

*Broughton Tolbooth 1582-1829*

# BROUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Editorial

In this edition's 'Broughton in Literature' feature we quote what Robert Louis Stevenson had to say about Picardy, in *Catriona*. I hadn't read the novel until recently, but had come across in John Russell's *Story of Leith* (1922) the claim that all readers of *Catriona* would know that 'the name of Picardy Place preserves the memory of the Huguenot colony of Little Picardy'. It turns out that RLS wrote no such thing, and makes no mention of the associated story of mulberry bushes on Multries Hill; he simply referred to the presence of French linen weavers when David Balfour passed by in 1751.

The story of Huguenot refugees settling here, trying to rear silkworms unsuccessfully and then later (in some versions) turning their hand to linen weaving was seriously challenged at least as long ago as 1933 when Charles Boog-Watson wrote that it had 'never been authenticated' – unlike the documented account of linen weavers being deliberately recruited from Picardy in 1729, and their settlement at Broughton being built the following year. Where did the tradition of Huguenot refugees come from? It's still possible that supporting evidence may some day surface; but even if they did exist they were unconnected to the weavers from whom Picardy Place actually did get its name.

Nevertheless the old story keeps popping up as established fact; as recently as 2005 in Hamish Coghill's *Lost Edinburgh*. As a student of local history, unless you look at all the primary sources yourself (impossible except for a specialist study) you're bound to get caught out sometimes; and maybe go on to help perpetuate a myth. Often it can depend on which book you come across first when researching a topic. Certainly there's no room for blind faith in the printed word. I remember when we ran a guest house the tourist office sent out notes to help us and others answer visitors' historical questions; I politely pointed out some mistakes. Their response to some of my points was infuriating: amounting to they'd 'read it in a book', end of story!

We can't always wait for certainty before committing ourselves to paper. But we can keep a general 'until shown otherwise' caveat at the back

of our minds – and be happy to revise our take on historical events in the light of new evidence.

*Sources: John Russell's Story of Leith, p.367 (1922.); Charles Boog-Watson's Notes (handwritten), Volume 2, p.156 (1933, Edinburgh Room, Central Public Library); John Mason's The Weavers of Picardy (1945), a 33-page article in Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, volume XXV.*

John Dickie

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## Ideas or contributions for our December edition?

Phone John Dickie on 0131-556 0903 or e-mail [john.dickie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:john.dickie@blueyonder.co.uk)



*The late John Caldwell, local historian: we re-print an article by him on page 3*

# Broughton History in the News

## Broughton Halls

*Evening News, 26th February:*



<The Scottish Civic Trust has highlighted six properties across the Capital – including the Broughton Halls in Broughton Street – which it wants to include on its buildings at risk register. Broughton Halls was built in 1853 for George Heriot's School but has been derelict since a bid to turn it into an arthouse-style cinema fell through in 1999.>

*Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh* gives this description: 'No.32, built as George Heriot's District School in 1853, is one of a number designed by *Alexander Black* in the strapworked Jacobean style of the parent building, and like the Cowgate one has a ground-floor arcade, still to be seen behind the shopfronts added by Henry F. Kerr when it became St Mary's Free Church Hall in 1889.' You can see the corresponding arches at the back of the building by going up the lane round the corner.

## Rumbling Bridge

*Spurtle, February 2008:*

<The metal bridge in St Mark's Park is to be replaced in 2008 as corrosion proved too costly to repair. City Development will site a new timber bridge in its place in an operation lasting 5 months. During the as yet unscheduled building phase, foot and cycle traffic will be diverted through Powderhall.

Like the neighbouring bridge upstream, the new span will be made from ekki; a durable West African hardwood from a renewable source ... The old "rumbling bridge" – enjoyed by all for the gaps in its floor, its slippery surface after rain, and perceptible swaying when crossed by over-weight dogs or joggers – is a Bailey Bridge. These prefabricated structures were developed during World War II by the British Army, and this one was acquired by the Corporation from the Ministry of Supply in July 1947.>

The news item prompted Society member Iain Inglis to wonder if there had been any crossing at this spot prior to the Bailey bridge. We asked Alan McIntosh, who wrote the *Spurtle* item:

'I can't find evidence of a bridge even as late as 1896. At that time, the area between the Destructor and the Water of Leith was known as 'Powderhall Park'. I wonder whether, when the Destructor site expanded into it, the field on the other side of the river was incorporated by way of compensation (today's St Mark's Park), and a bridge built to allow people from this side to reach it. It may be that the rumbling bridge was the first

there – certainly, my contact at City Planning had records of foundations being built for the bridge in 1947, so it doesn't sound as though they were simply placing a new span on the site of an old one.'

