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The Athens of the North



A self-guided walk in Edinburgh's New Town

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the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks







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Cover image: Detail of the National Monument © Rory Walsh RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The Athens of the North

Discover how international ideas built Edinburgh's New Town

By the seventeenth century Edinburgh's thinkers and inventors led the world – but their home city was too small and had twice been destroyed by fire.

Equally inspired by modern ideas and ancient empires, Edinburgh's great minds built a 'new town' from scratch. The New Town was a global landmark in urban design and became an international canvas to show off the Scottish Enlightenment.

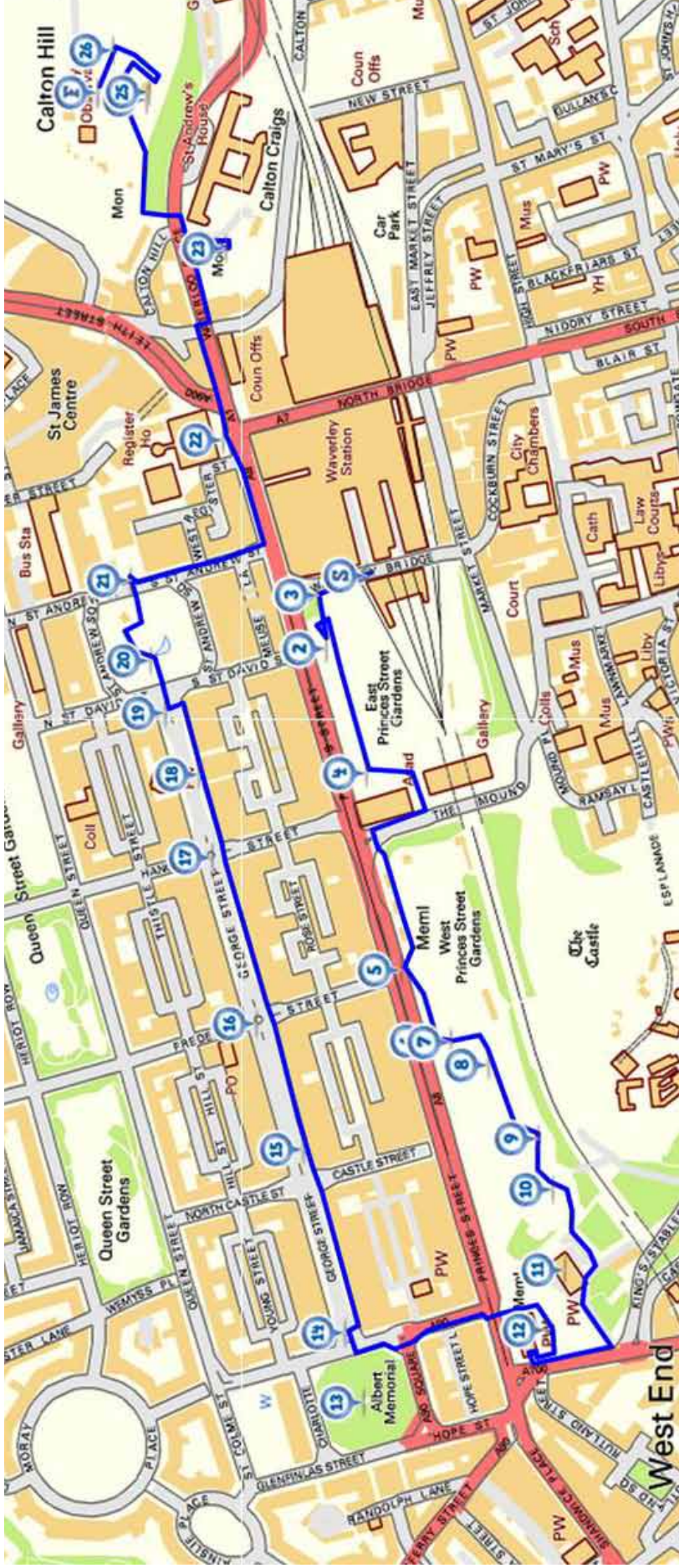


The view from Calton Hill (1829) by Thomas H Shepherd
© Scottish Pictures, Edinburgh (www.scottishpictures.com)

This walk explores the streets, buildings and the people whose ideas and ambitions created the 'Athens of the North'.

The walk was originally created in 2012. It was part of a series that explored how our towns and cities have been shaped for many centuries by some of the 206 participating nations in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Route map



Stopping points

- 1.** Waverley Bridge
- 2.** The Scott Monument
- 3.** David Livingstone statue
- 4.** The Mound
- 5.** Royal Scots Greys memorial
- 6.** First World War memorial
- 7.** Falklands memorial
- 8.** Norwegian Brigade memorial
- 9.** Robert Louis Stevenson memorial
- 10.** The Ross Fountain
- 11.** St Cuthbert's Church
- 12.** St John's Church
- 13.** Charlotte Square
- 14.** George Street
- 15.** The Freemasons' Hall, 96 George Street
- 16.** William Pitt statue
- 17.** King George IV statue
- 18.** The Dome, 14 George Street
- 19.** James Clerk Maxwell statue
- 20.** Melville Monument
- 21.** Dundas House
- 22.** Duke of Wellington statue
- 23.** Old Calton Cemetery
- 24.** Portuguese cannon, Calton Hill
- 25.** The Nelson Monument, Calton Hill
- 26.** Calton Hill monuments
- F.** View from Calton Hill

Practical information

Location	Edinburgh, Scotland
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest station to the walk route is Edinburgh Waverley in the city centre. Regular services run from London Kings Cross, York, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Durham, Berwick, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen.</p> <p>Bus - There are many local and long-distance services to the city centre. The bus station is just off Elder Street, near St Andrew Square.</p> <p>Car - Edinburgh is easily accessible from the north and south. The M8 links to Glasgow, the M74 and A1 to northern England.</p>
Start point	Waverley Bridge, EH1 1BB
Finish point	Calton Hill, EH7 5AA
Onward journey	To return to Edinburgh city centre and Waverley station use Directions 27 (on page 41).
Distance	2 ½ miles
Level	Gentle - a short city centre walk with a steep slope at the end of the route
Conditions	The walk is on a mixture of pavements and paths. Make sure to take care when crossing busy roads. The slopes at Calton Hill can be steep so wear suitable footwear.

Suitable for

Families - take care of young children by busy roads in the city centre and the slopes of Calton Hill

Dogs - must be kept on a lead

Refreshments

Plenty of cafés and shops along the route, including at the National Gallery of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Academy.

Facilities

Free public toilets are available in Princes Street Gardens, and inside the galleries at The Mound.

Other info

The route can be very busy at weekends and holidays - especially during the Edinburgh Festival (August) and at Hogmanay (New Year).

