

1970s

The achievements made in earlier years were consolidated during the 1970s and new services were added to ELOPWC's offering.

The demolition of houses in parts of the city led to some members being dispersed to new developments on the city outskirts. A new club was set up in Wester Hailes and volunteers were recruited to visit folk in outlying areas.

KEEPING FOLK WARM



The miner's strike in early 1972 led to coal shortages and cuts to the electricity supply for up to nine hours some days, meaning that some older people were unable to heat their homes. ELOPWC's day centres cooperated with the Social Work Department to create "warmth centres" to accommodate people during the day. Throughout the decade, Lamb's House continued to help with heating. An annual appeal was made for quilts and blankets and some years cash help was provided to help older people pay their fuel bills.

Pending the building of the Stockbridge day centre, a temporary centre was run in Dean Street in the early 70s. The permanent centre in Cheyne Street was opened by the Queen Mother in July 1975. Moving with the times, ELOPWC carried out a consultation exercise with older people in the locality to get their views on the matters such as the facilities to be provided in the centre and opening times. Within five years, the centre could boast 1,28 members with 136 attending the daily lunch club. 250 volunteers were recruited.



The opening of Stockbridge enabled the Chair to proudly say in the annual report that year that ELOPWC then had a membership of 10,000 people; ran 4 day centres, 54 social clubs and 18 lunch clubs; had nine regions arranging visits and organising social events and trips; managed four residential homes; and provided 68 occupational and recreational classes. Red Cross volunteers played a big part in helping to provide services.

A number of mini buses were acquired during this period. One was presented by the popular BBC TV show "Blue Peter". Another was purchased following an appeal broadcast by William Merrilees the Lothian Chief Constable of Police. The buses made a big difference by making it easier to bring people to day centres and organise outings to places of interest.



Lamb's House continued to attract considerable interest. Visitors arrived from many overseas countries to view the facilities first hand, television reporters came from as far away as Japan, tape recordings showing the services offered were sent to many countries, and a representative visited a number of German cities to present on the House's achievements.

Around 300 volunteers helped at the centre, including an increasing number of young people assisting with lunches and teas. New services were added: remedial exercises for the severely handicapped; a scheme providing the over 85s with an escort to take them to parties; outings for people who were homebound; and very disabled people were brought in 2-3 days per week to enjoy physiotherapy, chiropody, hairdressing and lunch. The donation of an ambulance by Help The Aged was a great help here. By 1975, 400 members fell into the 78-95 years age band reflecting increasing life expectancy.

Dalry House's membership had soared to over 2,000 by the mid 70s. In a typical year, 500 people took advantage of the chiropody service and 300 ladies had their hair done in the centre. Mini buses were bringing in over 80 frail and disabled people each week. It was noted one year that 95% of the volunteers at the centre were retired reflecting the social changes since ELOPWC was set up in the 1940s. A member wrote a poem praising the services on offer at the centre (extract below):

“ A SEWING CLASS WHERE ONE CAN MAKE UP SOMETHING NICE TO WEAR
THEN WHEN YOU ARE ALL DRESSED UP, WELL THEY WILL SOON DO UP YOUR HAIR
THERE'S A KEEP FIT CLASS AND YOGA WHERE YOU LOOSEN UP EACH LIMB
AND WHEN YOU HAVE HAD A GO AT THEM, YOU WILL FEEL IN GOOD TRIM!
TO THE RHYTHM OF THE MUSIC, THE DANCING IS SO MUCH FUN
THERE'S A LADY AND A GENTLEMAN, WHO WILL SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE... ”



The lunch clubs were supported by the Social Work Department who arranged for food to be supplied by the kitchens preparing school meals. By this time, the Department also hosted lunch clubs of their own, so in total there were 40 such clubs across the city.

ELOPWC's finances were put under pressure by periods of high inflation during the decade. But new ways were found to boost income. A little ERNIE prize draw was launched and 3,500 people spend 10p each week on a ticket. Four shops were opened, one in Hamilton Place and one in Bruntsfield Place and two in Lauriston Place. They sold bric a brac and home baking raising valuable funds.

Other matters of note were:



•An orchestra came into being in 1977 which performed regularly in Riddle's Court, Lawnmarket. It started with 30 retired musicians.

•The Christmas party for Lamb's House held in the Assembly Rooms was a highlight each year. In 1974, over 700 attended it. In 1973 an anonymous donor provided the members of all of the lunch clubs with a cooked chicken, a packet of crisps and a mince pie to enjoy over the festive season.

•A sports day was held by the Dalry and Stockbridge centres in the grounds of Donaldson's School in 1979. 200 people enjoyed the event either as participants or as spectators.

•Mary Tudor House boiler room was put to a novel use and employed to dry off carpets which had been soaked after pipes had burst in peoples' homes.

•Small changes were made to the residential home portfolio. A further property was acquired in West Coates providing five bedsits and Tornaveen was sold.

•The Scottish Old People's Welfare Council changed its name to Age Concern –Scotland in 1974. The primary role of this national body was to act as the coordinating body for bodies such as ELOPWC throughout Scotland, sharing news and ideas. But there was some disquiet about the fact that people sometimes thought that Age Concern was delivering services actually provided by ELOPWC! The Chair Norman Murchison died in 1975 after 17 years in office and was succeeded by Reverend Power who was in turn succeeded by Bill Boyd in 1977.

DECIMALISATION



Members of ELOPWC had lived all their lives using the "old" currency of pounds, shillings and pence and many were born when Queen Victoria's head appeared on notes and coins. But the currency changed in February 1971 with decimalisation. The pound kept its old value and name but the shilling was abolished and the pound was subdivided into 100 "new pence" each of which was worth 2.4 "old pence"