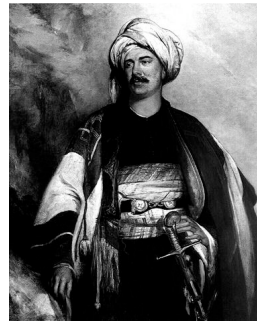
Can any of our readers throw further light on this?

## David Roberts, painter

*Herald, 11th April 2008:*

<More than 50 works of art, nearly lost to the nation through forgery and deception, have been received by the National Galleries of Scotland.

The six oil paintings and 51 watercolours and drawings by the Scottish 19th century painter David Roberts, worth more than £500,000, have been given to the nation by the Art Fund, the UK's leading art charity ... The paintings belonged to a devoted collector of and authority on Roberts' work, Helen Guitermann ... Before she died, she arranged, via the Arts Fund, that her collection should go to the National Galleries.



After her death in 1998, Shaun Gray, the grandson of her cousin, claimed to be her executor and gave varying accounts of what had happened to the artworks. When he claimed that Ms Guitermann had changed her will and they would no longer be donated to the Art Fund, the charity told the police. In 2006, after an investigation by the police and HM Revenue and Customs, Gray was jailed for three years ... He had forged her will making himself entitled to her estate, including the works by Roberts.>

David Roberts (1796-1864), son of a poor shoemaker, was born and brought up in Stockbridge. But he started painting pictures in Broughton, while an apprentice house-painter, thanks to fellow apprentice William Mitchell. 'David would go home with him, to draw together at William's widowed mother's laigh or basement flat in Picardy Place. David's own first painting was framed for him for half-a-crown by another Mitchell brother who was a frame-maker, paid off at 6d a week. His pictorial achievement gave David "supreme happiness". After his 7-year apprenticeship he continued to work as a decorator for a while. But he achieved his ambition to be a scene painter in 1816 – first in Edinburgh's Theatre Royal, and also in Glasgow, later in England. Meanwhile he started a series of foreign trips to paint architecture and landscape in France, Spain, the Holy Land and Egypt.

To enter the mosques of Cairo Roberts had to wear Arab dress, and it was in this outfit that he chose to be painted by his friend Robert Scott Lauder in the portrait shown above (Scottish National Portrait Gallery).

### Botanic Cottage

*Press release from Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Garden, July 2008:*

<Botanic Cottage may be one of the earliest and most neglected buildings on Leith Walk, but a local community group is launching an ambitious project to save it from destruction and reveal its historic past.



The Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Garden has received £48,500 from the Heritage Lottery to fund a painstaking

archaeological record of the historically significant cottage which lies between Annandale Street and MacDonald Road and was part of Edinburgh's former Botanic Garden. The only other surviving

part of the 18th century garden is a small public park in nearby Hopetoun Crescent.

The group will use the funding to discover Botanic Cottage's history and preserve evidence such as fragments of wallpaper and other archaeological finds. It will make this information available to local schools and communities so the history of the building will not be lost for ever when the site is dismantled later in 2008.

FHCG will continue to work in partnership with Cockburn Conservation Trust and Drumkeen, the developer of the site, and hope to raise further funding to dismantle the cottage, carefully label each stone and re-erect it in the current Royal Botanic Garden as a building for the public.>

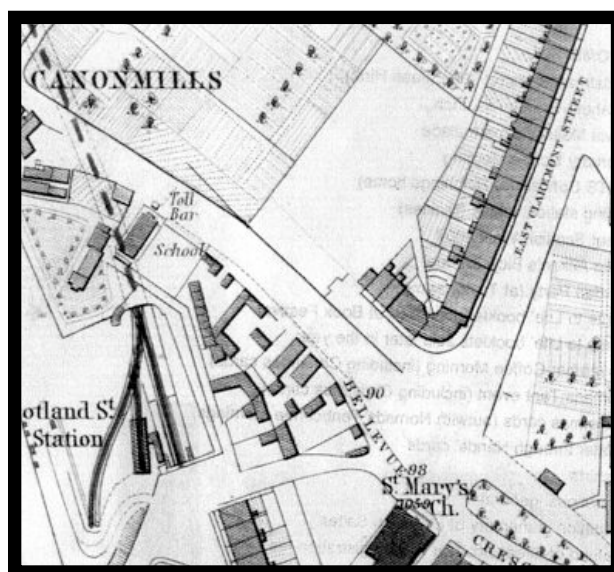
As part of this project, the Friends would like to hear from anyone who has ever lived or worked in the Cottage, knows someone who did, or who has any snippets of information about it. Please phone Eileen Dickie on 0131-556 0903, or email [eileen.hopetoun@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:eileen.hopetoun@blueyonder.co.uk)

