



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

EDUCT News

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The Newsletter of the Edinburgh University Club of Toronto

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Mark Your Calendars

Check out the full events listing and details on [page 2](#)

The 2026 Burns Nightcap

Thursday, January 23, 2026 | 6:30–10 p.m.
The Duke of Kent, Toronto

EDUCT Annual Dinner

Friday, April 17, 2026 | 6:30 p.m.
Arts & Letters Club, Toronto

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Membership fees for 2025 are due in January. If you have not yet renewed, please see [page 22](#) for details.
We now take INTERAC e-transfers.

Message from the President



Since my last message we have enjoyed talks from Dr. Hoekstra and Dr. Yanes of the Edinburgh Law School on the privatization of health services (which was very relevant to Ontario) and, at our Annual Dinner, from Professor Cogliano on his new book – *A Revolutionary Friendship: Washington, Jefferson and the American Republic*.

Looking ahead, at our AGM we decided that, as part of our planning for the coming year, we should survey members to get a sense as to whether our ideas for some of our forthcoming events are appealing to you. When the survey arrives, do respond.

In this issue, you can read about Dr. Cogliano's insights on the founders of the United States of America and on the current political scene in Washington, along with Gavin Clark's review of Rory Stewart's best-selling book on his experiences as a Westminster MP. And to whet your appetite to attend our next Annual Dinner, when we celebrate 300 years of medicine at Edinburgh, our Famous Alumni column profiles the three generations of the Monro family who were the first three occupants of the Chair of Anatomy at Edinburgh.

As ever, if you have yet to renew your annual membership for 2025, please do so now ([see p. 22](#) for details).

Anna Voineskos

Our Response to COVID

Although the public is still relaxed about Covid, we continue to learn of new variants that could well spread rapidly and that may not be as susceptible to control with our currently available vaccines. Given this air of uncertainty, and the history of waves of new variants of Covid and the ever-changing government cautions on public gatherings, we will decide how to stage each event about six weeks prior to that event. We shall retain the online format for a few events each year, given the ease of access this offers to those members living far from Toronto.

Promoting Your Event

If you are organizing an event or participating in an activity that would be of interest to fellow alumni in the GTA, please get in touch with our Communications Officer:

Paul Bradley

pauljfrbradley@gmail.com.

You may also join us on LinkedIn or Facebook to submit your information directly to participating members through these networks.

Upcoming Club and Alumni Events**The 2026 Burns Nightcap**

Thursday, January 22, 2026

6:30–10 p.m. (*two days before Burns*)

The Duke of Kent, Toronto

On Yonge Street, east side, at Roehampton Avenue, just north of Eglinton Avenue East. Parking underground across Yonge, or surface lot on Roehampton.

All are part of the entertainment. Start thinking about what you could perform!

Cost: TBA. Likely about \$55 for members and guests; \$60 for non-member alumni.

Info: Simon Miles – simon-miles@sympatico.ca, 416-466-8793

EDUCT Annual Dinner

Friday, April 17, 2026

6:30 p.m.

The Great Hall, The Arts & Letters Club – 14 Elm Street, Toronto

Professor David J. Argyle, William Dick Chair of Veterinary Clinical Studies, Vice Principal, and Head of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, The University of Edinburgh, will be our after-dinner speaker. Dr Argyle's theme will be *300 years of Medicine at Edinburgh: past landmark achievements; recent breakthroughs; and current challenges*. 2026 is a major landmark date for the University of Edinburgh, as it marks 300 years of the Edinburgh Medical School and is thus an excellent time to reflect on its place in the world, the impact that it has had, and the vision for the future. Dr. Argyle will look back to the beginning and the rise of the Medical School, and the benefits of being part of a civic university rather than one that was heavily influenced by religion. This allowed medical advancement at a pace, through anatomy and comparative anatomy. He will touch on many of the characters who have played a major role, such as Lister and Simpson in earlier times, through to more contemporary times and the impact of people like John Crofton in tuberculosis and Iain Wilmut and the impact of Dolly the Sheep on modern day regenerative medicine. This will also tie into the School's close links across comparative medicine and the 200 year old vet school intertwined with medicine. And he will articulate the School's future vision, the growth of the health innovation campus at Bioquarter, the building of a new medical school fit for 21st century medical education, and how the School is tackling the major challenges that face humanity both locally and globally.

Cost: TBA, but likely about \$110 for members and guests; \$115 for non-member alumni.

Info: Simon Miles – simon-miles@sympatico.ca, 416-466-8793

Annual General Meeting

Sunday, May 31, 2026

1 p.m.

Location TBA (likely on Zoom)

Cost: There is no charge for the AGM.

Info: Anna Voineskos – avoineskos@bell.net, 416-826-6655

EDUCT's Burns Night: One of the Best Ever

by Simon Miles

On 23 January Anna Voineskos, our President, welcomed us all to our twenty-first celebration of the bard. And what a splendid evening it was. Although we were far fewer in number this year, the performers outdid themselves. Several members felt it was the best ever and, as a result, we already have offers of performances for next year.

Following the usual mingling at the bar, during which our piper, Rory Sinclair, serenaded us, we got down to business. Robin McLernon kindly read The Selkirk Grace and then switched hats to give us a 'public announcement'. She had some interesting information to broadcast. Robin is now on the board of the Saltire Foundation Canada. The Foundation is expanding its network of corporations, non-governmental organizations and other institutions which would like to host a Scottish student to serve as an intern for the summer. Several people expressed interest with respect to the summer of 2025. Robin will be providing more information in an article to appear in our September newsletter in readiness for the summer of 2026.



Rory Sinclair pipes in the haggis

Then it was back to Rory again, this time to pipe in the haggis. This is the second time Rory has stood in for our beloved Graham Ferguson, our go-to piper, who, unfortunately for us, was abroad this year. Rory did a splendid job. This year he recruited two stalwart members, Alan Pearson and Bill Campbell, to be the carriers of the hod – a gigantic plate with lengthy handles – on which the haggis is borne aloft and ceremoniously escorted around the room. Michael Weinberger, fresh from the courtroom, then delivered his Address to the Haggis. In his finest Scottish brogue, Michael, sans notes, had the haggis trembling. No Sassenach among us understood what he was saying, but the delivery was perfect. We expect him to debut at Stratford very soon!

Michael then donned another hat and reappeared as our Quizmaster. He had composed his very own quiz which, while paying homage to Burns with a few questions about the Birthday Boy, had more questions that were about Edinburgh and our University. It was very well received and has been reworked in a form suitable for this newsletter. See the next article for the quiz and where to check your answers. Even better received was the fine box of chocolates that, later in the evening, went to the winners of the quiz. This was the threesome of Faye Roberts, Bill Campbell and Ian Duncan. The beautiful losers, featuring Robin McLernon, wearing yet another hat, and friends Erika Burns and Clarice Dale, got to share a bar of fine chocolate designed to encourage them to do better next year.

Following the main course Bill Campbell took centre stage to deliver The Immortal Memory. Bill was in fine form. As a communications professional he had our attention. He told us what he was meant to be telling us, and he delivered it to us, all with his usual self-deprecating humour. The central message we were left with was that the appeal of Burns lies in the ways he can get us to relate to his behaviour, enjoy the wisdom of his insights on life, and, above all, have fun celebrating his contributions to humanity.



*Anna Voineskos, our President,
and our MC for the evening*



*Robin McLernon brings gusto to
The Selkirk Grace*



*Bill Campbell shares his
Immortal Memory of the bard*



*Michael Weinberger
addresses the haggis.
No wonder it tasted
so good!*

Jim Hunter, our next performer of note, was tasked with the delivery of The Toast to the Lassies. There must be something in the Ayrshire water, for Jim, who hails from Burns' country, has a similar command of words. Jim, whose middle name is brevity, delivered a witty, and most colourful Toast, again, without notes. However, out of respect for the composer, the details are being withheld.



Jim Hunter delivers a brief and witty Toast to the Lassies

Our next performer was to have been Jenna Shelley, but on the very day Jenna was taken ill with an unknown bug. Jenna, one of our co-organizers, had put together a fine Reply to the Toast to the Lassies. Jenna's long-time friend, Clarice Dale, filled the breach with elan.



Clarice Dale responds to the Toast to the Lassies

Following these set pieces that are prerequisites for any self-respecting Burns Night, we moved to the supposedly extemporaneous performances of the evening. Of course, we had lined up our performers well in advance! Fortune smiled on us: our scheme did not "gang agley". We commenced this closing section of the evening with a magnificent performance by Ian Duncan of Holy Willie's Prayer. More recent members of EDUCT were introduced to Ian by Simon, who reminded us all that we used to organize our Burns Nights around the availability of Ian. Ian has to travel in from Guelph and for several years now we have not been able to get him into town. This year, Faye Roberts stepped up and enabled this star performer to be with us again. Ian brought the house to its feet with his costume, and his delivery. He will surely be joining Michael at Stratford!

Bill Campbell returned to the stage to introduce us, in his own colourful way, to Burns' Winter: A Dirge. With the bitterly cold night outside our Duke of Kent waiting to greet us with another blast of winter, Bill hit all the right notes. Anne McKellar followed with her introduction to, and performance of, The Birks of Aberfeldy, a charming love song that Burns dashed off when visiting a waterfall in the birch woods of Perthshire. David McCulloch then came forward with his accordion and played a splendid medley of Ae Fond Kiss, My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose, and Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon. We were short of folks who knew the words and did a dreadful job, despite David's urging, of accompanying him. We promised to have the song sheets circulated in advance next year.



