



# Newsletter

November 2017

## 2017 Season

## Excellent feedback but numbers down

We finished our 2017 season with some very good feedback from our visitors, but with overall numbers down on last year. During the 25 days of the Festival we ran 121 tours, but attracted fewer than six visitors per tour on average. The total attendance was 636. That's 13% lower than in 2016, and 40% down on 2013.

As in previous years, we welcomed visitors from across the globe - from as far away as Egypt, Zimbabwe, Brazil and New Zealand. As usual, the largest overseas contingent was from North America (24% of the total). Around 40 clients were local Edinburgh folk, with a similar number from other parts of Scotland.

Regrettably, the low attendance meant that, on several occasions, one or more guides had to go home without a tour. And there were several tours with just a single client.

But while the quantity was disappointing, the quality was as high as ever. Most guides received enthusiastic feedback from their clients, either in person or via comments to our website. Importantly, visitors posted 17 new reviews on our TripAdvisor page, all contributing to our solid 5-star rating. Terms such as 'fascinating', 'unmissable', 'wealth of knowledge' and 'information-packed' featured repeatedly in these reviews.

### Custom tours

While our Festival numbers were down, our custom tours have been going from strength to strength. Our tour coordinator, Maureen McMillan, reports that we have run 21 of these tours since our previous newsletter, bringing the total for the year to 37. These



included some particularly large groups, such as the Clan Carmichael Gathering in August and a large party of students from Winterthur in Switzerland in October (see photo on page 2). Thanks to all the guides who have volunteered to lead these tours.

### Changes

At its meeting in October, the Committee decided to make a number of changes to our custom tours offering:

- We will no longer offer these tours in August (for new clients), as this places too much pressure on our guides at the busiest time of the year.
- We will now ask for at least a week's notice for custom tours.
- We will continue not to charge for tours for primary and secondary schools from within the City of Edinburgh, but other school groups will be charged at our usual rates.

# Newsletter

## Guide News



Since our last newsletter, **Jim Eunson** (pictured above) has qualified as a guide and has completed his first season with us. Jim is a second-generation EFVGA member, as his father, the late David Eunson, guided with us during the 1990s. Jim is from Orkney but has lived in Edinburgh for nearly 45 years.

Two of our guides retired recently. **Dorothy Ellen** is one of our longest-serving members, having tirelessly led tours for well over 40 years. During that time, she only missed three seasons. **Bill Richardson** joined us in 2002 and served on the committee for six years. Both Dorothy and Bill now join the ranks of Honorary Guides. Thanks to both of them for their many years of service.

Sadly, two of our guides passed away recently. **Gordon Stewart**, who joined us in 2008 and who served as training coordinator for several years, died in April. The following month, **Elizabeth McLeod** died after a long illness. Elizabeth had guided with us for about ten years and was also a volunteer at the Georgian House.

Three potential guides are currently in training, with one of them nearly ready for the assessment test.

*Some of the Winterthur party (see page 1) facing some unexpected sunshine on the Castle Esplanade.*

## Photo-sharing system up and running

We have now set up an on-line photo-sharing system which all our guides are welcome to use. The system provides an easy way for guides to obtain historical images of Edinburgh to show on their tours or simply for their own interest.

At present, we have collections of pictures from the Old Town, the New Town and the Grassmarket / Greyfriars area (thanks to Eric Melvin and George Laing for organising these). We also have some recent photos, for example some taken at this year's anniversary dinner. Guides are encouraged to contribute their own pictures.

To access the system, visit the 'Guides Only' section of our website and follow the link to 'Photo Sharing'. You will need to enter your login name and password. Please contact Mike Lewis\* if you need any help with this.

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

**Given the success of our 70th anniversary dinner in May, the committee has decided to organise another social event next spring or summer. This will replace this year's Christmas soirée. We are sorry to disappoint those who were looking forward to a Christmas event this year. We will review the decision next year, with a view to holding a Christmas soirée in 2018, depending on your feedback.**





# Newsletter

## Educational visit to Magdalen Chapel

For our first educational visit of the winter, eight of our members were given a tour of the lovely Magdalen Chapel in the Cowgate (right). As our host, Matthew Vogan, demonstrated, this intriguing building, which dates from 1541, has many points of interest. We were shown its mortification brods (inscribed memorial panels, pictured below right) and the table used to prepare executed Covenanters for burial (including the headless Earl of Argyll). The chapel also has four surviving pre-reformation stained glass roundels.

The building has had many uses over the centuries and is now the headquarters of the Scottish Reformation Society. It is open to the public from 10 am to 4 pm on weekdays.

Our next educational visit will be to the Mansfield Traquair Centre to view Phoebe Anna Traquair's celebrated murals. These are considered to be Traquair's best work and the ones that cemented her international reputation. The visit will take place at 2.30 pm on Wednesday 22nd November. Please let Val Baker\* know if you would like to attend. Numbers are limited.

Our thanks to Val for organising these events. Please contact her if you have any suggestions for future visits.

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



*Eric and party in St. Andrews Square*

In July, Eric Melvin treated a group of guides to a sample tour of parts of the New Town taking in the area between St. Andrews Square, Queen Street and the foot of the Mound. This was followed two weeks later by a sample tour of the Grassmarket and Greyfriars area, led by George Laing.

Sample tours are intended to give guides an overview of parts of the city other than our usual Royal Mile beat. They are especially useful for guides who are interested in extending their own repertoire of tours. We will organise more sample tours in 2018 if there is sufficient demand.

# Newsletter

## Grave concerns



*Adam Smith's residence at EH8 8BN*

We hear from Revd Neil Gardner, the minister of Canongate Kirk, about a letter that recently arrived from a London-based internet company. The letter was correctly addressed to none other than Adam Smith, and bore the correct address and postcode for the kirk and kirkyard, which of course is where Adam Smith lies buried. The letter referred to an outstanding invoice for £33.55 in respect of 'web space and domain hosting', and demanded immediate payment.

The minister wrote back to say that 'as a distinguished political economist, he [Smith] would be disappointed to learn of the outstanding amount ... Sadly his death in 1790 means that it is unlikely this debt will be settled.'

The company replied with their condolences on 'Mr Smith's passing'. But they explained that the account could only be deleted on production of a valid death certificate. Faced with the daunting prospect of obtaining such a historic document, the minister decided to let the matter rest. But one wonders who else might have received these speculative invoices. John Knox at St. Giles, perhaps? Or Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringhay Castle?

*Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. If you have an amusing story or an anecdote from your tours that you would like to share, please contact Mike Lewis (see above right).*

## Keeping in Touch

**Please be sure to keep the 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 email addresses 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
- 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
- To notify changes to your contact details and for all other correspondence, contact the Secretary, Sandy Cameron:  
info@edinburghfestivalguides.org

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

**[www.edinburghfestivalguides.org](http://www.edinburghfestivalguides.org)**

We are always looking for new guides to join our ranks. If you know anyone who might be interested in becoming a guide, please ask them to contact our training coordinator, Val Baker (see above).

You can also refer them to a new page on our website that explains what becoming a guide involves. This page is publicly accessible, so potential trainees can read it before they make initial contact. To access this information, follow the 'Becoming a Guide' link from our home page.