

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE **SCOTTISH PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION**

A CELEBRATION


**'Strange but interesting times ... I remember it all so
vividly, because it felt like the beginning of something'**

IAN RANKIN





1974: Two UK elections, March and October. Harold Wilson replaces Ted Heath and his three-day week. SNP secure best-ever representation in the House of Commons with 11 MPs; President Nixon resigns to avoid impeachment over Watergate and Vice-President Ford succeeds him.



1974: Bestsellers include *Watership Down* (Richard Adams), *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (John Le Carré), *Fear of Flying* (Erica Jong), *All the President's Men* (Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward). Iris Murdoch wins the Whitbread Award (in its second year) with *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*.



1974: Mollie Hunter wins the Carnegie medal for *The Stronghold*; Douglas Dunn's *Love or Nothing* wins a Scottish Arts Council Book Award (and later other awards).



1974: Lawrence Durrell, with *Monsieur, or The Prince of Darkness*, and John Wain's biography of *Samuel Johnson* win the James Tait Black Memorial Prizes.



1974: Abba win the Eurovision Song Contest with *Waterloo* – their first no 1 (of 9).



1974: Shang-A-Lang reaches no 2 in April. Debut album goes to no 1 and stays in the charts for 62 weeks for the Bay City Rollers.



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Alexander McCall Smith
Photo: Graham Clark

Alexander McCall Smith is a Professor of Medical Law, but also author of over 50 books. These range from specialist titles such as *Forensic Aspects of Sleep* (the only book on the subject) to the *Criminal Law of Botswana* (also the only book on the subject), and from *The Perfect Hamburger* (a children's novel) to *Portuguese Irregular Verbs* (a book of tales about eccentric German professors). His collection of African stories, *Children of Wax*, received critical acclaim and has been the subject of an award-winning film. His recent *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series has been published to huge international praise and has dominated the US and UK bestseller lists for many months. His work has been described as 'beautiful and subtle ... full of interest and originality and compellingly enjoyable'. Polygon publishes the sixth book in the series in summer 2004, and a new novel, *44 Scotland Street*. Alexander McCall Smith, or Sandy as he is more fondly known, was born in Zimbabwe and was educated there and in Scotland. He lives in Edinburgh.

Foreword

Alexander McCall Smith

Any author who has ever been published in Scotland will find the story of the Scottish Publishers Association a moving, amusing, and inspiring one. But the story of these 30 years of the SPA are more than accounts of individual publishers and their exploits, it is a story of a publishing culture that has refused to lie down and die in the face of a relentless onslaught from homogenising and acquisitive forces. Scottish publishing could have faded completely; the fact that it did not is, in my view, an eloquent testament to the courage of the people whose experiences are recounted in this book.

As an author, I believe that it is immensely important that Scottish publishing continues to be healthy. This is because it is only in

having Scottish publishers based in Scotland that new Scottish authors will have a real chance of publication. The cultural consequences of denying a voice to Scottish literature, or of relegating it to adjunct status on the lists of publishers elsewhere, could be very serious. And I believe that there is something well worth preserving in the distinctive voice of the Scottish writer.

Without Scottish publishers, even if Scottish literature may not entirely disappear, it will still be gravely compromised.

Thirty years on, then; where now? I must confess that I am very excited about the stage that we are at. There is a sense of confidence in Scotland that we can compete with the larger countries in this area of activity. We can write the books and we can publish

them too. We are now no longer looking at our navel – we are looking outwards to the wider world and speaking to it. Scottish publishers can publish books about other parts of the world just as well as can publishers in London, New York or in any other place. Why not? Publication is now a universal act, and Scotland has a place on that stage just as any other country has.

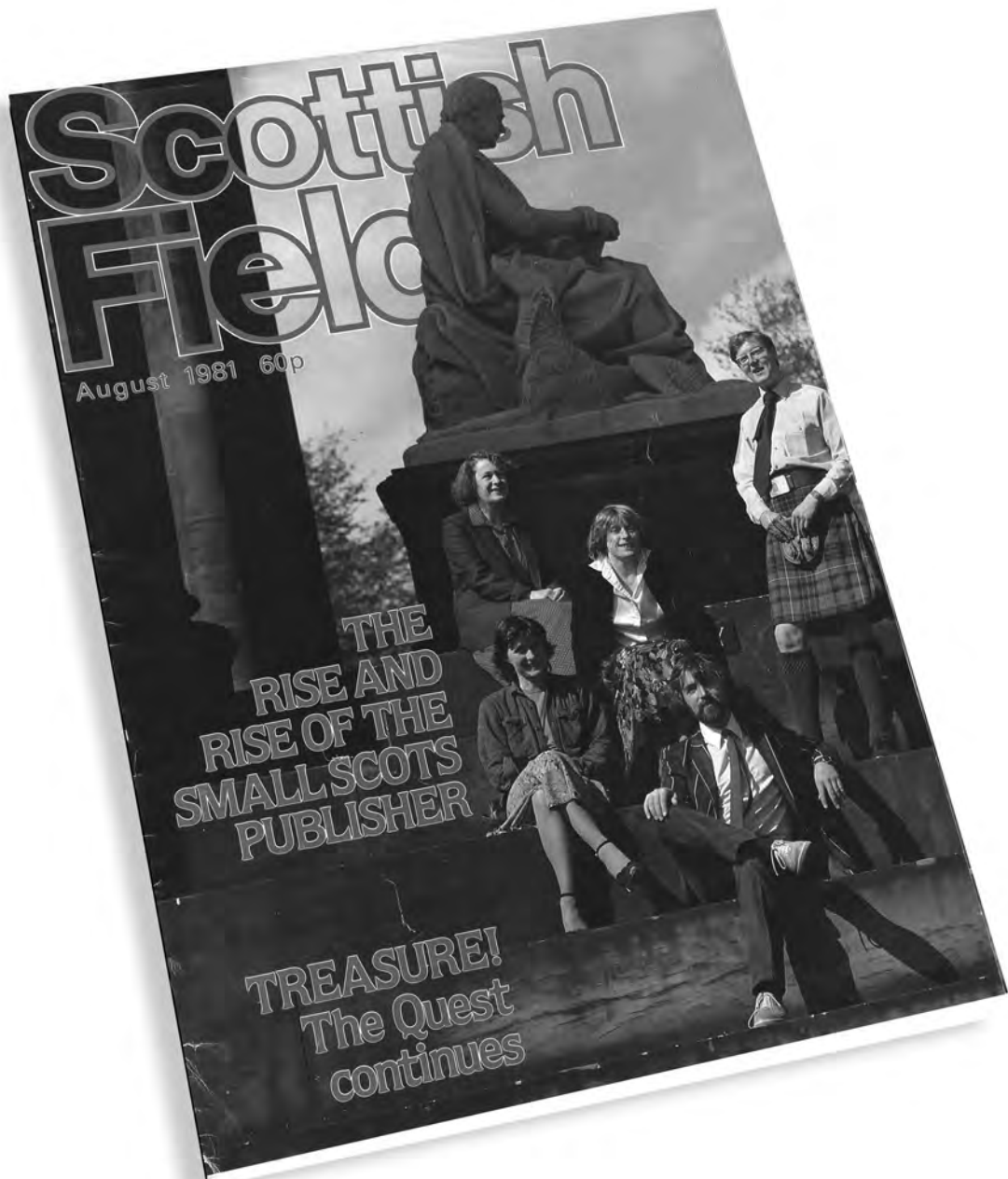
But the real hard work to ensure this is being done is by the publishers and by their Association. As a writer I am on the sidelines, but I applaud your efforts with all my heart. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

Scottish Field

August 1981 60p

THE
RISE AND
RISE OF THE
SMALL SCOTS
PUBLISHER

TREASURE!
The Quest
continues



Introduction

Lorraine Fannin

Grand organisations mark their founding with important papers and a ready-to-use archive. The Scottish General Publishers Association was not of this ilk but grew, as raconteurs in these pages will describe, from necessity, energy and conviction, ambition, and the wish to fan what then looked like the dying embers of a once-important industry in Scotland. So we have very few early papers to hand. When the first *Directory of Publishing in Scotland* was produced in 1989 a founding date was suggested: 1974. People who had been present then agreed. Some years later, minutes came to hand which suggested the venture had been conceived earlier, and we amended our birth date accordingly to 1973. We asked those with good memories to fill in the

gaps. It would appear that the first planning was done in 1973 and the full launch took place in 1974. So we will celebrate at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2004, on their 21st birthday.

Since that founding three decades have passed and suddenly the organisation is 30 years old. Canongate's 30th birthday has just passed – its founder, Angus Wolfe Murray, was one of the driving forces behind the setting up of the SPA – and, fittingly, last year Canongate Books, led by Jamie Byng, was named UK Publisher of the Year at the book industry's Nibbie Awards. Mainstream Publishing marked its 25th birthday in 2003.

To this we add a couple of other milestones. Last year the Scottish Arts Council

Scottish Field, August 1981.
'The Rise and Rise of the Small Scots Publisher'. Left to right: Sally Morris, Stephanie Wolfe Murray, Janis Adams, Bill Campbell and Paul Harris. Reproduced by kind permission of *Scottish Field*.

completed its far-reaching *Review of Publishing in Scotland in the 21st Century*, an important and interesting document for the future of our business: the basic statistics of this form the current snapshot of our next section. And a major project started up, when Edinburgh sought designation as a World City of Literature, and a gateway to Scotland's literary culture. The SPA is proud to be part of the team for this project, bringing Scotland's publishing into its core, and, in October 2004, takes it to UNESCO for validation.

This book was planned in order to provide a small archive, a recording of memories – many of which were never written down, the gossip and anecdote

which flows strongly through the publishing world – and a vision of what has happened to book publishing in Scotland in one of the fastest-changing 30-year spans ever known since Gutenberg. What is remarkable is that so many organisations, books, and people have worked through all of it. To this we want to add a look at the wider world; how it sees us and a glimpse of the future from those who will be responsible for it.

Our deepest thanks to those who have contributed memories, pieces and photos. We hope everyone will enjoy the collection, and that it will be around to remind the publishers of the future when the SPA celebrates 50, and indeed,

100 years of existence.

We are grateful to Mark Blackadder for design, Kate Blackadder for help with editing, Jim Hutcheson for his cartoons, Prue Borthwick for help with the selection of pictures, Katherine Naish and Jennifer Henderson for help with text collation, Janet Smyth of Blast-off Books and Ali Bowden for extra help with pictures, Douglas Robertson Photography, and Pascal Saez, Emma Bailey at Curtis Brown, Mark Guest at *The Bookseller*, Pam O'Connor, Marion Sinclair, Carol Lothian for support, Liz Small for general coordination and Ron Grosset for help with production.

Scottish publishing

30 years of change – the statistics...

The SPA was founded by ten small publishers, with the aim of collaborating on gathering information, marketing, and on exhibiting at book fairs.

In 1988, the programme included attendance at five book fairs in the UK and abroad, joint catalogue compilation, mailings, a training programme, and promotional work by the Scottish Book Marketing Group. Approximately 58 publishers were members. Of these, five were subsidiaries of large PLCs; 17 were owned by institutions, trusts or societies; four were libraries who publish books; nine were private shareholder-owned, and some 23-plus were individuals or small traders who published limited lists of books.

In 2004, as the SPA celebrates 30 years of existence, the programme now includes book fair

attendance (increased to eight or nine book fairs), mailings, a wide programme of training and seminars, UK trade promotion and information, an annual *Directory of Publishing*, export help, website information and marketing, lobbying and external links. The SPA is also a major shareholder in BookSource and is developing a number of partnership projects. Over 70 companies, institutions or organisations are members. Of these, three are subsidiaries of large PLCs; 21 are owned by institutions or trusts; six are libraries who publish books; 26 are private shareholder-owned and some 24+ are individuals or small traders who publish limited lists of books.

Geographically, almost half of the total number of publishing companies are located in Edinburgh;

28% are in Glasgow and the remaining companies are located in Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles, Grampian, Caithness, Dundee, Fife, Stirling and Ayrshire.

HarperCollins is Scotland's largest publishing company under the ownership of Rupert Murdoch's News International. The combined turnover of the rest of the industry in Scotland (excluding HarperCollins) is around £60 million at retail value. The greatest part of this turnover comes from reference, academic, scientific and medical books, a sector in which Scottish books publishers have traditionally excelled since the first days when *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was first published in Edinburgh.

Scottish publishing

creates employment for over 2000 people. The publishing industry also supports a large number of freelancers: writers, designers, illustrators, photographers, reprographic companies and others. Scottish publishers sell almost 24% of their total output to the export market, with key markets being the USA, Australia, Scandinavia, Germany and Holland. There is a divide between small companies, whose market on average is 66% in Scotland, and the medium/large companies whose sales in Scotland average only around 22% of their total.

Publishing in Scotland proves to be a transient business. Of the 64 key individuals listed in the 1989 *Directory of Publishing in Scotland*

only the following people are still with the same companies or organisations:

Christian Maclean at Floris Books

Bill Campbell and Peter Mackenzie at Mainstream Publishing

Janis Adams at the National Galleries of Scotland

Conrad Wilson at Ramsay Head Press

Lindsay Corbett at The Forth Naturalist and Historian

Ian MacDonald at the Gaelic Books Council

Lorraine Fannin at the SPA

Of the remaining 56 people, only six are now with other companies or organisations in SPA membership.

SPA staff

The people who have worked at the SPA in the course of its 30-year history have all contributed to its work and its survival. There have always been expressions of surprise at how few people carry out the wide remit, but then publishing itself often works like that. Staff at the SPA have heard first-hand the problems and dilemmas, and the triumphs and achievements. They have seen books they promoted on publication achieve resounding success, and some books they admired sink without trace. They have helped and advised when publishers were in crisis and, just occasionally, they have been allowed to join in celebra-

tions of success.

For the first 12 years of the SPA's history it had only one, or, eventually, two employees. For six years after this, the staff numbers rose to four, though one of these ran the newly-formed Scottish Book Marketing Group. For a further ten years there were five staff, but the end of the SBMG brought the numbers back to four. Now in a major development phase, new staff have joined the team.

By this 30th anniversary around 27 people have worked for the SPA. Seven of these stayed for a one-year-plus 'project assistant' post. Six work full or part-time now, one or two on an occasional basis and one works for

BookSource. It isn't the easiest place to work, but you learn a lot.

The writings in this anthology show that many publishing people have moved around, changed companies – several times perhaps – and some have even changed countries. Most have stayed in the business throughout its many upheavals.

Companies too have changed hands, disappeared or re-formed, but a core of stalwarts remains and new growth is healthy and thriving. It is, of course, a pleasure to realise how many people formerly involved in the SPA are still in contact and accessible to the organisation, as these pages show.

The early days

1973: Stephanie Wolfe Murray

Stephanie was a key figure in the SPA for more than 20 years. A figurehead for Canongate for two decades, she also chaired the SPA Council, and drove forward many schemes in which publishers co-operated to their great benefit. She published many fine books. Her memories of the early days of the SPA and the early pressures on Canongate are invaluable.

Judy Moir, SPA Director from 1982–86, now Editor-at-Large Scotland, Penguin Books, interviewed Stephanie:

JM What are your very earliest memories of the SPA?

SWM It was Angus Wolfe Murray who approached Paul Harris with the idea of forming some sort of publishers' union but nothing really came of it until after he left Canongate. I remember constantly trying to get access to Paul's greatly superior mailing list on his visits to us in our office in Jeffrey Street. We had some of the first meetings in Norman Wilson's house and I remember Paul Harris (sleeping a lot but always managing to look important), Robin Lorimer and Gordon Wright. What a funny bunch of people we were. Trevor Royle

was the Director of Literature at the Scottish Arts Council. He was always supportive. I don't remember him being at these meetings but I remember feeling his encouragement and the publishers, and indeed authors and poets, received fantastic support from the SAC and still do so.

JM And the SPA was founded in 1973?

SWM There is some debate about this. I feel that it was 1974 but records are either missing or don't make it very clear. We had our first AGM, I think, in 1974.

JM So Canongate was in from the start?

SWM Very much so. There were Paul Harris, Norman Wilson, Robin Lorimer, Simon Berry of Molendinar Press in Glasgow, Gordon Wright and Canongate. I hope I haven't left out other key people. I don't think

Callum MacDonald was one of the first members. He'd been going for some time as both a publisher and printer and he probably suspected that we would all be here today and gone tomorrow. Fly-by-nights. And then Duncan Glen of Akros became a member. One or two publishers used to have difficulty coming all the way up the stairs to the office we acquired early on in Thistle Street Lane. Mainstream joined as soon as they started, which was in 1978. Norman Wilson dealt with matters before we got someone to run it for us. In the early days Robin Lorimer insisted we call it SGPA, the G standing for general! He was very particular and quite pedantic which is what enabled him to publish such perfectly edited books. We managed to get rid of the G after a year or so. Robin was a real stickler.

JM What on earth made you take up the chairmanship in 1981?

SWM Nobody wanted the

job as chairman. Norman Wilson had been absolutely fantastic. Janis Fox, our Director, got it up and running in Thistle Street Lane. She was very good. Incredibly efficient, very practical in addition to being glamorous. She'd had experience as a bookseller, so she had a lot of good contacts and slowly we became part of the UK publishing world. On the question of sales, some publishers had better remain nameless. You almost had to break into their warehouses to get their books. Chambers joined the SPA fairly early on. And of course so did Bartholomew. And in those days it was unimaginable that they wouldn't always be big, independent publishers.

JM They had such a history behind them, didn't they? They were the mainstay of Scottish publishing along with Collins in Glasgow, Blackie, and Blackwood.

SWM Before the emergence of our lot in the mid-70s, that's true. And each one was bigger

than all of us put together.

JM Another colourful person I remember was Tom Fenton, Salamander Press. He got going in about 1983.

SWM Yes, he was a real breath of fresh air and an intellectual heavyweight. He did his own design and had a lot of good contacts through his brother, the writer James Fenton, and he did some wonderful publishing. He was the first Scottish publisher to get onto the Booker shortlist which was absolutely extraordinary after only two years in the business!

JM And *Flying to Nowhere* was printed on such beautiful paper, wasn't it? It would have been difficult to print again quickly.

SWM In those days a month would have been quick! And the distribution of books into bookshops was so slow. Customers were often told they'd have to wait for three weeks!

JM Any other colourful publishers?

SWM I suppose you could call Charles Skilton a colourful publisher! He made his money out of reprinting *Fanny Hill*, and then he did 'books for adults' which really sold a lot until other publishers brought out dirty magazines and then life became tough.

JM It's true, but then he did corner the market for a time with Scottish tourist books like *Kith and Kin* and *Scottish Place Names*. I worked there for a short time. And Richard Drew set up in the 80s.

SWM Yes, and he later worked at Chambers. He was a very live wire! Every publisher joined, I have to say, sooner or later. There was always great resistance to raising the membership fee.

JM When I started, the most you had to pay was £120.

SWM Everyone was living on the breadline. It was extraordinarily difficult. In the late 70s we were still trying to sell books south of the border. It was a big breakthrough

even to get the Scottish booksellers to take us seriously. And then, later, we persuaded them to have their Scottish section near the front of the shop and, surprise, surprise, it became a bestselling section. But many publishers were not doing just Scottish books.

We were trying to publish good books, from anywhere, so long as they fitted in with our ethos.

And many Scottish writers write about universal subjects. It was absurd not to take 20th century Scottish literature seriously. And this attitude was not confined to the English. I

remember a Russian delegation coming to Edinburgh and asking about Scottish literature, and I did point towards Heriot Row and said that's where Robert Louis Stevenson lived and they said, 'No, no, don't be silly, he's English'. We argued about it for over five minutes. Ridiculous!

JM Were there any dreadful books?

SWM I must say Paul

Harris's book of a list of prostitutes in the mid-1800s. You know, what sort of teeth they had and their vital statistics. It was a reprint of an old book. But he did some very good fiction that has subsequently appeared in people's classics series. But my God he did some tacky books, as did Charles Skilton, but maybe not such bad publishing since many of them sold OK. What constitutes bad publishing after all?

JM And wonderful books? There was *Lanark* published in 1981. It stands out in my mind as a pivotal title.

SWM A seminal work and one that got us huge reviews down south. But *Scottish Love Poems* was an important book because it brought in just about all the good contemporary Scottish poets and of course dead ones too. Hugh MacDiarmid was alive in those days, as was George Mackay Brown and Norman MacCaig. And there were many who

became well-known afterwards like Andrew Greig and Kathleen Jamie. Antonia Fraser did the editing, and the book put us on the map as far as the literary people in Scotland were concerned. The SPA gave us a show-room for these books and we were able to go to Frankfurt and America as part of the Association. We have to thank the SAC – I’m especially grateful to them for the initiative to set up a Scottish classics series and to Walter Cairns in particular. He was a great friend to all of us.

JM You’ve covered my next question: was the SPA ever an absolute necessity for Scottish publishers?

SWM It’s hard to imagine now how important it was. We couldn’t have become international if we hadn’t had a collective base. Some of us did sometimes question the point of the SPA, but in hindsight I can see that it was vital, just as the Publishers’ Association in England was. In the 70s,

the big, more established Scottish publishers belonged to the PA and it was somehow a sign that you’d arrived; why join this worthy provincial association when you belong to the proper one? But in time they all came to join.

JM In your work at the SPA, which projects do you feel had the most long-term value?

SWM First of all I have to say going to book fairs, meeting foreign publishers and not the least going to trade fairs and conventions in England. There wasn’t a London Book Fair in those days but there were conferences where we met booksellers, and got to know the big wholesalers, and the library suppliers who were so important in those days. And there was the training, which you were mostly responsible for imposing on publishers. I remember resisting it because I felt we never had time, but you emphasised the importance of it and you were quite right. And this

is what a lot of the big member publishers liked. They had a much larger staff, and they didn’t want to go down to London and pay a lot for it.

JM It was your idea to employ Steven Williams as a publicist in London. And he did open a few doors and showed us how to deal effectively with publicity in London.

SWM My quick reaction to that is that it was very frustrating for Steven. Both sides, he and the Scottish publishers, felt that it failed. We never had advance material ready on time. He used to beg to be told about books at least three months before they were published. Some publishers would send him books two weeks before they were published, or would say, ‘Oh, this is getting published tomorrow. Can you help?’ Most people know that you have to have book jackets at least six months in advance but this was a big learning curve for everyone. In the early

days, libraries used to buy a lot of books and even an obscure novel or a children's book would sell several hundred copies to them, minimum. When this stopped in the early 80s and libraries didn't feel obliged to buy anything, it was a bit of a disaster for publishers and that's the time when the SPA helped to get more books widely distributed around the world to English-speaking countries or to sell rights.

JM I remember the research we undertook with Bob Williams, a Pan Sales Director, who spent months going around bookshops, libraries, wholesalers, getting to grips with where Scottish publishers were going wrong. And as a result we set up the Scottish Marketing Group, which for many years did joint promotions between publishers and booksellers.

SWM These were always difficult things to set up because as publishers became more successful

they slightly spurned such ideas. You'd get the big ones who didn't want to know because they had huge sales teams working solely for them. And then you'd get publishers who were doing fairly well, like Mainstream and possibly Canongate, being reluctant to join in as we were already being accepted in England. So often you ended up with the smaller publishers who had few titles with universal appeal.

JM Canongate was often very supportive of these initiatives in principal.

SWM If the bigger publishers and the biggest of the smaller publishers like Canongate and Mainstream hadn't had a supportive attitude, the SPA wouldn't have survived and then a lot of publishers wouldn't have survived. They were pioneering days because before that the general publishers had only sold to a Scottish audience, and a small one at that.

JM When I left the SPA in 1986 there were a couple of areas where I

felt there was still unfinished business. Those were problems that publishers had with representation and with distribution, and I think these are two of the things Lorraine took on and has done extremely well, especially distribution which is an incredibly brave and huge thing to undertake for a publishers' association. But 30 years on, do you think there is still unfinished business that the SPA could be doing?

SWM I'm out of it a bit at the moment, but I think it's great, the distribution business, (SBS) that was set up in Glasgow. Not all the Scottish publishers are part of it but on the whole I believe it's pretty efficient although you wouldn't hear that from everybody. But it's a great service. And once again it's the Scottish Arts Council that made it possible.

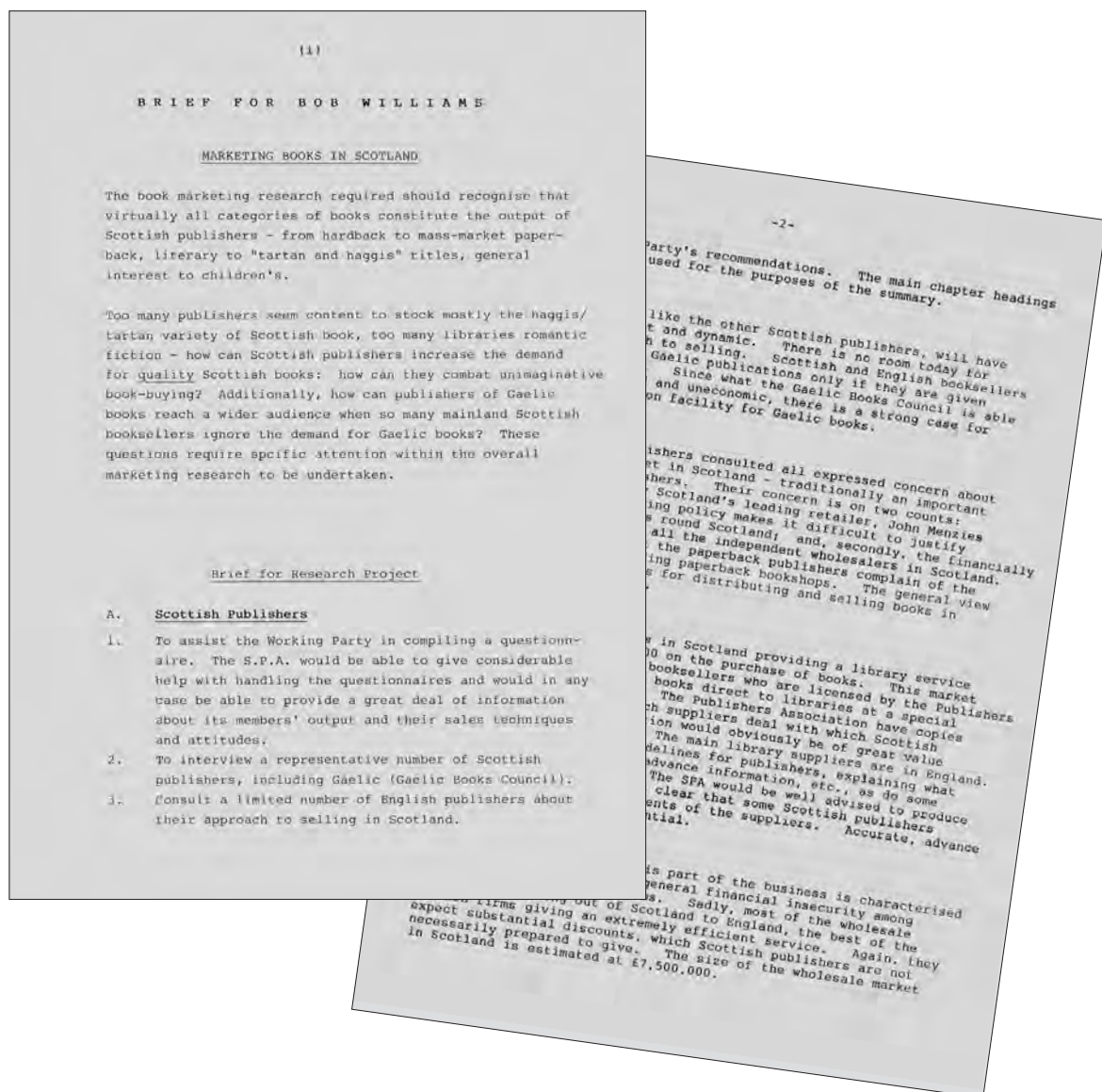
JM I think it is the case that the things you do after a while get taken for granted. Something like setting up SBS – which

was a huge amount of work – in time people do take it for granted, that's human nature. And another thing Lorraine did was to work with Hugh Andrew. He started repping for a lot of the Scottish publishers who didn't have good

representation.

SWM Many publishers, new members, wanted joint representation and it's a very difficult one, but Lorraine and Hugh did make it work to a great degree in Scotland ... it was hard to do it in England. There was

endless debate about this, but if you were selling a Scottish list in England, the chances are you weren't going to sell many books. Ultimately it's about publishing good books.



Simon Berry

by **Lorraine Fannin**

The first part-time administrator of the SPA was Simon Berry, now a writer, journalist and a spokesperson for PEN. Simon took on the difficult job of holding together the fragile new organisation to allow it to make a practical and possible plan for its wide-ranging ambitions. There were no offices and Simon worked from home in Glasgow, where he started up the Molendinar Press, one of the first new independent lists in the west. Molendinar Press

was later merged with Richard Drew Publishing.

The SPA needed to raise funds and, eventually, to set up a base where members could meet and new activities could be planned, and at that time Simon passed on the task, to be taken forward in a new location in Edinburgh. It is a difficult challenge to keep a new organisation breathing whilst everyone involved assembles their aspirations. Happily it was achieved.



Stephanie Wolfe Murray and
Paul Henderson Scott

Janis Adams

Janis became the SPA's first full-time administrator. Now Publications Manager with the National Galleries of Scotland, she has been a member of the SPA Council for many years.



The SPA's first job ad the *Scotsman* Friday May 12 1978

By far the most efficient method of getting into publishing is to inherit a publishing house, marry into one or, even better, know someone who is in the business. Thirty years ago none of the above applied to those publishers who made up the Scottish General Publishers Association. Only one had a double-barrelled name; another useful attribute in this industry. But what they lacked in connections they made up with a mixture of youthful enthusiasm and, with the benefit of hindsight, astonishing naïvety. The advertisement for the first full-time administrator (or Chief Executive Administrative Officer as Norman Wilson always called it; this is publishing after all) made the Association sound like a professional organisation. As it turned out this was

not really the case. Yes, we did all the usual things, the Frankfurt and London Book Fairs and the ABA. We also worked on a number of joint marketing initiatives; much more difficult in the early days as the majority of publishers had very few titles on their lists. Undaunted by this, publishers attended the fairs and attempted to sell rights to sometimes rather obscure titles and, more worryingly, bought some. The golden rule that you never buy a book at Frankfurt, as it will almost certainly end in tears (or with a remainder dealer), was not something that bothered the very inexperienced Scottish publishers. Some even returned claiming deals in six-figure sums, which, of course, never materialised. In the early days Scottish publishers were very small fish in a

very big pond. But, they were enthusiastic and learned quickly. They needed to if they were to survive. After a few years I realised that Raymond Chandler's rather scathing comment about publishers could certainly have been applied to many in the Association: 'The minute you try to talk business with him he takes the attitude that he is a gentleman and a scholar, and the moment that you try to approach him on the level of his moral integrity, he starts to talk business.'

Low cunning and an ability to bluff your way through any situation, vitally important skills required by all publishers, were important elements in surviving Frankfurt. Despite generous subvention from the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish publishers needed to do this hideously expensive book fair on a shoestring. This meant staying in the cheapest accommodation, normally very small cupboards that purported

to be rooms in flea-ridden hotels run by somewhat dubious men of Eastern European extraction to whom you would never dare to complain! Sustenance on the other hand was rarely a problem as the Scottish publishers (and their Irish colleagues) had an unerring sense as to where the best parties were being held. The fact that we almost never had official invitations was an irrelevance as the necessary skill of gatecrashing was learned early on. Perhaps the greatest proponent of this art form was Bill Campbell. Something to do with boyish charm

and total brass neck meant that there was rarely a party that he didn't get access to. On one notable occasion, however, he was chased by security guards when trying to get into the Bertelsmann party. Completely unfazed, he took refuge under the central table, which was groaning with food and drink. When security finally gave up, Bill emerged looking as if it was the most natural thing in the world to come from under the table to what was then, undoubtedly, the most prestigious party at Frankfurt.

The ABA was more



'Completely unfazed, he took refuge under the central table...'

fun than Frankfurt, and accommodation (at very cheap conference rates) was sometimes palatial, but we still gatecrashed every party we could. I think it only fair to say that among the best were those given by Transworld, for which many grateful thanks should go to Patrick Janson-Smith. The only slight embarrassment on our American trips was Paul Harris, who insisted on wearing his kilt for the duration of the fair. He concocted a story that his sporran was part of a complicated heating system, which kept him warm. Rather disturbingly, many gullible Americans believed him.

Thirty years ago the London Book Fair was still in its infancy and the most frequently asked question was 'What's the London Book Fair really for?' Nowadays, it is essential to show here if only to prove you are alive and still in business six months after Frankfurt! In one extraordinary year London fell

immediately before Frankfurt, an event that rather unsurprisingly was never repeated. Book fairs were and still are hard work and in the early days Scottish publishers needed every ounce of their persuasive powers to get people to take them seriously. To their credit, they were determined and it is a testament to their persistence and to the strength of the Association that nurtured them that many have survived and continue to grow.

We also made trips to Canada to forge links with the Canadian publishing scene. However, if truth be told, the similarities between the Scots and the Irish were greater. For sheer entertainment value, a famous weekend in Dublin with our Irish counterparts must go down in the annals of Scottish publishing. I well remember floating the idea of a Scottish-Irish publishers' weekend with Trevor Royle and trying not to make it

sound too much like a jolly jaunt. I succeeded in getting the SAC to contribute towards the cost but obviously failed to make it sound like a business venture as we were eventually accompanied on the trip by most of the Literature Committee. The great weekend arrived and we headed off in separate cars for Glasgow Airport. Well, some cars headed off. Unfortunately, Trevor Royle, Sandy McCall Smith, David Flatman and I were travelling with Stephanie who turned up 40 minutes late. As we raced through to Glasgow, Stephanie announced that she had forgotten to bring any clothes or money. Much to our amazement she did have her passport. Then it started to snow. By the time we arrived in Glasgow (an hour after the flight should have left) all flights had been cancelled. We spent the next eight hours happily ensconced in the departure lounge being given, by a very generous

Aer Lingus, what seemed to be an endless supply of vouchers (those days, like publishers' parties, are gone I fear) most of which were used at the bar. Suffice it to say that by the time we left Glasgow some publishers were unsure where they were, let alone where they were going. Paul Harris was particularly adamant that he was flying to Alicante! It also goes without saying that our Irish friends, who had organised a very formal reception to welcome us to Dublin and had given up hope of us ever reaching Dublin, had also hit the bar. There was much jubilation and many bottles of Irish whiskey consumed when we finally arrived. The evening and the weekend turned out to be a resounding success, if somewhat alcoholic. The Irish were exceptional hosts and many friendships were made. Stephanie, as usual, looked fantastic for the whole four days despite having left her luggage

behind. Sandy generously bought her a toothbrush! The return journey was almost as eventful and is related elsewhere in this book.

Another notable event in the early years was an exhibition we had at the SAC's gallery in Charlotte Square. We were offered this venue free of charge and without really considering fully the implications agreed to put on an exhibition for three weeks during the summer. The thorny question of what we should exhibit was finally resolved, although not until I had had many sleepless nights. We put on what I realise now was a stunning display of original manuscripts, original artwork, signed copies, and a series of fascinating progress drawings for title pages, produced by the great typographer George Mackie, for many of the books published by Edinburgh University Press. We sold books and also ran events throughout the period. One of the

most poignant was an afternoon devoted to Scottish literature. In the one day we had readings by Sorley MacLean, Iain Crichton Smith, Norman MacCaig, Callum MacDonald, Robert Garioch, J.K. Annand and Edwin Morgan. I had the privilege of taking them to lunch before the event. It was a bit like the literary equivalent of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party with Robert Garioch sitting quietly like the dormouse in the corner of the room, nibbling bits of cheese while everyone else chattered wildly about him. Unfortunately, there is no documentation of this exhibition or the events that took place.

Then there were the parties. In an effort to foster good relations not only amongst member publishers but also with local booksellers, we held many social gatherings in the attic office of South West Thistle Street Lane, an office that was leased from a businessman who was only just on the right side of the law and

which, by today's standards, would be condemned by Health and Safety. But we were young and such technical details didn't concern us. At a time when so many of the Scottish literary giants were still alive, we were honoured to entertain them. I must admit though that watching Norman MacCaig going down the stairs after a particularly riotous evening gave me some heart-stopping moments as I knew that if anything happened to him our insurance could not possibly cover it. Apart from the socialising, these gatherings were enormously helpful in breaking down the barriers that existed between the new Scottish publishers and the booktrade. I am pretty certain that Mainstream got at least one order from Malcolm Gibson on the strength of a party.

