

# Women of the West End

## Introduction

Long ago there was in Edinburgh a wonderful group of women pioneers, working, each in some special line, for what was then called 'the emancipation of women'.

Rosaline Masson, writer and novelist, wrote this in the *Scotsman* of 19 February 1941 after the death of Dame Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair LLB with whom her father Professor David Masson had been closely associated in the campaign to improve the position of women. These essays are a tribute to these remarkable women pioneers who lived and worked in the Western New Town of Edinburgh, dominated by a towering Cathedral, the legacy of sisters Barbara and Mary Walker. Most, if not all of the women knew each other and were interconnected in their aims and activities. Many had associations with St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral. Challenges they tackled remain with us today. Many of the words they spoke could be uttered today. In the face of enormous difficulties and opposition their energy, intelligence, patience and determination in working to improve the education, opportunities and position of women and in grappling with the problems of poverty, poor health and abnegation of responsibility still inspire awe. The one exception to the pioneering role is Miss Don Wauchope who is remarkable on another account, having become in middle age the model or muse for a Scottish artist who painted celebrated images of her now to be found in public and private collections.

The houses these women occupied are situated on the grounds of the Walker Estate and the neighbouring Earl of Moray's feu. Barbara and Mary Walker, last remaining members of the family of William Walker, continued the development of their father's lands and left the bulk of their estate to fund the building and endowment of the Cathedral Church of St Mary. Chester Street, Drumsheugh Gardens, Walker Street, Manor Place and Melville Street are part of the Walker Estate; Randolph Crescent and Ainslie Place lie on the Earl of Moray's feu. Other 'West Enders' who were friends of, or worked with, Sarah Mair included Margaret Houldsworth ((1839-1909), 5 Ainslie Place, campaigner for women's education and a wealthy philanthropist; Christian Guthrie Wright (1844-1907), Grosvenor Street, co-founder of the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Sophia Jex-Blake (1840-1912) 4 Manor Place, pioneer for the medical education of women and one of the first women doctors.

As social reformer Lady Aberdeen remarked in 1928:

it was well that the young women of today should remember at what cost the rights and privileges had been won by pioneers such as Miss Mair and so be careful to justify these champions by their discharge of those hardly-bought privileges. Not least of the services rendered by Miss Mair to her fellow women had been her insistence that in every department they should fully qualify themselves for the duties they claimed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 December 1928.

**Barbara Walker**  
**30 August 1778 - 23 March 1859**

**Drumsheugh**



**Mary Walker**  
**13 June 1783 – 4 March 1870**



Mary Walker's death on 4 March 1870 received press notices ranging from the *Scotsman* and *London Morning Post* to the *Liverpool Courier*, the *Hampshire Chronicle* and the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. Such coverage resulted not from widespread knowledge of her name but from the nature of her bequest.

Munificent legacy to the Scotch Episcopal Church. The late Miss Walker of Coates who died at Drumsheugh on 4th inst., has bequeathed the whole of the estates of the family, of which she was the last survivor, to the Episcopal Church of Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

After payment of certain legacies to distant relatives and servants, the newspapers reckoned the value of the succession to the Episcopal Church to be over £200,000. Upwards of £40,000 was specified for the building of a Cathedral with provision for a yearly stipend of £1000 for the incumbent with retirement allowances; as well as the granting of an annual bursary of £300 for young men destined for the Episcopal ministry and funds dedicated to future building work and bursaries. Not everyone applauded. A disgruntled West End resident using the name 'No Surrender' wrote to the *Scotsman*:

The whole of this neighbourhood forming the estate of Coates belonged to the late Miss Walker of Coates. She and her predecessors gradually feued it out for building purposes until only the *superiority* of it remained in her hands, the property having been wholly transferred to the householders. The proprietors of Melville Street, Chester Street, Walker Street, Manor Place and Coates Crescent were all vassals of the late Miss Walker and as such paid annually to her feu-duties varying from £10 to £20 per house.

He then described the terms of Miss Walker's will and continued:

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<sup>1</sup> *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 18 March 1870.

I have had from boyhood a pious horror of all cathedrals and a Cathedral Church of St Mary, even in the hands of the Episcopalian Church, savours so strongly of the Papacy....that I cannot look forward but with trembling, lest I should, in the smallest degree, contribute to its future support....What am I to do if they build that Cathedral Church of St Mary? Can I, considering the state of my conscience, possibly be expected to pay my feu-duty of £20 to further such a very questionable end?

Regardless of the answer to his question they did build the Cathedral. On 21 May 1874 the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury laid the foundation stone for the building designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott; the Cathedral being consecrated on 30 October 1879. The work cost £110,000 paid for by the legacy of the remaining members of the Walker family, Barbara and Mary.

Barbara and Mary were the youngest of the five surviving children born to William and Mary Walker or Drummond between the years 1769 and 1783; George, Patrick and Lillias, being the others. Siblings Mary, Christian, Patrick and Islay died in infancy.<sup>2</sup> The entire family (including a grandfather the Reverend George Walker) is commemorated on the family tombstone in Greyfriars' Kirkyard. William Walker was born on 21 April 1738 in Oldmeldrum where his father George had become the Episcopal incumbent in 1733.<sup>3</sup> In 1781, however, the Reverend George Walker raised a storm. On 1 December Bishop Arthur Petrie recorded that 'Mr Walker has now been in Edinburgh some time having abandoned his charge at Oldmeldrum'.<sup>4</sup> What prompted him to leave remains a mystery, but given that he was in his eighties and that his wife had recently died, Walker may just have decided to move to Edinburgh to be near his son William who had established himself there. He never returned to Oldmeldrum as on 22 December 1784:

died at Edinburgh in the 85th year of his age, the Rev Mr George Walker the eldest clergyman of the Episcopal communion in Scotland .<sup>5</sup>

William Walker probably moved to Edinburgh to pursue a legal career as he appeared in the first of Edinburgh's street directories as a writer (solicitor) living in Byres Close in 1773.<sup>6</sup> On 30 October 1768 he had married Mary Drummond, born on 21 November 1748 to Patrick Drummond merchant in Edinburgh and Christian Mitchell his spouse.<sup>7</sup> Drummond who became a burgess and guild-brother on 1 February 1745, dealt in plants and seeds.<sup>8</sup> On 22 November 1746 he married

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<sup>2</sup> Edinburgh City Libraries, *Old Parish Records*, Books 33-7, 1769-1786; Mary born 29 June 1769, Christian 26 October 1771, Patrick 4 December 1772, Islay 18 January 1781.

<sup>3</sup> David M. Bertie, *Scottish Episcopal Clergy 1689-2000* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Alex B. MacGillivray, *Meiklefolla: the saga of an Episcopalian Odyssey* (Oldmeldrum, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> *General Evening Post*, *St James's Chronicle or British Evening Post*, 25-28 December 1784.

According to the Edinburgh *Old Parish Records*, Book 97 he was buried in Greyfriars' Kirkyard on 24 December 1784.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Williamson, *Directory for the City of Edinburgh, Canongate Leith and Suburbs, 25 May 1773-25 May 1774*, facsimile edition (Edinburgh, 1889), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Register of Marriages for the parish of Edinburgh 1595-1800*, ed. Francis J. Grant (Edinburgh, 1922), pp. 212, 811; ECL, *Old Parish Records*, Book 49, 1759-71, Books 25-28, 1746-1755. Christian also appears as Christina and Christy in the records.

<sup>8</sup> *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-Brethren 1701-1760*, ed. Charles B. Boog Watson (Edinburgh, 1930), p. 59; *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 January 1752, 27 September 1753; National Archives of Scotland, GD132/392, *Discharged Acct. To The Lady Lude*, 30 July 1753; NAS, CS228/D/2/91, *Patrick Drummond v Gibson and Davidson*, 1755.

Christina Mitchell.<sup>9</sup> Following his death on 15 April 1758 his widow continued the business from the shop opposite Libberton's Wynd in the Lawnmarket.<sup>10</sup>

Inclosed I send a copy of your Acct with my deceast husband Patrick Drummond....I am settling all his affairs if you can send me either the whole or a part by the bearer it would be a great favour doon me as I have a great deal to do with money at present and has a large remittance to send abroad this night. I keep up the business as formerly for the behoof of Children and self and he has left me in very good Credit abroad so I'm sure of geting the best of goods I hope you with the rest of my good friends will still be my Customer if I can serve you as formerly which I shall take care to do.<sup>11</sup>

In his testament of 7 April 1758 which he had to have subscribed for him – being unable to write ‘on account of a nervous Disorder or shaking in his hand’ – Patrick Drummond named his wife as sole ‘Extrix’. He left everything to her and in trust for his children Patrick, Mary and Agnes Drummond with the ‘burden of maintaining and educating my said children suitable to their stations until their respective majorities or marriages’.<sup>12</sup>

Drummond's estate included a share of the ship *The Charles Christian* of Burntisland and the unpaid profits as well as his inherited portion (amounting to £133 6s 8d) of a debt dating from 1739, owed to his mother by James Lord Drummond a leading Jacobite. Robert Colville of Ochiltree and his son Peter also appear to have been in debt to the Drummond family as a result of which a Decreet of Adjudication was obtained from the Lords of Council and Session on 26 November 1778 and signed on 18 January 1779. The charter granted the lands and barony of Cleish, the lands of Dunduff, Outh, Crombie and various other lands, fishings, coals and coalheughs in Fife and Kinross, to ‘Lieutenant Patrick Drummond in the service of the United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies, Mary Drummond spouse to William Walker Attorney in Exchequer and to the said William Walker for himself and for his own interest and to their heirs and assigners’.<sup>13</sup> To date no evidence has been found of the outcome of this property acquisition which may have been sold soon after, but Mary Drummond had obviously brought some wealth to her marriage.<sup>14</sup>

It is not clear in which part of the properties in Byres Close the Walkers and their children resided; the directory for 1804-5 adds Luckenbooths to Byer's (sic) Close as the address of William Walker. Two ‘lands’ or tenements of flats stood in the part of the High Street named Luckenbooths, directly opposite the Tolbooth prison west of St Giles' Cathedral. Byres Close (previously named Lauder's) was the alley between the two tenements and took the name from Sir John Byres of Coates who had built part of the property on the west side in 1611. According to Robert

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<sup>9</sup> *Parish of Holyroodhouse or Canongate, Register of Marriages*, ed. Francis J. Grant (Edinburgh, 1915), p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 December 1758.

<sup>11</sup> NAS, RH15/38/134, *Letter to Mr Hugh Forbes Advocate by Muslebourgh from Christy Drummond Edinburgh*, 6 May 1758.

<sup>12</sup> NAS, CC8/8/118.

<sup>13</sup> NAS, SIG1/50/35.

<sup>14</sup> There are no relevant documents in the Walker Trust Historic Archive.

Chambers in 1825, this town residence of Byres who also built a house on his lands of Coates outside the city around the same time consisted of:

a large fore chamber with ane Studdy upon the south side of the said Turnpike off the right hand of the Entry with ane Transe leading to the rest of the house and kitchen on the west side of the said Transe with ane hanging stair on the west side divided into two rooms and Back-hall within and upon the north side of the said Chamber ane summer dining room on the west side of same and a Chamber of Dice within the said Backhall and Study on the east side thereof and Loft above the said Chamber of Dice and Back hall aforesaid.<sup>15</sup>

Subsequent eighteenth-century owners included Lord Coupar, Lord Lindores and Sir James Johnstone of Westerhall and finally William Walker.<sup>16</sup> When Henry Erskine, Lord Advocate wrote to William Walker on 13 November 1790 inviting him to a business dinner, he addressed the letter to Byres' Close.<sup>17</sup>

The tenement on the east side of the close was described as being 'in that place of the Tolbooth commonly called the Poor folks Purses'; namely the area next to the northern wall of the prison where each of the licensed 'blue-gown' beggars received from the magistrates a leather purse containing money from the monarch.<sup>18</sup> In 1807 property in this tenement was advertised for sale:

being the second storey entering by the first turnpike upon the left hand, consisting of five rooms, kitchen and other conveniences....<sup>19</sup>

It was purchased by Charles Henderson for £160 on behalf of David Lawson rope and sailmaker in Leith and disposed to William Walker on 3 August 1808.<sup>20</sup> In 1814 Walker, as principal proprietor of 'these different flats of houses and Cellars ...of those two great tenements of land' undertook a substantial renovation involving demolition and renewal of the western building and a new stone frontage for the eastern property.<sup>21</sup> By this time, however, the family residence had been relocated from the Old Town of Edinburgh due to William's successful career and property acquisitions, though his address in directories until 1793 remained Byres Close but with 'Coats' added. From 1799 to 1805 directories named only Byres Close, but thereafter William Walker of the Exchequer was listed as Drumsheugh.<sup>22</sup> He retained ownership of the Byres Close property where Patrick Walker was located in 1805.<sup>23</sup>

The description of William Walker as 'Attorney of the Exchequer' in 1784 indicated that the legal business he transacted related to cases in the Scottish Court of Exchequer to which he had presented a commission of appointment from the Joint Remembrancers in November 1775.<sup>24</sup> Three attorneys, however, objected to the proposed appointment and were ordered to submit their complaints in writing; which they did, along with a response from Walker, on 22 February 1776. The Lord Chief

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Chambers, *Traditions of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1825), p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> There are relevant documents in the Walker Trust Historic Archive.

<sup>17</sup> EUSC, Gen1995/25.

<sup>18</sup> Chambers, *Traditions*, p. 184.

<sup>19</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 1, 22 October, 5 November 1807.

<sup>20</sup> WT.

<sup>21</sup> WT, 23 November 1814; Edinburgh City Archives, SL 144, *Petition of William Walker for alterations on a tenement at the head of Byers Closs*, 14 April 1814.

<sup>22</sup> *Post Office Annual Directory* (Edinburgh, 1805), p. 139.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> NAS, E351/6, *Exchequer Court Minute Book*, 14, 22, 23 November 1775.

Barons judged the statement upon which the objections had been founded to be 'malicious and groundless', ordered its withdrawal and the admission of William Walker as one of the attorneys in the Remembrancer's Office.<sup>25</sup> The Scottish Court of Exchequer created in 1708 after the Treaty of Union, dealt with all questions relating to Customs and Excise revenue and to all honours and estates, forfeitures and penalties arising to the Crown in Scotland with the legal aspects reserved to the Court of Session.<sup>26</sup> The Attorneys or Sworn Clerks took an oath of office that 'they shall truly and diligently behave themselves as Clerks in the King's Remembrancer's Office'—embezzlement being particularly forbidden—and not consent to commands or precepts 'directed to the prejudice of the King'.<sup>27</sup> By Walker's time the Attorneys numbered four but only the two senior posts received a salary (£50 annually), the others being 'supported entirely by fees paid by the suitors in Court'.<sup>28</sup> His name is not recorded in the Minute Books of the Barons of the Exchequer Court until 1791, but some of his business can be traced as, for example, in July 1783, when the *London Gazette* reported him as dealing with the sequestration of the estate of Alexander Elphinstone at the beginning of the month and with the creditors of Lewis Gordon of Techmuir a fortnight later.<sup>29</sup> The latter case was complicated as it involved issues such as the liability of Gordon's wife for her husband's debts as she had been married to the late Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun and had property in her own right in addition to having settled some of the Fletcher debts which she wished to reclaim from the heir General Fletcher. Small wonder that Walker as factor was still engaged in achieving a settlement in 1798; and in dealing with the affairs of Gordon of Techmuir in 1809.<sup>30</sup> Similarly an inheritance claim on the estate of the Earl of Crawford involving his sister Lady Mary Campbell lasted from 1784 until 1808.<sup>31</sup> His employment by the distillers of Scotland to represent them in London concerning various public measures in 1785, resulted in Walker taking legal action against them for non payment of his fees following the dissolution of one of the companies. The case, later pursued by Sir Patrick Walker after his father's death, was still unresolved in 1832.<sup>32</sup>

William Walker's appointment as one of the two salaried Attorneys of Exchequer did not occur until 20 January 1791.<sup>33</sup> The salary of £50 paid quarterly,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 22 February 1776.

<sup>26</sup> W. Forbes Gray, 'Gleanings from the Scottish Exchequer Reports', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, vol. xxiii, 1940, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Sir John Clerk and Mr Scrope, *Historical View of the Forms and Powers of the Court of Exchequer in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1820), p. 289.

<sup>28</sup> House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers House of Commons and Command, Accounts and Papers, Public Offices*, vol. 7, (London, 1831), p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 July 1783.

<sup>30</sup> National Library of Scotland, MS/16757 fols. 3, 80, 182, 185; MS/16758 fols 20, 26, 40, 96, 120, 123, 130, 153; MS/16766 fols. 9-24, 117-124, 194-9, 225, 237; MS/16809/236 fols 253-9, 262. NAS, CS17/1/26, CS17/1/29.

<sup>31</sup> NLS, Ad.MSS/26.1.7 fols. 9, 14, 21-2, 205.

<sup>32</sup> Sir Patrick Walker v. James McNair, 19 June 1832 in J. W. Dickson et al (eds), *The Scottish Jurist*, vol. IV (Edinburgh, 1832), pp. 506-9.

<sup>33</sup> NAS, E229/10/1, *Book of holders of offices in Scotland 1708-1830*; E351/7, *Exchequer Court Minute Book*; E223/2/9, *Quarterly Lists*, 1785-1791.

comprised only part of his substantial earnings which were supplemented in 1797 when he successfully petitioned the Lords of the Treasury for compensation for the loss of fees incurred by 'the operation of the late Revenue Laws'.<sup>34</sup> In this he imitated his senior colleague Henry McKenzie, author of bestselling novel *The Man of Feeling* and favourable reviewer of the poems of Robert Burns. McKenzie was still being paid an additional £250 annually when he died in 1831; Walker received £200 until his death in 1817. William Walker is recorded as appearing regularly in the Court of the Exchequer after 1794, both dealing with procedural matters such as requesting extensions of time for Court hearings or acting in hearings on behalf of defendants in cases concerning, for example, ownership of quantities of starch powder at Haddington or duties on cargoes of spirits.<sup>35</sup> A case in 1812 involved a dispute over the right of collection of Government taxes for the New Town of Edinburgh. The Lord Advocate and Solicitor General argued in favour of the City magistrates but the Barons of the Exchequer (William Walker acting as Attorney) decided in favour of the Collectors of the County.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout this period Walker amassed an impressive property portfolio which might have influenced a decision to become an extraordinary Director of the Edinburgh Friendly Insurance Company.<sup>37</sup> Owning land and buildings gave status but was an investment for the future of his family. The *Post Office Annual Directory* for 1805-6 lists the address of William Walker of the Exchequer as Drumsheugh with that of Patrick Walker Advocate as 'Byres's Close'.<sup>38</sup> Thereafter they are both credited with Drumsheugh. Only in the Directories for 1793-4, and 1797-8 is 'Coats' included.<sup>39</sup> The advertisement for the roup, at a reduced upset price, of the 'Mansion-house of Coats', scheduled for 19 July 1786 (a postponement from August 1784), described the sale as being:

The LANDS and MANSION-HOUSE OF COATES, with office-houses, pigeon-house, gardens etc. The mansion-house is pleasantly situated within a mile of the Cross of Edinburgh, near the Water of Leith, and commands an agreeable and extensive prospect in every direction. The lands consist of about 30 English acres and are divided into four inclosures by sunk fences and all inclosed with high stone walls having strips of planting of various sorts of trees, with walks and beautiful borders of shrubbery all round. In each of the inclosures there is a water pond, and in three of the ponds there are fish; and the gardens are all well stored with fruit trees of all sorts of the best kinds. The great road to Queensferry passes along and will be the mutual boundary of these lands and the westmost square of the New Town when completed; and the cross road which bounds the lands on the south being in line with George-street, they will be very commodious for feuing to build on...<sup>40</sup>

Clearly no bidders were forthcoming as on 2 December 1786, 'William Walker Attorney in Exchequer came to the Trustee and offered him the sum of £1800

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<sup>34</sup> NAS, E305/11, *Minute Book of the Barons of the Exchequer*, 7, 12 May, 14 December 1797.

<sup>35</sup> NAS, E351/7, *Exchequer Court Minute Book*, 25 November 1790-5, July 1805.

<sup>36</sup> *Scots Magazine or Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, vol. 74, (Edinburgh, 1812), p. 562.

<sup>37</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 30 January 1806.

<sup>38</sup> *Post Office Directory 1805-6*, p. 139.

<sup>39</sup> *Post Office Directory 1793-4*, p. 181; 1797-8, p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 3 June 1786.

sterling for the lands of Coates which the Trustee accepted'.<sup>41</sup> Previous to the sale the Trustees of Cramond district paid £27 13s for ground taken from the land of Coates for making a new road from Edinburgh towards Queensferry – a later cause of boundary contention.



Mr Walker's Grounds 1801, Walker Trust.

The acquisition of Coates gave Walker an investment opportunity as can be seen from a newspaper advertisement of 15 May 1800 which cited the intention to build a crescent on the 'Lands of Coates' adjacent to Charlotte Square:

The intended canal between Glasgow and Edinburgh is proposed to be carried through the back ground of these streets on the on the south side thereof, where there is a very convenient place for a wharf and coal yard. There is an excellent situation on the north side thereof for butcher and fish markets so much wanted in the west parts of the city, is well supplied by water and there is already a common sewer to the Water of Leith cut out of the free stone rock, 40 feet below the surface of the ground, through a great part of the Lands of Coates which may be carried through to these new streets; so that the buildings will be rendered perfectly dry and comfortable. And as that part of the lands of Coates where the crescent is to be built lies within the extended Royalty, it is entitled to water and every other benefit in the same way as any other part of the New Town belonging in property to the city. The expense of digging founds will be trifling, and there is a Free Stone Quarry in the grounds from which some of the most showy houses in Edinburgh and Leith have been built. The elevation of the houses will be so framed as to be commodious and without deviating from elegant simplicity, at the least possible expense which the builders can suggest. Please apply to the proprietor at Coats.<sup>42</sup>

For his next property investment William Walker returned to the Old Town. The only bidder at the roup on 5 December 1799, he purchased from the heirs of Andrew Fletcher of Milton, Lord Justice Clerk, the lands of Meadowflat and Dishieflat and a house, garden, coachhouse and offices on the south side of the Canongate once belonging to the Duke of Roxburgh. Two years later he added to his Coates estate, lands of Drumsheugh which included two dwelling houses, a small dwelling house, flower garden, grass field, stable, byre and hay loft, for all of which his wife had liferent.<sup>43</sup> The only description of the house at Drumsheugh in which the Walker family took up residence, apart from an indication on a map, is the inventory taken after Mary Walker's death. The rooms listed comprised a Dining Room, Parlour,

<sup>41</sup> WT, *Extract Article of Roup*, 4 August, 2/8 December 1786. The sasine in favour of William Walker and of an annualrent for Mary Drummond is dated 3 May 1787.

<sup>42</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*.

<sup>43</sup> WT, 5 January, 3, 4 February, 1801.

Octagon Room off the Parlour, Little Dining Room, Canary Room, Kitchen, Scullery, Larder, Drawing Room, Bedroom off, China Closet, Ante Room, Landing and Lobby, Large Bedroom, Small Bedroom, Servants Bedroom, Bed Closet, Garret, Pantry, Butler's Bedroom, Beer Cellar, Office and Garden, ashing (sic) House, Larder, Dairy, Museum, Garden and Conservatory.

What Walker had in mind, is obvious from an advertisement in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 28 March 1807 which offered to be feued for building:

That part of the Lands of Coats and Drumseugh adjoining to Charlotte Square, conform to a plan and elevation. The city will supply water and there is plenty of good Free Stone on the grounds. Estimates and contractors wanted for making the Common Sewers through the said grounds according to levels taken by Mr Ainslie. For particulars apply to the Proprietor at Drumseugh.

According to the *Articles and Conditions of Feu by William Walker Esq*, the ground would be offered in lots on both sides of the intended streets at a mutually agreed annual feu duty – this being doubled at the entry of each heir. Feuars were forbidden to sell or dispone independently of William Walker and his heirs and each feuar was bound to build according to the specification of elevation made by Mr Robert Brown. Conditions included a ban on common stairs or shops; a requirement that no dung be carried away by front of street but only by the Mews Lane; and part payment of the cost of digging the common sewer from east to west of the first division of Melville Street. Mr Walker would bring the service pipe along the centre of the street for use of the feuars.<sup>44</sup> Walker made an agreement in July 1808 with the trustees of James Erskine, Lord Alva who had died in 1796, regarding a general feuing plan of the grounds of both and usage of the common sewers belonging to William Walker. The plan included a church with the stipulation that if Walker did not build this, the cross-street on which the church was proposed (Stafford Street) should be carried through to Melville Street with uniform width and the different parts where the properties met would be squared.

Success in another roup in the following year gave William Walker ownership of subjects lying on the south side of the village of the water of Leith at the cost of £330; and in August 1809 he paid £700 for the brewery at the Water of Leith and the Dwelling-house, Barns, Brewhouse, Kiln and Cobble, Draw Well and other houses and biggings bounded by the High Road leading to Bells Mills on the south, the Water of Leith on the north, Mrs Penman's garden wall and Lambs Houses on the east and the vennel leading to the Water on the east.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, 'for certain causes moving me' he sold the superiority of the lands of Meadowflat and Dishieflat to Mr Patrick Walker advocate 'my second son'.<sup>46</sup>

On 23 November 1814, however, William Walker of Coates, 'for the love favour and affection which I have and bear to Mary Drummond my wife and my children' drew up an interesting Disposition and Settlement in favour of them in the

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<sup>44</sup> WT, 12 August, 24 October 1807.

<sup>45</sup> WT, 27 April, 9, 14 November 1808; 3/12 August 1809. Mary Drummond was accorded liferent.

<sup>46</sup> WT, 8 October 1808; sasine dated 15 July 1816. In later years Patrick rebuffed the claims of the burgh of Canongate to collect dues from the property as this was expressly exempted in his charter, NLS, MS/16801/195, *Sir Patrick Walker to John Hume*, 29 October 1820.

event of his death.<sup>47</sup> He made over to Sir Patrick, Lillias, Barbara and Mary Walker, to any future children and to the survivor or survivors of such of them:

equally and proportionately share and share alike and to their respective heirs and assigners under the burdens hereafter mentioned and particularly of the liferent Provisions after specified in favour of the said Mary Drummond and the other reservations.... All and sundry Lands, Heritages, Tenements, Goods, Gear, Debts, sums of money Heritable and Moveable, Principal, Interest, Penalties and Expenses, Household Furniture, Lying Money, Bank and Bankers Notes or receipts.... contained in a list or Inventory thereof already subscribed by me.....<sup>48</sup>

Mary Drummond received 'my whole household furniture of every description comprising silverplate, china, bed and table linen and all other articles of Household ware within my present dwelling house of which I have a date hereof put said Mary Drummond in full right and possession .... for ever and disposable by her at her pleasure as well as a free yearly annuity of £200 during her life after my decease'. George Walker the eldest son was to receive 'during all the days of his Life a free yearly annuity of £200 at four quarterly terms with power to me to increase said annuity'. George would not be able to 'sell alienate burden or affect the said annuity by any debts or deeds beyond the current year' annuity', and it was payable only to him. Under the same conditions:

as a mark of affection of a parent towards a son, whose improvident conduct, extravagance and other circumstances, besides abandoning the Profession to which he was brought up and established in which the tenderness alluded to prevents me from detailing

Walker instructed his Disponees:

as over and above the said annuity due at the time to pay to the said George Walker the sum of £200st within forty days after my decease, or as soon before or after as he shall be in a condition to receive and grant a proper acquittance to my said Disponees for the same.<sup>49</sup>

When Lillias married Lieutenant Colonel John Ainslie of Teviotgrove on 3 July 1815, William Walker amended his settlement to provide her instead with a sum of £2,000 and anything further should he think fit to do.<sup>50</sup> Patrick, Barbara and Mary thus became the joint heirs with Lillias inheriting only in the event of their deaths.

After William Walker's death on 16 November 1817 Patrick Walker with his sisters as joint executors, continued the development of the estate. Although he enacted the transactions they were on behalf of all three. By the time Sir Patrick (knighted in 1814) concluded his agreement with James Erskine in 1822, much of Stafford Street had been built, drains made and the west division of Alva Street completed. Patrick consented to purchase the remaining areas in Stafford Street from James Erskine and part of the west of Alva Street; abandoning the plan of the church and making alterations to the Meuse Lane.<sup>51</sup> In 1824 he also bought from the Governors of Heriot's Hospital an angle of ground at Coates now Coates Place. Work had begun on Coates Crescent and Melville Street in 1813 and 1814 during

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<sup>47</sup> WT, *Disposition and Settlement*, 23 November 1814, registered 28 November 1817.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Lillias was Ainslie's second wife. Ainslie died on 15 March 1817. His son William Bernard Ainslie, a Walker step-nephew, became a Walker Trustee after the death of Mary Walker in 1870.

<sup>51</sup> WT, 12 June/16 November 1822; 23/31 January 1823/4 May 1824; 6/24 March 1824.

William Walker's lifetime, with Sir Patrick continuing the feuing and development of southern Walker Street (1822-7; northern 1827-45), Manor Place (1822-67), Melville Crescent (completed 1833) and William Street (1824-5).

On 10 October 1823 an anonymous diarist noted in his journal that 'in the direct western extremity of the New Town we have Coates Crescent completed this year and several new houses built in Walker Street'.<sup>52</sup> A few months later (22 January 1824) the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that in 1823, 373 private buildings had been erected in the city of Edinburgh and environs; 11 in Walker Street, 6 in William Street, 3 in Stafford Street, 6 in Melville Street, 4 in Coates Crescent and 2 in Melville Place.<sup>53</sup> An advertisement for a year's letting of No 6 Coates Crescent described the property as the centre house of the eastern division, substantially and comfortably furnished with ample accommodation for a family and including:

A coach house for two carriages, roomy three stall stable, excellent wine, beer and root cellar under them: capital stone larder, milk-house, wash-house etc in back ground. Water-closets on the first and second floors, with a plentiful supply of water both from the common pipes and an inexhaustible well with a force pump.<sup>54</sup>

Before Sir Patrick embarked on his travels abroad in 1833-4, he safeguarded his sisters' interests by setting up a trust to exempt them on his death from any debts that might occur from certain of his investments:

considering that several houses and tenements after conveyed have been either built by me on those parts of the lands of Coates which belong jointly to me and Misses Barbara and Mary Walker with my own monies or acquired by me from builders who had no feudal title to the same and further considering that I intend leaving Edinburgh for some time....

The properties designated comprised the corner area fronting Coates Crescent, 9 Walker Street, 25, 48, 50, 52 Melville Street, 8 and 9 Manor Place. The document was signed by Patrick, Barbara and Mary and witnessed by Neil McInnes, coachman and William Fraser, Footman.<sup>55</sup> After the death of Sir Patrick Walker in 1837 the sisters, including Lillias who inherited a third of her brother's personal property such as Meadowflat and Dishieflat, the corner house of 22 Coates Crescent and 1 Manor Place and 7, 9, 11 Melville Square, continued to develop the Walker Estate under the guidance of their legal agents Mr Goldie and then Mr Phin. Lillias died in 1842 leaving Barbara and Mary to inherit her share. They oversaw the completion of Coates Place, Manor Place to No 47 and north Walker Street.

A new phase of building work began in 1863. In April Miss Walker of Coates and Mr Robert Matheson of West and South Coates petitioned for authority 'to shut up the lanes or accesses at present leading to Coates Bank and to substitute a new roadway'.<sup>56</sup> (Architect Matheson had purchased nine areas at West Coates from the Heriot Trust and he built Grosvenor Street and Lansdowne Crescent.) On 27 May

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<sup>52</sup> D. G. Moir, 'Extracts from an Edinburgh Journal 1823-1833', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, XXXIX (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 143.

<sup>53</sup> An account of the Edinburgh 'Improvements' was printed separately in February 1824, NLS, LC.137.

<sup>54</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 March 1824.

<sup>55</sup> WT.

<sup>56</sup> *Scotsman*, 29 April 1863.

1863 the *Aberdeen Journal* reported that Miss Walker of Coates had given the name of Palmerston Place to the new street to be opened through her grounds north from the Glasgow Road in remembrance of the Premier's visit to Edinburgh. Miss Mary Walker of Coates residing at Drumsheugh, Mr Monro of Auchenbowie and builders Arthur Colville, John Muir and John Macgibbon petitioned the Dean of Guild Court on 19 June for permission to erect a line of houses with stables and offices behind the same upon the north side of Chester Street – stances 5, 9, 13, 17, Miss Walker having a dwelling house built on stance 11. A warrant for No 7 had already been granted. Mary also intended to feu the remaining stances on the north side of Chester Street, namely 1, 3, 19 and 21 to others to build on. The Petition concluded:

In ignorance that any warrant was necessary for the Buildings but without the slightest intention of shewing disrespect to the Court the work has been commenced, but it is respectfully hoped that this advertency may be overlooked.<sup>57</sup>

It was. Five years later, though not a project of hers, Miss Walker of Drumsheugh attended the laying of the foundation-stone of West Coates Church performed by Sir George Campbell of Succoth and Murrayfield.<sup>58</sup> As well as land development the sisters invested in shares of stock, having holdings in the Western Bank of Scotland in the 1840s and transferred after 1870 to their Trustees for the purpose of carrying out the terms of their Disposition.

The Walkers appear to have been a close family but in the absence of personal papers there is little evidence of the activities of Barbara and Mary. While there are sources to draw on for detail of Sir Patrick's enterprises and interests, there is scant evidence of those of his sisters both of whom lived long lives in comfortable circumstances. They employed several servants and kept a carriage, though hired the horses. It is difficult to determine how often Barbara Walker accompanied her brother to official events. References such as the notice on 16 June 1825, that Sir Patrick Walker Usher of the White Rod and Miss Walker had departed London for Edinburgh, are few.<sup>59</sup> As eldest unmarried sister Barbara would have been designated Miss Walker. When John James Audubon, author of *American Birds*, gave a demonstration during his visit to Edinburgh in 1826, he recalled exhibiting his drawings every day to those who came to see them. 'I had many noblemen, among whom I especially liked Sir Patrick Walker and his lady'.<sup>60</sup> As Sir Patrick was unmarried the lady would most likely have been Barbara. Miss Walker certainly accompanied her brother to the launch of a great steam ship in 1837. Built by Menzies for the General Steam Navigation Company and apparently the largest ever constructed in Scotland, Lady Clark of Penicuik named the vessel *Leith* while a brass band played *Rule Britannia*. With cabins fitted up by Messrs Bruce, upholstery by Messrs Trotter and carpeting by Messrs Whytock, the ship registered at 760 tons

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<sup>57</sup> Dean of Guild Court Records.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 July 1868.

<sup>59</sup> *Morning Post*, 16 June 1825.

<sup>60</sup> Journal entry for 19 November 1826 in Maria Audubon (ed.), *Audubon and his Journals*, vol. 1 (New York, 1899).

and had a deck 210 feet in length.<sup>61</sup> After the ceremony, witnessed by the largest crowd since the Royal visit of George IV in 1822, 200-300 guests partook of a splendid collation in one of Messrs Menzies' upper work rooms.

Fancy dress balls proved to be popular throughout the nineteenth century. Thus Sir Patrick and the Misses Walker attended the Grand Fancy and Dress Ball given in the Assembly Rooms in George Street in March 1829, but what they wore remains unknown, probably evening dress, though their friend Mr Kirkpatrick Sharpe, sported an 'uncommonly correct' costume of a nobleman of the reign of Henry VIII and other outfits described included those of Nell Gwynn, Charles I, Lady Jane Grey, several Spanish ladies, an Archeress, Robinson Crusoe and a British sailor.<sup>62</sup> Later that month Sir Patrick and Miss Walker patronised a ball organised to raise money for the Royal Infirmary. On this occasion the pillars of the lobbies in the Assembly Rooms were festooned with evergreens but the ballroom remained free from 'any meretricious ornaments and was better without them like Thomson's pastoral beauty—"when unadorned, it is adorned the most"'.<sup>63</sup> Influenza epidemic notwithstanding, 800 ladies and gentlemen appeared at the Grand Fancy Ball in March 1837 in aid of the Royal Infirmary with Miss Walker of Drumsheugh robed in a splendid scarlet Lyons velvet dress, blood mantilla and sabots, headdress hat and feathers; and Miss Mary Walker in a rich white figured satin ball dress, headdress, hat and diamonds. Sir Patrick wore his uniform of the Royal Company of Archers.<sup>64</sup> After their brother's death in October 1837, his sisters attended at least one further Royal Archers Ball, in February 1840. Messrs Trotter of Princes Street fitted the lobby of the Assembly Rooms in extraordinary magnificence resembling a military tent. Cloth covered the walls and floor with crimson and white hangings forming the tent. The initials V and A (Victoria and Albert) 'tastefully wrote in gold' adorned the ceiling and the band of the 78th regiment along with a temporary orchestra of violins provided the music.<sup>65</sup>

When Queen Victoria visited Edinburgh in September 1842, like George IV she resided in the Duke of Buccleuch's Palace at Dalkeith where she held a Reception attended by numerous ladies and gentlemen. Formal introductions took place in the great gallery of the Palace where Miss Walker of Coates was presented to Her Majesty by the Duchess of Buccleuch. Miss Walker had enjoyed a similar honour in 1822 when she and her sister Mary were presented to George IV by the Countess of Moray at the drawing-room held on 20 August in Holyroodhouse.<sup>66</sup> Their brother knew both the Earl of Moray and the Duke of Buccleuch through land transactions and in the service of the Crown. Sir Patrick Walker held the office of

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<sup>61</sup> *Scotsman*., 8 April 1837.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 March 1829.

<sup>63</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 February 1835. The journalist quotes from *The Seasons*, by James Thomson, Scottish poet and playwright, author of *The Seasons*, the words of *Rule Britannia* and focus of an annual celebration by the members of Edinburgh's Cape Club 1764-1843.

<sup>64</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 March 1837.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 February 1840.

<sup>66</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 22 August 1822; Robert Mudie, *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1822), p. 170.

Gentleman Usher of the White Rod, a post which had involved duties in the Scottish Parliament before the 1707 Union and to which lucrative fees were attached. In 1647 the fees and salary of the office had been fixed with a scale of amounts to be paid by all Scotsmen receiving any honour from his Majesty and all Englishmen receiving such within the kingdom of Scotland. Every creation of an Earl, for example, earned the Usher £180 Scots or £15 sterling; and each Knight £40/£3 6s 8d.<sup>67</sup> By the mid eighteenth century the office could be bought and sold and on 6 July 1805 Patrick Walker became Usher following William Walker's payment of £7,600. On Patrick's death his office passed jointly to his sisters including Lillias and when Mary died in 1870, to their Trustees who still hold it, though the right to claim fees was lost in 1911. Sir Patrick had successfully gained the privilege of walking in the coronation procession of George IV in 1821, though not that of William IV in 1831. His sisters petitioned to have a representative walk on their behalf at Queen Victoria's coronation but permission was not granted.<sup>68</sup>

Occasional press reports indicate the Walker sisters' maintenance of 'royal' connections. For example, guests at Lady Belhaven's evening party at Holyroodhouse in May 1860 in honour of the Queen's birthday included Miss Walker Drumsheugh – Mary, as Barbara had died in the previous year – and she attended a similar event in 1866. In 1863 Mary met Victoria's son Edward and his new wife Alexandra when the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Edinburgh in October. A Committee of Edinburgh ladies including Miss Walker of Drumsheugh, presented a silver casket to the Princess to commemorate the marriage.<sup>69</sup> Mary had earlier contributed a £1 subscription to the fund for the benefit of the 'deserving poor' raised at the time of Prince's wedding.<sup>70</sup>

As early as 1808 Marion Burnet, illegitimate daughter of the wealthy Gilbert Innes of the Royal Bank of Scotland, attested the Walkers' apparent liking for aristocratic society. On 26 May 1808 she wrote to her father who was in London on business:

I called there (Drumsheugh) the other day and shall not go back in a hurry. I like to speak as well as hear and am not very partial to stupid observations, even though made by "My Lord or My Lady". You will perhaps exclaim the grapes are sour, in truth no, I have now no inclination to be with people who think it great condescension to eat our dinners and drink our wine, while in public they scarcely recollect our faces, this is the case with the Walkers although they pretend not to feel it.<sup>71</sup>

A longstanding friendship with the Fletcher family was probably the outcome of William Walker's legal business cited earlier. A letter to Lady Charlotte Fletcher dated 10 February 1848 announced that:

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<sup>67</sup> *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* ed. John Maitland Thomson, vol. ix (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 651.

<sup>68</sup> The Chairman of the Walker Trust processed at the 1902 and 1953 Coronations.

<sup>69</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 30 October 1863.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 March 1863.

<sup>71</sup> NAS, GD113/5/458/143, *Marion Burnet to Gilbert Innes*, 26 May 1808. Gilbert Innes was a friend of Mr Walker and Marion and Jane the eldest of his Burnet family were of a similar age to the Walker sisters.

The Misses Walker presents their compliments to Lady Charlotte Fletcher and forwards by this days Post twelve Letters and papers which belonged to the late Mr Fletcher of Saltoun but none either of Lord Milton or Mr Fletcher's writing. Should the Misses Walker find any more they will have great pleasure in forwarding them.<sup>72</sup>

This sounds as if the sisters were sorting out inherited papers. Correspondence from 'Miss Walker' dated 3 May only, indicated that she regretted 'being from home' when Lady Fletcher had called; but a letter from Mary Walker dated 29 June 1866 thanked 'Mr Fletcher' for his visit:

allow me to congratulate you most truly and sincerely on the happy event of your marriage and as you have been fortunate I think the Lady will be equally so in her choice. Lady Charlotte dined with me on Wednesday....Wishing you and your bride every happiness and enjoyment this world can give.<sup>73</sup>

Certain of the Walker sisters' activities relate to their brother's interests. Sir Patrick had been Treasurer of the New Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts founded in opposition to The Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. The New Association divided the total of the annual subscriptions (one guinea) into prizes of various sums allocated to members by ballot. Each holder of a prize could then choose a picture, the price of which had to include the amount of the prize, from the exhibition of the Scottish Academy. Thus in March 1839 Miss Walker Drumsheugh won a prize of £10 to be used for the purchase of a painting.<sup>74</sup>

According to James Grant, Miss Walker had in 1841, donated to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries a pair of handcuffs used to secure Watt while a prisoner in the Castle.<sup>75</sup> Robert Watt, former government spy turned revolutionary conspirator, had amassed a collection of weapons as a prelude to seizing Edinburgh Castle but he was arrested on charges of high treason and executed on 15 October 1794. Grant also noted the Walker family's possession of a skull from Holyrood Abbey with:

a hole in the top of the cranium, which served most probably for securing a crucifix and over the brow was traced in antique characters *Memento mori*. This solitary relic of the furniture of the abbey was procured by the late Sir Patrick Walker.<sup>76</sup>

Most likely the 'pair of Halberts of elegant form' presented by Miss Walker of Drumsheugh to the Society of Antiquaries' Museum in 1843, had been obtained by her brother.<sup>77</sup> In an undated letter to Alexander Macdonald, joint curator of the Museum, Mary Walker informed him that 'Mr Tait sent today for the armour and the only thing he kept was some of Watt's Pikes and I send a note of them'.<sup>78</sup> The sisters, however, sold the contents of Sir Patrick's natural history museum. Newspaper advertisements placed by Messrs J. L. and S. Stevens on 7 May 1839 announced:

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<sup>72</sup> NLS, MS/16743/140 *Letter to Lady Charlotte Fletcher*, 10 February 1848.

<sup>73</sup> NLS, MS16744/85, *Letter to Mr Fletcher*, 29 June 1866.

<sup>74</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 March 1839.

<sup>75</sup> James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*, vol. IV (Edinburgh, 1880), p. 238.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 44.

<sup>77</sup> *Synopsis of the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1849), p. 130.

<sup>78</sup> NLS, MS/3134/90.

they will sell by auction at their Great Room 28 King Street Covent-garden this day May 7 at twelve the very valuable collection of British and Foreign Insects and several mahogany cabinets corked and glazed, the property of the late Sir Patrick Walker deceased, member of the Linnaean, Entomological and other scientific societies. This collection abounds in rarities and especially deserves the attention of entomologists. Now on view; catalogues on application to Messrs JC and S Stevens.<sup>79</sup>

When an inventory of Drumsheugh came to be compiled in 1870, the house contained six cases of stuffed birds and lots of shells, doubtless all that remained of the collection.

Another affair concerning their brother – this time personal – which the Walker sisters had to deal with immediately after his death must have been an unpleasant surprise. On 25 July 1838 Elizabeth Campbell residing in Merchant Street Edinburgh, raised an action against the sisters of the deceased Sir Patrick Walker. She claimed the payment of maintenance for her son and daughter as she alleged Sir Patrick to have been their father. According to her testimony she had met Sir Patrick about 13 years previously and he had persuaded her to live ‘under his care and protection’ with him paying her house rent, taxes, clothing and servant’s wages until his death.<sup>80</sup> From their relationship four children were born, two of whom had died but all had been acknowledged by Walker who had paid for their maintenance and education. Elizabeth Campbell sued for payments of £20 each annually for her son, born 4 January 1828 and daughter born 28 September 1834/5/6.<sup>81</sup>

For their part Lillas (Mrs Ainslie), Barbara and Mary, through Mr Goldie, stated that the first they had heard of the existence of the children and their mother was ‘when Sir Patrick was on his deathbed quite insensible’.<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth had obviously made approaches at this time and received the answer that if she could prove paternity and relinquished care of the children, the sisters would undertake to provide for them. She refused the offer. Subsequently on 15 March 1838, five months after Sir Patrick’s death, Elizabeth Campbell married William Grant flesher(butcher); and in July the Walker sisters received their summons – and insinuated that this was because William Grant had fallen into ‘circumstances of pecuniary embarrassment’.<sup>83</sup> The due process of law involved several written defences from the Walkers and replies from the solicitor representing Elizabeth and her husband. A note in the margin of one document stated that the ailment claimed for each child was ‘a great deal too high’, £8 or £10 being the usual sum. In the end Elizabeth lost her case and had to pay expenses of £7 11s. The Walkers appear to have taken on responsibility for the son with Miss Walker(Barbara) and Mr Alexander Smith of York Place named as his guardians – though where he lived and what education he received is as yet unknown. No further mention occurred of the daughter who presumably had died around this time.

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<sup>79</sup> *Morning Chronicle, Morning Post*, 23 April 1839. Sir Patrick was listed as a subscriber to John Curtis, *British Entomology* vol. IV (London, 1827).

<sup>80</sup> NRS, SC39/17/859.

<sup>81</sup> The Court recorded the date in three separate documents each with 28 September but a different year each time.

<sup>82</sup> NRS, SC39/17/859.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

William Grant died in 1840, aged 29 years and Elizabeth Campbell or Grant in 1842. They left a daughter Jessie and Elizabeth's son named William Drummond. Both went to London to reside with Elizabeth's uncle Patrick Drummond, a successful textile merchant but the Walker sisters provided financially for William. In 1844 Barbara Walker used two influential contacts – Thomas Collier and Georgina Glover – to make a request to the Duke of Wellington via Lord Fitzroy Somerset to have William Drummond's name put on the list of those wishing to purchase a commission in the British Army. In the meantime William attended Dr Bridgman's gentleman's boarding school in Belle Vue House on Woolwich Common where he acquitted himself favourably especially in military studies. In readiness for a successful application Miss Walker placed the necessary purchase money with Coutts bank. Documents relating to his appointment as Ensign 89<sup>th</sup> Foot on 1 October 1847 stated him to be an orphan with his guardians named as Miss Walker and Mr Alexander Smith of York Place Edinburgh. A letter from John Phin the Walkers' solicitor after Mr Goldie, confirmed William's birth date of 4 January 1828 and that Phin acted as Trustee for him.<sup>84</sup> Barbara Walker appears to have corresponded with William and she and Mary met him in London.

William variously called himself William Henry Drummond or William Henry Murray Drummond and stated his father to have been a naval officer or an officer in the Austrian service. He retired from the army by sale in 1852 and went to New Zealand. He also may have served in the French army in Algeria. In 1856 he married Elizabeth Thomasina Briscoe in Kilkenny and they and his half sister Jessie made their homes in Australia. After the death of her sister Barbara in 1859, Mary Walker took on the responsibility of writing to William though she confessed to being very dilatory. She gave news about friends, local and national news and made comments on his letters. William and Zina (his wife's family name) had seven children and by the time of his death in 1868 he had become a warden and police magistrate. His death certificate stated his parents as William Drummond officer in the navy and Elizabeth Campbell. The cause of death was snake poisoning. William Drummond had allowed himself to be bitten by a tiger snake owned by Joseph Shires an exhibitor who made his living by selling a snake poison antidote. Drummond doubted that Shires' snakes were venomous and set out to prove it but 'paid the penalty with his life'.<sup>85</sup> Consequently Mary Walker amended her will and on her death in 1870, Mrs Drummond and her family inherited £3000.

In common with her mother and brother Mary Walker appears to have had an interest in horticulture possibly inherited from her maternal grandparents. In 1809 a meeting of 17 gentlemen in the Royal College of Physicians had resulted in the establishment of the Caledonian Horticultural Society for the 'encouragement and improvement of the best fruit, the most choice flowers and most useful culinary vegetables'. The Society admitted skilled professionals, amateurs, nurserymen and professional gardeners and activities focused on blending theory with practice;

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<sup>84</sup> I am indebted to Alexander Stewart, Melbourne Australia for the information about William Drummond and his family.

<sup>85</sup> *The Argus*, 4 May 1868.

medals and certificates being awarded and shows held. Against the background of war with France which prohibited the importation of French wines, in 1810 several medals were awarded to 'Ladies for their excellence in the preparation of Currant wine'. This beverage being produced from the fruit abundantly growing in every part of the British Isles, aided by the sugar 'furnished from our plantations in the West Indies' was well calculated to cheer the well-being of the healthy and alleviate 'the distress of many when subjected to disease'.<sup>86</sup> Mrs Walker of Drumsheugh won second prize for her white currant wine the sample of which was marked 'On n'est jamais trop vieu pour apprendre'; and as requested, submitted an account of her method.<sup>87</sup>

One Scotch pint of currant juice; one Scotch pint and a half of water; three pounds of sugar, half lump sugar and half soft sugar. Mix them together in a tub, then fill your barrel. What is over, keep for filling up, as it works over; but it is better not to fill up more than twice. When done working, add one Scotch pint of aquavita or brandy, to twenty pints of the fermented liquor. The wine sent is flavoured with a small quantity of clary wine, the growth and manufacture of Drumsheugh.<sup>88</sup>

In 1814 Mrs Walker received two prizes—for Clary Wine and for Wine from mixed Fruits—and Patrick Walker seems to have joined the society in that year, if not earlier.<sup>89</sup> Some years earlier Jane Burnet had written to her father Gilbert Innes and her news included a visit of her sister Marion to Drumsheugh:

Miss Mary took her round the grounds and shewed her the range of offices all removed and built anew in another place, also a fine new green house and many other improvements all of which she told Marion have been done since the father went away and he knows nothing about the alterations that have taken place.<sup>90</sup>

At the winter meeting of the Caledonian Horticultural Society held in December 1838 the new members enrolled included Miss Walker of Coates – most likely Barbara – but in later years Mary exhibited plants at the Botanical Society of Edinburgh. On display at a Society meeting held in May 1866 was a plant of a large purple flowered primrose presented to the Botanic Garden by Miss Walker of Drumsheugh; her presence having been noted at the Corstorphine Horticultural Show months earlier.<sup>91</sup> On 10 June 1869 she exhibited from Lady Leith Buchanan 'a growing plant of *Athyrium Filix-foemina* var. *Frisellia*' found in a wild state at the Ross Dunbartonshire; and shortly before her death her own plant of *Rhododendron* arboretum about a foot high and in full flower.<sup>92</sup> Mary Walker employed a gardener and under-gardener at Drumsheugh to whom she left legacies and a sum of money to provide suitable mourning clothes for the head gardener to wear. Mr Phin the Walkers' legal adviser and one of their trustees, arranged with Mr McNab of the

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<sup>86</sup> *Memoirs of the Caledonian Horticultural Society*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1814), pp. 41-2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214. One is never too old to learn.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215. Clary sage, *salvia sclarea*. 1 Scotch pint is 1.6961 litres.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1825), pp. 31, 9. According to the *Caledonian Mercury* of 18 September 1815 Mrs Walker won in that year.

