THE PIPER

Engaging, promoting, collecting since 1962

Welcome to this issue of *The Piper*, which gives me an excellent opportunity to introduce myself to you, the members, and

- to thank you very warmly for your support of the *Friends of Edinburgh University Library*, and for entrusting me with the leadership of this excellent and very useful organisation;
- to thank the very efficient and helpful leadership team, and the committee, for the support, which they have already given me;
- to thank Fiona Graham who, with the assistance of Mark Blackadder, has yet again produced a wonderfully attractive and interesting issue of *The Piper*;

and, in particular, of course, to thank Lady Joyce Caplan, who has lead, developed and inspired this very special organisation so successfully for more than 25 years! It is a great pleasure for me to take on the leading role at this particular point – and I would like to draw your special attention to Lady Caplan's lovely farewell message, which you will find on page 6 of this edition of *The Piper*.

I am looking forward to meeting you all at the various events of the 'Friends' – and if you have any suggestions or comments regarding the 'Friends' programme and other activities, then please let us know.

Louise Gardiner,
President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library

Song School St Mary, 1897, by Phoebe Anna Traquair, 1852–1936.

A Murder in the Archives

It began as a simple cataloguing exercise. I noticed that a significant document in University of Edinburgh's history had no representation in our online catalogue and set out to remedy this by creating a basic catalogue entry that could be elaborated on in due course. With a handy 'caption card' shelved alongside it, this was not a task that would take very long – or so I thought. I was soon in the midst of a famous murder!

The item in question was described, wrongly as it turned out, as the Clement Litill Charter. Litill, an Edinburgh merchant, had bequeathed a collection of 276 books to the 'Town and Kirk of Edinburgh' which effectively laid the foundation for Edinburgh University Library two years before the Charter which established the University itself and three years before the University opened its doors. It marks a foundational milestone in our history.

As it turned out, the document was not a charter. In fact there were three documents but with the third appearing to largely a wrapper for the other two. Of the other two, one was a document which was identified as having been drawn up by Alexander Guthrie, the Town Clerk, extracted from the Town Council minutes. As such, it was important to be as precise as possible about who Guthrie was.

Investigation of online sources, including a digitised copy of the *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild Bretheren, 1406–1700*, identified three successive generations of Alexander Guthries who had served as Town Clerk. Which one was it?

Colleagues at Edinburgh City Archives were able to provide a list of Town Clerks and their appointment dates. In 1580, the second Alexander Guthrie took up office but it was unclear if he was in post by 14 October, when these documents were drawn up. At this point there was contradictory information as to who preceded him; the entry for the earlier Alexander Guthrie did not fully agree with the Edinburgh City Archives list. To try and better understand this discrepancy, I began to read the DNB article more fully and realised I was right in the middle of a key event in the history of the Scottish Reformation.

The article in question was written by Prof. Michael Lynch and identifies the eldest Alexander Guthrie as a 'civic administrator and religious activist', but that is only the start of the story. His wife, Janet Henderon or Henryson, 'was one of the group of wives of influential burgesses with whom John Knox corresponded while in exile in Geneva. She was addressed as his "beloved sister" in a letter of March 1558'. Guthrie himself worked closely with John Knox on consolidating the Reformation in

Edinburgh. Unusually, he held both burgh and political office simultaneously. As Lynch notes,

> His connections with Edinburgh's legal establishment and with key protestant dissidents within the royal administration were demonstrated by the appearance in court as one of his sureties of Patrick Bellenden of Stenness, brother of the justice clerk John Bellenden of Auchnoull. In 1556 Guthrie had acted as godfather to one of the children of another influential legal family, the Bannatynes, which was in turn closely connected to the Bellendens.

