

## The Making of the Scottish Enlightenment: The Role of Self-improvement in Scottish Clubs and Societies

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Two generations of enthusiasts produced the philosophical geniuses of the Scottish Enlightenment. The first generation created the climate of self-improvement emphasising tolerance and open-mindedness; a humanist climate. The second generation was born into and brought up in this atmosphere in which the best was expected of them. The first generation clubbed together to improve themselves and bring Scottish culture up to English standards of intellectual achievement. The first clubs were largely literary. With the Rankenian Club in 1717 onwards interest in philosophical discussions increased among the *literari*. Later clubs and societies such as the Select Society in Edinburgh and the Aberdeen Philosophical Society were dedicated to philosophical discussions and improving their writing and speaking skills in that subject.

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### 1. What Made the Difference?

Many factors made the Scottish Enlightenment so productive of genius. One crucial factor that made the difference and enabled a small, remote and relatively underdeveloped nation produce an astonishing number of outstanding individuals in a wide variety of fields during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Here are some of them:

PHILOSOPHY	LITERATURE	ART	ARCHITECTURE
David Hume	James Boswell	John Smibert	Robert Adam
Adam Smith	Tobias Smollett	Allan Ramsay (Jr)	James Adam
Thomas Reid	Robert Burns	Sir Henry Raeburn	William Playfair
Adam Ferguson	Henry Mackenzie	Alexander Nasmyth	
Dugald Stewart	Sir Walter Scott	Sir David Wilkie	

<i>SCIENCE</i>	<i>ENGINEERING</i>	<i>MANUFACTURING</i>	<i>EXPLORATION</i>
William Cullen	Thomas Telford	David Dale	Mungo Park
Joseph Black	James Watt	Robert Owen	James Bruce
James Hutton	John McAdam		

No attempt is made here to explain every aspect of the transformation that produced the Scottish Enlightenment. But there was something special about it that made it distinctive. It is argued here that the difference lay in the emphasis on self-improvement that pervaded the Lowlands and North East of Scotland during the early eighteenth century. Enthusiastic people formed clubs and societies devoted to improving their writing and speech skills. First, poetry and literature were all the rage, and then the study of philosophy became fashionable. In short, it takes two generations to produce philosophical geniuses such as Adam Smith and David Hume. The first generation instigated a hothouse atmosphere of self-improvement into which the second generation was born and brought up. Many of the first generation were in their teens when they became dedicated to self-improvement, and they formed clubs and societies to share their literary and philosophical interests. Thus, the generation of motivators, who kick-started the Scottish Enlightenment, were born during the period from 1680 to 1710, whereas the generation of innovators, whose names are better known to us, were born 1710 to 1730 at the very earliest. A list of principal motivators and innovators is as follows:

<i>MOTIVATORS</i>	<i>INNOVATORS</i>
<i>Born 1680 to 1710</i>	<i>Born 1710 to 1730</i>
Allan Ramsay Snr (1684/5-1758)	Thomas Reid (1710-1796)
Andrew Baxter (1686-1750)	David Hume (1711-1776)
Robert Hepburn (1690-1716)	Lord Monboddo (1714-1799)
Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746)	William Robertson (1721-1793)
William Wishart (1692-1753)	Adam Smith (1723-1790)
Lord Kames (1696-1782)	Adam Ferguson (1723-1816)
Robert Wallace (1696-1771)	James Hutton (1726-1797)
George Turnbull (1698-1748)	Lord Hailes (1726-92)
Colin Maclaurin (1698-1748)	Joseph Black (1728-1799)
William Dudgeon (1706-1743)	

This ethos of self-improvement was open-minded and tolerant about religion. The Church of Scotland in the eighteenth century was dominated by the ‘Moderates’ who were open to the new thinking coming from England. They were deists who used reason rather than revelation in their god belief. When the arch-atheist David Hume returned to Scotland in 1739 with his *Treatise of Human Nature*, he was not shunned by the clergy. “Warm friendship allied David Hume, the amiable sceptic, with Dr. Jardine, the fine Evangelical, as well as the Moderates, Alexander Carlyle, John Home, Hugh Blair, and William Robertson.”<sup>1</sup> Most of them were published authors in their own right. And the erstwhile Minister, Thomas Reid wrote to Hume from Aberdeen: “Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of St. Athanasius.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Catching up with the English Enlightenment

The main catalyst inducing the atmosphere of self-improvement in literature and philosophy in Scotland was the Act of Union in 1707 that abolished the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish élite of MPs and Peers went down to London where they experienced a culture more advanced than the Scottish one. The period called the Enlightenment really began in England in the late 17th and early 18th centuries with the works of philosophers and writers such as Newton, Hobbes, Locke, Addison, Steele, Swift, Clarke, Butler, Shaftesbury and Berkeley.<sup>3</sup> The Scottish, French, German, American, and every other ‘Enlightenment’ built on the achievements of the English one and they each made their unique contributions to cultural progress.

The origins of the English Enlightenment are beyond the scope of this paper but the flowering of learning after the Restoration in 1660 had much to do with it. The conviviality of clubs in taverns and coffee houses also contributed to the open-mindedness of the times. The clubs in early 18th century Scotland were different in that they aimed to emulate the English achievements by improving the behavioural, literary, and economic standards of the nation. The Scots began to think of themselves as contributing to humanity rather than to a narrow nationalistic culture.

The Scottish Enlightenment was therefore unique in that these clubs fostered self-improvement and eventually philosophical inquiry which had the bigger picture in mind. From the 1720s onwards, they sought to improve every area of Scottish life through philosophical discussion of the most wide ranging sort. In contrast, the clubs of London, for instance, were more specialised in their interests and pre-occupations, and hence much less philosophical. This specialisation of club activity in London resulted from a much earlier specialisation of taverns which catered for different classes, trades, and sectors of the population. This was reflected in a poem written in 1608 by Thomas Heywood:

The Gentry to the King’s Head,  
The Nobles to the Crown,  
The Knights unto the Golden Fleece,  
And to the Plough the Clown,  
The churchman to the Mitre,  
The shepherd to the Star,  
The gardener hies him to the Rose,  
To the Drum the man of war; [etc.]<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish clubs were only superficially similar to the English clubs in taverns and coffee houses. Whereas the English clubs were relatively specialised from the beginning, those in Scotland became increasingly generalised in terms of their content and their aims. In England, there were political clubs such as the Kit Kat club,<sup>5</sup> trading clubs such as Lloyds, literary clubs, and clubs centred on one eminent individual such as Mandeville of “The Fable of the Bees” fame.<sup>6</sup> But few if any of them became as philosophical, scientific, and wide-ranging in their interests as the Scottish clubs from 1717 onwards. The exception was the Royal Society which none of the English clubs

sought to emulate but which some of later Scottish ones did in fact do so, leading to the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, both of which still exist.

The role of the clubs in 18th century Edinburgh was evocatively described as follows over a hundred years later:

If we wish to seek for the beginnings of Scottish literature, we shall find it in the clubs of gentlemen that met in dingy taverns, in dark wynds of Edinburgh. There they had their gatherings over ale and claret, where they would discuss politics, books, and ballads; and after a prolonged sitting, and ample regaling, they would go argumentatively home, as the city guard's drum at ten o'clock gave warning for all citizens to return decently to their families and to sleep.<sup>7</sup>

This description is not quite accurate as the clubs formed in taverns were strictly governed by rules that excluded drunkenness and misbehaviour by imposing fines and possible exclusion on members.

