



Leighton Letter No. 10

Newsletter of the Leighton Library¹

March 2025

This Leighton Letter comes as we move to the next stage in the Library's story. After 2024's excellent season, with the books all back on the shelves and the cartouche back in place, there are exciting plans for the 2025 season, especially the development of the Undercroft and the conservation of books that have been identified as in need of critical repair.

In 2024, we were not able to open till 25 May but with extended opening hours we were delighted to welcome over 3,700 visitors (previously 1,500 a year). This year the Library will be open from 1 April, a month earlier than in previous years, so we expect to break new records in 2025. All this is possible because of the large number of enthusiastic guides we have. The guide training has paid off too, we've seen lovely visitor comments on how informative our guides have been.

The open door into the Undercroft on the ground floor with its photographs of the restoration and the display panels has attracted people in and enticed many to climb the stairs to the Library itself. The exciting development plan for the Undercroft aims to increase that attraction and add an exciting new dimension to the visitor experience – see Malcolm's article on page 3.

The return of the books from storage last year enabled a detailed assessment of the 4,700 books. This identified 77 books requiring immediate repair and 116 more also needing some attention. Alastair's article on page 4 tells about plans for that work in stages, as funding becomes available.

These developments require continued fund-raising. Treasurer Chris reports progress and plans on that front on page 2. **And:** The concert in the Cathedral on Sunday 9 March by the Edinburgh Renaissance Band is a chance for you to be part of the fund-raising effort. Do support this return visit by the Band and encourage friends and relations to come too. Donations are welcome at any time. Do spread the word about the next stage of the development plan, let's keep up the interest that the restoration of the building generated over the last two years.

Also in this Leighton Letter:

- Anthony Birch writes on the work of James Fall, Principal of Glasgow University in Leighton's time, whose research on Leighton's papers gives us some insights into Leighton's character.
- Gordon Willis gives us some background on the works of women writers and printers represented in the Library's collection who feature in the current exhibition in the Library.
- Editors Frances and Hugh welcome comments and suggestions for articles. Email us at leightonfriends@gmail.com

Edinburgh Renaissance Band



Fund-raising concert!

Sunday 9 March at 3pm

Dunblane Cathedral

Free entry – donations welcomed!

Plus: an opportunity to win a valuable holiday accommodation voucher

¹ Leighton Library Trust, Scottish Charity SC003010.

The concert is free to attend! You decide how much you'd like to donate to help the Library to keep up the development momentum and keep the Library free for all to enjoy.

We're delighted that the Edinburgh Renaissance Band is revisiting Dunblane with this fund-raising concert for the next stage of the Library development project, including development of the Undercroft and the repair of books that have been identified as needing particular attention.

Director Murray Campbell has put together an exciting programme of music from the time of Robert Leighton and his father Alexander Leighton. The concert will also feature music from the first volume of secular music ever printed in Scotland, by printer John Forbes from Aberdeen.



The band takes great delight in demonstrating and playing the amazing collection of original and reproduction instruments² they have built up since they were founded more than 50 years ago.

The Band has played every year since then in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe except during lockdown.

Don't miss this chance to hear sackbuts, cornets, viols, recorders, and other instruments you've never even heard of and enjoy the style of music that would have been familiar to the Leightons. Listen to a sample of their glorious music-making [here](#).



News from the Trustees

(by Chris Onslow, Treasurer)

A year of success and records broken. As you know the Library reopened last year on 25 May and we welcomed over 3,700 visitors (previously 1,500 a year) who kindly donated over £5,200. On top of this our Events team raised over £3,500 and with other generous donations our total income was £11,500 (another record!). And our new shop made nearly £2,000; please come and buy, and encourage your friends as well! And don't forget the shop on the website: <https://leighton-library-shop.co.uk>

This income pays our 'running costs' and helps towards tomorrow... The Trustees are very grateful for all the support given to the Library.