Ian Duncan lives the agony of Willie as he performs Holy Willie's Prayer



Anne McKellar takes us to The Birks of Aberfeldy

Anna then wound up the evening, thanking all those who had helped to organize the evening, and those at the Duke of Kent who made us so welcome. Simon proposed a toast to the health of two of our key organizers – Jenna Shelley and Brittany Howlett – both of whom had been unable to make it to the evening and were very much in need of a resuscitating tonic!

As David wound up the evening on his accordion we did make a valiant effort to get back into his good books by singing Auld Lang Syne with considerable gusto, thanks to the song sheets that had been circulated. I think we passed muster!



David McCulloch winds up the evening on his accordion

The Burns Night Quiz

by Michael Weinberger

Editor's Note: EDUCT's Burns Night Quiz was refreshingly challenging for all who were present. It was also one for which one did not have to be a scholar of the Bard's works. Thus, we have asked Michael Weinberger, the author of the quiz, if he would reproduce parts of it here. He kindly agreed, and indeed has provided the responses on [page 21](#).

While I greatly enjoyed putting together this quiz, I want to extend special thanks to my friends, all fellow University of Edinburgh alumni, who so graciously helped me fine-tune this quiz: Ben Besten ('12), Alastair Wright ('15), Sophie Atton ('15), and Pouya Jafari ('16). My goal was to have every question answered by at least one person. Only two went unanswered. Can you guess which ones?

The quiz is in five parts. Points have been assigned to each question. Once done, go to the answers and see how you score. If you think you did really well, let the Editor of EDUCT News know your score and next year, at our Burns Night, you may be able to enjoy bragging rights!

Part I: Who am I?

Here are photos of alumni. Name the subject and why he/she is famous? Half a point for each name, half a point for the source of their fame. Hint#1: They are all connected to Canada. Hint #2: The first figure was known for being a genuine guy, as opposed to perhaps the last figure.



Part II: World Political Leaders

Edinburgh has graduated many who went on to become political leaders. Name the political leader(s) from each jurisdiction, including those who received honorary degrees. One point for each name.

Name three British Prime Ministers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Name two Canadian Prime Ministers:

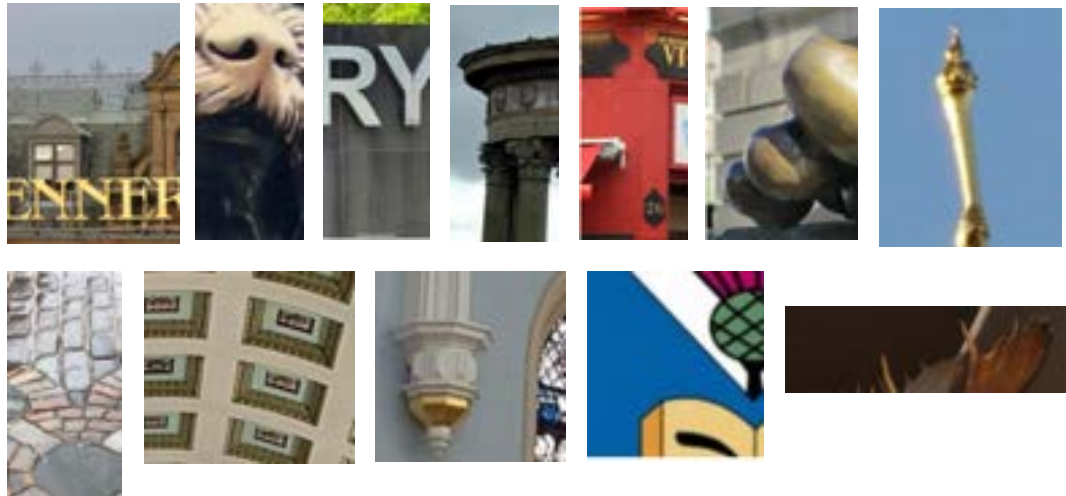
- 1.
- 2.

Name one President of Zimbabwe:

- 1.

Part III: Objects and Places

For any one photo, what are you looking at, or where are you? Half a point for each of the first seven photos. One point for each of the last five photos.



Part IV: Poetry

Finish the Robbie Burns lines. One point each.

1. The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men...
2. I learn't a sang in Annandale...
3. O my Luve is like a red, red rose that's newly sprung in...

Part V: Riddles

One point each.

1. Royal, sometimes spotted, like my patients. Where do I study?
2. People often turn blue trying to pronounce my name. (An extra point if you spell it correctly!)
3. My literary spires are interstellar. What am I?

The University's Information Session for Students

by Simon Miles

The University of Edinburgh's in-person Toronto information session for students was held on 9 April 2025. This year it took on a more streamlined format. This was made possible because it focused on the information needed by students who were holders of an offer of a place. For some, the offer was unconditional, for others it was conditional upon securing qualifying scores in one's final exams at school. The session also brought together both prospective undergraduate and post-graduate (i.e., masters and doctoral level) students. This session, and others like it elsewhere, was being held after an earlier round of online information sessions for students interested in finding out what Edinburgh had to offer.

The Gardiner Museum provided a perfect setting of a light and airy space with fine views.

The students heard first from some recent graduates: Simona Messina, an EDUCT member, and Serenna Gerhard. Simona was particularly impressive with a very well-organized presentation touching on many issues that students want to know about. Our President, Anna Voineskos, and I were then able to provide a summary introduction to EDUCT. Our mention of our efforts to collect information on potential sources of funding for Canadians wishing to study at Edinburgh gave rise to a long queue of students seeking more information. We trust the University was noting this!

University representatives then got down to the details. Mikaela Spencer and Rachael Parsons, both International Recruitment Managers for North America, covered everything the students could conceivably want to know about procedures to follow, forms to fill, finding a place to live, student support services, clubs, and much more. And Professor Frank Cogliano, International Dean, North America, introduced the prospective students to the history of the City and the University, the broad categories of the degree courses on offer, how Edinburgh's grading system varies from that in North America, and more.

It was a very well-organized session. Hopefully, the prospective students were impressed, and have taken up those offers. We wish them well in their studies and encourage them to join EDUCT upon their return to Canada.



The team: (from left to right) Serenna Gerhard, Mikaela Spencer, Rachael Parsons, Frank Cogliano, and Anna Voineskos. Missing are: Simona Messina and Simon Miles

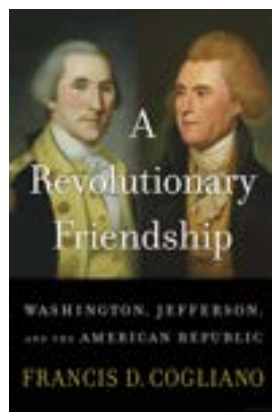
The Story Behind EDUCT

"EDUCT" is intended to form the acronym for the Edinburgh University Club of Toronto. "Educt" is a word which means, in the language of chemists: "A body separated by decomposition from another." In addition, there is "e-duct", an electronic channel, which seems appropriate for all of our members receiving EDUCT News via e-mail.

EDUCT's Annual Dinner: Frank Cogliano Talks on Another America

by Simon Miles

EDUCT had the pleasure of welcoming Dr. Frank Cogliano as the guest speaker at our Annual Dinner on 11 April 2025. Frank is Professor of American History at the University, and has been serving as Dean International, North America. EDUCT had already enjoyed listening to Frank on two previous occasions and, when we heard that he had just published a new book, we jumped at the opportunity to have him introduce us to his latest work: *A Revolutionary Friendship: Washington, Jefferson, and the American Republic*. He did an excellent job on that score, convincing even more members to add to our pre-dinner sales of the book. In addition, he first provided us with a brief update of recent developments at our University and then, having introduced us to two very civilized gentlemen who played such a central role in the founding of the United States of America, he gave us his take on the state of the States today. There were plenty of questions and the essence of key points raised in those discussions is blended into the three-part commentary offered here.



The book

Of the recent developments at the University, Frank chose to highlight both a cause for celebration and a major challenge. The celebratory event was the formal opening of the Edinburgh Futures Institute by HRH The Princess Royal, Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh. Although the EFI has been operational since June 2024, its formal opening happened to be held on the day of our Dinner. Occupying the refurbished former Royal Infirmary, the EFI has been established as a university hub that supports the City Region Deal and that has a mandate to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, encourage and enable interdisciplinary research, and thus provide an enriched teaching programme drawing upon that research. Easier said than done? Frank fully recognizes that universities do not do a good job in enabling a truly interdisciplinary approach to research. The barriers to the much-needed collaboration are real. The Principal had said the same when he spoke to us at last year's Annual Dinner. But the EFI will try to overcome these barriers by mobilizing the vast range of talents available in this large University to focus on the big challenges facing humanity. He cited the work of Shannon Vallor, on big data and the ethics of artificial intelligence, to which EDUCT had been introduced in Professor Vallor's talk to us in November 2024.

The major challenge facing our University is one of finance. This is currently confronting virtually every university in the UK, and indeed those in many other countries. It is a recurring problem for universities since many governments have tended to regard them as a bit of a luxury item. Seemingly politicians see more votes in freezing fees for domestic students than they see in well-educated citizens. This has led to enormous international competition for international students, who are seen as sources of revenue that will help to eliminate budgetary shortfalls. Edinburgh has to close a gap of £140 million this year, primarily by cuts to staff and services, and more effort in recruiting more foreign students. Nothing is off-limits for cuts: indeed, since the Dinner, it has been confirmed that the posts of International Regional Deans, such as Frank's for North America, will be eliminated. Edinburgh has actually done very well with respect to the recruitment of foreign students: it has exceeded its own targets and is the best performer of the Russell Group of Universities for recruiting from China, the US and Canada. Serious as this is, Frank was sanguine: it is good to question how we do business; and, Mr. Trump's attacks on American universities have led to a considerable increase in applications from US-domiciled students (although those same numbers are very sensitive to stock market movements too).



