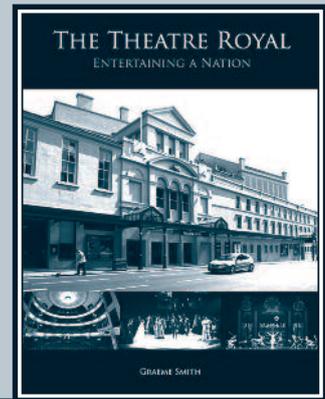


The Theatre Royal: Entertaining a Nation

Following our well-attended AGM in October this colourful and illustrated talk was by the Friends' new Chairman Graeme Smith. By profession a Chartered Accountant, which involved studying Law and Economics at

the University, he has assisted the writing of *Ships for a Nation*, the definitive history of John Brown's of Clydebank and is currently completing the history of the Alhambra Theatre, to be published as a sequel to his Theatre Royal book.



Abstract:

James Baylis, once a bookkeeper in a brewery, and creator of the Theatre Royal at the head of Hope Street, had his finger on the pulse of a city that would soon become the eighth largest in Europe. Most of his successors did likewise including the Glover family, from the old Royal in Dunlop Street, and fruit importer Baillie Michael Simons who introduced the actor managers Howard & Wyndham, a company which he helped become the largest operators and owners of quality theatres in Britain.

Opening in 1867, its bill of fare has embraced dramas, pantomime, spectaculars, opera, ballet, revues, concerts, seasons of film during WW1, circus in WW2 and festivals including Mayfest. Its promoters

and producers linked performance arts with fine arts and the International Exhibitions, all expressing the confidence and context of the times. By the 1960s John Logie Baird's invention closed over 80% of all theatres and cinemas nationally but, by a happy paradox, television saved the Royal.

Canadian newspaper magnate Roy Thomson started commercial Scottish Television in 1957 located in the Royal, using Howard & Wyndham staff, with live entertainment from the theatre being watched each week by many more people in the comfort of their living rooms. STV was the first sponsor of Alexander Gibson's newly formed Scottish Opera in 1962 and continued to broadcast their performances across Scotland and

England and to commission new operas.

When colour television studios started in Cowcaddens, STV offered the theatre to Scottish Opera and from 1975, after great support from members of the public, the Theatre Royal suitably restored to its French Renaissance elegance became Scotland's first national opera house – home of Scottish Opera, The Scottish Ballet, and in the 1980s of the Scottish Theatre Company mainly directed by Tom Fleming, with STV commissioning new plays. Today "that old fashioned mechanism, a curtain" continues to rise at the Head of Hope Street.

Graeme Smith

PROFILES



Born in London, brought up in Aberdeenshire, Helen is a graduate of the University of Aberdeen. In 1975 she took up the post of Graduate Library Assistant at Strathclyde, completing the PG Diploma in Librarianship there. She then worked at Glasgow School of Art and at the Western College of Nursing. Helen became a Subject Librarian at University of Glasgow in 1979, since when she has managed Lending/Enquiry Services, becoming Lending/Enquiry Services, becoming Associate Director and then University Librarian in 2006. While the early stage of her career matched the beginning of the use of computers in information

9. Helen Durndell

retrieval the focus is now on customer service development, building refurbishment and staff management. Helen's role now is more political and externally-facing. Working with an excellent team within the library, she also has to ensure that the Library has the backing of senior University managers to deliver the services needed by students and staff. Currently, Helen chairs SCURL (Scottish Consortium of University & Research Libraries, and is a Board Member of SLIC (Scottish Library & Information Council) and SCOUNL (Society of College, National and University Librarians).

Murder, Mayhem and Seneca: Fugitive Poems of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century.

On Thursday 22 November, Dr Theo van Heijnsbergen, Department of Scottish Literature, University of Glasgow, gave a highly informative and entertaining talk on an "eclectic and totally irresponsible selection of texts that were either written or circulating in Scotland c.1600 and that suggest a much livelier and varied literary 'scene' than we normally associate with early seventeenth-century". In 1989 Dr van Heijnsbergen graduated from the University of Nijmegen with a degree in Modern

British and American Literature and in Old and Middle English Literature. He began studies at the University of Groningen for a Ph.D in sixteenth-century Scottish lyrics and those of Alexander Scott. In 1994 he moved to the University of Glasgow to complete his PhD and to take up his current position as lecturer in the department of Scottish Literature. He was Secretary of the Scottish Text Society from 2004 to 2006. Recently he has researched into early modern book history and manuscript circulation.



Abstract:

The paper started by looking at a Glasgow University MS of Seneca's tragedies (MS Hunter 297, c. 1300) which in the late sixteenth century was owned by a member of the Sinclair of Mey family from the northern-most parts of mainland Scotland. Its marginalia are from a wide range of sources (Classical texts, a French song, proverbs, isolated inscriptions in Greek, poems from English printed lyrical miscellanies, etc. Particularly prominent are excerpts from a 1615 poem, Thomas Overbury's 'A Wife'. They confirm that there was an appetite in Scotland for

Overbury's verse; recent research has unearthed more references to this poem in Scottish contemporary manuscripts.

More of such fugitive texts were then traced in English and Scots books and manuscripts circulating in northern Scotland. The evidence details a much more active and self-sufficient literary 'scene' in seventeenth-century northern Scotland than usually thought. Particularly noteworthy are its connections with Lowland Scotland, and the role of women in this, as poets, compilers or (wives of) literary patrons.

The talk finished by examining how James VI instructed Scots poets to develop a distinct Scottish lyrical practice, one that made their verse 'fugitive' in another sense: they were fugitive in the usual sense for centuries, but although they have now been well known for some time they are still fugitive in terms of escaping better contextualised interpretations by modern readers who have not (yet) learned to read those texts within their intended poetical tradition.

Dr Theo van Heijnsbergen

News from other Libraries

Aberdeen University's new library is scheduled to open to the public in September 2011.

The new £60 million project will provide much more than a conventional library. It will provide an important resource for the whole community, who for the first time will enjoy access to priceless historical collections of books and manuscripts and regular events.

A dedicated Special Collections Centre within the building will offer a welcoming cultural venue where a wide range of public audiences can engage with the collections through educational programming, exhibitions and volunteer opportunities.



The Friends of Aberdeen University Library have earmarked £200,000 towards the new library.

The Aberdeen Friends newsletter for Spring/Summer 2010 is available online at:

www.abdn.ac.uk/library/friends/

St Andrews University started their **Friends of St Andrews University Library** in 2007.

Their Winter Lecture, held in the Arts Lecture Theatre, was

appropriate to the times entitled, "Books, Vision and Ambition in an Age of Austerity."

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/friends/

Edinburgh University's redevelopment of its main library is nearing completion, the last two floors due in 2012/13. **The Friends of Edinburgh University Library** are

raising funds to help purchase Display Cases for the new Exhibition Room in the redevelopment.

www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/friends/