<sup>90</sup> NAS, GD113/5/458/138, *Jane Burnet to Gilbert Innes*, 27 May 1808.

<sup>91</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 23, 25 May 1866; *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 August 1865.

<sup>92</sup> *Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh* 10 June 1869, vol. 10, p. 206.

Royal Botanic Gardens for 'the public roup of conservatories, shrubs plants etc at Drumsheugh'.<sup>93</sup>

In common with other members of Edinburgh society the Walker sisters made contributions to charities and appeals, sometimes individually and sometimes together. They supported the St Cuthbert's Industrial School where destitute children learned a trade or craft – 70 of them in 1849 when Miss Walker Drumsheugh gave £1.<sup>94</sup> By 1862 Mary had increased this to £5.<sup>95</sup> Later in that year she gave a similar amount to help the 'unemployed operatives in Lancashire and other Cotton Manufacturing Districts of England'.<sup>96</sup> (The Lancashire 'cotton famine' resulted from a combination of overproduction and the disruption to cotton imports caused by the American Civil War.) Other contributions to 'relief' work included destitution in the Highlands and Islands and in India.<sup>97</sup> When Catherine Sinclair died in August 1864, Mary gave £2 2s towards the building of a monument at the south east corner of St Colme Street to commemorate the writer's children's books and charitable work.<sup>98</sup> The sisters donated £1 to the Royal Zoological Gardens in 1848 and supported the Royal Infirmary to which Mary left £1000 in 1870 as well as £500 respectively to the Blind Asylum, the Royal Edinburgh, the Indigent Gentlewomen's Fund, the House of Refuge, the Destitute Sick Society, the Magdalene Asylum and the Life Boat Association of Scotland.

From the numerically slight extant correspondence relating to the sisters it appears that like Sir Patrick they possessed a sense of humour. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, satirical antiquary and fellow Episcopalian, wrote to the Misses Walker from 'New Athens' on 26 November 1835:

I send you the kitten you were so kind to say you would dispose of, with, I hope, the proper certificate. I have also made out a pedigree for your Dog, with which I intend to wait upon you tomorrow, should this wicked weather permit me....<sup>99</sup>

He included a Kitten Certificate testifying that:

the kitten in the wicker basket, was born in the back drawing room of the house, 93 Princes Street Edinburgh on the 22nd of October 1835 – behind the old Spanish guitar made in Cadiz by the celebrated Pevez – and under the portrait of Susanna Countess of Eglintoune to whom The Gentle Shepherd was dedicated and the Lady Mary Wortley Montague.

Chas Kirkpatrick Sharpe MA (Oxon)

Jeany beans cukmade

Kate Curtains, chambermaid X her mark

(CK Sharpe)

John Doolittle footboye – witness

Too this cirtifye cart<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> WT.

<sup>94</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 February 1849.

<sup>95</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 February 1862.

<sup>96</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 17 November 1862.

<sup>97</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 January 1847; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 1 October 1857 – the Misses Walker of Coates contributed £5 to the latter.

<sup>98</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 September 1864. Miss Sinclair's charity work included the establishment of cooking depots to feed those in need, the maintenance of a mission station at the Water of Leith and the provision of seats and drinking fountains in public places. Her grave is in the grounds of St John's Episcopal Church Edinburgh.

<sup>99</sup> NLS, MS/3134/208, *Letter to the Misses Walker*, 26 November 1835.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

Barbara Walker headed a letter only dated 'Friday Evy.' to Alexander Macdonald with a quote from a story by Mrs Agnes Strickland, published in 1838 and entitled *The Valentine*:

The Rose is red the leaves are green  
the days are past that we have seen <sup>101</sup>

The underlining was hers. She continued:

Some days since a parcel was sent by Miss MW (who) forgot to address the said parcel to Mr Mac – but was given to your servt by our flunky so I have nae doubt it was delivered safely now if you have had time will you say what you think of the O.....and if we can leave town about Tuesday for to tak' a bit fun wi' the North Countrie say nothing about this to any body but let it a'be ateen our selves. I have a grand story to tell you about the Garden yesterday. I hope you did not creep under the table to screen yourself from the Rain The servt will wait for your Answer.

She ended the letter by sending 'kind Love to Mrs Mac'.<sup>102</sup> In her letter to Macdonald dated 'Drumsheugh Saturday', possibly written around the same time as her sister's, Mary informed him:

We killed a grumply the other day and send a few sausages of our own Making which was forgot when I sent Col Spens note – we have the appearance of a proper storm – My sister writes her kind Regards to Mrs Macdonald <sup>103</sup>

Some indication of family connections and personal relationships come from Mary's amendments to her will in the 1860s. In a codicil to her Deed of Directions on 25 February 1860, Mary Walker instructed that the interest on £3000 be paid to William Drummond sometime of the 89th Regiment but residing in Australia, during his lifetime, reverting on his death to his wife Mrs Theresa Briscoe Drummond unless she remarried and a sum of £3000 to the surviving children, £1000 to Mary Drummond as her share and £2000 to the other children. The final Settlement of 1870, made after William Drummond's death, allocated a sum of £3000 to Mrs Drummond and family. The codicil of 29 January 1868 made provision for the Misses Walker's step-nephew Colonel William Bernard Ainslie. Colonel Ainslie's father Lieutenant-Colonel John Ainslie of Teviotgrove near Jedburgh had served in India where his first wife died in 1813, leaving four sons. John Ainslie married Lillias Walker on 3 July 1815 and died in Edinburgh on 15 March 1817. Lillias resided first in her husband's house at 23 Forth Street and then in 23 Melville Street. Her step-son Colonel William Bernard Ainslie commanded the 93rd Highlanders at the battle of Balaclava in 1854 and received a CB. According to George Tancred in 1899, Miss Mary Walker persuaded Colonel Ainslie to retire from the army, 'a step which he always regretted. At her death she left him only an annuity of £500'.<sup>104</sup> Actually she left him £350 and liferent of 11 Chester Street and further stipulated that in the event of his being married at her death or thereafter £5000 was to be held in liferent for him and made over to any children attaining majority, reverting to the estate on his or

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<sup>101</sup> Mrs Agnes Strickland, *The Valentine*, published in Chambers Edinburgh Journal, 1838, p. 210.

<sup>102</sup> NLS, MS/3134/89, *Letter to Mr Alexander Macdonald*, undated.

<sup>103</sup> NLS, MS/3134/90, *Letter to Mr Alexander Macdonald*, undated.

<sup>104</sup> George Tancred, *The Annals of a Border Club (The Jedforest)* (Jedburgh, 1899), p. 52.

their deaths. When he died on 31 October 1887 his personal estate exceeded £66,000.<sup>105</sup>

As well as to Colonel Ainslie Mary also left legacies to her other Trustees – sums of £200 to the Rt Rev. Charles Hugh Terrot or his daughters who remained unmarried at the time of her decease; to the Venerable John Sinclair Archdeacon of Kensington, to the Rev. James Montgomery of St Paul's Edinburgh and to John Phin. Phin's clerk received £100. Her instructions with regard to her servants were quite specific – £50 for her maid Jessie King; £15 later increased to £20 for Margaret Oliphant or Fisher 'who was educated and brought up by my late sister and me and is at present in my service'; and £10, later £15, for Isabella Gray my housemaid, paid half yearly for life but 'not assignable by creditors or husbands'. John Dobson butler, Hugh Macdonald coachman, Andrew Mathieson gardener, received greater sums – £300 in the case of the butler – and Robert Pool 'who has long worked for me as an undergardener during the summer season' would receive £50 but only if they 'are in my service at the time of my death'. Mary also allocated sums to the family of the late John Stephen gardener at Coates. Subsequently in December 1869 she changed her mind, increasing the legacies to her female servants and making gifts instead of legacies to some others who had left her service. Finally she stipulated that after her death 'on no account' should any 'part of my furniture in my dwelling house of Drumsheugh' be sold by public roup.

With regard to the building of an Episcopal place of worship, Barbara and Mary Walker first set out a Deed of Directions regarding their estates on 21 August 1850 but this also was subsequently amended and codicils added in the following years. Originally their trustees were instructed that as soon as the amount deposited in the Bank of Scotland amounted to £20,000, they were to obtain a plan of a chapel fitted to contain 1500 sitters; and to set apart an area in the trust estate of Coats or Drumsheugh where it would be built. The sisters envisaged a building constructed 'in a handsome and substantial style of architecture' at the expense of around £30,000. They requested that 'from respect to the memory of our mother' that the chapel be called by the name of St Mary and a draft constitution was to be prepared. In addition:

Out of respect to the memory of our father and also of our grandfather the Reverend George Walker of the Episcopal Chapel at Old Meldrum we direct our Trustees to pay to the Bishop of the Diocese within which the chapel is situated the sum of £50 yearly.

By 1858 the sisters considered £30,000 to be inadequate and instructed their trustees to delay action until the Bank account contained that sum so that £40,000 could be allocated to the building now to be called the Cathedral Church of St Mary. An interesting stipulation was added.

Considering that certain divisions or differences of opinion at present exist in the Episcopal Church in Scotland and it being our express wish and intention that the whole estate, funds and effects provided by us for the said church shall be applied solely to the support of pure Protestant doctrines.

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<sup>105</sup> *Belfast News-Letter*, 12 March 1888. He married Joanna Falls on 22 April 1874 but had no children.

In the event of differences on doctrines or church governance resulting in disruption, then 'our trust funds shall belong to that division or section of the Episcopal Church which may adhere most closely to our views'. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London, Durham, Winchester and the Diocese of Edinburgh were named as sole judges as to what would be appropriate.<sup>106</sup>

Following the death of her sister on 23 March 1859 Mary Walker added further codicils during the 1860s allowing for a retiring allowance to be paid to the incumbent of the proposed Cathedral; and substituting a legacy of £500 instead of an annuity to Old Meldrum Chapel. Rather than sell or dispoene the office of Heritable Usher of the White Rod the Trustees should hold this with power to appoint a Deputy to officiate for them; the fees relating to the post being allocated to the Trust. By 29 February 1868 she had decided that the Church site would be at Old Coates to the west of Melville Street with no building to be connected to the church or erected near as to interfere with the architectural effect; and with no thoroughfare for carriages or horses from Melville Street on either side. Finally in the month before her death on 4 March 1870 she stipulated an open competition among four to six architects for the plan of the church. Immediately after Mary Walker's death Colonel Ainslie and Mr Phin (being the only Trustees in Scotland with the exception of the indisposed Bishop Terrot) met to arrange for an inventory to be made of the house at Drumsheugh; and on 9 March, her remains having been 'interred in the Family Burying ground, Greyfriars Churchyard, the two men met again after the funeral to begin the process of carrying out the wishes of Barbara and Mary Walker of Coates and Drumsheugh.



Mary Walker's Prayer Book

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<sup>106</sup> See *An Address from the College of Bishops to all Faithful Members of the Episcopal Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1850).

## Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair

23 September 1846 – 13 February 1941

5 Chester Street



Sarah Mair aged 18 years



Portrait of Sarah Mair by J. H. Lorimer 1928

Courtesy of St George's School

In the Library of Edinburgh University on 19 December 1928 Lady Aberdeen presented a portrait to Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair. The artist J. H. Lorimer had painted Miss Mair seated beside a chess table with an archer's bow behind her and in the background, a painting of her great grandmother the eighteenth-century actress Sarah Siddons. Miss Mair wore the blue and red robes of the Honorary Degree of LL.D. conferred on her in 1920 by the University; and she had pinned a suffrage badge to the gown. In her speech Lady Aberdeen referred to the great changes in the position of women which had taken place during Miss Mair's lifetime commenting:

it was well that the young women of today should remember at what cost the rights and privileges had been won by pioneers such as Miss Mair and so be careful to justify these champions by their discharge of those hardly-bought privileges. Not least of the services rendered by Miss Mair to her fellow women had been her insistence that in every department they should fully qualify themselves for the duties they claimed.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah Mair was at that time 82 years old with another 12 years ahead of her.

Youngest of four sisters and a brother, Sarah or Sally as the family called her, was born on 23 September 1846 in 29 Abercromby Place, the house her grandfather Colonel Alexander Mair, veteran of the battle of Waterloo, had bought brand-new. Colonel Mair died in 1835; being succeeded in the property by his son Major Arthur Mair and his wife Elizabeth Harriot Siddons, granddaughter of the famous actress and daughter of Henry Siddons former actor-manager of Edinburgh's Theatre Royal. Sally's father took 'a warm interest' in the management of several Edinburgh

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<sup>1</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 December 1928.

charitable institutions especially the United Industrial Schools of which he was a director and where he supervised the religious instruction of the Protestant children educated there.<sup>2</sup> As a Town Councillor he discharged his duties in a 'quiet, earnest, unobtrusive style but making his usefulness always felt'.<sup>3</sup> Sally's mother gave Shakespearian-themed entertainments to friends and acquaintances but when Major Mair lost the money he had invested in railway shares his wife undertook readings to the public in their drawing room on 'Mondays and Thursdays at Half-past Two o'clock pm'; and she also gave instruction in 'English Reading and Elocution', receiving 'Pupils at her own House'.<sup>4</sup> Her daughter later recalled being 'fed and clothed on Shakespeare', both figuratively and literally.<sup>5</sup>

When Major Mair died in 1865 the family moved first to 25 Heriot Row and then permanently to 5 Chester Street:

quiet sunny Chester Street. And very quiet it was in those days with no Drumsheugh Gardens in existence, no northern division of Manor Place, no Palmerston Place. To the west stood and still stands – though shorn of its leafy shade – the picturesque old Coates House with its fine trees and green meadows.<sup>6</sup>

The dining room on the ground floor contained a table, crimson leather-covered chairs and a mahogany sideboard; with engravings of Kemble and Siddons ancestors and a print of the Duke of Wellington's banquet hung on the walls.<sup>7</sup> This room was to play a central role in the life of Sarah Mair until shortly before her death in 1941.

Sarah attended Mr Hunter's School at 25 and 27 Albany Street where the 'Private Classes for Young Ladies' comprised Elocution, English Grammar and Composition, History, Geography (including Physical Geography), Elementary Science and Botany along with free Needlework tuition.<sup>8</sup> She quickly appreciated, however, that 'women's brains were not given them merely to pilot them through a narrow round of more or less graceful activities'.<sup>9</sup> 'We read, Sally studies' commented her sisters and before his death Sally confided to her father her desire to edit a magazine.<sup>10</sup> Thus at some point in 1865 she formed the Edinburgh Essay Society attended by four friends. Sarah and Helen Reid co-edited the desired magazine *The Attempt* which was printed by Helen's father's firm, Reid and Company, Leith. Contributors wrote under pseudonyms, Sarah's being des Eaux, the name of a French Huguenot ancestor who had sought refuge in England from religious persecution. Her first essay, 'On Quotations and Misquotations', gives an insight into her character and sense of humour. She observed that in making a quotation it was essential to ensure that it was apt, correctly produced and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1865.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 18 November 1863.

<sup>5</sup> Lettice Milne Rae (ed.), *Ladies in Debate* (Edinburgh, 1936), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> The Duke of Wellington held an annual banquet to commemorate the Waterloo victory in which Sarah's grandfather had fought.

<sup>8</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 September 1850, 4 October 1851.

<sup>9</sup> Rae, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

accurately attributed; and she recounted an anecdote of two young men who attended a performance of *Hamlet* for the first time:

The first act was not finished before one of the young men turned to the other with astonishment, exclaiming, 'A remarkably odd play this – why it's all made up of quotations'.<sup>11</sup>

Sarah's subsequent contributions included 'On Sunday Reading':

We Scotch have somewhat misty ideas on the subject of what we ought to read on a Sunday. We have an instinctive dread of being happy on our day of rest – we have a comfortable feeling of doing right when sitting down of an evening with a dry book in our hands.<sup>12</sup>

'On Accentuation' (1866), 'Thoughts on Shakespeare's Women' (1866), 'On Tact' (1867), 'Knowledge of Ignorance' (1868), 'Our Ragged Schools' (1869), 'Croquet' (1870), 'Jane Austen's Works' (1872), 'Swedish Licensing Laws' (1874).

A new series of *The Attempt* became *The Ladies' Edinburgh Magazine* in 1875 and lasted for five years when the editors announced that although publication would cease 'the debates of the Ladies' Literary Society will be carried on with unabated vigour and we hope with still wider success'.<sup>13</sup> The Edinburgh Essay Society had been renamed the Ladies Edinburgh Essay Society in 1867, the Ladies Edinburgh Literary Society in 1872 and the Ladies Edinburgh Debating Society in 1881 under which name it operated until its disbanding in 1935. By 1869 membership stood at 60. Meetings took place on the first Saturday of the month with the exception of August and September, at 12 noon, but changed in 1881 to 11.00 am with October added to the months of non meetings. The women assembled first in 29 Abercromby Place, then 25 Heriot Row and from 4 November 1871 in the dining room of 5 Chester Street. During Miss Mair's absences from town (over a year in 1877-8) meetings took place in members' homes, for example, 3 Ainslie Place, 5 Eton Terrace, 16 Chester Street, 4 Oxford Terrace, 14 Melville Street.

Frustratingly the first extant minutes date from 1 June 1867 when 26 'Mesdames' attended and debated 'Is Boarding School Education superior to education at Home?'; voting being four affirmative, 11 negative, the rest abstaining.<sup>14</sup> Apart from personal interest, Sarah Mair's purpose in founding the society seems to have been a desire to encourage and develop the skills of public speaking and the ability to research and debate subjects beyond the accustomed women's spheres. On 6 February 1869 the minutes recorded 'disquiet' at the small number of members taking part in the discussion; 'it being evident that many members had no opinion on the subject but voted according to the luminaries whom they set up for themselves'.<sup>15</sup> In order to remedy this, a suggested reading list on the subject of the debate would be provided. By December 1871 the conduct of debates had improved but it was reiterated that:

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<sup>11</sup> *The Attempt*, vol. 1, 1865, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> *The Ladies' Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 6, 1880.

<sup>14</sup> NLS, *Minute Book of the Edinburgh Essay Society 1867-1873*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 February 1869.

those who are diffident about debating should begin by reading and thinking a little over the subject and after the debate jotting down a few remarks. Each member needs to play her part.<sup>16</sup>

Debates could be quite challenging in these early years, ranging from 'Was Charlotte Corday's assassination of Marat justifiable?' (December 1867), 'Has Hero-worship an elevating influence on the mind?' (February 1869) and 'Is France responsible for the present war?' (January 1871) to 'Is Miranda more to be admired than Juliet?' (November 1868) and 'Are the poems of Wordsworth more likely to obtain immortality than those of Mrs Browning?' (October 1869). On 7 December 1872 the ladies debated – 'Should women be admitted to the Franchise?' – 12 members voting no and nine, including Miss Mair voting yes.<sup>17</sup> By 1884 the affirmative view achieved a majority of five votes; and when the question was again debated on 4 November 1905 as 'Should the Parliamentary suffrage be extended to duly qualified women?' 27 voted in favour with six against. In January 1914, ladies who favoured the receipt of the franchise numbered 29 with nine against and two abstentions.

'Lighter' debates over the years included 'Country versus Town Pleasures' (July 1867), 'Is Flirtation morally wrong?' (March 1892), 'Is everyone the better of having a hobby?' (June 1893), 'Does the so-called "Revolt of the Daughters" necessarily imply blame to either mothers or daughters?' (December 1894), 'Are Manners deteriorating?' (December 1896), 'Has any man or woman the right to be idle?' (November 1897). Some issues are still being contended today – 'Is the City of Edinburgh less beautiful and less pleasant as a residence than it was twenty years ago?' (April 1904), 'Is it desirable to check the growth of great cities?' (December 1898), 'Should the immigration of pauper aliens be further regulated?' (April 1905), 'Have Cinemas a bad influence?' (May 1920). By 3 December 1932 the question 'Should there be a separate parliament for Scotland?' received three supporting votes to 27 against; while a year later 21 agreed with the inquiry 'Is Fascism making for the Happiness and Prosperity of Italy?' to four negative votes and three abstentions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century one of the original members reminisced:

I can remember, Sally, when you sat in that chair at this table and said 'How I wish I were thirty!' To which the President with her bright wit replied 'And here I am still sitting in the same chair at the same table and *still* wishing I were thirty'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., December 1871.

<sup>17</sup> According to Rae (*Ladies in Debate*, p. 33) women's suffrage was first debated in 1866 with 15 voting against and five in favour. The first volume of the minutes is missing from the collection of the National Library of Scotland.

<sup>18</sup> Edinburgh City Libraries, qvGV143 C65812, *In Memoriam: Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair, DBE, LLD*.



Dining Room of 5 Chester Street

Courtesy of St George's School



Sarah aged about 30

A journalist from the *Weekly Scotsman*, 'Cynthia' (Miss Jean Speedy) recorded her impressions of the meeting on 7 November 1931 when the door of 5 Chester Street was 'opened by a maid who has fulfilled the same duty for 50 years'. Ushered into the dining room she met Sarah Mair, 'a gracious personality with a white shawl thrown round her shoulders' and a 'sweet smile to greet people'.

Her presidential remarks were lit with flashes of humour and permeated with a very real feeling when she referred to some members who had died...When the debate began she relegated her seat to Miss Neaves, as President of the Debate and sat inhaling the perfume of crimson roses which a friend had brought for her.<sup>19</sup>

By 1935, however, the minutes recorded 'the feeling abroad among several of the members that owing to the difficulty of finding speakers for the debates the Society should be brought to an end'.<sup>20</sup> As 12 ladies voted in favour of this motion with seven against, on 2 November 'The business was the melancholy one of winding up the Society'. Members agreed that a History of the Society should be compiled for which Sarah Mair had already begun some notes. In her contribution to the volume which became *Ladies in Debate* she commented:

Throughout the seventy years our Society has witnessed many changes and seen countless new movements spring into being. Seventy years ago education, compulsory and free did not exist. There were no School Boards, no University Education for Women, no women doctors, no Jubilee Nurses, no school of Domestic Economy in Edinburgh, no Ladies' Clubs even; no women sat on Town Councils and no woman voted at Parliamentary Elections or sat in Parliament. All these activities have been reflected in our Debating Society. There was scarcely any advance that did not find ours a friendly stage on which to air its ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Sarah herself had participated in many of these 'advances'. On 15 October 1867 she and her mother attended, with four other ladies, a meeting at 1 Inverleith Terrace, the home of Mrs Crudelius, to discuss the advancement of the higher education of women. A fortnight later 18 women formed 'The Edinburgh Ladies Education Association' with the priority of 'the establishment of a high-class lecture

<sup>19</sup> *Weekly Scotsman*, 14 November 1931.

<sup>20</sup> NLS, MS/1733, *Minutes*, 9 October 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Rae, p. 8. A £5 donation was subsequently sent to the Edinburgh Hospital and Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital.

scheme'.<sup>22</sup> Although Mrs Mair chaired the first three meetings Sarah's name is absent until 15 February 1871 when the list of proposed new members included Miss S. Mair.<sup>23</sup> In the following years she played a leading part in addressing 'the inability of young ladies who have completed the usual curriculum of private schools' to access 'the higher education in Science, Philosophy and Literature which our Universities offer to young men'.<sup>24</sup>

From the beginning David Masson, Professor of Rhetoric and English at the University of Edinburgh lent active support and under the auspices of the Association he inaugurated a series of lectures of university standard in January 1868 in the Hopetoun Rooms. For the 1868-9 session 265 women enrolled in Masson's classes to which were added lectures in Logic and Mental Philosophy by Professor Fraser and Experimental Physics by Professor Tait. 95 candidates took the first examinations associated with these classes with further subjects being offered each year. At the General Meeting on 5 April 1871 Sarah Mair unsuccessfully 'suggested that to begin a class of Ethics next winter would have an injurious effect on the class of metaphysics'; but carried her motion that the requisition for a class of Biblical Criticism signed by 55 ladies be accepted.<sup>25</sup>

The University of Edinburgh Senate agreed in 1872 to award a certificate in Literature, Philosophy and Science to women who had successfully undertaken the courses, provided that candidates had first passed the University's Local Examinations or those of Oxford or Cambridge. Sarah Mair arranged for a group of students to meet three times weekly in her home to study for the Local Examinations before progressing to the Association's examinations.

Many who had taken sides keenly in the Lecture-rooms with the 'Realists', the 'Nominalists' or the 'Conceptualists'...shuddered at the idea of wrestling with vulgar fractions and decimals and with long forgotten and possibly never mastered rules of grammar. Either time had diminished their early attainments in these simpler fields of knowledge or as was very usual in those days their education had been lacking in solid foundation.<sup>26</sup>

The notices in the *Scotsman* advertised that Mr A. MacGlashan would tutor in Grammar and Analysis, Arithmetic, History and Geography at the cost of £1 1s for the course.<sup>27</sup> This further use of 5 Chester Street as an educational venue must have had the family's support; Miss Mair having been proposed as a new member of the Edinburgh Ladies Education Association by Miss S. E. S. Mair on 8 April 1874.<sup>28</sup> In

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<sup>22</sup> University of Edinburgh Special Collections, Gen.1877/5, *Minutes of meetings of the Edinburgh Education Association 1867- 1875*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 15 February 1871.

<sup>24</sup> EUSC, Gen.1877/1/1, *Annual Reports of the Edinburgh Ladies Education Association* (Edinburgh, printed by Thomas Constable), October 1868.

<sup>25</sup> USC, Gen. 1877/4, Gen.1855/5, 5 April 1871.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Nigel Shepley, *Women of Independent Mind: St George's School Edinburgh and the campaign for women's education* (St George's School, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Scotsman*, 18, 25 March 1876.

<sup>28</sup> EUSC, Gen.1877/4, *Scroll Minutes of General Meetings of the Edinburgh Ladies Education Association*, 8 April 1874.

the following year Association members unanimously elected Sally to the Executive Committee.<sup>29</sup>

A new constitution for the Association, agreed in 1877, established a Council formed of the teaching professors and 21 members of the Association with the Executive comprising five ladies including Sarah and four gentlemen, three of whom had to be professors. The Report of that year, however, recorded that:

by Mrs Mair's lamented death we lost one of the very first members of this Society who gave it in its time of greatest need the support of her honoured name and steady attachment'.<sup>30</sup>

In 1879 the Association assumed the name of The Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women and classes formerly held at 117 George Street moved to the Lecture Rooms, 14 Shandwick Place. Sarah's initiative in arranging for local examination tuition encouraged the Association in 1876-7 to establish Oral and Corresponding Classes in St George's Church Hall in Randolph Place organised by her and the Misses Dundas, Houldsworth and Urquhart, fellow members of the Ladies Edinburgh Literary Society. Sarah Mair raised money for a central fund to provide bursaries for those in need of financial assistance. The classes helped candidates to prepare for the University of Edinburgh's Local Examinations and for undertaking the lectures and examinations of the Association, the successful passing of which ensured a Certificate at Ordinary or Honours level. Later many students studied by correspondence for the Lady Literate in Arts of St Andrews University. By 1890 attendance at the Edinburgh classes numbered 193 with 657 learning by correspondence.<sup>31</sup>

An indication of Sarah Mair's status in the Association is given by an Executive Committee minute of 23 October 1877. When she offered to resign her place on the Executive 'on account of absence from Edinburgh during the winter' her resignation was refused but leave of absence granted instead 'for as long as may be necessary'.<sup>32</sup> She carried on her work with the Association throughout the 1880s and the decade culminated in the passing of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 which appointed commissioners to draw up ordinances relating to aspects of the University system. On 18 January 1892 Sarah attended the General Committee meeting which approved of the Draft Ordinance No 18 of the Senate of Edinburgh University with regard to the Regulations for the Graduation of Women and for their instruction in the Universities.<sup>33</sup> Although the Association had now achieved its main objective, at the Council meeting in April she proposed that the Association continue to 'exist in the meantime' for attention now turned to providing facilities and amenities for women students, with funds to be raised for a Hall of Residence named the Masson Hall.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 14 July 1875; EUSC, Gen.1877/1/1, *Ninth Annual Report of the Edinburgh Ladies Education Association*, June 1876.

<sup>30</sup> EUSC, Gen.1877/1/1, *Tenth Annual Report of the Edinburgh Ladies Education Association*, November 1877. This was the last report of the Association which then produced yearly Calendars.

<sup>31</sup> Miss M. R. Walker was appointed Superintendent, Secretary and Treasurer of the St George's Hall Oral and Corresponding Classes in 1877.

<sup>32</sup> EUSC, Gen.1877/4, *Executive Committee Scroll Minutes 1868-1892*, 23 October 1877.

<sup>33</sup> EUSC, Gen. 1877/3/1, *Minutes of the General Committee 1887-1935*, 18 January 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4, 14. April 1892.

The Ladies Edinburgh Debating Society gifted £20 towards this.<sup>35</sup> The Association moved premises to 8 Hope Park Square and by 21 April 1894 the Masson Hall had been incorporated under the Companies Act; Miss Mair as Honorary Treasurer submitted the accounts.<sup>36</sup>

She continued in this role until 1927 when at a meeting held in her home she announced that 'in view of her advancing years she had come to the conclusion that the time had come for her to resign her position as a Trustee'.<sup>37</sup> The minutes recorded:

That the Trustees of the Association for the University Education of Women desire to put on record their sense of loss on the resignation of Miss S. E. S. Mair, who has been closely associated with the work of the society from its beginning and their deep gratitude for her untiring devotion to the cause of the higher education of women and her valuable services in furthering it.<sup>38</sup>

The University of Edinburgh had earlier acknowledged this devotion by awarding her the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in 1920. The Dean in his Graduation eulogium remarked that:

Half a century ago it was a popular dogma that sex determines intellect, and that it would be flouting Providence to offer women equal opportunities with men, of citizenship, education and employment. Against this narrow conception of her sex's proper sphere, Miss Mair has battled valiantly throughout her long life, and today she will have the satisfaction of seeing a procession of girl graduates pass along this stage to point the triumph of the cause she espoused when it seemed the veriest forlorn hope....The University does well to honour a lady whose single aim has been to give her sisters the key of knowledge and power and train them to use it with a sense of responsibility.<sup>39</sup>

Sarah Mair also concerned herself with the education of girls and their teachers. As witnessed by the need to offer special tuition classes for female candidates wishing to pass Local Examinations and attend the lectures given by Professor Masson and colleagues, the education offered to, and undertaken by, girls was inferior to that available to boys. England had shown the way for progress with the North London Collegiate School founded by Miss Buss in 1850 and the Girls Public Day School Company begun by Maria Grey in 1872 which in the next decades established 36 schools; several having teacher training departments. Sarah Mair and the Misses Houldsworth, Dundas, Robertson, Schwabe, Urquhart and Walker believed that the time had come:

for making some special provision in Scotland for the training of ladies fitted to hold appointments as teachers in Secondary or Higher Schools for Girls or as Governesses in private families. This work is already well done in the Normal Teaching Colleges for Elementary Teachers. The question naturally arises "Why should it not be done for *all*, especially at a time when the Education Department has organised a scheme for the inspection of secondary schools?"<sup>40</sup>

Warm sympathy and support came from Professor Calderwood, Miss Guthrie Wright and Louisa Stevenson who wrote to the *Scotsman* newspaper on 16 March 1886:

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<sup>35</sup> NLS, MS/1727, *Minutes*, 4 March 1893.

<sup>36</sup> EUSC, Gen. 1877/3/1, *Minutes of the General Committee 1887-1935*, 21 April 1894.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 July 1927.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 July 1920.

<sup>40</sup> St George's Training College, *Reports and Prospectuses 1886-1900*, p. 2.

It may interest some of your readers to learn that the public-spirited committee of the St George's Hall Corresponding Classes have resolved to open a training college in Edinburgh in October next for the benefit of women teachers and governesses in secondary or high schools and in private families. The committee have secured modest but suitable premises in Randolph Place; a number of practising schools for their students and above all, a competent and enthusiastic lady superintendent who has had considerable experience of the kind of work to be done. It is proposed to give qualified women students one year's training in the theory, history and practice of education which would qualify them for passing the Cambridge Teachers' Certificate Examination and prepare them for their profession. Two such colleges already exist in England – one in London and the other in Cambridge. The former has been in existence for ten years and the work done has effectively proved that the system of training adopted develops and encourages what there may be of originality and individuality in the student, instead of crushing it out, as might have been feared. The Cambridge college has only been in existence for five months, but it already numbers fourteen students. The Edinburgh scheme deserves success and is sure to succeed if known and understood.<sup>41</sup>

Louisa joined the Committee of Management and the St George's Training College for Women Teachers opened in Randolph Place on 4 October 1886 with seven students and as Principal, Miss Walker who had been appointed Superintendent, Secretary and Treasurer of the St George's Oral and Corresponding Classes in 1877. Mr J. R. Findlay, proprietor of the *Scotsman* who also joined the Committee, contributed £20 and several bursaries were placed at the disposal of the College including one of £21 15s from Miss Mair. At a Committee meeting held in November at 5 Chester Street Sarah announced that 'being unable herself to fulfil her promise of giving Elocution lessons to the students' she had 'arranged with Miss Cameron to give a course of lessons after Christmas'.<sup>42</sup> On 11 February 1887 Sarah intimated that Sir William Muir Principal of Edinburgh University had accepted the office of President and she 'indicated a donation of £20 from the Edinburgh Ladies Debating Society to be offered as a bursary'.<sup>43</sup> The Minutes of the Society recorded 'the gratification of all the members that a bursary should have been conferred on an institution of which Miss S. E. S. Mair was a founder'.<sup>44</sup>

For the session of 1887-8 the Committee of the St George Hall Classes took a three years' lease of 3 Melville Street and the College moved to space there. By 1896 the number of students attending the College had grown to 21 and they could apply for bursaries; five provided by the Governors of George Heriot's Trust and others by the College Committee, the College Union of Former Students and personally by Miss Urquhart, Honorary Treasurer. When the Committee 'charged with the preparation of the Scottish Education Exhibit at the Paris Exhibition in 1900' decided to hold a Preliminary Exhibition in Edinburgh from 29 December 1899-4 January 1900, the College received an invitation to contribute.<sup>45</sup> The Scotch Education Department introduced its own training regulations for secondary teachers in 1905. The College gained recognition within the scheme and this arrangement lasted until 1939. By this time Sarah remained the only surviving founder.

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<sup>41</sup> *Scotsman*, 17 March 1886.

<sup>42</sup> St George's Training College, *Minutes*, 26 November 1886.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 11 February, 1887.

<sup>44</sup> NLS, MS/1726, *Minutes*, 3 February 1887.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 November 1899.

As part of her work with the Ladies Education Association Sarah involved herself with a Registry for Governesses and in 1880, in combination with similar registries run by women's education associations in Glasgow, Liverpool and Yorkshire, the Northern United Registry for Governesses came into being.<sup>46</sup> Newspaper advertisements advised 'Ladies in search of Governesses' or 'requiring English, Foreign, Certificated, Nursery' to apply to 'Miss S. E. S. Mair 5 Chester Street, Hon. Secretary Northern United Registry (Edinburgh Branch)'.<sup>47</sup> A London publication of 1886 entitled *A Thousand ways to earn a living* recommended the Registry as 'an excellent society...The fees amount to 2 shillings only for a situation'.<sup>48</sup> In 1888:

The Registry for Governesses carried on for many years in connection with the St George's Hall Classes as a Branch of the Northern United Registry by Miss S. E. S. Mair has now combined with the Registry of the Governesses' Benevolent Society of Scotland which will in future be called The Rutland Square and St George's United Registry.<sup>49</sup>

Miss Mair continued to act as Honorary Secretary along with Miss Robertson. By 1931 both the Registry and the Residence for Governesses had moved from 7 Rutland Square to 10 Gloucester Place. At the triennial meeting of the Governesses' Benevolent Society of Scotland held on 13 April of that year and presided over by Sarah, it was decided to close both registry and residence but to carry on operations otherwise. In remarking that the position of women was very different from what it was in 1861 she said:

Women now had a bigger choice of professional work but she was glad to think that the profession of teaching would always lie very near to their hearts.<sup>50</sup>

It was with regards to that profession and especially the improvement of the education of girls that Sarah Mair and fellow members of the Ladies Edinburgh Debating Society, the Misses Houldsworth, Robertson, Dundas and Urquhart founded the St George's High School for Girls in 3 Melville Street Edinburgh in 1888. Following the leasing of 5 Melville Street for the session 1889-90 the St George Hall Classes and the Training College relocated there while at No 3 Miss Walker became headmistress of a new school, staffed by trained women teachers who would prove the ability of women to teach academic secondary level subjects; and which would provide the Training College students with opportunities for teaching practice. St George's High School for Girls emulated those institutions in England established by the Girls Public Day School Company. The curriculum offered mathematics, science, classics, English, history, geography, languages, art and music – all to be studied in the morning with optional afternoon study of extra subjects or supervised preparation.

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<sup>46</sup> *Yorkshire Herald*, 3 December 1880, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 March 1881.

<sup>47</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 November 1881, 13 February 1882, 1 January 1886.

<sup>48</sup> *Tit Bits*, *A Thousand ways to earn a living*, (London, 1886), p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> *Scotsman*, 19, 28 November, 1 December 1888.

<sup>50</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, *Scotsman*, 14 April 1931.



Melville Street, Courtesy of St George's School

As Honorary Secretary, Sarah dealt with a range of contrasting business. In 1891 'Miss Mair mentioned that several applications had been made for the admission of little boys to the children's gymnastic classes'.<sup>51</sup> The Committee agreed to admit boys under two 'provided they came ready dressed for the classes'.<sup>52</sup> By 1893 the leases of Nos 3, 5 and 7 Melville Street had been negotiated and in the following year Sarah communicated with the authorities to arrange for a date to inspect the drains. On 28 February 1896 Miss Mair reported that the piano had been sold for £12 and that for £4 annually 'Mr MacKintosh would supply St George's with a good instrument and keep it in tune without further payment'.<sup>53</sup> She proposed an interesting arrangement in April when she suggested that:

a grant of two or more bicycles might be made to the Teachers and Secretaries of St George's in order to enable them to form a Cycling Club to be strictly limited to said Teachers and Secretaries.<sup>54</sup>

The Committee agreed on a sum of £25-£30. In July 1896 the Committee purchased 5 Melville Street for £3250 and No 7 for £3550 and Sarah could report that the Walker Trust would not object to the application to the Dean of Guild Court to add a top story to 5 and 7 – Walker Estate stalwards Messrs Watherstone had been entrusted with the work. Attempts to rent a portion of the grounds of the Dean Orphanage as a playground for the school, however, stalled in 1898 but a games field at Ravelston was secured in 1899.

On 23 December 1903 Miss Mair indicated the arrival of two engravings she had ordered in Rome for the school. By this time pupil numbers had increased considerably and accommodation, sports facilities, property issues and location continued to be challenges. In 1907 Sarah 'effected the insurance of staff and servants with the Scottish Union and National Insurance Company St Andrews Square' but had to deal with 'a considerable fall of plaster in Room K' in 1910 resulting in the testing of all the ceilings.<sup>55</sup> At the same time she reported to the Committee with regard to the repairing of Melville Street:

that she had been informed by a Member of the Streets Paving Committee that the best way of securing repavement was for each house in the street to agree to halve the expense with

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<sup>51</sup> St George's High School, *Minutes*, 16 October 1891.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 February 1896.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 April 1898.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 June 1907, 4 November 1910.

the town authorities; otherwise each street must wait till its present stone pavement was in absolute need of renewal.<sup>56</sup>

After further investigation the Committee decided to make a deputation to the Streets and Paving Committee to press for the early repairing of the roadway in the east division of Melville Street 'with some material that might lessen the noise of the traffic'.<sup>57</sup> The Town Council agreed to consider this but to the dismay of the St George's High School Committee members they found out in March of the following year – from an announcement in the *Scotsman* – that Melville Street would only be repaired from Melville Crescent to Stafford Street thereby excluding the part of the roadway outside the school. Miss Mair wrote to the Town Clerk with regard to re-roading the east end of Melville Street with some material 'to lessen the intolerable noise of the traffic' but nothing further on the subject appears in the Minutes.<sup>58</sup>

At this time discussions took place with regard to making the school an Incorporated Company limited by guarantee under the Companies (Consolidated) Act 1908; and in April 1913 the School and College amalgamated under a governing Council and with the name St George's School for Girls (Incorporated). Lord Salvensen became President with Professor Darroch and Miss Mair as Vice-Presidents. With a preparatory department now open in 9 Melville Street, a boarding house at 15 Ravelston Park and a school roll of over 200, new accommodation had become urgent. On 6 November 1914 the *Scotsman* informed its readers that:

The large, admirably planned and well equipped new building at Ravelston has been taken possession of without formal ceremony by the teaching staff and pupils of St George's School for Girls, which for a quarter of a century has been installed in Melville Street. Had conditions been normal it was the intention of the Council of the school to have marked this important event in the history of the institution with a public function at which some out-standing lady would have been asked to preside; but in the present circumstances of the country that idea was given up, and the school session was quietly opened with a few suitable words by the Rev. Dr Wallace Williamson of St Giles'....a small group of Edinburgh women whose names were already well known in connection with the movement of the time for the more thorough education of girls....had specially in view the establishment of a school in which the pupils would receive more individual attention than it was possible for them to expect in larger educational institutions, and in which the stimulus to moral and intellectual development could in that way be more personally applied. A small committee was formed, the members of which undertook all initial financial responsibility – it being understood that any ultimate profits which might be made were to be devoted to the development of the school...

The new building has been erected on a site extending to between six and seven acres, situated on the east side of Garscube Terrace, Murrayfield....A distinctive feature has been made of the central portion of the main block, in which the principal doorway is placed. This doorway, supported by Ionic pilasters, carries an architrave, over which is an oblong carved panel – the work of Mr W. F. Beattie, sculptor, with figures in relief of St George and the Dragon and the motto of the school taken from Chaucer's Prologue – "Trouthe and honour, freedom and curtoisie". This panel is the gift of Miss S. E. S. Mair.<sup>59</sup>

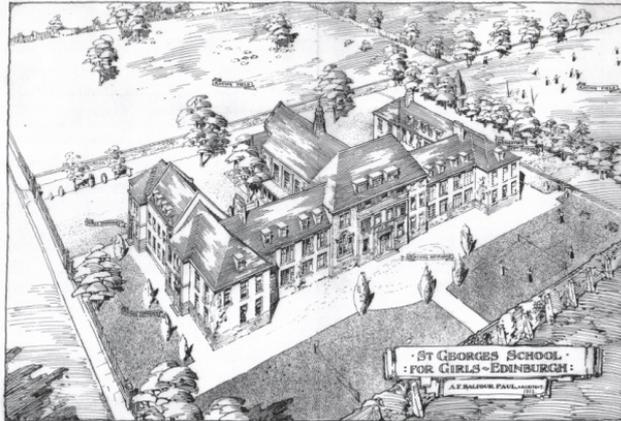
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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 4 November 1910.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 15 November 1910.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 12 April 1911.

<sup>59</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 November 1914. Britain had declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914.



St George's School 1914, Courtesy of St George's School

Sarah Mair continued her interest in, and commitment to, St George's School until the end of her life and she still attended a number of meetings of the Council and the Finance, Property and Law Committees in her later years until 1937. In contrast to an earlier period, at a School Committee meeting on 27 October 1930, the members agreed to contract for five Bechstein upright pianos at £80 and to hire a Bechstein grand piano for the Hall for one year only. By this time the roll of pupils numbered 280 with 36 boarders in Houldsworth House and 24 in Melville House. HM Inspectors' Report for 1929-30 had been highly satisfactory. Sarah chaired the Annual General Meeting at the school on 28 November 1932 but many of the meetings she attended took place at 5 Chester Street, the last being on 19 November 1937. As part of her contribution to a book published in 1939 on the higher education of women she wrote:

Through an open window in my soul I peep into the future and see generations of school-girls and students maintaining the honour of St George's and adding to its strength and beauty down the ages.<sup>60</sup>

Along with the campaign to improve education for women went the fight to widen their employment opportunities. Since the late 1880s conferences of women workers had been held around the United Kingdom. In October 1888 Lady Aberdeen presided over one in Aberdeen organised by the Ladies' Union which had been formed to unite 'all workers for the welfare of women and girls in Aberdeen with the view of strengthening one another in their common work'.<sup>61</sup> Flora Stevenson attended a conference organised in Liverpool in November 1891; and Glasgow provided the location in October 1894, thus affording the first opportunity for 'Scottish women to attend in large numbers to hear and see those who have distinguished themselves in efforts for their less fortunate sisters'.<sup>62</sup> On 9 October 1895 a letter to the *London Standard* informed readers that:

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<sup>60</sup> B. W. Welsh, *After the Dawn: A Record of the Pioneer Work in Edinburgh for the Higher Education of Women* (Edinburgh, 1939), p. xii.

<sup>61</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 October 1888.

<sup>62</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 28 May, 22 October 1894.

The National Union of Women Workers has been instituted with a view to bringing together women who are working either professionally or philanthropically and promoting the conferences of women workers which have been held for six years.<sup>63</sup>

The creation of a central office with a secretary facilitated the links throughout the United Kingdom and the promotion of the conferences. At the public meeting of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Union of Women Workers held in the Society of Arts Hall 117 George Street on 8 November 1897, Miss S. E. S. Mair read a paper by Miss Lockhart on the Grove Street Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children; and Miss Flora Stevenson spoke on Scottish National Education.<sup>64</sup> Following the decision of the National Union of Women Workers in May 1897 to establish a central employment bureau for women, Sarah Mair wrote in a letter to the *Scotsman*:

The Central Bureau was started in London fourteen months ago and last autumn the Edinburgh Branch of the National Union of Women Workers decided to organise a similar bureau in Edinburgh which is now started at 116 George Street and only needs to be more widely known and generally supported to become the efficient means alike of diffusing knowledge as to all available occupations for women and of bringing together employers and those seeking employment.<sup>65</sup>

The first minute of the Employment Bureau recorded the presence of nine ladies including Flora Stevenson, Sarah Mair as Honorary Secretary, and Margaret Houldsworth as Honorary Treasurer.<sup>66</sup> After the first annual meeting of the Bureau Flora Stevenson had to correct an impression that it might be 'the nucleus of a sort of trade union wherein to terrorise employers' or a 'society constituted to encourage antagonism between employers and employed'.<sup>67</sup> On the contrary:

The chief purpose of the Bureau is to bring women workers and those who employ them into a satisfactory relationship and this will only be accomplished when those who seek work are thoroughly trained and are efficient in the work they undertake, and when employers are willing to give adequate payment for skilled and efficient service....The Bureau does not profess to find employment for the unfortunately too large class of women who, having had no training for any kind of work, find themselves in middle life left to gain their own livelihood. But the promoters of the Bureau do desire that this class shall not be increased by the numbers of girls and young women who annually leave our schools and colleges.

It would, indeed, be well if parents would realise that their daughters as well as their sons have the rights to a training that will enable them to gain their own living, unless they can provide for them an assured competency....In some cases pecuniary help to get the training may be necessary. I hope that if the Bureau receives sufficient support from the public the committee will be able to advance to young women loans of money for this purpose.<sup>68</sup>

In similar vein the second annual report of the Committee of the Employment Bureau reiterated the need for training in the right directions, the time being past when a lady in 'reduced circumstances could rely on refinement of manners without suitable practical education as a passport to gaining her livelihood'.<sup>69</sup> Employment

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<sup>63</sup> *London Standard*, 9 August 1895.

<sup>64</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 9 November 1897.

<sup>65</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, *Lancashire Evening Post*, 12 May 1897, *Aberdeen Journal*, 13 May 1897, *Scotsman*, 23 March 1899.

<sup>66</sup> NLS, Acc/10710/1, *Minute Book of the Bureau for the Employment of Women*, 23 June 1898.

<sup>67</sup> *Scotsman*, 28 November 1899.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 February 1901.

opportunities where supply proved unequal to demand were for children's nurses, servants in general, and educated typists 'thoroughly skilled in stenography and with sufficient commercial training and knowledge of modern languages to fit them for the work required in public offices'.<sup>70</sup>

As a fund raising exercise for the Bureau Sarah Mair organised two evenings of Dramatic Entertainments in April 1902 which resulted in a sum of £25; and in the report which she read at the fourth annual meeting on 9 February 1903 she announced that an anonymous gift of £100 had enabled the modest beginning of a training fund although a sum of £330-£500 would have to be secured before any loans could be granted.<sup>71</sup> By the end of the year the Bureau had moved to 25 Queensferry Street and in the following year changed its name to the Scottish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. By this time the Loan Training Fund had been established to provide no interest loans to well accredited applicants, trusting that repayment would be made after completion of training and receipt of salary for six months.<sup>72</sup>

In the years preceding the First World War Sarah Mair continued to contribute to the meetings of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Union of Women Workers; characteristically recommending drama as a form of entertainment at the meeting on 30 October 1902.<sup>73</sup> She chaired the summer meeting of 1904, for example, and attended and reported on national conferences at Tunbridge Wells (1906) and Lincoln (1910).<sup>74</sup> When the first conference of Scottish Branches of the National Union met in Aberdeen in October 1906, Sarah seconded a motion to petition those local authorities not employing women sanitary inspectors and health visitors, to consider doing so.<sup>75</sup> To a meeting of the Employment Bureau held on 5 December 1911 she recounted her experience of attending the conference of Bureaux Committees at Leeds which 'she found both interesting and useful'.<sup>76</sup> When Sarah Mair presented the 21st Annual Report in December 1919, she stated that:

with the return to ordinary life of many women engaged in public work during the long years of the war, the demands for the services of the Bureau have never been greater. Good work and good pay must be the order of the day, but above all cooperation and the recognition of the dignity of all efficient work.<sup>77</sup>

During that year the Bureau had placed a total of 96 women in work. By 1921, however, having always relied on public subscriptions, it now faced the severe depletion of its Reserve Fund. On 7 June 1921 Mrs Gillespie reported that 'as the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> NLS, Acc/10710/1, 1 July 1902; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 9, 10 February 1903. The Edinburgh Ladies Debating Society gave two donations in 1903, NLS, MS/1728, 7 February, 5 December 1903. They also gifted £5 to the National Union of Women's Workers in 1904, NLS, MS/1729, 5 November 1904.

<sup>72</sup> When Miss Houldsworth died in 1909 she left £500 to the Loan Training Fund.

<sup>73</sup> *Scotsman*, 30 October 1902.

<sup>74</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 June 1904, *Scotsman*, 12 November 1906, 13 October 1910.

<sup>75</sup> *Scotsman*, 8 October 1906.

<sup>76</sup> NLS, Acc/10710/4, *Scottish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women Executive Committee Minute Book No. 2*, 5 December 1911.

