# EDINBURGH CASTLE RESEARCH

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

## EDINBURGH CASTLE IN THE MODERN ERA:

# PRESENTING MEANINGS

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Why is Edinburgh Castle still there? It is fairly useless as a defence asset and has long been sub-standard as a barracks. After all, Berwick Castle was flattened for a railway station and Trinity College Church – one of the finest medieval churches in Scotland – was rearranged to extend Waverley Station, but the castle is still there and looks more like a castle than it has ever done.

We owe this to a complicated process that turned a fortress and a barracks into a national monument. It was a slow process that began in the early 19th century.

How did the castle get like it is now? If you stand at the entrance to the Esplanade, probably some two-thirds of what you see was produced after 1850. The foundations are as old as any foundations in Edinburgh, but unless you get into the basement of the old towers that is not what you are looking at. How did our castle get like it is, who decided our castle should be as it is now, who paid for it, why was it not demolished or perhaps remade into government offices or even an international hotel?

Answering this involves a number of Scots, some familiar names and some forgotten, but all of whom enable and invite us not just to have an enjoyable and exciting day out but to imagine Scotland in changing ways.

This slow process gathered momentum over time. It was a process that gave new meanings to the castle; indeed, it was a process that asks every visitor, what does Edinburgh Castle mean and what did it mean to those who recreated it for 20th- and 21st-century visitors? In May 2015, visitors included Japanese tourists with their selfie sticks and groups of young soldiers brought to have a look around after a day's training. What stories are in their heads? Are they the same stories as those who remade the castle?

The Jacobite rebellion was the last time that the castle displayed significant military value. Such value was not trivial, for it meant that Prince Charles and his people never got hold of the 'Honours of Scotland' or the deposits of bank gold that both held symbolic and practical value.

The future change of purpose was signalled almost immediately. The development of the Esplanade began in 1752 using rubble removed from the site of the new Exchange (now the City Chambers). The Esplanade was landscaped as 'walks for citizens', part of the 'improvements' inspired by Lord Provost George Drummond that eventually led to the creation of North Bridge and the New Town. It did not approach its modern form until just before the visit of George IV in 1822[1].

Tourists came in increasing numbers towards the end of the 18th century, but it can hardly be said that the castle was set to welcome them. Mrs Sarah Murray, widow of a naval captain, arrived in the late 1780s and reported, 'James the First of England was born in a small room, or rather closet, in Edinburgh Castle: in which, when I saw it, soldiers were drinking porter'[2]. Stark's guidebook told visitors the significance of this:

James VI and afterwards James I of England, a prince whose birth for fortunate for the whole island, as in his person the crowns of two nations, opposed to each other from the earliest ages, were at last united[3].

Dorothy Wordsworth, when she came with her poet brother in 1803, was not very excited. After tea, they walked up to the castle from their hotel in the Grassmarket, but were more interested in Holyrood Abbey and Arthur's Seat.

Traditionally, the change began when Walter Scott 'discovered' the Crown Jewels. This was a brilliant bit of theatre and was followed by the spectacular visit of George IV. It had been a provision of the Act of Union of 1707 that the Honours of Scotland, the crown, orb and sceptre, were to be kept in Scotland, and they had been locked away in a 'grit aik kist' in the castle. One reason for keeping the Jacobites out of the castle was to stop them getting hold of such powerful symbols of kingship and nation. Some interest was taken in 1794, but nothing found. Then in 1817, after an intervention for which Walter Scott took the credit, George IV issued a warrant authorising a more thorough search. On 5 February 1818, a formidable representation of the Scottish state entered the room. They were:

The Lord President of the Court of Session,

The Lord Justice Clerk,

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh,

The Commander in Chief

Sir Walter Scott

They were accompanied by an armed guard, a military band and the king's smith and carpenter. The chest was forced open and the Lord Provost displayed the regalia from an open window.[4]

The drama of the opening was a fine bit of theatre, accompanied by fears that 'the English' had spirited the regalia away and hidden them in the Tower of London. But for Scott there were deeper feelings that were best expressed in a passage in his novel The Heart of Midlothian, which was published that year. When he introduced the Duke of Argyle to his story of the Porteous riots and Jeanie Deans, he paused to outline the political philosophy behind the opening of the chest:

Scotland, his [the Duke's] native country, stood at this time in a very precarious and doubtful situation. She was indeed united to England, but the cement had not had

time to acquire consistence. The irritation of ancient wrongs still subsisted, and betwixt the fretful jealousy of the Scottish, and the supercilious disdain of the English, quarrels repeatedly occurred, in the course of which the national league, so important to the safety of both, was in the utmost danger of being dissolved. Scotland had, besides, the disadvantage of being divided into intestine factions, which hated each other bitterly, and waited but a signal to break forth into action.[5]

Scotland was within a generation of a nasty civil war and the brutality and humiliation of reliance on the Hanoverian army to re-establish order. Looking at the jewels, Scott and his supporters delivered two messages.

Scotland was a nation – it had its own Crown Jewels to demonstrate this. Scotland was a partner in a broader union with a shared kingship. In the process, Walter Scott incorporated the Highlands and Highlanders and tartan as a part of being Scotland. His novels are now little read outside the academy, but they still determine many of the ways of imagining Scotland.

The outcome of this was a grant of £800 for setting up the Crown Room for the security and exhibition of the regalia and the appointment of one Captain (afterwards Sir) Adam Ferguson as deputy keeper. His allowance of £300 was to be paid from the 1s charged for public admittance. The castle was open for business in May 1819 and the Crown Room, with its evidence of Scottish kingship and hence nationhood, became the main focus of visitor interest.[6]

The next episode in castle development came in the 1840s. It was best described by Daniel Wilson, whose remarkable and little-noticed career was central to the castle. What motivated Wilson? He began his working life as an engraver, working for a while with J. M. W. Turner. He brought a deep awareness of the visual and the material. Wilson represented the continued influence of Enlightenment Edinburgh. Rationality created a respect for conclusions based on evidence, in his case the documentary and material evidence of the past. A paradox of the modern has always been a powerful desire to relate to the past. Wilson was amongst many who were deeply disturbed by the rapid pace of change and the destruction in a ‘modern’ Edinburgh. His initial response was to sketch, paint and engrave, especially buildings and scenes about to be demolished. Added to this was a desire to go beyond the fertile imagination of Walter Scott and base his understandings on scholarly analysis of documents and material remains. The outcome of all this was his Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time, published in 1848. He sought to place this in ‘locality’. For Wilson, ‘accuracy has been aimed at throughout’. He warned of ‘spuriousness’ of ‘the fictions of antiquarian romancers’.

