

# THE HOME OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH

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The bicentennial history of the Royal Society of Edinburgh<sup>1</sup>, like previous accounts, was rightly concerned to record the work and achievements of the Society and its Fellows. Although mention is made of the former homes and possessions of the Society, these matters were incidental to the theme of the history which was *the advancement of learning and useful knowledge*, the chartered objectives of the Society. The subsequent purchases by the Society of its premises at 22–28 George Street, Edinburgh, have revealed a need for some account of these fine buildings and of their contents for the information of Fellows and to enhance the interest of many who will visit them.

The furniture so splendidly displayed in 22–24 George Street dates, for the most part, from periods in our history when the Society moved to more spacious premises, or when expansion and refurbishment took place within existing accommodation. In order that these periods of acquisition may be better appreciated it will be helpful to give a brief account of the rooms which it formerly occupied before considering the Society's present home.

Having no personal knowledge of furniture, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr Ian Gow of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Mr David Scarratt, Keeper of Applied Art at the Huntly House Museum of Edinburgh District Council Museum Service for examining the Society's furniture and for allowing me to quote extensively from their expert opinions. With their help and the documentary evidence present in the Society's archives it has been possible to determine the provenance of most, but not all, of the furniture in the Society's house.

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## FORMER HOMES OF THE SOCIETY

### *The Early Days 1783–1826*

The first meeting of the Society was held in the College Library. This was not the fine Playfair Room or Upper Library of Edinburgh University's Old Quadrangle, which was not completed until 1826–7, but the 1617 building on the north side of the University property which had been refurbished to accommodate the library in 1753 (fig. 1)<sup>2</sup>. The minutes of that meeting record that the College Library was inconvenient for Society meetings and a committee was immediately appointed to find a more suitable place<sup>3</sup>. Despite the efforts of the committee, however, meetings continued to be held in the College library for 23 years! These were challenging times for our founding fathers and to criticise their lack of success in finding better accommodation is to reckon without the history of the period in which they lived.

Rebuilding of the College had been discussed at least since 1767 but in 1785, when the American War had ended and the North Bridge had been completed, new proposals were made and in 1789 subscriptions were invited for the development of the College<sup>4</sup>. Principal William Robertson, whose initiative did so much to launch the Society, provided impetus for the rebuilding project supported by the professoriate which was also well represented in the Society's Fellowship. Among the Trustees of the College Fund were Henry, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch, the President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and Henry Dundas, the Lord Advocate, on whose political influence the choice of the Duke as the Society's first President had probably depended<sup>5</sup>.

Fig 1. Lithograph (1817) by James Skene of Rubislaw, elected FRSE 1817, showing the principal university buildings as they were when the Society met there. Meetings were held in the Library, to the right of the tower. The range of buildings to the left housed the University Museum. Reproduced by courtesy of the University of Edinburgh.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when a subscription list was published in the following year The Royal Society of Edinburgh appeared as one of the principal subscribers at 100 guineas per annum for five years. This was to be paid on the understanding that the Society would be provided with accommodation in the new College building and such rooms were indeed proposed in Robert Adam's plans of 1789 and 1791<sup>6</sup>.

Hopes ran high when the foundation stone was laid in November 1789 but in 1792 the project's architect, Robert Adam, died and in the following year the Napoleonic Wars broke out and work came to a halt. During the war years the walls of the new college building stood like a ruin and exposed timbers rotted.

Meantime the Society's wish for more convenient rooms remained unsatisfied and from 1807 some meetings were held in the Physicians' Hall in George Street<sup>7</sup>.

In 1810, with work on the College Building at a stand-still and the outcome of the Peninsular War in the balance, the Society moved into 40–42 George Street which it had acquired from Alexander Brown, perfumer and hairdresser in December 1809 for 2000 guineas<sup>8</sup>. In a Bond of Disposition of 1807 the property had been described as 'Ground on the South front line of George Street, Edinburgh, measuring 27ft 4" in front with the Dwelling House erected thereon by Robert Burn, builder in Edinburgh, consisting of Four storeys and garrets with the necessary houses in the back green behind the same . . .'<sup>9</sup>. As may be seen from Kirkwood's Town Plan of 1819 (fig. 2) number 40 was a shop and 42 was entered by a door to the west. The shop continued to be used as a hairdresser and perfumer by John Urquhart and in 1813 the Society offered two south rooms on the bedroom storey to accommodate the library and cabinet of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland with the use of its hall for that Society's meetings. The Antiquaries had previously occupied a number of premises in the Old Town but were currently faced with financial difficulties. These arrangements were negotiated by Sir George Mackenzie and Thomas Allan for the Society with John Dundas, Gilbert Innes and Henry Jardine for the Antiquaries. The agreed rent was £42 per annum for a minimum of five years to include fire, the services of the porter, and cleaning and painting the rooms.

Fig. 2. Detail of R Kirkwood's plan of the New Town of Edinburgh (1819) showing the Society's House at 40/42 George Street. The frontage of John Urquhart's shop is indicated at number 40 with the entry to the Society's rooms at number 42 to the west. Photograph by Edinburgh City Library.

The use of a third room was granted some seven years later<sup>10</sup>. The frugality of these arrangements was recalled by David Laing who remembered the perfumer working in the shop and access by the common stair leading first to the Society's rooms and then to the rooms of the Antiquaries above<sup>11</sup>.

This was the home of the Society until it moved to the Royal Institution on the Mound in 1826 when the George Street house was let. The Society remained unsure of the tenure and suitability of the rented accommodation in the Royal Institution and, when its own tenant left George Street, had seriously considered moving back there. A strong committee was appointed: Mr John Russell (Treasurer), Professor J D Forbes (Secretary), Mr Milne, Sir H Jardine, Mr J T Gibson Craig and Mr Alan Stevenson which, having commissioned William Burn the architect to survey the George Street property, reported on 29 December 1843. The committee agreed with Burn's report that the house was unsuitable for re-occupation by the Society nor could he recommend adaptations which would make it so. It was therefore advertised for sale in the *Courant* on 4th and 6th January 1844 as 'Dwelling House and Shop No 40 George Street at present occupied by Mr John Urquhart, Perfumer Between Hanover St and Frederick St . . .' It failed to sell by roup at Stevenson's Rooms for the upset price of £3000 but, after some difficulty was eventually sold to Mr James Ballantyne, (Ballantyne & Allan, Painters) for £2,600 on 25th November 1844<sup>12</sup>. Since the titles of the property were

taken not only in the name of the Society (which by Charter of Erection is entitled to hold real property in its own name) but also in the names of the Secretary and Treasurer for the time, it was necessary for the Society to raise a Summons of Declarator and Adjudication against George Forbes Esq and against the heirs of John Playfair Esq, James Bonar Esq and Sir John Robison, the former office-bearers of the Society, for having it found and declared that the Royal Society had the only good and undoubted legal title to the said subjects<sup>13</sup>.

A precedent from which the lesson has been learned since the present George Street property is held in the name of the Society alone. 40–42 George Street is now the property of the Standard Life Company and has been developed for office use, the shop front having been removed and replaced with windows to match the upper storeys.

### *FURNITURE FROM THE EARLY DAYS*

*None of the Society's present furniture can be associated with any certainty with 40–42 George Street. Mr Ian Gow has pointed out that the present President's desk and the handsome oval table, presently in the Scott Room, predate the Royal Institution building but whether or not they were previously in the possession of the Society cannot be proved. Mr Gow has also recognised in the big square stuffed chair in the Kelvin Room a piece of furniture of some pretension and has suggested that it might have been the original founding President's chair, in which case it would have served this office in the University and in George Street<sup>14</sup>. That it fell from grace when new furniture was purchased for the Royal Institution is clear since it appears to be the 'Old lug chair in Council Room 2'3" x 2'5" ' in the Institution which, on the move to our present building, was recommended 'for use of doorkeeper'<sup>15</sup>!*

*One important article of furniture which, because of its domestic proportions, might have been acquired for 42 George Street is the beautiful round table with inlaid veneers which graces the present Reception Hall and was previously a feature of the Society's Reading Room in the Royal Institution. Although neither Mr Gow nor Mr Scarratt could express a firm opinion, both said independently that this table is after the manner of George Bullock, if not actually by him. This attribution is not impossible since, for some years prior to his sudden and premature death in 1818, Bullock was working in Scotland for a number of clients, among whom was Sir Walter Scott the Society's President<sup>16</sup>. Bullock certainly knew of the Society for in 1817 he presented to it 'A Handsome Ink stand composed of a variety of British woods'<sup>17</sup>. At a sale organised by William Bullock in 1819, the remaining stock of his late brother George was sold and there were a number of Scottish buyers.*

### *The Royal Institution 1826–1909*

Even after the Society occupied 40–42 George Street hope remained that rooms might still be provided in the new College Building. When preparations were made to resume work on the College, such rooms were included in William Playfair's competition plan of 1815 and again in his amended plan of 1816. Financial restraints, however, had required the size of the new building to be reduced from that projected by Adam and increasing student numbers made greater demands for space. It soon became evident that the Society could no longer hope for rooms there and in 1817 it informed the University Commissioners that it would give up the right to have rooms if an appropriate remission of its original subscription could be agreed<sup>18</sup>. From correspondence between Sir George Mackenzie, David Brewster and Thomas Allan<sup>19</sup> it is clear that the Society withheld its fifth payment to the Commissioners, £420 having been paid over. As later noted by Allan, the University could ill afford to allocate rooms for the Society 'As it was found that it would be extremely inconvenient to the arrangements which took place subsequent to the construction of the rooms in question which had been assigned to the Society'<sup>20</sup>. Not having obtained accommodation, the Society proposed a gift to the commissioners of 200 guineas and claimed the balance with interest. In 1826 Baron Rattray, one of the Standing Committee, recommended to a general meeting of the Commission that £225 should be paid by them to the Society in settlement<sup>21</sup>. This reasonable compromise was not accepted. Recompense from the Commission continued to concern the Society into the next decade but the issue was never resolved.

Having given up hope of obtaining accommodation in the College Building, the Society was interested when, in 1821, an approach was made to it and other bodies by the recently founded Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland (later known as the Royal Institution)<sup>22</sup> with a view to a new building being erected to provide gallery space for the Institution and for the common use of a number of learned bodies then known to be seeking accommodation. In November of that year, on the proposal of Henry Mackenzie at a meeting of the Royal Society, a committee was appointed to communicate with the Board of Manufactures, the Highland and Agricultural Society, the Institution for the Promotion of Fine Arts and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland to press for the erection of such a building<sup>23</sup>. It was finally agreed that the Board of Manufactures, which was financed by a grant from Central Government, would itself erect the building, occupy part of it, and lease accommodation to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Society of Antiquaries and the Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts. The Town Council agreed (Minutes of 24 July 1822) that it will be of great advantage to obtain a Public Building at the north end of the Mound according to the Plans of Mr Playfair now approved<sup>24</sup>.

