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Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC222

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EDINBURGH CASTLE - ESPLANADE



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Cover Image: Oblique aerial view of Edinburgh Castle, looking north. The esplanade is the rectangular strip of tarmac to the east (right) of the castle.
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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EDINBURGH CASTLE - ESPLANADE

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Please note, the research for this document was undertaken during 2020-2021 with limited access to archives and resources, as a result of Covid-19. While every attempt was made for accuracy throughout the statement, errors or omissions may remain. Please direct comments or suggestions to CRTenquiries@hes.scot

I. SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The Esplanade is a large, near-rectangular area of gently sloping ground which acts as a forecourt to Edinburgh Castle (see Edinburgh Castle Main Statement of Significance for an overview of the importance of the castle complex^{1 2}). The Esplanade was formalised into its present appearance during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was intended as a parade ground and as a public open space. During the 19th and early 20th centuries several commemorative statues and monuments were erected.

The Esplanade now serves as a gathering point and collecting area for the millions of visitors to the castle and to the city. It is outwith the ‘pay for access’ zone of the castle and many visitors and locals who do not enter the castle come to the Esplanade to view the city and take photographs. During the city’s festival period it is transformed by the erection of stands to form the arena for concerts and the internationally famous Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo (‘the Tattoo’). Annual visitor figures to the Esplanade are not counted, but can be estimated by comparison to the two million known visits to the castle: many more will surely visit the Esplanade.

1.2 Statement of Significance

The Esplanade is a part of Edinburgh Castle that particularly illustrates the merging of the castle’s role as military base (by the 18th century as a barracks rather than a fortress) with its increasing importance as a tourist attraction and city amenity. It sets the scene for the castle and is a busy gathering point and viewing platform used by visitors and locals alike. Some key aspects are:

- The role of the Esplanade as a prelude to the castle is immensely important. There is a great sense of arrival into this open space which is made more emphatic by its contrast with the tall narrow confines of the Royal Mile. Towering over all is the dramatic silhouette of

¹ The main Statement of Significance for Edinburgh Castle is accessible at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9fbc23c6-dce4-4dec-921e-a57000cf8ff7>

² Note: Edinburgh Castle, the Esplanade, and the monuments upon it, are covered by various designations. The cover of this document lists those which currently apply in 2021. For further detail, see the HES Designations Portal at: <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/>

the castle, as visitors are funnelled towards the Gatehouse. These characteristics were inherent in the original conception of the Esplanade as a formalised setting and functional space related to the castle and its military role, but also to civic amenity. The use of the Esplanade as a splendid setting for parade during George IV's 1822 visit to Edinburgh exemplified all of these aspects.

- The views offered from the Esplanade are among the finest in the city (and are generally available to all, without entering the pay-for-entry part of the castle). The area is often crowded with visitors taking photographs but also has quieter moments which offer a different aesthetic experience. These aspects link back to the historic use of the area as a civic amenity and setting for walks and promenades. The Esplanade, along with the castle, is a key part of the Edinburgh Old and New Towns World Heritage Site, and is an important civic space.
- The most important contemporary cultural association for the Esplanade is probably its role as the setting for the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and thus its association with the Edinburgh Festivals. This links back to its origins as a parade ground and the castle's military history and ongoing role as an active army base. The association with the Tattoo also gives the Esplanade an international resonance both for the international nature of the programme, and also of the audience and the event's worldwide recognition.
- The area formalised as the Esplanade from the 18th century onwards has an earlier history. Archaeology has revealed a series of earlier defences, while documentary sources indicate the area was used as a place of execution. More research is required to understand the number of executions which took place here. One aspect, that of execution for witchcraft, is particularly important. This aspect of the Esplanade's history has not been fully researched and may prove to be of increasing importance in a national context. The Witches' Well, in the north-east corner, provides a focus and tangible connection to this history.
- From the mid-19th century the Esplanade was the chosen location for the erection of a series of memorials, mostly with military associations. Monuments were erected to individuals and regiments and one, The Ensign Ewart Memorial, exceptionally, is also a tomb. The monuments are attached to or set close by the Esplanade walls and thus visually they do not form a dominating presence within the open arena of the Esplanade. They offer potential for reflection on the events or people they commemorate and as a group again

reinforce the link to Scottish military history and particularly the contested history of the British Empire.

- The Nova Scotia Plaque, unveiled in 1953, commemorates links with this province of Canada and is therefore a focus of interest for Canadian visitors. It also demonstrates the historic importance of Castle Hill as a ceremonial and symbolic site.

While the above bullet points summarise the main aspects of the significance of the Esplanade, the following paragraphs offer a general background and provide further detail, together with an overview of known gaps in our understanding.



Figure 0: Oblique aerial view of Edinburgh Castle Esplanade. 2017. © Historic Environment Scotland.

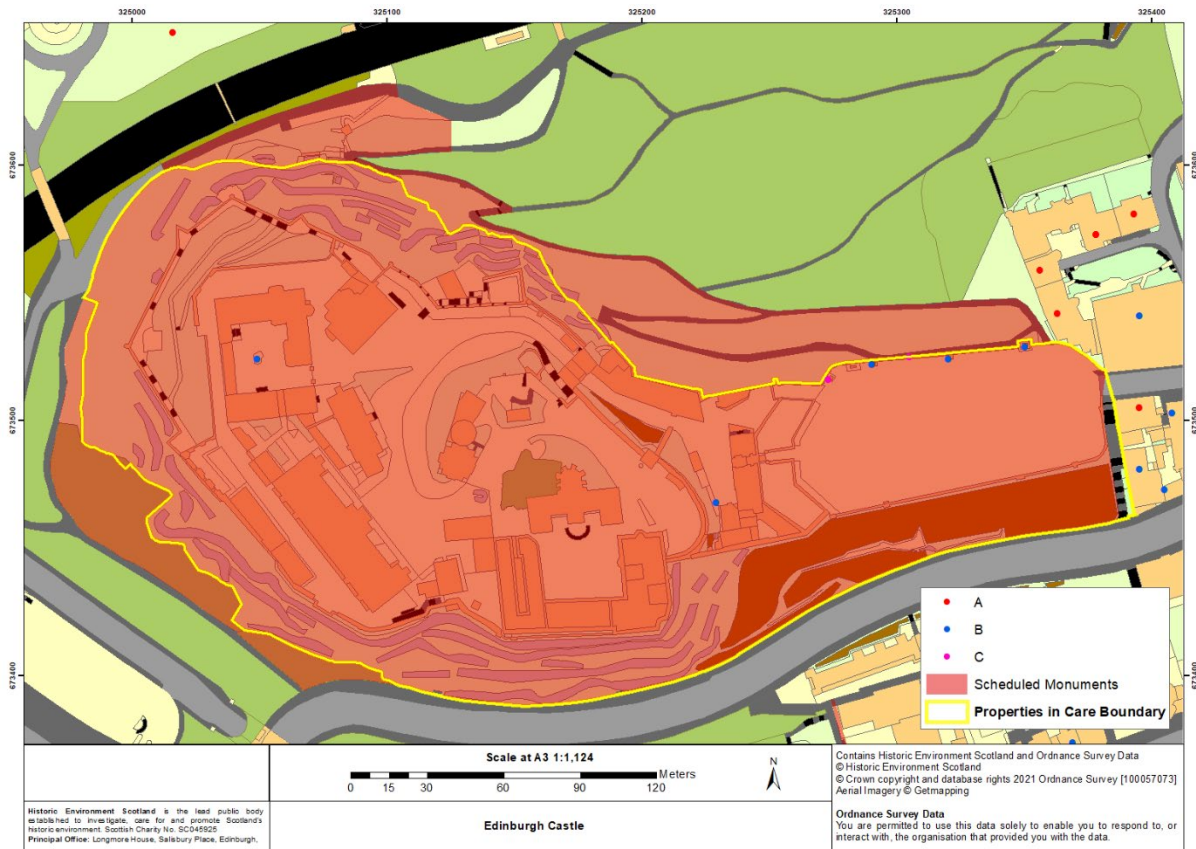


Figure 1: Edinburgh Castle Property in Care (PIC) Boundary, Scheduled area and Listed Buildings. For illustrative purposes only. The Esplanade is the open area on the right (eastern) side of the image.

2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Brief history and development

The area of ground that forms the final route to Edinburgh Castle from the head of the Royal Mile is known as Castle Hill (sometimes Castlehill). Geologically this is the topmost 'tail' part of the 'crag and tail' geological formation that stretches from the crag of the castle, down the Mile to Holyrood. The Esplanade consists of built-up and levelled ground forming a wide plaza leading up to the entrance to Edinburgh Castle. Slezer's illustrations and plans showing *The Entry of the Castle of Edinburgh as it was in the Year 1675* (Figure 2) give an idea of the appearance of the area prior to the Esplanade works.