Princes Street Gardens and the Mound may be closed for special events

The National Gallery of Scotland is open 10am to 5pm (7pm on Thursdays). Free entry.

The Royal Scottish Academy is open 10am to Mondays to Saturdays, from midday to 5pm Sundays. Free entry.

The Scott Monument is open all year round (9am to 7pm Summer and 10am to 4pm Winter).

Find out more about Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson at **The Writer's Museum** at Ladystairs House on the Royal Mile.

Tourist Information

Edinburgh Information Centre, 3 Princes Street EH2 2QP. It is next to Stop 3 of the walk or Tel: 0131 473 3868

1. Welcome to Edinburgh

Waverley Bridge

Welcome to Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city. Edinburgh is made up of two distinct areas – the Old Town and the New Town. The Old Town with its winding streets and hidden alleys (known as closes or wynds) dates back to the Middle Ages. It centres on the Castle and the Royal Mile.

Increasingly cramped and twice destroyed by fire, by the eighteenth century the Old Town was becoming too small for the expanding population. So a New Town was planned.

Creating a New Town from scratch was an opportunity for fresh and bold urban design. The result was a grid pattern of streets, squares and public gardens, spectacular public buildings and elegant private houses.

Built into the design was the space for celebrating the city's leading figures and commemorating those who had given public service. Although proud of their Edinburgh roots, many of these characters travelled the world spending some of their working lives overseas or had ideas that were influential around the world.



Views of 'the Athens of the North'
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 1

From Waverley Bridge (beside Edinburgh Waverley station) head towards Princes Street. With the park on your left, continue up to the very large dark monument with a marble statue at the bottom. Stop beside it.

2. Great Scott

The Scott Monument

We start at one of the largest and most ornate monuments in the city – the Scott Monument. This spectacular structure commemorates the writer Walter Scott who was born and lived in Edinburgh. Imposing isn't it?

It stands just over 200 feet tall with 64 carved figures. Scott is sitting at the bottom with his dog Maida by his side. His statue is made from the finest Italian Carrera marble. The monument looks so dark because it's made from a kind of sandstone that gets dirty very quickly. This stone was chosen deliberately to make the monument look more dramatic. Inside you can climb 287 steps to enjoy spectacular views of the city.

A monument this grand for a writer seems a bit strange. Monuments like this are usually for royalty or military figures. But Scott was an exceptional figure. He was the first writer to achieve lifetime worldwide fame. His books – such as *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* and *The Heart of Midlothian* – helped to give Scotland an exciting international image.

Another reason that the monument is so grand is its location. Princes Street Gardens were created after Edinburgh's New Town was built. Notice the park's deep trench shape. This area was once a lake called Nor Loch. Until it was drained in 1759 it acted as a moat for Edinburgh Castle.

While the New Town was being built, the drained lake became a dumping ground. When the gardens were created from 1816, Edinburgh was full of confidence. An international trade centre and the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment, the city was brimming with riches and ideas.

When the Scott Monument was completed in 1846, over a decade after Scott's death, it commemorated him but also Edinburgh's status and civic pride. The monument was a symbol of the transformed city's wealth, creativity and modernity. In a way statues commemorate two groups of people – the people the statue is dedicated to and the people who put the statue up.



Sir Walter Scott (1822) by Henry Raeburn
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 2

Retrace your steps towards the bridge. After a short distance stop by the statue of David Livingstone just to one side of the Scott Monument.

3. Dr Livingstone, I presume?

David Livingstone statue

Next to the Scott Monument this statue looks rather more modest. The subject though is anything but. This is the Scottish explorer and missionary, David Livingstone. Livingstone was one of the most popular public figures of the Victorian era. He was not from Edinburgh but was given the freedom of the city in 1857 in recognition of his achievements.

From 1840 until his death in 1873 Livingstone explored many parts of Africa. His missions included journeys through much of southern, central and eastern Africa and he was one of the first Westerners to visit and map these lands. He was the first white man to make the 4,300-mile transcontinental journey across the continent.

He was also the first European to see the huge waterfalls on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Livingstone dedicated his discovery to Queen Victoria and named them the Victoria Falls in her honour. There are similar statues of Livingstone to this one on both sides of the falls.



David Livingstone, missionary and explorer
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)



The Victoria Falls, Zambezi River
By Zest-pk, Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

The British government gave Livingstone financial support since his religious missions also provided useful information and new trade links. Although he was an explorer, Livingstone is perhaps most famous for being lost. Deep in Africa he lost contact with the outside world for six years. In 1871 The New York Herald newspaper sent journalist Henry Morton Stanley to find Livingstone as a publicity stunt. Against the odds, Stanley succeeded. He tracked Livingstone down in Tanzania and greeted him with the now famous question “Doctor Livingstone, I presume?”



1876 engraving of Stanley meeting Livingstone in the Zambezi
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Livingstone died in Zambia from malaria. Attendants carried his body over 1,000 miles to the coast of Zanzibar from where he was returned to Britain by ship. He was then buried in Westminster Abbey.

This bronze statue, cast in 1877, was made by Amelia Paton Hill one of Edinburgh’s few women sculptors of the era. The statue was cleaned in 2010, so you can see its wealth of detail. Look out for the Bible in Livingstone’s hand, the compass at his waist and the lion skin at his feet.

Directions 3

Follow the paved footpath into Princes Street Gardens, with Princes Street on your right. Pass behind the Scott Monument and at the end of this first section of the gardens you reach the twin buildings of the National Gallery of Scotland and the Scottish Royal Academy. Stop in the square by these buildings.

4. The Athens of the North

National Gallery of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Academy, The Mound

In between the two halves of Princes Street Gardens are these two spectacular public buildings – the Royal Scottish Academy and the National Gallery of Scotland. Both are art galleries and have impressive collections by artists from across Europe.

The Royal Scottish Academy building was completed in 1822 while the National Gallery of Scotland opened in 1859. They are less than two hundred years old but their style copies something from over 2,000 years ago.



Aerial view of The Mound - showing the National Gallery of Scotland (left) and the Royal Scottish Academy (right) below Edinburgh Castle
© Kim Traynor, Geograph (CCL)

These buildings are excellent examples of 'neo-classical' architecture. 'Classical' architecture was the building style of ancient Greece and Rome. Neo-classical means a more modern interpretation of that style. The columns, porticoes and elaborate stonework you can see here are all typical classical features. Classical buildings were designed using strict rules and mathematical formulas to make them pleasing to the eye. Columns, for example, were not only structural features but also had a decorative function; their shape and spacing was carefully calculated.

In ancient times this building style was an expression of wealth, power and prestige. In the eighteenth century, Edinburgh was the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a period when Scotland led great advances in the sciences and the arts. By 1750 Scotland was one of the philosophical and intellectual centres of the world.