Writing this piece has made me reflect on the

early days of the Association and remember what an exciting time it was. Mark Twain's comment that all you need to be happy in life is ignorance and self-confidence most certainly applied to many of us. The full implication of the vagaries of publishing was ignored by the supremely confident Scottish publishers. Perhaps, if they had known what a precarious world they were entering, many would have turned to horse racing which, in comparison, seems like a solid, stable business. If they had, we would have been the poorer. For they changed the face of publishing in Scotland. I am sad for those who did not make it but pleased that so many have thrived and are still here today. A major factor in this is the continuing commitment made by the Scottish Arts Council. During my time with the Association, I knew both Trevor Royle

and Walter Cairns. In their own way they both made a very personal contribution. In the early years Trevor recognised this youthful enthusiasm and paved the way within the Scottish Arts Council for the Association as we know it today. Walter, with his determination and his considerable knowledge and understanding of the industry, reinforced this and made the Scottish Publishers Association stronger. In his own quiet way, he had a vision of what the future should be, with publishers in Scotland working at an international level. I thought of Walter just recently as I walked through a little town called Kas. There on a bookstall was a copy in Turkish of *Life of Pi*. It was a curious and heart-warming moment. It made me realise that we had come a long way in 30 years and that Walter would be pleased.

Sally Morris

Sally Morris was appointed as Administrator of the SPA in 1981; subsequently she moved to London where she is now Secretary-General, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers.

I came to Scotland in 1978, initially working for Cassell at their Johnston & Bacon office, and then for Holmes MacDougall. I rapidly became aware of both the Scottish Young Publishers and the Scottish Publishers Association, and began to attend their useful meetings – a great way of networking with one’s colleagues, particularly those in other small-to-medium companies. Eventually I became Treasurer of the SPA, working with the inspirational Stephanie Wolfe Murray in the Chair.

I took over as Administrative Executive in late 1981 (in fact, I attended Frankfurt with Stephanie on the SPA’s behalf before I had even joined them; my experiences there were unforgettable, including a massage on the stand from one of our

‘mind/body/spirit’ publishers, and a hotel in the middle of the red light district – I did wonder about the abundance of red plush curtains, and mirrors in unexpected places ...). I worked, in solitary splendour, from the garret in Thistle Street Lane. Fortunately for me, the office was immediately above that of Mainstream, and Bill and Pete were unfailingly helpful with advice and muscle power, as well as providing some much-needed company. It was a good room for meetings (and parties!), and I also organised an exhibition of illustrators’ work, which I think led to some useful commissions for the exhibitors, though the Blu-Tack did make rather a mess of the walls ...

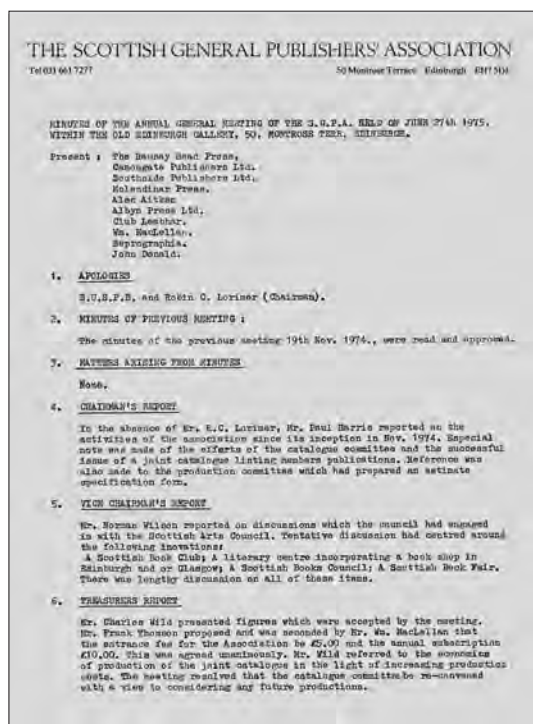
I was the one and only member of staff – the only hiring I ever did was of someone to come and

clean the office (though I must confess I stole the best candidate for myself, and appointed the second-best for the SPA!). I wrote a regular newsletter for our small but growing band of members, becoming expert with the Roneo in the process. I also organised a regular marketing catalogue; provided what advice I could to those just starting out in publishing (I'm proud to think I

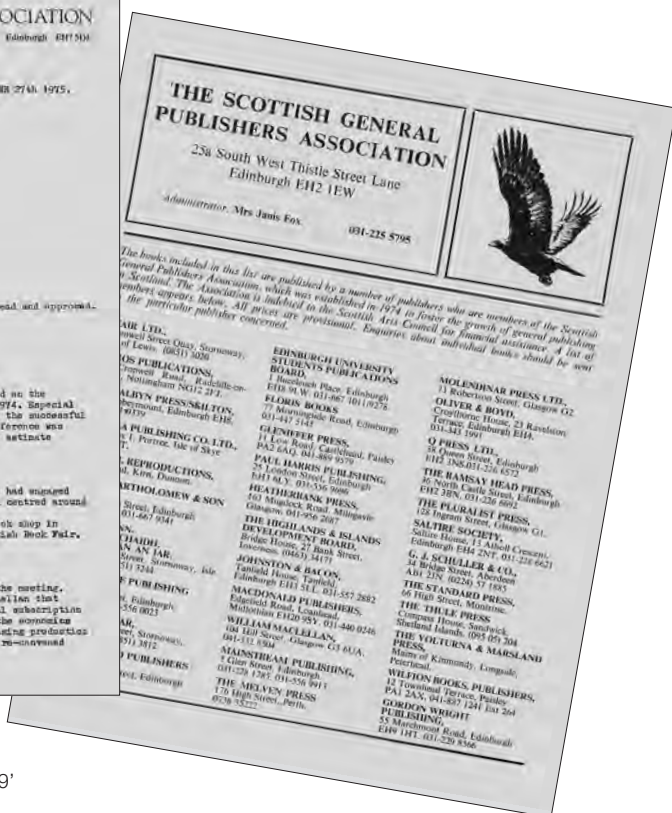
contributed my ten penn'orth to Salamander's early days); struggled with the mysteries of double-entry book-keeping (with the aid of a friendly cardiganed accountant) and travelled around to meet as many members as I could. I also spent some time looking into the possibilities for a co-operative marketing and distribution initiative, though without success.

One of the great things

about the job was that it brought me into contact with so many Scottish publishers. So perhaps it was inevitable that, when an attractive job came up six months later with one of them – Macdonald's – I should take it. However, my career has now come full circle as I am once again running a trade association – so something must have stuck!



Taken from the minutes of the SGPA's AGM 1975 and 'New Books from Scottish Publishers Summer 1979'



1982: Judy Moir



Judy Moir joined the SPA in 1982 after a spell as editor with Charles Skilton. Subsequently she worked at Mainstream, editing the prestigious *Scottish Art*, and was editorial director at Canongate, where she worked on their ground-breaking new fiction. She is now Editor-at-Large Scotland, for Penguin Books.

I joined the 'Scottish General Publishers Association' in the summer of 1982, at a time when the small independents – Canongate, Mainstream, EUSPB (now Polygon), MacDonald and Paul Harris – were capturing the imagination of the Scottish media as a brave new force in Scottish publishing. Their fresh young faces fronted glossy covers of magazines, and there was an energy about them which was irresistible. I seem to remember that the turnover for each of these publishers was below £100,000 p.a. at that time, but they were publishing some ambitious books (not least *Lanark*) and they valued the SGPA as their main (heavily subsidised) marketing tool and as a source of information on all aspects of publishing.

There were 30-something members around then, some absolutely tiny outfits – one-man bands like Gordon Wright Publishing and the Salamander Press and some extremely obscure outfits such as a lovely publisher of gorgeous miniature books. I was the only SPA employee, tucked away in my garret in South West Thistle Street Lane.

As time went by, the SGPA became the SPA as the drive for new membership broadened, incorporating just about all the large publishers such as Churchill Livingstone and Chambers, three (!) university presses, several educational publishers and many more small ones. By 1986, when I left, there were almost 60 members, the SPA had become a charitable organisation, we'd set up

the Scottish Book Marketing Group, and there were two and a half members of staff (the half was the affable Steven Williams, who arranged publicity for Scottish publishers in London). Reita Middlemiss, and then Alison Rae, were my wonderful companions for the five years I spent in that office. We had not a single computer between us, just a fancy 'golfball' typewriter, a coffee percolator that never worked properly, and strong legs from climbing all those damn stairs.

Stephanie Wolfe Murray was Chairman for the first two years of my tenure and she was inspirational – full of ideas for marketing, research, joint ventures, and for training. She had a great sense of purpose and fun, not least of all during the first (tiny) 'Edinburgh Book Festival' we held within the Assembly Rooms, at which I think we sold maybe twenty books, but still managed to get onto STV. When Tom Fenton's

Salamander Press had a book short-listed for the Booker one year, she brought champagne to the Council meeting – I think that might have been the meeting where Paul Harris famously snored through the entire proceedings. She also twisted my arm into hosting far too many parties (usually at the Queen's Hall, God knows why), with way too many village-hall nuances, at which, embarrassingly, I always seemed to win Canongate books in the raffle.

Walter Cairns was always supportive of the SPA, and our grant from SAC more than trebled while I was there. We forged good trade relations with the PA, British Council, IPG, LA and suchlike, becoming a far more integrated part of the British publishing scene. Publishers' delegations from China or Eastern Europe would arrive to be looked after by us. In turn, we were invited to book fairs or tours abroad (I to

Moscow, Stephanie to China).

My time at the SPA was formative, broad-ranging, satisfying. Focusing on many aspects of publishing, from contracts to distribution, repping to publicity, and rights to training, it was a trade association which most of the member publishers used and appreciated. I still think in terms of 'what is good for Scottish publishing'; I still can't enter a bookshop without checking that there is a fair display of Scottish books, and for my sins, for the past 17 years, I have worked with quite a few of these weird and wonderful publishing companies. Meanwhile, the very largest of them have more or less disappeared into corporate publishing; a few have melted into oblivion and some surviving independents now have annual turnovers well into the millions... but where are the brave, new, grass-roots publishers who are Scotland's future?



Left to right: Anna Fenge, Beatrice Sayers, Joanna Mattinson, Helen Kemp and Lorraine Fannin

1987: The growing demands

Lorraine Fannin

Lorraine Fannin joined the SPA as Director in 1987 and has, in the intervening 17 years, seen huge changes in the book trade and in publishing, and in the technology which drives both.

Around 1979 or '80, running my children's bookshop, Glowworm, on the edge of Edinburgh, I met Stephanie Wolfe Murray. She was keen to launch a series of Scottish children's fiction classics, the *Kelpies*, and she had my wholehearted support. She invited me to a party at the SPA, and I had my first experience of the rickety wooden staircase at South West Thistle Street Lane. Six years later – which for me included a spell working on Radio Scotland and launching an audio-publishing company – Stephanie told me the SPA was seeking a new Director, as Judy Moir had left.

I was even then unsure about the prospects for small independent booksellers, and enthusiastic about

the challenge put before me. Just what a challenge I didn't quite see. In April 1987 I was appointed by Richard Drew, the SPA Chairman, to the post of Director. Walter Cairns was the SAC's Literature Director at the time and a dear, funny and charming source of great support he became.

My colleagues were Alison Harley, recently appointed Publicist, and Alison Rae, the Administrator. The garret room had a desk acquired from the Lane Sales at Lyon & Turnbull, two tables, one typewriter and two telephones, for all three staff. There was no budget for, well, anything really, and when we held Council meetings we had to clear one of the table/desks, heave it into the centre of the office and squeeze everyone

round it. Council meetings were very cheery, though Richard Drew warned me early on that it was inevitable that there would always be one dissenter, one critic within every Council group. He didn't quite put it like that, actually, but I got his drift, and perhaps he had a point ...

I worried about the budget and the absolute lack of reserves, but was introduced to the Treasurer, Christian Maclean, who was very relaxed. He said we could certainly do something about the office if we made some money, somehow, to pay for it. I didn't realise it at the time, but that was how we had to develop the SPA throughout the next 17 years. Back then we looked around, found a pile of old display books in the side room and invited Thins to consider buying them. We were astonished when Jimmy Thin, the Chairman, arrived by bicycle to spend a happy day sorting them; he could

see both value and a bargain so the resultant cheque paid for our first telephone system.

But the premises were not easy to manage. Prue Borthwick joined us as Scottish Book Marketing Group organiser soon after I arrived, and our garret was crowded. In 1991, pre-National Lottery Funding, we took on the enormous task of finding funds to renovate the premises in Dundee Street. Looking back, our temerity amazes me. Edinburgh Book Festival had always shared office premises with the SPA but in Dundee Street we were joined by Scottish Book Trust from Glasgow. We expanded our training courses there and were able to bring experts from London to provide skills.

It was a turbulent time for publishing, the decade between '87 and '97. The sales which hit our book trade headlines were not of bestsellers and big deals, but of companies changing hands; control, staff, influence leaving Scotland. William Collins

was first in line to be sold, when News Corporation took over from a family in dissent; then Chambers sold the company to Paris-based Groupe de la Cité; Oliver & Boyd was spirited off to Essex, and subsequently buried; Holmes MacDougall, the mainstay of Scottish school reading schemes, was also sold off, followed by Bartholomew, into the HarperCollins stable and away. Blackie was split up and sold, again at the family's wish, and it disappeared from Scotland. Canongate had been sold to Phaidon, Richard Drew Publishing to Chambers, and at least nine small companies faced the receiver.

In 1987 the SPA had 56 members. By 2002 it had almost 80, but only 18 of the original were still there, and within that figure there were even more who had lasted only a brief moment.

In that time the Scottish Book Marketing Group grew, advertised

on TV, ran complex programmes of events, promotions and prizes, and finally sank beneath the weight of head-office-driven bookshop chains who dominated the trade by 2002. Our major achievement may well have been the set up of BookSource. This happened in 1995-96 as a rescue operation when Albany Book Company wobbled and finally fell. Publishers' funds and books were, fortunately, all saved. There was a strong wish that the initiative continue and develop, and so we embarked on what was a long and often rocky road to making BookSource into one of the UK's leading book distributors with a high reputation for technological development. It wasn't easy. Many of those who saw compelling reasons for the SPA to maintain this service were first in line to expect that it could do ever more, cheaper; that it shouldn't borrow but that it should have cash for development; that profits

be held to a minimum, but it should be attractive to investors. But then every company's clients expect that. That its Board has survived to bring the company to its present point in development is a testimony to the expertise and dedication offered for very little reward.

The SPA ran a mail order book promotion too, and through that project was added an on-line ordering facility in BookSource to which publishers could link. Scottish Books Direct was a challenging project which relied on publisher participation, a good offering and a great deal of capital to set it up. It combined the aspirations of Amazon with BCA book clubs – but rather lacked the Wall Street capital needed. It was praised from Australia, Switzerland and the USA. It lies fallow at present, but its systems, database and technological development remain to be used.

There were initiatives

to sell books in America, Canada, Eastern Europe, and in Scandinavia; there were developments in website information; the National Lottery funded new lists such as Neil Wilson Publishing's 11:9 and B&W's Itchy Co; Canongate embarked on an ambitious programme of translated fiction which brought a cosmopolitan flavour to publishing in Scotland. Small presses have come on board, many with aspirations to sell one or two books, and several have grown admirably in a difficult climate. And it is still difficult.

Books from many key Scottish publishers are today sold widely throughout the UK, and Mainstream, Canongate and Polygon have titles on bestseller lists that are not remotely Scottish in subject matter. But the problem lies now within Scotland where the steady march of chain bookshops taking over the indigenous book selling trade, has brought, in some instances, a reluc-

tance to buy Scottish books, and an assumption that Scotland is a region which needs just some local history titles to customise the offering to readers within a bland UK-wide mass-market offering. In this scenario, it is not simply publishers who have a problem. It's Scotland's book-buying public, its education and its libraries, as corporate UK effectively flattens out the cultural nuances that the politicians in Scotland seemed so strongly to want. In many cases the issue is whether the book fits into an incomprehensible buying system.

Fortunately there are signs of enlightenment and committed booksellers helping turn this around.

It is a challenge for the SPA in this decade. The organisation has had

to restructure its resources to meet these changes head-on, and remain fit and able to manoeuvre according to wide-ranging membership demands. The co-operative ethos is harder to maintain when competition is rife and growth is a Holy Grail. But it is still there, to a degree that is perhaps surprising in a modern business world. It is also gratifying that members will rally to the support of the SPA when things are tough, recognising perhaps that the organisation is their creation and their resource. There is also great work today with the chains, and the SPA facilitates buying days with Ottakar's, Waterstone's and Blackwell's on a regular basis. Most of these stores also support Scottish publishers through

Scottish Book of the Month campaigns and Scottish selections throughout the year. The SPA still calls for much more to be done however, and our hope is building more bridges with the staff of these stores who understand the Scottish market and with the all-important tourist markets.

The membership spread includes the largest and the smallest of publishing companies: from Orkney and Shetland to Argyll, Glasgow and Edinburgh, where half of the membership is based. The contacts are worldwide in all those places where initiatives reach, and in 2004 Scotland was a guest of honour at the Prague Book Fair, and part of the UK Country of Honour in Gothenburg.



In 1986 the booksellers and publishers got together to look at how they could promote Scottish books more effectively. The Scottish Book Marketing Group was formed. Robert Clow from John Smith's Bookshop in Glasgow was its first chairman, followed by Bill Campbell of Mainstream Publishing. Prue Borthwick was the group's first employee.

Early Days with the Scottish Book Marketing Group

June 1987 seems a long time ago and yet it does not seem an age since I found the door in South West Thistle Street Lane which opened up to the stairs leading to the offices of the Edinburgh Book Festival and the Scottish Publishers Association. I had an introduction to Jenny Brown, who was then Director of EBF, and was hoping that there might be a job available. There was no job but Jenny introduced me to Lorraine. My involvement with the Scottish Publishers Association and Scottish Book Marketing Group started that day as help was needed to organise the nationwide autumn promotion Scottish Book Fortnight – a SBMG activity.

The SBMG was set up

in 1986 by the SPA and the Booksellers Association (Scottish branch), initially as a three-year project. It operated from the offices of the SPA and was a joint venture between Scottish publishers and Scottish booksellers. It was intended to encourage sales of Scottish-interest books, at a time when most bookshops in Scotland did not have such vigorous Scottish sections as they did later. The Group was run by a committee of booksellers and publishers and administered by the SPA i.e. the colourful, cramped garret in South West Thistle Street Lane which housed four staff who shared work, facilities, frustrations and fun! So many changes over 15 years and when asked to recall the early days of our commitment to the SBMG, my main recollec-

tions are of the shared electric typewriter and the dependence upon the telephone.

The SBMG produced a Scottish Bestseller List each fortnight reflecting the differences in readership between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Scottish Book Fortnight was the main promotion of the year and took place during the second half of October with a full meet-the-author events programme around the country. Once events had been confirmed an events programme had to be produced and in those pre-computer days we did endless cutting and pasting by hand, sitting on the floor of the office well after office hours surrounded by sheets of A3 paper. The aim was to ensure that bookshops and libraries across Scotland were involved and to try to persuade an author, who maybe lived in London to travel to, say, Stornoway as well as to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Publicity was vital and co-operation of

local newspapers was essential. We would hold a SBF launch in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen so three parties within three days had to be arranged, point of sale material and invitations had to be published and advertising organised, accommodation for many authors found, travel arrangements made and calm confidence displayed – thank goodness only a few saw the panic and frenetic activity in the office as we coped with last minute cancellations, printing deadlines, typing errors, double bookings and yet more ‘cutting and pasting’!

Looking back, I think we were mad to embark on such an ambitious promotion but it worked, it was fun and it was great to experience the co-operation of booksellers, publishers, librarians, authors and newspapers in a national effort to promote and sell books with a Scottish interest. In 1991 a summer promotional brochure was

added to the activities and was appreciated by booksellers with seasonal and tourist-orientated trade.

When the budget allowed I would plan a trip to visit some of the smaller bookshops in more remote parts of Scotland to promote the aims and activities of the SBMG and to encourage them to stock Scottish titles – little did we realise how the retail trade and buying systems would change due to the growth of large bookselling chains based in the south. The changes have contributed to the closure of many small bookshops and to new ownership of the two large Scottish chains, James Thin Ltd and John Smith’s of Glasgow, and to the demise of the SBMG in 2002.

The Internet, email and ordering through Amazon are great, but I do miss the personal contact with the trade that had been built up and treasured over the years.

The publishing companies

Bill Campbell

Bill Campbell was born in Glasgow in 1951. Having graduated in History at Edinburgh University in 1973, he spent the following year at the School of Journalism at the University of California. He then returned to Edinburgh to immerse himself in written and broadcast journalism and as Publications Manager at Edinburgh University Student Publications, forerunner to the current Polygon. In 1978 he set up Mainstream Publishing with co-director Peter MacKenzie.

Mainstream: 25 years on

It was 1978. In the bars and cafes of Glasgow and Edinburgh in particular there was more than a whiff of radicalism in the air. Devolution (first vintage) seemed just around the corner in an atmosphere fuelled by Scotland's oil, spiralling inflation, consistent confrontational industrial unrest and a prevailing sense of social injustice. In football's World Cup in far-flung Argentina, Ally MacLeod's tormented Tartan Army danced their last desperate tango to the strains of Rod Stewart and rhythms of Archie Gemmell. A minor cultural explosion accompanied a renewed interest in Celtic music, peoples' theatre and the Scottish arts in general. Scottish publishing, having long

since packed its bulging bags and moved lock, stock and smoking barrel to London and points south, seemed to be undergoing a gentle revival at last, under the stewardship of small independent houses such as Canongate, John Donald, Gordon Wright and Paul Harris Publishing.



'Pete and Bill of Mainstream Publishing – they're the ones with the white hats.' – William McIlvanney



Bill Campbell with Jenny Brown at Frankfurt 2002

At the time I was employed as Publications Manager of Edinburgh University Student Publications – EUSPB, ‘Pubs Board’ and forerunner to what was eventually to evolve into Polygon Books. It was a unique and stimulating institution, a quasi-commercial, independent publishing entity answerable to a board of students, ex-students and academics, and publishing everything from the term-time weekly student newspaper to groundbreaking and, in retrospect, seminal books like *The Red Paper on*

Scotland and *Who Owns Scotland?* By the very nature of the job, I was making contact with a wide assortment of stimulating people and dipping my toe into journalism of both the written and broadcast variety.

Somewhat surprisingly at the time, the Scottish Arts Council, and in particular its young Literature Director, Trevor Royle, took an exceptionally proactive line with regard to the development of Scottish publishing. EUSPB had been encouraged to send a representative to the Frankfurt Book Fair for



Peter MacKenzie, LBF 2004

the first time in 1976 – me! What I saw and experienced there literally changed my life. The sheer scale of the fair, the buzz of the business, the global interchange of ideas, above all the sense of commercial commitment to and personal love for the world of books was overwhelming. I was hooked – for better or for worse. From then on that Book Fair and its American counterpart were to become an annual pilgrimage.

On return to Edinburgh the idea began to grow. I discussed possibilities with a contem-

porary teacher friend, and incidental EUSPB board member, Peter MacKenzie. What Peter and I shared at the time was youth, freedom from commitment and an innocent naïvety of what it would take to set up the great publishing venture. It rapidly became clear that we had more courage than capital. Eighteen months down the road we were inventing spurious loans for 'home improvement' on our respective Edinburgh flats and investing in a typewriter, letterheads and large doses of self-belief. After much soul searching and debate we hit on the name Mainstream – a 'buzz' word of the time that implied a broad, general and positive outlook, precisely how we envisaged our publishing policy developing.

Our first book, and one which incidentally Canongate had rejected, was *The Cevennes Journal* consisting of diary, notes and drawings by a young Robert Louis

MAINSTREAM PUBLISHING

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New Books from Scottish Publishers Spring 1986

Stevenson as he traversed the Cevennes region of France in researching his famous book, *Travels With a Donkey*. Beginner's luck rather than commercial nous saw us off to a brilliant start. The book caught the public imagination. We sold extracts to *The Times* and negotiated US and Canadian editions.

Mainstream was in business ...

Twenty-five years later it all seems so far away and yet so near. The flicker of an eyelid, the flash of a camera ... At the same time one remarkable journey. We've published paupers and princesses, spooks and sports people, chancers and chancellors

in one delicious, rollicking ride through the years. In Mainstream's first quarter of a century we have tried to adhere to our principles of high quality publishing of a decidedly independent nature – integrity with flair, if you like. The highs have been too many to list, the authors too numerous and talented to thank individually, but in the interest of posterity, let's list a few.

For sheer volume of sales, books like film tie-ins *Catch Me If You Can* and *William Wallace: Braveheart* take some beating, though others like *The Damage Done*, *Essex Boys* and *Jihad!* run close. More recently, Mike Coburn's account of the disastrous SAS Bravo Two Zero mission, *Soldier Five*, entered the

Sunday Times Bestseller list at number seven in mid-March 2004 and stayed there for a number of weeks. Award winners include the groundbreaking *Lost Lives*, a chronicle of every victim of the Irish troubles since 1966. President Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair both read from that book as a Christmas message on BBC Radio Four. We have also contributed significantly to our own culture with the very impressive volumes of Duncan Macmillan's *Scottish Art 1460-2000* and John Purser's *Scotland's Music*, while Ian Bell's biography of RLS, *Dreams of Exile*, has been lauded worldwide. Another universal success was the exceptional volume of memoir by the wonderful late Eugenie

Fraser, *The House by the Dvina*. In sport we have contributed everything from Hunter Davies' classic football book *The Glory Game* through to Clem Thomas' *History of the British and Irish Lions* while sporting giants like Gavin Hastings, Alex Ferguson and Ally McCoist have also braced the lists. Mainstream remains the only publisher to have won the William Hill Sports Book of the Year twice, with Stephen Jones' *Endless Winter* and Donald McRae's *Dark Trade*. Meanwhile the various diaries of Tom Shields have kept thousands happy while the works of Jan de Vries have kept thousands healthy.

We would like to use this volume as an opportunity to thank all of our friends in the book trade and the media as a whole for their fellowship and support.



Eleanor McLoughlan, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Lorraine Fannin and Bill Campbell

Paul Harris was a founder member of the SGPA with his eponymous publishing company, and when his company Waterfront Communications closed, he worked as a writer, packager and later as a print consultant (between several stints as a war correspondent in Bosnia). He moved to edit a periodical in Sri Lanka, and has recently travelled onward to settle in Shanghai, where he wrote this memoir.

Birth of the Scottish General Publishers' Association (SGPA)

I am writing this from Shanghai, China, and am separated from my archives in Scotland so this is written from personal recollection rather than written records. However, my recollections of 30 years ago are rather more reliable, I find, than those of what happened last week!

I was in my office in Guild Street, Aberdeen, early in 1973 when I took a call from Angus Wolfe Murray. I had never met Angus: I was running Impulse Publications in Aberdeen, a company I had started in 1968 to publish, initially, my own books, *When Pirates Ruled the Waves* and *The Garvie Trial*.

Angus had, of course, started Canongate in Edinburgh and we were

both, in our separate ways, struggling along in an essentially hostile publishing environment. Most of the famous names of Scottish publishing had been taken over or had removed their activities outside Scotland. Bookselling was dominated by a handful of operations, with Thin's and John Smith's the major players. Waterstone's was not even a gleam in Tim's eye. There were no distribution operations in existence. Angus and I found common ground: we both felt weighed down by the physical tasks of publishing. Calling on bookshops was time-consuming for very small publishers and joint representation seemed sensible. Packing parcels until the early hours of the morning was a universal feature of



those early days of publishing.

We decided to call a meeting of some other publishers in a bid to find common ground and advantage. The first meeting of what was to become the SGPA took place in a late afternoon in, I think, 1973 in the offices of Canongate in Jeffrey Street. I think there were half a dozen or so of us at that meeting

and it included Trevor Royle who was then Literature Director at the Scottish Arts Council. I had never met any of the attendees before but I remember first encounters with Bill MacLellan and Robin Lorimer. We repaired afterwards to The Royal Archer.

It was decided that, with the assistance of the SAC, we should call a major gathering of all

small publishers working in Scotland with a view to starting a formal association. Some time later, an extraordinary kenspeckle gathering of some 50 characters took place in the conference room in Charlotte Square. Anybody and everybody of significance in publishing was there.

There was much swapping of anecdotes about the difficulties of publishing. Charles Skilton talked of being prosecuted in Edinburgh for selling *Fanny Hill*. Forbes Macgregor, an elderly self-publisher, told a hilarious story. He had visited the matron in charge of John Knox's Bookshop in a bid to sell some of his books. 'We're not buying today,' she sternly advised him. Forbes looked around and could see no one else. He responded, 'Is that the royal 'we' or have you got mice up your arse?' This anecdote brought the house down.

The main movers in those early days were Norman Wilson (Ramsay



From left to right: Kate Blackadder, Grace Bluglass, Victoria Buchanan, Trevor Royle, Joanna Watson, Carol Harris, Paul Harris, Ellie Bryce, Jo Sherington and Nigel Billen

Head Press), who had retired from John Menzies and became an early Chairman; Robin Lorimer; Gordon Wright; Bill MacLellan; John Bruce (John Donald) and myself. Curiously, Angus, who had done so much to kick the Association off, took no further part: he had tired of publishing and Stephanie took over his role in Canongate, which was represented in the Association by the gregar-

ious, toothless Dave Morgan who possessed an enormous capacity for pints of Belhaven and roll-up cigarettes. A committee was formed, a constitution approved and, after much debate, the cumbersome name of The Scottish General Publishers' Association decided upon. In those early days we wanted to actually exclude some categories of publishers – like educational publishers – lest we become

dominated at an early stage by the big people we felt had let the Scottish side down, so to speak.

The first book fair we attended was the Montreal Book Fair. I think this was in 1975. Possibly '76. At Frankfurt I had met up with an amiable Canadian publisher called Ed Matheson who had taken on the marketing of a new book fair in Montreal. In those days

there was much interest in the real – or imagined – social and cultural links between Canada and Scotland. We saw vast, untapped markets in the rolling wastelands of Canada; riches on the scale of the Gold Rush. They were, of course, never realised ...

Ed came to Scotland and met with us and with Trevor Royle, and we attended Montreal. Some of us went on to New York and tramped the streets of the city meeting

US publishers. I went there with Gordon Wright. Stephanie Wolfe Murray arrived at Montreal – a couple of days late, with no money and, curiously, no clothes except the ones she stood up in. At the time, I was amazed. As I got to know Stephanie, I came to realise that was simply her own very individual and stylish way of doing things. We stayed in a hotel that was connected to the exhibition hall by subway so we saw little

of the city. I remember that one of us (not me) sublet his room during the day to Charles Skilton (Albyn Press) who engaged in extramural activities with a black maid at the hotel.

That first trip to New York led some of us into relationships with publishers like St Martin's Press, Rowman & Littlefield, Crown, Humanities Press and Taplinger. Scottish publishing was up and running...



Kate Blackadder



Kate Blackadder has worked for a number of publishers, Paul Harris included. She worked for Scottish Academic Press before becoming a freelance editor. In 2002 she edited the *Instant Book, Mirror Widow* by Gavin Inglis which was the winning entry in the SPA's Edinburgh International Book Festival competition. The aim of the competition was to attract new work from writers in any genre by noon 15/8/02; to have the winning work selected, edited and designed by 19/8/02, and to have 50 copies of the winning book delivered to Charlotte Square five days later. The CPI (UK) group, who sponsored the event, also printed and delivered to schedule. Kate's husband Mark is a book designer, and also worked on the *Instant Book*.

After sitting in the same chair in Hutchinson's production department in London for almost seven years, followed by two years with Churchill Livingstone as a sales promotion executive, I embarked unsuspectingly on a year of living dangerously. At the beginning of 1985 I got a new job after answering an advertisement headed 'Publishing Manager required to replace myself'. 'Myself' was Paul Harris, who had been publishing in his eponymous company for eleven years. He was diversifying into wildlife videos and magazine publishing. I was to look after the book side. He wanted to float this combined business on the OTC market.

When the flotation proposal was in place five of us went to London to meet the financial

press. Goldfish in a piranha bowl have friendlier company. One journalist wrote a scathing report in an influential investment journal and, although he later apologised, the damage was done. Paul Harris Communications for Leisure went into receivership, strangled at birth.

Back in Edinburgh there came news from the bank. Two businessmen would take over the book publishing side and the videos, with Paul as manager. We would move to an office in Leith and have a fresh start.

We adjourned to the Osborne to brainstorm a name for the new company. Rowan Publishing or Bracken Books were my contributions. These cosy ideas reminded Paul of a friend who had had a dog, now deceased, called Rowan.

What about Dead Dog Press? he suggested. Eventually someone, thinking of our office location, suggested On the Waterfront which fired Paul with great enthusiasm. We had to check to see if the name was already in use and, alas, a tiler on the Thames was found to have been similarly inspired, so instead we became Waterfront Communications. Paul swiftly put together an appropriately maritime list of both new and reissued titles, we wooed back some suppliers and, although the office was grotty and cold, the future looked promising.

Within weeks though, it became apparent that our new bosses knew nothing about publishing and cared less. Invoices either weren't paid at all, or cheques bounced. When they came to the office to see Paul voices were raised, while his secretary and I cowered in the next room (ears pressed against the adjoining wall). The staff left until there remained just Paul and myself. Paul became ill and was hospitalised. And then there was one. I tried to explain the situation to authors and suppliers without understanding it myself; answered the telephone and the door to

angry creditors; tried to keep warm; had an interview with an academic publisher; kept Silk Cut shareholders happy; became expert at the *Scotsman* crossword – but although I managed even Peter Bee's cryptic clues, the puzzle of why this had all come about remained unsolved.

Whether Waterfront Communications lived long enough to join the SPA I cannot recall, but when it finally ceased communicating, I moved to the comparative sanity and security of Scottish Academic Press. But that's another story.



John Tuckwell

John Tuckwell helped set up John Donald in 1972 (being the 'John' of the company's name) with four other founding directors. He was publishing director until 1990, when he left and joined Canongate to form Canongate Academic. He set up Tuckwell Press in 1995 with his wife, Val. Tuckwell Press specialises mainly in Scottish history, but has an interest in Scottish literary history, architecture, biography, ethnology, folklore and material culture. The initial emphasis was

academic, leading one reviewer to describe the programme as 'a triumph of idealism over accountancy'. The academic commitment remains, but as the company grows, it is extending, in the same subject areas, into Scottish books of more general appeal also. By the end of 2002, the published programme had passed the 200-title mark. Val and John Tuckwell were each awarded an honorary degree from Dundee University in 2003, in recognition of achievement in publishing.

John and Val Tuckwell at Frankfurt in 2001



Colin MacLean

Colin Maclean has now retired from publishing but his experience in the industry was wide; from his post as editor of the *Times Educational Supplement* in Scotland, he moved to Chambers and thence to run Aberdeen University Press. He was a long-serving member of the SPA Council and Vice-Chairman from 1989–91.

Snippets

In the mid-1970s the *Times Educational Supplement* awarded an educational-book prize to Holmes McDougall, Edinburgh publishers, of which Sir Hugh Fraser was chairman. As *TES Scotland* editor, I was required to go through to the Glasgow HQ of the House of Fraser, to hand over the prize to Sir Hugh, who had recently espoused the SNP cause and had been arguing for loyalty to Scottish business. I was accompanied by Mr Ian Christie, a manager for H McD, who was eager to hide from Sir Hugh the fact that the book had been printed in the Far East. When given the book, Sir Hugh set aside the large bacon roll he was consuming, flicked through the book and demanded to know who had printed it. On identi-

fying the foreign printers he turned to his secretary and commanded that she get an estimate from them for the next House of Fraser Catalogue.

In the 1980s Robert Maxwell decided that he would help restore the fortunes of the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games. Aberdeen University Press, which he owned, received a command that copies of the recently published *Dictionary of Scottish Business Biography* be sent to him. AUP was flattered that he had perused the AUP catalogue, but was then alarmed to discover that Maxwell planned to contact every business leader in Scotland to seek support for the Games. Maxwell reacted unfavourably to the news that the *Dictionary* dealt only with the deceased.