Professor Frank Cogliano



EDUCT President, Anna Voineskos, welcomes everyone

Turning to the meat of his talk, Frank introduced us to his latest book with a very moving observation that the book was an outcome of the symbiotic relationship that exists between research and teaching. While it easy to see how teaching is enriched by research, it may be harder to imagine how teaching stimulates research. Frank observed that the genesis of the book goes back to a student asking him about the relationship between Washington and Jefferson. Frank confessed to having given her what he imagined characterized that relationship and then, pondering whether what he had said was true, deciding to do a little research. He was surprised to discover that nothing had been written on the subject. Long story short – that is how this book came about.

After having read over 30 years of correspondence between Washington and Jefferson, Frank arrived at an understanding of their relationship that was appreciably different from the conventional understanding which has it that there was considerable tension between the two of them. That conventional view is likely fed by such well-known stories as that one about Jefferson's visit to Washington's house and grave in 1801. Martha Washington, George's widow, was reputed to have observed that, while the worst day of her life was the day her husband died, the second worst was the day Jefferson came to see her.

Frank concluded that the two had known each other for over 30 years and that, while they had different skill sets, they recognized the complementarity of those skill sets. A telling indicator of their friendship was that Washington had invited Jefferson to join his Cabinet, even though Jefferson was the only member of the Cabinet who had no military service record. Yes, they had grown apart in the later 1790s, shortly before Washington's death in 1799, but they both agreed upon key fundamentals of small 'r' republican government. That people should govern themselves was central to that belief.

And yes, Jefferson was much more egalitarian than Washington, and perhaps, given the importance of people being informed to enable them to govern themselves, this is one reason why Jefferson's great achievement, in his retirement, was the creation of the University of West Virginia.

They both wanted a written constitution, neither of them having much faith in the unwritten constitution of Great Britain. This helped to establish the primacy of law. Yet, at the same time, they both accepted that the constitution could be changed.

Indeed, Jefferson had made it clear that it would be absurd to think that the constitution could not be changed. Frank was refreshingly clear in his position that the 'originalism' stance, that is popular in the US Supreme Court today, is not reflective of the thinking of Washington and Jefferson.

In keeping with their belief in the power of the constitution and the rule of law, Washington had established precedents for how presidents should behave. He took this very seriously. Remarkably, King George III is reputed to have observed that he could not imagine Washington giving up power, and yet he did just that on two occasions.

Frank then turned briefly to the current governance of the United States. As an American talking to a Canadian audience, he signalled his sympathy for the position Canada is in. He recalls all too well 9/11 in 2001 and the generosity of spirit shown by Canadians welcoming Americans. He hopes that since 2026 marks the 250th Anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence there will be a focusing of minds and serious discourse on American values. He does not see that one can dismiss such odd behaviour as we are now witnessing as a product of American 'exceptionalism'. All countries have their own unique features.

One of the fundamental tragedies of the Trump presidency is the clash between the executive and the judiciary and the challenge this represents for the US constitution. Article 3 of the constitution is, in Frank's opinion, one of the least thought-through. In 1789-1791 it began to get some attention, but not enough. And President Trump is dismissive of norms.

As for the Supreme Court, well, it has not been behaving impeccably either. But Frank sees that people seem to have accepted that this is how the system works. This is illustrated by the recent incident of the Supreme Court's consideration of the case of the mistaken deportation of a man to El Salvador, which led to the Supreme Court sending the case back to the lower court to figure out how to bring the man back. This was clearly not the same as the Court explicitly ordering that the man be brought back.



The splendid setting

Considering the current government against the backdrop of his research on the founders of the country, Frank observed that George Washington had seen what had happened with the exercise of the royal prerogative in Great Britain. Washington took that seriously, and put limits on the powers of the US presidency. But the presidency has acquired more power over time and, as America has become more powerful, so the presidency became even more powerful. The founders of the US could not have foreseen that expansion of the global reach of the US and the parallel expansion of the power of its president.

According to the constitution, the body that should be looked to for control over the presidency is not the judiciary but Congress. Right now, Congress could do a lot more than it is. But at least it looks very unlikely that Mr. Trump could run for a third term. This would require a constitutional amendment and, to get that, one needs the support of two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states.

And what advice would Frank offer Canadians? Well, both Trudeau and Carney have stood up to Trump and we have to continue this stance. Defend Canadian interests and don't burn bridges. The roots of the relations between the two countries are strong. And this moment will pass. A nice note for an historian to end on! EDUCT thanks Frank for a most informative and entertaining evening.

Editor's Note: the full reference for Frank's book is: Francis D. Cogliano, *A Revolutionary Friendship: Washinton, Jefferson, and the American Republic*, (Cambridge, Mass, and London, England: Harvard University Press, hardback, 314 pp., 2024) ISBN 9780674292499

EDUCT Decennial Endowment Fund: No Change

by Simon Miles

The EDUCT Decennial Endowment Fund experienced next to no net change in world markets since our last report in January. As of the end of April 2025, the total investment in the Fund stood at £228,191, which is up from the £228,101 reported at the end of November 2024.

As ever, we remind all who are interested that the Fund remains open for further contributions. For details on how to donate, and to receive the appropriate form for donors from your country, please contact me at simon-miles@sympatico.ca

EDUCT Geography Centenary Fund: Positive Developments and Sad News

by Simon Miles

The EDUCT Geography Centenary Fund experienced a slight decline in total investment since our last report. As of the end of April 2025, the total investment in the Fund stood at £125,161, which is a slight drop from the comparable figure of £126,062 for November 2024. This was due to payments for both this year's Award to a student recipient, and for the expenses associated with the J. Wreford Watson Lecture.

EDUCT was delighted to learn that Patrick Miner, an American, was named the recipient of the Award for 2025. This brings to twenty-four the total number of students who have enjoyed support from the EGCF. Patrick is in the final year of his studies for his doctorate. The working title of his thesis is: "Repurposing car space to improve human and environmental health and wellbeing". This will be reported on more fully in a forthcoming newsletter.

The return of the J. Wreford Watson Lecture, following the setbacks due to Covid, was also welcomed. On 19 March 2025, Dr. Noreen Masud, a lecturer in twentieth century literature at the University of Bristol, a broadcaster, and this year's Watson Lecturer, spoke on the theme of her recently published best-seller, "A Flat Place". The book, which has won many awards, is partly a travelogue, taking readers through Britain's flat landscapes, and partly a memoir, investigating how flat spaces might give shape to, and succour to, complex trauma. The public lecture was attended by over 80 people and was also streamed worldwide for the first time. For more on the lecture, see the next article.

Additionally, we are pleased to report the almost complete restoration of the information about the EGCF to the GeoSciences web site. The material had been removed during an overhaul of that web site. We discovered this in late July 2021, and since then have been working with Natalie Fergusson, our main contact at the University, to have it restored. After all manner of challenges, and with Natalie's perseverance, Paul Bradley and I, along with new staff at the University, have finally arrived at a new page on the EGCF, on the GeoSciences web site, that satisfies all involved. EDUCT thanks all who played a part in the restoration. The page can be reached at: <https://geosciences.ed.ac.uk/about/educt>

We have to end this report on a sad note: the loss of two long-time members of EDUCT. On 22 March Professor D. R. Fraser Taylor died. An obituary appears in this newsletter. And on 22 May, just before we went to press, Professor Len Evenden died. An obituary will appear in our next newsletter. Both were geographers of note in Canada and both were generous contributors to the EGCF. EDUCT extends its condolences to their families. They will be greatly missed.

All interested are reminded that the Fund remains open for further contributions. Any assistance you can give to help us get to the next very important milestone of £130,000 would be much appreciated by all in Edinburgh. For details on how to donate, and to receive the appropriate form for donors from your country, please contact me at simon-miles@sympatico.ca

The 2025 J. Wreford Watson Lecture

by Simon Miles

On 19 March 2025 the Institute of Geography at the University of Edinburgh celebrated the return of its public lecture in honour of J. Wreford Watson, a former Chief Geographer of Canada, and the second holder of the Ogilvie Chair in Geography at Edinburgh. The lecture is normally held every other year. Sadly, Covid rendered that impossible. The Lecture is supported financially by the EDUCT Geography Centenary Fund and it is organized by Professor Dan Swanton and a committee at the Institute.

In keeping with the tradition of the Watson Lectures, for which the speaker is alternately drawn from within the discipline of geography and from outwith geography, the guest lecturer for 2025 was Dr. Noreen Masud. Dr. Masud, born in Pakistan and with a D.Phil from the University of Oxford, is currently lecturer in twentieth century literature at the University of Bristol. In 2023 Dr. Masud published *A Flat Place*. It is described as a memoir. On the Penguin web site a clip from a review by the Financial Times tells us "In the flatlands of Britain, and in the memories they evoke of the flat places of Pakistan, Masud both finds a way to comprehend her own story and establishes a strong voice that confirms her as a significant chronicler of personal and national experience." The book has already received several prestigious literary awards, such as Book of the Year or equivalent plaudit, by, among others, The Guardian, The Sunday Times, and The New Yorker, and has been shortlisted for many other awards.