Playfair modified his plan to meet the requirements of the tenants 'before a stone of the building was laid'<sup>25</sup> and in the Council Minutes for 17 October 1822 we read:

Mr Playfair laid before the Meeting the Working plans of the Society's Apartments in the New Building. The Council Approved of the Changes introduced by Mr Playfair and appointed Mr Walter Scott, Mr Henry Jardine and Mr Skene as a Committee to decide upon any further alterations that may be suggested<sup>26</sup>.

On 2 December 1822

The Secretary laid before the Council a letter from the Board of Trustees offering the Royal Society the accommodation on the Mound for £250 of annual Rent the Society keeping the Interior of their part of the building in repair. The Council agreed to accept the offer.

Chrystal put a gloss on this for he said that while £250 was spoken of in the original discussion 'as a matter of fact the sum actually agreed upon in the lease was £260'<sup>27</sup>.

On 20 December 1822 'Mr Allan as Treasurer and Dr Brewster as Secretary were authorised to sign the lease in name of the Society'. Playfair completed a detailed plan by the end of the year and the Secretary of the Board of Manufactures reported that the building 'evinces in a high degree the pure classical taste and Scientific attainments so conspicuous in that Gentleman's professional labours'<sup>28</sup>.

Work began on Playfair's building in 1823 with the driving of about 2000 piles to stabilise the foundation on the artificial ground<sup>29</sup>. Difficulties were experienced and delays resulted, especially because of the insufficiency of the preferred stone from Cullalo (Fife). Building was continued using Binny Sandstone and the contrast is evident in the western colonnade with Cullalo to the north and Binny to the south<sup>30</sup>.

On the 9 October 1823

Mr Allan proposed that a Committee should be appointed to consider the best method of fitting out the Society's New Apartments which they are of the opinion should be done in a style conformable to the exterior elegance of the Building. The Council agreed to this proposal and appointed Mr Allan, Mr Skene and Mr Stevenson as a Committee for the purpose. Mr Allan to be Convener<sup>31</sup>.

A lasting strength of the Society has been its ability to seek advice on any matter from Fellows with relevant experience which, despite their pre-occupations, has been freely given. This committee, to which the Society owes so much, was no exception. Thomas Allan, banker and mineralogist, was the Society's Treasurer with many business and civic commitments. A month after his appointment to the convenership he bought Lauriston Castle<sup>32</sup> and work on its extension was in full swing by 3 December 1827 when Scott recorded in his Journal

. . . went with Tom Allan to see his building at Lauriston, where he has displayed good taste - supporting instead of tearing down or destroying the old chateau . . .

Allan was thus in touch with craftsmen of the day on more than one front. James Skene of Rubislaw, Scott's 'excellent friend distinguished for his attainments as a draughtsman'<sup>33</sup> was Curator of the Society's library and museum. In 1802 Skene had travelled on the continent with George Bellas Greenough, President of the Geological Society of London, whose influence stimulated his geological tastes. Skene was thus active in the interests of both the literary and physical classes of the Society. Robert Stevenson had become known to Scott as 'a most gentlemanlike and modest man' during his memorable cruise with the Commissioners of Northern Lights in 1814. In the following year Stevenson was elected to the Fellowship in recognition of his engineering achievements, notably as designer and builder of the Bell Rock Lighthouse completed in 1811. He had been involved in a number of projects in the New Town, notably as engineer of the eastern approach road by Waterloo Place and Waterloo Bridge in which, as Youngson has noted, he showed an exceptional concern for visual effect. When appointed to the committee he was completing his account of the Bell Rock Lighthouse for publication. Only five months previously he had obtained an introduction from Scott, through Skene, to J M W Turner to make a painting of the lighthouse from an original sketch by Skene which was published in Stevenson's book in 1824<sup>34</sup>.

Exactly three years elapsed between the appointment of Allan's committee and the opening of the building, sixteen months behind schedule, in October 1826. They had used the time well, because, as Mr Gow has pointed out, the Board's accounts show that additional costs were incurred in making the Society's rooms more ornamental with better chimney pieces, pilasters, cornices and overdoors than had been budgeted for<sup>35</sup>.

The accommodation allocated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in the Royal Institution was on the west side and consisted, on the ground floor, of a suite of intercommunicating rooms which, from north to south, were the Library (28' × 24') and Meeting Hall (52' × 24') with, at the south end, a small office and stairway giving access to the Museum (36' × 12') on the first floor (fig. 3, plan I). Access to the exterior was available from the north and south. Adjoining the Society's museum to the north, was the museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland with their meeting hall to the north of that. Access to the Antiquaries' rooms was by way of the entrance hall and west stairway<sup>36</sup>.

When first opened the building was two-thirds the length of the present building and had only a single row of columns facing Princes Street and lacked the projecting portions. Completion must have been in sight by 1 May 1826 for then Council planned that the Society should dine in the New Rooms on Friday, 1 December.

On 4 December 1826 Scott records in his *Journal* 'We took possession of our new rooms on the Mound, which are very handsome and Gentlemanlike'. As Fellows gathered for their first meeting there, they must have been impressed by the richness of the internal appointments of the rooms and the furnishing of the Meeting Hall. The original arrangement of furniture in the Hall changed little before D'Arcy Thompson first attended the Society<sup>37</sup> and from his description, and from the photographs of the interiors taken prior to the Society vacating the premises in 1909 and then published<sup>38</sup>, a vivid impression of that first meeting can be gained.

The President's chair faced away from the middle of the five large windows which lit the Meeting Hall and which looked out on the Castle and Gardens. It was flanked by two chairs for the vice-presidents and all three were slightly raised on a low dais. The President faced down the length of the cloth covered Council Table (10' × 6') on each side of which were four chairs for the office-bearers who sat at the table. Facing the President, across the Turkey carpet and Council Table, was the Reader's table with the Reader's chair backed by a black board. At right angles to the President and Reader, and on either side of the Council Table, there were several rows of horse-hair and mahogany benches for Fellows and their friends. In Thompson's words 'The whole plan and idea of the chamber . . . was the old-fashioned salon of an academy.'

As Fellows settled on the benches and the office-bearers took their appropriately marked chairs at the table, Sir Walter Scott limped up to the dais and, taking the President's chair, addressed the meeting. Speaking through a heavy cold he

congratulated the Society on the elegance and superior accommodation of the apartments which they now occupied for the first time. He said:

It was not to be hoped that any exertion which might be made to advance the fame of the Society above that which it procured through the efforts of their celebrated predecessors, could attain a pre-eminence at all commensurate to the difference betwixt the present splendid apartment and the humble accommodation with which the Society had formerly been contented. Yet I conceive it ought to be a spur to the men of Genius, Knowledge and Talents by whom I see myself surrounded, so to exert themselves in behalf of the Institution, that it might not be said to have decreased in its literary or scientific fame while external circumstances attending its meetings were so much improved in elegance and convenience<sup>39</sup>.

A vote of thanks to the architect Mr Playfair was proposed and carried.

On the same day Council empowered Allan's committee to settle with the Board of Trustees respecting the rent due and to settle Mr Trotter's account for furnishings and to let or sell the Society's house in George Street<sup>40</sup>.

#### *FURNITURE FROM THE ROYAL INSTITUTION 1826*

*Through the discernment of Allan's committee the Society's new rooms at the Royal Institution were provided with what, in Mr Gow's opinion, must be considered in the first rank of Scottish furniture. Outstanding among these furnishings are the President's chair and Council chairs provided for the Meeting Hall. They were designed by W H Playfair, the architect of the Royal Institution and the original full-size drawings of the chair designs are preserved in Edinburgh University Library. Mr Gow<sup>41</sup> described the Council chairs as*

*. . . a variant of the standard Edinburgh dining chair of the period but it would be difficult to think of a more expensive variant than Playfair devised with its shaped and veneered back, splendid carved leaves, inset panels on the back supports, shaped seats and turned and fluted legs.*

*So proud was the Society of its new chairs that when Sir John Watson Gordon was commissioned to paint the posthumous portrait of the first President, Henry 3rd Duke of Buccleuch, the figure was shown seated in the President's chair of Playfair's design although it was made fourteen years after the Duke's death<sup>42</sup>. Chairs for the officers are designated in gold lettering on the veneered back panel 'Secretary', 'Secretary L.C.', 'Secretary P.C.', 'Vice-President' (X2), 'Curator', 'Treasurer' and 'Reader'.*

*The chairs were made in 1826 by William Trotter<sup>43</sup>, Edinburgh's leading cabinet-maker. He appears to have been the 'official' supplier of furniture for the Board of Manufactures and so would have had a right to make furniture for the Society's rooms in the Board's premises even though the Society was itself the purchaser. We may judge of the quality of these chairs for ourselves because they are again used by Council and now form a notable feature of the Scott Room. As completed by Trotter they had horse-hair seats with brass studded upholstery pins. When the Society moved to 22–24 George Street they were placed on the dais of the Lecture Hall where they remained until 1960 when, their condition having deteriorated, they were relegated to the basement store. As part of the refurbishment of the premises in 1983 the Trotter chairs were overhauled and recovered in red hide by Herral Antiques. A number were found to be beyond restoration, however, and the required number was made up by replicas manufactured to match the originals. These lack the high quality of polish on the veneered backs of the originals but, as Mr Gow has observed, their rather lustreless mahogany only serves to confirm the splendour of the others.*

*A suite of mahogany dining chairs of very similar design to those made for the Society was supplied by Trotter and Hamilton to John and Lady Augusta Kennedy-Erskine for the House of Dun where it may be seen still. The price of the twelve dining chairs was £37.16.0d and two with elbows to suit £7.14.0d as shown by an extant bill of September 1828<sup>44</sup>. Some two years later the Playfair design was again used for officer's chairs for the Meeting Hall of the new Surgeon's Hall in Nicolson Street built between 1829 and 1832 for the Royal College to plans by that architect. On this occasion the Surgeon's put the furniture out to tender and Trotter was undercut by Messrs Burke and Sons who made the chairs<sup>45</sup>.*

