

## **Heritage Trail: The North-East & Scotland – Sep 2019**

This perambulation over nine days started in Durham, ventured almost to Wick and ended in Edinburgh. A blend of planning and serendipity worked well. Travel by rail was relaxing and delightful, surprisingly cheap with advance booking and best fares for various configurations. Scenery was amazing, enriched by interesting conversations on trains, local buses, in cafes, at B&B stays and occasional chats in the street.

The majestic Cathedral looms into view on approaching Durham by train. Imposing and quiet too, Palace Green rises above the town. My room was at the top of the Castle, part of Durham University. A compensation of 82 steps was breathtaking views and the location – the Castle itself, Cathedral, old Library, other notable buildings and superb breakfasts in the Great Hall.

“We used to be served at the top table.” My companion, a former Fellow, sensed impending change with a new Dean. Retirement was timely and opportune. He enjoyed academia but didn’t miss it, happy to pootle around Britain by train and bus. He had never driven, nor had any desire. Now living in Edinburgh he visited Durham in vacations. A sense of nostalgia was evident: the ambience, meeting up with colleagues and exchanging stories and anecdotes.

### **Seaham**

Gazing at the illuminated bus timetable I asked a youngish guy what he thought of Stanley. A former mining town it is known better for the nearby Burns Pit disaster in 1909, killing 168 miners. He paused. “Not much there,” adding “it’s a dump” but what characterises a dump! The journey to Seaham was about 20 miles through rolling countryside and several villages, mostly former mining communities. I pondered the connection between Ulster and Seaham.

The answer was Lord Charles Stewart who in 1819 married Lady Frances Anne Vane Tempest, at 19 years a coal heiress, given away by the Duke of Wellington. Her annual income was a staggering £60,000. Multiply that by well over 100 to get a comparative today. On the death of Charles Stewart’s father in 1821 the eldest son became 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess. A year later he cut his throat. On Charles becoming Lord Londonderry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess, the mining, transportation and export of coal in the Seaham area would be transformed.

A 16 miles railtrack was laid from local pits to Seaham Harbour. In 1841 every Durham and Northumberland pit came out on strike, for at least a four days working week. Ringleaders, tenants of Lord L also, were sacked. Blacklisting awaited traders who helped any striking miners. With the recruitment of unwitting blacklegs from Ireland and Wales the strike was broken after four months. All were driven out. One stayed for 20 years, becoming a social outcast before he too returned. The union was a spent force but at least from 1850 there was systematic inspection of mines as working conditions were a thorny issue.

In 1843 Fanny, eldest daughter of the Marquess, married the Marquess of Blandford, heir to the Duke of Marlborough, hence place and street names. Charles was the driving force and Frances provided the money, creating a port and town where none had existed twenty years before. New collieries, waggon works and bottling facilities meant Seaham expanding from 5,000 to 9,000 people. A few years later a further influx, this time Irish immigrants fleeing the famine, helping explain the high proportion of Catholics in Seaham.

At Seaham there were three mining shifts: Fore from 4:00 – 11:30; Back from 10:00 – 17:30; and Night from 16:00 – 11:30. Each involved about 500 men and 1,000 men on overlapping

shifts. Fortuitously, the explosion on 8 September 1880 was at 02.20. The death toll of 164 would otherwise have been far higher.

Although several local pits closed, a second pit was constructed at Dawdon with the first coal extracted in 1907. By 1920 this employed over 3,300 men, the most productive pit in Greater Seaham, by which time the population had risen to 20,000. A combination of crippling death duties and cost of running uneconomic pits meant Lord Londonderry was cautious in making further mining investments. Besides, there was an economic depression from that year.

Ramsay MacDonald was adopted as Labour candidate on the retirement of Sidney Webb. MP since 1923 Webb retired, becoming Lord Passfield. MacDonald achieved a majority of nearly 29,000 in the January 1929 election. Liberal and Communist candidates lost their deposits. On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1931, in the wake of the Wall Street Crash, MacDonald became Prime Minister of a National Government, his second and far longer stint. Seaham Labour Party wanted him to resign. Adopting the title 'National Labour,' he won with a majority of nearly 6,000 over 'Official Labour' but in November 1935 lost to feisty Emmanuel Shinwell by a majority 2:1. He didn't wait long, becoming MP for Combined Scottish Universities at a by-election in January.

