



THE PIPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

NUMBER 50 AUTUMN 2018

'They are the ground, the books, the academies. From whence doth spring the true Prometheus fire.'

Love's Labour's Lost by William Shakespeare

It almost seems the Season is celebrating with us in this beautiful golden autumn as seems fitting for the Library's 50th year. This edition of the *Piper* also adds to the celebrations. We have an article by Grant Buttars based on his recent talk to the friends about the library's evolution from the first custom built edifice of 1616 to our present day building built by the firm of Basil Spence and splendidly refurbished recently. I entered the downstairs hub last week to weave my way through queues and groups of students eager to use the services. Some were also sitting talking energetically about their courses and each other. I ascended through the hush of quiet study to the glory and light of the CRC space with its tantalising glimpses of the Edinburgh skyline, so

different to the stygian gloom of the sixth floor 'stacks' which some of you will remember. The Library has become a real centre and hub of University life.

Also in this issue we remind you of the role and benefits the Friends have. This is also the 50th edition of the *Piper* and we are archiving all previous editions on line, available for all to trace our development and contribution over the years.

So let's celebrate something that brings positive light and value in these darkening times. I hope to do this with some of you in the Library over the coming Year.

**Lady Caplan,
President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library**



The Main Library at 50

How did we get here?

Grant Buttars

So, the Main Library is 50. It's as old as the films *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Planet of the Apes* or (if you don't like sci-fi) *Rosemary's Baby*. It opened in a year when James Earl Ray was arrested for shooting Martin Luther King, when Swaziland became independent and when Led Zeppelin made their first live performance. 1968 is also when I was born, though that has no bearing on the matter at hand either.

My purpose is to look at how we got here. In approaching this I decided that a longer context was necessary. This is the fourth Library and it has to be contextualised in relation to its predecessors.

I also wanted to let the archives themselves talk, in particular ones that we have digitised. As you can imagine, not everything I need has been digitised or would necessarily be a high priority for digitisation.

In the space available here, I can only sketch out a story. I have also drawn heavily on Guild & Law's history of the Library, produced in 1980 and it's made me realise how necessary another chapter is (any volunteers?). I have been here since 2001 and, even in that period, there has been much change. I would actually go further and say that there are a number of potential PhD studentships in the history of the Library.

This is the first University Library, not as it was built but close to the time of its demolition. Built in 1616/17, the building itself is University Hall and was

the University's first purpose built academic building.

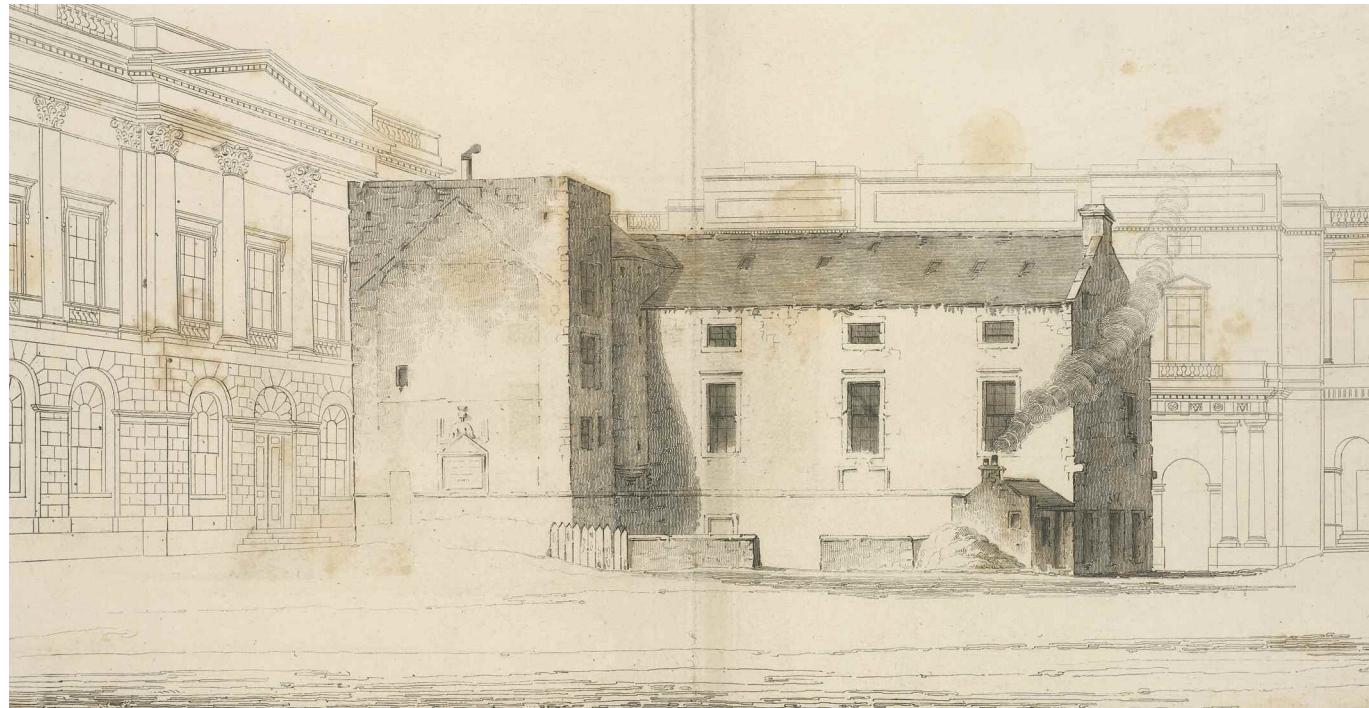
This building sat to the east of Hamilton House, where the Library had previously been housed.

