



EDINBURGH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

EDFAS CHAMPIONS

Deirdre, Dowager Countess of Rosebery



Deirdre Rosebery was an energetic and friendly presence at EDFAS since 1970. We have been so lucky to have known her and had her support and guidance.

EDFAS was founded in 1970, the first society in Scotland, and Deirdre Rosebery was involved from our inception. Her foreword to the book celebrating EDFAS's 50th says so much about her and her energy and approach to life: "It started with a group of Edinburgh friends... Edinburgh was always different from the early societies in the south. We were never a "blue rinsed" society group but all bright younger 'actively working' people who wanted to be involved. As EDFAS grew and as each 'top group' retires there has been a need to refocus now and then, but large as we are the ethos and camaraderie are unchanged. EDFAS has always been about friendship and widening interest and experience for individuals hungry for personal development outside the routine of life. I have come to most of the evening lectures, and I also enjoyed visits and tours."

Lady Rosebery became our President in 1974 and has always played an active role and contributed to EDFAS. Hugely interested in the arts and always curious to discover something new she had visited the art collections of the world and historic houses in Europe and America. She curated the spectacular collections at Dalmeny. Her fresh and original approach was much copied, and she was also a noted expert on French porcelain. She brought her knowledge and contacts particularly to the early days of EDFAS, attracting lecturers such as Roy Strong and Anthony Blunt to Edinburgh.

Deirdre Rosebery was well known to so many of our members over the years. She had the gift of making people feel relaxed and bringing out the best in people. She was always happy to step up and present a cheque or give a vote of thanks and always had a story to tell. After the 2016 EDFAS Society Lecture at the soon to be opened Patrick Geddes Centre at Riddle's Court she said she was the most appropriate person to give the vote of thanks as she had spent many weeks at Riddle's Court when in Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh Fringe in the early 1950s. She was at art college in Oxford and very involved with the Oxford University Dramatic Society. She gave us a most amusing account of those days at the Fringe. She recalled sleeping in the lovely painted room upstairs, watching mice picking up crumbs under the camp beds. Maggie Smith was amongst those who slept on the floor of Riddle's Court. The food budget was 23/- per week per head. Neil Rosebery, OUDS backstage crew member, was the electrician. Living locally, he brought in fruit cake and huge lumps of cheese from Dalmeny. Later in 1954 they became engaged. Lady Rosebery ended by saying she did indeed understand the premise of Patrick Geddes's dictum: learn by living.

Theo Burrell 1986-2026

Theo Burrell died on the 8th July of glioblastoma - incurable brain cancer - at the age of 39. She was simply a wonderful individual whom we were lucky enough to know, as a member of the EDFAS committee, and as a friend. Theo was a specialist in decorative arts, taxidermy and European ceramics at the auctioneers Lyon and Turnbull and was a popular antiques expert on the BBC "Antiques Roadshow". She was a gifted communicator and her passion for antiques was evident from her interactions with the public on television and with members of EDFAS. We were delighted when she joined the committee, under the then Chairman, Anne Mason Brown, as she brought with her a wealth of experience and energy. Theo helped to make our lectures available online during the lockdown of 2020 and also set up and managed all of our events through Eventbrite. She was always helpful and positive. Theo had a good sense of humour, seeing the funny side of challenging moments and was a huge supporter of EDFAS.



She was proud of her family connections and wrote the foreword to a biography of Sir William Burrell: "A Collector's Life". She organized a memorable visit to the Burrell collection for EDFAS members, bringing with it a very personal perspective.

Despite her diagnosis and major surgery, she continued to play a valuable part in the committee, sorting out IT and Eventbrite problems behind the scenes. Theo was brave and frank when talking of her illness, and she went on to devote her energies to Brain Tumour Research, as a high-profile campaigner. She asked EDFAS committee members if they would like to raise money for this special charity, and offers were immediately forthcoming. A week at a house in Elie was offered at a silent auction and two members offered dinner parties to be auctioned. These were only a few ways committee members rallied round Theo to help her cause. Her commitment was infectious. She spoke often of her little boy Jonah, and we send our heartfelt condolences to her husband, Alex and her family. Theo made a difference in so many ways.

