



BROUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Broughton Tolbooth 1582–1829

New Series Number **10**

Christmas/New Year 2021/22

Chair's report

As this newsletter is the final one of the year, I'd like to thank Jim very much for compiling the material for each issue as well as contributing occasional articles and a quiz, which tested our knowledge of our area and its history. Thanks also to others on the committee for their reports on the various online talks we've enjoyed during this year.

It's unfortunate that we haven't been able to get back to face to face meetings, both for our speakers and for you, the loyal members. Drummond and the City of Edinburgh Council are not yet in a position to advise when the school might be available for our monthly meetings again. So thanks to all of you who have continued to show your support through your attendance at these talks on Zoom.

Broughton History Society 2022 Programme

- **2022**
Monday 17th Jan Ian Riches
Theme National Trust of Scotland Archives
- Monday 7th Feb Una Race
Theme History of the Dog Trust
- Monday 7th March Bruce Keith
Theme Bridgescapes.
- Monday 4th April John Ennis
Theme The Linen Trade in Scotland
- Monday 2nd May Sandra Purves
Theme 200 years of the Union Canal.
- Monday 6th June AGM

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Disease and Healthcare in Early Medieval Scotland by Peter Yeoman

Our speaker Peter Yeoman is an archaeologist and cultural historian. He has directed major excavations in the UK and has written a number of books including *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* and a new guide to *Stirling Castle*. He was Head of Cultural Heritage then Principal Heritage Researcher at Historic Scotland. He currently leads a variety of historical tours for Brightwater Holidays.

The illustrated talk focussed on the findings of excavations carried out in the 1990s on the Isle of May at the mouth of the Firth of Forth. The May Island, or simply the May as it is known locally, is home to thousands of nesting seabirds, and the excavators had to wait for the puffins to depart at the beginning of August to carry out their work. The project lasted for five Augusts and resulted in 55 skeletons being unearthed on the site of ancient religious buildings going back to the period 500-1000 AD. These remains, which are now in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh probably represent about a tenth of the burials at the site. Their orientation which is at odds with the layout of surviving stonework from at least three subsequent places of worship suggest they were buried in a long-disappeared wooden building, presumably monastic in nature. The information about who was being buried is hard to determine ethnically, but the earliest surviving written record states that Ethernan [a saint] died among the Picts 669. The newer scientific methods of stable isotope analysis identifies where people came from in relation to the water they drank and shows that most of the buried came from no further away than the Inverness area. Peter showed evidence of other Pictish settlements, such as the Brodie Stone, the Church of Ethernan in Kilrenny, the seventh-century Skeith Stone and the East Lomond Fort. He explained the use of stone-slab graves, to be found also at the Hallowhill cist cemetery (600-800 AD), and in the Lundin Links Pictish cemetery. Some of the surviving stones have characteristic Pictish double disk carvings. What these may symbolise is a matter for conjecture.

A major part of the talk was concerned with the results of new forensic techniques which have extracted new data from the skeletons. These have been analysed in three recent PhDs. The data yield more detailed insight into the health, diet and causes of death in the sample. DNA analysis has still to be completed. Of the skeletons excavated from the cists 85% were male and quite healthy in the main, many reaching an age of over 40, high for the period. There were also some women and children. There was a higher-than-average incidence, however, of severe illnesses which suggests that the monastery was a place where the sick and dying were cared for. In particular, bone analysis showed evidence of pulmonary infection and 81% had joint disease. The honey-comb perforations in one skeleton's leg bones indicate a devastating form of TB. The speaker took the case of a male aged about 50, from around 700 AD, who had suffered a non-fatal sword blow the back of the skull, but also displayed evidence, in the form of bone damage, of prostate cancer. This is thought to be the earliest documented case. The forensic analysis, besides revealing evidence of trauma (including conflict wounds from Viking times; the Vikings raided the May Island in 875), of congenital disease and of severe infections also produced information about diet. The main food sources were plants and cereals, with little meat and, surprisingly, only 10% marine food. The reason for this low proportion is not yet understood.

Peter Yeoman's wide-ranging talk showed us what stones and bones can tell us about the early times when people who lived just up the road, or at least not far away over the water,

from Broughton, were suffering from the effects of armed conflict and disease, as well as experiencing the benefits of dedicated healthcare. This was a time when the Firth of Forth was both a major route and a liminal space between ancient kingdoms. The May Island is certainly well worth visiting to explore the past and breathe in the natural surroundings, but be sure to wear a hat to avoid skull trauma from the dive-bombing, terns nesting there in the present.