*Mr Gow believes that the writing table, now in the vestibule of the Swann Room, is also the work of William Trotter. This was provided in 1826 as the "reader's table" for the Meeting Hall at the Royal Institution and Gow observes that it too is every bit as fine and as expensively finished as the chairs but there is no reason to assume that Playfair designed it<sup>46</sup>.*

*The two-dozen horse-hair benches originally supplied by Trotter to seat the Fellows in the Meeting Hall were of a much more work-a-day nature. Four were brought to George Street in 1909 and the remainder left at the Institution where some may still be seen in the care of the Royal Scottish Academy. Through time those retained by the Society deteriorated and their horse-hair seats were replaced by wood. They were stored when the Lecture Hall was reorganised in 1960 and were disposed of during the 1983 refurbishment.*

*Playfair and Trotter fitted out the Society's rooms with a magnificent series of book cases some of which survive in the Royal Scottish Academy. One was brought to George Street and used in what is now the Reception Hall but was lost in the refurbishment of 1983.*

*The cloth-covered Council table, which was so prominent a feature of the old Hall, may have been the 'large board room table lately in the Lecture Hall of the Society' which was sold at Lyon & Turnbull's auction rooms for £1-16-11d in 1924<sup>47</sup>. It is pleasant to record that at the Society's meeting of 27 November 1826:*

*It was moved by Sir Henry Jardine, and unanimously agreed to, that the thanks of the Society be given to the Committee for superintending the furnishing etc. of the Society's apartments. The thanks of the Society were accordingly given by the Vice-President to Thomas Allan Esq. James Skene Esq. and Robert Stevenson Esq. members of the Committee.<sup>48</sup>*

Thus started a tenancy under the Board of Manufactures<sup>49</sup> which was to last for eighty years. A summary account of the occupancy of rooms in the building on the Mound then known as the Royal Institution, but now as the Royal Academy, is given in the report of the Akers-Douglas Committee to which reference has already been made (see notes

25 and 27). In particular the extensive report of evidence given to the Committee by Professor Chrystal, the General Secretary of the Society, gives a graphic account of the aspirations, achievements, tensions and frustrations experienced by the Society in relation to Central Government, the Board of Manufacturers and its fellow lessees during its long tenancy in the Royal Institution.

The new building provided the Board with administrative offices, a new home for its School of Design and galleries for the exhibition of its own pictures and of the Albercini Collection of sculpture casts which it had acquired. In 1828 the Trustees obtained letters patent enabling the Board to apply funds not only to the encouragement of manufactures but also to such other undertakings in Scotland as should benefit the United Kingdom.

How was it that the new building, having been built at the expense of the Board and occupied to an important degree by the Board and the School should have been opened under the name of the Royal Institution? As Lord Cockburn observed:

Strictly, it ought to have been named after the old historical *Board of Trustees* for the improvement of manufactures; because it was by their money, and for their accommodation chiefly, that it was made; and '*The Trustees Hall*' had been the title, ever since the Union, of the place in the old town where they had met.<sup>50</sup>

We have seen that The Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland was the prime mover in promoting the idea of the building on the Mound. The Institution had reached its apogee when it entered the new building in 1826 with 131 ordinary members and had recently obtained its charter to become the Royal Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, the abbreviated title being applied to the new building itself. Artists, however, felt excluded from the management of the Institution and in that year some of them founded the Scottish Academy of Painting Sculpture and Architecture<sup>51</sup>. The Academy grew at the expense of the Institution and obtained its own charter in 1836 to become the Royal Scottish Academy. Chrystal understood that the Institution became 'bankrupt' in 1828 and the Board of Manufactures had given them an allowance of £500, the main part of which was returned to the Board in rental. The Institution remained in that questionable condition until dissolved, the last rental having been paid in 1858<sup>52</sup>. The name of the building thus commemorated the least successful of the Board's tenants.

In 1831 the Board of Manufactures, recognising the need for more accommodation in the Royal Institution, engaged Playfair to extend the building by sixty feet southwards. Permission was obtained in the following year and the work was completed in December 1835. The projecting porticoes were also added and, as a late feature, the second row of columns bringing the main portico forward into Princes Street<sup>53</sup>. The Society was provided with a new and enlarged Museum (34' x 24') in the extension of the first floor to the south of the access stair. The smaller room vacated by the Society's museum was added to the suite of rooms of the Society of Antiquaries<sup>54</sup>. The Society was also given a private entrance from the Mound through the former office to the south of the Meeting Hall on the ground floor (fig. 3, plan 2), since its former access from the south had been blocked by the extension.

In his history of the Royal Scottish Academy Esme Gordon has written of the Board of Manufactures<sup>55</sup>

The Constitution of this Board lent scope in full measure for its paid officers to provide an independent and inharmonious ground base. If the simile is not over-stressed, a strong counterpoint is also present in the Board of Trustee's tenants.

This atmosphere of disharmony between the Board and its tenants, and between the competing claims for additional space among the tenants, never allowed the Society a feeling of security in its tenancy. As we have seen the atmosphere was, at times, so disagreeable that Council seriously considered returning to 40–42 George Street in 1843. Settlement of the Building also gave concern and in 1846 Playfair was called upon to rectify matters in the Library where bookcases had become twisted through movement of the walls and the floor bulged<sup>56</sup>.

In 1849 the Society gained a small new room by the flooring in of the stairwell at the northern entrance to the Library which was lit by the provision of a new window between the two pillars of the north-west portico. This provided a new Book Room in which Council could meet and the Society was required to pay interest to the Board for the outlay in fitting it up. The plans were submitted to the Council for approval and the tradesmen's bill certified by Playfair to be paid on 4 January 1850<sup>57</sup>. As a result of interest payments the rental payable to the Board increased by £2.10s to £262.10s<sup>58</sup>. Later in that year a small writing table was purchased for Mr Haig's use in the Library<sup>59</sup>. This is probably one of two similar writing tables now in the Society's possession (fig. 3, plan 3).

Meanwhile a further quarrel had taken place between the Royal Institution and the Royal Scottish Academy the resolution of which benefited the Society. In 1835 the Royal Institution had agreed to sub-let to the Academy two of their rooms for three months in the year. The Board gave them, besides, the use of the Southern Octagon, the southernmost of the central suite of galleries in the building, for their annual exhibition<sup>60</sup>. In 1845, however, the Institution and the

Fig. 3 (over page). Plans of the Royal Institution showing stages in the expansion of the Society's accommodation from the beginning of its tenancy in 1826 to the last major addition of 1892. Drawn by Tim Smith.







Academy fell out over ownership of certain pictures and in 1847 Sir John Shaw Lefevre was asked to report on the Administration of the Board of Manufactures (published 1850) and to try to settle the dispute. He persuaded both parties to waive their claim to the pictures and agree that they should be presented to the nation to form, with pictures belonging to the Board and the Torrie Collection of the University of Edinburgh, the nucleus of a national collection for Scotland. He also recommended the construction of a new building on the Mound to house the Royal Scottish Academy and the new National Gallery.

By an Act of 1847 the Treasury had been empowered to encourage education in the fine arts and so it was possible for the Board to obtain a substantial Treasury Grant which, together with a slightly smaller sum from the Board's own funds, enabled Playfair to be employed again as architect. The Prince Consort laid the foundation stone in 1850 and the classical building was completed in 1854<sup>61</sup>. With the removal of the pictures from the Royal Institution building, re-allocation of space became possible. The Society's Museum was moved into a room on the ground floor, previously used for the display of pictures, immediately below and of the same dimensions as the room on the first floor which it vacated. It was *en suite* to the south of the Society's other rooms on the ground floor (fig. 3, plan 4). The museum had become grossly overcrowded to the detriment of the specimens and its removal was the opportunity to dispose of sections of the collection to other institutions<sup>62</sup>. It was not long, however, before this newly added room became known as 'The Tea Room' rather than the museum<sup>63</sup>.

When financial difficulties had overtaken the Society of Antiquaries in 1844 it had retrenched by removing from the Royal Institution to rented accommodation at 24 George Street. In 1851 that Society reached agreement with the Board of Manufactures and government that it would be provided with rent free accommodation in the Royal Institution on condition that it made over its collections for ever to the free use and admission of the public. This was implemented seven years later when space became available in the Royal Institution on removal of the pictures to the new National Gallery. The Antiquaries occupied three intercommunicating central galleries on the ground floor; the Great Gallery with an octagonal gallery to north and south. Expansion of the antiquarian collections was rapid and it was not long before pressure was being put on the Royal Society of Edinburgh, whose rooms were adjacent to the west, to allow the Antiquarian Library to be moved into one of their rooms. This was resisted in 1867 but, when the renewal of the Royal Society's rental was reviewed in 1875 a more serious threat had to be averted because the Antiquaries again wished to gain space at the expense of the Society. Both Societies were now seriously embarrassed for space and in 1883–4 a crisis developed between the Board of Manufactures and the Antiquaries which was finally resolved by the removal of their collections and library to form the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland which, with the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, shared Sir Rowand Anderson's new building in Queen Street which owed so much to the generosity of John Ritchie Findlay and was opened in 1891<sup>64</sup>.

The final stage of expansion within the Royal Institution followed the removal of the Society of Antiquaries. By that time the problem of housing the Royal Society's ever expanding library had reached a crisis and some areas of the Statue Gallery, situated on the first floor above the Board's Administrative offices on the east side of the building, had been used as an overflow for storing books and periodicals<sup>65</sup>. The situation was relieved by the allocation to the Society by the Board of Manufactures in February 1892 of the South Octagon, formerly occupied by the Society of Antiquaries library, for which an increased rental was demanded. This was agreed to by the Society on condition that the new room be effectually separated from other rooms formerly occupied by the Society of Antiquaries and that new and direct access be found with the adjoining Tea Room, now the southern most of the Society's suite of rooms. The new room was the South Octagon (fig. 3, plan 5) and plans for new access to it were approved in January 1893 and in December it was remitted to the Library Committee, with powers, to manage the furnishing by Messrs Morison & Co., from whom estimates had been received. The library extension was finally opened in April 1895 'to be used by fellows for study and research and that speaking be not allowed'<sup>66</sup>.

