



University of  
St Andrews

Mapping the Songs, Lectures, and Lives of Scottish Dressmakers, Doctors, Chemists, and  
Journalists: The Case for Women Esperantists in 1911 Scotland

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Wordcount: 3004

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
Professions	4
Mapping	8
Map 1	8
Map 2	10
Final Thoughts	12
Bibliography	13

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to first thank Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Foundation for generously supporting my six weeks of research and leadership development. I am also incredibly grateful for my supervisor, Dr. Bernhard Struck, for guiding me through my first attempt at historical research and sharing excitement about my findings.

## Introduction

Attendance records of the Seventh International Esperanto Congress held in Antwerp in 1911 demonstrate that 106 attendees traveled from Scotland. Sixty-five of them were women, and fifty-three of these women lived in Edinburgh. This number of Scots and percentage of Scottish women was unmatched in all other International Esperanto Congresses before World War I. Only six of the fifty-three women from Edinburgh who attended the Antwerp Congress also traveled to other congresses including Cambridge 1907, Dresden 1908, Barcelona 1909, Krakow 1912, and Bern 1913.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, Edinburgh, Dundee, Montrose, Glasgow, Perth, and Aberdeen all had active Esperanto clubs. Who were these dressmakers, nurses, journalists, typewriters, and scientists, who spoke Esperanto, a planned language invented by the Polish doctor Ludwik Zamenhof in 1887, in Scotland? Why did such women travel internationally to Antwerp to discuss art, theater, literature, current affairs, and the potential of this universal language with people from around the world? This is the puzzle I grappled with in my research.

Within the context of scholarship on gender history and transnational history, I conducted largely primary source-based research with an “actor-focused”<sup>2</sup> approach. *Constructing Internationalism* by Leila J. Rupp provided a brief characterization of women’s international organizations. She wrote about the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and similar organizations’ unique symbolic expressions and opposition to containing forces like national borders.<sup>3</sup> I also read Marcel Koschek’s “Ways to Track Down a Transnational Movement” to grasp how to write about maps I would create myself. This article explains the heatmaps of Esperantist doctors’ addresses in 1909 Warsaw that Koschek created using QGIS, the same software I used for my mapping. His map descriptions paired with class discourse<sup>4</sup> gave me confidence in coming to my own conclusions from the maps I would create from scratch. Saunier’s theory-based chapter “On Methodology” in *Transnational History* was exceptionally useful for my research as it emphasized the adjustment of geographical scope to follow sources

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<sup>1</sup> See page 10.

<sup>2</sup> I got this term from David Brydan and Jessica Reinisch’s “Introduction: Internationalists in European History” in *Internationalists in European History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), on page 8 that emphasizes a “‘bottom-up’, actor-focused approach to the history of internationalism” to understand agendas behind international organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Leila J. Rupp, “Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888-1945,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1573.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Koschek, “Ways to Track Down a Transnational Movement,” Global History Blog, Scottish Centre for Global History, accessed June 24 2021, <https://globalhistory.org.uk/2021/04/ways-to-track-down-a-transnational-movement/>.

and answer questions about transnational actors.<sup>5</sup> All these works helped me gauge the appropriate style for writing about the lives of Scottish women Esperantists, an area of gender and transnational history unwritten until now. By examining the professional and personal lives of Scottish women Esperantists through census documents, local newspapers, archival material, attendance books, and Esperanto journals,<sup>6</sup> it is apparent that women were not just members of local Esperanto groups in Scotland. They held leadership positions, were responsible for the teaching and outreach of the language, and regularly performed live entertainment at socials. Still, Esperanto was not the center of these women's lives. Their fascinating careers, passions, and interests outside of Esperanto counterintuitively demonstrate the appeal of Esperanto as a movement and hobby in early twentieth-century Scotland.

