



THE PIPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

NUMBER 56 AUTUMN 2021

‘Enough if something from our hands has power. To live, to act and serve the future hour’

William Wordsworth ‘The River Duddon’, 1820

We have another splendid edition of the *Piper* for you and are looking forward to eventually having ‘real’ events. We all have much to look forward to, not only in our personal lives but in the Library. Next year is the 60th Anniversary of the Friends and we are planning a whole gamut of events and happenings to celebrate our continuing support of the University and its Library. There will be more specific details in the spring *Piper* but I would like to thank all of you for keeping us going in difficult times. We have had fascinating online talks with substantial audiences – some from Friends abroad! As you know your membership subscriptions enable us to continue with our task of purchasing special items for Special Collections in

the CRC so we would like to ask you help to expand our membership by recommending a friend of yours to us and perhaps bring them, when we can, to a meeting as a ‘taster’.

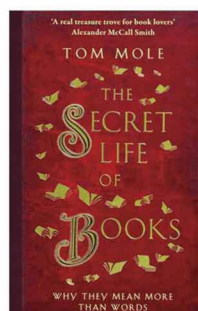
We also, over 60 years, have had much benefit from bequests both of money and books of value (first editions etc) so I would like to add this request to our list of ways we can enhance your contribution to the Friends. It will be good to inhabit the Library space again and be surrounded by its books and Archives. We will celebrate our return by being happily together again and will inform you when this is possible. Meanwhile I wish you a safe and successful return to your normal lives – whatever they may be.

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



Kettledrum, one of a pair, 18-inch and 22-inch
(Great Britain, circa 1810), see page 7.

The Secret Life of Books



In his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera describes a character who, as a young woman, loved to walk down the street with a book under her arm. 'It had the same significance for her as an elegant cane for the dandy a century ago,' Kundera writes. 'It differentiated her from others.' I remember people I

knew as a teenager carrying books in this way. Dickens's massive novel *Bleak House* seemed to be a popular choice. For me it was Byron's comic epic poem *Don Juan*. These books were ambitious undertakings for readers of our age. We carried the thick paperbacks around with us for weeks as our bookmarks slowly edged towards the back cover. Embarking on them was a declaration and finishing them an achievement.

We wanted to be taken seriously. We wanted people to know that we took ourselves seriously. The books, we hoped, made clear that we weren't just casual readers but committed students. We eyed the books of others, looking for like-minded peers. In the same way, for Kundera's character, 'books were the emblems of a secret brotherhood,' although I remember spotting as many sisters as brothers. Some adolescents signalled their identity by sporting a football shirt in the colours of their favourite team. Some fashioned a sense of self by wearing a leather jacket adorned with the names of their favourite bands. And some accessorised their individuality with books, carrying a copy of *Anna Karenina* so you knew what kind of person you were dealing with. You can't do this with e-books in the same way, because tablets and e-readers look the same whatever you're reading on them. Teenagers of the future will have to find another way to distinguish themselves when no one carries a fat paperback under their arm any more.

It took me a long time to get through *Don Juan*, but I can truthfully say that the book changed my life. I went on to study English Literature at university, and then to write a PhD thesis about Byron and eventually to become Director of the Centre for the History of the Book at the University of Edinburgh, where I've had the great privilege to work with the amazing collections in the University Library, and to handle some real treasures. Now I've written a book called *The Secret Life of Books* that's about all the things we do with books, and the things they do to us.

Sometimes, we think of books as tools for reading, but there's more to them than that. I wrote the book

because I wanted to talk about all the other purposes books serve. Our books are leading a double life. As well as being containers of words, they are things imbued with their own significance. Their importance goes far beyond the words or images they contain.

Books are part of how we understand ourselves. They shape our identities, even before we can read them. They accompany us throughout our lives – at home, at school, at college and (for some of us, at least) at work. And books are also part of how we relate to other people, from those closest to us to those only distantly connected. They get tangled up in our relationships with parents, siblings, classmates, teachers, friends, lovers and children. They are part of how groups of people, and even whole nations, imagine and represent themselves. Books become meaningful objects in all sorts of ways: treasured possessions, talismans, bearers of significance.

In *The Secret Life of Books*, I go in search of ways in which books have become important to people. From the love notes that Henry VIII wrote in Anne Boleyn's prayer book, to the Iris Murdoch novel that Philip Larkin and Monica Jones graffitied, from St Cuthbert's copy of John's Gospel to Van Gogh's father's bible, from books displayed in palaces to those destroyed in war, from medieval manuscripts to modern e-readers, books have been vital parts of the lives of people and nations.