Guthrie had suffered arrest for his activities during the Reformation crisis of 1559–60 but faced arrest again in 1566 when he was implicated in the murder of David Rizzio (or Riccio). He fled alongside fellow conspirators, was outlawed and lost his position as Town Clerk. This was a revelation. I had not come across Guthrie in any of the many lists of conspirators in academic and other accounts of this incident. Yet, as Lynch points out, 'The fact that he was among the last of the Riccio conspirators to be granted a remission, in December 1566, when he was also restored to office, confirms his prominence in the affair.'

For those unfamiliar with the Rizzio murder, a quick summary. David Rizzio was secretary and possibly a lover of Mary Queen of Scots. On the evening of 9 March 1566, royal guards at the Palace of Holyroodhouse were overpowered by rebels who seized control of the palace. Rizzio was seized from the supper room, taken through adjacent rooms and stabbed 57 times. His body was then thrown down a staircase.

This is not the only high-profile murder of a royal figure in Edinburgh in this period, nor of one with a University connection. In February of the following year, Mary's husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, who some thought was involved in Rizzio's murder died as the result of an explosion in Kirk O' Field House (roughly where our Old College quad is now situated). Suspicion fell on Mary and her future husband, the Earl of Bothwell. They were tried but acquitted.
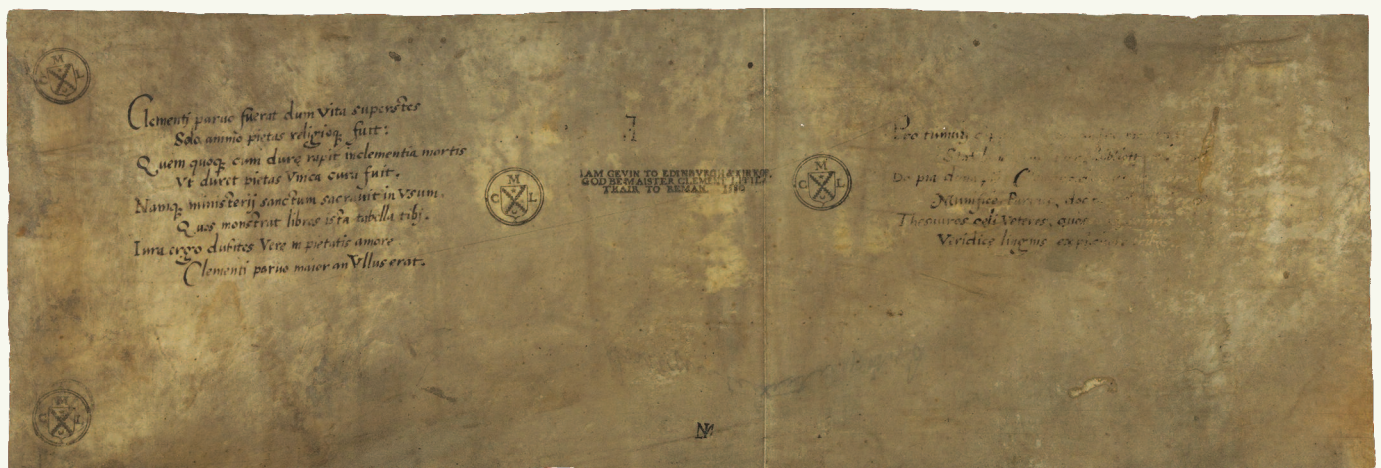
But was Guthrie restored to office? This is where Lynch's account and the Edinburgh City Archives list part company. His successor in 1566, David Chalmer(s), is recorded on the list with Chalmers then being succeeded by the second Alexander Guthrie in 1580. It may be the case that it was later determined that the elder Guthrie did not require to be reappointed to office – we can but speculate.