Dr. Masud is fascinated by and, indeed, as she readily admits, somewhat obsessed by flatness. The title of her lecture was "Painting Flat Landscapes: Repetition and Imagination from Koninck to O'Keeffe". In short, she delves into what made a number of painters spend so much time painting flat landscapes. But it was about much more than the work of painters. Masud also spent considerable time drawing upon the work of some twentieth century writers with whom she is very familiar, to reveal a rather different stance towards flat places. Remarkably, the work of Dr. Wreford Watson, who was also a poet of considerable standing and the recipient of the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1950, stands out in contrast to the writing of some of the other writers she talked about, and at the same time serves to underscore what Masud sees as a unifying theme running throughout the work of the painters – that the flatness of a flat landscape brings comfort to the viewer as a 'mothering space'.

Thus, in this lecture, Masud pays tribute to Watson by looking at how artists and writers have viewed flat places. Masud is an excellent lecturer. She does what the best teachers should do; she prompts the listener to think and question what she has to say. She is by no means didactic; she modestly maintains that her position is her contention for the reasons she spells out. It is for the listener to contemplate both their own experience and what Masud has to say and then come up with their own view. Since this article cannot do justice to the lecture, it is recommended that, if you would like to begin to understand what explains the fascination that flat spaces hold for many artists and some writers, you should listen to the lecture, which can be found here: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Wreford+Watson+lecture+-+Geography+Public+lecture/1_1sshsq5c

In the lecture, Masud introduces us to the work of the painters Ruisdael, Koninck, O'Keeffe, Aitchison, and more, and to that of the writers such as W. H. Auden, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, and, of course, J. Wreford Watson. Watson actually wrote his poetry under the pseudonym James Wreford. His most famous collection of poems was "Of Time and the Lover". She finds Watson particularly interesting because she sees his poetry as being buried in landscape, and because he sees landscape as a mothering figure.

Masud starts her lecture by introducing us to her fascination with flatness and how flat places have been portrayed in twentieth century literature, before getting to the painters of flat landscapes.

Masud makes some bold claims about landscape. It shapes our thought, our way of being, and our language. And since language is an established way of thinking about feeling, we think and feel with landscape. The history of looking at landscape is the history of attaching to landscape. And it is this notion of attachment to landscape that led Masud to look further into attachment theory. She introduces us to the work of John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott, who worked on child development in the twentieth century.

Attachment theory has it that attachment "could look most truly like a kind of unawareness, a secure obliviousness to the object of our attachment". Thus, for Bowlby, a good parent might create a secure base for a child, from which a child can explore, while knowing that the parent will always be there to return to. And, for Winnicott, the parent is a form of environment for the child. Indeed, it is this language they use ... 'base' and 'environment' ... that illustrates Masud's point about how metaphors of place shape our thinking.

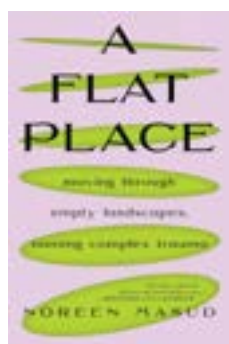


Dr. Noreen Masud

Accepting that the good parent is an environment that the child does not have to think about, focus on, or attend to, Masud is prompted to ask: "What sort of landscape demands our attention least?"

Masud postulates that it is probably a flat landscape, free of focal points, and drawing no attention to itself. She argues that, aesthetically, the flat landscape has had a bad rap in twentieth century literature. She cites the work of a number of writers, such as T. S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, George Orwell, Samuel Beckett, and W. H. Auden, to support her claim. Against this backdrop Masud suggests that Watson's plain, featured in his poem "The Gattineaus", is, in contrast, mothering, because flat landscapes escape notice, are denigrated, or seen as boring, even though they are the best places to live and to grow crops. Maybe, Masud suggests, this experience of being hated and needed, indeed hated because needed, is a phenomenon familiar to many mothers!

With this introduction to where she is coming from, Masud then turns to look at how flat landscapes have fascinated certain painters. Not surprisingly, Dutch painters of the seventeenth century feature strongly. At the outset of her analysis Masud suggests that there is a link to the previously discussed theme of the value of motherhood. These landscape paintings often include inserted buildings and other features to make them more interesting – something to cling to, like your mother.



Masud sees two features of these paintings of flat landscapes: they are half-imagined; and, they are often part of a series of paintings of similar scenes that have been painted repeatedly. For Masud, this raises two questions:

1. If you are going to invent a landscape, why invent a flat one?
2. Is there something about a flat landscape that attracts artists who like repetition?

Turning to her first question, and focusing in on the work of Dutch seventeenth century painters Koninck and Ruisdael, she rephrases the question slightly by asking why it was important for them to paint such half-imagined landscapes and for their buyers to display these landscapes. She comes up with a list of reasons, some practical, some historical. Among them are the following.

1. Recording ownership of a property. This has its roots in the earlier mapping of property and the display of such maps. With the advances in the drainage of the flatlands of Holland between 1590 and 1650, and thus more land coming under ownership, so there was a desire on the part of these new owners to record their new property, while also capturing it in a way that made it attractive to view.
2. Preserving the national identity. By the seventeenth century, the best rural vistas that had already been painted years before were beginning to disappear as industrialization and urbanization took over. This prompted a desire to preserve the national identity. Masud cited a painting of the bleaching fields – where, traditionally, linen was bleached – as illustrative of this motive.
3. Providing guidance for the viewer. The adding of features to what might otherwise be seen as a boring landscape, without a focal point, was seen as a way of rendering a painting more interesting, and providing the viewer with several focal points that, together, could serve to guide the viewer as they 'travel' through the landscape.
4. Enthralling the viewer. Masud argues that the viewer is more in thrall to an imagined flat landscape than any other kind of landscape, and thus that imagination plays a greater role in our relationship to flatness than it does in our relationship to, say, hills, or forests, or lakes.

Turning to her second question, on repetition, Masud explores what it is about flat landscapes that attracts artists and writers who exhibit a tendency to repetition – their desire to restage something time and again. She cites Ruisdael's sub-genre of paintings of scenes of Haarlem, Monet's haystacks, Aitchison's crucifixions, and O'Keeffe's series on 'sky above clouds'. Looking at the paintings does not yield a satisfactory answer. However, interestingly, as she turns again to Watson's poetry, she suggests that he may have pinned down the reiterative qualities of a plain's landscape: timeless, reliable, predictable, and where your actions echo those who were there before.

When you have listened to the talk, you may well be prompted to think about the landscapes in which you feel most at home. My own experience is mixed. I am most conscious of my comfort with the landscape of my childhood – of the rugged coastline of north Cornwall in the south-west of England. It was far from flat. And then, a close second is the comfort of sitting on the dock in Muskoka with a five-mile view of flat lake, but with islands popping up everywhere! And seen through the lens of a high-flying drone, that same landscape with that scattering of islands becomes even more beautiful and interesting. But it is worth noting that when I first saw that view from the dock, I could not relate to that form of landscape at all. Listen to the talk and put yourself to the test!

EDUCT thanks Dr. Masud for her excellent lecture and Professor Swanton and his team for having found her and made it happen.

Editor's Note: The full reference for Dr. Masud's book is: Noreen Masud, *A Flat Place, moving through empty landscapes, naming complex trauma*, (London: Penguin Random House, 2023, ppbk., 256 pp.), Cdn.\$26.99.

Famous Alumni

The Famous Monro Medical Family

by Simon Miles

Editor's Note: 2026 will mark the centenary of the formal founding of the Medical School at the University of Edinburgh. At our Annual Dinner, on 17 April 2026, EDUCT will welcome Professor David Argyle, Head of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, to speak to us on 300 years of medicine at Edinburgh. To stimulate your interest in attending that dinner and learning more about the history and achievements of the Medical School, one of the world's most famous, we thought it appropriate to have this column feature members of the famous Monro family, four generations of which played a central part in the early development of the Medical School.

Establishing a medical school is no mean achievement. And guiding that school's development to attain international prominence takes more than just vision and perseverance. And it takes several generations of outstanding leadership. What is particularly remarkable about the establishment and the rise to international prominence of the University of Edinburgh's Medical School is that it was largely one family – the Monros of Auchenbowie – which, over a period of 126 years, played such a central role in the establishment and the development of this famous institution. Three members of the family, all called Alexander, were graduates of the University – and thus qualify for coverage in this column. However, before moving to them, we need a short introduction to their progenitor, John Monro, without whom it would not have happened in the way it did.

John Munro was the first of the distinguished Monro family to achieve prominence in the medical field. He was born in 1670, in Bearcrofts, near Grangemouth, on the Firth of Forth. His father, Sir Alexander Monro, was a prominent soldier and politician. John was apprenticed to prominent surgeons prior to his entering the University of Leiden in 1692 to study medicine. Two years later he returned to Scotland and married. A year later he received a commission as an army surgeon. In 1700, John left the army and moved to Edinburgh. There he became a respected figure in medical circles. He was admitted to the Incorporation of Surgeons in 1703, becoming its Treasurer in 1708 and its President in 1712. This gave him an ex officio seat on the Edinburgh Town Council. From 1713 to 1720 he became the Town's surgeon to the poor. His increasing standing enabled him to acquire the support of the Town Council, the University of Edinburgh (then still known as the Town's College), the Royal College of Physicians, and the Incorporation of Surgeons for his plan to establish a "Seminary of Medical Education", not surprisingly modelled on the medical school at the University of Leiden.