### **Professions**

The Antwerp attendance book recorded seven professions of Scottish women: from journalist (journalisto) to teacher (instruistino) to nurse (flegistino), accountant (librotenistino), stenographer (stenografistino), typewriter (masinskribistino), and cashier (kasistino). The three nurses, three accountants, and five stenographers were all from Edinburgh.<sup>7</sup> One of the eight teachers was from Kilmarnock and another from Dundee. The one typewriter, Greta Smith, was from Eskbank and the one cashier, Helen Smith, was from Edinburgh. Only twenty-two out of the sixty-five women who attended Antwerp were listed as professionals. This data can be compared with the twenty-one out of the forty-one men who were listed with professions by their names in the attendance book. Proportionally, this demonstrates that there were more employed men than employed women who attended the Antwerp Congress. The men's professions contrast starkly with the women's. Ranging from solicitor (solicitoro), actuary (akuaristo), employee (oficisto), civil servant (civila oficisto), wine seller (vinvendisto), lawyer (advokato), city clerk (urba oficisto), teacher (instruistino), merchant (komercisto), accountant (librotenisto), sailor

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre-Yves Saunier, "On Methodology" in *Transnational History. Theory and History*. ed. Donald MacRaid (London: Macmillan Education UK, 2013), 120.

<sup>6</sup> I utilized enumerator sheets from the 1911 Census of Scotland courtesy of [ScotlandsPeople](#) Advanced People Search, the Report on the Twelfth Decennial Census of Scotland Vol 1 Part 1 - City of Edinburgh courtesy of [UK Parliament Papers](#), the [John Beveridge Collection](#) of University St Andrews Special Collections, and digitized versions of *The British Esperantist* from [Periodicals](#) and Congress attendance books from [Online Reading of the Esperanto World Congresses](#) courtesy of the Department of Planned Languages at the Austrian National Library.

<sup>7</sup> Sepa Universala Kongreso de Esperanto - Paris 1912, 125-127  
[https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL\\_6194633&order=1&view=SINGLE](https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_6194633&order=1&view=SINGLE).

(maringeniero), banker (bankisto), engineer (ingeniero), tax employee (imposta oficisto) to merchants (komercistoj)<sup>8</sup>, a picture of an upper-middle-class, highly-skilled population of men interested in Esperanto emerges. Only five of these employed men were from outside Edinburgh. In this way, it appears that while the majority of both employed women and men were concentrated in Scotland's capital, there was a wider socioeconomic range of women than men who attended the Antwerp Congress.

AB Mackenzie was listed as a journalist in the Antwerp attendance book, and the 1911 Census revealed that she worked for the publication *The Gentlewoman*.<sup>9</sup> The British Newspaper Archive highlights that from its first publication in 1890 until its end in 1926, *The Gentlewoman* desired to “‘represent and reflect’ its female audience ‘in all phases of their social and domestic life’ and that it was written ‘mainly by gentlewomen for gentlewomen.’”<sup>10</sup> Devoted to fashion writing with clothing, lifestyle, and beauty advertisements within the newspaper, Mackenzie was presumably interested not just in journalism, but in entertaining and connecting with upper-class Scottish women like herself. As one of the British Esperanto Association Delegate Councillors for the Edinburgh Esperanto Society<sup>11</sup> and the “Local Convenor for Ladies” at the 1908 British Esperanto Association Congress in Edinburgh,<sup>12</sup> Mackenzie was also clearly devoted to what Esperanto had to offer. Her roles within the local club illustrate not only her own dedication to women's involvement in Esperanto, but also how leaders of the Edinburgh club saw Mackenzie as someone who would successfully represent the club to women Esperantists who traveled to Edinburgh.

While Isabella Mears did not attend Antwerp, she is recorded frequently in the *British Esperantist* as a key contributor to multiple Esperanto clubs, socials, and congresses across Scotland. *The British Medical Journal* obituary for Dr. Mears provided key information to understand Mears' professional life. The journal records that she attended the School of

<sup>8</sup> Sepa Universala Kongreso de Esperanto - Paris 1912, 125-127, [https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL\\_6194633&order=1&view=SINGLE](https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_6194633&order=1&view=SINGLE).

<sup>9</sup> According to Scotland's People's census enumerator sheet entitled “1911 MACKENZIE, AGNES B (Census 685/6 50/ 7) Page 7 of 19, in 1911 Mackenzie was 42 years old and single.

<sup>10</sup> “Hot Off the Press - New Titles This Week,” The British Newspaper Archive Blog, last modified September 7, 2020, <https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2020/09/07/new-titles-7-sept-2020/>.

<sup>11</sup> *The British Esperantist* 1911 edition, 79, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=e1d&datum=1911&size=45>.

<sup>12</sup> Ms38908/13: British Esperanto Association congress programme and invitation, Edinburgh, 1908, John Beveridge Collection, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=JBEV%2f214>.