At its peak in 1931 the Durham coalfield produced 41.5 million tons, employing over 165,000 men at 304 pits. By 1934 the figures had shrunk by about 30% with 127 pits at the time of nationalisation in 1947. Between 1951 and 1964 under the Tories 44 pits closed. A further 51 pits shut under Labour between 1964 and 1970, leaving 32 pits employing 34,000 men.

Closures continued. The long-lasting Miners' Strike of 1984 - 85 was unable to stem the tide. In 1987 the Seaham colliery was 'amalgamated' and the rail connection to Seaham Harbour ceased a year later. In 1991 nearby Dawdon and Murdon pits closed. The final nail came in 1992. A national strategy decided on closure of the last four pits in the County of Durham.

After 150 years all mining operations ceased and street names no longer have a connection with the Londonderry family. All that remains is an impressive statue of the Marquess and forlorn former admin offices of a once vibrant coal mining and transportation industry. The Harbourside seems quaint now. The grimy industrial past of coal rail trucks and barges are a distant memory. Those hiking the 11 miles heritage coastal path might search out its history.

## **Sunderland**

The bus interchange across the road has several services each hour to Sunderland, my next port of call. The direct route is only about six miles but slightly more with the bus detour for this urban stretch. Sunderland bus interchange is a large half-moon complex. Large letters show the stops for numerous bus services. A short pleasant precinct takes you to the high street and Sunderland Museum & Art Gallery.

Opening in 1846 at the Athenaeum in Fawcett Street opposite, the proud boast was the first municipal museum outside London. In 1879 it moved to its present location that included a huge all glass winter garden, modelled on 'Crystal Palace' that housed the Great Exhibition of 1851. Such was its importance, US President Ulysses Grant attended laying of the foundation stone. The building was bombed in 1941 and the winter garden smashed to smithereens. It looks out onto Mowbray Park and in 1994 construction began to return the Park to its elegant Victorian state with improvements made to the Museum plus a completely new glass house.

Museum collections are in themed walk-through sections. An extensive display of Lustreware pottery, section on mining, and fine models of cargo vessels to all parts of the world depict Sunderland's past. Shipbuilding started in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with its heyday in the Victorian

century thanks to iron, steel and steam. Unsurprisingly, the paintings of Lowry are rather less impressive than Salford but still make a social statement. Sunderland was his second home.

Mowbray Park is a superb example of Victorian public gardens. Opened in 1857 and known as the People's Park, its origins go back to 1831 and a cholera outbreak. As with other towns the natural environment of a large park was felt to be beneficial, breathing in fresh air, rather than germs, in a tranquil setting that invited some exercise. War-time damage and neglect over decades was remedied with restoration of the lake, re-creation of flower beds, rebuilding the bandstand, renovation of a cast-iron drinking fountain and, after an outcry, return of the Victoria Hall memorial statue. The park re-opened in 2000, timed to celebrate the Millennium.

The popular Faye entertainers were to perform for children at the 2,000 seater Victoria Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1883. Conjurors, magicians, ghost illusion, talking waxworks & live marionettes were promised and presents too. The show finished just after 5.00 pm. A stampede ensued as children in the gallery saw those in the stalls receive presents. The heavy inward opening doors meant a large milling throng became a mass with children trampling over each other in their eagerness to race downstairs. The marble memorial statute is a poignant reminder that on this day 83 children lost their lives. Legislation soon insisted on outward opening doors.

The magnificent park rivals the 17 acres Grade 2 listed Valley Gardens in Harrogate. The winter garden, modest in size, has a spiral staircase to admire extensive foliage. Temperature controlled between 12C and 25C, pride of place is a Screw Pine tree, more like a palm, some 5 metres tall. The museum, winter garden and park enrich the life and culture of Sunderland. They are popular attractions for locals and visitors alike, at any time of year.

A short walk down Fawcett Street brings you to the River Wear. Looking left and west, there is now extensive planting out to provide a pleasant ambience whilst to the east are remnants of former shipbuilding days. Once dubbed "the largest shipbuilding town in the world," the depression years, and especially worldwide competition post-war, sapped the ability of yards to compete. In 1977 came nationalisation and on 7 December 1988 the last yard closed.