In 1848, Wilson became secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and joined the leadership of a group who were anxious to assert Scotland as a nation with a distinctive history and heritage. They struggled to finance their museum. In doing so, they revealed a theme that was to dominate the next 200 years, namely a desire for parity of esteem within the Union. They were especially concerned that England and Ireland had grants for cultural institutions and Scotland did not. They told Sir Robert Peel that they considered ‘the refusal of their application by their Lordships as a slight offered to Scotland’.[7] Wilson was soon to leave for the post of professor of English literature and history at the University of Toronto, and ended his career as president of that university, but he never lost his interest in Edinburgh and the castle. Wilson’s ‘discovery’ resulted in the first ‘restoration’ of St

Margaret's. The outcome was a warning of the problems of restoration and the architectural imagination. It looked like a rather cosy suburban church built in the 'Norman' style.


Figure 1. Engraving of St Margaret's Chapel, from Grant's Old and New Edinburgh. Many of Grant's engravings were done from Inglis' photographs of the castle. © Edinburgh City Libraries. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk.

Over the next 50 years, the castle took a little remarked upon part in public science. The work of Hill and Adamson in the 1840s played an important part in the early history of photography. The soldiers of the castle were prominent subjects for their work. In the following years, many leading photographers – Alexander Inglis, Washington Wilson and Valentine – came to the castle. The postcard revolution of the 1890s and 1900s was followed by the hand-held camera, so that over the 20th century buying a postcard and taking your own photograph became a central part of visiting the castle.

In the 1870s, the castle made a distinctive contribution to the modernisation of Edinburgh – the One o'Clock Gun. The modern city ran on time: trams, trains, working times and meetings all needed accurate time. Above all, navigation required the captains of ships in Leith to set their chronometers with precision. Calton Hill Observatory had provided an accurate clock in a window for the public to set their watches. In 1853, a time ball was linked to the clock, designed to drop

at one o'clock. Given Edinburgh's mist, rain and haar, this was often of limited value. After pressure from the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and cooperation with the Royal Artillery, a gun, initially on the Half Moon Battery, was linked to the observatory and fired at one o'clock. The problem here was that sounds travelled more slowly than light, and maps were produced for those who wanted to set their clocks with precision. W. & K. Johnson's map indicated that the sound of the gun took 12 seconds to reach the shipping in Leith. In February 1924, the BBC began to broadcast the 'time pips' and the gun became increasingly redundant, but by then had become a familiar part of being in Edinburgh and was retained. The gun became a part of the spectacle of the castle. Staff Sergeant Thomas McKay (Tam the Gun) gained his MBE for his part in firing the gun between 1975 and 2005. It remains a key part of a visitor's day at the castle, with a lecture and stamping feet from a smart uniformed gunner and plenty of photographs, but very few now set their watches by the gun.

## TOURISTS AND CITIZENS

Theodor Fontane, the German romantic novelist, visited Scotland in 1858. He was a devoted follower of Walter Scott and amongst the generation of tourists who arrived by train into Edinburgh. He was excited by the various sieges of the castle and delighted in the contrast with the peaceful castle he found, a castle useless for military defence. He compared the castle unfavourably with the Tower of London. Viewing the Crown Jewels was a matter of 'duty'.

> One looks at these things more or less as a matter of duty, listens with half an ear to the droned commentary, pays the customary sixpence and is glad when one is allowed to leave the room with its great hexagonal case.[8]

He was far more interested in the story of Queen Mary and the birth of James.

The great topographical writers of the 19th century had mixed feelings. Robert Chambers began with Alan Ramsay in Ramsay Garden and turned his back on the castle. For Robert Louis Stevenson it was simply there – part of the scenery. For Daniel Wilson and later James Grant it was the focus of a national history based on Edinburgh as they began their survey of the city with a detailed account. The result was a tour that was an account of the kingship of Scotland featuring Queen Margaret, the slaughter of the Douglas brothers at the 'Black Dinner', Mons Meg, the Crown Jewels and Queen Mary and the birth of James I and VI.

The next episode came in the late 1880s and brought together a remarkable group of men, some better known than others, some known for things other than castle restoration.

*Who were they and why did they pay such careful attention to what are now three of the most significant buildings in the castle?*

William Nelson was one of the major printer-publishers of 19th-century Edinburgh. His father had a small bookselling and publishing business in the Lawnmarket. William developed this into one of Edinburgh's major industrial establishments – the Parkside works that dominated the printing district of south Edinburgh. William was a devout reformed Presbyterian who traced his inspiration to the Cameronians of the early 18th century. Like many, he attributed his economic

success to faith. His retirement project involved three buildings in the castle. In the years before his death he withdrew from the company more than £50,000, most which was directed to financing restoration in the castle.

The most important to him was the Portcullis Gate or Argyle Tower, for it was believed that this was the place where Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyle, had spent the last night before his execution of 1685 for raising rebellion against King James. Argyle became a Presbyterian hero, hence Nelson's interest in the tower. E. M. Ward's historicist painting of The Last Sleep of Argyle now hangs above the gate (it was acquired in the 1960s). As the sun rises, Argyle is found sleeping peacefully with his hand on the Bible. This was a story of Protestant faith, calm and confident in the face of death. It was, in fact, painted for the House of Commons in London and was as much about the Protestant identity of Britain as it was about Scotland. Here we are invited to see 17th-century Scottish history through 19th-century eyes, and the desire of an Edinburgh industrial leader to celebrate his faith and his economic success.

Daniel Wilson, who deserves more attention in Scotland, was again a key figure here. He had been a school friend of Nelson's and by the 1880s was established as professor in Toronto. His letters had a major influence on the remaking of the castle. One response to the speed of change in the modern world has always been the desire to preserve and restore, but what actually should be restored and what does this mean? He wrote frequently from Toronto during the restoration process:

> … here as elsewhere, all that is really old and genuine must be preserved; the same time the prominent position of this gateway tower, in the general view of the Castle, suggests the desirability of treating it in such a way as may best accord with the picturesque outline of the fine old fortress, so long as this can be done without sacrificing any genuine ancient feature. It will of course be an indispensable condition in any restoration that the chamber in which Argyle passed his last hours be preserved intact. No new architectural feature, however admirable could compensate for the loss of a building enriched by such historical association.[9]

This was the Argyle Tower.

More work was to be done on the chapel to be 'as nearly as it is possible to the condition in which it was when the sainted Queen worshipped there for the last time in AD 1093'.[10]

This was all very well, but there was bitter argument as to what this meant. The roof of the chapel was an especial matter of contention. Slate, stone flags, tiles or perhaps even thatch were suggested. Of course, no one knew. They worked by analogy. They looked at Iona and Dalmeny for the redesign of the chapel.