#### *FURNITURE OF THE SOUTH OCTAGON 1893–5*

*The furniture designed and made by Morison & Co., 78 George Street, reflected the contemporary reaction against earlier Victorian mahogany and was supplied in oak<sup>67</sup>. The following pieces were supplied at this time; the large table (Serial A5592) now in the Cullen Room; a pair of tables each with drawer having original handles and each having the Serial number A5593; a pair of tables each having the serial number A5594 and a pair of carver chairs marked 'A'.*

*At this time Morison & Co. was run by the partnership of William Robert Reid, and his brother John although the latter took a less active part in the business. Their father William Reid, who died four months after the opening of the Octagon Room, had joined the cabinet-maker James Morison in 1847 and for many years after Morison's death in 1862 had run the business. W R Reid was a travelled man of fine taste<sup>68</sup>.*

*In Mr Gow's view the oak pieces which we retain from the Octagon Room are not typical of W R Reid's taste and their design was probably dictated by a brief prepared by the Library Committee having regard to the requirements of the room. They are made to a restrained standard Georgian design at a time when there was a new appreciation of the antique furniture styles<sup>69</sup>.*

*Morison & Co. used serial numbers to identify their products with the prefix 'A' for pieces designed and produced in their own workshop and 'B' for those repaired or resold by them<sup>70</sup>. All Morison pieces belonging to the Society are of the 'A' series. It is probable that the company, like William Trotter earlier, was 'official' supplier to the Board of Manufactures. The year before W R Reid retired to Lauriston Castle in 1903 the firm's Edinburgh premises were sold to Civil Service Supply Associates Ltd. and the business of Morison & Co. to Turner, Lord & Co. of London who, for some time, continued to use the name<sup>71</sup>.*

With the addition of the South Octagon the rental due by the Society to the Board was fixed at £300. When Professor Chrystal gave his evidence to the Committee in 1903 he summarised the position of the Society's occupancy as follows:

It occupies the whole west side on the ground floor and one large octagonal room at the south end, for all of which it pays a rental of £300. Tenure terminable on two years notice. The only Parliamentary Grant received is £300 which was given for the first time in 1836 and has never been increased and is equal to the rent paid.

When the Akers-Douglas Committee sat the Society was the last remaining tenant in the Royal Institution building, the only other occupants being the Board of Manufactures and its design schools, and the Sculpture Gallery run by the Board. The Society believed that its tenure in the building should be considered permanent because of an undertaking made by Sir William Arbuthnott as Secretary and authorised by the Board of Commissioners and Trustees at the beginning of the tenancy<sup>72</sup>.

Legislation followed publication of the Akers-Douglas Report in 1903 which brought its recommendations into effect. Under the National Galleries of Scotland Act of December 1906 the Board of Manufactures ceased to exist and was replaced by the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland. The various buildings which came under the management of the new Board, including the Royal Institution, were vested in the Commissioners of Works. The Secretary of State was empowered to allocate from the general fund of the Board of Manufactures money to build a new Edinburgh College of Art which was designed by J M Dick Peddie and completed in Lauriston Place in 1910, the teachers and students of the school removing thence in 1909 before its final completion. The claims of the Royal Society of Edinburgh were not forgotten in the 1906 Act and steps were taken to find a new home for the Society under the Commissioners of Works. Under the National Gallery of Scotland (Appropriation of Buildings) Order 1910, works of art that were exclusively the property of the Academy were transferred to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Scotland and the 1854 building was devoted entirely to the display of the National Collections. The Royal Institution building was given over for the use of the Royal Scottish Academy and was so named. The Society's last meeting was held there on 26 October 1908.

## THE PRESENT HOME OF THE SOCIETY

### *22–24 George Street*

As we have seen the Society felt that it had security of tenure in the Royal Institution although, as had happened on previous occasions, the conditions of the lease might be varied. It therefore came as a shock when in 1906 the Society found itself without a home<sup>73</sup>. Lord Kelvin was in his third presidency when negotiations began to find a new home and in 1908 was succeeded by Sir William Turner. Both men took a prominent part in discussions supported by Professor Chrystal's unrivalled knowledge of the Society's history. Early approaches to the Secretary of State for Scotland were not encouraging but later negotiations were more successful thanks to the energetic lobbying of Members of Parliament in London by Noel Paton, Professor of Physiology in Glasgow<sup>74</sup>. In the settlement of difficulties in the art world much was owed to the statesmanship of the President of the Royal Scottish Academy, Sir James Guthrie.

Under Guthrie's guidance differences within the Academy were composed and, in a considerable degree through his influence, new galleries for the Academy were inaugurated in 1911 and improved conditions obtained for the National Galleries of Scotland<sup>75</sup>.

Guthrie appears now to have used his influence on behalf of the Society because, as a Director of the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company, he knew that their premises at 22–24 George Street were to be vacated when the Company's new offices were completed on the adjacent site at the corner of Hanover Street. Guthrie believed that 22–24 George Street was well suited to the requirements of the Royal Society and would need little adaptation<sup>76</sup>. Because of their mutual involvement with the Akers-Douglas Committee it is likely that Guthrie and Chrystal were well known to one another and, according to Campbell and Smellie<sup>77</sup>, it was Chrystal who ascertained that the present rooms could be purchased and it was Turner who so persuaded the Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord Pentland, that the Treasury granted the necessary £25,000 for the Commissioners of Works to purchase 22–24 George Street and £3000 to cover the cost of removal and equipment<sup>78</sup>. The Bicentenary History found pleasure in noting that a feature of the negotiations was the courteous language used by both sides in all correspondence. It is pleasant to add that when our President, Sir William Turner, sat for his portrait for presentation to the University in 1913 it was painted by Sir James Guthrie.

During the winter of 1908–9 the Society met in University premises at High School Yards. Its first meeting in its new home took place on 1 March 1909.

Numbers 22–24 George Street were adjacent terraced houses which were built as part of James Craig's New Town. They dated from 1785 when the site was feued to the Edinburgh masons, William Smith and Robert Wright, by the Corporation<sup>79</sup>. Number 22 passed through the ownership of Alexander Baillie of Dochfour, George Steuart WS and Mrs Euphemia Douglas of Hartree<sup>80</sup> before being purchased by Dr David Maclagan, Surgeon-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria, in 1818. He and his family occupied the house until 1843 when he sold it to the Edinburgh Life Assurance Association. Ownership of the upper flat of this house, designated number 20 George Street, was retained by the builder Robert Wright and after his death his eldest son Thomas, a tanner in Crieff, sold it to the Edinburgh Life Association in 1841.

James Watson, Clerk to the Signet, acquired No. 24 from the builders and, in 1793, sold it to Elizabeth and Margaret Graham, daughters of the late William Graham, younger, of Gartmore. The upper flat was sold by the builders to John Campbell of Annfield in 1791 and it passed through the hands of the merchants John and Alexander Pitcairn, Robert Scott Moncrieff, banker, and William Scott Moncrieff of Newhall before being acquired and occupied by Ninian Stevenson teacher of writing and accounts in 1820 who, twenty years later, sold it to the Edinburgh Life Association. That company had been founded in 1823 and on 16 September of that year had rented No. 24 George Street until

Whitsunday 1824, at a rent of £47.10s, from the Miss Grahams. In February 1824, No. 24 was sold to the Company by Miss Elizabeth Graham for £2,333.18.10d. The Society's President, Sir Walter Scott, had been one of the founders of the 'Edinburgh' but in his *Journal* (13 December 1825) he described himself as 'one of those graceful and useless appendages, called Directors Extraordinary' and probably had little interest in its affairs.

As the Company's business increased it added to No. 24 firstly the upper flat of that house (1840), then the upper flat of number 22 (1841) and finally (1843) Dr David Maclagan's house at No. 22 itself. The connections of the Maclagan family with the Company did not cease with the sale. His eldest son Douglas, who had lived there during his youth and early manhood, was elected a Fellow of the Society in the year of the sale and, as Sir Douglas Maclagan, became its President from 1890 to 1895<sup>81</sup>. He was also the Principal Medical Officer of the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company for nearly half a century. His brother David Maclagan CA, FFA became manager of the Company from 1866 until his death in 1883<sup>82</sup> 'thus spending most of his working life within a few feet of where he was born'.

The architectural firm of Burn and Bryce was commissioned to redevelop the site of both houses as offices suited to the needs of the Company and befitting its status, and to provide additional accommodation which could be leased. The younger partner William Bryce attended to the commercial work of the practice and, in Professor Dunbar-Naismith's opinion, there can be little doubt that the design of the new building was by him. The Assurance Company's offices were entered by No. 22 and occupied the basement, business hall with offices behind on the ground floor and board room on the first floor to which access was obtained by the east stairway. The top floor was leased and reached by the western entrance No. 24, and a more modest stair which rose directly to the second floor. A lease was granted to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland from Whitsunday 1844 at a rental of £60 for the first five years and £65 for the next fifteen. The top floor was altered to provide them with a top-lit hall for their museum and other rooms. They occupied the accommodation for over fourteen years<sup>83</sup>. This well-lit space was subsequently rented as a studio by a succession of artists of which the best known were the Scottish Academicians Sam Bough and J Maclaren Barclay<sup>84</sup>. A lease was also granted to the Edinburgh Subscription Library for accommodation in the upper apartments.

In 1898 the Company leased 'a hall, room etc.' at 24 George Street to the Faculty of Actuaries for a period of 25 years at a rental of £150. The hall in question was what we now term the Wellcome Room although it then had the form retained by the Society's Lecture Hall prior to the refurbishment of 1983. A platform was constructed in the hall for the accommodation of the President and Council at the Faculty's meetings and the decoration, bookshelves and electric lighting were each the subject of painstaking discussion. The room sublet to the Actuaries was what we now know as the Clerk Maxwell Room. David Deuchar, FRSE, then President of the Faculty, invited the members to cake and wine to celebrate the acquisition which was regarded in a high degree as satisfactory<sup>85</sup>. A photograph of the Faculty's Hall at that time shows a spacious and dignified room having a metal balcony on the north and west walls giving access to book-cases. Prominent below are the busts of T B Sprague and W T Thomson which now flank the lecture podium in the Faculty's Lecture Hall in St Andrew's Square.

It must have been a blow to the Faculty when, only seven years later, they were required to move. An effort was made with the Edinburgh Assurance Company to have alternative accommodation provided for them in the company's new building at 26 George Street. The Scottish Education Department, no doubt with an eye to clearing the way at 22-24 George Street for the Society following the 1906 Act, found accommodation for the Faculty at 14 Queen Street to which it moved at the end of 1907<sup>86</sup>.