Medicine for Women in London in 1875. In 1881, she obtained the L.K.Q.C.P.I. qualification from the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and was listed as the twenty-fifth woman on the *Medical Register*.<sup>13</sup> Mears opened Woodburn Sanatorium, an open-air treatment center for tuberculosis in Edinburgh with her husband in 1899 and wrote about this facility in Esperanto.<sup>14</sup> In *The Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions: 1907-1908*, Dr. Mears' professional work is spotlighted without reference to her husband. The book praises Mears as "one of the pioneers in Scotland of a system which appeared at the time to be completely antagonistic to the old accepted methods... the results have been marvellously satisfactory."<sup>15</sup> While her obituary does not mention Esperanto, it mentions that besides her medical profession, Mears was fascinated with missionary work and Chinese religion and philosophy. She translated the Tao Teh King for publication in 1916.<sup>16</sup> At the Skota Kongreso Dundee on June 17, 1911, Dr. Mears presented the talk "Esperanto en la Misia Kampo"<sup>17</sup> ("Esperanto in the Mission Field"). Perhaps Mears invested time in Esperanto because she saw the language as a way to expand the influence of her work as a doctor, missionary, and/or scholar of Chinese philosophy.

Heather Beveridge was another Scottish woman in the sciences who appreciated Esperanto. Research about Heather's life and trajectory as a chemist has been undertaken by Marelene Rayner-Canham and Geoffrey Rayner-Canham in *Pioneering British Women Chemists*. After graduating with a B.Sc from St Andrews in chemistry she was appointed as a Carnegie Research Scholar at Dundee working with James Walker.<sup>18</sup> Heather Beveridge utilized some weeks of studying Esperanto while she was a Carnegie Research Scholar to translate an academic article she wrote in collaboration with Professor Walker about Para-Toluidine Monohydrate into Esperanto. According to the 16 January 1908 edition of the *Dundee Courier*, she hoped that this translation published in the *International Science Review* would allow scientists from around the world to learn from her work. This dedication to a wider audience's

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<sup>13</sup> The British Medical Journal, 1936;2: 1063.

<sup>14</sup> "Literaturo" in *La Esperantista Vagabondo* paper, entitled "Dr. Isabella Mears, L.R.C.P. I, Woodburn Sanitorium, Morningside, Edinburgh," John Beveridge Collection, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=JBEV>

<sup>15</sup> Janet Horowitz Murray and Myra Stark, *The Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions: 1907-1908* (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> The British Medical Journal, 1936;2: 1063.

<sup>17</sup> Ms38908/15: Skota Kongreso Dundee, June 19 1911," Scottish Esperanto Federation Annual Congresses, John Beveridge Collection, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=JBEV>

<sup>18</sup> Marlene Rayner-Canham and Geoffrey Rayner-Canham, *Pioneering British Women Chemists: Their Lives And Contributions* (World Scientific, 2019), 304.

access to science highlights Esperanto as a vessel for advancing the spread of scientific knowledge beyond Scotland.

Both Mears and Beveridge also participated in the entertainment aspects of Esperanto clubs. With her doctorate title next to her name, Mears is in the program of the Fifth Annual Congress of Scottish Esperantists in Glasgow on 18 June 1910 and the Sixth Annual Congress in Dundee in 1911 for writing and singing hymns and songs. Mears wrote and performed the solo “La Solo Sinjoro” (“The Only Lord”) at both Glasgow and Dundee.<sup>19</sup> In the program for the “Social Kunveno” at the Lamb’s Hotel in Dundee on 15 April 1908, Heather Beveridge is recorded under “Kanto: La Espero” (“Song: The Hope”) in part one of the social, and “Kanto: Seranado” in part two.<sup>20</sup> The academics’ willingness to sing in Esperanto for an audience may come as a pleasant surprise, but importantly demonstrates two of the many cases seen in my research of women Esperantists being the backbone of the creative entertainment within Esperanto socials across Scotland.