We continue to raise funds for our final phase of the Library's restoration, especially the Redevelopment of the Undercroft, and to date £42,300 has been either donated or pledged. Over 20 other applications have been sent to potential funders and we wait to hear. We continue to ask! And of course donations from Friends and supporters are very welcome. If all goes to plan and the required monies are raised we expect to start the works later in the year with a view to opening the modernised Undercroft at the beginning of the 2026 season.

As Alastair notes in his article about the books we are also raising funds for the repair and conservation of books requiring critical attention. We recently received a grant for £4,000 which together with previous donations means we have £9,000 in the kitty. An impressive amount which at least lets us get started. We're approaching other funders to help with their conservation and are encouraging donations from all who want to support this important work.

All in all we have a great story to tell... Spread the word!

² Photo provided under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) licence.

The Undercroft

(by Malcolm Wilson, Convener, Undercroft Development Group)

The Leighton Library's exciting Undercroft development project aims to create a welcome, interpretation and engagement space. We want to provide a vibrant, welcoming and accessible hub for visitors to enjoy learning more about the books in this unique collection, and also the history of the Library, and the life of its benefactor Robert Leighton and the turbulent times in which he lived.

With your support the Undercroft will combine interpretative print panels, interactive digital screens and a community sharing space – stepping back in time straight from the street to the simmering 17th and 18th century Scotland.

Adapting the Undercroft to form part of the library exhibit and visitor attraction will allow visitors who cannot access the first floor to enjoy aspects of the collection and Library, through the exhibition, films, and 360-degree interactive digital view of the upper floor library itself.

It will introduce a new dimension to the visitor experience through setting the Library and its collection in its historical context. It will provide engaging, relatable content exploring the key figures involved with the library, a broad overview of the time and of course the books in the collection and the subjects they cover.

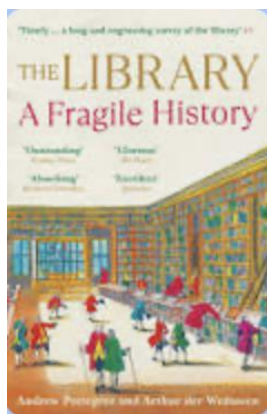


Your support is very much appreciated to make this happen (you can also donate online: <https://www.leightonlibrary.org.uk/undercroft-development>) - and thank you!

Volunteers

(by Dan Gunn, Volunteer Co-ordinator and Convener, Events group)

Looking back to May 2024 we were unsure if we would have enough volunteers to cover our extended hours. Indeed, we wondered if we were being too ambitious. However, the numbers rose right on time and we continued to attract newcomers throughout the season. I have already had my first offer of 2026. I suspect there will be many more to come.



This year we are starting the season much earlier, on 1 April, but I am hopeful and indeed confident we will have the number of guides to continue with our hours of 11- 4 Monday to Saturday. Our number per month in 2024 did vary but my master list exceeded 50 which was truly remarkable.

If you know anyone who might like to become a guide, please ask them to contact me. Our guides are a genuinely friendly group who support each other and willingly embrace any newcomer.

We had a very successful event in early January with five guides talking about their favourite book. This was a truly innovative event and one we will plan to repeat in January 2026.

We are looking forward to welcoming Professor Andrew Pettegree from St Andrews University in March, who will talk about his book “The Library: A Fragile History”, co-written with Arthur de Weduwen. Preceding his talk, we will have a training session for our guides.

Other Volunteer Roles

In addition to guides, offers of volunteer support for other functions are very welcome, e.g. looking after the network of Friends of the Leighton Library, fund-raising, running events, newsletter, etc.

You can contact me at degunn@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 07727 220420

Looking after the books in the Leighton Library

(by Alastair MacDonald)

Once the building restoration was complete in April 2023, there was a large exercise to return all 4,700 volumes from controlled storage. This involved slowly unpacking, cleaning, assessing condition and photographing before replacing on the shelves.

