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‘SPECTATOR OF THE BUSY SCENE’: A VISITOR OF 1793  
EXPERIENCES EDINBURGH OUTSIDE AND IN

IAIN GORDON BROWN

MANY WERE THE TRAVELLERS who saw and were duly impressed by the topographical setting and remarkable townscape of eighteenth-century Edinburgh; many, too, those who were, in equal measure, repelled by the nastiness they found in the older, ‘unimproved’ quarters of the metropolis. For all, the architectural grandeur and reassuringly genteel elegance of the New Town acted as a sort of antidote to the fascinating if vertiginous streetscape of the old city, with its teeming populace. Visitors knew that Edinburgh was, by nature, a most striking place. But only those who had entrée to the drawing-rooms of the houses of fashion and intellect could fully appreciate the extraordinary transformation that had taken place in the last quarter of the century – changes in the ‘hotbed of genius’ that had rendered Edinburgh truly fit for its developed role as ‘capital of the mind’.

The account of a short but heady sojourn in the city in the summer of 1793, which is published here for the second time, is extracted from a longer diary now in the National Library of Scotland, recording a journey from London to Morayshire.<sup>1</sup> The original text is anonymous, and attribution of authorship is circumstantial. When the manuscript was in the hands of Thomson Brothers, booksellers, of 74 George Street, Edinburgh, in the later years of the nineteenth century, a transcript of the whole was published in 1897 in an edition of 250 copies. This slim volume, which prints the journal text with less than complete accuracy and with no commentary whatsoever and no attempt to identify persons or places mentioned, has

itself long been all-but forgotten. Indeed the National Library catalogue entry for the manuscript does not allude to this edition. The book is entitled, quaintly and breathlessly, *Journal of a Tour from London to Elgin made about 1790 in Company with Mr Brodie Younger Brother of Brodie of Brodie*. Basing their statement upon two fragments of internal evidence, and extrapolating from a rather oddly formed set of initials on the inside front cover of the manuscript, Thomson Brothers felt able to inscribe the words ‘by R.L.W.’ upon their printed title-page. The publishers thus went only so far as to *imply* that the author was one R. L. W[illis]; and they ascribed a date of ‘about 1790’ to the journal. In fact, since 14 July was a Sunday in the year the journal was written (f.34) we may assign it to 1793. Library cataloguers, both in Edinburgh and London, have since given the diary to R. Legge Willis, a man probably to be identified with the author of two political pamphlets, both published in 1794: *A Glimpse through the Gloom in a Candid Discussion of the Policy of Peace, and an Impartial Review of the Prospect Before Us, with a Glance at the Marquis of Lansdowne’s late Speech and Motion*; and *A Short Exposition of the Important Advantage to be Derived by Great Britain from the War whatever its Issue and Success*. Although the internal evidence in the journal does not, in fact, allow us to identify him more positively, this same authorship seems a not unreasonable conclusion. It must be observed, however, that nowhere does a writer’s name actually occur in the manuscript itself. The initials on the cover appear to be stencilled, or stamped in some way; and

in fact they most resemble a (?later) collector's mark. But they may well be, and quite probably are, our only direct link to the actual author of the diary.

We know for certain only that the writer had family connections in parts of England, and can surmise that these particular regional links account for the rather circuitous route by which he and his companion travelled north from London. Newark on Trent was included on this rambling itinerary probably because the writer asserts that his great-great-grandfather, Sir Richard Willis, had defended Newark Castle for the King after the defeat of Prince Rupert at Marston Moor (f.7). From Harrogate the travellers had veered across the Pennines to Penrith. Again this was probably the result of a sentimental wish to tread on erstwhile native heath. As the writer expresses it, 'Penrith was the abode of my forefathers, who fled in the time of Charles 2nd to obscurity with the scanty remains of confiscated fortunes...' (f. 23). Thereafter they wove back eastwards and northwards through the Borders to arrive in Edinburgh through the city's Midlothian hinterland.

