

Looking back at Edinburgh's history

Each month The Old Edinburgh Club provides us with the notable dates from history. This month is full of important facts – including one about the formation of Hibernian Football Club.

1st In 1661, King Charles II, on his accession to the English crown, wrote to the presbytery of Edinburgh, emphasising his determination to support the presbyterian form of church government established by law in Scotland.

2nd In 1877, Father Edward Hannan enquired about a group of young Irishmen who had formed Hibernian Football Club since “it appeared outside [the] direction” of his Catholic Young Men's Society.

3rd In 1503, the provost, bailies, and council took action against a possible outbreak of the plague.

4th In 1951, Edinburgh otolaryngologist, George Cathcart, the man who gave financial backing to set up the early Promenade concerts on condition that Henry Wood be employed as the sole conductor, died.

5th In 1593, the council decided that there should be a more thorough watch and guard kept within the town due to public disorder.

6th In 1124, the royal burgh was founded by King David I

via a royal charter on land belonging to the Crown. Though the exact date of the charter is unknown, David granted a toft 'in burgo meo de Edenesburg' to the Priory of Dunfermline

7th In 1912, Sophia Louisa Jex-Blake, physician, teacher, and feminist, died; she led the campaign to secure women access to a University education when she and six other women (collectively known as the Edinburgh Seven) protested, leading to a change in the law.

8th In 1660, the Mercurius Caledonius – 'Comprising The Affairs now in Agitation in Scotland With A Survey of Forraign Intelligence', arguably Scotland's first newspaper, was founded in Edinburgh by the playwright Thomas Sydserf; it contained domestic news such as reports of parliamentary debates, as well as reports from abroad and reprints of news from London newspapers. And in 1697, Thomas Aitkenhead, student, at Edinburgh, became the last person executed for blasphemy in Britain at the Gallow Lea, a field on the road between Leith and Edinburgh where, 300 years later the bus garage at Shrubhill would stand. Also in 1729, two women were arrested in Edinburgh for wearing men's clothing.

9th In 1604, Alistair MacGregor of Glenstrae was hangit along with 2 of his associates at the Mercat Cross. (James VI had issued an edict that proclaimed the name of MacGregor as 'altogidder abolisheed.') And in 1811, the first women's golf tournament took place at Musselburgh. Also in 1902, co-founder of the Edinburgh International Festival and its Director from 1947 to 1949, Rudolf Bing, was born.

10th In 1666, a Royal Warrant was issued for John Baptisit Quarentino to practice medicine in Edinburgh. And in 1750, Thomas Lord Erskine, the Scottish advocate who gained fame through representing clients accused of corruption and treason, was born in an Edinburgh tenement. Also in 1864, Margaret, Lady Moir, was born in Gorgie; in 1919, she was one of the founders of The Women's Engineering Society (WES); she

and other members of the WES worked tirelessly to set up training courses for women engineers and encourage women to take up engineering as a career. Finally in 1978, one of the biggest fires in Edinburgh's history occurred at the Leith seeds warehouse, Lawson Donaldson at 135 Constitution Street.



Margaret Pennycook

11th In 1450, representatives of the Skinners signed a statute for the upkeep of the altar of St Christopher in the parish Kirk of St Giles. And in 1596, King James VI appointed 8 Lords to examine the Exchequer Accounts to eliminate irregularities. Also in 1838, a serious disturbance lasting 2 days began when a band of students and local tradesmen began launching snowballs at one another; see the article in the link [here](#). Finally in 1999, Naomi Mitchison (née Haldane), author, poet, and politician, who was born in Edinburgh, died at age 101; Mitchison was a campaigner for women's issues and a lifelong Socialist.

13th In 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots, came to Edinburgh with her son, Prince James.

14th In 1872, the Skye Terrier Greyfriars Bobby, who is said to have kept a vigil at his master's grave in Greyfriars Churchyard, died. And in 1880, the first popular meeting of the Edinburgh Photographic Society was held in Queen Street Hall.

