

THE BOOK  
OF THE  
OLD EDINBURGH  
CLUB

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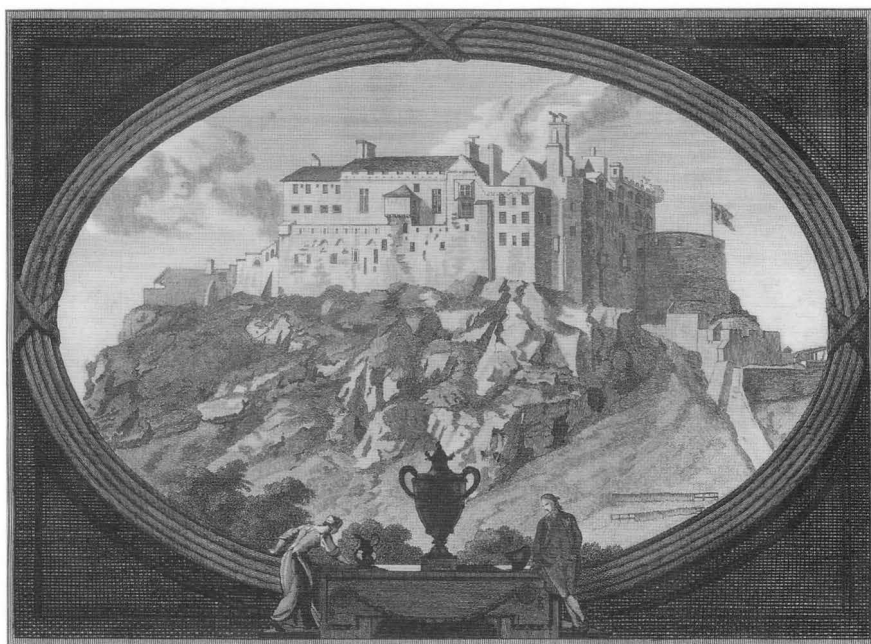
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NEW SERIES  
*Volume 3*

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1994

## COVER

### Edinburgh Castle from the south

*Drawn by Paul Sandby, RA, c. 1750, and engraved by Francis Chesham for publication in The Virtuosi's Museum: Containing Select Views in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1779*

Paul Sandby was in Scotland between 1747 and 1752. The drawing upon which this print is based was possibly made then, or was subsequently worked up from a sketch dating from that time. The neo-classical elements of the plate are clearly later in date.

The viewpoint is what is today the intersection of Heriot Place and Keir Street, somewhat above the southern end of the Vennel and near the Flodden Wall as it skirts the western boundary of Heriot's Hospital grounds. A portion of the Castle's eighteenth-century outworks and timber drawbridge, later swept away, can be seen at the right. Butt's Battery faces the spectator. The description accompanying the print in *The Virtuosi's Museum* is as follows:

This Castle is strong both by situation and art, but far from being impregnable, as has been experienced more than once. It was formerly called the Maiden Castle, because the Pictish Kings kept their daughters in it. Still more anciently it was called Alatum Castrum, or the Winged Castle, perhaps from its form, and standing on so high a hill, as it were in the air. It is situated at the west end of the city, where the rock rises to an high and large summit. 'Tis inaccessible on the south, west and north. The entrance is from the town, where the rock is also very high; and is defended by a round battery, and an out-work at the foot of it, with a draw-bridge. In the upper part of the castle is a guard-house, and the fortress is defended, in different places, by several batteries of heavy cannon, numbers of which are brass. In the castle is a royal palace of hewn stone, where are kept the regalia and chief records of state, as also the magazine for the arms and ammunition of the public, which is bomb-proof. A chapel is also in it for the use of the garrison; and it is furnished with water by two wells in the rock. From the castle is a delightful prospect over the city and neighbouring country; and to the river of Forth, from whence it is saluted by such men of war as come to anchor in Leith road. The Governor is always a person of prime quality, and general of the forces. The Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Fort-Major, and some other officers, have very good apartments; and there are deep vaults in the rock, which, they say, are bomb-proof.

The print is one of seven in *The Virtuosi's Museum* collection which have decorative oval frames and ornaments in the spandrels; two are Welsh views, one is Irish, one is English and three are Scottish – the present subject and two different views of Dunstaffnage Castle, Argyll. The Edinburgh view is the plainest in this respect. The spandrels are unornamented, and the frame is composed of a continuous reeded moulding with fillets at intervals. A well-dressed man (his tricorne hat is beside him) leans elegantly against a classical tablet which should bear – but does not do so – the title of the view. An urn sits improbably upon the tablet, which thus begins to resemble the counter of an inn or refreshment room in a theatre, an impression strengthened by the presence of a serving woman with a jug to the left. Such a notion seems at variance with the declared aim of *The Virtuosi's Museum*, which was to direct 'the national taste to the most innocent and refined amusements'. The Preface to the collection of plates states that 'if intellectual delight affords greater satisfaction to the rational mind than sensual pleasures; a plan calculated to draw off the attention of youth from the improper pursuit of the latter to the virtuous gratifications of the former, will not want the aid of a long prefatory address, or of servile solicitations in its favour'. The prints cost one shilling each. 'What a cheap and rational amusement then will these Gentlemen possess monthly, for the same consideration that is given for one night's admittance to the pit of a theatre! and in the course of a year, what a beautiful addition will be made to the furniture of their apartments, for less than the value of a masquerade ticket!'

*The Virtuosi's Museum*, containing 108 numbered plates, began publication in 1778. The plates and letterpress it contained were reissued as the second volume of *A Collection of One Hundred and Fifty Select Views ...* (London 1781).

I. G. B.

*By courtesy of Dr Iain G. Brown*

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Books should be sent to Dr Andrew Fraser,  
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#### GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Authors are invited to send a preliminary letter outlining the proposed contribution to Dr Fraser at the above address. An early indication of the illustrations envisaged would be helpful.
2. Copy should be submitted in typescript, double spaced, on one side of A4 paper, with wide margins. It is helpful if finished copy is also supplied on disc when the contribution is produced by word processor.
3. Notes and references should follow the text, with arabic numerals inserted consecutively at the appropriate places in the text.
4. References to printed sources should be set out as in the following examples:  
Sir Daniel Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, 2nd edn. 2 vols (Edinburgh 1891) II, p. 59.  
J. B. Morrell, 'Medicine and Science in the Eighteenth Century', in Gordon Donaldson (ed.), *Four Centuries: Edinburgh University Life, 1583-1983* (Edinburgh 1983), pp. 38-52.  
R. K. Hannay and G. P. H. Watson, 'The Building of the Parliament House', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 13 (1924), pp. 1-78.
5. References to manuscript sources should be in accordance with the practice of the repository in which the documents are housed. Examples are:  
Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Town Council Minutes, 12 August 1752.  
National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS. 638, ff. 9-10.

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