We devised a traffic light system for categorising the books' condition, recording those categorised as 'amber' (at risk) and 'red' (in need of immediate repair). We ended up with 193 red and amber volumes, of which 77 were red. That we have only 193 books at risk from a total of 4,700 is relatively good news. Our expert Trustee, Gordon Willis, then assessed the red volumes in terms of importance and priority, identifying some 17 volumes in the first tranche for repair. For some idea of the considerable costs involved, these 17 volumes will cost a total of just under £4,000.

In most cases, the books' 'block' of pages are in good condition; most problems are with damaged spines, detaching covers and front pages.

We are fortunate that we have a well-established local firm which specialises in old book restoration and conservation, RDW Book and Paper Conservation Ltd at Falkirk. We have commissioned the first batch and plan a rolling programme onwards. Given a rough average repair cost of around £250 per volume, to do all 193 volumes will eventually amount to a grand total of approximately £48,000.

The Leighton Library has had an 'Adopt a Book' scheme for some time, but it has fallen into abeyance in recent years. We now plan to revive the scheme and invite sponsorship for individual book repairs, where the donor will be acknowledged for their generosity. Keep an eye out on the Leighton Library website for further details later this Spring.

Dr James Fall

(by Anthony Birch)

Anthony has been researching the work of Professor James Fall, Principal of Glasgow University in Leighton's time. Fall's research on Leighton's papers and work in bringing some of his writings into print gives us some fascinating insights into Leighton's character.

When Archbishop Robert Leighton died in 1684, none of his own work had been published. As well as the books and papers that his nephew Edward Lightmaker had packed for sending to Dunblane, there were apparently all sorts of papers and manuscripts either in Horsted Keynes or held by Leighton's friends and colleagues around the country. Among these colleagues was James Fall, who had recently been appointed Principal of Glasgow University. He had been an undergraduate at Edinburgh at the end of Leighton's Principate and come under his influence at that time. Lightmaker was in correspondence with him about Leighton's papers and Fall gave advice in the setting up of the Library.³



Robert Leighton

The turbulence of church affairs in Scotland of course continued after Leighton's death. In 1688 James VII & II went into exile and William & Mary assumed the throne. The Bishop of Edinburgh, (formerly Fall's colleague at Glasgow) Alexander Rose, was less than enthusiastic in expressing his support to King William, "Sir, I will serve you as far as law, reason, or conscience shall allow me." The re-establishment of Presbyterian order in the Church of Scotland followed.

³ Principal James Fall of Glasgow (1647–1711), James F. Leishman, Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society, New Series, Vol. 7, No. 3(1924), pp. 342-350, Edinburgh University Press

The new Presbyterian establishment then initiated a purge of Episcopalians and Jacobites from the Scottish Universities. The Scots Parliament established a commission “to take tryall of the present professors, principalls, regents, masters and others beareing office therein, according to the qualifications and rules above mentioned, and such as shall be found to be erroneous, scandalous, negligent, insufficient or disaffected to their majesties' government, or who shall not subscrieve the Confession of Faith, swear and subscribe the oath of allegiance and submitt to the government of the church now settled by law, to purge out and remove”.⁴ When the commission considered the faculty in Glasgow, Principal Fall and others complained that this bundling together of the civil and religious elements was “complexly proposed” and they could not subscribe. James Fall was duly deposed, but in doing so the commission expressly thanked him for the care and attention he had given to his charge of the University when in office.⁵

James Fall was luckier or at least better connected than many. A year later he was installed as Canon and Precentor of York Minster.⁶ In order to take those posts he will have had to swear an oath of allegiance, but the Westminster Confession of Faith was by then long a dead letter in the Church of England. Even in the Church of Scotland, for parochial clergy it was less insisted on than it had been in the universities. The Scottish Comprehension Act of 1690 allowed non-subscribing clergy to remain in their posts, but not to hold office in Presbyteries or the General Assembly.