Still, you did not have to be an exceptional scientist or journalist to be involved in Esperanto. Annie Munro was a consul of the Edinburgh Esperanto Club<sup>21</sup> and is listed as a teacher on the Scottish Post Office Directories from 1909-1910. She was in contact with Reverend John Beveridge through postcards<sup>22</sup> and gave ten pounds to the BEA in her name as a single woman.<sup>23</sup> The sisters Rosa B and Lucy May Simpson had no professions next to their names on the Antwerp attendance book, but the 1911 census tells us otherwise. Rosa and Lucy lived in a 6-room house at 17 Clarence Street with their mother and their brother in Edinburgh. They were both unmarried, and 35-year-old Lucy was a dressmaker who worked from home and Rosa was 33-years-old and a “clerkess.”<sup>24</sup> Rosa and Lucy’s age, marital status, and lack of children align with trends in age and marital status of many other Scottish women Esperantists seen in my research.

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<sup>19</sup> Ms38908/15, Scottish Esperanto Federation Annual Congresses, John Beveridge Collection, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=JBEV%2f216>.

<sup>20</sup> Ms38908/17, Dundee Esperanto Club and Perth Esperanto Group 1906, 1908, 1912, John Beveridge Collection, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=JBEV%2f218>.

<sup>21</sup> *The British Esperantist* 1911 edition, 98, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=e1d&datum=1911&size=45>.

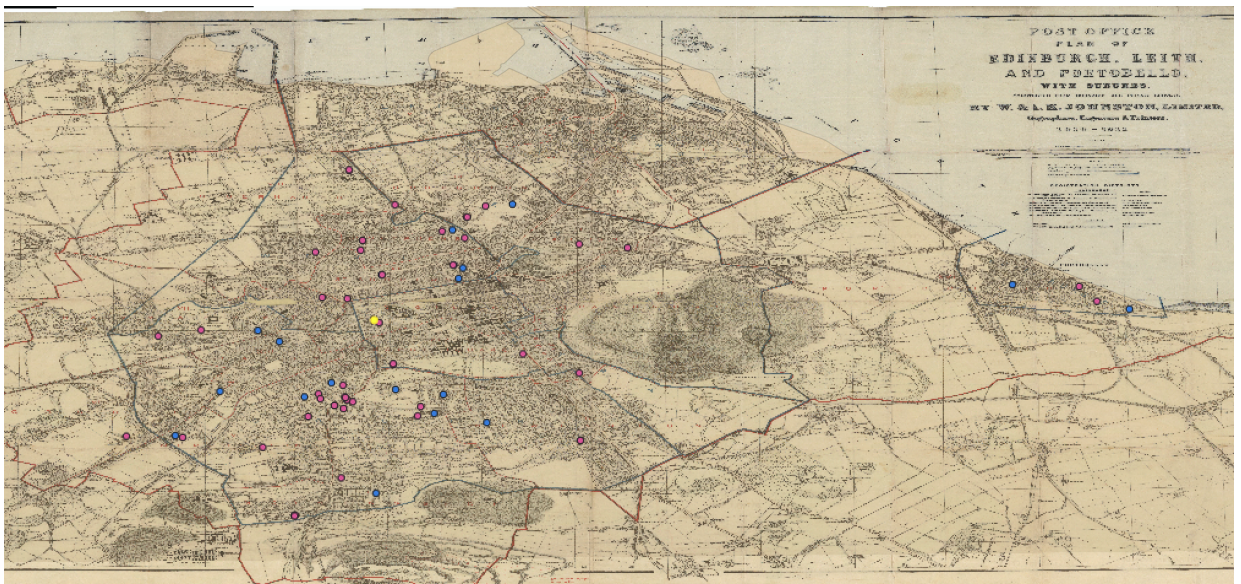
<sup>22</sup> Ms36242/222: Postcard from Annie M Munro to John Beveridge, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=JBEV%2f216>.

<sup>23</sup> *The British Esperantist* 1911 edition, Guarantee Fund, 19, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=e1d&datum=1911&size=45>.

<sup>24</sup> Scotland’s People Enumerator Sheet, “1911 SIMPSON, LUCY MAY” (Census 685/2 44/ 20) Page 20 of 24.

## Mapping

I created two maps to visualize trends in my research using QGIS software version 3.18.3- Zurich. I georeferenced a shapefile of Scotland onto a JPEG electronic download of the Bartholomew Post Office Plan of Edinburgh, Leith and Portobello 1910-1911, courtesy of the National Library of Scotland. As most Edinburgh street addresses have remained the same since 1910, I used Google Earth to record the coordinates of the Antwerp attendees' addresses. Then I put these coordinates into an Excel spreadsheet that could be exported as a text file and imported into QGIS software to place the coordinates as dots on this 1911 map. In total, this mapping process took a week of work.