<sup>77</sup> NLS, Acc/10710/7, *21st Annual Report of the Scottish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women*, 1919.

Government had undertaken the work of finding employment on such a large scale, there was very little need for the Bureau'.<sup>78</sup> The Bureau had never been self-supporting and it seemed impossible to ask for subscriptions for work for which the public was ready being taxed. The Committee instructed Miss Mair to write to the Secretary of the National Union of Women Workers indicating that the Bureau would close at the end of the year. On 25 October 1921 Sarah proposed that 'the Loan Training Fund be handed over to the Central Bureau in London for the use of Scottish Girls' but the Committee felt the difficulty of informing Scottish girls that the fund existed and agreed to continue with the administration of the Training Fund. Miss Mair, however, decided not to carry on with this work.<sup>79</sup>

Along with campaigning for the improvement of women's education and work prospects went the lengthy fight for women's suffrage. As seen earlier the Ladies Literary Society had debated the subject a year before Parliament excluded women from the Second Reform Act of 1867 (1868 for Scotland); and this legislation led to the formation of women's suffrage societies in London, Manchester and Edinburgh which, though individually independent, regarded themselves as parts of one National Society. Eliza Wigham, Agnes McLaren and Priscilla Bright McLaren headed the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage. Unlike the Stevenson sisters, Sarah Mair is not recorded as holding a leadership position until later although she actively promoted the cause within the Edinburgh Essay Society. Her first press appearance occurred in 1884 at a 'Scottish National Demonstration of Women' in favour of securing the suffrage for women householders.<sup>80</sup> The Synod Hall in Edinburgh was so overcrowded that an overflow meeting had to be held in the Presbytery Hall at which Miss S. E. S. Mair proposed that a petition be sent to Parliament requesting that the claims of women householders be treated as an open question among the supporters of the Government.

In February 1891 Sarah took the subject of women and the Parliamentary vote when she addressed a meeting of the Palmerston Place Literary Society in Palmerston Place Hall. For her the question at issue was 'as simple as if the question were raised as to whether women were to be permitted to eat their daily bread'.<sup>81</sup> If taxation without representation was injustice in the case of men 'how could it become just in the case of women who made up about one-seventeenth of the voting power of the country?'<sup>82</sup> The objection that women did not desire the vote was clearly disproved, she asserted, by the hundreds of thousands of women who had petitioned in favour of female suffrage. At the annual meeting of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage held on 5 April 1893 Sarah again dealt with the necessity of gaining the vote; though the Committee regretted the reluctance of women in general to use their municipal vote (gained in 1882) but welcomed the admission of women to the arts classes in the University of Edinburgh. Rosaline

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<sup>78</sup> NLS, Acc/10710/4, 7 June 1921.

<sup>79</sup> The Training Fund existed until 1973.

<sup>80</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 March 1884.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 February 1891.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Masson, daughter of Professor Masson, remembered an occasion at an Edinburgh dinner party when an eminent but irascible old lawyer:

ended a heated tirade against the admission of women to the learned professions by exclaiming – “Well all I know is that if a woman lawyer tries to enter the Edinburgh Law Courts it will have to be over my dead body!” And Miss Mair’s gentle reply: “Oh that would be no deterrent!”<sup>83</sup>

By the 1890s the number of local, regional and factional suffrage societies had greatly increased and in 1897 a federation of 17 societies came together under the presidency of Millicent Fawcett to represent every active suffrage society in Britain. The inaugural minutes of this National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies recorded that ‘Edinburgh so long as it represents all Scotland shall be entitled to four representatives’.<sup>84</sup> The Executive Committee included Miss Wigham, Miss Louisa Stevenson and Miss Mair who, at the annual meeting in November 1898, seconded a motion that women should be represented on Town Councils as well as Parish Councils.<sup>85</sup> The campaign continued into the early years of the twentieth century and Sarah presided over a public meeting in the Queen’s Hall in December 1904 when she announced to an audience of 150 that steps would be taken to induce MPs to vote for a Women’s Suffrage Bill in the next Parliamentary session.<sup>86</sup> When she chaired the annual meeting of the National Society in the Edinburgh Cafe in February 1906 she said ‘that a very large proportion of the new members of Parliament had pledged themselves in favour of the objectives of the Association’ to which had been added 11 new branches.<sup>87</sup>

By this time, however, frustrated by the lack of progress in gaining women’s suffrage, in Manchester Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters had broken away from the non militant National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies and formed the Women’s Social and Political Union in October 1903. Following the failure of the women’s suffrage bill in 1905, the WSPU focussed on attacking whichever political party held power and began to demonstrate and lobby Parliament which led to the arrest and imprisonment of increasing numbers of their members. In consequence the *Daily Mail* dubbed the militant campaigners as ‘suffragettes’ to distinguish them from the non- militant suffragists.<sup>88</sup> On 8 January 1907 Mrs Cobden Sanderson and Miss Teresa Billington who had been imprisoned in consequence of disturbances in the House of Commons, addressed a suffrage meeting held in the Music Hall, George Street and chaired by Lady Frances Balfour. Mrs Cobden Sanderson moved a resolution calling upon the Government to enfranchise women in the coming session and protesting against the indifference which had forced

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<sup>83</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 February 1941.

<sup>84</sup> Women’s Library, 2 NWS/C/1, *Minutes of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies*, 14 October 1897, <<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/>>[12 June 2015]. By 1913 nearly 500 regional societies had joined.

<sup>85</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 February, 24 November 1898.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 December 1904. On 3 December Sarah had drawn the attention of her Debating Society to this meeting; and on 6 May 1906 to a suffrage demonstration.

<sup>87</sup> *Arbroath Herald and Advertiser*, 8 February 1906; *Scotsman*, 5 February 1906.

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 January 1906.

women into conflict with the law. In seconding the motion Miss S. E. S. Mair said that:

some of her friends had expressed surprise that after working so long on constitutional lines she should associate herself with the new phase of the movement. She felt exceedingly strong on that subject that women must stand shoulder to shoulder, and none of them would throw a stone at their sisters whatever their methods. She hoped that ladies in Edinburgh who had worked on constitutional lines would give their support to other ladies working on different lines.<sup>89</sup>

Sarah, however, continued to work on constitutional lines and at the annual meeting of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage on 23 March 1907, she accepted the role of President (Priscilla Bright McLaren having died on 5 November 1906).<sup>90</sup>

Edinburgh National Society member Lady Steel, widow of a former Lord Provost and member of the Ladies Edinburgh Debating Society caused a sensation that March by refusing to pay her taxes as a protest against the non representation of women and consequently suffered the seizure by the bailiffs of some of her furniture which was sold at the Mercat Cross.<sup>91</sup> At an Edinburgh Society meeting in July therefore, Sarah read the resolution:

That this meeting is of opinion that, as the British Constitution is founded upon the principle that taxation and representation go together, women who are called upon by the State to pay taxes are not acting unconstitutionally in refusing to pay them.

Subsequently, putting into practice her determination that women should stand 'shoulder to shoulder' and as the event was to be peaceful, Sarah joined Miss Christabel Pankhurst, Mrs Despard, Mrs Philip Snowden, Mrs Billington Greig, Mrs Pethick Lawrence, Lady Frances Balfour and Lady Steel to head a parade of between 1000 to 2000 suffragists in procession from the King's Park to the Synod Hall on 5 October 1907.<sup>92</sup> Presiding over the meeting she said that the crowd which witnessed their march had been 'larger than even when Royalty visited them'.<sup>93</sup> Shows of solidarity were not to continue however and Teresa Billington Greig and Charlotte Despard broke with the WSPU to form the Women's Freedom League, a militant organisation which used direct action such as passive resistance to taxation and non cooperation with the census rather than the attacks on people and property undertaken by WSPU members.

Sarah Mair presided over a debate engaged in by representatives of all suffrage groups in December 1908 but at the Edinburgh Society meeting on 8 October 1909 she announced that the Executive Committee had passed a resolution:

strongly condemning the use of violence in political propaganda and reaffirming its adherence to constitutional principles, while protesting against the manner in which the whole agitation had been handled by the responsible Government. Even if they were a little slower in attaining their end, it would be a moral victory when they won it, it would be a victory gained without doing violence to any one. The members of the Government she had heard, were

<sup>89</sup> *Scotsman* 9 January 1907, *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 9 January 1907.

<sup>90</sup> NLS, Acc/ 4546, *Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage Annual Report*, 23 March 1907.

<sup>91</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 25 March 1907.

<sup>92</sup> *Scotsman*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Dundee Courier*, *Aberdeen Journal*, 7 October 1907.

<sup>93</sup> *The Times*, 7 October 1907.

receiving a great many anonymous threatening letters. She would not for a moment, charge the officials of the militant societies with having instructed their members to send such vulgar things as anonymous threatening letters, but when people got excited there was no knowing what they would do, and the executive of the militant section should at once declare that that was not their practice. Until that was done the whole Society would suffer. The militant societies used to have a very good motto –“Suffer violence, offer none”- and it was the breaking of that which had led to the parting of the ways. As a result there was to be no official participation in the demonstration today.<sup>94</sup>

(The demonstration was the procession organised by the WSPU from the Bruntsfield Links along Princes Street to the Waverley Market.) Apart from presiding over and speaking at meetings and events, an insight as to the other work involved in the women’s suffrage campaign is gained from her letter to the *Scotsman* on 2 March 1909. Sarah stated that as president of the Edinburgh National Society for Women’s Suffrage it had been her duty to question the two candidates for Parliamentary election as to their views on women’s suffrage in order to send the correct information to the Executive of the National Union, whose policy was to support whichever candidate proved the more favourable to granting this reform. Neither candidate had given satisfactory replies:

I feel this explanation of the position taken up by the National Union in regard to supporting neither candidate, but restricting their energies in the constituency to propaganda work in favour of our cause, is called for in view of Mr Dewar’s declaration yesterday of his “having been in favour of woman’s suffrage for a long time”. Such a statement on Mr Dewar’s part may well cause the Executive to doubt the accuracy of the information supplied to them by their Edinburgh branch, and unless qualified by the explanation I now give, may lead to much misunderstanding of the position taken up by us throughout this contest.<sup>95</sup>

By the end of the year Sarah Mair had added another presidency to her varied ‘duties’. As she explained to the annual business meeting of the ENSWSS in February 1910, ‘they felt they were not much in touch with their National Union’ and had formed the Scottish Societies into a federation which ‘they were going to ask the National Union to accept’.<sup>96</sup> The Scottish Federation of Women’s Suffrage Societies elected Sarah Mair as President and Elsie Inglis as Secretary. As representative of the Scottish Societies, in June 1910 Sarah accompanied colleagues from the NUWSS, the Women’s Liberal Federation and the Scottish Women’s Liberal Federation in a deputation to the Prime Minister over the women’s suffrage bill then before Parliament. Following the failure of the latter, Sarah wrote to the press from 40 Shandwick Place concerning a report about the resumption of militant tactics on the part of the leaders of the suffrage movement, headed by the WSPU:

may I point out that this is misleading, inasmuch as the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies had nothing to do with the demonstration. The methods of that very large body, to which the Edinburgh National Society is affiliated, as stated in its rules and constitution, are “the promotion of the claim of women to the Parliamentary vote by united action in Parliament, and by all constitutional methods of agitation in the country”.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Votes for Women*, 17 December 1908; *Scotsman*, 9 October 1909.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 March 1909.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 March 1910.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 November 1911.

When the Scottish Federation held its third annual meeting on 29 March 1913 at 9 Melville Street, Miss Mair welcomed 90 delegates from all parts of Scotland, commenting that the 'women of today realized their solidarity to an extent unknown to women of former generations'; and that they 'demanded bread, not stones or scorpions'.<sup>98</sup> By this time the number of societies in the Federation had grown from 16 to 57; with six organizers working with four others in the employment of the societies. Dr Inglis reported that in the Midlothian by-election, the Federation policy of supporting the Labour candidate as 'the best friend of women's suffrage' had undoubtedly turned the constituency from a Liberal to a Conservative seat. Both Sarah Mair and Elsie Inglis were re-elected as President and Secretary respectively. In February 1914 the NUWSS organized a great 'demonstration' in the Albert Hall. In preparation the Scottish Federation arranged for deputations of 76 Scottish men's organizations to travel to London to visit the Prime Minister, Mr Asquith who refused in advance to meet with any delegation. In spite of this 'all but a few of the delegates still came to London' and took part in the suffrage rally.<sup>99</sup> Prior to the meeting a few Scottish ladies held a dinner for the delegates at the Piccadilly Hotel; 'Miss S. E. S. Mair graciously acting as chief hostess'.<sup>100</sup> The Scottish Federation continued to deplore the violent tactics of the WSPU and on 26 February felt compelled to issue a statement:

The National Union of Women's Scottish Suffrage Societies has categorically condemned and repudiated violence in 1908, 1909, 1911, 1912 and 1913 and has itself never worked for the vote by any but Constitutional and peaceful methods. Those who are responsible for recent arson and violence are in no way representative of the body of suffragist opinion in this country inasmuch as there is only one organisation in whose name these crimes are committed and it numbers, at most, 6000 persons. On the other hand the NUWSS which is but one, though the largest of 46 constitutional suffrage societies, has a paid up membership of 51,000 persons whose work is on entirely constitutional lines, since they adopt only the ordinary political methods of reason, persuasion and argument.

The President, Miss S. E. S. Mair and other representatives of the Scottish Federation intend to lay before Mrs Pankhurst in a personal interview in Edinburgh this month, evidence proving unmistakably the disastrous effect of militant actions on the public mind and the extent to which the progress of suffrage propaganda is thereby hindered and its results impaired.<sup>101</sup>

Mrs Pankhurst refused to meet with Sarah and her colleagues.

At the end of the month Sarah Mair presided over the fourth annual meeting of the Federation when delegates from 63 societies attended. In buoyant mood the report stated that 'the great tide of the women's movement is sweeping in' but in April, following the burning of the historic East Lothian Whitekirk Church, allegedly by suffragettes, she was forced to place a newspaper notice declaring the deep regret of the Scottish Federation for the outrage and calling for support for restoration work.<sup>102</sup> Following the declaration of war on 4 August 1914, however, the Federation cancelled the annual summer school at St Andrews; and all affiliated societies suspended political activity to pursue various schemes, particularly to assist the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 31 March 1913.

<sup>99</sup> *The Common Cause*, 20 February, 13 March 1914.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1914.

<sup>101</sup> *Scotsman*, 9 March 1914.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 31 March, 6 April 1914.

women and children of the men sent to fight. The Edinburgh Society undertook the visitation and care of armed forces' families in Leith, but the most innovative action resulted in the formation of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service. The minutes of the Federation Committee meeting of 12 August recorded:

Dr Inglis proposed that the Federation should give organized help to Red Cross work. Miss Mair proposed that St George's School Melville Street should be applied for and equipped as a hospital. Dr Inglis proposed that Melville Street School be equipped entirely by women – if not required at home, to be sent abroad.<sup>103</sup>

As the scheme for Melville Street proved impossible to realise and the War Office declined the offer of a hospital staffed entirely by women, 'Elsie Maud Inglis, Hon. Secretary', approached the Allies (Belgium, France and Russia) by letter on 20 August and an appeal for funds was launched.

At a meeting on 3 October Dr Inglis estimated that £1000 would be required to equip and pay the salaries of one unit of 100 beds for six months; and a letter from Mrs Fawcett agreed that 'an appeal for funds for the Hospital Scheme' should be made at the National Union meeting in London on 20 October.<sup>104</sup> By 21 November £5404, rising to £6507 in December, had been raised. Administration and finance required the formation of the Scottish Women's Hospitals Committee with Sarah Mair as President, Mrs James T. Hunter of Glasgow as Chair, Mrs Laurie of Glasgow as Honorary Treasurer with Dr Inglis initially as Secretary until her departure for Serbia in 1915 when Miss J. H. Kemp replaced her in this role. The suffrage societies in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Wales also formed committees. The idea of a single unit had, by this time, been abandoned, and the number of hospitals would be dictated by the amounts raised.

On 1 December the Scottish members of the hospital unit organised by the Scottish Federation for service under the French Red Cross departed by train for London en route for the Continent. (Seven nurses came from Rutland Square.) Miss Mair, Lady Salvensen and 'a large number of ladies gathered at the station to bid them God-speed'.<sup>105</sup> Following the taking of photographs, Sarah presented each of the party with a box of chocolates; and the platform party sang the National Anthem before the train departed. The SWH Headquarters Committee in Edinburgh and the other Committees around the country worked tirelessly to support their hospital units. Elsie Inglis wrote to Sarah Mair on 30 November 1915 from the Scottish Women's Unit in the Serbian Military Hospital Krushevatz, saying that she was sure 'the Committee would approve of our work here' and telling them 'not to worry about us'.<sup>106</sup> She ended the letter with the words 'Ever, dear Miss Mair, yours affectionately'.<sup>107</sup> Earlier in the month Dr Hutchison had written to Sarah from Vrinjatcha Bania, Serbia:

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<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Eva Shaw McLaren (ed.), *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals* (London, 1919), p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> McLaren, p. 6; *Scotsman*, 21 October 1914.

<sup>105</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 December 1914.

<sup>106</sup> McLaren, p. 160.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

For over five weeks we have had no letter or news of any kind from the outside world. That is the most trying thing of all to bear. Everybody has kept in wonderfully good spirits, and it didn't seem to occur to any of us to be afraid. We were more concerned over our inability to battle with Serbian mud!<sup>108</sup>

She ended her carefully worded letter by asking 'if you could let it be used for my friends'; and sending her 'kindest regards to the Committee and to yourself'.<sup>109</sup>

Elsie Inglis died on 26 November 1917 and her funeral service, with full military honours, took place on 29 November in a packed St Giles Cathedral with Sarah Mair and the Headquarters Committee of the Scottish Women's Hospitals present along with representatives of suffrage societies, the British Army and the Serbian Ministry. Afterwards the funeral cortege progressed through crowd-lined streets to the Dean Cemetery where Sarah acted as one of the eight pall-bearers.<sup>110</sup>

The work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals continued, however, until after the end of the war; and in March 1919, in publishing an audited abstract of the accounts for 1 October 1917 to 30 September 1918, Sarah Mair and the Headquarters Committee took the opportunity to inform the public that:

During this time the work of the Hospitals has been carried on in France, Corsica, Salonika, Macedonia, Russia and since November last in Serbia, giving medical and nursing assistance to French and Serbian soldiers and refugees. With the announcement of the Armistice it was possible to bring the work for the French to an end, but there is a great necessity that hospitals for the Serbs should be continued for some months....In February 1918 the Elsie Inglis Hospital for Serbian students suffering from tuberculosis was opened at Sallanches, Haute Savoie France. The beds in this Hospital rapidly filled up and the need for giving further assistance to these Serbian students became urgent. A further extension was made possible by a grant from the American Red Cross Paris of 100,000 francs.<sup>111</sup>

The Committee continued the report by outlining the work still being carried on by the Scottish Women's Hospitals and ended by expressing thanks for all contributions to the funds either monetary or in kind and with a plea for continued support.

The price of all Hospital requisites and provisions remains at so high a figure that all their present resources will be strained to the utmost to carry on.<sup>112</sup>

On the return in 1919 of Dr Frances Ivens from Royaumont, France where the first SWH unit had been established, the Committee gave a reception for her in the Caledonian Hotel and entertained her to lunch with Miss Mair presiding.<sup>113</sup> By 1922, however, the organization had concluded its operations and devoted the remaining funds to building the Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital in Edinburgh.

Although Sarah and the Scottish Federation had ceased political campaigning and had poured time and energy into the support of the SWH, they had not lost sight of the goal of women's suffrage and the societies continued to meet. She chaired the Federation's annual meeting in 1915; and spoke on a favourite topic, 'Shakespeare's Heroines', at the meeting of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Only 'open' letters could be sent.

<sup>110</sup> *Scotsman*, 30 November 1917.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 20 March 1919.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 9 May 1919.

on 16 May 1916.<sup>114</sup> Following the 1917 report of the conference on electoral reform, led by the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Cabinet decided to support a bill which included giving the vote to women over 30 or 35 who were on the local government electoral roll. The Labour party and the suffrage societies agreed to support the Bill if the age limit were lowered to 30. On 18 May a demonstration in support of the inclusion of women in the Electoral Reform Bill took place in Edinburgh. Miss Mair who presided said:

It was the duty of the women to give expression of their appreciation of the Bill brought into the House of Commons giving a certain measure of enfranchisement to women....They were not going to say a word about wanting more but were willing to accept what was offered.<sup>115</sup>

The Representation of the People Act became law on 5 February 1918, giving the vote to women over the age of 30 who were householders, wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5 or graduates of British Universities. The 'various Edinburgh suffrage societies' held a united service of thanksgiving in the Synod Hall on 16 February although more campaigning had to be done.<sup>116</sup> On 21 November women became eligible to stand for Parliament; and on 14 December women voted in the general election, 8.5 million being enfranchised.

At the Annual Meeting held in February 1919, the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies became the Scottish Federation of Societies for Equal Citizenship. On 12 April the Edinburgh Society followed suit and adopted the name of the Edinburgh Society for Equal Citizenship with the objective of attaining 'all such reforms as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women'; in particular the improvement of the legal, professional and economic status of women, the extension of the franchise on the same terms as men and the promotion of women on all public bodies and Government commissions affecting the interests of women and children.<sup>117</sup> Miss Mair received a bouquet and an address, illuminated on vellum by Miss Annie Macdonald Clark (now held by Edinburgh City Libraries). Later, in the presence of about 50 men and women associated with the suffrage movement, she planted a tree in Princes Street Gardens to commemorate the first exercise of the Parliamentary franchise by the women of Edinburgh. Sarah said that the double-flowering hawthorn, planted between Dr Guthrie's Monument and the Ross Fountain:

would be a memorial to the rising generation and it specially symbolised the work of the society which was rooted in faith and would blossom in the future and spread the fragrance of sweet reasonableness and raise a higher standard of human civilisation.<sup>118</sup>

As ever, funds had to be raised for the furtherance of the Federation's work and in December of that year Robert Munro, Secretary for Scotland opened a Christmas Fair in the New Gallery, Shandwick Place, with Miss Mair presiding, as she did regularly at subsequent fund-raising events.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 6 May 1916.

<sup>115</sup> *Evening News*, 19 May 1917.

<sup>116</sup> *Scotsman*, 18 February 1918.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 1, 14 April 1919.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 14 April 1919.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 13 December 1919.

In 1920 Sarah Mair chaired a National Conference held under the auspices of the Scottish Federation for Equal Citizenship in the Goid Hall, St Andrew Square. She referred to the claim by women for equal pay for equal work:

Work had no sex. It was a glorious thing that everybody should be in a position at least to be able to support themselves. Everyone should have it in their power to provide for themselves.

When the University of Edinburgh conferred the degree of LLD on Sarah, the Executive Committee of the Edinburgh Society entertained her to dinner at MacVitties Guest, Princes Street. In her reply to the toast Sarah said she regarded her honour as 'valuable chiefly in recognising women's work in general'.<sup>120</sup> Much progress had been made but there were 'still many disabilities to be removed and it would be the aim of such societies as theirs to work for fuller citizenship'.<sup>121</sup>

As Honorary Vice-President and President, Sarah worked for this throughout the 1920s, welcoming on behalf of the Edinburgh Society, the actress Sybil Thorndyke to a reception in the Albyn Rooms, Queen Street in 1929 (by this time the franchise had been extended to all over 21); and again in 1931 when the reception was in honour of herself. Dame Sybil said on the latter occasion:

That a woman who had achieved, who had fought, who had done what Dame Sarah Siddons Mair had must for ever remain enshrined in the hearts of British women. When they knew what she had struggled for and what they were reaping for her struggles, they had a feeling of deep thankfulness and gratitude for her.<sup>122</sup>

In common with Sybil Thorndyke, Sarah had been made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1931; her citation being for services to women's education in Edinburgh. The *Scotsman*, more expansively commented:

Miss Mair for about half a century, took an active part in all the movements which had as their aim the education, enfranchisement and freedom of her sex.<sup>123</sup>

Such movements also involved the medical care of women and children.

In 1878 Sophia Jex-Blake had begun a medical practice in her house in 4 Manor Place and in 1879, opened the Edinburgh Provident Dispensary for Women and Children in 73 Grove Street. In 1883 she moved her practice to Bruntsfield Lodge and in 1885 the Dispensary became the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children located at 6 Grove Street with six beds for women requiring hospital treatment. Sarah Mair would have known Sophia from the Ladies Education Association, but when she became involved with the work of the Hospital and Dispensary is as yet undetermined. The first mention of her in the Minutes of the Executive Committee is on 11 November 1895 when she was to be asked to take the chair at the Annual Meeting which she subsequently did. At this point the work of the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children required larger premises and six members of the Executive Committee formed a Building Committee. Sarah must also have become a member as she chaired the meeting on

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<sup>120</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 July 1920.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 September 1929, 3 October 1931.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 June 1931.

5 February 1896 when the Committee approved a draft of an appeal to the public for £10,000 for the purpose of building a new Hospital. She contributed £5.<sup>124</sup>

By December 1898 Sarah Mair was chairing meetings of the Executive Committee. Raising funds for new premises occupied much time and energy and when in December of that year Dr Jex-Blake intimated her intention of leaving Edinburgh, Miss Mair formed a sub-committee to inquire into the feasibility of purchasing Bruntsfield Lodge as the Hospital. Valuation of the property and negotiations over the potential sale proved challenging but 'Miss Mair stated she had found a strong desire in various quarters that the Hospital should if possible purchase Bruntsfield Lodge'; and an appeal might be made to the residents in the neighbourhood.<sup>125</sup> A letter signed by S. E. S. Mair and two colleagues included a veiled warning in their appeal:

I do not know if you are aware that Bruntsfield Lodge is now on the market and that there is a possibility it may be bought for the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children (for non infectious diseases) if the funds of the Committee are sufficient for the purpose. Failing this the property will very shortly be sold by roup and there seems little doubt that the whole area will be covered with tenements of which it is estimated there is space for six, besides possible workshops in the area. Under these pressing circumstances the Committee thinks themselves justified in appealing to all the residents in the neighbourhood to assist them in raising the additional £2000 required for the purpose, and a representative of the Committee will call upon you in a day or two....Should the Committee fail in gaining the requisite amount, any donations given for this object will of course be returned.<sup>126</sup>

Unfortunately the appeal raised only £5 17s and in the area she visited 'Miss Mair reported a good deal of indifference and no contributions'.<sup>127</sup>

Eventually in March, Dr Jex-Blake agreed to the sale of Bruntsfield Lodge to the Committee for £4000 with a further £1000 to be paid in a year's time at 3% interest. Within a month Sarah wrote to the Treasurer:

I have found a friend who is willing to lend £1000 to the Committee for the purposes of the Hospital without interest, on condition that the loan be repaid in two years.<sup>128</sup>

By this time she had been elected Chairman of the Executive Committee, a post she held until 1920. Miss Houldsworth became an Executive colleague on 18 March 1899 and at this meeting the members discussed two letters from Miss Inglis LRCPs requesting that the Medical Women's Club should be involved in electing the Executive Committee. They minuted the impossibility of allowing half the Committee to 'be nominated by an outside body who had hitherto done nothing for the Hospital'.<sup>129</sup> A sub-committee headed by Sarah, however, would confer with Miss Inglis and her fellow delegates at 5 Chester Street to reach a positive outcome which seems to have been achieved as Dr Inglis later wrote to the Executive Committee

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<sup>124</sup> Lothian Health Services Archive, LHB8/6/1, *Minutes of the Building Fund 1896-1899*, 5 February, 17 April 1896.

<sup>125</sup> LHSA, LHB8/1 *Minutes*, 30 January 1899.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 31 January 1899.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minutes*, 3 February 1899.

<sup>128</sup> LHSA, LHB8/6/1/4, *Letter from Miss Mair*, 20 April 1899.

<sup>129</sup> LHSA, LHB8/1/2, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, Vol. II, 18 March 1899.

with proposed nominees from the Women's Medical Club. 'It was remitted to Miss Mair to see Dr Inglis as to the election of Mrs Geddes and Mrs Haldane'.<sup>130</sup>

Illness prevented Sarah from attending meetings after 11 October and on 11 April 1900, as it had been ascertained 'that Miss Mair's health made her return to work very uncertain', Miss Houldsworth became deputy chairman.<sup>131</sup> Sarah, however, was back in the chair for the special meeting held on 15 October 1900 when she reported on an appeal made to sportsmen undertaken by herself, Miss Houldsworth and Miss Elliott-Lockhart. At their expense, this had involved the writing of 600 letters enclosing stamped addressed envelopes for reply to their appeal for Hospital funds; £26 1/- being raised. After alterations Bruntsfield Lodge provided 18 beds as a small general hospital for women and efforts were made to interest the management and employees of Edinburgh works and commercial establishments which employed women. Fund-raising remained a constant necessity. Sarah paid for the advertisement leaflet for a performance of *Pygmalion and Galatea* given by the Tragic-Comedian Dramatic Club in aid of Hospital Funds on 16 December 1902; and regular bazaars and jumble sales occurred throughout these early years of the twentieth century.

Following her removal to London Sophia Jex-Blake had continued to be a member of the Consulting Staff of the Hospital. In 1905, however, Sarah Mair had to deal with the legacy of an earlier personal conflict. On 19 July 1905 the Committee received a letter from Dr Jex-Blake indicating that she would resign if Dr Elsie Inglis were appointed to the vacant post of Senior Surgeon and gynaecologist to the Hospital. The Chairman and Committee expressed 'the deepest regret' and instructed the Honorary Secretary to write 'earnestly urging upon Dr Jex-Blake that she should reconsider'.<sup>132</sup> They nonetheless appointed Dr Inglis and Sophia resigned and declined to become a Vice President of the Hospital. The press report of the Annual Meeting held in December only cited Dr Jex-Blake's residence in London as the reason for her severance with the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary.<sup>133</sup>

In December 1908 Miss Mair had to inform the Committee of a claim against the Hospital made by a former patient and her suggestion of appointing Messrs Blair and Cadell of 19 Ainslie Place as legal advisers was accepted. After months of legal negotiations and proceedings the Sheriff-Substitute gave an adverse judgement against the Hospital and on legal advice the Executive Committee decided not to appeal. In protest Dr Inglis wrote a letter of resignation which she later withdrew.<sup>134</sup> In the meantime the Hospital had gradually expanded, reaching a bed complement of 72. Plans for improvements and a building extension received a substantial uplift with the legacy left at the sudden death of Miss Houldsworth who bequeathed £3000 for 'the advantage of medical women in the pursuit of Gynaecology and

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<sup>130</sup> LHASA, LHB8/1/3, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, Vol. III, 19 July 1899.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 April 1900.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 July 1905.

<sup>133</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 December 1905.

<sup>134</sup> LHASA, LHB8/1/4, *Minutes*, 20 October 1909.

Midwifery'.<sup>135</sup> As a result Sarah Mair chaired a meeting at 5 Chester Street of the Medical Women who opined that an amalgamation between the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children and Elsie Inglis' Hospice in the High Street would be the best way of fulfilling the terms of the Bequest. Accordingly Miss Mair recommended to the Executive Committee on 12 January 1910, that Medicine, Surgery and Gynaecology be developed at Bruntsfield and that Midwifery and Infant work be centred at the Hospice with the two existing outpatient departments being retained. This arrangement would entail altered building plans and an estimated cost of around £6000. Sarah became chair of the Building Committee.<sup>136</sup> Impressively the new wing had been completed by 5 July 1911, in time for the official opening on 18 July by Queen Mary whom Sarah Mair, in her role as Chairman, accompanied around the Hospital and introduced to Dr Elsie Inglis. For the occasion Sarah wore 'a lilac dress and straw toque in the same shade with roses'.<sup>137</sup> Lord Pentland of the Scottish Office subsequently wrote to her after 'their Majesties' memorable visit to Edinburgh', to convey 'my cordial thanks for the valuable help you have willingly afforded'.<sup>138</sup>

The years following the outbreak of war in 1914 proved to be challenging both in the continuation of the medical care and the raising of financial support. The Committee meeting held on 11 November 1914 heard of Dr Inglis' intention of leaving for France with a hospital unit; and that as it had not been possible to find a substitute, Dr Venters had undertaken the whole of the surgery at the Hospital. Sister Liston was also bound for France. In February 1915 a severe outbreak of influenza occurred among staff at the Hospital while at the Hospice a crisis ensued when the sister in charge was called up by the War Office. Sarah Mair remained as Chairman throughout these difficult years, but on 11 April 1917 she tendered her resignation due to her inability to be present at meetings. Her colleagues asked her to reconsider and to leave the matter of resigning until after the war. She withdrew her resignation and chaired the meeting on 14 November 1917, remaining in her post until 9 June 1920. However she continued to attend meetings and became an Honorary Vice-President on 11 October 1922.<sup>139</sup> Thus Sarah participated in the discussions concerning the establishment of a Maternity Home proposed in honour of Elsie Inglis to which surplus money from the Scottish Women's Hospitals would be allocated; and she lent her support and name to fund-raising events for the Hospital which opened in Abbeyhill in July 1925. Sarah Mair attended a number of meetings until 12 March 1930; and when she became a Dame in 1931, the Committee sent her a letter of congratulations. On 13 March 1941, Mrs Johnston as Chairman made reference to the death of Dame Sarah S. E. S. Mair LLD, the last of the original members of the Executive Committee of Bruntsfield Hospital.

It was under her chairmanship that the small hospital in Grove Street with five beds was transferred to Bruntsfield Lodge with twelve beds and later expanded to forty beds without

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 15 December 1909.

<sup>136</sup> LHSA, LHB8/1/4, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, Vol. IV, 12 January 1910.

<sup>137</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 19 July 1911.

<sup>138</sup> LHSA, LB8/12/2, *Letter to Miss Mair*, 24 July 1911.

<sup>139</sup> LHSA, LB8/1/5, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, Vol. V, 1922.

incurring debt, Her interest and support were of the utmost value during those years of expansion.<sup>140</sup>

Sarah Mair also found the time to be involved in other philanthropic work. Not surprisingly she took an interest in the activities of the Theatrical Ladies' Guild which provided support to women in need working in the theatrical profession. Thus she presided over a large gathering of ladies in the Freemasons Hall on 21 December 1900 at a fund raising event in aid of the Needle and Thimble Guild, the Edinburgh version of the charity.<sup>141</sup> On 4 April 1906 Sarah spoke to a meeting of ladies in the Livingstone Hall in aid of the Edinburgh Home for Friendless Girls, an institution providing support for first offenders.<sup>142</sup> This work accorded with her deeply held Christian faith and her 'extraordinarily unprejudiced mind'.<sup>143</sup> When writing in *The Attempt* in 1869 on 'Our Ragged Schools' – charitable institutions for the free education of destitute children which in Edinburgh operated as rivals due to divergence over the religious teaching of non Protestants – she argued that:

we must not lose sight of the need of charitable feeling between all the institutions of this kind; which through working in different paths, are nevertheless aiming at the same goal – the rescuing of children from misery, vice, and it may be death. All we ask of our readers is to spend a few hours in visiting the three institutions....to judge for themselves to which, if not to all, they will lend their aid; knowing that to whichever they give, they give to a righteous cause.<sup>144</sup>

Speaking for the motion 'Is Fabian Socialism worthy of support?' at the Ladies Debating Society on 4 Feb 1893, Miss Mair, as reported by the Secretary:

saw in socialism a gleam of hope for those practically enslaved masses of our poorer countrymen. She spoke of the mere handful of people like ourselves who live, if not in luxury, at least in great comfort and whose well organised charity and alms did so little to solve social problems. It is the right of every man born into the world to be able to get work to do and with the object of giving it to him a social revolution is sought. The Ethics of Christianity and Socialism are much the same and we who are not in actual need should be willing to take up this subject.<sup>145</sup>

A practising member of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, she left a legacy of £300 to the Aged and Infirm Clergy Fund.<sup>146</sup>

As indicated in her portrait, two interests occupied Sarah Mair's 'leisure' time – archery and chess. In 1867, Mrs Lees, daughter of Sir James Gillespie the Secretary of the Royal Company of Archers, founded the Edinburgh Ladies Archery Club which had use of the Butts at Archers Hall. In 1873 the members participated in field shooting at the Range on the Meadows. In the second prize meeting on 2 July 1875, 16 ladies competed and Miss Mair won the six prize arrows given by the club

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<sup>140</sup> LHSA, LB8/1/8, *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, Vol. VIII, 13 March 1941.

<sup>141</sup> Scotsman, 21 December 1900. Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London, 2002), p. 62.

<sup>142</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 5 April 1906.

<sup>143</sup> ECL, qvGV143 C65812, *In Memoriam: Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair, DBE, LLD*, 1941.

<sup>144</sup> *The Attempt*, vol. v, p. 106.

<sup>145</sup> NLS, MS/1727, *Minutes*, 4 February 1894. Only five ladies supported her with 24 voting against the motion.

<sup>146</sup> Scotsman, 28 March 1941.

for the most 'golds' gained.<sup>147</sup> Double success came in 1883 when in January Sarah won the club prize for the largest number of centre hits; and in April she received as a prize an enamelled gold locket.<sup>148</sup> In 1904 she was still competing and winning.<sup>149</sup> A family friend remembered her reigning for years as 'Lady Paramount' and holding the annual meetings of the Archery Club at 5 Chester Street.<sup>150</sup>

In 1925 Dame Sarah Mair described chess as 'the Queen of Games' who 'must be wooed with respectful perseverance, and very soon she rewards her wooers with gifts such as no other indoor recreation has its power to bestow'.<sup>151</sup> This glowing testimony came as part of a speech she gave at the 21st birthday party of the Edinburgh Ladies' Chess Club. On 21 June 1904, Miss Stella V. Malcolm had called a meeting in the Victoria Club, 4 Hope Street for the 'Constitution of a Chess Club'.<sup>152</sup> Sarah recalled that:

At that time there was a nice little club for ladies at 4 Hope Street – *not* a Chess Club but simply a comfortable flat where ladies could see the papers, write letters, rest and have light refreshments. To this Club, known as the Victorian Club, both Miss Malcolm and I belonged....Well it occurred to some of us, notably to Miss Malcolm, that a Ladies Chess Club would be a pleasant adjunct.<sup>153</sup>

Miss Malcolm, Sarah Mair, Margaret Houldsworth and seven other ladies decided to call the Club 'The Victorian Ladies' Chess Club' with an entrance fee and annual subscription of 1s respectively. The first meeting for play took place on 18 October and at the General Meeting of the Victorian Club in the following June, Sarah successfully argued in favour of allowing ladies to join the Chess Club only; and was elected President, serving in that role until her death in 1941. As the Secretary Miss Malcolm recorded:

a ladies Chess Club is quite a new movement in Edinburgh and it is really the first of its kind in Scotland....Another forward movement in the same direction this year was the inauguration of the 'Scottish Ladies Chess Association' which was started in March with a Membership of twelve which number has since grown to nineteen of whom ten ladies are members of our Chess Club.<sup>154</sup>

The Scottish Ladies Chess Association ran 12 yearly Congresses for women only and managed three trophy competitions; Sarah Mair winning the Cranston trophy in 1907.

On 9 October 1906 the Ladies' Victorian Chess Club commenced the season under the new title of the Edinburgh Ladies' Chess Club meeting at 21 Stafford Street and affiliated to the Edinburgh Chess League. In 1908 the Club moved to 122 George Street where it remained for 12 years, then to 20 Rutland Square followed by 4 Melville Place in 1927 before settling at 1 Torphichen Street in 1931 where it operated until its closure in 1967. Sarah Mair's advocacy of chess filtered through to

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 3 July 1875.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 11 January, 16 April 1883.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 24 June 1904.

<sup>150</sup> *In Memoriam*.

<sup>151</sup> ECL, YGV1453C67231, *Miss Mair's Speech, Chess Festival*, 19 October 1925.

<sup>152</sup> ECL, YGV1453C65808, *Minutes of the Committee of the Edinburgh Ladies Chess Club*, 24 June 1904.

<sup>153</sup> ECL, YGV1453C67231, *Miss Mair's Speech*.

<sup>154</sup> ECL, YGV1453C65808, *Minutes*, 16 November 1905.

the Edinburgh Ladies' Debating Society. At a meeting on 7 April 1906 'notice was given of a Chess Club recently started'.<sup>155</sup> Debating Society and Chess Club member Margaret Houldsworth provided the Chess Club with its silver championship cup – a two-handed silver vase on an ebony base with a cover on which stood the figure of a chess queen modelled in silver from an old Indian set of chess men.<sup>156</sup> On 6 March 1926 'Miss Mair gave notice of a Chess Tournament in the Autumn'; and on 6 December 1930 due to the death of Miss Mair's sister, Debating Society members met at the Ladies Chess Club 4 Melville Crescent.<sup>157</sup>

During the years of the First World War the Club organised 'soldiers teas' with chess every third week – welcomed by wounded soldiers as a break in the monotony of convalescence. Two years after the end of hostilities, the Scottish Ladies Chess Association amalgamated with the Scottish Chess Association with the agreement that there should never be fewer than two ladies on the Council of the Chess Association and that one Congress be organised. At this point Miss Mair, on behalf of the members, presented Miss Malcolm with an opal and diamond ring and a purse bag in appreciation of her work as Honorary Secretary.<sup>158</sup>

At the 21st birthday celebration in 1925, the President assured her listeners that 'it is absolutely true that it is never too late to learn' and that those who made the attempt to learn chess would find that 'a new and fascinating interest' would be added to their lives 'if they only persevere for a few months'.<sup>159</sup> She never lost her interest, continuing to play in matches while still physically able – for example, on 21 February 1934 when the Edinburgh Ladies Chess Club played against the East End Club – and to give support in kind such as the writing attaché case she presented as first prize in the girls tournament played in January 1926.<sup>160</sup> In 1935 the Committee decided to hold the Annual meeting on Monday 26 April 'so that Dame Sarah Mair would be able to attend'; and on Sarah's 90th birthday on 23 September 1936, sent her flowers and a cake with a chess board iced on the top.<sup>161</sup> The Secretary's Report to the Annual Meeting on 16 May 1937 recorded regret that 'our beloved President is not able to be among us now' but that 'her thoughts very often turn to "the dear Chess Club" as she always calls it'.<sup>162</sup> The President continued to provide an annual competition prize; and although since the summer of 1939 she had remained in the south of England, she still read and signed Club documents. When Sarah died in February 1941 she left a legacy of £25 to the Club with the interest on the deposit of the sum to be used to provide her annual prize.<sup>163</sup> In 1925 Sarah Mair had remarked at the birthday celebration:

The nineteenth day of the month – of any month – always appeals to me as a happy date, for most Churches break out into praise that morning singing the XCV Psalm 'O come let us sing

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<sup>155</sup> EUSC, MS/1729, *Minutes*, 7 April 1906.

<sup>156</sup> *Scotsman*, 28 February 1907.

<sup>157</sup> EUSC, MS/1732, *Minutes*, 6 March 1926, 6 December 1930.

<sup>158</sup> *Scotsman*, 26 April 1920.

<sup>159</sup> ECL, qYGV1453C65812, *Minutes*, 6 March 1926, 6 December 1930.

<sup>160</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 21 February 1934; ECL, YGV1453 C65806, *Minutes*, January 1927.

<sup>161</sup> ECL, *Minutes of the Edinburgh Ladies' Chess Club*, 5 October 1936.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 May 1937.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 May 1941.

unto the Lord....I trust that some of our younger Members will be meeting together on the nineteenth of October 1954 to celebrate our Jubilee. And when that day comes I pray you think kindly of the Founders.<sup>164</sup>

They did and Miss Mair's niece Mrs Budgeon cut the 50th birthday cake.

A third 'sporting' interest occupied other leisure time. In 1870 Sarah Mair wrote an essay 'On Croquet' in *The Attempt* magazine, arguing:

For the last eight or nine years we have been of the opinion that Croquet should take a much higher standing among our national games than that which was at first accorded to it by a frivolous public, who, though willing to spend hours in knocking about balls amid laughter and conversation, failed to see any of the true merits of the game. However, the time and attention which have been bestowed upon it now for some years past, go far towards making amends for the ill-usage with which it met in the early stages of its existence..... Now that the All-England Croquet Club is fairly established, surely Scotland will not fail to found some national club of that sort. Should such a club be started, no better plan than our own metropolis should be selected for its centre, and doubtless a field, capable of being formed into several large croquet lawns, could be procured a little beyond the west side of our city.<sup>165</sup>

Whatever its origins, croquet was being played in Scotland in the 1860s with both separate competitions for men and women and mixed competitions held at Moffat in the 1870s. Overtaken in popularity by tennis in the next two decades, croquet experienced a revival in the late 1890s and from 1897-1914 the Scottish Championships took place at the Edinburgh Hydropathic in Craiglockhart. At what period Sarah Mair learned to play and where, remains unknown though Queen Street Gardens seem a likely contender – 'the joyful playground of my youth'.<sup>166</sup> Dorothy Turnbull's mother remembered her playing croquet around 1863, describing her as 'beautiful with lovely black ringlets'.<sup>167</sup> Forty years later she was still playing. The press report of the Scottish Championship Meeting at the Edinburgh Hydropathic in July 1901 recorded her defeat in the first ties by Maxwell Stuart.<sup>168</sup> In the championship competition two years later she opposed the Rev. S. Smart.<sup>169</sup> Was she wearing the jacket and good, firm kid or leather footwear she had advocated as suitable attire for croquet-playing so many years earlier?

Many reminiscences of Sarah Mair record her physical appearance. A former pupil of St George's High School recalled that among the people who appeared on the platform at the end of the school term, the most striking was Miss Mair 'in rustling black silk' and with a 'graciousness of manner' and 'always a charming smile for her "little school girls"'.<sup>170</sup> Lettice Milne Rae thought that she 'always knew how to dress with taste, elegance and suitability', but even more important was her:

warm graciousness on all occasions, public and private, her encouraging smile, her courtesy, her wonderful fluent voice and light clear enunciation that never failed to charm the ear as her beauty charmed the eye...<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> ECL, YGV1453 C67231, *Miss Mair's Speech*.

<sup>165</sup> *The Attempt*, vol. 6, 1870, pp. 234-240.

<sup>166</sup> Quoted by R. T. Skinner in *Scotsman*, 19 February 1941.

<sup>167</sup> *In Memoriam*.

<sup>168</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 July 1901.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 July 1903.

<sup>170</sup> Walsh, p. 39.

<sup>171</sup> *In Memoriam*.

Jean Stewart, another 'Old Girl', thought that no one would forget 'her beautiful speaking voice which retained so much of its rich tone to old age', especially as 'what she said one felt was most beautifully expressed'.<sup>172</sup> She added that a word in the school motto appealed very strongly to Miss Mair, namely 'Courtesyie'; while Rosalind Masson remembered that:

She was very beautiful – tall, stately, somewhat regal. I can see her clearly in her long amethyst velvet coat, some fur – was it ermine? – about the throat, the sparkle of a half-hidden jewel. The headdress shaped like a coronet on – as Keats has it – 'dark pretty hair'. A beautiful voice – a thing almost obsolete now.<sup>173</sup>



Sarah in 1902, Courtesy of St George's School

Sarah Mair also possessed the 'people skills', practical ability and sound common sense to enable her to mediate and steer courses of action involving strong-minded personalities. An excellent committee woman, 'she was a born president, though as she used to say "without an inch of red tape about her."<sup>174</sup> Perhaps the key to her zest for life, but acceptance of each of its stages, was that she never lost her capacity to learn and experiment, taking in her nineties, a keen interest in the latest teaching methods as practised on her by her great-niece Elizabeth Sainsbury. Many years earlier in the debate 'Do the years give more than they take away?' held in the dining room of 5 Chester Street on 1 February 1919, Sarah (Sally) Mair argued:

Old age is the happiest period of a well spent life. The progress of the world is the heritage of the old who have witnessed the various changes and improvements made by humans. Physical failure is compensated for by additional wisdom and experience.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 February 1941.

<sup>174</sup> *In Memoriam*.

<sup>175</sup> NLS, MS/1740, *Minutes*, 1 Feb 1919.

Although most of her Debating Society friends disagreed with her she remained undaunted, optimistic and full of gratitude for a long and happy life in which she had witnessed great improvements in the education and opportunities available to women attained since her birth in 1846. In 1935, aged 89 years, Sarah wrote what now might be called a mission statement:

Learn the lesson of progression truly. Do not call each glorious change, decay. Growth – development – is the healthy condition of life: stagnation – obstinate resistance to change – is death.<sup>176</sup>



Sarah aged 80, courtesy of St George's School

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<sup>176</sup> Rae, *Ladies in Debate*, p. 7.

## Bethia Hamilton Don Wauchope

10 March 1854 – 6 November 1944      12 Ainslie Place, 10 Grosvenor Crescent



F. C. B. Cadell, *The Black Hat*, 1914 (City Art Centre, Edinburgh Museums and Galleries)

Her portraits hang in art galleries and grace private collections but few who admire her know who she was or much about her. References in catalogues and art publications frequently misspell her name and take at least ten years from her age. Even family descendants plead ignorance. Her great nephew told the *Scotsman* newspaper in April 2007 – ‘I am sorry there is very little information on my great aunt’.<sup>1</sup> Yet Miss Don Wauchope’s legacy lives on not because of her pioneering work but through the artistic inspiration she gave to Edinburgh artist Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell. She is the lady in ‘The Black Hat’.

On 26 April 1853 at Pittfirrane Fife, Rev. D. T. K. Drummond of St Thomas Episcopal Chapel Rutland Place, Edinburgh married John Wauchope Esq. of Edmonstone in the parish of Newton and Bethia Hamilton, eldest daughter of Andrew Buchanan Esq. The area of the former estate of Edmonstone lies between Little France on the northwest and Danderhall on the east and is just within Edinburgh’s boundary with the county of Midlothian. Originally belonging to the Edmonstone family it passed first to the Raith family and then to the Wauchopes. After being requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply in 1942, the house was demolished in the late 1940s. When advertised for rent in 1897 the description listed:

a dining room, drawing room, library, billiard room, two morning rooms, 15 bed and dressing rooms, butler’s and housekeeper’s rooms, servants’ hall and seven servants bedrooms, ample kitchen, scullery, dairy, store and cellar

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<sup>1</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 April 2007.

accommodation, laundry and washhouse, two coach houses, stabling for 18 horses and five rooms for stablemen.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, 'the house and offices are supplied with the Edinburgh water'; sanitary arrangements being 'in perfect order'. The census of 1881 indicated the presence of a cook/housekeeper, lady's maid, young lady's maid, laundry maid, under laundry maid, housemaid, under housemaid, dairy maid, two kitchen maids, footman and under footman. Any other staff would have been non residential. In 1862 John Wauchope inherited the baronetcy of Newtondon Berwickshire from his kinsman Sir William Henry Don, 7th Baronet; and he added the surname Don to his own. The Don Wauchopes also owned Newton House where some of the children were born. Wauchope's sister, Henrietta Mary Wauchope married Sir John James Gardiner Baird of Saughtonhall.