In 1982 at a critical

board meeting of AUP Printing and Publishing in Oxford – the only time Maxwell chaired such a meeting – Maxwell glanced first at the minutes of the previous meeting, then exclaimed ‘Sederunt! What the hell’s Sederunt?!’ One director, an Hons. Classics graduate of Aberdeen University, offered explanation. This was shortly after Maxwell had, for a press profile, said one of his regrets was that he had not learned to speak Japanese, when he was fluent in nine other languages (which obviously did not include Latin). In fact, none of those present knew that ‘sederunt’ was already listed to appear as a Scots word in the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, which AUP would publish in 1985.

At the frontiers of technology

Robert Maxwell often boasted that he kept publishing on top and printing on tap. But no one knew better than

Maxwell that printing was often – as it was especially in the first two decades of the SPA’s existence – a huge trap.

In 1977 I was foolish enough to believe that I was escaping from a printing trap when I accepted an offer from Chambers to leave journalism for book publishing. In my years with the *TES Scotland* (edited in Scotland, printed in London) printing disputes had multiplied and intensified, so that issues of *TES* sometimes failed to appear or appeared with so many misprints (interchangeable nots for nows the least worrying among them) that gibberish reigned.

When I left Chambers I fell into the enigmatic embrace of Maxwell, who had acquired the ailing AUP Printing with the aim of using it to service Pergamon’s books and journals but also with the intention of using the name as a Scottish academic imprint. When we met first, Maxwell

boasted that he planned to be at the frontiers of technology. His good intentions cost him dearly. He was repeatedly conned into believing that computers could work instant miracles. He persisted, however, eventually to AUP’s advantage, but not before some weird things issued forth from his printers. My colleague, Harold Watt, trained in perfectionist book printing and in restrained language, gritted his teeth and called them ‘Nasty!’

Maxwell’s Pergamon Group published nearly 400 academic journals and he insisted that they come out on time – and in profit. One such appeared with several different typefaces, ranging from old thumper typewriter (with hand corrections) through electric typewriter to linotype to word processor. For some of the early books from AUP Publishing we gave authors box-lined sheets on which they typed their thoughtful camera-ready

theses. Then I sought support from Maxwell for AUP alliance with the Scots-language teams in George Square, Edinburgh, who edited the troubled *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the embryo *Concise Scots Dictionary*. Maxwell said AUP wouldn't make any money out of them, but we ought to be doing this kind of thing. He authorised the purchase of computers, which landed in George Square complete with fast-talking salesmen. *DOST* survived and prospered.

The *CSD* was to be the 1985 Edinburgh Book Fair's bestseller. There followed *The Pocket Scots Dictionary* and *The Scots Thesaurus*. The first computers were soon out of date, and the staff were bruised in the process. When told the *CSD* was a success, Maxwell just said we ought to have charged more for it.

By the mid to late 1980s computers were installed for virtually every publishing purpose.

Academics, eager to be published, became attuned to ASCII. Odd little cottage industries offered printing services, most of them using the latest word processors. Eventually I was sick-sorry for the typesetting craftsmen at the printing firms which had serviced Scottish publishing so well for so long, their skills scattered to the computer winds. Even more sorry that printers' readers were fast disappearing from both book and newspaper publishing. I have been astonished recently to read two costly hardbacks by eminent authors which had literals on every other page. Presumably the publishers, both English, chose to economise, assuming that the authors had carefully re-read their texts before sending in the disks.

In my first week at AUP a polite elderly printer's reader came to my room saying he wanted to discuss a point of grammar. Within a year he was made redundant.

When I had begun in newspapers some 30 years previously we mere journalists were overawed by the erudition of printers' readers, this in days when both journalists and academics could parse and analyse a sentence. Now the sentence has gone out of fashion, except for criminals, and parse looks like a rude misprint.

But there is still hope, here and there. I myself have no right to complain. In the ten years since I finally retired I have been tremendously well served by Scottish publishers, twice by Tuckwell, and most recently by Mainstream who have just published for the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland my history, *Nurturing Talent*, of NYOS' first 25 years. Disk delivery to book delivery in less than three months! I am singing Mainstream's praises. Pardon the plug.

Many thanks.

Neil Wilson

Neil Wilson started Lochar Publishing in the 1980s and later established his eponymous imprint, Neil Wilson Publishing. He has served on the SPA Council for many years, as well as being a strong support to many of its committees and has made a huge contribution to the development of SPA work.

If I was asked how and why I got into publishing I would have to say it was mostly down to whisky and Alasdair Gray's book *Lanark*, but not necessarily in that order. I remember vividly the day I saw it in hardback in Blacklock and Farries in Dumfries and was completely smitten with it.

I read it immediately and felt afterwards that if this represented the type of work that Scottish writers could produce, then I wanted to be involved in some way in the publishing industry. I had friends in London who were book packagers, and one of them, Mike De Luca, who was also from Lockerbie, encouraged me to write a history of the Hebridean malt whisky distilleries after I'd spent time researching them in my time off as an oil

engineer based in the Middle East. Gradually the writing and the publishing of my first book, *Scotch and Water*, drew me away from the oil industry and in 1984 Mike and I set up a partnership called Lochar Publishing, later to become a limited company.

The whisky books grew in number and I kept reading Gray's novels and eventually found myself sitting beside Alasdair in a stairwell in a Dowanhill flat during a long party some years later. I told him how *Lanark* had changed my life and Alasdair decided there and then that this had to be celebrated immediately and we spent the next hour or so blethering about books, publishing and writers ... and we drank a lot of Scotch!

I suppose sitting

NEIL WILSON PUBLISHING Autumn Titles 1995

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drinking whisky on the stairs with one of Scotland's greatest novelists sums up my passion about publishing in Scotland today, as it always places you in a position to meet and deal with disparate, entertaining and unusual (forgive me, Alasdair) characters such as Ian Hamilton QC, Jack MacLean, Wallace and Jack Milroy, Donald Findlay, Gore Vidal, Wilfred Thesiger (those last two on the same day would you believe),

Catherine Brown and the loony Jim Perrin. In my previous life as an oil engineer the characters tended to be lower brow but nonetheless engaging elderly twits, usually of American extraction who often sported daft names such as Mr Billion, Earl Fruits and Dan de Leon. Working life was definitely varied, but also stressful as many of these 'old hands' had got into oil after the war and did not have the benefit (not that they would ever

consider it as such) of a 'college boy' education. My free time on the rigs in Saudi was often taken up researching or simply re-educating myself and during the month of July in 1980, I think it's fair to say that I would have won any Mastermind questions on the Bloomsbury Group, or Leonard Woolf's time in the diplomatic service in Ceylon.

But I knew I was kidding myself and eventually I went for it

and quit the oilfield. My early jaunts at selling and publicity resulted in some incidents which only my sublime ignorance of the behaviour expected of a newcomer to the trade got me through. After appearing on Libby Purves's *Midweek* programme after *Scotch and Water* was published, I headed for Waterstone's in High Street Kensington (samples in the backpack) to pin a member of staff to the wall and I emerged with an order. Next, it was Foyle's in Charing Cross Road where I was shown down to the labyrinthine basement to join a queue of trade reps as they awaited their weekly audience with the C. in C. Harold Stimac. I noticed how the reps were spoken to (or commanded) and rarely uttered a word apart from 'Thank you Mr Stimac'. I also noticed the Collins rep Sandy Richardson (with whom I had been at a dinner at the divine bookbinder Kate Davis's

flat in Gayfield Square a few weeks before) and he gave me a few words of advice, so when my turn came I was confident of a sale. Oh dear. Mr Stimac clearly did not like unsuited backpackers who bore books. 'Who are you?' he snapped. I told him. 'Where is your business card?' I told him why I did not have one. He looked at the sample of my book suspiciously, as though it was booby trapped and smeared in faeces. This was not going well, I thought. He turned some pages over and eventually gave a cursory glance at the index. Turning to his

aide-de-camp, he issued his command: 'Department H, six copies, same for department M ... NEXT!' I grabbed the carbon copy orders and left. As I retreated back down the line of remaining reps I sensed that they felt I had fared pretty well and there was the odd appreciative nod and wink. Sandy was more fulsome '... Bloody hell, he usually skins new reps!'

But I knew I had passed the test and there would more and sterner ones to follow, but I think I'll leave those for the next SPA birthday book.



Alasdair Gray at the EBF 1989 *Photo: Douglas Robertson*

Balnain Books

The rambling Gothic house which was home to Balnain Books stood at the end of an avenue of drooping trees, off a long track which led from the town of Nairn to Culbockie Forest. It had more rooms, Simon Fraser explained, than he had counted. He thought there was a strange window, visible from the outside, but unidentifiable from within. Inside the house publishing activity took both pride of place and all the best spaces, and in the late 80s was very hi-tech.

It was a joy to visit. There were Rhodesian Ridgeback dogs as big as small ponies, often in the drawing room, where they were seen apparently inhaling whole slabs of cheese, entire puddings; there were Arab horses in the stables, where Sarah Fraser spent nights as

equine midwife followed by days of on-screen editing. Artist and children's book creator, Jan Pienkowski, was a frequent guest, Aonghas MacNeacail often called in and a procession of Scotland's creative talent passed through.

Sarah and Simon Fraser produced an eclectic list. They published Robin Jenkins, Ian Crichton Smith, Bess Ross (whose first prize-winning book from Balnain launched her career). And Stanley Robertson, extraordinary storyteller, Maurice Walsh, and eventually the biography of Roy Williamson of 'Corries' fame. Their design style was unlike other small publishers of the time, with airy, quirky jackets and extraordinarily high quality paper. They weren't what booksellers or readers expected, and

that may have been a problem. As publishers, Sarah and Simon weren't what people expected either; Sarah's extraordinary adventures in telepathy and Simon's artistic talents were not easy to blend with an increasingly centralised book trade. Probably their bestselling title was a popular book on Shinty, and a must-have for Highland sporting heroes.

Balnain Books worked hard at the international market and in the end Sarah relocated to California as an editor in the town where she'd worked years earlier. Balnain was disbanded to the regret of many. Some titles have been revived by Birlinn and reprinted. But it's sad to lose that amazing hub – and refuge – in the Highlands where creative ideas were what mattered.

Christian Maclean

Christian Maclean has been Chief Executive of Floris Books for almost 25 years and has served on the SPA Council for around 20 years, during which he has accepted the role of Treasurer for many of those years. His support for the organisation has been invaluable and he has given freely of time and advice to help many aspiring new publishing professionals.

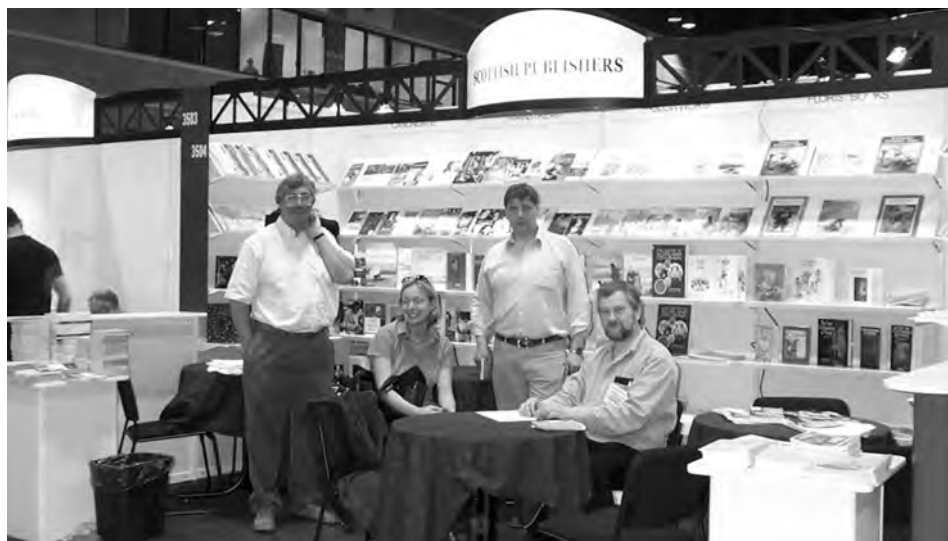
The Garret in South West Thistle Street Lane

To get to the SPA office you had to negotiate the little groups of bidders clustered around various bits of old furniture, which was being auctioned in the Lane Sales in South West Thistle Street Lane. From the fairly anonymous door you had a long climb up some steep narrow wooden stairs to the little office on the third floor.

In the years following Lorraine Fannin's appointment the activities – and the staff – of the SPA grew, and the premises were soon bursting. In the discussions about moving, Bill Henderson (of Chambers Books) reckoned the offices there were a fire-trap with the narrow stairs and no other method of escape (other

than putting some chairs on a table and climbing through the skylight).

Premises at Dundee Street Library were found. They were the storerooms of the City of Edinburgh Museums. The City Council was quite business-like about receiving rent, but seemed unable to grasp that it had related obligations like ensuring the space was empty, getting locks on doors, sorting out heating, and a hundred and one other tiresome things. Major work was required and the idea was that the SPA together with the Book Festival and Book Trust would raise funds to do this work. Ainslie Thin as the Book Festival's Chairman was prudently reluctant to commit to more than was in hand, though there was quite a good prospect of being able to raise money if we



Mike Miller, Fiona Brownlee, Ron Grosset and Christian Maclean, ABA 2000



Chris Moore and Christian Maclean, Frankfurt 2003

went for the project. We had visions of half a floor being put in, with no support for joists at other end for lack of funds.

Luckily we persuaded Ainslie that this might not be practical. The Scottish Book Centre premises provided a

welcome extension of space.

Frankfurt Book Fair
At the first Frankfurt

Book Fair I attended (about 1980) the SPA had a small stand in Hall 5. Tom Fenton's Salamander Press had just had a book short-listed for the Booker Prize, and Tom was running around like a headless chicken trying to sell as many foreign language rights to the book as he could. It was the heady time when publishers at Frankfurt bought not only books, but each other. Within a year Penguin Books not only bought the rights to Tom's Booker short-listed novel, but the whole of his publishing house. Like many a similar small bought-up publisher it vanished somewhere in the vast conglomerate which swallowed it. Following Tom's departure I succeeded him as Treasurer (which since then seems to have become a life-long appointment).

Distribution for Scottish Books

There had been endless discussion and reports on trying to get some

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ADDRESSING MACHINE. Automatic electric machine addresses straight onto envelopes. Addresses get typed straight onto cards with a normal typewriter. Cards can be used as card index with room for additional information. Cost £900 new. Going for £100 complete with all accessories.

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From SPA General Newsletter, December 1987

common distribution for Scottish Books, but no one seemed able to get it started, as the bigger publishers always had an existing arrangement, and without them there was insufficient critical mass for the smaller ones to do anything. The great service to Scottish Publishing of Andrew Haig, of Albany Book Company, was to offer distribution for other Scottish Publishers after he bought Canongate. The fact that he was unable to provide the service promised, and that he subsequently went into receivership, does not diminish from the fact that he did get a number of Scottish

publishers into common distribution.

When the crunch came, we heard that receivers were in Albany's offices, and some of us rushed over to the warehouse in Finlas Street to await arrival of receiver to ensure that the stock of books was recognized to belong to the publishers and not to Albany, and to try and find a way of continuing to provide the distribution service without interruption.

As things turned out both the stock of books and the publishers money was safeguarded and operations continued, with a disruption for only 24 hours.

Shake up in the business

Mike Miller

Mike Miller commenced in publishing in 1972 and is still in it...

He was Managing Director, and then Chairman and MD, of Blackie until 1992, when he became Publisher of Geddes and Grosset, alongside Ron Grosset. He has served as a committee member of the PA and the Book Development Council, and also as Chairman of BookTrust Scotland, and two terms as SPA Chairman.



Left to right: Mirek Jachemek, Sophy Dale, Mike Miller, Liz Small at Guck-Guck, Frankfurt 2003

Five minutes advice to young tradesman

*Written by John Blackie
Senior, Founder of the
Firm, about 1812.*

1. Whatever your trade be, never be ashamed of it or above it.

2. Do not disdain to keep company with people of your own class, but rather court their acquaintance.

The conversation of men of trade brings trade. Men first talk together, then deal together.

3. Without diligence and application no trade can be successfully or honourably carried on.

4. Never trade beyond your stock, or give or take too large credit. Better let slip a bargain now and then, than buy a greater quantity of goods than you can pay for.

5. Should your affairs go wrong in spite of all care

and diligence, break in time. If you pay ten shillings, do not affect to remain whole until you cannot pay ten pence.

6. The cruelty of creditors is always in proportion to the dishonesty of debtors.

7. A well-sorted and well-chosen quantity of goods is preferable to a shop entirely filled with an immense quantity.

8. The retail tradesman, and tradesmen in general, must lay in a very great stock of patience. They must conquer their passions, and endeavour to weather the storm of impertinence.

9. Pleasure and diversions, when frequent, are generally fatal to young tradesmen, especially those diversions which are deemed innocent, such as horses, dogs, and races.

10. For the first five or six

years of business a tradesman ought to consider himself as worth nothing, or as having no money which can be taken out of business, and be spent in the luxuries of life.

11. Profusion in expenses, living like your neighbours, and mimicking the manners of high life, are paths which lead directly to the *Gazette*.

12. In the employment of the holidays be sure that exercise only is your object. He who rides ten miles, and drinks two bottles of wine, will not find health greatly improved.

13. Beware of engaging to be security for any sum which you cannot pay without injuring your business or credit.

14. If you marry, let it be one who is not above being the wife of a tradesman. It may be necessary, therefore, to avoid one who has had a boarding-school education.

15. Trust as little to servants as possible; and this caution may be observed without depriving them of a just

and proper degree of confidence.

16. Idle servants are rarely honest ones. If a servant discovers a taste for dress, rather correct and moderate it than prohibit it altogether.

17. Trust nothing to speculation, and avoid all paper-money schemes to deceive the public and uphold false credit.

18. In general, avoid partnerships; at all times avoid them if you are not perfectly well acquainted with the temper, disposition, and character of your partner.

19. If you discover that your partner is a schemer or a gambler in the funds, lottery, or otherwise, dissolve partnership directly.

20. Be firm and determined in your prices; fix a moderate price but never depart from it.

21. Exposed as you must often be to improper questions, rather positively refuse to answer them than tell such lies as are common on these occasions.

22. Acquire a neatness

and despatch in everything you do, yet avoiding that affected bustle, cringing smile, and vulgarity of some tradesmen.

23. When in the shop take care to be sober on all occasions.

24. Talk to your customers like a man of sense of business, and not like a mountebank.

25. Be not very anxious to make a great fortune, nor set your heart upon a country-house and retirement.

26. In a word, be strictly honest, assiduously diligent, and frugal. Never break your word, or shuffle, but teach your brother tradesman and the whole world that you are a person in every possible case to be depended on.

Blackie: founded in 1809, departed 1991, published Educational Childrens' and Academic books.

This piece written in 1812 set the tone for most of Blackie's existence – particularly items 12, 14 and 23?

Lesley Taylor

Lesley Taylor has worked for a number of SPA member publishers (Scottish Academic Press / Saint Andrew Press / NMS) and has also been a long-serving SPA Council member. She serves on the SPA staff sub-committee and helps out – very willingly – whenever she is called upon (which is actually quite often).

My Dad keeps odd bits of family memorabilia in a sewing-machine box. Every so often he gets the urge to clear it out and I get handed an envelope with a few memories he thinks too precious to bin. Last time, along with a certificate of baptism and ‘birthday wishes to a one year old from the Church of Scotland’ there was a newspaper cutting. Set between a jumble sale and a meeting of the National Childbirth Trust there was this rather quaint notice:

‘An Edinburgh woman has been appointed publishing manager of St Andrew Press, the publishing arm of the Church of Scotland. Lesley Taylor (26), a former pupil of Broughton High School, worked as an editor at Saint Andrew Press for three years before moving

on to John Bartholomew and then Teviot ... and during the past year has been working for Scottish Academic Press in the city.’

If asked what I wanted to do with my life, it invariably involved the printed page. Barely a week after graduation I was moving artwork from A to B at Bartholomew’s; by Christmas I was sloshing out a flooded shop at Kimpton-Teviot; and by New Year I was editing at Saint Andrew Press. With time out for good behaviour at Scottish Academic Press, I was back with the Church of Scotland before my move to the National Museums of Scotland.

Publishing for the Kirk was the longest job and not the easiest. The Church, and NMS for that matter, are important Scottish institutions,

always in the public eye, and the implications of getting it wrong are not worth thinking about. I remember going into hiding during one General Assembly when the burning bush appeared upside down on the cover of the *Daily Papers*. Luckily the Principal Clerk had just returned from Australia and shrugged it off with a bit of jet-lagged humour. There was also the angst of an English translation of a Gaelic song book – the words did not match the tune; and the embarrassing but well-spotted ‘Cavalry’ instead of ‘Calvary’, ‘Pubic’ instead of ‘Punic’, and a cover with too many fishes and not enough loaves.

Saint Andrew Press is still known for the ground-breaking million-seller *Daily Study Bible* series, but in our time we added a small but controversial bestseller to the list: *The Glasgow Gospel*. Never have so

many phone calls been received by so few people in such a short space of time. From Sky Television to Channel 4’s ‘Big Breakfast’, with radio stations and newspapers in between, we knew we were on to something big. Even Barlinnie was treated to a ‘meet the author’ session.

NMS also has its moments, never dull, I may add. The list is broad, matching the vast collections, and our catalogues are designed to capture the grandeur of a Chinese emperor, and to celebrate Scotland’s crafts, with a bit of Heaven and Hell and polar exploration thrown in for good measure – no, never dull.

I can’t remember when it was that someone thought I was worth a SPA council seat, but it was way back when the SPA was squeezed into a cramped low-ceilinged attic in South West Thistle

Street. I remember the staircase. Perhaps there are still some publishers sprawled at the foot of those steps after a particularly heavy AGM. Anyone missing that you know of?

SPA meetings at Thistle Street, and at the Book Centre, were always too warm. Decisions were made to a soundtrack of whirring fans and a plentiful supply of mineral water. Perhaps the concerns of institution-based publishers are not always the same as the commercial publishers round the table, but the mix of individuals was always useful. It still is.

It’s difficult to believe that the SPA has been around for thirty years, and I’m torn between thinking ‘that long?’ or ‘is that all?’ It has been so much a part of the publishing life of this country. Well, what else can you say? Here’s to the next 30 years ...

Timothy Wright

Timothy Wright, chairman of the SPA from 2001, joined EUP as Managing Director from Churchill Livingstone.

Move to Churchill Livingstone

At the end of 1993 I was invited by Andrew Stevenson, MD of Churchill Livingstone – the medical publishing division of the Longman Group – to move to Edinburgh to head up the sales and marketing operation of CL. After nine years based in Harlow New Town a move to Edinburgh had huge attractions. Furthermore, working with the market leader in medical publishing and developing a sales team worldwide represented a considerable challenge. On January 2nd 1994, I arrived in Edinburgh to find the city very quiet and the shops shut!

Over the next four years I travelled up to 22 weeks a year developing the Churchill Livingstone business worldwide. Key markets were the Far and

Near East and I had several memorable trips to India where some medical books were selling 100,000 plus copies a year and where they were piled high in outlets in the markets of Old Delhi. Real selling! Although a division of the Longman Group – itself part of Pearson PLC – the culture at Churchill Livingstone did not feel overly corporate, mainly because of its location but also because of the particular market that it was working in. The name itself was a leading brand in medical publishing worldwide and this enabled us to establish our own identity. There was also crucially an excellent team of people – many of whom have themselves gone into independent publishing.

Storm clouds though were gathering over the headquarters of Pearson

PLC. The new Chief Executive, Marjorie Scardino, decreed that she wanted to focus on businesses that were 'number one in the world'. The effect of this strategy demonstrated by the current share price is plain to see. Although a significant niche player with an excellent brand name, Churchill Livingstone was not an Elsevier or a Harcourt and so we were put up for sale. To let an asset like that go was in my opinion madness but let it go she did – to Harcourt Brace. With the sale went many of the jobs – particularly in Sales and Marketing – and, effectively, the outstanding imprint which was soon subsumed into Harcourt Brace and then two years on within Reed Elsevier. This was not just a blow for Churchill Livingstone but a blow for Scottish publishing.

Meanwhile, across the city, Edinburgh University Press had been reinvented

as a Limited Company in 1994, having clocked up significant losses as a department of the University for many years. In late 1997 as Churchill Livingstone was moving into the arms of Harcourt, EUP was looking for a Managing Director designate to build the brand worldwide, to establish and focus the list and to return it to some kind of profitability. A dream job which I was fortunate enough to land and, on 12th January 1998, I began work in 22 George Square. Independent publishing is many miles away from corporate life and many times more satisfying. Andrew Stevenson once said to me that every Senior Manager in a corporate business should have a stint running a small business to understand the importance of cash, the implications of margin erosion and the complexities of stock valuation etc. In a corporate organisation

you are sheltered from all these issues – pigeon-holed in sales and marketing, in editorial or in production occasionally seeing monthly accounts if you are lucky. In a small business these issues suddenly become absolutely fundamental and I entered a new and challenging environment.

Since then EUP has refocused – concentrating as a University Press should on academic commissioning. We sold the fiction and non-fiction imprint Polygon to Birlinn in 2002, which enabled us to consolidate our position as the leading independent academic publisher in Scotland and we can now claim to be the third biggest University press in the UK behind Oxford and Cambridge. We publish over 80 new titles a year in the humanities and social sciences, have 23 journals and a young, dedicated and experienced team of 18 people.

Keith Whittles

Keith began his career in publishing in 1978, moving from academic research into academic publishing with Blackie & Son in Glasgow. Feeling the need to see publishing from a different perspective, in 1986 he moved to the Highlands and became a freelance editor, commissioning for several companies. When former authors sought help, and a publishing vehicle, he strayed into publishing under his own imprint. Recent years have seen the creation of technical and trade lists, which are now being expanded. Being a Cancerian Yorkshireman in Scotland, Keith appears mean and plausible. He is, but with a soft heart. In addition to his multifarious role in Whittles Publishing, he is currently a non-executive director of BookSource.

Well now, shall I become a lecturer – in a lively academic atmosphere, comfy office, lots of stimulating young people around me, and several weeks' holiday each year; or shall I become a commissioning editor for a Scottish publishing house founded in 1809? Hmm... Is there any difference? What is a commissioning editor anyway?

In 1978 I found out, moving straight from geological research into academic publishing – from a rock to a hard

place? – with Blackie & Son in Glasgow. Eight and a half years later, and with a desire to do something a little different, I quit Glasgow for the Flow Country. What on earth made me do it? Well, I did want to acquire a little more freedom and control, but it was my wife's fault really. The previous summer we took a holiday to the north-west coast of Scotland – unbeatable. (I was not new to the attractions of the Scottish countryside, having undertaken my



Liz Small and Keith Whittles,
Gothenburg 2002

geological research in the Monadhliath Mountains where, at my base camp, i.e. the local hostelry, I also became a highly-skilled darts player and won several bottles of whisky.) While travelling around the beautiful bays and glens, my wife said, 'Wouldn't it be nice if we could live somewhere like this, while still working in publishing?' I told you it was her fault.

So in 1986 I did three of the four or five most stressful things a person can undertake – gave up my job, started my own business, moved house, all with two very young children. The other stressful thing I didn't contemplate? Dying, probably. But it was long before the more recent trend for working from home, or whatever you wish to call it, and it was quite lonely.

My decision was met with comments like, 'That's brave of you Keith,' in other words 'You bloody fool', and 'You're not taking any authors with you, are

you?' I was so green, it never occurred to me.

It took a long time to get established – initially as a freelance commissioning editor and then as a publisher, when authors from my Blackie days began knocking on my door (not literally of course; few authors travel this far north to 'pop into the office') with publishing requests. Then began the routine that so many small publishers go through; dealing with everything, packing books, invoicing, chasing money, *and* trying to generate new titles *and* deal with the promotion of the 'list' – although hardly long enough to call a list at that stage, more like a notelet.

Then of course something decent comes along, but can you handle it? Not only finding the money to publish it, but what about promotion, etc, etc. Where can I get help? 'Have you heard of the SPA?', says a bright spark. So there, some years ago, began my personal contact with the

Scottish publishing establishment, without whose help life would have been distinctly more difficult. The same applies to BookSource – no more packing books on the kitchen table for me.

It is, in some ways, quite a strange existence. I am working with authors all over the world and yet I live in a village of 40 or 50 people, a village that is nearer Stavanger than London, and considerably further north than Moscow. My office window looks out upon a wooded valley (I hope it stays that way) and from the front door, the Moray Firth provides the backdrop. It can be extremely pleasant, but the travelling costs can be frighteningly large sometimes.

Publishing is undergoing constant change and facing multifarious threats. There is much wrong with the trade and yet so much good publishing is happening. In the shadow of the all-consuming multi-

nationals, smaller companies continue to publish some lively, interesting and worthwhile books – of course there is some trash there as well – but perhaps less so on the Scottish scene. Yes, the Scottish scene. It does exist and has a

voice that belies its size. I have great faith in Scottish publishing; the people make it so. It is now almost 17 years since I left Glasgow and I have spent the last 25 years of my life in Scottish publishing. Would I have chosen a

different career if I had had the chance? Pointless question. (If I were to return it would probably be as a honey bee with hay fever.) There is much I wish I had done differently of course, but then hindsight is a wonderful thing.



Loch More and the distant southern flanks

Photo: Don Mackay from Under a Northern Sky (Whittles Publishing 2005)



An aerial view of the Flow country of Caithness and Sutherland

Photo: Don Mackay from Under a Northern Sky (Whittles Publishing 2005)

The new wave

Hugh Andrew

Hugh Andrew began his career as a bookshop manager with James Thin Ltd and Hatchards before setting up a freelance repping agency in 1990. He set up Birlinn in 1992.

Birlinn was founded in 1992, largely because I was constantly being asked why certain books were not available, and secondly to give my sales agency something to sell. From a small and tender plant the company grew rapidly and in October '94, Jamie Byng and myself bought Canongate from the administrator. In 1998 with the acquisition of John Donald and my own departure from Canongate, the company again began to grow rapidly. 2002 saw the purchase of Polygon.

This may seem like a trajectory of fast and easy growth. It has been anything but. Virtually every year has seen the disappearance or collapse of another Scottish-owned retailing, library supply or wholesaling business and the concomitant movement of responsibility for Scottish books south of the border. Companies which used to regard 'Scottish' as a badge of pride now look on it as a minor irritant. This of course is the tale of the book trade with the

Susanna Geoghegan with
Hugh Andrew and John Davies,
Frankfurt 2003



steady march of conglomerates and elimination of small businesses on all sides – both retailing and publishing. There are however, signs of life in the undergrowth and indeed it is difficult to see the process going much further. For a small country with small businesses and fully exposed to the open market, then Scotland is vulnerable in the

extreme. Few small businesses can fight their way through the thickets to replace the larger ones who die or are bought out. For an industry which is a celebration of cultural diversity and difference, this poses problems. But within it also lie opportunities, as larger publishers retreat into larger and larger print runs of safer and safer books, so much in

their lists that has been hidden or underexposed becomes available for smaller and more focused lists to pick up and give new life to. Equally strong focus brings through good new writing suitable for that particular list.

If the future poses threats it also poses opportunities. It is up to us all to take them.

Jamie Byng: Canongate

Jamie Byng grew up in Winchester and completed a degree in English Literature at Edinburgh University. The rest is history ...



'Life of Pie'

I realised my future lay with Canongate pretty much when I first met Stephanie Wolfe Murray. She interviewed me for a voluntary job in the publicity department. Her passion and her instinctive way of operating inspired me – I started to get a sense and a feel of what it was like working in a publishing house. My response was a pretty visceral and immediate one in terms of being attracted to it as a career. Not that I've ever thought in terms of a career – I think that's a risky way to approach life. It implies a certainty that can be dangerous. I'd spent a lot of my life reading books and had finished a degree at Edinburgh in literature. Suddenly I was at a place where books get made – where they are edited, typeset, printed and published. I found it very exciting working

with living writers. Up to then I'd was running a dance club, Chocolate City. It opened from 11pm to 5am with reggae on one floor, mellow jazz on another and funky jazz on a third. It had been doing really well for a couple of years so the income from that enabled me to take the voluntary job in the publicity department ... In 1993 I started receiving a salary and that was helpful – I felt that I was wanted.

I bought Canongate with my partner in 1994. To have built something outside of the very much London-dominated publishing scene and the fact that we are publishing a lot of books that I think are wonderful is important to me. We have very idiosyncratic tastes at Canongate. I love its eclecticism, I love the fact that we are not afraid to take risks, that we



The Canongate team celebrate winning the Booker Prize

constantly try to publish new writers and strive to do things differently. The position we're in right now is the result of a lot of hard work by a great many people ... Winning the Booker was really the biggest break a publisher can get. It's given us greater credibility and other books we adore have benefited. One of the most stimulating things about being at

Canongate is the variety of projects you work on simultaneously. Certain books have the potential to reach out to an altogether bigger audience, not because they are necessarily better than other books, but because they work on the reader in a way that enables a lot of different people to enjoy them and be helped by them. In the case of Yann Martell's

book, it was a straight gut reaction. It was a great piece of storytelling and a beautiful book in many different ways. *Life of Pi* has now sold over a million copies, which shows novels can go beyond any defined market. It's boundless.

And we've just begun a joint venture with Text Publishing, in Melbourne. They won the Samuel Johnson Prize with Anna Funder's *Stasiland* earlier this year and publish Tim Flannery and Raimond Gaita. It's a unique move in English language publishing and gives us huge new sales opportunities in Australia. It will mean a new force for us in publishing and will mean we are able to offer an Australian home for some acquisitions ...

Campbell Brown



Campbell Brown, Cowgate 1996

Campbell Brown is Managing Director of Black & White Publishing in Edinburgh. After graduating from the University of St Andrews in 1985, he worked in a wide variety of pointless jobs for a few years before writing and publishing a guide to Edinburgh in the early days of DTP. *Edinburgh Walks* sold well, the business was set-up and it has developed into one of Scotland's leading independent publishers.



Alison McBride

B&W Publishing/Black & White Publishing: The 1990s ...

It seemed like a good idea at the time. With an idea for a book, access to an incredibly primitive computer and a £200 overdraft, B&W Publishing was up and running right at the start of the 1990s. Probably just as well that Mr W. was working as a bookseller at the time in the original, incredibly relaxed Waterstone's bookshop near Charlotte Square. These were the days when shop budgets allowed for piling 'em high and stock control was an occasional afterthought. Happily the first book, *Edinburgh Walks*, sold well, reprinted and sold out again. As did the sequel, *Edinburgh Walks Vol 2*. With very low overheads, we moved on to *Glasgow Walks* and *St Andrews and Fife Walks*.

Not perhaps the most original plan, but it seemed to be working.

In 1991 the charming and incredibly supportive Nigel Tranter let us reprint some of his vast back catalogue, much of which was out of print at that time, and all of which sold steadily. And with the addition of titles by John Buchan, Neil Munro, Guy McCrone, Margaret Thomson Davis and, later, Jessie Kesson, the Black & White list started to become a lot more substantial. For the first few years we were still operating from my flat in Sciennes, but the warehouse, which was basically the hall between the living room and the kitchen, was starting to get a bit too full for the joists. I'm not sure what the neighbours thought about articulated lorries parking at the front door, pallets being broken down

and books being hauled up to the third floor, but I can't remember any serious complaints. Well, nothing involving the police. A good point to say that one of the best SPA initiatives in the last decade has been to set up BookSource as a distributor, an initiative fully supported by the neighbours at Sciennes.

A dozen years on and the original B&W list is still going strong, with the addition of new authors from time to time. But it was the development of the Black & White list, originally dedicated to new non-fiction titles, which has helped to develop the business substantially over the last four years. The Black & White list had a fantastic start with the memoirs of Rikki Fulton which has been one of the bestselling Scottish titles of recent years. We knew, of course, that it would be popular, but it surpassed all expectations and has helped us grow the list considerably over the last

few years. With considerable input from Marketing Director Alison McBride, the Black & White list has developed humour titles, cookery, crime, local history, books in association with the *Herald* and the *Scotsman* and much more. And we were working with Rikki Fulton who, with Tony Roper, produced the Rev I.M. Jolly's first book, another bestseller in 2002.

In 2002 we added Itchy Coo, a new list of books for children in Scots, supported by the Scottish Arts Council and with editorial input from the tireless and talented James Robertson and Matthew Fitt. By the end of this year there will be 16 titles in print and the list has been a fantastic success, introducing thousands of new readers to Scots in the last year, and providing a valuable educational resource for teachers. With the addition of the fabulous *King o the Midden*, the *Wee Book of Fairy Tales*, *Animal 123* and others

this summer and autumn, the list is already established as the leading Scots language imprint and undoubtedly has a bright future.