The bus journey from Sunderland to Gateshead takes about 40 minutes, past the Stadium of Light and giant Nissan works, dwarfed by an enormous car park for new vehicles. The hope on both counts is Sunderland will compete and prosper. In 2016 Nissan said it would build two new vehicles, X Trail and Qashqai but has dropped the former. Diesel, switch to electric, Brexit and A.I. are all blamed. Relegated from the Premiership in 2017, Sunderland FC were relegated again the next season. Even so, average attendance was nearly 28,000, just over half the ground capacity and higher than seven Premiership clubs two leagues above.

## **Gateshead**

"You must look inside." I did. The enthusiastic young performer was on her way to the Sage for a rehearsal. Home of the Royal Northern Sinfonia it is a magical musical venue for all genres with a 'Words Weekend' celebrating the spoken word. Resembling a billowing steel cloud, if not airship, the Sage has a 1,650 seater concert hall and auditorium with a capacity of 400 for folk music and jazz. A third large space is for rehearsals. With cafes, bars and shops it is a vibrant venue, cheek by jowl to the towering Baltic building. Both are right by the River Tyne and overlook Newcastle, a cricket six-hit away on the other side.

The Baltic, formerly a Rank Hovis flour mill and warehouse, has been creatively transformed into a contemporary visual arts centre. It opened in 2002 and has six main floors and three mezzanines with four galleries, flexible performance space, studios and cinema, doubling as a

lecture theatre. A beeline was made to the viewing platform on the fifth floor. The views are stunning, not dissimilar to those from Tate Modern but in this case of several bridges crossing the Tyne and of the adjacent 'airship.'

Through a clever 3D effect artist Mick Peters used humour to create an imaginative piece of sculpture from the original design concept. Sculpture was also the theme in the next gallery, with various creations from discarded bottles and bio-degradable plastic bags. Extraordinary is an understatement. A chat about attitudes to possessing and discarding even more stuff soon turned to related themes of herd instinct, me too mentality and media reliance. "We live in our own fictional world." The comment of the Baltic guide set me thinking as I crossed the Millennium bridge to Newcastle. She was right. We do live in a bubble – and a wasteful one.

A lingering look at the Gateshead and Tyne skyline before a fast train back to Durham and tranquillity of Palace Green. This is a World Heritage Site. Early next morning a stroll down to the River Wear snaking its way around the Cathedral, Castle and other fine buildings. Dame Bowes (1651-1736) married to William, five times MP for Durham, lived at 4 South Bailey, adjacent to the university entrance. Their considerable wealth was mainly from coal mining. Our Queen and the Queen Mother are descended from third son George. A stroll past Colleges and Chorister School and cloisters of Durham Cathedral before a final breakfast in the Great Hall. It once used to wine and dine kings, clergy and noblemen.

## **Inverness**

The route from Durham was first to Newcastle and then west to Glasgow before the scenic run to Perth and Inverness. Time was not a big issue. Besides, this was a circular tour. The return was to be via Dundee with spectacular scenery most of the way. A man nearby made loud business phone calls, reaching a crescendo on concluding a sale. He ensured most of the carriage could hear but you soon become immune to the conversations of others.

Walking down Union Street, opposite the station, initial impressions were not good; tatty and rather tawdry but this was misleading. A few inner streets are similar but step left into the High Street with shops, a shopping centre and M&S Food Hall, and then the River frontage.

The River Ness is almost as wide as the Tyne with lovely walks each side. On crossing the bridge, the B&B was minutes away, on the quiet side. My hosts were well set up for gluten-free with home-made muesli and sausages from the high quality butcher in the High Street as part of a hearty breakfast. Debbie made delicious flaps jacks; my lunch! Most evenings on this tour I brought back an impromptu evening meal from M&S or wherever, such as smoked salmon and salad. Vigilance is needed if eating out with a proliferation of fast food. Indian food is fine as gram flour is used but my only meal here was bland and poorly presented.