*Sources: For Broughton Halls, Gifford et al's Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh, p.342 (1984,1988 edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books ); for David Roberts, Mary Cosh's Edinburgh: The Golden Age, pp. 245-47; pp.549-52; p.835 (2003, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh).*

## Early Education in Broughton and the New Town

**By the time he died in his ninetieth year, John W. B. Caldwell (1915–2005) was part of Broughton's history himself. He was also a keen local historian, delving into the primary sources on St Mary's Parish Church in particular, and an early contributor to our newsletter. This article about the parochial school St Mary's established early in its existence appeared in the second edition, Winter 1997.**

On 13th October 1824 the Town Council of Edinburgh defined the parish of the Bellevue Church (later renamed St Mary's) as that area of the New Town north of the centre of Leith Walk, Picardy Place, York Place and Queen Street; east of the centre of Pitt Street and Dundas Street; south of Fettes Row and Royal Crescent; west of the Canon Mills Road (Rodney Street) and Broughton Street to Albany Street; thence eastwards to Union Street. The Barony of Broughton was not part of the parish though within its bounds. In this area by November 1826 there were six small private schools run by teachers in their own homes – in Dundas Street, Cumberland Street, Albany Street, Scotland Street, Broughton Street and Union Street. These schools catered for the children of the affluent, but there were estimated to be three hundred children of 'labouring and lower classes' in the parish. On 13th November 1826 the Kirk Session decided to set up a parochial school and invite the teachers of the private schools to avail themselves of its premises, the aim being also to provide education for the children of the poorer



parents in the parish; the Kirk Session paying the teachers where necessary. It was not until the second of June 1828 that a site on the northernmost tip of the New Town was obtained, land earmarked by the Town Council for the eastern end of

Royal Crescent but abandoned when the line of the Edinburgh, Leith and Newhaven Railway became known. [*When the railway was laid a decade later, the tunnel ran under the northwest corner of the school.*] The school was indeed the most northern building in Sibbald's and Reid's New Town: a toll gate leading out of the town was situated on the Canon Mills Road in front of the school building.

A prospectus was prepared. For a subscription of three guineas, one would become a proprietor; St Mary's beadle was sent round the New Town soliciting subscriptions. Other funding was sought from the magistrates, Dr Bell's Fund and special church-door collections. George Smith, an architect and member of St Mary's, drew up the plans without charge.

Building started in July 1829 and was completed on 15th March 1830, but it took nearly a year before all the private schools came under one roof. Smith's facade shows the large bow window of the sewing-room for the girls and above the smaller windows of the library for the parishioners. A Board of Governors was elected, half from the proprietors and half from the Kirk Session. Robert Stevenson, Engineer, Elder of St Mary's (December 1828 to December 1843), builder of the Bell Rock Lighthouse among others and the paternal grandfather of R.L.S., was a strong supporter of the school, being one of its first governors. He and his fellow Elders visited all the families in their Districts to find those children who could not read or write and to ascertain the parents' circumstances. If the parents were too poor to afford fees, the Kirk Session was appraised of the fact.

The Education Act of 1872, bringing compulsory education for all children between five and thirteen years, brought about the school's closure; many of its patrons in the New Town felt that as ratepayers they were supporting education through their rates. The Edinburgh School Board occupied the premises between July 1875 and 31st December 1877, when Stockbridge School was opened and the children transferred there. During the School Board's tenure, St Mary's kept the right to use the building on Sundays for Children's Morning Service and Sunday School and on weekday evenings for meetings; from 1878 they used it solely for Sunday activities. In February 1884 the overcrowding of the Sunday School was such that the Session was petitioned to enlarge the

premises. Sydney Mitchell, the architect, was commissioned to draw up plans. He enlarged the existing hall, and added a small upper hall at the front with access by a turret staircase at the north-east corner. The work was carried out in 1885: the building line was brought forward and the cross-stepped gable built. There were minor alterations subsequently, but not at all obtrusive. [*Thereafter the halls were used by a variety of church groups, including the theatre club in which Jack Caldwell himself was so active from 1955 to 1984.*]

In 1993 the building was sold to the British



Legion. The Legion have made minimal alterations, dictated by the fire regulations, to the outside; and even inside, some original features remain. The original schoolhouse is extant today, the single storey at the rear with the triple windows. [*You can still see this if you walk through the pend into Rodney Place.*] Also original is the archway and porch at the side entrance.