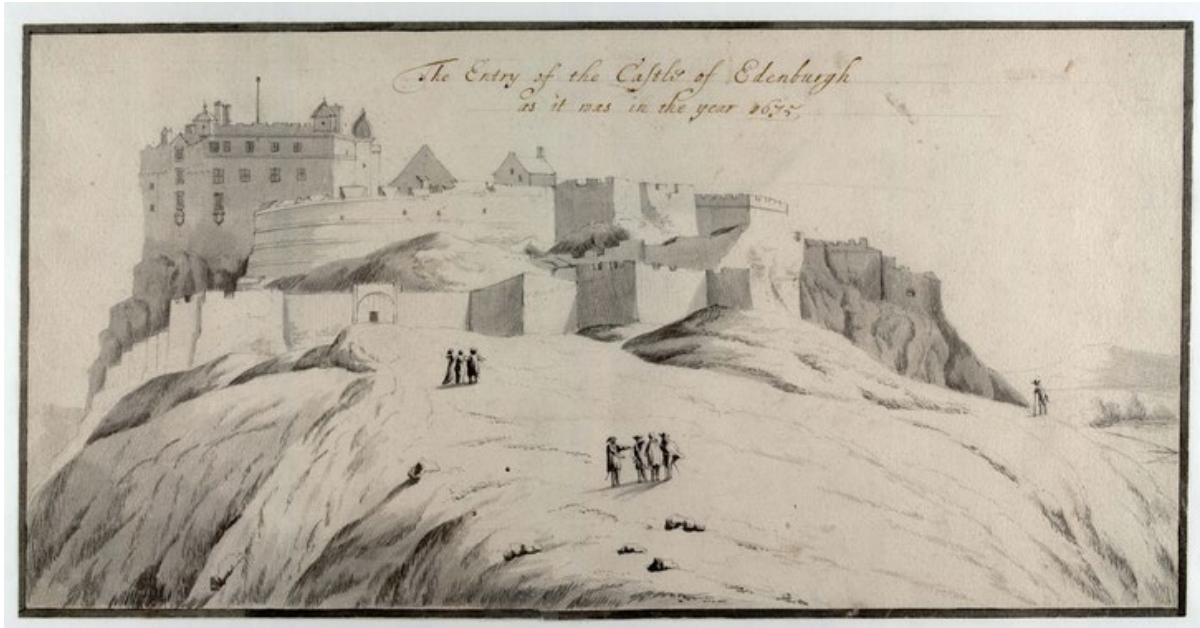


Figure 2: Slezer's illustration titled 'The Entry of the Castle of Edinburgh as it was in the Year 1675'. Image reproduced with kind permission of City of Edinburgh Council - Libraries www.capitalcollections.org.uk

The route provides the only straightforward approach to the higher crag of Castle Rock and must always have been the main route to the citadel. In the mid-18th century it was decided to formalise and landscape this area as part of city improvements, and to provide a parade ground. This was a time when the castle's role as a fortress had declined, but it still represented a place of military importance as barracks and headquarters.

In earlier times, this route obviously required to be strongly defended, and there is archaeological evidence of earlier structures and activities beneath the current ground level of the Esplanade: this is detailed in the timeline below. In summary, the Castle Hill area will have been extensively used for defensive structures over several thousand years, for example, ditches which date to the Iron Age, or more elaborate Renaissance fortifications known as the Spur, who's purpose was to protect the castle and citadel. Over time this area of ground will have had many other uses, and the Castle Hill is known to have been a place of execution (see 2.3 Historical Values).

In 1752 discussions between George Drummond, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and the military authorities of Edinburgh Castle resulted in a project to landscape and formalise the approach to the castle. Initially this consisted of carting up 'rubbish' from the city as fill material, and under the eye of William Skinner, the Board of Ordnance Chief Engineer, the construction of 'Walks on the Hill' for the use of citizenry, and a central parade ground. Work proceeded slowly and further rubble was brought in from demolitions, including the area of Royal Exchange Square, site of the City Chambers.

In 1814 further work was proposed to upgrade the parade ground into the Esplanade in celebration of Napoleon's capture. However, only after Wellington's victory at Waterloo in 1815 was the project re-started and by 1820 the Esplanade emerged much as we see it today. The OS map of 1852 defines a border around the central parade area, perhaps representing setts around the perimeter and gravel in the centre, and formally enclosed by low walls punctuated by imitation sentry boxes.³ It was decked out in celebration of the visit of George IV in 1822 (see Figure 3) and has seen many events since. The south boundary wall may not have been formalised in stone until after 1822; it is shown as an informal line on the aforementioned illustration. Over time several monuments and statues were erected, mostly on the north side of the Esplanade; these are detailed at Appendix 1 below.

For more details of the development of the Esplanade in the context of Edinburgh Castle, see Ewart and Gallagher, *Fortress of the Kingdom*, p99-109.

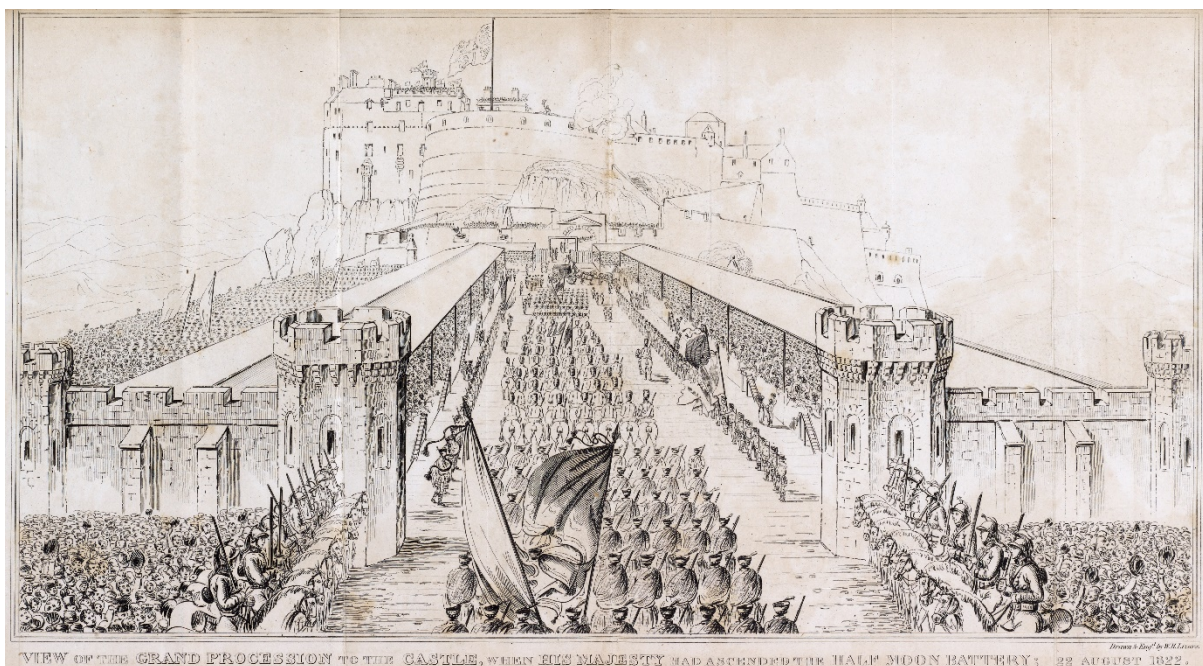


Figure 3: View of Edinburgh Castle from Esplanade, with parade and covered terraced seating, during the visit of George IV. Titled: 'View of Grand Procession to the Castle, when His Majesty (George IV) had ascended the Half Moon Battery; 22 August 1822.' © Courtesy of HES.

³ Ordnance Survey 1st edition six-inch map, Edinburghshire, Sheet 2, Surveyed 1852. Accessible online via NLS: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74426700>

2.1.2 Summary timeline

Iron Age/pre medieval	Defensive ditches dug to protect the citadel, there is archaeological evidence that they remained until the medieval period.
16th century and earlier	The area of Castle Hill outside the castle walls had many uses including as a place of execution: a gibbet is shown on early maps. We do not know the numbers of people executed here. For instance, in 1537 Janet Douglas, Lady Glamis, a member of the powerful Douglas family was accused of witchcraft and plotting to poison the King, James V. She was sentenced to death for treason and put to death by burning on the Castle Hill before a large and sympathetic crowd.
1546/7	Ditches ('fosses') are recorded being dug on 'castell hill', the open ground between the castle and the town, during the War of the Rough Wooing with Henry VIII's England.
1548	An Italian military engineer, Migiliorino Ubaldini, arrives in Scotland and oversees the building of 'the forte of the castle hill', better known as the Spur, an innovative <i>trace Italienne</i> artillery fortification, to help the Scots defend the castle against English guns.
1560	Mary of Guise, the queen regent, writes of instructing workmen to construct a flank on the side of the gate 'de lesperon' (the Spur).
1573	The Spur is extensively damaged during the latter days of the 'Lang Siege' of 1571-3. It is substantially rebuilt in 1576, when Regent Morton 'caussit maissions begin to repayrit the forewark to the forme of a bulwark . . . for the resett and rynning [running] of many cannons'.