### 3. The Importance of Self-Improvement

A desire for self-improvement pervaded the whole of lowland Scotland in the early 18th century. In one of the earliest letters of Colin Maclaurin (1698–1746), later a celebrated Newtonian mathematician as well as a Rankenian Club member. Maclaurin, aged 18, wrote the following to his pupil, James Spreull, whom he was teaching mathematics, from his uncle's house in Kilfinnan overlooking the shores of Loch Fyne. At this stage, he has apparently never travelled further from Argyllshire than Glasgow:

I think there are four things that cannot fail to make as much a Scholar as will be for your own Pleasure, Use, and Ornament; I mean, reading chosen Books, Conversing with as well chosen Acquaintances about what you have read, Solitary & retired thought, & sometimes writing, or making Discourses on chosen subjects. ... All are necessary to make one perfect in any kind of Study, and together, they cannot fail of it. ... Reading is the foundation; by Converse it becomes pleasant & Ornamental; by Solitary Thought, we find the Use of it, and apply it for Wisdom & Virtue. And Writing is the last perfection of all.<sup>8</sup>

The four elements mentioned here: (1) Reading, (2) Conversing, (3) Solitary Thought, (4) Writing, constitute a programme of self-improvement which was generally adopted by educated young people of Maclaurin's generation throughout the lowlands of Scotland including the Borders and the Aberdeen area. To fulfil the second element, these people became enthusiastic about clubbing together with "well chosen Acquaintances" to improve their eloquence and conversational abilities.

This programme of self-improvement, as outlined by Maclaurin, was followed by all the early clubs. It is echoed in the Easy Club's "great design" of achieving "mutual improvement of minds by conversation"<sup>9</sup> and in the Rankenian Club's 'object' of

encouraging “mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational inquiry,” according to the *Scot Magazine*’s 1771 account of it.<sup>10</sup> Both these clubs also encouraged contributions of written material as well as intelligent debate about books they had read.

Maclaurin was clearly one of the individuals directly influenced by the ethos of self-improvement, and he in his turn influenced others in his role of motivator. His influence through the early Enlightenment period was paramount. For instance, he was one of the prime movers in remodelling the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh in 1737. It later became the Royal Society of Edinburgh which is today the sole survivor in Edinburgh of these eighteenth century clubs.

Maclaurin’s attendance at Glasgow College from 1709 to 1714 set him on the right path towards self-improvement, especially as Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) was a student there from 1710 till 1716. They had a measure of friendship while at College and Maclaurin wrote to Hutcheson in 1728 expressing the surprise he felt when he realised that his “old acquaintance” had written the anonymously published *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*.<sup>11</sup> As Maclaurin was then well established in Edinburgh as Professor of Mathematics, this suggests that Hutcheson was not directly influential on the Edinburgh *literati* though they may well have read his book. Hutcheson’s activities were contemporaneous with this ethos of self-improvement but that does not make him “the Father of the Scottish Enlightenment,” as has been contended.<sup>12</sup> He was merely one of many young men infected with this ethos at that time. Not only were some of the alleged Rankenian Club members older than Hutcheson, but they were all intellectually active more than a decade before he returned to Scotland in 1730. Hutcheson was personally active in improving Glasgow College and Glasgow people generally, but his influence elsewhere was confined to his writings. Indeed, the ethos of self-improvement was already underway in Edinburgh with Allan Ramsay’s Easy Club in 1712 while Hutcheson was still a student at Glasgow College.

In fact, if any one individual deserved that title of ‘Father’ it was surely Lord Kames, *alias* Henry Home (1696–1782). He was closely connected with the legendary Rankenian Club, and he also knew and influenced practically everyone who contributed to the Enlightenment throughout Scotland. And he had much greater and earlier influence on David Hume than Hutcheson could have commanded. Hume had no personal contact with Hutcheson till after the publication of the *Treatise* in 1739. Hutcheson wrote to Kames in April 1739 acknowledging receipt of “your Friends Book upon human Nature” and saying “I should be glad to know where the Author could be met with.”<sup>13</sup>

That this Enlightenment ethos had reached Aberdeen before the Rankenian Club started up around 1717, has been shown by Paul Wood. He has championed the cause of Aberdeen in showing the extent to which its advances were independent of what was happening in Edinburgh.<sup>14</sup> And Aberdeen’s 1736 Philosophical Club is the first of the philosophical clubs of which we have written records of their proceedings.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. The Role of the Easy Club

The first known club of this improving sort was Allan Ramsay’s Easy Club established in 1712. This was Allan Ramsay the poet who was the father of Allan Ramsay the painter.

Many of Ramsay's early poems were composed for the Easy Club and included in the Club's Minutes. The "great design" of this club was to achieve "a mutual improvement of minds by conversation." This was laid down in the Eighth Law of the Club:

The Design of the Society being a Mutuall improvement of minds by Conversation it is Enacted that there be no gaming in the club or forcing One another to drink Both being diverting from our great design and of times provoking to an undue exercise of the passions which is contrary to and inconsistent with our Commendable Easiness.<sup>16</sup>

The minutes of the Easy Club make clear that they aimed to achieve their 'great design' in various ways that included improving their use of the English language for written as well as spoken purposes. They were disciplined by the laws of the club enforced by the *praeses* (president) to deter unruly, drunken, and pugnacious behaviour. The 'easiness' of the Easy Club is defined at length in the minutes of the Club and the following admonition is included:

Easy as apply'd to each Member of the Club in particular signifies a Tractable and gentle Manly Temper not to be discompos'd by every triviall accident From a just knowledge of our Selves allowing for the Weaknesses and failures of our Neighbour – a generosity of mind frankly owning the Excellancies of another tho interfeering with our own pretensions.

This quotation alone shows an emphasis on tolerating and appreciating differences of opinion and attitude. However, the members' ambitions were limited to literary as opposed to philosophical pursuits. While it was a model literary club in terms of the strictness of its devotion to literature and self-improvement, its activities are not sufficient to explain the astonishing upsurge of philosophical productions which occurred later in the century.

##### 5. Subsequent Literary Clubs

The Easy Club is only the first of the literary clubs of this type in Edinburgh of which there is definite knowledge. After its establishment, an Athenian Society (in imitation of John Dunton's fictitious Athenian Society in London) was very active. This society, like the Easy Club, had purely literary interests, not extending to philosophy.

The Athenian society is known of mainly from secondary sources and was said to have published at least one volume of poetry, called the *Edinburgh Miscellany* (1720)<sup>17</sup> which contained early poems by James Thomson (1700–1748, writer of "Rule Britannia")<sup>18</sup> and Henry Home (later Lord Kames). There is no indication that they were also members of the Athenian Society, but Thomson at least was a student of Edinburgh University where a "Grotesque Club" functioned, of which little is known, but which was reputedly the source of many of the poems attributed to "university students" in the above book.<sup>19</sup> David Mallet (1700–1765) supplied the following information about the book:

The *Edinburgh Miscellany* was undertaken by an *Athenian Society* here who received the poems, and published all they thought worthy of seeing the light. The gentleman to whom I inscribed my *Pastoral* is one of their number. His name is Mr. Joseph Mitchel, author of the *Lugubres Cantus*, a poem to the memory of Mr. Ford. Mr. Callender, who is written C——r, is an ingenious young gentleman, and is the author of the second part of the *Lugubres Cantus*. Who the ladies are, scarce any one knows. The gentleman in the University whose productions are marked with an S, is one Mr. Symmers, a boy of fifteen, and very sprightly.<sup>20</sup>

The *Edinburgh Miscellany* is important in that it was the first publication of the budding *literati* in Edinburgh. It precedes even Allan Ramsay's book of poetry which was first published in 1721. There are 91 poems in the *Edinburgh Miscellany*, most of which were written by 27 individuals who are named or give their initials at the end. Only 19 of the poems are anonymous. There are 68 poems by students, mainly said to be Edinburgh students, some of whom are stated to be fifteen years; five poems by fifteen year old David Mallet (originally 'Malloch') who was in later years noted by Dr. Johnson in his *Lives of the Poets*; and one poem by an unnamed fourteen year old boy.