DISCOVER THE MUSEUM



Discover the Museum is a flagship access and engagement programme supported by EDFAS and the Jamath Charitable Trust, and delivered by National Museums Scotland. Designed to provide **free, fully supported museum visits** for primary school pupils from areas of mid to high deprivation across Edinburgh.

Running since 2019, the programme continues to address barriers to cultural participation by offering an inclusive, welcoming and memorable museum experience. For many pupils, this is their **first visit to the National Museum of Scotland**, supporting the development of cultural capital, confidence, and curiosity.



Evaluation was gathered through observation during visits, teacher surveys and pupil feedback activities. Teachers are provided with an evaluation feedback survey and through this feedback we know that teachers identify the programme as an effective way to address the poverty-related attainment gap, particularly through access to cultural learning opportunities otherwise unavailable to many pupils.

Teacher Feedback:

"The children were amazed by the Giants, but actually really enjoyed the tour round the main museum. The model making was a definite hit. It was lovely for me to see what each child was most interested in. From a teacher's point of view it was great to have so much facilitation so I could concentrate on talking to the children."

A MEMORABLE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

- Engaged 451 pupils across 7 schools
- Introduced a themed learning journey centred on the **Giants exhibition**
- Provided **fully funded access**, including transport, snack, workshop delivery and exhibition entry
- Continued focus on **equity, accessibility, and reducing barriers to participation** Supported Curriculum for Excellence priorities, including **Learning for Sustainability** and interdisciplinary learning
- Provided incentives for pupils to return, with pupils given a voucher to claim a free gift from the shop - 42 pupils returned to the museum by end of April to claim their gift from the Museum shop, almost a 10% return

Exhibition: Giants

Pupils explored large-scale natural and prehistoric phenomena, engaging with scientific concepts through visually impactful displays and storytelling.

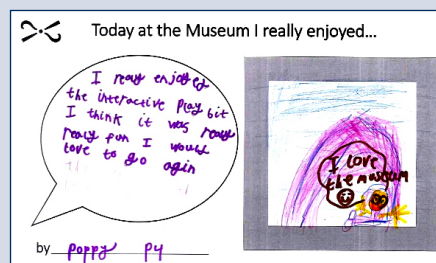
Workshop: Eco Explorers – Giants

Delivered by the Learning Team, this hands-on session encouraged pupils to:

- Investigate environmental themes
- Collaborate to build models of giant invertebrates
- Reflect on human impact and sustainability
- Engage creatively with scientific ideas

"10 children in my class had never been to the museum, so this gave them an equal opportunity."

"It allowed children to be engaged to an experience that may not have been possible for them. The learning was enriching and accessible to all abilities. They are now aware that access to the museum is free so they will be able to go in their own time with their families."



Pupil Feedback:
Thanks you for the best time!!!
– Poppy

Discover the Museum aims to create a long-term relationship between participants and the museum. We do this through encouraging return visits with families, providing information on future free and subsidised opportunities, and maintaining relationships with participating schools.

Thank you again for your continued support of this innovative and inclusive schools programme that enables young people to feel more confident about visiting museums and engaging with culture.

UPDATE FROM LEITH SCHOOL OF ART

As a Patron, your support enables LSA to offer a range of activities that underpin their charitable ethos, particularly widening participation. Our donation provides talented school pupils from schools across Edinburgh with professional art tuition.



Spotlight on LSA Schools Programme

EDFAS has helped to provide another successful Schools programme this year. Now in its 10th year, this community outreach project is delivered by LSA tutors in partnership with seven schools: Broughton High School, Craigroyston High School, Holy Rood RC High School, Leith Academy, Portobello High School, The Royal High School and Trinity Academy.

The LSA Schools Programme supports young people aged 15-17 to progress into further arts education. Alongside weekly two and a half hour classes across two terms, they offer up to two full bursaries each year for students progressing to our Art & Design Foundation Diploma. Last year, three pupils from the 2024/25 programme continued on to the Diploma with bursary support.