Edmonstone House demolished in the late 1940s, Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*, 1880s

The Wauchopes named their first child, born at Edmonstone on 10 March 1854, Bethia Hamilton Wauchope. Eldest of eight children Bethia had three sisters and four brothers of whom the eldest brother, John Douglas 9th Baronet (1859-1951) remained unmarried like her. The youngest of the family, Anne Eskine died on 18 January 1888 in her fourteenth year. David Buchanan also died young at the age of 31 years in 1896. Bethia's other brothers Andrew Ramsay known as 'Bunny' (1861-1948) and Patrick Hamilton (1863-1939) distinguished themselves on the sports field. Both played rugby for Scotland but A. R. excelled also in athletics and represented Scotland in the first cricket encounter between Scotland and Ireland in 1886 and in the first rugby match against Wales in 1883. Although listed as an advocate in 1890 Andrew became a London stockbroker while Patrick practised as a solicitor in his firm of Rutherford and Don Wauchope, 19 Young Street. Like these brothers Bethia's sisters Henrietta Cecilia (1855-1939) and Clothilde Georgina (1858-1945) both married; Henrietta on 1 January 1882 to Lieutenant (later Major)

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1897.

Ernest Digby Mansel and Clothilde on 29 June 1886 to the Hon. Arthur Henry Browne, fourth son of John Cavendish 3rd Baron Kilmaine.

That Bethia lived the comfortable life of a young lady of her social status and family background is borne out by the first press notices of her after her 21st birthday. On 30 March 1875 she and Henrietta attended the New Club Ball in the 'handsomely decorated' Assembly Rooms with the orchestra 'arranged in a terraced perspective of oriental design', with Corinthian pillars, Etruscan vases on pedestals and massive candelabra placed around the rooms.<sup>3</sup> Just over a week later she appeared at the Fancy Dress Ball organised by the St Andrew Boat Club on 9 April 1875 in the Music Hall and Assembly Rooms. Founded at 17 Atholl Crescent in 1846 the St Andrew Boat Club was the oldest of its kind in Scotland; having received permission to have boats in the Union Canal. Most of the first members were Oxford and Cambridge graduates. The first ball took place in 1853 and the tradition lasted until 1939. Bethia's costume is interesting as she chose to appear as the notorious Lady Sarah Lennox at the time of George III. She wore a blue satin quilted petticoat, flowered white silk tunic, fishu of Honiton lace, high-heeled blue buckled shoes, white straw hat trimmed with pale blue satin and looped up at the back with three pink roses. A pearl necklace, earrings, brooch and hayrake completed her outfit and she wore powdered hair. Henrietta dressed as 'Esmerelda' (a representation of the character in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*) in yellow satin petticoat, red tunic slashed up to the waist, trimmed with gold braid, fringe and sequins, black satin shoes with gilt heels and yellow rosettes finished with a cap of red and yellow satin, a necklace of Algeria sequins and coral and 'a dagger, goat, tambourine and castinets'.<sup>4</sup> The description of Lady Don Wauchope merely mentioned fancy dress, diamond ornaments and powdered hair. A fortnight later Bethia returned to the Assembly Rooms in the company of her parents and sister to attend a Military Ball which seemed a sparser event. Given by the officers of the 1st Royal Scots, the regiment stationed at the Castle, little had been done in the way of decoration except for a 'trophy of military insignia surrounded by a collection of greenhouse plants'.<sup>5</sup> Clothilde joined her elder sisters for the ball given by the Bachelors of Edinburgh Society on 7 March 1876 and for that of the New Club on 14 March when for this occasion the orchestra performed amidst a garden scene.

In April 1879 Bethia's cousin William James Gardiner Baird of the 7th Hussars and only son of Sir James Gardiner Baird Bart of Saughton Hall married Miss Hozier, eldest daughter of W. W. Hozier of Newlands and Barrowfield, Convener of the County of Lanark. The marriage took place at Mauldslie Castle Carluke and the two elder Don Wauchope sisters stayed in the Castle while their parents and Clothilde came for the celebration; the ceremony being conducted in the entrance hall to the Castle 'tastefully decorated with choice exotics and evergreens from the greenhouse in the Castle Gardens'.<sup>6</sup> Guests partook of the wedding breakfast served in two

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 21 March 1875.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1875. Lady Lennox' scandalous affairs included an elopement and a divorce.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 29 April 1875.

<sup>6</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 4 April 1879.

rooms in each of which was a large table decorated with 18 different varieties of rare and beautiful white flowers with 'choice grapes and other fruits from Mauldslie Castle on the tables'.<sup>7</sup> Orange blossom also supplied from the Castle gardens, ornamented the magnificent brides cake and guests could admire the 150 costly and beautiful presents before the newlyweds left 'amidst a shower of slippers' for Carlisle Station en route for Paris for their honeymoon.<sup>8</sup>

On 24 May the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the Earl of Rosslyn and the Countess entertained a distinguished company to dinner in the Picture Gallery of Holyroodhouse to honour the Queen's birthday and the guests included Sir John and Lady Don Wauchope and their daughters. This would not be the only time Bethia attended an event at the Palace. However she must have spent the Christmas of 1879 in Torquay as the *Western Times* reported the presence of Miss Don Wauchope at the first dance of the subscription season at Bath Salon when Miss Bailey's Quadrille Band played the music; and she attended the second subscription dance on 29 December.<sup>9</sup> The new decade of the 1880s during which Bethia celebrated her thirtieth birthday, marked Lieutenant John Don Wauchope's promotion from 2nd Lieutenant to Lieutenant of the Edinburgh or Queen's Light Infantry. In the annual calendar of balls and social events the 21st Hussars Ball of March 1881 seemed worthy of a lengthy press description. On this occasion the 'orchestra was transformed into a military encampment with trees and tents receding into the background and flanked by ivy covered towers and campfires and piles of arms'.<sup>10</sup> A large centrepiece consisting of illuminated crystal prismatic stars enclosing the regimental badge and enriched with trophies of arms screened the organ. Further decoration consisted of a rustic bridge covered with ivy leaves and gilt fleur-de-lis, rockeries surmounted by mythological figures and others in ancient armour, hundreds of lights suspended among the trees and a balustrade of kettledrums decorated with skins of lions, tigers and leopards. Rustic boudoirs, arms, weapons, lace curtains, mirrors and plants on the staircase completed the transformation of the Assembly Rooms where Lady Don Wauchope and the Misses Don Wauchope spent their evening.

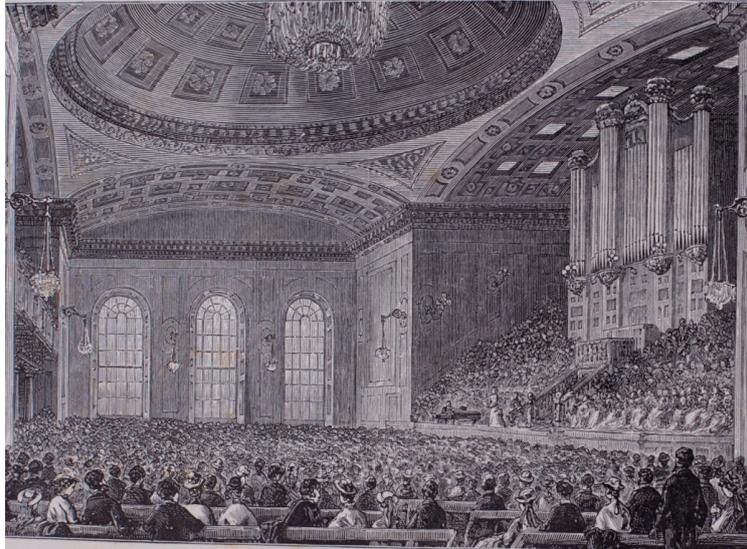
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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *Western Times*, 19 December 1879, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 1 January 1880.

<sup>10</sup> *Scotsman*, 17 March 1881.



Music Hall of the Assembly Rooms George Street, Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*, 1880s

Bethia attended two regimental balls with her parents and sisters Henrietta and Clothilde in April of 1882 but for that of the 3rd Dragoon Guards Mr Don Wauchope accompanied them. In September she and her mother only seem to have attended the balls of the Ayr races.<sup>11</sup> A family event, however, occupied their attention at the beginning of November when Henrietta married Mr Ernest Digby Mansel 1st Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry, third son of Colonel Pleydell Mansel of Smedmore Dorset. The Rev. E. C. Dawson of St Thomas Episcopal Church Edinburgh performed the ceremony at Edmonstone.

The bride's dress was of white satin trimmed with Brussels lace looped with bunches of orange blossom, wreath of the same, tulle veil fastened with pearl and diamond pins and she wore a gold necklace and locket set with pearls the gift of the Edmonstone tenantry. The bridesmaids were Miss Don Wauchope, Miss Clothilde Don Wauchope, Miss Anne Don Wauchope, Miss Halkett, Miss Helen Halkett, Miss Russell, Miss Hope, Miss Walker, Miss Meta Walker. Their dresses were of white muslinette and lace with hats to match, trimmed with white chrysanthemums and Marshal Neil rosebuds and each carried a bouquet of the same flowers and wore a horseshoe and hunting whip pin the gifts of the bridegroom. The bride's travelling dress was of blue broche and velvet with hat to match. After the ceremony the bride and bridegroom left en route for the Continent.<sup>12</sup>

For the next few years Miss Don Wauchope continued to be seen at fashionable Edinburgh balls and formal occasions such as the presentation of colours to the 3rd Battalion Royal Scots at Glencorse on 19 July 1883, in the company of her family who now often included her brother Andrew Ramsay Don Wauchope who had completed his studies at Trinity College Cambridge. On 8 December 1884 the *Glasgow Herald* announced that it had been authorised to state that a marriage would shortly take place between the Hon. Arthur Browne brother of Lord Kilmaine and Clothilde Georgina third daughter of Sir John Don Wauchope Bart of Edmonstone. Clothilde probably became the Hon. Mrs Arthur H. Browne on 29 January 1885 not 1886 as stated in *Dods Peerage* (*Debrett's Peerage* says only 1885). This would account for Bethia's presence in Dublin in March 1885. The

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 26 April, 22 September 1882.

<sup>12</sup> *Dundee Courier*, November 1882.

Browne family hailed from the Neale in the County of Mayo and the most important period in Dublin's social calendar preceded St Patrick's Day. The festivities dated to the 1670s when the Viceroy of Ireland and retinue resided in Dublin Castle for the six weeks of celebrations. By the 1880s the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the 5th Earl Spencer presided over the full dress Viceregal Ball held in 1885 on 17 March. The guests included the Hon. Arthur H. Browne and the Hon. Mrs Arthur Brown who was presented to the Lord Lieutenant and Countess Spencer by the Countess of Kilmaine. The Countess of Meath presented Mrs Browne's sisters Mrs Ernest Mansel and Miss Don Wauchope.<sup>13</sup> Clothilde returned to Scotland for the birth of her daughter on 9 May 1886 at Edmonstone House; and another daughter was born at 6 Melville Street on 21 December 1889.<sup>14</sup> The family must have returned to Ireland as in 1891 Lady Don Wauchope advertised for 'a nurse of some experience to go to Dublin: two children: nurserymaid kept'.<sup>15</sup> The 1901 census recorded the Brownes as living at 38 Ailsebury Road Donnybrook Dublin; a third daughter having been born in Dublin. Arthur died in 1908 and Henrietta in 1945.

When Bethia attended the Highlanders Regimental Ball in March 1890, brothers Andrew, Patrick and David accompanied her. By this time the family had vacated Edmonstone House which the Dowager Duchess of Kintore leased from 1886-1895. Her substantial copy of the inventory of the house included all the objects in rooms such as 'Crimson Bedroom', 'Green Bedroom', 'Water Closet', 'Business Room', 'Strangers' Footman's Room', 'Shoe Hall', 'Lamp Room' and 'Gentlemen's Water Closet outside front of House'.<sup>16</sup> Sir John also must have rented property in Edinburgh New Town as the *Times* reported Anne as having died at 13 Moray Place on 19 January 1888. By 1891 the family had moved to 11 Ainslie Place where the census return recorded the presence of Sir John aged 74 years, Lady Don Wauchope aged 63 years, Bethia, 36, John of the Midlothian County Militia 31, Andrew, 29, Advocate at the Scottish Bar, Patrick, 27, Writer to the Signet and David, 26, clerk in Commercial House. Of the seven female servants only Harriet Young the cook, aged 45 years had been employed by them 10 years earlier. At 22 Ainslie Place lived Francis Cadell, surgeon MB, FRSCSE with his family and four servants and in nearby Randolph Crescent the Stevenson sisters also with seven female servants.

In May 1891 12 Ainslie Place came on the market advertised as 'consisting of six spacious floors and occupying a favourable position on the Northside of Ainslie Place, the view northward being open and extensive'.<sup>17</sup> In a letter dated 29 June 1891 John Bruce wrote to Sir John to express his pleasure that the latter had become the proprietor of No 12 'the house next to mine in Ainslie Place' – No 13.

I am sure you will come to love the outlook from it as much as I do. I cheerfully agree to your wish to raise the upper storey the same as I did when I bought my house.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Belfast News-Letter*, 18 March 1885.

<sup>14</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 11 May 1886; *Morning Post*, *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 December 1889.

<sup>15</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 March 1891.

<sup>16</sup> Midlothian Council Archives, WE/60/2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 9 May 1891.

<sup>18</sup> MCA, WE/58/5, *Letter from John Bruce*, 29 June 1891.

He offered to show him what he had done and share his experience. This new location would have been a more convenient residence for attending functions at the Assembly Rooms such as the St Andrew Boat Club Ball in February 1893. While the *Scotsman* declared the Assembly Rooms to be 'pretty enough in themselves to do without external aids' it gave extensive coverage to the 'Scots Baronial' decorative scheme.

The orchestra was subjected to elaborate treatment. A full screen representing an oak panelled wall completely hid the organ. In the centre was an imitation open doorway, with a pretty peep of landscape beyond; and on each side were two stained glass windows, which when lighted from the back had a pretty effect. In the panels were hung trophies of armour with stags' heads worked here and there to the wainscot. Just below this screen, in the centre of the orchestra was a lofty square tower-like erection where the band was placed. The platform approached by a temporary staircase from the floor of the hall was converted into an elegant lounge set out with pretty pieces of furniture and adorned with large palms and other fine foliaged plants. Its front had a semi-circular golden balustrade picked out against crimson drapery and carrying fairy lights. The transepts were screened off as supper rooms from the area of the hall. The screens were in wainscot, each pierced with three archways having over them the crest of the club – a white St Andrew's Cross on a blue ground. At the wall-head was a row of opal gas lamps which formed a brilliant feature in the scheme.<sup>19</sup>

Further decoration involved painted landscapes with stretches of water, rich crimson and gold drapery, choice flowers and palms; and the entrance vestibule fitted up in the club's colours of blue and white as a tea and light refreshment room with trophies of oars hanging on the walls. Messrs Maclure, Macdonald and Co. of Glasgow had fitted out a space as a light studio for photography and Messrs Pass and Son Princes Street had their assistants in the dressing rooms to 'repair any damage that might be sustained by the elaborate coiffeurs of the ladies in the dance'. In this glittering scene Miss Don Wauchope appeared as 'Portia' in a scarlet silk gown, birette and cassock while brothers Patrick and David attended as the Knave of Hearts and a Spanish Nobleman respectively.

Later that year Bethia's father died of influenza at 12 Ainslie Place on 12 December. The press listed his many appointments including those of Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Lunacy in Scotland from 1863 and Chairman of the Board of Education from 1872; and his election as a Director of the National Bank of Scotland in 1887. A member of the vestry of St Thomas Episcopal Church in Edinburgh he had connections with a number of local, religious and philanthropic societies and he attended the opening of the Edinburgh School of Cookery in 1875. Although originally a Liberal 'he abandoned Mr Gladstone before the Irish surrender' and since then 'had taken an active part in advancing the Unionist position in Edinburgh and the country'.<sup>20</sup> On 28 October 1894 Bethia, her mother and brothers attended the unveiling of a memorial to Sir John – a handsome brass tablet – in Newton Church.<sup>21</sup> Sir John left a personal estate of £73,811 18s 4d out of which an

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<sup>19</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 February 1893.

<sup>20</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 12 December 1893; *Dundee Courier*, 13 December 1893. Prime Minister William Gladstone supported Irish Home Rule in 1885. The Liberal Unionist Association was against this.

<sup>21</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 October 1894.

annuity of £600 was payable to Lady Don Wauchope in the terms of her marriage contract; and £7,666 13s 4d was secured for Miss Don Wauchope by Bond and Disposition granted by Sir John D. Don Wauchope out of the estate of Edmonstone.<sup>22</sup> This gave her an independent income which by 1939 would have halved in value.

Miss Don Wauchope seems to have adhered to her father's political viewpoint for on 1 April 1895 she attended the annual meeting of the General Committee of the Women's Branch of the Liberal Unionist Association for East and North Scotland held in the house of her neighbour Mrs Patrick Blair at 11 Ainslie Place. The Marchioness of Tweeddale as President presided over the Committee which included Mrs J. R. Findlay, wife of the *Scotsman* proprietor; and Bethia seconded the motion in support of the financial statement. She was present at the East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association Annual Meeting in Dowell's Rooms in November 1898 but the only other mention of her in a political context found to date, is of the sixth annual meeting of the West Edinburgh Women's Joint Unionist Association held in Dowell's Rooms on 29 November 1911. Miss Balfour of Whittingehame presided on this occasion and the platform party included Miss Don Wauchope.<sup>23</sup> Bethia and her mother, however continued with their round of social activities, visiting Crieff in August 1895 when they resided at the Drummond Arms Hotel; and York in December to attend the brilliant spectacle of the Scottish Borderers Ball in the York Exhibition Building.<sup>24</sup> A few months later another tragedy affected the family with the 'death at 12 Ainslie Place of David Buchanan fourth son of the late Sir John Don Wauchope' on 24 April 1896.<sup>25</sup> The notice in the *Edinburgh Evening News* requested no flowers.

On 4 November 1898 the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* carried a paragraph claiming that:

One of the most attractive women among us is undoubtedly Miss Don Wauchope who lives with her widowed mother, Lady Don Wauchope and is seen at most of the leading houses. Miss Wauchope is suspected of literary tendencies, but is better known as the possessor of a lovely complexion, an aristocratic bearing, a fine figure and the daintiest pair of feet in Midlothian.<sup>26</sup>

By this date Bethia had passed her forty-fourth birthday. She and her mother continued to live at 12 Ainslie Place but Andrew was not listed in the Post Office Directory after 1898-9 at which time Patrick's address appeared as 66 Queen Street. He had married Georgina Buchan on 10 June 1897. Andrew's engagement to Miss Maizie Salmond daughter of General William Salmond of Park Lane was announced in August 1902 and the wedding took place on 30 October 1903 in St Mark's North Audley Street London. Bethia's brother now Sir John Don Wauchope, does not appear at the Ainslie Place address until 1910 although he may have been living there. The *Scotsman* of 27 February 1904 carried an advertisement for the furnished

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<sup>22</sup> MCA, WE12/1.

<sup>23</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 April 1895, 30 November 1911.

<sup>24</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 2 August 1895; *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 December 1895.

<sup>25</sup> *Scotsman*, 27 April 1896.

<sup>26</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 4 November 1898.

lease of Edmonstone House with six public rooms, 13 bedrooms, ample servants' rooms, kitchen accommodation, coach houses and stables; application to be made to Rutherford and Don Wauchope 19 Young Street.

Miss Don Wauchope does not seem to have devoted her energies to worthy causes but she did make charitable donations from early adulthood such as to the Edinburgh Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in which her father took a great interest. In 1879, for example, Sir John paid a subscription of £1 and his daughters collectively £3 5s.<sup>27</sup> The press noted her donations to the Courant Fund for Destitute Children in 1897, 1898 and 1902 and her presence at two unusual fund-raising events. On 14 November 1895 Mrs Wauchope of Niddrie in the absence of the Duchess of Buccleuch, opened a three days' bazaar in the Freemasons' Hall with the object of raising funds to build a manse for the parish of Newcraighall. The event featured concerts, theatricals and other amusements such as the band and pipers of the Black Watch. Stalls had names and the Manse stall holders included Miss Don Wauchope. On 3 December 1907 the Assembly Rooms hosted a Grand India Fair to raise money to provide a 'Habitation' for the use of Indian and other students resident in Edinburgh and for 'the encouragement of learning native languages and dialects of our great Indian Empire'.<sup>28</sup> Miss Don Wauchope officiated as one of the holders of Stall 7. After the outbreak of the war in 1914 she contributed £1 towards the funding of an 'Ainslie Place Bed' in response to the appeal of the Scottish Women's Hospitals.

Bethia's mother died aged 83 years, on 20 February 1911 at 12 Ainslie Place. There is no Post Office Directory entry for that address for the next decade although Sir John owned the property until 1922 so it is probable that Bethia continued to live there. The years preceding the outbreak of the 'Great War', however, saw her enter her phase as 'artistic muse' for Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell one of the group of painters known as the 'Scottish Colourists'. Francis, family name 'Bunty', had been born at 4 Buckingham Terrace on 12 April 1883, thus making him 29 years younger than Bethia. In 1889 he and his family which included his sister Jean Dunlop born 1884 and brother Arthur Patrick Hamilton born 1886, moved to 22 Ainslie Place. Bunty's Edinburgh Academy School Report for 1892-3 remarked:

He makes more effort to give his attention to his work, though little sketches are still produced at intervals – a pencil in his hand at any time is dangerous to lessons.<sup>29</sup>

Accepting the inevitable his mother and sister moved with him to Paris in 1898 and he enrolled in the Académie Julian, a private studio school for artists. The family returned to Edinburgh in 1902 but Cadell commuted between Edinburgh and Paris and also exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy and Society of Scottish Artists exhibitions. In 1906 his father retired, sold 22 Ainslie Place and moved to Germany where in 1907 Francis entered the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich. The death of Mrs Cadell in December 1907 resulted in the family's return to Edinburgh

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<sup>27</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 1 March 1879.

<sup>28</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 December 1907.

<sup>29</sup> NLS, Acc/11224/1.

where Cadell held his first solo exhibition of oils and watercolours at Doig, Wilson and Wheatley in George Street in March 1908.<sup>30</sup> Early in the following year Cadell senior died and Francis moved into 130 George Street.

At which date Miss Don Wauchope came into contact with F. C. B. Cadell is yet to be established. From the 1890s of course, both families resided in Ainslie Place until the Cadells' departure in 1906. The first mention of Bethia in connection with the artist is in 1909 when he exhibited in the annual show of the Society of Scottish Artists. Mistakenly calling him 'Miss', possibly confusing him with artist sisters Agnes and Florence, the *Scotsman* thought that the study of still life, 'The China Cabinet' and the portrait of Miss Don Wauchope 'shows vigorous handling and a feeling for rich colour'.<sup>31</sup> The fact that Cadell signed but did not date his work has caused art historians difficulty as few dates can be assigned with accuracy. 'Afternoon' a painting in which Bethia is usually said to be depicted, was executed in 1913 and exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition of 1915.

Mr Cadell more fully realises his ideals in his large "afternoon" interior than he has yet probably done. To a considerable extent it is a black and white study, there is at the ordinary viewpoint an amazing lack of details in essentials but distance lends the requisite "enchantment to the view", the dots and dashes coalesce and what is still scanting the imagination easily supplies. It is a remarkably clever piece of work.<sup>32</sup>

Earlier the *Scotsman* had also given a favourable review.

Several clever interiors with figures are contributed by Mr Francis C. B. Cadell. The artist might be classed among the impressionists but at the right distance the objects come marvellously together and colour and execution have great fluency and style. 'Afternoon' is a specially good example of Mr Cadell's art, the subject, a brilliantly lit interior of a salon, with three fashionably attired ladies skilfully placed in the composition.<sup>33</sup>

The newspaper later listed the painting among those sold.<sup>34</sup>



F. C. B. Cadell, *Afternoon*, 1913, Private Collection

The drawing room in 130 George Street constituted 'the salon' which featured a marble mantelpiece, the background for many of his paintings. One of the best

<sup>30</sup> *Scotsman*, 10 March 1908.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July 1909.

<sup>32</sup> *Evening News*, 8 May 1915.

<sup>33</sup> *Scotsman*, 14 June 1915.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September 1915.

known works in the art collection of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries' is the 'Black Hat' painted in 1914. Miss Don Wauchope stands in front of the mantelpiece on which are displayed two silver candlesticks and a blue and white jar. She wears a mustard coloured robe trimmed with white lace and black ribbon and decorated with a red flower. Gold hoop earrings and a black cloche hat with white feather complete her ensemble. When displayed in the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts in 1916 the *Scotsman* commented:

in the borderland between portrait and picture there is nothing more arresting, or in its own way more charming than Mr F. C. B. Cadell's "Lady with a Black Hat".

In a privately owned photograph taken around 1914 Cadell sits crossed legged on a chair with this portrait on an easel beside him. In another painting, 'The White Interior', the identically dressed figure sits on a gold chair in front of a white sofa. 'The daintiest pair of feet in Midlothian' display shiny black heeled shoes with buckles. A painting dated to the same period and entitled 'The White Room' shows Bethia with her left arm resting on the mantelpiece on which the candlesticks still reside but in company with several other ornaments. This time she is regaled in a mauve-grey coat with wide-brimmed black hat trimmed with white. A similar pose adopted in 'The Mantlepiece in Summer' (now in a private collection) depicts her in a dress adorned with a red flower and wearing a different black hat. In a work of 1915 entitled 'White Room' a seated figure dressed in black with a pink flower wears gold hoop earrings and yet another black hat.

...the black hat is a greater mania than ever. This little hat may be either a sailor, a rather high-crowned Directoire with a curly brim, a turban pure and simple with its straight high brim, or a turban indicating towards the tricorne.<sup>35</sup>

There are other predominately black and white interiors of the same period featuring figures which may or may not be Miss Don Wauchope but a representation of a costume draped over a white sofa is entitled 'Miss Don Wauchope's Robe'. This sold at a Lyon and Turnbull auction in November 2012 for £241,250.



F. C. B. Cadell, *Miss Don Wauchope's Robe*, Private Collection

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<sup>35</sup> *Western Mail*, 13 March 1914.

In 1915 Bunty joined the 9th Battalion Royal Scots and departed for France and the trenches. Two years earlier the estate of Edmonstone 'situated in the Parishes of Newton, Liberton and Inveresk and county of Midlothian extending to 1329 acres or thereby' came on the market with the firm of Messrs Rutherford and Don Wauchope acting as agents.<sup>36</sup> Then in September 1920 12 Ainslie Place was advertised for sale at Dowell's Rooms or privately at an upset price of £3000 and an entry date of 11 September 1920. From a mandate regarding the rroup sent to Rutherford and Don Wauchope, Sir John, proprietor of 12 Ainslie Place seems to have been residing at 23 Moray Place, the property of Sir Archibald Campbell Bart.<sup>37</sup> No one appeared on the day to make an offer and the house remained unsold until 30 January 1922. In 1920 among the list of apologies for absence from the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood was the statement that Sir John Don Wauchope and Miss Don Wauchope 'regret they were unavoidably prevented from obeying Their Majesties' command to be present at Their Majesties' garden party on Wednesday'.<sup>38</sup> They did, however, attend the Royal Reception at Holyrood on 10 July 1923. Cadell meanwhile had returned to Edinburgh in 1919 and in 1920 bought four floors of 6 Ainslie Place, one of the earliest New Town properties to be divided. Here he embarked on another series of black hat portraits some of which were of Miss Don Wauchope.

The big black hat always has its followers summer and winter because there are numbers of women fully alive to its usefulness, who realise that it is too, among the most becoming of headgear.<sup>39</sup>

The black hats in the paintings of the 1920s are all large. The last portrait of Bethia harks back to that painted in 1914. This much older figure, dressed in black with a pink flower pinned to the front of the dress, adopts a similar pose standing with her left side turned to the viewer whom she does not look at directly. Behind her hangs one of Cadell's still-life paintings. Miss Don Wauchope wears a large black hat.



F. C. B. Cadell, *Miss Don Wauchope*, from Sotheby's sale catalogue, 2007

<sup>36</sup> *Scotsman*, 15 February 1913.

<sup>37</sup> MCA, WE35/8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1920.

<sup>39</sup> *Lancashire Evening Post*, 3 March 1920.

In 1919 Sir John Don Wauchope was elected as Vice Convener of Midlothian County Council, becoming Convener in 1926. From 1927, if not earlier, he resided at 10 Grosvenor Crescent. In his role as Convener he appeared at many civic functions and when the Lord Provost of Edinburgh Sir Thomas Whitson opened Huntly House in the Canongate as the City Museum on 6 May 1932, among those present were Sir J. Don Wauchope and Miss Don Wauchope. In the years leading to the Second World War Dowells held a series of auctions of many of the Edmonstone artefacts – books in July 1936, Scottish and English silver in October, tapestries and furniture in November and December. Three tapestry panels realised 1500 guineas.<sup>40</sup> Further sales took place in 1937 and in 1939. Two paintings by F. C. B. Cadell appeared in the March and May sales of 1939 – ‘Flowers’ and ‘Ayrshire Calves’, though it is not clear if they belonged to the Edmonstone picture collection. ‘Flowers’ was sold for three guineas.

Bethia’s brother Patrick died at 25 Ainslie Place in January 1939 after a long illness. A press obituary described him as an enthusiastic rugby player and credited him with pioneering the layout of Muirfield Golf Course ‘to make it playable for championship matches’.<sup>41</sup> His wife Georgina had died on 5 May 1928. He left an estate of above £19,014. Bethia seems to have had contact with his daughter-in-law to whom she left a legacy; and part of Patrick’s estate included items which were a gift from Miss Don Wauchope, 10 Grosvenor Crescent.<sup>42</sup> Then in June 1939 Mrs Henrietta Cecilia Mansell, Bethia’s sister widowed since 1911, died in London leaving an estate of £16,063. Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell had succumbed to cancer two years earlier in 1937. Following the outbreak of war on 4 September 1939 Bethia responded to the Lord Provost’s Red Cross Appeal by donating £6 but perhaps the last press mention of her is indicative of her persona and the glamorous image she portrayed. An advertisement in the *Scotsman* of 20 August 1942 read – ‘Lost a marcasite earring. Please return to Miss Don Wauchope 10 Grosvenor Crescent Edinburgh’.

If one’s income is limited, the general rule is that one must live and die in a black hat.<sup>43</sup>



F. C. B. Cadell, *Lady in a Black Hat* (Miss Don Wauchope of Edinburgh), Image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery

<sup>40</sup> MCA, WE59-6; *Times*, 27 October 1936, *Scotsman*, 16 November 1936.

<sup>41</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 January 1939.

<sup>42</sup> MCA, WE58/5, 34/1.

<sup>43</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 14 June 1906.

**Louisa Stevenson**

**15 July 1835 – 13 May 1908**

**Flora Clift Stevenson**

**30 October 1839 – 28 September 1905**

**13 Randolph Crescent Edinburgh**



Louisa Stevenson



Flora Stevenson

E. T. McLaren, *Recollections of the Public Work and Home Life of Louisa and Flora Stevenson*

Pioneering Edinburgh sisters Louisa and Flora Stevenson were Glasgow girls although the family moved to South Shields in 1844. Flora was the youngest and Louisa the fourth youngest of a family of 11 born to James Stevenson, son of a Paisley silk manufacturer and Jane Stewart Shannon, daughter of a Greenock merchant. When James Stevenson retired from the Jarrow Chemical works where he had been a senior partner, he came to Edinburgh, residing first in 47 Melville Street, then 12 Royal Circus before settling eventually in 13 Randolph Crescent in 1859 and becoming an elder in Free St George's Church. Mrs Stevenson died soon after arrival in Edinburgh. Following the death of James in 1866, his four unmarried daughters, Jane, Elisa, Louisa and Flora, after a brief sojourn in London, returned to live in the family home along with their childhood nurse who in the last few of her 94 years, occupied one of the best rooms. Jane seems to have preferred to remain at home but initially Elisa played a more active role, being an early supporter of women's suffrage and a member of the Executive Committee of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage in the 1870s. In later life, however, she suffered increasingly from depression and according to a contemporary

commentator made considerable demands on her sisters.<sup>1</sup> Louisa and Flora undertook more active public roles, both earning for themselves at the end of their lives, Honorary Doctorates from the University of Edinburgh. Their voluntary 'careers' were complementary and their similar interests often found them giving mutual support. Significantly both joined what became the Ladies Edinburgh Debating Society – Flora in 1873, Louisa in 1884 – and both worked with Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair to improve educational, employment and civic opportunities for women.

When the Stevenson sisters returned to their home in 13 Randolph Crescent in 1868, Louisa and Flora attended the classes in English Literature given by Professor Masson in the Hopetoun Rooms in connection with the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association founded by Mrs Crudelius. The Annual Report of October 1868 lists their names as ordinary members along with their sister Elisa and Mrs Mair, mother of Sarah, who had been present at the inaugural meeting.<sup>2</sup> While Louisa and Flora both became life members with the latter regularly serving as a Member of Council, Louisa played the leading role, being listed as Honorary Treasurer in the Report of November 1877 and continuing as Honorary Secretary when the organisation became the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women in 1879. The Calendar for the Session of 1887-8 also lists her as a Trustee.<sup>3</sup> Louisa worked tirelessly on behalf of the Association not only in an administrative capacity and in writing and presenting the reports at the annual meetings but also in campaigning around the country. At a Social Sciences Congress held in Aberdeen in September 1877 she read a paper on 'The Higher Education of Women in Scotland' in which she described what had already been done by voluntary effort. In advocating the opening up of Scottish Universities to women, she remarked that 'the friends of the cause must urge the Government to devise some remedy by appointing a committee of inquiry or otherwise'.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1880 'Miss Louisa Stevenson whose efforts in connection with the higher education of women in Scotland are so well known', visited Perth with a view to the forming of an Association in that city; and in the following month she spoke in Dundee for a similar purpose.<sup>5</sup> Louisa along with Lady Aberdeen and Professor Masson addressed a memorial to the Lord Advocate on the new Universities (Scotland) Bill on 2 June 1884, pointing out that Scottish Universities 'are virtually the only universities in Great Britain from which women are debarred'.<sup>6</sup> When the Bill became law five years later the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1889 for the better Administration and Endowment of the Universities of Scotland, appointed Commissioners with power:

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<sup>1</sup> E. T. McLaren, *Recollections of the Public Work and Home Life of Louisa and Flora Stevenson* (Edinburgh, c. 1914), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Edinburgh University Special Collections, Gen1877/1/1, *Annual Report of the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association* (Edinburgh, October 1868).

<sup>3</sup> EUSP, Gen1877/1/3, *Calendar of the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women* (Edinburgh, 1887-8).

<sup>4</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 25 September 1877; *Manchester Courier*, 26 September 1877.

<sup>5</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 20 April, 20 May 1880.

<sup>6</sup> *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 13 June 1884.

to call before them the principals, professors, University lecturers, assistants, recognised teachers, students, and examiners, or any other person employed in teaching or examining, or bearing office in or otherwise connected with the Universities or colleges thereof existing at the passing of this Act, and such other persons as they may think proper, and to examine them as to all rules and ordinances now in force in the Universities or colleges, and to require the production of all documents and accounts relating thereto, and after making due inquiry to make ordinances.... as shall to them seem expedient.<sup>7</sup>

Professor Masson and Miss Louisa Stevenson appeared before the Commissioners in Edinburgh on 29 June 1891 as representatives of the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women.<sup>8</sup> There is no record of their testimony; only subsequent anecdotal opinion. E. T. McLaren thought that the 'evidence given by Miss Stevenson produced a profound impression by its clearness and the intimate knowledge and grasp of principles which it exhibited'; while the Committee of the Association had 'reason to believe that it was to a great extent due to the splendid appearance she made when called to give evidence...that the Commissioners were encouraged to sanction the opening of the universities to women students'.<sup>9</sup> At a Conference of women workers in Glasgow attended by both Flora and Louisa, the latter emphasised:

the distinction between Scotch and English University life which should never be overlooked. Scotch Universities were essentially democratic. For generations men from the lower ranks of life have come to them to take degrees and returned to the farmwork in summer. She hoped that the women students would be drawn from the same classes and from every class.<sup>10</sup>

On 26 March 1892 Louisa wrote to Professor David Masson from 13 Randolph Crescent informing him that:

a strong desire exists among members and students of the Association to give some expression to their gratitude to you for your unwearying efforts during the last twenty-five years to bring the benefits of a University education within the reach of Scottish women. At a social gathering of students held today at 15 Shandwick Place it was unanimously agreed that in order to facilitate the Commissioners recommendations a Reading Room or Hall outside of the University, which might develop into a Hall of Residence, must be provided for matriculated women students. A suggestion was then made....that I should ask you, as I now do, to gratify and honour us by granting our very respectful request that this proposed building of the near future should at once be named 'THE MASSON HALL'.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Masson concurred and Margaret Houldsworth and Louisa Stevenson immediately issued a printed leaflet eliciting subscriptions.

In view of the Opening of the University of Edinburgh to women students, it is considered important that a Library and place of meeting for rest or study, and a Hall of Residence, should be provided for all matriculated Women Students, in whatever Faculty, within easy reach of the University buildings.

A suggestion that it should be known as 'the Masson Hall' in acknowledgement of Professor Masson's lifelong services in promoting the University Education of Women, has been most gladly welcomed and adopted by the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women...as a provisional arrangement the Association have decided to remove their valuable

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<sup>7</sup> *Universities (Scotland) Act, Chapter 55 52 and 53 Vict., 30 August 1889.*

<sup>8</sup> *General Report of the Commissioners under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 with an Appendix,* (printed for HMSO by Neill and Co Ltd, Edinburgh, 1900), p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> McLaren, p. 12; EUSC, Gen1877/3/1, 14 March 1911.

<sup>10</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24, 25 October 1894.

<sup>11</sup> EUSC, GD58/20, *Masson Hall Scrapbook belonging to Louisa Stevenson (1894-1905).*

Library from 15 Shandwick Place to No. 8 Hope Park Square near the University. These rooms with the use of the Library, will be open to all women students attending the University or Schools of Medicine during the session 1892-93.<sup>12</sup>

The first subscriptions included £10 from the Marchioness of Lothian and £100 from the Misses Houldsworth and Mair and Louisa herself. Elisa Stevenson gave £50 and Flora £25 and donations came from friends such as Christian Guthrie Wright and the family of J. R. Findlay. Louisa successfully negotiated the Incorporation of the Masson Hall under the Companies Acts 1862 on 17 January 1894, reporting this to the Provisional Executive Committee of Professor Masson, Miss S. E. S. Mair, Miss Urquhart and Miss Frances Simson and presenting the seal of the Company, the gift of Miss Houldsworth.<sup>13</sup>

By January 1895 £4000 had been raised including a grant of £2000 from the Pfeiffer Bequest; and by June 1896 this had risen to £5834 14s 2d.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to Louisa's efforts – her scrapbook contains newspaper advertisements for property sales – the Company bought 31 George Square for £2500 in January 1897. A telegram from Margaret Houldsworth read 'House ours, thanks to your tenacity'.<sup>15</sup> Louisa reported to the Committee on 31 March that alterations and additions would cost about £1800 including a new dining hall and the installation of electric light. Gifts towards furnishing the property included complete supplies of household napery and blankets, silver plate, cutlery, rugs, books, chairs and plants from Miss Houldsworth, a Chippendale Cabinet, books and china from Miss Mair, a Persian carpet for the drawing room from Miss Stevenson, sets of curtains, mirrors and framed photographs from Louisa whose own framed and enlarged image was a gift from the first eight Graduates of Edinburgh University.<sup>16</sup> Arthur James Balfour, leader of the House of Commons and future Prime Minister was invited to open the Hall but wrote to Miss Stevenson on 14 October 1897 declining on account of the necessity of being in London in November and December.<sup>17</sup> When his sister Miss Balfour of Whittingehame opened the Hall on 24 November 1897, Louisa remarked that:

she had heard it said that the house was perhaps too luxurious for students. She ventured to submit that the non-luxurious nature of the benches in the University class-rooms would more than counteract any possible effects from what they hoped would prove to be a really comfortable Union and home. (Laughter and applause.)<sup>18</sup>

Former students and new graduates warmly appreciated the fight that had been undertaken on their behalf. Jessie T. Muir wrote to Louisa on 9 April 1896:

I must again thank you for all your kindness to me from the time that I first attended classes at Shandwick Place. I am sure that none of us who studied there and who know, part at least, of the difficulties you had to contend against to get us all these privileges we now enjoy, can

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Miss Houldsworth suggested the name Masson Hall.

<sup>13</sup> EUSC, GD58/1/1, *Minutes of the Masson Hall Committee*, 25 March 1894 held at 3 Ainslie Place, home of Margaret Houldsworth.

<sup>14</sup> *Scrapbook*. Mrs Emily Pfeiffer was the benefactor of Newham College and author of a book on *Women and Work*.

<sup>15</sup> EUSC, GD58/10, *Masson Hall Retrospect and Forecast* ((Edinburgh, 1931), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Scrapbook*.

<sup>17</sup> NLS, Acc/6414.

<sup>18</sup> *Scrapbook*, cutting from *Scotsman*, 25 November 1897.

ever forget what you have done for us. Miss Mair whom I saw this morning kindly gave me your address.<sup>19</sup>

A further gratification came on 26 March 1901 when M. C. Taylor of the University of Edinburgh wrote to Miss Stevenson to inform her that the Court and Senate of the University of Edinburgh had resolved to make provision for the instruction of women in subjects taught in the Faculty of Divinity by admitting them to classes in the Faculty. Louisa, however, though she continued with all her activities, was far from well. The General Committee of the Association recorded 'sincere regret at Miss Louisa Stevenson's enforced absence on account of her health'; and she missed five Masson Hall Executive meetings in 1904 the year in which sisters Elisa and Jane died.<sup>20</sup> She decided to relinquish office as Honorary Secretary – 'I do not take this step without much consideration' – and wrote to Miss Houldsworth on 14 June 1904:

Dearest M, It has come to this and my heart is sore – But it must be. What I suffer makes it quite impossible to do justice to the work. Masson Hall well established and should not miss me now – other work must also be gradually considered. It was quite wrong that you who have already too much to do should be burdened with my share of the work also.<sup>21</sup>

She did not, however, resign at this time. Miss Houldsworth, in sending the letter to Miss Simson hoped that:

the writer may be able to withdraw it on her return home. I saw her yesterday and she looked so like her old self and seemed in good spirits I feel much more hopeful about her.<sup>22</sup>

Though back at work in 1905 the respite did not last and on 5 March 1906 the Committee recorded profound regret at Miss Louisa Stevenson's intimation of her desire not to be re-nominated for the post of Honorary Secretary; having been one of the chief inspirers and benefactors of the Hall and having since its inception 'taken the warmest interest in its management'.<sup>23</sup> 'You must all know what this resignation means to me' wrote Louisa to Margaret Houldsworth.<sup>24</sup> Following Miss Stevenson's death on 13 May 1908 the Minutes recorded the 'devoted personal service and generous financial help' that had contributed so largely to the successful inauguration of Masson Hall of which she was throughout its earlier years 'the indefatigable Honorary Secretary'.<sup>25</sup>

Louisa Stevenson's devotion to the further education of women particularly included medical education. In 1869 Sophia Jex-Blake, Isobel Thorne, Helen Evans, Edith Pechey, Mathilda Chaplin and subsequently Mary Anderson and Emily Bovell were, after a previous abortive attempt by Sophia, allowed to matriculate for a medical degree and sit the relevant examinations at the University of Edinburgh. Taught separately from the men and not considered 'members of the class' they could not be awarded certificates of attendance to enable them to take the exams.

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<sup>19</sup> EUSC, Gen1877/25, *Letters to Miss Louisa Stevenson*.

<sup>20</sup> Gen1877/3/1, 10 July 1903. Elisa died on 21 May and Jane on 28 November 1904.

<sup>21</sup> *Letters*, 14 June 1904.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 June 1904.

<sup>23</sup> GD58/1/1, *Minutes*, 5 March 1906.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, 13 March 1906.

<sup>25</sup> GD58/1/1, *Minutes*, 23 June 1908.

Sophia appealed successfully against this to the Senate thus triggering a protracted campaign to eliminate women from the University led by Professors Robert Christison and Joseph Lister. The women had their supporters, notably Professor Masson and the members of the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association but had to deal with incidents of harassment and bullying culminating in the Surgeons' Hall riot of November 1870 when 22 male undergraduates prevented Sophia and her colleagues from entering the Royal College of Surgeons to sit an anatomy exam.

On 2 January 1871 the contributors to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary held their annual meeting in the City Chambers to elect representatives to the Board of Managers. The knowledge that an attempt would be made to elect managers favourable to the admission of lady students to the wards of the Hospital (necessary for the completion of the medical degree) resulted in overcrowding and the attendees, who numbered a large contingent of women including Elisa, Louisa and Flora Stevenson, had to repair to St Giles Cathedral. Both Mrs Henry Kingsley and Miss Jex-Blake spoke in favour of Lord Provost Duncan McLaren's list of reforming candidates. In the course of her emotional and rather intemperate speech Sophia alleged that Dr Christison's class assistant had been one of the leading rioters at Surgeons' Hall.<sup>26</sup> Mr Craig the assistant immediately issued a writ of libel against her. On 1 June 1871 the jury, on a casting vote, found in favour of the pursuer but only awarded damages of one farthing though Sophia had to bear the legal costs of £900. On 5 June she wrote in her diary 'trial over at last' and on 8 June, 'went to London with L and F Stevenson'.<sup>27</sup>

Sophia's supporters immediately sprang into action to solicit contributions to cover the sum required. Mrs Henry Kingsley and Louisa who, according to Jex-Blake's biographer was known as 'Pussy' to her friends, undertook to be Treasurers of the Fund.<sup>28</sup> Miss Stevenson received numbers of donations and letters of support including one from J. D. Mackenzie MD of Inverness who wrote to her on 3 August deploring 'the unmanly brutal conduct towards Miss Blake and her friends' and promising a donation from himself and others which he intended to deliver in person.<sup>29</sup> On 9 October 1871 the contributors to the fund met with the Lord Provost in the Council Chambers to present Miss Jex-Blake with a cheque. Over £1000 had been raised; the surplus to be allocated towards establishing a future hospital staffed by women. Louisa in her statement of accounts bore testimony to the great interest aroused throughout the country and the monetary range of donations which showed response from all classes of society. She confessed to an error in her accounts.

It was pointed out to her that no notice had been taken of the damages awarded to the pursuer. (Great laughter) This is certainly an omission but as I received no statement respecting this source, the matter must, I suppose, be left for settlement between the pursuer and defendant.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The text of her speech can be found in *Glasgow Herald*, 3 January 1871 and *Dundee Advertiser*, 4 January 1871.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Todd, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake* (London, 1918), p. 325. Following the writing of this biography all Sophia's diaries were destroyed.

<sup>28</sup> Todd, p. 325.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>30</sup> *Scotsman*, 10 October 1871.

The battle with the University continued, however, and the 'support group' which had earlier become the Edinburgh Association for the Medical Education of Women with Louisa Stevenson as Honorary Secretary, continued with fund-raising to meet the expense involved. Louisa wrote numerous letters including one to Charles Darwin requesting that he and his wife 'be added to the General Council for securing medical education to women'.<sup>31</sup> He responded positively but stipulated that one or other of their names should be used, not both. In 1872 the University Court of Edinburgh rejected the proposals brought before it by Miss Jex-Blake and Miss Louisa Stevenson, stating that if the applicants would accept the awarding of certificates of proficiency in medicine rather than degrees they would consider this. The legal battle continued with the Lord Advocate favouring the women's case and the *Scotsman* whose proprietor donated £5 to the cause, carried numerous appeals.<sup>32</sup> An advertisement in the *Examiner* of 1 June 1872 stated the case:

As the ladies now studying in Edinburgh, after exhausting every means of conciliation and after repeated appeals to the justice and generosity of the University authorities, have at length been driven to take legal proceedings to obtain the completion of that Education which the Lord Advocate of Scotland declares to be their right as matriculated students, the Committee are doubly anxious for the practical support of all the friends of freedom of Education throughout the country, that the expense of deciding a question of such national importance may not fall on the few women immediately concerned in the present action. Contributions will be gladly received by Miss Louisa Stevenson 13 Randolph Crescent Edinburgh.<sup>33</sup>

These included 9s 6d from 'A Few Working Men'. The campaign, however, culminated in the decision of the Inner Court of Session that the action of the University Senate in 1869 which allowed women to matriculate was illegal. A further blow came in July 1875 with the failure of a bill to grant powers to Scottish Universities to admit women as students and award them degrees. Having had the mortification of failing her examination, though the other women succeeded, in January 1877 Sophia Jex-Blake eventually passed the medical degree examination of Berne University, Switzerland, obtaining her licence to practise from the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Dublin. In 1878 she practised privately from 4 Manor Place and opened the Grove Street Dispensary and Hospital for Women and Children and then Bruntsfield Hospital. In 1886 she founded the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women in premises in Surgeon's Square where Dr Knox of Burke and Hare notoriety had lectured. The property had been purchased in 1876 with financial assistance from Louisa Stevenson and Ursula Du Pre.

The Association maintained its efforts to achieve medical education equality for women and in January 1879 became the National Association for Promoting the Medical Education of Women. The statement of accounts produced by Miss Louisa Stevenson showed a balance of £155.<sup>34</sup> The Association provided scholarships for women studying for a qualification in medicine and Louisa's zeal for the cause

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<sup>31</sup> NLS, Acc/6414, *Letter from Charles Darwin*, 8 April 1871.

<sup>32</sup> See for example 30 April, 18 May and 1 June 1872.

<sup>33</sup> *Examiner*, 1 June 1872.

<sup>34</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 28 January 1879.

remained undiminished. Louisa had links with Elizabeth Garrett, the first woman to qualify as a medical practitioner (through the Society of Apothecaries) who opened St Mary's Dispensary for Women and Children, 69 Seymour Place, London in 1866.<sup>35</sup> When the dispensary became the New Hospital for Women and Children in 1872, the General Committee included Miss Louisa Stevenson. In 1874 Garrett co-founded the London School of Medicine for Women with Sophia Jex-Blake and became Dean in 1882. Louisa presented the prizes in 1888. Having lately visited India where Dr Edith Pechey had charge of the Kama Hospital at Bombay, she gave an account of her impressions of medical women in that country, 'pointing out some of the difficulties, especially those of a monetary character' and addressed a few words of encouragement to the students.<sup>36</sup> (Several years previously Miss Stevenson had informed readers of the *Scotsman* that her Majesty the Queen had expressed her interest in the efforts being made to provide fully qualified medical women for India.<sup>37</sup>)

After the long years of campaigning by the reformers, in October 1894 the University of Edinburgh decided to admit women for graduation in medicine. The original members of the National Association still present in Edinburgh met on 3 November 1894 to present an address to Sophia Jex-Blake. The thirty signatories included Elisa, Louisa and Flora Stevenson and Sarah Mair who collectively stated that it had been due to Sophia's great ability and knowledge that the enabling Bill of 1876 was passed giving the nineteen examining bodies of the UK, if they so wished, the power to admit women to qualifying examinations. In her presentation speech Louisa stated that many of the original members of the National Association for Promoting the Medical Education of Women had passed away or were widely scattered but:

it seemed desirable to those women who had always been members of it, and who were still resident in Edinburgh, that some congratulation should be offered by them to Dr Jex-Blake for the great victory that had been achieved by her in the opening of the degrees of the University of Edinburgh to women after a struggle extending over exactly five and twenty years.<sup>38</sup>

Louisa Stevenson and Flora regularly attended the annual meetings of the contributors of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary which until 1948 was run administratively by Managers responsible to those subscribers who paid £5 or more to the Hospital funds. The Managers also included representatives from the Town Council, physicians and surgeons, and the legal profession. At the January meeting of 1875 Professor Calderwood caused consternation by proposing that two ladies – Miss Raleigh and Miss Louisa Stevenson – should be appointed as Managers. This was a step too far. Albeit women could now serve on School Boards and Parish Councils but the Infirmary was a different matter altogether.<sup>39</sup> Another attempt failed in 1879 and Louisa had to wait until 1896 to become the first Lady Manager. At the annual meeting Professor Calderwood expressed gratification in proposing for

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<sup>35</sup> This 'loophole' was immediately closed therefore unavailable to Jex-Blake.