Helen Rorrison



The Brodie or Rodney's Stone near Brodie Castle.

Edinburgh Literary Quiz

This quiz celebrates Edinburgh's appearance in fiction. These numbered excerpts are all from works of fiction set, at least partly, in Edinburgh and written between 1818 and 2021. The name of the work, its date and author are also listed separately by letter. The task is to match up one with the other, but some are easier than others! You will note that there are 12 quotes but only 10 authors and works listed. Two are left untitled, so there is an optional extra competitive element to the quiz.

If anyone can identify the two unnamed excerpts - which are quite difficult - correctly there will be a prize. The two authors concerned were both Scottish males and contemporaries. They probably knew each other. One is better-known as a playwright, the other was very popular in his heyday but is now regarded as a bit old-fashioned. They also share one other significant connection. Answers to me at eunsonjim@gmail.com.

Good luck!

Jim Eunson

1. They approached the Old Town which none of the girls had properly seen before, because none of their parents was so historically minded as to be moved to conduct their young into the reeking network of slums which the Old Town constituted in those years.
2. The area of the Grassmarket resembled a huge dark lake or sea of human heads, in the centre of which arose the fatal tree, tall, black, and ominous, from which dangled the deadly halter.
3. We turned into the Parliament Close, and my companion, without a faltering step, marched up to and through the Great Door into the old Parliament building itself. I had been in and out of this place once or twice myself, but never lingered much, preferring the light of the street to the gloom within.
4. The rain had in no way deterred the crowds – it had never occurred to him that Edinburgh was in the middle of 'the Festival' and that there would be carnival hordes of people milling around as if the end of a war had just been declared.
He ended up in the dirty heart of the city, in a street that somehow managed to be on a lower level than the rest of the town, a blackened urban ravine.
5. Edinburgh tenements could be murder. She wouldn't be sorry not to have to climb the two storeys again after today.
6. Lysistrata woke with a start. She had come home, tired out, and fallen asleep in a chair.....
For the last month she had been living in Edinburgh. The Government had successfully transferred itself, with all its apparatus and appendages, to the Scottish capital, and none could deny that in appearance at least the city was more congenial than Blackpool, to imperial and warlike administration; though many found the climate uncomfortably severe.

7. Beautiful city of Edinburgh, most wonderful to be seen,
With your ancient palace of Holyrood and Queen's Park Green,
And your big, magnificent, elegant New College,
Where people from all nations can be taught knowledge.
8. She wonders when she will first glimpse the famous silhouette of Edinburgh Castle. At
a terrace of recently-completed houses marked Picardy Place, the carriage halts and
she peers outside as her driver disappears into a wide basement to deliver his mes-
sage.
9. But the High Street of Edinburgh, which they soon reached, is a dangerous place in
which to make an open attack upon a mob. And it appears that the entrances to the
tavern had been somewhere near to the Cross, on the south side of the
street.....
10. - I see from your application that you attended George Heriots. The old Heriots FPs
seem to be rather thick on the ground this afternoon.
Yeah, fat-cat.
- Actually man, ah've goat tae come clean here. Ah went tae Augie's, St Augustine's
likesay, then Craigy, eh Craigroyston, ken. Ah jist pit doon Heriots because ah thoat it
wid likes, help us git the joab. Too much discrimination in this town, man, ken, like-
say?
11. Then she thought of Mansie, so called in loving diminutive of the good Shetland
'Magnus', how he had survived convulsions, how he had narrowly missed extinction
when the horse in the Co-operative milk lorry bolted, how he might have been
drowned when he fell into Inverleith Pond at the age of three, but was not, thanks to
the gentleman who owned the model of the Titanic.
12. It was coming near noon when I passed in by the West Kirk and the Grassmarket into
the streets of the capital. The huge height of the buildings, running up to ten and
fifteen storeys, the narrow arched entries that continually vomited passengers, the
wares of the merchants in their windows.....