Britain was leading the world with its industrial advances and was growing rich on trade and commerce. Buildings in neo-classical style were deliberately designed to recall the wealth, power and prestige of ancient times. The Scottish Enlightenment together with the sheer number of neo-classical buildings like these meant that Edinburgh became known as 'the Athens of the North'. Look out for more neo-classical architecture throughout this walk.

Directions 4

When you are ready cross over The Mound and enter the western section of Princes Street Gardens. Follow the upper path. Go up the ramp on the right to the statue of a soldier on horseback.

5. Second to none

Royal Scots Greys memorial



The Royal Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo in 'Scotland Forever!' (1881) by Lady Butler
© Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery)

This statue of a cavalryman on horseback is a war memorial to commemorate the soldiers of a particular regiment, the Royal Scots Greys. They were famous for riding grey horses - hence their name. As the military role of horses declined the Greys were merged in 1971 to form the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards.

The Royal Scots Greys motto was "second to none". Founded in 1707 they had a long history of international service. They fought in continental Europe during the Austrian and Spanish successions, in the Crimea and also in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Their most famous foreign battle was at Waterloo in 1815 where the Greys played a major role in defeating Napoleon's French army.

This memorial was erected in 1906 after the Boer War in South Africa. On the base you can find other plaques that have been added since.

Directions 5

Go down the ramp back to the main path and continue a little further along the gardens until you reach a sculpture of a soldier.

6. A call and a creed

The Call - First World War memorial

Here is another war memorial. This one is dedicated to Scottish soldiers of the First World War. The sculpture is titled 'The Call'. The memorial was a gift from Scottish Americans and offers "a tribute from men and women of Scottish blood and sympathies in the United States of America to Scotland".

The memorial shows a young Scottish soldier complete with kilt rising out of his seat to take part in the action. Behind is a frieze showing Scottish men marching to the front changing from civilian clothing to uniforms as they go. Look for the bagpipers leading the line.



The Scottish-American war memorial
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The text that runs underneath is from a poem called 'A Creed'. The poem was written in 1916 at Vimy Ridge in France by a soldier in the trenches, Lieutenant Ewart Alan Mackintosh of the Seaforth Highlanders. Mackintosh was killed the following year at the Battle of Cambrai. He was 23.

The sculptor was Robert Tait Mackenzie. The memorial took four years to complete and was cast at the Roman Bronze Works in Brooklyn, New York. It was unveiled here in 1927 by the US Ambassador, Alanson B Houghton. The story of this memorial goes to show that international conflict can sometimes end with international co-operation.

Directions 6

On the opposite side of the path from the Scottish American memorial is a small fenced garden. Go onto the grass and round to the other side of this garden. Stop by a small stone in the ground.

7. A space to reflect

Falklands memorial, West Princes Street Gardens

Here is yet another war memorial. This small garden and stone plaque is a tribute to the Scots in the armed forces who lost their lives in the Falklands War in 1982 between the UK and Argentina.

Compared with the last few memorials we have seen, this is quite different. Instead of a large bronze statue here is a simple stone with specially selected trees and plants.

This shows how attitudes to commemorating conflicts have changed. Rather than flag-waving patriotism memorials like this encourage reflection and international sympathy.



Falklands Memorial stone
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This memorial is actually the focal point of Edinburgh's war commemorations. The 25th of June is the nationwide Armed Forces Day and in Edinburgh the Falklands Memorial Garden is the site of a minute's silence. In 2011 Edinburgh was the host city for Armed Forces Day which saw an estimated 100,000 people turn out in the city to pay their respects. Various events were held in the city culminating in a parade down the Royal Mile before a ceremony of thanks at the Gardens. Some 2,500 soldiers and veterans from the Army, Navy and RAF took part.

Directions 7

From the Falklands memorial stone take the path down the slope towards the open air theatre. Turn right along the footpath along the bottom of the gardens. Stop by the large stone a short way along on the left.

8. North Sea neighbours

Norwegian Brigade memorial

This massive boulder is yet another interesting war memorial. Like the Scottish American memorial it is a gift from overseas – this time from Norway. It marks co-operation between Scotland and Norway in the Second World War.

During the war Norway was under German occupation. Some Norwegians left their home country by crossing the North Sea to the Shetland Islands and mainland Scotland. Members of the Norwegian resistance were based in northern Scotland. They made the treacherous journey across the sea in fishing boats, a war effort known as the 'Shetland Bus'. Between 1941 and 1945 the Shetland Bus snuck 373 refugees out of Norway and landed 260 spies plus countless supplies and weapons.



Norwegian Brigade memorial
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Scotland's strong relationship with Norway goes back several centuries. Norway is Scotland's nearest overseas neighbour and parts of Scotland are nearer to Norway than much of the UK. Trade between the two countries can be traced back to the days of the Vikings. Parts of Scotland, especially the Orkney and Shetland Islands, have names of Viking descent. Today Scotland and Norway share fishing waters and since the 1970s have worked together extracting North Sea gas.

There is also a Norwegian Seamen's Mission with a base in Edinburgh. Perhaps the most famous Norwegian in Edinburgh though is Brigadier Sir Nils Olav. Colonel-in-Chief of a Norwegian army unit, the King's Guard, Brig Sir Nils is also a penguin who lives at Edinburgh Zoo!

In 1972 the Norwegian King's Guard came to Edinburgh for the Military Tattoo and one of their soldiers, Lieutenant Nils Egelién, visited the Zoo's penguin colony. The regiment adopted a penguin, who was then renamed Sir Nils Olav after the soldier and Norway's King Olav V. Brig Sir Nils was made Colonel-in-Chief in 2005 and knighted in 2008. He is the first penguin to receive such an honour from the Norwegian army.

Directions 8

A few metres away from the Norway memorial is a path of paving stones through the grass. Follow these to a headstone among a group of silver birch trees.

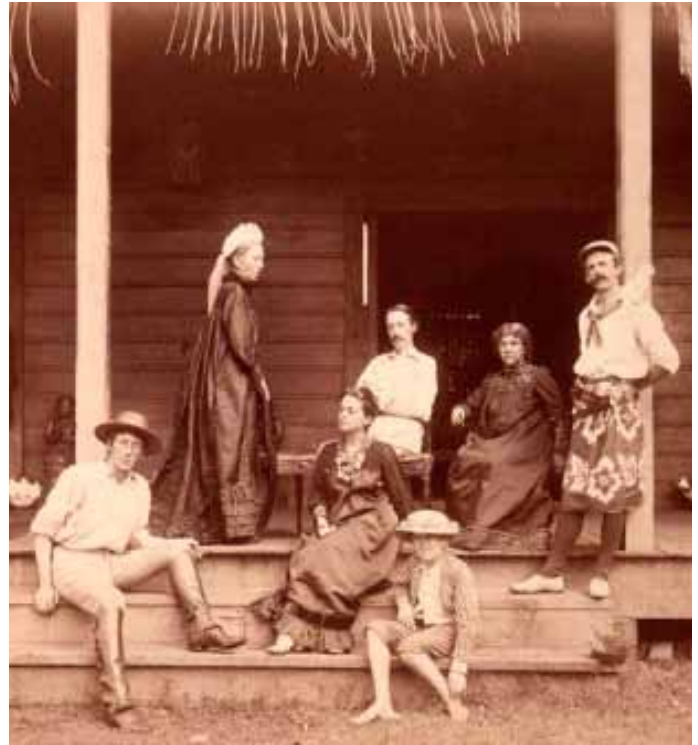
9. A man of letters

Robert Louis Stevenson memorial

Tucked among a cluster of silver birch trees is this small stone. It looks like a grave but is a memorial to another of Scotland's most famous writers – Robert Louis Stevenson.

Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850 and suffered from ill health throughout his life. As a result, he often travelled and worked in warmer climates. These not only suited his health but also provided inspiration for his writing. His journeys included periods in southern France, Belgium, the USA – notably Hawaii and San Francisco – as well as New Zealand, Samoa, Tahiti, and other Pacific Islands.

Stevenson's career breakthrough came in 1883 with his adventure novel *Treasure Island*. The book's success means even today most of us think of pirates as he described them – with peg-legs, hook-hands, eye patches and colourful parrots.



Robert Louis Stevenson (seated centre) at home with his family in Vailima in Samoa
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Let's think for a moment about the difference between this memorial and the one to fellow writer Walter Scott. Their respective memorials reflect how the two men felt about their home city.

While the Scott Monument is a public piece of bombastic reverence, this memorial doesn't even bear Stevenson's name, just his initials. The inscription underneath – 'man of letters' – is a cheeky pun. While Scott was a major public figure who had great social and political influence, Stevenson was a social outsider.

Scott's books helped create a romanticised image of Scotland. Stevenson meanwhile was suspicious about Edinburgh's redevelopment. His book *Jekyll and Hyde* was partly influenced by the contrasts in Edinburgh's Old and New Towns, in particular the social and class divides.

Directions 9

Walk across the grass a short way to the large fountain.

10. Indecent and disgusting

The Ross Fountain

Our last stop in Princes Street Gardens is the Ross Fountain. This giant iron sculpture makes an impressive spectacle at the foot of Edinburgh Castle. Today it is one of the landmarks of the city and a Grade B listed structure of national importance. But the Ross Fountain was once an unloved and highly controversial part of Edinburgh's landscape.



The Ross Fountain
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The fountain dates from the 1860s and was made by Durenne, a French firm based just outside Paris. It came to Edinburgh in 1869 when it was bought by gun maker and philanthropist Daniel Ross, who spotted it at the 1861 Great Exhibition in London.

To make transporting it from London easier, the fountain arrived in Edinburgh in 122 sections and was reassembled! After three years of intense debate about where to put it, the fountain was reassembled and unveiled here in 1872 after Ross's death.

The fountain has a classical French design topped by a naked woman standing above four nymphs. Nymphs were minor goddesses in ancient Greek mythology. They often represented features of nature or culture. The four nymphs on the Ross Fountain represent art, science, poetry and industry. Below them are a series of mermaids.

Despite the fountain's artistry the naked French figures outraged some of Edinburgh's locals. The Dean of nearby St John's Church described it as "grossly indecent and disgusting". The fountain fell into disrepair over time before being restored in 2001.

Directions 10

Continue to the far end of the Gardens where you will see the wall of St Cuthbert's Church. Enter the church grounds. The church is open to visitors from 10am to 4pm from Monday to Saturday. Go inside if it is open or stop by the front porch.

11. Marble, glass and bronze

St Cuthbert's Church

This church is named after St Cuthbert, a monk and hermit from Northumbria who became bishop of the Farne Islands south of Lindisfarne. There has been a St Cuthbert's Church on this site since at least 850 AD, making the parish one of the oldest in Scotland. The current building is much younger, though, with extensive rebuilding in 1894.

In the late nineteenth century architectural fashions had changed. Out went the neo-classical architecture that we saw earlier and in came imitations of Italian Renaissance art. So when St Cuthbert's was redesigned in 1894 it reflected these changing tastes.

The congregation of St Cuthbert's included some of Edinburgh's most wealthy and fashionable residents, so they wanted to keep up with the times. Nowadays it would be considered unusually ornate for a Church of Scotland church.

Inside the church, the font, pulpit and communion table are made from Italian and Egyptian marble. Above the altar is a spectacular alabaster copy of Leonardo da Vinci's wall painting, The Last Supper, which shows Christ having his last meal with the apostles. One of the stained glass windows meanwhile shows David on the way to meeting Goliath. The window is by the famous Tiffany & Co of New York.



Tiffany window, St Cuthbert's Church
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 11

When you have finished exploring the church follow the path through the grounds up the steps and on to Lothian Road. Turn right and walk a short way along to St John's Church. The church is open daily for visitors. Go inside for the next stop.

12. War and peace

St John's Church

Right next to St Cuthbert's church is St John's, a Scottish Episcopal church. Straight away we can see another architectural style. St John's was built in 1818 in the Gothic style. The term 'gothic' comes from thirteenth-century buildings in southern Europe.

Like many churches St John's contains war memorials that commemorate members of the congregation and other locals who served and died in conflicts overseas. Do go inside and have a look along the walls and see how many countries you can spot.

As well as the memorials inside the church, the graveyard records many people who were born, lived, worked, travelled or died overseas. One of the graves here has a particularly interesting story behind it.



St John's Church tower
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Malvina Wells' gravestone
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Malvina Wells was born in 1805 in Grenada, West Indies. She was a slave girl and worked on a plantation for a Scotsman called John Maclean. Malvina came to Scotland in the service of Maclean's daughter, Joanna. After Joanna married an Edinburgh lawyer, John Macrae, Malvina worked for the Macrae family in Edinburgh for over 70 years becoming 'a faithful servant and friend'.

Outside the café and shop look for a white pole. This is a Peace Pole with a message of peace written in 8 languages. It was erected in 2005 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. If it is open, you may like to stop at the café at St John's before completing the walk.

Directions 12

When you are ready cross over Princes Street/Shandwick Place and go up South Charlotte Street. When you reach Charlotte Square stop by the railings and look at the figure on horseback in the middle.

13. A king, a queen and a prince

Charlotte Square

We start the second half of our walk in the streets of Edinburgh's New Town. In 1766 a competition was held to design the New Town and this was won by 26-year old James Craig. His design was a grid of streets, with a garden square at each end. We are now at one of them and from here we'll walk continue along the central street to the other square.

Craig's original plan was to name the squares after St George and St Andrew to show the links between England and Scotland. But there was already a George Square in the Old Town so that wouldn't do.