Since the early 1990s the changes in the business and the book industry have been immense. I have no idea how we used to run a business without email and the Internet. And the once relaxed book chains have sharpened up their act, focused their own businesses and largely changed into serious corporate, even global, operations. There is perhaps an inevitable logic to economies of scale and a uniform 'offer' on the High Street, but let's hope they continue to recognise the value of diversity and that offering a wider range of titles, including Scottish titles in Scotland, is very much in everyone's interest. And I'm sure the SPA will be championing this cause and others for many years to come.

Lucy Juckes

Lucy Juckes was Sales Director at Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, before co-founding Barrington Stoke in 1996. She is married with four children.

Barrington Stoke

When we went round to meet potential investors to raise money to set up Barrington Stoke, we had an easy method to find out how trustworthy they were. We would introduce the company by telling them the history of the man himself, Barrington Stoke.

‘Surely you’ve heard of the Victorian character, Barrington Stoke – the famous and much-loved storyteller who travelled from village to village, carrying his lantern to light his way? Children rushed to meet him and were enthralled by his exciting tales of adventure, horror and

mystery. He knew exactly what they liked best and he loved telling a good story. And another. And then another. When the lantern burned low, he slipped away, only to appear next day in some other village to tell the next story.’

And the heads of some of the investors would begin to nod in recognition –

‘Oh, yes the name does ring a bell, I do remember learning about Barrington Stoke, now you come to mention it.’

And we knew they were not to be trusted – as the whole story and the character and the name were all made up!

Derek Rodger

Derek Rodger is President, Chief Executive and general Heid Bummer of the Argyll Publishing Corporation. Company headquarters is in Glendaruel Argyll – first track after the red phone box and the foot of the beallach. Unlike the books, the sheep are harmless.

It's the Identity, Stupid

What's it like? Publishing books in Argyll, in Scotland?

A year or two after I started the Argyll imprint, there appeared an obituary of Robin Lorimer, publisher in 1983 of the *New Testament in Scots*, a founding president of the Scottish General Publishers Association in the 1970s, and general enthusiast for independent publishing of quality books that enhance our culture. His career in the books business had spanned the traditional companies who, one by one, had been bought over and either closed or moved to London and he eventually set up his own Southside imprint in 1969.

He is an inspiring figure. Not because he is a dead hero. Not because Southside's critical

success and financial struggles also ended by 1975. But because he and others showed the way, in the modern age of pervasive corporate truth, to value our own literature, language and traditions. A generation later these efforts are ever more important.

So what's it like operating on the margins of the corporate world? As Lorimer found, not easy. In some ways, it is now even harder than thirty years ago. Scotland may now have its own Parliament, but concentrated media ownership, public sector penury as it affects the nation's libraries, and the prevalence of market-led thinking are now bigger obstacles. Also, the simple fact that levels of literacy, especially over Scotland's dividing wall among the urban poor, have been shown to have

declined, making the selling of books all the harder.

In addition, it can't be denied, there exists in Scotland's body politic and the party that has ruled large tracts of civic society since World War II, an anti-intellectual view that dismisses literature and its concerns as 'middle class' and as nothing more than the concern of Fancy Dan chatterers. In contrast to most other countries, Scottish leaders of unionist persuasion consider indigenous culture, not an asset, but a danger.

As if these weren't high enough hurdles, just to make things that wee bit harder for ourselves, prevalent too is the old cringe factor and fear of what others might regard as parochial. Reduced to its basic rudiments, if it's Scottish, it must be crap. This means, for example, that the books pages of our newspapers want to cover anything, even market-led, celebrity-fronted content, anything,

as long as it makes us look modern and switched on to the charge from corporate London and New York. Sadly this is a view that even pervades Scottish cultural bodies who should know better. It is even exists within the membership of the Scottish Publishers Association.

Consequently, competing with multinational product with TV-led book tie-ins, getting books into prominent display in book chains where decisions are made 400 miles from our own country is not easy.

What's it like!

On this thin topsoil and against this unpromising cultural backdrop, it's astonishing what can be achieved. Books produced by Argyll and other similar companies regularly sell out their print runs. Five figure sales are not uncommon. In contrast to their politicians and their media opinion formers, the Scots have an appetite for books and for

titles that take seriously their own history and identity. Some of Argyll's list have been shortlisted for literary prizes. Peter Burnett's modern comic novel *The Machine Doctor*, set in a futuristic Aberdeen, came close to Scottish Book of the Year in 2002. Local titles of decent content are more or less guaranteed to sell out. Some local histories do even better. John and Noreen Steele's *The Secrets of HMS Dasher* is the latest of three editions including four print runs to recount the naval disaster in the River Clyde in World War II.

Among the last year's crop, the satire of Frank Boyle's political cartoons (*Hooray for Holyrood*) and Andy Bain's hilarious take on the vanities of the political class (*Don't Vote for an Idiot, Vote for a Clown!*) have made their impact. Lorn Macintyre's (*Tobermory Days*) and Brian McCabe's (*Selected Stories*) show that the short story exploring the

corners of the modern Scots mind is in great health. So is the public demand as reflected in their sales.

Maisie Steven's *The Good Scots Diet* and Agnes Walker's *A Garden of Herbs* are books that tackle strong contemporary issues. Their respective subject matter points up the power of vested interests in the food industry and the health sector in determining what's mainstream and what's considered

alternative. In other words they are books rooted in Scotland's own culture and the way we think of ourselves and our past that shake conventional thinking.

What if our libraries stocked these kinds of books? What if our newspapers gave them the odd bit of attention? What if the political class was able to value Scottish culture instead of feel threatened by it? What if even a droplet of the financial wealth that is

hoarded in canny corners of institutional cupboards was invested in publishing projects that looked beyond the space around our feet? What if instead of feeling ashamed and inhibited by doubt half the time we were proud – not in an aggressive way but in a manner of quiet and assured confidence – of our own identity?

Well, let's not get carried away. Publishing might not be so hard. We might even have to take ourselves seriously.

Joy Hendry

Joy Hendry started Chapman when she was 18. She is one of Scotland's strongest developers of young writing talent.

A Magazine's Eye View of the SPA

Chapman started as an impertinent magazine from nowhere, hawked mainly by me in bedraggled clothes round the pubs in Edinburgh. The printer's bill was £600.00, cover price 30p. I was only 18 at the time and able to stand it. We managed to pay the bill by the aforementioned method. That's a lot of copies – 3000 to be precise. I have one copy left! Some of my favourite customers were Gavin Muir, son of Edwin; Fionn MacColla whom I met in Princes Street, both looking equally bedraggled; and Ronald Stevenson complete with black hat, looking very suave, even at a bus stop in Hanover Street. Their welcome of a juvenile upstart like me has set an example to me for the rest of my life.

There was an intuitive recognition of spirits set on the same path, and no further explanations needed.

The magazine has come a long way since then, moving from an eight page demi-quarto format to 64 pages of our second official number, on ancient Chinese literature, to what it is now, the latest centenary editions, two doubles of 304 pages each, first two of three, with another (single) issue to come – full colour cover with eight-page full colour spread, and looking altogether something like a history of Scottish literature over the last 30 years without the footnotes.

When I got full control of the magazine, the first thing that happened was that the Scottish Arts Council informed me that they

intended to withdraw the grant in a year. Encouraging stuff, but par for the course at the time. They doubted the ‘editorial judgement’ at the time – most of which had been up to previous editors and a lot of nasty infighting, of which then there was a great deal. Poets at that time were always at each other’s throats. I decided that it was stupid, destructive, and have dedicated myself to avoiding that whenever possible, which it isn’t always. I was publishing too many people not to the taste of the then literature committee, and became an innocent casualty of their decades of warring. ‘Nuff said. If you want more details, go dig the archives.

Then there was SCAMP – the Scottish Association of Magazine Publishers, an organisation rightly doomed to oblivion, which at one point attempted to join the Scottish Publishers Association, only rather snootily to be told that

magazines weren’t considered pukka enough, and, politely, to go away. We did as we were told.

It was fair enough, really, magazines are quite a different ball game from books, even more of a nightmare to produce, especially in Scotland, so I wasn’t unduly discouraged by the rebuttal. Anyone who produces one for any length of time does need their head examined. I’ve had mine ‘done’ but it hasn’t made much difference.

But then, as you do, you find authors who have had work published in various journals, but it isn’t enough to sustain them through to the next level of ‘creativity’. Getting several long, tortured letters from discouraged, virtually suicidal authors is enough to turn to you to publishing books. And before you know it you’ve published a couple of books, no doubt badly, with spines that fall apart, but at last

you qualify for membership of the SPA. *Cencrastus* has recently followed the same path (but books with spines relatively intact due to improved technology).

Last year, we reached issue 100 of *Chapman*. I tried to think of a clever theme for it, but decided in the end that it had to be a celebration of all the writers who had contributed to the ongoing discussion which has been *Chapman* and its books over the years. We have established ourselves as a major outlet of books of poetry in Scotland. Most other publishers increasingly don’t want to do these – and given the lack of support from bookshops and the media, that may (or may not) be understandable. Our Wild Women Series, starting off with Magi Gibson’s *Wild Women of a Certain Age* and Janet Paisley’s *Ye Cannae Win* were both sell-outs, Lydia Robb’s book *Last Tango with Magritte* rapidly following suit. Other

poets like George Gunn, Maragaret Fulton Cook, Robert Calder, Keort Linde and others have managed to establish their literary credentials on the back of books we have published. Nobody has made a fortune, but something has been achieved for the benefit of all.

Finally *Chapman* reaches its centenary. A party between, as it turns out, six covers, 100/1 304 pages, guest artist Jack Vettriano. Scotland is so much better in every way than it was when I started, partly thanks to the existence of the SPA, although several people (Scotland being Scotland)

have had their wars with it. It's all moving in the right direction. It's unfortunate as I write that Colin Mackay, author of my first book, *Red Ice*, has chosen this week to shuffle off his mortals.

But all things considered, I do think we are getting there, and magazines and small presses like *Chapman*, the establishment of the Scottish Poetry Library and the Scottish Publishers Association, the Edinburgh International Book Festival and so much else, do indicate that things are, without a doubt, much better than they were 30 years ago.

All power to all of us – and the most difficult thing, in such a close-knit community, is to try to maintain an honest critical climate. That is, I think, one of our most difficult challenges. And we draw on the real sense of comradeship and community, which our neighbours down south don't have; but we have to be cautious about the dangers of incestuousness and xenophobia. I am absolutely sure we can do that – but we have to be prepared to stand back and be honestly critical about each other, however much it hurts.



Joy Hendry

Rough patches

Lorraine Fannin

The spirit of co-operation and dedication which shines through the writing of the SPA members, past and present, who have contributed to these pages is central to the organisation. But it isn't, of course, the whole story, and in these days, when Government spin-doctors are reviled in the press, the other side of the coin is worth a look.

Every job description for SPA staff contains the words: 'sense of humour necessary'. The world of publishing is interesting, creative and fun, but the SPA is not an easy corner in which to enjoy the sunshine; that sense of humour together with a tough protective carapace are, perhaps, essential.

Being a small publisher is hard, frustrating and worrying. Large bookshops are not welcoming to small

suppliers, authors often expect miracles, and livings have to be earned. The SPA is there to help, to provide some of the bricks to build a business which is complicated and costly. All of this is a way of explaining or even excusing the criticism and complaint which frequently falls on the SPA.

I should have been warned, in my first week in the post. A pleasant phone call from a member I had yet to meet turned nasty a few minutes later when I explained about a poetry promotion running with Scottish Book Trust: the SPA was, the publisher said, hopelessly, terminally uncommercial, wasteful of public money, ignorant of the market place and of no use to anyone who wanted to make a profit on books; reality was a strange

world to us. I did, in the end, manage to explain that actually I had run my own bookselling business, and in fact I liked his books. A call came from a poetry publisher exactly one hour later and with relief I gave out the same information. We were, he said, hopeless philistines, who knew nothing about literature, poetry, writers, and all we cared about was crass commercialism ... That was 1987.

Since then I have collected an archive of the letters of complaint. I wish I could reproduce much of it here as it has grown more interesting and insightful and definitely funnier as time has gone by, and for those not on the receiving end, it's a hilarious glimpse of our industry. Many of those who write actually quote the need for us to be 'open, transparent and accountable', and some claim they'll turn to the press, but I suspect they don't mean that we should include their own letters

here, and libel laws beckon.

Some years ago a publisher, described as a 'vanity press' was asked to resign when author complaints reached a crescendo, and his anger filled a page or two. Author complaints made the SPA withdraw membership from other publishers, too, and one of these threatened legal action, though clearly none was taken. However, many small presses expect that public subsidy to the SPA brings an obligation to deliver any service they wish, and at times our inability to do so has been referred to MPs, MSPs, the Scottish Arts Council, the Minister of Culture, Audit Scotland, the DTI, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Trade International and the Scottish Executive.

Would that we could wave a magic wand, Harry Potter fashion. We would then insist that WH Smith accept all the books which publishers wish them to sell, enforce

a downward-spiralling discount on Waterstone's and full window displays in Scottish stores. We would ensure that every Scottish library buys every Scottish-published book, preferably in multiple copies, that all schools teach Scottish literature, that citizens of the UK buy more books instead of music or videos, oh, and that successful authors stay with their first publisher. Books would be sold to the millions of expatriate Scots in North America and Australia with consummate ease – the SPA would produce a catalogue to be mailed to each and every one of them. There would be a subsidised sales force, a Scottish rights agency, a publicity machine, and distribution services which would send out every single book for next day delivery at a mere fraction of the true cost.

We will risk a few anonymous quotes from letters received over the years:

On BookSource:

‘... lottery money should be used for the benefit of all not just a clique in Edinburgh ...’

On Scottish Books**Direct:**

(which had a remit to include Scottish-published books and Scottish writers, to be selected by a committee):

‘When the SPA is prepared to allow outside panels or committees to decide who may or who may not participate in their various promotions, in order to meet requirements for funding, it has sold out on what should be the main reason for its existence – to nurture and support each member equally.’

Extract taken from letter to SPA – date 13/12/00

On the Scottish Arts Council subsidy of the SPA:

‘For a trade organisation to be in financial thrall to an elitist arts quango whose agenda is or even may be at variance with that trade organisation’s

members’ interests is self-evidently an unwholesome situation.’

‘... the proper and adequate support-funding of a nation’s literature is much too vital a matter to be left to a financially marginalized department of an institution which is, in our view, intrinsically and increasingly elitist, inefficient, and in some areas prone to corruption.’

‘One only has to focus on the absolute numbers and relative percentages of publishing freelances to sit on the Grants to Publishers panel or subcommittee in recent years to start whiffing at least a potential rat in that vicinity.’

And the same publisher hadn’t quite finished:

‘When we returned from holiday a few weeks ago, and found a number of SPA envelopes in our postbag, we experienced spontaneous spasms of nausea and an immediate

inclination to, as it were, cut our losses, spare ourselves the nausea, and terminate our membership without further ado.’

An apology was discussed with our lawyer ...

‘On the strength of my own modest competence as a philosopher by training, and more topically on the mightily inscrutable authority of the People’s Republic of China, I can assure your client that a diplomatic expression of regret relayed by an agent in no way constitutes any sort of apology. One might for example and having regard to pecuniary rewards *regret* having abandoned economics at the end of one’s first year at university in favour of rushing to embrace philosophy. But that regret would in no wise constitute an *apology*, would it, because who would the apology be to? Regret, in short, is a matter within the self, be it a single personal self or a corporate legal self.

Apologies, very differently, concerned are addressed to others. And the settlement proposal put forward.'

Extract taken from fax to Simon Brown – 15 March 2001

**And the lawyer replied
... extract taken from
letter to SPA – date
15/03/01**

'As you will see, whilst it may have some merit as an exercise in sesquipedalianism, for those of us condemned to operate within the exigencies of the

quotidian world, it is of scant interest.'

**And from writers who
seek help from us ...**

'I'm not asking help from anyone that they cannot give without batting an eyelid. On the grounds that many of us are involved in this kind of dialogue my project, irrespective of its merits, carries its own moral legitimacy.

I'm seeking less than one tenth of one per cent of the energy and commitment I've put into my project. I'm looking

for a considered list of suitable publishers in Scotland who would show real interest in this project.

I am half-way through a second manuscript on the same theme and the information, culled from highly unusual channels, is so fabulous in every sense of the word that I don't know whether to proceed with it or throw it on the flames.'

*Extract taken from email:
Subject: Gypsies – Date
25/02/02*

Help along the way

Jenny Brown



Jenny Brown was Director of the Edinburgh Book Festival 1983-1991, National Co-ordinator of Readiscovery Campaign 1994-1996, then Head of Literature at Scottish Arts Council for six years. In 2002 she started a literary agency, Jenny Brown Associates. Photo: The Scotsman



Postman Pat at the EBF 1987
Photo: Douglas Robertson

The Edinburgh International Book Festival: the early years

Twenty-one years ago the Edinburgh Book Festival was a newborn and the Scottish Publishers Association, at the heady responsible age of nine, took the fledgling sibling under its wing and showed it how to get on in life. First off, it organised the opening party of the Book Festival in 1983, a detail that had somehow slipped the mind of the newborn. And then it provided a home for the Book Festival when its temporary base (an office within the personnel department of the Bank of Scotland) was no longer available. No matter that the home was an eyrie, only accessible by a rickety wooden staircase with no fire escape: these were pioneer days of arts

and cultural industries, before Health and Safety ruled, and risk assessment was an unheard-of concept. The offices had been recently vacated by Mainstream Publishing, and revelled in the gloriously backstreet address of 25a South West Thistle Street Lane. A bizarre feature of the building was an outsize Paolozzi sculpture, left behind by a previous tenant, which occupied most of the first floor landing and acted as an impromptu coatstand. The narrow cobbled street was host twice a week to sales of household furniture and effects from the nearby auction rooms, and on these days it most resembled an eastern bazaar, with accompanying hubbub. We always tried to arrange meetings with London publishers and especially authors and sponsors out of the office – on one occasion

when an editor dropped in unannounced he commented that at least no one could accuse us of squandering tax payers' money on our offices. Too true! However it was a happy arrangement with the SPA – we exchanged news and gossip, swapped ideas, shared ups and downs, staff – and a newfangled bit of technology called a fax machine.

From the outset Scottish publishers played a major role in the Book Festival, both in helping to shape the event behind the scenes, and at the festival itself. The likes of Bill Campbell, Janis Adams, Stephanie Wolfe Murray and Tom Fenton of Salamander, were all roped in, designing brochures, proofreading copy, chairing sessions, blowing up balloons ... Families were also called upon – Richard Drew's children sold tickets; Lorraine Fannin's kids paraded Charlotte Square Gardens dressed as Postman Pat and Fungus

the Bogeyman. In 1985 Christopher Maclehose of Harvill suggested a contest between publishers to see who would be the most effective salesman of their books at the Book Festival. A number of publishers from both sides of the border eagerly took part, but the contest was won easily by Canongate, as Stephanie had persuaded Alasdair Gray to do pen portraits of every buyer of *Lanark* on the day. A number of Scottish published books were Festival bestsellers, skewing the UK bestseller charts for a fortnight every other summer, including Aberdeen University Press's *Concise Scots Dictionary* and another year, a uniquely Scottish hit, a book devoted to midges.

The SPA, together with Scottish Book Trust, were instrumental in supporting Readiscovery, Scotland's reading campaign of 1995. This one-year campaign, the brainchild of the Scottish Arts Council, aimed to

raise the profile of books and reading for adults and children. Tall order! We tried lots of different activities, with varying degrees of success: poems on Stagecoach buses, books in Kwik-Fit waiting rooms, arresting bits of novels on the walls of airports, prisons and hospitals, romantic reads in the *Daily Record* (where they were awarded a smooth count for raunchiness) – and, best of all, a book bus. It was big, full of kids' books and very orange. Andrew MacDougall took to the wheel for a year and entertained authors such as Robert Crowther, Viv French and Alison Prince as the bus visited remote and urban primary schools throughout Scotland, from Shetland to Stranraer.



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Alison Baverstock

Alison Baverstock studied Mediaeval History and Fine Arts at St Andrews before embarking on a career in publishing. After ten years she decided to go it alone and has since then been combining marketing consultancy, training and writing about the industry, in both books and the trade press. Her *How to Market Books* (Kogan Page) is often hailed as the 'bible of book marketing' and is now in its fourth version, with a fifth in preparation. She now lives in Kingston upon Thames with her husband (also ex-St Andrews) and four children, all of whom have been brought up on Maisie stories!

I have had my Filofax for more years than I can remember.

It's very seasoned leather now, the press-stud broke long ago, and you can tell the annual diary bit from the rest because it has white edges rather than the grey that surrounds it. But one of the first entries in the address section under 'S' is the Scottish Publishers Association, which makes me realise for just how long I have been coming up to give training courses in Edinburgh. The other remarkable thing is how few names are written next to 'SPA'. I've worked with no more than four people in the 15 years we've been working together – the SPA obviously keeps its staff for much longer than down south.

I was at university in Scotland, and from there went into publishing,

always on the marketing side of the business.

Since going freelance in 1987 I have written widely about the industry (best-known book is *How to Market Books* (Kogan Page), now in its fourth version, having sold over 20,000 copies), run many marketing campaigns, and trained lots of publishers. As well as giving training courses on marketing at the SPA, I have also been involved with several of your marketing initiatives.

I have to say that in my near-quarter century of book marketing, the copy I see from publishers, and their habits of thinking, have not changed a great deal. The media may have changed (email and web marketing were unknown when I started) but catalogues are still the staple of the industry – and the things I invariably end up

commenting on are very similar.

Publishers the length of Britain seem to be stuck with the same manner of constructing sentences (why do so many catalogue entries begin 'This book...') and the same way of describing their products: as 'accessible', 'comprehensive', 'lucid', 'timely' – and a wider range of equally serviceable words that almost never make it into our spoken vocabulary. On each course I try to encourage delegates to think of everyday alternatives with which to enthuse rather than Latin compounds; to start in the middle of a sentence if it makes it more arresting rather than to provide something that can be translated with ease. And I would love to encourage everyone to focus on targeting their message at the market rather than in-house colleagues, which tends to mean that there is more effort to please the manager who will

approve the copy than the customer who will buy the product – and on whom the future of the whole company ultimately depends.

Having said that, I do find independent organisations (from which the majority of SPA delegates come) much better at taking risks, spotting market gaps and marketing imaginatively on a very small budget than their much larger competitors down south.

But the real reason I love to return to the SPA is the people who come on the courses - you recruit such enthusiastic delegates. Cynicism is a creeping disease, one horribly prevalent in the London area, and one from which your delegates never seem to suffer. I find them optimistic, determined to get good value out of a small budget, and very positive – which makes them a joy to work with.

Your attention to detail is also impressive. I like the way the delegates

arrive knowing what they want to get out of the course and the way they are united by their common determination to get Scottish books better known. I like the certificates you hand out at the end of the course – something tangible to take home seems important. Lunch is always very good too. And I love the way you always invite me to the SPA Christmas party. Each year I stick the invitation on my mantelpiece in London and wish I was indeed up in Scotland, and able to attend.

What is more, through the process of working with the SPA, I have discovered some fantastic books. To name but two, Jonathan Falla's *Blue Poppies* (Neil Wilson Publishing) and the *Maisie* series which I read to all my children, and whose vocabulary has entered our family's conversation ('She's a real Mrs McKitty ...') So – I'd like to say, keep it up, SPA!

Gavin Wallace



Dr Gavin Wallace is Head of Literature at the Scottish Arts Council, and was Literature Officer from 1997-2002. He is a graduate and postgraduate, in English and Scottish Literature, of the University of Edinburgh. He has been active in many aspects of Scottish literature and culture as a teacher, lecturer, critic, journalist, editor, and broadcaster at home and abroad, and was an Associate Lecturer in Literature and the Humanities at the Open University in Scotland from 1991-2001. He has co-edited critical works on Scottish Fiction and Theatre, and was a co-editor of the journal *Edinburgh Review*.

Early and Late

It was a classic case of poacher turned gamekeeper when I joined the Scottish Arts Council in 1997 as Literature Officer, to lead on policies and schemes for publishing after well over a decade as the gypsy scholar, writer, critic and editor, with many reasons to be grateful for a place to park the caravan, thanks to the enlightened benisons of Literature Department funding under the wise and gentlemanly stewardship of the late lamented Walter Cairns. His successor, Jenny Brown – with whom I would enjoy the best working relationship of my professional life for the next five years – had already made a huge mark in building on Walter's many achievements through her charisma, passion and

enthusiasm, and in terms of publishing, things were looking interesting: Scottish BookSource up and running as a creative and pragmatic solution to the Albany collapse; Canongate entering a new phoenix phase; Scotland offering a hospitable home for exciting new ventures like Barrington Stoke. And within five minutes of meeting the Director of SPA for the first time, we were talking the precise determinants of the perfect gin and tonic, so I knew things would probably be alright.

Not that there was any shortage of challenges. The initial years of SAC Lottery funding, which bore early fruit in Scottish BookSource, proved trickier for individual publishers to negotiate, who found jumping through these particular

hoops required excessive stamina and determination. As a Department, we had to work far harder internally than should have been necessary to make the case for large-scale publishing projects, and it eventually paid off: the Gaelic Books Council launched its Book Club in 1997; the Pocketbooks imprint and Neil Wilson's 11:9 came good in 1999, the latter after a devilishly protracted internal battle and a nail-biting finish. Both ventures, in different ways, made a huge impact: Pocketbooks was a quiet transformation in literary publishing in Scotland, raising production and design values spectacularly, while 11:9, though proving bittersweet for its publisher, proved invaluable to its authors professionally and creatively, especially those publishing their first books.

Jenny and I eventually managed to persuade a somewhat cautious Grants to Publications Sub-Committee that the

time was right for a pilot programme for block funding, with spectacular results: the largest award, pump-priming for the first three years of the Canongate International imprint, was arguably the best money I ever spent, a critical and commercial triumph that took the publisher well into the home-straight towards *Life of Pi*. The future is investment, not subsidy, even if it is modest: the £8,000 bursary to the then unknown J.K. Rowling, or the tiny production grant for the first Alexander McCall Smith novel. The Programme Publishing initiative encouraged Scottish Enterprise to partner us in the equally successful Creative Industries Company Development scheme for the next two years, which would prove crucial to the six publishers who benefited, notably Floris and its Kelpies re-launch, and pragmatic, creative expansion for the diligent miniaturist Keith Whittles.

With the impending recommendations of the hefty *Review of Scottish Publishing in the 21st Century*, an SPA responding robustly and imaginatively to adverse factors in the UK and global markets, and the huge momentum being generated by the Literature Forum for Scotland towards placing Literature in its rightful place of centre stage, it has been a heady and productive six years – and, on the whole, happy and positive. All happy publishers, to paraphrase Tolstoy, are happy in their own unique fashion, but unhappy publishers can be contumacious creatures indeed. There have been spectacular and upsetting barneys, though we have always made up – if not quite kissed – in the end. And there is no end, and long may that continue, to a delightful array of downright bemusing, frequently infuriating idiosyncrasies. The publisher who complained bitterly about

the time-consuming process of form-filling for production grants, when all he really needed, actually, was help with marketing and promotion. It was politely pointed out that funds for the latter had been introduced years ago, in response to demand. 'Oh, I know that, but it's too difficult to go for. There's no

application form'.

Or, to finish with a personal favourite – the tireless comic and cynical invention of members trying to justify (if not circumvent!) overdue subscriptions at SPA Council meetings; unforgettably, the distinguished then Chairman finding he himself was on the repentance stool, who retorted: 'Give us a

break! This is the earliest we've been late for years!'

The point being, we *are* getting there, and we *will* get there, eventually – and probably sooner than we all sometimes imagine. We could never have come thus far without the SPA – and we won't go any further without them.

Trevor Royle

Trevor Royle was Literature Director of the Scottish Arts Council between 1971 and 1979 when he resigned to concentrate on his writing. During the 1980s he wrote and presented documentary programmes for BBC radio and published a number of bestselling military titles including *The Best Years of Their Lives* (1986), an account of post-war National Service. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1995 and was one of the founding editors of the *Sunday Herald* in 1999. Amongst his many books, the most recent are *Crimea: The Great Crimean War 1854–1856* (1999) and *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638–1660* (2004) which were published to critical claim on both sides of the Atlantic.

When do I get my grant?

First, prose: the myth-making can be left for later. Thirty years is a long time by any reckoning. Less than half a lifetime, it produces a healthy span, enough for memory to play tricks yet still within grasp so that it can stand up to middle-life's oft-repeated shake of the head – 'surely it wasn't all that long ago?' So, it's just possible to make some sense of the publishing scene in Scotland three decades ago when Canongate had set up shop in Jeffrey Street and a glance at the Scottish Arts Council's awards to publishers reveal the long-lost names of Impulse, Garret Arts, Blackie, William MacLellan and Volturna. Remember them?

The 70s proved to be a fertile decade in

Scotland's cultural history. The Scottish Arts Council had just achieved devolution; it was well funded and had embarked on an ambitious policy for spending money on literature. At the start of the decade the sum available was c£23,000; by 1979 it had climbed to c£346,000. However, it would be wrong to suggest that the publishing renaissance of the 1970s was solely to do with dosh.

If nothing had been happening outside the rarefied atmosphere of the SAC's headquarters at 19 Charlotte Square, if there had been no Callum MacDonald, no Stephanie Wolfe Murray, no Campbell and Mackenzie Inc, no Paul Harris, no Simon Berry, no Norman Wilson, then the Grants to Publishers fund which started on 9 September

1974 would have remained stillborn. Its first chair was Tommy Dunn, professor of English at the University of Stirling and a fine man who laboured long and enthusiastically behind the scenes to make sure that the first allocation of c£14,000 was spent well and wisely.

At that time the Scottish General Publishers Association (SGPA and forerunner of the present outfit) had already come into being and it received its first grant in January 1975 when it was awarded c£400 to produce its first joint catalogue. There was some raising of eyebrows within the Literature Committee, two of whose members were best-selling novelists and one of them an Oscar winner. For them publishing had been all agents, big deals and the sale of rights. It took some convincing and a

leap of the imagination to be persuaded that publishing, a commercial enterprise, should be funded by money from the state.

Once convinced they never looked back. The big breakthrough came on 14 February 1978 when the Literature Committee held a joint meeting with the council of SGPA to find ways and means to 'increase the professional work of the publishing industry in Scotland.' It was chaired by Professor Derry Jeffares, another great man, and as a result SAC made two awards: £5450 towards the costs of attending book fairs and £5850 towards the costs of appointing a fulltime organiser. That same year, Mary Baxter's National Book League in Scotland also received substantial SAC backing. At last the future had arrived.

It wasn't all grants and meetings though,

licence also came into the equation not least when a joint Scottish-Irish publishing seminar was held in Dublin in the spring of 1979. For reasons that escape me, we were all marooned at Dublin airport and were forced to spend the night in a ghastly corporate hotel. Everyone piled into my room where room service came courtesy of SAC. On leaving the next day the receptionist complained to me that the people in the room below had kicked up a fuss about the noise coming from above. Fair enough, Jameson and Paddy had made an appearance with inevitable results, but as we left the hotel I couldn't help noticing that my room was on the basement floor. Scottish publishers! They could waken the dead and given a chance probably will.

Brian Osborne

Brian D. Osborne's career in librarianship ended with his retirement in 1995 as Chief Officer: Libraries and Museums in Strathkelvin. He was President of the Scottish Library Association in 1992, the SLA's Honorary Publications Officer, served on Scottish Arts Council Committees and chaired the Scottish Book Marketing Group. Since retiring he has written on a variety of Scottish themes – including three historical biographies.

A token librarian remembers, or, it was all Lorraine Fannin's fault

Around 1989 I was invited to join the Scottish Book Marketing Group as their token librarian. I found an interesting collection of people – equal numbers of publishers and booksellers, and an author. I was at that time working as District Librarian in Midlothian and serving as Honorary Publications Officer for the Scottish Library Association and I had even spent 18 months in a bookshop when I left school so I felt adequately cross-sectoral.

In 1991 Lorraine Fannin phoned me up to say that the Chairman of the Group was resigning. My naïve thought was that Lorraine was asking for a contribution to his going-away present.

Instead she asked me if I would become Chairman.

Of course I said yes (who says no to Lorraine?) and explained to all enquirers that, as the token librarian and Chairman, I was a professional neutral and the publishers and the booksellers could happily unite to attack me. In fact the five years I spent as Chairman of the SBMG were entirely enjoyable, harmonious and productive. We oversaw a variety of marketing initiatives, implemented by the excellent and hard-working staff of the SPA, and with events like Scottish Book Fortnight felt we were focusing much-needed attention on Scottish books and Scottish writers. I was also personally happy to be doing something to forge stronger links between the too-often separate worlds of



Left to right: Angus Clark, A.L. Kennedy, Brian Osborne Photo: Kevin Low

libraries and the commercial book trade in Scotland. I even did something on a more direct level to forge these links by starting out on a

parallel career as an author.

This was all quite safely within my comfort zone – but Lorraine decided that I needed

something else to do – probably feeling that running Libraries and Museums for Strathkelvin (where I had gone in 1989) wasn't really work.

So she proposed my name to the Scottish Arts Council and in 1994 I found myself on their Grants to Publishers Panel. This gave me further insight into the world of Scottish publishing and a remarkable knowledge of the first 40 pages of quite a lot of Scottish books published over the next seven years.

In 1996 the Scottish Arts Council invited me to join its Literature Committee. This meant that, as I was now involved in funding decisions affecting the SPA, I had to give up my involvement with the SBMG. However my involvement with Scottish publishing did not cease. I took early retirement in 1995 to do freelance work and to

spend more time writing. When last I checked I had been published by eight members of the SPA – I will refrain from naming and shaming the guilty parties as I hope to continue my association with a number of them! I even have been published by the SPA itself – can there be greater glory?

The years from my first involvement with the SPA have seen a great many changes in the trade in Scotland – not all of them positive. We have seen the end of Retail Price Maintenance – which has had mixed benefits. We have seen the demise of many traditional booksellers and library suppliers and the growth of chain bookselling and the rise and fall of publishing

houses. We have also seen a remarkable improvement in production standards with most Scottish publishers now turning out attractive and well-designed books – which is not something that could honestly have been claimed for all of them in the late 1980s.

Whether the quality of the editorial input into these books is as good as it might be is another matter. But this is a celebration and not an excuse for my ‘grumpy old man’ performance.

Scottish publishing has remarkable achievements to its credit in recent years and the SPA in its 30 years has done much to make these possible – Happy Birthday and here’s to the next 30.



Mary Baxter

Mary Baxter is former Director,
Book Trust Scotland

Scottish Book Trust

Carrying out the aim of Book Trust Scotland (as it was then called) 'to encourage the use and enjoyment of books in every part of the community' made for a job that was always demanding, mostly enjoyable, often frustrating and, just occasionally, wholly satisfying. It involved working with people over the whole book world, from authors through to readers. We compiled countless booklists, together with travelling exhibitions of the books themselves, on a wide variety of subjects and sent them touring throughout schools, libraries and halls in Scotland. We organised authors' talks, discussion groups, teachers' seminars and so on, from Orkney to the Borders. We published a whole series of eight-page

pamphlets each devoted to one contemporary Scottish writer, as well as several sets of poetry posters. We acted as an enabler and sometimes as a catalyst for other people's activities.

I met many authors, both Scottish and from other countries and many became friends. We did our best to prime host organisations on the reception of guest speakers – not always successfully. Authors don't like to be met with: 'Oh, I got your book out of the library and enjoyed it *so much* I lent it to *ten* of my friends'. Or to be introduced by: 'I'm sure he/she needs no introduction, so I'll just hand you over.' Still less, if the chairman starts with what's meant to be disarming honesty: 'I must admit that up until today, I had never heard of Lavinia Derwent'.

(Lavinia promptly retaliated by beginning: 'I must admit that up until today *I* had never heard of (whatever his name was)').

One meeting we initiated in the early 80s had far-reaching effects. The speakers represented every facet of children's book interests in Scotland. Teachers in particular were crying out for books with a Scottish background, but they were all out of print and London publishers weren't interested in what they considered as a narrow field. It was at that meeting that the idea of a series of paperback reprints of Scottish children's books crystallised in the mind of Stephanie Wolfe Murray at Canongate, and the Kelpies were born.

