

Dundee Literary and Scientific Institute Magazine



Dundee Literary and Scientific Institute, *Dundee Literary and Scientific Institute Magazine*, [title page], Vol. II, 1846-47 (Libraries, Leisure and Culture Dundee, D22022, Lamb Collection, 265(17)). Permission for the use of this image has kindly been granted by Libraries, Leisure and Culture Dundee.

Overview

George Tawse, one of the founding Literary and Scientific Institute members, wrote a light-hearted and affectionate recollection of the society's early days in 1846, in which he depicted its humble beginnings as eight or ten "mere lads", meeting on Monday evenings in a "mere garret - and a very poor garret - as garrets go[.]" This garret was the attic of the Cramb family house, shoemakers "of a political and intellectual cast, as shoemakers often are," and was located at the east end of Dundee High Street (barely five minutes' walk from Lamb's Coffee House in the Murraygate, where the [Dundee Literary Society](#) met).

Their first concerns were in discussing literary and scientific affairs, but their minds soon turned to the prospect of a manuscript magazine, as a way to 'vent' their energy and intelligence. As well as Tawse and two brothers from the Cramb family, the original members included geologist and journalist James Adie, who emigrated to Canada around four years after the society's foundation. At the time, Adie was known among his friends for his love of verse, 'if in rhyme,' and his recitations of poems by Scott, Byron, and in particular James Hogg, from which he gained the nickname 'Kilmeny.'

An earlier recollection of the beginnings of the Literary and Scientific Institute was written by James Barnet, mostly in memory of Adie, and appeared in the periodical

The Scottish American in 1890. He describes himself and three other boys 'just in their teens,' including Adie, who "took it into their heads that they would form a mutual improvement society." At the time of publication, Barnet said this took place 'around fifty years ago,' placing the events described around 1840.

Their meetings took place domestically at first, in Barnet's house and then in Adie's, before the "first mutual improvement society in town" grew from the small group. If Barnet joined the group for the transition to Cramb's garret, Tawse does not seem to remember him. Similarly to the Literary Institute, the young members of this group took turns at presenting an essay each meeting, but in the early days this did not have to be original work. Barnet, when nominated for the first essay, found a story about Genghis Khan in the *Chartist Circular* to read, despite a total prior lack of knowledge on the subject.

Name of Club, Society or Group That Produced the Magazine

Dundee Literary and Scientific Institute

Date of Existence

1844 -1848

Date of Magazine

1844-1847 (or possibly 1855?), Vol. 1?-Vol. 2

Number of Issues

2

Manuscript/Published Magazine

Manuscript

Contents and Contributions

Articles (non-fiction); Editorial; Essays; Letter to 'Critic'; Letter to Editor; Magazine Rules; Poems (original); Title page

Repository

Dundee District Central Library, The Wellgate

Reference

D22022, Lamb Collection, 265(17)

Additional Notes

See also *[Dundee Natural History and Literary Magazine](#)*.

These magazines were collected in the 1860s by A.C. Lamb, a Dundee temperance hotelier. Many of the societies represented met on premises owned by either himself or, in earlier decades, in his father Thomas' coffee house. Lamb was often involved in society life himself, and his collection of over 450 boxes covers a wide range of material relating to literature, poetry, culture and politics in Victorian Dundee. For more information on this material, please contact local.history@leisureandculturedundee.com.