



Senior Fellows Club - Winter Newsletter

The Senior Fellows Club is a community of over 200 retired doctors who meet up regularly. They have a programme of events throughout the year, including monthly Lecture & Lunches, an annual Guest Lunch & Exhibition, and an annual Summer Outing.

To find out more, please see the SFC pages on the College website.

If you are interested in joining this thriving community, please complete this online SFC application form or email the clubs administrator – sfc@rcpe.ac.uk.

We started the academic year as normal with our AGM in October. It is always gratifying to see how many members attend for this, which precedes the October lecture. At this AGM we were able to announce that our updated Constitution was now fully enacted. With the development of new medical colleges many doctors who were previously Members and Fellows of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of Edinburgh now have their own separate Colleges to join, including paediatrics, psychiatry, emergency medicine and general practice. To ensure that all of these retired doctors could access the club it was necessary to change our rules and hence the constitution.

This year our committee has remained the same, and our Honorary Treasurer, Roger Smith was able to tell us that we still have money in the bank, always a relief! We use our reserves to benefit the College, and for example have made a donation to help support the expansion of the RCPE museum facility; as you will know from the President's Update this was [opened by the Princess Royal, Princess Anne in autumn 2025](#). We also now have a new Fellows and Members lounge area with tea and coffee available for those in Edinburgh at a loose end. It is a very nice place to meet with former colleagues. Those wishing to access this can collect a key from Reception. Both these new developments were made possible following the very generous donation to the College by the late Dr Joyce Grainger in her will.

The Senior Fellows Club also gives two prizes for publications in the College Journal written by trainees. This adjudication process is led by Ron Fergusson, and this year we had the usual excellent selection of case reports and fuller papers to select from. We include in the judging panel a representative of the Trainees and Members' Committee, and it was gratifying to see that all the judges agreed despite their wide differences in experience. The prizes will be announced and presented at the Medical Trainees Conference in February 2026. This year may well be the last year we can give prizes in this way since, as many of you will be aware, the College journal published its final issue in December 2025. We are in discussion with the Trainees and Members' Committee about the best way forward, as we feel that it is important to continue to support and engage with trainee colleagues, particularly in these challenging times.



Our first lecture was delivered by Professor James Drife who travelled up with his wife from Leeds. He is an honorary fellow of the College and is internationally known for his work on improving perinatal mortality. Members of the SFC can watch this talk on demand on the RCPE website. His story was fascinating as he highlighted the heroines and heroes of the past who helped to improve women's experience during childbirth. He also noted that despite advances in medical and surgical science, the greatest reduction in maternal mortality only came in the mid part of the last century. Even more interesting is the fact that the major causes of morbidity and mortality, in particular perinatal haemorrhage, have not changed in frequency despite all advances in medicine. It is only our ability to manage these problems more effectively that has made a difference to mortality. This fact gave all of us listening pause for thought.

Our November lecture was given by one of the College's old friends, Professor Frank Dunn, a former president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow. Frank has already given us a lecture previously on AJ Cronin and his book *The Citadel*. Frank is a keen sportsman and one of his loves is golf. His lecture this time focused on two famous American golfers, one amateur, Bobby Jones, and one professional, Ben Hogan. He told us a little of their golfing lives, but also about the medical mishaps they suffered, notably a vehicle accident for Hogan which left severe injuries, and the rare condition syringomyelia for Jones. This was a moving story of two great sportsmen laid low at the peak of their powers.

Our programmed speaker for December sadly fell ill a couple of weeks before the lecture date. Our January lecturer for 2026, Iain Milne, kindly stepped into the breach, and delivered a masterful history on the analogue librarians of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. For those of you who think librarians are a dull bunch who sit in their offices reading great tomes this was a fascinating story. We learned that the first honorary librarians had no professional support, and when it was introduced, it was not always plain sailing. I won't spoil it by giving the full details but suffice it to say that the lecture is available to view online for SFC members. One small piece of tempting information however is the story of the introduction of library fines for overdue books in the middle of the 19th century. It was interesting to hear that the Fellow owing most on his library loans was none other than James Young Simpson. His debt to the library was in many hundreds of

pounds in today's money. I am not sure we ever found out from Iain if the money was eventually paid, or the College took a lenient view because of his enormous workload and waived the fee.

Upcoming Lectures

Please see below a list of our upcoming lectures which are available to SFC members. If you would like to attend these events, but are not a member yet, you can apply to join the club by completing our [online application form](#).

Date	Speaker/Event	Title of Talk
<i>Monday 2nd February 2026</i>	<i>Mr James Ogilvie Chartered Forester</i>	<i>From Edinburgh to Edinburgh - a two month tall ship voyage to Antarctica, South Georgia and Tristan de Cunha</i>
<i>Monday 23rd March 2026</i>	<i>Dr James Grant Retired General Practitioner and Arts Society Lecturer</i>	<i>The Art of Quackery</i>
<i>Monday 27th April 2026</i>	<i>Professor Maggie Bassendine Professor Emeritus of Hepatology, University of Newcastle</i>	<i>The Bassandyne Bible</i>
<i>Monday 25th May 2026</i>	<i>RCPE/RCSE Joint Lunch held at RCSE Professor Simon Harley Professor of Geology, University of Edinburgh</i>	<i>The Earth's Crust</i>

As we write this, the College is about to undergo its normal routine cycle of a change in President. That is to be Professor Mark Strachan, formerly the College Secretary and most recently Heritage Trustee. We look forward to working with Mark in the future, promoting the College and its work in many fields.

Warm regards,
Dr Nick Bateman
Chair, Senior Fellows Club



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