#### *FURNITURE ACQUIRED WITH 22-24 GEORGE STREET*

*With the purchase of 22-24 George Street the Society acquired many pieces of furniture which formerly had been the property of the Assurance Company and Mr Gow has kindly commented on this phase of acquisition<sup>87</sup>. It may be that the Company wished to start afresh in its new offices and so was happy to part with its Victorian pieces, it may be also that the Society wished to continue the character of Bryce's interiors. The furniture purchased with the house was in keeping with what was brought from the Royal Institution. From photographs of the interiors as they were when used by the Company it is possible to identify items which grace our rooms today.*

*The set of handsome upholstered mahogany benches, which now do duty in the Reception Hall and Wellcome Rooms, were formerly placed around the walls of the Company's Board Room. Some are larger than others and it is likely that they were made to fit that room which now we know as the Scott Room. The long set of upholstered chairs with single curved back rails was also obtained at this time. Twelve of them surrounded the round Boardroom Table of the Company and others were in the Manager's Room. The long table with rather fat legs, now against the north wall of the Kelvin Room, appears to have served as a side-board against the east wall of the Company's Board Room. The Board Room clock has also survived in its former position on the Board Room mantelpiece. The wall panelling of crimson Utrecht velvet, however, was a feature of the decoration of this room which was removed to the company's new Board Room at 26 George Street which was designed for its reception<sup>88</sup>.*

The George Street building was adapted for the Society by William Thomas Oldrieve of the Office of Works in 1908/9<sup>89</sup>. The former Business Hall, now the Reception Hall, became the library and reading room with fitted shelves on the south and west walls, access to the upper sections being by a spiral metal stair and gallery (fig. 4). A large book case, brought from the Royal Institution, clothed the east wall between the door and the east stair. The former Manager's Office, now the Programme Manager's Office, became the office of the Assistant Secretary and Librarian and the adjoining room, now the Kelvin Room, became the Council Room which also served as a general office. The Rear Salon, lit by three cupolas and five windows to the west, was fitted with steel shelving and a gallery on the east and south walls and shelving was also placed between the windows. It was used as part of the library but also contained the

*Extracted from Year Book, R.S.E., 1996*

residual museum. The basement was used as a book-store and stockrooms for the Society's publications. The former Hall of the Faculty of Advocates, now the Wellcome Room, was adapted as the Lecture Hall with the lecturer's bench occupying a recess on the north side and seating was arranged along the length of the room backing the windows. Later, as bookshelves encroached upon the walls, it was found more convenient to arrange the seating across the room to face a platform at the east end, the former lecturer's dais being removed. The Company's Board Room, now the Scott Room, became the Society's Reception Room with an ante-room, now the Clerk Maxwell Room, to the west. To the east of the Board Room was the Auditor's Room which became, what the Society rather grandly termed the Preparation Room but which really served as a kitchen and is now the General Secretary's Room. The Society's Officer was provided with a flat on the top floor comprising a sittingroom, two bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen. This provision was discontinued in May 1977 when, with the rest of the top floor, it was adapted for office and storage use and a small committee room.

At the Council Meeting of 25 June 1909<sup>90</sup>

Fig. 4. The Reception Hall in 1951 (then known as the Entrance Hall and Front Reading Room). Note the Playfair bookcase on the left at the foot of the east staircase. Reproduced with permission of The Scotsman Publications.

It was intimated that the President, Sir Wm Turner and the General Secretary, Professor Chrystal, had offered to furnish the Reception Room, and the adjoining Ante-Room respectively, with Brass Grates of appropriate design, approved by Sir George Reid. The Council has much pleasure in accepting the gifts; and thank the donors most cordially for their thoughtful generosity.

At the previous Council meeting Oldrieve's estimate of £45 was considered for carrying out Sir George Reid's suggestion that brass grates would be better fitted to the new decoration than the pre-existing steel ones but it was not obvious where this considerable sum could be found. Turner and Chrystal obliged. As we admire their brass grates in what are now the Scott and Clerk Maxwell Rooms we should remember the true extent of our indebtedness to these men for, as John Horne wrote, the present rooms themselves may not ineptly be regarded as a monument to them<sup>91</sup>.

The heart of the new accommodation, however, was the Lecture Hall which was fitted up in what had been the Hall of the Faculty of Advocates and which we now know as the Wellcome Room. Many older Fellows remember with affection the Hall as it was arranged in 1909 and continued until 1960. The metal galleries having been removed, the lecturer's bench, complete with three gas points and two sinks, was placed across the recess on the north side of the room and seating arranged along the length of the room backing the five windows. A fume-cupboard occupied a recess to the west of the bench. It was seldom used, but when it was, the extraction fan reverberated throughout the building. On the south wall of the recess, behind the demonstration bench, were fitted the four expanding blackboards from the old Meeting Room of the Royal Institution, a pair on each side of the projection screen. Projection was from a box fitted into the window recess of the middle window of the room. The projectionist climbed into this by means of steps and there displayed his skill in maintaining light from the carbon arc behind  $3 \times 3$ "glass slides. Light was often accompanied by sound from the hissing arc and misjudgement resulted in failure of the arc or in the sudden discharge of carbon dust which instantly clouded the lenses. Seating was on hard-bottomed chairs except for four of the original horse-hair benches brought from the Royal Institution, three of which were placed along the south wall and one along the west. Proceedings were under the eye of the President who sat in the President's Chair on the dais at the East end of the room. Behind him were placed the Trotter chairs, not then used by Council, and in front of him stood the President's table, now in the Kelvin Room. In the depth of winter a small electric radiator provided personal warmth to the President on the dais and was responsible for a mid-lecture expostulation by Sir D'Arcy Thompson that he had set himself alight. It was from this imposing setting that I heard Sir William Wright Smith express his personal satisfaction that the Earth had just been shown to be older than the Universe; Arthur Holmes having shown that the radiometric ages of rocks provided evidence that the origin of the earth lay beyond what the astronomers would then allow to be the age of the universe.

During the presidency of Professor Ritchie a scheme of redecoration of the rooms was initiated. After consultation between the Society's Officers, Stanley Cursiter and Sir Robert Matthew, the east stairway was redecorated in a carefully selected shade of pink, the panels in the Reception Room, which had been red flock, were changed to gold and the ceiling panels of the Reception Room and the Lecture Room were brightened with colour. The work was undertaken by Macarthur Bros. In 1960 the Lecture Room was rearranged with the seating across the room to face the lecturer on the dais at the east end. The demonstration bench was removed from the north recess, cut down and, bereft of sinks and gas fittings, re-erected on the dais. The projection box was dismantled and new equipment placed at the west end of the room. The fume-cupboard and old expanding blackboards were removed and disposed of and book shelves, to

match those on the other walls, installed in the northern recess. A new rotary blackboard was purchased for the east end of the room. The Trotter chairs and horse-hair benches were relegated to store in the basement<sup>92</sup>.

#### *FURNITURE ACQUIRED FOR 22-24 GEORGE STREET 1909-1979*

*Since the Society's occupation of 22-24 George Street, Council had used a set of oak chairs acquired from J & T Scott, 30 George Street. In 1977 these were sold through Herrald Antiques, except for the two carvers which are now in the Clerk Maxwell Room which are stamped with the maker's name.*

*Twenty-six standard and two carver reproduction chairs were then acquired for Council's use from Herrald Antiques, 38 Queen Street. These chairs are of a reproduction antique design and have a Prince of Wales feathers pattern with wheat sheaf motif on their backs. At the request of the Society they were upholstered in red velvet dralon to match the curtains of the Scott Room. The cost was approximately £60 per standard chair<sup>93</sup>. At the same time 10 'Abbess' metal-legged utility tables were purchased.*

In 1977 The Property Services Agency, in which the property was then vested, asked the architects Robert Hurd and Partners to suggest proposals which would make the building comply with modern fire regulations. This was difficult in a building 'rich in architectural detail and designed for an earlier age'. At the same time the accommodation provided by Oldrieve's adaptation of the Bryce Building was fast becoming inadequate for the needs of the Society. W H Rutherford has written;

. . . The lecture room and the reception rooms on many occasions were crowded to capacity and the library, early in the 1970s, had more than fully occupied all the available space. The Society had the impossible task of attempting to house appropriately an ever-expanding collection of scientific literature. From a mere 30,000 volumes in 1909 the stock had increased to more than 250,000 volumes . . .<sup>94</sup>

The establishment of a Scottish Science Reference Library under the National Library of Scotland had been proposed in 1975 and an account of the lengthy and detailed negotiations which led to the agreement in the autumn of 1980 for the handing over of the Society's foreign periodicals to the National Library of Scotland for this purpose has been published<sup>95</sup>. In addition to the provision of an annual allocation to fund Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, compensation to the Society under the agreement with the Scottish Education Department included a capital sum of £500,000. In 1981 Council decided that about half of this should be used to finance the reconstruction and renovation of the Society's house and the rest of the necessary money was raised through generous support from the Wellcome Trust, the Wolfson Foundation, the MacRobert Trust and other benefactors and by the sale of a further part of the library. Between May and September 1981 the foreign periodicals, some eighty per cent of the total library stock, was transferred to the National Library. The British periodicals and other volumes that were being sold were removed in the autumn of 1981. By the end of that year a satisfactory development scheme was agreed and the architects, Robert Hurd and Partners, were instructed to proceed. G Percy Trentham Ltd, the main contractor, took over the building in April 1982.

These courageous decisions released the Society from traditions which had served their time and made possible rapid expansion in activities more suited to the needs of the day. As so often in our history, succeeding Presidents proved to be men for the hour. Sir Kenneth Blaxter was the visionary whose guidance led to these reforms; the industrial and financial experience of his successor, Sir John Atwell, proved invaluable in bringing them about.

Temporary accommodation was leased for the Society at the headquarters of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland at 29 Queen Street where it was located from 5 January 1982 until the reconstructed rooms were formally opened by Her Majesty The Queen on 29 June 1983. The opening was one of the highlights of the celebrations of the Society's bicentenary.

The following account of the restoration of 1982-3 is taken from that published by the architects on the occasion of the opening of the rooms in June 1983<sup>96</sup>.

The two major alterations proposed which affected the form of the building were the construction of a new Lecture Theatre and a lift to serve all floors . . .

Of the rooms released by the removal of the library, the most important was the rear salon, within which the requirements of the new Lecture Theatre could just be met. Provision of the lift was a more difficult matter. It should be remembered that the main staircase finished at the first floor level; the only access to the second floor was by means of the west stair which did not go to the basement, an imbalance caused by the building having had two separate occupiers at an earlier time. The biggest problem here was that the lift structure had to come through the first floor which was totally taken up with large formal rooms and even these were at different levels. A solution was found by taking the space from the existing raised dais in the Old Lecture Theatre; having established this position for the lift this decision determined what would happen on other floors. Fortunately the ground floor and basement were able to accept the intrusion without too much alteration but in the case of the second floor, the lift was only accommodated because of other alterations necessary to provide administrative offices, Committee Rooms, toilets etc. It has been mentioned that the main stair finished on the first floor and here the landing was extended to provide the required direct link from the lift to the Scott Room. The extension was made to harmonise with the original landing and includes a cast iron and mahogany balustrade.

