

THE BOOK
OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH
CLUB

The Journal for
Edinburgh History



Joe Rock, 'Robert Forrest (1789–1852) and His Exhibition on the Calton Hill',
Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, New Series 7 (2008), pp. 127–138

~~~~~

This article is extracted from **The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club**, **The Journal for  
Edinburgh History** ISSN 2634-2618

Content © The Old Edinburgh Club and contributors. All rights reserved.

For information about The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC), including contents of  
previous issues and indexes, see <https://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/boec>.

**This article is made available for your personal research and private study only.**

For any further uses of BOEC material, please contact the Editor, The Book of the Old  
Edinburgh Club, at [editor@oldedinburghclub.org.uk](mailto:editor@oldedinburghclub.org.uk). The Club has a Take-Down Policy  
covering potential rights infringements. Please see [http://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/oec-  
take-down-policy](http://oldedinburghclub.org.uk/oec-take-down-policy).



Digitised by the Centre for Research  
Collections, Edinburgh University  
Library from the copy in the Library  
Collection



# ROBERT FORREST (1789–1852) AND HIS EXHIBITION ON THE CALTON HILL

JOE ROCK

**R**OBERT FORREST is not a well known sculptor but he was an influential figure and significantly increased the popularity of sculpture in nineteenth century Scotland (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> His work forms a prominent if largely ignored feature of the townscape in Edinburgh, Falkirk, Haddington and Glasgow and there may be surviving but unidentified works in England. Some of his work is in private hands, standing in parks and gardens across Scotland, but sadly a great deal has also been lost or badly damaged. This article, based on research by the author and by John Monro in Lanarkshire, examines the sculptural spectacle Forrest arranged on the Calton Hill in Edinburgh, between 1832 and the auction sale of his work in 1876.

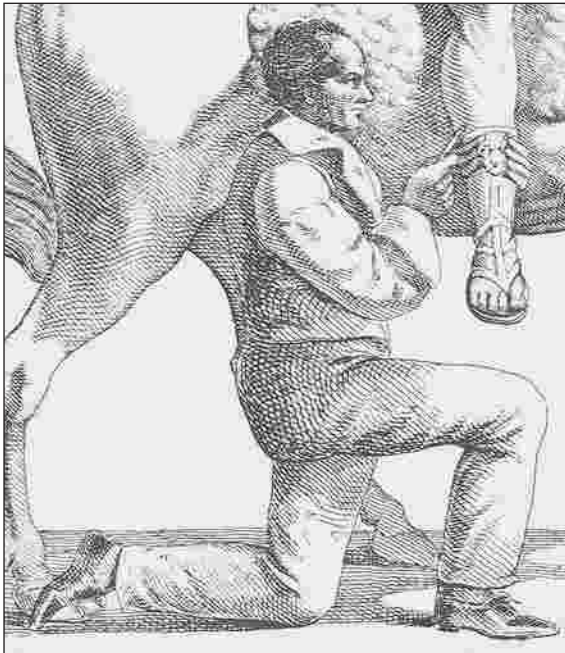


Fig. 1. Robert Forrest, self portrait, working on an unidentified equestrian group. Detail of etching by Fr. Schenck after Robert Forrest. (*Frontispiece to Forrest's Descriptive Account, 1846, Edinburgh City Libraries.*)

Forrest was born at 'Barrs Nook' (presently Briarsneuk), Lanarkshire, on 27 November 1789, the son of Robert Forrest, a tailor, and Mary Golder.<sup>2</sup> He may have begun his working life as a shepherd but around 1805 he was apprenticed to a Mr Selkirk as a stonemason.<sup>3</sup> Robert Chambers, writing in 1832, suggested that in 1810 Forrest visited the castles of Maudslie, Craignethan and Douglas, near his quarry, where he saw examples of carved sculpture.<sup>4</sup> It is not clear what he saw that might have inspired him but Forrest, writing about his life in 1846, added Hamilton Palace to this list of early influences.<sup>5</sup> As well as the pictures, which included an equestrian portrait of Charles I by Van Dyke, the collection of sculpture there was regal in its scope. It included a full-size replica of the complex classical group, the Laocoön, cast in Paris by Crozatier, and a set of five bronze figures, believed by the Duke to have been made for Francois I in 1540 by Francesco Primaticcio at Fontainebleau, in casts from antique originals (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> There were other figures in the collection that may have interested Forrest, particularly a very naturalistic full-length statuette of Voltaire by Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828) and an anatomical figure of a horse in bronze.<sup>7</sup> The putative Primaticcio casts were placed in the new entrance hall of the Palace, built between 1822 and 1825 for the 10th Duke of Hamilton and where John Greenshields (1792–1835), Robert Forrest's assistant from around 1822, was employed in carving decorative stonework.<sup>8</sup>

Forrest's earliest works were small carved animals but he soon attracted patronage among the local gentry and began a series of large single figures such as the Highland Chief in 1817 (since 1929 in the grounds of Westoun House, Lanarkshire). He moved to a quarry at Orchard, north of Crossford, where he began to work on historical subjects, Rob Roy (1818) and Old Norval (1819), both untraced, and Sir John Falstaff (1823), now in the gardens at Calderglen Country Park, Lanarkshire. According to



Fig. 2. Thomas Annan, photograph of the entrance hall, Hamilton Palace, before 1882. (*Glasgow University Library, Special Collections.*)

J. M. Leighton he advertised his presence by building a ‘Gothic’ structure ornamented by two statues near the road at Andrewbank where he occasionally exhibited other sculpture.<sup>9</sup> This has not survived and there is no visual record of it.