Map 1

On both maps the male attendees of Antwerp are signified by a blue dot, the female attendees by a pink dot. I had to discard six Edinburgh residents from both maps because their addresses were buildings rather than personal homes.<sup>25</sup> The yellow dot signifies Synod Hall, the location where multiple Esperanto events were held in Edinburgh according to *The British Esperantist*. Constructed in 1875, the buildings were transformed for public letting in 1902 when the Edinburgh Corporation bought them from the Church.<sup>26</sup> Synod Hall's central location in

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Forrest, A. Calderhead, H. Forrest's addresses were the City Hospital, Frank W. Keddie's address was listed as the City Chambers and Clare J and Mary Thompson who had Durham Road, Portobello as their addresses.

<sup>26</sup> The University of Edinburgh, "Synod Hall, Castle Terrace," accessed June 16 2021, <https://www.reidconcerts.music.ed.ac.uk/venue/synod-hall-castle-terrace>.

Edinburgh and its placement in roughly in the middle of the displayed data of Map 1 makes it no surprise that this space was utilized for Esperanto meetings.

Map 1 plots all Edinburgh residents who attended Antwerp in 1911 from the addresses provided by the Antwerp attendance book. A stand-out feature of this map is the cluster around Bruntsfield Links. In this area, the sisters Agnes Burton and Ella Darling Deans, William Page and his wife lived on the same street. Bessie Dishart lived down the road, and Annie Robb, the Valentines, Jean A McLean, and Alexander Heron lived close to them as well. A bit further away but in the general area lived Alice Maxton, James T Johnson and Mary C Jolly. On the Antwerp attendance sheets, Page was listed as a solicitor, Heron as a lawyer, Dishart as a stenographer, and Mackenzie as a journalist. When examined next to the map where large estates are present throughout this area, these professions characterize Bruntsfield Links as a wealthy area.

The proximity of the Bruntsfield cluster is mimicked on a smaller scale in several other parts of the city. With the St Andrews Square addresses, John Warden and his wife lived within a block of the David Ritchie Tullo and John C Thompson. Near Drummond Place, Annie Munro, Agnes J Lawson, and Robert Selcraigh all lived within a street of each other. The physical closeness of these addresses fit into the narrative that Esperanto spread from person to person in the early twentieth century. This argument appears in Pierre Janton's famous book *Esperanto*. As Janton explains, "The advantage of this [person to person] process lies in the fact that interpersonal contact carries great persuasive force, and accordingly the new recruit remains strongly tied to the recruiter."<sup>27</sup> While we cannot be sure that women like Annie Munro, the Deans sisters, and Bessie Dishart, were introduced to Esperanto from each other, this theory poses an interesting question about the motivations behind someone becoming a transnational actor. Perhaps these women's values already aligned with those they found at the Edinburgh Esperanto club which prompted them to leave their familiar surroundings, go abroad, and meet like-minded Esperantists in Antwerp. However, the four Portobello addresses do not fit into this proximity theory as each address is more than a few streets away from another and consequently presents a question of outliers.

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<sup>27</sup> Pierre Janton, *Esperanto* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 125.



Map 2

Map 2 plots the twenty Edinburgh residents in total who attended Antwerp who also attended other international congresses between the years 1907-1912. This map allows for gender dynamic comparisons about men and women's likelihood to go abroad for Esperanto purposes. Attending an international congress usually required leaving home for over a week to travel on a ship.<sup>28</sup> As fourteen men and six women attended Antwerp in addition to other congresses, the six women plotted here frequently came up in my research: Jane Baird attended Krakow 1912 and Bern 1913, AB Mackenzie attended Cambridge 1907, Dresden 1908, and Barcelona 1909. Annie Robb attended Cambridge 1907 and Dresden 1908. Annie Munro attended Dresden 1908, Barcelona 1909, and Krakow 1912. Alice Laing attended Bern 1913, and Bessie Dishart attended Dresden 1908.