Anticipation was high for a train journey to Dunrobin Castle, one of the best scenic journeys anywhere. The 80 miles trip is west via Beaully Firth and Dingwall before heading north-east along Cromarty Firth. You then head north across Dornoch Firth, switching north-east as you approach Golspie and Dunrobin, situated on the coast. Sun, puffy white clouds and clear visibility meant the perfect travel conditions until the falcon display when it decided to rain for 20 minutes. The falcon was not objecting.

The Duke of Sutherland has his own station. The short path leads to the entrance and a walk of about 500 yards to the Castle itself, the largest in the Northern Highlands. A well preserved part dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century but between 1835 and 1850 most of the present Castle and gardens were added by Sir Charles Barry, architect of the Palace of Westminster. Still lived in,

the Castle is a statement of wealth and power, modelled on the major stately homes of earlier periods. The library houses over 10,000 books but as with many such properties we wonder if they are fully catalogued – or ever accessed! No mention of the Highland Clearances was made. Feelings still run high locally. In 2010 an enormous statue of the Duke in nearby Golspie had 'MONSTER' painted on the 76 ft plinth in large green lettering, visible for miles.

The Castle looks out onto specially created gardens in the style of Versailles. Each parterre is set around a circular pool with a fountain, conveying the impression of grandeur and space. Beyond is the sea. No wonder the Castle is still occupied. The vista is glorious and the Castle has a homely feel even though there are 189 rooms. Sitting left side on the return the views were simply amazing. Two hours passed quickly, interspersed by a conversation with a solo traveller from the USA. She didn't see the falcon show, fearful of missing the infrequent train.

Next morning a stroll alongside the River Ness down to the botanical gardens. Small in size it is beautifully laid out with most interesting plant specimens. The café was busy. I saved my coffee for the hospice, spotted shortly after setting out. With each step the enticing aroma grew stronger but it was not to be; no volunteer that Saturday. Inverness is the 'capital' of the Highlands and an IT hub. 'Echo' is Inverness Hospice's telementoring project and the Hospice also facilitates a 'Helping Hands' Highlands partnership. Sadly, in 2017 the Hospice was victim of a scam, siphoning off £570,000 of which about two-thirds has been recovered. The balance was untraceable.

A quick visit was made to the museum & art gallery and Inverness Castle. It is a fine city, so different from first impressions. Another sunny day, slightly fresher feel, and wonderful views with mountains for a backdrop. Culloden, run by NT Scotland, and only 8 miles away, was easily reached by bus. The battle itself took place on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1746.

Perhaps giddy with victory at Preston Pans near Edinburgh, in September 1745 the army of Bonnie Prince Charlie marched west to Carlisle and then south to Preston, Manchester and finally Derby. One of two ships was lost, men and armaments promised from France failed to materialise, soldiers deserted and few locals en-route wanted to join. The risks were high as the goal was London and Government overthrow. The Prince saw sense and returned north.

Buoyed by victory at Falkirk he was prepared to take on Government troops. His own were exhausted having marched through the night, whilst the Duke of Cumberland forces marched from Nairn at daylight. Culloden is a large flat plain surrounded by hills. The battle lasted barely an hour. The charging Jacobites were met firstly by bayonets and then muskets from the second line of defence. It was slaughter with 1200-1500 Jacobites killed and about 50 of the Duke's army. The visitor centre charts the story; one side Jacobites and the other the British Government.

Retribution was swift and brutal, slaying Clansmen and 'exporting' them to the Colonies. The Clan system was dismantled, including Highland dress with kilts and tartan banned. Research might reveal a connection with the Highland Clearances, starting 25 years later. The reason trotted out is encouraging sheep farmers as income would be far higher than tenant farmers. Whilst so, we may speculate if there was another reason as the word 'Clearances' meant just that in many cases! The British Government was intent on crushing the Clan system forever.

## **Dundee**

Another beautiful rail journey, hugging the Moray Firth past Nairn and Elgin before heading south-east to Aberdeen. A change of trains, this time with fine coastal views, especially the



sweeping bay just beyond Arbroath. Not a B&B in Dundee but a pleasant, spacious room with double bed at the Best Western and a competitive rate being Sunday. A bonus was location, only a 10 minutes walk at most to the V&A, Scott's Discovery and 'McManus,' my first stop.