His reputation grew and in 1820 he presented a figure of Sir William Wallace, apparently copied from ‘an ancient drawing in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries’, to the town of Lanark.<sup>10</sup> This drawing (now untraced) was presumably also the source for a monumental statue of Wallace by John Smith of Darnick, erected by the Earl of Buchan, President of the Society, near his house at Dryburgh in 1814.<sup>11</sup> Forrest’s figure was placed with great ceremony in a niche in the new Tolbooth at Lanark, where it remains today and forms the centrepiece of annual civic celebrations.

According to Chambers, Forrest began carving figures inspired by the poetry of Allan Ramsay (1684–1758) and Robert Burns (1759–1796) in 1823. The artist did little to counter the myth that he was self-taught, but his interest in poetry coincided with the short period of formal training that he undertook at the School of Arts in Edinburgh in 1823, where

John Steell senior (1779–1849), wood carver and print-seller, was the teacher of modelling. He also attended ‘Mr Warren’s Academy’ in Glasgow in 1825–26, where he studied anatomy, drawing and modelling.<sup>12</sup> The catalogue of the Calton Hill exhibition lists two groups inspired by poetry, Tam O’Shanter and Souter Johnny, and Simon and Bauldy: all four figures have been rediscovered, standing in the garden of a private house in Fife (fig. 3).<sup>13</sup> The seated figures of Tam and Souter Johnny were very popular subjects and as well as Forrest’s figure of Tam, which Chambers says was the earliest, others are known by James Thom (1802–1850), now at the Burns Cottage Museum at Alloway, and by David Anderson (c. 1804–1847) at Fingask Castle.<sup>14</sup> All of these figures were inspired by an eighteenth century fascination with the seated figure that developed among artists associated with St Martin’s Lane Academy in London. Forrest may have seen prints of the languorous seated figure of Handel, carved in 1738 for the Vauxhall Gardens in London by Louis François Roubiliac (c. 1705–1762). Closer to home, he undoubtedly knew the magnificent seated marble statue of Lord President



Fig. 3. Robert Forrest, sculptural groups (from left) Bauldy and Simon, and Tam o'Shanter and Souter Johnny. (19th century postcard, Carnegie Library, Dunfermline.)

Forbes, also by Roubiliac, accessible in the public space of the Parliament Hall in Edinburgh, where it was placed in 1752.<sup>15</sup>

The public display of the Wallace statue in Lanark raised Forrest's profile considerably and resulted in further commissions. In October 1824 the *Scotsman* responded in glowing terms to his figure of Lord Melville, while it was still in his quarry near Crossford, and Chambers says that the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Belhaven visited Forrest while he worked on the piece.<sup>16</sup> The design was supplied by Francis Chantrey (1781–1841) and is very close to his 1818 marble of the same subject that dominates (by its size, if little else) its surroundings in Parliament House in Edinburgh.<sup>17</sup> Forrest's figure arrived in Edinburgh before August 1827 in several pieces, some of which had been blocked out by his assistant John Greenshields.<sup>18</sup> The statue was placed on the top of the Melville Monument, designed by William Burn (1789–1870) some five years earlier for the centre of St Andrew's Square.<sup>19</sup> The greatly blackened figure, which is a well known feature of the Edinburgh skyline, is carved with deeply flowing robes that give it the necessary dramatic interest from a distance.

Robert Forrest moved to the Scottish capital around 1832, encouraged out of the seclusion of his Lanarkshire quarry by the success of the Melville statue and by the enormous success of another sculptor, James Thom, in Edinburgh.<sup>20</sup> Thom had held an exhibition in the city in 1829 where he attracted an astonishing 18,000 visitors, each paying a shilling for the pleasure of seeing his carved stone figures of Tam O'Shanter and Souter Johnny.<sup>21</sup> Michael Linning (1774–1838), secretary to the Melville Monument Subscribers Committee, was also Secretary to the Royal Association of Subscribers to the National Monument. By November 1829, the Association had completed twelve columns of a proposed full-scale reconstruction of the Parthenon on top of the Calton Hill, to the designs of C. R. Cockerell (1788–1863). The intention had been to build a memorial to the Scots who died in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars but by 1829 subscriptions had run out and the work halted. In 1831, Linning unexpectedly announced that he had secured access to a free supply of stone in Lanarkshire for the completion of the building and at the same time he



Fig. 4. The National Monument, Calton Hill: the domed structure beyond Forrest's huts is Short's Observatory. (From Sir J. H. A. Macdonald, *Life Jottings of an Old Edinburgh Citizen*, 1915, probably taken from James Gordon's *Panoramic View from Nelson's Monument*, c. 1850.)

proposed that Robert Forrest be allowed to display equestrian figures in the space behind the columns, and to build wooden huts to house them (fig. 4).<sup>22</sup> Forrest's presence worked to the benefit of the Managers as it kept alive the possibility of completing the Monument and Forrest no doubt hoped to capitalise on the proposal to turn the building into a Scottish Valhalla, with sculptural memorials to the great and the good. A series of equestrian figures, the Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Marlborough, Mary Queen of Scots with Lord Herries, and Robert the Bruce, were mentioned in a note 'from a correspondent' in the *Scotsman* in January 1832, without any reference to Edinburgh.<sup>23</sup> But by July of that year, they were listed in the first advertisement for Forrest's exhibition of 'Equestrian Statuary' on the Calton Hill.<sup>24</sup> The Duke of Wellington (or possibly another version of the same) was purchased from the artist's widow by Falkirk City Council in 1854 and erected in the town centre. The figures of Mary and Marlborough are untraced but John Monro has discovered Robert the Bruce in good condition in a private collection (fig. 5).

