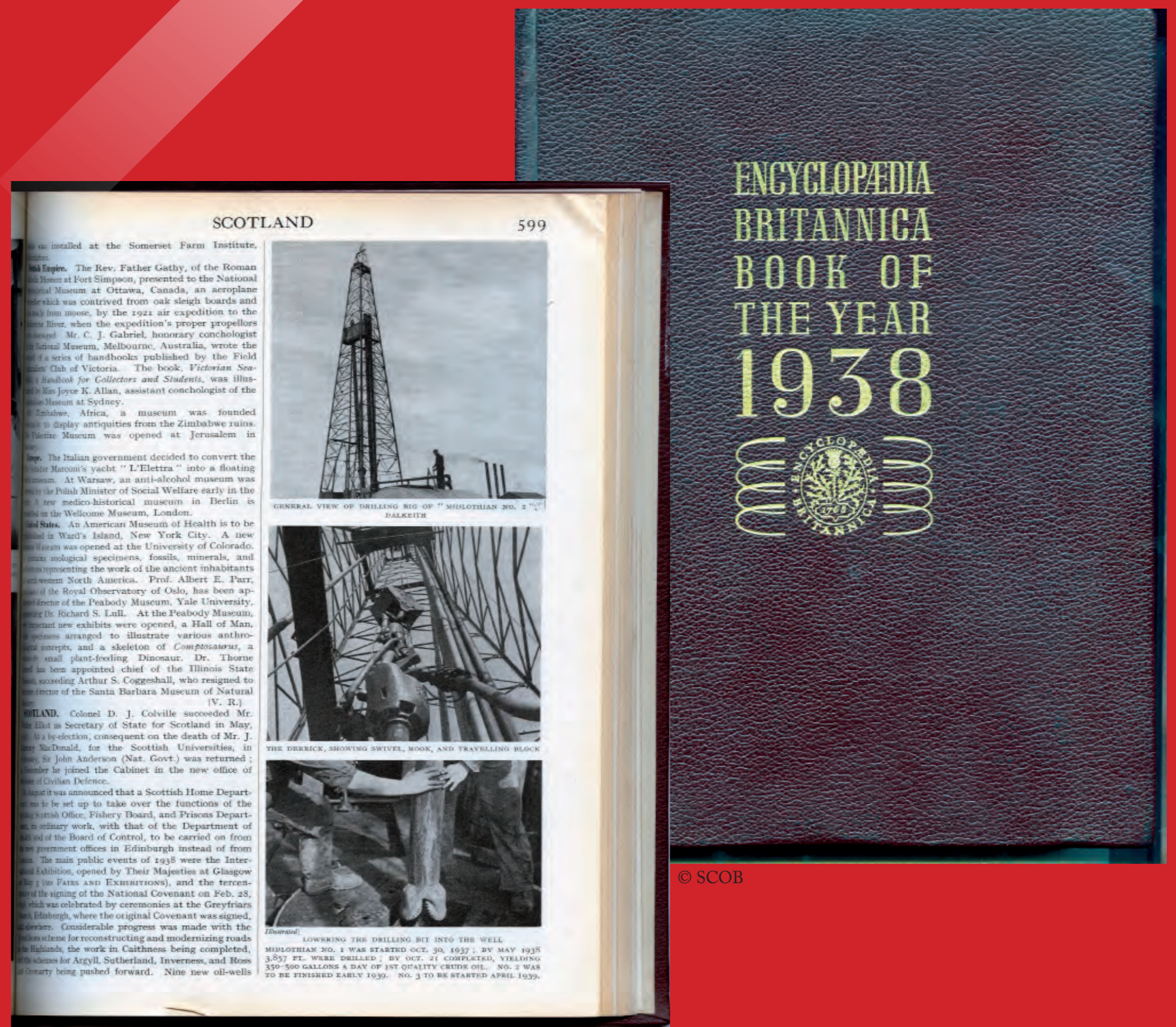


# Encyclopaedia Britannica

One of the greatest English language reference works to emerge from Scotland during the latter half of the eighteenth century was the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Modelled on an earlier French example of encyclopaedic material, Denis Diderot's 1750 *Encyclopédie*, The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was edited in Edinburgh by the polymath William Smellie, and issued in slim, sixpenny parts between 1768 and 1771. The parts were subsequently collected together and published as a three-volume set of 2,659 pages and 160 engravings. Alphabetically arranged, the first edition only partially succeeded in its aim of summarising all then known of human knowledge.