*Sources: The map extract is an addition to the original article; it's from Johnston's Plan of Edinburgh & Leith 1851, by Alfred Lancefield. Jack's chief sources were St Mary's Kirk Session Minutes, and Town Council minutes. Three years after writing this article for our Society's newsletter he published his booklet History of St Mary's Parish Church, Edinburgh 1824–1992.*

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### Quotations from Jack Caldwell's Booklet

St Mary's Kirk Session held its meeting of 20th March 1827 at the top of the Nelson Column, Calton Hill. 'Why? They wanted to get a bird's-eye view of their parish. There were no reliable maps then.' (p.47)

'Fears were expressed that the immediate proximity of a toll gate outside the schoolhouse would prove a danger to the school children from the horses waiting to pass through. It was sought to have the gate moved a little farther down the road. The Council was approached on this, but I could find no evidence this was actually done.' (p.48)

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# Broughton in Literature

## 'They took it from a wean belanged to Broughton'

In his award-winning historical novel *Joseph Knight*, James Robertson has three of his characters standing at the top of Arthur's Seat in 1776:

They saw as a whole what they more often saw as a confusion of layers and fragments – the old city on its rock, the various construction sites on the north side of the new bridge, the houses going up all along Princes Street and behind. It was borne in upon them how huge the changes were that had already taken place, and how, in time, all the fields and gardens as far even as the village of



*Drawing of 'Picardy Village and Gayfield House (After Clerk of Eldin)'*

Broughton might become paved over and built on. That seemed incredible, yet looking to the southside, at George Square and Newington, it was possible to see how rapidly such expansion could take place.

That's the most recent (2003) literary reference to Broughton I've come across. In the last two editions of the newsletter we quoted from Robert Louis Stevenson's own memories of the area in the late nineteenth century, including Broughton Market. But he also imagined local landmarks as they would have been back in 1751, in the novel *Catriona*, through the eyes of his character David Balfour as he made his way from the Old Town to Pilrig:

My way lay over Mouter's Hill, and through an end of a clachan on the braeside among fields. There was a whirl of looms in it went from house to house; bees bummed in the gardens; the neighbours that I saw at the doorsteps talked in a strange tongue; and I found out later that this was Picardy, a village where the French weavers wrought for the Linen Company. Here I got a fresh direction for Pilrig, my destination; and a little beyond, on the wayside, came by a gibbet and two men hanged in chains. They were dipped in tar, as the manner is; the wind span them, the chains clattered, and the birds hung about the uncanny jumping-jacks and cried. The sight coming on me suddenly, like an illustration of my fears, I could scarce be done with examining it and drinking in discomfort. And, as I thus turned and turned about the gibbet, what should I strike on, but a weird old wife, that sat behind a leg of it, and nodded, and talked aloud to herself with becks and courtesies.

'Who are these two, mother?' I asked, and pointed to the corpses.

'A blessing on your precious face!' she cried. 'Twa joes of mine; just two o' my old joes, my hinny dear.'

'What did they suffer for?' I asked.

'Ou, just for the guid cause', she said. 'Aften I spaed to them the way that it would end. Twa shillin' Scots: no pickle mair; and there are twa bonny callants hinging for 't! They took it from a wean belanged to Broughton.'

My way down the causeway of Leith

Walk would have been more pleasant to me but for this encounter. The old rampart ran among fields, the like of them I had never seen for artfulness of agriculture; I was pleased, besides, to be so far in the still countryside; but the shackles of the gibbet clattered in my head.

And later in the story, travelling with Alan Breck from Silvermills:

The whiteness of the path guided us into the sleeping town of Broughton, thence through Picardy, and beside my old acquaintance the gibbet of the two thieves.