With remarkable enthusiasm for sculpture of any kind, the *Scotsman* reported almost every movement

of stone to Forrest's 'Statuary' on the Calton Hill in the 1830s and described each piece as it was executed and placed on show. In May 1833 it noted progress on three statues, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and the Rev. Dr Andrew Thomson, 'late minister of St George's Church'. Of these John Monro has found the figures of Thomson and Byron, though the latter is badly damaged. The unlocated statue of Scott, clearly influential in relation to Sir John Steell's figure of the same subject for the Scott Monument in 1844, was described by the *Scotsman*: 'Sir Walter Scott is seated in an arm chair with his head leaning on his right hand in a musing posture. In his left hand which rests on his knee is a quantity of mss. with a pencil. He is dressed in a morning gown and slippers.'<sup>25</sup> An interesting work, the *Fall of Mazeppa*, based on the poem by Byron, was on view in May 1834, but it is now a greatly vandalised lump of stone, lying in Hamilton Park near Glasgow where it was placed in 1926.<sup>26</sup> Further equestrian groups were announced, the *Conversion of St Paul* in April and *King James V* in October 1835. The *St Paul* is unlocated but the description of 'the steed ... almost squatted on his hinder legs ... while his fore parts are upheaved' suggests that it had some influence on



Fig. 5. Robert Forrest, King Robert the Bruce and the Monk of Baston. (*Photograph by Thomas Annan, 1877, private collection.*)



Fig. 6. Robert Forrest, King James V and the Gypsy. (*Photograph, the author.*)

Stell's well known later bronze of the Duke of Wellington (cast 1852).<sup>27</sup> King James V and the Gypsy now stands near the modern Cramond Bridge in a small office complex (fig. 6). The report on the arrival of the stone for this group on an October evening in 1835 gives a flavour of the *Scotsman's* enthusiasm and also highlights the importance of the spectacle to Forrest's endeavour:<sup>28</sup>

Last night between six and seven o'clock, a ponderous block of freestone, from Craigleith Quarry, was brought into town, and safely lodged in the studio of our talented countryman, Mr. Forrest, on the Calton Hill. It was drawn on a wagon by eight powerful horses, the property of Mr. Johnston of Craigleith, which were assisted in dragging it out of the quarry, and up the Calton Hill, by the quarrymen, about 60 in number, with ropes attached to the wagon. The weight of the block, when raised from its bed in the quarry, was 23 tons; but Mr. Forrest had rough modelled it down to about 14 tons. It is still, however, a stupendous piece of rock, and its passage along Prince's Street attracted a great crowd of spectators, who followed it to its destination. We understand that the subject Mr. Forrest means to illustrate, in this new effort of his chisel, is the attack by gypsies on King James V, in Cramond Wood, the legend on which the drama of Cramond Brig is founded, which drama is at present having a successful run at the English Opera House.

Quarry managers and owners presented Forrest with stone and clearly vied with each other for the publicity associated with ever-larger blocks being dragged along the main thoroughfare of the Edinburgh New Town.<sup>29</sup> They were well aware of the value of such a biblical spectacle, of men and oxen toiling through the setting sun of an October evening along a dusty Princes Street, advertising their product in what was still one of the largest building sites in Scotland. Once the statues were in place, the *Scotsman* duly noted visits by every passing aristocrat and dignitary. In 1832, they reported that deaf and dumb children were enthusiastic about the rustic figures in the anteroom.<sup>30</sup>

There were many descriptions of the exhibition but, once again, the best was in the *Scotsman*, probably written by William Ritchie, founding editor of the newspaper:<sup>31</sup>

We have much pleasure in drawing the attention of the public to this admirable exhibition on the Calton Hill, which is certainly a most finished group of statuary. On entering the exhibition room, the attention is first attracted by the athletic and mystic form of the 'Bruce of Bannockburn' receiving from William Baston a poem in praise of the Scots, 'whom Bruce had often led'. Behind him stands, in restive posture his stout-made, noble-looking horse. The next group is Mary 'Scotia's Queen', seated on a palfrey rampant, with Lord Herries urging her to retreat from the battle of Langside. The third group that merits attention is the Duke of Marlborough, with his steed beside him, in a posture after the manner of one of the Elgin Marbles. The Duke is a well-made figure, of almost colossal size; but the object of our admiration in this group is the steed: its excellent, its finely proportioned limbs cannot fail to call forth approbation from all who see it. The last and perhaps the best executed of the groups is the Duke of Wellington, in the uniform of a British field officer, leaning on the shoulder of his steed, which is in the act of pawing. The visitor is next admitted to the ante-room, where, in the north west corner, is planted honest Tam O'Shanter 'and at his elbow Souter Johnny, his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony'. One almost thinks he hears the loud guffaw of honest Tam and can scarcely refrain from joining in his hearty expression of joy. In the opposite corner stands poor Bauldy, in his dreadful fright, his hair on end, his eyes almost starting from their sockets — his hands clasped in hopeless terror — his mouth gaping wide — and we had almost said his knees knocking against each other; while Symon, half naked, stands before him; nearly disposed to laugh, and yet somewhat anxious-like to know poor Bauldy's tale. This is conceived in the true spirit of the pastoral form from which the idea is taken, and every admirer of the Gentle Shepherd will peruse its pages with more zest after he has seen Mr. Forrest's statues of Symon and Bauldy.