Prince Albert statue, Charlotte Square
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Instead the king, George III, named this square after his wife, Queen Charlotte. Nearby Hanover Street commemorates Queen Charlotte's family who were from Hanover in Germany.

The statue in the centre of Charlotte Square is not of Queen Charlotte but another royal consort – Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. Prince Albert was also from Hanover. He married Victoria in 1840 but died in 1861 aged just 42. Victoria was consumed by grief for the rest of her life.

Victoria commissioned several memorials in his honour, most famously the Royal Albert Hall and Albert Memorial in London. This statue was created in 1876 and unveiled by Victoria herself. It shows Albert on horseback in field marshal's uniform.

Charlotte Square was the last part of Craig's New Town plan to be completed. It was finished in 1800. The buildings around the square include the headquarters of the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and part of the National Archives of Scotland. Although the square is very large we can't go into it. The square is a private garden and only opens to the public for the 3 weeks of the Edinburgh Book Festival. Prince Albert remains symbolically untouchable.

Directions 13

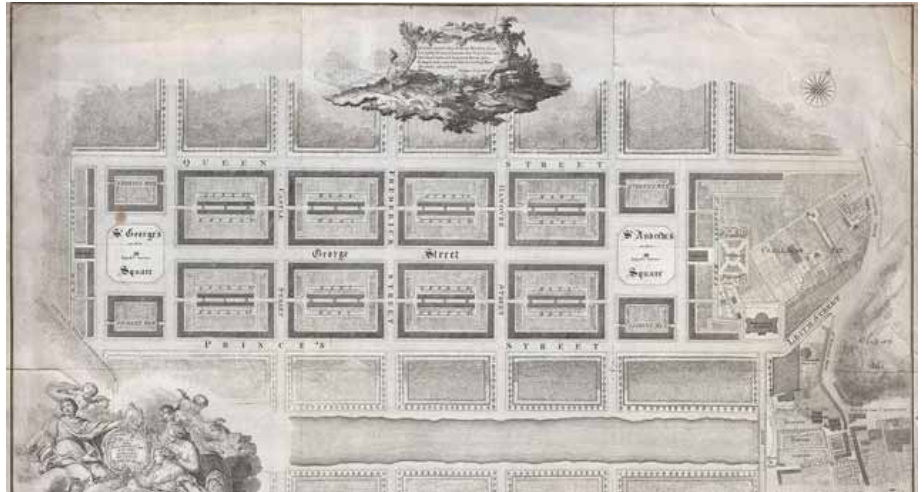
Half way down the east side of Charlotte Square is the start of George Street. Cross carefully over into George Street, stop at a safe place and look down the street.

14. A street fit for a king

George Street

We are now at the start of George Street, named after King George III. At 115 feet wide it was the grandest street in the original New Town plan.

As well as linking St George and St Andrew squares, the street runs parallel with Princes Street – to our right – and Queen Street – to our left. George Street is higher up than both of these because a lot of the New Town was built on uneven land.



James Craig's 1768 plan for Edinburgh New Town
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Building work started in 1767. It took three years to line the whole street with buildings. To encourage people to move here from the Old Town, a £20 prize was offered to the first person to build their house on the street! The prize went to another George – a man called George Young whose house still stands today in Thistle Court.

As we walk continue, there are many impressive buildings to admire. Look out for neo-classical features like those we saw earlier at the art galleries; columns, stepped doorways and ornate roofs. Several have statues or figures carved into their facades.

George Street was initially a wealthy residential area. Then in the Victorian era financial businesses moved here and built new offices. Some of the impressive buildings were originally banks, insurance companies and investment agencies. They were designed to showcase Edinburgh's wealth and civic status. Increasing rents and new office developments on the edge of the city centre drove much of the financial sector away. Today the street is mostly home to upmarket shops, bars and clubs. The impressive buildings remain though and we will stop at a few on our way.

Directions 14

Continue along the right hand side of George Street. Take time to look at the buildings around you. Cross straight over the junction with South Castle Street and the statue of Scottish mathematician, political economist and theologian, Thomas Chalmers. After the junction stop outside the second building on the right.

15. Scotland's symbol

The Freemasons' Hall, 96 George Street

This is the Freemasons' Hall. Above the doorway of the Edinburgh is a statue of St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. At first he doesn't seem to fit in with the classical architecture of the street but his appearance here is fitting. According to legend St Andrew was crucified at Patras in Greece.

The x-shaped cross St Andrew was crucified on was a saltire and thereafter saltires became a symbol of his martyrdom. In Scotland depictions of St Andrew on a saltire have been found dating back to 1180. The saltire on its own became a Scottish symbol from the fourteenth century. In 1385 the Parliament of Scotland ordered Scottish soldiers to wear crosses on their uniform for identification.

The saltire is a symbol of Scottish identity still very much in use today. You will find examples throughout Edinburgh, from flags outside shops to the iron gates of Holyrood Palace.

Outside Scotland, saltires were symbols of early Christianity in the Roman Empire. Roman coins have been found with saltires on and saltires were also used as Christian symbols in ninth and tenth century Greece. They also appear in heraldry and on flags.



St Andrew statue on the Freemason's Hall
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG
Discovering Britain

Directions 15

Continue along the right hand side of George Street. Stop at the junction of Frederick Street and look at the statue in the middle of the road.

16. A young Prime Minister

William Pitt statue

Among the distinctive features of George Street are the statues that stand in the centre of the major junctions. There are four in total. All are in bronze and mounted on stone plinths. Each one commemorates a notable Edinburgh resident or visitor.

This is William Pitt, who was the Prime Minister from 1783 to 1801 and again from 1804 to 1806. He was just 24 when he first took office and is still the youngest person ever to have occupied the position. He is known as Pitt the Younger to avoid confusion with his father who was also called William.

Pitt's time in office was dominated by problems overseas. He oversaw the aftermaths of the American and French Revolutions. There was unrest in the British colonies especially in Canada, India and Ireland. Pitt also led the country through George III's illness and the Napoleonic Wars with France.



Engraving of William Pitt the Younger
Wikimedia Commons
(Creative Commons License)

This statue was unveiled in 1833. Notice the classical pose with Pitt's cloak draped over his arm and the dates engraved in Roman numerals. The style meant the statue fitted in with the neo-classical designs of the surrounding buildings.

In 1924 and 1963, plans were proposed to remove Pitt and the other statues so that trams could run along George Street. Fierce opposition meant the idea was scrapped both times.

Directions 16

Continue along George Street. Keep looking out for interesting buildings including the Northern Lighthouse Board office. Carry on to the next main junction, with Hanover Street. Stop and look at the statue here.

17. Wearing a kilt with pink tights

King George IV statue

This statue is of King George IV. But if George Street is named after George III isn't this a statue of the wrong king? The answer is on the statue's base which records George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822.