For readers, books are familiar objects. Maybe we're too familiar with them to pay them much attention. We take them to bed with us. They weigh down our suitcases when we go on holiday. We display them on our bookshelves or store them in our attics. We give them as gifts. We write our names in them. We hoard them or discard them. We take them for granted. Over the last five hundred years, printed books have become a common sight – so common that they are almost invisible. It requires an effort, a shift of perspective, to bring them into focus.

Today, we can make that effort because it has become possible to imagine the end of the book as we know it. We can perceive the book as an object because we think that object might be going away. When historians of the future look back to the early twenty-first century, they will describe it as a moment of media change as significant as the Western invention of printing with movable type in the second half of the fifteenth century. But as the epoch of print ends, printed books are not simply vanishing; instead, their significance is being transformed. We're

The British Library holds a book of hours produced in about 1500 that once belonged to Anne Boleyn. At the foot of one of the pages, Anne wrote, 'Be daly prove you shalle me fynde to be to you bothe lovyng and kynde' ('By daily proof, you shall find me to be both loving and kind to you'). Later in the book Henry VIII wrote (in French) 'If you remember my love in your prayers as strongly as I adore you, I shall hardly be forgotten, for I am yours. Henry R. forever.' (© British Library Board: BL Kings MS 9, f.231v)



historically well placed to understand this transformation.

And yet we often fail to understand it. If we think of books as just media – just a way of conveying text and images – then we'll expect them to give way to new media that do the job faster, more cheaply, more efficiently or more profitably. The strange tenacity of the paper book will seem puzzling. But once we

understand the life of books as objects, and the many functions they serve in our lives, then we'll be better equipped to understand what's happening to them now.

Tom Mole was Professor of English Literature and Book History at the University of Edinburgh and Director of the Centre for the History of the Book. In August 2021, he became Principal of Van Mildert College, Durham University.

New Acquisition Highlights, 2021

Daryl Green, Paul Barnaby, Julie-Ann Delaney, Elizabeth Lawrence, Jenny Nex

The Centre for Research Collections curatorial teams have continued growing our collections through purchasing, donations, commissions and partnerships throughout this eventful year. Below you'll find some of the highlights of the year so far, including activity at auctions, purchasing from antiquarian sellers, working with artists and practitioners, and growth through continued support from our benefactors.

1. Colin Maclaurin, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh from 1725 to 1746, was Scotland's most significant mathematician of the 18th century. In this letter (written in French) to the prominent French scientist Jean-Jacques d'Ortous de Mairan, Maclaurin discusses his major work, the

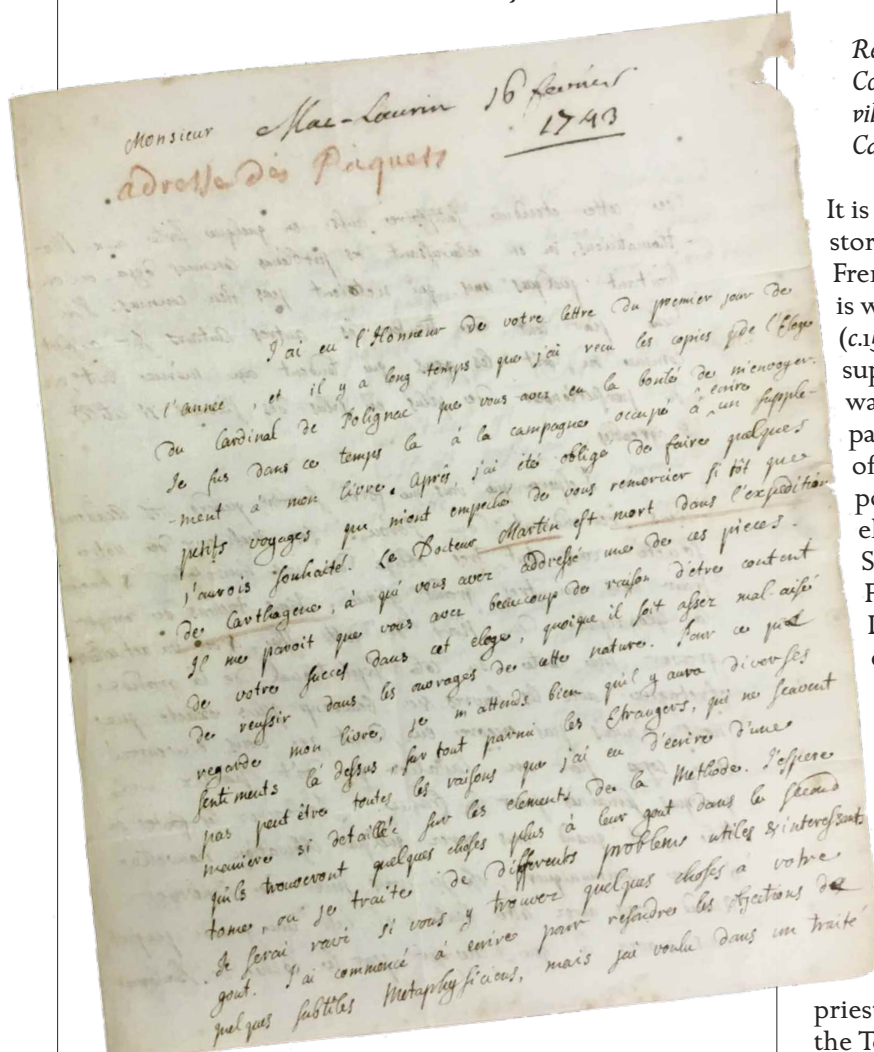
Treatise of Fluxions (1742), a rigorous and systematic defence of Newtonian calculus. He also enquires about the French expeditions to establish whether the earth's circumference was greater around the equator or around the poles, and reports on attempts to correct the geography of the North of Scotland. Autograph material by Maclaurin is of the greatest rarity; this is the first example to have appeared on the market in forty years. The CRC was successful at acquiring this letter for the University at a winter auction at Christie's London.