Shortly before July 1836 Forrest carved a pair of figures, Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, for

niches on either side of the imposing entrance to Falcon Hall, Morningside, designed by Thomas Hamilton (1784–1858) for the nabob Alexander Falconer before 1823 (fig. 7).<sup>32</sup> Soon afterwards, in 1837, Forrest set off on a tour of the Continent, described by him in 1846:<sup>33</sup>

Mr. Forrest proceeded to France and Italy in 1837, and visited the Louvre, Versailles, and every public place celebrated for works of art. He passed through Genoa and Piacenza to Parma, where he was detained fourteen days under quarantine. While compelled to remain in that city, a fellow traveller, who was a native, procured for him an admission to sketch in the Gallery of Paintings and Sculpture, in which he passed the greater part of his time, varied by visits to the Grand Palace gardens and the Churches, some of the latter containing excellent specimens of statuary. After his release from quarantine, he went to Bologna, a city possessing the greatest attractions to the sculptor and artist. The cemetery is probably the grandest in the world, the churches are adorned by statuary of the very first class, and the Cathedral in particular magnificently enriched in the several recesses. In one of these recesses, the third on the left hand entering from the front, is as fine a specimen of drapery as can be found in Italy of that bold outline and broad simplicity so successfully practised and brought to perfection by the late Sir Francis Chantry [*sic*] ... Mr. Forrest next visited Florence, and obtained permission to sketch in the Gallery of Painting and Sculpture in that celebrated city. He examined the churches and chapels, which contain ample materials for the most imaginative mind, the specimens of sculpture being by many of the ancient and eminent masters. One church contains Michael Angelo's *Day Break, Dawn and Night*, which never fails to arrest the attention and impress the feelings of those who can appreciate the grand in form and the mighty in conception.

Forrest's tour may have been brief for, according to his own account, the Earl of Elgin commissioned a design for a monument to the Duke of Wellington on the summit of Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh in 1838.<sup>34</sup> 'Mr Forrest prepared three plans, containing outline views of the summit of Arthur's Seat with three colossal statues of different sizes — one 60 feet high, a second about 80 feet high and a third 100 feet high, each figure standing on a low pedestal. Equestrian groups of the same sizes of figures were also sketched.' The 80 foot figure was chosen and the sculptor set about making a model of the upper part of Arthur's Seat with the statue in place, and displayed it in his exhibition. But the idea faded with the death of the Earl in 1841 and neither the model nor the designs, one of which was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1841, have survived.<sup>35</sup>

Robert Forrest's sculpture struggled to find a market outside the Calton Hill exhibition and in 1838



Fig. 7. Robert Forrester, Wellington (left) and Nelson, removed from the façade of Falcon Hall, Edinburgh, 1912, now in a private collection abroad. (Photograph courtesy of T. Crowther & Son.)

his greatest champion, Michael Linning, died suddenly in the midst of sequestration proceedings against him.<sup>36</sup> Linning had been declared bankrupt in 1834 and his trustees demanded payment of almost £800 from the Directors of the National Monument, a demand they could not meet and which forced them into a slow decline. From 1838 they considered charging rent for the space behind the columns, beginning a process of haggling with Forrester that went on until 1842 when it was set at five guineas, backdated to 1840.<sup>37</sup> The sculptor continued to increase his exhibition annually with new works and the *Sisters of Scio*, from a poem by Felicia Hemans (1793–1835), was executed in 1839 (now in a private collection). In the same year the *Scotsman* reported that the exhibition was to be closed down and the sculpture removed.<sup>38</sup> Forrester may have planted this story in an attempt to drum up business, because he remained in place and in January 1843 and 1844 he produced plans for a cottage on the hill, but was refused permission to build.<sup>39</sup> In an addendum to his 1846 Exhibition Catalogue, *Monumental Designs*

*Selected from the Cemetery of Bologna and other celebrated Places of Sepulture in Italy*, he listed a collection of six clay models that might be executed in stone or marble for churchyards or cemeteries. No funerary sculpture by Forrester other than the public monuments already mentioned is known but it may be that he supported himself during his leaner years with this more anonymous form of employment.

Far from filling the artist with classical fervour, his time in Italy pushed Forrester towards the sentimental and this is evident in the *Sisters of Scio* and the monument to Robert Ferguson of Raith, erected at the western entrance to the town of Haddington and unveiled in June 1843.<sup>40</sup> In a well tried formula (his John Knox in the Glasgow necropolis, 1825, and Melville, 1827), the monument consists of a statue atop an elegant fluted Doric column, but on this occasion supported at the base by four figures in mourning. Writing about the group in 1846 Forrester stated that the figures had been copied from ‘celebrated pieces of sculpture in Italy’. Of the four figures, a male represents Agriculture while



Geology, Art and Justice are shown as heavily cloaked females.