*John Monro portrait by William Aikman 1715
Collection of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh*

Seemingly John had been thinking about this for a long time. He supposedly planned the education of his son, Alexander Monro primus, to equip him with the competences required of a future chair of anatomy. Alexander, who had been born in 1697, had studied medicine in Edinburgh, London, Paris and Leiden. There are varying accounts of how Alexander came to occupy the first University Chair of Anatomy. Some argue that John used his influence to persuade John McGill and Adam Drummond, the two professors of anatomy at the Incorporation, to resign; others argue that those two professors were so impressed with the work of Alexander that they readily stepped aside. In any event, in January 1720, Alexander Monro primus was appointed by the Town Council as Professor of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh. In the same year John was involved in the appointments of Charles Alston as Professor of Materia Medica (pharmacology in today's world), and James Crawford as Professor of Chemistry. It was these appointments and the lectures that they made possible, that are seen as the foundation on which the Medical School would be officially established in 1726.

Alexander's lectures, delivered in English as opposed to the more conventional Latin, and seemingly without notes, were very popular. Thus, after just two years in his post, Alexander primus applied to the Town to make his appointment permanent. Convention had it that all appointments at the University were held at the pleasure of the Town Council. But his request was granted and in 1722 he became the Professor of Anatomy in the City and the University. However, until November 1725, Alexander continued to lecture at Surgeons' Hall, in Surgeons' Square. The popularity of his anatomy classes had led to an increased demand for cadavers to dissect. Body snatching became a big issue. An enraged public was making life uncomfortable for Alexander and he asked that the Town enable him to lecture and demonstrate his anatomical skills in the relative safety of the University. The Town Council agreed to this and on 3 November 1725 Alexander was formally appointed to the inaugural University Chair of Anatomy.

In February of 1726 four more appointments were made to what would constitute the initial faculty of the Medical School: John Rutherford and John Innes were appointed Professors of the Practice of Medicine, Andrew St. Clair was made Professor of the Institutes of Theory of Medicine, Andrew Plummer was appointed Professor of Chemistry, and John Gibson appointed Professor of Midwifery. By 1729 Alexander primus and a committee of donors had established a small teaching hospital. Initially, it could treat six poor people, as in-patients, at a time. By 1736, King George II had granted the hospital a royal charter. And thus began the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Given the demand for more beds and the willingness of donors to step forward, in short order a new building was commissioned. Designed by William Adam, the new building, on Infirmary Street, was in working condition by 1741, but took another four years to be completed. That building, with 228 beds, was demolished in 1884 when the Infirmary moved to a new building on Lauriston Place. It is that building which now serves as the home of the University's Edinburgh Futures Institute.

In 1726, the year the Medical School was founded, Alexander primus also published his textbook *The Anatomy of the Human Bones*. It was a great success, running to 11 editions and translated into most European languages. Later editions also included his description of *The Anatomy of Human Nerves*.



Bust of Alexander Monro primus by an unknown sculptor, 1812. Old College, University of Edinburgh

Alexander primus's institution building, teaching and research contributed much to the growing reputation of the Medical School. And his contributions were not confined to the University. Outside of the University he was also an institution builder. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and a Fellow of the Royal Society of London early in his career. He also helped to establish, in 1731, the Society for the Improvement of Medical Knowledge. Over time, with the continuing involvement of Alexander primus and his son, Alexander secundus, this evolved into the Philosophical Society, which in turn became the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Alexander primus continued to teach and occupy the Chair of Anatomy until 1764. Three years later, in 1767, he died. Some 44 years of teaching, with 38 years as University Chair, was impressive. However, what is particularly remarkable is his seeming determination to have his third son, Alexander secundus, succeed him as Professor of Anatomy.

Alexander secundus was born in Edinburgh in 1733. He attended Mr. Mundell's School, which served the wealthy families living in the Lawnmarket neighbourhood. The teaching was mostly in Latin. By the age of 12 Alexander had entered the University of Edinburgh and was studying ethics, mathematics, philosophy, Latin, Greek and history. Like many of the arts students of his time, he did not graduate, since the certificates that one's professors provided were regarded as more valuable documents than the official graduation diploma. At the age of 18 he had started his medical education and served as an assistant to his father. His curiosity, perseverance and good memory served him well. His big break came when, in 1753, the new cohort of students created such a large class that his father decided to divide the class into two sessions and to ask his son to teach the evening class. Alexander secundus performed remarkably well. His father thus requested the Town Council to make Alexander secundus his successor. Alexander secundus became a joint Professor of Anatomy in July 1754, sharing the Chair with his father. This all happened before he actually graduated with his degree as Doctor of Medicine, in October 1755.

Shortly after that, Alexander secundus decided to take the equivalent of a European tour, but for him time would be spent working with famous medics in London, Paris, Leiden and Berlin. In 1757 he was called back to Edinburgh to stand in for his father, who had been taken ill. In 1758 the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons admitted Alexander secundus as a licentiate and that same year, after his father had delivered the inaugural lectures in anatomy and surgery, Alexander took over his father's Chair and role as Professor of Anatomy. He also taught surgery but never practised as a surgeon. He was somewhat defensive of his position and resisted suggestions that a separate chair in surgery be established. He continued to teach full-time until 1800 when he shifted to a part-time role, sharing his load with his son, Alexander tertius, until 1808, at which time he ceased teaching and gave up the Chair he had occupied for 54 years. It seems, however, that his very clear way of presenting his lectures meant that his popularity continued until his last lectures. Records show he had 228 students in 1808.

Like his father, Alexander secundus also published and enhanced the reputation of the Medical School. He is best known for: his research on the comparative anatomy of mammalian species; his research on, and documentation of, the human lymphatic system; and, for producing the most detailed description of the musculoskeletal system that had ever been seen.



Alexander Monro secundus. Coloured stipple engraving by James Heath (1757–1834), after Henry Raeburn (1756–1823)

His publications covered such subjects as: the structure and functions of the nervous system, with his work on this being known to medical students even today; the structure and physiology of fish compared with that of humans and other mammals; the bursae (the cushion-like pads in human joints), their structure and the accidents and diseases to which they are susceptible; and, examinations of the brain, the eye and the ear.

Alexander secundus is particularly well known for a scientific hypothesis he developed with one of his former students, George Kellie, a surgeon practising in Leith. Known as the Monro-Kellie doctrine, it addresses intracranial pressure (ICP). It proposes that the cranial cavity of a healthy human is rigid and thus maintains a constant volume since the brain is almost incompressible. Thus, whereas there are three fluids occupying the cavity, any increase in volume of one of these should be compensated by a decrease in volume of another. Any increase in ICP is indicative of health problems such as tumors, cerebral edema, venous sinus thrombosis, heart failure, etc.

Outside of the University, Alexander secundus, like his father, was heavily involved in various societies. Of note was his position as joint secretary, with David Hume, of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh from 1760 to 1763, following which he became sole secretary for the next 20 years when it became the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Alexander secundus married well. His wife, Katherine Inglis, was a daughter of the treasurer of the Bank of Scotland. For much of his professional career they lived on Nicolson Street, close to the University and the Infirmary. However, his passion for gardening led him to purchase a property of some 271 acres in Craiglockhart on the edge of the city in 1773. He and Katherine had three sons (the eldest dying young) and two daughters. One of the two surviving sons was Alexander tertius.

Alexander secundus died in 1817, leaving his valuable collection of anatomical preparations, and his extensive library, along with his father's collection, to the University's Anatomical Museum for the use of his son and successors.

Like his father, Alexander secundus had groomed his son to become his successor and had arranged for a timely transition. Alexander tertius was born in 1773. He attended the Medical School at Edinburgh and graduated in 1797. In 1798, at the aged of 25, his father had convinced the Town Council to appoint him as Joint Professor of Anatomy. Oddly enough, Alexander tertius was travelling abroad at the time, thus his father continued to teach a full load until Alexander tertius returned in 1800. This arrangement of a shared Chair continued until 1808, when Alexander secundus ceased teaching. Understandably, Alexander tertius's record has often been compared to that of his father and grandfather and some critics have been unkind. He is reputed to have used his father's notes to lecture. But he had some remarkable students, some of whom, such as Sir Humphrey Davy and Charles Darwin, would become leading scientists. He also published: his best-known works being *Outlines of the Anatomy of the Human Body* (1813), and *Morbid Anatomy of the Brain* (1827). But again, the critics regard these as writings that draw more upon the research of others than upon his own. He continued to occupy the Chair of Anatomy until 1846. Thus ended the remarkable run of 126 years during which three generations of the Monro family held the post of Professor of Anatomy, and in all but the first six years of which they also occupied the Chair of Anatomy. He died in 1859.

And what of the generations to follow? Well, they demonstrated that there is a life outside of medicine. Alexander tertius and his wife, Maria, had six sons and six daughters. Although the eldest was named Alexander, and doubtless expected to become a professor of anatomy, he decided against medicine for a career. The fourth son, David, did graduate in medicine in 1835, from Edinburgh, but he went on to become a notable politician in New Zealand, receiving a knighthood for his services. And a grandson of Alexander tertius, David Binning Monro, became a classicist who served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

EDUCT acknowledges the following sources of information for compiling this article: Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh; University of Edinburgh Archives; Wikipedia; Britannica; Brain Science; University of Otago Library; National Institutes of Health National Library of Medicine; Who Named It.



Alexander Monro tertius (1773–1859) by John Watson Gordon. The University of Edinburgh Fine Art Collection. Oil on canvas

Do you know of other Edinburgh alumni in Toronto?

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone who might be interested.

Welcome To Our New Members

by Simon Miles

Maya Hibbeln

Maya Hibbeln is a public opinion researcher, who focuses her energies on urban planning, sustainability and public engagement. Having spent time on the east coast of Canada, Maya has recently moved back to Toronto to be closer to family and to work with local artists on letterpress and screen-printing projects.