James Gore Booth was senior officer of the Royal Engineers stationed in the castle. A member of a minor Irish landed family, he provided a key link with the War Office, who owned the real estate that was the object of the ambitions for restoration. He proved an enthusiast for the historical substance of the castle that had been entrusted to his care. He went on to be a trusted public servant. He was consulting engineer to the Secretary of State for Scotland, notably working for the Congested Districts Board in the Highlands.

Hippolyte Blanc was an active Edinburgh architect who had already worked for the Office of Works. It was his job to put together the competing ambitions outlined by Wilson. His historical researches took him to London and his tickets to the British Museum Library are still in his papers. What was he to do? The roofs were the biggest problem. What shape should the Argyle Tower be? What materials covered the old chapel when Queen Margaret was alive? In the end, they gathered as much information as they could from old maps and engravings. They also gathered as much old material as they could find scattered around the site. There was great excitement when Gore Booth discovered 'a heap of old stones that were taken from some old building that was near St Margaret's Chapel and among them is the old stoop of the Chapel'.[11] The outcome was to create something that looked like a castle. The upper floor and roof of the Argyle Tower was 'restored' using the full vocabulary of Scottish baronial architectural revival of the later 19th century. There was no attempt at deception. The difference between the machine-cut stones of the industrial age and the hand-trimmed stones of the 17th-century gate are clear. Viollet le Duc was the leading theorist of restoration. Blanc had some of his writings. Le Duc's view was this: 'The term restoration and the thing itself are both modern. To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair or rebuild it; it is to re-instate it in a condition of completeness that could never have existed at any given time'. In other words, a castle should look like a castle and the modern restoration had the chance to do a better and more coherent job than people had done in the past.

Lord Napier and Ettrick provided important political support for this process. Napier had served as a talented diplomat and as governor of Madras. He is best known to Scottish history as chairman of the Napier Commission that was material in establishing the legal structure of crofting in the Highlands. Napier always saw understanding the past as an important part of relating to the present. Indeed, his plans for the Highland crofter were based on his belief that these would repair older damaged relationships of people and the land. In 1883, during a pause in taking evidence before the Crofting Commission, Napier took time out to inspect key areas of the castle and wrote an important letter to the Scotsman newspaper.

Sir, – At a time when public attention is particularly attracted to the restoration of buildings in Edinburgh connected with our national history, it may, perhaps, interest your readers to know that researches have recently been made into the condition of a portion of the Castle which has a high claim on the curiosity and affection of Scotsmen.

It has long been known that the great hall of the Castle – the 'Aula Castri' of our ancient records, the Parliament House and Palace of State of the Stewart Kings – exists, though concealed, disfigured and converted to an uncongenial use. Forming the greater part of the southern side of the Palace quadrangle – which, alas, was once bounded on the north by a noble Norman church – the great hall, 80 feet long by 33 feet wide, still stands in its fair proportions, but divided internally by floors and partitions into two storeys and several rooms, used as an hospital, with its offices and dependencies.

On the higher floor, the carved timbers of the ancient roof are apparent, descending through the modern ceiling, and resting probably, on their proper supports below the level of the floor. Only one of these supports is at present visible. It is shown on the staircase, to which the floor does not extend – a stone bracket sculptured with a fine female head, and adorned on the side with thistles boldly wrought. I do not know

whether any preceding explorer had ever inspected the roof above the ceilings of the upper wards. I find no traces of it in our popular books.

Major Gore-Booth, the officer of the Royal Engineers on duty in the Castle, and who takes a lively interest in its historical features, has now done so: and I have been kindly permitted to accompany him and Colonel White, commanding the 92nd regiment, into the dark recesses which have been so long sequested from human sight. Preceded by a sergeant of the Sappers with a lantern, we crept up by ladder through a trap door, and found ourselves in a maze of mighty beams, on which the dust of centuries lay thick and soft. From end to end the converging rafters and cross pieces stand in their original positions – a rude but impressive structure. Having wiped a portion of the woodwork, we found the surface of a clear yellow tint, finely veined.

The windows can be identified by reference to ancient prints and traces in the masonry; which have been carefully compared by Major Gore-Booth. Now this is the hall in which the parliament of Scotland sat before it was transferred to the Tolbooth, and afterwards to the Parliament House on the High Street. It is the hall in which Chancellor Crichton set the bull's head before the Earl of Douglas (if we may credit the gloomy legend of the Scottish Chronicle), where Knox conferred with Grange and Lethington, where Charles I held his coronation banquets, where Argyle feasted Cromwell.[12]

Is it too much to expect that the Government in London will now make us kindly reparation, and gives us back a monument of antiquity which time and fortune have spared so long? If they have no money to restore this venerable relic of the ancestors of our gracious Sovereign, they might at least give the soldiers a decent hospital, and turn over the empty fabric to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries, or the Cockburn Association. There seems to be a Providence for lovers of the past, and in time some Chambers would be raised up who would give us back the 'Aula' and 'Magna Camera' of Scotland, in its pristine integrity and beauty.[13]

Three buildings attracted the attention of this group: the Great Hall – then used as a barracks hospital; the Argyle Tower – then the armourers shop; and St Margaret's Chapel – one-time powder store and subject of the unsatisfactory restoration of the 1850s.

*What did they think they were doing?* These buildings were to become places for story telling – in the process they were places for re-imagining Scotland and Scottish identity. Those involved were tapping into the power of place. Restoration was much more than a technical exercise.

For Nelson, the story was one of a Protestant Scotland with a focus on the death of Argyle. Since the 1840s, Daniel Wilson's focus had been on Queen Margaret. He quoted a long poem celebrating the queen's faith, centred on the sacrifice of Christ:

The castled crag is chapel crowned

As when Margaret's vow was made …

But the sainted Queen in her people's hearts

Lives on for Scotland's weal.

For the 19th-century Margaret had a central place in being Scottish.

Napier had the broadest range of stories to tell. His place was the Great Hall. The stories of the 'parliaments' and the Black Dinner had a mixed message. At one level, the emphasis on Scottish kingship was a fundamental reminder of the basis of Scotland as a nation. At the same time, the constant retelling of the Black Dinner provided a character of violence and deception that left questions about Scotland's virtues as a distinct kingship.

Napier's letter made it clear that the restoration of key buildings in the castle was about the restoration of the identity and self-respect of Scotland. It was no accident that activity in the castle followed changes in the Tower of London that moved that building from barracks and armoury to monument and symbol. The demand here was for parity of esteem rather than independence in the modern sense.

## FROM BARRACKS TO MONUMENT CONTINUED

The development from barracks to monument and subsequently to 'the United Kingdom's top heritage attraction' and 'Scotland's most visited paid attraction in 2011 with 1.3 million visitors' can be traced in a series of key episodes.