In 1849 the Royal Association of Contributors demanded an increase in Forrest's rent to £20 per annum and he refused, stating that he had all the expenses of repairing and maintaining the palisades and in keeping up canvassers for his exhibition.<sup>41</sup> The Association decided to evict him and by 1850 James Linning Woodman (1811–1856), Michael Linning's nephew and successor as Secretary, was suggesting that his removal 'would deprive a portion of the public of the gratification, which they derive from inspecting the works ... even admitting that these are not classical in their proportion or high in the scale of artistic production'.<sup>42</sup> The difficulty was that Forrest had almost literally fallen between a rock and a hard place — he could not afford to pay more rent and he could not afford to move his work. In 1849 the Town Council appointed the Dean of Guild to take control of activities on Calton Hill and in 1851 Forrest approached the Council and asked them to find him another site, but they refused. He wrote to the Council again later that year to say that he had closed down his exhibition and had been trying to find another site in the city, without success. 'It is therefore my intention to remove at least part of my Statuary to Cheshire where I have procured suitable accommodation. The remainder of my sculpture I intend to locate in Leith Walk until my future plans are more developed'.<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, he asked if he could open his exhibition on Calton Hill until 2 January 1852 and the Council agreed. When they reminded him of his agreement in January, he wrote that he had closed his exhibition although he had not found a new site. 'My exhibition in Cheshire has not been so productive as I had reason to expect, indeed, it has landed me in debt which I have no means of paying'.<sup>44</sup>

The attempt to exhibit in Cheshire is something of a mystery. It may be that the venture was related to the activities of the architect James Gillespie Graham (1776–1855) who designed an elegant square of houses for the Scot, William Laird, in Birkenhead.<sup>45</sup> The north and east sides of the square were begun in 1825 but the south and west sides were not started until 1839–44 and it may be that Forrest's statues were exhibited as a way of encouraging an interest in the stone-built terraces. No record of any such

exhibition has been found, but it is interesting that missing works by Forrest include statues of Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, Lord Marlborough and the Duke of Wellington, all figures likely to have been of interest to an English audience. A full size statue of Sir Walter Scott might also have been part of the group sent to Cheshire. This was probably not the 1833 seated figure described above, but another recorded in 1846 as being 'for a family in Kent, done in 1840'.<sup>46</sup>

The sculptor died on 28 December 1852 and was interred in Warriston Cemetery on 3 January 1853. Ironically, for a man who left so many monuments in stone, his grave is unmarked. His testament, made in 1836, is a fascinating mixture of the showman and the practical man of business. His trustees were Michael Linning and James Linning Woodman, James Brown of Orchard, Robert Stevenson, civil engineer, and James Slight, practical engineer; entrusted with all his moveable estate but with very specific instructions on its dispersal. After payment of all debts his widow, Margaret Caldwell, was to have any income from his property.<sup>47</sup> On Margaret's death or marriage all of his statues were to be given to the Royal Association of Contributors to the National Monument (each of the noble members is listed ostentatiously in the testament, with full title) 'in the hope that said Office bearers may give the same a place within the National Monument, so that they may be preserved and kept together'. He also gave the Royal Association 'all books and drawings connected with the Art of Sculpture, together with a portrait of myself by Warren' (the whereabouts of this material is unknown). In exchange, his widow was to have a free annuity of £40. On 21 July 1839 he added a codicil 'considering that I have deemed it expedient in some degree to restrict and alter the provisions before referred to'. This codicil was almost certainly the work of James Linning Woodman, who may have sought to redirect Forrest's gift and reduce the liability of the Association of Contributors. Now the sculpture would be transferred to the Association only if work on the National Monument were to recommence — a pretty forlorn hope in 1839. Failing this, the statuary 'and other relative effects' were to be gifted to the Lord Provost and Magistrates of the City of Edinburgh.

Woodman wrote to the Lord Provost in March 1853, after Forrest's death, drawing his attention to

the artist's gift but as some of the pieces had been on permanent exhibition for upwards of twenty years, they had simply lost their novelty and the gift was declined.<sup>48</sup> This began a protracted debate about the fate of the works with Mrs Forrest making numerous applications to re-open the exhibition, all of which were refused.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, the final paragraph of the very last minute kept by the Secretary to the contributors in 1864, records that a warrant had been served on Mrs Forrest for the removal of 'herself' and the sculpture.<sup>50</sup>

In 1865 John Cox of Gorgie Mills approached the Council about finding a permanent site and by April 1866 the Council had raised a subscription to move the sculpture to a site at Cox's 'Royal Patent Gymnasium' in Royal Crescent Park, opposite Dundonald (originally Duncan) Street, whereupon Cox was paid £10.<sup>51</sup> The matter seemed settled until 1875 when Councillor Donaldson suggested that the Lord Provost's Committee should consider securing some or all of Forrest's work to adorn the different parks in the City, and he prepared a report.<sup>52</sup> In 1876 Mr Cox's Trustees surfaced, renouncing their claim to the sculpture (Mrs Forrest was apparently indebted for the cost of the removal) 'in the event of the Town Council purchasing the statuary, [and] provided the Council grant her an annuity as her friends would consider proper'. The Council agreed and Mrs Forrest was paid an annuity of £50 from 1876 while the Lord Provost's Committee was charged with disposing of the sculpture 'as they shall deem proper'.

On the basis of Donaldson's report the Council rather surprisingly agreed to purchase the sculpture on 14 March, at which point there were vociferous protests. A letter appeared in the press on the same day, in which 'Municeps Edinburgensis' pointed out that Forrest's 'conceptions are mostly such as might occur to any schoolboy' and asked 'Is it really intended to apply part of the public funds for the acquisition of this unique and withal cumbrous memorial of misapplied industry?'<sup>53</sup> The Cockburn Association weighed in, with a letter to the Council including examples of representations made to them, the most powerful from Sir Noel Paton, RSA: 'Taken as a whole this "Statuary" forms a monument of painful and persistent dullness which, so far as I know, has no parallel in the history of art'.<sup>54</sup> The

Council quickly rescinded their earlier decision and in November 1876 they sold the works at an auction arranged by Lyon and Turnbull. The catalogue with prices realised survives, but the *Hamilton Advertiser* for 11 November 1876 reported the final resting place of some of the works:<sup>55</sup>

The principal buyer on Monday was Mr. Mitchell, commissioned on the Earnock and Neilsland estates who purchased for Mr. Watson some very fine statues, including — Burns resting from the Plough; Old Norval; Henry Bell, the inventor of the steam boat; Charles XII of Sweden; a Cossack Prince under an oak; the Sisters of Scio, in Craigleith stone; Lord Lovat, from Hogarth's painting; a statue of Lord Byron; an equestrian statue of King Robert the Bruce and War Horse, receiving a poem from the monk of Baston; also an equestrian statue of the first Napoleon and his Charger Marengo; busts of Effie and Jeannie Deans, and the Pirate, from Sir Walter Scott; and some other figures.