Born in Toronto, Maya attended Northern Secondary School, where she was able to pursue a broad range of interests including rowing, curling, sewing, and swimming. Indeed, her interest in open water swimming has taken her to Greece, Croatia and Oman, where she swam more than 25km over the course of a week. She hopes to find an outdoor swim club here in Toronto to continue this activity locally.

Maya attended Dalhousie University for her undergraduate degree: a B.A. (Hons) in Political Science. There, she became particularly interested in studying how sport is inherently political – which led to her diving into topics such as doping, gender, and nationalism. This interest inspired her to seek out a master's degree in sport policy, and this is how Edinburgh attracted her attention. Edinburgh offers an M.Sc. in Sport Policy, Management and International Development. Maya opted for the one-year taught masters.

Maya loved the city's striking landscape. She was fortunate to find a flat in Bruntsfield, overlooking the Meadows and around the corner from the Warrender Baths, where she would drop in for swims.

While based in Edinburgh, Maya also had the opportunity to conduct some part-time work for Canadian clients, which made it possible for her to make the most of any free time to explore Scotland. She managed to get to the Outer Hebrides, the Isle of Skye, and other landmark places. One of her favourite moments was a weekend away at Guardswell Farm, near Perthshire, where she enjoyed a class on spoon carving and woodworking.

While in Scotland, Maya was also able to take many courses on print-making, bookbinding and letterpress. Indeed, on her return to Canada, she bought herself a small printing press and had the good fortune of being able to purchase a selection of typefaces from a local company.

Graduating in September 2019 with her M.Sc., for which she had been awarded a distinction, Maya had planned to stay on for a couple of years, but by March 2020 Covid had descended and she returned home.

Maya's first job back in Toronto was with The GenWell Project, a not-for-profit, and ongoing client, for which she conducted research on isolation and loneliness within Canada. By late 2020 she was also working part-time, online, for Simon Fraser University (SFU) on a project in which she has continued to be involved for several years. It is an extensive examination of sexual assault and violence in the military in Canada, the US and Australia. As EDUCT members are aware, this issue has been attracting media attention over the last several years. When Maya started working on the project, General Vance was one of the key figures being talked about in Canada. As was illustrated by the Vance case, in broad terms the problems arise from institutional culture and, within that context, the non-reporting of incidents. Although Maya sees some change in addressing the overall issue, in large part due to the momentum arising from the #MeToo movement, the progress is still painfully slow.

Later, in September 2021, while still working for SFU, Maya moved to Halifax and started a full-time job with Narrative Research, a public opinion research company. Much of the work involved the conducting of surveys, and the organization of focus groups in support of the preparation of reports designed to help shape public policy. Although small, the company had a diverse range of many clients, including those from all levels of government. Adding to the interest was the breadth of topics on which she worked ... ranging from climate change, election polling, and library usage, to healthcare. Maya felt she learned a lot about how to conduct research that would satisfy clients' standards (e.g., with respect to sample sizes).

It was work on climate change and active transportation for the City of Edmonton, that led Maya to spend time at the Urban Cycling Institute, at the University of Amsterdam, in July 2024, for a summer course on Planning the Cycling City. And it is her fascination with this general theme, plus her own love of cycling, that is currently driving Maya in her pursuit of work on projects in urban planning and transportation.

Maya already has several published papers on sport policy to her name and currently serves as Managing Editor of Research, for The Journal of Emerging Sport Studies, affiliated with Brock University, Ontario.

EDUCT welcomes Maya, and wishes her the very best in finding fascinating projects to work on.



Maya Hibbeln: with the famous Greyfriars Bobby

Agnes Ouko

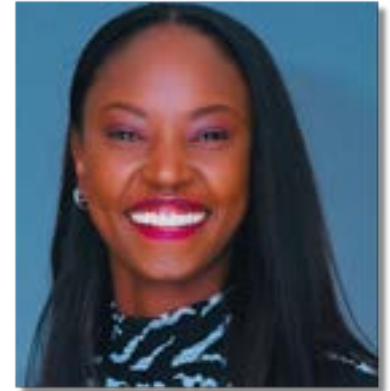
Agnes Ouko is as Associate with the Technology Leadership Advancement Program, that operates out of CIBC's corporate head office in Toronto.

Agnes was born in Nairobi, Kenya. She attended nine schools, most of them boarding schools, before graduating in 2015. However, she loved school life – with her mother travelling constantly in support of the diplomatic service, it was central to her life. She played every available sport, largely because it offered a way of getting outside of the school, and at the same time she excelled in most subjects. When she graduated from school she was in the top 100, based on performance in all subjects, for all of Kenya.

In planning to go to university, Agnes had done lots of work. She had applied for a Mastercard Scholarship, but the competition was intense. She recalls having to write seven essays, and obtain several letters of support. Fortunately, on leaving school, she got a job in a local bank that was also supportive. She had dreamed of attending Columbia University in New York, as much as anything just so she could spend time in the Big Apple. But just as she was about to make a decision, she received a call from another university to which she had applied – the University of British Columbia. They offered her that Mastercard Scholarship, which covered all her needs.

Thus, in September 2015 Agnes arrived in Vancouver. She found study culture in Canada took some getting used to after Kenya. But she adjusted, did well, and graduated with her B.Sc. (Hons), in Mathematics and Computer Science, in 2019.

Upon graduation, Agnes initially enrolled as an intern with Boeing, in its research lab, in Vancouver. She then moved to Brex, a company that offers corporate credit cards to startups that have raised venture capital. But she found that living in Vancouver was like living in a bubble: she felt cut off from the rest of the world. And with Covid setting in that sense of confinement was heightened. In August 2020 Agnes decided to move to Toronto. Well, yes, she had set up some interviews before hopping on the plane, but she was prepared to take a chance. Fortunately, one of those interviews led to a job - with 1Password, a company that provides password and secrets management for individuals and enterprises.



Agnes Ouko

Agnes had not been in Toronto very long before she sensed she needed a graduate degree to advance further. She applied to Edinburgh to pursue the M.Sc. in Data Science, Technology and Innovation, and was accepted. The good news was that Mastercard had been impressed with her performance as an undergraduate and it agreed to fund her with another scholarship. But the bad news was that Covid was unrelenting. So, in September 2021, while still working at 1Password, Agnes had to start the coursework. The experience was mixed: some courses worked well, and others not so well. And the timing of some courses – can you imagine taking a course at 4:00 am? – was obviously not good. Overall, however, she was very satisfied. Agnes kept this up until May 2023. She then went to Edinburgh in June and met with her tutor, only to be told that, since she had completed the coursework, there was no need for her to stay in Edinburgh. So it was back to Toronto to write her thesis. Her theme was “Improving the process of feedback: maximizing the distance learning student voice in university courses”. In essence, Agnes was investigating how to maximize the distance learning student voice in courses offered at the University of Edinburgh by focusing on how distance learners provide feedback to the University on various courses and programmes.

With the thesis completed in August 2024, Agnes returned to Edinburgh to graduate in November. She was honoured by being asked to serve as the student orator at the graduation ceremony!

While pursuing her degree at Edinburgh online Agnes decided to move from 1Password to CIBC. There, Agnes had the opportunity to be assigned to the Vice-President of Enterprise Data in what is the first of three ‘rotations’, each of eight months, which, over the course of two years, will give her considerable exposure to the workings of the bank. Rotation 1 involved working with data pertaining to CIBC's operations. Not surprisingly, artificial intelligence is looming large in much of the work, which is focused on updating the bank's data systems. In April she shifted to rotation 2 in which there is more emphasis on the technologies involved.

In the longer term, Agnes would like to buy a company, to which she can add value through her knowledge of technologies that improve corporate operations.

EDUCT welcomes Agnes and wishes her well in realizing her long-term goals.

OBITUARY

by Simon Miles

D. R. Fraser Taylor

Fraser Taylor, a long-time member of EDUCT, died on 22 March, 2025. Remarkably, although he was 87, he had been active in his roles as Chancellor's Distinguished Research Professor of International Affairs, Geography and Environmental Studies, and Director of the Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre, at Carleton University, until his death.

Fraser's life story is one of outstanding achievement. Born in 1937, he had grown up in rural Fife, attending a small, village school. As he had noted, if it had not been for the inauguration of free post-secondary education just as he was leaving school, he would never have been able to attend university. Fortune smiled on his generation. He entered the University of Edinburgh and completed his M.A. (Hons.) in Geography in 1960.

Fraser was curious about the developing world and wanted to spend time there teaching and conducting further research. To this end, he first decided to pursue a Post-graduate Certificate in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. It was there that he met a fellow student, from Canada, who would become his wife. However, before setting off for Kenya, Fraser arranged to have Edinburgh's then-Department of Geography accept him as a doctoral student. Then, armed with their PGCEs, Fraser and his wife travelled to Kenya, where Fraser began work as an education officer, while also conducting fieldwork for his doctorate on rural development in Africa.

And it was in conducting that fieldwork that he realized that he must listen to the local people talk about their lives rather than try to apply current academic theory to explain their particular situation and the challenges they face. It was this realization that shaped his thinking about what he later referred to as 'development from within'. And it also shaped his thinking about the making of maps. In short, if maps are to help people understand their world, and especially at the scale of the community, those maps have to capture all kinds of qualitative and quantitative information linked by location. That information comes from the local people. Notably, Fraser was already pioneering computer-based analysis of data gathered in Kenya for his doctorate in the 'Sixties.