1590-1	<p>During the 16th and 17th centuries an area of Castle Hill below what is now the Esplanade, was one of several sites in Edinburgh where people accused of witchcraft were executed.</p> <p>The full number of people executed is unknown and we list here some of those we know of, with their date of death:</p> <p>Janet Clark - 1590</p> <p>Meg Dow - 1590</p> <p>Janet Grant - 1590</p> <p>Ewfame MacKalzene - 1591</p> <p>Agnes Sampsoune - 1591</p> <p>John Cunningham (John Fian) 1591</p>
1625-40	<p>Soil from the Castle Hill is used symbolically to represent Nova Scotia in a ceremony to confer for those of Charles I's subjects purchasing baronetcies of that distant land.</p>
1629-1646	<p>The execution of people accused of witchcraft continued well into the 17th century. Again, the full numbers and details of those who died in this way is not known, but preliminary research has identified the following:</p> <p>Margaret Burges - 1629</p> <p>Alexander Hamitoun - 1630</p> <p>Jonet Barker - 1643</p> <p>Johnne Brughe - 1643</p> <p>Margaret Lauder - 1643</p> <p>Agnes Finnie - 1646</p>
1639/40	<p>Two sieges in quick succession, during the Bishop's Wars against Charles I, resulting in the recently repaired Spur sustaining yet more damage.</p>

1649/50	The Spur is removed. Its stone entrance gate is re-used 'for beautifying the outer court' of the new Parliament House in Edinburgh's High Street. Temporary siege works are erected on the site of the Spur in an attempt to withstand another siege, this time by Oliver Cromwell. After capturing the castle, Cromwell orders a new defensive forework, called a hornwork, to be built on Castle Hill.
Later 17th century	Following the return of Charles II to the throne (1660), work continues on completing the new hornwork. Elements surviving include the Dry Ditch at the upper (west) end of the Esplanade.
1708	Following the aborted Jacobite Rising, work begins on constructing a large defensive outwork on Castle Hill, designed by the military engineer, Theodore Dury. The so-called 'Grand Secret' is abandoned at an early stage due to major misgivings by the military authorities.
1752-55	William Skinner, the Board of Ordnance's chief engineer of North Britain, has the rough terrain of Castle Hill graded and landscaped to form a parade ground for the castle garrison. To either side of the parade ground 'Walks on the Hill' are created where the citizens can promenade. The works progress slowly.
1814	Following Napoleon Bonaparte's capture in early 1814, a scheme to celebrate the momentous occasion by formalising Skinner's parade ground to create an Esplanade is proposed. (see Figure 4) The French Emperor's escape from Elba forestalls the project.
1816-20	Following Bonaparte's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, the Esplanade project goes ahead. The parade ground is widened and laid with setts, and enclosed by low, stone walls topped by decorative railings along the north side and dummy turrets/imitation sentry boxes on the south side.

1822 (August)	The first ceremonial occasion is held on the new Esplanade, when George IV returns the Honours of Scotland to the castle, at the end of his visit to Scotland (see Figure 3).
1839	The first monument is erected on the north side of the Esplanade - a bronze statue of Frederick, Duke of York and Albany, by Thomas Campbell (Figure 19).
1854	The town council of Edinburgh asserts its legal right to ownership of the Esplanade, but the court finds in favour of the Crown.
1861	A Celtic cross commemorating The 78th Highlanders, by R. Rowand Anderson, is erected (Figures 24-25).
1875	A Celtic cross to Colonel Kenneth Douglas Mackenzie, by John Steell, is erected (Figure 23).
1883	Erection of a granite obelisk to The 72nd Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders, by McDonald, Field & Co. (Figure 18)
1894	Witches' Well designed by John Duncan for Patrick Geddes in 1894, ⁴ and attached to the side of the Castlehill Reservoir in 1912 (Figures 12, and 32-38). ⁵
1905	A Celtic cross to The Scottish Horse, by Stewart McGlashan & Son, is erected (Figures 21-22).
1923	A bronze equestrian statue to Field-Marshal Earl Haig, by G E Wade, is erected.

⁴ <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/model-for-the-witches-well-castlehill-254986>

⁵ Details on the erection of the fountain are contained within file MW1/63, National Records of Scotland.

1938	A memorial (a block of Swedish granite) to Ensign Ewart, together with part of his gravestone recovered from a cemetery in Salford (England), are placed on the Esplanade to commemorate his actions at Waterloo (Figure 20).
1950	The first performance of the Edinburgh Tattoo (now the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo) is held on the Esplanade.
1953	Installation of the Nova Scotia Plaque (Figures 30-31).
1956/7	Descriptive plaque installed above the Witches' Well, and repairs carried out to the fountain itself.
1970s	Large part of the north wall in danger of collapse. Demolished and rebuilt in the 1960s and 70s, and sections of the iron railings date to that time. (see Figures 5-7)
1989-1990	<p>A vehicle tunnel was created to give vehicular access from the Esplanade to the Castle without the need to go through the main gate. The tunnel was part blasted and drilled as a true tunnel, and was part cut-and-cover, so the upper end at Mills Mount has a concrete roof. The first charge was fired by Lord James Douglas Hamilton MP, the then Minister, on 17th April 1989. The tunnel part of the contract was completed in 1990.</p> <p>The bridge over the Dry Ditch was widened as part of the tunnel works, in order to allow adequate fire engine access.</p> <p>Associated archaeological excavations immediately to the west of the Esplanade uncover evidence for two huge and deep ditches dating from the later Iron Age and continuing in use into the central Middle Ages.</p>
2009-11	Excavations in advance of constructing new Tattoo stands find evidence for the 16th-century Spur. As part of the operation, the Scottish Horse memorial is repositioned

	in a recess and, on 16th March 2011, the equestrian statue of Earl Haig relocated to Hospital Square within the castle walls.
2010-11	Extensive footings for new Tattoo tiered-seating stands constructed, and below-ground services rationalised.
2012	Tarmac area renewed on completion of the footings for the new Tattoo stands. N.B. No setts were removed or covered during this work.

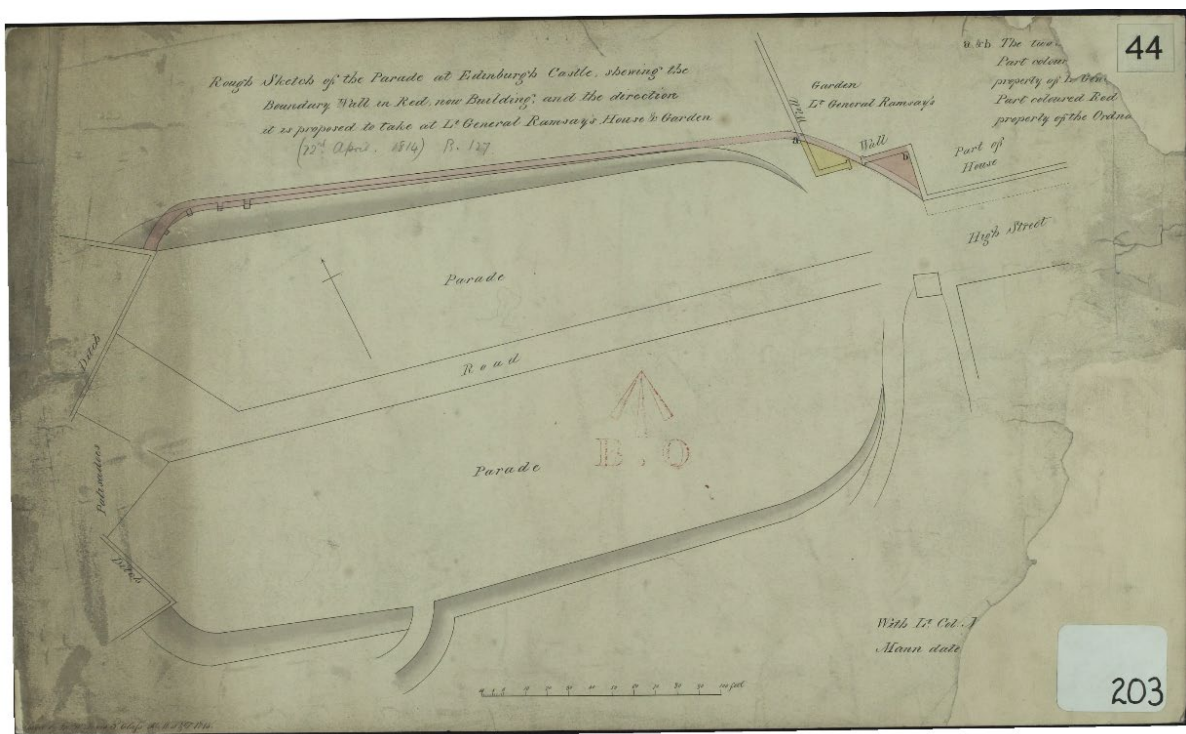


Figure 4: 1814-15 Plan of the Esplanade, 'showing the Boundary Wall in Red now Building, and the direction it is proposed to take at Lt General Ramsay's House & Garden' (on the top right of image). Note depiction of access to esplanade from south. © Crown Copyright. Reproduced with kind permission of National Records of Scotland, RHP35780.