Here our writer was to benefit immeasurably from the current connections of his fellow traveller. This was Alexander Brodie, indeed a member of the family of Brodie of that Ilk. He can be identified as Alexander Brodie, of Arnhall and The Burn (1748–1818), then Member of Parliament for Elgin Burghs. Tenuous links to past royal service were replaced by the much more practical, social and indeed intellectual benefits of the active connections and the evident good standing in Edinburgh society that Brodie was able to manipulate to the distinct advantage of the visitors. Drawing-rooms, balls, race-meetings and routs were open to them. A window on the intellectual world of the city was offered to a traveller who, without benefit of this connection, would otherwise have seen the 'external' city as a place of natural spectacle and curiosity, certainly; but who, for lack of such inside knowledge might have departed without the experience that he in fact enjoyed – that encompassed in heady days of dining with peers of the realm, the seeing of splendid houses, and of spending an 'Attic Evening' with none other than Henry Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, himself. The journal is a striking example of the adage that it is not *what* one knows but *whom* one knows.

What impressions can we form of our unknown visitor? Extrapolating from the age of his known

companion, we might suggest that he is likely to have been in his mid-forties. On the basis that his first visit in Edinburgh was to Parliament House, from his evident interest in the proceedings of the courts, and from his remarks that something like the Register Office was a desideratum that England might well hope for, we could perhaps conclude that he was in some way connected with the legal profession. He dines with at least two Senators of the College of Justice: Alexander Murray, Lord Henderland, and David Ross, Lord Ankerville. His friend Brodie was of the Dundas circle.

Despite one allusion to Oxford, and thus the implication that he was a University man, ours was not a particularly compelling diarist, and his spelling and sentence structure in the Edinburgh section of the journal do not immediately suggest an exceptionally literate man. But, to be strictly fair, this is by no means the best part of the whole; and he may very probably have been off-form at the time, as will be noted below. He 'peeps', coyly and rather often, into this and that, a manner of writing that never endears itself to the critic. He cannot quite get the hang of the spelling of 'Edinburgh' (silently corrected in the 1897 printed version), producing a hybrid of the correct name and that of the quite customary (even today!) English mis-usage of 'Eding...'; but yet he gets the '...burgh' part right, and does not lapse into the southron 'borough'. Such few literary quotations as he gives – from Pope, Shakespeare, Virgil and Johnson – are not cited completely accurately and appear to be given very much from imperfect memory.

He is familiar with the literature of the Picturesque and with William Gilpin in particular; so he has done useful homework in preparation for his northern tour. He shows an appreciation of the increasing grandeur of a city smitten by 'the rage for building', whether in the domestic sphere in the streets of the New Town, or in the public realm with buildings such as Robert Adam's University, the present Old College, founded some four years previously but which, even in its incomplete state, he clearly suggests may be a building of European significance – as indeed it proved to be. He is suitably querulous, even cynical, about the labelling of the Jacob de Wit royal portraits at Holyroodhouse; nor is he gullible in respect of what he is told about 'tourist attractions' – as clearly they were even then – such as Rizzio's 'blood-stain'.

He seems tired and not very well: too tired and out-of-sorts, in fact, to enjoy fully the theatre (although he did appreciate the chance to see Mrs Harriet Pye Esten on the stage), the ball, the heavy dinner. Dutifully he goes to divine service, mostly in the hope of hearing the Revd Dr Hugh Blair, doyen of *belles lettres* teaching and personification of the urbanity of Scottish Enlightenment thought, famous in his day far furth of Scotland; but he has to make do with William Greenfield, like Blair an academic as well as a clergyman, but a much less charismatic figure and one still to be disgraced and condemned to exile and obscurity as ‘Mr Rutherford’.<sup>2</sup> He appears censorious when writing of the Duke of Hamilton’s drink problem. His host one day at dinner (presumably at his house in St Andrew Square) was Lord Ankerville, a noted bon viveur and gourmand, so the diarist is unlikely to have escaped entirely the copious draughts of claret and the gargantuan meals we tend to associate with the legal life of Edinburgh in its golden age.

