

1950s

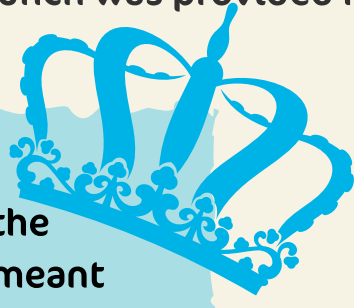
The 1950s was a period of considerable growth for older peoples' organisations in Scotland. The first of the annual Old People's Welfare Week was held in 1952. To publicise these weeks, buses in Edinburgh had slogans on the side such as "Salute The Senior Citizen".

By the start of the decade, the ELPOWC was working in partnership with a wide range of other organisations in the voluntary and state sectors. Reflecting this, the membership of the governing council had expanded to include representatives from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Rotary Club, retirement home providers, the Ministry of Labour and other organisations.

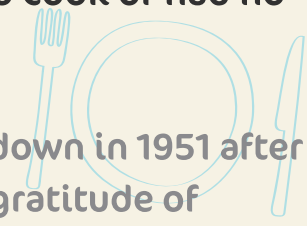
The ELOPWC moved to Margaret Tudor House in Merchant Street in 1957. This not only provided bigger office premises but also space for a club room and a lunch club. Lunch was provided for 28 people each day who were either unable to cook or had no one to cook for them.

THE CORONATION

The earlier generosity shown to the ELOPWC by HRH Princess Elizabeth meant that her Coronation as Queen Elizabeth in June 1953 was a special event for many older people in the city. More than 20 million people watched the service on television. Older viewers had been born in the Victorian era and had witnessed enormous change and two World Wars in their lifetimes.



The first chairman, Reverend Notman, stood down in 1951 after ten years' service and left with the immense gratitude of everyone connected with the ELOPWC. He was succeeded by Alexander Paterson and he, from 1956, by Reverend Selby Wright.



A separate entity (Old People's Homes Limited) was established to manage the two retirement homes. The aim was for this to be a self-financing body but this proved to be a challenge due to the rising cost of living and there was an ongoing dialogue with the Council about the contribution they made to the costs of accommodating the residents which it had nominated.

Interest in places in the homes was strong throughout the period. Only a small number of places became available in any given year but up to 300 applicants could be interviewed. Five Red Cross trained nurses started to visit the homes on a regular basis increasing the quality and quantity of care provided.

A recurring concern for the ELOPWC was the provision of accommodation for the elderly infirm who were not too ill to be in hospital but who needed care. Representations were made to the Council and NHS on this matter, reflecting a wider commitment by the ELOPWC to continue to review the adequacy of care.



NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

The NHS had been established in 1948 and by the 1950s it was bedding in. The founding legislation provided a uniform national structure for services. Previously this had been provided by a combination of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service, local government, charities, and private organisations and in general was only free for emergency use. The new system was funded from central taxation and treatment was free of charge.



The clubs established by the ELOPWC were a roaring success. By 1959 there were 35 with a total membership of 3,272. Many clubs started to meet on a daily basis. Domino tournaments were popular and games were held with teams in Glasgow. A welcome addition to clubs was the provision of chiropody services to members.

The management of visits became more centralised in 1955 when a Visiting Officer was added to the staff. Regional committees remained in place but the Officer coordinated the service and organised the recruitment and training of visitors. The visiting list could be as high as 600 so a small army of volunteers was needed. Between 125 and 150 people were volunteering their time each year and about 35 people were recruited annually to replace volunteers standing down. In 1959, a staggering 13,907 visits were made in total to people in their homes. The purpose of visits was sometimes extended beyond friendship, with clothing, bedding and furniture being supplied to invalids.



A range of social activities continued across the city. Monthly parties were popular and, as well as the company and entertainment, many attendees appreciated being in a heated environment. The 1957 Annual Report records that Jimmy Logan was seen dancing at one event with an 84 year old lady, not to the Gay Gordons, but to rock and roll!



In the 1950s Edinburgh had two evening papers, the "Evening Dispatch" and "Evening News". In 1954, the former provided ELOPWC with 600 free tickets for the Circus and, in 1958, Christmas presents for 500 people.



FESTIVE FUN

In 1954 an anonymous baker donated 800 boxes of cakes to ELOPWC just before Christmas. This presented a big challenge to distribute these to older folk in time for the festivities. But not a box was wasted and each one was delivered to a happy recipient. Free shows were provided at the Murrayfield Ice Rink at Hogmanay on several occasions. The tickets were either provided free by the Rink or paid for by generous donors. In 1953, 3,000 people watched two performances of "Rose Marie On Ice".



A new innovation was holiday trips. Reduced rates were negotiated with hotels and boarding houses in various locations for out of season breaks for older people. Later, week long holidays in Morecambe were arranged each year. By 1959, over 500 people were taking advantage of the opportunity to have a break in this Lancashire resort.

Another new development was the provision of occupational classes. The Council provided the teachers free of charge and subject matter included handicrafts, make do and mend, percussion, singing, and mime. The number of these classes grew to 29 in total.



The ELOPWC's income rose steadily throughout the decade and new ways were found to raise funds. In 1953, the radio comedian Vic Oliver appeared on BBC Radio's "Week's Good Cause Appeal" asking for support for ELOPWC. This raised £205. A Flag Day was held each year and this proved to be money maker. In 1951 it raised £580 and by the mid 50s this figure had doubled. Bazaars were also a success and could raise in excess of £1,000.

Publication of the "Old Folks Own" magazine ceased in 1957. Although it was valued by its readers, the income from subscriptions never covered the costs of production and it was reluctantly decided that losses could no longer be borne by the ELOPWC.

A growing demand for the ELOPWC's services in Leith led to a search at the end of the decade for a building of its own. Over 400 old people were known to the organisation in central Leith and it was no longer tenable to rely upon church halls and other premises to run activities. In 1959 discussions started about moving into the historic Lamb's House which was available under a lease from the National Trust for Scotland.

The decade, ended with Christmas cards being sent to over 5,500 folk. A fourfold increase since the organisation's early days.