The programme is especially impactful for young creatives with limited access to arts opportunities or networks. Each year, twelve S5 and S6 pupils complete a 22-week course focused on developing skills, building confidence and preparing portfolios. Students work across a range of media, visit exhibitions and exhibit their work twice during the course.

Student Feedback:

"I really enjoyed the course. It forced me to be creative when I felt like I was in a rut. I like that we didn't get graded on things, it felt like there was less pressure"

"I really care about art and it's been so amazing to be in a room full of people a similar age to me who are equally as passionate about making art. It's so nice being with creative people"

"It was a much more relaxed environment than school. I would get all my school stuff done then be really excited to have this extra creative outlet on a Friday afternoon"

"I think I do much more art now, like I do a lot of art at home just for fun. Before the course I would just do it as school work, but now it's something I do for myself."

"The course has had a noticeable impact on me both personally and academically. One of the biggest changes has been the opportunity to meet new people, including others who share similar creative interests as well as more experienced, professional artists. Being around that kind of environment has made me feel more connected and less isolated in what I'm interested in"

Schools Programme 25-26 Student Feedback

LEITH SCHOOL OF ART After completing the S5/S6 Friday course...

90%
of students said they are more likely to push themselves to try new things

70%
of students said they feel more independent

80%
of students said they felt more confident in their artistic abilities

90%
of students said they would like to have a career in the arts

80%
of students said they are more likely to take ownership of their learning

We were delighted to welcome Nicholas Devison, Principal of Leith School of Art, to our afternoon lecture in May, when he thanked us for the support EDFAS offers to this project.



EDFAS CONTINUES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AT THE EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART

EDFAS currently supports three students through their three - year degree course at Edinburgh College of Art. We are delighted to share their progress with you.

Zoë Smillie is currently experimenting with sculpture, looking at casting in different materials, including gelatine and bioplastics, as well as Plaster of Paris. She is interested in the idea of decomposition, but will also need to try some harder and more brittle materials, to ensure that her work lasts a little longer. Her focus is currently the nature of the relationship between humans and nature, and she had an interesting visit to the Anatomical Museum last term.

She is still studying Art in Process, looking at Bauhaus, and had to prepare a teaching plan on how she would approach teaching that topic to a class. In her Making Things Public course, she and fellow students curated individual exhibitions within a group, using work from their Art in Practice course and focusing on how best to present it.

She worked over Christmas and managed to fit in a visit to the Kunstmuseum in Vienna and will be joining the Art School trip to Berlin in Reading Week to visit the galleries and studios. Away from her studies, Zoë has achieved a long-held ambition to learn to ski (she lives in Aviemore, but couldn't afford it as a child). Her neighbours are ski instructors and have offered to give her some lessons and she has managed to source a great deal of second-hand equipment online, so she is now set to conquer the slopes. After graduating, her aim is to travel and experience all that life has to offer. She agreed that studying at Edinburgh really had broadened her horizons and that her scholarship had played a vital part in enabling her to travel to Europe and visit so much of its wonderful art.

Yara Kamleh is incredibly busy, as ever. She has been focusing on ceramics and embroidery for her Art in Practice and experimented with combining the two: she is punching holes in clay, then firing it, with a view to embroidering the objects after glazing. This is a process of trial and error, as the clay shrinks on firing, of course, and she needs to get the size and spacing of the holes correct. Ever inventive, she goes to the laser cutting workshop to create a wood cutting, which she then stamps onto the clay to mimic embroidery. She is making a water jug and hopes to embroider the finished product. Yara is also using embroidery as part of her Making things Public course: she and three others are creating an exhibition, with the overarching theme of "threads" that bleed out of the frame and into the exhibition space.

Yara is also working on a 4,000-word essay on the theme of Women in Diaspora for Art as Process, looking at the experience of making art in the west and comparing it with the context of art in the Levant. Her final course this term is Sites and Situations, and she has chosen 'Making Art in Schools'. Her group has been working with the children of West Barns School near Dunbar, teaching them printmaking. She has really enjoyed this course and finds working with the children very rewarding.

Yara herself had an exhibition of her own work at the Embassy Gallery in January (<https://embassygallery.org/events/scheherazade-in-the-land-of-birds/>), titled Scheherazade in the Land of Birds (birds being a reference to Palestine).

