

**THE ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING OF EDINBURGH
NEW TOWN: AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY**

by

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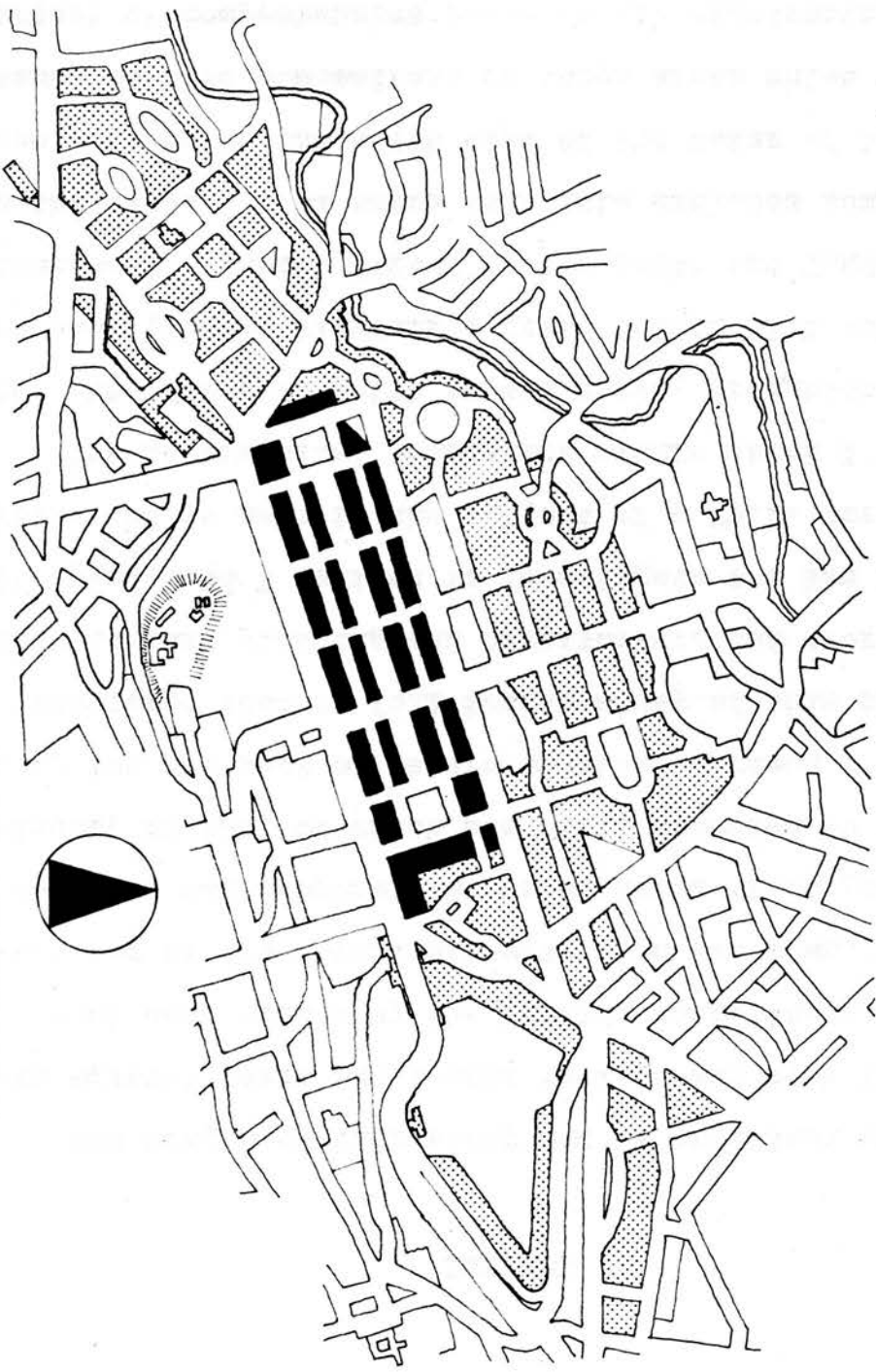
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Plan showing extent of the New Town
Solid black indicates First New Town;
stippling indicates subsequent extensions



PREFACE

The origin of this study can be explained quite simply. When several years ago I came to live and work in Edinburgh, I was at once struck by the "solid, masculine and unaffected" character of its remarkably extensive New Town. I began to wonder who was responsible for building these great stone palaces, so many of which are still occupied as houses and enjoy the prospect of mature spacious gardens. On enquiry, I discovered that no full-length study of this phenomenal essay in town planning and architecture had ever been attempted, and I decided to investigate the New Town for myself and to make it the subject of a Ph.D. thesis.