This view of the same building gives you a better sense of where the Library itself was within University Hall. The large windows of the upper floor were its location. The attic floor where you can see these smaller windows was a later addition. Although we have no direct evidence, it is thought that the books themselves would have been arranged on presses placed perpendicular to the outer walls between the windows. By 1641, there were 3054 books to be accommodated.

The following year saw the idea of a new Library building first discussed. There were issues with damp in the 1616 building and the wisdom of the day thought its orientation was part of the problem. In the left of this picture, you can see the trace of another building running east/west. This second Library was however not complete until 1646, the delay being caused by the Civil War.

The rather stylised engraving (right) shows the second Library and it was in the late 17th/early 18th century. You can see the Adam designed north-west corner of Old College.

The number of books in the Library continued to increase and the Copyright Act of 1710 played its part



in this. A further landmark even was the appointment of William Robertson as Principal in 1726. He oversaw the expansion of the 1616 Library.

And here we can see Old College with all but the southern range of Old College completed. The only earlier buildings remaining are those older buildings, Teviot Chambers, on the south and the 1617 University Hall building, with the Library in it.

The Library was part of Phase Two. The original government grant had covered the period up to 1822 and gave us what we can see in the right-hand image. It was to take further monies to get to what you can see on the left.

With further funding procured, Phase Two commenced, including the new Library.

By August 1827, all the books had been moved into the new Library and the University Hall building was then demolished.

It is important to remember that today's Playfair Library is just the Upper Library. The operation occupied the entire south range, basement to attic.

By 1838, the Library had 63,000 books including:

- 8735 history/biography
- 7710 theology
- 6469 medicine/surgery
- 4635 poetry/fiction

Use also increased. Playfair's original Reading Room was soon considered too small and the room previously designated to be a Graduation Hall was refitted to this purpose. By 1895, a separate Reading Room for female students had been created in what had previously been the Entrance Hall (now Old College Reception). A lending Library space was also created in what is now Student Administration. On the upper floor, the Library had also expanded into the south-east block.

The late part of the 19th century was also a huge period of University expansion. This was when the Medical School and McEwan Hall were built and the volume of students increased significantly. This resulted, as you can imagine, in increasing use of the Library's facilities. Resources, of course, lagged behind and money had to be procured from external sources, including the newly established Carnegie Trust.

As well as funding the purchase of additional books and paying for additional staff, this was also used to upgrade accommodation, including a new steel shelving system and the construction of a fireproof strongroom.