2. In the early summer of 2021, we added to our collections the smallest book among recent purchases it has the longest back story, and the longest title:

Remonstrance faite en l'Assemblée generale des Colonnels, Capitaines, Lieutenans, & Enseignes de la ville de Paris, par Monsieur de Sainction l'un desditz Capitaines ... le 5 jour de Janvier, 1590.

It is a thin pamphlet, contributing to the long and stormy disputes in print which accompanied the French Wars of Religion. The Edinburgh connection is with the author of the preface, John Hamilton (c.1547–1610/11). From a Scottish Catholic family who supported Mary Queen of Scots, he fled abroad and was denounced as a traitor at home. In 1581 he took part in a public dispute with violence, over matters of theology, with the visiting Scottish Protestant poet William Fowler. This led to him publishing an eloquent pamphlet in Scots, for distribution in Scotland, defending points of Catholic theology. Fowler was a close associate of William Drummond of Hawthornden, from whose collection come the library's copies of Hamilton's controversial pamphlets, and those published to oppose them, by Fowler and others. Ours is the most complete collection of this material anywhere.

Hamilton's career was stormy to the end. In 1590 he took up arms in the siege of Paris, despite being an ordained priest. Having to flee Paris following the restoration of King Henri IV, he went to the University in Louvain, before, in 1600 returning to Scotland as a missionary priest. Eventually, in 1608, he was captured, and sent to the Tower of London, where he died, reputedly of poisoning. Only five other copies of this pamphlet are known, worldwide, none of them in Scotland.



1. Letter from Colin Maclaurin to Jean-Jacques d'Ortous de Mairan, 5 February 1743, SC-Acc-2021-0023

3. (Right) Alberta Whittle, 'business as usual: a hostile environment', colour video with sound, 2020, EU5851

5. (Below) Album of sketches and watercolours, dating from 1793–1834, by Sir James Skene of Rubislaw, Coll-2019

3. *business as usual: a hostile environment* is the work of Alberta Whittle (b.1980 Barbados), Edinburgh College of Art BA graduate. A moving image work, it looks at the colonial history of the Forth and Clyde canal and waterways' role in forced and unforced migration. Reflecting on waterways as sites of renewal and regeneration – the work focuses attention on how the architecture of the city continues to shape and impact communities, and understandings of austerity, poverty, race and class. Whittle is a current PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh and her research is concerned with individuals' roles in perpetuating the systems of oppression existing in society by turning a blind eye to their existence. Her work usually takes the form of interactive installations which use film, sculpture and performance to consider contested histories, climate colonialism, trauma and healing.

4. The keyboard instrument collection has grown recently thanks to a generous gift by Theodora Zemek. As well as a spinet, a 'toy' piano, and a sewing-box piano, the donation includes a square piano and a grand piano both by Erard, the latter being on display at St Cecilia's Hall. There is also a pretty square piano made by Christopher Ganer in London dating from 1783 that has a pair of swans adorning its legs and Wedgewood-blue panels painted on the exterior of its gold-painted case. This instrument was clearly made to stand in an opulent room and is visually very different from the wood-panelled square pianos already in the Musical Instrument Collection. We are looking forward to finding out more about these instruments, and to using the Erard grand piano in concerts at St Cecilia's Hall.



