



Edinburgh Festival Voluntary Guides Association

Newsletter

March 2017

Welcome ...

... to our first newsletter of 2017. This year is something of a milestone as it marks the Association's 70th anniversary. We ran our first tours in 1947, the year that the Edinburgh Festival was founded, and we're still going strong seven decades later.

To mark this significant event, all our guides, along with spouses or partners, are invited to a celebratory dinner at the Royal Overseas League on the 26 May. Further details will be circulated in the next few weeks.

Also in this newsletter:

- A notice of our AGM (see below). As usual, it will be followed by a civic reception—an excellent opportunity for us to all get together and especially to meet our new guides, who will be presented with their badges by the Lord Provost.
- Our usual roundup of news about our guides, educational visits, illustrated talks, etc.
- Information about our updated website.
- An article contributed by one of our guides about an amusing incident on a recent tour.

If you have an article you would like to contribute — an amusing incident, curious fact, historical story or anything else you would like to share — please pass it to the Secretary* for publication in a future newsletter. If you can supply a photo to go with your article, so much the better.

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

Guide and Training News

We are sorry to report the deaths of Joyce Wallace and John Smith.

Rob McKillop and Andy Downie have become honorary guides. Graham Morton and Toby Williams have resigned.

Caroline Castle, Brian Currie, Darrin Green and John Robertson will all receive their badges at the AGM.

We have nine potential guides at various stages of training. However, despite this high number, we still need new guides to keep pace with retirements. If you have any friends or colleagues who might be interested in becoming guides, please encourage them to contact Seonaid Martin*.

69th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 2017 A.G.M.
will be held in the City Chambers
on Wednesday 22 March
Commencing 7.00 pm

Please remember to wear your name badge

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Educational visits

Did you know that when you go through the main entrance of the National Library on George IV Bridge, you are entering the building on its 11th floor? That's right; there are ten floors below your feet, and this is where most of the library's collection of 25 million books, periodicals, journals and pamphlets are stored.

Around twenty of our guides were given a tour of these underground vaults on our educational visit in January. What's more, we were able to pass through a low passage into the void below George IV Bridge itself. With the sounds of traffic above our heads and remnants of the former Liberton Wynd clearly visible, it was a fascinating sight — one not normally accessible to the general public.

We also toured the Reading Room (see photo) and heard how it was donations



from biscuit magnate Alexander Grant (of McVitie & Price fame) that established the library in the 1920s.

Thanks to Kate for organising this splendid visit.

A return visit to the Masonic Lodge in St. John Street is being planned for April. Details of this event will be circulated in the near future.

Website News

Over the last few weeks, Mike Lewis has been busy bringing our website up to date.

The site now contains expanded information about our tours as well as links to social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and TripAdvisor. The pages now load faster, and will work better on mobile devices such as phones and tablets.

There is also a password-protected 'guides only' section where you can find past issues of this newsletter, hints for giving tours and lots of other useful material.

Please get in touch with Mike* if you have any comments about the site or if there is anything you would like to see added to it.

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Did you know ...?

- Edinburgh Castle has seen 26 sieges in its 1100-year-old history, making it 'the most besieged place in Great Britain and one of the most attacked in the world'.¹
- In 2016, the Castle was overtaken by the National Museum of Scotland as the most popular visitor attraction in Scotland (1.77 million visitors compared to 1.81 million). But the Castle remains the most popular paid-for attraction.²