16th In 1707, the Scottish and Westminster parliaments ratified the Treaty of Union; the act passed in the Scottish

parliament by 110 votes to 67, amid a background of resistance, with crowds burning copies of the treaty on the streets of Edinburgh and attacking the buildings of the Scottish parliament.

17th In 1513, King James IV issued regulations to deal with the pestilence and ordered the provost, baillies, and council to put them into effect. And in 1795, the Duddingston Curling Society, which had an expensive joining fee of three guineas, was founded.



17th (1795), the octagonal building is a curling house, built in 1825 by eminent architect William Henry Playfair

18th In 1823, The Scotsman noted that the work of ornamental improvement of the North Loch and adjoining grounds continued including the planting several full-sized trees. And in 1904, The Nelson Hall and East Branch Library, McDonald Road, opened for the first time; Thomas Nelson had bequeathed £50,000 for “the erection, furnishing, maintenance and management of shelter halls in the poor districts of Edinburgh, to be used as places to which persons of the

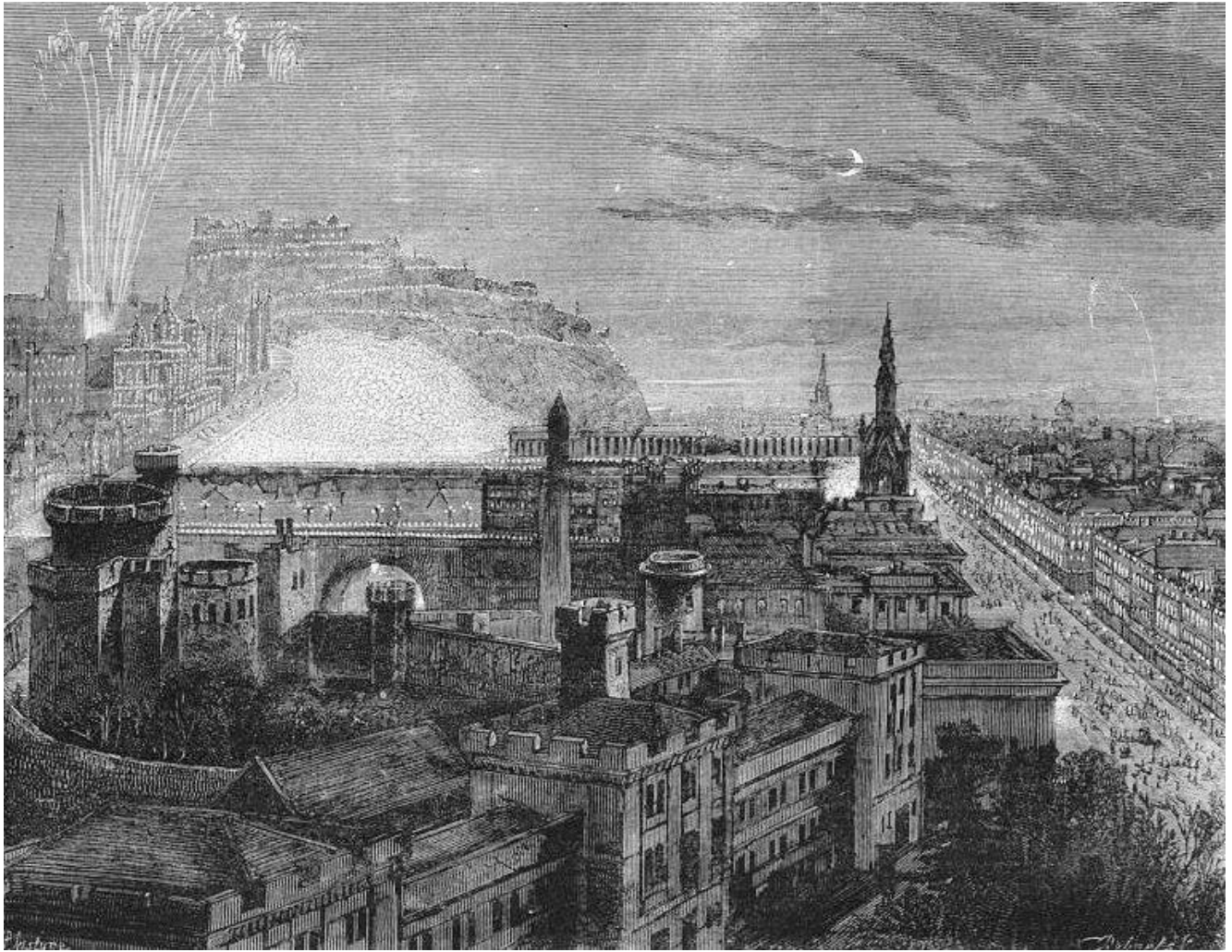
working class and others, can go and sit and read, write, converse, and otherwise occupy themselves”.