<sup>36</sup> *Times*, 5 July 1888; *Daily News*, 4 July 1888.

<sup>37</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 January 1883.

<sup>38</sup> Todd, p. 509.

<sup>39</sup> *Scotsman*, 5 January 1875.

election to the Infirmary Board 'a lady of so large experience and one so fitted to go into public service'.<sup>40</sup> She attended her first meeting on 13 January and was appointed to the Convalescent House (Corstorphine), Chaplain and Library and Extension Committees.<sup>41</sup> Managers also had to undertake visiting inspection duties, Louisa being scheduled for March and September for the Infirmary and April and October for the Convalescent House. On the day of that meeting the Hospital inmates numbered 647 adults and 64 children; £705 13s 6d having been received in contributions in the previous fortnight. Managers meetings occurred every two weeks and until 1905 Louisa missed very few.

The Minutes for 1896 reveal the range of activities dealt with by the Managers – legacies, building works, improvement of operating theatres, electricity costs, tenders for food supplies, lighting and ventilation of the mortuary chapel, the case of a patient jumping out of a window, and the first mention of the Röntgen process of photography (X-rays). Miss Stevenson took a particular interest in the work of the nursing staff and on 3 February requested a remit to the House Committee to inquire into the duties of the Night Nurses, 'it having been stated outside that these Nurses were overworked'.<sup>42</sup> From the answers the sub-committee received to questions put by Louisa to Miss Spencer, Lady Superintendent of Nurses, all appeared to be satisfactory; and they approved of the proposed gradual increase in the number of nurses. Miss Stevenson tried unsuccessfully in June and July to persuade the Medical Managers Committee and the Surgeons to agree to establish a 'Waiting-Day' for outreach patients in the wards set apart for the instruction of women medical students. When in November 1899 she spoke at the opening of a Nursing Home for Women at 11 George Square, initiated by Dr Elsie Inglis, she welcomed the new opportunity of enabling women to receive treatment and advice from women, thereby supplying much needed facilities for clinical study to women doctors. She observed that as far back as 1872, a statute was enacted by the Court of Contributors that the educational advantages of the Infirmary be open equally to men and women students. 'They knew how far present arrangements fell short of that enactment'.<sup>43</sup>

Before her re-election in 1897 (along with the election of Mrs Marcus Dodds) Miss Stevenson had give notice of a motion to request the appointment of a small committee to consult with Miss Spencer over the revision of the Board's Regulations as to the training of Nurses in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Miss Spencer had trained at the (Florence) Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St Thomas' Hospital London where her predecessor at the Infirmary, Miss Pringle now worked as Supervisor. Through the good offices of Christian Guthrie Wright, Louisa who must have been in London, asked for an appointment with Miss Nightingale. On 22 January 1897 Florence Nightingale wrote to Henry Bonham Carter, Secretary of the Nightingale Fund:

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<sup>40</sup> *Scotsman, Glasgow Herald*, 7 January 1896.

<sup>41</sup> LHSA, LHB1/1/39, *Meeting of the Managers of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary*, 13 January 1896.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 February 1896.

<sup>43</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 16 November 1899.

I am afraid that I ought to see Miss Louisa Stevenson though I fear from what Miss Guthrie Wright says, that it is actually upon "hospital arrangements" that this responsible person wants to consult me (not about the rationale of matron's powers.) Miss Pringle knows all about Miss Stevenson, describes her as a most meddling etc person but says I ought to see her. I think of sending for her this afternoon. Shall I? Please return me Miss Guthrie Wright's letter, which has her address. Miss Spencer I wrote to yesterday urging her not to resign and promising her a fuller letter today. Apparently she does not know of the Monday's Committee to be appointed with Miss Stevenson upon it "to revise rules".<sup>44</sup>

Without delay Florence then wrote to Louisa indicating she was much occupied and far from strong but following up with:

if you are so good as to wish it I would see you today (Friday) at 5.30 pm. It would however be greatly to my benefit if you would kindly put upon paper any questions upon which you would wish to have my views. I will endeavour to look them over before I see you and perhaps put something in writing. Broadly speaking, an experienced Matron is by far the best judge of what regulations are suitable for her Nursing Staff.<sup>45</sup>

Miss Nightingale clearly did not wish to be disadvantaged as she added a postscript offering to send a messenger at any time that morning to collect the written questions. Following the meeting Miss Nightingale wrote to Bonham Carter on 26 January relating to him a story of Louisa's which told to Miss Spencer's detriment though Florence thought Miss Spencer might have a different version. She offered a mixed opinion of Miss Stevenson who:

is not a gabble like Miss Guthrie Wright but she is very difficult to follow probably because she cannot follow herself. I have not the least idea whether I did any good....I think Miss Spencer is quite certain to hear that I have seen Miss Stevenson and may think I have gone over to the enemy. (Enemy says she will carry my flowers to Edinburgh.)<sup>46</sup>

The Infirmary Minutes indicate that Miss Stevenson carried out substantial research as to the nursing systems of various London and provincial hospitals where the period of night-service varied from one month to 12 months and in those where shorter periods operated, all nurses except Staff Nurses took day and night duty alternatively. Miss Spencer, however, maintained that the night nurses preferred a continuous year of night duty rather than broken periods of alternative day and night duty. When the Committee recommended that no changes should be made to the current system, 'Miss Stevenson desired that her dissent from the findings of the Committee on the general question be recorded' though she approved of two minor recommendations.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Florence Nightingale: Collected Works*, ed Lynn McDonald (Ontario, 2009), p. 375.

<sup>45</sup> NLS, Acc/6414, Letter to Miss Stevenson, 22 January 1897.

<sup>46</sup> McDonald, p. 377.

<sup>47</sup> LHSA, LHB1/140, 1 March 1897.



*Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Old and New Edinburgh, 1880s*

The Subscribers elected Louisa as a Manager each year until the end of 1905. Though the Minutes give no indication of her abilities, after her first year one of her colleagues reputedly declared that she had changed his mind about women undertaking such work as she had proved to be the most useful Member of the Board in 20 years.<sup>48</sup> During 1905 she served on the Medical Managers and House Joint Committee tasked with overseeing the reconstruction of Professor Cheyne's theatre to plans by Mr Washington Browne; and the Minutes of 27 March 1905 refer to her being on the Committee dealing with nurses' training in the use of drugs and chemicals. On 19 June she drew the attention of the Board to the hardship entailed on workers in the Laundry by the closing of windows during working hours as well as their meal and recreation hours; and on 26 June she was dealing with nurses' sick pay. Louisa attended her last meeting on 4 December 1905 when the business included tenders for stores, a request for leave of absence from Professor Cheyne, the report of the Budget Committee and the expense of the new telephone system soon to be operational. Patients in the Infirmary numbered 757 adults and 76 children with the week's contributions amounting to £267 2s 6d. On 18 December Miss Stevenson wrote to the Board intimating that 'owing to circumstances' she had decided to decline nomination for re-election for the ensuing year but that her interest 'in the Institution and all its concerns would not be lessened'.<sup>49</sup> The Managers agreed to minute their high appreciation of the services which Miss Stevenson had rendered to the Institution during nine years; and to send her a copy. On 8 January 1906 she wrote to the Clerk conveying her sincere thanks for the honour – 'and say how conscious I am of the inadequacy of my work'.<sup>50</sup>

Nursing interests other than those of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary also occupied Louisa Stevenson's time. She belonged to the Colonial Nursing Association which recruited and sent nurses to areas overseas with substantial British populations; but she played a more active role in another organisation. As

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<sup>48</sup> McLaren, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> LHSA, LHB1/1/47, 18 December 1905.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 January 1906.

part of the commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887, funds were raised which enabled what became known as Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses for the training, support and maintenance of women to act as nurses for the sick poor in their own homes under the supervision of doctors. The Central Committee, set up to work in England, established two other centres, one in Edinburgh and the other in Dublin with the Countess of Rosebery as Scottish President and Christian Guthrie Wright as Honorary Secretary. Miss Guthrie Wright informed readers of the *Scotsman* of the first meeting of the Committee in the Board Room of the Infirmary and listed the names of the nominees to the Executive Committee which included the Countess of Aberdeen, the Right Hon. J. B. Balfour MP and Miss Louisa Stevenson. Nurses would receive training in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and other institutions as sanctioned by the Committee with additional training in district nursing; and be supported by the districts who engaged them. In her letter Guthrie Wright appealed for funds to secure and equip a suitable training home and to supplement the endowment of an annual £400.<sup>51</sup> When the first yearly meeting took place on 13 November 1889 the *Scotsman* reported Lady Rosebery, Miss Louisa and Miss Flora Stevenson to be among those on or near the platform. The Scottish branch was later rebranded as the Scottish Council, with the Queen's daughter Princess Louise becoming president in 1891 after the death of Lady Rosebery. A superintendent and three nurses began work in a temporary Home in a double flat at 5 North Charlotte Street in April 1889 before the purchase of a main door house and two flats at 29 and 30 Castle Street in 1890. This Scottish District Training Home accommodated a superintendent and 11 nurses.

As well as tirelessly raising subscriptions from the public Miss Guthrie Wright managed to secure a grant of £50 from St Cuthbert's Parochial Board in December 1894 by which time the numbers of nurses had grown. In 1900 35 nurses completed their training as Queen's Nurses who attended an average of 410 cases per month in the City while a network of district nursing associations had been established country-wide. When the contributors again re-elected Louisa Stevenson to the Executive on 5 December 1905 the number of nurses and probationers had risen to 41. Miss Guthrie Wright died 'in harness', aged 62 years on 24 February 1907. In describing her many achievements and her role as Honorary Secretary of the Jubilee Institute for Nurses the *Scotsman* also mentioned the ladies who acted with her – the late Lady Rosebery, the late Miss Flora Stevenson and Miss Louisa Stevenson.<sup>52</sup>

In 1902 the *British Journal of Nursing* presented its readers with a profile of Miss Louisa Stevenson, President of the newly formed Society for the State Registration of Nurses with its object of obtaining an Act of Parliament to ensure the legal registration of nurses. At that time no recognised standard of education existed for nurses or control of the nursing profession. Any woman could claim to be a nurse and 'at present the private nursing world is unfortunately more largely exploited by untrained or unsuitable persons than in any other branch of nursing work'.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 August 1888.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 February 1907.

<sup>53</sup> *British Journal of Nursing*, 5 July 1902, p. 8.

Journal felt that the work ahead would be arduous and that the new society had been fortunate to secure so able a president as Miss Louisa Stevenson whose public career afforded such a brilliant example of woman's work in this sphere.

She has a thorough grasp of the subject in hand, upon which she brings to bear the broad-minded views of a woman of the world and can deal, with detail in the same spirit. This characteristic is specially valuable in dealing with nursing matters, for in the nursing profession the various schools are for the most part inclined to take a narrow and parochial view of their professional affairs instead of dealing with them from the point of view of the greatest good of the greatest number.<sup>54</sup>

This is a rather different view of Louisa than the opinion expressed by Florence Nightingale and perhaps explains the conflict the former had with the Superintendent of Nurses at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The Journal concluded that the influence of so statesmanlike a woman as Miss Louisa Stevenson would be most helpful for the successful future of the State Registration of Trained Nurses.

Louisa had already given an indication of her support for state registration in a paper on the 'Work of Women on Hospital Boards' delivered to the Conference of Women Workers at Brighton in October 1900. In it 'she greatly heartened up the nurses present by declaring herself in favour of a comprehensive system of State Registration for Nurses'.<sup>55</sup> She presided at the first annual meeting of the Society in May 1903; and when she chaired the annual meeting on 13 May 1904 at 20 Hanover Square London, Louisa stated that the progress made during the previous year had been such as to give them great hope for the future. She fully recognised, however, the social, professional and political opposition they had to contend against but likened the objections to those raised against the training and registration of medical women. She was not alarmed in the least, being convinced that 'sooner or later there would be for the whole British Empire, a state register for trained nurses'.<sup>56</sup> A Select Committee of the House of Commons reported in 1904, setting out a detailed and persuasive case for registration but the government failed to take action. Although a number of Private Members Bills were introduced over the years before the First World War, Louisa did not live to see the achievement of registration. Ill health made her relinquish her presidency in 1907 and it was not until 1919 that the first Nurses Registration Acts were passed.

In its article of July 1902 the *British Journal of Nursing* referred to a motion brought forward and carried by Miss Stevenson at a meeting of St Cuthbert's Parochial Board in 1888 when she advocated the appointment of trained nurses in poorhouse hospitals. Louisa had been elected to St Cuthbert's Parochial Board five years previously. On 24 February 1883 the *Edinburgh Evening News* declared excitedly that in the forthcoming election to the Board 'two lady candidates have been nominated for seats....the first time that lady candidates have been nominated for a parochial board in Edinburgh'.<sup>57</sup> The newspaper returned to the subject on 1 March:

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *The Nursing Record and Hospital World*, 6 July 1901.

<sup>56</sup> *Manchester Courier*, 6 May 1903; *Times*, 14 May 1904.

<sup>57</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 February 1883.

A new and wholesome interest is given to tomorrow's Parochial Board election in Edinburgh by the candidature of Miss Louisa Stevenson and Mrs Jane Millar. The claim made by the advocates of women's suffrage that it would bring a deeper interest into politics may incontestably be made in regard to local government. No one will deny that the administration of poor relief is treated with much more general indifference than even the election of the Town Council....There is nothing to be gained by ignoring the common impression that the management of our poorhouses is not what it should be. Everyone must feel that if the evils spoken of exist, the election of lady members to Parochial Boards is one of the best conceivable methods of securing a remedy. At this time of day nothing need be said as to the justice of giving women a share of public affairs.<sup>58</sup>

The Poor Law Act (Scotland) of 1845 had created a central Board of Supervision in Edinburgh overseeing 880 Parochial Boards in Scotland with locally elected Managers responsible for raising the annual assessment (Poor Rate) and for the administration of the poorhouse, the provision of out-door relief, medical aid and hospital accommodation to pauper aged and infirm applicants who were examined by the Parish Inspector of the Poor. A Parochial Board could also provide for the education of poor children who were themselves or whose parents were objects of parochial relief. The able-bodied poor did not qualify for relief. By the time of Louisa's election St Cuthbert's Poorhouse in St Cuthbert's Lane had been demolished to make way for the railway station, re-located to the newly- built Craigleith Hospital and Poorhouse, Crewe Road in 1866, merged with the Canongate Poorhouse in 1873 and enlarged in the 1880s. In the 1890s St Cuthbert's Poorhouse became Edinburgh's Craigleith Poorhouse.

The Poor Law legislation of 1845 did not make it clear whether women ratepayers could stand for election as Parochial Board Managers and the first woman to do so seems to have been Margaret Foulton in Inverkeithing in 1876. Louisa Stevenson polled 1544 votes in the election of March 1883, attended her first Board meeting on 6 March and was appointed to the Finance, Relieving and Medical Committees.<sup>59</sup> In June the Finance Committee recommended the erection of 'Piggeries' at the Poorhouse at a cost of £50 and Miss Stevenson gave notice of a motion 'That the number of the Ratepayer's ward be printed or written on each receipt for payment of Rates'.<sup>60</sup> Very little information of the work she undertook during her annual terms of office from 1883 to 1892, however, can be gleaned from the Parochial Board Minutes. The *Scotsman* reported a meeting in July 1885 when Louisa suggested that the Board should make some arrangement for receiving a number of cases of their pauper lunatics in the St Cuthbert's Poorhouse; and to approach the Board of Lunacy to request the licensing of two of the Poorhouse wards for the purpose. The Board instructed the Inspector to communicate with the Board of Lunacy.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 1 March 1883.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 3 March 1883; Edinburgh City Archives, SL10/1/4, *Minutes of the Parochial Board of St Cuthberts*, 6 March 1883.

<sup>60</sup> *Minutes*, 26 June 1883.

<sup>61</sup> *Scotsman*, 18 July 1885.



Craigleith Poorhouse now within the Western General Hospital complex

In 1891 Miss Stevenson served on the Medical, Law and Children's Committees. A St Cuthbert's ratepayer wrote to the *Scotsman* to complain that Miss Louisa Stevenson:

had been ousted as convener of the Children's Committee because some gentlemen objected to serve on a committee of which a lady was a convener. No dissatisfaction apparently has been expressed as to the manner in which Miss Stevenson has for the past year discharged her duties but solely on the ground that she is a woman the Board took what is, I believe, an almost unprecedented course and declined to re-elect the convener of last year. It is not a little discouraging to find that a lady who has devoted so much time and attention to the children under the St Cuthbert's Board should be deprived of a position which gave her such excellent opportunities for carrying out the purpose for which she was elected.<sup>62</sup>

This may have been the occasion of the often-quoted anecdote of the Board Member who declared:

I object to Miss Steve'son because she's a wumman – now I'll be told that Queen Victoria's a wumman, but the Queen is only a kind o' figurehead. Now Miss Steve'son's nae figurehead, she gangs into everything.<sup>63</sup>

There is no reference to her as a Convenor in the Minutes but she served on the Children's Committee in 1892, the year that she proposed that the Board provide a Nurses' Home in connection with the Poorhouse Hospital.<sup>64</sup>

Miss Stevenson requested leave of absence from the Board on 18 November 1887 as she would be in India; being absent from meetings until 20 July 1888. In October she spoke at a conference on Women's Work in Aberdeen and expressed the hope of being able to persuade her listeners to take up the work of returning women as members of School and Parochial Boards. She declared one of the greatest evils of the time to be 'a want of public spirit' – public spirit being defined as the recognition of individual responsibility with regard to the interests of the country generally but more particularly of the town or district of residence. Every year showed a decrease in the numbers of people voting for members of School and Parochial Boards.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 20 April 1891.

<sup>63</sup> McLaren, p. 58; Rae, pp. 41-2.

<sup>64</sup> ECA, SL10/1/5, *Minutes*, 16 December 1892.

And yet , if they could realise even a tenth part of the difference that the personnel of the administration made to the comfort and happiness of the poor of the city, such apathy would certainly disappear....The difference could best be realised by women coming forward and offering themselves for election. No doubt elections were disagreeable things but they were soon over, and the interest of the work to be done continued all the year round.<sup>65</sup>

With regard to Parochial Boards she felt that speaking from experience cases continually occurred which could be most suitably dealt with by women.

After twenty years experience of public work she had come to the conclusion that the work of the world was best done by men and women working together – not by men alone or women alone. They heard a great deal about women’s sphere and occasionally man’s sphere was casually mentioned. She had sympathy with the witty lady who said on this point ‘I am quite content to occupy my own sphere but I am not content to be relegated to a hemisphere.’<sup>66</sup>

The 9th Report of the Society for Promoting the Election of Women as Poor Law Guardians (as they were termed in England where the Poor Law differed from that in Scotland) listed Louisa Stevenson among the 90 women acting in that capacity in Britain as a whole.<sup>67</sup> When in 1893 this Society reconstituted itself to promote the election of women as County Councillors, thus widening its remit, Louisa attended the inaugural meeting in St Martin’s Town Hall, London.<sup>68</sup> On 7 February, however, she informed the St Cuthbert’s Parochial Board:

that as this was the last occasion she would be present at Meetings of the Board, she desired to take this opportunity of thanking the Chairman and all the other Members for the courtesy and kindness she had received during the ten years she had sat on the Board. On the motion of Mr Learmonth a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Miss Stevenson for her services during the many years she had been a Member of the Board and for the kind manner in which these have been performed.<sup>69</sup>

The *Herald* attributed Louisa’s departure to a re-division of the city’s boundaries by which her house was excluded from the parish.<sup>70</sup> After 1894 elected parish councils replaced Parochial Boards with women being eligible to vote in the elections. Louisa continued her interest in the promotion of women in local government. In October 1894 she spoke on Lady Guardians at Darlington, citing the main reasons for electing them to be the oversight of women and children, the boarding-out system the care of harmless imbeciles and the domestic economy of the workhouse.<sup>71</sup> She again deplored the lack of public interest and dearth of trained nurses either to work in Poorhouse hospitals or with those not feeble or invalid enough to be in these Institutions.<sup>72</sup> Two years earlier in a letter to the *Scotsman* her sister Flora had paid tribute to her work by reminding readers that in Edinburgh ‘it was not until women

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<sup>65</sup> *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 11 October 1888.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 20 October 1890.

<sup>68</sup> *Glasgow Herald, Daily News*, 31 January 1893.

<sup>69</sup> ECA, SL10/1/5, *Minutes*, 7 February 1893.

<sup>70</sup> *Herald*, 22 November 1893.

<sup>71</sup> In Scotland mentally ill patients could be domiciled in specially licensed houses under the care of strangers but the term came to be applied to any parish patient living under the private care of relatives or strangers. Under the English Poor Law boarding out referred to the placing of orphan or abandoned children with suitable foster parents. Workhouse is an English term as residents of a Scottish Poorhouse did not work.

<sup>72</sup> *Northern Echo*, 21 October 1894.

were elected as managers of the poor that trained nurses were introduced to the hospitals of St Cuthbert and Canongate Combination and the City Poorhouses'; and that much still remained to be done.<sup>73</sup> In May 1899 Louisa read a paper on 'The administrative work of women in poor law and other State relief' to a meeting of women journalists; and at the Conference of the National Union of Women Workers in Brighton, presented her views on the work of women on hospital and other Boards.<sup>74</sup> In 1907 when she had only a year to live she and 190 other influential women signed a letter sent to the Prime Minister by the Women's Local Government Society urging the speedy passage of the Local Authorities (Qualification of Women) Bill to enable women to vote in the town council elections in November.<sup>75</sup>

Louisa Stevenson's promotion of the role of women in local government was inextricably linked to her participation in the campaign for women's suffrage. Both she and her sisters Elisa and Flora joined the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage with Louisa a member of the Executive Committee in 1879.<sup>76</sup> At a Society meeting in January 1880 Louisa moved a resolution that 'as women were equal with men' they should have a vote in the election of members of Parliament on the same conditions as men and that the present meeting 'should petition Parliament in favour of the bill to remove the electoral disabilities of women'.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the 1880s and 1890s she attended and spoke at Society and public meetings including several held in London in 1884 to press for the inclusion of women householders in the franchise bill.<sup>78</sup> In November 1896 five of the principle women's suffrage societies appointed a joint sub-committee for the conduct of the Parliamentary arrangements of the movement with Miss Louisa Stevenson representing the Edinburgh National Society.<sup>79</sup> When, two months later, MPS met with women's suffrage societies in Committee Room 13 of the House of Commons, Louisa attended.<sup>80</sup> The suffrage associations combined to work together under the name of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies 'absolutely on non party lines' in 1898 and Miss Louisa Stevenson took her place on the Executive Committee.<sup>81</sup> Parliamentary activity in the early 1900s included her presence at a conference of MPs and others favourable to women's suffrage when a committee of MPs was formed to watch the interests of women's suffrage in the House; and she signed her support of Sir Charles McLaren's resolution on women's suffrage.<sup>82</sup> Even after her resignation from the Committees dear to her heart she remained a member of the

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<sup>73</sup> *Scotsman*, 13 January 1882.

<sup>74</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 10 May 1899; *Standard*, 12 September 1900. On 4 February the *Times* mentioned her as being on the Committee dealing with the professional section of the Congress.

<sup>75</sup> *Times*, 1 February 1907.

<sup>76</sup> NLS, Acc/4546, *Annual Report*, 1879.

<sup>77</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 January 1880.

<sup>78</sup> *Standard*, 12 April 1884; *Times*, 14 June, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 June 1884. The Reform Act of 1884 did not enfranchise any women.

<sup>79</sup> *Times*, 16 November 1896.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 January 1897.

<sup>81</sup> Women's Library, 2 NWS/C/1, *Minutes of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies*, 14 October 1897, <<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/>>[12 June 2015]; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 February 1898.

<sup>82</sup> *Times*, 16 February 1901, 16 March 1904.

Executive of the Edinburgh Society for Women's Suffrage and joined the deputation of 350 women who presented a petition to the new Liberal Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at the Foreign Office on 19 May 1906.<sup>83</sup> While sympathising with the cause he refused to commit to introducing legislation on parliamentary reform.

Although the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was 'non-political' both Louisa and Flora also worked for the cause of women's suffrage through the Liberal Party. Their brother James Cochrane Stevenson (1825-1905) served as Liberal Member for South Shields from 1868-1895; and the *Glasgow Herald* reported Miss Louisa Stevenson as attending the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Liberal Association in Glasgow in January 1884.<sup>84</sup> In 1889 the West End Women's Liberal Association – open to all women residing in Edinburgh and newly formed to promote Liberal legislation and administration in connection with all political and social questions, especially those relating to women and children – chose Louisa as one of two vice-presidents (Mrs Steel being the other).<sup>85</sup> This sounds as if Louisa and Flora held differing political views as in 1886 a group of politicians opposed to Irish Home Rule had broken with the Liberal party and formed an alliance with the Conservatives becoming the Liberal Unionists. Flora supported this group and the advocates of free trade. Speaking at the annual meeting of Partick Women's Unionist Association she delivered an address in which she noted:

the change of feeling during the last 10 years concerning women's work in politics and how all parties welcomed and valued their service. She remarked that almost all legislation directly or indirectly affected women and it was therefore desirable that women should form intelligent opinions on the various legislative proposals. She reviewed the situation in Ireland and appealed for steadfast adherence to the Unionist principles.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore although the press often attributed Louisa's actions to Flora, it seems likely that the Miss Stevenson who seconded a resolution at the Women's Liberal Unionist Association at their Annual Council meeting in May 1897 was Flora.<sup>87</sup> Miss Flora Stevenson was certainly reported as presiding over a meeting of the women's branch of East and North Scotland in January 1895; of addressing a meeting at Peebles in December and being present at a meeting of the South Division in November 1896 – all in connection with the Liberal Unionists.<sup>88</sup> The Women's Liberal Unionist Association elected Flora to the Executive Committee in 1900; but four years later she and Lady Frances Balfour, Mrs Fawcett, and Mrs Alice Westlake threatened to resign over the issue of Free Trade.<sup>89</sup>

Louisa and Flora also appear initially to have had differing views over the issue of teaching cookery in schools. Christian Guthrie Wright, member of the

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<sup>83</sup> NLS, Acc4546, ENSWS, *Annual Report*, 23 March 1907.

<sup>84</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 24 January 1884.

<sup>85</sup> *Scotsman*, 8 March 1889.

<sup>86</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 17 December 1892.

<sup>87</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 May 1897.

<sup>88</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 28 January 1895; *Southern Reporter*, 26 December 1895; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 November 1896.

<sup>89</sup> *London Evening Standard*, 19 June 1900; *Edinburgh Evening News*, *Aberdeen Journal*, *Dundee Courier*, 18 January 1904.

Edinburgh Ladies Debating Society, Honorary Treasurer of the Ladies Educational Association and friend of Sarah Mair, visited the National Training School of Cookery which opened in South Kensington in March 1874. She returned to Edinburgh to establish, with Louisa Stevenson's support, a similar institution. On 21 April 1875 the *Scotsman* printed an advertisement of a public meeting in the Lecture Theatre of the Industrial Museum 'to consider the expediency of establishing a Course of Lectures on Cookery with Demonstrations and relative arrangements'.<sup>90</sup> The lectures would aim to benefit the working classes by providing working class wives with cooking skills to secure the comfort of their husbands and families with a particular emphasis on health. From this meeting emerged a Provisional Committee soon followed by an Executive Committee of the Edinburgh School of Cookery with Miss Guthrie as Honorary Secretary and Louisa Stevenson as Honorary Treasurer, a post she held until 1891. Sir Robert Christian formerly declared the opening of the School in the Museum's Lecture Theatre on 10 November 1875 before an audience of 1000, mainly ladies but from all classes of the community.

For the lecture session of December 1875-April 1876 extra accommodation was found in the Watt Institute and School of Arts and demonstrations took place in other areas such as Perth, Alloa and Auchtermuchty. On 27 September 1876, however, Flora Stevenson, member of the Edinburgh School Board, wrote to the *Scotsman* in response to criticism about the lack of cookery teaching in schools:

I believe it was from no want of interest on the part of the members of Edinburgh School Board that no decision has been come to on the question of teaching cookery in their elementary schools, beyond the very general one, that if satisfactory arrangements could be made for giving this teaching it would be desirable to have it. Want of accommodation was one great obstacle and want of time. Also in addition to lessons shared with boys, girls have to be given five hours of compulsory sewing instruction. People seem to forget in speaking about training school girls in the art of cookery that there are other branches of instruction which are equally important, and which they can only acquire at school...girls have to be presented for examination in the different standards at the same age as the boys, and with the disadvantage of having five hours per week less of teaching in the branches for which grades are given, for under the Scotch Code excellence in sewing is not required for payment of any grant.<sup>91</sup>

While paying tribute to Miss Guthrie Wright and the other managers of the Edinburgh School of Cookery, she continued:

I do, however, deprecate the tone which so many people assume in speaking of the importance of teaching women the art of cookery, as if by this means, and this means alone, society is to be regenerated, and an end put to all intemperance and improvidence. It is only one means. The well-being of the family depends equally on the 'house-father'. It seems to me equally important that the boys attending our public schools should be trained for their future duties as husbands and fathers – habits of industry, self-denial, self-reliance and thrift. When the mother of the family is driven to be the bread winner for the family because of the idleness or intemperance of the father, it is not likely that she can be a model housewife.<sup>92</sup>

Miss Guthrie responded in the newspaper by describing the ignorance in the selection and preparation of food in most working class homes and emphasised the role that well-taught cookery could play in improving health and in providing a

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<sup>90</sup> *Scotsman*, 21 April 1875.

<sup>91</sup> *Scotsman*, 28 September 1876.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

practical vehicle for the teaching of physics and chemistry. At this stage her arguments proved unsuccessful.

What Louisa thought or said on the issue is unrecorded but when she gave the report of the school at the first annual meeting of subscribers she announced a balance of £689 2s 11d which included a substantial donation. The Edinburgh artisan classes had attracted 525 working women on one night; with lessons to 100 being given at George Watson's Institute, 180 at Queen Street Merchant Company School, 140 at the Free Church Training School and 60 at Portobello Board School.<sup>93</sup> In November she visited Newcastle to organise a branch school there.

The Edinburgh Committee will take the entire care of the classes and send an experienced teacher who travels with her stove and all the necessary cooking utensils. The local Committee will find a suitable hall and undertake the actual supervision of the classes.<sup>94</sup>

The early financial success of the classes enabled a move in December 1877 to Albert Buildings Shandwick Place, to a Lecture Hall, Dining Room, residential accommodation for one teacher and a Ladies Club Room for the use of ladies visiting Edinburgh. The three categories of Demonstration Lessons encompassed High Class Cookery, Plain Cookery and Cheap Cookery with one lecture in each course on Sick Room Cookery. Costs ranged from 15s for 12 lessons (High Class) to 5s 6d (Cheap Cookery) though single admission was available for all. The School offered more expensive Practical Lessons on the same themes and also taught Cleaning and Scullery Work.<sup>95</sup> In 1879 the Edinburgh School of Cookery added 'and Domestic Economy' to its name and dressmaking, sewing, lace-making, theory of food, domestic economy and sick nursing to its curriculum. From 1881 women intending to teach cookery could receive training.

In January 1881 Miss Louisa Stevenson presided over a lecture delivered to women by Dr Agnes Macdonald in connection with the winter's season of Health Lectures for the People; but two years later at the annual meeting she confessed that the school was not yet on a satisfactory financial basis. With a balance of only £4 15s the Committee were a little anxious as to the future.<sup>96</sup> The School, however, survived and consolidated in the 1880s and at the seventh cookery evening of the season run by the Edinburgh Health Society Miss Louisa Stevenson read Miss Wright's lecture.<sup>97</sup> By this time the School offered training to teachers to enable them to teach needlework to the requirements of the Scotch Code. Miss Flora Stevenson, in attending an exhibition of needlework and teaching at the Edinburgh School said:

it gave great satisfaction to the ladies of this school that they had been able to supply what had been for a long time a great want in regard to their industrial teaching. They had improved it in their public schools and the Government had recognised it as a grant-earning subject. She hoped that at some time the diploma of the school would be recognised by the Government and that they would have all their teachers fully qualified for teaching needlework.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 7 November 1876.

<sup>94</sup> *Newcastle Courant*, 5 January 1877.

<sup>95</sup> *Syllabus 1877-8* quoted in Tom Begg, *The Excellent Women* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 168.

<sup>96</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 January 1881, 31 March 1883.

<sup>97</sup> *Scotsman*, 10 January 1887.

<sup>98</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 October 1887.

By this time Flora must have reached some position of compromise over the teaching of cookery in schools for she, Miss Guthrie Wright of the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Miss Patterson of Glasgow School of Cookery formed a deputation to the Education Department. Flora explained that:

the Education Department allowed a grant of 4s for 40 hours of instruction given in cookery, so many hours being devoted to demonstrations and so many to practical cookery. The Edinburgh School Board found great difficulty in withdrawing their girls for so many hours from the ordinary work of the school and they also found that while they had thoroughly efficient teaching twenty-four hours of instruction accomplished quite as much as they could expect in an elementary school. She urged an alternative grant of 2s for 20 hours of teaching and cited needlework as a precedent. Miss Guthrie after expressing her concurrence spoke of the necessity of some guarantee of the training of cookery teachers who were accepted by the Department.<sup>99</sup>

By 1890 Louisa Stevenson as Honorary Treasurer of the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Domestic Economy must have felt much more confident of the financial position and need for expansion as the Committee decided not to renew the lease of Albert Buildings but instead to form a limited Company to purchase and equip new premises – 3 Atholl Crescent – at a cost of £3,500 for the house, stable and grounds. Princess Louise became Patron with the Marquise of Lothian as President and 15 Vice-Presidents including the Lord Advocate and the Duchesses of Buccleuch and Roxburghe. Christian Guthrie Wright continued as Honorary Secretary but Louisa relinquished the Treasurership to become Chairman instead. Princess Louise (the Marchioness of Lorne) performed the opening ceremony of the new School on 5 October 1891.

Miss Louisa Stevenson presented 42 students from Edinburgh Free Church Training School to whom Her Royal Highness presented prizes and diplomas of the School of Cookery and 11 pupils from George Watson's Ladies College to whom Princess Louise handed certificates of proficiency.<sup>100</sup>

The Princess visited the school several times during the 1890s, as in December 1898 when Miss Louisa Stevenson intimated the list of prize-winners; and in 1901 when Louisa received the Royal party and Flora gave the vote of thanks.<sup>101</sup>

In 1898 the Edinburgh School Board agreed to allow student teachers from the School to undertake practice sessions in the Board's schools; and also in that year the Cookery School leased 4 Atholl Crescent, purchasing the building three years later and buying No 6 in 1906. By this time, however the state of her health had forced Louisa Stevenson, as in her other areas of work, to retire from an active role and Miss Guthrie became Chairman. A contemporary in describing Miss Stevenson as Chair said she 'sat at the head of a long table, observant of everyone and everything'; and as the room had to be vacated to allow the students to lunch, the only way of persuading her to close those fortnightly Directors' meetings was to send in a maid with a tray of silver and glass.<sup>102</sup> Christian Guthrie Wright did not

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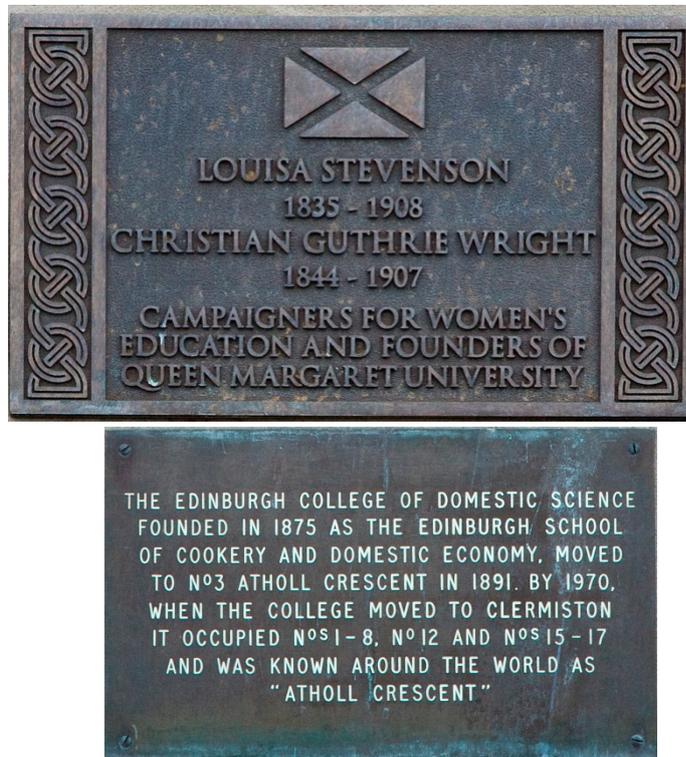
<sup>99</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 14 January 1888.

<sup>100</sup> *Times*, 6 October 1891.

<sup>101</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 December 1898; Begg, p. 74.

<sup>102</sup> Begg, p. 71.

serve long as Chair as she died in February 1907 at Lansdowne Crescent. The Bishop of Edinburgh and Dean Skinner Wilson presided at her funeral service in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral and the Dean Cemetery. Miss Louisa Stevenson represented Princess Louise.<sup>103</sup> In just over a year Louisa herself was buried in the Dean Cemetery beside her sisters.



Plaques commemorating the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Domestic Economy in Atholl Crescent

Flora Stevenson's career, to her chagrin, perhaps overshadowed that of Louisa's in the public mind and when the University of Edinburgh conferred on her the Honorary Degree of LLD in 1903 she felt it should have been awarded to Louisa to whom the honour was given in 1906 after her sister's death. Flora gained her recognition mainly through the sphere of education in which she appears always to have been interested, having 'when a girl instituted an evening class for message girls in her own house'.<sup>104</sup> However she seems to have first made her mark in Edinburgh through the work of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. Following the publication at a meeting on 28 February 1868 of Dr Alex Wood's *Report on the Condition of the Poorer Classes and their dwellings, neighbourhoods and families*, a further 'large and influential meeting' on 30 March resolved to form an Edinburgh Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor led by Wood and with an all male Executive Committee which included J. R. Findlay.<sup>105</sup> Dr Alex Wood of

<sup>103</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 March 1907.

<sup>104</sup> Obituary in *Scotsman*, 29 September 1905.

<sup>105</sup> *First Annual Report of the Edinburgh Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor 1868-9* (Edinburgh, 1869).

the Royal College of Physicians was a friend of the Mair family who introduced him to the Stevensons.

The Association operated through local Committees which each had a representative on the Committee of Ladies, Secretary Miss Phoebe Blyth, with a Central Depôt of Clothing kept in the office at 5 York Place (later Hanover Street). Flora Stevenson contributed financially from the beginning but in 1870-1 the Association decided that as far as possible, relief should be given in return for work done and so opened a Sewing Room under the supervision of Miss F. C. Stevenson and a Committee of Ladies 'along with some gentlemen'.<sup>106</sup> In her first Report Miss Stevenson said:

On 3rd of January last a Sewing-Room was opened at 5 Roxburgh Place where employment was given to women whose cases were considered suitable to be relieved by the Association. Each woman was obliged to bring an order signed by the chairman or secretary of the section to which she belonged; in this order was stated the amount for which the woman was to receive employment and the payment was made by an order on the provision merchant at the end of each week for the amount the woman had worked. If it was preferred clothing was given instead of provision. Employment was given for four hours for five days in the week. Payment was made by time, at the rate of 3 halfpence an hour so that the most any woman could earn was 2s 6d per week.<sup>107</sup>

Over five months 156 women received relief in this manner.

On the whole real good was done; and although the payment given often exceeded the *real* value of the work done, much was gained in having induced women who had fallen out of industrial habits to make another effort after self support. The expenses are met by a grant from the Association of £15 and by the sale of clothing and payment received for work done in the room.<sup>108</sup>

All this accorded with the Association's aims summarised in the phrase 'Help for those who will help themselves'.

What other work Flora undertook on behalf of the Association does not appear in the Annual Reports though she made financial contributions to help neglected children in the years 1876-8. McLaren attributes her role as visitor to the Victoria Lodge as bringing her abilities to the attention of J. R. Findlay.<sup>109</sup> She continued to make annual reports on the sewing room, describing in 1879 how the exceptional severity of the winter weather had brought more applicants than ever, putting severe pressure on the ability to provide work – 'subscribers to the Association are reminded that orders for work to be done in the work room are most gratefully received'. When the Association moved to new premises in the Grassmarket in 1890 the focus of the Sewing Room Committee changed. The Annual Report of 1892 recorded:

The Sewing Room which for many years had been carried on under the superintendence of Miss F. C. Stevenson, giving employment to many women during the winter months is now entirely devoted to the work connected with the Clothing of Destitute Children Scheme. The Directors desire to record here their appreciation of the great services of Miss F. C. Stevenson and the ladies associated with her.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Report*, 1871.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> McLaren, p. 25.

<sup>110</sup> *Report*, 1892. Flora was Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the scheme.

This accorded with what had become a principal focus of her life and why her name had become so well-known – membership of the Edinburgh School Board.

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act made it possible for women to serve on the school boards charged with implementing the terms of the Act which introduced compulsory schooling for children aged five to 13 years. Responsibility for elementary education lay with elected school boards tasked with enforcing school attendance and building new schools, subject to the general control of the Scotch Education Department in London.<sup>111</sup> In 1905 Flora recalled:

It was one evening after the passing of the English Education Act of 1870 that the late Henry Kingsley said 'We must make sure that when the Scottish Education Bill comes on that there is the same provision for the election of women as school board members as there is in the English Act'. I of course acquiesced that that was desirable but expressed some doubt as to whether there were many people who would care for the position. He replied 'You are exactly the kind of person who ought to take it'.<sup>112</sup>

Flora dismissed the idea as the social side of life seemed too attractive at that time to be replaced by the serious strenuous work of such a post. This explains the reported comment of a contemporary – 'Flora Stevenson? I thought her gloves were her first consideration'.<sup>113</sup> The campaigning committee for the selection of a lady, chaired by Professor Masson, selected Miss Phoebe Blyth as its candidate, but due to the system of a cumulative vote the possibility of electing two ladies emerged.

An election campaign meeting took place on 5 March 1873 in the Mission Hall South Gray's Close before an audience of men and women mostly from that district who were told that as 15 members had to constitute the Edinburgh School Board 'it had occurred to many people that there ought to be on that board at least two ladies. (Hear Hear) There were as many girls to educate as boys'.<sup>114</sup> Miss Blyth and Miss Stevenson had been chosen entirely on their merits. An anecdotal story is recounted of the wish of Sarah Mair to campaign in Chester Street on behalf of her friends and of the propriety of her and her sister calling unaccompanied on a retired bachelor neighbour. When Mrs Mair urged that their brother should accompany them he replied that if they wanted the fellow's vote they should go alone – which they did and secured the vote.<sup>115</sup> Miss Blyth and Miss Stevenson became Edinburgh School Board members. Flora later commented:

It was altogether a new situation in Scotland. There were many fears expressed that such innovations would revolutionise all home life and unfit women for the discharge of their domestic duty – and perhaps the people who entertained these fears were a little disappointed to find that all social and domestic life went on as before.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The creation of the Scottish Office in 1885 gave a measure of independence from the English Department. The Act only dealt with elementary education for which parents paid up to a maximum of ninepence weekly. Anyone unable to meet this cost had to apply to the parochial board for assistance. Fees were abolished in 1889.

<sup>112</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 January 1905. Kingsley was the brother of author Charles.

<sup>113</sup> McLaren, p. 52.

<sup>114</sup> *Scotsman*, 6 March 1873.

<sup>115</sup> Rae, p. 26.

<sup>116</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 January 1905.

She served on the Edinburgh School Board until her death in 1905.

Flora Stevenson's commitment and workload over those 32 years is breathtaking. The Minutes give some indication of the range of work she undertook but newspaper accounts give a fuller flavour of the variety and of her personal knowledge and experience gained through careful study and hands-on activity. 'What Miss Stevenson did not know about education was not worth knowing'.<sup>117</sup> Like Louisa she possessed a clearness of comprehension, capacity for business, high sense of public duty and formidable intellectual ability; along with tenacity of purpose and a liking for getting her own way. Both sisters held to their father's Free Church ideals of self-help and charity. Thus when after her first election Flora was allocated both to the Attendance and Destitute Children Committees of the Board, she devised the charitable scheme for the feeding and clothing of destitute children on condition of their regular attendance at school. On 10 January 1877 Flora reported to the Board that attendance at Public (Board) schools for the previous December was 79.93% for juveniles and 70.63% for Infants, making a total of 76.04% for the 17 schools.<sup>118</sup> The following month she informed her colleagues that 26 families with 50 children were granted food, four with nine children food and clothing, six with ten children clothing only, 12 with 24 children referred to the Parochial Board and one family with four children remitted to Miss Stevenson.<sup>119</sup> During session 1878-9 the Committee granted relief to 443 Neglected and Destitute Children of whom 269 attended Protestant schools and 174 Roman Catholic schools.<sup>120</sup> In 1880, however, she reported that the Committee had been obliged to stop breakfasts to children and had to consider whether to continue giving food to all on the lists as long as the money lasted or to make an attempt to reduce the numbers; the great difficulty being to differentiate the cases – 'they all seemed so hard'.<sup>121</sup> The Committee required £40 monthly or £75 with breakfasts. The Board decided against breakfasts but to do the best with the money to provide a daily dinner till the end of the session.

Flora was always quick to respond to any criticism levied at the Board for dereliction of duty as on 25 November 1880 when she wrote to the *Scotsman* to answer criticism of truancy levels.

I have no hesitation in saying that there are not fifty children of school age who have been six months in the city and who are habitually absent from school, who are not known to one or other of our compulsory officers and whose cases have not been brought under the notice of the School Attendance Committee. But unfortunately even with the knowledge that they are not in attendance at school we cannot force the children into school because our compulsory power is limited to dealing with the parent only.<sup>122</sup>

She explained that many of the children were vagrant, moving from one lodging house to another and that the necessity of proving 'gross neglect' on the part of the

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<sup>117</sup> *Scottish Review*, 22 October 1905.

<sup>118</sup> ECA, SL28/2/1, *Minutes of the Edinburgh School Board*, 10 January 1877.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 February 1877.

<sup>120</sup> SL28/2/3, July 1879.

<sup>121</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 April 1880.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 November 1880.

parent and the time taken in procuring a statutory order meant that it was easy for the parent to move to avoid appearing before the Board.

I am always glad to be told by benevolent people who visit in the low parts of the town of any neglected children who come under their notice. When any such cases are reported to me, I invariably find that they are already well known to the officer of that district.<sup>123</sup>

There is probably more than a grain of truth in the anecdote of the defaulting parent who, warned by the Inspector that if his children continued to be absent from school he would be dealt with, stated that he would rather 'gang to jail for a fortnight' than appear before Miss Stevenson.<sup>124</sup>



Canongate mothers and children, Edinburgh Museums and Galleries

Flora's strong views on dealing with the problem of destitute children or 'the underfed schoolchild' did not alter and she used her last public appearance – her presentation with the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh on 22 May 1905 – to reiterate them. Citing her many years' study of the question and many years' experience of administration she said that:

it would be an evil day for Scotland if the legislation put on the School Boards the duty of providing meals out of public funds for underfed school children. It was a sad fact that there were many children in their schools whose physical condition left much to be desired. It was due to wrong feeding, to living and sleeping in vitiated air, to being insufficiently clad and the mischief had begun long before the child had reached school age. The evils of underfeeding were not to be counteracted by a universal provision of free meals in schools. Parents were all too ready to throw off their responsibilities nowadays. What was wanted was an awakening of the public conscience to make them realise and accept their responsibility...What was wanted was better organised charitable funds for the help of children. But this meant more investigation and cooperation with the school authorities.<sup>125</sup>

Flora saw parental neglect and the futility of penal punishment for children who committed crimes as the key issues to be tackled. In 1899 in the foreword to a pamphlet on the education of neglected and destitute children she wrote:

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> McLaren. p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 May 1905.

During the last fifty years more than one Royal Commission and at least one Select Committee have inquired and reported as to the best way of dealing with the neglected, destitute and criminal children in our country....It is interesting to note that this neglected and miserable condition of so many children in our large towns is largely due today, as it was fifty years ago, to the same cause – parental neglect. In some cases this neglect may not be wholly culpable....In most cases, however, it is the vice and selfishness and greed of the parents that is the cause of the neglect and misery of the children, and that drives them into crime.<sup>126</sup>

She advocated a reformatory rather than punitive system and campaigned for years for an alteration in the law concerning Reformatory or Industrial Schools.

Under the Reformatory Act of 1866 magistrates had to commit offending children to prison first before sending them to reformatories.<sup>127</sup> The 1872 Education Act allowed school boards to establish industrial schools but did not authorise them to send education (truanting) cases there or allocate power to raise rates to contribute towards the upkeep of children in such schools. School boards resorted to having truanting children admitted as ‘begging or wandering’, thereby allowing the industrial schools to claim the full Treasury allowance of five shillings. Children, however, had to be committed on a long-term residential basis, there being no day industrial schools outside Glasgow. On 18 November 1880, a month after taking part in a discussion on the good work done in Glasgow by the day industrial schools there, Flora wrote to the *Scotsman* about her visit to see two little girls convicted of theft and sentenced to 10 days imprisonment and five years in a reformatory.

My visit to the little prisoners only helped to strengthen my already strong conviction that to send a little child to prison for its first offence is a harsh measure and one which is not likely to make the child better. Anyone must have been convinced of this who could have seen the younger of these two children as she came to the door of her cell all dressed in a prison gown, much too big for her, looking very small and very miserable; and who could have heard her as she clung to me sobbing out her piteous childish entreaty, ‘Can ye no ask them to let me oot to my mither an’ I’ll be good, I’ll be good an’ I’ll never, never do it ony mair’. Of course the child has committed a crime – and she must be punished. But surely she should not be treated as a grown-up criminal is treated. To a child accustomed always to live with people who are crowded together in small rooms, solitary confinement in a prison cell must be a terrible punishment especially at night. I believe that the one chance for the reform of many children is to remove them from their home influence, but this could be effected without making them first acquainted with prison life.<sup>128</sup>

Flora attended a Conference of Reformatory Managers in Bristol in May of the following year and gave evidence to the Reformatory and Industrial School Commission in October 1882.<sup>129</sup> The campaign continued throughout the 1880s culminating in representatives of Scottish School Boards meeting with Sir George Trevelyan, Secretary of State for Scotland, in London on 28 February 1893 to support the Day Industrial Schools Bill. Miss Flora Stevenson stated their objective of having a clause inserted to enable the managers of industrial schools in Scotland to receive children for short periods of detention instead of the existing system of three

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<sup>126</sup> *Education of Neglected and Destitute Children: An Address delivered by Lord Balfour of Burleigh* (Edinburgh, 1899).

<sup>127</sup> The Wellington Reformatory Farm School Midlothian, founded in 1859 by the Edinburgh Association for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders, was an example of such an institution.