Designed by Giles Gilbert Scott, as a memorial to Prince Albert, this elegant Gothic Revival building is home to the McManus Museum and Art Gallery, exploring Dundee's fascinating history. Important claims were made on inventions, firstly in the 1830s and then in 1903

Joseph Chalmers, printer, bookseller and publisher of *The Caledonian*, wanted to speed up the mail service between Edinburgh and London, at no extra cost. In early 1838 he produced an essay, proposing an adhesive postage stamp of one and two pence values. Rather than use an envelope a stamp would seal the letter. He sent his proposal to Robert Wallace MP.

Wallace sent it to Rowland Hill, a teacher and inventor, who had been pursuing a similar idea since 1835. Hill produced a pamphlet entitled *Post Office Reform* and on 4 January 1837 sent this to the Chancellor of the Exchequer who appeared very interested. Hill's selling point was a penny post system would massively increase postal traffic and offset the extra weight of an envelope; a far safer, more secure and private method. The rest as they say is history.

In August 1903 Preston Watson's bi-plane catapulted into the air for at least 100 yards on the banks of the Tay River. This was five months before the Wright Brothers who flew the Kitty Hawk for 12 seconds. Watson's plane was made of wire and wood, hoisted into tree-tops by means of ropes and weights and then propelled into the air with assistance of engines. Much like the light bulb of Joseph Swan, the first to be used in a public building, it depends on what constitutes a first. Watson's plane just about took off and Swan's light bulb had a very short life, unlike that manufactured by Thomas Edison soon after.

The Discovery exhibition is amazing. You really sense the drama, icy landscape of Antarctica and desolate environment, cast adrift from humanity. Robert Falcon Scott's expedition was aimed at research: geographic, magnetic, metrological, biological, geological and scientific, all explained in a relatively hi-tech but very engaging way. A short intro film is complemented by a later film in the magnificent theatre with large screen. You felt you were in Antarctica.

Ernest Shackleton was in charge of supplies: 600 tons of tinned, dried, bottled and pickled food for 46 men, including 8,000 lbs of beef; 62,000 lbs of flour, 2,800 lbs of tea; 36,000 lbs of biscuits and 112 lbs of curry powder. Much food was donated: Coleman's Mustard, Bird's Custard Powder and Ideal Milk, Dewar's Whisky, a massive 800 gallon tub of rum grog, 1,000 lbs of tobacco, Bovril and ton of Cadbury's Cocoa. All competed for space with polar clothing, tents, sledges, tools and explosives. The next issue was safe storage to avoid decay, mould and contamination, not least by 23 howling huskies. Fish, penguin eggs, seabirds and seals enriched the crew's diet but lack of Vitamin C, a cause of scurvy, remained a problem.

The name Discovery had been used several times before and by William Baffin, James Cook and George Vancouver. Discovery set sail from Cowes on 6 August 1901. The destination initially was Lyttleton in New Zealand, the springboard to head south for McMurdo Sound in Antarctica, "penetrating further and further into the unknown," as Scott put it.

Robust wooden construction was preferred to metal to withstand pack-ice and ice-floes. The vessel cost £51,000 to build of which £34,000 was for the ship, £10,000 for the engine and the rest for miscellaneous items. Dundee was famed for building wooden whaling ships and was selected, cheaper than the only other competitor at Barrow-in-Furness. The Discovery is a formidable vessel with massive sails that Scott felt were not high enough. The crow's nest

is 110 ft! The sheer bulk meant a speed of only 7 knots, “an extremely sluggish sailor” said Scott. Up to six tons of coal might be used each day, especially to break through pack-ice.

For leisure and recreation, sporting events were arranged, concerts and theatre evenings and celebration of important occasions, not least King Edward VII’s birthday on 9<sup>th</sup> November. A harmonium was donated by New Zealand whose farmers provided 45 sheep.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1902 Scott, Shackleton and Wilson set out to cross the Great Ice Barrier and on 30<sup>th</sup> December established a record, reaching 82° south. “We are almost beyond the limits of human endurance” wrote Scott. Shackleton had scurvy as well as frostbite. Returning to base on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1903, they had covered 960 miles in 93 days, slowed by conditions and ominously a lack of dog-handling skills and inability to ski.

