

Looking back at February in history

Each month The Old Edinburgh Club draws our attention to what happened in the capital in years and centuries gone by.

Day	Event
1st:	In 1918, Dame Muriel Spark (author of <i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>) was born Muriel Sarah Camberg in Edinburgh; Spark spent her childhood in the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh and began her working life as a secretary in a department store.
3rd:	In 1700, fire destroyed Edinburgh's, some say Europe's, highest buildings behind St. Giles. And in 1700, the Darien colony was abandoned.
4th:	In 1520, the masters of the shoemakers (cordiners) presented a request to the burgh council that their statutes, articles, and regulations should be approved; the purpose of this was to harmonise the many conflicting regulations that had been decided over the course of time. And in 1649, Charles II proclaimed king in Edinburgh – but not in England. Also in 1818, the Crown Jewels of Scotland were rediscovered in Edinburgh Castle by a search party led by Sir Walter Scott; the jewels had last been used to crown King Charles II in 1651.
5th:	In 1523, Sir William Sinclair of Roslin gave land beside Rosslyn Chapel as an endowment for the construction of 4 houses for 4 priests.

6th:	In 1875, The Scotsman reported that the Theatre-Royal in Broughton Street had burnt down.
7th:	In 1700, the council considered the aftermath of the fire that devastated the meal market, both sides of the slope beside St Giles, part of the Royal Exchange, and all of Parliament Close bar the Treasury Room.
8th:	In 1592, Lady Margaret Campbell of Argyll brought the body of her son, James Stewart (later Stuart), 2nd Lord Doune, 2nd Earl of Moray ('Bonnie Earl of Moray' of ballad fame), to Edinburgh to confront King James VI to demand that the Earl of Huntly be brought to justice for his murder. And in 1626, due to unrest abroad the council decided that all inhabitants of the city should be instructed in the rules of war and subject to military service.
10th:	In 1567, at about 2 AM an explosion destroyed Kirk o'Field which was roughly at the south east corner of what is today Old College; Mary, Queen of Scots' husband, Lord Darnley, was found strangled in a garden nearby. And in 1800, 34 Princes Street was advertised for sale in the 'Caledonian Mercury'.
12th:	In 1624, George Heriot, goldsmith to Anne of Denmark, wife of King James VI, and founder of the eponymous School, died. And in 1829, a crowd of men marched from Calton Hill to the home of Dr Robert Knox where his effigy was symbolically murdered and then burnt.
13th:	In 1826, the inaugural meeting of the Institution for the encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland was held modelling itself on the British Institution in London.
14th:	In 1659, in response to a paper sent by the Kirk Sessions listing a number of profanations of the Sabbath, the council ordered several pairs of stocks. And in 1666, the treasurer of the university accused the janitor of illegal brewing, gambling, smuggling, and embezzlement.

15th:	In 1699, the Council banned all lotteries. And in 1878, A man named John Litherland, residing in Scotland Street Lane, was fined 5s, with £1 expenses, for refusing to send two of his children, aged ten and eight years respectively, to school.
17th:	In 1598, a solar eclipse between 9 & 10 in the morning frightened the people of Edinburgh who thought it presaged Domesday. And in 1688, Scottish minister James Renwick became the final Covenanting martyr when he was executed at Edinburgh's Grassmarket for refusing to swear fealty to King James VII; he was executed by hanging and his severed head and hands were hung on the city gates to serve as a warning to others.
18th:	In 1473, the provost, bailies, and council granted a seal of cause to the Hatmakers. And in 1842, the Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway opened.
20th:	In 1598, Thomas Dobie drowned himself in the Quarry Holes beside Holyrood Abbey; the following morning his body was hanged on a gallows in the town for having committed suicide.
21st:	In 1842, an intercity railway service between Glasgow and Edinburgh was officially opened by Queen Victoria. And in 1940, a sand-filled dummy shell had to be fired across the bows of the Naval trawler 'Peter Carey', to stop it straying into a mined area; the shell ricocheted off the water and ended up bursting into a tenement flat at 118 Salamander Street in Leith; fortunately no-one was injured.
22nd:	In 1371, King David II of Scotland died at Edinburgh Castle. And in 1834, several people were killed by a collapsing wall in Leith Wynd. Also in 1885, Adam Bruce Thomson OBE, RSA, PRSW, painter perhaps best known for his oil and water colour landscape paintings, particularly of Edinburgh and the Highlands, was born in Edinburgh.

23rd:	In 1820, Eliza Wigham, suffragist, abolitionist, & graffiti artist (she carved messages into the Salisbury Crags, notably the message 'Send back the money'), was born in Newington. And in 1827, Walter Scott revealed himself as author of the Waverley novels.
24th:	In 1923, steam locomotive, the "Flying Scotsman", went into service with London and North Eastern Railway (LNER), on the London (King's Cross) to Edinburgh route.
25th:	In 1657, by Act of Council and ratified by Parliament, the surgeons and apothecaries were united into one community.
27th:	In 1510, Master Gavin Douglas, provost of the Collegiate Church of St Giles, and all the canons admitted their failure to celebrate the mass of the Most Holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with the dignity it merited.
28th:	In 1638, the 2nd Scottish National Covenant was signed in Edinburgh.

■ Compiled by Jerry Ozaniec, Membership Secretary of the Old Edinburgh Club, membership@oldedinburghclub.org.uk



10th, Princes Street from the Scott monument, Begbie, Thomas, 1858, Glass negative. Photo: The Cavaye Collection of Thomas Begbie/City Art Centre/Capital Collections



George Heriot  *Jeweller to King James VI*
who bequeathed bequeathing & Endowments
to his Relations above sixty thousands
to the Right Hon^{ble} John Cuthbert
Governor & Treasurer of Heriots Hospital this plate
is hereby dedicated by your Hon^{ble} most humble Ser^{ts}
John Chal. Eyles 1725

12 February



24 February