In formal terms, 1905 marked a major break. The ownership of the castle was handed over from the War Office to the Office of Works. In practice, this was part of a slow process that had begun with the opening of the Crown Room and continued with the acquisition of Margaret's Chapel and then the Great Hall and Argyle Tower. The War Office continued to assert ownership to both barracks and monument, and in the 1890s contributed the gatehouse under guidance of their architect Ingress Bell. The mixed nature of castle control was highlighted when the Scottish Society of Antiquaries supplied two 'carvings of military engines formerly over the Barrier gateway' that had been placed in their museum in 1839. The year 1905 did not result in major changes. The deeds were handed over and a modern fire alarm system was installed with telephone links to the fire station.

The immediate trigger for the handover was probably reforms in the War Office that followed the Boer War. The barracks in the castle were identified as insanitary and cramped. W. T. Oldrieve, principal architect for Scotland of HM Office of Works, gave the Edinburgh Architectural Association a clear picture of changing attitudes in the 1900s. Buildings like the castle were:

…national architectural treasures … there was a general awakening in all civilised countries to this national responsibility … a growing interest on the part of the general public … only the enlightened and improved artistic sense of the public could enable any government to take efficient control and enforce the necessary provisions for the conservation of such buildings[14].

The immediate gains were minimal, although the soldiers did get eight additional baths in the old ground-floor prison cells.[15]

For the castle, the Great War of 1914–18 brought a brief augmentation of military function and experience. The Zeppelin raid of 1916 subjected the castle to a near miss, although it was the Grassmarket tenements below that suffered serious damage. The vaults, including those below the Great Hall, were made into a fairly unpleasant prison both for prisoners of war and those deemed 'traitors', notably some of the Red Clydeside leaders of war strikes and protests. Substantial troop movements brought massive pressures on the castle as barracks.

The regard for the castle as a monument had been growing throughout the 19th century. Here amongst many is Sir J. H. A. Macdonald, Lord Justice Clerk. He was full of praise for the work of Nelson and regarded the use of the Parliament Hall as a hospital with 'an enormous sewage pipe carried down the face of the rock' as 'an insult to Edinburgh'. The restored Parliament Hall, he wrote, 'can be visited with pleasure, where formerly it could only be looked on with shame'. At the same time, he joined many citizens of Edinburgh in calling the barracks on the west side of the castle as 'a disgrace', which was known to the soldiers as 'the cotton mill'.

## THE 'EVACUATION' OF THE CASTLE GARRISON

It is a universal of half-expressed feelings of identity and value that threats of change and destruction bring full and often forceful articulation. Bound up in the castle were just such ill-defined feelings of pride, insecurity, identity and historical continuity.

With the development of Redford Barracks in the western suburbs of Edinburgh, there was a progressive reduction in the importance of the castle as a barracks. Then in 1923, in the grey days after the end of the Great War, it was announced that, with the exception of units attached to the military hospital, troops would be withdrawn from the castle.

The distress and anger displayed by Edinburgh opinion, ranging from the Scotsman to the Lord Provost, expressed in some detail the meaning of the castle for citizens.

> The company of the Gordons who have been mounting guard over what has been the centre and symbol of Scottish history – which still shelters the 'Honours of Scotland' – marched forth on Tuesday, leaving the protection of our ancient acropolis to a sentry guard brought in every morning from Redford Barracks … stripping Edinburgh of the last remnants of its vitality and strength as a national stronghold … Whatever may be the reasons for closing the career of Edinburgh Castle as a garrisoned fortress and place of arms, this abrupt and unceremonious treatment, this obtrustive manifestation of disregard and neglect, is not courteous of respectful; it cannot but be regarded as a slight to Scottish sentiment.[16]

The St Andrews Society expressed the distress of 'Scotsmen throughout the Empire'. Questions were asked in Parliament and letters written from the Athenaeum Club. There were claims 'a whole battalion with colours, band, drums and pipes would be in keeping with the dignity and traditions of the Scottish capital'. Many believed that keeping a garrison in the castle was required by the

Act of Union. Others worried about leaving the Regalia unguarded; after all, the crown made for Charles II had been stolen from the Tower of London in 1761.

The clumsy handling of the move to Redford Barracks by the War Office forced a variety of ill-defined feelings into the open – demands for parity of esteem in the Union and respect for Scotland in the British Empire were identified with the military presence in the castle. It was a feature of this period of democracy that lacked a specific Scottish representation that the civil servants often gathered Scottish opinion from the correspondence columns of the Scotsman. Opinion at its most simple and direct came from 'A Scotch Lassie'. She had been to an architects' conference and lunched at the castle:

The stillness around was to me like being in a house where the presence of death hushed one's every movement. The playing of three hired pipers only served to accentuate the loss of past glories … One felt humiliated to witness such want of dignity in the capital of Scotland, and with difficulty one kept back tears of indignation.

One of the more perceptive fears came from Thomas Hannan, minister of the Episcopalian Church in Musselburgh, who worried about the castle becoming a museum: 'We do not want a dead Castle; and the presence of soldiers gives it life'. George V helpfully and with complete lack of understanding suggested some Beefeaters from the Tower of London might be useful.

The matter was discussed in the city council. Sir Thomas Hutchison, Bt, Lord Provost, led the protests. There was a prompt response from General Sir Walter Braithwaite, General Officer Commanding in Scotland. He promised a detachment of at least 60 men would be stationed in the castle and provide the guard for the castle and the palace. In addition, once a month the whole battalion at Redford Barracks would march with the relieving detachment to the castle with band and pipers. 'We soldiers', he told the Lord Provost, 'are not unmindful of Scottish sentiment'. By July, there were regular reports on the changing of the guard parades as they marched from Redford Barracks, down Colinton Road, through Tollcross and along Lauriston Place, High Street and the Lawnmarket. There were comments on the many spectators, especially American visitors who gathered to watch. They marched back by way of the Mound, Princes Street, Shandwick Place, Haymarket, Ardmillan Terrace and Polwarth Terrace to reach the Craiglockhart tramcar line. Braithwaite showed he was keenly aware of the function of military display and the close links of Scottish identity and the military bound up in the castle. Everyone was pleased with this. It was the parity of esteem they had been seeking.

There were voices of dissent. Councillor Millar disagreed:

The feeling of Scotland was to reduce armaments and not increase them … Throughout the next fortnight hundreds of meetings would be held against increasing armaments.

He was ignored.

A more practical form of dissent came from 'A Scottish Soldier' who condemned:

… the ridiculous statements made from time to time by uninformed civilian correspondents. … the Castle, has been for good practical reasons unpopular with

both men and officers … the clamour of false sentiment … had no regard for the comfort of the men they would consign to the Castle.