'Mouter's Hill' is yet another spelling of Multries Hill, where the St James Centre now stands. The weavers' houses were built in 1730, and later demolished to make way for Georgian Picardy Place. When Stevenson's David Balfour made his journey in 1751 Leith Walk's origins as General Leslie's seventeenth-century rampart would still be obvious, and it was still for pedestrians only. And the gibbet stood on the site now known as Shrubhill, but previously as the Gallowlee.

In our next edition we'll feature Robert Garioch's poem *Fi'baw in the Street*. Not only was Garioch brought up in Bellevue Road; his poem features several traditional Broughton place-names. But we hope readers will draw our attention to any other literary references to Broughton that they have come across.

*Sources: James Robertson's Joseph Knight, pp. 246-47 (2003, paperback edition 2004, Fourth Estate, London); Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped and Catriona, pp.263-4 and p.332 (1952 edition, Olive Classics, Collins, London and Glasgow).*

# St Andrew Square Garden

## 'Come down, ye auld villain'

John Dickie celebrates the recent opening of the Garden to the public with some historical background and a nineteenth-century story

The building of St Andrew's Square started in 1768 and was completed in 1781 (the 's' was dropped by the mid-1820s); the Garden was established in 1770. At the outset, it was a very fashionable place to live. But from 1800 it was becoming less residential, and by 1825 a diary entry says 'the great folk' were migrating westwards 'leaving Princes Street, St Andrew Square etc. to be occupied by public offices, hotels, shops, lodging houses and the like'.

From the start the proprietors' deeds reserved the Garden for their exclusive use. In 1851 a proposal to convert the Square into a Continental-style paved public Place gathered a lot of support, but fell foul of determined resistance from a small group of long-established residents. In 1865 a less radical idea, preserving the garden but with wide paths through it open to the public during daytime, suffered the same fate; but over the next few years passers-by did get a better view in through less chunky railings, fewer trees and shrubs, and more grass.

In the 1960s the City Council discussed acquiring both St Andrew Square and Charlotte Square 'so as to make them available to the public throughout the year and for use at the Festival'; but public access didn't actually come until this year!

The monument was built in the Garden in the 1820s, first the column (1821–23) and then the statue of Lord Melville in 1827: 16 tons of statuary arrived in 15 separate pieces, the lightest being the head at half a ton. Henry Dundas had ended up as Viscount Melville after a career which saw him Solicitor-General of Scotland aged 24; MP for Midlothian and then for Edinburgh, until becoming

a peer; at various times Lord Advocate, Keeper of the Signet, and of the Privy Seal, in Scotland; and in London as President of the Board of Control opening up careers in India for many young Scots. His complete control of political patronage on behalf of successive Tory governments over 30 years led to such nicknames as 'Henry the Ninth' and 'The Uncrowned King of Scotland'. Eventually he came unstuck in



1805 when he was impeached because of a scandal in the Board of Admiralty (another of his London jobs); he was acquitted, but his political career was over – although he did manage to ensure that his son Robert succeeded to much of his 'kingdom'!

Ten years ago I came across a good story set in St Andrew Square which stuck in the back of my mind. Writing in 1859, John Heiton described an incident witnessed by one of his friends:

One of the Old Town women had found her way to St Andrew Square, in a state of half-intoxication. The night was bright moonlight, the hour about eleven, and all was so still that a woman's voice could be heard a great way. Here was our heroine perambulating the pavement very deliberately, and quite occupied in cursing every house she came to. She went round the Square several times, throwing volleys in at the house once occupied by Dr Gregory, then at Gilbert Innes's, where she was peculiarly energetic. 'And you, you auld w-monger, wi' your three dizzen bastards. I kent the mither o' a half-dizzen o' them, puir Burnet, and a bonnier lass before ye ruin'd her wasna in braid Scotland. Hell tak ye and a' yer kith!'

Then, looking up for higher game, she fixed her eye on Lord Melville. 'And ye're up there, too, ye auld rascal, wi' your Admiral'ty tricks that should ha'e hanged ye on a wuddy. Wha set ye up on that grand pillar, ye auld scoondrel, when better foulk are obleeged to walk upon the earth? Come down, ye auld villain.'

*Sources: For St Andrew Square and Garden, Connie Byrom's The Edinburgh New Town Gardens, pp.35-47 (2005, Birlinn, Edinburgh); for Viscount Melville, John and Julia Keay (eds.), Collins Encyclopaedia of Scotland, p.260 (1994, London, HarperCollins). The story appears in 'The Conglomerates', the last chapter of John Heiton's The Castes of Edinburgh (1859).*

### Society member Sandra Purves adds:

The Melville Monument was designed by the Edinburgh architect William Burn (1789–1870) who based his design on Trajan's Column in Rome. The Monument, erected in 1821, was built of Cullalo sandstone and weighs approximately 1500 tons. Cullalo quarry in Fife has recently re-opened and has stone suitable for repairs to buildings in the New Town.