<sup>128</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 11 October 1880; *Scotsman*, 19 November 1880.

<sup>129</sup> *Gloucester Citizen*, 27 May 1881; *London Evening Standard*, 26 October 1882.

years or until the age of 16. A very much shorter time would be quite sufficient to cure children of their truancy and justified on both financial and moral grounds. In January 1893 she had quite specifically stated that the law as it stood required that child truants should be left in the streets until they became sufficiently wicked to qualify as criminals.<sup>130</sup> Eventually the Day Industrial Schools (Scotland) Act 1893 allowed School Boards to send education truancy cases to industrial schools for a maximum of three months. Flora thought that one of the most valuable provisions of this was 'that it imposes on the parents the responsibility of seeing to the child's attendance at the school, and of paying for his maintenance there'.<sup>131</sup>

On 12 January 1899 Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Secretary of State for Scotland, formally opened the St John's Hill Day Industrial School in Edinburgh, the first of its kind to be built by a School Board. Boys and girls who truanted and were in danger of falling into crime were sent there by the School Board under an attendance order or an order of detention from the Sheriff Court.

These are not necessarily bad children. Many of them have excellent qualities, and they readily respond to the discipline of the school. Doubtless the fact that attendance at school means a good dinner, as well as breakfast and tea, makes the day industrial school more alluring to the child with vagrant instincts than the ordinary board school.<sup>132</sup>

The first entry in the log book – the school opened on 6 September 1898 – records the presence of 18 boys, one girl, Miss Clark, Superintendent, Miss Coyle Assistant Mistress, Mr Sneezeby Janitor and Mrs Sneezeby Cook. 'Miss Stevenson and Mr Gibon were in the school and saw the children partake of their first meal'.<sup>133</sup> By 14 January 1889 the roll numbered 46 with an average attendance of 42.3 children. On 25 February the logbook recorded that on the night of Wednesday 22 February two boys had left the school and walked to Glasgow arriving on there on the Friday night weary and footsore. On Saturday morning they visited the Railway Station in the hope of finding work of some kind but were unsuccessful and shortly after noon 'placed themselves under the seat of a railway carriage and rode back to Edinburgh'.<sup>134</sup> They were brought back to school from their homes on Monday morning, punished and 'seem to have had quite sufficient roving for some time'. Miss Stevenson visited the school regularly, recording on 10 November 1899 'I have today visited the school and found everything going on well. I also saw the new boys being admitted on Monday 6th'. She gave annual January treats to the children at her own expense – a tea and cinematograph entertainment with an orange to take home; crackers being added in January 1901. When HM Inspector of Industrial Schools visited on 21 March 1900 Miss Stevenson attended for part of the examination; and the regular visits of the School Attendance Committee included her presence. The annual treat of 20 January 1905 proved to be her last.

Flora saw abnegation of parental responsibility and parental exploitation of children as important factors in creating child delinquency; children selling

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<sup>130</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 17 January 1893.

<sup>131</sup> *Education of Neglected and Destitute Children*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> ECA, SL207/1/1, *St John's Hill Day Industrial Log Book 1898-1921*.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

newspapers on the streets at night being an example of this. Writing to the *Scotsman* on 14 December 1881 during discussion as to the best means of enforcing the arrangements for the casual employment of children, she expressed the view that the public could be actively involved in discouraging this. She told a meeting organised for the purpose of creating a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, that a great many cases of ill-treatment of children came before the School Board, not least those of parents who sent their children under the specified age to sell newspapers:

It was too often the practice when such cases came before the magistrates for them to dismiss the parents with an admonition on their promising to refrain from offending again. In almost all cases the admonitions had no effect and the promise given was at once broken.<sup>135</sup>

In a report to the School Board a month later Flora referred to the hindrance to school attendance caused by the employment of children in newspaper selling and in theatres despite the relevant clauses in the Police Act which gave powers to the magistrates. Subsequently a deputation from the School Board including Miss Stevenson petitioned the Town Council when she spoke of the demoralising effect on girls of the nightly street newspaper traffic; and although the number of children employed had decreased the proportion of those just over school age had not, due to their having acquired during their school age, vagrant and idle habits. In urging the Magistrates to enforce all their powers, she added that at least 20% of the children sent to industrial schools had been children employed in selling newspapers on the streets. The case was remitted to the Lord Provost's Committee; and Flora appealed to her fellow citizens to play their part, informing them that:

It is the unlawful gains of these children that tempt their parents to let them stay out at night. If people would deny themselves the easy charity of giving sixpences and shillings to those who stay out late at night, 'because it is so late, and they look so wretched', it would go a long way to strengthen the hands of the authorities in clearing the streets of these children. It is impossible to speak too strongly of the demoralising effect of this kind of casual employment on the children, more especially the girls, who engage in it. They quarrel and fight, and use bad language, and learn to gamble, and to beg and steal, and in the case of many girls. it is the first step to a life of utter degradation and ruin. The people whose indiscriminating charity encourages them in this life on the streets are simply aiding and abetting the parents of these children to bring them up in idle, vicious habits. Surely if our civilisation requires that that we should have evening newspapers, some means could be devised by which they could be obtained by civilised means.

Miss Stevenson saw a clear demarcation over the role of the school and that of the home. 'There seems to be a wonderful tendency on the part of parents in every class and in every rank of life to throw the entire responsibility of their children's education on other people' she declared in 1882.<sup>136</sup> But no teacher in a day school could exercise authority over children in their own homes. Only the parents could ensure that their children spent a reasonable time in homework and went to bed at a proper time. 'If a child is sent to school on a wet day, after a hasty breakfast, wearing thin boots, that surely is the fault of the parent, not of the teachers

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<sup>135</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 16 October 1884.

<sup>136</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 November 1882.

and school managers'.<sup>137</sup> Personally Flora could not see why so much learning had to be done after school hours – 'no system can be good where the whole part of the school hours is taken up in mere repetition of lessons learned at home'.<sup>138</sup> She could also be critical of the workings of the Education Act of 1872 and Scotch Code of 1878 whereby the annual Parliamentary grant for public education in Scotland given to the school boards to maintain schools and teacher training colleges was conditional on the attendance and proficiency of the scholars, the qualifications of the teachers and the state of the schools. Miss Stevenson told a meeting of the Edinburgh Public Schools Teachers Association on 30 October 1885 that no one could defend the system of payment by results on other than economic grounds as it assumed a uniform condition and capacity in all the children. Destitute children needed compulsory education most but 'it was unreasonable to subject such children to the same training as those of the respectable artisan'.<sup>139</sup> Most of a teacher's energy had to be directed to 'counteract the evil influence of their homes'; but the Board appreciated the teachers' kindness and patience in such cases and it was unreasonable to expect 'the entire regeneration of society in twelve years of School Board work, when Christianity had failed to effect it in eighteen centuries'.<sup>140</sup>

Both before and after the Education Act of 1872 schools operated a pupil teacher system whereby boys and girls aged 13 years could be apprenticed for a period of five years during which they learned how to teach while continuing their own education. Flora seems to have had a pragmatic, if lukewarm attitude towards the system and was taken to task by a newspaper reader in March 1897 who professed to be 'sorry to see a lady of Miss Flora Stevenson's masculine intelligence so damning with faint praise the pupil teacher system'.<sup>141</sup> In response to a question she had said that in the educational interest of the children it was better that they should be taught by certified teachers, though she would be sorry to do away with pupil teachers altogether. The letter writer declared that 'Miss Stevenson knows as well as anybody that comparatively little direct teaching is done by the pupil teachers. Their functions in the classroom are as much in preserving order as in conveying information and the latter is generally done under the eye of a trained teacher'.<sup>142</sup> Tables were turned, however, in the following year when the newspaper accused the Edinburgh School Board of 'arithmetic discussions' as to how many pupil teachers equated with one certificated teacher.

Miss Flora Stevenson yesterday showed more sense than all the chartered accountants of the Board. Of course, she said, it is entirely a question of arrangement. Turn three pupil teachers into a room to manage a class by themselves and see how long it would be before chaos was arrived at.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 31 October 1885.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 17 March 1897.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

Speaking in 1900 at a School Board election meeting she said quite firmly that she would rather that pupil teachers did not count as part of the official staff; it being impossible to attend to their own studies and do justice to the children they were put to instruct. 'Children should be taught by responsible people who had learned self-control and who were calculated to have a proper influence over the children in their charge'.<sup>144</sup> The pupil-teacher system was abolished in 1906.

Another of the clauses of the Education Act of 1872 stipulated that children should leave school at 13 years or as early as ten if they had successfully passed grade five of the curriculum. The nominal leaving age was raised to 14 years in 1883 but a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education instituted by the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Education Department Henry Craik in 1886, showed a serious lack of uniformity. Miss Flora Stevenson gave evidence to the Commission in April 1887; and in submitting the annual report of the Edinburgh School Board three years later, she referred to the decrease of scholars in the upper standards. She stated that 'to her mind the only real remedy for the present was that the standard of exemption according to attainment should be done away with and that there should be an age fixed – say 14 – at which a child could leave school'.<sup>145</sup> In 1888-9 out of 16,815 children presented for examination the number above 13 was only 284 or 1.6%. The percentage dropped to 1.5% in the next session. Throughout the 1890s Flora continued to press for a compulsory leaving age as, for example, at a conference of School Boards held in Aberdeen in 1891 when she spoke of the 'undoubted evils from the withdrawal of children at an early age from school'.<sup>146</sup> As the Edinburgh School Board report of December 1896 showed a steady increase in the number of children under 12 who passed the 5th standard, Flora emphasised the 'absolute necessity' for something to be done to ensure that the education given in their schools should be more efficient and more thorough because the children who left school after passing the fifth standard were too young to be regularly employed. 'There existed in the public mind the idea that there was no necessity for giving a child education after it had passed the fifth grade'.<sup>147</sup> At a School Boards Conference two years later she again reiterated the need for an age limit to 'disabuse the average parent that there was one definite standard to be reached to complete a child's education'.<sup>148</sup> She did, however, welcome the idea of an extension of the standard to standard six. The Education (Scotland) Act of 1901 restricted exemption to children over 12; with each case having to be approved by the relevant school board.

The Education Code of 1873 allowed extra grants for older children who studied specific subjects beyond reading, writing and arithmetic but the Edinburgh School Board does not seem to have made much use of these grants in the early days. By the 1880s the need to provide access to higher education for the lower

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 29 March 1900.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 16 December 1890.

<sup>146</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 12 February 1891.

<sup>147</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 December 1896.

<sup>148</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 16 February 1898.

middle classes led Glasgow to establish 'Higher Grade' schools which built secondary work on elementary foundations. Edinburgh at this stage failed to provide a challenge to the City's Merchant Company and Endowed Schools though some Board schools taught specific subjects. In 1887 the Technical Schools (Scotland) Act authorised school boards to maintain technical schools but provided no extra money for so doing. Following the publication of Government Circulars on Technical Education in August and September 1891, meetings took place throughout Scotland to promote the cause. The first meeting of the Scottish Association for the Promotion of Technical and Secondary Education took place in the Heriot-Watt College Edinburgh on 1 December 1893 for the purpose of promoting the development, systematisation and unification of higher education and the securing of funding for secondary and technical education for Local Authorities. Miss Flora Stevenson attended, as she did the Annual meeting in March 1895 and she formed part of a deputation to Lord Balfour of Burleigh in connection with the aims of the Association.<sup>149</sup> A degree of success was achieved with the passing of the Local Taxation Account (Scotland) Act of 1898 which provided funds for technical and secondary education; and in the following year the Edinburgh School Board authorised the building of two Higher Grade Schools.

Boroughmuir and Broughton Higher Grade Schools opened on 1 September 1904. Advanced advertisements proclaimed them to exemplify the highest standards of modern school buildings and to have been designed and equipped 'to meet the latest views of educationists and authorities on School Requirements'.<sup>150</sup> Both schools had well appointed Physical and Chemical Laboratories, Workshops, Art Rooms, Gymnasiums and Recreation Rooms; and provided 'excellent opportunities for Advanced Instruction on Literary, Scientific and Commercial lines'.<sup>151</sup> The schools would therefore provide a thorough general education and the best possible training for Intermediate and Leaving certificates, Pupil Teachers, Bursaries and University Entrance Examinations – and classes were small. As a result Bruntsfield Public School which had been teaching higher grade pupils, reverted to elementary education. Three years earlier when she opened the new Higher Grade School at Burntisland, Flora had spoken of the difficulties encountered by teachers in giving advanced instruction in so many subjects to large classes.

We may congratulate ourselves that our education authorities have now recognised the necessity for not only allowing our public school managers to make provision for the advanced education of our children, but of encouraging them to do so by the establishment of such higher grade schools as this which we are here met to inaugurate....wherever there is a demand for higher instruction in any district that demand should be supplied without the necessity for bursary and scholarship.<sup>152</sup>

She again expressed her views when addressing a meeting of the Aberdeen branch of the Educational Institute of Scotland, telling them that 'we have far too

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<sup>149</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 2 December 1893, 9 March 1895; *Dundee Courier*, 12 November 1895.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 August 1904.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 September 1901.

many examinations'.<sup>153</sup> Those competitive examinations, the outcomes of which decided the allocation of bursaries and scholarships, necessitated special preparation. The vote of thanks expressed the opinion that 'Miss Stevenson had shown a thorough, practical knowledge of all educational matters. She did not start a question without solving it'.<sup>154</sup> Two years before the opening of the new Boroughmuir Higher Grade School, Flora emphasised at a prize-giving at Bruntsfield, 'the importance of continuing children's education on lines it had previously gone for it seemed to her that a great many of their boys and girls, who were successful in winning bursaries were like transplanted plants', experiencing a line of education different from before.<sup>155</sup> She therefore felt quite justified in asking that facilities should be given to make provision for higher instruction to their children in their own schools, although she felt that people did not always understand this. Most of the pupils in the Higher Grade School were beyond school age and 'came with a real and earnest desire to make the very best of the opportunities' available to them'.<sup>156</sup>

Another area of school work into which Miss Stevenson had considerable input related to physical exercise. She reported to the School Board in November 1882 that during a recent visit to Switzerland she had found that in the schools in Lucerne, gymnastics had as important a place as writing or sewing in the timetables of both girls' and boys' schools. Two years later she proposed a motion to remit to the School Work and Building Committees the consideration of fitting up gymnasiums in each school instead of requiring children to go to Stockbridge school for practice in gymnastics. When she came to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland in 1902, she could state that the Edinburgh School Board 'had always been anxious to encourage physical training' and had erected its first gymnasium in 1882.<sup>157</sup> The Education Code of 1895 had made drill compulsory and after the outbreak of the second Boer War in 1899, had issued circulars on the importance of physical exercise in schools. However, Flora told the Commission that:

in the case of very poor children, too much should not be required from them in the way of physical instruction till they became a little stronger. They improved very much as they went up through the school. Asked by Sir Henry Craik whether the Board had power to acquire a recreation field to be common to a number of schools she said she did not think so. To the question 'Have you ever taken legal advice on the subject?' she answered 'No I think we have the fear of the rate-payers too much before our eyes'. She had come across several instances of objections on the part of parents to girls taking part in physical training on the grounds they did not consider it 'proper'. Most desired there should be a regular medical inspection – all the more so if an increased amount of physical instruction was to be given.<sup>158</sup>

The Education Act of 1872 tasked the new School Boards with enforcing attendance and building new schools the first of which in Edinburgh were Leith Walk,

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<sup>153</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 21 October 1901.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 25 October 1902. The bursaries were given for education at private schools.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Scotsman, Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 August 1902.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

Water of Leith, Stockbridge, Fountainbridge, Causewayside, Bristo and North Canongate. School Board members in rota visited all schools under their jurisdiction. Flora, for example, had Dalry, Dean, Roseburn, New Street and North Canongate in her remit in 1879; and Bruntsfield, Dalry, Dean, Milton House and Warrender Park in 1897. In addition, at one of the first meetings of the Board after the 1873 election it considered the report of a sub-committee on the proposed establishment of evening schools and approved the recommendation that six 'schools' be established for young men and two for young women, opening for four evenings per week in a session of five months at a cost of 4s per session or 1s monthly. The cost included books and slates to be used only in the classrooms; with reading, writing and arithmetic the subjects taught. The report on the session of 1873-4 indicated that in fact 11 schools had been opened as 'a much greater need of elementary education existed among the classes for whom evening classes were intended than generally supposed'.<sup>159</sup> Flora as a member of the Evening Schools Committee took a great interest in the work; for example, entertaining the female scholars of Bristo, Canonmills and Dalry Evening Schools to tea in South Bridge School at the end of the session in 1890 and presiding over the closing of the winter session of evening classes at Bruntsfield School in March 1903 when a party of Miss Jessie Murray's Mandoline Band performed.

She proved equally zealous in her years of service in attending new school openings such as Sciennes in June 1892; and in being present at the many prize presentations at the end of school sessions. Soon after the establishment of the Edinburgh School Board, Baroness Burdett Coutts donated £50 to be allocated as essay prizes among the schools recently established by the Board in the poorer districts of the city. Miss Blyth and Miss Stevenson carried out the arrangements for the awards ceremony in the New Waverly Hall Waterloo Place. The prize-winners received small sums of money and in her short address Flora 'gave good advice as to the disposal of their "prize money"'.<sup>160</sup> As part of Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations of 1897 Miss Stevenson gave the girls of Standard Six at Bruntsfield School a copy of Mrs Fawcett's *Life of Queen Victoria*. The end of session ceremony at the Royal High School in July 1904 proved to be the last prize-giving over which she presided.

Being a School Board member involved Flora in a range of further duties. She acted as the Board's representative on the governing body of George Heriot's Trust from 1 December 1890 until her death, serving on the Education and Bursary Committee, the Founders' Committee and the Heriot-Watt College Committee; being described as 'a woman of energy and ability'.<sup>161</sup> Flora also attended prize-givings and events at Edinburgh private schools such as the Edinburgh Ladies' College prize-giving in July 1895, Founders' Day at Fettes in June 1898 and the annual dinner of the Merchant Company in July. She was no stranger to education commissions and deputations to ministers and she undertook her share of

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<sup>159</sup> *Scotsman*, 7 May 1874.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 May 1874.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 October 1905.

accompanying important persons on visits. Mr Mandella MP visited Edinburgh in January 1884 and Flora accompanied him to St Leonard's, Davie Street, New Street and North Canongate Schools and the High School. On leaving the High School Mr Mandella said that the building was magnificent but lacked an art school or laboratory and so the Board schools were better for teaching. When King Edward VII came to Edinburgh in May 1903 he too visited the Royal High School but his carriage made only a brief halt in order for Miss Stevenson to present him with a loyal address on behalf of the School Board. She also acted on the Consultative Committee advising on the representation of Scottish Education at the Paris Exhibition of 1900; and she was present at the ceremony for the opening of the new wing of George Square College by Lord Balfour.

Flora regularly attended branch meetings and spoke at Congresses of the Educational Institute of Scotland founded in 1847 to promote sound learning, advance the interests of education in Scotland and certify the qualifications of persons engaged, or desiring to be engaged, in the education of young people in Scotland. A Royal Charter of 1851 granted to the EIS the power to award a degree of 'Fellow of the Institute'; and in November 1892 the Institute presented Flora Stevenson with the Honorary Diploma of Fellow of the EIS. In accepting the honour she said that she saw in it:

not only a recognition of the work which she had personally been able to do as a member of the Edinburgh School Board, but also of the principle that there was work in education which could well be undertaken by women.<sup>162</sup>

In 1897 she followed this up by stating in her speech as retiring President of the EIS Edinburgh branch, that 'there was no public department which required higher aims and loftier ideas than the work of education'; and at an EIS branch meeting in February 1902, spoke of the potential benefits but great cost of having free kindergartens as adjuncts to public schools in large cities.<sup>163</sup> If there were free kindergartens in each crowded district of Edinburgh she believed:

the moral character of the children would be raised and one result would be the great diminution of the criminal class. It was not because they had higher education and advanced education that the better classes did not fall into the hands of the police but because they had been brought up in an atmosphere of self restraint and good habits.<sup>164</sup>

Flora, however, thought that the public 'would not want to pay', and in fact Scotland's first nursery school, the Edinburgh Free Kindergarten, a charitable institution, began in Galloway's Entry in the Canongate in 1903 with money left by Miss Howden, former headmistress of Milton House School.

In September 1901 two new elementary schools opened their doors to pupils – Parson's Green which had its formal opening on 7 January 1902 by Miss Flora Stevenson; and on the same day Flora Stevenson School Comely Bank, inaugurated by Lord Balfour of Burleigh. By this time Edinburgh School Board managed 33 schools and Flora had become Convener. Although in 1879 the Glasgow Herald

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<sup>162</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 5 November 1892.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 Jun 1897.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 February 1902.

could report that Miss Flora Stevenson, 'a very attractive speaker and hard-working member of the last Board' had 'excited feeling and imperilled her seat' with her amount of zeal or interference, nonetheless she had never failed to be re-elected.<sup>165</sup> In 1882 Miss Stevenson received a larger number of votes than any other candidate.

She has been a member of the Board from the beginning and has acquired a thorough knowledge of its business, is as ready as well as a clear and concise speaker and she possesses ample leisure, which she has always been zealous to devote to the interests of public education. Why then should Miss Stevenson not be promoted to the chair?<sup>166</sup>

In the following year James Dick in a letter to the *Scotsman* commented that 'the citizens of Edinburgh are very fortunate in having such an energetic lady as a member of the School Board'.<sup>167</sup> Flora, however, continued for the next many years to serve only as a convener of committees of the Board; sometimes receiving criticism for her actions as on 22 January 1892 when an *Edinburgh Evening News* reader took her to task for imposing a midnight curfew on the South Bridge teachers' Christmas party. A few years later, however the newspaper urged:

If you had a fair idea of the work that Miss Flora Stevenson has been connected with for this last 23 years as regards the children of Edinburgh, you would ask every ratepayer in Edinburgh to vote for her, as she has done, and is doing a wonderful work.<sup>168</sup>

Finally on 6 April 1900 the press could report:

All Edinburgh citizens will wish Miss Flora Stevenson a successful term of office as chairwoman of Edinburgh School Board. If experience and the devotion of time and trouble to the City's educational interests are to count for anything, Miss Stevenson has deserved the honour. The chair demands qualities of quick decision and tact, but firmness is also essential. In none of these is Miss Stevenson deficient. Miss Stevenson will have to pay for eminence in heavy responsibility. It is the first time a woman has been placed in so conspicuous a position in Edinburgh and Miss Stevenson's record in the chair will be watched with all the interest of a new experience.

It proved too much for one anonymous 'gentleman' who wrote to Flora to say he regarded her appointment as 'a proof of the decadence of Great Britain'.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 7 April 1879.

<sup>166</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 4 April 1882.

<sup>167</sup> *Scotsman*, 15 October 1883.

<sup>168</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 March 1897.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 April 1900.



Flora Stevenson School opened in 1899

Closely related to her work as a member of the Edinburgh School Board went her support of the Royal Blind Asylum and School. Both she and Louisa made financial contributions but Flora became a Director in December 1897 and served in that capacity with Harriot Mair, Sarah's sister and Miss Stodart. All three were appointed as Lady Visitors with the duties of visiting the Boarding House and Female Blind Asylum and School and submitting any observations and suggestions to the Trade or House Committee. When Lord Balfour of Burleigh laid the memorial stone of the new buildings to be erected in Nicolson Street for the industrial and commercial departments of the Royal Blind Asylum, Miss Mair and Flora attended the ceremony. She retired in 1903, being replaced by Lady Steel but was unanimously re-elected in 1904. In 1903 her fellow Directors congratulated her on the 'well deserved honour conveyed on her by Edinburgh University'; and following her death they paid tribute to her interest in the Institution and her work amongst the young there.<sup>170</sup>

When the School Board discussed temperance teaching in schools at the beginning of 1893, Flora expressed the view that while she approved of this she felt that any scientific teaching to elementary pupils would 'have no positive effect in deterring them from indulging in intoxicating liquors'.<sup>171</sup> Of rather more benefit would be the influence in moral and religious directions. In 1898 Parliament passed the Inebriates Act which provided for the treatment of Habitual Inebriates and enabled local authorities to set up Certified Reformatories to treat habitual drunkards over a period of two to three years as an alternative to a short prison sentence. Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Secretary of State for Scotland, accordingly appointed a Departmental Committee to inquire into the best means of carrying out the terms of the Act in Scotland and for the conduct of the Reformatories to be established under it. Possibly because of her educational experience and advocacy of reform work, Miss Flora Stevenson became a member of the Committee. Consequently in January

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<sup>170</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 February 1903; *Scotsman*, 24 October 1905.

<sup>171</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 17 January 1893.

1899 she and three colleagues inspected Perth General Prison with regard to its possible utilisation as a home for Inebriates. The deputation 'went over the prison and grounds minutely' and were 'favourably impressed especially with the accommodation afforded in the outdoor department'.<sup>172</sup> The Secretary of State subsequently issued instructions for the necessary building alterations to be made. Miss Stevenson, however, told a conference of women workers in Brighton in October 1900 'that the present treatment of inebriates is futile' as it afforded no hope of reformation for those 'who drift between the prison and the workhouse'.<sup>173</sup> She thought that treatment must be reformatory and not penal which was the intention of the Inebriates Act which had so far failed due to the lack of the necessary reformatory institutions.

From May to October 1886 Edinburgh mounted a Great International Exhibition on the Meadows showcasing the latest scientific, cultural and social advances and featuring over 20,000 exhibits from around the world. The reconstruction of a seventeenth-century Edinburgh street attracted particular interest. Flora Stevenson paid the fees for 200 New Street School pupils to attend. She had been a member of the Committee appointed to manage the Women's Industries section of the Exhibition. Such activity formed part of her promotion of 'women's work'. The Stevenson sisters' friend Lady Rosebery acted as President of the Scottish Home Industries Association formed in 1889 with Princess Louise as President. At an Edinburgh branch meeting held in the Lyric Club George Street on 19 October 1892, Miss Stevenson said that the Association wanted to revive 'what was at one time very common in Scotland, useful home industries'.<sup>174</sup> To date they had been successful with the Edinburgh branch selling from £1000 to £1200 worth of goods during the previous year; but that money was required to increase production. She wished to make it clear that when they asked for financial support 'they did not invite subscriptions to charity', for the object of the Association 'was not to start another charity of which they had too many'.<sup>175</sup> Yet people doing work in a small and limited way at home could not compete in the market with the large manufacturers. As many potential buyers remained appreciative of the work done by hand for its individuality and aesthetic merit, the Association would be the means of bringing to public attention the articles made in workers' homes. However the workers had to be paid at once as they could not afford to 'lie out the money they had paid for the material', hence the request for assistance preferably in the form of subscriptions.<sup>176</sup>

Both Louisa and Flora supported the National Union of Women Workers; Flora attending the Conference at Liverpool in 1891. Flora spoke on 'Scottish National Education' at a meeting of the Edinburgh branch on 9 November 1897 and contributed to the debate following Dr Jessie Macgregor's paper on 'Indiscriminate Charity'. On this favourite subject Miss Stevenson said 'she thought the overlapping

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<sup>172</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 24 January 1899.

<sup>173</sup> *Shields Daily Gazette*, 26 October 1900.

<sup>174</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 20 October 1892.

<sup>175</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 October 1892.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

of charity might be remedied by each organisation giving sufficient to cover the needs of the case instead of giving a little with the idea that it would be supplemented by other organisations.<sup>177</sup> Two years later she wrote to the *Scotsman* to correct the view that the Women's Employment Bureau was the nucleus of a trade union. On the contrary if the Bureau achieved its aims the time would come when there would no longer be any necessity of 'claims on our charity to give assistance to Scottish women who are in the anomalous position of being called "indigent gentlewomen"'.<sup>178</sup> Flora also seems to have been involved with another employment agency as reported by the *St Andrew's Citizen* on 14 October 1893. Miss Flora Stevenson Vice-President of the new Domestic Servants' Employers Association (established 2 March last) with the Duchess of Fife as the Honorary President said that the objects of the Association were to supply its members with good servants and to assist such servants to find a suitable situation. 'The membership exceeds 1000 including many of the best families in Edinburgh; and there are large numbers of servants availing themselves of its advantages'.<sup>179</sup>

Having spoken at the annual conference of the National Union of Women Workers at Brighton in October 1900, Flora reported on the proceedings to the Edinburgh Branch meeting on 12 February 1901 in the Drumsheugh Hall; and she contributed to the annual meeting held at Cheltenham in November 1903 when she and Louisa were listed among the 24 Vice-Presidents. The conference of 1902 had been held in St Cuthbert's Hall Edinburgh when Miss Flora Stevenson presided, before holding a reception at 13 Randolph Crescent in the afternoon attended by 300 ladies and gentlemen. Hand in hand with this work went the Stevenson sisters' continued support for women's suffrage and it was Louisa who presided over the annual meeting of the Edinburgh branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in St Andrew's Free Church Drumsheugh on 23 November 1898 when Flora declared memorably that 'one thing that had kept back the movement was the indifference of women themselves'.<sup>180</sup> After Flora's death Lady France Balfour paid tribute to her, writing that:

she, with her sisters was one of the firmest supporters of the Parliamentary franchise for women and she always felt that women should possess the full right of citizenship. This great and gentle citizen who has passed to her rest looked for and believed in the day which should bring this right and privilege to the women citizens in her beloved country.<sup>181</sup>

The Edinburgh Philosophical Institution was founded in 1846 to provide popular lectures on subjects connected with science, literature and art; and also to make available to members a News Room, Reading Room and Library along with classes for students. Accommodated first in 54 Hanover Street the success of the Institution enabled a move to 4 Queen Street with the later incorporation of adjacent buildings. In the session of 1872 Mrs Henry Fawcett lectured on 'The Education of

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<sup>177</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 November 1897.

<sup>178</sup> *Scotsman*, 28 November 1899.

<sup>179</sup> *St Andrews Citizen*, 14 October 1893.

<sup>180</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 November 1898.

<sup>181</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 October 1905.

Women'. When Flora Stevenson joined as a lady member, at a cost of 10s 6d, is unknown, but in 1880 John Ritchie Findlay became a Director and during the session of 1882-3 he largely paid for the repainting, redecoration and refurbishment of the Ladies' Room. Smoking on the premises was then forbidden but there must have been something of a backlash as the complete reorganisation and extension work of 1888-9 added Conversation, Smoking and Billiard Rooms with increased accommodation for the ladies and higher subscriptions rates of 25s for gentlemen and 21s for ladies. In 1890 the membership elected Mrs Mary Hay McIntosh and Miss Flora C. Stevenson as Directors. During the session of 1890-1 Professor Masson spoke on 'The Last Years of Sir Walter Scott' and Professor Ralph Copeland lectured on 'Temporary Stars'. Flora remarked in October 1891 that 'she felt perfectly sure that if the ladies of Edinburgh knew what was provided for them in the Institution they would be more willing to become members'.<sup>182</sup>

During her years as a Director Flora, if she had the time, would have heard lecturers as varied as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on 'George Meredith', Professor William Flanders Petrie on 'Excavating in Egypt', Miss Mary Kingsley on 'Some Experiences in West Africa', Winston Churchill on 'The Boer War as I saw it', Sir Ronald Ross on 'Mosquitoes and Malaria' and Mrs Kennedy Fraser on 'Scots Folk Music'. The Directors also dealt with the expulsion of a member in the 1895 session for 'the surreptitious removal of books and periodicals from the Reading Room'; the installation of the telephone in the lobby in 1899 and in January 1903, the resignation of the secretary over 'certain irregularities in the keeping of the accounts'.<sup>183</sup>

Following the death of Flora Stevenson a member presented a photogravure of her portrait by Alexander Roche and this was hung in the Ladies' Reading Room. Roche's portrait had been commissioned by 322 subscribers anxious to recognise Flora's contribution to public services especially in the cause of education. Sir Colin Macrae presided over the presentation ceremony in the Egyptian Hall Queen Street with Louisa included among the guests present on 11 January 1905. In his speech Sir Colin told his audience that 'probably there was no name in Scotland connected with education more widely known than that of Miss Stevenson'; and he attributed to her 'a mastery of detail and grasp of the whole facts of subjects'.<sup>184</sup> The artist had painted her seated at a table, wearing a black velvet dress relieved with lace and holding a document, with her LLD gown and hood beside her – a reference to her recent honour. In response Flora said 'it was not easy to find words to express all that she had in her heart to say', but in comparing the condition of the children in the present public schools with that of children in the schools of the early 1870s she:

said unhesitatingly that there was an improvement. When they contrasted the schoolhouses at that date with the large, airy well-lighted buildings in which so many thousands of our city children spent their schooldays now, it was obvious that there must be an improvement in the health of the children unless all accepted sanitary laws were without foundation. The lives of

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<sup>182</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 28 October 1891.

<sup>183</sup> W. Addis Miller, *The Philosophical, a short history of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution and its Famous Members and Lectures 1846-1948* (Edinburgh, 1949), pp. 42, 46.

<sup>184</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 January 1905.

both children and teachers are happier now. They heard much criticism of the education given in our schools, but she did not find that it was a criticism found on knowledge.<sup>185</sup>

In concluding her speech Flora paid tribute to the cooperation of the teaching staff. 'It was that hearty cooperation and that confidence in her that had brought her so much happiness in her public life'.<sup>186</sup> In a codicil of her will dated July 1905 she intimated her wish that her portrait be donated to the trustees of a public gallery in Scotland as it had been gifted to her by public subscription. Flora Stevenson's portrait is now part of the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland.

Flora had worn her LLD gown at her graduation ceremony on 9 April 1903, an event heralded earlier in February by the *Shields Daily Gazette* which stated her to be 'the only woman in the kingdom who has been a member of a School Board for 30 years'; and credited her 'knowing more about the Code than the Education Department itself'.<sup>187</sup> Professor Sir Ludovic Grant, Dean of the Faculty of Law in his graduation eulogy referred to 'the splendid services she has rendered in the cause of education'.<sup>188</sup> Describing her as 'a lady of many accomplishments and wide culture', he said 'she has earned the lasting gratitude of the intellectual sisterhood in this country'.<sup>189</sup> Some of that sisterhood in the form of a deputation of women graduates of the University of Edinburgh called on Miss Flora Stevenson to congratulate her on her receipt of the honorary degree. They presented her with a bouquet and a formal letter in which they expressed their appreciation of her 'lifelong interest and labour in the cause of education'.<sup>190</sup> A group of women undergraduates also offered congratulations and a gift of Bell's Miniature Series of Painters. Louisa wore her sister's gown at her graduation in 1906 and on her death the Stevenson family presented it to the Masson Hall Committee 'to be lent when the occasion offers to ladies about to graduate for a similar degree'.<sup>191</sup>

Given the intense dedication that both Louisa and Flora gave to their espoused causes neither seems to have indulged in other activities as did Sarah Mair with her archery and chess. Flora indeed confessed that she had difficulty in finding time to read book reviews in the *Spectator* let alone the books themselves.<sup>192</sup> Press references to social or family related events attended by either sister are few and far between and many had 'work' connotations. Eldest brother James Cochrane Stevenson served both as Mayor of South Shields and from November 1868 as its Member of Parliament. His successor in civic office gave a Grand Ball in his honour on 2 April 1869 in the large hall of the Mechanics Institute which featured 'elegant and costly decorations', gas jet lighting and a sky blue ceiling spangled with gold and silver stars.<sup>193</sup> Younger siblings Mr Alexander S. Stevenson, Mr Archibald Stevenson

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> *Shields Daily Gazette*, 20 February 1903.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1903.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> *Dundee Evening Post*, 20 April 1903.

<sup>191</sup> EUSC, GD58/1/1, *Masson Hall Minutes*, June 1908.

<sup>192</sup> McLaren, p. 61.

<sup>193</sup> *South Shields Gazette*, 3 April 1869.

and his wife and Miss Flora Stevenson attended – a time when the social side of life attracted her. When Alexander Shannon Stevenson as President of the Tynemouth Rowing Club opened the season in April 1880, Miss Louisa Stevenson of Edinburgh accompanied him when he acted as coxswain of the newly launched ‘Chipchase’ in a ‘capital row’.<sup>194</sup> Both sisters attended Lady Aberdeen’s reception at Holyroodhouse for the Queen’s birthday on 24 May 1881 and both witnessed the opening of the restored Parliament Hall on 18 October 1892 by Princess Louise. Probably in her capacity as School Board member Flora Stevenson attended a reception and dance given by the Lord Provost in the Assembly Rooms in February 1896 along with ‘1250 representatives of many different classes of the community’.<sup>195</sup> Looking like a corner of Venice the venue featured a transparency stretched across the gallery representing a portion of the canal by moonlight. The guests enjoyed dancing till the early hours of the morning.

In the following year Flora attended ‘a smart garden party at Warwick Castle’ given by the Countess of Warwick who in her role as president of the Victorian Era Exhibition, entertained the Education section as well as a number of others interested in higher and general education in the Midland Counties and the advising Committee which included Miss Stevenson.<sup>196</sup> London guests came in a special train from Paddington for lunch followed by a personal tour of the Castle and a river trip in Lord Warwick’s electric launch, concluding with tea and musical entertainment by the Blue Hungarian Band. Both sisters witnessed the marriage of their niece Miss Dora Jane Stevenson, youngest daughter of Mr James C. Stevenson, Kenton Lodge Newcastle with Mr John C. P. Thompson solicitor Newcastle in Jesmond Presbyterian Church in October 1899. Only Flora, however, seems to have been present at the wedding of Lady Frances Balfour’s daughter Blanche in St Mary’s Abbott’s Church Kensington in November 1902. Princess Louise also attended and the reception took place in Kensington Palace.

In November 1904 the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to Edinburgh School Board asking if the Board would be ‘prepared to enter into negotiations with a view to arranging terms for the transfer of the property of the Royal High School for the purposes of a National Gallery’.<sup>197</sup> In what was to be one of her last actions as Convenor Miss Stevenson signed a memorial against the National Gallery being removed either to the Calton Hill or Royal High School sites – ‘it would practically close the doors to the man in the streets with an interest in art and half an hour to spare, to the visitor who has much to crowd in’ – and even more to the leisured class who would not venture up the hill in the wind and rain.<sup>198</sup> The Board recommended that the two buildings on the Mound should be wholly devoted, one to the Gallery and one to the Academy.

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 26 April 1880.

<sup>195</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 February 1896.

<sup>196</sup> *Leamington Spa Courier*, 15 May 1897.

<sup>197</sup> *Dundee Evening Post*, 22 November 1904.

<sup>198</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 March 1905.

Although she continued to accept future engagements Flora was by this time seriously 'incapacitated more or less by an internal complaint'.<sup>199</sup> In September 1905 she underwent an operation in St Andrews where she had been residing in the Marine Hotel. Press bulletins described her condition as grave and she died on 28 September. Newspapers around the United Kingdom carried reports of her death and subsequent obituaries and Louisa received many letters of condolence both personal and official. In a lengthy tribute the *Scotsman* described Flora as 'a brave spirit' who had 'died in harness', who 'was an honour to her sex' and who possessed intellectual qualities and a sense of public duty of a 'high order'.<sup>200</sup> 'She was a shining example, frequently cited in and out of Edinburgh, of the capacity of women for administrative work on public Boards'.<sup>201</sup> The *Edinburgh Evening News* described her as carrying through the business entrusted to her with a firmness and determination 'that showed her to be the equal of any man'.<sup>202</sup> Showing 'equanimity among harassments':

She was thoroughly independent. She had a mind of her own and spoke it without fear. Our public life would be the better and purer if all the men taking part in it were as strenuous, as independent and as courageous as was Miss Flora Stevenson.<sup>203</sup>

A memorial service for the public took place in St John's Episcopal Church conducted by Rev. Canon Cowley-Brown but Rev. W. M. McGregor of St Andrew's United Free Church delivered the funeral service in 13 Randolph Crescent. As a tribute of respect, school children lined the route of the funeral procession to the Dean Cemetery. Flora left her personal estate of £31,524 15s 7d to Louisa. When Sir Ludovic Grant gave his oration at Louisa Stevenson's graduation in 1906 he described her as 'strenuous in action, tenacious of purpose and of high courage'.<sup>204</sup> These were qualities she shared with her sister Flora and indeed the sisters had many characteristics in common. Both possessed high intellects, a business capacity, grasp of detail and sense of public and moral duty. Both could speak well on the public platform and chair meetings and both liked to have their own way. Louisa, however, appears to have had 'a deadly earnestness and absorption in one set of ideas and an inability to see any other point of view'.<sup>205</sup> Her way of getting things done seems to have been more of the blasting of rocks approach rather than the slower steady work with the pickaxe. Yet she had a disarming sweetness and courtesy, a keen sense of humour and a willingness to admit she was wrong if she so thought. A friend recalled how 'she would break her heart over some of the sad cases which came before her' when she served on the Parochial Board.<sup>206</sup> Flora had more of an instinct as to how far she could go in expressing her own views and prepared carefully for her public appearances.

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<sup>199</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 27 September 1905.

<sup>200</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 September 1905.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 29 September 1905.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 April 1906.

<sup>205</sup> McLaren, p. 19.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Sweeter tempered than Louisa she had an ability to smooth over difficulties yet could appear quite intimidating – ‘a blaze o’ grandeur and gold specs’.<sup>207</sup> Yet there is no doubt as to their roles as pioneers. After Flora’s death the Minutes of the Masson Hall Executive Committee recorded:

Miss Louisa Stevenson’s work for the advancement of the Secondary Education of women has been on the same high level as that of Miss Flora Stevenson in connection with Elementary Education. The joint work of the two sisters sets a high example of what strenuous effort, coupled with natural ability, may accomplish for the good of the community, an example that will serve to many as an inspiration in their work and an encouragement and strength in the disappointments incident to all earnest efforts.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>208</sup> EUSC, GD58/1/1, *Masson Hall Minutes*, 16 October 1905.

**Annie Bourdass**

**Maybel Benvie**

**Dates unknown**

**1 November 1881- April 1965**

**14, 10 Drumsheugh Gardens, 21 Chester Street**



Annie Bourdass and Maybel Benvie



Maybel Benvie

Courtesy of St Denis and Cranley Association

Advertisements in the *Scotsman* for August 1902 and 1903 informed readers that:

at 14 Drumsheugh Gardens Edinburgh an Establishment conducted by Miss Mack provided for the Board and Education of Girls, including a limited number of Day pupils with hockey, cricket, tennis and swimming also on offer.

One of many similar institutions in Edinburgh, this private school had originated in Great King Street under Miss Sinclair in 1855, moving to Royal Circus in 1858, 24 Buckingham Terrace in 1865 and in 1872, to 2 Magdala Crescent. Miss Saunders succeeded her aunt in 1883 and moved the school first to 42 Drumsheugh Gardens and then in 1888 to No 14. At this time each 'Headmistress' personally owned the school. When Miss Saunders married in 1891 Miss Mack took ownership and an advertisement for 18 December 1907 announced the Establishment to be 'conducted on Modern Methods by Miss Mack', with Games, Gymnastics, Riding, Swimming, Cooking and 'Foreign Resident Mistresses and guest visiting Professors'.<sup>209</sup> In 1908, however, a change of ownership to that of 'Miss Bourdass, Diplômée University of Paris, late Modern Language Mistress at St Katherine's St Andrews' meant that the school could provide a 'special opportunity for Languages' as well as 'Swedish Gymnastics'.<sup>210</sup>

To date little material has been found regarding Annie Bourdass' background. A notice in *The Star* of January and February 1894 described a dramatic performance at St Julia's Hall Guernsey under the patronage of J. C. Motteé, Esq. French Vice-Consul, for the benefit of the poor. The performances of two plays, one in French and one in English were interspersed with a pianoforte duet performed by

<sup>209</sup> *Scotsman*, 18 December 1907.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 May, 20 June, 19 August 1908.

Mdlle Bourdasse and Miss Dugmore.<sup>211</sup> This may have been her or just coincidence. However notices in the *North Devon Journal* and *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* in 1903 for Exeter High School advertised the presence among the staff of 'Mlle. Bourdass, Université de Paris, Certificat d'Etudes Francaises'.<sup>212</sup> This award had been instituted in 1896 and attracted many women who first undertook elementary courses in the pronunciation and grammar of the French language, as well as in French history and literature at the *Guilde Internationale*, 6 rue de la Sorbonne. In 1906 Blackie and Son published *French Auxiliary and Regular Verbs* by A. Bourdass, Diplômée de l'Université de Paris and de la *Guilde Internationale Paris*, Language Mistress at St Katherine's St Andrews. In the introduction 'A. B.' wrote:

The following arrangement of French verbs is intended to be used as a supplement to a Reader in Junior forms. It is essential that the child should have an accurate knowledge of the forms of verbs almost from the outset, but as the teaching of French is generally now begun on the Oral Method and based on the Reader, a want is sometimes felt of having the elementary verbs expressed as paradigms, as they are often not given in a reading-book. It is to supply this want, and to save the time of dictating and copying in form, that this little book has been arranged....The names of the tenses are given in French, as it is as well that the pupil should learn the French expressions from the beginning.

An advertisement in *Modern Language Teaching* the official organ of the Modern Languages Association, considered the publication 'admirably suited for junior forms'.<sup>213</sup> Annie Bourdass also translated into French from German a one act comedy entitled *Le Petit Grand-père et La Petite Grand-mère* by Kate Weber, a fellow holder of the Paris qualifications.<sup>214</sup> The senior pupils of Motherwell High School performed this in January 1908 when 'it was very gratifying to notice the interest taken by the pupils of the Higher Grade Department' during the play which was 'evidently followed and understood' by most of those studying French'.<sup>215</sup>

When Miss Bourdass became Principal of the school at 14 Drumsheugh Gardens she clearly lost no time in giving the establishment a name. A paragraph in the *Scotsman* of 1 April 1909 noted that:

A highly successful concert under distinguished patronage in aid of the Edinburgh Distress Committee was arranged by Miss Bourdass at St Denis School Drumsheugh Gardens yesterday afternoon. There was a crowded attendance. In addition to the items provided by the pupils, the following kindly gave their services – Madame Middleton, Miss Glover, Mons Chollet and Mr Nalborough. A small string orchestra also assisted.<sup>216</sup>

Miss Bourdass had either taught at, or wished to emulate, La Maison d'Education des Jeunes Filles de La Légion d'Honneur in the St Denis district of Paris. In 1805 Napoleon had instituted a school for the daughters of the recipients of his Légion d'Honneur with a second school opening in 1808 in monastic buildings of the abbey of St Denis the patron saint of France. In the grounds of the school stands a statue of Pierre Terrail, seigneur de Bayard who lived from 1473-1524. Miss Bourdass

<sup>211</sup> *The Star*, 27 January, 1 February, 1894.

<sup>212</sup> *North Devon Journal*, 26 March, 25 June 1903; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 18 April 1903.

<sup>213</sup> *Modern Language Teaching*, ed. Walter Rippman, vol. IV (London, 1908), p. 223.

<sup>214</sup> Advertisement in the *Educational times and journal of the College of Praeceptors*, vol. LXII, January-December 1909.

<sup>215</sup> *Motherwell Times*, 24 January 1908.

<sup>216</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 April 1909.

adapted his motto 'Sans Peur et sans reproche' (fearless and blameless) to 'Loyauté sans reproche' as the logo for the school. The colours chosen for the institution were navy-blue, white and green and the girls wore white straw hats with bands of navy-blue edged with narrow lines of white and green. She also clearly had ideas about her pupils' diet as she advertised in March 1910 for a 'Cook-General (good, plain) for school'.<sup>217</sup> By 1911 the notices for the beginnings of terms described the establishment as St Denis Private Boarding and Day School for Girls with Languages and Music a speciality along with Swedish Drill and Games, Tennis and Riding.



Miss Bourdass is the centre adult



21 Chester Street Dining Room

Courtesy of St Denis and Cranley Association

Much of the information about school life at this time comes from the reminiscence of former pupils and bears out the impression given by the advertisements and extant photographs.<sup>218</sup> At meals the girls had to speak French and German week about, although German was tactfully dropped after the outbreak of war in 1914. For swimming lessons they visited the nearby Drumsheugh Baths and for tennis, a court across the Dean Bridge and when it sometimes flooded and froze in winter, they skated, otherwise they used Craiglockhart. Horse-riding seems to have been a regular activity with long rides to the Pentlands taking place in the summer months. St Denis School also placed the same emphasis on needlework as the schools managed by the Edinburgh School Board. The girls occupied themselves with this in the evenings with Miss Bourdass or another mistress reading aloud and singsongs round the piano took place on Saturday evenings. The tradition of teaching good deportment continued with instruction in how to enter and leave a room and shut the door without turning one's back. Miss Bourdass also developed academic subjects and presented pupils for the public examinations with the result that the Scottish Education Department recognised the school as 'efficient' and subject to regular inspection. In 1914 she thought that the former pupils of the school should form an 'Old Girls' Association' and by 1915 this new group had a membership of 24.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 26 March 1910.

<sup>218</sup> See J. O. Ramsay, *From Small Beginnings: A History of St Denis School Edinburgh 1855-1974* (Edinburgh, 1974).

The St Denis' girls regularly experienced music concerts and theatre performances and undertook visits to places of historical and natural interest such as the Castle, Holyrood, Arthur's Seat and Rosslyn. Miss Bourdass seems to have been a member of the Historical Association as a group visit to Linlithgow in June 1912 included her.<sup>219</sup> The members enjoyed tea at the Grange, the home of Colonel and Mrs Cadell for whose dining room artist F. C. B. Cadell painted a series of watercolours. Cadell exhibited his painting 'Afternoon' at the Royal Scottish Academy exhibition of 1915. In July 1915 the St Denis' girls of the Senior Drawing Class attended the exhibition in the company of Art teacher Miss Molyneaux who:

pointed out the best and most interesting paintings and explained them to us. In the watercolour room a pleasant surprise awaited us in the shape of a painting by Miss Molyneaux, 'Daleerie Farm, near Crieff'.<sup>220</sup>

This was the period of the First World War and earlier in the year Miss Bourdass had contributed two guineas to Glasgow Corporation's subscriptions for the support of the Belgian refugees.<sup>221</sup> The war, however, did not prevent her from taking steps to develop the school and in April she moved the girls to 21 Chester Street which remained the principal venue until 1932.

In December 1915 the 'Past and Present Students of St Denis School per Miss A Bourdass' donated £50 to the Scottish Women's Hospitals 'to name "St Denis' Bed" (Royaumont)'.<sup>222</sup> This money maintained the provision of a bed for war casualties in the Scottish Women's Hospital at Royaumont in France. People all over Britain donated to the Units staffed entirely by women and organised by the Scottish Women's Hospitals in war zones such as France and Serbia. Patients in these beds sometimes wrote letters which the women's suffrage journal *The Common Cause* published as a propaganda exercise. In November a communication appeared from 'St Denis Bed'. In this Louis Belibio, Sergeant of the 207th Infantry, baker at St Germain-du-Bel-Air and married with a son, described how he had 'started off' on the third day of mobilisation, 'very glad to go to war'. He had fought for 16 months but at Arras in December 1915 he had fallen ill for the first time and had been sent to Royaumont 'where I still am, well cared for'. He ended by declaring that 'the "doctoresses", the nurses and the orderlies are absolutely devoted to their work and give the patients all possible care. Long live France, England and all the Allies'.<sup>223</sup>

School life continued throughout the war and in 1919 a pupil wrote:

After dinner there is usually hockey and those who do not take hockey go for a long walk. From 3.30 until about seven we devote to preparation with only about ten minutes interval for tea. We then have prayers and supper after which we sit and sew.... Summer Term is by far the nicest as we get a good deal of tennis and riding and we often spend a happy afternoon in the swimming baths but the garden is not large enough to do lessons in, but we occasionally sit there in the evenings to admire the brilliantly coloured flowers.