Figures 5 & 6: North wall of Edinburgh Castle Esplanade, before and during reinforcement works. (left) 1966, looking east (right) 1967, looking west. Both images © Crown Copyright: HES.



Figure 7: Resurfacing works being undertaken on the Esplanade. © Crown Copyright HES.

2.2 Evidential values

The primary archaeological values of the Esplanade relate to the buried evidence of earlier forms and layouts of this and the wider Castle Hill site. The importation of fill material to build up ground levels may have preserved earlier evidence, and the potential for future discoveries is very high.

The history of occupation of the Castle Rock reaches back over 3,000 years. During that time, Castle Hill has seen a range of uses, including most importantly as an outer defence, as an outer ward, or enclosure, and as a place of execution. Two limited archaeological investigations, coupled with evidence from boreholes, have highlighted this potential.

Excavations directed by Peter Yeoman in 1989, during the formation of the vehicle tunnel (see Timeline), found evidence in the Coal Yard immediately to the west of the Esplanade, for two huge ditches that must have cut off the top of Castle Hill. They had been created in the later Iron Age and were still in use in the 14th century.

Excavations in 2009–11 by CFA Archaeology uncovered evidence under the Esplanade for the 16th-century Spur. Although only a small proportion of the Esplanade area was excavated, the exercise highlighted the potential for further discoveries.

There is also a range of associated evidence from maps and documents which help illuminate the development of the Esplanade and Castle Hill site over several hundred years.

2.3 Historical values

There are two main themes evident in the historical values associated with the Esplanade:

1. The post-1752 incarnation of the area as the Esplanade when it became increasingly important to the city as a public space and, from the mid-20th century, as the home of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo
2. The earlier history of the site when the Castle Hill area was part of the outer castle defences, but also a place with a variety of ceremonial and other uses, including as a place of execution.

The former theme is probably the most dominant today and is closely bound up with the aesthetic, landscape and contemporary values of this part of the castle, and is discussed in later sections of this document.

The emergence of the Esplanade as a significant public space within the city evolved in the context of the shift in emphasis for the castle from a purely military site into one of more conscious 'monumentising'. The latter was linked to a form of Scottish national identity, to pride in the ancient stronghold and the castle's civic value to the city of Edinburgh.⁶ From the outset, the Esplanade was envisaged as an important public space, as well as a site for military parade and display. The initial 18th century plans of Provost Drummond seem rather more focussed on civic amenity, while the later 19th century developments perhaps placed more emphasis on the grandeur and formality of the Esplanade as a setting for events.

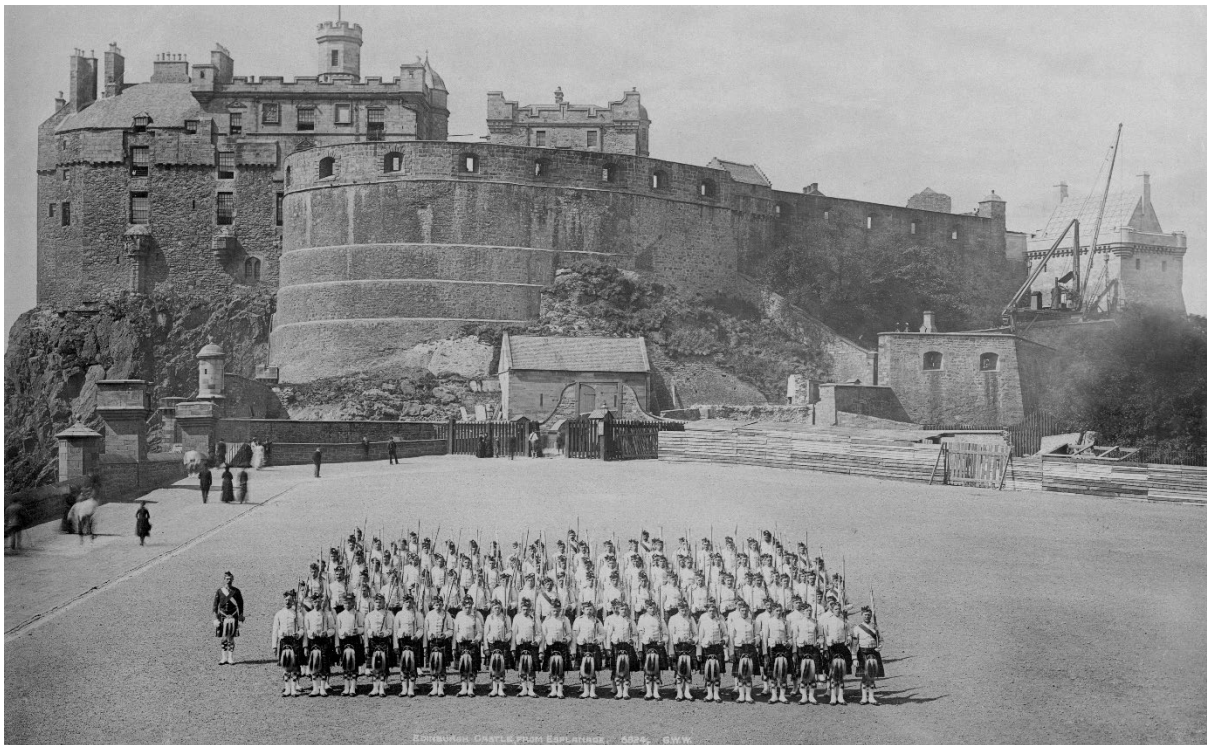


Figure 8: Historic photograph taken prior to 19th century development of main gatehouse (centre), with ongoing works to Portcullis Gate (right). View of soldiers on Esplanade, with caption 'EDINBURGH CASTLE FROM ESPLANADE. 6824 G.W.W.' © Courtesy of HES.

⁶ This is further discussed in Morris, R J, *Edinburgh Castle Research Report: Edinburgh Castle in the Modern Era*, available at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=0d82577c-4cd7-4695-8354-aaa000ff60eb>