Sir John Watson (1819–1898) was a wealthy coal merchant and he placed his purchases at picturesque points on his recently (1874) acquired estate.<sup>56</sup>



Fig. 8. Robert Forrest, Charles XII of Sweden and a Cossack Prince (private collection). (Photograph, the author.)

Of these works, five survive in the collection of the family who purchased them — Burns Resting from the Plough, Charles XII of Sweden, the Sisters of Scio, Lord Byron and Robert the Bruce, although they are no longer in the sites where some of them were photographed in 1877 by Thomas Annan.<sup>57</sup> John Monro has discovered evidence along the banks of the Clyde for the partially destroyed figures of Napoleon and Byron, and the Sisters of Scio has been used for target practice since his first visit. The Napoleon appears to have been similar in design to the statue of Wellington and may have been intended as a companion piece at Falcon Hall where the surviving interior of the entrance hall (removed to Duncan Street in 1909) is decorated with very ‘Imperial’ eagles. The group Charles XII of Sweden, inspired by Byron’s *Mazeppa*, was carved from stone from the Ravelston Black Quarry, near Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh — ‘a rare and choice specimen of a stone which is nearly jet black when taken out of the quarry’ (fig. 8).<sup>58</sup>

Robert Forrest’s work, very much like that of the contemporary sculptor Ronald Rae (b. 1946), is loved, by the public, or loathed, by the art critics. Less relevant now as reminders of characters from literature or as repositories of national feeling, Forrest’s works are nevertheless fascinating examples of the sentiment of their time. They are occasionally awkward in pose and design but are well carved with great feeling and, from the evidence, had a lasting influence on the work of later sculptors in Scotland: John Steele’s mounted Wellington and seated Walter Scott are clearly a response to Forrest’s work. But their significance lies not in the detail of individual works, interesting though they are, but in their popularity with the general public — the great enthusiasm for public sculpture in later Victorian and Edwardian Scotland, built on interest in the medium generated by sculptors like Forrest and promoted in an extraordinary way by the *Scotsman* newspaper in the first half of the nineteenth century.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

John Monro has worked tirelessly on bringing Forrest to public attention and I am very grateful for his enthusiastic assistance over many years. I also thank Helen Smailes and Fiona Pearson of the National Galleries of Scotland who have provided references too numerous to detail. Many owners have also been generous with their time and, while thanking them, I leave them anonymous for the protection of the works in their care.

- 1 Joe Rock, ‘“An ingenious self-taught Sculptor”, Robert Forrest, 1789–1852’, *Sculpture Journal*, 9 (2003), pp. 62–71; Robin Lee Woodward, ‘Nineteenth-Century Scottish Sculpture’, PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh 1979), pp. 130–131 and pp. 71–75 of the catalogue; Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660–1851* (London 1968), p. 7; Andrew Beveridge, *Clydesdale, Descriptive, Historical, and Romantic: A Poem with copious Notes* (Carlisle 1881), p. 140; William Rankin, *A History of the Parish of Carlisle* (Glasgow 1874), with a list of 35 sculptures by Forrest; and Robert Chambers, ‘The Lanarkshire Sculptor’, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, 8 December 1832, pp. 357–358.
- 2 International Genealogical Index (IGI): Carluke Parish Register. He was christened on 16 December 1789. His mother may be the Mary Goutherer who married Robert Forrest on 22 June 1788 at Carlisle. Robert Forrest and Mary Golder had at least three other children: Marion (29 January 1791); Janet (11 January 1797, d. 22 February 1870), both Carlisle; and George (28 November 1795), Barrs Nook.
- 3 Selkirk’s house at Beanshields has been located by John Monro and it is decorated on the gable walls with two busts mounted on brackets, said to be portraits of Mr Selkirk and his son, and at ground level, a crudely executed but imposing bust of a lady, said to be Mrs Selkirk. The latter resembles in its design an important bust of Lady Diana Cecil, Countess of Elgin (1656) by an unknown sculptor, illustrated in Fiona Pearson (ed.), *Virtue and Vision, Sculpture in Scotland, 1540–1990* (Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 1991), p. 129.
- 4 Chambers, ‘Lanarkshire Sculptor’ (note 1).
- 5 R. Forrest, *Descriptive Account of the Exhibition of Statuary at the National Monument, Calton Hill, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1846), p. 32, copy in Edinburgh City Libraries (ECL), Edinburgh Room.
- 6 The bronzes were catalogued as the work of Primaticcio when sold by Christie, Manson & Wood in 1882: *The Hamilton Palace Collection*, sale catalogue (London 1882), 16th day of sale, 19 July 1882, lots 2061–65: Apollo Belvedere, 7 ft (£504), Diana of Versailles, 6 ft 4 in (£525), Borghese Gladiator, 5 ft (£561. 15. 0), Belvedere Antinous, 6 ft 5 in (£483), Hercules and Telephus, 6 ft 5 in (£477. 15. 0). See also G. F. Waagen, *Art Treasures in Great Britain* (London 1854), vol. 3, p. 294. For the palace design and the sculpture see

- Allan Tait, 'The Duke of Hamilton's Palace', *Burlington Magazine*, 125 (July 1983), pp. 394–402, where he suggests that the sculptures from the French royal collection were purchased from the estate of the Sieur Laneuville, possibly at the sales in 1826–28. He refers specifically to a receipt for five sculptures dated April 1831 for 25,000 francs. Tait does not address the issue of the Borghese Gladiator, which was cast by Hubert le Sueur in 1633 for Charles I, because it had not been cast by the French King. Four of the casts (not including the Gladiator) are now at the Huntington Museum, California.