Finally, as Disability Student Officer, she wrote an article on arthritis and its representation in contemporary art and worked on a social media campaign on the subject of endometriosis in March.

Matt Philpot is in his first year at the College. Originally from the Isle of Sheppey, he is studying the BA (Hons) in Fine Art. He is a mature student at 23 years of age and was successful at his all-boys grammar school, though his A levels coincided



with a period of ill-health, followed by COVID, which meant he was not able to complete them.

In 2024 Matt moved to Edinburgh, where he was accepted on to the university's Access Programme. He did extremely well, gaining A grades across the board and embarked on the Fine Art course this year.

He undertook three projects in the first term: "Parade", an ice-breaker; "Chair" (shown left) for which Matt deconstructed two camping chairs to create a sculpture of a seal and "Image as Object" when he chose something that represented a significant person in his life: a button hole worn by his former partner at a wedding. He then stretched out this image to create a banner which was chosen to hang across the Sculpture Court at the college (pictured above). In addition, he chose to study Performance Art as an elective subject, before embarking on a "Living as a Creative Art" project, using video and photography and a further elective on the topic of "Adventures in Drawing." In addition to his studies, Matt takes a life-drawing class and a drawing and painting class at Leith School of Art.



The EDFAS scholarship has allowed Matt to spend more time on his studies; he is able to work fewer hours at a supermarket and the funds allow him to pay for extra drawing classes and to rent a studio space in the city. He feels this space has been "transformative" and is grateful to EDFAS for the support.

We are very grateful to Carolyn Brodie Mackay, Senior Donor Relations Officer, for keeping us up to date with the students' progress.

WELCOME TO ALASTAIR LEARMONT & KATE HEGGIE



Alastair Learmont

I joined the committee in session 2025-2026. Brought up just outside Edinburgh, I read classics at university. I practised for several years as an advocate interspersed with spells as a publisher in Scotland and a walking guide in Italy, but, since 2012, I have combined historical research with a wide range of adult educational work. I am a Teaching Fellow at the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Open Learning and a regular freelance educator at the National Galleries of Scotland.

As a social and cultural historian, I have pursued research into Scotland's connections with the slave economies of the West Indies during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. I assist with the organisation of events on the EDFAS committee.



Kate Heggie

I was introduced to EDFAS by family members who had enjoyed the lectures for some time, and I'm delighted that they did. I have always been interested in the arts, with painting and ceramics my two particular passions. However, it has been a joy to broaden my knowledge and discover new areas of interest, thanks to the fascinating lectures. I've been a member of EDFAS for a couple of years, and I am delighted to join the committee. It's my role to keep the database up to date and to ensure members receive information about the lectures and events.

FAREWELL TO LIZ EAST



Liz has decided to stand down from the committee after fifteen years of service. She was appointed Secretary of the EDFAS committee at the AGM in 2011 and has been Vice Chairman for the last eight years. She has taken minutes of over one hundred meetings, quite a feat in itself! Liz previously worked as the Corporate Service Director for the Carnegie Trust and has been a dedicated and positive member of the committee, always willing to help out in all sorts of ways. Organised and efficient, she has been a tremendous support to the Chairs. As well as taking excellent minutes, she has helped prepare flyers for visits and been a welcoming face at our lectures.

Liz has enjoyed being part of several EDFAS Tours, and I know from personal experience that she is particularly good at putting people at ease. Liz has a "can do" attitude which is infectious and her cheerful contributions to EDFAS lectures, events and meetings have shaped the society in recent years. We are grateful to her for her loyal service, hard work and cheerful, smiling presence.

EDFAS DONATIONS 2025/26

DONATIONS MADE

Edinburgh College of Art	£4,500
Leith School of Art	£3,000
National Museum of Scotland	£7,600

Total Donations made **£15,100**

VOLUNTEERING UPDATE



The EDFAS team continues to work for one day a month at the Museum stores in Granton. We have been working there for over 14 years and were delighted this year to receive an **Inspiring Volunteer Award** from the Lord Provost in a ceremony at the City Chambers in early June.