Careful attention to detail in organising supplies in 1901 was a life-saver as the Discovery was trapped in ice until release by the Terra Nova on 11 February 1904 thanks to a few explosives to break through thick ice. The party arrived at Spithead on 10<sup>th</sup> September to a rapturous reception. In 1909 Scott said his objective was to “reach the South Pole, to secure for the British Empire the honour of this achievement.” International competition, whilst intense, was played down. The race to the South Pole was most definitely on.

How do you describe the V&A next door, the first design museum outside London, linking the heritage of Dundee to its future? Opened one year ago it is the regeneration centrepiece of the waterfront. Designed by Japanese architects the slatted exterior and internal panels avoid austere vertical sides that may otherwise give a box-shape appearance. The inside is breathtaking as the huge tiered space exudes warmth.

It paid to focus on a specific theme in selecting the major Design Gallery. From fashion and architecture to furniture, engineering and video game design, the inventions and innovations of the past are brought to life and connected to future design using digital technology, 3D and A.I. also. An example is jute, a prime former industry of Dundee. The V&A was buzzing.

The rail station is yards away. The train to Edinburgh crosses the wide-span rail bridge over the River Tay, at almost three miles. The original lightweight lattice design bridge opened in 1878 but on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1879 collapsed without warning in high winds. The train with 75 passengers plunged into the cold, dark waters of the swirling River Tay. Nobody survived.

## **Edinburgh**

Royal Terrace forms the last part of the New Town designed by William Playfair. The Neo-Classical and Georgian architecture never fails to impress. Careful attention to design and décor had been given by the B&B owners. The house has been in the same family for 60 years. The previous owner was the Duke of Atholl and before him the Church of Scotland.

Archive records mention one rather eccentric minister. He consigned himself to a couple of rooms in this spacious house so the poor and dispossessed could stay in what became a house of multiple occupation, disallowed today probably! His church, pulled down years ago, was nearby. A liberal and tolerant attitude was taken to weddings, unlike the formality of the Church of Scotland with strict protocols. Those who did not attend church on a regular basis, if at all, might be married in his home. On completion of formalities he dashed ahead, up the stairs. On emerging, the happy couple were showered with confetti.

Calton Hill lies behind Royal Terrace, reached by a winding path. Major landmarks viewed from here include Arthur’s Seat, with Holyrood and Parliament below, and the Firth of Forth.

Perched imperiously is the National Monument inspired by the Parthenon of Athens. Close by is what resembles an upturned telescope, a commemorative monument to Nelson's famous victory at Trafalgar in 1805. Here too is the Observatory in the style of a Greek temple and now there is a restaurant as well.

Modern Leith harbour, a short bus ride away, was disappointing with only a glimpse of the fenced off Royal Yacht Britannia. A standard ticket price of almost £17 seems incredibly steep. More interesting and free, is the area called Shore, the old part of town that contains many fine buildings, some with a European influence, especially Dutch. Maybe there were connections with the Hanseatic League with much interchange between nations of Europe, including marriage and jobs.

From Leith there is a direct bus service to the Botanical Gardens. Leaving aside Singapore that is rather different, Edinburgh ranks nearly alongside Kew in my estimation, on par with Dunedin that is outstanding too. The themed layout is imaginative with smooth paths and excellent signage. The Japanese and Chinese gardens impress immensely as do many other displays from around the world. The huge glasshouses are currently under renovation.

A National Memorial is a tribute to those donating organs or tissue after death. The 'taigh,' Gaelic for small house, has a turf roof. Buried beneath the foundations is a book detailing donors between 2006 and 2013. An annual donor ceremony is held. Each family receives an Order of St John gold pin, inscribed with 'add life, give hope.' The Botanical Gardens form an impressive setting for this Memorial in a city renowned for medical science.

The National Gallery of Scotland is compact with collections from early Renaissance to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with masterpieces from Raphael, Velazquez and Vermeer to Monet, Van Gogh and Cezanne. His *Montagne Sainte Victoire* is especially appealing. Impressive too is Vuillard's *La Chambre Rose*, works by British artist Wilkie, with their social statements, and paintings of Venice by Guardi, much preferred to the static and formulaic works of Canaletto.