In terms of the holdings themselves, the number of books went from 208,000 to 260,000 between 1902 and 1910 and manuscripts from 7500 to 8000 in the same period.



Opposite. The first Library building viewed from the south

Left. The first Library building from the west

In the aftermath of WW1, the perennial issue of accommodation arose again and, in 1923, students were allowed into the Upper Library hall. From today's perspective it sounds astonishing that they were not allowed in prior to this.

The same year, further steel shelving was installed to allow for more book accommodation through the more efficient use of space.

You can see from the adjacent photograph the density that was being achieved. An interesting feature is the ornate signage or label holder. We think this came off earlier furniture as it looks slightly incongruous.

In the aftermath of WW2 expansion space was required and both short and longer term solutions were pursued. In terms of the former, it was adjacent space which was gobbled up, with the Library taking over the south-west corner of Old College, gutting it and refitting it.

Further student accommodation had been provided in the former Natural History Classroom (originally Robert Jameson's Museum) in 1939. The Library now occupied most of two sides of Old College. This of course was only a stop gap. The University was also planning something bigger.

By 1956, a site had been chosen. The University had been buying up properties in George Square since the end of WW1 and, as we know, the Library was just one of a number of buildings to be built here in this period.

The University Court set up a specific project committee in 1950. This included the Librarian,

L.W. Sharp and J.H. Hardie Glover (for architects Spence, Glover & Ferguson). In 1960 E.R.S. Fifoot (who succeeded Sharp) and Glover went on a tour to look at comparable Libraries. With very few in existence in the UK, this took them to the USA. To Fifoot, the one which stood out was the John M. Olin Library at Cornell. From this, a detailed brief was prepared and approved in 1961/2.

There was still a long way to go until we got to this and many battles ahead. This included battles with the University Grants Committee over the design, over their wish for it to be built in phases, over how much air conditioning they would fund. In terms of phases, very few people know that phase 2 was never built.

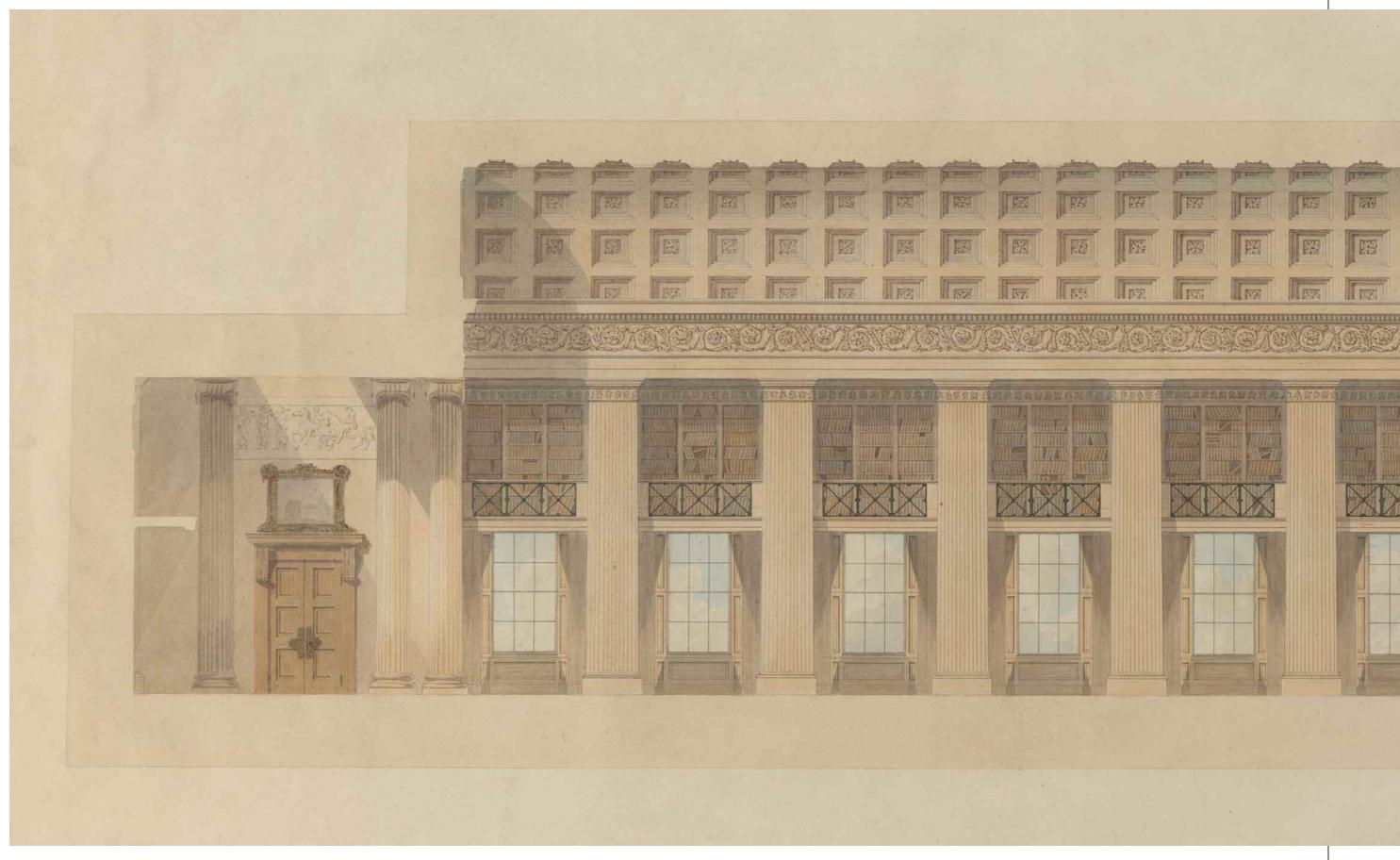
There were also battles with the planning authorities, including a height restriction. This has also to be set against the period when there were vast changes taking place in the area of building regulations in Scotland.