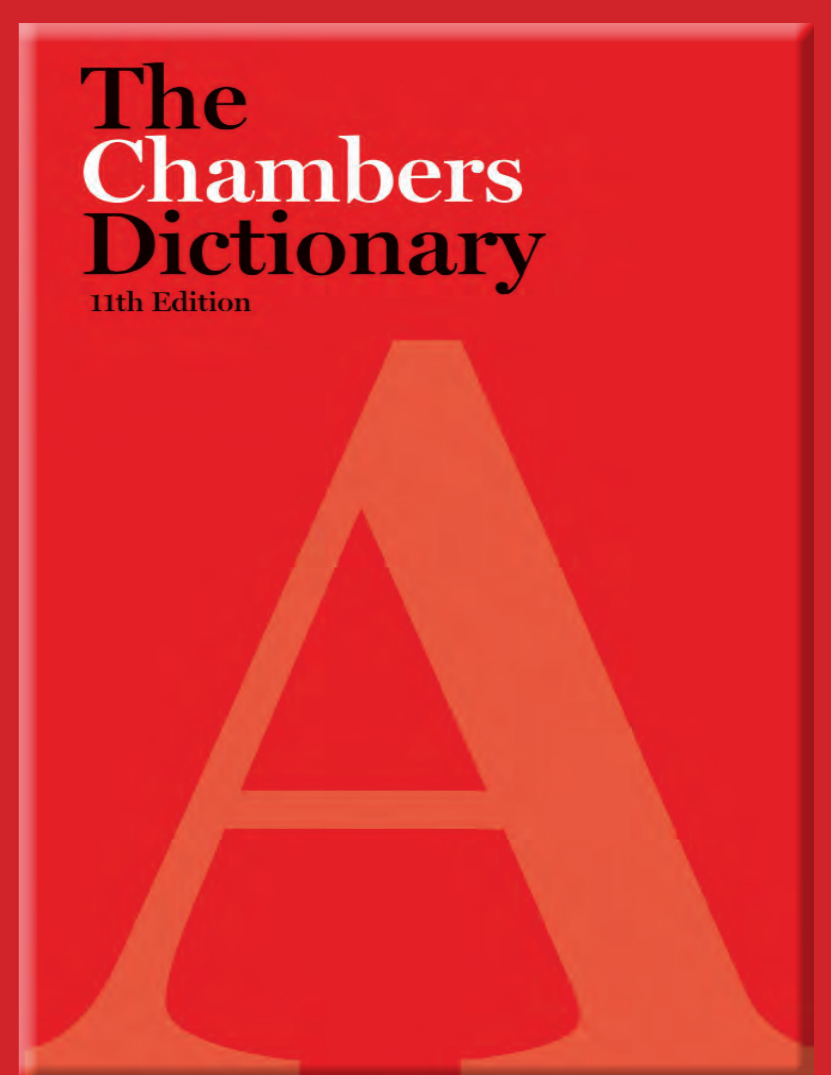
Subsequent revised editions were more successful in coverage, with each growing exponentially in size and scope: the second edition (1784) took up 10 volumes and 8,595 pages; the third (1794) covered eighteen volumes; the renowned fourth edition, completed in 1810, stretched to 20 volumes and over 16,000 pages; the 1889 edition included 20,000 pages in 25 volumes, and the 1911 edition contained 40,000 articles and over 40,000,000 words.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published in Edinburgh until 1898, when a group of U.S. entrepreneurs secured copyright and began producing it elsewhere. Its status as cultural touchstone remains unsurpassed, its format and style admired and widely imitated. The key legacy of the *Encyclopaedia*, the idea of gathering, categorising and re-presenting human activity in a central, accessible and organised fashion, remains greatly in force today, carried on in ambitious national projects such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and online in initiatives such as *Wikipedia*.



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