The geographical boundaries within which I have worked are: the Water of Leith to the north, Broughton Street to the east (though Playfair's great Calton Hill scheme is discussed), Princes Street to the south and Magdala Crescent to the west. I am aware that this excludes some delightful architecture on the north side of the Water of Leith; but it seemed best to concentrate on those areas which were the subject of comprehensive plans in the eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries, because these, with their emphasis on broad streets, long terraces, integrated public buildings and spacious gardens, typify the essentially urban nature of the New Town.

The study includes a brief description of the Old Town, whose history is so inextricably linked with the New, and thereafter focuses on the period from 1752 to 1833 - a period somewhat longer than the reign of George III (generally regarded as the Golden Age of architecture in Britain) though one which suits the circumstances of Edinburgh most conveniently.

None of this work could have been done without assistance from a considerable number of persons, both within the University and outside it. First I wish to thank Professor Sir Robert Matthew for his ready support and encouragement throughout this project, and the University Court for generously providing a travel grant which enabled me to study at first-hand many of those monuments which were a source of inspiration to Robert Adam and his successors, including the Palace of Diocletian at Spalatro, the Piazza del Popolo in Rome, the Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza and Roman remains at Nimes and elsewhere.

I am very much indebted to Sir John Summerson and the late Ian Lindsay, both of whom have drawn on their vast knowledge of Georgian architecture to help me to give this study some

balance and shape.

I have also received valuable assistance from the following in the way of access to buildings, drawings and manuscripts etc: Miss Helen Armet, former City Archivist; Mrs. N. Armstrong and the staff of the Edinburgh Room of Edinburgh Public Library; the Rev. W.C. Bigwood, Mr. R.M. Birse, Mr. Frank Clark; Miss Catherine Cruft of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland; Miss J.P.S. Ferguson of the Royal College of Physicians; Mr. T.T. Hewitson, Town Planning Officer and the staff of this Department; Mr. Colin McWilliam; Mr. W.H. Makey, present City Archivist; Mr. D. Morris, Clerk to George Heriot's Trust; Mr. Howard Stutchbury, City Architect and Planning Officer, Bath; Mr. R.C. Young and many others too numerous to mention.

I owe a special debt to my wife and family for their patience and forbearance, especially on the occasions when I have travelled hundreds of miles for the sole purpose of visiting a single town, such as Richelieu, or a single building even.

Finally, I am very grateful for the skilled help given by two secretaries and two architectural students, in the production of the typescript and some specially-prepared drawings.

Edinburgh, June 1968

Anthony Forward

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PART ONE

INCENTIVES: THE OLD TOWN OF EDINBURGH

Here is the capital of an ancient, independent, and heroic nation, abounding in buildings ennobled by the memory of illustrious inhabitants in the old times, and illustrious deeds of good and of evil; and in others, which hereafter will be revered by posterity, for the sake of those that inhabit them now. Above all, here is all the sublimity of situation and scenery - mountains near and afar off - rocks and glens - and the sea itself, almost within hearing of its waves.

John Gibson Lockhart, 1819

Edinburgh is a bi-polar city. The medieval town, astride its bony ridge, still contrasts piquantly^{*} with the Georgian town across the northern valley. Neither is complete in itself. Neither would exist in its present form without the intimate co-existence of the other.

To understand the significance of the New Town, therefore, it is necessary to review briefly the evolution of Edinburgh in medieval and early Renaissance times. Many political and social tides swept over the Old Town during the centuries, leaving on its face a series of clearly-defined features, of which many persist even to the present day.