George IV had become king in 1820. In his ten years as Prince Regent – heir in waiting – he led an extravagant lifestyle. He was obese, frequently ill and very unpopular - especially north of the border. Therefore royal officials planned to boost his popularity here and he became the first reigning monarch to visit Scotland for 172 years.

The trip was a slickly-run marketing campaign. The fortnight-long visit was full of Scottish pageantry. At a Holyrood Palace reception the king even wore a kilt – hiding his cold legs with a pair of pink tights!

Wearing the kilt not only boosted the king's popularity but also established the tartan kilt as a symbol of Scotland. Events culminated with a grand parade with large crowds cheering the king to Edinburgh Castle.

The royal visit to Edinburgh was a great success but it was also designed to distract the king from the Congress of Verona. This Congress saw military leaders from across Europe discuss diplomatic issues about their respective empires, especially disputed land such as Turkey, Spain and northern Italy.

This statue shows the dual motives of the visit. Erected in 1873 it shows an elegant figure with his cloak unfurled and a sceptre in his right hand. Notice he isn't wearing a crown. Instead of an obese unpopular playboy George is shown here as a classical hero – in Walter Scott's words as a "handsome man looking and moving every inch a King".



Portrait of George IV in kilt
by David Wilkie (1829)
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 17

Cross Hanover Street and continue along the right hand side of George Street. Stop at the large building called The Dome.

18. Not less than gorgeous

The Dome, 14 George Street

We have now arrived at one of the most striking buildings on George Street. Today it is a bar, restaurant and nightclub called The Dome. When this building opened in 1847 it was the headquarters of the Commercial Bank of Scotland.

As we heard earlier banking was a growth industry in Edinburgh in the 1840s. Bank buildings in this period were designed to impress and often used a mixture of styles. Here, for example, ancient Greek and Roman features such as columns and steps, combine with later Italian baroque aspects like the domed roof.



Chandelier in The Dome entrance lobby
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The architect was David Rhind. He was born and worked in Edinburgh and produced several other buildings for the Commercial Bank of Scotland. He also designed some of the city's churches, government offices and the spectacular Stewart's Melville College on Queensferry Road.

Shortly after it opened this building was described in the Fine Arts Journal: "The front of this banking-house, a really magnificent structure, exhibits a Corinthian hexastyle portico ninety-five feet in width, of great general beauty, and having a bold but not obtrusive projection; the columns of which it is composed, six in number, as the name of its style indicates, are thirty-five feet high, of very graceful proportions".

The Scotsman newspaper put it more succinctly saying the building was "in a style which is not less than gorgeous".

Take your time to have a good look at the wealth of details in the architecture. The inside is well worth a visit too. As you go inside, notice the snake and dagger symbol on the doors. Before David Rhind's bank building this was the site of the Physicians' Hall, the office of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

Directions 18

After you have looked around the inside of The Dome head to the end of George Street. Just before the end carefully cross over to the statue in the centre of the road - a man in a chair.

19. The man who changed the world forever

James Clerk Maxwell statue

At the end of George Street is a more recent statue. This is the physicist James Clerk Maxwell with his dog Toby. Born in Edinburgh in 1831 Maxwell has been described as the nineteenth-century scientist who had the greatest effect on the twentieth century.

In 1861 he developed the first permanent colour photograph. That disc in his hand is a colour wheel. Maxwell also developed an electromagnetic theory, now called 'Maxwell's Equation'. It demonstrates that light, electricity and magnetism are parts of the same energy field. The theory paved the way for radio, television, satellites and mobile phones. You can find the equation on the base of the statue.



Detail of the James Clerk Maxwell statue
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Maxwell was a great influence on physicist Albert Einstein. Einstein wrote that Maxwell "changed the world for ever". By contrast this statue of Maxwell was designed to fit in as much as to stand out.

This statue is the same size and made from similar materials to the ones we saw earlier of Pitt and George IV. Yet it was only unveiled in 2008. The New Town is part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. This protected status means that any new structures, including statues, should fit in with the existing built environment. So

Directions 19 -

From the statue carefully cross the road ahead and continue into St Andrew Square. Stop in front of the large column in the middle.

20. The most powerful man in Scotland

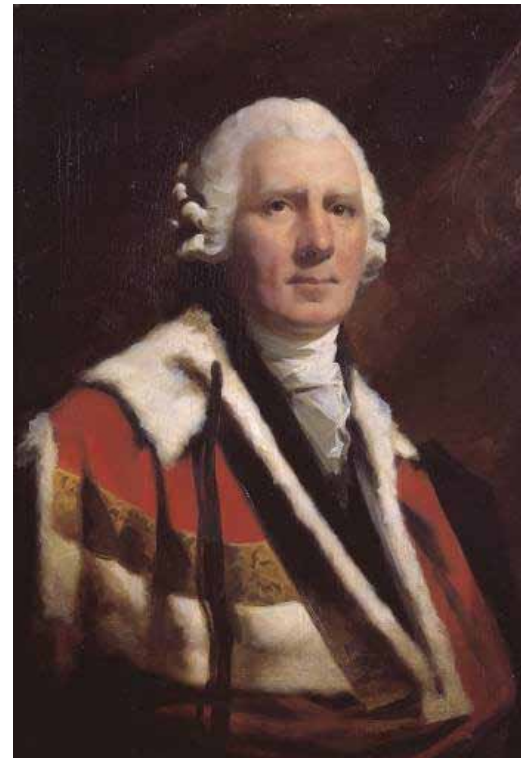
Melville Monument, St Andrew Square

Here we come to a statue that was meant to stand out from the rest. You probably caught sight of it from a long way off. This 150-foot high column was erected between 1821 and 1823 loosely modelled on Trajan's Column in Rome. During construction some of the residents of St Andrew Square were concerned about the Monument's stability. So the designer, William Burn, received some help from famous Scottish lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson.

On the top is a statue of Henry Dundas. During his lifetime Dundas was considered the most powerful man in Scotland. Friends even called him King Henry IX. Dundas held several powerful political posts including Solicitor General and Home Secretary.

In 1784 he became the first ever War Secretary during the wars of the French Revolution. These wars saw a series of military coalitions try to intervene in Revolutionary France. Over a ten year period the British fought alongside Spain, Portugal, Russia, Poland, Denmark, Norway and the Dutch Republic amongst others.

Dundas was made Viscount Melville in 1802 and from 1804 he worked as First Lord of the Admiralty. He made many contacts overseas. As a result there are places named after him such as Dundas Street in Hong Kong. In Canada you can find Dundas Street in Toronto and the town of Dundas in Ontario. At home suspicions grew about the Admiralty's finances and in 1806 Dundas became the last person in Britain to be impeached. He was later acquitted.



Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (c.1805)
by Henry Raeburn, Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Directions 20 -

Cross St Andrew Square and with the column behind you cross the road ahead. Continue to a building slightly set back from the road and with a statue of a man and horse outside. Stop at the iron railings by the pavement.