5. One of our major acquisitions so far this year has been an album of sketches and watercolours by Sir James Skene of Rubislaw, acquired at the February Lyon & Turnbull auction. This album of c.420 sketches is a record of an extraordinary creative collaboration. A talented amateur artist, Skene (1775–1864) was a close friend of Sir Walter Scott who accompanied him on riding excursions to localities that Scott planned to feature in his novels and poems. There, at Scott's suggestion, Skene made sketches of landscapes and buildings that Scott then used as an inspiration and aide-memoire for his own work. Many of the sketches in this album can be linked to trips that Scott and Skene are known to have made together. Some later sketches date from excursions that Skene took alone at Scott's request, as Scott himself grew ever busier and, with declining health, less physically mobile. The album also includes sketches that were clearly used as source material for published Scott illustrations by professional artists.

The album has huge research potential for scholars charting the links between the famously vivid descriptions of locations in Scott's novels and poems and the sketches that Scott used to prompt his memory and inspire his words. Besides casting light on Skene's relations with Scott, with Scott's publishers, and with professional illustrators, the sketches also provide an invaluable insight into Skene's own life and activities. A collectable artist in his own right, Skene was a prominent member of Scottish literary and antiquarian circles, with extensive cultural and scientific interests. We plan to digitize the sketches and to build an online resource around them, making this extraordinary resource available to scholars worldwide.

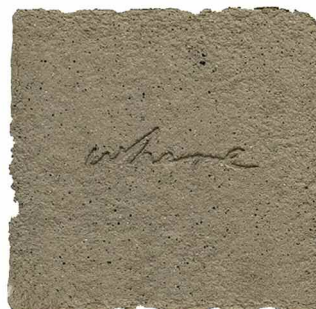


Photograph © Lyon & Turnbull



6. 'Where do we begin and end?' is comprised of six, debossed, limited edition prints made from pulped delivery packaging as well as sedimentary seabed samples collected in 1970, from the University's Geology Collection. This work is one result from a long collaboration with the University of Edinburgh's Geology and Art Collections. Mann has been engaging with them, along with their curatorial staff, since 2018 as avenues to question specific ideas: *Where do objects start and end? How do they exist alongside humans? What is an object and can it stop being?* The handwriting on the prints is taken from Charles Lyell's notebooks (spanning 1825–1874) held in the University's Special Collections. Known for his contributions to geoscience, he made it possible for people to think about the earth as dynamic and developing as opposed to static and fixed.

This work is a continuation of Mann's broader practice and interest in objects, specifically their inherent properties, the boundaries between them (and us) and the way they stretch and fracture through



6. (Left) Stephanie Mann, 'Where do we begin and end?', six debossed prints, 2021, EU5850. Photograph: Damian Griffiths, courtesy of the Freelands Foundation

7. (Below) Bill Smith secures the nets on the deck, aboard the *Argosy* seine net fishing boat, in the North Sea. February 1995. ©Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert, SSSA/ACC/2021/02

time. Mann is an ECA alumna; having graduated with a BA (Hons) in Sculpture in 2011, she went on to complete a MFA in Contemporary Art Practice at ECA in 2013. Since 2018 she has been Freelands Foundation Artist in Residence with the University's Talbot Rice Gallery.

7. The CRC has acquired a fantastic (physical and digital) portfolio of prints by documentary photographer Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the School of Scottish Studies Archives. Sutton-Hibbert is a Glasgow-based photographer who has travelled the world on photographing on assignment, but who has also kept his lens trained on documenting Scottish life; he is also one of the founders of the Document Scotland collective. This portfolio includes the artist's selection of images from three of his most personal Scottish-focussed projects: Longannet Colliery (Fife, 2001); North Sea Fishing (aboard the *Mairead* 1993, aboard the *Argosy* 1995); Paddy's Market (Glasgow, 2000).



8. (Right) Edinburgh Arts and Crafts binding, attributed to Johanna Caird Ross, on Dante Gabriel Rossetti *Poems*, 1873, Bdg.s.70

9. (Below) Pair of kettledrums, 18-inch and 22-inch (Great Britain, circa 1810), MIMed 6573 & 6574.

8. One of the more distinctive byways of bookbinding history is the work in modelled leather carried out in the 1890s and early 1900s by a circle of artistic women in Edinburgh, of whom Phoebe Anna Traquair is the best-known name. The group was associated with the Edinburgh Arts and Crafts Club, and the Edinburgh Social Union. Some members sold examples of their work through the London-based, and much better-known Guild of Women Binders.