The column is 152 feet high, and to facilitate its erection the consulting and supervising civil engineer Robert Stevenson (grandfather of RLS) used a balance crane of the type he had used when building the lighthouse on the Bell Rock. Robert Stevenson was also responsible for the design of the foundations for the column.

The statue of Lord Melville was added six years later, in 1827, and was designed by Robert Forrest.

# A Museum for Leith

**Jim Tweedie of Leith Local History Society highlights Leith's role in Scotland's history, and the campaign for a museum to do it justice**

Leith has a long history going back to the time of David I and has played a major part in many of the events which shaped Scotland's story.

As the most important port in Scotland, especially after Berwick was lost to England, it traded with the Hanseatic League (a confederation of Prussian and Baltic burghs) in all kinds of commodities such as the export of wool, hides and salted fish and the import of wine and spices. It was also the collecting point for much of the rent owed to the King by those who paid in kind. Cattle, dairy produce and poultry were brought to the port to be stored for him or sold for revenue.

When Scotland was at war Leith suffered occupation many times by English and French troops, from 1296 to 1314 during the Wars of Independence by the English and again in 1335 when Edward III invaded – although on that occasion the occupation was only for six years. In 1400 Leith was again in the hands of the English but only for about a month. In 1544 the Earl of Hertford arrived and sacked Edinburgh and burnt Leith to the ground – this of course, was at the time of the 'Rough Wooing'. Three years later he was back again, now as Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England. He defeated the Scots at the Battle of Pinkie and occupied Leith so that his army could recuperate and the wounded receive attention. He stayed for a week but left Leith in ruin once more.

In 1548 Mary de Guise asked France for help and 3,000 French troops occupied Leith for 12 years until 1560, building a strong wall around the port. This resulted in the unusual situation of Scots and English fighting on the same side against the French. When the treaty was signed in 1560 the French and English left but Leith was left in ruins once again. A hundred years later the Scots army was in Leith ready to face Oliver Cromwell but he defeated them at the Battle of Dunbar and so Leith was occupied by the English once again.

On a happier note, Leith has also been known as the Queens Port because of the number of princesses who arrived at Leith to marry various kings over the centuries, including Mary Queen of Scots in 1561.

So Leith's history is really Scotland's history in miniature. In 1920, when the amalgamation of Edinburgh and Leith took place, there was a museum in the old Leith Town Hall in Charlotte Street (now Queen Charlotte Street). The artefacts from this museum were placed in crates and removed to store, some apparently to Starbank House in Newhaven and others to Huntly House. This was done to enable them to identify a site for a museum in Leith and allow these items to be displayed.

Some fourteen years later, in March 1934, there was an article in the *Edinburgh Evening News* which stated: 'There are still a number of Leithers who have never become reconciled to the amalgamation and who doggedly maintain that the Port would have been better off today had it been left to manage its own affairs'. One of the main complaints was that the items on exhibition at the old Leith Council Buildings in Charlotte Street had been removed but the new museum for Leith had never materialised.

Now, 88 years later, after many attempts which failed for various reasons, it seems that this may at last come about. A petition was started last summer with the support of our local M.P. In a very short time this attracted more than 3000 signatures. The petition has since been presented to the Scottish Parliament following which it was sent out for consultation to various government, local and national bodies. The responses indicated considerable support for a Leith Museum; in fact City of Edinburgh Council stated 'The importance of Leith and its role in Scottish History deserve to be told in a dedicated museum', and the Scottish Museums Council supported the idea of a Leith Museum and encouraged the group to take this forward.

The campaign for this museum continues to garner widespread support and a steering committee, The Leith Museum Group, was set up. They are at present seeking funding for short-term activities, including an oral history project and a mobile exhibition, and we hope to see the results of these in a fairly short time. They are also anxious to keep the momentum going for the establishment of a permanent museum. This would not just be a museum for Leith but for Edinburgh and Scotland as a whole.



The favoured venue for the museum is the Leith Custom House on Commercial Street. This building is presently being used by the National Museums of Scotland as a store, and dialogue with the National Museums is ongoing. The committee is now busy trying to identify funding for this project but is hopeful that, at long last, Leith will get the museum it so richly deserves.