Glasgow students also contributed to this volume: three of the poems feature Glasgow in their titles, ("A Walk on Glasgow Green," "Prologue to Cato, Spoke in Glasgow, May 28th, 1719," and "Epilogue to Cato, *ditto*"). James Arbuckle is credited with ten poems, all of them tolerable verse translations of some of Horace's Odes. He was an Irish student who was involved in student unrest in 1720–22 at Glasgow College. Arbuckle was quite prominent in his time. He was crippled, possibly with a club foot, and Jonathan Swift, "who nicknamed all his friends, called him "Wit-upon-Crutches."<sup>21</sup> When Arbuckle returned to Dublin from Glasgow in 1724, he made friends with Francis Hutcheson and Lord Molesworth who had formed a group of enthusiasts for Shaftesbury's philosophy. Arbuckle participated in this club whose discussions and dialogues helped Hutcheson in preparing his first book, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, published in 1725.<sup>22</sup> Arbuckle therefore helped propagate the ethos of self improvement and contribute to philosophical inquiry in Ireland as well as Scotland.

"The Athenian Society" was Joseph Mitchell's club which is mentioned by Ramsay of Ochtertyre<sup>23</sup> in connection with the poetry being published in Edinburgh in 1719 (probably as pamphlets). Mitchell later became a leading poetical propagandist for the government of Robert Walpole (the first "Prime Minister"). Nearly all its named members contributed poems to the *Edinburgh Miscellany*. They included "Mr. Cunningham" who is probably the "C. C. . . m" who persuaded the ladies of the Fair Intellectual-Club to publish their account of the club.<sup>24</sup> The book also contains poems by at least two of the members of Fair Intellectual-Club, which was founded in 1717 by a group of young ladies (aged between 15 and 20 years of age). As a pamphlet survives of the rules and rationale of this club, more is known of its structure than of the early male societies, apart from the Easy Club. It is however the only female society known of in any detail at this time. Part of the pamphlet is "A letter to the Honourable Member of the Athenian Society" which states the following:

In the month of May 1717, three young ladies happened to divert our selves by walking in *Heriot's Gardens*, where one of us took Occasion to propose that we should enter into a Society, for Improvement of one another in the Study and Practice of such Things, as might contribute most effectually to our Accomplishment. This Overture she enforc'd with a great deal of Reasoning, that dispos'd the other two cheerfully to comply with it. The Honour of our Sex in general, as well as our particular Interest, was intended, when we made that Agreement. We thought it a great Pity, that Women, who excell a great many others in *Birth and Fortune*, should not also be more eminent in Virtue and good Sense, which we might attain unto, if we were as industrious to cultivate our Minds, as we are to adorn our Bodies.<sup>25</sup>

The members of this Club are not known for certain but the initials of the “Speaker” are M.H. and this likely to be Margaret Hamilton who died unmarried in Edinburgh in 1768.<sup>26</sup> She was eldest daughter of Thomas Hamilton, sixth Earl of Haddington (1680–1735), himself a poet and author of a treatise on tree-planting.<sup>27</sup> Her talented eldest brother, Charles, Lord Binning (1697–1732) was also a published poet.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the members were well-educated aristocratic young ladies aged 15 to 20 and unmarried, in accordance with the Club’s rules.

No more is heard of ladies’ clubs after the publication of the Fair Intellectual-Club’s pamphlet in 1720. This is apparently because of a political backlash against giving too much liberty to the “fair sex.” Thus, Aaron Hill, writing in the London periodical, *The Plain Dealer*, in 1724 had the Fair Intellectual-Club pamphlet before him when he wrote the following:

I shall say more, on a future Occasion, of the Honour done to the whole Sex, by the dangerous Ambition of these Ladies: And of the Political Necessity, which, I conceive, there will soon be, of putting a Stop to the Progress of such unlimited Improvement of a Power, already too exorbitant.<sup>29</sup>

Hill never did fulfil his promise of justifying this censorship which seems to be late addition to a passage in which he is giving unqualified praise to the achievements of the Club. He is no doubt reflecting the political mood of the times rather than his personal sentiments on the matter. Whether that is the reason or not, there is no further mention of female clubs in the records available to us. This may only mean that their literary activities were driven underground but remained as ‘exorbitant’ as ever.

The interactions between all these distinct clubs (i.e. the Athenian Society, the Grotesque, and Fair Intellectual Clubs) and their members were extraordinary. They cooperated to produce the book, the *Edinburgh Miscellany*, and to achieve literary fame and accomplishment by that means. While self-improvement was the chief end of their forming such clubs and societies, they had no desire to get to the bottom of things. They were ambitious but not overly curious and inquiring people. However, a fashion for improving their minds led them inevitably to philosophy. According to John Ramsay of Ochtertyre (1736–1814):

It is well known that between 1723 and 1740, nothing was in more request with the Edinburgh *literati*, clerical and laical, than metaphysical disquisitions. These they regarded as more pleasant themes than either theological or political controversies, of which, by that time, people were surfeited. The writings of Locke and Clarke, of Butler and Berkeley, presented a wide and interesting field of inquiry, in which they could exercise their intellectual powers without endangering their own quiet and safety.<sup>30</sup>

## 6. The Legendary Rankenian Club

The existence of this club has never been established conclusively. The main evidence for it lies in a 1771 *Scots Magazine* obituary of the Rev. Robert Wallace (1696–1771)<sup>31</sup>. It states that “its object was mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational inquiry.”<sup>32</sup> Its influence on the Scottish Enlightenment is emphatically proclaimed as follows:

It is well known, that the RANKENIANS were highly instrumental in disseminating through Scotland freedom of thought, boldness of disquisition, liberality of sentiment, accuracy of reasoning, correctness of taste, and attention to composition; and that the exalted rank which Scotsmen hold at present in the republic of letters, is greatly owing to the manner and spirit begun by that Society.<sup>33</sup>

It is also claimed that the club members corresponded with George Berkeley, the philosopher and that “he has been heard to say, that no persons understood his system better than this set of young gentlemen in North Britain.”<sup>34</sup> However, no such correspondence has ever been found.<sup>35</sup> Some of the members showed interest in Berkeley’s philosophy in their surviving writings but none of them actually corresponded with Berkeley. Kames was said to have visited Berkeley on a business trip to London but he merely talked Berkeley into silence.<sup>36</sup> But Kames was not supposed to be a member of that club! The legend of the club’s contact with Berkeley is based mainly on the painter John Smibert’s relationship with Berkeley. He went with Berkeley to America where he was the first portrait painter to arrive there and he established a considerable reputation for himself. But he left Edinburgh in 1719 at the latest so his involvement with the club was short lived.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the list of Rankenian Club members in Tytler’s *Life and Works of Kames*, and complied by George Wallace (son of Robert Wallace), seems only to comprise eminent men whom Wallace assumed to be associated with the club.<sup>38</sup> Some individuals are missing who are known from other sources to be associated with it.<sup>39</sup>

The club was said to be founded in 1716 or 17 (depending on the source) and was named after Ranken in whose licensing house the members gathered at the head of Kennedy’s Close.<sup>40</sup> Alexander Bower in his *History of the University of Edinburgh* (1817) may be drawing on anecdotal evidence when he described the activities of the Rankenian Club as follows:

The gentlemen who composed it spent their hours of meeting in literary conversation, making critical remarks of any new works of merit that were published; or on the style, sentiment, or manner of authors of established reputation. One of their number was appointed to deliver an essay upon some prescribed subject at each meeting; concerning the merits of which, every member was requested to give his opinion.<sup>41</sup>

This general account can be applied to all the subsequent philosophical clubs in Scotland. This particularly applies to the practice of hearing “an essay upon some prescribed subject at each meeting.” The members also laid down questions, usually of a philosophical nature, which were discussed during its proceedings. The success of the Rankenian club may be measured by the number of publications with which the more active members are credited. These members comprised: Sir Alexander Dick, Boswell’s great friend; Colin Maclaurin whose genius was second only to Sir Isaac Newton’s; his son, John Maclaurin; Isaac Madox, afterwards Bishop of Worcester; Sir John Pringle, the medical authority; and George and William Wishart. These men produced well over one hundred publications, including thirty books, two edited works, three translations, thirty-five sermons, eleven pamphlets, five dissertations, a score of papers read before learned societies, two books of poetry, and a play.<sup>42</sup>

The Rankenian Club was a fairly exclusive affair. It contained much the same members for forty years, after which it was decided to admit sons of members as their numbers were diminishing. It ceased to meet after 1774. Its membership was at first confined mainly to students and graduates of Edinburgh and Leyden Universities. In contrast, Henry Home (Lord Kames) was said not to be a member,<sup>43</sup> possibly because he had no links with Edinburgh College and was largely self-educated, or because he was disliked by one or more of the members. Only one member objecting to his membership would have been sufficient to block it (as was the policy of the Easy Club laid down in its second ‘Law’).