The removal of the bookcases in the entrance hall exposed an arched opening into what is now the Kelvin Room and this led us to further investigations along the same wall to the west where another built-up arch was found. The two arched door openings which now show up in the grand manner are a result of these findings.

To avoid the suggested erection of a fire emergency screen in the entrance hall between the columns, which would have been unattractive, the basement stair, previously open to the ground floor, was enclosed and the wall floored over to give the required escape route. The bottom of this basement stair was reformed to complete the second means of escape through a newly formed fire route to the outside and street level via a new stair within the basement area.

In the basement, there are new cloakrooms, bookstores and toilets and, within the old vaults, a modern kitchen. The kitchen has an electric hoist for service to the Kelvin Room at Ground floor level and to a first floor servery.

The rear salon was tested acoustically and found suitable for lecturing purposes. Then the complicated work of planning and providing up-to-date facilities within the old walls commenced . . . . A raked floor was provided to improve viewing . . . . The projection room is accommodated within an old safe which was extended over a mutual lightwell to give central projection . . . .

The old lecture theatre on the first floor was an oddly shaped room lined with books. By the erection of a partition, the north recess was made available for use as a kitchen servery, thus giving a facility for formal meals at this level . . . .

The installation of the heating and ventilation plant was difficult because of lack of space and, after much consideration, it was decided to accommodate the main equipment within the roof space which involved total replacement of the roof structure. The height within the roof space was limited and, as external height of the roof could not be increased, the floor had to be dropped, thus reducing the height of the rooms below . . . .

The former kitchen adjoining the Scott Room was converted into an office then used by the President. The Trotter chairs, which had been long disused, were salvaged and restored and reinstated in the Scott Room, while the pictures were cleaned in the studios of the National Gallery. The 75 year old Turkish carpets were repaired but other carpets were replaced.

In his address on the occasion of the Society first meeting in the present house on 8 November 1909, Sir William Turner had said<sup>97</sup> 'We are now, therefore, no longer tenants-at-will of apartments, to be dispossessed on short notice; we sit rent free in a handsome and commodious building, and with our occupancy ensured by a Parliamentary title'.

It was no doubt in the security of this belief that the Society spent over half a million pounds in the refurbishment and reconstruction of a house which it did not own. No sooner had this been accomplished, however, than new Government procedures were introduced whereby the Society was required to pay an annual rental to the Property Services Agency. To fund this the Society received an equivalent sum within its grant-in-aid from the Scottish Education Department. It soon became apparent that while grant-in-aid increases were likely to be limited to inflation rates, rental reviews would take account of rapidly rising inner city values thus raising the possibility of a damaging squeeze on the Society's own funds. A rental also put in question the security of the Society's tenure with the possibility of the consequent loss of the capital investment which had been made by the Society in the property. Thus when Government indicated its desire that properties rented from the Property Services Agency might be 'privatised' by purchase, the President, Sir Alwyn Williams, initiated discussion with the Agency in 1986 to buy the house which it occupied. On 24 October 1988 Council decided to proceed with the purchase on the best terms available. The District Valuer's Valuation of £1.6m was the basis of negotiation and it was agreed that half of that sum should be discounted against refurbishment funded by the Society and the balance of £800,000 should be paid in two instalments, £500,000 when formal agreement was reached and £300,000 in October 1989. While some £300,000 of the purchase price could be met from the Society's funds, an appeal for £500,000 was launched under the Society's former Treasurer and President Sir John Atwell as Appeal Director assisted by Mr J M Dunlop, formerly Chief Executive of Fife Regional Council, as Appeal Administrator. In two years the Appeal had raised half its target from the Fellowship and half from outside contributions and, in October 1990 the President, Professor Kembell, announced that, making reasonable assumptions on future tax recoveries, the target of £500,000 would be reached.

Purchase of the House has given the Society a capital asset and with it responsibility for upkeep and maintenance with the aid of a continued grant from the Scottish Education Department for this purpose. In 1991 the Hurd Rolland Partnership was commissioned to undertake the redecoration of the Wellcome Room to make it better fitted to meet the ever-increasing demands of the Society and other organisations which lease rooms. The effective floor space was increased by the removal of the platform at the east and recarpeting the whole. The proportions of this long room were improved by defining panels on the walls and more appropriate light fittings were introduced.

With a rapid increase in the Society's activities and the consequent appointment of additional staff, pressure for additional function rooms and offices again became urgent. In 1992 the basement of the Society's house was refurbished, under the direction of the Hurd Rolland Partnership and with the assistance of a further generous grant from the Wellcome Foundation, to provide space of a standard comparable to that elsewhere in the building. The key to these changes was the transformation of the publications stock-room and store below the Wolfson Lecture Theatre, and of equal area to it, into a seminar room for the use of medium sized groups. This room has been named the Swann Room in recognition of the outstanding part which the late Lord Swann of Coln played in the affairs of both the Wellcome Trust and of the Society. The seminar-room is provided with an adjacent toilet and cloak-room.

The stairway from the Reception Hall on the ground floor was upgraded to lead into a basement vestibule which gives access to the other accommodation. This includes the book-lined MacRobert Room for the use of Fellows, the Cullen Room for the use of the Society's Officers and for housing the valuable residual library and also limited storage accommodation. A feature of the basement vestibule is the pair of painted glass panels depicting the helmeted Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the arts, and perhaps Urania the Muse of astronomy, which once formed two lights of an

inner door leading to the Society's rooms in the Royal Institution. It is appropriate that Trotter's reader's table from the Meeting Hall of that building should be placed in the vestibule together with photographs of the former rooms in the Institution as a reminder of the Society's tenancy of over eighty years at the foot of the Mound.

Refurbishment of the basement allowed reorganisation of offices elsewhere in the building. The President's office was moved to the Kelvin Room on the ground floor which, since 1983 had been used as the Fellows' room then named the MacRobert Room. The former office of the President adjoining the Scott Room has been named the Hutton Room and now provides an office for the General Secretary, while the former General Secretary's office, then called the Kelvin Room, has become the Clerk Maxwell Room. It was also found helpful to exchange the offices of the Publications Manager and the Programme Manager at this time. Through a supplementary grant of £100,000 in 1992–3 from the Scottish Office, office efficiency has been increased by the installation of new equipment including a fully networked Personal Computer system with terminals for each member of staff and some of the senior officers.

#### *26 George Street*

In 1992 the Business Committee recognised that even after the refurbishment of the basement of 22-24 George Street there would be insufficient accommodation to meet the likely needs of the Society and, through the leadership of the President Sir Alastair Currie, Council had under consideration possible options for the future. Even as it did so important changes were taking place in the external environment in which the Society operated and by coincidence Commercial Union Assurance vacated the adjacent building in 1992 and 26 George Street became available for purchase.

Fig 5. Photograph of George Street in 1901. On the right the tenement block, numbers 26–28, is clearly seen with the shop of Alexander Gibb, umbrella manufacturer, on the corner of George Street and Hanover Street. The office of the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company at numbers 22–24 abuts to the left.

The building was owned by Ocean and Accident Guarantee Corporation, Trustees for the Commercial Union Assurance Group Staff Pension Fund. Working Parties to consider the Society's Activities and Fund-Raising were established in the early summer of 1994 and in August of that year Council decided to acquire 26 George Street for £1,575,000, a price negotiated with the Commercial Union Property Managers. The Hurd Rolland Partnership have advised on the integration of 22–26 George Street and plans for major refurbishment are in preparation.

Commercial Union had purchased the building in 1948 from the Edinburgh Assurance Company who had built it as their head office which has been described as 'one of the striking architectural features of a street full of handsome buildings'<sup>98</sup>. To the geologically sensitive its Portland stone sits uneasily among its local sandstone neighbours. Designed in the grand renaissance manner by John More Dick Peddie in 1908–9<sup>99</sup>, it followed that architect's classical Edinburgh College of Art building in Lauriston Place of 1906. A feature is the rounded corner between George Street and Hanover Street surmounted by a consoled drum and copper dome crowned by a bronze statue of Prudence by Percy Portsmouth. Smooth engaged ionic pillars rise between the windows of the two upper floors and the crowning balustrade carries westwards a feature of our neighbouring Burn and Bryce building. The magnificence of the ground-floor hall is emphasised by Roman Doric marble columns and that of the main stairway by heavy balusters. This leads to the first-floor board room with its 18th-century marble chimneypiece and velvet panels brought from the Burn and Bryce building next door. As in that building, access to the upper floors is gained by a separate and less grand stairway at 53 Hanover Street. The basement is reached by way of 26 George Street.

The building replaced a tenement, numbered 26–28 George Street and 37–39 Hanover Street, and a sub-divided dwelling house 33–35 Hanover Street (fig. 5).

From the deeds it is known that William Smith, the mason who with Robert Wright built 22 and 24 George Street in 1785, obtained the feu for the neighbouring site from the City in 1783. Smith died shortly afterwards, however, and in



1785 the feu was renounced in favour of his mason colleague Robert Wright who, with Smith's eldest son William Smith jnr., built the tenement in 1786.

Conforming to the regulations governing houses built on the main streets of the new regality, re-enacted by the Corporation in 1785, the tenement comprised a basement, three storeys and garrets. The apartments were spacious each consisting of five 'fire' rooms, lobby, kitchen etc. approached by way of the common stair at No.26 and they were sold to the original owners in 1787. Each had a number of cellars under the pavement which were entered from the sunken area which surrounded the property. Adjoining the cellars were the 'common office houses' being 'the arched cellar . . . which communicates to the main drain'. Fresh water was obtained from pipes in front of the tenement and slops were presumably discarded into the common office house. The fetching and carrying which this implied was no doubt undertaken by servants until water was piped into the houses and internal sanitation eventually became available<sup>100</sup>.

