

Glasgow Shakspeare Club

Overview

This club was formed in Glasgow as it was thought there was a need for the city to have its own society similar to the ones then running in Edinburgh and beyond.

The object of the club was to encourage the study and knowledge of drama as well as the works of Shakespeare. Members had to be at least 18 years old to join. The amount of the entry money to be paid upon joining is not given. The club started its own library.

The meetings took place at 8.30pm on the second Monday in the months of February, May, August and November. At ordinary meetings (that is, meetings not devoted to business or social matters), members read original essays, and held conversations and discussion, with every other week being devoted to 'conviviality'. In addition, the club held a yearly dinner to celebrate Shakspeare's birthday.

There are 12 Honorary Members on the roll who joined between 1838 and 1848 whose residences crossed the globe: while 5 (at least) lived in Glasgow, there was one member who moved to New Zealand, another to New York, and yet another who lived in Calcutta. In addition, there are 54 Ordinary Members on the roll who joined between 1838 and 1850.

There are a few interesting aspects of this club. The first is that the members wore some form of insignia during the meetings, as set out in the 'Laws and Regulations'. It is currently unclear what form this took. The second was that every member had to choose a sobriquet from the characters of Shakespeare by which they would be addressed when at the meetings. Thirdly, the laws of the club required that all members had to know the Bard's work so well as to be able to recite any passage should the President call upon them to do so. Lastly, the club had a detailed list of fines to be paid for various infractions, and these were dependent upon whether the transgressor was an office-bearer, a member, or an orator/respondent, with a few selected infractions having a fine 'common to all'. The greatest fines were 'For resigning office' (2s 6d), 'For refusal to accept office' (2s 6d), 'For absence at half-past 9 o'Clock' (making him a half hour late, at 6d), and 'For absence from Anniversary' (1s), respectively.

Date of Existence

1838-1850?

Source of Information

Laws, Articles and Regulations of the Glasgow Shakspeare Club, Instituted 1838 (Glasgow: Printed by Muir, Gowans, & Co. 1839) (also includes manuscript, 'Bye & New Laws', list of Honorary Members, and Ordinary Members with dates admitted, names, 'cognomen', and 'remarks')

Repository

Mitchell Library Special Collections

Reference Number

Mitchell (GC) 822.33 324627

Additional Notes

This club should not be confused with the [Monday Shakspeare Club](#) (10 April 1879-November 1882?).