The Rankenian Club may have been confused with Ruddiman’s Club founded in 1718, perhaps because the former’s exclusivity made it less well known. But the latter club was not thought by later commentators<sup>44</sup> to be as important as the Rankenian club; it was a literary club concerned with “the cultivation of the literature of Rome, and of Greece,”<sup>45</sup> though according to Kames it also debated religious questions. Kames also told James Boswell that he and his friends attended it “to puzzle and make mischief, and they succeeded but too well with many, making them Deists.”<sup>46</sup>

Thomas Ruddiman (1674–1757) was an eminent classical scholar and book publisher who was keeper of the Advocates’ Library, and who preceded David Hume in that position. He was highly thought of by Dr. Johnson who arranged for a set of books containing his *Rambler* issues to be given to him when they were printed in Edinburgh.<sup>47</sup> Ruddiman’s Club had Lord Kames as a member and also some of the Rankenians, namely, Archibald Murray and George Wishart.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the relationship between Ruddiman’s club and the Rankenians is puzzling. One theory is that it also met at Ranken’s tavern.<sup>49</sup> This would account for Kames’s mistaken reminiscence that he had been a member of the Rankenian club, as he was definitely a member of Ruddiman’s club,

according to his own remembrance and that of Sir Alexander Dick (1703–1785).<sup>50</sup> As Ruddiman was also not a college man, it is possible that he got together with other non-college men such as Kames to form a rival club which purposely met at the same place as the college men. This would give them the right to think of themselves as ‘Rankenians’ also.

Sir Alexander Dick also seems to have confused the two clubs in his later remembrance of them. He sent “Anecdotes … relative to Lord Kames” to James Boswell in 1780 in which he clearly begins by referring to Ruddiman’s Club – ‘The Father of the Club was the very learned old Mr. Thomas Ruddiman.’<sup>51</sup> Then he says, “I think this was called the Rankinian [sic] Club, if my memory does not fail me.” Thereafter he seems to be referring to the Rankenian Club exclusively since he mentions some of the members such Alexander Boswell, father of James, who joined the Rankenian Club later (1727 at the earliest) and who is not known to have been a member of Ruddiman’s Club.

Ruddiman’s Club lasted till 1731 when it was succeeded by a society “for the improvement of medical knowledge.”<sup>52</sup> This was generally known as the Medical Society, and it is credited with laying the foundations for Edinburgh University medical school’s later pre-eminence as a world centre for medical teaching and research.<sup>53</sup>

## 7. The Influence of the ‘Borders Nexus’ on Hume

David Hume was exceptional in that he was exposed not so much to philosophical discussions in his early contacts with the Edinburgh *literati* but more to a nexus of individuals in the Borders who engaged in written philosophical exchanges. This Borders Nexus comprised four men: David Hume (1711–1776), Lord Kames (1696–1782), Andrew Baxter (1686–1750), and William Dudgeon (1706–1743),<sup>54</sup> (whom McCosh in his *Scottish Philosophy* book mistakenly calls “David Dudgeon”<sup>55</sup>) During the 1720s and 30s, these men lived within a radius of ten miles around Duns in Berwickshire.<sup>56</sup> Kames was a ‘cousin’ or near relative of David Hume, and correspondence between them from 1737 still survives.<sup>57</sup> Kames exchanged letters with Baxter in 1723.<sup>58</sup> Also, Baxter and Dudgeon had a debate in 1732–4 in published pamphlets on the subject of liberty and necessity.<sup>59</sup>

Both these exchanges may have influenced Hume in formulating his views on liberty, causation and necessary connections. It is arguable that the philosophical debates conducted between them were influential (1) in ensuring that the young Hume was motivated to be a philosopher and (2) in providing him with an example of how philosophers behaved in writing out and developing their ideas. In short, the activities of this Nexus were the principal reason why the *Treatise of Human Nature* was written at all. These individuals undoubtedly knew of each other’s existence even though they may have had little or no social contact with each other. There are definite, provable literary links between Kames and Hume; Kames and Baxter; and Baxter and Dudgeon. Other links between them remain to be established and are at best only probable at this time.

The exact extent of the influence of Andrew Baxter and William Dudgeon on David Hume is not known. But these authors were writing within ten miles or less of Ninewells House where Hume was laying the foundations for his later *Treatise*. They did

not form a distinct club but the evidence of written and published exchanges between them suggests that they had considerable influence in motivating Hume to develop his philosophy. The importance of the Borders Nexus's influence on Hume has been insufficiently recognised hitherto.

On the periphery of this Nexus were two Rankenian club members, Robert Wallace, who was Minister of Moffat from 1723 to 1733, and Charles Telfer, who was Minister of Hawick from 1723 till his death in 1731. The extent of their connection with the Nexus is not fully known but Robert Wallace engaged in a pamphlet debate with William Dudgeon in the early 1730s. Hume's views on religion were doubtless influenced by the content of that debate, and the Kirk's reaction to Dudgeon's writings helps to explain Hume's extreme caution in putting these views before the public. More tangible evidence of a connection between the Nexus and the Rankenian Club lies in the fact that Dudgeon used Archibald Murray, a Rankenian Club member, as his advocate in his legal dispute with the Kirk. This suggests that the Rankenian Club not only took a direct interest in Dudgeon's conflict with the Kirk but also gave him moral support in his fight (see below for more detail on this conflict).

The idea that the four men comprising the Borders Nexus formed a loose association in which they encouraged or provoked each other's writings helps us to make sense of what was happening in the Borders in the 1720s and 30s. It seems certain that the original inspiration and motivation that led David Hume to produce his *Treatise* are to be found here, and not in Edinburgh or in any contact with Francis Hutcheson which began only after the publication of the *Treatise*, when Hutcheson queried Kames to know the author of that book.<sup>60</sup> The development of Hume's philosophy was not influenced by the activities of the Rankenian Club. But there is no doubt that he was friendly with a number of its members, possibly as early as the time that he was a student at Edinburgh University. However, his closest Rankenian friends, viz. Sir Alexander Dick and Sir Andrew Mitchell, were not philosophers and could hardly be said to have helped him in formulating his philosophical views.<sup>61</sup>

While Hume's thinking was also influenced by his wide reading, this is not sufficient in itself to explain why he was suddenly able to produce a work of genius. We need an extra ingredient to explain his mental development and this may have consisted in his contact with these three men and his consequent reading of their correspondence and pamphlet debates. He was of course influenced in his reading of the works of established philosophers such as Hutcheson, but this was *not* the reason why he wrote the *Treatise*. To establish what motivated Hume to write such a work of genius, we need to know more than just his reading list. Such a reading list may have been followed by any young man of the period without his necessarily producing a work of genius. Therefore, it is here argued that the extra events needed to explain this occurrence are to be found in the activities of the Borders Nexus, and Hume's involvement in it.