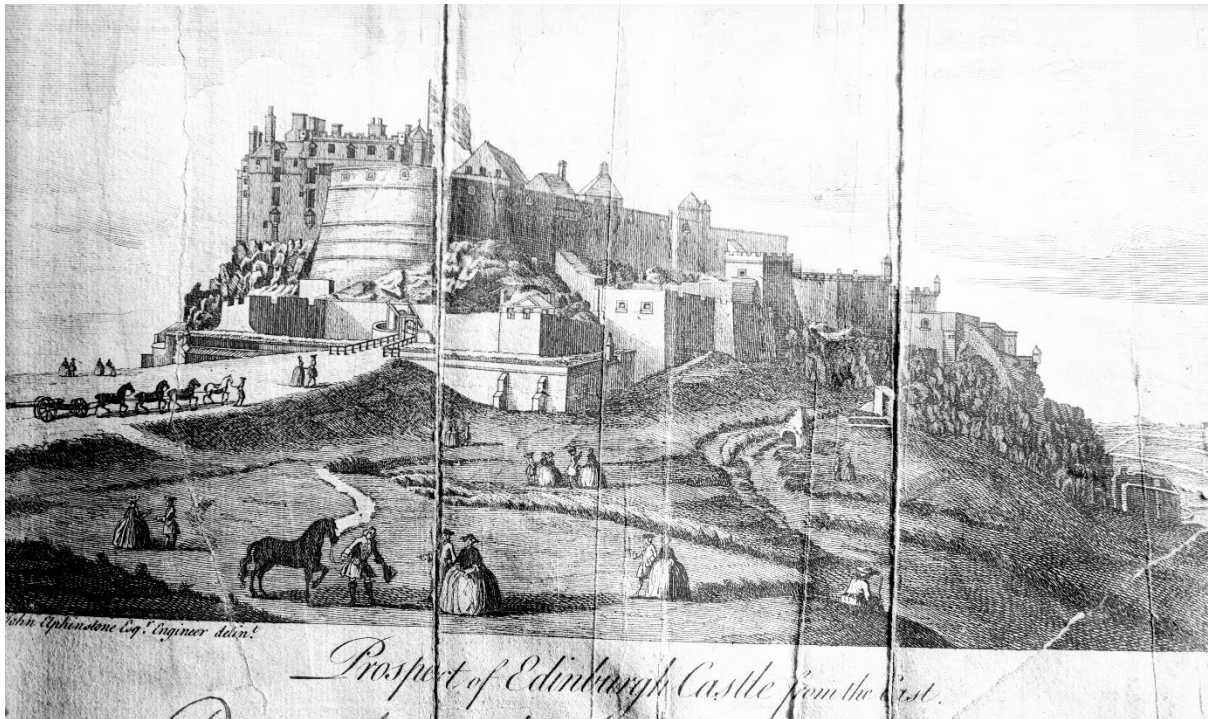


Figure 9: Prospect of Edinburgh Castle from east, drawn by John Elphinstone, military engineer. Early 18th-century engravings, such as this, show the Esplanade as a place of civic amenity, prior to the formalisations of the 19th century. © Courtesy of HES.

Several statues and memorials were set up around the edges of the Esplanade: most have military associations and some international resonance. Fuller details of each individual monument is given in Appendix 1 to this Statement. It is intended to expand this work to cover the majority of the statues and monuments elsewhere within the Castle.

Most of the Esplanade memorials serve to emphasise the close connection between the castle and the Scottish regiments; this is further underlined by the presence within the castle of regimental museums and the Scottish National War Memorial.⁷ Many of the Esplanade memorials also bear witness to the role of the military in overseas campaigns and especially in support of the British Empire/British imperial policies. Interpreting the historic context behind the memorials to give a balanced account of events is one of the key opportunities presented by the memorials for HES.

Referring to the second main theme above, understanding the earlier incarnation of the Esplanade area as the Spur and the Castle Hill defences, allows visitors to understand the extensive nature of the castle's outer works. Without understanding this history, features such as the

⁷ Both of which have separate Statements of Significance, available at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9fbc23c6-dce4-4dec-921e-a57000cf8ff7>

fragmentary walls and tower below the Esplanade (generally glimpsed from a railway carriage on leaving Waverly Station) can seem incomprehensible.

A further theme is that of the Castle Hill as a place of execution; the site is believed to lie under the footprint of the present Esplanade, and a gibbet is shown on Rothiemay's map of 1649.⁸ Some of the known execution events are listed in the Timeline, but there is clearly much more to research to fully understand this aspect of the area of Castle Hill. Those executed included people accused of witchcraft during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Assessing the number of executions following trials for witchcraft is difficult as many trial records, including confirmation of sentences being carried out, do not exist. Even where court records survive, they often do not mention the place of execution. Trials and executions were usually held in each local area. For Edinburgh there were a number of execution sites, though Castle Hill was believed to have been the most significant.

Academics estimate the number of executions as very likely in excess of 100 for Castle Hill. Known individuals executed are listed in the Timeline. It is important to note that following execution (often by strangulation then burning), the ashes of the pyre would simply be raked into the ground, as there was no burial of remains allowed.⁹

The Castle Hill, including the area now under the Esplanade, was therefore the last resting place of many unfortunate victims of this legally sanctioned and barbaric killing. Indeed, Walter Scott noted¹⁰ in 1830 that during the works for the Esplanade, areas of burnt ground and ash had been found and interpreted as the remains of execution pyres.

Another important historic association from the 17th century is commemorated by the Nova Scotia Plaque, inserted into the west wall of the Esplanade in 1953. This commemorates the part of Castle Hill which was the scene of a symbolic transfer of the lands of Nova Scotia, Canada to Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, Earl of Stirling, in 1625 (see Appendix 1 for full details). In turn, Sir William used this location to grant land to some of the new Baronets of Nova Scotia, a title given to entice people to purchase large grants of land (see Appendix 1 for full details).

⁸ Accessible online via National Library of Scotland, at: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/74475427>

⁹ Professor Julian Goodare, pers comm.

¹⁰ Walter Scott letter available at: https://sacred-texts.com/pag/scott/lodw09.htm#fr_64

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

The main architectural impetus behind the creation of the Esplanade was to provide an open, levelled area to accommodate troop parades and areas for public circulation. In addition, the Esplanade created a clear sense of physical separation between the buildings of the town and the fortifications on the steeper cliffs of the Castle Rock. The later construction of the Gatehouse 1886-89¹¹ with its dry ditch and drawbridge (later replaced by a fixed bridge) further underlined the role of the Esplanade as a grand open-air anteroom to the castle.



Figure 10: View of approach to gatehouse, from Esplanade. Note setts on ground, and sentry boxes either side of the narrow walkway (a fixed bridge leading over the dry ditch) © Crown Copyright HES.

The physical features of the Esplanade, the walls, imitation sentry boxes and railings are low-key. The architectural and aesthetic impact arises from the great contrast of this open area of ground linking the steep and crowded Royal Mile to the martial gatehouse and the imposing silhouette of the castle. The extensive open views are magnificent and must always have been a key consideration in developing the Esplanade at a time when tourist visitation was just beginning to be a widely appreciated and economically important practice.

¹¹ A separate Statement of Significance for the Gatehouse is available at: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9fbc23c6-dce4-4dec-921e-a57000cf8ff7>



Figure 11: Oblique aerial view centred on the main entrance to Edinburgh Castle, looking south. This view emphasises the effect of the Esplanade (here, with Tattoo seating stands partially erect) as an anteroom to the castle, with visitors funnelled onto the bridge over the dry ditch (centre) and through the gatehouse. © Crown Copyright: HES.

The freestanding monuments (detailed and illustrated in Appendix 1) are set at intervals along the north perimeter, while several plaques are inset into the west, south and east walls.¹² The monuments are all individual in design; the most closely related stylistically are the three Celtic crosses. All could be described as 'traditional' in their design, material and execution, the exception being the Ensign Ewart memorial, which is more modernist in style and unusual in being made of imported material – in this case, Swedish granite.

The monuments were not constructed as a group, though they appear carefully positioned in relation to one another and to the setting. However, over time they have become perceived and appreciated as a group. They are well designed and executed, and while none can be counted as exceptional as works of art, they do gain significance from their setting.

¹² Until 2011 the bronze equestrian statue of Earl Haig was probably the most prominent and eye-catching of the monuments on the Esplanade. It was relocated to Hospital Square within the castle precinct for a number of reasons including health and safety and visitor flow primarily during the Tattoo, and conservation concerns. For further details, see the Listed Building description (LB27860) accessible at: <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB27860>



Figure 12: View of the Witches Fountain, on wall of former Castlehill Reservoir at north-east corner of Castle Esplanade. © Dianne King

Standing somewhat apart from the main run of Esplanade memorials is the Witches' Fountain, now generally known as the Witches' Well. Though small in scale, this memorial fountain is beautifully executed as a work of art (Figure 12 above, and Figures 32-38, Appendix 1). It commemorates the people, mainly women, who were accused of witchcraft and especially those who were executed so brutally on the Castle Hill. It therefore stands

apart from the rest of the Esplanade monuments in style, subject matter and aesthetic. The designer, John Duncan was a leading figure in Scottish art of the time, working here in a Celtic Revival and Symbolist style.

The fountain is associated stylistically and through patronage with nearby Ramsay Garden. In 1894 Patrick Geddes, client for Sydney Mitchell's marvellous architectural masterpiece of Ramsay Garden, commissioned his friend the artist John Duncan to design a bronze drinking fountain in memory of the accused witches. The fountain was cast in bronze by W A Stevenson in 1896¹³ and was installed in its current position in 1912.¹⁴ Set above the fountain is a bronze plaque which explains the symbolism employed by Duncan. The plaque was installed in 1956/7¹⁵ after some repairs were carried out to the fountain. This memorial therefore provides a tangible, if much later, physical reminder of this important historical association for the Esplanade (see Historical Values above). It is affixed to the former Castlehill Reservoir which supplied piped water to the upper parts of the Royal Mile, a particularly apposite location for a fountain. A modern HES interpretation panel provides information about the fountain.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

One of the most important aspects of the Esplanade is the panoramic view it offers of the city, the castle and the more distant landscape south to the Pentlands and north across the Forth to Fife. It is one of several such viewpoints within the city (Arthur's Seat and Calton Hill for example), but because of its central location and ease of access it is probably the pre-eminent viewpoint. It therefore makes a significant contribution to the enjoyment of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site with the experience it offers of both Old and New Towns.¹⁶ Viewed from Princes Street the Esplanade acts as a visual break between the Castle and the top of the Old Town characterised by Ramsay Garden and the Tollbooth Kirk spire, enhancing the drama of the Castle Rock.