In terms of our archives, what is the significance of all of this? First, on the basis of current information, it is unclear which Alexander Guthrie drew up this document.
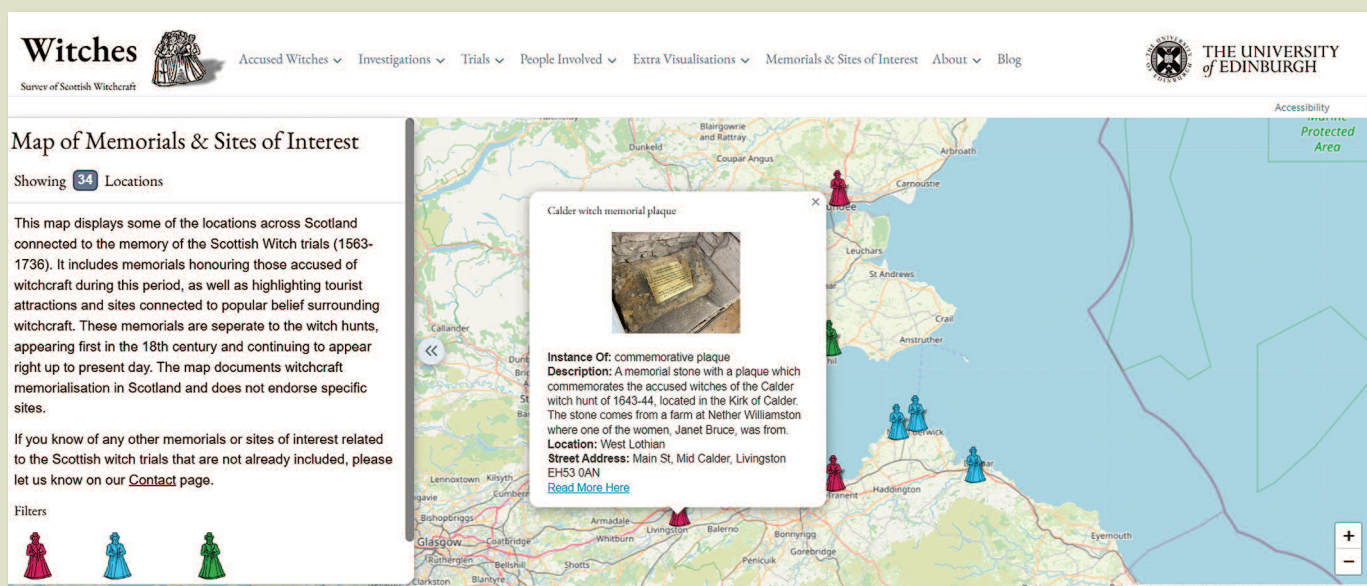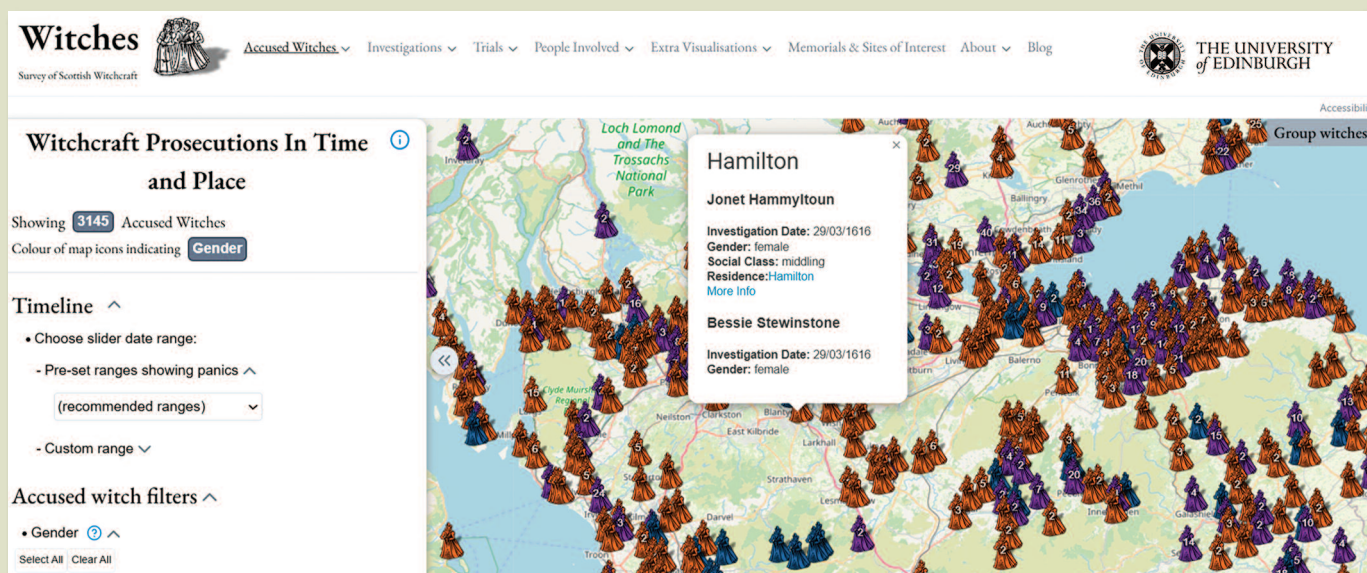
Second and more importantly, it helps situate the bequest of Littill's books within the context of the time, this context being not just a backdrop but essential to understanding the significance of these events in the foundation of the University. Regardless of which Alexander Guthrie was involved, these were people working at the highest political levels within Edinburgh and Scotland. William Litill, who was responsible for honouring his brother Clement's wishes, went on to become the city's Lord Provost. The bequest was more than a beneficial transaction and those involved in seeing it fulfilled and executed were at the heart of the political turmoil of the period.