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<sup>219</sup> *Scotsman*, 3 June 1912.

<sup>220</sup> <[www.stdenisandcranleyedinburgh.co.uk/](http://www.stdenisandcranleyedinburgh.co.uk/)>[4 December 2015]. Elizabeth Gowanlock Molyneaux (1887-1969) lived in Edinburgh and painted landscapes in Scotland, France and Italy – see Julian Halsby, *Scottish Watercolours 1740-1940* (London, 1986), p. 274.

<sup>221</sup> *Daily Record*, 22 February 1915.

<sup>222</sup> *The Common Cause*, 17 December 1915.

<sup>223</sup> *The Common Cause*, 3 November 1916.

Miss Bourdass whom former pupils described as having a sense of humour, patience and understanding as well as being quite formidable, retired in 1920. In 1929 Miss A. and Miss F. Bourdass were listed as being members of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society.<sup>224</sup>

Miss Maybel Margarita Benvie became the new headmistress. Miss Benvie's father Andrew born on 11 May 1845 in Abernyte Perthshire, was firstly minister of Scone Parish Church then of St Aidan's Bread Street Edinburgh from 1894. Her mother, Elizabeth Williamson Crighton, born c. 1844 came from Strathcathro Forfarshire. The couple had five children – Bessie, George, Crighton, Maybel (born 1 November 1881) and Bertha. In Edinburgh the Rev. Andrew Benvie DD resided at 18 Chalmers Street, the address given in a press advertisement of 1 October 1902 – 'Elocution Miss Maybel Benvie, Pupil of Henry Neville. Private or in Schools'.<sup>225</sup> A similar notice appeared two years later. Henry Neville was an actor and co-editor of the book *Voice, Speech and Gesture*.<sup>226</sup> Miss Maybel Benvie made her debut in Edinburgh as a 'dramatic reciter' on 26 February 1903 in the Freemasons' Hall:

Possessed with a keen elocutionary insight Miss Benvie made a very favourable impression, though at times several of her phrases were too hurriedly spoken. 'Herve Riel' (Browning), 'The Merrythought' (Margaret Johnston) and the closing scenes from 'Macbeth' were however exceptionally well rendered the latter piece especially so. There were eight items on the programme against Miss Benvie's name embracing all phases of her art and on the whole she made a highly creditable debut.<sup>227</sup>

In May of the following year, despite the 'lateness of the season' she attracted a sizeable audience for another Dramatic Recital in the Masonic Hall:

In these days the platform entertainer who hopes to win favour with the public must be highly accomplished and must offer in person, in programme and in performance, attractions above the average. Only the specially gifted can make and hold a place in popular esteem. In Miss Benvie's performance on Saturday there were tokens of conscientious effort and diligent application, of an appreciative sense of expression and of a sound understanding of the value of elocutionary control. The number and variety of pieces she submitted disclosed not only a trustworthy memory, but a ready adaptability to the strikingly dissimilar methods of thought, style and character creation to be found in a wide range of authorship. Her reception was cordial and encouraging.<sup>228</sup>

Although resident in Edinburgh she seems to have kept in contact with her former home as the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of 29 October indicated:

Miss Mabel Benvie daughter of the former very popular minister of Scone Parish, the Rev. A. Benvie, now at Edinburgh, is visiting Perth this winter to give one or two dramatic recitals. Miss Benvie has long been known as a very talented reader and reciter and much local interest is being taken in her more ambitious venture.

Her attachment extended beyond performances as the *Dundee Courier* reported her as being one of the supporters of the sweet stall at the Scotsraig Golf Bazaar in 1906. The ladies wore 'light gowns with pink bows in their hair'.<sup>229</sup> Ten years later at

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<sup>224</sup> *Proceedings of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society*, vol. XXXI, 1938-9.

<sup>225</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 October 1902.

<sup>226</sup> The book was published in London and New York in 1895, the other editor being R. F. Bewster.

<sup>227</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 27 February 1903.

<sup>228</sup> *Scotsman*, 30 May 1904.

<sup>229</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 19 October 1906.

a temperance meeting in Perth 'excellent elocutionary items' were contributed by Miss Benvie Edinburgh and solos by Miss B. Benvie; and in the following year she performed in Pitlochry.<sup>230</sup> Maybel must, however, have played a role in her father's charge of St Aidan's as she represented the church at the 16th annual conference of the Church of Scotland's Women's Guild in Aberdeen in April 1907 when she attended with other delegates from the Presbytery of Edinburgh including Dr Elsie Inglis from St Cuthbert's.<sup>231</sup>

In the years immediately prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, however, Maybel Benvie faced a new challenge as a student at Edinburgh University. She graduated with a Third Class Honours in English at the end of June 1913 at the age of 31 years.<sup>232</sup> When Professor Saintsbury retired from the Chair of English Literature in Edinburgh University in 1915 the Rev. Dr Benvie attended his presentation ceremony. Miss Benvie in response to the vote of thanks to the organising committee said:

they were glad to be the instrument for voicing for the students the esteem in which they held Professor Saintsbury and the love and admiration they had for him. To the world Professor Saintsbury was a great scholar. To his students he was something more – he was a great soul and a great friend (Applause).<sup>233</sup>

During the period after her graduation until 1917 Maybel taught elocution at St Denis School but she still gave public performances especially in support of the war effort. In November 1914, for example, she played Mrs Goldfinch in a Three Act comedy 'A Pair of Spectacles' by Sydney Grundy in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund in the Queen's Hall Queen Street.<sup>234</sup> Two charity performances in Portobello Town Hall in aid of the aged poor and permanently ill soldiers and sailors injured in the war included the 1 Act Farce 'A Kiss in the Dark' in which Miss Bertha Benvie acted and the Comedietta 'Dearest Mamma' with Miss Mabel(sic) Benvie.<sup>235</sup> Then in 1917 she appeared on stage at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in a matinee of 'Brass Farthing', a comedy in Three Acts by Mrs Findlayson Gauld, former suffragette.<sup>236</sup> Under the auspices of the Scottish Young Women's Christian Association's Appeal for £20,000 to erect Huts, Canteens, Hostels and Convalescent Homes for Women War Workers in Scotland and for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in France, Miss Benvie arranged a Musical and Dramatic Entertainment. This took place on 24 April 1918 in the Lauriston Hall with tickets priced from 3s to 1s.

A month after the end of war her sister Bertha Crighton Benvie married Dr J. Murray Robertson of Toronto on 26 December in St Aidan's Church. A few weeks later Miss Benvie from the Historical Association of Scotland (Edinburgh Branch) lectured to the Women's Rural Institute at Longniddry. The Women's Institute movement had originated in Canada in 1897 and spread to Wales and England.

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<sup>230</sup> *Perthshire Advertiser*, 3 May 1916, 18 April 1917.

<sup>231</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 29 April 1907.

<sup>232</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 July 1913.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 October 1915.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 November 1914.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 November 1915.

<sup>236</sup> *Stage Year Book 1917*, p. 112.

Suffragette Catherine Blair (1872-1946) of Hoprig Mains Farm near Gladsmuir, knowing of the isolation of rural women, launched the Scottish version at Longniddry in 1917 with Lady Wemyss as Honorary President. Maybel Benvie was therefore one of the Institute's early speakers, her subject being a sketch of life in Reims and Meaux before the war. She described 'the customs of the people, their economy, markets, the cathedrals, Sunday Observances, the champagne cellars etc and the way the inhabitants had lived during the war'.<sup>237</sup> In 1920, however, the newspaper advertisements for St Denis, Boarding and Day School for Girls announced the Principal as Miss Benvie (Hons MA) successor to Miss Bourdass. Over the next few years Miss Benvie instituted some changes.

The girls now wore navy-blue gym tunics with a girdle in the school colours and navy blouses with white stripes, pique collar and tie and a navy jersey with green and white bands on the cuffs and pockets. Special protective green sleeves had to be put on for desk work. Any girl who lost five marks from her conduct sheet in a week reported to Miss Benvie's study on the Friday. Maybel Benvie like Sarah Mair, believed in education in its broadest interpretation and emphasised good manners, suitable table conversation, consideration for others and courtesy. As the subject for the school bookplate which Miss Molyneaux designed in 1922, she suggested an open door and a sea with a ship representing the barque of life. Given her background it is not surprising that school plays became a regular feature; and at the end of term she held a 'drawing-room' when each class had to prepare a programme with every girl performing a recitation or piano piece. A press report of the 15th annual 'At Home' of the Edinburgh Centre of the Scoto-Italian Society held in the Royal Arch Halls in November 1934 noted the presence of Miss Benvie who supervised an attractive programme of dramatic and musical items by her talented pupils.<sup>238</sup>



Entrance Hall with School Motto



Classroom

Courtesy of St Denis and Cranley Association

<sup>237</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 January 1919.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 November 1934.

In 1924 an advertisement in the *Scotsman* announced another innovation – ‘A Junior House will be opened after Easter at 10 Drumsheugh Gardens’.<sup>239</sup> This development then enabled the use of the strapline ‘Education from Kindergarten to University’ in later press notices. Miss Benvie chose the name ‘St Joan’ for the new Junior School as St Joan had fought under the banner of St Denis. The Kindergarten Class admitted boys. Maybel visited the Junior School every day and read a Bible story to the pupils. Prayers were also said each morning in both schools and the boarders worshipped at St Cuthbert’s. Another ritual took the form of the ringing of a large gong in the front hall of 21 Chester Street to indicate the end of the lesson period. The ‘Gong Monitor’ had responsibility for this and as she had to apply a certain technique to produce the necessary crescendo required for those in the classrooms on the upper floors to hear the signal, this skill passed from one Gong Monitor to another. When a few of the St Denis ‘Old Girls’ who had been pupils in 21 Chester Street visited the building in 2002 they reminisced that ‘fire practice’ had consisted of being lowered by rope from an upper window down the outside of the house! They also remembered going out of a backdoor in the basement to a paved tennis area (now the Walker Garden) to play and where meetings of the 59th City of Edinburgh Girl Guide Company took place in summer.

In 1929 Miss Benvie organised the school into ‘houses’ – Arden, Athens, Belmont and Elsinore – under a house mistress and house captain and the girls in the sixth form elected a Head Girl. The last pupil to be Head Girl in the 21 Chester Street school recalled many years later that as a child she had not been robust and had been taught by a governess. When the governess left, the girl’s parents faced the dilemma of what to do about her education. They happened to be staying at Dunblane Hydro at the same time as Miss Benvie and her father and therefore asked her advice. ‘Send her to me’ was the answer – and they did. Until 1932 St Denis remained as a private school under the ownership of the headmistress who was solely responsible for the financial management. At this point the institution moved to premises vacated by St Bride’s School in Ettrick Road. Like St George’s many years before, St Denis became incorporated as a private company with a Board of Governors known as the School Council the members of which were shareholders who took over the business management. Miss Benvie remained as Principal until her retirement in 1950.

Maybel Benvie’s duties as Principal do not seem to have inhibited her other interests for in February 1924 she presented the second in a series of illustrated lectures in the school hall of Donaldson’s Hospital. On this occasion she spoke on ‘A Trip to New Mexico and the Grand Canyon’.<sup>240</sup> This gives rise to the speculation that at some point, possibly in 1919, she visited her brother, George William Rodney Benvie who had settled in New Mexico. Ten years later, however, at a meeting of the Edinburgh Natural History Society held in the Geography Rooms Synod Hall, Miss Benvie gave an illustrated address on ‘A visit to New Mexico by way of Canada and

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 19 March 1924.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 11 February 1924.

the Grand Canyon of the Colorado'.<sup>241</sup> In this lecture she told of a journey from the Straits of Belle Isle to the borders of Mexico. Quebec was depicted as 'a bit of old France in the heart of British Canada thus showing the genius of the British people for governing an alien people with friendliness'.<sup>242</sup> Her lecture included descriptions of Niagara, Grand Canyon, New Mexico, a portion of the country known as the 'journey of death' and a visit to Elephant Butte Reservoir in the upper reaches of Rio Grande. This may have been the same expedition that she talked about in 1924 or a second. Certainly her brother-in-law came from Toronto and he and Bertha had been present at the funeral of the Rev. Dr Andrew Benvie in August 1930.<sup>243</sup> Whatever the case it was clearly an adventurous undertaking and she was still talking about it in 1940 when:

At the monthly meeting of the Coldstream Women's Rural Institute a delightful talk entitled 'Though the Grand Canyon to New Mexico' was given by Miss Benvie Principal of St Denis High School for Girls which is at present evacuated to Swinton House.<sup>244</sup>

Given her training and performance experience it is not surprising that Maybel Benvie belonged to the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse. At a meeting in Edinburgh on 27 November 1923 those present who included the Right Rev. the Bishop of Edinburgh and Professor Darroch, resolved to form this Association under the presidency of John Masefield, future Poet Laureate.<sup>245</sup> After a public meeting in the following January, numbers of Scottish branches were established including one in Edinburgh in March 1924. Maybel Benvie would have enthusiastically embraced the objects of the Association, namely:

to further the use and appreciation of spoken verse and generally to foster the sense of beauty, rhythm and fitness of the spoken word in verse. To provide, or assist in providing for special education and instruction with the above objects and in particular to promote the teaching of fine speech as part of education.<sup>246</sup>

There is no record of when she joined but she performed at the first members' recital of the session of 1928-9 given in the Scottish Geographical Society Rooms Synod Hall on 4 November 1928.<sup>247</sup> The syllabus for the 1936-7 session of the Edinburgh Branch shows Miss Benvie as a Committee member. The speakers for that year included Mr C. Day Lewis reading a selection of his own poems in the New Gallery Shandwick Place.<sup>248</sup> The Second World War caused a lull in activities but in a post war revival the Edinburgh branch mustered 140 members. Miss Benvie became a member of the General Council of the Association in 1948.

Her love of Shakespeare was reflected in her membership of the Edinburgh Branch of the British Empire Shakespeare Society in which Professor Saintsbury had

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 29 November 1934.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 9 August 1930.

<sup>244</sup> *Berwickshire News*, 27 February 1940. Like other schools St Denis School was evacuated to the country following the outbreak of war.

<sup>245</sup> NLS, Acc.3435/1, *Minutes of the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse, 27 November-9 October 1930*.

<sup>246</sup> NLS, Acc.3435/2, *Constitution of the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse*.

<sup>247</sup> *Scotsman*, 4 November 1928.

<sup>248</sup> NLS, Acc.3435/2.

taken a leading role. Founded in London in 1901 by Greta Morritt with Sir Henry Irving as first President, the British Empire Shakespeare Society promoted Shakespeare's works throughout the Empire by co-ordinating reading circles, dramatic readings, and costume recitals; and by encouraging the study of Shakespeare through annual awards of prizes for the best reading, recitation, acted scene or essay on Shakespeare. Open to both adults and children, a second objective actively exemplified by Miss Benvie's school activities, was 'to help the rising generation not only to study Shakespeare's works, but to love them'.<sup>249</sup> Putting the aims of the Society into practice Miss Benvie, Edinburgh gave 'a lantern lecture on 'The Merchant of Venice' at an open meeting of Tayport Women's Citizens held last night in the Masonic Hall'.<sup>250</sup> Maybel Benvie therefore had a practical enthusiasm for Shakespeare which Sarah Mair shared but the two women had another interest in common – the playing of chess.

Maybel may have inherited her love of chess from her father who gave a brief history of the game in Scotland when he opened the new rooms of the Edinburgh Chess Club at 130 George Street on 13 November 1912.<sup>251</sup> Miss Benvie did not join the Edinburgh Ladies' Chess Club presided over by Sarah Mair until 14 May 1920, her address being given as 18 Chalmers Street.<sup>252</sup> On 19 March 1924 the Minutes recorded that Miss Benvie should be asked to pay a half subscription of 10s 6d as she had been unable to use the club at all during the year. By 28 October 1927, however, she had become a life member of the club and over the next years she played in numbers of club and league matches. She was elected to the Committee in 1936, a post she relinquished during the war years but in April 1945 she took on the role of Vice-President followed by that of President in 1946. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Scottish Chess Association from which she retired in 1950. When the members of the Ladies Chess Club celebrated their 50th anniversary in October 1954, Miss Benvie the President in calling for new members urged that chess was a game to begin young.

Believe me you do not have to be very intellectual, but only have to have a power of concentration and silent courtesy combined with some knowledge of the moves.<sup>253</sup>

She said they never had two games alike and 'save for the Glasgow Ladies' Chess Club this was the only chess club composed of women'; and that 'many housewives found the game an ideal way to relax'.<sup>254</sup> By 1961 Miss Benvie 'for personal reasons' resigned from acting as match captain and she chaired her last committee meeting on 9 April 1962.<sup>255</sup> Members attending the Annual General meeting on 26 April 1965 heard a moving tribute to Miss Benvie who had received a piece of the 60th birthday cake in her home which she was unable to leave to attend the celebratory tea.

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<sup>249</sup> Katherine Cockin (ed.), *Ellen Terry, Spheres of Influence* (London, 2015), p. 76.

<sup>250</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 7 January 1936. The *Scotsman* recorded her presence at an At Home of the Society in the North British Station Hotel on 4 December 1936.

<sup>251</sup> *Scotsman*, 14 November 1912.

<sup>252</sup> ECL, YGV1453[C65808], *Minutes of the Edinburgh Ladies Chess Club*, 14 May, 26 October 1920.

<sup>253</sup> *Scotsman*, 19 October 1954.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> ECL, YGV14453[C65807], *Minutes*.

Maybel Benvie of 2 Morningside Gardens died in an Edinburgh nursing home in April 1965. In describing her character her obituary in the *Scotsman* stated:

there was never anything stereotyped or dryly academic about her teaching. With her wide field of interests, her immense knowledge and her keen sense of the dramatic, she could awaken interest even in the dullest subject; but above all she aroused in her pupils a deep and lasting appreciation of literature and for those who read Shakespeare with her, these plays will remain a joy for all time. She will be remembered even more for her outstanding personal qualities – her unfailing cheerfulness and courage, her great-hearted kindness and tolerance and her never failing faith in goodness.<sup>256</sup>



Miss Benvie  
Courtesy of St Denis and Cranley Association

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<sup>256</sup> *Scotsman*, April 1965.

## Elsie Maud Inglis

16 August 1864 – 26 November 1917

8 Walker Street



Eva Shaw McLaren, *Elsie Inglis the Woman with the Torch*

In December 2014 the British Embassy in Belgrade partnered with the Serbia Post to issue a series of stamps commemorating British Heroines of World War I. The women included Dr Elsie Inglis. 'What she had done in Serbia and what she had done for Serbia, is part of their history now' – a history that had passed into song and commemoration before her death.<sup>1</sup> In December 1917 Father Nicolai Velmerovic of Belgrave wrote:

Dr Elsie Inglis was one of the noblest warriors for the good of humanity. She has certainly won this war. Wherever she came, victory came with her. In her readiness to endure hardship and make self-sacrifice, we in Serbia saw the warrant of Serbia's victory. I was present once when a lady asked her what she thought about the issue of war. She looked at her fixedly and said smilingly, 'We are already victors if we have done our extremist'. I understood her very well. There will be at the end of this war two kinds of people – the victorious and the defeated. Those who have done their extremist will be victorious, even if their country should be conquered. And others will be defeated even if their country should win. Dr Elsie Inglis, the pride of the British womanhood, has been victorious every day during the last three years.<sup>2</sup>

The Serbian experiences, however, constitute only the last chapter of the life of a woman whom the *Aberdeen Journal* called 'the indefatigable Dr Elsie Inglis'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1840 John Inglis began his career in India firstly as an employee of the East India Company and later when the Crown took over the government of the country, as a member of the Indian Civil Service. He married Harriet Thomson in 1846 and the couple by 1856 had a family of five boys and one girl. A separation of

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<sup>1</sup> Elsie M. Butler, interpreter and administrator Scottish Women's Hospitals, quoted in Audrey Fawcett Cahill (ed.), *Between the Lines: Letters and Diaries from Elsie Inglis Russian Unit* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Scotsman*, 24 December 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 May 1914.

around five years occurred when Harriet and the children stayed in England to where they had all travelled in 1858 on furlough, while John had to return to India then in the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny. After 1863 another three children of whom Elsie was the eldest (number seven in the family) were born in India where they remained until 1876 when John took early retirement. Thus many years later the *Southern Reporter* could state that Dr Inglis had had 'special opportunities for knowing her subject' when she lectured to the Boswells and District Women's Liberal Association in February 1901 on the subject of 'British Rule in India'.<sup>4</sup> Two years later Elsie spoke 'in a graphic way' on the same topic to a similar women's group in Dundee describing the way in which the officials governed the country, the raising of taxation and the operation of the civil service which included 'over thirty natives' in posts of responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

After a sojourn of two years in Tasmania John and Harriet Inglis brought their younger children to Edinburgh where they took up residence in 10 Bruntsfield Place. John Inglis believed in educating daughters as well as sons and Elsie attended the Edinburgh Institute for the Education of Young Ladies at 23 Charlotte Square where, according to her first biographer Lady Frances Balfour, she edited a school magazine, the *Edina*. An early reminiscence which gives a clear indication of Elsie's determination in the face of difficulties, relates to the use of the Charlotte Square Gardens for the pupils' outdoor activity. Informed by the school's Directors Messrs Oliphant, Edmonds and Lichtenstein that the admission of pupils to the gardens would only be possible in the unlikely event of the agreement of all the Square's residents, she and a companion visited each neighbour in turn and elicited consent. In September 1882 Elsie arrived in Paris for her post-schooling at Miss Gordon Brown's 'finishing' establishment from where she wrote letters home to her father with whom she had always had a close relationship. After her return to Edinburgh in the summer of 1883 her mother only had months to live for Mrs Inglis succumbed to scarlet fever in January 1885.

Elsie took over housekeeping duties which she hated and the family moved to upper rooms in Melville Street – this is the period of her 'Resolutions' to give up dreaming and getting cross, to being truthful and to devoting her mind more to housework.<sup>6</sup> She played croquet and golf, however, and undertook long walks with her father. In 1887 she joined the Women's Liberal Federation and in 1888 with former school friends, started the 'Six Sincere Students Society' which, like Sarah Mair's Essay Society, grew into a Debating Society arguing on such topics as 'That modern civilisation is a development not a degeneration' and 'That character is formed in a busy life rather than in solitude'; and hearing papers on Henry Drummond's *Ascent of Man* and on the 'Ethics of War'.<sup>7</sup> Although in India the family had attended Anglican services, in Edinburgh they worshipped in Free St George's Church on Sunday mornings and in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in the evening.

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<sup>4</sup> *Southern Reporter*, 21 February 1901.

<sup>5</sup> *Dundee Courier*, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 21 October 1903.

<sup>6</sup> Lady Frances Balfour, *Dr Elsie Inglis* (New York, 1919), p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

After her father's death Elsie gravitated to the Church of Scotland and regularly attended St Giles where she appreciated the teaching and friendship of Dr Wallace Williamson. The custom of prayers before breakfast for servants and visitors alike remained non negotiable throughout.

Life for Elsie Inglis, however, had taken a new direction in 1886 when Sophia Jex-Bake who had returned to Edinburgh in 1878 to 4 Walker Street, announced the opening of her Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women with tuition fees of £40 per annum and clinical training at Leith Hospital. With the support of her father Elsie enrolled in the school as did Jessie MacGregor and sisters Grace and Georgina Cadell. Unfortunately, though unsurprisingly, temperaments clashed as Sophia's authoritarianism and micro-management irritated many of her students and incidents grew out of proportion. One student who failed an examination due to illness, appealed successfully against the decision but was charged with dishonourable conduct by Jex-Blake. Another episode involved Grace and Georgina Caddell who brought an action for damages against the school. Elsie backed the sisters on the grounds that female students had the same rights as men to protest against unfair treatment. As a result Elsie Inglis left the establishment in 1889 and with the assistance of John Inglis and a group of his influential friends, founded the Scottish Association for the Medical Education of Women which opened the Medical College for Women at 30 Chambers Street with lower fees, temporary facilities at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and a list of 18 lecturers on topics such as midwifery, public health, children's diseases, vaccination, insanity and ophthalmology. Within two years the Association had endowed two wards at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary for the teaching of women students.

After studying at the Medical College for 18 months Elsie Inglis departed for Glasgow to undertake hospital training at the Infirmary while lodging at the Young Women's Christian Association. When working in Glasgow she experienced for the first time slum conditions and especially the exploitation of women, their treatment by men and their passive acceptance of this. On 9 February 1891 she wrote to her father:

When I have the vote I shall vote that all men who turn their wives and families out of doors at eleven o'clock at night, especially when the wife is ill shall be horsewhipped. And, if they make the excuse that they were tipsy, I should give them double. They would soon learn to behave themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Her period in Glasgow gave her a love of surgery and a determination to improve the lives of women. She became a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Edinburgh and a Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons Glasgow on 4 August 1892 with her resultant placing on the British Medical Register; but she needed more experience. The third annual meeting of the Scottish Association for the Medical Education of Women noted that:

The appointment of Miss Elsie Inglis to be house surgeon of the New Hospital for Women in London was a matter of congratulations. Miss Inglis and Miss Griffin had gained the first and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

second Pattison prizes in the open competition arranged by the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh.<sup>9</sup>

The hospital had been built in Euston Road in 1890 by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Elsie wrote to her father:

If I don't get into the Infirmary in Edinburgh I mean to build a hospital for myself, like this one. Indeed I don't know that I should not like the hospital to myself better! I'll build it where the Castle Market is at the head of Lady Lawson Street. That would be convenient for all the women in Fountainbridge, and the Grassmarket and Cowgate.<sup>10</sup>

Before this could happen she needed to learn more about midwifery so she left London for the Rotunda Dublin in November 1893. The Rotunda was one of the leading centres for obstetrics and provided greater equality of teaching with mixed classes rather than the separation of men and women practised elsewhere. By this time, however, John Inglis' health had deteriorated and he ruled out further study for his daughter in Paris – but another career opportunity arose. Jessie MacGregor, fellow student from the Jex-Blake school days and supporter of Sophia, wrote to Elsie suggesting a medical partnership in Edinburgh; their previous opposition had not been personal and they had got on well together. Elsie returned to Edinburgh at the beginning of March 1894. Her father died on 13 March – 'I simply cannot imagine life without him'.<sup>11</sup>

Drs MacGregor and Inglis established themselves first in Atholl Place but soon after at 8 Walker Street where they built a substantial practice. Two days after her father's death Elsie had written to her brother Ernest in India:

I wish he could have seen me begin. I said it would be such a joke to see Dr Elsie Inglis set up. Saturday afternoons were to be his and he was to come over in my trap.<sup>12</sup>

Contemporaries testified to her equality of treatment and compassion towards all her patients regardless of their financial and social status. One patient reminisced that people felt better after a visit from Dr Inglis 'though her orders had to be obeyed and no mistake and she would tell you off at once if you did not carry them out'.<sup>13</sup> She frequently refused payment saying, 'Now go and buy a nice chop for yourself'; and often personally paid for hospital treatment for those who could not afford this.<sup>14</sup> In appreciation the residents of Morrison Street raised money to buy their doctor an electric lamp to light her way up dark tenement stairs – hence the title of her sister Eva Shaw McLaren's book, *Elsie Inglis the Woman with the Torch*. She officiated at dispensaries at St Cuthbert's, St Anne's, Morrison Street and the Little Sisters of the Poor where to the Sister Superior, Elsie's facial expression signified 'I mean business'.<sup>15</sup> In the furtherance of her medical education Dr Inglis travelled to

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<sup>9</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 18 January 1893; *Shields Daily Gazette*, 21 December 1892.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in many publications including Leah Leneman, *Elsie Inglis* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 94. Elsie hired a Victoria carriage from John Croall, Castle Terrace to transport her around Edinburgh. The hood folded back thus giving maximum fresh air which she advocated for health.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Balfour, p. 139.

Germany and Vienna to study the practices of the clinics there and on 13 April 1899 the *Scotsman* published her name among those who had passed the second professional examination for the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery (MBCM) from the University of Edinburgh. Appointed a lecturer in Gynaecology at the Medical College for Women, she formed the Medical Women's Club for which she acted as secretary, usually holding the meetings in 8 Walker Street. She served also as Honorary Secretary of the Muir Hall of Residence for women studying medicine, founded in 1898 at 12 George Square by Lady Muir whose husband had been a friend of John Inglis. As her sister Eva Shaw McLaren wrote after her death - 'There was no stagnation about Elsie Inglis'.<sup>16</sup>

She still yearned for hospital work and on behalf of the Medical Women's Club, wrote to the Committee of the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children founded by Sophia Jex-Blake and chaired by Sarah Mair, offering to raise half of the money required for the proposed building works in return for the Club being given 50% representation on the Hospital's Committees. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Edinburgh Hospital chaired by Miss Mair on 18 March 1899, discussion took place over two letters from Miss Inglis LRCPS during which it was declared to be:

quite impossible to grant their request that half the Committee should be nominated by an outside body who had hitherto done nothing for the Hospital but that it might be desirable that a Conference should take place as requested.<sup>17</sup>

The meeting proposed for 22 March at 5 Chester Street does not seem to have taken place as the Committee received another letter from Miss Inglis with similar proposals to which they instructed a reply to be written closing the correspondence. However it was thought desirable that Miss Mair, Miss Macpherson LRCPS and Dr Venters should take any future opportunity of an informal meeting with some members of the Medical Women's Club at which an understanding might be reached but it was 'to be clearly understood' that no medical women 'other than the present or past staff of the hospital' should be eligible for election to the Executive Committee.<sup>18</sup> Elsie had indicated the Club's intention of establishing a Woman's Hospital in Edinburgh but believed that it would be better to join forces than to have separate institutions. The Committee subsequently offered two seats on the Committee to the Medical Women's Club and in a letter to the Hospital Committee Dr Inglis submitted a list of nominees from whom to choose. 'It was remitted to Miss Mair to see Dr Inglis as to the election of Mrs Geddes and Mrs Haldane'.<sup>19</sup> Elsie had in fact already set about soliciting support and funds from friends, family and medical women for another hospital and had secured through the good offices of Dr Hugh Barbour, the rent-free lease of 11 George Square. Opened in November 1899 the George Square Hospital contained seven beds – four in a ward at 2s 6d per week

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<sup>16</sup> Eva Shaw McLaren, *Elsie Inglis the Woman with the Torch* (London, 1920), p. ix.

<sup>17</sup> LHSA, LHB8 1/2, *Minutes of the Edinburgh Hospital Executive Committee*, vol. 2, 18 March 1899.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 27 March 1899.

<sup>19</sup> LHSA, LHB8/1/3, *Minutes*, vol. 3, 19 July 1899.

and three private rooms at one guinea weekly – and admitted women only. The Committee included Drs MacGregor and Cadell.

The end of the property lease marked the beginning of a new venture as, on 12 January 1904 the 'Hospice' opened at 219 High Street. The *Dundee Evening Post* informed readers that:

The work of women doctors receives encouragement on all hands and the latest addition to the many institutions in Edinburgh is peculiarly interesting from a woman's point of view. A committee of enthusiastic women alive to the needs of their sisters in the city, have organised a hospital which is likely to do valuable service.<sup>20</sup>

The formal opening by Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson took place in West St Giles' Hall where a large company of ladies and gentlemen heard the report describing the reasons for the new venture. It had been felt that:

the Home would be of greater benefit to poorer patients if it were placed more within their reach – that it was in one of the poorer districts and that its usefulness would be greatly increased by its development of an out-door maternity department and also a gynaecological dispensary.<sup>21</sup>

The building in the High Street, formerly the Dunedin Temperance Hotel, had been bought by the Committee for £1700 with a further £300-£400 spent on alterations and furnishings. An appeal to the public for money to clear the debt incurred and for yearly subscriptions to fund the work was necessary. Women desiring to be attended by women doctors would be received at rates varying from 5s to 30s weekly. The new premises occupied three flats containing two wards and a large number of private rooms.

The second floor is devoted to the nursing department and the operating room which is quite modern in its equipment and the lower flat is occupied chiefly by the administrative department.<sup>22</sup>



219 High Street in *Elsie Inglis the Woman with the Torch*

<sup>20</sup> *Dundee Evening Post*, 13 January 1904.

<sup>21</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 January 1904.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Working alongside Elsie were Dr Alice Hutchison as second in command, Dr Grace Cadell and Dr Beatrice Russell. 'To those of her friends who knew her Edinburgh life intimately, Elsie Inglis's love of The Hospice was the love of a mother for her child'.<sup>23</sup> As Sarah Mair remembered after her death:

This little Hospice lay very near to the heart of its founder – she loved it – and with her always sensitive realisation of the needs of the future, she was convinced that this was a bit of work on the right lines for recognition in years to come....She saw in it a possible future that might effect much, not only for its patients but for generations of medical women.<sup>24</sup>

Marie Agnes Davies, a probationer at the Hospice from 1906-8 wrote:

The hospital was very poor and equipment very expensive so great economy had to be exercised in every department but Dr Inglis made sure that the patients had the best that the money could run to....(she was) exacting as to details and was severe about careless mistakes but so ready with praise and encouragement for good work done. We were afraid of her but also loved her for her kindness and humanity.<sup>25</sup>

According to Davies, Elsie disapproved of the customary hospital practice of waking patients early in the morning in order to get through the ward work so none were disturbed before 6.00 am and a cup of tea took precedence over everything else.

In April 1905 Dr MacGregor departed for America for family reasons but died there in the following year. Elsie continued with the practice and the Edinburgh Hospital offered her Jessie Macgregor's post as attending medical officer-surgeon. This triggered the resignation of Sophia Jex-Blake from the Consulting staff of which she had remained a member following her removal to London in 1899. Nonetheless the Executive Committee appointed Elsie and urged Sophia to reconsider her decision but she held firm and also refused to become an Honorary Vice-President.<sup>26</sup> From 1905, therefore, at the Hospice, the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children and for the patients of her own practice Dr Inglis maintained 'the provision of skilled medical and surgical attendance by women doctors for such suffering women as desire it'.<sup>27</sup> When the Hospital senior consultant retired Elsie took her place and brought in Dr Cadell to work with, rather than under her. These were years of much fund-raising by a range of volunteers to support the ongoing need for money. Elsie's sister Amy Simson had presented the report at the opening of the Hospice. Her nieces Evelyn and May Simson attended St George's School in the 1890s and unsurprisingly considering the founders of the school, the St George's girls and the Old Girls Association carried out a number of money-raising ventures over the years to support the Edinburgh Hospital such as the provision of goods for a sale in the Hospital grounds in May 1905. In 1908 Dr Inglis began lecturing in gynaecology to extra-mural classes at Edinburgh University and to the newly formed Voluntary Health Visitors Association. At the same time the Hospice introduced the first infant milk depot in Edinburgh and a systematic inspection of babies.

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<sup>23</sup> Balfour, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Leneman, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> LHSA, LHB8/1/3, *Minutes*, 19 July, 2 August, 8 November 1905.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., LBH7/7/27, *27th Annual Report of the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children*, 1905-6.

In October 1909, however, Elsie sent a letter of resignation to the Executive Committee of the Edinburgh Hospital on a matter of principle. A former patient had made a claim for damages against the Hospital and in December 1908 the Executive had appointed Messrs Blair and Cadell of 19 Ainslie Place to act on behalf of the Institution. When the Sheriff Substitute declared adversely against the Hospital Miss Mair informed the Executive on 20 October 1909 of the advice of their Law Agent not to appeal against the decision. Elsie who had not been involved personally in the affair felt the Court judgement to be wrong and detrimental to the good name of the Hospital; that the Executive had failed to support its staff and that there should have been an appeal. The Committee replied in writing expressing regret and a desire for her to reconsider and Executive member Margaret Houldsworth suggested a compromise. In the event the situation reached a resolution through Miss Houldsworth's death soon after, for she left a sum of £3000 'for the advantage of medical women in the pursuit of Gynaecology and Midwifery'.<sup>28</sup> At a meeting of the Medical Women of Edinburgh held at 5 Chester Street the members supported the resolution that an amalgamation between the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children and the Hospice 'would best fulfil the conditions and terms of the Bequest'.<sup>29</sup> Sarah Mair recommended that this course of action be undertaken and she subsequently chaired the Committee appointed to confer with the Hospice with the result that the Edinburgh Hospital at Bruntsfield became the centre for Medicine, Surgery and Gynaecology with Midwifery and Infant work centred on the Hospice and with the continuation of the two out-patient departments. Consequently the Executive Committee noted the need for altering and extending the Bruntsfield building at a cost of around £6000. Elsie Inglis and Sarah Mair were among the signatories to a letter of 5 May 1910 empowering the signing of the relevant contracts. When Queen Mary opened the new wing on 18 July 1911, Dr Elsie Inglis wearing her 'academic robes over a gown of pale grey crepe de chine', met her in the new theatre and anaesthetic room which the Queen toured 'paying special attention to the new sterilising apparatus and all the recent additions to the equipment of this department'.<sup>30</sup>

Writing after her death Dr Wallace Williamson of St. Giles Cathedral felt that Elsie's real vocation had been to work among the suffering poor.

She was seen at her best in hospice and dispensary, and in homes where poverty added keenness to pain. There she gave herself without reserve. Questions of professional rivalry or status of women slipped away in her large sympathy and helpfulness. Like a truly 'good physician,' she gave them from her own courage an uplift of spirit even more valuable than physical cure. She understood them and was their friend. To her they were not merely patients, but fellow-women. It was one of her great rewards that the poor folk to whom she gave of her best rose to her faith in them, whatever their privations or temptations. Her relations with them were remote from mere routine, and so distinctively human and real that her name is everywhere spoken with the note of personal loss.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., LHB8/1/3, *Minutes*, 15 December 1909.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Dundee Courier, Scotsman*, 19 July 1911.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in McLaren, pp. 15-16.



Canongate families, Edinburgh Museums and Galleries

It is not surprising therefore to find Dr Inglis involved in organisations which tried to improve the health and living conditions of the poorer residents of the city and in particular women and children. As a member of the Social and Sanitary Society of Edinburgh, on 11 January 1898 she and others of the group presented a petition to the Corporation of Edinburgh the principle clauses of which urged the registration of a separate lodging house for women only and the appointment of one or more women as sanitary inspectors. Out of 40 registered lodging houses none provided for women only; all sanitary inspectors being men.<sup>32</sup> The petition was remitted to the consideration of the Public Health Committee. Later in the year Dr Inglis presented a paper on 'Women as Sanitary Workers' at the Annual Congress of the Sanitary Association held at Rothesay in September; and at a meeting of Women Workers in Drumsheugh Hall on 23 October 1900 she endorsed the necessity of appointing women as sanitary inspectors. When she addressed the 15th annual meeting of the Social and Sanitary Society of Edinburgh on 29 November 1899 she gave a brief account of the work of the Society and its methods, declaring that they had no desire to supersede the authorities. 'They tried to teach people thrift, cleanliness and industry'.<sup>33</sup> Dr Inglis was still a member in 1912 when she addressed a meeting on 'Infantile Mortality and Voluntary Health Visitors'. The Voluntary Health Visitors Association had been set up in Edinburgh in 1908 following the example of London and other parts of the country. In her paper she:

drew attention to the fact that the enormous infantile death rate in all European countries concerned mainly the infants in towns during the first three years of life. To find a really low death rate it was necessary to go to the Australasian colonies. She gave in detail some of the causes of the high death rate more especially the employment of women outside of their own homes. The chief factor in the situation after general sanitary improvements seemed the ignorance of the mothers which could be best combated by Voluntary Health Visitor Associations. She gave a detailed account of St Pancras School for Mothers and of the

<sup>32</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10, 11 January 1898.

<sup>33</sup> *Scotsman*, 30 November 1900.

Edinburgh Voluntary Health Visitors Association which she described as one of the most perfect organisations in the country.<sup>34</sup>

Alongside this work Elsie supported Chalmers House for Working Girls, Dr Barnardo's Homes and the Falconer Rescue Home St John's Hill. In December 1909 she joined the Committee of the Edinburgh Association for Boarding Homes for Widowers' Children, commenting that in her work among the poor people of Edinburgh she came across cases where it seemed so difficult to provide for the poor motherless children. 'However they looked at the question of the position of women there was no doubt that woman was the home-maker'.<sup>35</sup> When the Scottish Circle of the 'Children Salon' movement held its first meeting in the North British Hotel on 30 March 1914 Dr Inglis proposed the vote of thanks, having a personal interest as the members had committed to raising money to found a cot in the Edinburgh Hospital for Women and Children. At the same time she served as a member of the general committee for the Child Study Society Annual Conference.

Elsie also carried out a pioneering piece of social research into nutrition with Doctors Noel Paton and J. Crawford Dunlop – *A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh carried out under the auspices of the Town Council of the City of Edinburgh*. The Town Council granted £50 towards the expenses of the investigations and Elsie undertook the selection of the families, the study of the social conditions and the examination of the diets. She organised and superintended a staff of workers for the most part medical students who under her direction, daily visited the families during the period of the study, took all necessary notes, and weighed the food. In addition she recruited a corps of volunteers including her sister and niece to record relevant observations about the households studied. Some of the families whom they approached refused to take part. One husband advised his wife to have 'nothing to do with they folk'.<sup>36</sup>

Under the circumstances Mrs. O. deserves great credit for allowing the study to be carried on, and for helping so willingly as she did. She does not know what wage her husband gets. During the week of the Study she fed a household of six on 9s.1d, or rather less than 3d. a head a- day. The household consists of the father, an Irishman, age unknown, the mother also Irish, age twenty-seven, and four children, ages ten, six, three, and two. The whole family are pale and thin, and the bigger children are not well developed. The house has two rooms. It is dirty and ill-kept. The table is always littered with crumbs, and tea, and dirty crockery, and the furniture consists of table, chairs, two boxes, and a large bed. Besides the kitchen there is an inner room, and this probably would be found overcrowded with lodgers at night. The rent per annum is £7 18s, paid quarterly. There is no object in calculating this by the week, for it is quite certain that no effort whatever is made to meet it in advance. No information could be got about taxes, which are probably remitted on the score of poverty. One is not surprised to learn that they subscribe to no sick society. To a funeral society they pay 1s. a week. The meals are irregular. The children drink tea five or six times a day, and get a piece of bread whenever they ask for it. The mother owns no living on tea and potatoes, but the father has his plate of butcher meat when he comes home in the evening. Things are bought in small quantities 1 lb. of potatoes, ¼ lb. of tea, 3 eggs, &c. On Saturday some things were bought in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 10 February 1912.

<sup>35</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 December 1909.

<sup>36</sup> N. Paton, E. Crawford Dunlop and E. M. Inglis, *A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh carried out under the auspices of the Town Council of the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1901), p. 17.

larger quantities, for instance, 16 lbs of bread (4 loaves). The stair leading to this house is airy, but neither stairs nor passages could, by an unprejudiced person, be called clean.<sup>37</sup>

In another household where the railway worker father earned £1 2s a week the family comprised the mother and five children ranging in ages from seven years to eight months. The two-roomed house in a good street (rented for £9 paid quarterly) had its own water tap and sink placed in the little dark lobby between the two rooms. The shopping was mainly done at the co-operative store. The father breakfasted at 6.30, and took a packed lunch of four pieces of bread and butter with cheese and a flask of tea. The mother and children ate at 8.30 and had bread, syrup and cocoa for lunch.

Dinner is at 5.30, when the father comes home, and the meal always ends with tea. For supper the children have bread and syrup before they go to bed, and the mother has cocoa and bread and butter later. The father has nothing more after his dinner. The children drink tea and cocoa, and have milk only with their porridge. The baby is on the bottle.<sup>38</sup>

In this family the wife had the management of the weekly wage from which she spent 6d. on tobacco for her husband, giving him 6d. for pocket money out of which he paid 2d. weekly into a sick society. With the weekly 21s. Mrs. X had to feed a family of seven, pay the rent and taxes of £1 0s. 6¾d. 'Notwithstanding the most careful management, ends do not meet in this house'.<sup>39</sup>

When Dr Paton presented the findings of the study to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on 5 November 1900, he stated the main objective of the study as being to ascertain the importance of deficient feeding in the production of imperfect physical development; and whether the average income of a labourer could provide annual nourishment for a family as well as the other necessities of life and also include some recreation. During his lecture he spoke of 'the superiority of porridge over bread as a protein producing food'.<sup>40</sup> The study, largely written by Elsie, advocated the substitution of porridge and milk for some of the bread and tea meals in the labourer's diet which would then be vastly improved and its outstanding faults cured – 'its daily proteid value would be raised from 108 to 120 grammes and its energy value from 3227 calories to 3447 calories'.<sup>41</sup> In drawing conclusions, however:

We have no great hopes that the thriftless, drunken, incapable class will be benefitted by instruction, nor do we think that the well-to-do labouring classes will be amenable to improvements, but our experience has convinced us that the steady, thrifty poor, who feel the difficulty of making both ends meet, would appreciate and would benefit by simple instruction on the rules of dieting... If district visitors and other workers among the poor, could receive some elementary instruction in the principles of dietetics, and could be supplied with simple dietary tables, they might assist in diffusing the knowledge of which so many stand in need.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 6 November 1900.

<sup>41</sup> *Study*, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

Elsie Inglis could wax eloquently on the subject of thrift. In moving a resolution in favour of old age pensions at the annual conference of the Scottish Women's Liberal Federation in April 1900, she admitted the existence of a great deal of improvidence among the working classes but asserted that as one out of every two working men who reached the age of 65 then depended more or less on the parish rates this state of affairs should be tackled. Any scheme which might be adopted, however, 'must encourage thrift' for any system would be useless if it motivated workers to spend all their earnings 'with the view to living on a pension when they were old'.<sup>43</sup> She also maintained that from her knowledge of the working classes she believed that old people did look upon it as hard to be dependent on their offspring and that even when old folks were supported their situation was by no means pleasant. The country should never reject any scheme which had been found necessary 'if it was only a question of money'.<sup>44</sup>

Elsie embraced her father's Liberal politics with the exception of his attitude to Irish Home Rule which she supported and he opposed. She joined the Women's Liberal Federation formed between 1886 and 1887 under Catherine Gladstone. In 1892 the new President Lady Carlisle committed the Federation to supporting the campaign for votes for women, thereby causing a rift and the establishment of a breakaway section, the Women's National Liberal Association. As many of the Federation's members also belonged to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies they disliked the negative attitude of the Liberal leadership to the suffrage campaign. Elsie acted as Vice-President of the Central Edinburgh Women's Liberal Association for 16 years. Her 'hands-on' experiences gained during her medical training convinced her that only through achieving the right to vote could the lot of women be improved. She wrote to her father:

There is no question among women who have to work for themselves about wanting the suffrage. It is the women who are safe and sound in their own drawing-rooms who don't see what on earth they want it for.<sup>45</sup>

Dr Inglis made her views plain in her address to a meeting of the Berwickshire Women's Liberal Association on 21 November 1894 when she likened the position which women occupied in politics to 'little girls who were not yet "out" but watched the ball from behind the curtains. (Laughter)'. This position:

was simply a huge joke now and it was rapidly developing into a rather ridiculous one, and especially ridiculous for the Liberal party – the party which had enfranchised everything that wore trousers and had suddenly come to a stop. (Laughter).<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless she continued to support the Liberals, telling a social meeting of Galashiels Women's Liberal Association that she could not see why women should be anything else than Liberals. 'The Liberal party was the party of romance, high enterprise and of progress'; and at a meeting of women students at St Andrews she

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<sup>43</sup> *Scotsman*, 12 April 1900.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Balfour, p. 101.

<sup>46</sup> *Scotsman*, 22 November 1894.

declared that she 'could not understand how any young person could be a Conservative'.<sup>47</sup>

While she continued to address Liberal meetings throughout the 1890s, as a member of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage, increasingly Elsie Inglis campaigned for women's suffrage, having first spoken on the subject while working in London. At a women's suffrage meeting held on 12 November 1896 attended by Sarah Mair and Margaret Houldsworth, she heard Louisa Stevenson reiterate that the Society had nothing whatsoever to do with party politics, that every shade of political opinion was represented on the Committee and that they were absolutely unanimous in their demand for such legislation as should entitle every qualified woman 'were she Conservative, Liberal or Radical' to have 'her name added to the list of Parliamentary voters'.<sup>48</sup> Elsie herself at a meeting of the Edinburgh Women's Liberal Association in February 1897 expressed congratulations at the passing of the second reading of the Women's Suffrage Bill; and in April spoke to the Perth Women's Liberal Association on 'Women's Duty as Citizens'.<sup>49</sup> With regard to the internal politics of the Liberal party Dr Inglis joined the breakaway Liberal League under Lord Rosebery in 1902 in protest against the Boer War as she felt the Boers should have their freedom, although being an Imperialist she did not envisage the breakup of the British Empire. Her friend Annie Wilson said of her that she was 'an Imperialist in the very best sense and had high ideals for her country and people'.<sup>50</sup>

Elsie urged a meeting of women Liberal League members in October 1902 'to take off their coats and set to work and refuse to be ejected from the Liberal party'.<sup>51</sup> A few days later she graced the platform at Kirkcaldy for a political address given by Mr Haldane at the invitation of the Kirkcaldy Liberal Committee of the Edinburgh and East of Scotland Liberal League. On 20 October in her capacity as Convenor of the Eastern Section of the Liberal League she heard Lord Rosebery speak at the Empire Palace in Edinburgh. Many Committee meetings took place in the drawing room of 8 Walker Street. Elsie Inglis continued her allegiance to the Liberal party and at the annual meeting of the Edinburgh National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies she protested against any move to refuse support for a Parliamentary candidate if he did not pledge himself to the suffrage cause – 'she would not stay in a society where that political question was to be made a test'.<sup>52</sup> Increasingly, however, she devoted time and energy to the 'Cause' of women's suffrage. In the manuscript of her unpublished novel found after her death Elsie wrote:

I don't think for a moment that the millennium will come in with the vote....But our faces, the faces of the human race, have always been set towards the millennium, haven't they? And this will be one great step towards it. It is always difficult to make a move forward, for it implies criticism of the past, and of the good men and true who have brought the people up to that especial point. However gently the change is made, that element must be there, for there

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<sup>47</sup> *Southern Reporter* 26 Dec 1898; *St Andrews Citizen*, 20 October 1899.

<sup>48</sup> *Scotsman*, 13 November 1896.

<sup>49</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 February 1897; *Dundee Courier*, 26 April 1897.

<sup>50</sup> Balfour, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> *Dundee Evening Post*, 4 October 1902.