*Connection with Kames.* Hume regarded Kames as "the best Friend, in every Respect, I ever possest."<sup>62</sup> It is not known exactly when their friendship began. But they lived within 10 miles of each other and were distant relatives, and this suggests that their friendship may have begun in Hume's boyhood. If not then, it could date from Hume's days of reading law in the late 1720s, when he would have met Kames in Edinburgh. It is

known that about this period, Hume joined Kames and his cronies in their convivial binges when they visited, presumably in their legal capacity, towns such as Cupar in Fife.<sup>63</sup> He could also have maintained contact with Kames who visited his country estate as often as he could, and especially in the summertime as he was an enthusiastic farmer.<sup>64</sup> Kames also encouraged writers all his life and David Hume may have been one of his first ‘élèves’, as Ramsay of Ochtertyre called them.<sup>65</sup>

It is likely that Hume not only knew about the acrimonious 1723 correspondence between Kames and Andrew Baxter but he also read the letters involved. They were kept by Kames even though Baxter advised him to destroy them. The correspondence may have influenced him in the two following ways:

Firstly, it is arguable that Hume’s emphasis on passion lying behind all our reasonings and his sceptical account of the limits and powers of human reason find their original in his witnessing the highly contentious *a priori* exchanges between Kames and Baxter, and between Baxter and Dudgeon. He saw that these antagonists had an emotional commitment to their respective positions which transcended their reasonable justification.

Secondly, Kames was concerned in the correspondence with Baxter to show the role of “active power” in the material world. He believed that life, as opposed to non-life, is active in the world, whereas material things are overwhelmingly passive rather than active. He therefore disputed Newton’s laws of motion on that basis. As he failed to make his views philosophically coherent, Hume perhaps felt justified in adopting the opposing view that we are passive recipients of impressions and ideas rather than active beings in the world. Hume interprets human nature largely from a passive point of view in which we are at the mercy not only of impressions and ideas impinging on us but also of our passions which govern our reasoning processes. The other side of the coin, namely, that we are able to act mentally in controlling our thoughts and emotions, and to act physically and purposely in the real world, is left out of his account almost entirely. Baxter in particular argued in his writings on the side of freewill. Thus, this correspondence was important in reinforcing Hume’s predilection towards scepticism and in giving him good reasons to believe in the limitations of human reasoning powers.

When Hume returned to Scotland with recently printed copies of his *Treatise*, he visited Kames and tried hard to convince him of his arguments. Kames told Boswell that at first he could make nothing of the books. But some time later, when he read them in an idle moment, he was able to understand the arguments, but he disapproved of them on what he thought were common sense grounds.<sup>66</sup> Kames discussed his objections with Hume and later published them and they influenced the subsequent Scottish Common Sense movement. His book, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751), emphasised the importance of common sense as against scepticism, and it influenced Thomas Reid and the Aberdeen “Wise Club” founded in 1758.

*Connection with Andrew Baxter.* Baxter was governor (that is to say, tutor) to the sons of William Hay at Duns Castle during the years 1719 to 1723<sup>67</sup> and he remained employed by the Hay family till his death in 1750. Hume enrolled at Edinburgh University in February 1723 at the age of eleven. It is possible that, before going to university, Hume and his brother went to Duns Castle, a mere five miles away, to participate in the lessons given by Baxter. It was customary at this period for neighbouring landed gentry to share

the same tutor.<sup>68</sup> Hume's antipathy towards natural philosophy may find its source in an unhappy contact with Baxter. The latter may well have been intolerant, for example, of Hume's slowness in appreciating the mathematical subtleties of Newtonian physics. Kippis in his early biography of Baxter suggests that he ignored Hume's works because "it is probable that Mr. Baxter did not think Mr. Hume to be enough of a natural philosopher to merit particular notice."<sup>69</sup> Baxter was undoubtedly a dedicated teacher of natural philosophy and this is evidenced by his published work called, *Matho*, published in both Latin and English. This comprises dialogues by which the rudiments of science, as known at the time, are taught to a pupil.<sup>70</sup>

Hume's antipathy to natural philosophy was expressed in an early note in his "Memoranda," possibly written as early as 1729: "A Proof that natural Philosophy has no Truth in it, is, that it has only succeeded in things remote, as the heavenly Bodys, or minute as Light."<sup>71</sup> Hume may have felt slighted by Baxter, firstly, because of his inability or unwillingness to appreciate the importance of natural philosophy; and, secondly, because of his atheistic inclinations and disparagement of the views of the theologians, Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler. Perhaps in reaction to his humiliation at the hands of Baxter, Hume ceased to be plump, lazy and indifferent, and became the intellectual powerhouse which he needed to be to produce his best philosophical work. This would explain not only his motivation but also the fact that he never mentions Baxter in any of his works or his letters. Indeed, he seems to go out of his way to ignore Baxter's existence altogether. He may indeed have destroyed all his letters and papers referring to him.

Baxter remained as tutor at Duns Castle continuously until 1741 when he went abroad with Alexander Hay, son of the laird of Duns.<sup>72</sup> The recently discovered letter of his to Bishop Warburton in 1740 supports this view as it was addressed from Duns Castle.<sup>73</sup> Hume was at Ninewells House during the late 1720s and early 1730s; a mere six miles from Duns Castle. Thus, there may well have been contact between Baxter and Hume while the latter was conducting his studies which led to the publication of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. But the evidence of such a relationship between Baxter and Hume remains circumstantial and inconclusive at this time. Unfortunately, there is as yet no direct evidence to support such conjectures, beyond the facts, namely, (1) that Hume had developed prodigious writing skills by the early 1730s, and (2) Andrew Baxter, William Dudgeon, and Lord Kames had already possessed these skills. That he learned these skills through the example of these men seems not at all unlikely.

*Connection with Dudgeon.* William Dudgeon was a tenant farmer at Lennelhill ten miles from Hume's home. He engaged in pamphlet debates with Andrew Baxter and Robert Wallace (1696–1771). Wallace was Minister at Moffat in the Borders from 1723 to 1733 and an important member of the Rankenian Club. One of Dudgeon's pamphlets was entitled *The State of the Moral World Considered* and he unwisely had "W.D." on the title page. He argued that there is no such thing as sin or wickedness in the world and we improve ourselves by our vices and faults. We are not punished for them as we do nothing but what God has designed us to do. These views are so much against Calvinist doctrines of original sin that a clash with the Kirk was inevitable.

In 1732, the Presbytery of Chirnside (near Hume's home at Ninewells House), on hearing "a flagrant report" about Dudgeon having published his pamphlet which attacked

Robert Wallace's views in terms that are offensive to the Kirk. He 'compeared' (presented himself as accused) before the Presbytery and refused to acknowledge authorship of the pamphlet. The local minister, George Home (David Hume's uncle) remonstrated with him without success. He was charged with errors in Christian doctrine but he refused to acknowledge that they were errors. The Presbytery formally judged him 'contumacious' in denying the charges and the case was passed on to the Synod at Kelso and eventually to the General Assembly in Edinburgh where the case petered out as the Kirk was busy dealing with Secessionists and other dissenters within its ranks.

It can hardly be doubted that David Hume knew about Dudgeon and his works. He may well have visited him at Lennelhill. In his biographical letter of 1732, he states that he rode nearly everyday, except in winter, sometimes as much as "8 or 10 Scotch miles"<sup>74</sup> (a Scotch mile being more than 200 yards longer than an English one). This would have given him ample opportunity to visit his neighbours, as was customary among the landed gentry of that time. Also, Scott's 18th century novel, *Guy Mannering*, features a young man riding a journey of seven miles, there and back, to have a three hour session with his 'dominie' every day.<sup>75</sup>

Apart from the later friendship between Hume and Lord Kames, there is no evidence that the men of the Borders Nexus formed lasting personal friendships or that they met in a club-like atmosphere. But such was their mutual interest in philosophy that they made use of their acquaintanceship to participate in written exchanges of their views and opinions. This Nexus was therefore an important competitive association in which there was little or no cooperation, unlike the cooperative clubs and societies which laid the foundation to the Scottish Enlightenment. That competitive aspect is important in understanding the influences which led David Hume to write his *Treatise of Human Nature*. In conclusion, therefore, what was happening in the Borders was the *sine qua non* of David Hume's development as an original and highly influential philosopher.

