

EDINBURGH

A portrait based on the Easter Tour

To begin with, Edinburgh, although not the largest city in Scotland has the distinction of having been the capital for over 500 years. It is built upon hills and has at its feet the sea in the shape of the Firth of Forth and near the centre a great rocky hill, Arthur's Seat which could pass for a mountain. The name Edinburgh could conceivably have originated from Edwin, King of Northumbria in A.D. 617 thus taking the name of Edwin's burgh.

The real Edinburgh is built on seven hills, and the heart of the city is St Margaret's Chapel standing on top of Castle Rock. In spite of rivalry between Edinburgh and Glasgow, St Margaret's belongs to Scotland and thus to all. Its charm lies in its simplicity. It was built on the highest point of Edinburgh Castle Rock in 1076 and has room for 26 worshippers. One cannot leave the castle without visiting the crown chamber containing the honours of Scotland where objects used in coronations since Bruce are beautifully preserved. The castle is presently used for barracks and memorial services. You pass out of the castle to the east over the wide esplanade to the beginning of the Royal Mile, the main channel of the Old Town leading from Edinburgh Castle to the palace of the Holyrood House. To walk the mile is a unique experience not to be missed at any cost. Kings, Queens and Princes have ridden the Royal Mile; great men have walked along it to their execution. To the right is the Grassmarket which was used for public hanging as late as the last century. All that remains of the West Bow gate is rather inappropriately a Church, which is used as the assembly hall of the Free Kirk of Scotland. Opposite is the Lawn Market where the 'camera obscura' permits a bird's eye view of Edinburgh.

Further down on the left we come to Jame's Court and Gladstone's Land which have been splendidly restored to 17th-century elegance by the National Trust for Scotland and the Saltire Society. The Lawn Market turns into High Street, 100 yards down which is the real centre of the Old Town. The High Kirk of St Giles established in 1120 occupies the centre of the thoroughfare and if the democratic Church of Scotland has any first church this is it. Royal proclamations and assemblies of Scottish judges for the worship which precedes the opening of the court of session, all take place at St Giles. Not to be overlooked is the Thistle Chapel where Knights of the Thistle have meetings similar to those of the Knights of the Garter. In Parliament Square is Parliament House where the Scottish parliaments met from 1639 until the Union of 1707. Parliament House is now the headquarters of Scottish law: the courts of Session are held there presided over by Scottish judges arrayed in crimson robes. After crossing the 19th-century intersection of the North Bridge we arrive at the lower

end of High Street and the famous John Knox's house. This is in excellent repair and his study has been preserved. It would appear that the reformer actually stayed there only for a period of time when his manse was being repaired, which indicates it was not a permanent residence.

Now the Royal mile ends and we enter Cannongate: Cannongate Street was frequented by the higher nobility. Huntley House preserved by Edinburgh corporation is a classic example of a town house. We emerge from what was once the old city of Edinburgh and into an open space at the entrance to the palace of Holyrood House which we will discuss later. George Square was the first attempt of the citizens to escape from the overcrowded conditions of the Royal Mile. The university has bought most of it and has turned it into residential quarters and lecture halls. The erection of contemporary buildings caused some controversy and the town council, under pressure from the Georgian Society, have forbidden new buildings above a stated height. Here is also the National Library of Scotland containing much of literary value and second only to the British Library.

Now begins the new town. In the middle of the 18th century Edinburgh needed to expand. Under the direction of the Lord Provost Drummond the council drained the Loch and threw the North Bridge over the marshy land to the East of it. In 1770, with the additional advice of James Craig, the New Town took shape with St Andrews Square at the east end and Charlotte Square at the west with George Street connecting them. To the north is Queen Street and Princes Street to the south. From this point emerged an era of gracious living in cleaner uncrowded surroundings. Starting from the west is Charlotte Square with its green domed St George's Kirk from which we proceed to the famous Princes Street. Money is the keynote here and consequently a jumble of commercial buildings evolved from the Victorian and Edwardian era.

In contrast we come to the National Gallery of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Academy, two impressive buildings in the modern Athenian style. The Royal Scottish Academy shows what is best in Scottish painting and sculpture as well as contemporary works from other countries. The National Gallery contains many art treasures including works by Titian, Rembrandt, Degas, Gauguin, Monet and of course portraits of Highland and Lowland lairds by Scotland's own Raeburn. At the east end of Princes Street is the Register House which contains national and historical records as well as legal documents. There are letters from Mary Queen of Scots and a salary book used by Robert Burns.

On George Street is St Andrews Church in the New Town style which was designed by a much travelled army officer and therefore has a touch of continental decoration. Next is Charlotte Square containing banking houses and law firms earning the title of the richest square in the United Kingdom. On Queen Street parallel to George Street is the Museum of Antiquities where we find a collection of crushed and broken silver plate of the 4th century believed to have been a pirate hoard; John Knox's pulpit; and the stool hurled by Jenny Geddes.

Now we are ready for the palace of Holyrood House. During James IV's reign the official palace was built. In 1543 the palace was burned during an English invasion. It was in the partially restored palace that Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and her James VI lived. It was again burned after its occupation by Cromwellian troops during the Commonwealth. After the Restoration Charles II ordered an extensive rebuilding, the result of which is the palace you see today. After the fall of the Stuarts the palace remained unused until Edward VII lived there as Prince of Wales and it

is now used for monarchs visiting the United Kingdom. The castle is open to the public when it is not being occupied as a residence.

Finally we must mention the International Festival of the Arts which has been held every year since 1947. Since then Edinburgh has opened her theatres, concert halls and galleries for all art lovers of the world.

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