Edinburgh ‘society’ is as thoroughly explored and experienced as was possible in the brief time available. A clutch of attractive houses, mostly on the outskirts of the city proper, but also within the confines of the New Town, was visited, and rich and pretty girls eyed-up at what is likely to be Bellevue House which stood in what is now Drummond Place Gardens. The Miss Wemyss he admired and to whom he gave priority in the glamour stakes at the races on Leith Sands is in fact (and fortunately for his friendship) the lady whom his friend Brodie married before the end of the journal, having returned to Edinburgh in hot pursuit of the object of his desire, thence to carry her off to the north.<sup>3</sup> The development of Lord Moray’s ground is alluded to, and the possibility hinted at that there might soon be ‘no more corncrakes’ on that portion of land to be feued for building the north-western extension of the New Town, a move that might in time increase the proprietor’s revenues but at the expense of his current level of rural seclusion. Use of the phrase ‘rus in urbe’, which we now resort to so frequently in describing more sequestered parts of the New Town and its gardens, is here employed early and notably.

The flourishing ‘India Club’ reflects a disproportionate Scottish involvement with that ‘corn-chest’ (as Walter Scott would call it) as fabled place of employment, excitement, enchantment, rich pickings,

worldly advancement, and ultimately the possibility of returning home to live out a life as a vastly wealthy Nabob or ‘returned Indian’ – as indeed Alexander Brodie, who had spent ten profitable years in Madras, himself was. So, for that matter was our author, who twice (in other parts of his journal) alludes to time spent in India: a reference to Fort St George fixes his residence likewise at Madras. It is to be regretted that he says no more of the Indian connection with Edinburgh, along the lines of what John Symonds had written three years before. Symonds had attributed the rise and development of the New Town to the ‘Oriental wealth’ flooding into the city as a result of the settling there in well-heeled retirement of ‘numberless petty nabobs’.<sup>4</sup>

At one point the writer alludes to moments agreeably lost in ‘anecdoteage’ in the company of Sir Robert Murray Keith, KB, soldier and late British Ambassador to Vienna, a fellow guest at Lord Ankerville’s. This occasion was a highlight of the Edinburgh visit. Our diarist also caught sight of James ‘Abyssinian’ Bruce of Kinnaird, author of *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* and a man whom it was indeed easy to catch sight of due to his great physical stature. The writer of our journal was himself a seasoned traveller, even if he could not match Bruce’s range or exploits. But allusions to Turkey and to Aleppo indicate some familiarity with Asia Minor and the Levant, perhaps the result of voyages to or from the East. Translated to a more tame and domestic sphere, his interest in the business of travel is evident elsewhere in the journal in his account of progress through the Scottish Highlands and in his evident pleasure in the landscape of the English Lake District, where his sensitivity to the ‘Picturesque’ is worthy of note.

Unquestionably the climactic point of the entire visit consisted of the ‘classical hours’ and ‘Attic Evening’ spent in the company of Henry Mackenzie, then one of the most celebrated of Scotsmen, and most widely read of all Scottish men of letters. For him are reserved the most enthusiastic words of the entire journal, and the greatest possible praise. Mackenzie appears the embodiment of the good sense and good taste of Edinburgh in its most glorious days. The writer’s comments on the flight ‘from the Bottle to the Feast of Reason’ and the description of the occasion as an ‘Attic Evening’ would seem to be founded upon Mackenzie’s own advocacy

(in Number LXIII of *The Lounger*, 15 April 1786) of just such a gathering, where *politeness* was not compromised by over-indulgence in alcohol, and where moderation, both in social manners and in the expression of intellectual opinions, might be the basis of a ‘truly Attic’ entertainment.

The manuscript was acquired by the National Library of Scotland in 1982 from an auction in Crewkerne, Somerset. Its provenance is of some interest, for previous owners (apart from the Thomson Brothers period) include (in 1850) John Lee (1779–1859), Principal of the University of Edinburgh, whose papers are in the National Library, and (in 1909) John A. Fairley, the noted Edinburgh book-collector, many of whose books are also in the Library.