- 7 Forrest would also have known the bronze anatomical horse in the collection presented to the University of Edinburgh by Sir William Erskine of Torrie in 1824.
  - 8 Greenshields died on 19 April 1835: *Scotsman*, 25 April 1835, p. 3(a).
  - 9 Perhaps now Underbank, just south of Crossford on the Clyde: J. M. Leighton, *Swan's Views from above the Falls of Clyde to Glasgow* (Glasgow c. 1834), pp. 33–34.
  - 10 Minutes of Lanark Town Council (transcribed in a private letter to John Monro, 7 December 1995), Letter from Robert Forrest to the Magistrates of Lanark, dated Orchard, 20 November 1820. He states that the statue is almost complete and gives instructions for it to be placed on a pedestal at least eight or ten feet high: 'The statue must be sufficiently painted with oil paint till the pores of the stone are completely skined [sic] over, the painting to be no means slighted and will require at least three coats, the finishing coat to be either in bronze or dark stone colour'.
  - 11 *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1817, part 1, p. 621; Pearson, *Virtue and Vision* (note 3), fig. 76, p. 77.
  - 12 Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), p. 34. Little is known about Warren. He may be William Warren of Hitchin (fl. 1790–1828): Gunnis, *Dictionary* (note 1), p. 413.
  - 13 R. Forrest, *Descriptive Catalogue of Statuary from the Chisel of Mr. Robert Forrest*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh 1835), copy in National Library of Scotland (NLS).
  - 14 Chambers, 'Lanarkshire Sculptor' (note 1). Forrest states that the figure of Souter Johnny was modelled in plaster in 1823: *Descriptive Account* (note 5), p. 28.
  - 15 David Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel and the Keeping of Order in Vauxhall Gardens in the Early Eighteenth Century', *Sculpture Journal*, 1 (1997), pp. 22–31. For Lord President Forbes see Malcolm Baker, "'Proper Ornaments for a Library or Grotto": London Sculptors and their Scottish Patrons in the Eighteenth Century', in Pearson, *Virtue and Vision* (note 3), fig. 47. See also John Pinkerton, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Lord President Forbes', *Connoisseur*, 183 (1973), pp. 274–279.
  - 16 *Scotsman*, 23 October 1824, p. 768(c); Chambers, 'Lanarkshire Sculptor' (note 1).
  - 17 The *Scotsman*, 25 August 1827, p. 542(b), reported that 'the figure from which the sculptor worked was modelled in clay by our townsman, Mr. O'Neil'. This may have been either Luke O'Neil (fl. 1825–1840) or Anthony O'Neil, who produced *A Catalogue of Casts of Skulls of different Nations, selected from the Museum of the Phrenological Society* (Edinburgh 1834), NLS, MS Combe 5(5). For Luke O'Neil, see Woodward, 'Scottish Sculpture' (note 1), p. 173.
  - 18 Leighton, *Swan's Views* (note 9), p. 34. Most authors, including Chambers, refer to the statue being in nine blocks but the *Scotsman*, 4 August 1827, p. 494(b), reported 15 pieces that were 'securely riveted together by strong massy bolts made of gun-metal'.
  - 19 *Scotsman*, 4 August 1827, p. 494(b). See also W. Forbes Gray, 'The Melville Monument', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 15 (1927), pp. 207–213. Burn's elevation for the monument, without any indication of the sculpture, is in Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Dean of Guild Court Plans, Petition of Michael Linning, 14 April 1821.
  - 20 *Scotsman*, 22 November 1828, p. 1(b–c); 'The Ayrshire Sculptor', *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 1 (1828–29), pp. 51–52.
  - 21 *Scotsman*, 7 February 1829, p. 87(b), and 21 March 1829, p. 1(a–c).
  - 22 ECA, SL103/1, 1 & 2, National Monument Minutes (NMM), Contributors, 17 March 1831, pp. 299 and 315. There are two volumes which include minutes for meetings of the Directors of the National Monument, both in Edinburgh and London, and the Royal Association of Contributors.
  - 23 *Scotsman*, 7 January 1832, p. 3(b).
  - 24 *Ibid.*, 11 July 1832, p. 3(d).
  - 25 *Ibid.*, 25 May 1833, p. 3(a).
  - 26 Rock, 'Forrest' (note 1), fig. 8, photograph taken before much of the damage.
  - 27 *Scotsman*, 25 April 1835, p. 2(d).
  - 28 *Ibid.*, 25 October 1834, p. 2(e).
  - 29 His works King Robert the Bruce and Lord Marlborough were carved from stone supplied 'from a quarry on the banks of the Clyde, near Hamilton, belonging to Lord Douglas'. Mazeppa came from a block of stone from the 'Cullallo' quarry near Aberdour in Fife: Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), pp. 6, 8, 12. His Duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch (untraced) was from stone supplied by the Duke himself from his quarry at Granton: *Scotsman*, 23 June 1838, p. 1. Forrest also used stone from Binny and from Craighleith quarries: see printed list of prices for Binny stone addressed to 'Robert Forrest, sculptor, Calton Hill, 1845' in papers of A. A. Foote & Son, National Monuments Record of Scotland.