In later years the flats were used mostly as office premises, the Directories listing among others teachers, solicitors, engravers, booksellers, bookbinders, printers and engineers. In earlier days, however, the properties had been residential. Here had lived the advocate William Boswell and the Misses Edmonstone of Duntreath, grand-nieces of the Duke of Argyll who are described as Aunts Jacky, Grizzy and Nicky in Miss Ferrier's novel *Marriage*. Miss Ferrier herself lived in her father's house opposite at 25 George Street<sup>101</sup>. Later Mrs Dickie lived at No. 26 with whom the celebrated American naturalist John James Audubon took apartments for two periods of six months during his visits of 1826–27 and 1830–31<sup>102</sup>. Audubon writes in his Journal for October 26 1826:

My companions, who knew Edinburgh well, offered to accompany me in search of lodgings, and we soon entered the second door in George Street, and in a few minutes made an arrangement with Mrs Dickie for a fine bedroom and a well furnished sitting-room. I am to pay her one guinea per week, which I consider low, as the situation is fine, and the room clean and comfortable. I can see, from where I am now writing the Firth and the boats plying on it<sup>103</sup>.

Mrs Dickie found that lodging an artist naturalist had its excitements. On December 16 David Lizars sent two cats to Mrs Dickie which she objected to have roaming in her rooms. Long after midnight Audubon left a party at the Halls and hurried back to his lodgings 'to commit murder'.

. . . her son helped me, and in two minutes the poor animals were painlessly killed. I at once put them up in fighting attitude, ready for painting when daylight appeared, which would not be long<sup>104</sup>.

On New Year's Eve Audubon returned early from a party at the Hall's having heard of fearful deeds committed on the Edinburgh streets by vagabonds at that time.

I reached my room sat down and outlined a Pheasant, to save daylight to-morrow and was about going to bed, when Mrs Dickie came in and begged I would wait till twelve o'clock to take some toddy with her and Miss Campbell, my American boarding companion, to wish all a happy New Year. I did so of course . . . the noise kept increasing in the streets, and the confusion was such that until morning I never closed my eyes<sup>105</sup>.

Only three weeks later Audubon was to realise one of his great desires, to meet the Society's president Sir Walter Scott and was proud of his election on 5 March 1827 to Honorary Fellowship of the Society.

It was during his second visit to Edinburgh, again at 26 George Street 'where he felt truly at home with Mrs Dickie', that Audubon began the *Ornithological Biography*<sup>106</sup>.

The western half of the ground storey was a shop numbered 28 which was occupied by various silk-mercers and merchants. By 1848 it was the shop of Alexander Gibb, umbrella and parasol manufacturer, who remained there for over 50 years until forced to remove to 49 Hanover Street to allow construction of the new Assurance building. In the basement below Gibb's shop was a tobacconist which was entered by way of Hanover Street as number 39. Number 37 Hanover Street was the side entrance to the tenement and was the address of a number of businesses among which, of the more long lasting, were a furrier and a toy warehouse.

The feu of 33 and 35 Hanover Street was granted to Robert Burn, mason, by the City of Edinburgh in 1787 and the property apparently built and sold in the same year. An early tenant of No. 35 was Allan Maconochie, advocate, who lived there prior to being raised to the bench as Lord Meadowbank in 1796 and before the house was altered and subdivided<sup>107</sup>. He was a founding Fellow of the Society and active in its affairs as a Vice-President.

The Edinburgh Life Assurance Company acquired the whole of the tenement at 26 George Street from the several owners between 1869 and 1902 and the property at 33–35 Hanover Street from the Union Bank of Scotland in 1872. All were demolished to make way for the Company's new head office. Nothing is left of these old buildings except a fine late 18th Century marble chimneypiece, probably from one of the original houses, which was retained by the Assurance Company in their new boardroom<sup>108</sup>. Did this chimneypiece witness the nightly battles over whist enjoyed by the Miss Edmonstones and their friends at that address, or give winter cheer to Audubon, Scott's 'sojourner in the desert', or perhaps to Allan Maconochie as he studied his legal briefs?

Someone once said 'The birds now have a gilded cage – but will they sing?'. Whenever the Society has moved into a new building the president of the day has reminded the Fellowship of that challenge. On this occasion it has been summed up in our President's words:

We must remember in all this that buildings are simply a means to an end. What matters is the quality of our human resources - the talent of our Fellowship<sup>109</sup>.

Ebb and flow is inevitable in the affairs of institutions and so it has been in the history of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. There have been times when Roger Hahn's withering description of the Institut de France might well have applied to our Society:

Today it is a glorious relic of the past, more akin to a Hall of Fame than an Olympic Stadium. . . . Age, wisdom and ceremony now prevail where once youth, creativity and debate reigned supreme<sup>110</sup>.

In his presidential address Sir Alwyn Williams may have had such a picture in mind when he said that antiquity and past achievement are inadequate reasons for the continued existence of any body. He went on to say of the last decade 'it would be difficult to find a period when social and economic ferment could so menacingly have threatened the Society'<sup>111</sup>. But the Society emerged from the challenge of the eighties transformed by adaptation and fitted for vigorous survival. The writer believes that our affairs are once more at the flood and Fellows will again respond to the President's challenge so that through their talents the Society will be ready to make a significant contribution to Scottish life in the coming millennium.

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- <sup>1</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, *The Royal Society of Edinburgh (1783–1983) The First Two Hundred Years*. Edinburgh (1983), 186pp.
  - <sup>2</sup> A G Fraser, *The Building of Old College, Adam, Playfair & The University of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh (1989), 384pp.
  - <sup>3</sup> J W Moncreiff, *Proceedings* **12** (1884), p.458.
  - <sup>4</sup> A J Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*. Edinburgh (1966), pp.124–5.
  - <sup>5</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, op. cit. note 1, p.13, note 1.
  - <sup>6</sup> A G Fraser, op. cit. note 2, pp.105, 111, 212.
  - <sup>7</sup> This was the only important public building in his New Town designed by James Craig himself and was completed in 1777. It did not satisfy the needs of the Royal College, however, and was replaced by the head office of the Commercial Bank (recently vacated as a branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland), designed by David Rhind and completed in 1847.
  - <sup>8</sup> NLS Acc 10000/56.
  - <sup>9</sup> NLS Acc 10000/56.
  - <sup>10</sup> R B K Stevenson, in *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition*, ed. A S Bell. Donald, Edinburgh (1981), pp.57–58.
  - <sup>11</sup> D Laing, *Archaeologica Scotica* iii (3: 1784-1830), 1831.
  - <sup>12</sup> NLS Acc 10000/18. Council Minutes for 27th November, 29th December 1843, 12th January, 2nd, 16th, 29th February, 7th June, 30th September 1844 refer.
  - <sup>13</sup> NLS 10000/18. Council Minute for 25th November 1844.
  - <sup>14</sup> Letter to C D Waterston from I Gow, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, of 14th April 1991.
  - <sup>15</sup> NLS Acc 10000/71.
  - <sup>16</sup> A Coleridge, 'The work of George Bullock in Scotland; 1', *The Connoisseur* (1965), p.249. C Wainwright, 'Walter Scott and the furnishing of Abbotsford', *The Connoisseur* (1977).
  - <sup>17</sup> NLS Acc 10000/4. Minute of General Meeting of November 17th 1817 and *Transactions* **9**, proceedings for November 17th 1817.
  - <sup>18</sup> A G Fraser, op. cit. note 2, see Playfair's 1815 plan of the Upper Storey, fig. 6.12, p.171 and his amended 1816 plan of the Principal Storey, fig. 6.15, p.174 also pp.172 and 212.
  - <sup>19</sup> NLS Acc 10000/387.
  - <sup>20</sup> T Allan, letter of 9th March 1825, NLS 10000/387.
  - <sup>21</sup> NLS Acc 10000/387.
  - <sup>22</sup> The Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland was founded in 1818 for the annual exhibition of pictures by old masters and subsequently those of living artists.
  - <sup>23</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, op. cit. note 1, p.19 note 6.
  - <sup>24</sup> A J Youngson, op. cit. note 4, p.162.
  - <sup>25</sup> Report of Departmental Committee to enquire into the administration of the Board of Manufactures (The Akers-Douglas Committee), vol.2, *Evidence and Appendices*. HMSO (1903), evidence of Professor Chrystal para.1937, in NLS Acc 10000/65.
  - <sup>26</sup> NLS Acc 10000/16, Council Minute of 17th October 1822.
  - <sup>27</sup> Ref. cit. note 25, vol.2, evidence of Professor Chrystal para. 1947.
  - <sup>28</sup> Manufactures in Scotland: Fine Arts, Minute Book, 14th January 1823, quoted Youngson ref. cit. note 4, pp.162–3.
  - <sup>29</sup> J Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*. London (1882), vol.2, p.83
  - <sup>30</sup> I T Bunyan, J A Fairhurst, A Mackie and A A McMillan, *Building Stones of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh Geological Society (1987), p.66
  - <sup>31</sup> NLS Acc 10000/16, Council Minute of 9th October 1823.
  - <sup>32</sup> J A Fairley, *Lauriston Castle, The Estate and its Owners*. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh (1925), p.166.
  - <sup>33</sup> *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* from the original manuscript at Abbotsford, David Douglas, Edinburgh (1891), vol.1, entry for January 4th 1826.