Grant Buttars
University Records Archivist

Scottish Witchcraft and the History of Witchcraft in Edinburgh

In 2017, the University of Edinburgh's Wikimedian in Residence, Ewan McAndrew, began collaborating with the Design Informatics course programme during their annual 'Data Fair' project. He proposed a 'data challenge' involving students working *practically* with the University's landmark Survey of Scottish Witchcraft database (2003):

> *What if they transformed the relatively static records stored as text in MS Access into linked open data on Wikidata and made it available for new visualisations and inquiry?*

Year after year, student groups successfully contributed some fascinating visualisations over the seven week project, but McAndrew and his team felt there was always the potential to do more.

Creating the Map of Accused Witches in Scotland

Since historical records from 16th/17th century Scotland contain many gaps, an internship was conceived to focus on all the placenames listed for (virtually) *every* named accused's place of residence.

Opposite top.
Screengrab of Witchcraft Prosecutions in Time and Place from witches.is.ed.ac.uk.

Opposite below.
Screengrab of Map of Memorials from witches.is.ed.ac.uk.

This page, below.
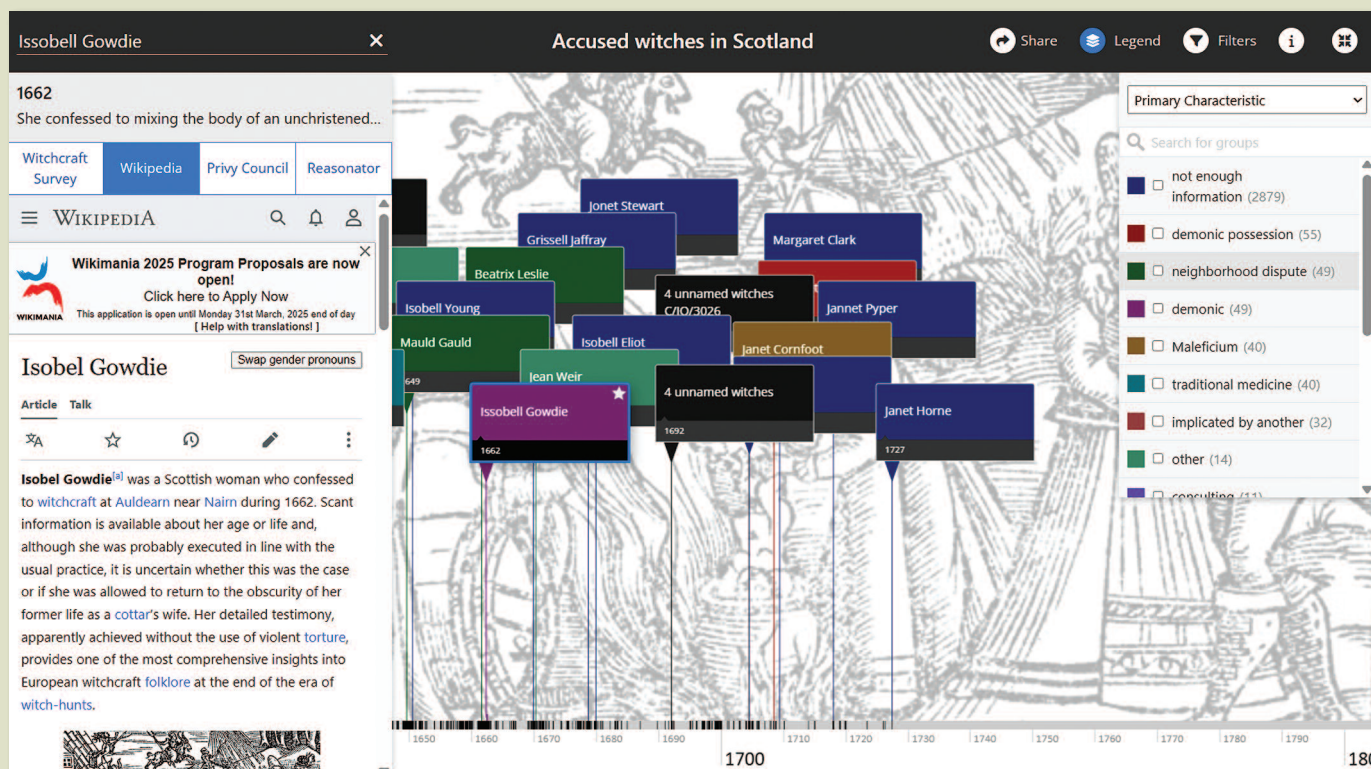Screengrab of Histropedia Timeline from witches.is.ed.ac.uk.

Bottom, left to right.
Emma Carroll researching at the Scottish Studies Archives.