The new Library was designed to accommodate:

- 2 million books
- 1900 readers (increased to 2500 following the Robbins Report)

The original fittings and features included:

- Vast German double-glazed windows
- Burmese teak
- Danish white beech
- Half acre main Reading Room
- 2000 student spaces
- 200 study desks, inc 20 for left-handed students



Moving the collections in was a mammoth task, in summary:

- 500,000 books
- 27,000 pamphlets
- 30,000 letters
- 5,000 manuscript volumes
- 25,000 other volumes
- 3 vehicles per move at £3.5m per journey

With things like external landscaping still to be completed, the building had its unofficial opening in 1967 (the official one to come on 1st March the following year).

Originally, only staff had access above the second floor but that was to change. The subsequent decades saw many other changes, including the relocation of the main reception desk to the rear of the concourse, the establishment of a dedicated Special Collections department and the introduction of computer technology.

Yet nothing major required to be done until the early years of this century, when the Main Library Redevelopment Project transformed the building in its entirety, marrying original features with state-of-the-art new facilities.

The Centre for Research Collections was created during the first phase of MLRP, bringing together the University's heritage collections behind one service.

In closing, I just want to return to the question of Phase 2 which was never realised. A lot of what was planned for George Square was never realised, partly due to cost. Architectural historian, Clive Fenton has