The late 70s and the 80s saw great developments throughout the

Scottish book scene. There was tremendous co-operation, too, between all the different organisations and the many new schemes initiated by the Scottish Arts Council's Literature department did much to smooth the way for all of us. Book prizes and Awards began to appear. One Book Trust had a hand in starting, together with Valerie Bierman of the Federation of Children's Book groups and the publisher Blackie, was the Kathleen Fidler Award for a first book for children in the 8-12 age group. This was to encourage first-time authors, and children were involved in the judging.

The other major event of the 80s with which Book Trust Scotland was closely involved was the setting-up of the Edinburgh Book Festival.

For years many people, notably the Society of Authors in Scotland, had bemoaned the lack of a major book event during the Edinburgh International Festival. For some years they themselves had organised a week of highly successful authors' meetings during the Festival, held in various hotels in the city. It was high time to take the plunge. The practicalities were seriously discussed over a lunch, a meeting of all interested parties was called, a chairman and board appointed, and we were away. One of my most enduring memories is of drafting the initial statement of aims and objects and rushing over from Glasgow to Edinburgh Airport to get it approved by the Chairman before circulating it. And the rest is history.

Tessa Ransford

Tessa is a practising poet and cultural activist. She has been working as Royal Literary Fund Fellow at the Centre for Human Ecology in Edinburgh over the last three years, where she is now organising courses on creative writing for activists. Having founded the School of Poets in 1981, the Scottish Poetry Library in 1984 and campaigned for poetry pamphlets since 2000, she is currently President of International PEN, Scottish Centre. Forthcoming in summer 2004 is a book of translations from poets of former East Germany: *The Nightingale Question*, five poets from Saxony.

I remember climbing the winding stair in South West Thistle Street Lane – what an appropriate address for a Scottish Publishers' Association – to visit Judy Moir, the SPA Director when I was campaigning for the Scottish Poetry Library in 1982-4. She was supportive, helpful and informative as the SPA has always been. Not long after, under Lorraine Fannin, I remember the heartsearching involved in the move to Dundee Street, where the premises perhaps gained in efficiency what they might have lost in romance.

To jump into the present: in *The Times* of 17 May 2003, Matthew Parris discusses the media's view of Scotland. He points out that the English 'own' the news and adds 'before devolution the Scots could fairly

complain that their affairs were viewed only from London. After devolution, however, the complaint is increasingly that they are not viewed at all.' He tells us that 'Scotland is encouraged to believe it is another country without being given the means to be another country, maybe leaving the Scots the worst of both worlds.' He also suggests 'The people of Scotland are effectively being governed from England and encouraged by the English to blame their problems on their own administration...' Why should I note these comments of Matthew Parris in the context of the Scottish Publishers' Association on its 30th Anniversary? Because, like so many institutions in Scotland, it is totally essential and largely ineffectual. Do not think I

am being critical: far from it.

The Scottish Publishers Association was initiated 30 years ago by three or four small literary publishers, who wanted to pool resources for marketing and publicity. Callum MacDonald, Norman Wilson, Gordon Wright, Duncan Glen and Robin Lorimer were all publishing poetry and literary fiction, whose economic story does not allow editions large enough to warrant expenditure on marketing; even if a whole edition sells out its costs would not be covered, so that further outlay on publicity and marketing would only incur further losses.

As time went on the Scottish Publishers Association served many and various Scottish publishers in a general support and training role as well as in marketing and publicity. The publishers paid their membership dues and to join any promotions, but the smaller poetry

publishers fell by the wayside. The reason? Scottish publishing, like Scottish everything else, is viewed from a London perspective, which means mostly or completely ignored. Those authors who go south join the club and those who have English publishers are at least nominal members. But even Norman MacCaig, published always by Chatto and hugely popular in Scotland, would probably draw a blank nowadays on University Challenge, for example, even with Edinburgh University contesting. The ignorance about all things Scottish is coincidental not deliberate: Scotland is not relevant to the lives or careers of people in England, except perhaps as a step on the ladder in some cases.

Scottish publishers and their authors are not known south of the Border. Within Scotland, the talented and creative are forced to leave if they want a receptive environment. Ours is still a cold

climate to creativity, especially of the more intellectual kind. It could change if, as in Ireland, we had control of our own media and were allowed and enabled to take pride in and know about our own authors, artists, composers and other 'makers'. The policy of the Scottish Publishers Association, as of the Scottish Arts Council, the Government, Local Government, and of all Scottish Arts organisations, should be to put Scotland at the centre of their world and look out to Europe and Ireland, with whose cultures we have more in common than we do with those of England and the US.

In the late 80s and early 90s we had a phenomenon called Scottish Book Fortnight. This consisted of two weeks of the year, in October, when bookshops in Scotland were to be encouraged to stock Scottish publishers' books. To have your book included meant paying dearly however. The

absurdity of the idea that bookshops in Scotland should stock Scottish books in only two weeks of the year, during special sponsored promotions, used not to amuse, but infuriate me.

In my view Scotland was (and still could be) from a European perspective, the land of philosophers and poets. We have been let down by our university presses and by our literary organisations. We have the poets and philosophers (past and present) but they are not being published or promoted. Nowadays bookshops in Scotland do have a section for Scottish books, often attractive to tourists and near the door. But we have lost the one bookshop where staff seriously understood Scotland, James Thin. Libraries in Scotland no longer turn away local or Scottish books, as they often used to do, and they often hold readings

for promoting bestselling Scottish authors. But even now, for most people living and working in Scotland, if you mention 'Scottish culture' to them their minds record a complete blank. It doesn't impinge.

Our media is controlled from Westminster and with it our minds. We fail ourselves; we de-sensitise ourselves; we write ourselves a very dud script. But without the Scottish Publishers Association there would be nothing at all. My plea is that more Scottish publishers take the risk of aiming much, much higher in terms of literary, aesthetic and intellectual content, thereby filling a niche not only glaringly empty in Scotland, but increasingly so in the English-speaking world. In so doing they would restore Scottish culture, make it anew, mark it our own, dare to be different, dare

to be ourselves, which is what we are if we could only stop trying to define it but get on with being it.

We have a wealth of languages; a fine tradition of legalistic and logical argument; wonderful myths, legends, fairy-tales, ballads, stories; humour and local colour; strong characters in men and women; adventure and exploration physical and metaphysical; history social and political; educational and religious experience of our own; a wide variety of poetry and short-story writing; song and dance; drama and dialogue. Why then do we go on being told there is no market for anything we are interested in? I don't believe it. The policy has not worked so it should be changed. Let our publishing specialise in being upmarket, artistic, poetic, philosophical, political and demanding. Then it will be demanded.

Lindsey Fraser

Lindsey Fraser and Kathryn Ross ran Scottish Book Trust from 1991-2002, overseeing its launch as an independent organisation in 1998. They have now established a Literary Agency, Fraser Ross Associates.

Book Trust

Book Trust (Scotland) was at a turning point in 1991 when Kathryn Ross and I took up our posts. The partnerships it had established to promote good writing and adventurous reading had triggered the increasingly extensive public programmes offered by bookshops and libraries and its imaginative support for writers had evolved into such sophisticated initiatives as the Edinburgh Book Festival. What was its role now to be?

We faced a challenge, but we were never short of ideas. Children's books were always a great enthusiasm, and when Chris Young joined the team in the New Year of 1992, we found ourselves undertaking all manner of initiatives and events to raise the profile of writing for young people.

Of course, we had first-rate material with which to support our campaigns. Many of our established writers, although setting their work firmly within a Scottish context, enjoyed international reputations. It is invidious to name names, but our delight at the progress made by Theresa Breslin, an early winner of the Kathleen Fidler Prize who went on, with almost indecent haste, to win the prestigious Carnegie Medal, is understandable. Such success stories followed thick and fast, and we did all we could to trumpet them to potential readers (both within and outwith Scotland). There was nothing 'emergent' about Scotland's writers for young children.

Our *Books for Babies* campaign was a forerunner of the Bookstart initiative which now



Lindsey Fraser and Kathryn Ross launch a Now Read On Campaign, October 1994

presents every toddler with a book bag at their nine-month check-up. Youth librarians took the leaflet and ran with the idea – the start of a relationship without which Book Trust (Scotland) would have been much the poorer. But a tentative offer to GP surgeries and health centres nationwide resulted in bundles of leaflets reaching even more hands. Books were increasingly being recognised as more than simply tools to build readers. A follow-up booklet, *Beginning with Books*, illustrated greater confidence in our readership development work and attracted orders from

all over the world. The Scots language version written by Rory Watson, our Chair, was especially popular with Scots in exile.

Buoyed up with success at the cute and cuddly end of the spectrum, we turned our attention to adolescence, reflecting the wealth of outstanding writing for the age-group, and widespread concern at the difficulty of accessing ‘lost and lapsed’ readers aged between 11 and 15. We toured Scotland with our *Radical Reading* campaign, working closely with school librarians who were only too pleased to be offered our lively promotional

material with its call to arms: *Warning! This is NOT a recommended reading list!*

Walter Cairns, the Literature Director at the Scottish Arts Council, periodically growled gently at us lest we abandon grown-up books completely, but we enjoyed the *Now Read On* campaigns far too much for that to happen. The Albany Book Company’s generous – in hindsight some might say, too generous – support for the initiative meant that we were developing high quality materials that were enthusiastically promoted by librarians ‘on the shop floor’. Public

The Bookbus in action



Lending Right statistics proved that the approach had a dramatic effect. Tempting though it is, we don't take credit for the phenomenal success of a first novel we included in a children's *Now Read On* promotion one summer by an Edinburgh-based author, J.K. Rowling.

In amongst all that, we provided help desks at Book Festivals, offered poetry evenings (which occasionally elicited mild reproofs from audience members who liked their poetry to rhyme), ran noisy Book Bonanzas for children throughout Scotland and offered our book recommendations to teachers and librarians at

all kinds of gatherings. We took over the administration of the Writers in Scotland Scheme from the Scottish Arts Council and in addition to basking in the reflected glory of our better-known writers and illustrators, we tried to offer support to newcomers, often sharing in their frustrations but delighting in success when it came.

The 90s saw many changes to Book Trust (Scotland), not least its relaunch as an independent organisation following protracted negotiations with our erstwhile parent organisation. But at its heart I hope Scottish Book Trust, as we emerged,

maintained the same wholehearted commitment to partnership and support that we'd inherited.

Increasingly during our tenure with the organisation, we were asked to define ourselves, our aims, our constituency and our partnerships. Irritatingly I'm sure for those intent on sharpening our focus, we stuck doggedly to 'anybody interested in people and what they read'. It wasn't a fashionable response, admittedly, but it reflected our ambitions for readership in Scotland, and the outstanding cast of characters with whom we worked towards that end.

Mark Blackadder

Mark Blackadder is a graphic designer and has worked for the Health Education Department of Grampian Health Board (1978–1981) and Churchill Livingstone (1981–1989). Since being made redundant at the end of 1989, he has been freelance.

Working from home, from our front room to be exact, would be difficult, if not impossible, if technology had not taken the steps it has over the last twelve years or so.

My 'work station' is quite contained: the Apple Mac, the scanner and the colour printer on one table with the black/white printer on the floor beside it. Even the phone is small and cordless. No need for a plan chest or filing cabinet and a heap of filing to do (all files on CDs); a drawing board (little did I know doing

graphic design at Art College in the 70s the new meaning that the word 'mouse' would have); Letraset (now a typeface lasts forever rather than when lower case 'e' runs out, and the size, face and style can be changed at the touch of a button); packs of A2 line board, spray glue, Pritt, sheets of rubylith etc etc – previously essential tools for a graphic designer which I would just not have room for. Companies making these must have contracted or disappeared overnight, like manufacturers of

'Happy days' in the Churchill Livingstone design studio. Mark is in the foreground. Graham Galloway is at the other desk, and Ian Dick, the Design Manager, standing.



quill pens or blotting paper in previous generations.

The new technology has increased remarkably the speed at which a book can be put together. Now it is possible to go from disk to book in a week. Ten years ago I would have marked up the manuscript, then it would disappear for three weeks for typesetting; galleys proofs had to be checked and at that stage a more accurate manual cast-off could be done (now accomplished in seconds with the word count facility); bromides would come back from

which the book was made up; I had to make sure lines were straight and copy fitted and then there was the hit and miss sizing of pictures; on to film make up, ozalids ... eventually a book was produced. This is not say that speed is everything though – just because you can instantly add three further typefaces onto the cover certainly doesn't mean that you should.

Perhaps one downside is that while standards have improved, so have clients' expectations. I can produce a colour visual of a cover;

when it is nitpicked over I can't help thinking that a few years ago clients approved the most basic of sketches with pantone swatches attached.

Just before Churchill Livingstone made me redundant 14 years ago they thoughtfully sent me on an 'Introduction to the Apple Mac' course at Napier. That was the first time I had used a Mac and although I found it fun to play with I could not see any 'real world' applications. I've changed my mind!



Jim Haynes

Louisiana-born, teens in Venezuela; 20s in Edinburgh, launched The Paperback Bookshop & Gallery (1959), the Howff (1961), the Traverse Theatre Club (1962), co-directed (with John Calder and Sonia Orwell) *The Writers' Conference* (1962), *The Drama Conference* (with John Calder and Kenneth Tynan); 30s in London co-founded the London Traverse theatre (1966), *International Times* (1967), the Arts Laboratory (1967), moved to Amsterdam and Paris in 1969, co-founded 'SUCK – First European Sexpaper' and directed 'The Wet Dream Film Festival' (1970 & 71), Professor of Media Studies and Sexual Politics at University of Paris 8, author of some dozen books and publisher (Handshake Editions), maintains a salon every Sunday night in Paris these past 28 years to which all are invited.

I arrived in Edinburgh in October 1956, courtesy of Uncle Sam. It was National Service. Kirknewton was a small air force base some 15 minutes outside Edinburgh. But no planes ever took off or landed. The many antennas must surely have suggested what was really going on.

Immediately fell in love with the city, an affair which has continued to the present day. Promptly I requested permanent night duty (five p.m. to midnight), permission to attend the University of Edinburgh during the day, and further permission to live at my own expense in a small room in Great King Street. All granted. Thus several years passed with very little pain and lots of joy.

Then another request: permission to be demobbed in Scotland in

order to continue my studies. Another yes! But one major problem loomed: income, how to get one. I would no longer have Uncle Sam's dollars. The solution: start a bookshop. Surely a mad scheme in a city of bookshops. But 'The Paperback' would, as its name indicates, sell almost exclusively paperbacks appropriate for Edinburgh University students. It would be the first all-paperback bookshop in Scotland, and maybe the first in Europe.

A location was found and purchased (for £300) in Charles Street, directly on the students' path between the Old Quad and the new Hume Tower in George Square. Thousands passed by daily, students and professors. Free coffee and free tea to all customers further ensured the bookshop's immediate

success. Along with sales of such 'outrageous' material as D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, just republished. A tapestry and pottery gallery was created in the basement while, upstairs, hessian drapes dropped over the bookshelves enabling the shop to become a small performance space.

The Scottish philosopher David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, performed in The Paperback, became the surprise hit of the 1960 Edinburgh Festival. We also published Hugh MacDiarmid's essay on Hume. (Should any kind reader of this know of a copy, I'd love to have one: all mine have vanished). The newly opened bookshop was suddenly a Fringe theatre, Fringe box office, and I helped organise the first Fringe catalogue. The success of our Festival Fringe productions led directly to the creation of The Howff (369 High Street) and The Traverse

(in the Lawn-market). Those were the years years when I set up Yevgeny Yevtushenko's first poetry reading in Scotland, and co-organized (with John Calder and Sonia Orwell) the 1962 Writers' Conference and the 1963 Drama Conference (with John Calder and Ken Tynan).

Archie Turnbull, then Editor-in-Chief of the Edinburgh University Press; George Shepperson, Professor of American and Commonwealth History; John Mackintosh, Professor of Political Economics – all were fans of the bookshop, bringing along numerous visitors for coffee or tea and providing invaluable advice and counselling.

I later left The Paperback to devote full time and energy to the creation of The Traverse. I was the first Chairman of the Committee of Management and became Artistic Director, initiating and insisting on the policy principle that the

Traverse be a home for new plays, a practice that the Traverse maintains to this day.

In 1966 I left Edinburgh, first for London, then Amsterdam, then Paris. But I have not missed a Festival since my first in 1957. Thanks to the Festival, and to my friendship with Stephanie Wolfe Murray, Canongate published my experimental travel series, *People to People*, for ten Eastern European countries and Russia. Jamie Byng's first job, almost, at Canongate concerned publicising this series. It received fantastic coverage and rave reviews but, alas, modest sales. The series did win, nevertheless, a prize from the Institute for Social Inventions. And many who used it wrote glowing letters of thanks, including a fellow in London who married a woman in Lithuania as a result.

To backtrack briefly, in 1960 I attended my first Frankfurt Book Fair. I thought at the time that this was an appropriate

action for the new book-seller that I was. Nine years later I attended again, in 1969, to launch SUCK – First European Sexpaper. The newspaper became an instant cult success. I have never

missed a Frankfurt Buchmesse since then. I am thankful to Lorraine Fannin, her team of associates, and to the Scottish Publishers Association for allowing their stand to be my

headquarters and my oasis.

A lot has happened to me since opening The Paperback in 1959. And it's all been good!



Judy Moir, Natasha Perova (translator) and Stephanie Wolfe Murray, Moscow Book Fair 1983

Across the world

Judy Moir

Judy Moir joined the SPA in 1982 after a spell as editor with Charles Skilton. Subsequently she worked at Mainstream, editing the prestigious Scottish Art, and was editorial director at Canongate, where she worked on their ground-breaking new fiction. She is now Editor-at-Large Scotland, for Penguin Books.

Book fairs/conferences were plentiful and fun in the early 80s. Of all the smaller publishers, the inimitable Findhorn Press was by far the most effective on the rights front – a group of maybe eight Findhorners, dressed like old-world hippies with their impressive hair and sheepskin coats, would squat beside the minuscule stand at Frankfurt (in the old Hall 5), planning their assault on the rest of the world. The other publishers were not amused, and rather jealous. The most exciting book fair was undoubtedly the Moscow Fair of '83 when British publishers were stranded in Moscow after a Korean plane was shot down and all flights to/from the Soviet Union were

cancelled. It's all a little foggy in my memory ... on the last morning of the fair, we'd been obliged to down shots of vodka (at least one per half hour) with various publishers with whom we'd signed option agreements (of which just one came to fruition maybe ten years later). Then we had to make our way to a train station, for the long overnight journey to Helsinki, during which Stephanie lost her visa and fell out with the authorities; however we managed to sing all the way across the Finnish border.



'Dressed like old-world hippies ...'

Stephanie Wolfe Murray

Stephanie was a key figure in the SPA for more than 20 years. A figurehead for Canongate for two decades, she also chaired the SPA Council, and drove forward many schemes in which publishers co-operated to their great benefit. She published many fine books. Her memories of the early days of the SPA and the early pressures on Canongate are invaluable.



'So we leant against our bedroom doors awaiting our customer ...'

As chairman of the SPA, we were invited on a PA delegation to China. It was in 1983 and I think it was a British Council sponsored trip, and they and the PA felt that Scottish publishers should be represented. It was the first time I'd been to China and it's the sort of place that one has images of before one gets there – very accurate as it turned out. You know – the eucalyptus-shaped leaves in Chinese paintings, and the impossibly tall peaky mountains, and the mandarins with long dresses, the ducks along the roadside, the long bendy poles slung over the shoulders balancing baskets at either end, the men trudging along with their peaky hats. I remember the buildings too, and the meetings in comfortable rooms in big armchairs with delicate

teacups. It was all absurdly Chinese! In terms of book sales, it was simply a PR job, because China hadn't signed up to the Berne Convention.

There was a publisher with us from Chatto, Roger Kirkpatrick, and on our arrival he was presented with two of their bestselling titles. They were by internationally renowned authors and they were still in copyright and they had of course been pirated! He couldn't exactly make a fuss as they were presented to him with such ceremony but he wanted to say, 'How dare you pirate our books!'

I remember we had to see the Chinese publishers in our hotel bedrooms. They all claimed that their offices were 'under repair' at the time. So we leant against our bedroom doors awaiting our customers

like street prostitutes, but first I had lain out my wares on the spare bed as best I could. I had atlases from Bartholomew's and I knew there was enormous potential for their books there. So I excitedly opened a pocket atlas which my 'client' liked the look of, and when I found the map of his part of the world he was furious. 'Tibet is part of China. It is a province. This must be changed if I am to consider these books!'

But we went there at a good time. Every night we had a 'banquet' and I remember being chosen to sit next to the most important people because I was apparently so good at communicating with people whose language I didn't speak! In less than a week we moved to Nanking and that was the beginning of a mild ordeal: terrible toilets, nasty beds and sometimes silent, staring people. When we went on day trips it was almost impossible to go to the loo without suffering a

lot. The one or two offices we were allowed in were filled with donated computers that nobody knew how to operate.

Judy Moir and I both recall the '83 Moscow Book Fair as a highlight, whispering over running water because we figured our room was being bugged or finding huge marijuana plants near the exhibition hall. I'm afraid I remember that I was pretty obsessed by lavatorial matters. We had typical Russian food for breakfast. It was vinegary and salty. We learned after a couple of days not to eat salty things in the morning and we couldn't drink too much in case we wanted to go to the loo during the day, so yogurt was the only thing possible. But we were welcomed so much. They were thrilled to see people from Scotland at the fair. They wanted us to feel at home and thought that we had at last escaped from our English masters. This was only too true for some of the Irish publishers. It

was the first time that we saw some Irish titles that had been banned in England.

What was sad is that there were a lot of people who wanted our books so badly. And even if we wanted to give them copies it was fraught with difficulty because if they got caught with them on the way out they would be arrested. Remember these were pre-Perestroika days. Andropov was in power then. And we paved the way for at least one book to be translated. Many years later it resulted in the sale to an obscure Soviet country of Alasdair Gray's *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*.

They were funny days for Scottish publishing. In those days, fostering good relations and people from different cultures and talking to each other seemed to be important. Even if you didn't get a financial result very quickly it was somehow worthwhile.

Peter Lothian

Peter Lothian is the fourth generation to head Lothian Books, an independent Australian publisher. The company has represented many Scottish publishers in the Australia/New Zealand markets over the years, including Blackie and Chambers.

Lothian Books

With the surname of Lothian, it's of no surprise that our Australian publishing company, Lothian Books, has strong Scottish links. My great-grandfather left North Berwick to establish the business of representing British publishers in Australia and New Zealand in 1888. The houses of Chambers and Blackie formed a solid base of trading for over half a century. I used to earn a bit of spare cash from my father by working in the warehouse during school holidays. Early memories include picking and packing thousands of various Chambers' dictionaries, Blackie's *Flower Fairies* and Kennett Readers. Ian Gould, Gordon Graham, then a director of Chambers, Mike Miller, Eric Mitchell and Jim

McCall of Blackie all visited from the mid 1970s. George Ogg from Blackie had come when I was still in short pants! This was a time when business was expanding and opportunities abounded. They were all welcome at home, and dinners with the family were enjoyed by all. Strong friendships were made and have endured. Mike Miller and I still try to get up to some mischief at Frankfurt each year and it was great to host Jim McCall on an Australian trip of his earlier this year. Businesses may change but it's the people that count. What a pleasure it always is to attend the SPA drinks at Frankfurt each year. Wonderful hosts, generous sponsors (crucially important!), lively company and decent business; a brilliant combination.

Seamus Cashman

Having spent some years as an editor with Irish University Press, and in a previous life as a teacher in Tanzania and Ireland, Seamus Cashman founded Wolfhound Press in 1974. Wolfhound became one of Ireland's leading literary and cultural presses through the 1980s and 1990s, and developed a quality children's fiction list. In 2001 the list was acquired by Merlin Media Ltd. Separation from the Press left him 'regretful, but tinged with a delight that has persisted since!' He is working on a third poetry collection to add to his two published volumes, *Carnival* and *Clowns & Acrobats*, and works part-time as a publishing consultant. A long time active member of Clé – the Irish Book Publisher's Association, he is currently on the board of Children's Books Ireland.

Wolfhound Ireland

It was my first visit to the Frankfurt Messe – sometime in the 1970s. Awed, already footsore from a first inquisitive circuit of garish miles of display stands in the titanic Hall 8, I suffered a diminishing sense of my own publishing venture amid all this visible wealth of achievement. But the growing gloom was delightfully cauterised by the simplicity of the Scottish inquisition – 'From Dublin?' was read aloud from my lapel card, followed without pause by – 'How about a drop of whisky?'

Perspectives revived once more – and for the next decades, along with Irish publisher colleagues, the Scottish stand proved a touchstone – or perhaps just a temptation – for business hospitality and business practicality. We vied hard

with you of course on the Irish stand – pursuing the same international business links via our respective annual parties. And there were, undoubtedly, year upon year, enviable successes.

Envy probably featured also among us novice publishers as we noted the seeming strength of Scottish publishing, unaware initially that it proffered a better shoe forward than the foot therein. We soon awoke to the fact that both of us were on an upward curve of growth, professionalism, discovery and success. We have a wonderful Irish saying –

*Fiche bliain ag fás,
Fiche bliain faoi bhláth,
Fiche bliain ag mheath
Agus fiche bliain gur
cuma ann no as.*

(Twenty years agrowing;

twenty years in bloom;
twenty years declining;
and twenty years when it
matters little whether you
are still around or not.)

Well, through the 70s, 80s and 90s that 30-year stretch brought growth and blossoming for us all. And it seemed to many of us on this side of the water that you Scots had got something else right that we have struggled with unsuccessfully, the SPA – the object of our very real admiration. Mention Scottish publishing to anybody on this side of the Irish Sea and one name comes to the lips above all. And not the name of a pub-lisher but that of the SPA Director, Lorraine Fannin. The energy and *nous* driving the SPA for so many years also reflects an energy and *nous* in its constituent members. The core role of cohesion and innovation Lorraine and her team have provided for Scottish publishing, and for the people who participate in it, these many years, has brought enormous benefits to the

industry. Our own beloved Clé however, nosedived for a time leaving a disparate and uncoordinated industry to find its own myriad of ways. You have the better route I believe and long may you cherish – and more importantly – support it.

Of course, we can be fairly feckless! Joint early and initially fruitful efforts at networking of the Irish and Scottish industries resulted in that most memorable visit many of you made to Dublin in the early 1980s. Remember the Mount Merrion Hotel ‘conference’? And our promises to give you the opportunity to match it the following year. Alas, that return tryst in Edinburgh remains unconsummated some 15-plus years later. I did contact a respected and erudite colleague for the purposes of this short article in hope of re-discovering details of our panel discussions and arguments during that seminar. Alas, the response, after a reflective

pause – ‘It’s all a drunken haze to me,’ leaves me and you to conjure up our own philosophies for international publishing networks.

But in truth all was not abandoned – from early days, many valuable and enduring friendships were made, some of us undertook joint editions and co-publications; others reciprocal sales representation in GB and Ireland; others still rights sales in fiction, children’s books, poetry, academic texts and general trade; and we all shared distribution ignorance and business wisdom, experiences and information. Indeed it must also be noted that one or two of your members ventured with success directly into the Irish marketplace. As it should be among Celts.

Thirty years is a good haul of experience – long may the SPA continue to test, innovate and expand horizons. Like the *Skibbereen Eagle’s* warning to the red tide of a previous century, we have our Eye on you!

Tony Read and David Foster

The International Book Development Ltd (IBD) Directors (Tony Read, Amanda Buchan, Carmelle Denning and David Foster) have been involved with the SPA for at least two-thirds of the SPA's history and have enjoyed close relations with the SPA ever since we set up IBD in 1990. Indeed, the SPA was the very first subscriber to IBD's information and advisory service, and Scottish publishers have had the opportunity to attend annual 'surgeries' run by IBD in Edinburgh. At times during some of these sessions the IBD directors – focused as we are on export market opportunities – may have enthused over-much about aid-funded prospects in such remote countries as Macedonia and Mozambique: very real though the prospects were in these countries for educational publishers, their immediate relevance was not always clear to some of the more specialist SPA members. We were on one occasion brought down to earth by a straightforward question: 'Have you got any ideas for titles which we can publish so that they're bestsellers in the export markets?'

Our first visits to the SPA were to the old offices in South West Thistle Street Lane where Lorraine assembled a group of SPA members, some of whom were clearly a bit wary of what we could do for each other. But an evening spent together easily dispelled any mutual suspicions. We were pleased a few years later to be one of the organisations recorded on the board at Dundee Street as helping to establish the Scottish Book Centre there.

2004 is the 15th year in which IBD has shared a stand with the SPA at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Every year we have some exotic visitors to the stand and it isn't always easy for Lorraine and other SPA personnel to establish what these visitors want or who it is that they want to see, but, needless to say, all such

discussions are always handled with tact, humour and usually success. An annual highlight for us has been that we've been at the centre of the SPA party on the stand and that we have been able to hand out some of the much-sought-after invitations – a sure way to keep friends.

In a previous role we enjoyed sharing with our SPA friends the privations and political excitement of attending the Moscow Book Fair in Soviet times. It was a matter of considerable surprise to other exhibitors that the SPA stand at the fair was always up, furnished and ready for business, long before others even had shelves, let alone desks, chairs and waste paper baskets. The reason became apparent when the Russian stand-



Frankfurt Book Fair 2000

builders were all found to be armed with miniature bottles of single malt whisky. This was in the years of Gorbachov's futile attempt at prohibition in Russia and when sinister-looking security men with cameras lurked around the fair. But the SPA certainly won a few friends – and perhaps influenced a few sales – through their surreptitious largesse.

We like to think that we have played a part in

encouraging Scottish publishers to widen their selling horizons. For the most part they have responded well to our enthusiasms for exotic markets and we have been able to effect many useful introductions to booksellers, publishers and agents in countries where Scottish publishers had not previously done business. We in turn have benefited from the close friendships which we have established within

the Scottish publishing community, from being part of the unique network which operates from Dundee Street and from the exposure to a range of publishers which is very different from those around us in London. Many congratulations to the SPA on clocking up 30 years – and thanks for letting us Sassenachs into the SPA fold.

Fiona Brownlee

Fiona Brownlee joined Pavilion Books, London as a publicity assistant in January 1990. After a short stint at Midas PR working with the likes of Jim Davidson (for Little, Brown), Gloria Hunniford (for Century) and Anthony Hopkins (for Colin Baxter) she returned to Pavilion as Publicity Director in January 1994. In May 1996 she left London to get married and spent a year travelling during which she wrote reports on bookshops around the world for *Publishing News*. In June 1997 she returned to the UK and moved to Edinburgh where she joined Mainstream Publishing as Marketing Director with responsibility for the web site and foreign rights. In her first year at Mainstream she was awarded her second award for non-fiction publicity campaign of the year by the PPC, a national award judged by leading agents and journalists. In January 2001 she wrote a feature on her global rights trip for the *Bookseller* and she has also reported on Book Expo America for *Publishing News*. She was a member of the Scottish Book Marketing Group until it was disbanded and is now a member of the SPA Council and on the board of the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

Travelling with books

I hadn't sold foreign rights until I joined Mainstream in 1997. My background was publicity but foreign rights is really an extension of PR, the difference being that publishers are a lot easier to deal with than journalists! Over the years several people have sold rights for Mainstream but in the period prior to my arrival no one had had direct responsibility for it. The only people who had attended the Frankfurt Book Fair had

been the Joint Managing Directors, Peter MacKenzie and Bill Campbell. Eager to do everything correctly I referred to their appointment schedules from previous years and set up my appointments accordingly. On the first day of the Fair I coasted in at 11am with appointments on the hour blissfully ignorant of the fact that everyone else had been beaver away since 9am with appointments every thirty minutes!

Although they might



Left to right: Jay Cassell, Lyon's Press, USA, Fiona Brownlee and Mandy Jamieson, Mainstream (London rep) at LBF 2004

not have had their schedules packed with formal appointments, Bill and Pete are fabulous at the networking for which Frankfurt is famous. Many deals are struck and contacts made outwith the confines of the Book Fair itself and I found myself hurled in to the social whirl of the bars at the Frankfurter Hof and the Park Hotel. I pity the locals whose bars and restaurants are completely taken over by international publishers but I suppose we experience something similar when the rest of the world decamps to Edinburgh during the Festival. Frankfurt is an extraordinary event. We moan about going but seem to get an adrenaline rush when we get there and survive back to back meetings all day and back to back parties all night with very little sleep in between. I have made some of my best contacts on the dance floors of post-Fair parties. It is little wonder that I return from Frankfurt each year

minus my voice!

Having mastered Frankfurt I realised that there was a whole world out there waiting to be conquered and now include the US Book Fair (BEA) and independent trips to New York on my travel itinerary. One of my greatest coups was a rights trip around the world, starting in New York and going on to Australia where I visited publishers in Melbourne and Sydney. Although email makes selling rights much easier nothing beats meeting a publisher face to face. Prior to my trip to Australia I had only sold a couple of books there. Now I regularly sell Australian rights and am in constant touch with the publishers I met on my trip. It is worth mentioning that the trip evolved from a conversation in the Park Bar at Frankfurt with James Fraser, an Australian publisher Bill had introduced me to on the first night of my very first trip!

I have now been to five Frankfurts and four book fairs in the US. At all of them the SPA, and in particular Lorraine Fannin, have made my life easy by booking the stand, chasing me for books and providing moral support at the Fairs themselves. As an independent publishing company we would be crammed in to a tiny space if we had to have our own stand. As part of the SPA we have a light and spacious stand, distinguishable by tartan table cloths, staff who take general queries while we get on with our meetings and whisky on hand for when things just get too much! The fact that other publishers are on the stand is a bonus. I once sold a book at the SPA party to a publisher who had been invited along by someone else and was strangely drawn to SATURDAY NIGHT FOREVER: THE STORY OF DISCO, which was glistening above my head. That said we get very little time to talk to

each other. The fact that we all have such busy schedules means that our first opportunity to chat is usually in the departure lounge on the way home!

I had a baby two years ago so travelling isn't

going to be as easy in the future, but I am looking forward to two trips this year. I shall be back at Frankfurt in October where I'm sure there will be new contacts to be made along with the all the usual characters

propping up the bars at the Frankfurter Hof and the Park Hotel who will be raising a glass to celebrate 30 years of the SPA, not to mention 25 years of Mainstream Publishing.



In March 2004 eight young publishers, (under the age of 35) selected from countries all over the world, took part in a tour of UK publishing houses organised by the Creative Industries section of the British Council for the BC's first (of three) International Young Publisher of the Year Award (IYPY). Their visit to Scotland included a trip to the SPA, Birlinn, Canongate, EUP, Mainstream, Scottish Book Trust and the Scottish Poetry Library. Eduardo Rabasa from Mexico was awarded 'Most Promising Publisher' at the judging ceremony a week later at the London Book Fair by a panel that included Liz Calder, Bloomsbury and Lorraine Fannin, SPA. The project was a great success.

From left to right

Filip Modrzejewski – IYPY Polish candidate

Eduardo Rabasa – IYPY Mexican candidate

(Winner)

Augusto Di Marco – IYPY Argentinian candidate

Anuradha Roy – IYPY Indian candidate

Santiago Tobon – IYPY Colombian candidate

Ani Rosa Almario – IYPY Philippinean candidate

Julie Gutierrez-Fletcher – BC London (Creative Industries Dpt.) sitting

Promise Okekwe – IYPY Nigerian candidate

Tomas Butkus – IYPY Lithuanian candidate

Kate Burwell – BC Scotland, Edinburgh (Creative Industries Dpt.)

Travelling with books

Marion Sinclair

Marion Sinclair joined Polygon in 1988 from university. She became Editorial Director in 1990. During that time, Polygon won The Sunday Times Small Publisher of the Year award, a SAC award for Services to Scottish Publishing, and had a first-time author, Tibor Fischer, shortlisted for the Booker Prize. She moved to Napier University in 1997 to lecture on the Masters in Publishing degree and after six years there, went freelance in 2003.

For a raw recruit starting out in Scottish publishing in the late 1980s, the SPA was (and still is) welcoming. It was a great time to be in publishing. Scottish writing was beginning to be properly recognised and the publisher I joined, Polygon, had just been taken over by EUP - there was real enthusiasm for what we could do and achieve. We were very small in number: there were then two full-time Polygon staff members, the highly-respected Peter Kravitz, then the Editor of *Edinburgh Review*, and myself, although we had great editorial ideas/work and support from Murdo MacDonald, Jenny Turner, and Cairns Craig, and production done by John Davidson and Pam O'Connor of EUP. Going along to the SPA for advice or events connected us with the

rest of Scottish publishing and took us away from our attic rooms at George Square. The staff at the SPA were friendly, cheerful, and there was a spirit of co-operation (called Isle of Jura, I think).