## 8. Later Mature Philosophical Societies

We know much more about the Select Society which was founded in Edinburgh in 1754 and included David Hume and Adam Smith among its founder members. Its full title was "The Select Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures and Agriculture." According to Alexander Carlyle, it "was intended for Philosophical Inquiry, and the improvement of the Members in the Art of Speaking."<sup>76</sup> But in fact it performed a much more important function in the community as will now be shown.

In scale, the Select Society greatly exceeded the early philosophical clubs which had relatively small memberships. It began with 14 members and after a year reached 83. At its peak in 1759 it had 130 members and became a debating society. However, it became so influential that it functioned almost like a parliament in that its recommendations were sometimes enforced throughout Scotland. This applied for instance to the practice of giving 'vails' or drink money to servants. The ending of this practice began with a debate in the Select Society on the question: "What is the best and most equal way of hiring and conducting servants? and, what is the most proper method to abolish the practice of giving of vails?" As this practice contributed directly to

drunkenness among servants, its abolition was thought to be a considerable social advance at the time.

The Select Society was dedicated not only to the improvement of the minds of its members but also to the material and economic improvement of Scotland as a whole. For that purpose its members formed “The Edinburgh Select Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture.” This functioned as a kind of sub-committee of the Select Society which discussed all kinds of agricultural and economic questions including the question of the ‘vails’ mentioned above. It was no mere talking shop as it prepared, for instance, a “Plan for repairing the Highways,” by which roads in Scotland were brought up to the highest standard of the times. Its approach was the following:

To encourage genius, to reward industry, to cultivate the arts of peace, are objects deserving the attention of public-spirited persons.

That the inhabitants of Scotland may become diligent in labour, and excellent in arts, is the concern of all who indeed love their country.<sup>77</sup>

The Select Society itself continued to discuss the kind of general philosophical questions which were pursued by all the philosophical clubs and societies of eighteenth century. Among the considerable list of questions recorded are the following which are as debatable now as they were then:

Whether Lotteries ought to be encouraged?

Whether whisky ought not to be laid under such restraints, as to render the use of it less frequent?

Whether Printing has been of advantage to Society?

Whether the Liberty of the Press ought not to be restrained?<sup>78</sup>

The size of the membership of the Select Society limited the time for speaking to give everyone a fair opportunity of speaking. Accordingly, Rule Ten of its Constitution stipulated: “That every person may speak three times in a debate, and no oftener; the first time fifteen minutes and ten minutes each of the other times; addressing himself to the person presiding.” The Select Society rules had restrictions concerning the discussion of religion and politics. Rule nine stated: “That very Member may propose any subject of debate, except such as regard Revealed Religion, or which may give occasion to vent any Principles of Jacobitism.”<sup>79</sup> This rule alone suggests a direct link with the earlier clubs i.e. the Rankenian and Ruddiman’s.

Compared to the Select Society, the Glasgow Literary Society, founded in 1752 with Adam Smith as a founder member, was not as widely influential as it was centred on Glasgow College and its professors. Its early meetings were unrecorded, but in 1764 Thomas Reid came to Glasgow as Professor and joined the club, and from then on regular minutes were kept of the proceedings at their meetings. The numbers of those attending generally did not exceed fifteen so that the formation of a community of philosophical inquiry was possible. The range of questions certainly suggests that a lively and

productive discussion was often achieved. Thus, in April and May 1766, we get the following sequence of questions discussed:

April 18th 1766. Mr. Cumin [Prof. of Hebrew]. In what respects is Man a free or necessary Agent?

April 25th 1766. Dr. Williamson [Prof. of Mathematics]. Whether persons of landed property should be permitted to entail their Estates?

May 2nd 1766. Dr. Wight [Prof. of Church History]. Are there any certain Principles upon which we can judge of the productions of Poetry and of the finer Arts or is there any Criterion of Taste?

May 9th 1766. Dr. Reid [Prof. of Moral Philosophy]. Whether moral Character in Man consists in affections which are involuntary or in fixed determinations of Will.<sup>80</sup>

These questions are remarkable in that they show the breadth of interest of the professors whose concerns were not confined to their own sphere of academic interest. Only Thomas Reid adheres to his profession in the type of question which he puts before the Society.

By far the most productive of the later philosophical societies was the Aberdeen Philosophical Society founded in 1758 (and nicknamed “the Wise Club”). It surpassed all the others in the number of books it inspired and in the influence that its publications had on European culture in the 18th century. Thomas Reid presented papers to the Society which were later published largely word for word in his first book: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764); a book that arguably laid the foundations of the psychology of perception. Apart from the better known works of Thomas Reid and James Beattie, the works of other members are as follows:

George Campbell: *Essay on Miracles*; translation of *The Four Gospels*; *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

John Gregory: *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man, with those of the Animal World; Lectures in the Duties and Offices of a Physician; A Father's Legacy* [to his Daughters].

Alexander Gerard: *An Essay on Taste; Dissertation on the Genius and Evidences of Christianity; A Essay on Genius*; and two volumes of sermons.

John Farquhar: Two volumes of sermons, published after his death.

The members not only put forward written papers to be discussed and criticised, they also followed the pattern of debating questions which were proposed by the President of the meeting “to be discussed at some future meeting.”<sup>81</sup> The rules of the society also made clear the extent which its proceedings were to be “philosophical.” Article 17 states the following:

The Subject of the Discourses and Questions shall be Philosophical, all Grammatical Historical and Philological Discussions being conceived to be

foreign to the Design of this Society. And Philosophical Matters are understood to comprehend, Every Principle of Science which may be deduced by Just and Lawfull Induction from the Phænomena either of the human Mind or of the material World; All Observations & Experiments that may furnish Materials for such Induction; the Examination of False Schemes of Philosophy & false Methods of Philosophizing; The Subserviency of Philosophy to Arts, the Principles they borrow from it and the Means of carrying them to their Perfection.<sup>82</sup>

The intimacy of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society is testified by the fact that only fifteen men were members at various times during its existence.<sup>83</sup> Most of these members attended the Society's meetings regularly until the late 1760s and there can be little doubt that the Society was deeply dedicated to philosophical discussions. It followed the same pattern outlined above of discussing pre-determined questions and criticising each other's written "discourses." Typical of the kind of questions examined by this Society are the following which were discussed in 1765 (Reid had apparently tabled his question before leaving Aberdeen for Glasgow in 1764):

70. Dr. Gregory. What are the distinguishing characteristics of wit & humour?
71. Dr. David Skene. Whether brutes had souls; & if they have, wherein do they differ from the human?
72. Dr. Campbell. Whether the manner of living of parents affects the genius or intellectual abilities of the children?
73. Mr. Stuart. Whether the idea of an infinitely perfect being be a good argument for his existence?
74. Dr. Reid. Wherein does the nature of a promise consist, & whence does its obligation arise?<sup>84</sup>

The productivity of philosophical discussions depends (among other things) on posing questions and giving clear and adequate answers to them. Any restrictions on the range of this questioning impede free inquiry and inhibit open discussion. Thus, the breadth of questions tackled by the philosophical societies of 18th century Scotland ensured that their interests remained universal and that they embraced, in their concerns, the plight of Scotland and their civil responsibility to do something about it. An unimpeded universality of questioning ensures that philosophical inquiry remains down-to-earth and relevant to human needs as a whole, and not just an ivory tower activity which is increasingly specialised and divorced from the feelings and aspirations of ordinary people. Thus, the Scottish Enlightenment exemplifies the intensity with which people can come together to improve themselves and become better speakers, writers, citizens, and thus better people.

