

Book relates details of the Briggers who died while building the Forth Bridge

Museums & Galleries Edinburgh have published digitally a book which lists all the accidents which happened during the early phase of the construction of the Forth Bridge which was opened on 4 March 1890.

The compilation is an account of the “Briggers” who faced daily danger during the seven-year long build and contains details of the accidents and the way the men were treated, and how much compensation they received.

Since 2005 local historians who have also called themselves The Briggers have researched the history of the bridge and in 2009 they listed all known deaths which occurred during the construction phase from 1883 to 1886. This book has now been donated to Queensferry Museum where it joins other artefacts which relate the story of the three bridges.

The book has now been transcribed [and the full text is available online at Capital Collections](#) which is an archive service run by the City Libraries. The research has already uncovered one death which was previously unrecorded.

It is also a history of health and safety and the way that the emergency services treated accidents on the bridge. Alongside

the details of accidents, the book also gives information on sick leave, compensation, and any resulting sick pay. It lists the various doctors who attended the injured; among them a certain Dr. Hunter who was one of the Forth Bridge doctors and also the South Queensferry GP.

Many of the injuries listed in this early stage of construction were sustained during the complex operation to build, move and sink the massive caissons in place. These were wrought iron cases lowered into the Forth to give workers access to the seabed to lay the foundations. The caissons were assembled on land and towed by boat to their final positions in the Forth. 2024 is the 140th anniversary of when the six enormous caissons were first launched.

Culture & Communities Convener, Councillor Val Walker said: "The Forth Rail Bridge is iconic and recognised around the world. Research has only just started but already the book is unveiling stories of incredible endurance, hardship and resilience, and allowing us to make links with other objects across our collections. Edinburgh has many local communities, each with their own unique history, and it is through partnerships such as the work with The Briggers that the collections really start to reveal their secrets."

"Publishing the book online is a great way to share the collections and open up the stories for the world to read. We hope this resource will help anyone interested in finding out more about the bridge, or perhaps those doing family history to discover they have relatives who once worked on the bridge.

"Museums & Galleries Edinburgh have some astounding collections, and it is wonderful to see they continue to grow with such items as this book."

Frank Hay of The Briggers and Queensferry Heritage Trust said: "The Forth Bridge Accidents Book is an important addition to the collections at Museums & Galleries Edinburgh. It is one of

the few (or possibly the only) day-to-day working documents to have survived from the construction period.

“After a talk at the Queensferry Heritage Trust by Nico Tyack, Collections Information Officer at Museums & Galleries Edinburgh, we volunteered to transcribe and research the accidents book – revealing important new bridge information on, for example, industrial insurance and how the Forth Bridge was on the leading edge of the Scottish first aid and ambulance movement of the 1880s.”



ACCIDENTS.

Claims for compensation settled

By Sancred & Co.		By Insurance Co.	
Name	Page	Name	Page
Edward Lafferty Damages £300 + expenses	10	(15) Jas. McDonald Labr. claim £ 32. 10/-	
And ^o Savnie	50	20 Jas. Todd Aired Ray	10. 0/-
J. Dalgleish	100	28 J. Robinson Mother of (Redd) =	4. 1. 6
G. Lorke - J. of 46: agreed to pay his weekly wages		(42) Duncan McPherson	31. 0. 0
(3) less sick fund money until able to work again.		(Alex) Ferguson	
J. Blainey care compromised for £57. 7/-	61	J. Gibson	148. 14. 2
H. Macdonald. widow of, £28. 10/-	241	53 J. Hart	6. 0. 0
Capt J. Fairless	500. 0. 0 expenses	57 J. Reddie	25. 0. 0
J. Robinson mother of (Redd) =	4. 1. 6	22 G. Clark	72. 17. 8
(Alex) Ferguson			
J. Gibson	148. 14. 2		
James Reddie money refused by Insurance Co (£25. 0. 0)	51		
Stephen Thomson to receive wages until fit to work	65		
Wm. Scawthorn	see page 60		
Amount paid to him to be refunded by Ins. Co.			