We were flying by the seat of our pants most of the time as being part of a university press meant absolutely no money to play with, neither to give our authors (whose patience with our very small advances on royalties deserves a mention) nor to spend on much marketing. We really did publish a lot of books and felt that to get writers in print was the thing: we were seen as a 'nursery' for talent. As a general publisher, the output was varied and a lot of the authors we published went on to do great things: (they included Tommy



Polygon: Winner of Sunday Times Small Publisher Award 1993

Sheridan, now a demigod in Scottish politics, who provoked a scuffle among the ladies in the office whenever he came in); A.L. Kennedy; Janice Galloway; James Kelman; Tom Leonard; Tibor Fischer, and many others, sadly too numerous to mention. The last author I took on before leaving in 1997 was Alexander McCall Smith. We put flaps on our stylish white paperbacks as a last throw of 80s minimalism, and published some of the first Scottish gay and lesbian fiction, some translated fiction, and loads of Scottish folklore. It was a great mix of writers, poets, playwrights, pundits,



Marion Sinclair

politicians and intellectuals.

I really enjoyed the overseas book fairs. Not only was there a sense of getting away from the more mundane aspects of the job, it afforded you a glimpse of your fellow publisher at play: not always a pretty sight. You can only take so many: 'I was utterly hammered last night and didn't get in till 6' boasts before you give up (yes, that was you, Christian). The SPA stand attracts a rowdy crowd, mainly Irish and Australian, who obviously recognise kindred spirits in the Scottish publishers, and enjoyed sitting round the tartan-clad tables. It was a

lively stand most of the time. And you learn a lot from watching how other publishers conduct their business, whether it's a relaxed run-through of key highlights in their list or a 'throw-all-my titles-at-them-in-one go' style. Great fun.

One of the great strengths of the SPA is the sense that you have of advice and help on the other end of a phone and it was invaluable to us as a small publisher. Trade organisations can often be too lofty to deal with the day-to-day concerns of their members – the SPA is really much more than just a trade organisation. Happy 30th and here's to the next 30.

Timothy Wright

Timothy Wright, chairman of the SPA from 2001, joined EUP as Managing Director from Churchill Livingstone

Book Fairs and PA missions

It is book fairs which more than anything else bring people from the industry together. Over the years I have attended fairs in cities such as Prague, Moscow, Warsaw, Calcutta, Delhi, Taiwan and Frankfurt. The fairs in Moscow and Warsaw are of course the most memorable as much as for events outside the halls as anything else. I once drove to the Warsaw

fair via Prague – an extraordinary journey along lethal unlit roads full of horses and carts and the occasional corpse in the road. In Warsaw it was ‘policy’ to stay at the Forum Hotel – a monstrosity of a place which, come 10pm, became a brothel with ladies of the night frequenting the bar. The ghastly accommodation was more than compensated for by the excellent dinners in various estab-



Timothy Wright, Frankfurt 2000

lishments in and around the city. In Moscow good food was more difficult to find in the 1980s. In fact the whole experience of a Moscow fair can be summed up for me (sitting in row one of a BA flight reading the *Daily Telegraph* – what else) – as the pilot announced we had left Russian airspace a huge cheer went up from the publishing delegation! More tragic was the fire

that engulfed the Calcutta book fair whilst I was there on a publisher's delegation to India. On a lighter note, recently married, I had been given by my wife a small pig (I love pigs!) which was stuffed with beads before I left on a delegation to Argentina and Chile. Instead of flying from Argentina to Santiago we decided to fly to the north of the country and charter a bus over the

Andes. There was huge amusement at the Border when this pig was found in my luggage and summarily slit open by the Customs officials who suspected the beads were something very different. Luckily another member of the delegation had her sewing kit with her!

Good times – demonstrating the international nature of our business ...

Timothy Wright in action



Trade matters

Lavinia Drew

Lavinia Drew is now Credit Controller at BookSource, but was one of the two founder members of this distribution company when it was set up in 1998. Her publishing experience started with William Collins (now HarperCollins) and she also helped run Richard Drew Publishing before this company was acquired by Chambers Harrap in 1989, where she was also in charge of credit control.

Richard Drew Publishing Ltd was set up in 1980 in Glasgow and over the course of 10 years published a wide range of titles, including Scottish fiction under the imprint of *The Scottish Collection*, language books in the *Travelmate* series, children's books with *Otters*, *Swallows* and *Magic House*, publications in association with *The National Trust for Scotland*, *Glasgow Museums* and *The National Museums of Scotland* as well as significant architectural books such as *Mackintosh's Masterwork*. Richard was both Chairman and Treasurer of the SPA during this time.

The company had a high profile at international book fairs and was successful with foreign rights and co-editions. I joined in 1985 and was involved in every aspect

of running a small publishing company with particular emphasis on credit control. We had our own warehouse which was managed by Stevie Thomson – a charismatic character who picked, packed and despatched the books, ran in the Glasgow Marathon and also turned out to be an ace salesman.

In 1990 we were approached by Chambers and, after much heart searching, decided to sell out to this French-owned company and take up new appointments in Edinburgh – Richard was International Sales Director and I was responsible for credit control, customer services and liaising with the warehouse. Stevie Thomson was also taken on as a rep and Louise McGinnity (who came to us through a mention in an SPA newsletter) was

employed in the production department. Chambers had an enviable name as a reference publisher although much changed under the ownership of Groupe de la Cité. During my time there Harrap was acquired and eventually it was decided to amalgamate sales and distribution for all UK companies in the group; this was taken on by Macmillan in 1994 and the Chambers warehouse in Edinburgh was closed with several redundancies.

Lorraine Fannin and I had various discussions over the next 12 months about setting up a distribution service for Scottish publishers and finally this was achieved in October 1995 under the name of Scottish BookSource, later to become BookSource. The SPA was the major shareholder with various client publishers also buying shares.

One of the key reasons for this decision was as a rescue operation for those publishers whose distribution was handled by



Richard Drew

Albany Book Company which was financially unstable and there was concern that publishers would lose money if Albany went down.

Two of us ran the administration from the SPA office in Edinburgh and subcontracted the

picking, packing and despatch to Albany from their Glasgow warehouse. This was not satisfactory and as predicted Albany went into receivership in February 1996. We were left in the very difficult situation of trying to continue with the business of distribution with no access to the warehouse. It was a very worrying time but eventually we were able to take over the lease of the Glasgow warehouse and two employees, David Warnock and Alex Forbes who are still the mainstay of the warehouse operation. To further compound our troubles it was an exceptionally cold winter and all the pipes had burst over the Christmas break and for the following six months there was no heating or hot water as we wrangled with the landlords about installing a replacement heating system. However, the books still went out ...

In 1995 we had started out with 10 publishers but by 1998 we had almost 40 and it was clear that we

needed a more sophisticated computer system to handle more complicated reporting requirements. We decided on Bookmaster, an Australian package used widely in that country by all the major publishers and it has proved to be robust and flexible. Five years on we are still fine tuning its capabilities to enhance our efficiency and help

publishers obtain information more easily. Many publishers are now able to dial into Bookmaster instead of waiting for monthly reports and many of our functions are carried out electronically.

In 2002 we moved the whole operation over to Glasgow where we currently have 13 employees and are growing every year.

Distribution is not the glamorous end of publishing and seldom attracts much attention unless it goes wrong. However it is a vital component and BookSource is constantly striving to maintain the balance between providing an efficient but affordable service for our publishers, with total security for their cash.

BookSource

David Warnock

David Warnock has worked in the book trade since 1985, and with BookSource since 1996. He likes football (spectating) and music. He is also a computer techie, and plays in two bands.

I have been in the book business since 1986, always at the ‘gruff’ end: namely warehousing and distribution. This took me through the school textbook distribution stage at Interbook Media Services and Book Services, which eventually became part of Albany Book Company.

Whilst at Albany, I became involved in publisher distribution when Albany bought Canongate Books. This acquisition was a diversification to go with Albany’s other concerns of library supplies and textbook distribution. This meant a fair shift in my main daily tasks, but it certainly seemed to be a refreshing change from working with educational textbooks and supplying schools.

All seemed to be going well until Albany decided to put Canongate into

receivership in 1995. This was the first domino to topple as Albany itself fell in January 1996. The receivers paid off all but two members of staff immediately. Only Alex Forbes, who is still my colleague at BookSource, and myself were kept on.

As is usually the case, both Alex and myself were to experience the ‘colder’ side of administrators. Following assurances about our continuing employment, the receiver saw fit to tell me that she was making Alex and I redundant during a short telephone conversation last thing on a Friday afternoon. She didn’t seem to want to do this in person!

Our employment was due to finish on the following Tuesday and the receiver had arranged to meet us at the warehouse to take the keys to the premises. It just so

The Scottish Publishers Association in co-operation with Albany Book Company, is pleased to announce the introduction of a new **invoicing and book ordering service**:

Scottish Book Source

Orders for titles previously distributed by Albany Publishers' Distribution, should now be sent direct to Scottish Book Source:

Tel: 0131 229 6800

Fax: 0131 229 9070

Trading will begin on **28th August 1995** and orders for the following companies should be sent to Scottish Book Source from that date:

CANONGATE BOOKS
THE RUTLAND PRESS
THE TUCKWELL PRESS
BOOK TRUST SCOTLAND

BIRLINN
NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION
WHITTLES PUBLISHING

happened that there had been heavy snow falls on the Monday and Tuesday and the car park was under about three or four inches of snow. When the handover of keys was complete, Alex and I went to drive away and noticed that the receiver had managed to get her car stuck in the deep snow in the car park! What should we do? Should we drive off and leave her? After all, she had just made us part of the unemployed masses and could only give us our notice of redundancy by telephone. However, our sense of decency got the better of us and we helped dig her

car out.

A day or so later, I received a call from Lorraine Fannin asking if I would come to work as Warehouse Manager for Scottish BookSource. She had also called Alex to ask him if he wanted to work with me. Therefore, Alex and I started back in the same building once the handover of the keys had taken place with Albany's receivers.

Christmas 1995 was one of the coldest winters for decades and temperatures went as low as 20 degrees below freezing. Because of this and a fault in the heating system at the warehouse, most of

the water pipes had burst during the Christmas holidays. Therefore, there was no heating on the premises whatsoever. We spent the tail end of the winter and the spring with one strategically placed gas heater. As the warehouse is around 20 thousand square feet, the heater became pretty ineffectual at distances of five feet or more. Extra clothing was required, so we would regularly wear two pairs of trousers, a couple of t-shirts, a sweater and gloves. Summer was eagerly anticipated, as it was generally colder inside the warehouse than it was

outside. Eventually a new heating system was installed later that year.

From then on, BookSource has gone from strength to strength. We have steadily built up the number of client publishers who use our services and have increased the number of employees. Turnover has increased progressively and this has allowed us to develop the business.

One major step forward for Book Source was the installation of the BookMaster software system. This very powerful and flexible system has allowed for increased efficiencies in

all areas of the business. The warehouse module has helped greatly in all aspects of the day-to-day tasks of the warehouse. It enables me to attain very accurate stock controls. Order picking tasks take a fraction of the time and the annual stocktake time has been virtually cut in half. Housekeeping reports enable the best use of space and bulk replenishments are methodical and efficient.

As I said earlier, the area of the book business that I work in is the 'gruff' end. It's all about manual labour and sweat, be it lifting heavy boxes or stacking hundreds, if not

thousands, of books onto pallets. It is probably as far away as you can get from the artistic invention of writing fiction, the loving care and pride of the first edition copy and the launch parties where authors and publishers alike show off their 'works of art'. However, it is, without doubt, one of the most important areas of the business. A great deal of work goes into getting copies of these precious masterpieces into the shops on time and in pristine condition.

Blessed are the book distributors!!!



Career in bookselling

Bob McDevitt



Bob McDevitt currently works for Hodder Headline in Scotland, acquiring both fiction and non-fiction from Scotland



'There was a wine tasting event that got out of hand ...'

My first bookselling job was in the late 1980s at Bargain Books on Princes Street in Edinburgh. I had just graduated from Stirling University with a teaching qualification and decided that, rather than go straight from one educational establishment to another, I would see a bit of life.

There was plenty of life to see, the shop was a real tourist trap (especially during the festival when it was open until midnight and beyond ...). It was here that I was introduced to the unbelievable customer questions that plague our industry: Do you sell tartan pants in a tin? Excuse me, are we in Scotland yet? Have you got any books about Bobby Whitefriars?

David Flatman himself was a terrific guy to work

for, a completely unique character and very passionate about his business. After a while though, I had sold one too many hairy haggis and moved a couple of blocks along the street to Waterstone's.

This was the beginning of six years with that chain (I had decided that teaching was not for me after all) and my first taste of the events job that would dominate the rest of my career. Although over-shadowed in many ways by the then new West End branch, the East End branch where I worked was a busy branch, populated by a number of memorable characters that had an influence on me.

One of them, Ian Docherty, who went on to produce and present book programmes on BBC

Radio Scotland, was my direct boss and positively oozed enthusiasm for books, and especially book events. I remember it was his vision that led us to book the Usher Hall for Michael Palin; still I think the biggest book event I've ever attended.

The list of names we welcomed to Edinburgh was long and varied; Margaret Thatcher, Leonard Nimoy, Luke Goss (from Bros – it was the 80s), and Quentin Crisp being some of the most unforgettable in one way or another ...

Then for me it was off to Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow to help open what was then the largest bookshop in Scotland and also Waterstone's flagship.

This was just as Borders were moving into the UK and there was much talk about 'lifestyle' bookshops with cafes (Caffeine and Internet varieties), Massage chairs, Sofas, Magazines and we had them all. This was one of the most satisfying periods in my career. Waterstone's was a

company full of creative people, at all levels, and there was a genuine feeling that we were all working together to create something special. The shop was rewarded that year with a Nibbie, which I collected, in my kilt, from Alan Titchmarsh – Who says there is no glamour in this business?!

Waterstone's was sold to HMV in 1998 and I left. These two occurrences were not linked, but in retrospect I do not regret my decision.

I had been offered a job on the other side of the fence (Poacher? Gamekeeper? I'm never sure) and went to work for Headline Publishing, first of all in Scotland and then in London.

It was incredibly interesting to view the business from a new perspective and I found the way a number of different departments (Editorial, Sales, Production, Marketing Rights, Publicity) work in symbiosis to create the final product fascinating.

Headline was a

relatively new company and although part of a bigger group (Hodder Headline, WH Smith) still a small team. While there I worked on Barbara Windsor's *Autobiography*, witnessed the phenomenal rise of Martina Cole and had to sell Geoff Hurst's *1966 and All That* by the bucket-load to the English ...

Ultimately though I found that I was homesick and after two years in the land of the Black Bogies I was very pleased to be offered a job back in Scotland.

At the time I was approached, Ottakar's had just taken over James Thin and as a result had gone from having seven shops in Scotland to 13. The job was to oversee the marketing of the new and re-fitted branches, and to coordinate Scottish marketing, promotions and core stock. The job combined a number of the areas I had worked in before and some I had not.

I enjoyed my time at Ottakar's very much.

James Heneage, the Managing Director is committed to maintaining the strengths that have made his company successful; knowledgeable staff, the right books for the local market, shops with personality and exciting events, he also play some mean piano, and puts together a covers band every year for the managers' conference of which I was a member. This was a fantastic opportunity to relive those pop star dreams of my youth and we could even talk about a European 'Tour' as we played in Cardiff and Amsterdam!

At the end of 2003, my old employers Hodder Headline came knocking on my door with a completely new challenge. Inspired by the success of Hodder Headline Ireland, they had decided to look at Scotland as a separate market and to put someone in place as a Scottish publisher.

My new brief is to look after the existing



Kathy Reichs and Bob McDevitt at Ottakar's George Street, Edinburgh, branch opening party August 2002

stable of Hodder, Headline and John Murray authors in Scotland (Which includes Quintin Jardine, William McIlvanney, Allan Massie, Isla Dewar and Rosmunde Pilcher to name but a few) and to look for new books that will have a market in Scotland and hopefully the UK and beyond. I have received a number of manuscripts and ideas since beginning in January and have already signed up a few books, the first of which will be published in Spring 2005.

I suppose, like many people I fell into the book business, but after 15 years of changing currents

I hope I am still waving not drowning.

• • •

Who was the author who demanded at the last minute that the bookshop be filled with candles to improve the ambience of their reading?

Does anyone remember the Edinburgh lady who attended many book events, gardening, poetry, crime, yet always asked if the author was vegetarian?

Which sports star asked for his water jug to be filled with gin at his signing?



There was a wine tasting event that got completely out of hand and ended up with a number of people stark naked in the window of a bookshop at 3am ...

Willie Anderson

Willie Anderson has worked for the renowned Scottish academic and professional booksellers John Smith & Son for 31 years. He currently holds the post of Deputy Chairman. He was President of the Booksellers Association of Great Britain and Ireland from 1995-97.

John Smith

It does seem like a different age when looking back at the beginnings of the SPA. In those days, Simon Berry of the Molendinar Press ploughed a lonely furrow to gain some semblance of recognition for Scottish Publishing. Scottish bookselling in 1973 was beginning to realise that the retail world was moving on and that maybe, just maybe, a smidgeon of 'modernisation' may be required. In Glasgow the bookselling scene was dominated by Grants Educational and by John Smith & Son, Aberdeen had Bissets and Edinburgh James Thin, the Edinburgh Bookshop and the John Menzies flagship store in Princes Street. Many of the characters have survived the 30 years, but not many of the retail business names have

lasted the pace.

Simon's initial excursions into forming the SPA heralded the renaissance of Scottish publishing that was to play such a prominent part in protecting the Scottish booksellers from some of the excessive ravages of the late 80s recession. I can remember selling vast quantities of Scottish published books, when colleagues the other side of Hadrian's Wall were bemoaning the lack of 'decent' books.

In the 70s we had colourful characters coming to the fore. Those likeable cavaliers Bill Campbell and Pete MacKenzie launched Mainstream, Stephanie Wolf Murray was publishing real fiction and the human whirlwind Richard Drew single-handedly maintained a Glasgow presence in the publishing scene. In



many ways they were quite heady days and when the pleasures of buying books to sell was an art form not governed by EPOS, bestsellers and the now omnipresent 'targets'.

The Scottish Book Marketing Group grew out of an understanding that the Scottish book trade was a remarkably close community. Publishers and booksellers actually quite liked each other and it was possible for us to do things together. Our customers were not just confined to a small part of these islands, but were spread throughout the world adding colour and the hard work ethic wherever they lived. The SBMG was designed to exploit that market, and in many ways it succeeded.

The book world has

changed a great deal since 1973 and many of the changes are for the better. Personally, I do not believe the Scottish trade is anything like as close as it has been and that in my opinion is to be regretted. Fortunately, Scottish publishers are still publishing excellent books, as witnessed by Canongate's success with the 2002 Booker Prize for Literature and Mainstream's continued quality in their specialist areas. Publishing, like bookselling, has become corporate. There are still the dedicated, slightly other worldly, devotees to 'I love books' concept in amongst the monoliths, but they have few opportunities of raising their heads above the parapets of the 'Company Ethos'. Brand and all that a brand stands for is now the message and no one dare

speak 'off message'. The book trade is a wonderful trade and books are the most exciting thing to sell in this world (you don't get many opportunities to sell a Ferrari and anyway they are pretty similar).

But bookselling is a personal business. The great unknown about a book is that even without the interminable hype, a good book will come through, because it has been personally recommended. No computer can compete with that!

The customers haven't changed too much. Yes they are more demanding, more fickle with their loyalties, more adept with a keyboard than speech, but the virtual shops still can't deal with questions like 'Have you got that latest book on the Scottish wine trade, which is entitled *Up to Your Neck in Hock*? Yes we have' and you give the customer *Knee Deep in Claret* without comment and they say 'Marvellous!' That is the fun of real bookselling.

Ainslie Thin

Ainslie Thin gained an honours degree in Chemistry, but then changed course and joined the family bookselling business in 1957. At that time it consisted of one shop in the South Bridge, Edinburgh, and about 30 staff. After a fairly tough time in the 1960s, a pattern of growth was established which lasted for 25 years. The business peaked at 37 bookshops and 650 staff in the mid 1990s. James Thin was one of the very first retail booksellers to use computers for ordering, accounts and stock control. In 2002 the fight to prosper in the face of competition from the big chains, supermarkets and to a lesser extent Internet bookselling was lost; the general shops were mostly sold to Ottakar's and the Academic to Blackwell's.

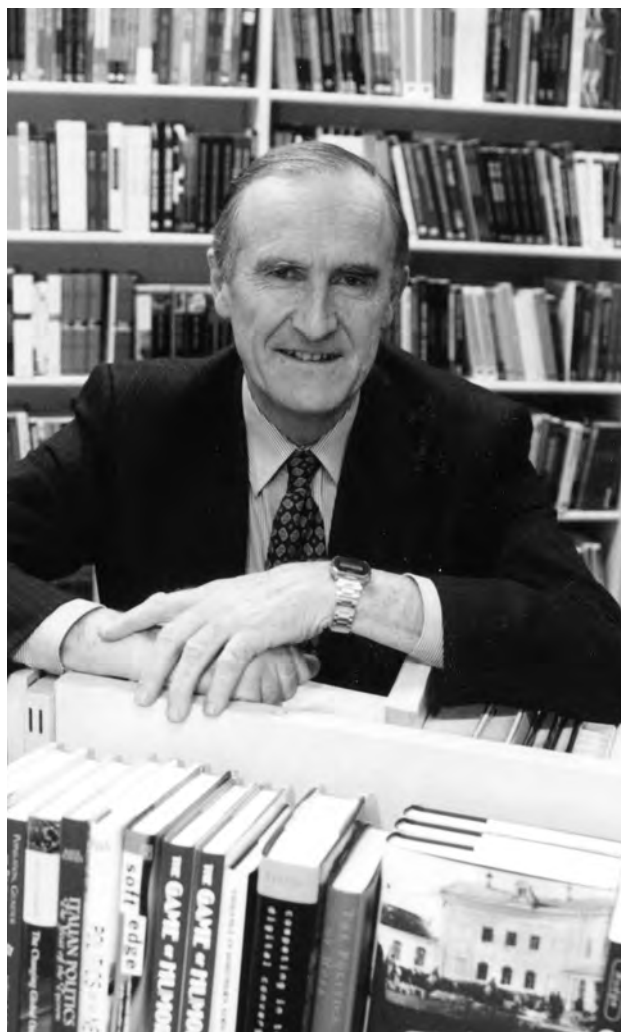
James Thin Ltd

James Thin Ltd in its heyday had 17 bookshops in Scotland, nine of them being general bookshops and eight of these being fairly large general bookshops by the standards of the day. We had therefore earned ourselves a position of some significance in the availability of good books in Scotland. We attempted to be havens for committed book readers, and others, and we attempted to have a wide range of books, backed up by computerised stock control – using systems that we designed ourselves. In our Scottish shops, not surprisingly, the books by Scottish authors and on Scottish subjects were of particular importance and sold particularly well – so we always had strong Scottish book sections. Fortunately we had a

number of staff in our bookshops who were devoted booksellers, stayed with us over many years, and were able to give a knowledgeable service to customers. Although the service in our shops always could have been better, great efforts were made in staff training to inculcate the need to provide our customers with a really good service, and most of the time I think we were known as bookshops where customers were well looked after by people who cared about books.

Sometime after it was established, the Scottish Publishers Association set up the 'Scottish Book Marketing Group' (SBMG), with I believe, some very important help from the Scottish Arts Council. The concept was to market Scottish books more vigorously, and to

involve Scottish bookshops in this process to the extent that they were willing to take part. James Thin got involved in this, and were quite enthusiastic supporters, providing senior members of staff to join the controlling committee, and thereby provide practical advice. This was not ever unquestioned support, because several times we looked at the cost of being involved, which included a subscription of around £1000–£1500 per annum, plus some senior staff time. Each time we did the sum, we concluded that we were getting good value – in that less would have been achieved if we had spent that sum of money organising a James Thin-only Scottish book promotion. SBMG managed to get well-known people in Scotland to help promote the Scottish Book Fortnight, for instance, and they seemed to be able to win quite a lot of press coverage, and comment on radio and even sometimes on televi-



Ainslie Thin Photo: the Scotsman

sion. They also got some subsidies to help with promotions, and this would not have been available to an individual retailer.

Over the 30-year period of the life of the Scottish Publishers

Association there have been many changes in the trade, some of them fundamental, some good, some not so good. I will not comment much on changes in publishing, other than to say that there are hardly any

medium-sized or large independent publishers that were in existence 50 years ago, who have retained their independence. In bookselling there were three main factors which have brought about change. Firstly there was the growth of the big chain booksellers, like Waterstone's, Dillon's, Sherratt & Hughes, Ottakar's, Borders, etc. These chains have opened hundreds of, usually, good bookshops all over the UK. Quite a lot of the finance involved has come from the financial markets. Then there was the loss of the Net Book Agreement in the mid 90s. Finally there has been the growth of Internet bookselling (mostly Amazon). The result of this for the larger independents, already in the cities or largish towns, was that competition increased dramatically (17 times James Thin suffered from a branch of a chain opening nearby). The loss of price maintenance brought in the supermarkets and

others who liked to sell heavily discounted books, and their share of the home market for books increased from about 2% to about 12% now, obviously some of this was at the expense of existing booksellers. Internet booksellers now have about 5% of the home market – again some of this has come from existing booksellers. So almost all of the large independent booksellers have now gone. This is not the end of the world, because instead there are many handsome and well-stocked chain bookshops. But something has been lost – many chain bookshops are dedicated to quality bookselling, but the independents were also and in perhaps a somewhat more personal way. Bookshops now seem to concentrate over much on bestsellers to the detriment of backlist. It is driven more by the wish to make money (difficult!) than the wish to promote worthwhile books to the benefit of the community.

In the circumstances change was unavoidable, and a great many book customers must be well pleased that there are now so many large and well-stocked bookshops available to them.

The Mercat Press was set up as a publishing unit within James Thin Ltd. It was intended always to publish Scottish books. Along the way we bought some titles from the Scottish Academic Press, most of the Aberdeen University list, and some Scottish titles from HMSO. Tom Johnstone and Seán Costello started running it when it got bigger, as a result of the above purchases. They recently successfully carried out a management buyout, and will no doubt continue to run it carefully and well, as they have in the past.

Mercat Press is a member of the SPA, and has gained from this in a number of ways – e.g. training and overseas sales.

The writers

Aonghas MacNeacail

In Gaelic and English, Aonghas MacNeacail has written poems, songs, scripts for radio, television and film as well as a couple of librettos, plus journalism and broadcasting. Scottish Writer of the Year, 1997, his poetry has taken him to Japan in the East and Seattle in the West, to the Dead Sea and the Finnish Arctic Circle, as well as to the Capitol in Rome.

Publishers and prizes

Being a writer is a curious occupation at the best of times. We have to gather our experience that which will nourish the work, from the world around us and those who populate it, but the process of transmutation into a finished poem, play, novel or story, is an essentially solitary one. Only after a period, sometimes lengthy, of reflection on its worth, is the work liable to be taken to the next stage, where it is subjected to the critical eye of an editor, on whose assessment its journey into the wider world will depend.

Being of Gaelic temperament (where 'manana' is the domain of the hyperactive) as well as ethnicity, I do recall one occasion when an editor presented me with a stamped addressed envelope in an attempt to

ensure that material was sent in on time (I think it worked). Things begin to take a more serious turn when we graduate to books.

My first full collection of poems, *An Seachnadh* (The Avoiding) was published by a truly remarkable man whose curiously self-effacing public persona masked the sharply fastidious and rigorous professionalism he manifested when behind his editor's desk. The fact that Callum MacDonald never consciously sought the limelight makes him one of the (largely) unsung heroes of 20th century Scottish literature. As one who was privileged to receive his detailed, occasionally acerbic, but always caring, editorial scrutiny while experiencing the transformation of my dog-eared typescript into a beauti-

fully produced published work, I am more than happy to sing his praises.

By the time I got to know him personally, Callum was approaching the end of his professional career as printer and publisher, a career which began in the basement of a Marchmont newsagent's shop, from which he began to print and publish the magazine *Lines Review*, on an old hot metal printing press he taught himself to use. As I understand it, he didn't initiate *Lines Review* but became its publisher at an early stage, and continued in that role until its last issue, not long before he died. Under a succession of distinguished editors, the magazine retained a house-style that made it instantly recognisable, and a commitment to new writing balanced against the works of established writers. My own first appearance in print, beyond campus magazines, was in a special issue of *Lines Review*, which featured

young poets from Glasgow University.

Callum was, of course, a fellow-Gael, but as a Lewisman he had more of an infusion of the Viking, that Teutonic streak which allows an affinity with the significance of clocks, calendars and other strange phenomena like balance-sheets. Simon Fraser, who would also become my publisher, is also of Gaelic origin, though the dislocations of an army background separated him from the language his grandfather had spoken, while his artistic gift freed him from any obligation to follow the family tradition.

Our initial contact was over the phone. A mutual acquaintance had given him my name as a possible collaborator in a text and image project. His stylistic and thematic preoccupations, obvious from the sheaf of prints he sent me in a big brown envelope, were confirmed when, shortly afterwards, we met. While apparently not too clearly aware that

there had recently been a General Election, he was fully at ease in the world he and his then wife Sarah occupied with their menagerie of dogs, cats and horses: his studio a wonderfully rooted canvas Brigadoon populated by images drawn from Neil Gunn's novels as landscaped by a Celtic Marc Chagall.

The exhibition which resulted from our collaboration was accompanied by a catalogue (of disasters) including an embarrassing misprint in the text and the inclusion of one of Simon's prints upside-down. This prompted Simon and Sarah (the latter having considerable experience in book design) to advise me that they were minded to produce a reworking of poem and prints in book form. With the publication of *Sireadh Bradain Sicir* (Seeking Wise Salmon), an improbable slim volume, a new imprint, Balnain Books, which would become, for a time, one of Scotland's most innovative and

energetic, was born.

Even before 'SBS' had fully settled on to bookshop shelves, it was clear that the Frasers had caught the bug. Did I, they asked, have any other poems that might be given similar treatment? The first poem had been my response to Simon's images: I did, however, have a poem, already completed and due to be published in my first collection, which I was happy to have Simon illustrate. *An Cathadh Mor* (The Great Snow-battle) became Balnain's second publication.

Some time after its launch, Simon and Sarah approached me with some diffidence: would I mind if they were to approach another author with a view to publication? That author was George MacKay Brown; distinguished company indeed! Following George, they entered new territory with Stanley Robertson's first collection of retellings of Scottish traditional folktales and reminiscences of

the traveller life.

From then on, Balnain was a serious player on the Scottish publishing scene. Simon, the visionary painter and printmaker, became more and more drawn into a strange new world of computing. While the necessary administrative chores did not enthuse him, he began to discover some of the equipment's other potentials, from the obvious, desktop publishing to the liberating, computer-generated artwork, all of which he mastered to such an extent that when a local printer upgraded their hardware, he was employed as consultant, with the task of figuring out and explaining the new system to the old staff.

If I was an accidental catalyst in the birth of Balnain Books, getting published by Polygon also came about by a kind of accident; a chance meeting, with Peter Kravitz, then editor of the University-based Edinburgh Review. In the

course of our conversation, he asked whether I had any unpublished material. I remembered a sheaf of poems in English, mostly written while I was a student at Glasgow University with Philip Hobsbaum as mentor, and Tom Leonard, Jim Kelman and Alasdair Gray among my fellow 'promising young etceteras' and drinking companions. These poems provided the core, and title, for that first Polygon collection, *Rock and Water*.

Six years later, the same publisher delivered my second Gaelic collection, *Oideachadh Ceart* (A Proper Schooling), which would put me in the pleasantly fraught position of sharing a short-list with, among other distinguished writers, Bernard MacLaverty, when nominated for the Stakis Scottish Writer of the Year Award, in 1997. My initial reaction, on hearing the winner's name announced was 'That's a funny way to pronounce 'Bernard

MacLavery' ...' A wee voice to my left, my nine-year-old son's, in a passionate stage-whisper, 'YESSS! Now I'll get a mountain bike for Christmas!' confirmed that my ears had not beguiled me.

Receiving, or being nominated for, prizes is a curious business. My records reveal that I have received a Grampian Television Poetry Award as well as a Diamond Jubilee Award from the 'Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse', now, I'm glad to say, known as Poetry Association Scotland (the former designation conjuring up an image of youngsters putting on their best 'refined' voices to recite a suitably refined sample of verse). *An Cathadh Mor* took the An Comunn Gaidhealach National Mod Literary Prize. Shortlisting for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Poets' Award, in 1997, came with a consolation cheque, while the Society of Authors Travelling Scholarship, in 2003, was

completely unsolicited – and no less pleasant for that.

Being shortlisted for the first Creative Scotland awards was a different pot of piranhas. All nominees were invited to gather at Edinburgh's Hub for the disbursement of prizes. No prior notice having been given, those of us whose applications had been driven by economic need, began to feel more and more like Christians waiting for the Emperor's thumb to save them from the lions, while winner after winner collected cheques we assumed would be fed into already well-cushioned bank accounts. Sour grapes, perhaps: some of the winners were friends of mine and thoroughly deserving of recognition. I believe the Scottish Arts Council has changed its modus operandi: I've not been back to find out.

The value of prizes to their recipients, or to a given artform, is frequently questioned, though the survival of

Booker, Orange and Turner awards, among others, suggests that their organisers have no such reservations. If Scotland's literary and others arts awards have a particular hurdle to cross, it's one which could be characterised as the 'kent his faither' syndrome – especially if it's given to a book by a Scottish author published by a Scottish imprint – except that there are other complicating factors, including a reluctance by the Scottish media to ensure that books published in Scotland are effectively reviewed and recognised.

But let's celebrate three decades of the Scottish Publishers Association, and let our celebrations be a precursor to the widest possible recognition of the importance of what they and their members do to promote, in print, the life and culture of Scotland. That's the real prize. It may not catch the headlines, but it endures. Let's treasure it and help it grow.

Alasdair Gray

by **Lorraine Fannin**



Alasdair Gray was an art teacher, muralist and theatrical scene painter before becoming a full-time painter and playwright. He was first published by Canongate in 1981: *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* was the novel which made Gray's reputation and helped highlight Canongate as a publisher of innovative and excellent literary work. The manuscript is

said to have arrived at Canongate's office in many, many cardboard boxes.

Much of Gray's later work was published by Bloomsbury in London, though the relationship with Canongate was maintained and several of his later works have appeared under their imprint. He also kept a publishing presence in Scotland, by starting up a publishing company *Dog and Bone* with a band of fellow writers. Books from that innovative list had strong visual identity, not surprising given Gray's background and training as an artist. In fact he insisted on designing and typesetting several of his Bloomsbury books at *Dog and Bone*. *Something Leather*, published by Bloomsbury bore a strong resemblance to the *Dog and Bone* titles of that year but

Gray's experience as a publisher had clearly left its mark, as the final words on the jacket indicate. 'Despite the plot's elaborate Keltic knotwork,' he wrote, 'despite some crafty baits for the prurient, I doubt if this book will be taken seriously south of the Tweed – or north of it either.'

The huge volume *An Anthology of Prefaces* was a masterly and original work, and one which Gray worked on for years, perhaps even decades. It was worth the wait. Alasdair Gray has become an icon for new Scottish writers, his work a watershed in the development of modern Scottish literature and it is no surprise that his appearances at book events bring forth a veritable fan club of readers of every age group.

Joan Lingard

Joan Lingard is an internationally renowned author of over 50 books, for both adults and children. She was born and lives in Edinburgh, but spent her formative years living in Belfast, where the novels of the Kevin and Sadie quintet are set. Joan has won several major awards for her writing, and in 1998 was awarded an MBE for Services to Children's Literature.

Public speaking

Forty years ago, when my first novel was accepted for publication, I received a questionnaire from the publisher asking if I would be prepared to be interviewed by the press, on radio and television, and to give talks in bookshops, libraries and other venues. I wrote 'no' opposite each, thinking, in my youthful ignorance, that surely it was sufficient to write the book without having to talk about it. The very thought of getting up to speak in public appalled me. How times have changed! If you were to answer 'no' now, it is likely that the publisher would cease to be interested. We are all expected to be performers.