Maggie Lin winning Undergraduate Feminist Trailblazer of the Year at the Gender.Ed Awards 2023.

Professor Julian Goodare and Ruby Imrie discussing the Survey of Witchcraft at the University of Edinburgh Main Library.

Design Informatics MA/MFA students showcasing their laser-cut wooden map of Scotland's accused witches at the Suffer the Witch symposium at the Patrick Geddes centre in January 2020.

Geography undergraduate Emma Carroll was recruited in Summer 2019 and her detective work geolocated over 800 locations using resources such as georeferenced maps from the National Library of Scotland, gazetteers, and the Scottish Studies Archives.

Emma was then able to create a variety of new map visualisations which were then integrated into a new website (witches.is.ed.ac.uk) with the help of a brilliantly talented and much missed web developer colleague, Richard Lawson.

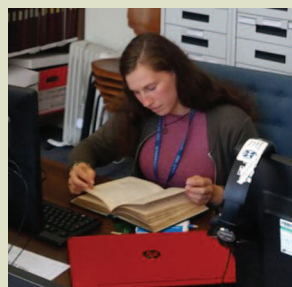As interest in the project grew, more interns contributed to expanding the map's capabilities:

- Maggie Lin (Summer 2022) added temporal data and detailed information about each accused's witch trial and witchcraft investigation, collaborating with student web developer Josep Garcia-Reyero.
- Claire Panella (February–May 2023) developed a methodology for quality assurance of the data.
- Ruby Imrie (Summer 2023–October 2024) fixed website bugs and data anomalies, created a new Map of Witchcraft Memorials, and added contextual explanations to aid understanding about the Scottish witch trials.