- a. **Robert Louis Stevenson 'Kidnapped' 1886**
- b. **Muriel Spark 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' 1961**
- c. **Sir Walter Scott 'Heart of Midlothian' 1818**
- d. **Irvine Welsh 'Trainspotting' 1993**
- e. **James Hogg 'The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner' 1824**
- f. **William McGonagall 'Beautiful Edinburgh' 1881**
- g. **Sara Sheridan 'The Fair Botanists' 2021**
- h. **Ian Rankin 'A Song for the Dark Times' 2020**
- i. **Kate Atkinson 'One Good Turn' 2006**
- j. **James Robertson 'Joseph Knight' 2003**

The Enlightenment—a Tale of Three Cities by Prof. David Purdie 4TH Oct 2021.

The well-known speaker Professor David Purdie gave an inspirational talk on this subject in which we embarked on an exciting journey with stunning imagery from 5th C Classical Greece through 15th C Renaissance Italy to our fair city of Edinburgh in the 18th and 19th C.

Both literary and scientific relationships were explored with their intertwining connections. In Athens politics and democracy had its beginnings. The great thinkers of the intellectual society such as Socrates, Pericles and Plato and influential women of the times such as Sappho the great lyric poet and Aspasia the philosopher welcomed us into their world of the Golden Age of Athens with its impressive classical architecture and art.



Then we were transported to the great city of Florence in its 15th C heyday with its masterpieces of architecture and into the rebirth of the ancient world. Through Raphael's painting of the School of Athens, Leonardo's Mother and Child or his self-portrait, we were made aware of the light that would shine through the darkness.



The great oppression and resistance from both Athenian religion and the Catholic Church to the advancement of the Enlightenment was highlighted, where remarkable thinkers were condemned for their heresy. Socrates, the founder of Western philosophy, who was forced to take his life or Galileo, the father of astronomy, who was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life for his scientific revelations being the prime examples of the power of religion against non-conformist beliefs.

David's painting of the death of Socrates (part)

In 18th C Edinburgh, the Enlightenment was welcomed by George Drummond, our equivalent to Pericles, whose vision for the New Town was inspirational in its concept. The star of the Enlightenment being of course David Hume, the greatest philosopher and historian who wrote the "Treatise of Human Nature" and gave us today "the freedom to speak, think and the freedom to act."

Connections were made also to Immanuel Kant the German philosopher who took on the work of Hume and the mantle of enlightenment.

AUDE SAPERE. INCIPE

"Dare to know, Dare to understand . Get on with it."

Contemporaries of Drummond and Hume at this time were people like James Hutton, geologist, Adam Smith, economist and philosopher, John Home the playwright and Joseph Black, chemist and physicist known for his discoveries in carbon dioxide and bicarbonates.



The statue of David Hume on the High Street, note his clothing is almost identical to Socrates.

Several of these were depicted together in an oil painting illustrating the intellectual and integrated life of the city when a young Walter Scott is introduced to Robert Burns at the home of Adam Ferguson at Sciennes Hill House in 1786/7, although David Hume's presence is shown only implicitly by an empty chair in the foreground (Hume had died in 1776). (The painting is shown in more detail on the back page)

Other slides showed the controlled and uncontrolled medical experiments used when James Lind found the cure for scurvy in giving fresh citrus fruit to the navy and James Young Simpson and his assistant discovered the effects of chloroform.

The industrial side of the Enlightenment was likewise not forgotten with James Watt and his ingenious creativity using steam power or the eminent thinker James Clerk Maxwell, the gentle man who revolutionised our lives with his understanding of light waves.

Professor Purdie concluded his talk with these comments .

“Humanity has emerged from the ignorance and superstition into the world we know today ; and as Voltaire stated

“It is to Scotland that we turn for all our ideas on the nature of civilisation”

Jenny Bruce.

The Meeting of Burns and Scott



This is the painting by Charles Martin Hardie of that famous encounter in Sciennes Hill House. It took place in the winter of 1786/7 and the painting dates from about 100 years after that. It is an imaginative recreation rather than a record of who was actually there at the time. In Hardie's portrait, besides Burns and the 16 year old Scott, (standing) we can see Adam Ferguson, sitting by the fire, and his fellow philosophers, Adam Smith and Dugald Stewart; the physician, Joseph Black; the geologist, James Hutton; and the dramatist John Home, author of the then immensely popular play, *Douglas*. A group of unnamed ladies congregates in a far corner, eyeing the poet curiously. Burns was then at the height of his fame.



Quiz Answers below

- 1 b
- 2 c
- 3 j
- 4 l
- 5 h
- 6 Anon1
- 7 f
- 8 g
- 9 e
- 10 d
- 11 Anon2
- 12 a