Dr. Fraser Taylor

Fraser received his Ph.D. from Edinburgh in 1966. He and his wife then moved to Ottawa where Fraser had already been accepted as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at Carleton University. There, over time, Fraser became known as a cartographer of note and especially so for his pioneering work in developing Cybercartography. Although the term cybercartography was not part of the cartographers' lexicon until Fraser introduced it in a keynote address to the International Cartography Society's Conference in 1997, the work that he had been conducting and the techniques he had been refining since his doctorate can, in retrospect, be seen as the evolution of Cybercartography.

What is Cybercartography? As Fraser put it ... "It is a technique that uses all five senses. My basic argument is, if we, as human beings, experience our surroundings using sight, sound, taste, smell and touch, why can't we produce maps using all these senses? What we are now doing is creating a method, a framework, in which this information can sit." Thus, for Fraser, Cybercartography is "the organization, presentation, analysis and communication of spatially referenced information on a wide variety of topics of interest to society in an interactive, dynamic, multisensory format with the use of multimedia and multimodal interfaces". In 2014, in the Introduction to his one of his books on Cybercartography, Fraser cited Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the originator of the Web, who anticipated two major challenges in making the most of the Web. The first is to link datasets on different topics, both quantitative and qualitative, and generate new and more useful combined information. The second is to find innovative ways of displaying that information in easily understood ways. Fraser observed that Cybercartography, using location as a linking mechanism, does both. Thus, Cybercartography is very much at the cutting edge of the development of Web technology.

This method and framework have evolved from Fraser's lifelong efforts to capture information that provides new and better insights into reality. In 1969, in his early days as a cartographer, Fraser made his mark by producing the world's first thematic computer atlas: The Computer Atlas of Ottawa-Hull. Computer mapping allowed him to stack many variables on top of one another and to find the relationships that exist between those variables. In recent years, some of his outstanding contributions have been made through his research group's work with Indigenous communities in northern Canada in creating cybercartographic atlases capturing Indigenous and local knowledge. Several of the early cybercartographic atlases he produced were developed in partnership with Inuit communities in Canada. More recently he had been working on projects in Mexico and Brazil. Fraser was convinced that too much specialization does not lead to innovation. He rightly argued for an holistic approach, that embraces learning from other societies, and, above all, listening to the people who wish to create maps of their realities.

To further the institutionalization of the approach to mapping, Fraser and his colleagues at Carleton established the Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre (GCRC) in 2003. As Fraser's reputation grew, he was able to attract more research funding and an increasing number of contracts, which enabled him to maintain a strong and dedicated team at the Centre. This has led to what Fraser and his colleagues now call the Nunaliit platform. Nunaliit is the Inuit word for community. The platform presents information in multisensory, multimodal and multimedia formats, through an integration of theory, practice, technological developments and publication. The Centre is currently regarded as the world's leading centre for the study and advancement of Cybercartography.

In addition to leading this prominent research group at Carleton, Fraser had long been very active in the global arena. He was a member of the United Nations Expert Group on Global Geospatial Information Management, a former President of the International Cartographic Association, a former President of the International Union for Surveys and Mapping, and a former Chair of the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping. He was also Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Association of African Studies for 15 years. In short, he has indeed contributed to the building of a not just a better Canada but a better world.

Not surprisingly, Fraser's research led to his being the recipient of many prestigious awards, including, most notably: the Killam Prize for Social Sciences in 2014 (this being Canada's highest academic honour); the Carl Mannerfelt Gold Award in 2013 (the top honour to be bestowed by the International Cartographic Association); and, the 3M/Royal Canadian Geographic Society Award for Environmental Innovation in 2012.

In 2008, Fraser's work was recognized through his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was the first cartographer to have been so elected.

In early 2022, Fraser was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada. Created in 1967, the Order of Canada recognizes those who, through their outstanding accomplishments, have contributed to the building of a better Canada. Fraser was recognized "for his innovative contributions to cartography, and for spearheading the theoretical and practical development of cybercartography".

Fraser is survived by his wife and their three children. EDUCT extends its condolences to them and to his colleagues at the GCRC.

At EDUCT, Fraser will be remembered as an enthusiastic and generous supporter of EDUCT's Geography Centenary Fund (EGCF) from the time it was just a concept. Three days before he died, Fraser and I were online listening to this year's Wreford Watson Lecture, which was organized by the Institute of Geography at Edinburgh. The lecture series is supported by the EGCF. This was the first time that the University had arranged for worldwide streaming of the lecture. It was a most stimulating lecture and, to my mind, helped to underscore the value of the continuing support that EDUCT members, such as Fraser, have given to the Fund over the years. He will be missed.

Books

Rory Stewart's Refreshing Insights on British Politics

by Gavin Clark

Rory Stewart, *Politics on the Edge: a Memoir from Within* (New York, Penguin Random House US, 2023, 454 pp.), ppbk. Cdn. \$27.99. Note that the hardcover edition is available in Canada under the title *How Not to Be a Politician*, Cdn. \$39.99.

Rory Stewart can be described variously as a public intellectual, broadcaster, academic, social entrepreneur, former diplomat and former Member of the U.K. Parliament and Cabinet Minister. In this book he relates his time in politics at Westminster from his first election in 2010 to his campaign for the leadership of the Conservative Party and his resignation in 2019. His time spent in Parliament included service in five junior minister posts (which are not Cabinet posts in Britain) and one Cabinet-level ministerial office. In those nine years he left his mark: both Britain and the developing world benefitted. Anyone interested in learning about the inner workings of government, and what to expect if contemplating a run for elected office, will find this book very useful, and doubtless equally disconcerting. When published, it became an instant best seller in the U.K.

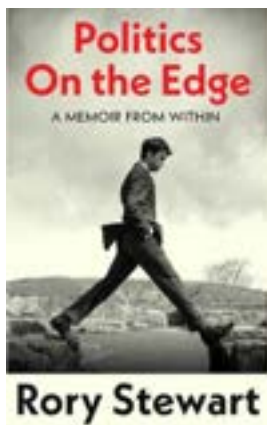
Rory's background was one that naturally led to politics. He was born in Hong Kong in 1973. Both his grandfather and father had been part of the colonial service. His father later rose to become second-in-command at the British Intelligence Service (MI6). Rory attended the Dragon School and Eton, before going up to Oxford. Upon graduation, he joined the diplomatic service and spent time in Indonesia, Montenegro, Iraq and Afghanistan. During this period of service, he took time off to spend two years walking through Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India and Nepal. He captured the experience of those two years in his book *The Places in Between*. His later time in Iraq is portrayed in his book *Occupational Hazards: My Time Governing in Iraq* (2006), which was republished as *The Prince of the Marshes* (2007).

In 2005 he moved to Kabul to establish, in partnership with the then Prince of Wales and Hamid Karzai, a charitable non-governmental organization, Turquoise Mountain Foundation. It is now working worldwide and run by Rory's wife, Shoshana Stewart. In 2008 he took up a professorship at Harvard, teaching human rights.

In 2009 Rory decided to seek election as an MP at Westminster. He was 36, well-travelled, and familiar with the dire constraints confronting the majority of the world's population. He valued being able to interact with people to understand their particular situation and, albeit having been born into a family of privilege, he was keen to improve the lot of the poor.

His documenting of his time in politics is refreshingly frank. Nothing is held back. He is excellent at describing people and places. Clearly, he was not writing this book to garner political favour.

The picture he paints of politics at Westminster starts with his explanation of how, quite serendipitously, he ended up being nominated as the candidate for the Conservative Party in the constituency of Penrith and The Border, in Cumbria. There had been a series of scandals exposed in 2009, in the Daily Telegraph. Cabinet ministers and other MPs had been caught, when filing their expense claims, for misappropriating public funds for personal uses.



Among the more prominent were Douglas Hogg, who claimed money for “cleaning the moat”, and David Cameron, at that time Leader of the Conservative Opposition, who had seen fit to claim for “pruning the wisterias”. As a result, more than 20 members of parliament stood down. Cameron decided to change the traditional procedure for selecting candidates. Instead of relying on a centrally controlled party committee, he proposed that the constituency associations should be responsible for the selection of their candidates. In getting to understand his chosen constituency, Rory walked to every hill village and bothy to get to know his constituents. Cumbria, like the Yorkshire Dales, is known for its ‘hard people’. But once they trust you, they will not desert you. He won the nomination and was elected with a significant majority.

On entering Parliament in 2010 Rory was introduced to the One Nation Club, a bastion of conservatism. Here he learned that the traditional route to office in Westminster was several years as a backbencher, then more years with the Whips Office before becoming a junior minister. This lesson was reinforced when he received Cameron's invitation to Chequers to discuss Afghanistan – along with other ministers. The visit convinced him that (a) Cameron made his own decisions, even in the face of facts and the expertise of others, and (b) that as an MP he had no influence on policy. Rory saw backbenchers as sheep waiting to be herded by the collies (the Whips). Rory needed to become at least a junior minister. The wait was long.

As Rory assesses his chances of becoming a junior minister he shares with us his views on the qualifications needed to become a junior minister or even a Cabinet Minister. He was appalled by the prevailing belief that a first-class degree in anything from Oxbridge was qualification for any ministerial post. MPs with specialist knowledge were not seen as making good ministers. His fortunes were not improved by his antipathy towards Cameron. When in Afghanistan setting up the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, Rory and other NGO leaders had met with the visiting Cameron in a triple-length, sand-bagged shipping container. To their total incomprehension, Cameron opened the meeting with “Good Afternoon. Normally at this moment I would be drinking a cup of tea with eight sugars in it.” Cameron took no notes as each NGO director spoke, and he closed the meeting saying “Well, at least we are all agreed upon one extremely straightforward and simple point, which is that our troops are doing very difficult and important work, and we should support them.” Cameron had heard nothing and confirmed Rory's fear that the party of Churchill was “becoming the party of Bertie Wooster.”