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AS YOU APPROACH Edingburgh, the scene wonderfully improves. It is a cultivated landscape all around, abundant in wood and every chearing view. We peeped into Mr [Henry] Dundas’s grounds at Melville Castle, which is altogether superb and beautiful, there are few more smiling or more desirable places to be met with, and my friend told me that here the owner dismissed his cares and welcomes the unmixed pleasures of society – here enjoyed:<sup>5</sup>

The happier hour  
Of social freedom ill exchanged for Power,  
And here uncumber’d with the venal tribe,  
Smiled without Art, and won without a Bribe.

We passed many fine seats on either hand, and I am sure in no want of trees: Lord Somerville’s [The Drum], the Duke of Buccleugh’s at Dalkeith [Palace], Lord Lothian [Newbattle Abbey], &c. As we neared the capital the villas of course crowded upon us. I recognized the rock called Arthur’s Seat from Gilpin’s print; Edingburgh Castle could not be mistaken. About nine we reached old Reekey in company with numerous asses and horses bearing creels, or large baskets of strawberries; of this fruit the number of acres I had seen planted were almost beyond belief. In a few minutes we found ourselves comfortably at breakfast at Walker’s Hotel with our friends

Mowbray, Ferguson and Duncan.<sup>6</sup>

Edinburgh [spelling corrected in MS] must strike with the most forcible impression every Englishman; its buildings are so dissimilar to ours, and the situation so peculiar; the Castle which crowns a craggy, steep rock, on some sides perpendicular, is the most prominent and boldest feature; it is indeed singularly romantic. From hence the old high street runs gradually sloping to the Abbey, or Holyrood House, the ancient palace of the kings of Scotland, thus having a fine termination at the end. This street has not only a good but grand effect: it resembles no street in England but is not unlike some of the fine streets in the great cities of Flanders. The houses are 8, 10 & 12 stories high, and in some parts of Edingburgh they soar to 15 & all of stone. It is also ornamented by the Exchange, the Parliament House, some fine churches and other public buildings. This old portion of the town is well and strongly contrasted with the new city, where the fashionable world in general reside, from which it is divided by two elegant bridges, not over a river but over a deep valley or strath [by this must be meant the North Bridge, to the New Town proper, and the new South Bridge viaduct]. The new town has entirely arisen within these few years, and the rage for building does not yet subside. It is composed of handsome broad streets of modern structure, some of which command a fine view of the country and Forth. St Andrews Square, built so entirely of fine stone, has a magnificent appearance, and several public buildings such as the Register Office, where the records of every estate are deposited, and every mortgage upon them (an institution much wanted in England), and many others are worthy of a great nation. I don’t mention the College which is not finished, but has the promise of being one of the finest structures in Europe.

I walked after breakfast to the Parliament House, where now are held the Courts of Justice. I heard the Lord Advocate, Mr [Robert] Dundas [of Arniston], defend his client in a very animated manner, and many very shrewd remarks from the Lord President [Sir Ilay Campbell, Lord Succoth], Chief Justice Clerk [the Lord Justice-Clerk, Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield],

and others of the judges. From hence I took a peep at the Exchange, an useless building, for the merchants, as at Bristol, prefer standing in the street; and then proceeded to Holyrood House. This palace is a large quadrangle, and for the times in which it was built sufficiently magnificent. It is now parcelled out to Officers of State and noble Families. In the Gallery, which is said to be 120 feet long, are the portraits of all the Scottish Kings. The resemblance of those who, as the inscriptions tell us, reigned 300 years *before* Christ must undoubtedly be *strong*; however, all the Stuart Race are originals, or copies of originals. There is one at full length of the beautiful, ill-fated, Mary; lovely indeed she seems, and her errors may be forgotten in her face. I distinguished also an animated picture of the great Robert Bruce, and one less resembling, I should suppose, 'the gracious Duncan'; next whom is suspended his murderer and successor, Macbeth; these are unquestionably figures of Fancy but from their dates which appear in a less questionable shape we find that Macbeth held the throne seventeen years (a much longer period than my belief had assigned to him). I had conceived a swifter vengeance had overtaken his crime, and 'returned the ingredients of the poisoned chalice to his own lips'.<sup>7</sup> I viewed with a thrill of indignant horror the chamber into which Darnley and his crew dragged the wretched Rizzio from Mary's closet and presence, and dispatched him with their daggers. The private door through which the nobles entered by a back staircase is very small and narrow, through which none but Darnley, I should suppose, could have admitted himself, or others. They show you gouts of Rizzio's blood on the floor which no water can wash away. I suppose them to be natural stains in the wood. In one of the chambers was a curious assemblage of faces that would not well have assorted together. There were among other John Knox, Nell Gwyn, Cardinal Beaton, Mary, Elizabeth and the Duchess of Portsmouth.