The photo shows the team involved, left to right:

Lesley McLean, Jen McDowell, Betty Brightman, Rie Stevenson, Dorothy Bleich, and Margaret Studley

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH



The Botanics still finds work for our volunteers in the library and in the archives. Countless sketches and paintings have been carefully recorded and rehoused, and information entered on the main Botanics database.

We are always asked for yet more padded coat hangers, and we have made a considerable number again this year. The requests for Tyvek garment bags also keep coming, sometimes with a troublesome item needing special thought, for example the very trendy PVC raincoats popular in the 1960s. Tyvek is used for other things too, for example dust covers for chairs in the furniture collection and pillows, not only for cushioning items as they are transported, but also for supporting a particular object while the conservators are working on it, an amphora maybe that arrived in the museum in many pieces and which needs to be reconstructed.

We are looking for just a few new volunteers to help with the work in Granton. If anyone who has an interest and skills in hand and machine sewing and who would be able to volunteer for one day a month, then please contact Jen McDowell at: jjmcdowell@ymail.com



NEW CHURCH TRAIL FOR CHILDREN



A new Church Trail for children has been created for the Church of the Good Shepherd in Murrayfield and was presented to the Rector in April.

We are hoping to start work on a trail for Old St. Pauls in Jeffrey Street in the Autumn.



CHAIR'S REFLECTIONS



I am writing this in the midst of a heat wave and the memory of what felt like a long, wet, rather grey winter is fading rapidly! Our lecture programme this season has been as varied as our weather: from the glorious light-filled paintings of William McTaggart and the vivid mosaics of Ravenna, to the extraordinary heroism of the women of the orchestra in Auschwitz.

We have gained insights into the world of Jan Van Eyck and T. S. Eliot and listened in awe to the music of Benjamin Britten. Sharing the lectures with you, our members, either in person at St John's, or online, has been a real pleasure. It has been good to see familiar faces, to catch up, discuss lectures and to welcome new members throughout the year. Our thanks go to Grace Durham and Peter Hunter, lecture secretaries, for putting together such a splendid series.

We have also enjoyed visits to some interesting city gems: the season opened with a visit to the **Signet Library**, where members were taken on a tour of the art collection and later in the winter, on a chilly February morning, to the **Edinburgh University Old Medical School**, which offered us insights into the teaching of anatomy over three hundred years. In the new year, a group of us attended a fascinating and informative session on **Scottish Arts and Crafts Silver**, led by Gordon Foster, when we were able to see at close hand wonderful examples of silver ware and jewellery and to bring our own pieces along for Gordon to peruse and share his thoughts on them with us. This summer we have experienced two memorable visits: one to the remarkable private collection of our Vice-President, Dr Iain Gordon Brown and his wife, Dr Patricia Andrew, and to **Marchmont House** in the Borders (pictured below), an A listed Palladian mansion. Both visits, in glorious weather, were very much enjoyed and appreciated by members. Thanks to Jill Holmes and Russell Duncan for organizing the visits and events this season.

As I write, the EDFAS summer tour is taking place in North Yorkshire, organized and led by **Charles Guest**, supported by Connoisseur Travel. I know from the itinerary, that they will be thoroughly immersed in some of the finest houses and gardens of the area.



Thanks to your subscriptions and donations, we continue to support creative arts in the city through our outreach programme and focus on funding courses and projects that engage those young people who would otherwise miss out on the joy and value of creative arts. There is a full review of our three key projects in this newsletter. At the May lecture, we welcomed **Nicholas Devison, Principal of Leith School of Art**, who described how the funds we donate enable them to offer weekly, free tutored sessions to promising art students from local schools. We have invited representatives from the National Museum of Scotland and from the Edinburgh University College of Art to come to lectures in the autumn to do the same.

Integrating art into our lives has so many benefits: it can transcend words, broaden perspectives and offer hope. It can surprise and startle us, but most of all it offers us the opportunity to reflect on our world and to respond to it in our own, personal way. Coming together, as we do, at lectures or events helps us to connect with each other and, by doing so, help promote wider access to the arts for the next generation.