21. The art of war

Dundas House

In James Craig's original plan for the New Town this site was intended for a Church dedicated to St Andrew. Instead Dundas House was built in 1774. It was the home of Sir Lawrence Dundas, one of Henry Dundas' relatives.

The house was designed to look like a Roman villa, once again illustrating the classical fashions of the time.

Since 1825 Dundas House has been the head office for the Royal Bank of Scotland. Features of the house even appear on Scottish bank notes.



Dundas House
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The statue outside is of John Hope, the Fourth Earl of Hopetoun. The Earl of Hopetoun was a British Army general and took part in military campaigns throughout the world. The Earl is shown in a Roman toga carrying a sword. Notice the inscription on the base of the statue. John is spelt with the Roman 'I' and the dedication lists a series of virtues from past military eras. They include "the unshaken patriotism of the ancient Roman". The inscription shows how the Romans were idealised in the nineteenth century.

Directions 21

Leave St Andrew Square by South St Andrew Street. As you pass take time to look at the bank building next to Dundas House which is another spectacular piece of neo-classical architecture. When you reach the junction with Princes Street turn left. Continue on the left hand side a short way until you are outside the National Archives of Scotland. Stop at the statue of a man on a rearing horse.

22. The Iron Duke in bronze

Duke of Wellington statue

Here is a magnificent statue of Arthur Wellesley, better known as the first Duke of Wellington. The Duke was one of the major military and political figures of the nineteenth century. This statue shows him mounted on one of his favourite horses, a battle steed named Copenhagen, after the capital city of Denmark. While Copenhagen rears up onto hind legs the Duke is shown pointing ahead, giving the order to advance.



Copenhagen in Edinburgh!
© Kim Traynor, Geograph (CCL)

The Duke rode Copenhagen throughout the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Waterloo is in present-day Belgium but at the time was part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In this battle Wellington led the British army to victory over the French Emperor, Napoleon.

Copenhagen was a superb battle horse. He had great stamina and did not flinch in gun and cannon fire. But he was also tetchy and cantankerous. A story goes that when the Duke dismounted after the final battle of Waterloo he went to pat Copenhagen on the rump in thanks for a fine day's work. The horse responded with a savage kick just missing the General - who had already escaped death many times that day. Despite his unpredictable nature the heroic steed was buried with military honours when he died in 1836, aged 29.

This statue is different to most of the others we have already seen, as it was unveiled while the subject was still alive. Instead of a memorial it is a celebration of his achievements. The statue was erected in Edinburgh in 1852 as many of the Duke's troops at Waterloo came from the Royal Scots Greys (whose memorial we saw earlier in Princes Street Gardens).

Over time attitudes towards the statue have cooled in some quarters. In 2003 a member of the Scottish National Party suggested that the statue should be replaced. In a letter to the Scottish Parliament, he wrote: "it's time Wellington was given the boot".

Directions 22

Continue straight on where Princes Street becomes Waterloo Place and cross to the other side at one of the pedestrian crossings. Before the road bends to the right turn right into Old Calton cemetery. There are a set of steps to climb, though you can see the major monuments from the street entrance.

23. Graves and slaves

Old Calton Cemetery

Like church graveyards cemeteries are also good places to look for local people who were born, lived or worked abroad. There are several cemeteries in Edinburgh and this one has a great deal of historic and international interest. Old Calton Cemetery is the resting place to many of Edinburgh's notable residents. The most obvious is the large vault for philosopher David Hume.

There are several graves with interesting international connections. These include James Leishman McDougal, a soldier awarded the Victoria Cross after fighting in 'the Opium Wars' in China.



David Hume's tomb
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Also look out for Peter Williamson who was kidnapped abroad as a boy and grew up working on American slave plantations. Known in Edinburgh as 'Indian Peter' Williamson had a shop in Parliament Square and advertised as "the vintner from the other world". Outside the shop stood a statue of him in Indian dress. Julius Von Yelin, meanwhile, was a German knight and scholar who died in Edinburgh on the way to visiting Walter Scott.



Abraham Lincoln on the
American Civil War memorial
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Near David Hume's monument one of the most famous international landmarks in the cemetery is the American Civil War memorial. Built in 1893 it was made to honour six Scottish men who fought in the American Civil War. It shows the US President Abraham Lincoln whose victory effectively abolished slavery in America. The man below him is a freed slave reaching out in thanks. The man is also holding a book to symbolise his education as a free man.

Look closely and you will find other symbolic details, such as thistles and cotton plants which illustrate Scotland and America's collaboration in the war.

The monument is the only US Civil War memorial outside America and the 16-foot high statue of Abraham Lincoln was the first ever of a US President outside the United States.

The monument came about after the widow of one of the Scottish soldiers wrote to the US Consul to ask for a pension. She and her children were living in poverty and her husband, Sergeant Major John McEwan, had been buried in a pauper's grave. The Consul, Wallace Bruce, forwarded her request to the US government. Mrs McEwan's pension and this monument soon followed.

Before you leave Calton Cemetery take a look at the huge obelisk that dominates the skyline. This is the Political Martyrs Monument. It records the fate of five men who fought for political reform in the 1790s. At this time only the wealthy were allowed to vote in elections. The five men campaigned for a change in the law and instead they were arrested and transported to Australia. Two of the men died within a year of ill health while another, Thomas Muir, escaped to France. The Monument was put up in 1844 to commemorate their campaign.



The Martyrs Monument (left) by Old Calton Gaol
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 23

If you went into the cemetery leave by the way you came in. From the gates turn right and continue uphill. Cross back over the road at the traffic island and go up the steps to Calton Hill. Take another set of steps on the right and continue following the path to the top of the hill. The path is quite steep so take your time.

To avoid the steps - you can use a longer but step-free path by continuing onto Regent Road. Where the road forks keep to the left and follow the road uphill. When the road turns sharply left take the first path lined by trees on both sides. This will eventually lead to the top of the steps.

We'll look at all the monuments at the top of the hill in turn. Stop first at a cannon in front of a column-shaped building.

24. Fired across the globe

Portuguese cannon, Calton Hill

This ship's cannon, which points towards Edinburgh Castle, arrived on Calton Hill after journeying across the world. Cast in brass in the early seventeenth century the cannon was sent to the Portuguese colonies.

Soon after it was built the Portuguese king, Philip III, was succeeded by Philip IV. If you look at the barrel of the cannon you may be able to see a number 4 has been stamped after the king's name along with the date 1624.

The cannon was probably used in Portugal's colonial wars, where it must have been lost or captured.



Portuguese cannon, Calton Hill
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Looking at the barrel again can you spot some unusual script cast along the side? This is Burmese writing which says the cannon was seized after Burma captured the state of Arakan in 1784. How the cannon came to be owned by the King of Arakan is unknown but the next leg of the cannon's international journey occurred under Burmese ownership.