Accounts of the castle from the soldier's point of view are rare. One of the most direct came from Eric Linklater when he was stationed there after recovery from wounds and 'misbehaviour with a nurse'.

There is a tall barrack-block on the right as you turn to climb the last steep slope of the hill, and my bed was in a room on its third or fourth floor. The wash basins were in a basement, and the business of washing and shaving was made disagreeable, not only by the labour of going down, and up again, so many stairs, but by the intrinsic nature of the 'ablution benches,' as they were repulsively called. They were made of a dark slatey stone, grim enough when dry, and curiously sickening when covered by the scum and lather of pink carbolic soap with which your predecessors had washed themselves.[17]

Not all soldiers would become successful novelists.

Alasdair Alpin MacGregor came to Edinburgh from Inverness with his brother and military father: 'No sooner were we installed in Edinburgh than our father insisted on a spell of sightseeing for educational reasons'. First stop was the castle. Here the first call was 'the honours three', crown, sceptre and sword, to be followed by Mons Meg, the one o'clock gun[18].

## THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL

As far as adding to and affirming the meaning of the castle, the creation of the Scottish National War Memorial between 1924 and 1927 was the most important episode in the 20th-century history of the castle. The creation of the memorial owed much to the leadership and determination of the Duke of Atholl, a landowner of ancient family and unionist politician, but also an experienced soldier. The art and architectural history of the memorial has been well covered[19], as has the political and cultural history of its creation[20].

The proposal was debated with great anxiety, but the outcome was to change the meaning of the castle. To the castle as a barracks and a monument was added the castle as the place of memory, tribute and grief. At this distance in time it is hard to appreciate how significant but problematic this was. Many, like the Earl of Roseberry, wanted attention to be directed to local memorials, especially as the United Kingdom had the Cenotaph in London. The Duke of Atholl led the campaign for a national memorial. Much of the visual success of the memorial was due to Lorimer's ability to respond to a variety of pressures. The Ancient Monuments Board, the Cockburn Association and the Old Edinburgh Club were amongst many who held strong views. A focus of aesthetic anxiety was the Edinburgh skyline. Scaffolding was erected to demonstrate potential outlines. In the end, Lorimer created a building that contributed to the outline but respected the scale of the other buildings around it. The respect for the scale of existing buildings meant that it blended into the older buildings, producing a sense of being embedded into the history of the castle. Indeed, Lorimer used the masonry of the old North Barracks that stood on the site, which in turn had used masonry from the even older St Mary's Church.

The outcome added new definition to the castle and to the nature of Scotland. The memorial looked like a religious building but was not a religious building. It was, however, sacred space. It still is. Some 1,000 people a year take advantage of the provision for free access to those who wish to see only the memorial, and they are carefully escorted from the main gate and back again. The cheerful and intrusive clatter of photography is also forbidden. Inside is presented a complete and unified Scotland. There are no East–West, Edinburgh–Glasgow, Highland–Lowland divisions. This was a building placed in the most prominent spot in the capital of Scotland.

The debates around the memorial affirmed the castle as a national monument. In Atholl's words, 'Edinburgh Castle is national property, not Edinburgh property'. Representatives from Glasgow, Aberdeen and elsewhere all agreed, the castle was the only possible place for a national memorial. The only alternative would have been a reliance on local memorials, for Scotland as a nation of localities. Significantly, Edinburgh in the form of the municipal council and the Cockburn Association would have preferred this. In the words of the Aberdeen Press and Journal, the choice of the castle signified 'the nation's solidarity'.

The memorial affirmed the nation, but did so in a specifically Scottish way. Ideas of a special place for those who had been awarded medals for gallantry were set aside. There was a democracy of death. Each death was simply recorded as a name in the appropriate book. For those missing in action, the simple name was the only memorial possible. The memorial presented a porosity of Scottishness. There were special lists for those who served in English regiments and Scottish regiments raised in England. There were memorials for those who died in the armies of what were then dominions. Scotland was located in the British Empire and in its own martial tradition. This was an uncomfortable tradition for some, notably those in the rising socialist movements and Independent Labour Party. The memorial remains a powerful presence that still poses questions.

## ST MARGARET V MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

As the citizens of Scotland and those in the Office of Works who had the castle in their care reflected upon the castle, a quiet but crucial cultural battle emerged between Queen Margaret, represented by the tiny reconstructed chapel, and Mary Queen of Scots, represented by the room in which James VI of Scotland and I of England had been born.

One of the earliest formal guides to the castle by John Sinclair, which saw a first edition around 1870, gave pride of place to Mary. As late as 1947, George Scott Moncrieff reflected the way in which the mystical power of monarchy drew visitors to the room in which James had been born. He found the birthplace of James 'the most moving, the most personal and intimate part of the Castle', and noted her 'heroic fight to preserve the life of the baby … against her nobles … Mary is the only ruler in Europe of her day whose descendants retain their crown'. Mary's link to the castle was brief but her story remained one of the best known. It had all the elements of a Victorian melodrama, with its qualities of good and evil, love, lust,

betrayal and murder, the drama of the confrontation with John Knox and the final execution.

Mary was and is perhaps the visitor's queen, but it was the story of Queen Margaret that time and again drew the citizens to reflect on the meaning of their chapel on the hill. It was this that drew Daniel Wilson and the Society of Antiquaries to the castle in the 1840s. Rosalind Masson was wife of one of the first professors to lecture to women in Edinburgh University. Margaret gets central place in her account of the castle. The 'Saxon Queen, Saint Margaret of Scotland … lovely, pious washing the feet of the poor, founding abbeys and endowing the Church, and filling the Scottish Court with luxury gold plate and rich raiment'. The queen in her last illness 'spent her time in the little stone oratory in prayer and vigil'. Scott Moncrieff, writing in the aftermath of war, gave Margaret a special place in the meaning of the castle as he reflected on the reforms she had brought to the Scottish Church.

> Queen Margaret's reforms were necessary to the maturity of the nation … [she] opened the doors again to universal thought … She brought no invading army … no Gestapo or Departments of Light and Culture … Despite alterations, St Margaret's Chapel remains authentically itself.

In fact, the chapel, reconstructed from fragments in the 19th and 20th centuries, almost certainly never saw the sainted queen kneeling in prayer, and began life as a memorial to Margaret built by her son David. When Martin Carrie and others produced *Edinburgh for Children* in 1971, Margaret got pride of place; she 'led a life of kindness, looking after poor people and feeding the hungry'.