- <sup>34</sup> J Skene, *Memories of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. B Thomson. John Murray, London (1909), pp.108–9.
- <sup>35</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>36</sup> R B K Stevenson, ref. cit. note 10, p.67.
- <sup>37</sup> D'A W Thompson, 'Fifty years ago', *Proceedings* **54** (1833–4), pp.147–8.
- <sup>38</sup> Published with the Address on the occasion of the Opening of the New Home of the Society by W Turner, *Transactions, General Index 1889-1908*, and with D'A W Thompson, ref. cit. note 33.
- <sup>39</sup> NLS Acc 10000/5. Minute of General Meeting of 4th December 1826.
- <sup>40</sup> NLS Acc 10000/16. Council Minute of 4th December 1826.
- <sup>41</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>42</sup> C D Waterston, 'Notes on portraits in oils, busts and statuettes, the property of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, displayed in the Rooms of the Society', *Roy. Soc. Edinb. Year Book* (1994), p.98.
- <sup>43</sup> William Trotter (1772–1833) has been the subject of articles by Francis Bamford, 'Trotter of Edinburgh', *Scotland's Magazine* (March 1956) and 'The rise and decline of an Edinburgh cabinet-maker' *The Connoisseur* **183**, no.738, (August 1973). Trotter's grandfather Robert Trotter established the cabinet-making business in 1783 at Gosford's Close with a 'ware room' in Princes Street. When Robert's son Thomas died in 1797, a partner named Young was brought into the business. William Trotter joined the firm of Young and Trotter and became sole partner in 1809. In 1814/15 he furnished the library and picture gallery at Paxton House and between 1818 and 1830 he worked with W H Playfair, for example on the new College building. He was elected a member of the Merchant Company (1797) of which he became Master (1819). He was elected to the Town Council (1806), Dean of Guild (1809) and was Lord Provost of the City (1825-7). He died in London in 1833 and is buried in the Greyfriars Churchyard.
- <sup>44</sup> W Kay, D Learmonth, C Harley & J Forgie, *House of Dun*, National Trust for Scotland (1989), p.4.
- <sup>45</sup> I Gow, 'Fittingly furnished', *Country Life* (August 16, 1990), p.58.
- <sup>46</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>47</sup> NLS Acc 10000/26. Council Minutes of 3rd and 24th November 1924.
- <sup>48</sup> *Transactions* **11**, proceedings for 27th November 1826, p.502.
- <sup>49</sup> The Honourable the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in Scotland initially derived its income from a provision of the 1707 Treaty of Union whereby an "Equivalent" was made available to Scotland for the increase of duties of Customs and Excise, which was to be applied to the encouragement of certain manufactures in Scotland. No payments from this fund were made until Parliament set up the Board of Trustees for Manufactures under the Linen and Hempten Manufactures (Scotland) Act 1726 and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1726. At its inception the Board had £6000 per annum at its disposal. This was applied to develop fisheries and coarse woollen and linen manufactures. It was in the encouragement of linen manufactures that the Board had its greatest success and in 1760 it established the Scottish School of Design originally as an encouragement of designs for the linen trade. The school remained under the sole control and administration of the Board until 1859 and during that time developed as an important school of art. Then it was affiliated with the Science and Art Department in London, and thus became the Government School of Art for the City of Edinburgh but remained with the Board.
- <sup>50</sup> H Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time*. Adam and Charles Black, Edinburgh (1856), p.465.
- <sup>51</sup> H Cockburn, ref. cit. note 50, p.464 and E Gordon, *The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture 1826–1976*. Charles Skilton Ltd. Edinburgh (1976).
- <sup>52</sup> Ref. cit. note 25, vol.2, evidence of Professor Chrystal, para 1953.
- <sup>53</sup> A J Youngson, ref. cit. note 4, pp.164–5.
- <sup>54</sup> R B K Stevenson, ref. cit. note 10, p.72.
- <sup>55</sup> E Gordon ref. cit. note 51, p.63
- <sup>56</sup> NLS Acc 10000/18.
- <sup>57</sup> NLS Acc 10000/19.
- <sup>58</sup> Ref. cit. note 25, vol.2, evidence of Professor Chrystal para. 1947.
- <sup>59</sup> NLS Acc 10000/19, Council Minute of 18th November 1850.
- <sup>60</sup> Ref. cit. note 25, vol.2, evidence of Professor Chrystal para. 1949.
- <sup>61</sup> J Gifford, C McWilliam & D Walker, *Edinburgh* in the series *The Buildings of Scotland*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp.282-3.
- <sup>62</sup> NLS Acc 10000/20, Council Minute of 21st November 1859.
- <sup>63</sup> Ref. cit. note 25, vol.2, evidence of Professor Chrystal para. 1948.
- <sup>64</sup> R B K Stevenson, ref. cit. note 10, pp.75–85, 142–173 and H Smailes, *A Portrait Gallery for Scotland*. National Galleries of Scotland (1985), pp.19–21.
- <sup>65</sup> E Gordon, ref. cit. note 51, p.162 footnote.
- <sup>66</sup> NLS Acc 10000/23, Council minutes of 5th February, 11th March 1892; 22nd January, 10th February, 6th December 1893; 6th December 1894 and 11th January 1895.
- <sup>67</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>68</sup> J A Fairley, ref. cit. note 32, pp.192–5.
- <sup>69</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>70</sup> Personal communication from Mr David Scarratt.
- <sup>71</sup> J A Fairley, ref. cit. note 32, p.195.

- <sup>72</sup> ref. cit. note 25, vol. 2, evidence of Professor Chrystal para. 1939 and Appendix R(1).
- <sup>73</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, ref. cit. note 1, p.48.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> J L Caw, in *Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for James Guthrie in the 1922–30 volume.
- <sup>76</sup> E Gordon, ref. cit. note 51, pp.69–70.
- <sup>77</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, ref. cit. note 1, pp.48–9.
- <sup>78</sup> Report of Council to a General Meeting of the Society of 21st December 1906 in *Proceedings* 32 (1911), p.498 and W Turner's Address, ref. cit. note 34, p.2.
- <sup>79</sup> Feu Charter dated 4th May 1785, Instrument of Sasine 10th May 1785, see also [W Forbes Gray] *Shopping in George Street, Edinburgh*. Edinburgh (c.1926), p.55. In this section I have also made use of '22–24 George Street, Home of the Royal Society of Edinburgh' by J D Dunbar-Nasmith, FRSE, in a pamphlet published on the occasion of the formal opening of the reconstructed rooms, 29th June 1983. Royal Society of Edinburgh (1983), pp. 5–7.
- <sup>80</sup> Mrs Euphemia Douglas-Dickson of Hartree was liferentrix of the estate by virtue of entail from Colonel Alexander Dickson of Hartree. She died in 1825 when the estate came to John Dickson, Advocate, and in 1866, with Kilbucho, to Archibald Dickson, Professor of Botany at Edinburgh University, who was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1869. P W L Adams, *A History of the Douglas Family of Morton*. (1821), pp.192–4.
- <sup>81</sup> W Turner, ref. cit. note 38, p.3.
- <sup>82</sup> [W Forbes Gray] ref. cit. note 79, p.56.
- <sup>83</sup> R B K Stevenson, ref. cit. note 10, p.77.
- <sup>84</sup> From the Edinburgh Street Directories and *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitions 1826–1990*, ed. C B de Laperriere, 4 vols, Hilmartan Manus Press (1991), it is known that the following rented studio accommodation at 24 George Street: Samuel Bough (Painter) 1860– ; Francis Cruickshank (Painter) 1860–62 and 1866–73; George MacCallum (Sculptor); John Yelland (Painter) 1868–80; John Maclaren Barclay (Painter) 1870–72; John Nesbitt (Painter) 1872–99; John Douglas Scott (Painter) 1876–82; Robert Macfarlane Cameron (Architect) 1892–93; Eleanor M Ross (Painter and Miniaturist) 1900–02.
- <sup>85</sup> A R Davidson, *The History of the Faculty of Actuaries in Scotland 1856–1956*. Faculty of Actuaries Edinburgh (1956), p.70. It is of interest to our Society that 16 of the 32 Presidents of the Faculty up to 1956 were Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Edward Sang, who was a prominent figure in the Society, was the first official lecturer at the Faculty although he had died prior to their move to George Street from their previous premises at 24 York Place in 1898.
- <sup>86</sup> Ref. cit. note 85, p.70.
- <sup>87</sup> I Gow, ref. cit. note 14.
- <sup>88</sup> J Gifford, C McWilliam & D Walker, ref. cit. note 61, p.301.
- <sup>89</sup> In the two following years Oldrieve undertook extensive alterations of the Royal Academy building in the course of which the interiors of the rooms formerly occupied by the Society were lost by lowering the floor level and introducing mezzanine galleries.
- <sup>90</sup> NLS Acc 10000/25, Council Minute of 25th June 1909.
- <sup>91</sup> J Horne, in *The Student* (11th July 19160 quoted by Campbell & Smellie, ref. cit. note 1, p. 49.
- <sup>92</sup> Council Minutes of 2nd May, 6th June and 4th July 1960 refer.
- <sup>93</sup> Executive Committee Minutes of 7th March and 4th June 1977 refer.
- <sup>94</sup> W H Rutherford, ms dated 1 July 1982, updated 25 June 1986, in Society archives.
- <sup>95</sup> N Campbell & R M S Smellie, ref. cit. note 1, pp. 137–41.
- <sup>96</sup> 'A story of Restoration' by Robert Hurd & Partners in a pamphlet published on the occasion of the formal opening of the reconstructed rooms, 29th June 1983. Royal Society of Edinburgh, 1983, pp. 9–12.
- <sup>97</sup> W Turner, ref. cit. note 38, p.3.
- <sup>98</sup> [W Forbes Gray], ref. cit. note 79, p.55
- <sup>99</sup> For a technical description of the building see J Gifford, C McWilliam & D. Walker, ref. cit. note 61, p.301.
- <sup>100</sup> The main sewer was dug along the centre of George Street and the connections to it were sizeable tunnels. Boog-Watson (Ms. Notes, vol.8, p.284, Edinburgh Room, City Library) described the old tunnel or drain leading from, 9/11 George Street as being floored by clay and arched in brick with vertical rubble walls. It lay nine feet two inches under the causeway and its cross-section was 5 ft. 8 ins in height and 30 inches in breadth. Youngson noted that when the first of the city shaws or sewers was planned, Craig was sent to London in 1767 to learn how to do the job (ref. cit. note 4, pp. 80–81). The deep excavations made for the sewers in Frederick Street and Castle Street between 1785 and 1788 were of geological interest and the exposed sections were recorded in detailed drawings by John Clerk of Eldin (G Y Craig, D B McIntyre & C D Waterston, *James Hutton's Theory of the Earth: The Lost Drawings*. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh (1978), figs 2 and 3).
- <sup>101</sup> W Harrison, *Memorable Edinburgh Houses*, revised & enlarged O Smeaton, Edinburgh & London (1898), p.103.
- <sup>102</sup> 26th October 1826 to 5th April 1827 and October 1830 to 15th April 1831.
- <sup>103</sup> M R Audubon, *Audubon and his Journals*, 2 vols. Nimmo, London (1898), vol. 1, p.145.
- <sup>104</sup> M R Audubon, *ibid.* p.188
- <sup>105</sup> M R Audubon, *ibid.* p.202
- <sup>106</sup> M R Audubon, *ibid.* p.63.
- <sup>107</sup> W Harrison, ref. cit. note 101, p.97.

<sup>108</sup> J Gifford, C McWilliam & D Walker, ref. cit. note 61, p.301.

<sup>109</sup> T L Johnston, *RSE News*, Issue 5 (November 1994), p.1.

<sup>110</sup> R Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution – The Paris Academy of Sciences 1666–1803*. (1971).

<sup>111</sup> A Williams, 'A Society for the Learned and Leisured', Presidential Address, *Year Book* (1989), 7–17.