<sup>52</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 13 February 1904.

is always a sense of struggle in changing from the old to the new. I do not think we are nearly careful enough to make it quite clear that we do not hold that we women *alone* could have done a bit better—that we are proud of the great work our men have done. We speak only of the mistakes, not of the great achievements; only I do think the mistakes need not have been there if we had worked at it together!<sup>53</sup>

In 1906 Elsie supported Chrystal Macmillan and the group of Edinburgh University women graduates who applied for voting papers in the election of the University's Parliamentary candidate.<sup>54</sup> They argued that the University had no legal right to withhold the ballot from female graduates on the grounds that the 1868 Act specified 'person' rather than 'man'. The case eventually reached the House of Lords who upheld the Lord Ordinary's judgement that person meant man. In January 1909 Scottish women graduates acknowledged the 'energy, patience and ability' with which the Misses Macmillan and Simson had pursued the case to the Upper House and their able manner in pleading, by giving them a lunch in the Edinburgh Women Students Union. Dr Elsie Inglis who presided proposed 'the toast of the Cause' and emphasised that 'women of all sections were at one in this demand' and that 'it was the most important national question of the day'.<sup>55</sup> Elsie thought it so important that a fellow Suffrage worker felt that she had 'never met anyone who seemed to me more absolutely single-minded and single-hearted in her devotion to a cause which appealed to her'.<sup>56</sup>

She was eminently a feminist, and to her feminism she subordinated everything else. No consideration for her health, for her position, for her practice, ever stood in the way of any call that came to her. She was untiring, and that at a time when our cause was not popular everywhere, and when her position as a medical woman might easily have been affected by its unpopularity.... No consideration of herself prevented her complete devotion to her work. I sometimes felt that there was an element of relentlessness in this devotion, which would have allowed her to sacrifice not only other people, but even perhaps considerations which it is not easy to believe ought to be sacrificed.<sup>57</sup>

By this time Dr Inglis had resigned her allegiance to the Liberal party in pursuit of the aims of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. She told a suffrage meeting at Warrender Park School in March 1909 that conditions of life had so altered that women had been forced into public life and work. Women who had the same qualifications as entitled men to vote should not be debarred from the franchise because they were women. All suffrage societies agreed on that although they disagreed on the methods for achieving the vote. The National Society 'did not believe that militant tactics would further the cause they had at heart'.<sup>58</sup> Indeed later that year in the absence of Miss Mair and in her capacity as Vice-President of the Edinburgh Society, Elsie Maud Inglis wrote to the Editor of the *Scotsman* pointing out some

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<sup>53</sup> McLaren, p. 33.

<sup>54</sup> The 1868 Representation of the People Act created two University constituencies – Edinburgh and St Andrews and Glasgow and Aberdeen. Each returned one member to Parliament.

<sup>55</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 12 January 1909; *Scotsman*, 11 January 1909.

<sup>56</sup> McLaren, p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>58</sup> *Scotsman*, 3 March 1909.

errors in the newspaper's criticisms of the Women's Suffrage movement, in that the National Union strongly condemned all acts of violence in political propaganda.

We hope the Press of the country will give every prominence possible to the laborious and unceasing work of the law-abiding many, rather than to the dangerous extravagances of the unbalanced minority.<sup>59</sup>

She might have been tempted to apply that description when subjected to rowdy behaviour some months before at St Andrews where, under the auspices of St Andrews University Women Students Suffrage Society, she along with Miss Conolan from Glasgow and Miss Chrystal Macmillan, addressed an open meeting. They suffered considerable interruption by men students who sang snatches of comic songs, played mouth organs and rang bells before eventually leaving. The meeting, however, passed the resolution that 'The Parliamentary franchise should be given to women on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men.'<sup>60</sup> Soon after at the end of a meeting at Dumfries under the auspices of the Scottish Women's Suffrage Union, she and Chrystal Macmillan experienced more 'spirited heckling'.<sup>61</sup>

Following the formation of the Scottish Federation of Suffrage Societies in 1909 Elsie Inglis became Honorary Secretary with Sarah Mair as President. She recruited workers to organise and support societies all over Scotland.

It was Dr Elsie Inglis who brought me to Scotland to organise suffrage societies in the Highlands. She gave me the full responsibility of one's position and always expected the best...She only saw difficulties to conquer them.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time she personally continued to address meetings up and down the country. Something of the content and style of Elsie Inglis' orations can be gained from newspaper reports of her speech-making in the years leading to the outbreak of war in 1914. In December 1909 she attended the annual business meeting of the Aberdeen Association for Women's Suffrage. In referring to the argument of the anti-suffragists that woman's place was in the home, she reminded members of the five million women who had no homes except such as they made for themselves. Personally she did not think working for one's own to be a hardship. The hardship came in being denied a voice in the government of the country after having built up a position which would have guaranteed this had she been a man. If people who sometimes asked her what good the vote would be to her, considered that 'there was not a single man who had the vote who would give it up' they would realise that 'there was something in the vote'.<sup>63</sup> Elsie provoked laughter and applause when she hoped that the Secretary of the Anti-Suffrage Society would visit Aberdeen as she would probably do what she did in Edinburgh – 'induce by her arguments, a great many people to join the Women's Suffrage Society'.<sup>64</sup> She ended her address by urging more effort in the fight for women's suffrage. 'They must all give up their time

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 30 October 1909.

<sup>60</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 6 March 1909.

<sup>61</sup> *Scotsman*, 25 March 1909.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 112.

<sup>63</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 18 December 1909.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Elsie had debated with Mrs Arthur Somerville of the Anti-Suffrage League in the Freemasons Hall on 30 October 1909.

and their pleasure and a great deal of money too' and those who could not give money 'must make it up by giving personal service'.<sup>65</sup>

When Dr Inglis addressed a meeting at Galashiels on 18 May 1910, she took the line that women wanted the vote as citizens of a great empire the glory of which was as much a matter for women as for any man. 'Freedom', she declared, 'never made a man less manly, or a woman less womanly'.<sup>66</sup> In October at Melrose she spoke of the unfair treatment of women with regard to political power and 'dealt in a pleasing manner' with various topics 'of interest to women which would be improved if women were in possession of the vote'.<sup>67</sup> Elsie used a physiological example to illustrate her points in a speech lasting three quarters of an hour 'without a note of any kind' given at Coldstream on 9 November 1911.<sup>68</sup> Just as a pigeon with a tumour in one part of its brain walked round and round in a circle so when a nation used only one half of its brain 'it was very apt to walk round in a circle too (laughter)'.<sup>69</sup> Women wanted the vote because the forthcoming legislation would affect the social well-being of the country and therefore the whole brain of the country must be used and every point considered or many mistakes would be made. This applied especially to great questions like the drink question and the housing question.

Modern civilisation is a very great thing, and a thing to be proud of and I for one am quite ready to admit that civilisation has been almost entirely the work of the men of the country. But, you know, ladies and gentlemen, there are GREAT BLOTS on that civilisation, great disfigurements on that civilisation: and I can't help thinking that if we had worked at it together we should not have these blots. What we have to do is get rid of them and that is what we want the vote for. I have heard it said that the drink question is insoluble. I don't admit that. If we could bring the whole brain of the country to bear upon it, we could find some solution. We don't do so. We let it slide past, and the result is that men and women are drifting into asylums and filling hospital wards, and the next generation will suffer from the effects of it. No woman had any right to sit still and say the question of the vote did not concern her. The home was woman's duty, but the world was her duty too, and most emphatically, Scotland was her duty.<sup>70</sup>

At Falkirk in March 1912 Dr Inglis declared that in 'our fight for liberty we had never waited until some other nation had shown us the way'; and in a deputation to the Presbytery of Edinburgh said women felt 'they were needed in the life of the country. For one woman who wanted the vote because she wanted to rule there were hundreds and thousands who wanted it because they desired to serve'.<sup>71</sup> Press reports indicate some of the speaking engagements Elsie Inglis undertook in her punishing schedule while at the same time carrying out her medical work. She travelled around the country by rail and road as illustrated by her leaving Coldstream immediately after the meeting in November 1911 to motor to Berwick to catch the 9.30 pm express train. In 1913 Elsie wrote:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> *Southern Reporter*, 19 May 1910.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1910; *Scotsman*, 18 October 1910.

<sup>68</sup> *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 14 November 1911.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Falkirk Herald*, 20 March 1912; *Scotsman*, 29 January 1914.

Unfortunately, I never have time to stay in a place, at one of these meetings, and see people. It would often be so pleasant. This time I arrive in Dollar at 6 p.m. and leave about 8 the next morning. I have to leave by these early trains for my work.<sup>72</sup>

Contemporaries were unanimous that her patients did not suffer but that possibly her own medical career prospects were hindered. In 1913, for example, the year she visited America to study hospitals there, she also attended meetings at St Andrews (3 February), Edinburgh (22 February), Auchterarder (5 March), Partick (7 March), Falkirk (15 March), Hamilton (16 October) and Broxburn (7 November). In January 1914 she spoke at Wormit (24 January) and then at Kelso (12 February) and Kirkcaldy (28 February). This was the period of rallying the supporters of the Cause following the failure of the 1912 Conciliation Bill which would have given the vote to around one million women property owners. At the same time the militant 'suffragettes' intensified their campaign of violence. In March 1912 at Falkirk Dr Inglis 'deplored that one society had broken away and indulged in the campaign of window breaking which was regrettable'.<sup>73</sup> The only effect of that action was 'to furnish an excuse for their half-hearted supporters to withhold their support'.<sup>74</sup>

Elsie had 'an unusual degree of optimism which never failed her'.<sup>75</sup> For her, difficulties never existed and 'were barely so much as thought of in connection with any cause she might have at heart'. Concerning the militants she told the Kelso Women's Suffrage meeting on 11 February 1914 that she did not think that after all, the movement had received any great setback in the country through their foolish actions. On the contrary the movement was advancing by leaps and bounds.

Besides the women who did these things were only a very small minority; in fact there were only some half a dozen women in Scotland who engaged in acts of militancy though they usually gave a different name every time they were arrested. Personally she could not understand why these absurd, regrettable and wicked outrages by extremists should prejudice anyone who gave the subject the consideration it was entitled to against the granting of the vote to women.<sup>76</sup>

A fortnight later she informed the Kirkcaldy Burghs Women's Suffrage Society that membership of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies numbered 51,000 with 470 societies stretching from Shetland to Cornwall. The previous year's income had amounted to £45,000 and 'they spent practically every penny on women's suffrage'.<sup>77</sup> In April Elsie presented to the fourth annual meeting of the Federation the yearly report which noted that in the period of its existence the Federation had grown from 16 to 33 societies, the latest being Auchterarder, Bridge of Weir, Helmsdale, Golspie, Kirkcudbright and Stranraer with an increase in membership from 5513 to 7622 and the enrolment of 3891 'Friends of Women's Suffrage'. By this time Elsie Inglis was a sick woman, having resigned before she went to America, from the dispensary of the Little Sisters of the Poor on the grounds of health and

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<sup>72</sup> McLaren, p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> *Falkirk Herald*, 20 March 1912.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in McLaren, p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> *Southern Reporter*, 12 February 1914.

<sup>77</sup> *Fife Free Press and Kirkcaldy Guardian*, 28 February 1914.

other demands on her time. By the time she returned she had become seriously unwell. Yet the period which made her name so renowned still lay ahead of her.

In 1909 the War Office issued the Scheme for the Organisation of Voluntary Aid whereby the British Red Cross received the remit to provide supplementary aid to the Territorial Forces Medical Service in the event of war. County branches of the Red Cross organised units called voluntary aid detachments – VADs – and trained the members in first aid and nursing. Within twelve months of the scheme's launch, membership had surpassed 6,000. Elsie Inglis actively supported the work of the VADs and became Commandant of the 6th Edinburgh Detachment, her presence being noted on 2 April 1912 at the General Parade of Women's Detachments raised locally by the Scottish Branch of the British Red Cross Society.<sup>78</sup> On the outbreak of war with Germany in 1914 she worked hard at training the volunteers, using the main rooms of 8 Walker Street as a depot for bandage rolling and packaging of dressings. This, of course, was not enough. As Sarah Mair commented:

To her it seemed wicked that women with the power to wield the surgeon's knife in the mitigation of suffering and with knowledge to diagnose and cure, should be withheld from serving the sick and wounded.<sup>79</sup>

Consequently Elsie wrote to Louisa G. Anderson, daughter of Elizabeth, offering her assistance for the field hospital unit Anderson had formed but by this time the posts had been filled.<sup>80</sup> She took herself off to the Royal Army Medical Corps representative at Edinburgh Castle and received the now legendary advice to go home and sit still. At this point the War Office decreed women's work to be with women and children and that men would not like to be treated by female doctors.

On 12 August Dr Inglis made her proposal to the Federation Committee that it should give organised help to Red Cross work. Sarah Mair remembered vividly:

the first suggestion that passed before us on the subject of directing the energies of our suffrage societies to the starting of a hospital. Let us gather a few hundred pounds and appeal to the public, was the decision of our ever courageous Dr Elsie and from that moment she never swerved from her purpose. Some of us gasped when she announced that the sum of £50,000 must speedily be advertised for. Some timid souls advised the naming of a smaller amount as our goal. With unerring perception, our leader refused to lower the standard.<sup>81</sup>

Elsie had a new cause to absorb her. She argued that the possibility of directly serving the country would provide opportunities for medical women and demonstrate the usefulness of women, thereby furthering their quest for the vote. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies agreed to cooperate. Being rebuffed by the War Office, Dr Inglis, Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Federation wrote to the Embassies of Belgium, France and Russia:

A number of Scottish Women have it in their minds to fit out a Red Cross Hospital for use to the seat of war, and to offer it to one of the Governments involved in the war. Is it possible you could supply us with some general information as to the position with regard to the Red

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<sup>78</sup> *Scotsman.*, 3 April 1912.

<sup>79</sup> Balfour, p. 155.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson and Dr Flora Murray using private subscriptions equipped a surgical hospital staffed entirely by women which served in Paris with huge success thereby causing the War Office to revise its policy of barring women from working at the front.

<sup>81</sup> Balfour, p. 158.

Cross Service in connection with the troops on the Continent? The scheme is only in its initial stages, but we should be very glad to know whether your Government is already more than sufficiently equipped in connection with its hospital service.<sup>82</sup>

The French and Belgians accepted the offer, quickly followed by the Serbians. On 9 October Elsie wrote from 8 Walker Street to Mrs Fawcett President of the National Union informing her of the urgency of despatching expert women doctors, nurses and ambulance workers to wherever they were required and advising her that this need would increase and was too great 'to allow any haggling about who does the work'.<sup>83</sup> She continued:

If we have a thoroughly good organisation here, we can send out more and more units, or strengthen those already out. We can add motor ambulances, organise rest stations on the lines of communication. It will depend on how well we are supplied with funds and brains at our base....From the first we must make it clear that our hospitals are as well-equipped and well-manned as any in the field, more economical (easy!) and thoroughly efficient. I cannot think of anything more calculated to bring home to men the fact that women *can* help intelligently in any kind of work. So much of our work is done where they cannot see it. They'll see every bit of this....The money is the thing now. It must not be wasted, but we must have lots....I can think of nothing except these 'Units' just now! And when one hears of the awful need, one can hardly sit still till they are ready.<sup>84</sup>

Mrs Fawcett agreed that Elsie could speak at a meeting at the Kingsway Hall in London on 20 October on what women could do to help in the war. *The Common Cause*, press organ of the NUWSS announced that Dr Inglis had appealed for help – 'Let us give it at once and with enthusiasm. We could not serve our country better'.<sup>85</sup>

Dr Inglis in her address outlined the scheme whereby each unit would have four women doctors, ten trained nurses, six dressers, senior women medical students, two cooks, an administrator and a clerk. Using existing buildings made available by the Allies, the cost of equipping each hospital of 100 beds including salaries for six months would be £1000.<sup>86</sup> She appealed to the public for financial support. On her return to Scotland Elsie formed the Scottish Women's Hospitals Committee with Sarah Mair as President, Mrs James T. Hunter of Glasgow as Chair, Mrs Laurie of Glasgow as Honorary Treasurer and herself as Honorary Secretary. The suffrage societies in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Wales also established committees. On 28 October the *Scotsman* reported that an appeal to the residents in Trinity for funds to equip a bed 'in the British Red Cross Hospital (Scottish branch) had raised £115 7s 6d less 10s 6d expenses'; and that people in Newington had raised £50 in six days.<sup>87</sup> Contributions in kind of blankets, sheets, shirts, pyjamas and other articles were to be sent to Dr Inglis at the Federation Offices, 2 St Andrew Square and a special plea had been made for X-ray equipment. *The Common Cause* announced in its edition of 30 October that Dr Inglis 'has got her first £1000' and wants 'a yacht to take our first hospital unit to Salonika'.

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<sup>82</sup> Eva Shaw McLaren, *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals* (London, 1919), p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Balfour, p. 160.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>85</sup> *The Common Cause*, 9 October 1915.

<sup>86</sup> *Scotsman*, 21 October 1914.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 October 1914.

Federation organisers travelled round Scotland in a quest for money and by 21 November the amount raised had reached £5404, rising to £6507 in December. Dr Alice Hutchison and ten nurses arrived in Calais in November to work with the Belgian surgeon, Dr de Page in supporting the Belgian army; and by the end of the month the first fully equipped Unit, under Miss Ivens of Liverpool established a base at the Abbey of Royaumont which operated throughout the war under the direction of the French Red Cross. Dr Eleanor Soltau meanwhile took a hospital unit to Serbia. Elsie spoke to members of the Edinburgh Franchise Club in 9 Melville Street in January 1915. She explained the scheme, emphasizing the particularly serious plight of Serbia and described the tremendous response to the appeals for support.

Whatever they wanted seemed to simply flow into the office. On one occasion Miss Mair appealed through the *Scotsman* for 200 pyjama suits for the services and within three days she got 500. (Laughter and applause).<sup>88</sup>

The Serbian Unit had been taken out in an Admiralty transport and was situated at Kragujevatz 25 miles from Belgrade where the staff had to deal with 250 wounded at a time instead of 100, thereby depleting supplies – no fewer than 15,000 extra yards of gauze were on the way. In France at Abbayé de Royaumont the women arrived to a state of unpreparedness – no hot water, no stoves, no coals, nowhere to sleep. They set to and organized everything themselves.

One of the girls, an orderly, was an excellent carpenter and she made all the tables. The girls scrubbed the whole place from top to bottom and within a week the hospital looked as if it had been in order for months. The striking thing was this, that except for the trained nurses not one of these girls had done a hard day's work in her life before. They had the greatest possible difficulty in securing coal. The military authorities were using up vast quantities and the Unit had to get their supplies direct from Scotland....The wounded had now begun to arrive. They were sent down the line to Creill, a big junction from which they were distributed. Three motor ambulances and one ordinary car brought the wounded from the station to the Abbey and now they had the benefit of two additional ambulances which the Scottish Red Cross had sent out and which the French authorities had placed at their disposal. They were only 25 miles from Soissons and they could hear the sound of the guns quite plainly at the Abbey.<sup>89</sup>

Elsie admitted that Royaumont was proving much more expensive than expected with over double the numbers of casualties to be nursed but she remained confident that an imminent appeal for £50,000 would be met.

In her customary manner Elsie Inglis embarked on a programme of speaking engagements to heighten awareness and raise money for her new cause. She gave an address at a concert organized in aid of the Serbian Unit by the Young People's Missionary Working Guild at Bristo United Free Church at the end of February. At Bridge of Allan Dr Inglis explained that while the work being done in France was extremely exacting it was being carried out under normal conditions but in Serbia, following the 'ravaging of the country by the Austrian armies' who had lived under 'indescribably insanitary conditions', poverty and disease 'were rampant throughout

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 22 January 1915. Miss Mair wrote another letter to the paper on 26 February 1915 requesting pyjamas, dressing gowns, day shirts, outside shoes, blankets, sheets, feather pillows, pillow slips, sheets, towels and razors both stropped and safety for Serbia.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

the country'.<sup>90</sup> Dr Elizabeth Ross, Nurse Jordan and Chauffeur and Orderly Madge Neil had died of typhoid. Not surprisingly, therefore, when she lectured on the work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals at St Bride's School on 15 March, she conveyed the impression that those who went out to serve in Serbia took their lives in their hands. The sum of £13 5s collected that evening when added to money raised previously, meant that St Bride's School had collected enough to equip a bed for the Serbian hospital. Two days later the Merchiston Rooms could not accommodate the numbers of people who assembled to hear Elsie speak and on 19 March she took the message to Dundee. When Dr Inglis appeared at a meeting in Morningside United Free Church chaired by her sister Eva at the end of March, she referred to the changed mood of the country by asserting that politics meant nothing to them at present. She gave as an example the donation of £20 from a prominent Fife anti-suffrage supporter who had enclosed a note saying 'she was glad they were doing something useful at last'.<sup>91</sup> Elsie described the condition of Serbia as being 'simply riddled with infectious disease' – typhus, typhoid, smallpox and relapsing fever – and tragically for 'little Serbia' this stemmed from the hospitals and camps left by the Austrians.<sup>92</sup> Travelling south in April, Elsie Inglis gave talks illustrated by lantern slides to Women's Suffrage Societies at Redhill, Surrey (14 April), Winchester (21 April) and Exeter (22 April). By the end of the month she had departed for Serbia.

Sarah Mair painted a vivid picture of Elsie Inglis during these early months of establishing the Scottish Women's Hospitals.

Whilst others were considering and planning she acted, and if occasionally her rapidity overstepped the constituted order of things, it was generally justified by the event and pardoned by those responsible for the business management of the scheme....A certain stir of feeling might be perceptible in the busy hive at the office when a specially energetic visit of the Chief had been paid. Had the impossible been accomplished? If not, why not? Who had failed in performance? Take the task from her; give it to another. No excuses in war-time – no weakness to be tolerated – onward ever onward. To those inclined to hesitate or at least to draw breath occasionally in the course of their heavy work of organizing, raising money, gathering equipment, securing transport permits and attending to the innumerable secretarial affairs connected with so big a task, she showed no weakening pity; the one invariable goad applied was ever, 'It is war-time'. No one must pause, no one must waver: things must simply be done whether impossible or not, and somehow by her inspiration they generally were done.<sup>93</sup>

Sarah described her friend as 'the very embodiment of wireless telegraphy, aeronautic locomotion with telepathy and divination thrown in'.<sup>94</sup> Elsie saw an object, aimed for it and marched straight ahead brushing aside any obstacles. Special efforts by her fellow workers received a rewarding radiant smile or affectionate hand clasp. Miss Mair summarized Dr Inglis' character in the phrase 'Strength combined with sweetness with a wholesome dash of humour thrown in' – 'hers was a truly great soul'.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Stirling Observer*, 16 March 1915.

<sup>91</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 March 1915.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* Serbia had repelled the Austrian attack.

<sup>93</sup> McLaren, *History*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>95</sup> Balfour, p. 159. McLaren, *History*, p. 179.

Elsie departed for Serbia at the end of April 1915 after receiving a telegram that Dr Soltau had contracted diphtheria. She wrote to her sister Amy on 30 May from Kragujevatz telling her 'this is a perfectly lovely place – and the Serbians are delightful' but her unit was dealing with 550 beds, having been sent out to nurse 300 beds, in three hospitals – one surgical in a schoolhouse, one for typhus in barracks on the outskirts of the town and the third for relapsing fever and general diseases also in barracks.<sup>96</sup> Dr Alice Hutchison and her Unit arrived in Serbia soon after and were despatched to Valjevo; Lazaravatz and Mladanovatz being respectively under Drs Holloway and McGregor. Dr Inglis embraced her new life joyfully and wrote to Committee and family enthusiastically about the country and its people. Meanwhile Sarah Mair had presided over a lunch for the recovered Dr Soltau recently returned from Serbia and announced that the Scottish Women's Hospitals were caring for over 1000 patients. She expressed thanks for the generous public support and for the 'foresight, energy and forethought of Dr Inglis who had originated the scheme'.<sup>97</sup> In October the *Daily Examiner* expressed pleasure in the Serbian appreciation of the invaluable work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals.

Just outside Mladanovatz, a village where the 'Scottish Women' have a hospital for 400 beds the Serbians have built an arch over a spring of drinking water and put up an inscription in English and Serbian. 'In Memory of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Serbia and their founder Dr Elsie Inglis'. On one side of the fountain the drinking water runs and on the other side, there is a screw to which a tube for filling water-carts can be fixed. There is also a drinking trough for animals and all round the memorial the Serbians are making a little park-like ornamental enclosure.<sup>98</sup>

The months of peace, however, came to an end as Germans, Austrians and their new allies the Bulgarians invaded.

Elsie wrote to the Committee on 26 September:

If only they could have sent a British Expeditionary Force up here this summer, it would have made absolutely all the difference – all the Balkan States would have declared on our side, Germany could not have got ammunition through to the Turks, and probably things would have been easier for Russia. I suppose one ought not to criticize – but to lengthen our line in France and have meddling diplomacy out here!<sup>99</sup>

Privately she referred to the 'idiots at the top' who had 'not enough gumption to realize this must happen'.<sup>100</sup> The staff at Mladanovatz and Lazaravatz had to be evacuated to Kragujevatz and then they all moved south to Krushevatz. Dr Inglis cabled home:

All well. Neill Fraser Hospital (Mladanovatz) called in, stationed here. Hutchison Unit (Valjevo) now coming in to be stationed further south. Holloway (Lazaravatz) still at original station.<sup>101</sup>

In a 'thank you' letter to the Misses Christian James of 14 Randolph Place and Winifred Shand of 29 Howard Place, Sarah Mair expressed gratitude for the

<sup>96</sup> Royal College of Surgeons, GD43/3/3, *Letter of Elsie Inglis*, 30 May 1915.

<sup>97</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 July 1915.

<sup>98</sup> *Daily Examiner*, 11 October 1915.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Leah Leneman, *Elsie Inglis, Founder of battlefield hospitals run entirely by women* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 47.

<sup>100</sup> RCS, GD43/3/4, *Letter of Elsie Inglis*, 6 November 1915.

<sup>101</sup> *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 November 1915; *Scotsman* 10 November 1915; *Newcastle Journal*, 13 November 1915.

collection of the sum of £50 for a June Birthday Bed to be placed in the Neill Fraser Memorial Hospital but regretted being unable to give an account of the hospital as 'the recent news from Serbia probably means that the splendid hospital at Mladanovatz has had to be withdrawn further south'.<sup>102</sup> On 5 November Elsie wrote to Sarah Mair:

We are in the very centre of the storm and it is anything but pleasant to be part of a beaten and retreating army. All our hospitals, planned as part of a campaign on the Danube have had to be 'evacuated'....some day we'll have lots to tell you. Just now one can think of nothing but these poor little people in this awful hole – with the whole country over-run from end to end. They can hardly speak to one another without breaking down- even strong men among them. They look at one eagerly and say 'When will your men be up?' When!<sup>103</sup>

Next day she told her sister in a letter:

These poor little people, you cannot imagine anything more miserable than they are. Remember they have been fighting for years for their independence and now it all seems to end....The Hospitals are packed out with wounded. We decided we must stand by our Hospitals; it was too awful leaving badly wounded men with no proper care....we gave everyone in the units the choice of going or staying.... Some day I'll tell you all the exciting things that have been happening and all the funny things too. For there have been funny things in the middle of all the sadness.<sup>104</sup>

Those who elected to go joined the great retreat over the Montenegrin and Albanian mountains; the rest remained with Drs Inglis and Holloway to tend the Serbian wounded and the prisoners, sometimes 1000 a day, in Krushevatz. They had to clear up the appalling compound by digging rubbish into the ground, emptying the flowing cesspool, building incinerators, and constantly cleaning. In a letter to Sarah Mair dated 30 November, Elsie thought that on the whole they had been extraordinarily well and that the Committee should not worry about them.<sup>105</sup>

During a Red Cross Service for the wounded held in St Giles on 19 December, Elsie's friend Dr Wallace Williamson gave a prayer for the Scottish Women's Hospitals with Dr Inglis at its head 'now behind the veil which has fallen on the Balkans'.<sup>106</sup> Then on 25 December the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* announced that a party of 28 women doctors, nurses and orderlies had arrived in London from Serbia, seven weeks after their 'horrible journey' had begun but that 'Dr Elsie Inglis is reported to have been captured by the Germans with most of the unit at Krushevatz'.<sup>107</sup> Elsie and her staff had been taken prisoners in November at the Czar Lazar hospital where they continued to work in the bitter cold, in isolation and with a shortage of food. On 11 February 1916 they were sent north under Austrian guards with fixed bayonets to Vienna and from there they travelled to Zurich. 14 members of the Scottish Women's Hospitals under Dr Inglis and 25 members of Dr Banks Red Cross Unit arrived after eight days' detention at Bludenz on the Austrian

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<sup>102</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 November 1915.

<sup>103</sup> Printed in the *Scotsman*, 31 December 1915.

<sup>104</sup> RCS, GD43/3/4, *Letter of Elsie Inglis*, 6 November 1915.

<sup>105</sup> RCS, GD43/3/6, *Letter of Elsie Inglis*, 30 November 1915.

<sup>106</sup> *Scotsman*, 20 December 1915.

<sup>107</sup> *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 25 December 1915; the *Edinburgh Evening News* of the same date does not mention Dr Inglis and gives the number of the party as 46.

frontier.<sup>108</sup> 'At Zurich we at last felt that we were really free', Elsie said later, 'and I don't think till then we ever realized how uncomfortable it is to be prisoners'.<sup>109</sup> On 29 February relatives and a deputation from the Scottish Federation led by Miss S. E. S. Mair met them at Waterloo Station London. In an interview with the *Scotsman* Elsie said:

I would like no one to think that either the Germans or the Austrians are tired of the war. They are the victor army; at all events they have the bearing of a victor army. I say that in regard to the Germans in particular. They are well-fed, well clothed and they have not the least intention of giving in! Of the Austrian soldiers Dr Inglis said they looked much younger than the Germans and were not so well clothed. She mentioned that the enemy were displaying great activity in preparing the ground against possible attack in the future. 'Beautiful trenches' was her description of the German works.<sup>110</sup>

She related that the Germans had arrived on 7 November and demanded that the German wounded be tended which, as Red Cross workers, they had been ready to do. The Germans moved the Serbian wounded out of the hospital and their own in then changed their minds and moved the Serbs back. Speaking as a doctor Dr Inglis said that:

even on the part of a muddle-headed people this quite gratuitous shifting and reshifting of wounded men would have been inexcusable, but on the part of a nation which prided itself on its scientific organization, it was absolutely criminal. However, that incident over, the work of the hospital went on.<sup>111</sup>

Elsie described the deprivations of the Serbian prisoners and the denial of more space and access to the supplies which had been sent to the unit. She omitted to tell of the episode when she was threatened at gunpoint – the time when she realised she did not know the meaning of fear.

On her return to Edinburgh on 2 March a large party of friends including Miss Mair, Lady Salvesen and Dr Hutchison met her at Princes Street Station. Dr Inglis then embarked on a Serbian awareness- raising campaign, addressing a conference of the League of Honour and Patriotic Clubs in the Gartmore Hall Edinburgh on 12 March. She and Alice Hutchison spoke on their work in Serbia and experiences as prisoners of war in Austria in St Cuthbert's Hall on 21 March; and Elsie spoke in Glasgow on 23 March. A few days later both women lectured on 'Serbia before and after the German occupation' in the Central Hall. On 3 April in London Lady Cowdray gave an evening reception for the Crown Prince of Serbia and for Dr Inglis who paid tribute to the fine national characteristics of the Serbs at the Criterion Theatre. She said that their 'courtesy and fear of hurting the feelings of others' would never permit them to say anything that 'might be taken as derogatory to their Allies' even when they were so 'bitterly disappointed at the non arrival of relief'.<sup>112</sup> At the event Dr Curcin of the Serbian Medical High Command told the audience:

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<sup>108</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 24 February 1916.

<sup>109</sup> *The Common Cause*, 3 March 1916.

<sup>110</sup> *Scotsman*, 1 March 1916.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 5 April 1916.

I am personally grateful to Dr Inglis because both directly and indirectly she gave me a clear and precise conception of the British woman and of the task she will accomplish with regard to society.<sup>113</sup>

Elsie wrote an account of her experiences for the *Englishwoman* published in two parts in April and June in which she expressed both the depth of her feelings for Serbia and its people and her championing of women's abilities.

When we reached Serbia in May, she was lying in the sunshine. Two storms had raged over her during the preceding months – the Austrian invasion, and the terrific typhus epidemic. In our safe little island we can hardly realise what either meant.<sup>114</sup>

Dr Soltau, 'to her undying credit' with her small staff and equipment unequal for the scale of the work did 'yeoman service' and the Scottish Committee dispatched supplies and further medical staff.<sup>115</sup> For three months the epidemic raged:

and all women may ever be proud of the way these women worked....There were three deaths and nine cases of illness among the unit; and may we not truly claim that those three women who died gave their lives for the great cause for which our country stands today as any man in the trenches?<sup>116</sup>

In the second part of her article Elsie described how within a month of the German bombardment of Belgrade the whole of Serbia had been overrun with the resultant consequences for the staff of the Unit still serving there. She ended with a heartfelt undisguised plea.

It was a great thing to be once more 'home', and to realise how strong and straight and fearless a people inhabit these Islands; to realise not so much that they mean to win this war, but that rather they consider any other issue impossible. There must be people not doing their 'bit', but one does not see them. As the weeks pass, however, it becomes clearer and clearer that the 'bit' of each one of us is something bigger than we all realized at the beginning of the War. It is not only a question of knitting what socks we can, of fighting cheerfully and bravely whenever we can, of giving what money we can to the Funds and in taxes. As free, self-governing people, with more or less power according as we possess votes or not, our 'bit' is something bigger than that. For the Government is what the House of Commons makes it, and the House of Commons is what we make it.<sup>117</sup>

In recognition of her work for Serbia the Crown Prince of Serbia conferred the Order of the White Eagle (Fifth Class) on Dr Inglis, 'the first woman to be decorated' with the 'highest Order in Serbia'.<sup>118</sup> Miss Mair, President of the Committee of the Scottish Women's Hospitals received the Order of St Sava (Third), Mrs Hunter, Chairman, the Fourth and the Committee, the Fifth Classes of the Order.<sup>119</sup> With the help of the London Committee Elsie organised a celebration throughout Britain of Kosovo Day on 28 June, the day on which the Serbs remember the battle of 1389 against the invading Ottoman Turks. Posters calling on people to think of Serbia, Pray for Serbia and Restore Serbia covered London and events took place all over Britain.

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<sup>113</sup> *Common Cause*, 7 April 1916.

<sup>114</sup> *The Englishwoman*, Vol. XXX, No. 88, April 1916, p. 42.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, No 90, June 1916, p. 207.

<sup>118</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 15 April 1916.

<sup>119</sup> *Scotsman*, 14 April 1916.

Dr Inglis had earlier managed a visit of inspection to the Women's Hospital Unit in Corsica to where 500-600 Serbian boys aged 13-14 years had been sent to save them from internment in Germany. She wrote to the *Scotsman* from 2 St Andrew Square in an appeal for games for them:

The Serbian Relief Committee is arranging regular lessons with the help of Serbian teachers in the island. What I want to do is make them play games and Sir Edward Boyle, the head of the Serbian relief work in Corsica is most anxious to have the means. What they want is footballs, hockey sticks and balls, chess, draughts, dominoes and Indian clubs. We as a people do not need to be converted to the value of games. Will those who can, and especially boys' schools, consider what they can do....and will they remember that this is certainly a case where 'they give twice who give quickly'.<sup>120</sup>

Elsie also tried in vain to be allowed to send a SWH unit to Mesopotamia where medical standards, she had heard, fell far short of those acceptable. This proved impossible to achieve as Mesopotamia lay under the remit of the Indian Government working directly to the War Office which still remained opposed to women medical practitioners. At the same time she fell out with the SWH Committee now advocating a policy of consolidation and with whom she had other issues. The Prime Minister of the Serbian Government in exile requested medical assistance for two divisions of Southern Slavs, mostly Serbs who as Austrian conscripts had deserted to the Russians and who had volunteered to fight in the Russian army. On 9 June the Committee agreed to the request provided that Elsie be in charge of the Unit – a stipulation Elsie rejected on the grounds that decisions should be made according to need rather than who would lead the Unit. She stated that she could not take out any more Units under Scottish Women's Hospitals, resigned her commission and then withdrew from the Committee. A compromise, however, was reached, the official line being that as the Headquarters Committee had enough work in running the existing Units, the London Committee would equip and maintain two field hospitals and motor transport and pay the staff salaries with Dr Elsie Inglis as chief medical officer. Elsie would send her reports to London.

On 31 July 1916 the *Aberdeen Evening Express* reported that Dr Elsie Inglis 'the woman doctor who had such thrilling adventures in Serbia with her unit is getting ready to go back again with a fully-equipped medical unit comprised of women even to ambulance drivers'.<sup>121</sup> They left Liverpool on 29 August in, according to Elsie, a 'filthy boat' with the crew 'drunk to a man', but 'we got into shape very quickly' by cleaning and painting.<sup>122</sup> She conducted a service at 10.30 am on Sunday 3 September – 'Several of us made up a choir and practiced some hymns beforehand'.<sup>123</sup> The passengers numbered 75 hospital staff, three Serbian officers, the mother and sister of one of them and 32 Serbian non-commissioned officers. X-ray operator Elinor Rendel commented:

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 13 May 1916.

<sup>121</sup> *Aberdeen Evening Telegraph*, 31 July 1916.

<sup>122</sup> Letter to Amy Simson, 6 September 1916 quoted in Cahill, p. 16.

<sup>123</sup> Edinburgh City Libraries, qYR489[152] *Uncensored Diary of Lillias Mary Grant, August 1916-April 1917*.

Dr Inglis likes a good deal of deference paid to her as head of the Unit and she goes in for roll-calls, cabin inspection etc. We have to stand to attention and at roll-call she has given the order that we are to say 'Here Ma'am'.

When they docked at Archangel on 10 September the Town Guard lined up from ship to station and the Russian soldiers according to custom, 'tossed' various officials including Elsie who was 'glad it was dark and that there were no cameras'.<sup>124</sup> Having heard of the dreadful casualties among the Serbs fighting in Rumania, nine days later they arrived in Odessa where they found 1000 wounded Serbians. They received a wonderful reception including a gala performance at the opera. Following lengthy discussion the General in charge agreed that the Unit should go to the front after Elsie had made arrangements for the care of the casualties. She wrote to London asking for another hospital and describing the Serbian force as magnificent fighting men.

We seem to have come into the midst of a second Verdun...The need of the hospitals for these two divisions is awful. It is heartbreaking to realise how many places we are needed in. I wish each of us here were six women instead of only one.<sup>125</sup>

According to Elinor Rendel Dr Inglis got her own way in spite of the best efforts of the authorities in Odessa, by insisting that the Unit be sent on as a field rather than become a stationary hospital.

On 24 September they left for Medjidia in Rumania by train and during the journey 'Dr Inglis came along and played Bridge with us and had tea'.<sup>126</sup> On arrival they tended the wounded for three weeks though in actuality by the end of October Elsie, on the request of the Mayor, had set up an operating theatre and wards at Braila where she had found thousands of wounded. Ordered to evacuate to Galatz with the Army, Dr Inglis as usual worked up to the last minute attending the wounded who were then taken straight to the train whenever possible – crossing the Tchernovado Bridge just before its destruction. London received a cable from the British Consul in Odessa on 6 November announcing the arrival of the 80 members of the Unit at Galatz. Elsie felt she was becoming an old hand at retreats. At Galatz she 'justified the belief that she is always on the spot when most needed'.<sup>127</sup> During the first rush of wounded, staff worked for two days with little sleep, sustained Elsie said, by the excellent kitchen arrangements which ensured a supply of food at any hour. In January 1917 the Unit again had to evacuate, this time to Reni in Bessarabia 10 miles east of Galantz. In reporting this *The Common Cause* remarked once more – 'To be on the spot at the crucial moment is a peculiar faculty belonging to Dr Elsie Inglis'.<sup>128</sup> The Unit spent the next eight months there. Elsie reported to the London Committee:

The work we are doing is to take the badly wounded men from the Evacuation Hospital. It is work we are especially fitted for, with our well-equipped theatre and our highly trained nurses,

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<sup>124</sup> *The Common Cause*, 27 October 1916.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 November 1916.

<sup>126</sup> Grant, 26 September 1916.

<sup>127</sup> *The Common Cause*, 16 February 1917.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 January 1917.

and the Committee may, I think, feel satisfied that the Hospital is in a very useful niche for the moment.<sup>129</sup>

The staff endured an exceptionally cold winter and although the Unit had been sent to work with the Serbs, the Serbian Commander in Odessa told Elsie she could best help them by continuing to work with the Russians. Lady Balfour, having attended a special Scottish Hospital meeting wrote to her sister-in-law Betty:

They are very uncertain what to do about the Roumanian Unit at Odessa. It wants reinforcing. Dr Elsie Inglis has wired for stores and orderlies. Red X is discouraging as to anything going to Russia at present. Dr Potter has come home from that front via Bergen ....She was in Petrograd two days before the Revolution....The Russian wounded seem legion, a perpetual stream. On one occasion the Drs (women) worked 59 on surgery out of 65. They only totted this up when 'a mere male' said he had worked 36 hours on surgery.<sup>130</sup>

The Russian Revolution had erupted in March causing much unrest among the soldiers at the front though at Reni discipline was maintained and on 20 March Prince Dolgoukoff, the General in command of the Rumanian front arrived. 'Do you know' wrote Elsie, 'we have all been given the St George's Medal?'<sup>131</sup> The telegram announcing his arrival came quarter of an hour after he left. 'Our patients were awfully pleased and impressed on us that it carried with it a pension of a rouble a month for life'.<sup>132</sup> This was a quiet period causing orderly Yvonne Fitzroy to write home on 21 March:

Work is very slack, which Dr Inglis says is bad for us. Therein I don't the least agree, and it is only terribly dull people who would not find endless resources for any amount of spare time in the sunshine and the country. But the dear lady forgot how to play *many* years ago.<sup>133</sup>

No-one, of course, guessed that Dr Inglis suffered from a terminal illness. It was also a time of enemy spy mania which resulted in the arrest of an orderly and subsequent confinement of both her and Elsie who had insisted on accompanying her. The episode ended in an apology although a further episode ensued briefly tempting Dr Inglis to withdraw their services. Yet the Easter period provided celebrations and staff including Elsie enjoyed horse riding. Later Mary Milne one of the cooks described the glorious rides over the steppes on 'extraordinary saddles padded like the arms of a Chesterfield sofa'.<sup>134</sup> Although no wounded arrived the doctors saw dozens of outpatients every day from the various regiments stationed in Reni and performed many operations.

While the Foreign Office refused to send out any more women drivers they agreed to medical replacements going out. On 15 July Elsie wrote home:

I have had German measles! The Consul asked me what I meant by that at my time of life! The majority of people say how unpatriotic and Hunnish of you!<sup>135</sup>

In August an unsuccessful Russian offensive resulted in the arrival of the seriously wounded at Reni. At the end of August, however, the Unit rejoined the Serbian

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted in McLaren, *History*, p. 209.

<sup>130</sup> NRS, GD433/2/359, *Copy Letters Lady Betty Balfour*, 2 April 1917.

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 228.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Cahill, p. 214.

<sup>134</sup> Mary Milne, 'Some months in Bessarabia' in *Blackwood's Magazine*, May 1918, p. 639.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 241.

division at Hadji Abdul in Bessarabia where Dr Inglis continued in her efforts to ensure the safety of the Serbs, sending reports and messages home to the Committee and to the Foreign Office via the British Consul. The state of Elsie's health began to show. Mary Milne told the readers of Blackwell's Magazine:

Soon after we arrived in Hadji Abdul Dr Inglis began to be ill. She had been unwell on and off for some time past at Reni; but her extraordinary will-power prevented anyone from knowing how ill she really was. On 26 September she was unable to leave her tent and from then onwards she was more or less ill all the time. Some days she was well enough to sit outside her tent in the sunshine; but whether in her tent or outside, she directed all the work of the hospital even to the last. She was the pivot on which the unit turned and without her nothing seemed to be very much worthwhile.<sup>136</sup>

On 28 September news arrived of an imminent departure for Archangel en route for France or England and orderly Margaret Fawcett wrote to her family that at last they had got their marching orders to go home with the Serbian staff and then later follow the Serbians to Salonika. She did not plan another tour of duty and although she thought that Dr Inglis still hoped to take them out 'I don't think she will ever be well enough'.<sup>137</sup> By 21 October nothing had happened and then it seemed that after all, the Serbs would be sent to join the Rumanians and proceed to Ackerman near Odessa to prepare for fighting – the Unit would go too.

Mary Milne visited Dr Inglis who told her it was the first time in her life she had ever been homesick. She then proceeded to outline the hospital arrangements and staffing and said that in the spring she would go home and have a rest.

It was perfectly wonderful. Ill as she was, all the details were arranged in her mind, and we had only heard of the change of plan that morning. I was very miserable when I left her. She was so obviously unfit to stay on, yet she would not go. For six days we lived in a state of uncertainty.<sup>138</sup>

Then on 27 October they heard they would indeed go home and after a train journey of nearly a fortnight, arrived at Arkangel from where Elsie wrote to her sister Mrs Simson on 18 November – 'Have not been very well; nothing to worry about. Shall report in London then come straight to you. Longing to see you all'.<sup>139</sup> During the voyage Dr Inglis felt better and dealt with paper work remarking that after 'each time I go down, I rise higher and higher. I shall soon be quite well again'.<sup>140</sup> On 23 November Margaret Fawcett thought that on the whole she had stood the journey quite well but the night before the ship docked at Newcastle Elsie was in great pain. Yet next morning:

she dressed fully, wearing all her decorations, and stood for nearly twenty minutes while the entire Serbian staff said goodbye to her. When I went to say goodbye to her she thanked me for all I had done, told me to take the Scots girls as far as Edinburgh and see the Committee there. And she added 'In a few days come and see me in Edinburgh'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Milne, p. 641.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Cahill, p. 303.

<sup>138</sup> Milne, pp, 643-4.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Balfour, p. 244.

<sup>140</sup> Milne, p. 647.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 648.

Elsie Inglis was taken to the Station Hotel from where she telegraphed her family to tell them not to phone for a few days as she was in bed, but her niece Eve Simson travelled to Newcastle reaching there early on 26 November. Eve contacted her mother and aunt who arrived that evening to share their sister's last hours. True to form Dr Inglis dictated farewell messages to family and her Unit, remarking that for a long time she meant to live but that she now knew she was going to the other side. She told her niece – 'It is grand to think of beginning a new work over there!'<sup>142</sup> Her last message to the London Committee read – 'Whatever happens, dear Miss Palliser, do beg the Committee to make sure that the Serbs have their hospital and their transport for they do need them'.<sup>143</sup> As Mrs Flinders Petrie commented later in *The Common Cause*, 'in some ways her vigour that day was unimpaired – her thoughts were for others, never for herself'.<sup>144</sup> On 27 November 1917 in Edinburgh Mary Milne wrote in her diary – 'Poor Dr Inglis died last night. What a sad ending to our trip. But she had accomplished what she had before her. She got the Serbs out of Russia and died knowing she had won'.<sup>145</sup>

People received the news of Elsie Inglis' death with shock and widespread sorrow. Dr Williamson presiding at a lecture given under the auspices of the Scottish Women's Hospitals on the evening of 27 November, had to give the sad news to the audience but felt that her memory even as her life 'would be an impulse to all who were associated with the work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals'.<sup>146</sup> On 29 November a notice appeared in the press:

The funeral of Dr Elsie Inglis having been fixed for 2 o'clock THIS AFTERNOON at St Giles the offices of the Scottish Women's Hospitals 2 St Andrew Square will be closed from 10 onwards.<sup>147</sup>

The packed congregation included representatives of the British Army, the Serbian Ministry, the Scottish Women's Hospitals led by Miss Mair with Lady Balfour and members of the London Committee, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Scottish Federation led by Miss Chrystal Macmillan and the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association. Royal Scots buglers played 'The Last Post' and a great crowd of spectators witnessed the departure of Elsie's coffin, covered with the Union Jack and conveyed on a gun carriage drawn by six horses. People lined the route to the Dean Cemetery where members of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in uniform waited at the graveside. The Serbian representatives carried the coffin to the grave into which it was lowered by Dr and Mrs Shaw McLaren, Dr and Mrs MacNicol, Miss Simson, Professor Waterson, Sir George Berry and Miss S. E. S. Mair. The numerous wreaths and floral tributes from a range of organizations and individual suffrage societies included one 'From Her Unit'.

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<sup>142</sup> McLaren, *Elsie Inglis*, p. 76.

<sup>143</sup> McLaren, *History*, p. 222.

<sup>144</sup> *The Common Cause*, 7 December 1917.

<sup>145</sup> Quoted in Cahill, p. 326.

<sup>146</sup> *Scotsman*, 2 November 1917.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 November 1917.

Tributes flowed in including a letter of sympathy from the Queen; and the Serbian Ambassador observed – ‘It is a national calamity for us’.<sup>148</sup> On 7 December ‘a deeply impressive service’ took place in St Margaret’s Westminster ‘in memory of the intrepid Scottish lady doctor’, attended by members of Royalty, Parliament, the Allied Governments, the Military Forces, the Nursing Sisterhood, the Medical Profession and other classes of the community.<sup>149</sup> They were assembled, said the *Daily Record*, to pay a last tribute to ‘one of the most heroic women – and they are legion – who have found their life’s opportunity in the great war’.<sup>150</sup> Annie Christitch echoed this sentiment in her tribute.

Through Dr. Inglis Serbia has come to know Scotland, for I must confess that formerly it was not recognized by our people as a distinctive part of the British Isles. Her name, as that of the Serbian mother from Scotland (Srpska majka iz ‘Skotske’), has become legendary throughout the land, and it is not excluded that at a future date popular opinion will claim her as of Serbian descent, although born on foreign soil. Dr. Inglis won universal respect in the Serbian medical profession for her skill as a surgeon. During a great number of years past we have had women physicians, and very capable they are too; but, for some reason or other, Serbian women had never specialized in surgery. Hence it was not without scepticism that the male members of the profession received the news that the organizer of the Scottish hospitals was a skilled surgeon. Until Dr. Inglis actually reached Serbia and had performed successfully in their presence, they refused to believe this ‘amiable fable,’ but from the moment that they had seen her work they altered their opinion, and, to the great joy of our Serbian women, they no longer proclaimed the fact that surgery was not a woman’s sphere. This is but one of the services Dr. Inglis has rendered our woman movement in Serbia.<sup>151</sup>

Just before she left Britain en route for Russia Elsie said that before the war ‘I had only two thoughts – Suffrage and Surgery: and now I feel that I am working for suffrage still. When we come back, women will have the vote’.<sup>152</sup> Lady Frances Balfour attended the House of Lords in December 1917 to hear the debate on the Suffrage Bill and wrote to Lady Betty Balfour:

I heard as I came into the H of Ls yesterday that Mrs Garrett Anderson was dead. Striking, the old Pioneer dying on the threshold of success in Franchise and Dr Inglis passing in the tide and strength of work through the gate opened by Mrs Garrettt Anderson.<sup>153</sup>

Two months after Elsie Inglis’ death Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act which abolished almost all property qualifications for men and enfranchised women over 30 who met minimum property qualifications. There would still therefore have been suffrage work ahead for the tiny energetic woman – no Amazon as Sarah Mair remarked – with the disarming smile, ‘who never knew a higher authority than her own conscience’, who expected the best of herself and others of whom she could be highly critical, who called for things to be done regardless of obstacles and who inspired and engendered so much loyalty and affection.<sup>154</sup> Describing her experiences in Bessarabia Mary Milne wrote – ‘I am most

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 30 November 1917.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily Record*, 7 December 1917.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> McLaren, *Elsie Inglis*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>152</sup> Quoted in *The Common Cause*, 30 November 1917.

<sup>153</sup> NRS, GD433/2/360, 18 December 1917.

<sup>154</sup> Quoted in McLaren, *Elsie Inglis*, p. 55.

proud of all to have worked under one whose name will go down in posterity as one of the Big Women of the Age'.<sup>155</sup>



Elsie Inglis' gravestone in Dean Cemetery

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<sup>155</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, May 1918. p. 648.