18th (1904), photograph courtesy of the Edinburgh Photographic Society and now McDonald Road Library

20th In 1671, the council granted permission to Mr John Alexander, a teacher from Poland, to establish a school for learning German and Polish.

23rd In 1874, the city saw a Grand Illumination to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria's second son, Prince Alfred, to the Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna, the only surviving daughter of Emperor Alexander II of Russia; the Scotsman wrote: "The grand feature of the illumination will be the lighting up of the valley between Princes' Street and the Old Town...fire burned at intervals will throw a weird glare over the Castle Rock"; the event included a firework display which was "directed as far as possible so as to fall within the range of the Castle banks between the esplanade and the railway." Most buildings in the centre participated including the Imperial Hotel, the Post Office, St George's Church and the Albert Hotel.



24th In 1644, the comptroller of accounts advanced funds for the equipment of the Town's Regiment for service in England. And in 1890, Candida Louise Hay, Marchioness of Tweeddale, was at the controls of the first locomotive (pictured) to cross the newly completed Forth Bridge.



25th In 1784, Dr Alexander Webster, Edinburgh-born Minister of the Tolbooth Church, founder of the Widows' Scheme of the Church of Scotland, and known for Webster's Account of the Population of Scotland in 1755, died. And in 1815, highway robbers Kelly and O'Neill were executed on Morningside Road where one of their robberies took place. Also in 1816, one hundred gentlemen (including Mr Walter Scott) dined in MacEwan's Rooms as part of the first public celebration of the birthday of the poet Robert Burns. Finally in 1817, the Scotsman newspaper was first published.