For the Office of Works, the chapel was one of the most demanding buildings in the castle. Mary's rooms were visitors' rooms. They were tidied up, a few Victorian wall panels and divisions were removed and they became pleasanter, more 'authentic' places to visit. The issues and meanings surrounding St Margaret's Chapel were more problematic. Following its restoration in the 1850s, the chapel was little used, although it was valued as a place for the baptism of soldiers' children. When the chapel was handed over to the Office of Works in 1877, they noted that Colonel (later General) Spot had been given permission to insert a stained glass window in memory of his wife who had died in the castle. It was apparently of poor quality, and in 1915 the Cockburn Association offered to replace all the windows with designs by Douglas Strachan, a leading stained glass designer who was later to contribute to the war memorial. To their credit, the Board of Works felt a little respect should be paid to Colonel and Mrs Spot. Their daughter was consulted and she objected to the removal of her mother's memorial. But what had been a minor asset for the garrison was now a public place that belonged to the citizens of Scotland. C. E. Price, MP, told the office that 'the people of Scotland' would resent a private individual being commemorated there, and Mrs Purvis, the daughter, received a visit from Professor Baldwin Brown and Lord Guthrie, secretary of Cockburn Association, and agreed to changes providing there was a brass plaque for her mother. The project was now driven, not by the needs and wishes of the garrison but by the aesthetic judgement of leaders of Scottish artistic taste and by the careful construction of a history of Christian Scotland. Strachan provided

a little symbol of pre-Christian Scotland, spirit haunted, but with the symbol of Christianity … beginning to emerge. This was followed by St Ninian pushing symbols of druids, serpents eggs, mistletoe etc, into a rubbish heap. Then came St Columba and Queen Margaret with Wallace in the west window, defending himself against 'the red and gold of English leopards'.

It was part of being the public castle that Strachan was subjected to considerable scrutiny. Baldwin Brown thought St Columba had too many doves and disliked the pre-Christian Scotland window; 'I warmly protest against the two gentlemen of low sporting type wearing bowler hats of either side of the uppermost evangelistic symbol'. The result was a carefully constructed story of Scotland.

Resolving the implication of those windows for the meaning of the castle was simplicity compared to what was to follow. In July 1929, David Russell wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland, suggesting that the chapel 'be set apart as a place of devotion and prayer in connection with the war memorial, it would I believe occupy a unique place in the imagination of the whole country'. Russell was a member of the Fife paper-making family, leisured, wealthy and with a powerful and specific view of Christian faith. He had taken a leading part in the formation of the Iona Community, notably in the restoration of the ecclesiastical buildings there. The Secretary of State promptly handed this to the Board of Works, who said the chapel was too small and that their primary duty was to ensure access to visitors. Russell was not easily dismissed and suggested he might pay for furniture for this 'empty space'. J. W. Peers of the Office of Works warned, if

the Chapel is to be furnished as a chapel. The introduction of an altar and candles would give great offence to a great body of people. Altars are not recognised by the Church of Scotland and anything flavouring of the Church of England would meet with strong opposition.

Charles Warr, Dean of the Thistle and minister of St Giles' Church, told George Lansbury, Secretary of State for Scotland, that he did not want the chapel under Church of Scotland control, but it might be furnished 'such as it is representative of those Christian beliefs which are held in common with all churches'. Every time a new Secretary of State was appointed, Russell was back with a variation of his proposals, often accompanied by accounts of the sainted queen. Eventually, chairs and a simple communion table for the apse were agreed and dedicated on 16 March 1934.

The impact of the campaign to give St Margaret's Chapel a more specific religious identity had been limited by the caution of the civil servants and the diplomacy of the Dean of the Thistle, but one outcome represented a quiet and positive link with a quiet strand of Scottish Society. In 1942, Lady Russell founded the St Margaret's Chapel Guild. Their immediate task was, as it still is, to place flowers in the chapel as a place of peace, but also 'to keep alive the life and principles of St Margaret of Scotland before Scottish women and girls as an example of good and Christian womanhood'. Thus confirming that, although Mary might be the visitors' queen, it was Margaret who was the inspiration for the citizen[21].

## A MONUMENT EMERGES

The castle emerged slowly as a monument, in other words, as a place of enjoyment, entertainment and education, but also one that projected symbolism and the mystic of being Scotland's castle.

The first visitor attraction was the opening of the Crown Regalia Room on 26 May 1819. The entrance charge was 1s. In the first two years, £1,121 14s were collected, suggesting a daily visitor flow of 35 to 40 people. This did not cover costs, and the Scottish Exchequer was called in to cover the deficit.

A discussion of opening hours in 1885 showed the way in which visiting had grown. The keeper of the Regalia Room and the keeper of Queen Mary's Rooms were military pensioners who were each paid £45 a year, with housing and free heating. The Regalia were the responsibility of the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer, an officer of the Scottish state, whilst Queen Mary's Rooms were directed by the military authorities of the castle. Both agreed to change summer visiting hours from 11am to 5pm to 10am to 4pm. They argued that 'large number of tourists' visited before 11am and were disappointed when they were turned away, but the late afternoon visitors were 'frequently in such a state of inebriety as to render their admission undesirable'. The warden and the keeper called them 'tired out excursionists who often unfortunately are in an inebriated condition'.

The expansion of visitor access to the castle was a piecemeal process and records are fragmentary. The 1920s saw an increase in numbers of visitors and the areas of the castle that they could visit. David's Tower and the buildings where French prisoners had been kept were opened in 1925[22]. A discussion of the costs of the Scottish National War Memorial included a summary of income from admission fees that showed the impact of changes in the mid-1920s, the spike in interest from the war memorial and the decline reflecting the depression of the early 1930s.