In the 60s, the giving of talks was unorganised and usually did not involve payment. People seemed to think you should be grateful simply

to be invited to entertain them and that they were doing enough by paying your bus or train fare and giving you a cup of tea and a biscuit before sending you off into the night. There was no question of anyone *buying* your books. They could get them in the library and often told you so in a tone of voice that suggested it was impertinent of you to think that anyone would actually part with the money in order to read one. In spite of having said 'no', I gradually became sucked into the circuit and even agreed to appear on STV, along with William McIlvanney and Hugh Rae, one St Andrew's eve, around 1965. We had been invited, as three new young writers, to discuss the future of Scotland. I cannot recall anything we said but I do remember being very relieved after-



Sophie Moxon (EIBF, now Scottish Book Trust), Gavin Inglis (writer), Joan Lingard, Lorraine Fannin at the SPA's Instant Book prizegiving 2002

wards to have survived the ordeal.

Then, in 1970, Trevor Royle, literature director at that time of the Scottish Arts Council, started the Writers in Public Scheme. I was part of a pilot group testing out the water. To begin with, we visited schools in groups of four – I went with novelist Sean Hignett and poets Alan Jackson and Tom

Buchan – and sometimes, only two. Tom Buchan and I were dispatched to Northumberland for a week during which we spent a memorable evening with Hugh MacDiarmid in the miners' institute in Alston.

The Writers in Public scheme, now known as Live Literature Scotland, and operated by Scottish Book Trust, rapidly

became popular and has grown so much that not all demands can be met from the available budget. Apart from stimulating interest in books and reading in the community, it has proved to be a great support to writers, as a morale booster and also financially. Now we are paid to speak! And sometimes people buy our books.

Margaret Elphinstone

Margaret Elphinstone is Professor of Writing at the University of Strathclyde. Her latest novel, *Voyageurs* was published by Canongate, July 2003.

An experience of Scottish Publishing

I once attended the Frankfurt Book Fair, in 1977. The small stall shared by the Scottish publishers who belonged to the Scottish General Publishers Association seemed like a little lifeboat in a vast whirlpool. Wandering bemused through the four huge halls at Frankfurt, I first discovered that the publishing world is more like the stock exchange than the library in *The Name of the Rose*. I didn't fully realise how necessary it was that the SGPA should become visible at the world's biggest international book fair. I had yet to learn that the leap from publishing in Scotland to publishing internationally is the crucial step for Scottish publishers and Scottish authors. The presence of the SGPA at Frankfurt

meant that Scottish writing could go from Edinburgh to the world direct, and not via London.

My own function at the book fair was vague. I came because I was involved with the Thule Press from Shetland, but I had nothing to do with sales; my main contribution was finding out-of-print Shetland titles that were crying out for reprints. In those years I seldom left Shetland; our main link with Edinburgh was the SGPA. It was through the SGPA that I first encountered Canongate; little did I know what Canongate would eventually mean to me. Other small publishers were represented: Paul Harris and Molendinar Press were two, both one-man businesses with fascinating lists. To be honest, I remember the dinners at Frankfurt a lot

better than the book deals. The characters were memorable.

So my career in publishing began and ended. I crossed to the other side of the fence and turned author, and from that perspective I've experienced 20 years of Scottish publishing. Two of my novels were published by Polygon, and three by Canongate. Now that I'm with Canongate I feel no temptation to go anywhere else.

It wasn't always like that. My first two books were published by The Women's Press, in London. I was delighted when they took my first novel. An Edinburgh publisher would have seemed like a step backwards. It worried me a little that The Women's Press represented, in its very title, a different sort of marginalisation. Half the population might think the books were not for them. A feminist I might be, but I didn't think of myself as writing exclusively for women.

Would a Scottish publisher, at that stage, have made me wonder if I was writing exclusively for Scots? The fact was that when I was with The Women's Press my books were widely available in bookshops all over the UK, and distributed abroad as well.

My first novel appeared in a Women's Press list entitled *Feminist Science Fiction*. My second novel, set in exactly the same world, with some of the same characters, appeared in a Polygon list entitled *Scottish Fantasy*. In my own opinion *Scottish Fantasy* was the more accurate description. My editor at Polygon was Murdo MacDonald, and he and Peter Kravitz were to be found on the top floor of 22, George Square above the Edinburgh University Press offices. One climbed the three rickety flights of stairs, and there they were, huddled under the roof, in the space where I imagine the servants once lived. Murdo and Peter

served me well, anyway, by producing a very attractive book. It was the first of my covers which seemed to me to reflect the content. Polygon in those days still retained much of its original student image; I felt at home there.

In its early days Polygon served a vital function in Scottish publishing by discovering new authors and taking risks. In 1989, when they published *A Sparrow's Flight* they also launched first novels by Sian Hayton and Janice Galloway. If one looked back over the years and checked who was first published by Polygon, the list would be as almost as impressive as in the halcyon days of Blackwood and Blackie. The problem was that nearly all Polygon's dazzling list of new authors took their second books elsewhere, which at that time meant London. The reasons were obvious. I don't think I ever saw a Polygon title furth of

Scotland. The beautifully produced books would appear, and vanish.

Writers are notorious for having mutual moans about their publishers. I know I was not alone in feeling short-changed by the Scottish publishing scene in the 1980s and early 1990s. There were Scottish writers who flashed to the top like meteorites, by-passing Edinburgh altogether. There were also those who were trying to establish a reputation, or who were struggling to keep their place 'mid-list'. One advantage of belonging to a nation of five, not 50, million is that new writers quickly become visible. In Scotland the Scottish Arts Council Writers' Scheme (now administered by the Scottish Book Trust), and the system of grants, is more comparable to arts forums in Ireland and Scandinavia than to the larger European countries. Scottish publishing established new writers in Scotland, and there was further

modest support available, and that was very nice. But the writers I knew believed something more was possible (and that we deserved it), but not, apparently, in our own country.

The explosion of innovative Scottish writing (and reprinting) in the 1990s surely demanded a new impetus in Scottish publishing. Dispirited by the promotion of my next Polygon novel, I retreated from fiction into academia (I support my writing habit with a half-time University post). It seemed to me that London publishers were looking for a Scottish brand of gritty urban realism which I might read with interest, but I wasn't about to write. I was aware of a new kind of marginalisation: the limited branding of the Scottish product. Scottish writing has always been remarkably innovative – the twist Scottish writers gave to contemporary urban realism in the 1990s was no more

contentious than the invention of the historical novel, or the Standard Habbie, had been in their day. But if a national literature doesn't reflect diversity and difference, what will happen to the nation?

Two things conspired to turn the Scottish publishing scene around for me: one, leaving Scotland for a time, and two, Canongate. I wrote my next novel in the United States, a temporary vantage point from which publishing suddenly looked quite different. I came back determined to sell my novel to someone who would put their heart and soul – or if not that a small investment – into selling it. If it had to be London, I'd tackle London. But first of all I went to Canongate.

Canongate sell books. They sell them, as the SGPA did at their Frankfurt stall 26 years ago, in a very competitive international market. As a result, authors can earn a living, and are encour-

aged to write more books. It's as simple as that. Canongate's Jamie Byng enlivens the features pages of the Sunday papers, and has plenty to say to journalists about Scottish publishing. He is one of the publishers who has made Scottish publishing, as well as Scottish writing, work.

Writing, like any career, needs to develop over the years. I can recall the euphoria I felt when my first novel was accepted. It was one of those moments, like the day I left school, or the day I learned to swim, which I shall never forget. I'd have been happy if my advance had been ten

shillings. I was innocent about the whole process of production, publicity and sales. I didn't mind not being able to earn a living from the work I wanted to do. I did mind when I knew that there were readers out there who might like my books, but who would never know about them. I was troubled by the giant step, as it seemed then, between Edinburgh and London. As a writer belonging to Scotland, I wanted a Scottish publisher, but success, and sales, seemed to lie, as they had lain since 1707, in the south. The emphasis, emanating from the London market,

on one Scottish genre at the expense of others, put me among a group of writers who felt doubly marginalised. It was a sea change in Scottish publishing that changed all that. Like it or not, a nation's publishers have a lot to do with the formulation of its literature. Sometimes I used to think that I would prefer to be with an Edinburgh publisher on principle. What has made all the difference to me is that I want to be with an Edinburgh publisher now because it makes commercial, as well as cultural, sense.

Ian Rankin



Ian Rankin is best known as the author of the Inspector Rebus novels. He has also written short stories, radio dramas, and three thrillers under the pseudonym Jack Harvey. The first Inspector Rebus novel, *Knots and Crosses*, was published in 1987. The latest, *Fleshmarket Close*, was published in September 2004. Ian is a past winner of two Dagger awards for Best Short Story, a Gold Dagger for Best Novel, the Edgar Award in the USA for Best Novel, and the Spirit of Scotland Award for Writing. Other prizes have come from France, Germany, Denmark and Finland. Ian appears regularly on BBC2's *Newsnight Review*, and in 2003 was awarded the OBE for services to literature. He lives in Edinburgh with his partner and two sons.

By 1984, I'd written my first novel. It was a black comedy set in a Highland hotel. Having met Ian Crichton Smith when I was runner-up to him in a short story contest I begged him to put in a word with his publishers. The manuscript eventually came back from Livia Gollancz in faraway London, accompanied by a pithy critique. Nothing daunted, I think I next sent it to Stephanie Wolfe Murray at Canongate. After about six months, I asked if I could have it back. I think she eventually located it in a cupboard or drawer somewhere. By this time I wasn't much bothered; I'd already commenced writing my second novel. I'd started badgering the Scottish Arts Council, looking for monetary help – again, to no avail. Still, I felt in my heart that I could and would be a

writer, whatever it took. I looked to the west – Gray's *Lanark*, Liz Lochhead, Willie McIlvanney ... All the ideas seemed to be coming out of Glasgow, while all the publishers were still in Edinburgh. Strange, but interesting times. And then I discovered Polygon. The company was tiny and ramshackle, run by Edinburgh University students (with the help of their lecturers and probably two full-time staff – Neville and Pam). Nevertheless, they'd already 'discovered' James Kelman, and were about to kick-start an initiative for first-time novelists, so I sent them my second novel, *The Flood*.

And it was accepted. I was walking on air, dazed and confused. I took a fellow postgrad with me as witness when I went to sign the contract. They

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POLYGON, 48 PLEASANCE, EDINBURGH EH8 9TJ.

were going to pay me two hundred quid and print a couple of hundred hardback and maybe 800 paperbacks. A student at the Art College provided the jacket illustration. I remember it all so vividly, because it felt like the beginning of something.

Turns out, it was.

The manuscript was edited by a student a couple of years below me, and proofread by a lecturer from the English Literature department.

The *New Fiction* imprint saw three novels published on the same day: Alex Cathcart and Robert Alan Jamieson were the other authors. Suddenly I was in the same catalogue as Mr Kelman. The launch party was a wild affair, held (if memory serves) in the Pleasance Bar. From this distance, I can't be sure if I already knew that this was not only my first but also my last foray into 'Scottish' publishing. Certainly, around that

time, I came to the decision that I didn't want to spend half my life hectoring the SAC for hand-outs, or subsisting on three-figure advances. I was 26 years old, and all I knew was that I wanted to make my living as a writer. So ... when an agent came calling, I told her about my next project, a novel featuring an Edinburgh cop called Rebus. She took it to London.

I followed soon after.

James Robertson

James Robertson was born in 1958 and grew up in Bridge of Allan near Stirling. He studied history at Edinburgh University, and then worked for Waterstone's in Edinburgh and Glasgow for seven years before becoming the first holder of the Brownsbank Writing Fellowship in 1993. He has published two collections of short stories, two novels (*The Fanatic*, 2000, and *Joseph Knight*, 2003, which won the Saltire Scottish Book of the Year award) and various other works of non-fiction and poetry. In 1999 he founded Kettillonia, a pamphlet-publishing imprint specialising in poetry and short fiction. He lives in Angus.



Over the last 20 years I have been involved in some form or other in many areas of the book trade. My first permanent job, back in 1983, was as a publisher's sales rep, and since then I have been an author, editor, bookseller, bookshop manager, writer-in-residence, book reviewer, sales rep (again!) and, in a small way, publisher. Some of this activity came about by accident rather than design, some through the necessity of making ends meet by supplementing my earnings as a writer. Inevitably, my experience reflects some of the changes that have affected the Scottish book scene during these years.

In early 1983 the first Edinburgh International Book Festival had not yet taken place; Waterstone's, the chain which would do so much to

shake up the quiet, regular world of Scottish bookselling, had not yet opened its first branch in the capital's George Street (I got a part-time job there in 1985); the 'Scottish' sections of bookshops tended to be small, non-literary and tartan in tone; *Scotland on Sunday* and the *Sunday Herald* had yet to launch; growth in Scottish publishing was blighted by under-investment. Yet there were positive signs: Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, that landmark publication, had come out from Canongate in 1981; there was, following the 1979 devolution referendum and the second Thatcher election victory, a new sense of cultural urgency and intent; the 1980s saw intellectually stimulating and energetic small magazines like *Chapman*, *Cencrastus* and *Radical Scotland* (of which I was



Itchy Coo: Book launch at EIBF 2002

arts editor) generating intense debate in the best tradition of dissent. Out of such beginnings grew a vibrant, confident contemporary literature and a level of general cultural activity that demanded to be taken seriously.

Nowadays, the Scottish sections of bookshops are front-of-house, big, bold and varied, but this does not mean everything in the garden is healthy. Scottish publishing still

suffers from under-investment: despite the success of Canongate at the Booker, most Scottish houses do not have the financial strength to compete with London, and consequently to attract, or keep, successful authors. Scottish independent booksellers such as James Thin and John Smith have either gone into receivership or had their high street presence severely curtailed. Publishers, squeezed by outrageous

discount demands from the big chains (which have failed, by and large, to sustain the revolution in bookselling they instigated, becoming the establishment they once sought to displace) are having to look to other, more direct ways of selling their products. Scotland's literary life is still under-resourced, and this in turn breeds a mentality that too often sees the receipt of a Scottish Arts Council subsidy as the apex of ambition. I have benefited from SAC grants (Itchy Coo, the Scots Language project in which I'm heavily involved, is a case in point) so I am far from being opposed to such support – but I do feel that for the long-term health of publishers and writers we need more courage, more independence, and more private investment.

I started Kettillonia, an imprint producing poetry and fiction in pamphlet form, out of frustration at the lack of opportunities for good

writers to get new, sometimes experimental, work into print. The numbers are minute – a thousand pounds constantly recycled, print-runs of no more than 400, cover prices of £2.50 – yet in a tiny way Kettillonia has been successful, and only lack of time has prevented me doing more with it. I sell most of my pamphlets by mail order, Internet and at readings, and virtually none through the book trade; and I've neither asked for, nor received, any kind of subsidy. At the same time, I can't pretend that Kettillonia provides me, or the writers I publish with anything remotely like a real income – the price of a few fish suppers, at best. This is, I freely admit, very small-time publishing indeed, but it is, perhaps, a model for something bigger.

The truth is, I cannot afford to let Kettillonia, or Itchy Coo for that matter, divert me for too long from writing books, since that, in the last year or

two at any rate, is how I pay the bills. The sad fact is that I don't make – have never made – a viable living from the 11 books I have written or edited which have been published in Scotland. My first novel, *The Fanatic*, was rejected by several Scottish houses before it was taken on by Fourth Estate in London. It followed that Fourth Estate, now part of HarperCollins, also published *Joseph Knight*, my second novel, and paid me an advance for it

that enables me to live. Until the infrastructure of a really healthy publishing industry, such as Scotland boasted in the 19th century, is re-established here – and that includes more literary agents, serious investors, and more publishers who want to produce books with an appeal beyond the tourist industry or a market of five million – the reality for most full-time authors will be that, to survive, they will have to be published furth of Scotland.



The Bogie Bird bides up yir neb,
E'er sine it wis a chick,
And when it's feelin hungry,
It ayewis taks its pick.

From *Boggin Beasties* by Gregor Steele,
King o the Midden (Itchy Coo)

The press and media

David Robinson

David Robinson has been the literary editor of the *Scotsman* for the last three years and has worked there for 17 years in all. Because years in journalism are seven times shorter than real ones (or just seem to be), he is just a slip of a lad at heart, despite what the weighing scales and mirror tell him. Being born in Yorkshire, he is incapable of deceit, which is inconvenient when it means he cannot lie about all those books he has not read.

On my computer at the *Scotsman* today, there's a notice asking staff if they want to spend a day working in a completely different department. And yes, there are indeed odd moments when I fancy taking a 24-hour break from being the paper's books editor and instead learning the arcane mysteries of the circulation department, or playing with a very large printing press.

Generally, however, I suppress the urge. Because I realise that if there's a 24-hour job swap on offer, the people who most need enlightening about what mine consists of aren't even in the same building. They are, of course, those poor unfortunates who do PR in Scottish publishing. I can imagine that I'd learn an awful lot if I did a day

swap with them. But what if they did a swap with me? What would they learn?

It's so horrific that I've tried to shield them from it. It would shatter too many illusions. Much better, perhaps, if they don't realise just how many of the books published each year find their way into my morning post. Much better if those overflowing cupboards, those sackfuls destined for the charity book sale, are kept out of sight, like vats of rendered fat at an abattoir.

I *try* not to see myself as a slaughterman of books. I know each and every one has dreams behind it, and not just dreams of profit. But there are times when, pulling open the Jiffy bag (yes folks, all hand-

opened, all by me, what do you mean, do I have a secretary?) to reveal a copy of Oxbridge University Press's *Particle Physics in Poland or Lead Mining in Leadhill, 1880-9* that bloody metaphor seems bloody obvious.

So what else would my SPA job swapper discover? Well, once the hour massacring the Jiffy bags was over, there'd be the phones. 'We've just produced this book about Leadhill,' they'd hear. 'Most fascinating time in its history. The great 1880s lock-out. Dumfriesshire teetering on the brink of anarchy ...' Or 'Not a lot of people realise that the really important breakthroughs in science are being made in Poland, right now. We know particle physics is a bit difficult for the ordinary reader, but this book completely bridges the Two Cultures Divide. Absolutely essential to any understanding of ... Can we count on a review?'

Meanwhile, there's the other 38 books still on the

shelves behind my desk still awaiting sorting. I'm on about 40 a day, so that's 200 a week, and there's only space for eight main reviews and another eight for paperbacks, books in brief and audio. You do the maths.

While you're at it, throw in a few variables. An editor's prejudices (sorry, I mean preferences). A sudden shower of late ads. A reviewer who forgets to file. Some time to draw up pages and do the headlines (like the ripped Jiffy bags, all my own work), stand-firsts, captions, plan interviews, write them. I could go on, but I see by

my word count that I already have.

The odd thing is, I love this job. Some books in those Jiffy bags explain the world inside or outside our heads so well that sharing even part of my life with them is an undiluted pleasure and a privilege. So many of them have come – and increasingly, do come – from SPA members that your 30th anniversary is indeed a cause for celebration. From the bottom of the *Scotsman's* mountain of books, I raise a glass in the general direction of Dundee Street.



Douglas Davidson (MD, Isle of Arran Whisky), Chris McDowall (Anderson Strathern) with David Robinson and Campbell Brown, SPA Christmas party 2003

Catherine Lockerbie

Catherine Lockerbie has held a broad range of posts including scriptwriter and occasional broadcaster for BBC Radio Scotland and Literary Editor of the *Scotsman*. She was appointed director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2000 and is involved in a number of major cultural initiatives, including aiming to have Edinburgh designated as UNESCO's first World City of Literature.



Michael Palin at the EBF 1987

Photo: Douglas Robertson



Charlotte Square, EIBF 2003

Once upon a time there was a garden. It was a quiet, green, empty garden. Because the garden was in Edinburgh, its gates were locked. Children did not play there, dogs not dig there: the trees dreamed in damp Edinburgh silence.

Then one day the gates were flung open. The silence was shattered by a merry clang and clatter. Tents appeared and bookshelves, and books, and writers, and publishers! The public poured in. The first Edinburgh Book Festival was born. The year was 1983 and the SPA was already almost ten years old.

In that blessed year, you could meet Fungus the Bogeyman, listen to a steel band, watch a demonstration of handloom weaving and browse 6000 titles. This Edinburgh occasion

closed with a Glasgow celebration – *Noise and Smoky Breath*. There were Scottish authors and Scottish publishers and new life in the garden.

Since then the Book Festival has grown even faster than the spring daffodils of Charlotte Square. There were 30 author events in 1983; there are over 650 now.

We've added, proudly, the word 'International'. We've turned our unique, independent bookselling operation into a successful trading subsidiary.

And we've sold more Scottish publishers' books than ever before.

It is a marriage made in heaven. The SPA and the EIBF nestle together, year-round, in the Scottish Book Centre in super-sophisticated Fountainbridge. We coo at each other in the kitchen as we discreetly fight over the kettle. We work



Catherine Lockerbie



Helen Donald with Scottish books, EIBF 2003

together in all manner of ways, overt and behind the scenes, to ensure that literature and books are at the heart of cultural agendas, implanted in ministers' minds. And in August, we work together to display, promote and sell as many SPA members' books as possible to the increasing hordes of book-loving visitors to the festival. (The hordes numbered 183,000 in 2003.)

The Bookshop in Charlotte Square has grown too. From a damp, low tent, in which sad volumes curled at the

edges before one's very eyes, it has been transformed into a lofty cathedral to the glories of bookselling. In this mighty marquee, no longer called the Adult Book Tent – too many titters –SPA displays take pride of place. (Next door is the Children's Bookshop with its own indigenous glories.) State-of-the-art sofas, organic coffee and the assembled labours of love of our own Scottish publishers – what more could any discerning bookfest-goer possibly desire?

This is a big festival, a

global festival, a growing festival. It also has its roots deeply its own land. Actively and positively, we promote Scottish authors and Scottish books and will avidly continue to do so.

In 2004 we have our own anniversary, our 21st. It's a swell party, and you are all invited. For now, we salute, in friendship and admiration, our excellent SPA colleagues who have so superbly helped us to bring bouncing bookish life to what was once a quiet, green, empty garden.

Giles Gordon

Literary agent Giles Gordon left his native Scotland years ago for the richer pickings of the London literary scene and attained the pinnacle of his profession when he was called upon to place, with a suitable publisher, the literary output of his fellow Scot, HRH the Prince of Wales. Some years ago he returned and set up a branch of his agency Curtis Brown in Edinburgh. Giles' death in 2003 after a tragic accident has left a vast gap in the UK publishing world. He is much missed.

The SPA, Lorraine Fannin assures me, was founded in 1974. I had left Edinburgh to seek my fortune in publishing in London in 1962. Thus, it may be construed, the SPA has hardly played a significant part in my professional life. Nevertheless, the formidable Fannin has twisted my arm to write a piece for this celebratory volume.

From an early age I loved books. As my mother couldn't resist telling people, Giles was very late learning to read. This was presumably why I have ever been attracted to the visual side of books, the *mise en scene* of words on the page, and illustrations. My local hero was George Mackie, the designer of those aesthetically perfect (how George would spit at my saying that, he being such a puritan)

Edinburgh University Press books.

I was taught book design at Edinburgh College of Art by the solemn but sensitive Kingsley Cook; the eager and beaming Stuart Barrie, letterer extraordinaire; and the no-nonsense printer and typographer Bob Balderston. This somehow landed me an apprenticeship at Oliver & Boyd, where Douglas Grant ruled the Tweeddale Court emporium (founded 1778) as if he was running ICI. It was the most rigorous training school where I was taught more than I realised at the time by Bill Henderson, whose sales, marketing and publicity abilities would have made him a decade or two later a major player in London publishing; Bob Anderson, who flirted

with the young female staff and looked like a football referee and dealt with the minutiae of publishing as a business on a daily basis; and, as it were, the mad woman in the attic, Robin Lorimer, the editorial director, a kind of crazy genius who, long before Donald Dewar, had a vision for a new Scottish literature, very much a justified sinner. Robin made me realise, after my education at Edinburgh Academy had denied it, that there was something called Scottish literature and that, verily, O & B should magnificently and intellectually espouse it in its latest incarnation.

The Grants and Thins (as in the late bookshops) who owned and directed O & B were the most conservative of men but, at least in some of them, there was a kind of vision there, and they recognised and tolerated the intellectual acumen of Lorimer and that he consorted as an equal with Chris Grieve (always to be called that) and the

other major writers about. Is it to his credit that it was Robin who circa 1961 introduced me in the Abbotsford both to MacDiarmid the poet and to whisky the spirit, as a result of which I commissioned and published the former's second volume of autobiography when with the publisher Hutchinson in London a few years later?

What else? We worked every Christmas Eve morning, being released at lunchtime. The offices in Tweeddale Court were like something out of *Hard Times*. Forty years on, the same building, housing trendy Canongate, looks like a heritage hotel, all airbrush, light and makeover. And Jamie Byng is taken by French publishers and many of the London lot to be the most Scottish of us all.

When in 1968 I went to work for Victor Gollancz as editorial director (before turning over the loaf of bread in 1973 and becoming an agent) Scottish authors

didn't begin to be recognised internationally, or even nationally, until published by the London imprints. I commissioned Iain Crichton Smith to write his first novel, that little masterpiece *Consider the Lilies* (subsequently a Canongate Classic) and persuaded George Mackay Brown to put together *An Orkney Tapestry*. Both authors became thereafter infinitely more honoured in their own country. Typical. Still the grand names of contemporary Scottish literature all want to be published from London. Nothing much has changed.

The membership of the SPA comprises innumerable small imprints, many of which no one has heard of including possibly their owners. In the years ahead, the SPA should be canvassing the peedie parliament – and Scotland's leading men and women of letters – to set up a national publishing house (as in Scotland's national

theatre, a moveable feast rather than a heritage building) to persuade all our great living authors to clamour to be published in their own country. Until they do, whatever postures they strike in the media, they are – which, being authors, of course

they are – more interested in their own status, bank balances and careers than in Scotland. Which makes the job of the SPA and its myriad members both Toom Tabard and a hard graft. The past has to become the future.

As one of a growing

number of literary agents now working out of Edinburgh and Scotland, I gently wish the SPA many happy returns but certainly not returns in the sense of books being sent back by booksellers who have failed to sell them.



*Photo: Lesley Jones courtesy of
The Bookseller*

The Gaels and Scots

Ian MacDonald

Ian MacDonald is Director of Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (the Gaelic Books Council).

Sùil air Ais

When he was Scottish Arts Council Literature Director, the late and much missed Walter Cairns used to say that the problems of Gaelic publishing were those of Scottish publishing generally – ‘but with knobs on’. I know what he meant. But those of us in the trade are perhaps over-aware of the difficulties, and if we stand back we must surely concede that the years since the SPA was set up have been a period of extraordinary success for Scottish publishing – a flowering, a renaissance, call it what you will. I was still a student when the Gaelic Books Council was being set up just five years earlier, and to compare the current situation with the way things were then is to realise how much

has been achieved. The number of young authors who achieve publication, the rise in poetry readings and literary festivals, the sense that Scotland is not just about Burns and Scott, the availability of the classics and of important texts generally – there has been a transformation.

There are still gaps and problems, of course, and I sometimes think it would have been better to remain a punter, a consumer. To me, working and staying in London was no ordeal. It was rather cushy, in fact, by comparison to some of the jobs I’d had in the four or five years after I left University – forklift driver in Birmingham, working at a conveyor-belt in Romford, doing a long night shift at a wire factory or a fifteen-hour

day in the shellfish industry in my native Uist. Mind you, I enjoyed them too (well, maybe not the wire factory). But no, I must leave my friends in the Smoke and get involved in Gaelic publishing. *Amadain!*

Well, I'd loved books since I'd learned to read. Then there was the attraction of working with Derick Thomson – teacher, poet, mentor. That list of nouns was added to in time, but there is no doubt about his status as the father of modern Gaelic publishing, as of so much else.

The time since then seems a blur of endless work and rushing, but there have also been

feelings of achievement, friendships and a lorra laffs. We've had (in 1996) the setting up of the Books Council as a company in its own right, with Arts Council approval and support. I've had the f-word from the son of an author (although not from any author), I've sold 64 copies of a Gaelic hymnbook in one evening, had an ultimatum in Harris that I must drink a huge whisky before the two relatives of the Pabbay Bard will even set foot in our mobile bookshop (it's eleven o'clock of a summer's morning, and I'm planning to work until dusk: we compromised

on a three-way split of the whisky), and I've laughed so much at Norman Campbell's reading that I could hardly chair his book launch properly.

Gaelic publishing is underfunded and understaffed and continues to be precarious, but shows no signs of passing away. Scottish publishing generally has its crises, and at present there is a problem with the chains. And so it goes on. But I'm confident that the commitment that has enabled the SPA to achieve miracles on slender means will continue undiminished. To all who work there, well done, and haud forrit!

Norma Macleod

Norma Macleod joined Acair, the prime Scottish Gaelic publishing house, as editor in September 1995 and remained in that post until April 2002 when she went freelance. The work entails editing Gaelic texts mainly for the national education system as well as editing Gaelic and English general texts. She is a graduate of Aberdeen University (a product of the 60s) where she studied Gaelic, English, Psychology and Sociology to advanced level. Norma also holds a post-graduate Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and was for many years Director of Social Work in the Western Isles. In May 2004, Norma became chairperson of Acair and looks forward to presiding over new developments in the company in the years ahead. Her interests are walking, reading, traditional Gaelic singing and playing the button-key melodeon. Norma is also a regular Gaelic adjudicator at local Mods and at the Royal National Mod.

Acair was set up in 1978 to provide a Gaelic service to schools, with the provision of relevant, modern reading material at all levels. In that time it has published over 700 books. It is the main Scottish Gaelic publisher.

From very small beginnings located in an old morgue in Stornoway, Acair (anchor) still continues to be at the forefront of Gaelic educational provision. It probably needed an anchor to secure it to the holdfast of life!

The Board of Acair, in the early days, had a membership made up of internationally known educationists specialising in Gaelic education, and it drew on their expertise and networking skills across a number of other countries which specialised in publishing in lesser used languages. Acair has also published

general Gaelic texts ranging from the academic to the humorous, and has afforded the opportunity to Gaels to see their endeavours in print and to be read throughout Gaeldom and beyond.

I have experienced Acair's birth and growing pains (my husband, Finlay was a founding father) over these many years, when bilingual education was being established through thick and thin and where every argument had to be made and remade so frequently that any other endeavour would have given up long ago. Thanks to some good managers and early purposeful Board input covering a broad spectrum, Acair has survived through tough publishing times and continues to serve Scottish Gaelic literacy.

Many good relation-

ships continue with larger English language publishers which enable bright co-editions to be made available for younger children and there is a strong relationship with Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (The National Gaelic Resource Centre) which now plays a key role in ensuring a high standard of enterprise in the publication of Gaelic materials for schools.

Acair supports a number of illustrators and translators who play their part in the overall production of their books. Suffice it to say that many people comment that some of the Gaelic co-editions at times surpass the English originals.

No profit is made from these books, as the audience is so small in comparison with the much larger English readership. Sometimes Acair has not broken even. Couple that with the ups and downs of the book trade in general and it is little surprise that we sometimes feel hard done by. When the Gaelic versions of *Spot* came out many moons ago, they were given but a tiny grant, as they contained few words!

One day the sun will shine and the Scottish Executive will support the Scottish Gaelic publishing scene. Otherwise there will be no books published solely

in Gaelic. They will all have parallel translation and will produce a generation of English dependent readers. That is not what bilingual education is about. It might be what making profit is about.

Until that time we will remain at anchor on terra firma on James Street, producing reading schemes, geography books and teenage novels in Scotland's native tongue, hoping for the clouds to lift and for a favourable wind of change, which should make Gaelic publishing a vibrant and attractive option for expansion.

Matthew Fitt



Matthew Fitt was born in Dundee in 1968. A poet and novelist, he is currently Schools Officer for the Scots Language imprint, Itchy Co.

Writing and publishing in Scots is not for the faint hearted. When I first started out as a Scots poet, I had to cope with almost everybody in my life telling me that I was mad for writing in Scots. Don't do it, they said. No one will read it. No one will ever publish you.

Fortunately for me a couple of guid folk gave me the right kind of encouragement just at the right times and I didn't give up, plus I was a thrawn wee bugger in my teens (and probably still am). So my first taste of publication as a Scots writer (outside school and college magazines) was a Duncan Glen anthology called *Twenty of the Best* for which I will ever be in Duncan's debt.

In the late 80s performing on the vibrant poetry reading circuit in Scotland seemed to me a much more effective way

of transmitting Scots poems and texts to magazine editors than the traditional route of sending them in. Perhaps the fact that Scots in the twentieth century had a stronger appeal when spoken had something to do with this. Having work accepted for *Chapman* and *New Writing Scotland* were important milestones on the journey towards becoming recognised as a Scots writer.

The Scottish Arts Council and Biggar Museums Trust took a chance employing me as the second holder of the Brownsbank Fellowship, a gig that involved me living in the same bothy as the late Hugh MacDiarmid who I had only recently been studying at school and university. The Fellowship gave me the opportunity to develop and complete my first

novel, *But n Ben A-Go-Go*. It took another act of bravery, this time on the part of Gavin MacDougall of Luath Press, to bring this 200-page Scots Language sci-fi rammy of a novel into print.

And since 2002 I have been working as an editor and schools officer for the exciting new Scots Language imprint, Itchy Coo. Brought into being with an initial pulse of National Lottery funding, this imprint has exploded the myth that there is no market for Scots Lang-

uage books. A collaboration between the writer James Robertson, myself, Campbell Brown and Alison McBride at Black and White Publishing and the Scottish Arts Council, Itchy Coo has drawn from a pool of talented illustrators and writers who had the desire to work in Scots but had previously had nowhere to take their material. Producing high quality titles with a strong brand name, the imprint has sold in excess of 40,000 books in two years and has received or

been nominated for four awards: *An Animal ABC*, TESS/Saltire Society Children's Book of the Year 2003; *The Hoose o Haivers*, SAC Awards Special Commendation 2003; *Eck the Bee*, TESS/Saltire Society Commendation 2004 and *King o the Midden*, SAC Awards Shortlist 2004.

There has been a sea-change in the reading public's perception of Scots. If it is presented to them in well-made books in clear accessible Scots and without the traditional tartan tat, people will read poetry, prose, drama, Greek myths, fairy stories and manky mingin rhymes in this language that publishers were for many years reluctant to touch with the proverbial barge-pole. I am proud to have witnessed this turnaround in the fortunes of this unique language at first hand and sincerely hope that other publishers will now begin to explore the possibilities of Scots for themselves.



Eck the Bee

No longer with us

Alan Bold

by **Harry Reid**

Harry Reid worked on Scottish newspapers for 32 years, latterly as Editor of the (Glasgow) *Herald*. In 2001 he received honorary doctorates from Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities for his services to Scottish journalism.

The journalist Jack Maclean spent five years studying art in Edinburgh, and did not enjoy the experience. He wrote later that the only genuinely cultural event he witnessed during the time was the poet Alan Bold being sick outside Milne's Bar.

Alan Bold, who sadly died a few years ago, was a heroic, rugged and very fecund writer. He certainly drank hard – when he was in Edinburgh, usually in Milne's, the Windsor Buffet or the Abbotsford – but he wrote hard too. He

was incredibly prolific. Indeed, he once wrote a novel in three days.

He was a huge man – he was once described as looking like an Easter Island statue – and he had a big persona to go with his vast size. He had a fine gift for friendship and a capacious, incredibly well-stocked, literary mind. His knowledge of twentieth century literature was encyclopaedic.

He could write with instant and authentic authority on just about anyone you cared to mention, whether it was Jorge Luis Borges, William Gerhardie or Muriel Spark or Violet Jacob or Gordon Williams. He probably produced too many books. But not one of them was bad, and several of them were very good indeed.

Boldie – as he was universally known – was a poet, critic, painter, anthologist (one of his early successes was the *Penguin Book of Socialist Verse*) and a distinguished biographer. He admired Hugh MacDiarmid and developed a close friendship with the great poet. When MacDiarmid died in 1978 he was distraught. He edited his letters (1984) and wrote a magisterial biography (1988).

But what I wish to touch on here is Alan's literary journalism, which was consistently pungent and gracious: not a common combination.

When I became features editor of the *Scotsman* in 1977, I also became *de facto* the paper's literary editor. I inherited a strong squad of reviewers, led by Isobel

Murray and Robert Nye. I didn't want to shed any of them, but I was determined to add Boldie to the team. He didn't let me down. He soon established himself as a superb reviewer, with an eclectic range – though he preferred Scottish books – and an available style. He was never precious. He always sought to be positive, but he could be tough and abrasive when he felt he had to be.