The election of 2010 resulted in a minority government. Cameron was Prime Minister but a coalition was formed with the Liberal Democrats. Thus there were fewer junior minister posts for Conservatives. In the election of May 2015 the Conservatives were returned with a majority. Rory then received his first significant appointment – as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This is a junior minister post. He was variously styled as Resources Minister, Floods Minister, Environment Minister, and more. Initially planning to be there five years, he held the post until July 2016. In that year Rory championed many initiatives ranging from the successful 85% reduction in the use of plastic shopping bags in England following similar successes in Wales and Scotland, greater involvement of youth in running national parks, the protection of threatened species, the plan to create a walkway of 2,700 miles around England's coastline, and much more.

And then, in 2016, Cameron called for the referendum that was to lead to Brexit. Following the referendum the government accepted that the U.K. should leave the European Union, and Cameron resigned. Rory was appalled that Cameron had not allowed any government department to prepare contingency plans. There were plenty of contenders for Cameron's job. Rory was an early backer of Theresa May. When she won, Rory was rewarded by being appointed Minister of State in the Department of International Development as of July 2016. This office he held until January 2018.



Rory Stewart

In relating his moves between ministries Rory brings to light another sad fact of life in Whitehall. He became very conscious of the formal distance that senior civil servants establish between themselves and their ministers. He knew many of his civil servants: some personally, some as colleagues in Iraq and Afghanistan - all by first names. Now, he faced, for example: "We thought we should brief you, Minister of State, on our current priorities". Note, "our", not "your".

And, despite being a junior minister, it was difficult to steer policy. Funding to an area in Syria in jihadist hands is an example. Rory was determined to stop the funding. He found that none of the staff had visited the areas in Syria, nor were there staff on the ground. But Rory was told that, although his signature was enough to authorize the programme, he had no authority to stop it! "The decision is above our pay grade, Minister." But no one could identify whose decision it was. He visited British and Syrian embassies in Turkey, the U.S. Special Forces in Syria, the Foreign Office, MI6, and the U.S. presidential envoy for Syria and Iraq in Washington D.C. All denied having authority to terminate the funding.

In 2017 Theresa May called an election. Rory's majority increased, but the governing Conservatives saw their majority reduced, such that the Conservatives entered a confidence and supply agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party. Rory retained his post as Minister of State for International Development, and was also appointed Minister of State for Africa. This new post meant he was dealing with such hot spots as South Sudan, an area of 200 separate ethnic groups, that had suffered 50 years of civil war and was then host to 12,000 peacekeepers from 60 nations. Rory travelled widely in Africa and was "astonished by the speed and depth of erosion of the Foreign Office's position in Africa." The description of the situation in Africa is possibly the most disheartening part of the book. One is left wondering how anyone could survive such soul-destroying futility.

However, the very next part of the book is one that can give the reader some joy. No sooner had Rory's plans for Africa been approved by the National Security Council than he was replaced and appointed as Minister of State in the Ministry of Justice, with responsibility for courts and prisons. It is here that Rory was able to shine. He was dealing with tangible problems where success could be achieved and documented. The department was in a mess. Its budget had been cut by 25% by Cameron and Osborne, a past Secretary of State had privatized prison maintenance, another had privatized the Probation Service, and a third, Michael Gove, had sold off the London prisons. Liz Truss, a fourth, had rented out space in the department building. At this time, the prisons had 65,000 places, but 85,000 prisoners; 16,000 of whom were sex offenders.

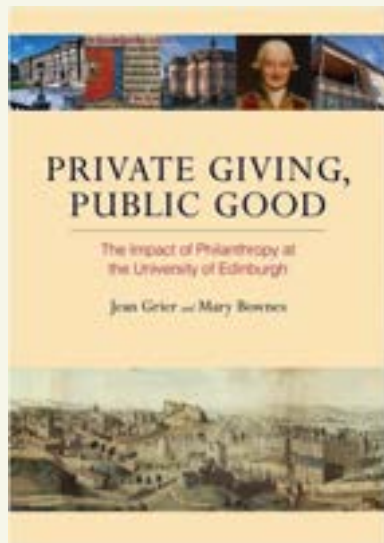
Rory visited prisons to witness the appalling conditions: the overcrowding, the rubbish, the gangs, the assaults, the recidivism, and nonsensical reasons for some of the short prison sentences (e.g., not paying for a TV licence).

Rory achieved the elimination of those short sentences. The press did not applaud. The Daily Mail's front-page headline was "Minister gives Green Light to Criminals"! He introduced better training for prison staff, and ensured they had safety vests and pepper spray. He averted a strike by staff. He designed a plan to radically improve prisons and he started implementing it with a pilot involving the 10 worst prisons. Within a year, there were appreciable and measurable improvements.

And then Rory was finally appointed to Cabinet. On 1 May 2019 he became Secretary of State for International Development. But he had no time to leave his mark. Throughout 2018 the heated discussions on the nature of Britain's future formal relationship with the European Union were leading to moves to replace Theresa May. By April 2019 this was well underway. Rory's support was solicited, but he decided to take a run for the leadership himself. His wife organized his campaign. He obtained the support of several noteworthy figures, he did well in early debates, and remained in the race until the third ballot when he was eliminated. As soon as Boris Johnson was elected PM on 23 July, Rory resigned his Cabinet post. In September, he became an Independent MP. And in the election of December 2019, he was not a candidate.

One is left with the impression that Rory's decision not to run again was a loss for Britain. He had demonstrated a commitment to make both Britain and the world a better place. He was one who avoided any involvement in scandals; and he was not afraid to speak his mind in support of ethically sound policies and behaviour; and he listened to his constituents. I recommend this book.

If you need a gentle nudge to buy the book, listen to Rory in 2015, when, as Environment Minister, he gave a speech defending the British hedgehog! Several newspapers said it was the best speech of the year. The fifteen-minute speech is on the web. Look for "Rory Stewart 2015 hedgehogs". It is everything one would expect to hear in the House of Commons, and shows his passion for his job, the environment and the country.



A Special Offer to EDUCT Members

Would you like to own a copy of the latest book on the University of Edinburgh?

Jean Grier and Mary Bownes, Private Giving, Public Good: The Impact of Philanthropy at the University of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2014), 224 pp., £30.

EDUCT would like to make it possible for every member to own a copy of this magnificent book on our University. We have arranged for a slight discount to be offered to members. Just how much we can offer off the market price of £30 depends on our shipping costs. If you would like to purchase a copy, or if you are planning to visit Edinburgh soon and can help with the transport of a few copies at no charge, please contact Simon Miles at 416-466-8793 or simon-miles@sympatico.ca.

For a review of the book, see EDUCT News, September 2014, p.19.

Treasurer's Report

Our Treasurer reports that EDUCT's accounts, as of 31 May 2025, show a balance of \$13,364.71.

Answers to the Burns Night Quiz

Part I: Elijah McCoy, Alexander Graham Bell, Geoffrey Hinton, Christy Clark

Part II: Gordon Brown, Lord Palmerston (Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston), John Russell (1st Earl Russell)

Part III: First seven photos: Jenners, Greyfriars Bobby, Main Library Sign, Dugald Stewart Monument, Victor Hugo, David Hume's Toe, Golden Boy of Old College. Last five photos: Heart of Midlothian, Playfair Library Ceiling, New College (nobody managed to guess this one, but can they be blamed? This was very hard... but the colour of the interior is distinctive), University Logo, The Moose Head in Teviot (nobody knew this one either... apparently all who attended the event spent all their Saturday nights at the library!)

Part IV: Gang aft agley, Nine inch will please a lady, June

Part V: Royal Dick School of Veterinary Studies, Buccleuch Place, the Scott Monument (also missed by most - the key was knowing it is also called the "Gothic Rocket")

Are you a fan of Scottish writing?

Do you enjoy reading novels and non-fiction by Scottish authors?

How about books about Scotland or Scots? If so, EDUCT would welcome your views and opinions for publication in EDUCT News.

Please contact the EDUCT News Editor, Simon Miles at simon-miles@sympatico.ca.

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Membership Dues

Annual membership fees are due in January of each year. If you have not yet renewed for this year, please send \$35 to our Treasurer, Fiona Bruce either by Interac e-Transfer, via **educt.treasurer@gmail.com** or by cheque, payable to EDUCT, and marked "membership". For mailing details, please call Fiona at 416-728-4254.

Your promptness in this regard greatly lightens the load on our volunteer Board and is thus much appreciated. Thank you, in advance, for your payment.

Friends of EDUCT

Friends of EDUCT are recognized by virtue of the generosity they demonstrated when, as nonmembers, they donated to the University of Edinburgh through an EDUCT-initiated special fund.

Carlyle Circle Members in Canada

EDUCT wishes to acknowledge the generosity of alumni and friends of the University of Edinburgh who have decided to leave a bequest to the University in their wills. They are recognized by the University as Carlyle Circle members. We extend our gratitude to each of them. If you are a member of the Carlyle Circle or know of such members, you are encouraged to contact us.

Honorary Members of EDUCT

Recipients of Honorary Degrees from the University of Edinburgh who reside in Canada are invited to become Honorary Members of EDUCT.

Are you on our list?

We know of over 240 alumni in the Toronto area. As of 31 May 2025, we have 171 members, most of whom are in the Toronto area. If you would be interested in joining EDUCT, please do not hesitate to contact the EDUCT President or the Club Treasurer.

EDUCT News is published three times a year in January, May and September. Please send submissions or ideas for articles to the Editor: **simon-miles@sympatico.ca**

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