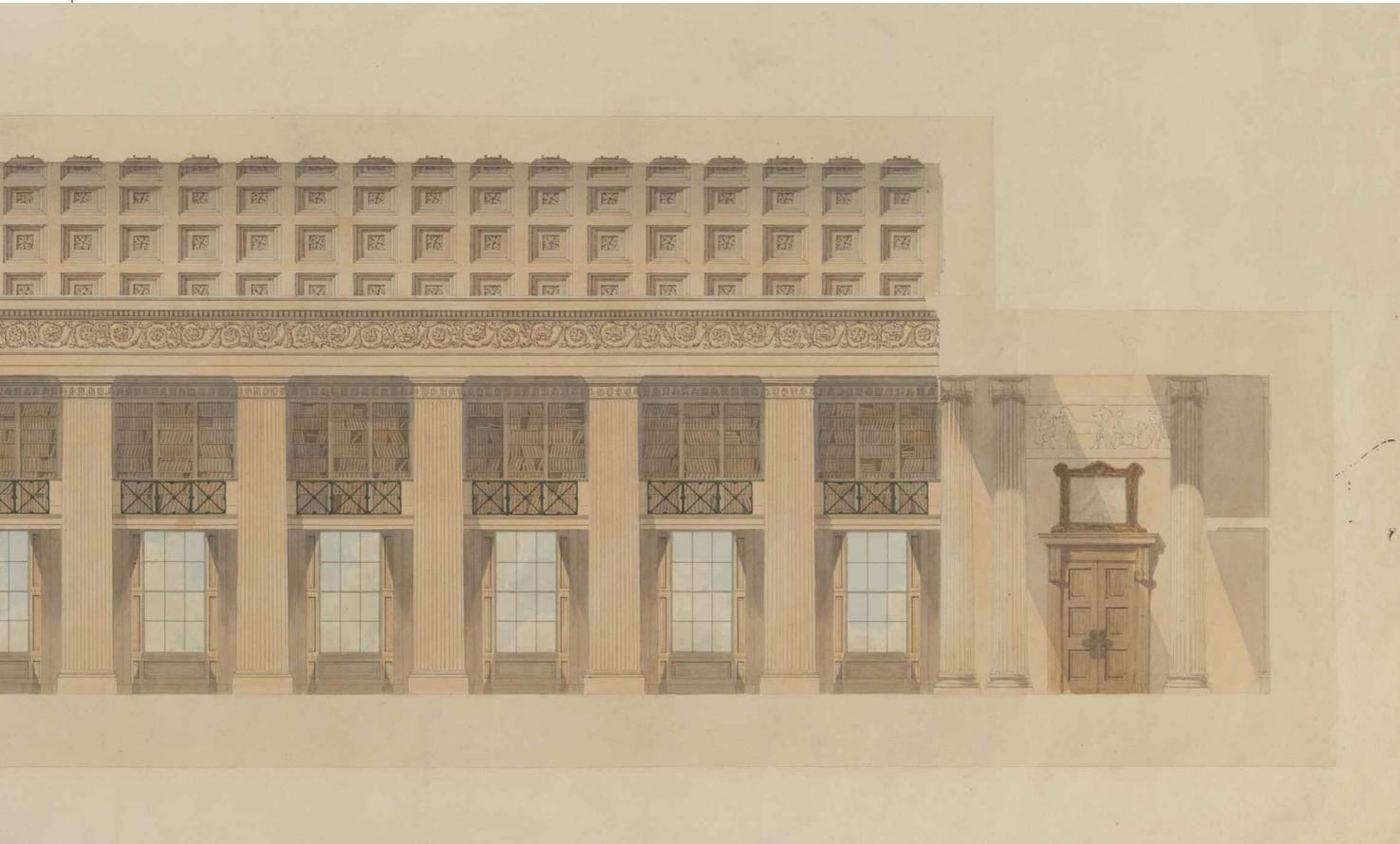
made the point to me on several occasions that it is this fragmentation of the original concept that has led to it not being properly valued.

Grant Buttars,
University Archivist



Above. Centre for Research Collections Reception and Reading Room

Below. A cross-section through the Playfair Upper Library



Why join the Friends of Edinburgh University Library?

**Joyce Caplan
and
Peter Freshwater**

Lady Caplan is the President, and Mr Freshwater the Honorary Secretary, of the Friends of Edinburgh University Library