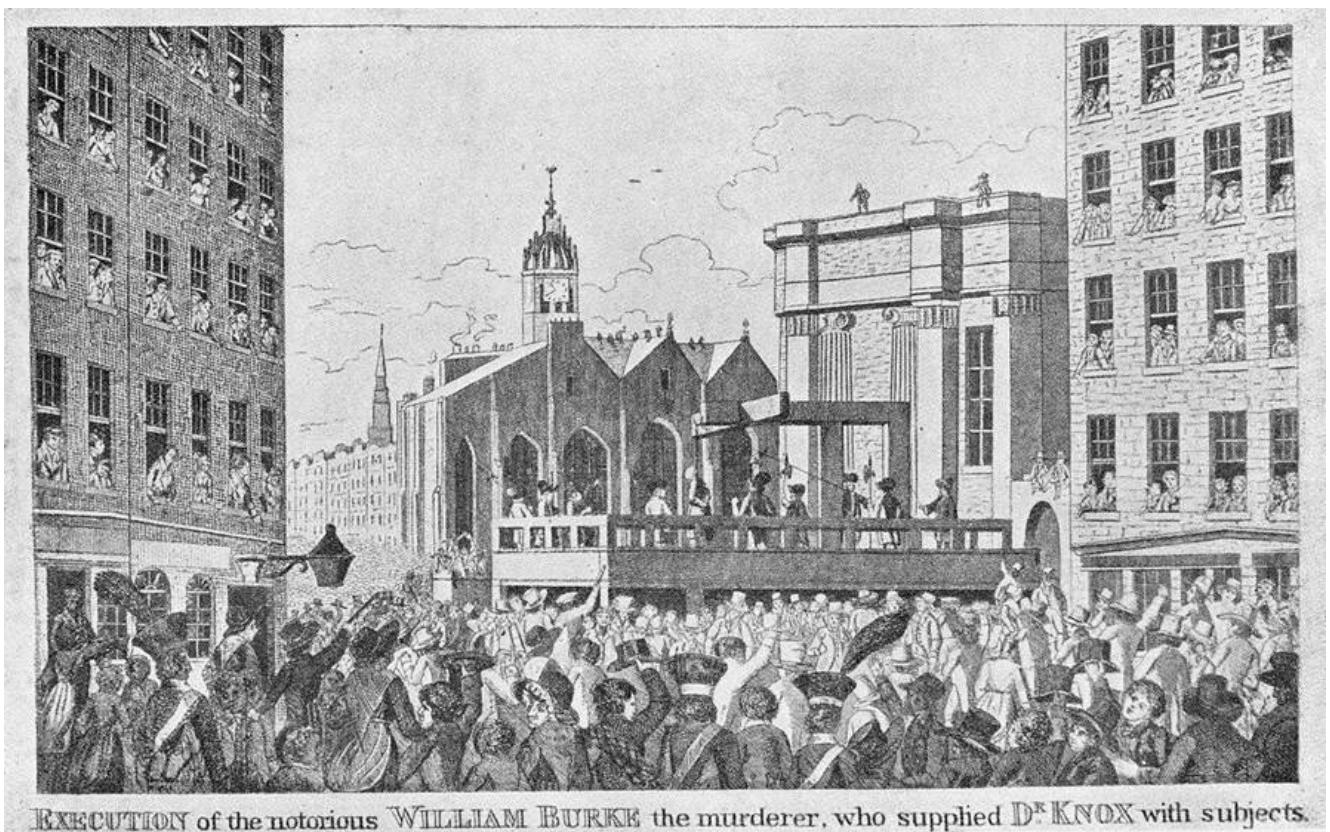
(1784), Dr Alexander Webster

26th In 1861, the One O'Clock Gun was fired for the first time in Edinburgh; the gun was created to complement a time ball on Nelson's Monument, which proved of no use in foggy conditions; the original gun took four men to fire and was connected to the Royal Observatory's clock by a 4,000-foot

electric cable.

27th In 1527, King James V wrote to Abbot George Crichton of Holyrood expressing his appreciation of the 'good, faithful, and gratuitous service' provided by the provost, bailies, council, and community of Edinburgh since the death of his father at the Battle of Flodden. And in 1894, Edinburgh-born gun maker Alexander Henry died.

28th In 1829, murderer William Burke, one half of the notorious criminal duo 'Burke and Hare' was hanged in the high street at the head of Libberton Wynd, which joined Lawnmarket roughly where the east pavement of George IV Bridge is today in front of a crowd of over 20,000 people with nearby householders charging members of the public for seats with the best views.



28th (1829)

29th In 1928, Edinburgh-born (in a house on Charlotte Square) Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, AKA the 'butcher of the Somme', who commanded British Forces during World War One, died in London.

30th In 1607, the council and bailies agreed that John Orley, an Englishman, along with 4 companions should serve the town as musicians, walking along the Cowgate and High Street playing and singing early every morning, then play again at midday from St Giles' steeple, and finally between 6 and 7 PM.

31st In 1918, the so-called Battle of May Island started; the 'battle' was a series of collisions between submarines, battleships and cruisers during a secret military exercise named Operation ECI in the Firth of Forth; 270 Royal Navy servicemen were killed in the incident and although it took place during World War One, enemy forces were not involved.

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