The question that arises from this map is: why did so many Edinburgh residents attend Antwerp but not other congresses? Compared to all the other International Esperanto Congresses, fifty-three Edinburgh women was a huge number of Scottish women to travel abroad. Logistically, when we compare Antwerp to Dresden, Barcelona, or Krakow, Antwerp

<sup>28</sup> *The British Esperantist* 1911 edition, 139,  
<https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=e1d&datum=1911&size=45>.

had the advantage of being geographically closest to Scotland, and consequently took less time and resources to get to. More analytically, the First World War had not yet burst the dream that the universal language could work to unite the world. 1911 was also about five years after Esperanto clubs started to form across Scotland<sup>29</sup> and steady leadership of the Edinburgh Esperanto club remained as involvement grew.

Four out of the six women on Map 2 (AB Mackenzie, Annie Robb, Bessie Dishart, and Alice Laing) are clustered with addresses near Bruntsfield Links. Oppositely, the array of blue dots signifies that the fourteen men who attended other congresses had addresses that were spread out across the city center near St Andrews Square, North Castle Street, Haymarket Station, Carleton Cricket Ground, and Harrison Park. The two pink dots in the upper right-hand corner of the map are Annie Munro on 39 London St and Jane Baird on 95 Bellevue Road. The distribution of Map 2 consequently reinforces the importance of profession and wealth status for Edinburgh women and men to travel abroad as the fourteen men on this map had professions such as actuaries, solicitors, civil servants, wine sellers, lawyers, city clerks, bankers, and engineers. The four Bruntsfield Links women also had specialized professions such as being journalists, teachers, and stenographers.

Edinburgh was a unique city with its historically large population of professionals that influenced the city's slow industrialization compared to Glasgow or Dundee according to Rebecca Madgin and Richard Rodger in "Inspiring Capital? Deconstructing myths and reconstructing urban environments, Edinburgh, 1860–2010." Madgin and Rodger explained that high professional employment supported a "high ranking international financial centre 'engrossing all the top legal and much of the top financial business.'"<sup>30</sup> As seen previously in my paper, many of the men Esperantists from Edinburgh, especially those who frequently traveled abroad, were employed in such legal and banking professions. The article also highlights the reputation of Edinburgh: "as a contemporary observed ... 'the city has a calm, steady character in keeping with the predominance of legal, educational, literary and artistic pursuits, from which it derives its chief maintenance.'"<sup>31</sup> Reading through the 1911 edition of *The British Esperantist*, it's clear that Esperanto clubs and congresses were *for* discussing and appreciating theatre, art,

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<sup>29</sup> *The Dundee Courier* records the Montrose Esperanto Club as starting in 1906 in "Interview with James D Simpson, Montrose, President of Federation of Scottish Esperantists" from the Saturday 22 July 1911 edition.

<sup>30</sup> Rebecca Madgin and Richard Rodger, "Inspiring Capital? Deconstructing myths and reconstructing urban environments, Edinburgh, 1860–2010," *Urban History*, 40 no. 3 (August 2013), 510.

<sup>31</sup> Madgin, Rodger, "Inspiring Capital?," 511.

travel, and literature. This article's emphasis on such topics disallows any coincidences in Edinburgh's high concentration of Esperantists who were involved in local and international Esperanto endeavors compared to other Scottish cities. The values of Esperanto clubs and the values of the city of Edinburgh simply overlapped.

### **Final Thoughts**

With the help of the Hebden Bridge Historical Society, I also found three exceptional women from the Midlands, Emily and Violet Crossley and Helen Geddes during my research, but was unable to introduce them as transnational actors in this essay because of word count. The locations of Scottish Esperanto club meeting places like Synod Hall in Edinburgh are present in records about Esperanto clubs in Montrose, Perth, Glasgow, Dundee, and Leith. Mapping these locations and looking into the socioeconomics of each area would be another useful exercise to further understand Scottish Esperantists.

In only six weeks of research, while I was able to begin uncovering an untouched part of the history of the Esperanto movement, there is much more about these Scottish Esperantists to be explored. I employed various disciplines such as land and spatial history, cartography, software, and statistics to understand this sliver of the Esperanto movement through a gender history lens. The interdisciplinary nature of my research exhibits the fascinating yet puzzling professional and personal lives of Scottish women involved in Esperanto. Further, I will be presenting my research at the "Language Practices in Transnational Contexts" workshop held at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin September 6-8 2021 organized in part by my supervisor Dr. Bernhard Struck.

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