In the early 1980s I moved to the *Herald* in Glasgow and shortly afterwards I persuaded Alan to transfer to that paper. Once again, he excelled as a book reviewer. Boldie was a delightful man and a convivial companion, but in this context it is important to note that he was, over almost 20 years, a most distinguished contributor to Scottish literary journalism.

Someone once wrote

that the fate of critics is to be remembered by what they failed to understand. Alan Bold understood everything he read, and wrote about. He had a consummate understanding of books, and he could communicate that understanding. Indeed, I'd say that everything he wrote, long or short, was a cultural event.

Walter Cairns

by **Jenny Brown**



The foundations for the current vitality of Scottish literature were laid during Walter Cairns' 17-year tenure as Literature Director at the Scottish

Arts Council. His twin passions were for music and literature – he studied music at Edinburgh University, but followed his father into publishing, and joined the editorial staff first at Thomas Nelson's and then at Edinburgh University Press. He retained his editor's eye for detail and high standards in typography and design throughout his career. In the late

1960s he organised the Martin Chamber Concerts, bringing baroque music to the city. Walter's first association with the Scottish Arts Council was as chairman of its Music Committee, and in 1979 joined the staff of the Council as Literature Director.

Literature has traditionally received a slender slice of the funding, and finding

additional resources to support a burgeoning writing community and to kickstart new ventures was no easy task. Nevertheless, under Walter's guidance and with his encouragement, significant initiatives started and flourished: the Edinburgh International Book Festival which celebrates 21 years this summer, Moniack Mhor Writers' Centre, and the Scottish Poetry Library. In 1987, Walter invited publishers to come forward with proposals to establish an affordable, high quality paperback series which would bring back into print works of Scottish literature. Canongate was successful in securing funding, and the resulting Canongate Classics series (now running to over 100 titles) has been instrumental in ensuring the study of Scottish literature in schools and universities, and its enjoyment by the general reader.

The *Readership Report* of 1989 was a

landmark document which looked at ways of reversing the decline in reading. From it came *Now Read On* which took bookshop promotion into public libraries, Books for Babies, and the 1995 Readiscovery campaign with its touring Book Bus.

Not only did Scottish writing flourish in this period, but there was a lively international exchange – Robertson Davies, Nadine Gordimer, Brian Moore, Mario Vargas Llosa and Alistair MacLeod visited as guests of SAC.

One of his most outstanding achievements was the degree of co-operation he managed between SAC and its literature clients. Authors speak warmly of his absolute integrity, his unfailing courtesy and his genuine concern for their situation. Members of the Literature Committee recall his kindness and his astuteness, colleagues his dedication, wry appreciation of life and his love of good food. Correspondents

remember his well-worded letters and sculptural handwriting.

He was a man of his era, with little time for management tools, political correctness or computer skills. It is a testament to the affection in which he was held that his retirement party in 1996 was attended by a great gathering, and a book presented to him had contributions by the likes of Iain Crichton Smith, Edwin Morgan and George Mackay Brown, and a painting by Alasdair Gray. A sonnet by Alison Prince paid tribute to Walter's crucial enabling role in Scottish literature:

'... In defence of those
Who live to write, a man
who put stone on stone
All over Scotland. Time
cannot efface
Such work. Whatever
wind of fashion blows
These cairns of caring
will be ever known.'

Dorothy Mitchell Smith

by **Kate Blackadder**



Dorothy was Publishing Manager at Saint Andrew Press in the late 80s and represented that

publisher on the SPA Council. She had an eye for detail – and used it well later as a teacher of proofreading and copyediting. In those early days it was SPA expenditure which came under her microscope and decisions were examined thoroughly. She was, however, very supportive, and later,

when she married and moved to London, she joined with the SPA in providing training in those useful skills. It was sad that Dorothy enjoyed her marriage for so few years, and somehow amazing to us all that illness could have challenged such an organised and positive person.

Pam Smith

by **Lorraine Fannin**



Born St Valentines Day 1955, died Easter Monday 2000

‘Polygon Pam’ was how she was first described to me as I tried to identify the characters I’d started to work with at the SPA. Pam Smith worked with Neville Moir in the early Polygon, a list which grew to such later prominence. At that time it was still run by the

Edinburgh University Student Publications Board with titles that reflected the intellectual and creative ambitions of university life. Interesting new writers appeared, James Kelman and Ian Rankin included. Pam Smith’s main task was to market and sell the books,

though she and Neville worked together to guide and help shape the list.

Pam was tireless in her promotion of Polygon and she took their titles to all the book fairs, where she developed a great network of international contacts.

Pam was huge fun. Her energy and humour were abundant and she made the travels and the tasks enormously enjoyable. Specially memorable are the zany outings at Frankfurt where we shared accommodation in

the small flat of an elderly former POW near the zoo. (Money was very tight in Scottish publishing then).

As people changed jobs in the late 80s, Polygon was passed over to Edinburgh University Press and Pam moved to Mainstream to do sales in London. We missed her, but she made trips to the London Book Fair an absolute treat with her knowledge of the wacky places to eat and the interesting places to party – even occasionally Mainstream’s London

base. Peter Mackenzie and Bill Campbell enjoyed her wit and greatly respected her views on the trade.

Pam later moved from Mainstream to work on a variety of projects, including both Reiki massage and crime publishing: one could expect no less from her. Sadly her illness began to take hold, though she battled with great determination against it. Pam finally lost the battle in 2000.

Martin Spencer

by **Vivian Bone**

Vivian Bone worked for Oxford University Press for 12 years after her degree. She worked for EUP, first as Editor, then for 16 years as Managing Director. She is now a Consultant Editor on EUP journals.

After National Service, a period in which he learned spoken Chinese to understand ‘enemy’ transmissions, Martin worked for Longmans in Hong Kong and West Africa. He then spent 15 years running Manchester University Press until 1987, before joining

Edinburgh University Press as Secretary. He threw himself into expanding EUP’s output, working with Vivian Bone for a year before he started the job, so the titles produced in his first year increased from 23 to 34. Sadly, Martin died at the end of 1990,

but by April 1991 the number of titles published had increased to 58.

Martin concentrated on politics, social science and literature and published books intended to give EUP a higher profile. He also built up Polygon.

To EUP's Scott edition he added editions of Stevenson, Boswell and Hogg. He brought the anthropological journal *Africa* from MUP after a decent interval, and it became the foundation of EUP's now flourishing journals list; financially speaking

it was his greatest legacy to the Press. Overall, Martin made it clear that the Press was looking to expand, and be more modern and marketable; one could say he put it more on the map.

Archie Turnbull

by **Alistair McCleery**

Alistair McCleery teaches, researches and writes on publishing, present and past, at Napier University.

Archie Turnbull, who died in February 2003, was Secretary to Edinburgh University Press from 1952-1987. During his period at EUP, he transformed a rather pedestrian publisher into the most significant

university press outside those of Oxford and Cambridge. His enthusiasm and professionalism led to EUP's position as the key outlet for Scottish historical scholarship, laying foundations for a much fuller understanding of the nation's history and contributing to the debate about its political status.

Also of note is the ongoing *New Edinburgh*

Edition of the Waverley Novels, commissioned by Turnbull before his retirement. His early appointment of George Mackie as designer gave EUP books a distinctive appearance. When Archie Turnbull took over in 1952, EUP had published about 12 books; by 1987 it had published about 400 and the annual output had risen to some 40 titles.

Norman Wilson

by **Professor Douglas Gifford**

Norman Wilson OBE (1906-1987) Former Chairman of The Scottish (General) Publishers Association, Founder of Ramsay Head Press, President of the Scottish Arts Club.

This brief description misses so much of this delightfully unpretentious, shrewd, and outstanding humane man. As early as 1927, Norman, with Lewis Spence and Charles Graves, was a founding-member of the Porpoise Press, which played an important part in the Scottish Renaissance in poetry and prose of the 1920s and 30s. Just after this, for the next 25 years, he played an important part in developing Scottish film in the days of Grierson, he and Forsyth Hardy founding the Edinburgh Film Guild and in the 30s publishing the distinguished *Cinema Quarterly*, and founding

(again, with Forsyth Hardy) the Edinburgh Film Festival in the same year as the city launched the main Festival in 1947 (Norman was, of course, on the Official Festival Committee). In 1948 his expertise and knowledge of film placed him on the prestigious Committee of Inquiry into the Future of the British Film Institute; his contribution to this and his pioneering film work was recognised that year in the award of his OBE.

Around the war years Norman published many titles with The Albyn Press, also producing another and beautifully illustrated quarterly, *Edinburgh Today*. Then came the London decade, as a managing director of John Menzies (a success which he later typically played down, along with the fact that he had had his own chauffeur!). He

returned on retirement in 1968 to found the Ramsay Head Press and *Books in Scotland* – and to become Chairman of the fledgling SPA, in days when the body had no clerical back up. Stephanie Wolfe Murray of Canongate was to say, after his death, that it was largely due to him that SPA became a strong and growing organisation.

When Norman died in 1987 his magazine, *Books in Scotland*, carried uniquely glowing tributes from many friends and colleagues. Forsyth Hardy pointed to the fact that as director of Porpoise he had helped the young Neil Gunn's career with the publication of *Morning Tide*; he also enthusiastically and practically supported from the beginning the work and writing of John Grierson as well as ensuring that Scotland

gained its own independent Film Council, and making the Edinburgh-based Film Guild the largest film society of its time in the world. 'A constant tug-of-war between films and books' is how Forsyth described Norman's life and work; yet Alastair Dunnett claimed that 'there never was a man more devoted to the printed word'. And what a range of books Norman helped bring to print – from the many ground-breaking film and general interest magazines, Gunn's early fiction, and *John Grierson's Scotland* to Arnold Haskell's *Miracle in the Gorbals* and Moira Shearer's *Ballet Album*. In later years, with typical generosity, he gave young – and established – writers and academics the chance to write on their enthusiasms in his *New Assessments* series. With David Daiches as editorial consultant, the series produced a distinguished and challenging series of revaluation's of major Scottish figures across

culture, including amongst others, Hugh MacDiarmid's *John Knox*, the *Scotsman* drama critic Allen Wright's *James Barrie*, Donald Low's *James Bridie*, Ian Campbell's new study, *Kailyard*, C.H. Sisson's *David Hume*, Douglas Gifford's *James Hogg*, Allan Massie's *Muriel Spark*, as well as volumes of poetry from leading poets such as Tessa Ransford, Alice Stuart and Charles Graves. In 1978 Norman himself produced *Scottish Writing and Writers*, a stimulating guide to contemporary Scottish writing, with the help of friends like Iain Crichton Smith, Allen Wright, A.D. Mackie, Stephen Mulrine and Douglas Gifford.

It was also typical of Norman to create in *Books in Scotland*, a magazine which helped both writers and publishers simultaneously, and which gave a global concept to the idea of the Scottish literary scene which it had not had for nearly 200 years. Here

virtually all Scottish books received reviews, whether on cookery or caravanning, great literature or mountain-climbing, art or architecture, children's books or philosophy. The magazine, begun in 1978 and carried on after Norman's death in 1987 by Norman's wife Christine and his son Conrad, the distinguished music critic and writer, rapidly became essential reading not just for interested readers but for the librarians of all descriptions to use as a tool for book selection, whether for public, schools of universities.

Walter Cairns of the Scottish Arts Council described Norman as an anachronism – 'a publisher who was also a gentleman' – and while Norman would have shaken his head self-deprecatingly, all his colleagues and friends knew exactly what Walter meant, since it took one to know one. What came through in all the tributes, from figures like

Sir Robert Grieve (who chaired the Highlands and Islands Development Board), Albert Morris, Tessa Ransford (who pioneered The Scottish Poetry Library), Trevor Royle, Professor Ross Roy of the University of South Carolina (the world's foremost authority on Burns and Scottish poetry and editor of the foremost critical magazine in its field, *Studies in Scottish Literature*), and Paul Scott (until recently President of the Saltire Society) – was the emphasis on Norman's humanity, kindness, and gentle shrewdness.

And Norman's wisdom and warmth, together with publishing, writing and editing, lasted all through his long life. At 73 he was persuaded to take on the Presidency of his beloved Scottish Arts Club, to steer it successfully through its debates as to whether to admit women, becoming one of the most memorable and best-loved of its Presidents. The Art Club at the centre of Edinburgh as a whole was Norman's world – and his choice of symbolic *logo* for his publishing house was highly appropriate – the

head of that other Edinburgh entrepreneur, of the early eighteenth century, the predecessor of Fergusson and Burns, and a forerunner and enabler of the Scottish Enlightenment, who sold his warmly human poetry in the city streets, whose vision for Scotland came from a fierce loyalty to his city and country, Allan Ramsay. The Scottish Publishers Association should be proud to have had his heir, Norman Wilson, as one of its pioneering Chairmen.

The future belongs to ...

Alison Bowden

Alison Bowden jettisoned a dubious career in journalism to move into publishing in 1996, and is currently Rights Manager at Edinburgh University Press. Her early years were moulded by the work of Mr Jim Henson, and later by a raft of fine authors.

I managed to wind my way into publishing in a somewhat vague manner. As the proud owner of what many would view as a doubly pointless degree – English and Media Studies (two mickeys in one mouse there) – I had decided to take me and my debt to the big smoke ...

Edinburgh. While at university I had dabbled in publishing by setting up and editing a satirical magazine which had resulted in my degree being suspended – momentarily and mostly just for effect – by our esteemed Principal. He was not entirely approving of our rather robust editorial policy which allowed for a close examination of both his anatomy and his management skills. Thus having appreciated fully the

highs and lows of journalism, I thought I might move to the more hallowed ground of publishing, even academic publishing, clouded as it is in a strangely cerebral air, the implication being that because you work with books, you have therefore, obviously, read them all and are extremely intelligent. In 1995, a burgeoning Edinburgh University Press welcomed me into the fold as an assistant. Aside from learning that computers had yet to touch the world of academic publishing in any meaningful form (what do you mean you don't have a database of all the books you've ever published?) I realised that it is a world of specially extended time. I had worked for radio stations

and newspapers, and my concept of time involved things having to be done 'now', 'immediately' and 'yesterday'. The concept of scheduling books for years hence was just bizarre, and the idea that there was an aspect of the media world where the end product could take eight or more months to make, just seemed outlandish. However, on my first day, I realised working in publishing held unexpected joys. I was given the task of chasing up one or two authors and thoughtfully reminding them that their manuscript was overdue for delivery. One of the errant bunch contained a certain Professor from my University days who took particular delight in refusing to grant essay deadline extensions. (What do you mean your entire family has been wiped out by a deadly virus and your head has fallen off? Dante didn't miss deadlines; Shakespeare didn't turn up to a rehearsal and say 'My dog ate the play'.) So



Alison Bowden, Lorraine Fannin and Liz Small at *Instant Book*

I called my Professor and made lots of 'oh really ...' and 'mmmm well the wheels of publishing wait for no man' noises. Day one in publishing and I had warmed to the trade immensely. Over the years I've tiptoed my way through a variety of jobs and departments, both academic and trade publishing, but the pull towards London, and the plethora of jobs and opportunities available there, remains strong and unavoidable. To remain in Scotland and in publishing involves sacri-

fices, compromises and a dogged spirit. And a huge amount of luck. Eight years later and I'm still warming to the trade. I'm proud to work in publishing, and particularly to have worked at Polygon, most memorably with Alexander McCall Smith on his meteoric rise to fame. The number of Scottish authors and publishers currently topping the bestseller charts in the UK and in the USA is testimony to quality publishing, irrespective of location.

Scottish publishing is

a small, dedicated and supportive (or poorly paid and suffocating depending on your viewpoint ...) community but we have a long way to go if we want to grow and compete, and be heard amongst the daily flood of books being published and promoted across the world. Margins seem to shrink each year and to be profitable in this sort of environment is a major achievement. Our

strength lies in our collective resolve, and in our individual dedication to what we spend each day doing. Perhaps I'm a product of my generation, but I think technology holds the key for our industry. Websites, databases, spreadsheets, the Internet – these things should underpin our work and help us do our work. Publishing shouldn't be 90% admin with a little reading and

conversation thrown in to brighten up each day. Using technology – rather than running behind, fumbling under mounds of paper trying to catch up – will let us make books, sell books, sell rights and reach a world of authors, readers and buyers more easily. Perhaps even cut down that 90%, and who knows, let us do a little more reading.



Alison Caldwell

Alison Caldwell set up Keppel Publishing in 1998 and published her first books in 1999 with the launch of the first two picture books in the *Rory Stories* series. Five years on, there are seven picture books and an activity book in the series and sales have grown to over 40,000 copies. Most recently, Alison has published a new series of picture books entitled *Our Wonderful World* and has been busy developing new projects for launch in autumn 2004 and spring 2005. She is married, has three young children and loves living and working in southwest Scotland.

Keppel Publishing

The Scottish Publishers Association has been around six times longer than Keppel Publishing has and our list is a fraction of the size of most of the other members in the Association. We are a small business though not small-minded, ambitious but don't aspire to lofty ambitions. Surviving, growing steadily, producing books that outlets will hopefully stock and people will somehow spot and buy, continuing to enjoy what we do – each and all of these are what we are striving to achieve.

Publishing isn't the easiest of business ventures, but that was one of the earliest lessons I learned, courtesy of the SPA's excellent course, *Introduction to Publishing*. (Perhaps it should be renamed *Everything you need to know about*

publishing, but are too afraid to ask in case you're told the truth.)

Initial hopes of achieving world domination overnight were quickly dashed when I discovered that an order for six copies of a book from an individual outlet was the exception. This reality check was closely followed by the chin-dropping revelations that orders can sometimes be sale-or-return and certain levels of discounts can leave you with very little percent of hardly anything at all.

Yet, despite the home truths, the lure of developing an idea and working with others to produce a book that somebody, somewhere would hopefully buy, take home then share and enjoy with a child proved irresistible. And it still is. As for the future? Now, where's that crystal ball ...?

Ann Crawford



Ann Crawford is Head of Publishing at Saint Andrew Press. In 2004, Saint Andrew Press celebrates 50 years of publishing Church of Scotland titles, many of which have attracted considerable attention not only in Scotland but well beyond. Ann studied publishing full-time for three years before going on to work at HarperCollins, Bartholomew, Chambers, Edinburgh University Press and in the distance-learning department at Napier University. She lectured part-time in editing and publishing and is currently a member of the Napier University Court. She enjoys living in relatively rural East Lothian with her husband, and travelling whenever she gets the opportunity.

When I decided to leave my secure civil service job for a career in publishing, people seemed mystified by what that meant. With my colleague, Ally McCoist, leaving to become a professional footballer, maybe it wasn't surprising that people were unconcerned by the risk element of *my* decision. From their point of view, I was leaving to become involved in something that they felt 'might be to do with ... printing?' I had grasped that it wasn't printing but I found it easier to tell them what it wasn't than what it was!

Now, 23 years and five publishing houses later, I don't regret that ill-informed choice: for me, there is a thrill in starting from nowhere, exploring ideas with an author and having an exciting concept emerge

that neither I nor the author could have come up with alone; then, taking that concept through all the stages of the writing and publishing process, until a crisp, new consignment of books arrives from the printer. The final element of the thrill, I admit, comes from lurking in bookshops, watching members of the public *choosing* to pick up that book and take it to the till. The sense of achievement comes from starting with nothing and finishing with something on which someone actively wants to spend their money.

Catherine Read

Catherine Read joined Mercat Press in July 2001, after spending a year travelling and working in Australia, New Zealand and south-east Asia. She grew up in Yorkshire and Hertfordshire, but has a few second-homes, having lived in Madrid, Miami and Sydney. After completing a degree in American Studies from the University of Edinburgh, she decided to stay in the city and pursue a career in publishing.

It all went pretty smoothly until I threw away an author's manuscript on my first day at work. I graduated from Edinburgh University, and after a year of escapism in Australia, decided to apply for my first 'real' job. Not pitching my hopes too high after hearing how hard it was to find work in publishing, I sent off my CV and a few weeks later, I was negotiating my way up a narrow, winding staircase in James Thin Bookshop to my new office at Mercat Press.

Thankfully, I salvaged the manuscript before it was lost for good and managed to avoid any major catastrophes for the next few weeks. Back in the Baltic climate of Edinburgh I was starting to realise that living two minutes' walk from Bondi Beach had its benefits! In

Australia, I'd worked in sales, PR, marketing, accounts and even found work as an extra in an ad campaign. The variety I was accustomed to helped me to settle in at Mercat Press, as I found that working in a small publishing team demanded versatility. My tasks ranged from editing, typesetting and design to marketing, events and promotions.

However, I'd joined James Thin at a difficult time and within six months of starting my new job, I walked into work to hear the news that the family business was in administration. The subsequent MBO by Seán Costello and Tom Johnstone was a new beginning for Mercat Press and since then, we have moved to new premises in the West End, expanded the list, exhibited at the London

Book Fair in association with the SPA, set up links with an American distributor, developed a website and launched a new fiction imprint.

Before I decided on this career, I never knew how demanding and

exhausting, but ultimately rewarding, the publishing process was. One of the most enjoyable aspects of the job is meeting such a wide variety of people and, for a short time, being part of their dream to see their (sometimes

very personal) work in printed form. It is hard to say what will happen in the future of publishing, but Mercat Press have some exciting projects in the pipeline and I am looking forward to being part of them.



Mercat Press: Tom Johnstone, Catherine Read and Seán Costello, EIBF 2003

Davinder Bedi

Davinder was appointed Managing Director of BookSource, the SPA's trading arm, in August 2003, having transferred from the SPA, which he joined in 1996. Currently studying part-time for an MBA at Glasgow University, he aspires to spend more time in the library and less in the bar than during his undergraduate career.

The future of Scottish Publishing?

It was a cold September morning in 1996 and I found myself in Perth looking for the local Stakis hotel. It was my first day at work with the Scottish Publishers Association and I was full of all the anxieties that you would expect of a 'newbie' in a well-established office. Well it wasn't actually my first day – Lorraine had said after the interview that it might be useful if I came along to the SPA's first conference prior to taking up my position as Financial Administrator the following week.

I felt great. I was 'away on business', staying in a reasonably top-notch hotel, and I even had my own room! My dad would have been proud of me, for it was a far cry from being a tailor in some back street in the

Punjab, which is what he did at my age. I had landed my perfect gig – or so I thought.

It was later in the day that I realised that I knew nothing. Why was this old bloke (Ainslie Thin) standing in front of us talking about the collapse of the 'NBA'? What the hell was the connection between American basketball and Scottish publishing? And what did the 'Jews' have to do with it and why were we recording them?!

Bewildered, I resorted to what every Glaswegian finds comfort in – drink. The absence of 'Buckie' at the bar led me to a hairy scary Irishman (Kevin Byrne) who was sporting an unopened bottle of Isle of Jura. Spotting the booze, I quickly established whatever tenuous link between us I could (in this instance it happened to be that I was

at University with his son), and we set about getting tore into a bottle of fine Scotch.

The next morning, my first foray into Scottish Publishing ended at the AGM with people talking about booksellers 'demanding' more discount – now what's that all about? If anyone ever 'demanded' any discount in my father's shop he would have set about them with a brush!

I had the weekend to think about it, but I still turned up for work at Dundee Street the following Monday, and it is a day I will never forget. I met not one but two intriguing animals that day – Lavinia Drew and BookSource, for it was BookSource that recorded the 'Jews' and Lavinia managed the process.

Oh, how I have learned.

Eight years have passed and I have become Managing Director at BookSource. I have turned from 'Buckie' to Beaujolais, from 'Scotch'



to Speyside and from 'Dear' to 'Dah-ling'. I can air kiss with the best of them and I can schmooze with the worst of them. I have truly learned about Scottish publishing.

I have learned in my time how invaluable a good distributor is for a small publisher – and by invaluable I mean essential. For it is a good distributor that not only provides a quality service but also ensures that no harm can ever come to publisher's cash, no matter what the circumstances are. It was to safeguard funds that BookSource was founded in 1995 after the collapse of the then Albany Book

Davinder Bedi finds the camera

Company. Working out of a corner in the SPA office, BookSource provided invoicing and cash collection services for around ten client publishers.

Since then the company has seen several key developments (besides employing me). The implementation of one of the world's leading software systems in 1998, the strengthening of our customer service and warehouse departments and the consolidation of our operation to our Glasgow premises have all contributed significantly to the growth of BookSource. We now distribute for some 50 client publishers based

across the entire United Kingdom, and by offering our clients what other distributors regard as ‘value added’ services, we fully expect to see client numbers flourish over the years to come.

Our unique policy of only ever being owned by the users of the business has meant that we are frequently invited to participate in industry-wide initiatives. We took part in the initial discussions on the Returns Process and helped formulate the rules, keeping the ‘smaller players’ in mind; we trade electronically with as many key customers as we can and we continue to sit on the UK credit control committee, offering, and getting, advice on credit control issues that affect all UK publishers.

So what does the future hold for us? The entire trade seems to be moving towards ‘stream-

lining’, or ‘taking the cost out’ of things, or ‘greater efficiencies’. Basically, it means that people want things cheaper than they got them before, and whilst this goes against whatever knowledge of economics I’ve picked up over the years, I feel we simply have to respect it and deal with it. As our customers look to ‘take the cost out of the supply chain’, and with more and more effort required in the sales process, and with the inevitable discount increases over the forthcoming years, more and more publishers will realise that the only way to trade profitably with booksellers is for them too to achieve those ‘supply chain efficiencies’. They will realise that they have to trade electronically, which is expensive, and that they have to achieve consolidation, for which you need at least one other.

Now, I’m not suggesting that publishers should make a mad dash to their nearest distributor – far from it for it will only be a few that exist in a few years time. Like publishers, distributors also need to examine their costs and find ways of providing all the services that publishers need, at the service levels that customers expect, but both at a lower cost – and ultimately at a profit. In many cases the demands of the industry will be too great and we will begin to see the dominance of a small number of third party distributors, each operating within its own niche market.

Being well equipped for it, BookSource looks forward to the challenges of what’s left of the 21st century – and anyway, world dominance seems fine to me.

Until next time. Ciao darling. Mwah, mwah.

Jim Hutcheson

Stephanie Wolfe Murray

interviews Jim Hutcheson

Jim Hutcheson has worked as a book illustrator/designer for most of the Scottish Publishers over the past 30 years. Originally from Alloway in Ayrshire, he did his second-ever job for Canongate Books in 1974.

Today, he still works part time for Canongate as Art Director and was responsible along with the artist Andy Bridge for the cover of Booker Prize winning *Life of Pi*.



SWM How did you first become involved in book design?

JH Well, I started when I was at school. I designed magazines with friends and I was also on the school magazine committee.

SWM Did that continue through Art College?

JH Yep. We had our own printing press at our flat and produced limited edition pocket books – very limited.

SWM Were you particularly interested in book design, or magazines, posters, that sort of thing, or did you have ambitions to become an artist?

JH Yes, I did then. I was doing the usual exhibition routine. The design was more of a way to make a living.

SWM Did you have strong feelings about the difference between being an artist and being an

illustrator?

JH No, I didn't. There is a difference obviously, but illustration is often applied art really.

SWM Some wood engravings are often made by very fine artists, for example. But would you call some of the more famous illustrators like Ernest Sheperd an artist or an illustrator?

JH An artist. But he was also a commercial illustrator.

SWM What was your first publishing job and how long after you left college was it?

JH About a month. It was a book jacket for Simon Berry of Molendinar Press. I can't remember which book! And then I got a job doing a cover for *Cromarty, the Search for Oil*, for Canongate.

SWM That was a funny little book wasn't it? But interesting too.

JH Yes. I remember it

being basically a black Freudian ink mark. When it came to delivering the artwork, I found myself rushing up Dundas Street with the ink still wet and it running all over the place. By the time I got to Jeffrey Street (Canongate's old offices). It looked a bit like a Jackson Pollock.

SWM I think of your first job as the illustrations for *Scottish Love Poems* by Antonia Fraser in 1975, soon after Canongate started. I thought they were absolutely wonderful and original and did sort of marry this business between being an artist and being an illustrator. Do you feel they have stood the test of time?

JH It helped that I had done a thesis on Celtic art and that that whole area had not yet been exploited. They were really vignettes rather than illustrations, to be honest. Funnily enough now, on my new letterhead, thirty years later, I'm using one of these illustrations. By the way, they were Scandinavian.

SWM Those were the days when we all started going to book fairs and I remember you coming to one or two of them. It must have been very different for somebody who wasn't actively killing themselves trying to sell books.

JH I thought they were great – meeting one's heroes etc. For instance, I met Victor Ambrus the illustrator once and had a very inspiring conversation (Ambrus is now mostly known for his work on television's *Time Team* programme). I thought it was a huge kind of melting pot for meeting people.

SWM You probably had time to wander the stands of all the different countries in the world to see what was going on whereas we were having to have one business meeting after another so I remember being quite envious of you.

JH Well, that's how Bill Campbell and I became friendly. Not just wandering the stands but wandering around the

bars and parties of Frankfurt.

SWM Right. Well, to skip a few years, how did the new technology change the way you worked? I remember the vast cameras you used to have in your studios.

JH Well, there was about a fortnight's honeymoon period with digital technology at the end of the 80s when we were pleasantly surprised at the speed in which we could finish some tasks. Thereafter, I think we've all been working too hard. The original 'Californian' idea (computer technology) was that it would give us more leisure time so we could actually spend more time thinking about what we were doing!

SWM So it has just enabled you to do more and more?

JH Yes, but I don't necessarily want to do more. I want to do work right i.e. pieces of work which will hopefully last a bit longer than next week.

SWM I remember the days when we used to

send a blurb to the typesetter through the post. That would take one or two days to get there, then they'd take a week to ten days to send it back, typeset, then we'd have to send back the corrected proofs and so it went on, and now we expect that whole exercise to happen in less than half a day.

JH That's right. And there were fewer mistakes. Mistakes get places quicker nowadays. There was generally more care taken over the whole process. I mean I love computers, but human nature being what it is ...

SWM Is it true that you can design several book covers in one day?

JH Yes, but as I've hinted, that's not a particularly good idea.

SWM What I really want to know is has this new technology improved design?

JH Yes, I think it probably has. Sounds like a contradiction, but yes it has. There are folk working full-time in design nowadays who might otherwise have

chosen a different career if they had been confronted with the skills necessary in the old handcraft side of it i.e. glue and scalpels etc. But good ideas will out regardless of the medium.

SWM You worked with some wonderful old designers like George Mackie and Ruari Maclean who very much lamented the day when letterpress stopped and suddenly you could then get anything at the touch of a button. And then I remember the young Rob Dalrymple being a complete type aficionado all on computer and you used to be a mixture between the two.

JH Well you can still get hot metal typesetting if you really want to.

SWM But is it worth it?

JH For specific jobs, yes it is. I imagine some publishers might not know what letterpress was nowadays and therefore query the extra costs involved.

SWM Sorry, I'm just showing my age even asking you such

questions. You've worked for many publishers. Can you tell me more?

JH I've worked with Penguin, and Weidenfeld and Nicholson for instance along with many other publishers here and abroad.

SWM Are you happier working in Scotland with local publishers?

JH I like the idea of folk working locally (if the work is available of course). Although we now have the Internet and we're supposed to be global, I think there are certain psychological, fundamental processes at work that mean that people would benefit working locally. It happens to be Scotland in my case.

SWM Yes. I remember when I worked with you, especially when we were doing Scottish books, you knew so much about the folklore and the history, not just design. I was inspired by many of your stories!

JH Thanks. I made them all up. No, just kidding. I think that's what's been

good about the Scottish Publishers Association, the Scottish Arts Council and so on, supporting books which are often and obviously never going to be as successful on a world platform ...

SWM Some of them are, but maybe not often the Scottish ones.

JH I regard most of the books I work on in the same way, be they by a well-known writer of international stature, or by a local chimney sweep who might pen the odd poem now and then.

SWM Talking of poets, and book covers, you have done some classics yourself. I'm thinking of *Men on Ice* by Andrew Greig.

JH Thanks, that was great fun – and I used the lettering from the *Eagle* comic. Now, that was a true classic.

SWM Would it be too contentious to ask which publisher you prefer working for?

JH No, but this is a small stage we're talking about and most of us in this neck of the woods know

each other. I feel privileged to have known and worked with most of them. It would be daft to single any one out.

SWM Do you work for fewer publishers now? Has it been a particular decision? I know you spend much of your working week with Canongate and Birlinn/Polygon.

JH Yes, but on the other 12 days of the week I still work for other people.

SWM Has it given you some fulfilment having contributed so much to the Scottish publishing scene?

JH Very much so. There is a fantastic list of characters, long may it continue.

SWM It's not just publishers either. There are the authors who have become successful.

JH Yes, absolutely. For instance, Alasdair Gray and I have worked on quite a few books together. They have been a good example of the local collaboration scenario I was referring to earlier.

SWM Also you've been involved with the SPA who we're doing this interview for now.

JH Yes, years ago, I drew the big eagle which was the SPA's first logo. It was a grim, big, foreboding beastie especially when we pasted it onto a large piece of plywood and carted across the English Channel. A bit like a *Dad's Army* operation really.

SWM I think it's time we had an exhibition of your classic book covers, illustrations and posters. They really do trace the time that has passed and the progress that has been made since the renaissance of Scottish publishing in the 1970s.

JH I'd have to have some Kilmarnaonian leisure time for that! That's it folks!



Round-up and celebratory noises

Timothy Wright

SPA and Scottish Publishing

My experiences at EUP following 12 years as part of a large organisation reinforced my enthusiasm for independent publishing, and I was delighted to be elected as Chairman of the Scottish Publishers Association in 2001. My election coincided with huge changes across the industry and particularly in Scotland. Central to these was the demise of James Thin and its subsequent sale to Blackwell's and Ottakar's. The increased dominance of the high street chains was also becoming more and more apparent and Scottish publishers were (and are) finding it more and more difficult to get shelf space. The new Scottish Parliament increased Scotland's

exposure around the world and has provided many opportunities for Scottish publishers. The Scottish Arts Council, with whom the SPA has very close ties and to whom they rely on for significant funding, itself underwent major surgery. As a result funding failed to rise in line with expectations and the SPA faced a significant budget deficit. The SPA's Council undertook a root and branch review of the organisation: new priorities were identified and costs were cut. The process has not been without pain but the outlook is highly encouraging with a new and dedicated team led by Lorraine Fannin and some major initiatives are underway including the *Edinburgh: World City of Literature* project and the

outcomes of the SAC-commissioned *Review of Publishing*. As the majority shareholder in BookSource, the SPA is also much encouraged by the advances made by that business over the last 18 months and the outlook here too is bright.

All this is not to gloss over the continuing difficulties that Scottish independent publishers – indeed all independent publishers – are experiencing. As a member of the Independent Publishers Guild, which has over 400 UK members, I see at first hand the issues that are faced by small companies

on a daily basis: the continuing struggle to get books into high street shops; the lack of understanding at some head offices; the constant battle with cash flow and the need to placate banks; the cost of distribution, and, for trade publishers, the difficulty of attracting leading authors. The success of publishers like Canongate – a fantastic achievement for Scottish publishing as well as for independents – illustrates that these problems can be overcome. As the SPA celebrates its 30th anniversary, the future for Scottish publishers, and indeed for all

independents, is both exciting and challenging. The multitude of corporate takeovers that has occurred over the last five years has given us a real opportunity to demonstrate that big does not mean better. Authors are increasingly looking for service and commitment rather than exclusively pounds, shillings and pence. It has been a hectic couple of years as Chairman of the Scottish Publishers Association, but I do genuinely believe that as an organisation we are as ready as we have ever been to face the continuing challenges that lie ahead.



2004: Orange Prize goes to Andrea Levy for *Small Island*.



2004: Alexander McCall Smith dominates Scottish bestseller lists.



2004: Tony Blair prepares to fight election in 2005 for his third term as UK Prime Minister. President Bush prepares to fight US Presidential election for second term ...



2004: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (J. K. Rowling), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (J. K. Rowling), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (J. K. again), *The Lovely Bones* (Alice Sebold), *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (Lynne Truss), *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (Alexander McCall Smith).



2004: James Robertson wins Scottish Arts Council Book of the Year Award with *Joseph Knight*; Elizabeth Laird wins SAC Children's Book of the Year Award with *The Garbage King*.



2004: Scotland's new Parliament building at Holyrood designed by Catalanian architect Enric Miralles is planned to open as costs exceed £421 million ...