What the map site reveals

The interactive map site is now an accessible and engaging way to explore all the named accused witches of Scotland in both space AND time. Users can filter by occupation,

gender, social class, investigation dates, and various aspects of their accusations, such as the primary & secondary charactiserisations of their particular cases, alleged pacts with the devil, accusations of property damage, accusations of shapeshifting, and more.

The project is a powerful way for us to connect with history, providing a meaningful link to the past and the real individual human stories behind the data, and thereby fostering a deeper understanding and empathy. The student work in putting the accused witches of Scotland on the map – perhaps in one's hometown or in places one has visited or heard of – has evoked emotional responses, making the history much more personal and impactful.

The project also serves as a means to preserve research and to continue to build from it. The original Survey database was created in the late 1990s/early 2000s to see what computing then could do to support researchers, and technological advancements now allow for richer explorations of the data. This ensures that the accused witches' stories endure and remain accessible for further inquiry.

The History of Witchcraft in Edinburgh Walking Tour

McAndrew worked with MScR researcher Ellie Whitehead in 2024 to develop a *Curious Edinburgh* walking tour (http://curiousedinburgh.org/history-of-witchcraft-in-edinburgh) of Edinburgh's own history of witchcraft. This initiative was designed to fact-check and counter urban myths regarding locations potentially related to the witch trials. Initially, only one execution site was thought to be known (Castlehill) but extensive research grew the tour to 18 locations travelling down from the Castle along the Royal Mile to Holyrood Palace. Each stop includes 100–200 word descriptions, further reading, and includes video inserts from experts, Professor Julian Goodare and broadcaster Louise Yeoman.

Below.
Screengrab of the *Curious Edinburgh* History of Witchcraft in Edinburgh walking tour.

History of Witchcraft in Edinburgh Tour

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Scotland went through a series of changes which fuelled the Scottish witch hunt. The state became stronger and more able to interfere with ordinary people's lives. The church went through a shake-up in religious belief called the Reformation and became much more interested in what ordinary people did and believed. Things they worried about included sabbath breaking (having fun or working on a Sunday), sex outside of marriage, quarrelling (flyting), whether people practised the 'right' religion in the right way or not, and the issue which interests us – witchcraft. They thought all of these things were sins. The state worried about these things too – because they feared that if all these sins were allowed to go unpunished, then God would become angry with Scotland and smite its people with plagues, famines and wars. Prosecuting witchcraft was part of this big picture of church and state becoming more 'godly' and working together to fight sin and to stop the consequences of sin.

However, unlike most of the church's other preoccupations, witchcraft became a secular capital crime as well as a sin in 1563 by an act of the Scottish parliament. So, church and state collaborated to pursue witches. This led to the persecution of upwards of 4000 people in Scotland, in what we now recognize as the Scottish witch-hunts. Of these people accused as witches, it is estimated that around 2,500 were executed. Around 85% of those executed were women, and even men were not safe from suspicion, accusation, and condemnation.

Next Steps

Looking ahead McAndrew would like to add a search interface and also link directly from each accused's investigation to any digitised records there may be in order to make the primary historic sources more accessible and explorable.

While the project does underscore the challenge of supporting & maintaining digital projects within universities in the longer term, McAndrew argues that this particular dataset must be preserved as an important part of Scotland's national identity, ensuring that the persecution of the accused is not forgotten.

The work of University of Edinburgh students has illuminated a dark period in Scotland's past, fostering a greater understanding of the individuals who suffered under these trials. Future scholars and schools all around Scotland will hopefully build on this foundation, keeping the memory of Scotland's accused witches alive for generations to come.