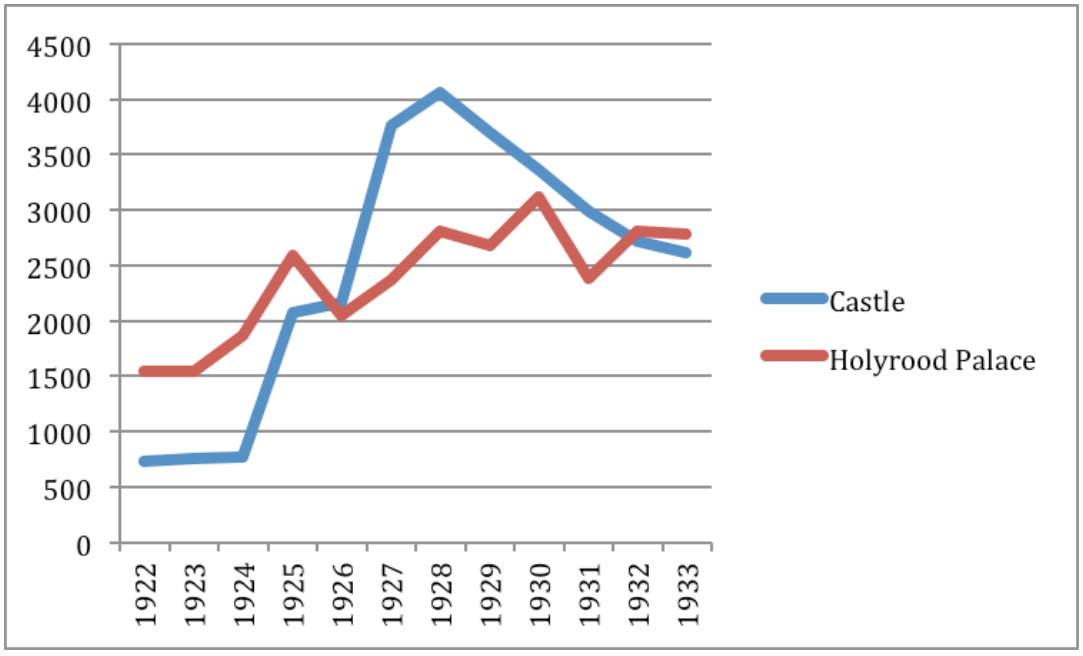


Figure 2. Income in £s from admission fees for Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Palace

The 1930s saw the slow emergence of the castle as a stage set for entertainment and enjoyment. In June 1936, *The Scotsman* reported a display by the dancers of the Black Watch, watched by a crowd of 5,000. 'Pictorially', they reported, 'the experiment was a marked success'. The display featured pipes, drums and floodlights, but the report noted the unsuitability of the Esplanade as an area for spectators. The regular military tattoo appeared in 1947 and came to define the castle for many visitors.

The visual impact of the castle on the whole city had always been an issue since the New Barracks of 1793 had been condemned as 'the cotton mill'. The importance of this impact grew in the last 50 years of the 20th century. The Abercrombie Report of 1949 showed the planners of that era treating the castle with respect. It was an 'inspiring backdrop' to the festival city.

More recently, the growing importance of view corridors and of Edinburgh's status as a World Heritage Site has confirmed the visual importance of the castle. The *Skyline Report: The Protection of Key Views*, issued by Edinburgh City Council planning committee in June 2008, gave the castle a central place in many of the 'view cones' that were to be defended against high-rise building.

> Edinburgh Castle looks so majestic because it stands in isolation. It would not look the same if viewed through a group of tower blocks which came very close to the edge of the sightlines to the castle rock.

Many in the planning process wanted wider viewing cones to protect the castle. The castle plays a central part in Edinburgh's claim to the status of a World Heritage Site; it 'is an image recognised all over the world'. It is part of 'a distinctive and cohesive historic skyline'.

## A COMMODITY AND AN OBJECT OF SCHOLARSHIP[23]

In 1978, Scottish elements of the Ministry of Works were transferred to the Scottish Office in anticipation of devolution. The failure of that vote in 1979 left it in limbo with the Scottish Office and, in 1981, it was placed under the Scottish Development Department. Charging at the gate began in 1981. Previous to this, small charges had been made for admission to specific parts of the castle. This went back to the 1820s. A charge of this kind implied looking at what visitors got for their money. A consultancy report was commissioned from a firm of architects, and the Boyce Jarvis report advised a remodelling of the Esplanade. In fact, the most influential part of the report was a sub-consultancy from Williamson's, an engineering firm that proposed a tunnel from an old coal store by the Esplanade to emerge opposite the New Barracks. This meant that military and other supply traffic no longer used the Argyle Gate and this route was left for visitors.

In 1984, in accordance with the policies of the Thatcher government, the castle was placed under the direction of an executive agency, Historic Buildings and Monuments of Scotland, soon to be renamed Historic Scotland (which most people called it anyway). As an executive agency, Historic Scotland had a 'brand' name, a chief executive and a responsibility to produce an enhanced revenue

stream. The castle gained a manager and a senior ancient monuments inspector with sole responsibility for the castle.

These changes projected the castle towards its 21st-century meaning as a commodity to be sold ticket by ticket to its customers, to be a major component of 'tourism', one of Scotland's leading industries. Few official statements can resist naming the castle as 'the United Kingdom's top heritage attraction'. It was thus voted at the British Travel Awards ceremony in London. It remained 'Scotland's number one paid-for tourist attraction'[24]. In 2014, visitor numbers approached 1.5 million. There were and are obvious dangers in the castle as commodity. Like all good commodities, it can be reproduced. The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo was performed in front of a replica castle on Sydney Football ground. It cost $1 million and will ensure Australian audiences get the full experience of the tattoo[25]. At times, the need to entertain and attract can reach the extreme. It was not clear what the recent day of 'Families First World War Fun' might involve.

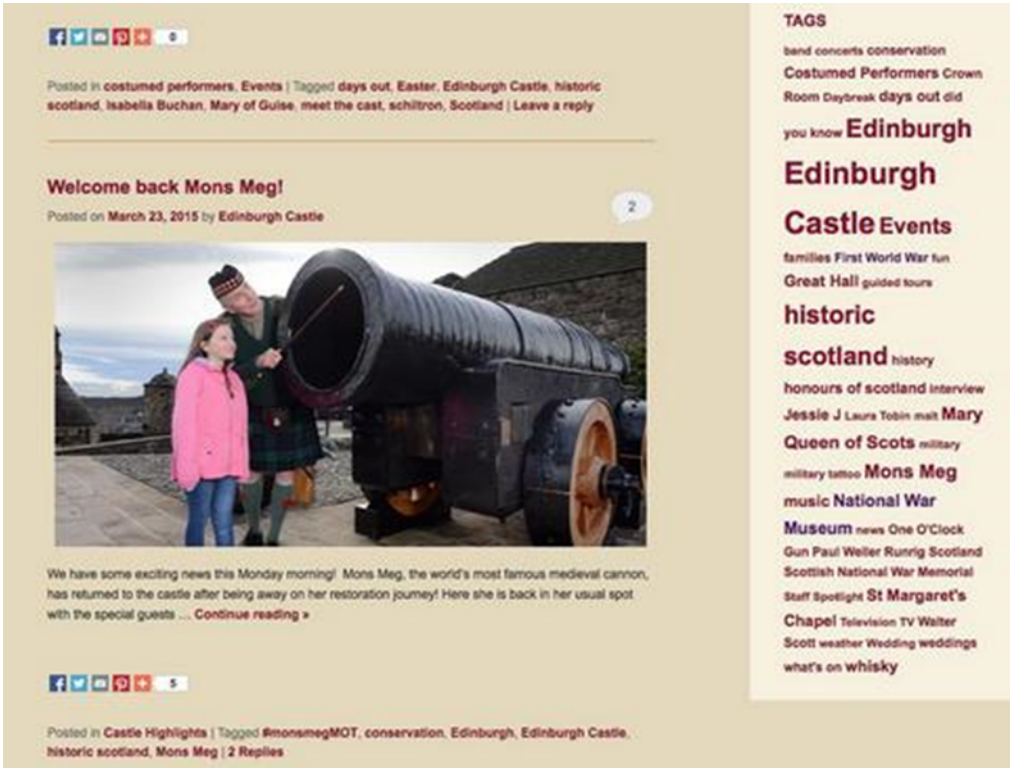


Figure 3. Historic Scotland website, April 2015 © Historic Environment Scotland

The 1980s saw a reconceptualisation of the way in which the castle was used and presented. There were to be five 'zones'. The first belonged to the Secretary of State/later First Minister and had a ceremonial and representative purpose. This seems to have had a fairly fluid boundary. The second belonged to visitors. Thus the east building on Palace Square was no longer seen as an appropriate place for army and air force memorabilia, but was steadily developed for historical display centred on Queen Mary's Rooms and the Regalia. The west barracks, great hall and cart shed were seen as visitor spaces. Visitors were also given very practical