However, the Scots Act against irregular Baptisms and Marriages in 1695 explicitly forbade those ministers who had been “outed” from conducting these offices for their dissenting congregations. That bar remained until after the Act of Union when in 1711 (the same year as James Fall died) the United Kingdom Parliament passed both the Scottish Episcopalians Act, tolerating (at least until the 1715 Jacobite rebellion) the presence of the infant Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church Patronage (Scotland) Act sowing the seeds of future dissension in the Church of Scotland.

Despite the upset in his professional and personal life, James Fall continued to work on Robert Leighton’s papers. As early as 1693 he published the Meditations on the First Epistle of Peter and the Latin discourses given to Edinburgh University. His preface to the Meditations refers to Leighton as, “their primitively devout author”. Even by then Leighton’s style was evidently considered somewhat dated. However Fall’s editing seems to have been relatively light, Butler’s *Life and Letters of Robert Leighton* commends this, “Dr Fall’s edition may with some drawbacks be pronounced as by far the best. Later editors have reduced the good, archaic, nervous language which appears still so prominently in his letter, to the bald feebleness of modern phraseology. They have acted the part of schoolmasters, correcting the style of a school-boy’s essay, and so Leighton’s quaint language has been much impaired.”⁷

Those parts of Leighton’s works in the Library published before 1711 are probably all the fruit of James Fall’s work. They are The Meditations of the First Epistle of Peter, the Latin discourses, an exposition on the Creed, Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments and a collection of Sermons. Even during Fall’s life there was evidently some uncertainty what had become of Leighton’s other manuscripts. Those that had been sent to Dunblane were later sent to Edward Lightmaker. A receipt indicates that they would be returned once transcribed, but later correspondence shows that they were not. James Fall evidently acted as intermediary in some of the communications between the Library Trustees and Lightmaker, but in 1710 he wrote to them, “As for the manuscripts, they are in the hands, I suppose of Mr Lightmaker’s Executors: many of them are transcribed for the Press, and others already printed. ... for the original manuscripts Mr Lightmaker designed to keep them, thinking them

⁴ Edinburgh University History:

https://ourhistory.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Purge_of_Episcopalian_and_Jacobite_Staff,_1690

⁵ Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis:

<https://archive.org/details/munimentaalmeuni03mait/page/594/mode/2up>

⁶J.F. Leishman op.cit.

⁷ D.Butler, *The Life and Letter of Robert Leighton*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903 p.161

of no further use to the Library after they were printed, and copys of them were sent to you.”⁸ Poor Fall, himself ill and in the last year of his life is evidently trying to account for the oddities and derelictions of others.

For all this uncertainty we do have a substantial body of Robert Leighton’s work now in print. Most of this seems to date from his time as Principal of Edinburgh University rather than as Bishop and Archbishop. However, together with his letters and the minutes of meetings at which he was present throughout his life, his writings reinforce the impression from and recorded by his contemporaries of a man, deeply religious, sacrificially generous and ever focussed on reconciling of personal differences. Those he influenced, like James Fall, evidently revered his memory and considered it important to preserve his example of toleration in a difficult time. This could not be better expressed than as James Fall himself wrote in his introduction to Leighton’s *Meditations on the First Epistle of Peter*: “Matters of Controversie in Religion among Protestant Divines, this good Man, upon all occasions, in his Lifetime, either absolutely shunned, or endeavoured to soften, and where he could not Conciliate the Points themselves in Disputing: For (out of his great Charity) he had much better thoughts of each of them, than they ordinarily have of one another. And even when he gives in these Papers, his own Opinion in some few of these Points, he does it, with that Moderation and discretion, that can give no offence to any of the Parties, Except to such of them, who will needs be contentious: He was a singular instance how far good Men may differ in Judgement about some Abstruse points in Religion; Yet without Diminution of Affection, either to Truth, or to one Another.”

Women Printers of the Seventeenth Century in the Leighton Library

(by Gordon Willis)

Gordon has been tracking down the works of women writers and printers represented in the Library’s collection, the subject of the current exhibition he put together for us in the Library.