Above. *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, vol 11, 1846

Opposite left. Holinshed's *Chronicles*, vols 1, 11, 111, 1587

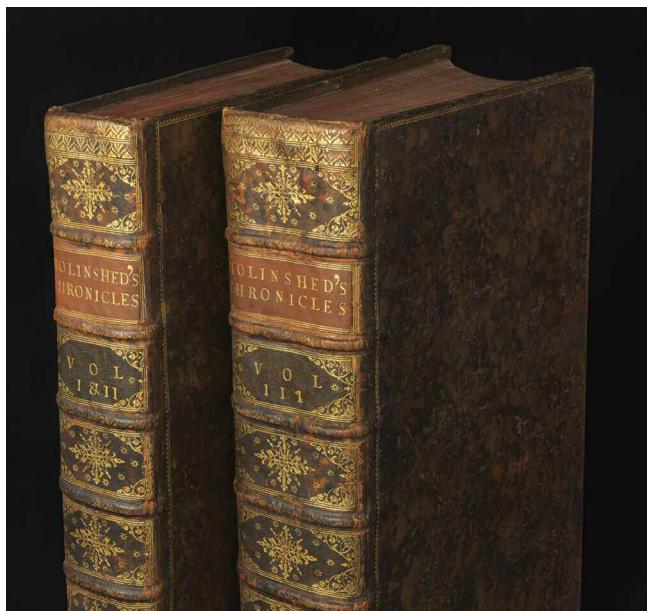
Opposite right. *King Richard III*, 1634 from the Halliwell-Phillipps Collection

Edinburgh University Library is, quite simply, unique. It is older than the University which it now serves, and whose name it bears, and has been in continuous use for nearly 440 years. It is the oldest post-Reformation university library in Scotland and the UK. It is also the oldest civic university library in Scotland and the UK. It was founded by a two-stage benefaction: the bequest in 1580 by the Edinburgh lawyer Clement Litill of 280 books to the City of Edinburgh, who transferred it in 1584 to the newly established College of King James, which was to become the Tounis College and later still the University of Edinburgh. The Library was soon augmented by more donated collections, many from early graduates, and notably by William Drummond of Hawthornden, 'the greatest Scots poet of his time', who presented some 1,400 books from his own library between 1624 and 1636, and the Reverend James Nairn, minister at Holyrood and later of Wemyss, Fife who bequeathed his collection of 1,838 books in 1678.

The Library began, and was established, by benefactions. For its first 130 years, it continued to depend on benefactions – donations and bequests in kind and in coin, matriculation and graduation fees, and occasional deposits – for the acquisition of more books for its collections. These sources were augmented by the new *Copyright Act 1710* which allowed the University to claim one copy of any book printed in the UK and Ireland, and continued until the *Copyright Act 1836*, when this facility was replaced by, and subsumed in, an annual government grant to the University.

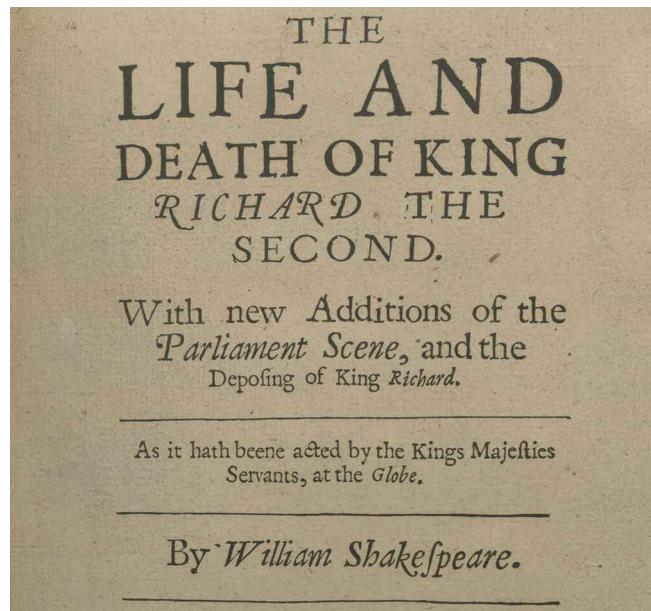
However, the Library continued to enjoy benefactions for many of its major acquisitions. Most magnificent of all is the David Laing Collection (1878), the depths and extent of which are still being plumbed. The network of Library benefactors was eventually brought together by the inauguration in 1962 of the Friends of Edinburgh University Library, and the later introduction of an online Gallery of Benefactors (<http://www.docs.is.ed.ac.uk/docs/lib-archive/bgallery/Gallery/index.html>), now complemented by the publication of Joseph Marshall's comprehensive *Directory of Collections* (2016).