These bindings are charming and inventive, and completely outside the mainstream of bookbinding design of the period, reflecting the skills, but also the dedication and social background of the women who made them. We were lucky enough to acquire another example, a binding attributed to Johanna Caird Ross on an 1873 edition of Rossetti's poems, at auction earlier this year. The initials 'J.C.R.' are found on the back, the name 'Johanna Caird Ross' written on the titlepage, and a postcard addressed to the same name caught into the binding part way through. The initials in a shield on the backs of these bindings are usually those of the artist who decorated it. Therefore it appears that Johanna Caird Ross, the daughter of an Edinburgh architect, with very clear links to other members of the group, must have bound this herself. No other examples of her work are known.

9. As well as full acquisitions, we have a number of long-term relationships with lenders whose collections greatly enhance our permanent holdings. Professor Arnold Myers, former Director and Curator of the Musical Instrument Collection, continues to be a valued supporter and regularly adds instruments to



his loaned Collection. Recently, we have taken in additional brass instruments and this fantastic pair of timpani, which we plan to place on display at St Cecilia's Hall in the near future.

The copper bowls are painted and bear the insignia of the Worcester Local Militia in two places on each drum. Local militia were established in 1810 in response to the threat of Napoleonic invasion and disbanded following Waterloo. This small pair of drums was formerly owned by the art historian Edward Croft-Murray and played by him in the 'Guild of Gentlemen Trumpeters.' They were exhibited in 'Made for Music', the 1986 exhibition commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Galpin Society, and illustrated in its catalogue.



The David Laing Book Collecting Prize

Collections of books put together by individuals were the basis on which Edinburgh University Library was founded and built up from the late 16th century and have continued as a major aspect of its collection development ever since. The largest and, in many ways, the greatest collection in the Library is that of the antiquary and librarian of the Signet Library, David Laing, whose collection came to Edinburgh University by bequest in 1878. To mark and recall that collection, the University since 2015 has offered the annual David Laing Book Collecting Prize for the best collection of books put together, and written and spoken about, by a currently registered student, undergraduate or postgraduate, in the University. The Prize has been initiated and sponsored by Dr William Zachs, and there are similar Prizes in the other Ancient Scottish Universities.

Competitors are required to submit a list of not fewer than ten collected items (printed or manuscript), a brief essay on the collection, illustrated by photographs if possible, and a list of five more items which they would like to acquire to enhance the collection.

The winner receives a personal cash prize, together with the opportunity of helping to select one or more books for purchase for the Library. An additional sum is now provided by the Friends of the University Library. From this year the Friends also give the winner and runner up a year's free membership. The winner then goes on to compete in the National Students' Book Collecting Prize (£1,000), sponsored by the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association. Other competitors may be judged to be runners up, or worthy of honourable mention, and may share small amounts of the cash prize and a year's free membership of the Friends of EUL.

This year's Winner is George Young (studying for a MA in Scottish and English Literature), with a collection of books on *Beagling*, and the Runner up is Denise Dewar (studying for a MSc by Research), with a collection of *The Pocket Macmillan Series of Thomas Hardy* (published between 1914 and 1930 and long out of print). Each has been given a year's membership of the Friends as part of their prize, and we are delighted to welcome them as members and celebrate their achievements.

Covid-19

Prior to Monday 9th August 2021 Library access was restricted to current staff, students, official visitors and recent graduates, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Library staff appreciate that this may have caused inconvenience and acknowledge Friends' patience and understanding.

Following Scottish Government guidance moving Edinburgh to beyond Level 0, from Monday 9th August conditional access to the Main Library was extended to Friends for a limited period to Friday 3rd September 2021. We will keep Friends posted as to how these welcome arrangements might be continued. Many thanks to Library staff for extending their services to the Friends again.

Events 2021-22

Tuesday 14 September:

Daryl Green, Head of Special Collections and Deputy Head of the Centre for Research Collections, on *Growing Cultural heritage Collections during Lockdown(s)*

Tuesday 23 November:

Annual General meeting, followed by Professor Tom Mole, University of Durham, on *The Secret Life of Books: Libraries and Collections*

Tuesday 22 February 2022:

Dr David Munro MBE, Royal Scottish Geographical Society, on *The Centenary and Library Collections of William Speirs Bruce, polar explorer and oceanographer*

Gift aid

If you have already given us a Gift Aid Declaration, thank you. Please let us know if you want to cancel this declaration, or change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you have not previously provided a Gift Aid Declaration and now wish to do so, please complete the appropriate section of the Membership Application Form on the Friends' website. Please send the signed form to the Friends' Administrator.

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