Hume and his friends gave Scotland the intellectual leadership of Europe, so that by the late eighteenth century, it was generally considered on the Continent that Scotland was where things were really happening, more so than in England. José Manuel Barroso, when he was President of the European Commission, said the following: "Voltaire was

right when he said that: “Nous nous tournons vers l’Écosse pour trouver toutes nos idées sur la civilisation.” (We look to Scotland for all our ideas on civilisation).<sup>85</sup> It was where to learn to be men:

Whenever the English mention *Scotchmen* to me in that contemptuous tone they sometimes affect, I advise them to go to Edinburgh to learn how to live, and how to be men. Your learned men, Robertson, Black, and Hume are looked upon here as geniuses of the first rank. Only two days ago, I saw Comte de Buffon, who named them all to me at his finger’s tip, just as you might name Newton and Locke.

Tieman (“a literary Hungarian writing from Paris” to Henry Mackenzie in 1781)<sup>86</sup>

#### Notes

1. H.G. Graham, *The Social Life in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd edn. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), chap. 9, p. 358.
2. Thomas Reid, Letter to David Hume, 18th March 1763, *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.*, edited by Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1895), vol. 1, p. 92. Athanasius (circa 296–373) was the anti-Arian controversialist who laid down the canon of twenty-seven texts that now comprises the New Testament. See his “Festal Letter” no. 39, AD 367.
3. See. A.M. Wilson, “Enlightenment came first to England” in *England’s Rise to Greatness: 1660–1765*, ed. S.B. Baxter (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1983), pp. 1-28.
4. John Timbs, *Club Life of London, with Anecdotes of the Clubs, Coffee Houses, and Taverns of the Metropolis During the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries* (London: R. Bentley, 1866), vol. 2, p. 116.
5. Taking its name apparently from “a mutton-pieman” called Christopher Katt (Cat or Catling) at whose premises in Shire Lane this club originally gathered. Cf. Timbs, op. cit., p. 5, and also Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London*, p. 36.
6. See Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., 1965), chap. 3, p. 49. In 1725, Franklin was taken by a Mr. Lyons to the Horns, an alehouse in Cheapside, London and was introduced “to Dr. Mandeville, author of the *Fable of the Bees*, who had a club there, of which he was the soul, being a most facetious, entertaining companion. Lyons, too, introduced me to Dr. Pemberton, at Batson’s Coffeehouse, who promised to give me an opportunity, some time or other, of seeing Sir Isaac Newton, of which I was extremely desirous; but this never happened.” (Newton was 85 when he died in 1727.)
7. H.G. Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters in the 18th Century* (London: A & C Black, 1901), p. 7.
8. Colin Maclaurin, Letter dated Dec. 16, 1716 in Glasgow University Library Special Collections MS Gen 1378/1, pp. 3-4. Also reproduced by S. Mills (ed.) in *The*

*Collected Letters of Colin Maclaurin* (Nantwich, UK: Shiva Publishing, 1982), Letter 1, p. 3 (in which James Spreull is mistakenly named “I. Spreull”). Maclaurin, in a later letter to James Spreull (March 30, 1719, Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 8), preaches the virtues of self-restraint and discipline, and the fact that the pursuit of learning keeps a young man on the straight and narrow.

9. “Journal of the Easy Club,” published in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, vol. 5, ed. A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood, 1972), p. 31.

10. *Scots Magazine*, vol. 33 (May 1771), p. 340. This article was probably not written by George Wallace, son of Robert Wallace, but the writer no doubt obtained his information from him. While Robert Wallace was a founder member of the Rankenian Club, his son, George, was one of the last members.

11. *The Collected Letters of Colin Maclaurin*, *op. cit.*, Letter 13 (October 22, 1728), p. 25.

12. See T.D. Campbell, “Francis Hutcheson: ‘Father’ of the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1982), p. 167. See also Arthur Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment: the Scots’ Invention of the Modern World* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), p. 68, where Herman also subscribes to the myth that Hutcheson was “the founding father of the Scottish Enlightenment” and exaggerates his influence accordingly.

13. Ian Ross, “Hutcheson on Hume’s ‘Treatise’: An Unnoticed Letter,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4 (1966): 71-72.

14. See, for instance, P. Wood, “Science and the Aberdeen Enlightenment,” in *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Peter Jones (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1988), p. 39; and his *The Aberdeen Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, UK: Aberdeen University Press, 1993), p. 38.

15. Cf. Thomas Reid, *Minutes of a Philosophical Club 1736*, Aberdeen University Library, Ms 2131/6/I/17.

16. “Journal of the Easy Club,” published in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, vol. 5, ed. A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood, 1972). p. 31. Though the original manuscript has disappeared, its existence cannot be doubted as Oliphant Smeaton tells us in the Preface to his *Allan Ramsay* (1896) that he saw “the complete Minutes of the Club” though too late to be accounted for in his book. Also, George Chalmers quotes from what he calls “the MS transactions of the ‘Easy Club’ in his “Life of Allan Ramsay” in vol. 1 of *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (1853).

17. *The Edinburgh Miscellany: consisting of Original Poems, Translations, Etc. By Various Hands*, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Printed by J. M’Ewan and Co., 1720).

18. James Thomson’s involvement in this volume has at least ensured that it is mentioned by scholars of literature: cf. Mary J. Scott. “James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots,” in *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen, UK: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), chap. 5, p. 81.

19. See D.D. McElroy, *Scotland’s Age of Improvement* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1969), p. 21.

20. A.F. Tytler, (Lord Woodhouselee), *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames* (Edinburgh: W. Creech etc., 1807), vol. 1, p. 70 footnote, quoting Mallet as in “Dr. Anderson’s *Life of Mallet*.”
21. William Robert Scott, *Francis Hutcheson: His Life, Teaching and Position in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 1900), p. 33.
22. See R.S. Downie, in his “Introduction” to Hutcheson’s *Philosophical Writings*, ed. R.S. Downie (London: Everyman, 1994), pp. x, xvii.
23. John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century*, ed. A. Allardyce (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1888), vol. 1, p. 22 fn.
24. *An Account of the Fair Intellectual-Club in Edinburgh: In a Letter to a Honourable Member of an Athenian Society there, By a young Lady, the Secretary of the Club* (Edinburgh: Printed by J. M’Euen & Co., 1720), p. i.
25. *Op. cit.*, Preface.
26. *The Scots Peerage*, ed. James Balfour Paul (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1907), vol. 4, p. 321.
- 27 *Op. cit.*, pp. 320-321. The Sixth Earl was wounded at the Battle of Sheriffmuir (1715) fighting for the government against the Jacobites.
28. *Op. cit.*, pp. 322. Lord Binning also fought at the Battle of Sheriffmuir, alongside his father.
29. *The Plain Dealer* no. 46 (Friday, August 28, 1724), p. 396. Hill’s copy of the pamphlet is probably the one currently available in the British Library in London.
30. Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century*, vol. 1, pp. 195-196.
31. Robert Wallace was author of numerous religious tracts and books, such as: *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind in Ancient and Modern Times* (Edinburgh, 1753); *Characteristics of the Present Political State of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1754); and *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature, and Providence* (London, 1761).
32. *The Scots Magazine* 33 (May 1771): 340-341. This quotation is from an obituary of Robert Wallace, which was written either by Wallace’s son, George, or by someone who received his information from the latter.
33. *Op. cit.* p. 341.
34. *Ibid.*
35. See Alexander Campbell Fraser, *Life and Letters of George Berkeley D.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), p. 224, footnote 37.
36. Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century*, vol. 1, p. 196 fn 1.
37. Richard H. Saunders, entry for John Smibert (1688–1751), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <http://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25758>.
38. A.F. Tytler, (Lord Woodhouselee), *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames* (Edinburgh: W. Creech etc., 1807), vol. 1, Appendix 8, pp. 50-52.
39. See, for example, Robert Wodrow, *Analecta* (Glasgow: Maitland Club, 1843), vol. 3, p. 175.
40. As Kames told Boswell. See James Boswell, *Private Papers from Malahide Castle*, ed. G. Scott and F.A. Pottle (New York: privately printed, 1932), vol. 15, p. 314f. Kennedy’s Close was at the west end of what is now Hunter’s Square.