¹³ Information from City Art Centre, Edinburgh. A wax model for the fountain is in the collection of the centre. Image of which accessible via:

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/model-for-the-witches-well-castlehill-254986>

¹⁴ Letter from W.T. Oldrieve authorising the fountain's installation, dated 6th September 1911. Contained within file MW1/63, National Records of Scotland. Note the fountain was the responsibility of the City Council rather than the Ministry of Works.

¹⁵ Copy letter from City Council to Edinburgh Festival Volunteer Guides Association in file DD27/248 dated 6th Dec 1956, National Records of Scotland. The Volunteer Guides seem to have campaigned for repairs to the fountain and the plaque was installed as part of this programme of works.

¹⁶ Panoramas are noted, for instance, in the City of Edinburgh Council Old Town Character Appraisal, accessible at: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/23393/old-town-conservation-area-character-appraisal>

As well as its importance as a platform for distant views, the Esplanade is important for the close views it offers looking east to Ramsay Garden and the top of the Royal Mile, and of course west to the Castle. The contrast of close-to views with more expansive panoramas is a key aesthetic value.



Figure 13: View of Edinburgh from Castle Hill showing the Esplanade and the Old Town, c.1830. © Courtesy of HES.



Figure 14: Detail from Engraving showing general view, looking East from the Castle Esplanade with figures standing round cannon. Insc: 'Published by J. Brydone, 29, Princes Street, Edinburgh' 'J Ramage. T Brown'. c.1860. © Courtesy of HES.

Note contrast with earlier view, above, including development of memorials around the Esplanade, and appearance of the tall spire of the Tolbooth (aka the Hub, to the right of centre).

The monuments on the Esplanade appear relatively low-key, simply because of the grandeur and expansiveness of the setting, and in this often-crowded space they can be easy to miss. The patinated bronze and gently weathered stone of the monuments blend in with the stone walls and iron railings, though the crosses can stand out as more dramatic when perceived against the sky, or against the lighter walls of Ramsay Garden. (for the Witches' Well, see 2.4 above).

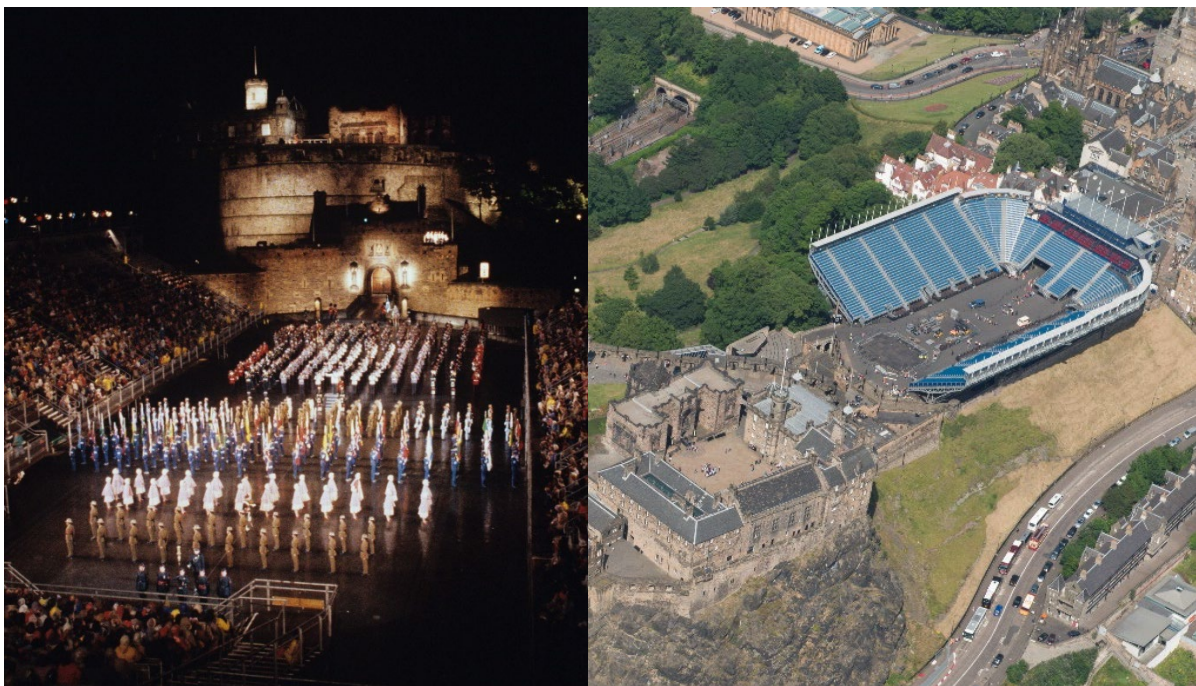
The activity and erection of tiered seating stands for the Tattoo affects the experience of visiting the Esplanade as the stands occupy a good proportion of the site (see Figures 15-16). It brings a different character to the area and to the views of the Castle from the city which underline the importance of the Castle as a living performance venue. During this period some of the monuments are fenced off and interpretation is fixed to barriers for visitors' benefit.

2.6 Contemporary/use values

While the number of visitors to the castle is known (well over two million for 2018 and 2019, pre-pandemic), footfall to the Esplanade is not counted, though is likely to be significantly higher as it lies outwith the pay zone of the Castle. It is, by any measure, one of the most important public spaces within the city.

Given its iconic location, the Esplanade is regularly used for a whole range of events and activities. Throughout the year, the Esplanade hosts civic and military events and ceremonies, for instance Remembrance Day, State Opening of Parliament, the Birthday and Official Birthday of the Sovereign and key regimental anniversaries such as the recent parade for the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. On these ceremonial dates there may be a military guard at the Drawbridge, a gun salute or a short band performance. In recent years, over the summer there are the Castle Concerts and the Tattoo; in winter, there is the festive light event (Castle of Light). More ad hoc activities include requests for filming and photography and many events such as charity fundraisers. Most recently, during 2020/21, a mobile Covid-19 testing centre was set up on the Esplanade.

A key importance is of course the use of the Esplanade to enact the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. This event is of international importance and is key to the character of Edinburgh as a festival city and to its place on the international stage. The event is a hugely important cultural and economic asset and the atmosphere of the Esplanade will remain a key memory for many participants and audiences. For Edinburgh residents, erection of the Tattoo stands, (which begins from mid-May and ends with the final down-taking around October) has the character of a seasonal event marking the passage of time.



Figures 15 & 16: (left) Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo taking place on Esplanade. (right) Oblique aerial view of Edinburgh Castle and Esplanade, looking NNE. Tattoo stands erect on Esplanade, providing tiered seating. July 2014. Both images © Crown Copyright: HES.



Figure 17: Visitors congregating on Edinburgh Castle Esplanade. © Historic Environment Scotland.

The memorials impart a different and quieter set of values to the Esplanade as they are markers of memory, commemoration and sadness for those lost in conflict. They can provoke individual feelings of loss and contemplation. The Ensign Ewart monument is unusual in that it contains the remains of the Ensign, and so is a place of interment, while the other memorials are more in the nature of cenotaphs or monuments to the memory of regiments or individuals. The Witches' Well drinking fountain has no military connection, but it tells a sobering story of the brutality of earlier times, and provokes as much pause for thought as the other monuments.