During the nineteenth century Burma and Britain were at war three times. At some point the cannon was captured by the British and it was presented to the city of Edinburgh in 1886 for the International Exhibition of Science, Art and Industry.

The Exhibition was held in a purpose-built hall at the Meadows beside the New Town. It displayed over 20,000 exhibits from across the globe. The cannon would have shared space with Italian furniture, Turkish rugs, even Icelandic knitwear.

Directions 24

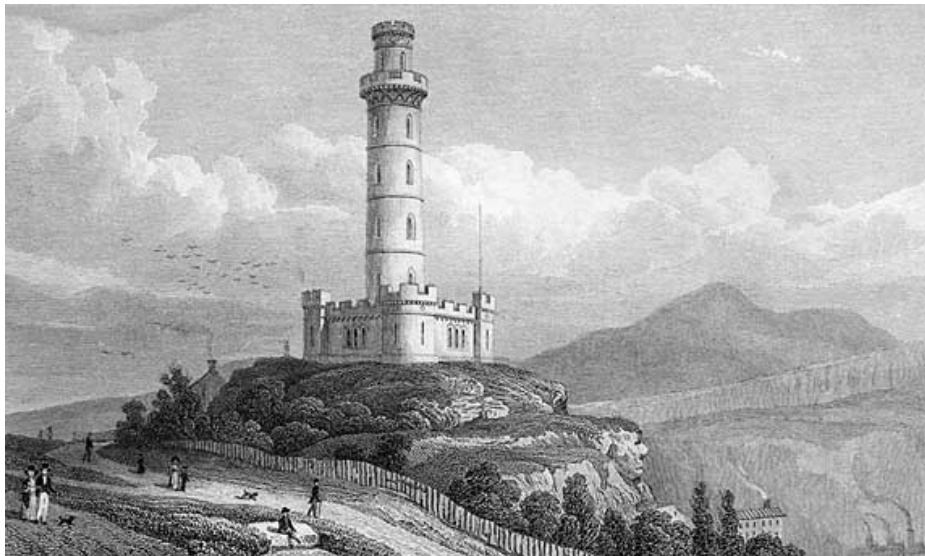
From the cannon make your way to the Nelson Monument beside it up to the right.

25. A sailing saga

The Nelson Monument

The Nelson Monument honours Horatio Nelson who joined the navy at age 13 and rose to the rank of Vice-Admiral. His naval career is an exhausting worldwide travelogue.

In his early days Nelson crossed the Atlantic twice, went on an expedition that reached within ten degrees of the North Pole. He was then involved in the Caribbean during the American War of Independence.



The Nelson Monument, Calton Hill (1829) by Thomas H Shepherd
© Peter Stubbs www.edinphoto.org.uk

Next he was in charge of accompanying navy convoys and then spent more time in the West Indies, including Jamaica and the Turks Islands. Then came seven years in the Mediterranean, before being sent off to the Baltic including a battle at Copenhagen.

Nelson was then placed in charge of defending the English Channel from invasion by the French. Appointed commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, he was given HMS Victory as his flagship. In 1805 came the famous Battle of Trafalgar where Nelson led the British fleet against Napoleon's naval forces. During this battle Nelson was fatally shot and his worldwide travels came to an end when his body was brought back home.

This monument is to Nelson and all of the fallen of the Napoleonic Wars. It was built to resemble a ship's telescope. At the top is a mast similar to a ship's rigging. Look out for the memorial plaque to Nelson on the side of the building with a stone model of a ship.

Inside the monument is a small museum about Nelson and the Napoleonic Wars. For a small fee you can also climb up to the top of the monument for spectacular views over Edinburgh and the Forth estuary. It's well worth it!

Directions 25

When you are ready, make your way down from the Nelson Monument to the area in front of the unfinished National Monument.

26. Momentous monuments

Calton Hill



The National Monument on Calton Hill
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Dominating Calton Hill are more examples of Edinburgh's neo-classical taste. This group of monuments built in ancient Greek styles can be seen across the city.

The largest is the unfinished National Monument. Inspired by the Parthenon in Athens this was designed to be a huge church commemorating Scottish soldiers who died in the Napoleonic Wars in France. Just look at the size of it!

Dragging each immense stone up the hill took 70 men and 12 horses. The project had an estimated cost of £40,000 but only £26,000 was raised and in 1829 the money ran out leaving only a dozen finished columns. Now it is one of the most recognisable landmarks in the city but for a long time many considered the unfinished building an eyesore. It became known as "Edinburgh's disgrace".

There have been several proposals to complete the Monument but with the passing of time the lack of money has been joined by a lack of enthusiasm for the idea. Many people in Edinburgh are used to the unfinished landmark and like it just the way it is. What do you think of it?

The National Monument was partly designed by William Henry Playfair, who also designed the National Gallery and Royal Academy that we saw earlier. Playfair was one of the most successful architects in Edinburgh and he designed several of the other landmarks on Calton Hill.

The small building with a domed roof is the Dugald Stewart Monument. It was made in 1832 in honour of the late Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University. The ancient Greek style is an almost exact copy of the Lysicrates monument near the Acropolis in Athens.

Playfair also designed the City Observatory with the green dome built in 1818. At the corner of the observatory is the square Playfair Monument. Completed in 1826 it commemorates William Henry Playfair's uncle, the mathematician John Playfair.

Take your time exploring Calton Hill. At each monument are information boards with more details about their history.



The Dugald Stewart Monument and the City Observatory
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Directions 26

When you are ready, make your way to the Dugald Stewart Monument towards the front of the hill. From the monument is a good view across the city.

27. High ambition

Calton Hill

From here up on Calton Hill take time to look at the spectacular views across Edinburgh, as well as Leith Docks and the Firth of Forth. Look across the city and we can trace our route through Princes Street Gardens and George Street.

Calton Hill is a fitting place to end our walk. High above New Town we have arrived – literally – at the height of the city’s architectural and cultural ambitions.



‘Edinburgh from the Calton Hill’ by David Roberts (1858)
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

As we heard at the start of the walk Edinburgh’s New Town was built from scratch and the bold design showed off the city’s wealth, sophistication and ambition.

The spectacular architecture evoked the ancient Greek and Roman Empires. The streets, squares and buildings expressed affluence. Numerous statues display the city’s pride in people from Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland who made an impact in fields such as politics, economics, theology, science, philosophy and literature. Meanwhile memorials to those from Edinburgh who died in war commemorate their contribution to victory and peace.

We hope that you have enjoyed our walk today exploring the ‘Athens of the North’.

Directions 27

To return to Edinburgh city centre, go back down Calton Hill using the paths onto Waterloo Place. Princes Street is to the right of the hill. For Waverley railway station turn left at Waverley Bridge and then take the first left down the short walkway into the station.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this walk:

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