

1980s

ELOPWC's fifth decade brought both continuity and change.

Older people continued to enjoy the range services provided by the day centres, attended social events, went on outings and met for lunch with friends. The mini bus fleet was expanded enabling more people to be transported from their homes to day centres.

Lamb's House celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 1981. A number of events were held to mark this occasion. A sale of art work donated by the widow of William Merrilees raised over £3,000.



Stockbridge House attracted visitors from a wide range of countries, including Malta and Finland, keeping up the tradition set by Lamb's House. Visitors were amazed that so many services were provided to older people by volunteers.

One feature of this period was the amount of time which had to be spent liaising and consulting with other organisations. This was necessary as responsibility for providing services to the elderly was by then shared by the NHS, social work department and a large number of national and local organisations. It was important not only to ensure that resources were not wasted by unnecessary overlap of activities but also that gaps in services were identified and filled.



DEMENTIA CARE

ELOPWC embarked on a new project to provide day centre facilities attached to Stockbridge House for sufferers from early dementia who were not so severely disabled as to be in hospital but whose memory difficulties cause problems for them and their families. This ambition was brought into being when St Bernard's Club was opened in 1989. It remains open today.

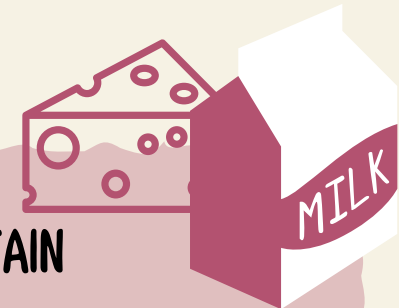
In 1985 the chair Bill Boyd said in the annual report that despite financial pressures

“ WE ARE DETERMINED THAT THE LONGSTANDING REPUTATION OF THE [EDINBURGH AND LEITH OLDER PEOPLES WELFARE] COUNCIL AS LEADER AND INNOVATOR IN THE FIELD OF CARE FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD NOT BE LOST. ”

The financial position of ELOPWC became increasingly challenging. In 1985, the chair commented that income was not enough to do what was adequate to run day centres and residential homes.



The lunches provided by ELOPWC cost a bargain price of 10p per day at the start of the decade. But it was not possible to maintain this price and it was increased to 40p in 1982, leading to some fall in the numbers attending lunch clubs. The total number of lunch clubs in the city rose to 63, with ELOPWC continuing to provide 18 of these.



MOVING THE MOUNTAIN

The European Economic Community (as it was then called) pursued agricultural policies in the 1980s which led to food surpluses being created (sometimes these were described as “mountains”). It was agreed that this surplus should be reduced through redistribution to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Margaret Tudor House was used as a depot to store and distribute butter, milk and cheese. 4,500 people received weekly supplies of these items for seven weeks.

As the decade progressed, the scale of ELOPWC's services and the number of members started to decline.

The official visiting service was closed in 1987. Many of the volunteers which they depended upon were too elderly or infirm to continue and they were not replaced by new, younger volunteers. Informal visits continued to be made though in those parts of the city where some volunteers were available. The number of social clubs declined to 35, in part due to the departure those who volunteered to run them. Also, the number of regions reduced to four. The numbers attending monthly events halved from a typical attendance of around 200 to about 100 or less.

Membership of Dalry House fell from 1,300 in 1980 to less than 800 by the end of the decade. ELOPWC left Margaret Tudor House in 1989. The number of members had also fallen there. The HQ moved to Stockbridge House.



While it is sad to record the reduction in older people using the ELOPWC's services, the positive side is that many older people were by then living in warmer homes with modern facilities, unlike many of those in previous generations, and were happy to spend more time enjoying home comforts. Plus, for those who wanted to socialise, they had the option of going to the new community centres opening across the city.

Bill Boyd stood down as chair in 1989 after twelve years service and was replaced by Doris Bilton.