

Chronicle of Edinburgh

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Abstract

The following lines are focused on the Scottish city of Edinburgh, which I had the pleasure to know in the beginning of the year 2020. Emphasis is given to the visit I paid to the office of the Disability Information Scotland, where Ms Irene Purcell and Ms Lizzie Dally kindly received me. The article also addresses the essential role of the Catholic Church in the creation of the Western culture.

Keywords: Edinburgh; Disability Information Scotland; charity; Catholic Church; West

*There's no leaving Edinburgh, no shifting
it around: it stays with you, always.*

Alan Norman Bold



Figure 1: "A picture is worth a thousand words." (Photo taken by the Author, inside an Edinburgh's bus)

First Things First

Circa half a million people live nowadays in Edinburgh, a Scottish city whose origins are more than 10,000 years old, considering the fact that "the earliest known remains of human settlement in Scotland have been uncovered at Cramond, near Edinburgh.

Mesolithic stone tools, tool waste and hazelnut shells from a hunting camp overlooking the Forth Estuary have been radiocarbon dated to about 8500 BC [1]." With respect to the Scottish people (Scots: *Scots Fowk*; *Scottish Gaelic*: *Albannaich*, *Old English*: *Scottas*) or simply "Scots", it is known that they are "a nation and ethnic group native

to Scotland. Historically, they emerged from an amalgamation of two Celtic-speaking peoples, the Picts and Gaels, who founded the Kingdom of Scotland (*or Alba*) in the 9th century. Pictish-Gaels (or Albannaich) were then displaced by Viking settlers to the north and west, who in turn became Norse-Gaels, and, becoming Gaelicised by the 13th century, left a Norse legacy in places such as the Hebrides [2].” At first sight, Edinburgh might seem “a foppish dandy compared to Glasgow, its earthy rival to the west [3].” However, Edinburgh’s own attractions are many, and many are the visitors who come to

the capital of Scotland to enjoy them. Considered to be “a great first stop north of Hadrian’s Wall” [4], Edinburgh has plenty of Georgian townhouses, beautiful churches, excellent museums and a superb castle, whose foundations date back to the 12th century. History is just everywhere in this city nicknamed “Athens of the North” due to her many Greek Revival Buildings and named after a Celtic word whose meaning nobody knows anymore. Indeed, “Edin’, the root of the city’s name, derives from Eidyn, the name for this region in Cumbric, the Brittonic Celtic language formerly spoken there. The name’s meaning is unknown” [5].



Figure 2: At 2,900 million years old, this Scottish metamorphic rock is one of Europe’s oldest known rocks. (National Museum of Scotland) Photo taken by the Author.

On 5 Rose Street

In the view of my already mentioned Lonely Planet guide for Europe – the renowned international travel guide book of which I became a fan in Katmandou, Nepal, almost 30 years ago [6]–, Edinburgh’s “every building seems to have its own ghost story [7].” With or without ghosts, the city’s urban landscape fascinated me during my time there (March 2020). Personally prominent among the buildings I entered was the one called “Thorn House”, located on 5 Rose Street. One of its many offices belongs to the Disability Information Scotland [8], an entity responsible for providing “reliable, accurate and accessible information [9]” not only for Scottish disabled, but also for disabled foreigners who live in

Scotland and happen to suffer from any kind of disability. As for me, neither am I Scottish nor disabled, but this did not prevent me from visiting such office nor of being warmly welcomed by both Ms Irene Purcell and Ms Lizzie Dally, representatives of *Disability Information Scotland’s* “small and friendly team”, definitely always ready to “understand and find the answers to individual queries on a whole range of topics from Blue Badges to Personal Independence Payments [10].” As a prove that progress is not incompatible with “old” moral principles such as charity and respect for one’s neighbor, Edinburgh, notwithstanding her ancient roots, is a model in terms of urban accessibility.



Figure 3: Irene & Lizzie (Photo taken by the Author)

It is Worth Remembering

It is worth remembering that charity (*Latin caritas*), in Christian theology, is one of the seven virtues. St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), “the wisest among the saints and the saintliest among the wise”, saw charity as “the friendship of man for God”, which “unites us to Him”; he also holds it as “the most excellent of the virtues [11]”, adding that “the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God, but also to the love of our neighbors [12]”. In fact, “It would take large volumes to record the complete history of Catholic charitable work carried on by individuals, parishes, dioceses, monasteries, missionaries, friars, nuns, and lay organizations.

Suffice it to say that Catholic charity has had no peer in the amount and variety of good work it has done and the human suffering and misery it has alleviated. Let us go still further: *the Catholic Church invented charity as we know it in the West* [13].” Besides, if it were not for the Catholic Church, we would not have had universities, nor Renaissance, Scientific Revolution, Industrial Revolution, or freedom of thought; the very Western civilization would not have existed. Most likely, we would not have Edinburg either, nor people that work for the benefit of the disabled [14]. This very *Chronicle of Edinburgh*, of course, would not have been written, either.



Figure 4: Believe you can and you're halfway there. (Theodore Roosevelt) (Photo taken by the Author)

References

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2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_people.
3. Miles Roddis et alii. *Europe on a Shoestring*, Victoria, Lonely Planet, 2005, p. 202.
4. Ib.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh#Etymology>; see also Melville Richards et alii. *The Names of Towns and Cities in Britain*, London, B.T. Batsford, 1970, pp. 88-89.
6. “Lonely Planet was founded by married couple Maureen and Tony Wheeler. In 1972, they embarked on an overland trip through Europe and Asia to Australia, following the route of the Oxford and Cambridge Far Eastern Expedition. The company name originates from the misheard ‘lovely planet’ in a song written by Matthew Moore. Lonely Planet’s first book, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, had 94 pages; it was written by the couple in their home. The original print run consisted of stapled booklets with pale blue cardboard covers. [Tony returned to Asia to write *Across Asia on the Cheap: A Complete Guide to Making the Overland Trip*, published in 1975. The Lonely Planet guide book series initially expanded in Asia, with the India guide book in 1981, and expanded to rest of the world. Geoff Crowther was renowned for frequently inserting his opinions into the text of the guides he wrote. His writing was instrumental to the rise of Lonely Planet. The journalist used the term ‘Geoffness’, in tribute to Crowther, to describe a quality that has been lost in travel guides. By 1999, Lonely Planet had sold 30 million copies of its travel guides. The company’s authors consequently benefited from profit-sharing and expensive events were held at the Melbourne office, at which limousines would arrive, filled with Lonely Planet employees.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lonely_Planet).
7. Miles Roddis et alii. *Europe on a Shoestring*, op. cit., p. 202.
8. <https://www.disabilityscot.org.uk/>.
9. Ib.
10. Ib.
11. *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, q. 23.
12. *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, q. 25.
13. Thomas Woods, Jr. *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (with a new preface from Cardinal Antonio Cañizares), Washington, Regnery, 2012, p. 172.
14. Cf. Id, pp. 1-23.



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