facilities, such as toilets by the gate as they got off the tour coaches. There were a variety of eating places and shops. The third area was the war memorial. It still retained its quality as sacred space. For those who wished, entry was free of charge and they would be escorted to and from the gate. Photography was forbidden and quiet requested. There was a National War Museum area around the 1890s hospital block. Finally, the army still has an officers' mess in the Governor's House, the six-storey New Barracks and a pair of regimental museums.

Despite the emphasis on the castle as a commodity, it retained some of its old mystique as a stage set for being Scotland. The castle space was used for ceremonies that enacted Scotland. It was the starting point for the opening ceremonies of the ill-fated Commonwealth Games of 1986. It was the point from which the military began their parades at the opening of the Scottish Parliament in July 1999. The most spectacular use of the castle as symbol was its selection as destination for the return of the Stone of Scone, often called the Stone of Destiny. The return was a political gesture from the Westminster Conservative Government of John Major, designed to counter the increasing dissatisfaction in Scotland with the nature of London-based government. Historically, the Stone should have been returned to Dunblane, but after a bidding process it was sent to Edinburgh Castle where it was placed next to the Regalia. There it sits, looking rather uncomfortable. It had last been in the castle when it was being carried off to London in 1296 by Edward. It was a political gesture that did little to delay devolution, a gesture that illustrated the power and limitation of the symbolic. One outcome was an addition to the days of free entry to the castle. There had been well-advertised open days at Easter, but another free day on St Andrew's Day was added as part of commitment made for housing the Stone of Destiny.

The creative interaction between scientific scholarly archaeology and commercial development added to the castle in a variety of ways. A visitor attraction needed a café and restaurant. This, together with the tunnel, involved archaeology that revealed traces of Iron Age and late-Bronze Age settlement and fortification, thus providing evidence for what had been a mixture of mythology and assumption. The creation of the Red Coat Café and Jacobite Room from the old cart sheds and hospital buildings involved archaeology that revealed further evidence of Bronze Age and substantial Iron Age settlement, including hut circles[26]. The reconfiguration of cart sheds and a barrack created at the time of Culloden involved a modern building designed for the 'view', but also designed to ensure an impact on the outline of the castle that was minimal and in scale. In places, the archaeology rewarded the needs of the managers looking for more space to serve customers. The creation of the shop from the old guardhouse involved archaeology that revealed great depth of usage and thus the availability of vertical space, which has brought a threefold increase in retail space.

Science and scholarship set new puzzles for those who wished to understand and present the castle. The Great Hall had been restored in the late 19th century under the direction of William Nelson and his executors, guided by the advice of Daniel Wilson. They envisaged this as the space in which early meetings of the Scottish estates had assembled and the first parliament of James II had met in 1437. It was the place of the Black Dinner in 1440 when the bull's head had been placed before the young Earl of Douglas before his murder. In 1999, Historic Scotland began careful cleaning and recording of the very fine medieval roof that Wilson had

identified. The resulting dendrochronology placed the date of the roof at 1510, thus indicating that the early parliaments and the Black Dinner must have been elsewhere, probably in the main hall of the palace block that lies above the recently restored Laigh Hall, in the tangle of rooms that house the exhibition leading to the Crown Room. The Great Hall was a major space of Scottish kingship, but not as Wilson and Nelson had imagined it. The hall, as it was restored post-hospital, represented the imagination of 19th-century architects like Hippolyte Blanc, who often worked by analogy with other buildings such as Crichton and Borthwick Castle or the churches in Iona and Dalmeny[27].

What stories, then, should we tell when visiting the castle? It is easy to be critical of the tourists for whom the only story is 'I was there'. It is easy to be sympathetic with the young soldiers looking around after their morning's training, pondering on the war memorial and examining the details of past uniforms in the regimental museum. There is no reason to be critical of those resting in the new café, recovering from the queue to see the Crown Room. To go further than this it is necessary to accept the castle as a multi-layered experience. It is an invitation to see a medieval and Renaissance building through the eyes of 19th-century antiquaries; to respond to the work of modern archaeologists who have provided evidence for mythology and revised other stories; to respond to stories of Scottish kingship and identity, of the tangled web of military and religious contest and a long depth of human habitation. It is an invitation to respond to forgotten stories such as the religious faith of William Nelson and David Russell, or the tangle that civil servants and military men got themselves into as they attempted to manage a castle which was much more than a monument and never quite a commodity.

## ABBREVIATIONS

NLS National Library of Scotland

NRS National Records of Scotland

*This essay should be read alongside R. J. Morris, 'The Capitalist, the Professor and the Soldier: The Re-making of Edinburgh Castle, 1850–1900', Planning Perspectives, 22.1 (January 2007), 55–78; and R. J. Morris, 'Edinburgh Castle and the Remaking of Medieval Edinburgh', in Audrey Dakin et al., Scotland's Castle Culture (Edinburgh, 2011), 266–79.*

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Notes

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[9] NLS, MSS 1734, fol. 128, 12 December 1885.

[10] NLS, MSS 1735, fol. 194.

[11] William Nelson to Hippolyte Blanc, 14 September 1885, MS 1734, fol. 15.

[12] *Scotsman*, 11 December 1883.

[13] He refers here to the recent 'restoration' of St Giles Cathedral which had been financed by the publisher-printer and one time Lord Provost William Chambers.

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[21] Lucy Menzies, Ronald A. Knox and Ronald Selby Wright, *St Margaret Queen of Scotland and her Chapel* (Edinburgh, 1957).

[22] *Scotsman*, 20 March 1925.

[23] This section owes much to conversation with Chris Tabraham. My thanks to him for thoughtful input, although the interpretation must remain the responsibility of the author.

[24] Association of Leading Visitor Attractions.

[25] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 2010.

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