

Innes, Cosmo Nelson (1798–1874), antiquary, was born on 9 September 1798 at the old manor house of Durriss on Deeside, the youngest child but one of sixteen children of John Innes and his wife, Euphemia (*née* Russell). John Innes, who belonged to the family of Innes of Innes, had sold his property in Moray to buy Durriss. He resided at Durriss for many years, but was afterwards ejected by a legal decision, a leading case in the Scottish law of entail. Cosmo Innes was sent to the high school, Edinburgh, under James Pillans, and studied at King's College, Aberdeen, and Glasgow University. He afterwards matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford, on 13 May 1817, graduating BA in 1820 (with a third class), and MA in 1824. In 1826 he married Isabella, daughter of Hugh Rose; they had nine children. Their eldest daughter, Katharine, herself an author, married John Hill Burton, the historian; while a son, James, became a government official in Sarawak and married Emily Robertson, who is now known for her controversial book on life in Selangor. Innes and his family lived chiefly in or near Edinburgh, first at Ramsay Lodge, then at 6 Forres Street, later at Hawes, South Queensferry, and finally rather grandly at Inverleith House, Edinburgh.

In 1822 Innes became an advocate at the Scottish bar. His practice was never large, but he was soon employed in peerage and other cases demanding antiquarian and genealogical research. His first case of this kind was the Forbes peerage case, about 1830–32. In the Stirling case he was crown advocate. For several years, from about 1833, he was advocate-depute. In 1840 he was appointed sheriff of Moray, and while in office had to deal with the Moray protesters, who at the time of the Irish potato famine resisted the export of produce from their own district. In 1845 he was a member of the municipal corporation (Scotland) commission. In 1852 he resigned his sheriffdom, and succeeded his friend Thomas Thomson as principal clerk of session.

About 1830 Innes had assisted Thomson in arranging the ancient documents in the Register House (cf. Innes, *Memoir of T. Thomson*, 1854). He was afterwards officially engaged in editing and preparing for the press the *Rescinded Acts*, and in partly editing the folio edition of the *Acts of the Scots Parliament* (1124–1707), to the first volume of which (1844) he wrote an introduction. In July 1865 he began to compile with his assistants the *General Index* to the whole work. This was published in 1875 after his death. Innes was an acute and learned student of ancient Scottish records, and singularly skilful as a decipherer. He was an active member and editor of the Bannatyne, Spalding, and Maitland clubs. He edited the cartularies of numerous Scottish religious houses, as well as various academical and

municipal works of importance. In his *Scotland in the Middle Ages* (1860) and *Sketches of Early Scotch History* (1861)—the latter selected from his introductions to the cartularies—he showed a sympathetic interest in the pre-Reformation period, and was accused of being a Roman Catholic, though he was a member of the Episcopal church. From 1846 until his death Innes held the post of professor of civil history (from 1862 simply ‘history’) at the University of Edinburgh. His lectures were attractive. He also gave valuable lectures on Scottish legal antiquities to members of the Juridical Society, some being published as *Lectures on Scotch Legal Antiquities* (1872). While on a highland tour he died suddenly at Killin on 31 July 1874. He was buried in Warriston cemetery, Edinburgh, on 5 August. In appearance Innes was tall and handsome. He suffered from shyness, which sometimes took the form of nervous volubility in conversation. He was a keen sportsman, and amused himself with gardening. He had a great contempt for the mere bookworm, and said that more was to be learnt outside books than in them. As an antiquary he had no rival in his own line. In politics he was a whig. He advocated the claims of women students of medicine to graduate at the University of Edinburgh.

Innes's voluminous antiquarian publications, mostly for the Spalding and Bannatyne clubs, will chiefly be found listed in David Stevenson, *Scottish Texts and Calendars* (1987). In addition to works mentioned above, Innes wrote memoirs of friends, including one of E. B. Ramsay published in Ramsay's *Reminiscences* (22nd edn, 1874), and articles for the *Quarterly Review* and *North British Review*.

W. W. Wroth, *rev.* H. C. G. Matthew

Sources K. Burton, *Memoir of Cosmo Innes* (1874) · J. A. H. Murray, *The Academy* (15 Aug 1874), 181

Archives Elgin Museum, Elgin, letters to George Gordon · [NL Scot.](#), letters to E. D. Dunbar · [NRA, priv. coll.](#), letters to Sir Charles Dalrymple Fergusson relating to axe heads and sword remains · [U. Edin. L.](#), special collections division, letters to David Laing

Likenesses A. Edouart, paper silhouette, [Scot. NPG](#)

Wealth at death £6992 17s. 2d.: confirmation, 13 Oct 1874, NA Scot., SC 70/1/170, 142

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