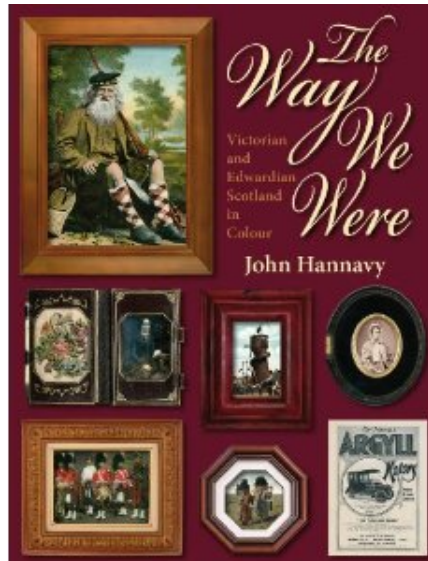


HIST 130: Extra Credit Book Review

Due Monday 6 May @ 1:00 p.m.



Students in Cranks, Reformers, and Radicals in Victorian Britain have an extra special opportunity this year -- to review the book *The Way We Were* by John Hannavy. Although doing this book review will result in an as yet unspecified amount of extra credit, the real prize for writing a top quality review will be the chance to have it published in the magazine *History Scotland*. The Reviews Editor, Dr. Kirsty McAlister (University of Stirling), has agreed to publish the best review written, as determined by Drs. Cordery, Pool, Urban, and Witzig (submissions will be considered anonymously to ensure impartiality). Dr. Myers will help the “winning” writer polish their review and will therefore be a co-author on it at the time of publication (this is also because it is standard for someone with a doctorate to submit reviews to the magazine). If you would like help as you are writing, do not hesitate to ask Dr. Myers for assistance.

A copy of the book is on Reserve at the library, and you are asked to remain on the first floor when you are using it in case a classmate needs to look at it as well. The book is available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble, should you want your own copy (you are *not* expected to buy it).

An assortment of copies of *History Scotland* has also been placed on Reserve so you can look at other book reviews that have been published in it. You are also encouraged to visit their Facebook page to get to know more about the magazine. They are also on Twitter.

The target length of a book review for *History Scotland* is 500 words. You should describe the book and focus on what its strengths are -- in other words, why would readers of the magazine find it an interesting book to purchase? If there are, in your opinion, any obvious weaknesses in the book, you should note those as well (honesty is important), though you should do so in a friendly and respectful manner. Unlike book reviews you may have done for other courses, the purpose of this type of review is not to tear the book apart, it is to encourage people to read it and learn more about Scottish history.

A sample review with formatting (written recently by Dr. Myers) can be found on the back. →→→

The Victorian Elliots in Peace and War: Lord and Lady Minto, their Family and Household Between 1816 and 1901

By John Evans

Amberley Publishing; 2012

351 pp, 65 illustrations, plus maps, plans, and sketches

Hardback; £25.00

ISBN 978-1-4456-0507-4

The Victorian Elliots were a Scottish family that was involved in or witness to numerous significant events in Britain, Europe, and around the world over the course of the nineteenth century. By focusing on a single family it makes much of that larger history seem more accessible and allows readers to get an impression of what it must have been like to wait to hear news of events like the revolutions in the 1830s or the Crimean War for the people that lived through them. A quick look at the index will tell readers how extensive the planetary coverage of events is, with at least three-dozen different nations mentioned on every populated continent. The Mintos associated with many prominent politicians, military figures, and families of the day, so valuable insights on these people are also provided.

Do not worry if you have not heard of Lord and Lady Minto (Gilbert and Mary Elliot) before, Evans introduces readers to each of the key members of the family, one at a time in the Introduction. He follows that up with background on the family's history to explain how they got to their position in society by 1816, then follows them chronologically through the century. The book reads largely like a novel and, were it not for the endnotes, you might think it was a fictional account because of the close proximity this family had to major events.

The Victorian Elliots is a well researched and referenced book with emphasis placed on personal manuscripts of the family located in the National Library of Scotland. Evans also provides chunks of text from newspapers, journals, and other primary sources so we can hear people's thoughts in their own words. The maps, plans, and sketches that are scattered throughout the book aid readers in their understanding of the places and events being discussed. On top of these images, there is a section of 65 photos and other images in the center and family trees at the end. It is hard to think of anything that Evans has not thought to include in the book.

Evans' descriptions provide excellent details to help the reader visualize the people, the settings, and even their belongings. Additionally information is provided about the children's studies with their tutors, the "family's dancing master" (68), games played, songs sung, etc. Much of the depiction of the household staff is courtesy of the recollections of the family members, but that is the nature of history; not all people in the past left extensive records behind. In some ways it is reminiscent of the BBC classic *Upstairs, Downstairs* and will appeal to those who enjoy *Downton Abbey* and the like.

The only drawback to *The Victorian Elliots* is the formatting of the book. The publisher chose to use a small font size and tight line spacing, so a great deal is packed into its 351 pages. It may be a challenge for some readers as a result, but hopefully it will be made available as an eBook in the near future so that it is easier on the eyes.

Christine D. Myers
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(To save you counting the words in the review, there are 514.)