Ewan McAndrew
Wikimedian in Residence at the University of Edinburgh

'It is difficult suddenly to lay aside a long cherished love'
Catullus, *Carmina No.76*

I have loved working with the Friends to support the Special Collections but the time has come to move on.

I have always been awkward at farewells. As a child I would abruptly leave a room and after being admonished would learn to mutter reluctantly 'thank you for having me'.

However, I leave as President after 25 years knowing my successor, Louise Gardiner, will steer us carefully through challenging times. I am proud of how we flourished and were able to contribute not only a wide and interesting range of books to the Library but display cases for the Exhibition space (of best Milanese craftsmanship) and employ interns, often students, to help with special projects. This was only with possible with the generous financial support of members through subscriptions, bequests and legacies, as well as fund raising for very special purchases such as the 'Holinshed Chronicles'. All this was possible because of the excellent Committee who, working as an energetic and enthusiastic team, made it possible by giving willingly their time and expertise. I thank them all.

I am a member of the 'Library' generation who had haunted my local library from an early age, though I remember my extreme disappointment on being given an adult ticket aged nine to discover that adult books had few pictures!

So, farewell – but only in part as I will be eagerly attending future events and of course reading the *Piper*.

Meanwhile, 'Thank you for having me . . .'

Lady Caplan

THE Outstanding Library Team 2024

The University of Edinburgh's Library Research Support Team won the 'Outstanding Library Team of the Year' category at the Times Higher Education Awards 2024 in Birmingham on 28th November. The team plays a central role in the institution's transition to open research, with the impact of its work spreading far beyond the Scottish capital. The team created and implemented a UK-first rights retention policy, enabling scholarly work to be published in an open-access format while the authors retain the rights to their work.

Across the UK, 30 other universities have since followed Edinburgh's lead, and the library team has also presented its work in India, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The team has already saved its university more than £10,000, with hundreds of thousands in savings anticipated in the years to come and millions expected across the broader university sector.