41. Alexander Bower, *History of the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: A. Smellie, 1817), vol. 2, p. 313.
42. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*, pp. 22-23.
43. "Whatever was the reason, he was not a member of the Rankenian Club" is the authoritative statement of Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century*, p. 196, fn 2. As Ramsay knew Kames and all the *literati*, and was an acute observer of the scene, his word is scarcely to be doubted.
44. "Of these two societies, the Rankenian Club was doubtless the most important." See "Literary and Philosophical Societies of Edinburgh during the 18th Century," anonymously published in *Hogg's Instructor* 8 (1852): 44.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Boswell, *Private Papers from Malahide Castle*, p. 284.
47. Samuel Johnson, Letter to James Elphinstone, 1750, in *Life of Samuel Johnson* by James Boswell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), *Aetat.* 41, p. 151.
48. George Chalmers, *The Life of Thomas Ruddiman* (Edinburgh and London: J. Stockdale, 1794), p. 84.
49. As suggested by McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*, p. 67, fn.1.
50. Sir Alexander Dick's home, Prestonfield House, is now a fashionable hotel and is one of the few buildings surviving in Edinburgh associated with the 18th century *literati*.
51. Boswell, *Private Papers from Malahide Castle*, p. 314f.
52. Chalmers, *The Life of Thomas Ruddiman*, p. 84. See also Bower, *History of the University of Edinburgh*, vol. 2, p. 337.
53. Tytler, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames*, vol. 1, p. 184.
54. See Paul Russell, article on "Dudgeon, William" in *Dictionary of Eighteenth Century British Philosophers*, ed. J.W. Yolton and J.V. Price (Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press, 1999), p. 296-298, where Russell refers to Dudgeon as "one of a group of thinkers active in the Borders," i.e. the four men comprising the Borders Nexus.
55. James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (London: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1875), pp. 111-113. It appears that in consciously associating Dudgeon with Hume, McCosh has unconsciously rechristened Dudgeon.
56. Ninewells House, Hume's family home, is about 5 miles (8 km) from Duns Castle, where Baxter was tutor, 10 miles (17 km) from Kames, and from Lennelhill, where Dudgeon was tenant farmer. And Dudgeon was a similar distance (10 miles) from Baxter.
57. J.Y.T. Greig, *The Letters of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), vol. 1.
58. Tytler, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames*, vol. 1, pp. 23-26.
59. Two of Dudgeon's pamphlets, "The State of the Moral World Considered" and "A Letter to the Author of the State of the Moral World Considered," were published posthumously in *The Philosophical Works of Mr. William Dudgeon* (Edinburgh: privately printed, 1765), pp. 5-159. This book was reproduced by Thoemmes Press in 1994, together with the complete correspondence of Dudgeon with the Rev. John Jackson.

60. See Ross, “Hutcheson on Hume’s ‘Treatise’: An Unnoticed Letter,” pp. 69-72.

61. Andrew Mitchell was “a classmate of Hume’s at Edinburgh’ College, and Dick was a fellow-frequenter of the Rainbow Coffeehouse, apparently a gathering place of purely literary characters.” E.C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 108, 110. The possibility that the Rankenian Club may have influenced Hume in the development of his philosophy is only hinted at by George Davie in his writings: e.g. in footnote 2 to his “Berkeley’s Impact on Scottish Philosophy” in *A Passion for Ideas: Essays on the Scottish Enlightenment*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), p. 38.

62. *New Letters of David Hume*, ed. R. Klibansky and E.C. Mossner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 17.

63. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, p. 59.

64. See Ramsay, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the 18th Century*, vol. 1, p. 207.

65. *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

66. See *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, pp. 273-274.

67. It seems reasonable to assume that Baxter was governor to the sons of William Hay at Duns Castle throughout this period 1719 to 1723. This conclusion is evidenced, firstly, by a receipt (or ‘discharge’) for salary received, which is to be found in Bundle 36 of the Hay Family Papers at Duns Castle. This is dated March 1721 and refers to the sum of £20 sterling being paid for period November 1719 to November 1720. Secondly, Baxter was at Duns Castle during his correspondence with Kames in 1723, as mentioned above. His letters to Kames are addressed from Duns Castle.

68. For example, James Boswell observed: “Some of the neighbouring Gentleman’s sons were educated at Kames.” This was while Lord Kames was being educated by a governor. See *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, vol. 15, “Materials for Writing the Life of Lord Kames,” p. 268.

69. Andrew Kippis, *Biographia Britannica* (London: 1780), p. 25.

70. Andrew Baxter, *Matho, or the Cosmotheoria Puerilis* (London: Printed for A. Millar, over-against Katharine Street in the Strand, 1745). In this dialogue, “Philon” is Baxter himself, and “Matho” is his pupil, Mr. Hay. In a later much larger and unpublished dialogue, *Histor*, a written note states that “Matho” is Mr. Hay, “Philon” Mr Baxter, and “Histor” Mr Wilkes’. The latter dialogue takes place in Spa, southeast of Liège, where the famous John Wilkes first adopted Baxter as his mentor, if not tutor. See also Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography* (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1910), pp. 177-178.

71. E.C. Mossner, “Hume’s Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9 (1948): 499.

72. Baxter presumably was governor to the sons of William Hay at Duns Castle throughout this period 1719 to 1723. This conclusion is evidenced, firstly, by a receipt (or ‘discharge’) for salary received, which is to be found in Bundle 36 of the Hay Family Papers at Duns Castle. This is dated March 1721 and refers to the sum of £20 sterling being paid for period November 1719 to November 1720. Secondly, Baxter was at Duns Castle during his correspondence with Kames in 1723, as mentioned above.

73. Baxter's letter to Bishop Warburton addressed from Duns Castle and dated May 16th, 1740. This was discovered and published by Heiner F. Klemme in "Anmerkungen zur schottischen Aufklärung in Aberdeen" in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 74 (1992): 256-257.
74. Greig, *The Letters of David Hume*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15.
75. Sir Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering* (1815) (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1932), chap. 15, p. 98.
76. "An Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson D.D," *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, vol. 10, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1854), p. 203, note A.
77. Pamphlet entitled "Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture," Edinburgh Room, Central Library, Edinburgh. See its Introduction, p. 3.
78. From the Ms. Minutes of the St. Giles or Select Society of Edinburgh. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
79. *Op. cit.* Meeting of 13th November, 1754.
80. Ms. *Minutes of the Literary Society in Glasgow College*, Glasgow University Library, Special Collections, MS Murray 505, p.18.
81. *The Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society 1758–1773*. ed. H.L. Ulman (Aberdeen, UK: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), p. 77.
82. *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
83. *Op. cit.*, p. 66, where a table is given showing the extent of each members' time with the Society.
84. *Op. cit.*, p. 194, 85. José Manuel Barroso, in a lecture given at Edinburgh University, 28th November 2006 entitled, "The Scottish enlightenment and the challenges for Europe in the 21st century; climate change and energy." The quotation from Voltaire remains unsourced.
86. Quoted in French by H.W. Thomson in *A Scottish Man of Feeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 18: "Toute les fois que les anglais m'ont parlé de Scotchmen avec un ton de mépris qu'ils affectent quelques fois, je leur ai conseillé d'aller à Edimbourg pour apprendre à vivre et à être hommes. Vos savans Robertson, Black et Hume sont regardés ici comme des génies du premier rang; il n'y a que deux jours que j'ai vu M. le Comte de Buffon qui me les a tous nommés au bout de doigt, comme on nomme Newton et Locke." The quotation ends thus: "Pour les Sciences exactes Edimbourg vaut mieux qu'Oxford et Cambridge ensemble." Trans. by E.C. Mossner in his book, *The Forgotten Hume: le bon David* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 202.

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