Please note, the research for this document was undertaken during 2020-2021 with limited access to archives and resources, as a result of Covid-19. While every attempt was made for accuracy throughout the statement, errors or omissions may remain. Please direct comments or suggestions to CRTenquiries@hes.scot

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(see main Edinburgh Castle Statement for full Bibliography)

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Unpublished Report for The Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

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Gifford, J, C McWilliam, and D Walker, *The Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984)

University of Edinburgh, *Survey Database: Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*,
accessible at: <http://witches.shca.ed.ac.uk/>

Further Resources

A 3D model of Edinburgh Castle, including the Esplanade, is available to view via HES's Sketchfab page: <https://skfb.ly/6SWxo>

Transcriptions of Alexander Curle's diaries include a description of a royal visit in July 1920, in which the King inspected the Company of the Scots Guards on the Esplanade: <https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/rcahms-archives/curle-diaries/curle-diary-14/78>

Current Designations (2021)

Edinburgh Castle:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90130>

72nd Highlanders Memorial:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48237>

Duke of York Statue:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB27883>

Scottish Horse Memorial:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48239>

Monument to Colonel Mackenzie:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48257>

78th Highlanders Memorial:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48238>

Edinburgh Castle Esplanade De-listing:
<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB28011>

The New Town Gardens:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/GDL00367>

Old Town Conservation Area: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/directory-record/1099435/old-town-conservation-area>

Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/728/>

Canmore Entries

Edinburgh Castle Esplanade: <http://canmore.org.uk/site/111664>

72nd Highlanders Memorial:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/236887/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-72nd-highlanders-memorial>

Ensign Ewart Memorial: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/310912/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-memorial-to-ensign-ewart>

Duke of York Statue: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/236871/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-duke-of-york-statue>

Scottish Horse Memorial: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/237907/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-scottish-horse-memorial>

Monument to Colonel Mackenzie:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/236896/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-monument-to-colonel-mackenzie>

78th Highlanders Memorial:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/236890/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-78th-highlanders-memorial>

Princess Louise's Argyllshire Highlanders Memorial:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310913/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-princess-louises-argyllshire-highlanders-war-memorial>

Gordon Highlanders South African Memorial:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310914/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-the-gordon-highlanders-south-african-war-memorial>

King's Own Scottish Borderers Plaque:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310915/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-the-kings-own-scottish-borderers-plaque>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS ON THE ESPLANADE

This appendix is a work in progress. It gives outline details of some of the statues and memorials on the Esplanade. In time it is intended to expand the survey to cover all the memorials within the Castle.

Starting from the western end of the north side of the Esplanade, the memorials are (clockwise):

1. Memorial to The 72nd Highlanders (Figure 18), Category C Listed: LB48237.¹⁷ This monument also known as the ‘Afgan needle’ was erected in 1882/3 to commemorate men and officers of the 72nd Duke of Albany’s Own Highlanders who were either killed in action, or who died of wounds or disease during the campaigns in Afghanistan between 1878 and 1880. The monument is a highly polished, pink granite obelisk with a bronze coronet over the numerals ‘72’, on a pedestal with inscriptions; surrounded by decorative wrought-iron railings over a low stone plinth. It was carved by McDonald Field and Co, Aberdeen.¹⁸
2. The Remains of Ensign Ewart (Figure 20). This monument was erected in 1938 to incorporate and mark the new burial place and to commemorate the actions of Ensign Charles Ewart (1769-1846) at the Battle of Waterloo where he was responsible for capturing the eagle standard of the French ‘Les Invincibles’. It takes the form of a gently curving altar tomb of grey Swedish granite that stands on a stepped plinth designed by modernist architect William H Kinnimonth.¹⁹ Kinnimonth was for a time in partnership with Basil Spence and was a prominent designer and teacher. He is also known to have worked with sculptor Hew Lorimer, who may have been the letter-cutter on this project.²⁰

¹⁷ Designation Documentation accessible at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48237>

¹⁸ For further information, see Canmore entry (which includes full inscription):

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/236887/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-72nd-highlanders-memorial>

¹⁹ Further detail available at:

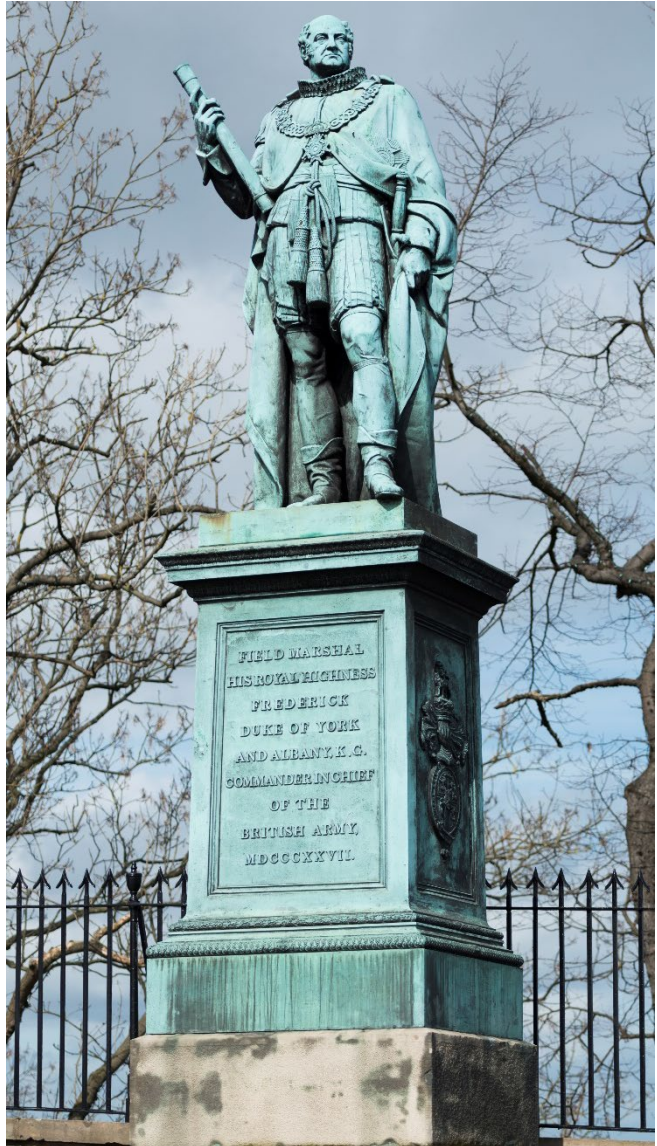
http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=408261

²⁰ For further information, see Canmore entry (which includes full inscription):

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310912/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-memorial-to-ensign-ewart>



(Above left) Figure 18: Memorial to the 72nd Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders. © Dianne King.



(Above right) Figure 19: Statue of the Duke of York and Albany. © Crown Copyright HES.



(Left) Figure 20: Memorial to Ensign Ewart. © Dianne King.

3. Duke of York Statue (Figure 19), Category B Listed: LB27883.²¹ This statue erected in 1836 is a memorial to Prince Frederick, Duke of York and Albany (1763 – 1827) who was Commander of the British Army. He was the second son of George III: Princes Street is named for he and his brother, the future George IV. The statue shows him dressed as a Knight of the Garter and set on a tall bronze pedestal. Though he was not particularly noted as a military commander, the Duke was acknowledged as a key reformer of armed forces instituting structural, recruiting and administrative reforms which contributed to Britain's success in the Napoleonic and later wars. The sculptor was Thomas Campbell, the foremost Scots-born sculptor of his day.²²
4. Memorial to The Scottish Horse (Figures 21-22), Category C Listed: LB48239.²³ This monument was erected in 1905 to commemorate the fallen of the Scottish Horse regiment from 1901-2 during the South African War (1899-1902). It takes the form of an Iona Cross of red Peterhead granite, with a claymore and lion rampant carved prominently on the front of the cross all set on a battered rock-cut granite plinth with bronze inscription panels. The South African War was fought between the British Empire and two independent Boer states, the South African Republic (Republic of Transvaal) and the Orange Free State, over the Empire's influence in South Africa. The monument was carved by Stewart McGlashan & Son, monumental masons. A similar monument, also by McGlashan was set up in South Africa at Kensington near Johannesburg.^{24 25}
5. Monument to Colonel Mackenzie (Figure 23), Category B Listed: LB48257.²⁶ This memorial was erected in 1875 to commemorate the life of Colonel Kenneth Douglas Mackenzie of the 92nd Highlanders (1811-1873). It takes the form of an ornately carved sandstone Celtic Cross on a rubble plinth with an inscription on a red granite plaque. Mackenzie served in the British army for 42 years with The Gordon Highlanders; he served as Quartermaster which meant he was responsible for provisioning the troops. The designer and sculptor was Sir John Steell, a towering figure in Scottish public art.²⁷

²¹ Designation Documentation accessible at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB27883>

²² For further details see Canmore entry: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/236871/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-duke-of-york-statue>

²³ Designation Documentation accessible at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48239>

²⁴ See <http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/journey-rich-history-vandalised-scottish-horse-memorial-kensington>

²⁵ For further information, see Canmore entry: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/237907/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-scottish-horse-memorial>

²⁶ Designation Documentation accessible at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48257>

²⁷ For further information, see Canmore entry: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/236896/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-monument-to-colonel-mackenzie>



(Above left and right) Figures 21 & 22: The Scottish Horse memorial © Crown Copyright HES.
 (Below left) Figure 23: Memorial to Colonel Mackenzie, view from South. © Dianne King.
 (Below right) Figure 24: Memorial to the 78th Highlanders, view from south. © Dianne King.



