pm until 8.30pm.

Entry and toilets are both on the ground floor.

If you are able to come along please advise

Kate Dick

31 Durham Road, EH15 1PB

0131 669 3365

katedick51@gmail.com

**There will be a nominal charge of £2.50 per person
which will be donated to charity. Please pass your
donation to Kate before 1 December.**

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.

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.

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AGM

Business was completed in double quick time at the 2015 AGM and we had to find ways to pass 30 minutes before the arrival of the Lord Provost.

In his address, the Lord Provost said, as always, how grateful he was, on behalf of the City, for the time and effort given by our guides in promoting Edinburgh to visitors from all over the world. "Without the Festival Guides, the Festival would not be the same."

Colin replied, on behalf of the guides, by thanking the Lord Provost for attending and for granting us use of the room with a generous buffet. Colin, knowing that the Lord Provost was training to run a marathon, teased him by saying he thought he looked a little trimmer." Two stones trimmer!" replied the Lord Provost.

The Lord Provost then presented guide badges to our new guides Val Baker, John Gorrie, Bernard Heavie and Mike Lewis.

EFVGA WEBSITE

Updating of our website is ongoing.

Bespoke tours for the Royal Mile and Grassmarket/ Greyfriars have been re-organised and the New Town tour added. New charges have been quoted for all tours.

A Link to the Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) website has been added and a Disclaimer clause inserted.

Trip Advisor information will be loaded over the next few months.

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

AGM information and Training material will be loaded over the next couple of months or so. 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.

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

LORD PROVOST'S MARATHON

The Lord Provost completed his London Marathon in a little over 5 hours and raised £6831.59 for charity - the One City Trust and the Jamie Skinner Appeal. EFVGA donated £50.00 and individual donations were also made from various guides.

Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit.

Wisdom is knowing not to put it in your fruit salad.

GUIDE NEWS

COMMITTEE RETIRALS

Murray Carmichael has retired after 6 years' service which included the role of Fringe Co-ordinator.

Gordon Stewart has been forced to retire due to ill health. Gordon was also our Training Co-ordinator and this duty has now been taken over by Seonaid.

Colin Young (Deputy Chairman), for family reasons, has emigrated to England and sends his best wishes from Cirencester. Colin was the man who organised all those wonderful (educational) trips to places not normally open to the public. We have decided to operate meantime without a Deputy Chairman and Kate will take on Educational visits.

Our thanks are sent to Murray, Gordon and Colin for their contributions and hard work and, most importantly, we wish Gordon the best of health in the future.

COMMITTEE NEW MEMBERS

Maureen McMillan who will also take the role of Fringe Co-ordinator.

Richard Richardson who will take over from Olive Morrison as auditor.

NEW GUIDES

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

HONORARY GUIDES DEATHS

John Fee died 2011. Joined December 1991.

Margaret Rose died August 2015. Joined August 1995.

HONORARY GUIDES RETIRALS

Dorothy Peay due to ill health.

HONORARY GUIDES NEW

Colin Young

Olive Morrison

Olive has hung up her walking boots but is not yet hanging up her calculator as she is continuing as auditor for another organisation. Nevertheless we would like to extend our thanks to Olive for her time as a guide, Committee Member, Treasurer and Auditor and send her our best wishes.

SEASON 2015

Sadly, our numbers are down again this year to 833. This is 16.8% down on 2014 (1001) and 27.7% down on 2013 (1152). The main reasons appear to be increased competition and the fact that the public can't find us at the City Chambers. We are considering how to overcome these problems and have a few ideas on the table.

For the 2015 season we decided to invest in an Edinburgh Arts & Entertainment (EAE) distribution of our flyers and, although we don't know where our customers picked them up, this has resulted in a huge percentage increase from 4% to 18% in business from that source .

We were also able to leave a supply of our flyers in places such as the Backpackers Hostel, Gladstone's Land, St.Giles Café.

We now have a basic Visit Scotland entry which will be expanded to provide more information about the Association.

TRIPADVISOR

We have 21 entries, twenty of which are 5* and one 4*. If you would like to read them then search "*tripadvisor edinburgh festival guides*". So take a pat on the back everyone, particularly those guides mentioned in the entries. We are also quoted as being 54th out of 153 tours and activities and 379th out of 817 attractions.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Kathleen reported a bank balance of £2935.70 as at 21 September 2015 against £3228.18 as at 1 January 2015 so our account remains in a healthy state.

EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE

The Committee agreed to make our usual donation of £100 to Edinburgh World Heritage.