We dined at the Race Ordinary in compliment to Lord Downe, one of the stewards.<sup>8</sup> In the evening went to a play, where Mrs Esten took the lead, and I think I had never seen her so animated, or so just: I knew not she was so admirable an actress. Exhausted from the previous sleepless

night and the various incidents of the day, I declined the ball, where I was told a brilliant circle of beauty assembled, and sought my sleep.

Next morning – July 12th, for every day must be noted here – we breakfasted at Lord Moray's at Drumshuich, a delightful house and garden on the edge of the new town commanding a noble view adown a woody bank, of Leith Water, the Firth of Forth, and the County of Fife beyond it; the new buildings begin to elbow his Lordship's but as he is the proprietor of the grounds around he can always keep them at proper distance. This is literally *rus in urbe*. We had a political breakfast, for his Lordship is a stout *Quidnunc*.<sup>9</sup> He is much more, he is a most worthy man, with a true spirit of independence. The earls of Moray, wrongly spelt Murray, are prominent in the annals of their country; he inherits from a daughter of the Regent Murray, but is of the same name and family of Stuart. About 12 we went with the crowd to the races on Leith Sands, a vile course, but the scene is strange, and literally amphibious: you see at once ships, battlements, houses, woods and waters, an immense concourse of people, carriages and horses. I took part of my friend Duncan's post-chaise who played the nomenclator well: he thought Lady Suttie the finest woman on the Sands, but I gave the preference to Miss Wemyss.<sup>10</sup> We dined at the India Club and sat late; this club already consisted of 144 members.

July 13th. Nothing material. I was wearied with the incessant whirl, and laid by to recruit and refresh, in my case, perhaps, is the best remedy; I cannot say '*Viresque acquirit eundo*'.<sup>11</sup> We dined with a select party at Bayle's Hotel, but I was unwell and out of spirits: I peeped into the theatre in the evening, but could hear nothing for the obstreperous noise of those pests of society, ycleped Bucks.<sup>12</sup> (N.B. This town swarms with the vermin.)

July 14th. This day being the Sabbath I went with my friend Mowbray with all due decorum to church. We were disappointed in not hearing Dr Blair, though a more popular preacher, Mr Grinfield [Greenfield], filled the pulpit. The form of service was to me compleatly novel: all falls upon the preacher, except the psalmody; both prayers and sermon are his extempore effusions.

They were both energetic, but diffuse; but his delivery was monotonous and soporific, and his manner too much in the spirit of John Knox. There was, however, a decency and simplicity through the whole. We dined with Mr Campbell at Duddleston [Duddingston] House, about 4 miles from town. This magnificent seat was built with particular care by the late Lord Abercorn. The park, plantations and gardens are elegantly disposed. Arthur's Seat with the folks in their Sunday clothes winding up its sides is seen to great advantage. This Lord was a character: he was all stiffness – stiff-rumped, stiff-backed and stiff-necked. Brodie told me he is said to have made the Tour of Europe without touching the back of his chaise. When the King was thanking him for his attention to the Queen, who had slept at one of his houses, on her landing, he added 'I am afraid she gave your Lordship a great deal of trouble'. 'A great deal, Sir', replied the lord. Among many anecdotes of the same nature they mention that after a long sombre walk with him in the park Dr [William] Robertson broke the silence by observing 'how well his lordship's trees grew: 'They have nothing else to do, Doctor', replied the costive peer.