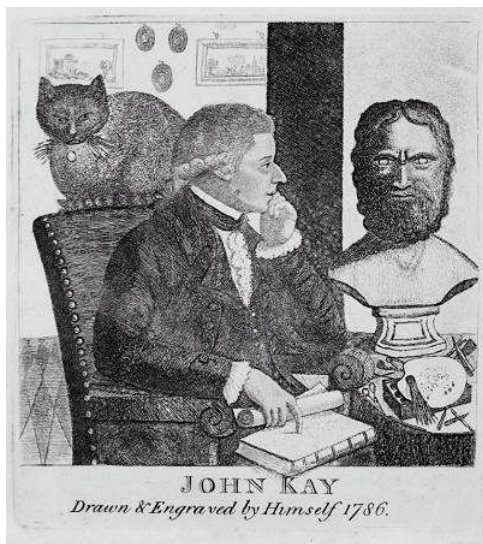
Sources

1: Historic Scotland magazine, 20–24

2: Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions

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2017 Illustrated Talks



Our picture shows John Kay (1742 – 1826), a self-taught artist and engraver who, over a period of 38 years, sketched and engraved many of the colourful characters who passed by his workshop behind Parliament Close. His subjects included such intellectual giants as Joseph Black and Adam Smith, as well as notable eccentrics like Lord Gardenstone and disreputables such as William Brodie.

This remarkable artist is the subject of an illustrated talk by Eric Melvin during our 2017 Festival season. The full programme of talks is as follows:

4 August

Edinburgh, Athens of the North

William Playfair, Architect (1790-1857).

Speaker: Hamish Coghill

10 August

John Kay, Caricaturist (1742-1826)

A unique record of social life during the Scottish Enlightenment

Speaker: Eric Melvin

16 August

A Dirty Swindle

Edinburgh and the Great War

Speaker: Walter Stephen

22 August

The Battle of Prestonpans (1745)

Speaker: Arran Johnston

Edinburgh Festivals 2017

Science Festival	1 – 16 April
Imagine Festival	27 May – 4 June
Film Festival	21 June – 2 July
Jazz & Blues Festival	14– 23 July
Art Festival	27 July – 27 August
Royal Military Tattoo	4 – 26 August
International Festival	4 – 28 August
Festival Fringe	4 - 28 August
<i>EFVGA Season</i>	<i>4 – 28 August</i>
Book Festival	12 – 28 August
Storytelling Festival	20 – 31 October

Sample tours

We are hoping to organise sample tours of the New Town and Grassmarket/Greyfriars this coming spring.

If you are interested in adding these areas to your guiding repertoire, these tours will give you a flavour of what's involved. Look out for further details in the near future.

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The Missing Client

Vic Aitken tells what happened when a member of his tour group got hungry.

Met an Indian family, Daddy, Mum and grown-up daughter for a New Town tour beginning at the Tron. After the introductions we set off down the Bridges where tales of Muir and transportation were the start of a fine question-and-answer session. Then, by way of the former GPO, Register House and the Royal Bank, we reached the National Portrait Gallery, which we thought might be a coffee stop. 'No' said Daddy, 'We'll eat later'.

On we went by our well-trodden route: Thistle Street, St Andrew's Church, across George St, through the lane at the side of the Dome and into Rose St. Then just as we were about to turn left heading for the Scott Monument, instead of four, we were only three. No Daddy.

What would be the best course of action? Daughter volunteered to form a search party of one and off she went. After some false trails she went into a nearby pub and asked the bar man, 'Have you seen an Indian gentleman?' 'Why yes' was the reply 'I think he's gone upstairs to the restaurant for a meal'. Returning with the news that our missing person was found (much to my relief), the question then was 'What about our tour?' 'Oh that's OK' said Mum. 'We'll just go and wait'.

And so we all sat round the table waiting for him to finish lunch, much to the annoyance of the waiting staff who were at pains to tell us that this was a restaurant not a waiting room (which was a bit harsh). Then when the sweet and Coke were finished we were on our way.

Was I annoyed? No. That's Indian culture. But I was disappointed because after he promised to give some feedback he didn't bother.

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 Seonaid Martin:
training@edinburghfestivalguides.org
- For enquiries about custom (bespoke) tours, contact Maureen McMillan:
tours@edinburghfestivalguides.org
- For problems or suggestions concerning our website, contact Mike Lewis:
webmaster@edinburghfestivalguides.org
- For contributions to the newsletter, to notify changes to your contact details, and for all other correspondence, contact the Secretary, George Laing:
info@edinburghfestivalguides.org

The above email addresses may be considered permanent. The relevant committee roles will change after the AGM, but the email addresses will remain the same.