  - 30 *Scotsman*, 3 October 1832, p. 2(f).
  - 31 Reprinted in Forrest, *Catalogue* (note 13), appendix, pp. 25–26.
  - 32 Alexander Falconer (d. 1847), wrote to Sir George Warrender, Secretary to the Wellington Statue Committee, on 29 February 1840, stating that 'about seven years ago ... I had erected at my sole expence, by an eminent native artist, two statues, in stone ...': ECL, Edinburgh Room, YDA 1968 W45 T60772. The *Scotsman* announced on 13 July 1836, p. 2(f), that Forrest's statues had been erected the previous week. For an illustration of Falcon Hall with the sculpture *in situ*, see Joe Rock, *Thomas Hamilton, Architect, 1784–1858* (Edinburgh, Talbot Rice Art Gallery, 1984), pp. 40–44.
  - 33 Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), pp. 38–39.
  - 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
  - 35 Private correspondence with the late Earl of Elgin. See also, Charles Baile de Laperriere (ed.), *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors, 1826–1990* (Calne 1991), vol. II, p. 75, no. 565. Forrest exhibited between 1841 and 1844, including a number of busts, presently untraced.

- 36 It transpired that he had offered the donation of stone in 1831.
- 37 ECA, NMM, Contributors (note 22), 1 June 1839, pp. 423–424; 6 June 1840, pp. 434, 436; 18 June 1841, p. 448; 18 June 1842, p. 470. Tack agreed, 28 July 1842, p. 473.
- 38 *Scotsman*, 20 July 1839, p. 3(c).
- 39 ECA, NMM, Contributors (note 22), 7 January 1843, p. 486, and 6 January 1844, p. 498.
- 40 Robert died in December 1840. His wife at the time of his death was Mary Nisbet, Countess of Elgin until she left the Earl in a scandalous divorce in 1808. She was a wealthy landowner in East Lothian in her own right. See Susan Nagel, *Mistress of the Elgin Marbles* (Chichester 2004): the monument is illustrated opp. p. 139.
- 41 ECA, NMM, Contributors (note 22), 9 June 1849, p. 24.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 1 February 1850, pp. 33–34. For Woodman see *History of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet* (Edinburgh 1890), pp. 121, 219. John Willox, author of *The Edinburgh Tourist and Itinerary* (Edinburgh c. 1845), p. 187, also had his reservations, referring to ‘Forrest’s collection of Statuary, cut in stone, of which little more can be said than that the figures are numerous, and indicate, on the part of the carver, most painstaking and persevering industry’.
- 43 ECA, Town Council Minutes (TCM), vol. 256, pp. 173–174, 22 July 1851.
- 44 *Ibid.*, vol. 257, pp. 368–369, 13 April 1852, Letter from Robert Forrest, 7 April 1852.
- 45 Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840*, 3rd edn (New Haven and London 1995), p. 425.
- 46 Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), p. 38.
- 47 National Archives of Scotland, SC70/1, vol. 79, p. 396. IGI: Margaret née Caldwell (b. 21 October 1798, Carluke; d. 20 April 1888, Crossford), married Robert Forrest, 5 December 1829, Eastwood, Renfrew, no known children.
- 48 ECA, TCM, vol. 259, p. 337, 8 March 1853.
- 49 The 1854 Ordnance Survey plan shows five ‘pedestals’ around the National Monument and it may be that the works were taken out of the sheds and placed on general exhibition.
- 50 ECA, NMM, Contributors (note 22), 18 June 1864, p. 84. The wording suggests she was living there.
- 51 ECA, TCM, vol. 289, p. 249, 30 May 1865; vol. 290, p. 354, 10 July 1865; vol. 292, p. 440, 24 April 1866.
- 52 *Ibid.*, vol. 315, p. 94, 10 August 1875; p. 398, 16 November 1875.
- 53 *Scotsman*, 14 March 1876, p. 7(a).
- 54 ECA, TCM, vol. 316, pp. 390–396, 28 March 1876. Paton and ‘Municeps Edinburgensis’ may be one and the same.
- 55 Sale leaflet bound with Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), in ECL copy: The Careless Shepherd, £7; King James V on horseback, £29; Robert the Bruce, £26; and Mazeppa, £10.
- 56 A. Slaven and S. Checkland, *Dictionary of Scottish Business Biography* (Edinburgh 1986). Writing to John Monro in 1983 Sir John’s grandson wrote: ‘There were at least another six statues which I well remember from my boyhood and teenage days (I am now 81!) as follows: A sitting Shepherd with a lamb on his lap on the side of the curling pond, adjoining the tennis court; Robert Burns, in the same direction but only half way to the small lake; King Robert the Bruce and the monk situated about 40 yds from the SE corner of the house; A fallen horse — about 60 yds to the NE of the house; The Minister of Drumclog in the garden opposite the memorial to the three Covenanters, carved and erected in 1881 by my Grandfather below the mound under which they were buried and sited beneath some prominent sandstone rocks overlooking the burn glen; and finally, Napoleon Bonaparte (a grotesque portrayal making him into a man over 6ft tall whereas he was only 5ft 3!) sited on the east bank of the burn above the waterfall inside the garden and more or less opposite the entrance to the stables yard’. For the ‘sitting shepherd’ (Ramsay’s Gentle Shepherd?) see David Paterson and Joe Rock, *Thomas Begbie’s Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1992), pl. 18.
- 57 Album of photographs in the family collection.
- 58 Forrest, *Descriptive Account* (note 5), pp. 24–25.