Only approximately ten women *writers* can be identified from the Leighton Library catalogue, ranging chronologically from Saint Teresa of Ávila to Queen Victoria. Even allowing for others who may be hidden behind pseudonyms, this is a paltry number. It may come a surprise that rather more women *printers* are represented. An exhibition of the work of some of these women has been running in the Library since the beginning of October.

Across most countries in northern Europe, the book trade was organized according to similar principles. Entry to the profession via the apprenticeship route was restricted to men; however, the wife of a master printer was permitted to take over the firm on the death of her husband. In many cases wives would have gained a good knowledge of the business side of the industry and were more than equal to the task. The new firm would be styled ‘The Widow (or Heir) of ...’ to retain the continuity of existing contracts and privileges. If such a widow married a journeyman printer, he automatically became a master printer and the head of the firm, in which case we would again lose sight of the widow, even though she may have continued to work there. Because of stringent closed-shop regulations, if she remarried outwith the booktrade, the firm would automatically be dissolved.

Coincidentally a woman printer had a hand in the library’s 1656 edition of the works of Saint Teresa, mentioned above; it was printed in Paris by the widow of Sebastien Huré and her son. Madame Huré is one of at least five Parisian widows whose printing is owned by the library. Other continental centres represented include Lyon, Douai, Poitiers, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Leiden and Frankfurt-am-Main. The Plantin-Moretus company in Antwerp was a particularly famous family-owned printers where down the years several women had managerial roles. The exceptional quality of their work can be judged in the library’s copy of the *Homilies of Asterius in Greek and Latin* (1615) ‘Ex officina Plantiniana, apud viduam et filios Ioannis Moreti’. This particular widow, Martina Plantin (1550-

⁸ D. Butler Op.cit. p.589

1616), knew the trade intimately, and the book is a typically elegant production, with a harmonious title-page, pretty capitals from wooden blocks, and crisply printed plates. Martina's rather scary portrait, by no less an artist than Rubens, is now displayed in the amazing Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp. She is portrayed as a well-to-do member of the bourgeoisie.

In London, widows regularly inherited printing businesses, thereby gaining membership of the powerful Stationers' Company. They can be hard to spot in imprints, however, as they often printed under their first initial followed by their late husband's surname. There are several instances in the library. E(lizabeth) Purslowe continued to print prolifically after her husband's death in 1632, both under her own name and as a partner in an enterprise called the Eliot's Court Press. E(llen) Cotes printed several books by one of Leighton's favourite authors, Jeremy Taylor. 'S. Griffin', active 1652-1673, was Edward Griffin's widow Sarah. She was the printer of the library's folio first edition of Francis Bacon, *Resuscitatio, or, Bringing into Publick Light Severall Pieces* (1657). Perhaps justifiably proud of her association with this important work, she declared herself as 'Sarah Griffin' on the title page. Other London printers to be found in the library (though for lack of space not in the exhibition) include Mary Clark and Anne Maxwell. A nice example of work by Anne's company is Sir William Temple's *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673).

In Scotland there was no equivalent of the Stationers Company, but the legal framework governing inheritance in the book trade was similar to that in England and elsewhere. The library has books printed by two Edinburgh women who each continued her late husband's business over many years. The first, Jonet Hart, succeeded her husband Andro (died 1621), who had a high reputation both as a printer and as a bookbinder specialising in richly decorated bindings. Along with two of her sons, Jonet carried on the printing side of the business until 1643. Two of the library's examples of her work are of special interest, as they were probably the first that Robert Leighton bought as a student. One is a list of theses defended by the Edinburgh graduands of 1627, the year of Leighton's matriculation, while the other, also from 1627, is a Latin catechism written by John Adamson specifically for the use of the Edinburgh students. Adamson was the university principal at the time; his immediate successor in 1653 was none other than Robert Leighton. (Unfortunately Jonet Hart could not be included in the exhibition.)