The importance of the Friends of EUL is that they are here, are active, and are dedicated to putting the Library first. They are able to channel funds, including specific bequests, towards the purchase of important



and identified books, manuscripts and, occasionally, equipment such as display cases that enhance and help to publicise the Library and its collections. They work independently of the Library Committee and are therefore able, on the advice of the Head of Library Collections, to acquire important items for collections that are not currently used for research and teaching, but which need to be maintained as and when the opportunities arise. Important acquisitions over the years have included such diverse subjects as diaries and letters of Edinburgh-trained missionaries abroad; C17 correspondence on the manufacture of soap from herrings; the first publication, in a very limited (1986) edition, of Andrew Jackson Grayson's *Birds of the Pacific Slope* (1853–1869); a complete set of the 75 volumes of *Picture Post*, a major photographic archive of British society from 1938 to 1957; a rare treatise on bullspERM for the Veterinary Library; the only surviving copy of the plans and photographs compiled to illustrate the *Edinburgh Boundaries Extension and Tramways Bill 1920*; and 20 pictorial boards by Erno Goldfinger and Ursula Blackwell on *Planning your Neighbourhood for Home, for Work, for Play* (1944). Details of the Friends' most recent acquisitions can be found on their website at <https://friendsofeul.wordpress.com>

That the Friends are able and prepared to do this provides the basis for major partnership funding for the purchase of major Library research resources and collections. These have included the second Halliwell-Phillipps Collection of Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration drama in 1964; literary papers of C20 Scottish writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig and George Mackay Brown; and most recently, important early editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the one on which Shakespeare is known to have drawn, and of *The Works of Ben Jonson* (1640) contemporarily and extensively annotated with manuscript stage directions. The acquisition of these



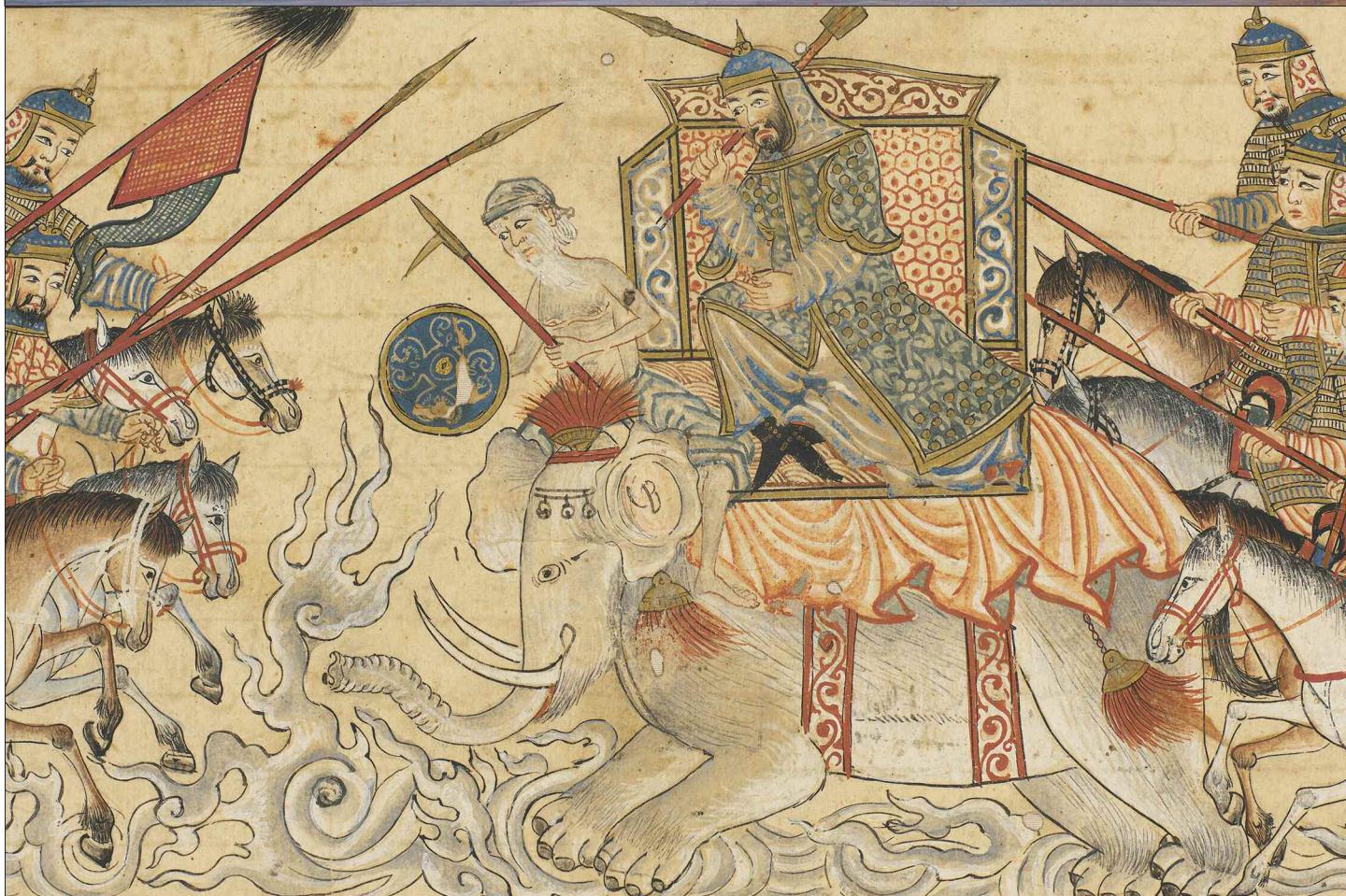
last two items has confirmed Edinburgh's position in the premier league of libraries on C16 and C17 literature. The significance of the Friends' contributions to this purchase was lauded in the national press.