Next stop Surgeons' Hall Museum, reopened in 2015 after a £4.4 million Lottery Fund Grant. Barber-Surgeons appeared in the Middle Ages when surgery was often performed by barbers. With their toolkit of a sharp razor, tasks ranged from cutting hair to draining abscesses and even amputation of limbs. Collections began in 1692 at a time when medical practitioners were unregistered, often making exaggerated claims about their knowledge and ability. Some still believed in the Greek four body liquid humours going back to Hippocrates: blood, phlegm, yellow & black bile, linked to the four elements of earth, air, water and fire and four seasons.

The two professions separated in 1722 with formation of the Edinburgh Medical School four years later, the oldest in the United Kingdom. Three major problems confronted the medical profession: blood loss, pain and infection. Perhaps the Museum is best known for its links with Joseph Lister and his breakthrough discoveries in antisepsis and James Simpson famed for his experiments with chloroform, including on himself.

Arthur Conan Doyle trained at Edinburgh Medical School from 1876 to 1881. He was greatly impressed by the analytical skills of Joseph Bell who made swift and accurate diagnoses of patients, often on the basis of observation and clues others had missed. Not for him luck or a fluke but maybe at times intuition. In 1887 Conan Doyle published *A Lady in Scarlet*, marking the first appearance of Sherlock Holmes. He wrote to Bell in gratitude for creating his famous detective with an uncanny knack for solving crimes.



Anatomical research continued to be refined. A problem was finding sufficient dead bodies for dissection. In desperation RCS physician Robert Knox paid £8 - £10 per body, oblivious that bodies were exhumed. Jewellery was often left as body removal, in theory, was not illegal. In 1828 Irish immigrants, William Burke and William Hare, suffocated up to 28 people by 'Burking,' such was the shortage. Hare was granted immunity in return for testifying against Burke, hanged in Edinburgh on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1829. His body was dissected to a viewing public at the Medical School. Three years later the Anatomy Act of 1832 outlawed body snatching.

The People's Story is a museum run by volunteers, dedicated to capturing the stories of those who wish to contribute to the social history of Edinburgh. Whilst much is anecdotal and fairly general, a few nuggets emerged. Prior to the Reform Act of 1832 Edinburgh had 33 voters, all of whom were members of the Town Council. The expression 'gardyloo' meant 'look out' as the contents of chambers pots would be emptied from upper floors into the street. This slang expression derives from the French, 'prenez garde a l'eau!'

In October 1821 in Niddry Street, a public lecture in chemistry was held at St Cecilia's Concert Hall, packed to capacity. It was the forerunner of Mechanics Institutes or People's Colleges that by 1850 had grown to 700 across Britain. It was no coincidence that Edinburgh was the epicentre for an emerging Scottish Enlightenment that would soon have radical thinkers such as Adam Smith and David Hume. Education was becoming the vehicle for moral and material self-improvement – and a basis to challenge prevailing beliefs and assumptions.

The last nugget concerns a paid holiday that did not come into force until 1938 and even then only one week, with conditions attached. A ditty did the rounds: "five days a week; eight hours a day; trade union rates and holidays with pay."

### **Making Connections**

"Don't want to interrupt but what are you creating?" Curiosity had got the better of me. The train had barely left Edinburgh with the next stop Newcastle where this design engineer got off. We chatted most of the way. He was referring to a desolate, forlorn space between the waterfront and shopping area, bisected by busy roads. I thought it cries out for imaginative use and so it seems does Dundee Council. A project has funding of £1 million plus expenses.

The design brief is to create a large play area with the theme of whaling to capture Dundee's past. He constantly flicked to photos on his mobile phone with examples elsewhere around the world, and other large species that might give inspiration such as dinosaurs. Ecology is much in his mind too with water displays, complete with a whale spout, recycling the water. Important too are messages about ocean pollution, especially from plastics. The entire area will be multi-sensory, using tactile displays so that learning for all is fun and enjoyable.

He wants to incorporate digital technology and 3D images, portraying Dundee's bright future in IT, including the development of games. A similar emphasis was very evident in Gateshead with arts in all formats and in Inverness too, hub of the Highlands, using digital technology. Building on history, coupled with innovation, is a potent combination, enabling us to make sense of the past and present - to shape the future.

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