This spring we were saddened to lose our President of many years, Deidre, Countess of Rosebery, who died peacefully in May, at the age of 94. She held this position alongside her many other philanthropic and cultural roles, and we are indebted to her for her contribution to our society.

At the AGM in October, I will be stepping down as Chair, after five years. It has been an enriching and fun experience, due not only to the range of lectures and visits I have been lucky enough to be involved in, but largely because of the support and friendship of a dedicated committee. EDFAS is an inspiring society and charity, with admirable and relevant aims for today's world and to have been part of its development, and to have served you, our members, has been a privilege.

Patricia Lancaster

Tricia Lancaster
Chair EDFAS

LECTURES 2026/27

8th September 2026

James Renshaw

Dwellings for the gods: the Ancient Greek temple and its legacy

13th October 2026

Sandy Burnett

Exploring Bach's St Matthew Passion

10th November 2026

Jane Geddes

Piping Pigs, Groping Mermaids: some carved panels from Fetteresso

8th December 2026

Simon Seligman

A 21st Century Renaissance: Chatsworth and the Devonshire Collection in the Modern Age

12th January 2027

Patricia Andrew

All-Round Raeburn: Sir Henry Raeburn, the man and his milieu

9th February 2027

Frances Fowle

Richard Dadd, Augustus Egg and 'The Clique': Precursors of the Pre-Raphaelites

9th March 2027

James Bolton

Rome Re-invented: the Influence of Italy on 18th Century English Gardens

13th April 2027

Christina Faraday

The Visual World of Mary Queen of Scots

11th May 2027

Chantal Brotherton-Ratcliffe
Caravaggio: the artist and his contemporaries' response to his revolutionary art

8th June 2027

Alike Braine

Same Old, Same New: How the 'Old Masters' help us understand contemporary art

EDFAS TOUR TO NORTH YORKSHIRE JUNE 2026



Relaxing at Markenfield Hall

Charles and Gail Guest excelled themselves again this year, organising visits to a range of places, and we particularly appreciated the special access to private houses. Based at **Nidd Hall** just north of Harrogate, on our drive south we visited **Auckland Palace**, a remarkable restoration project of the home of the Prince Bishops of Durham with a new Gallery of Spanish art.

Birdshall House was a highlight. The home of the Willoughby family since the 1200's, the house developed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and we were given a private tour of her home by Lady Cara Willoughby.

Castle Howard, a truly great house whose exterior is known to all, was built over 100 years to the design of Sir John Vanburgh. This 'Palace of the North' has undergone several restorations and we saw the Tapestry Drawing Room, the Long Gallery (where Anne Young remembers attending a dance as a teenager), and Grand Staircase.

Simon Green, a former committee member of EDFAS, who now lives in the area, gave us a short talk about the history of North Yorkshire.

Scrampton Hall, home of Christopher and Miranda Legard, is a fine regency house full of interesting works of art, furniture and porcelain set in a Capability Brown park. The Walled Garden (*below*) has been transformed from a derelict kitchen garden into a contemporary garden designed by Piet Oudolf, with bold drifts of herbaceous perennials and grasses.



Hovingham Hall (*above*), the private home of the Worsley family for over 450 years and the childhood home of the late Katharine, Duchess of Kent is a Grade 1 listed Palladian house built between 1750 and 1770. You enter through an enormous indoor riding school and the lawn is home to what is reputed to be the oldest continuously played cricket pitch in England.

Markenfield Hall is first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 and is a medieval building surrounded by a moat. The private home of the Grantleys, we were given a warm welcome and quantities of cake.

Newby Hall, home of Richard and Lucinda Compton was built by his ancestors about 1697 by Sir Christopher Wren and remodelled by Robert Adam around 1750. A stunning house with fabulous gardens with 27 plant collections. Full of remarkable treasures collected during the Grand tour and bespoke Chippendale furniture – as well as Gyles Brandreth's collection of teddy bears.



Dining Room at Newby Hall

We headed home via **Ripon Prison and Police Museum**, complete with pillory, whipping post and grim cells with barred windows and heard about policing in Yorkshire from Anglo Saxon times.



EDINBURGH
DECORATIVE
& FINE ARTS
SOCIETY

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A Member Society of The Arts Society

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