6. Memorial to The 78th Highlanders (Figures 24-25), Category B Listed: LB48238.²⁸ This memorial was erected in 1861 to commemorate the men of the 78th (Highland) Regiment of Foot who died during the uprising against the British rule of India in 1857-1858. The monument takes the form of a Celtic cross of Redhall sandstone with decorative motifs of interlace work, a stag's head and an elephant. The stag's head represents the raising of the 78th by the chief of Clan Mackenzie; the use of the elephant insignia was awarded to the regiment after the Battle of Assaye, India in 1803. The monument lists the Indian engagements in which the soldiers were involved. It is an early work by Robert Rowand Anderson who would go on to become a leading Scots architect.²⁹



Figure 25: Detail of Elephant carving on 78th Highlanders memorial. © Crown Copyright HES.

²⁸ Designation Documentation accessible at:

<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB48238>

²⁹ For further information, see Canmore entry:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/236890/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-78th-highlanders-memorial>

Starting from the western end of the south side of the Esplanade the memorials are (anticlockwise):

7. Princess Louise's Argyllshire Highlanders War Memorial (Figures 26-27). This memorial, a water fountain in the form of an ornamental horse trough, was presented to the public by Colonel Sprot and the officers of the 91st Highlanders in 1874.³⁰
8. The Gordon Highlanders South African War Memorial (Figure 28). This is a memorial plaque to the Gordon Highlanders who lost their lives in the South African War (1899-1902). Designer Alfred Drury RA.³¹
9. The King's Own Scottish Borderers Plaque (Figure 29). This plaque commemorates the raising of the 25th Regiment of Foot by David Leslie, Earl of Leven to defend the city in 1689. It is believed to date from 1973 to a design by Charles D'Orville Pilkington Jackson, who was also responsible for much of the sculpture in and on the Scottish National War Memorial.³² Pilkington Jackson sculpted the iconic Robert the Bruce statue at Bannockburn, among other commissions.³³



(Above left) Figure 26: Princess Louise's Argyllshire Highlanders War Memorial © Crown Copyright HES. (Above right) Figure 27: Detail of The Princess Louise's Argyllshire Highlanders drinking well. © Dianne King.

³⁰ For further information, see Canmore entry:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310913/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-princess-louises-argyllshire-highlanders-war-memorial>

³¹ For further information, see Canmore entry:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310914/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-the-gordon-highlanders-south-african-war-memorial>

³² Separate Statement of Significance for Scottish National War Memorial, available at:

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=9fbc23c6-dce4-4dec-921e-a57000cf8ff7>

³³ For further information, see Canmore entry:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/310915/edinburgh-castle-esplanade-the-kings-own-scottish-borderers-plaque>



(Above left) Figure 28: The Gordon Highlanders South African War Memorial © Crown Copyright HES. (Above right) Figure 29: General view of the King's Own Scottish Borderers plaque on the Esplanade at Edinburgh Castle. © Crown Copyright HES.



Figure 30: Metal plaque marking the spot under Edinburgh Castle Esplanade which, according to tradition still remains a small part of Nova Scotia, Canada. © Crown Copyright HES.

Affixed to the western part of the Esplanade wall above the dry ditch:

10. The Nova Scotia Plaque (Figures 30-31). This plaque was presented in 1953 by the Province of Nova Scotia following several years of negotiation. The inscription tells the story of the ceremonial transfer

of the lands of Nova Scotia to Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, Earl of Stirling in 1625.³⁴

In medieval Scotland the significant part of any transaction was often not the signed or even sealed deed, but some action, either real or symbolic. The 'action' took place before witnesses, who could all understand it although they could not have read the legal document. Thus, following the grant of lands in Nova Scotia in July 1625 to Sir William Alexander, the delivery of sasine (that is, actual, real and corporal possession) of these lands was undertaken on 29th September, by the King's representative, the Sheriff of Edinburgh. He would hand over to Sir William in front of witnesses, earth and stone from Castle Hill which symbolically represented his newly acquired lands in Nova Scotia. Sasine was essential to the conveyance of property and had to be done on site, as it was quite impractical in this instance to cross the Atlantic in order to deliver sasine in Nova Scotia, earth and stone from the principal Royal Castle in Scotland was an acceptable substitute.

The final part of the plaque reads 'Here also (1625-37) the Scottish baronets of Nova Scotia received sasine of their distant baronies'. This means that those men who were created Baronets of Nova Scotia between the years 1625 and 1637 and who were granted lands in that country also received lawful possession, or sasine, of their distant lands by the handing over of earth and stone on Castle Hill.

During the unveiling of the plaque in 1953, a handful of Nova Scotian soil was scattered as a symbolic gesture of response. This action has given rise to a belief that therefore some part of Edinburgh Castle belongs legally to Nova Scotia. This is an excellent story – and is often repeated – but has no basis in law!

The Nova Scotia plaque highlights the often-celebrated connection between Scotland and the Canadian province of Nova Scotia (Latin for 'New Scotland'). Though this connection has historical roots, it is often criticised for erasing the experiences of other colonising and Indigenous populations in Nova Scotia. The origin of the name dates back to 1621, when the aforementioned Earl of Stirling was granted a charter by James VI/I to establish a colony in what is today eastern Canada. The first settlers arrived in 1622, encountering problems from the outset that included illness and ill-preparedness, and the effort was abandoned in 1632. In reality, the land was controlled by Indigenous nations – the Mi'kmaq, Wulstukwiuk, Passamaquoddy and other Wabanaki people – and to a lesser extent by the Acadians, a French colony.

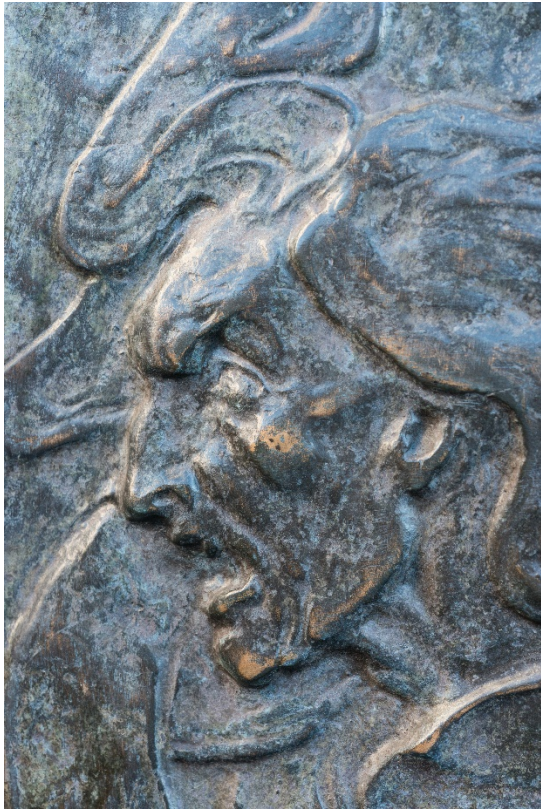
³⁴ For further information, see Canmore entry:
<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1172639>

This balance of power continued in the early 18th century, despite the region legally coming into British control in 1710, until a colonial push beginning in 1749 saw the creation of new settlements throughout the area. These were in direct violation of Anglo-Wabanki treaties and were met with armed resistance leading to recursive violence under the new Governor Edward Cornwallis. Beginning in 1758, the Acadian population was deported after some settlers refused to swear allegiance to the British crown. Another influx of settlers came during and after the American Revolution in the latter half of the 18th century, when Loyalists and Black Americans, both free and enslaved, fled there. At the same time, the arrival of the ship *The Hector* in 1773 is often pointed to as the beginning of the first significant migration of Scottish settlers to the area, though Highland settlers began arriving at least one year earlier. Subsequent celebrations of this event have been accused of downplaying or erasing the experiences of these other groups, particularly the Mi'kmaq.

Despite this varied history, today many of the emblems of the province recall its connection with Scotland. Historians have shown how this focus on the 'Scottishness' of Nova Scotia largely dates from the second quarter of the 20th century, making it a relatively new phenomenon, and one that doesn't accurately portray the varied experiences of the colonisation of Nova Scotia.



Figure 31: View of Edinburgh Castle and Gatehouse from centre of Esplanade. Location of Nova Scotia plaque indicated by arrow. © Historic Environment Scotland (with annotation added). (Scottish Colorfoto Collection).



Above and below: Figures 32-37: Details of the Witches' Well/Fountain © Historic Environment Scotland. (Bottom) Figure 38: Detail of plaque above the Witches' Well. © Dianne King