Later in the century we meet one of the most prolific of all women printers: Agnes Campbell (1637-1716), owner of Scotland's largest printing company, and one of the wealthiest traders in the country. In 1676 Agnes inherited from her first husband, Andrew Anderson, both his struggling printing business and his privileges as Royal Printer. Observing the terms of the Royal Warrant, which had been granted for the controversially long period of 41 years, she printed as 'The Heir of Andrew Anderson', even after a short-lived second marriage. For four decades Agnes thrived in this male-dominated trade, displaying entrepreneurial flair and ruthless tenacity in defending and advancing her rights. Her competitors attacked her business ethics, but in this respect she was probably neither worse nor better than they were. As Royal Printer she was not only guaranteed steady work, but she was also exempt from paying duty on paper. She was in addition the official printer to the City and the University of Edinburgh, and, after many years of manoeuvring, printer to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In some years her company printed over half of the items produced in the whole of Scotland. Her business interests expanded beyond printing into financing other printers in Scotland, Ireland and northern England, as well as dealing on a large scale in paper. She jointly founded the first paper mill in Penicuik, at Valleyfield, an enterprise which developed and continued in other hands until 1975.

In later life she styled herself Lady Roseburn, having purchased Roseburn House and various lands in southwest Edinburgh and elsewhere. Roseburn House, now in the shadow of Murrayfield stadium, is still preserved, while some of its land has become Roseburn public park. On her death in 1716, her estate was valued at £78,000 Scots, a sum which could have paid for the Leighton Library building at least 30 times over! The printing business was continued by Agnes's daughters and other relatives,

but within ten years it became unprofitable, the Royal Warrant having expired, and the Heirs of Andrew Anderson printed no more.

The Leighton Library has around 25 examples of her work. Some are extremely rare single-sheet proclamations and petitions. It would be nice to be able to say that Agnes raised the quality of printing in Scotland, but unfortunately that is decidedly not the case. Her firm's productions were notoriously poor, set in battered type and carelessly proofread, as may be seen in two title pages from the exhibition. *A Discourse Representing the Sufficient Manifestation of the Will of God to His Church*, by James Canaries, was issued in 1684 with a list of errata facing the title page. In the second example, *The Difference Between True and False Christianity* (1703), by Laurence Charters (or Charteris, one of Leighton's close friends), the word 'Difference' is broken-backed, while the place of publication is misprinted as 'EDINBUGH'!

Further reading: Alastair Mann, who wrote the excellent entry on Agnes Campbell in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, is an authority on early printing in Scotland. For a useful overview, see his essay ['The Anatomy of the Printed Book in Early Modern Scotland'](#) on Stirling University's website.

Exhibition in Stirling Central Library: Stirling's Literary History

As part of Stirling 900 celebrations, an exhibition at Stirling Central Library celebrates authors who have connections with the Stirling area.

The panel featuring Sir Walter Scott mentions "The Lady of the Lake", set in the Trossachs, of which the Leighton Library has a first edition.

Stirling was established as a Royal Burgh by King David I in 1124. The 900th anniversary started in 2024 and will come to an end on 29 March 2025.

The exhibition at the Library was launched on 12 February and will stay up for some time after the end of the celebrations.



The Leighton Library Website

Do keep an eye on the Leighton website <https://www.leightonlibrary.org.uk> where you can find excellent photos, videos, latest news, and links to press articles. You can read about the history of Robert Leighton, the Library, and the books. You'll find previous editions of the Leighton Letter there, with articles on Leighton, the books and the bindings, the early librarians, and past volunteers. And all 18 Restoration Newsletters are there.

Here are two items that your editors have found particularly interesting this month:

- The Books, with the addition of an illustrated piece by Katie Halsey: [Leighton Library Books](#)
- Alastair MacDonald's article on ['The Scottish Enlightenment'](#) looks at books in the Library by significant figures such as David Hume, Adam Smith, Robert Adam, and Joseph Black.

And finally...

Friends of the Leighton Library: If you know of someone interested in signing up as a Friend, an application form can be obtained by emailing leightonfriends@gmail.com