FEUL is always glad to welcome new members to help continue its work. In return for modest subscriptions (£20 p.a. for adults, £35 for two people at the same address, £10 p.a. for students; life memberships are also available), members are made aware that they are supporting the Library and its collections; they can use all sections of the Library for reference and apply for borrowers' cards; they are encouraged to attend Friends' events, including talks by local and visiting scholars on aspects of the Library and its collections, visits to other local libraries and collections of interest, and private views of Library exhibitions. They receive discounts on Library publications, and receive the Friends' full-colour newsletter *The Piper* twice a year ('The Library' includes the Main Library in George Square, and the Edinburgh College of Art, Law, Moray House, New College, Murray (at King's Buildings), Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, School of Scottish Studies, Lady Smith of Kelvin (at The Bush), and Western General Hospital Libraries).

Having read this, do come and join us. Find out more about us and about joining us on our website <https://friendsofeul.wordpress.com> and email us at friendsofeul@ed.ac.uk or write to

Ms Alason Roberts (Administrator),
Friends of Edinburgh University Library,
Edinburgh University Library,
George Square,
Edinburgh EH8 9LJ.

We look forward very much to meeting you.



from Oriental Manuscript 20: Rahsid al-Din Tabib

Congratulations

Warm congratulations to the Friends of Edinburgh University Library, and to *The Piper* on achieving its 50th edition, from its first Editor (and second Editor of the Friends of EUL Newsletter) and now Editor of the University of Edinburgh Journal

Peter B Freshwater

Events

Events in main library: 5th floor seminar room (unless otherwise notified before the event)

24 October 3pm:
IASH Fellow, Dr Elizabeth Ford: 'The musical culture of taverns in 18th-century Scotland'

14th November 3pm:
AGM and talk by Dr Louise Boreham on the Lorimer Papers after the AGM

11th December 3 – 5pm:
viewing event on 6th floor: this is a splendid opportunity to view the Jonson folio – to which purchase the Friends contributed. There will also be on view the Audubon set of volumes which Dr Marshall recently acquired.

26th February 3pm:
Dr Paul Barnaby on the Buchan Papers

Please note that members may bring a friend to the Annual General Meeting talk, but for other events any accompanying friend(s) will be invited to make a donation of £5 to the Friends.

Contact details

If you have not yet supplied your email address, please do so now to the Friends' Administrator: Alison Roberts: a.roberts@ed.ac.uk



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