July 15th. Made a little promenade to the environs and a visit to Lord Henderland at Murrayfield. Edingburgh Castle appeared in a fine point of view. Dined at Mr Houston's where among others was the Duke of Hamilton, the first subject in Scotland. He was politely attentive to everyone, and gave us, through Brodie, a pressing invitation to Hamilton House; but the early effect that wine had upon him showed to what extremity he had indulged in that beastly habit. How insufficient are wealth, birth and distinction when a man thus pre-eminently graced in all, with every added advantage of person and understanding, is compelled to fly for momentary consolation to so wretched a resource.

In the evening we fled from the Bottle to the Feast of Reason, and enjoyed some classical hours with Mr Mackenzie, the well, but not too well known, author of *The Man of Feeling*, *The Mirror*, &c. This was to me an Attic Evening. In most of the literary characters I have seen (Dr Warton eminently excepted)

there is some peculiarity of manners.<sup>13</sup> They are perhaps reserved or perhaps dogmatical and argumentative. The man who has this moment stepped into his chariot, Abyssinian Bruce, is often, I am told, impenetrable as the Sources of his own Nile. But in Mr Mackenzie there is an animated but unaffected, display of those powers he is blessed with: easy, eloquent and elegant, he treats the subject before you as it demands, either with the solidity of reasoning or the graceful levity of humour; far from repressing, he beckons you on, and encourages to discussion & investigation. It becomes, rather, the co-operation of friendly powers to penetrate by mutual aid into the regions of Truth or Fancy, than the keen encounter of your wits, or the acute conflict for triumph that is rarely obtained, or at least confessed. He had kindly expected us to stay to supper, and I was concerned when the hours was come to join the crowd at Mrs Scott's ball, at her beautiful villa near the city. This lady is the mother of the three Miss Scotts, all of them wealthy heiresses, but the eldest is said to inherit £400,000. They were all present; the second is certainly the prettiest, but the eldest has an unaffected, placid air that suits well with her splendid fortune. Here was assembled a gay and splendid groupe:<sup>14</sup>

'The Nymphs of roseate cheeks and radiant eyes  
Whom pleasure keeps too busy to be wise.'

The enthusiasm of Scotch dancers is proverbial, and languid though I was, the fairy foot, active as light, communicated its motion to the spirits. Brodie danced and bounded briskly; so did not I; I was pleased to be a spectator of the busy scene, which we both quitted before supper.

16th. The morning passed in paying and receiving visits. We dined at Lord Henderland's nearly related to my friend Lady Campbell. We had a singular, glowing view of Edingburgh Castle from the drawing room under all the glowing influence of the setting sun. The whole landscape was most warmly coloured.

17th. I took a drive up to the top of the Castle, and surveyed the glories of the world. Here is a most extensive prospect, comprehending the City, an immense tract of country, Pentland Hills, Leith Harbour and the Firth of Forth. We dined at Lord

Ankerville's, who had kindly engaged Sir R. M. Keith to meet us. Of the urbanity & vivacity of this gentleman I had heard much, but found him equal to report. He was replete with anecdote. I recollect one, of the famous General Mustapha, who commanded the Turkish artillery above 20 years. He was a Briton, but no one could discover, and he never would divulge, his birth. On dispatching a courier to Sir Robert at Vienna, nature was too strong within him. 'Tell him', said Mustapha, 'my name is Campbell. He may not (he added pausing) remember me from that; he will, if you tell him I was his school-mate at Preston Pans.'