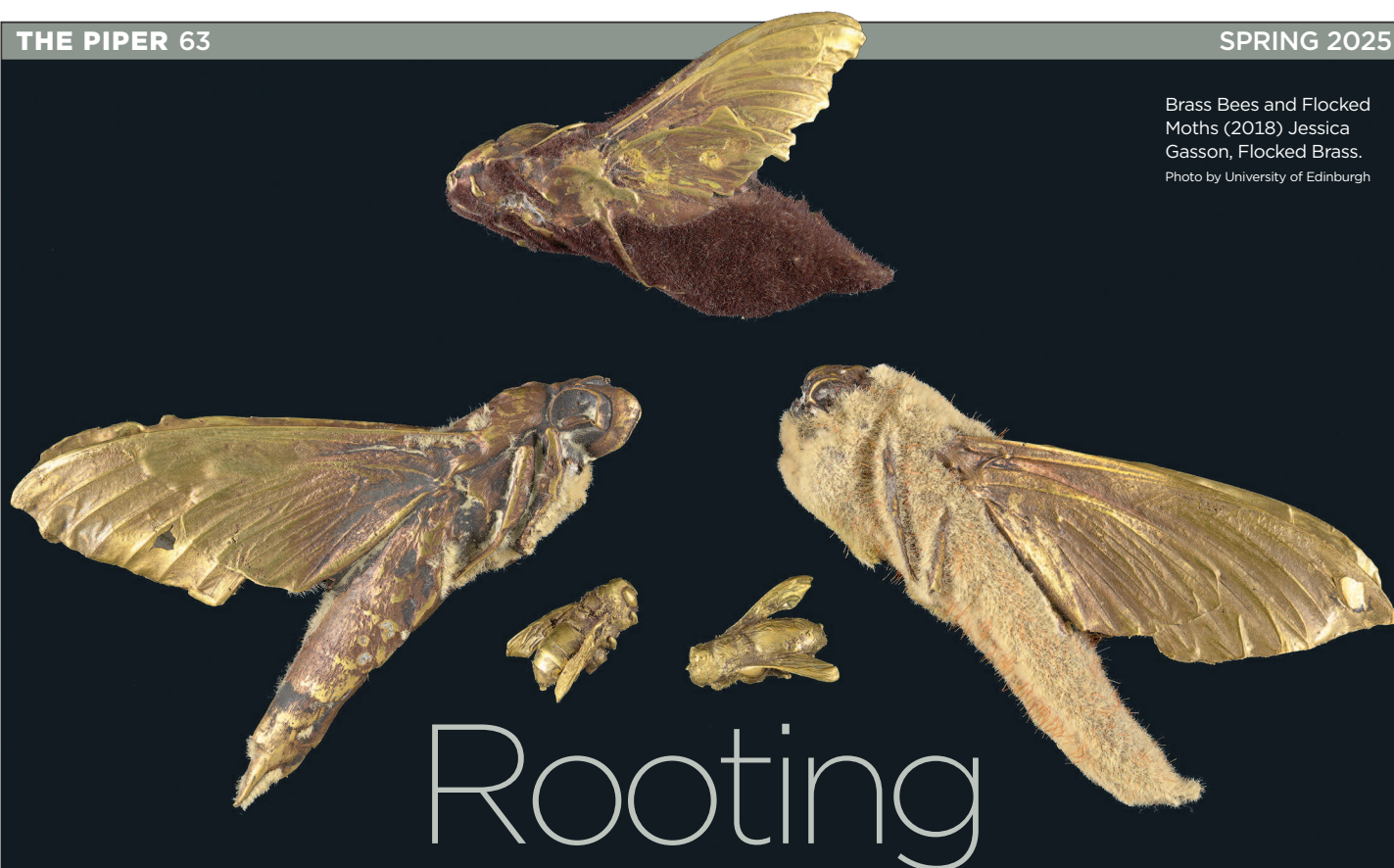The library team's new Citizen Science and Participatory Research Service, meanwhile, aims to boost public trust in science while facilitating research that depends on lived experience. By providing library spaces to researchers and community groups, the service enables collaborations on research projects, while the public can also access heritage collections and other library resources. The team endeavours to connect researchers with the communities around them, helping them answer research questions of public concern.

The judges applauded the Edinburgh library team's initiative, commending its efforts to 'share its experience with the wider sector' alongside its 'emphasis on community access'. Its work, they said, 'demonstrated a collaborative approach between the library research support team, academic and professional services staff, students and the local community that is scalable to other parts of the sector'.

Dominic Tate
Associate Director, Library Research Support
Deputy Director, Library & University Collections

Brass Bees and Flocked Moths (2018) Jessica Gasson, Flocked Brass.
Photo by University of Edinburgh

Rooting

Ecology, Extraction and Environmental Emergencies in the University Art Collection

'Rooting: Ecology, Extraction and Environmental Emergencies in the University Art Collection' brings together a selection of artworks collected over hundreds of years from the University's Art Collection around the theme of the environment and ecology. Taking inspiration from various interpretations of 'rooting' – such as searching, growth, beginnings and interconnectedness – it invites visitors to consider entangled stories of art, history, nature, and the University across time and artforms.

Delivered in collaboration with the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability, this exhibition contributes to wider conversations and research around sustainability, highlights connections between art and research and reflects on artistic, individual and institutional actions in addressing environmental emergencies.

University of Edinburgh Main Library Gallery, George Square
24 January to 15 November 2025
10–6pm Monday to Saturday
Free Admission

Events

May 6th Dr Kate McAuley, IASH Scholar, 'From national songs to nursery rhymes'

June 4th Visit to Library of Mistakes

Library updates newsletter

Library Updates is a monthly online newsletter, sharing the latest news on library services, resources and projects.

https://library.ed.ac.uk/library-news-events/library-updates-newsletter

Gift aid

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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.