


Edinburgh's top five charity shops

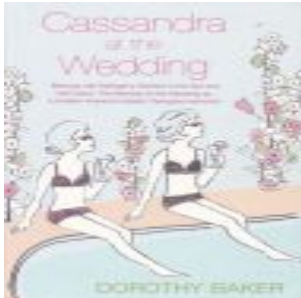
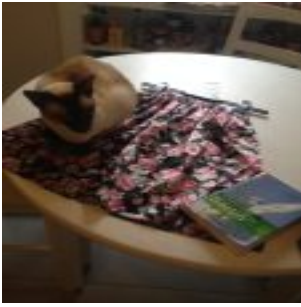


Charity shops: you either love them or loathe them. If, like me, you are unable to walk past one of these treasure troves of possibility without a 'quick look' at the books...then the dresses...then all the other intriguing bits and pieces...if one of your greatest joys is to find things both cheap and fascinating, weird and wacky, then Edinburgh is paradise.

Few other cities produce their own map of charity emporia, and few, I imagine, offer such a variety of shopping styles, from the smart to the shabby, the specialist to the random. If you're a charity shop fan, you'll be bound to have your own favourites – here are mine:

Shelter Shop, Forrest Road

Want a pair of fishnet tights, a kilt or an evening dress  (possibly not all at once...)? This housing and homelessness charity has eight shops throughout Edinburgh, and they're all pretty good. The Forrest Road one is my favourite; it always has a great selection of unusual clothes and interesting bric-a-brac, and there's a lovely little book nook at the back. The people on the counter are friendly, they play very cool music (I once asked if I could buy some of it and was kindly told that the guy had brought it in on his iPod..the stock isn't *quite* that cool...), and the prices are sensible too.



My best buys from here have included a new **Targus laptop bag**, a pink and flowery skirt and a copy of **Dorothy Baker's** wonderful American classic ***Cassandra at the Wedding***.

Hospices of Hope, Home Street

☒ If the jumble sale style of some charity shops puts you off (mystifying as that may be to **Barbara Pym** acolytes like me) Hospices of Hope's Tollcross branch certainly won't. The charity is the leading palliative care charity in south eastern Europe (Romania, Serbia, Moldova). It has three shops in Edinburgh; this one in Home Street is especially loved by many. It has a subtle vintage feel without the twee-ness that often accompanies this style, and the stock in this tiny treasure chest is so good that I almost don't want to tell you about it.


Mainly clothes (modern and retro), and a small but good book section at the back with some fabulous old children's stories, plus some ephemera and jewellery. The changing room is worth a

visit by itself; the walls are decorated with 50s knitting patterns. The staff are great too, very friendly and helpful. Best buys from here? Numerous, but I particularly treasure my copy of *Rosemary at St Anne's* with its first line "I'm rather looking forward to school' Hazel remarked, dividing the last remnants of the simnel cake amongst the three of us..." , my arty **T-shirt** and my picture of a **lady bather**. A **black velvet coat** was also a snip at £7.



And here's another brilliant thing; the shop is right next to **The Pine Tree Polish Bakery**, which may not be a charity, but I am so far as their marmalade buns are concerned...

Barnardo's Bookshop, Clerk Street

There are several specialist charity bookshops in  Edinburgh; I like them all but do find some a little bit over-priced or lacking in variety. This Barnardo's shop is my first choice; it has very good, well organised and interesting stock (and again with some vintage children's classics), affordable prices and approachable staff, and also offers DVDs and some unusual CDs. Best buys – lots, including a perfect hardback copy of the much lamented **Jane Gardam's *Stories*** and the DVD of the fantastic ***Grand Budapest Hotel*** – only a few weeks after it came out.



Barnardo's is a charity working to transform the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

Bethany Christian Trust





Knitting needles anyone? Dishes shaped like salad vegetables? The Bethany shop offers all these and more. A Scottish charity, Bethany works to prevent homelessness and to help when it's already happened. It has seven shops in Edinburgh; this one in Morningside Road is brilliant. It's not very smart and it can be a bit muddly, but it has everything from toys and jigsaws to linen, plus clothes, books, some electrical items and lots of bric a brac, all at very good prices. I've bought lots of things from here, but my top acquisition was a set of full height **white shelves** to house the DVD collection; two units in excellent condition for £15 and no trip to you-know-where required either. No they don't serve meatballs.

British Heart Foundation Furniture Store, Dalry Road

Need a bed? A sofa? A freezer or a 1930s sideboard? Now that some charities have branched out into furniture and electricals, you can find some amazing bargains. The BHF has two specialist shops in Edinburgh – this one in Dalry (the other one is in Duke Street, Leith) has everything from beds (with new mattresses) to sofas, freezers to washing machines and toasters to tables; if you see something you like, snap it up – nothing seems to hang around in here for long. Best purchase that I didn't make was a beautiful **walnut drinks cabinet**; I couldn't think of anywhere to put it – but someone else did; it went faster than you could say *Dry Martini*.




I also narrowly missed an electric ‘wood’ stove – see what I mean? You have to be on the ball, but if you can’t face lugging a sofa through the streets of Edinburgh, maybe you’re just not cut out for charity shop shopping (actually the BHF will deliver...).

The BHF’s mission is to win the fight against cardiovascular disease, the UK’s single biggest killer.

I’ve spent many a happy hour in each and every one of these shops, and if I have to trudge half way round the city to get to them I don’t mind, it just makes me feel justified in adding on a cake stop. If, however, you’d like to find charity shops in your local area there’s a great little free publication produced by the environmental charity **Changeworks: The Edinburgh Charity Shop and Reuse Map** – which also has details of where you can donate things you no longer need.

You can get a copy of the map from Changeworks at 36 Newhaven Road (0131 555 4010), and many of the shops have them too. And of course there’s now an **app** available from Changeworks’ website at www.changeworks.org.uk. Changeworks also produce **Too Good to Waste**, a guide to recycling things that charity shops can’t take.

So which charity shops are your favourites? Do let us know 
– especially if they're next to excellent eateries...(like
the ones in Stockbridge in our main photo...!)

Cat for display purposes only...