17th July. We had many engagements on hand, for never was a man more universally esteemed than my friend Brodie. We resolved, however, to break thro' and get onwards to the North. So taking a quiet dinner at Bayle's we soon left Edingburgh behind us and reached Queensferry. In crossing the ferry I had occasion to remark that dangerous spirit innovation, that, I had before heard, had infinitely more infected Scotland than England; a man with singular high cheek-bones, and a red head, fell foul at once upon Government, Taxes, Representation in Parliament, and on the unequal system of things, and all with irrational fury. He next expatiated on the cruelty of pressing, and moreover, added he, they seize all the hands out of the merchantmen, though I should have a thousand pounds in her, and her voyage is stopt, God

knows how long. But, said Brodie, if every vessel retained their men, the Navy would be unmanned and what would then prevent every merchantman, and even your £1000, from falling entirely into the hands of a few French privateers. He could only reply by collecting the votes, which were generally with him; one man in black ranked himself on our side, but I think we could not count much on his alliance, for before we parted, he presented a written petition for charity, and laid us under a shilling contribution.

We were obliged to re-cross the ferry, as the inn was completely occupied by a bench of justices who there held their bed of justice, and found excellent accommodation on the south side. We crossed again early the next morning and had a fine view of Hopeto[u]n House, an enormous but grand pile of building, on a very elevated situation, well screened with wood but yet sufficiently exposed; and after breakfast went on to pay a promised visit to Lord Moray at Donibristle. We had heard often of the beauties of this place, but we hastened to own how much it exceeded our own expectations. Much indeed has been done by the present owner, but those noble groves of venerable oaks and beeches must have been the growth of ages; and the situation, the grandest I think I ever saw, must always have been equally magnificent. What can exceed the view of the metropolis of this country, with its noble castle, over an expanse of nine miles of water?

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 National Library of Scotland, MS. 29492: the Edinburgh section is ff. 29v-37v.
- 2 Greenfield, from 1784 jointly with Hugh Blair Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, was ruined by his involvement in a scandal of a homosexual nature. The event profoundly shocked his contemporaries and none more so than Adam Ferguson, who wrote to Alexander Carlyle on the matter in a letter of such scatological power that its implications were for long completely misunderstood. On the episode see, most recently, Alexandra Lawrie, *City of Words: 250 Years of Writers, Readers and Critics in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 2012), pp. 8-9.
- 3 Elizabeth Margaret (1769-1800), elder daughter of Hon. James Wemyss, third son of the fourth Earl of Wemyss, this being before 'Charteris' was added to the family surname. She married Alexander Brodie on 16 August 1793.
- 4 See Iain Gordon Brown, 'Surpassing Expectations: An East Anglian Visitor's Report of 1790', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, new series, 4 (1997), p. 117. On Indian wealth in the city see also Eleanor M. Harris, *Indian Ships & English Shops. Wealth and Social Rank, 1794-1818*, in the series *Enlightenment & Romance: People of the Regency West End of Edinburgh* (Privately Printed, Edinburgh 2012), p. 11. On some subsidiary uses of Indian wealth see Beatrice Teissier, 'Asia in 18th-Century Edinburgh Institutions: Seen or Unseen?', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 134 (2004), pp. 499-556.
- 5 A distortion of Pope, 'Epilogue to the Satires', Dialogue 1, lines 29-32.
- 6 Walker's Hotel was at No. 1 Princes Street, south side, more or less on the site of the present Balmoral Hotel; it later became Barry's Hotel. See Brown, 'Surpassing Expectations', fig., p. 116.
- 7 A distortion of the lines from *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 7.
- 8 John Dawnay, 5th Viscount Downe, whose first wife was a Miss Scott of Balcomie.
- 9 'Quidnunc': literally, one who is constantly asking 'what now?', or 'what's the news?'; so an inquisitive person, a gossip or newsmonger. The epithet can be traced to Steele in *The Tatler*, 10 (1709).



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- 10 Katherine Isabella, daughter of J. Hamilton of Bangour, wife of Sir James Suttie of Balgone, fourth Baronet (1759-1836): the family is now Grant-Suttie.
- 11 Adapting Virgil, *Aeneid*, iv. 174, of the progress of rumour, making the line mean 'we gather strength as we travel'.
- 12 Bayle's Hotel was in Shakespeare Square, and more usually referred to as (John) Bayle's Tavern. It was here that the New Club was first constituted in 1787.
- 13 Thomas Warton (d. 1790), late Poet Laureate and historian of English poetry.
- 14 Misquoting Samuel Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, lines 321-322.