KEEP OUR CUSTOMERS

For the first time we issued our customers with sticky 'identification labels' to try and prevent their defection to other tour groups.

KILTS and TARTAN

Knowing how much ladies, especially Japanese ladies, like to see men in kilts, we encouraged our male guides to wear the kilt and quite a few did so. Of course our female guides also played their part by wearing tartan.

RICK STEVAS GUIDE BOOK

EFVGA is well and truly included in this American Guide Book and the editor has been in touch to confirm details.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

We have visited the War Memorial on Edinburgh Castle and had a trip up St.Giles Tower.

Our thanks go to Colin for organising top-class visits to various establishments throughout the city.

Kate will be taking over from Colin and has Moray House, Royal College of Surgeons and the National Library on her list.

OUT OF SEASON TOURS (OOS)

A major loss of income for 2015 was that from our OOS tours which were down in number to 5 from 17 in 2014.

One of the 5 was, potentially, the biggest we have ever had to manage. We were invited to take approximately 200 delegates attending a European Social Workers' Conference in the EICC on a Royal Mile Tour. Was this a chance to break into conference business?

12 guides volunteered and were in place by 6.00 pm. Of the 176 delegates who had signed up for the tour, only 69 delegates turned up. It was disappointing to say the least.

Nevertheless we will know better how to deal with this type of business should the opportunity arise again.

For 2015, the Committee decided to increase the charge for our OOS tours from £3.00 (£1.00 under 17) to £5.00 (£2.00) and we went further by splitting the Royal Mile tour into two - Castle to Netherbow and Netherbow to Palace in the hope that this might attract repeat business.

We will continue to offer tours of the Grassmarket, Greyfriars and the New Town for out-of-season business only.

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.

GUIDE TRAINING

We currently have around 11 trainees at various stages, having lost 4 who found it 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. Earlier this year Ann Dewar kindly posted a notice at U3A and this has produced a few enquiries. Many thanks for that Ann.

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.

CANNONBALL HOUSE

Our previous base, Cannonball House, is now a Contini restaurant with an ice cream and porridge (yes, porridge) parlour. Is this an Italian favourite?

ROYAL COMMISSION FOR ANCIENT AND HISTORIC MONUMENTS (RCAHM)

Has been renamed 'Historic Scotland Archives Division'.

ILLUSTRATED TALKS PROGRAMME 2015

Our 2015 programme was thought to be one of the best we have had and broke a few records of various types. Our speakers were:-

Eric Melvin	'Edinburgh and the Act of Union 1707'
Iain Macintyre	'Morbid Curiosities'
Hamish Coghill	'My Edinburgh'
Derek Wilson	'Edinburgh in the Movies'

A record of which we are proud is that of Hamish breaking the audience numbers with 82. A few helpful guys had to scurry around finding more chairs. Derek's talk was the first (I think) incorporating sound and finishing his talk with the Proclaimers "*500 Miles*" from "*Sunshine on Leith*" was just brilliant. Being a Hibby I would think that!

However, for the first time, we also had a few problems. During Eric's talk one of the roving mics ran out of power - a minor problem. Before Iain's talk the sound system failed. Fortunately Iain has a good voice and coped with little trouble. Before Hamish's talk the lights could not be switched off! This was the most serious problem and, without doubt, somewhat spoiled Hamish's talk as many of his slides could not be seen because of the bright light. Derek suffered the same problem as Hamish.

ROYAL MILE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (RMBA)

The RMBA has been in existence for two years and we have been members since its inception. Until now membership has been free but RMBA now think it's time to impose an annual charge of £50.00. The Committee feels that this a good organisation of which to be a member, mainly due to its networking opportunities and our ability to be involved in whatever is happening in the Royal Mile. Acceptance was recommended by the Committee and this was agreed by the floor at the AGM.

Kate and George attended the RMBA AGM in the Whisky Heritage Centre to ensure that EFVGA is included in the list of Guiding Organisations.

After the AGM, which was even shorter than ours, we were given a (free) lesson on whisky blending and allowed to name and take home our efforts. Now this only happened because the event was held in the Whisky Heritage Centre but perhaps it will encourage guides to join the Committee and take advantage of those little extras.

George Laing
Secretary
EFVGA

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Bernard Heavie, Mike Lewis,
Val Baker, John Gorrie



The Lord Provost



Elizabeth McLeod, Gladys Bain



Seonaid Martin, Dee Hunter



John Thompson, Sandy Cameron,
Eric Melvin



Olive Morrison, Maureen McMillan
Anne Runnalls