# 1942 – Piershill Tragedy – 5,000 Dead!

David Watt shares a wartime memory

During World War II part of the Air Raid Precautions organisation was the Warden Service, a group of volunteers who enforced the Black-out rules and reported damage and casualties due to air raids. Each area had its headquarters, and reports were sent by telephone or cyclist messenger to a Police Report centre – one of which still exists today, the flat-roofed, windowless building at the foot of Restalrig Road on a corner of Leith Links, now used for footballers to change.

Piershill was part of the Duddingston area, and its volunteers during the evenings were required to send practice messages to the Report Centre. One night Davie Donaldson (a Leith docker) sent a message to the Report Centre:

**Locus of incident Map Reference 853216  
5,000 dead.**

The next day the police inspector at the Report Centre gave Davie a ticking off for sending a ridiculous message, saying how could there possibly be 5,000 dead. To which Davie replied by asking if the inspector had checked the map reference. It was Piershill cemetery!

I was one of the boy cycle messengers. Air raid damage could interrupt telephone lines and boys were recruited, being uniformed and getting 2s.6d. bike allowance – this is 12.5p in decimal money, and a small fortune to a boy in 1942.

We had to attend the Report Centre on a rota basis. Luckily I was never out during an air raid, the most important message being to collect the duty police sergeant's fish supper!

## Society Business

In our last edition Patrick Tyler (Chair) asked readers what they thought of our history society. **Susanne Markwell** replied from Missouri:

'My name is Susanne Markwell and I live in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. I read in the last newsletter that you wanted to know what we thought of the History Society. Well, I just want to say how grateful I am to all the members for preserving the history of Broughton. My mother grew up on East Claremont Street and my father on New Broughton. They left many years ago to come to the US and I have no relatives left in Scotland. The History Society is my link to my family.

Thanks to member Alice Lauder I have seen pictures of family homes, and Alice even took the time to find where my aunt was buried and then took flowers there and sent me a picture. When my sister and I visited Edinburgh last year meeting Alice was like being greeted by an old friend. Alice also sends me copies of the *Newsletter* which I thoroughly enjoy reading.

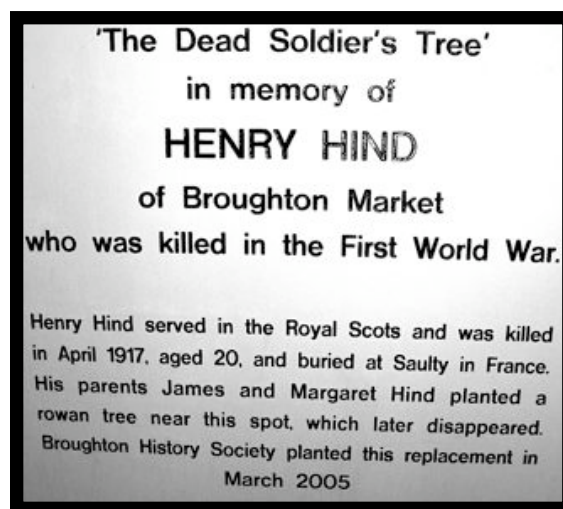
So, to all the members keeping the History Society alive – Thank you. You have no idea what it means to me and I'm sure others like me. Please keep up the good work and know you are appreciated. I hope one day to return to Edinburgh and would love to attend a meeting.'

Patrick Tyler also asked for ideas for future development, to which member **David Watt** responded:

'You ask for suggestions of new avenues for Broughton History Society to explore. The Portobello History Society has a programme of fixing commemorative plates to local houses formerly occupied by notable people, e.g. Hugh Miller the geologist. Broughton examples would be 14 East Claremont Street, the home of Tom Curr the artist;

or my own address (21 Bellevue Place), once occupied by Mr Barnard who was a pioneer in establishing a chain of the first cinemas in Edinburgh; and went on to establish a more profitable chain of brothels in the city till his downfall in 1933 after the Swinton Row scandal.'

Other possible candidates for plaques might include poet Robert Garioch (1909–81), brought up in Bellevue Road; and distinguished lawyer and collector Lord Eldin (1757–1832), an early resident of Picardy Place. Over to our new Committee!



*Our Society has already installed one memorial plaque*

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**First meeting of the new session  
Monday 8th September, 7.15pm  
The Edinburgh Industrial Exhibition  
of 1886**