

Transcribed from the 1878 RSA Annual Report

At the same Meeting the Council had also the great regret of recording on their Minutes the death of David Laing, L.L.D., their venerable and very much respected Professor of Ancient History.

David Laing was a native of Edinburgh, and made the city of his birth his residence from the beginning of his days to the end of a long life – a life devoted to work, useful work of the most disinterested kind, literary, antiquarian, and artistic. For half a century he was a member of the Society of Antiquarians, and there is not a volume of its Transactions to which he did not contribute, and there was hardly a meeting which he did not attend. He was for forty years Librarian to the Writers to the Signet, and Secretary to the Bannatyne Club during the whole period of its existence. In fact, there was hardly an object connected with his extensive range of knowledge to which he did not willingly lend a helping hand.

He was the literary editor of more than two hundred and fifty volumes, many of them to be found in the most select libraries in the country, and in 1864 had the degree of L.L.D. conferred upon him by the University of Edinburgh.

Mr. Laing was elected Honorary Professor of Antiquities to the Academy in 1854, and was translated to the Honorary Chair of Professor of Ancient History in 1861, and during that year and the following year, he delivered to the Academy three interesting lectures, the first being, "Inquiry into the State of the Arts of Design in Scotland at an early period," and the second and third, "On the Scottish Artists who flourished between the Union of the Crowns, A.D. 1603, and the present century." The lectures were delivered in the Exhibition Galleries, and were highly and deservedly appreciated. It is understood that Mr. Laing intended to give more lectures on kindred subjects, and that he had the materials on hand for that purpose, - if so, it is to be hoped that they may yet be made available.

At the Scott Centenary Exhibition in 1871, Mr. Laing rendered valuable assistance, and again at the Exhibition of the works of Sir Henry Raeburn.

His great knowledge of Art, both native and foreign, and his singularly retentive and accurate memory, rendered his services invaluable, and he was never applied to in vain. The oldest and most learned could learn from him, and the youngest and most inexperienced was always sure of a kind reception and attentive consideration.

There is a highly characteristic portrait in our library of Mr. Laing surrounded by his favourite books, painted for and presented to the Academy by his friend William Fettes

Douglas, R.S.A., and another painted by Robert Herdman, R.S.A., is deposited in the Hall of the Society of Antiquaries.

He died at Portobello on the 18th October, in the eighty-sixth year of his age.