Paradoxically, the town in the twelfth century, as Sir

* 4, 5

Frank Mears and John Russell have pointed out,¹ was itself a New Town, laid out on the narrow volcanic ridge - hitherto unbuilt on - extending between the Castle Rock and Holyrood. The layout was at this time spacious, healthy and convenient. It consisted of

".... a broad market-place, 100 feet wide and $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile long, occupying the crown of the ridge. On either side and running down the slopes towards the parallel northern and southern valleys were the long 'closours' or cultivated plots, from 20' to 25' wide and nominally of one rood ($\frac{1}{4}$ acre) in area At the upper end of each plot was the dwelling of the owner, probably in early times gable-ended towards the street, with a passage on one side leading to the ground behind."²

In short, it was virtually what we would call today a 'garden city', though with a population of perhaps only two or three thousand at the most.

The steepness of the ascent to the ridge made access to the High Street very difficult. From the point of view of

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 167

2 Ibid.

the safety of the citizens against attack by English invaders, this was clearly a great advantage; but at the same time it doubtless discouraged and retarded the growth of the city.¹ The first Parliament was not held in Edinburgh until 1436, and from twenty years later, when Parliaments began to meet there regularly under James II, we can date the recognition of Edinburgh as the capital of Scotland.² It is reasonable to infer that from this time onward the city began to develop, in both a political and a physical sense, though neither kind of development was smooth and continuous, as we shall see.

The reign of James II also witnessed the first enclosure of Edinburgh with fortified walls, in 1450. About half a century later, under the 'new monarchy'³ of James IV, the city underwent its first really swift expansion:

"A large suburb, including the Cowgate (where many of the nobles' and bishops' palaces were built) sprang up to the south of the walled town A wall was rapidly built to protect this new suburb."⁴

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- 1 T. Brown, A New History of the City of Edinburgh, p. 37
 2 W. Maitland, The History of Edinburgh, p. 6
 3 J.D. Mackie, A History of Scotland, p. 119
 4 Sir Daniel Wilson, Old and Modern Edinburgh, p. 67

But expansion of this kind was short-lived: "Scarcely a single house was erected beyond the second wall for upwards of two centuries."¹

Certainly the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought to Edinburgh a long series of religious and political upheavals which did nothing to encourage further house-building, at any rate in the form of horizontal expansion; but it is clear that the population was by now more numerous than in early medieval times.* Although contemporary records are scanty and imprecise, we know from a description of the Duc de Rohan's travels that by the year 1600 its physical extent was: "about one thousand Paces in Length, and four or five hundred in Breadth."² The Duke considered that there was nothing remarkable in it except for:

"... the great Street, which was very long and broad, extending from one End of the Town to the other ... the Houses were not sumptuous, being almost built of Wood; but to make amends, are so full of Inhabitants, that probably there is no Town elsewhere of its Dimensions so populous."³

Interesting though this description is, it does not tell us about the actual numbers living in Edinburgh at this time. Nor do other sources help much in this respect.⁴

1 Ibid.

2 W. Maitland, op. cit., p. 6

3 Ibid.

4 A discussion of the problems involved in computing Edinburgh's population occurs in H. Arnot's History of Edinburgh, pp. 253-260

But though, tantalisingly enough, we cannot reconstruct with any great precision the form and density of the city at this time, as the seventeenth century progresses we gain increasingly frequent glimpses not only of its physical changes, but of the changing attitudes of its more influential citizens. The first significant step taken by the magistrates was to procure an Act passed in 1621, requiring that houses, instead of being covered with straw or boards: "should have their roofs constructed of slate, tiles or lead."¹ That the walls themselves were generally of stone by this date is clear from an account of Edinburgh by the "Water Poet", John Taylor, who visited the city in 1621 on his tour from London to Braemar. He describes the Royal Mile as:

"the fairest and goodliest street mine eyes ever beheld the buildings on each side being all of squared stone, five, six, and seven storeys high."²

He felt that these houses with their walls "eight or ten feet thick" were, "not built for a day, a week, a month, or a year, but from antiquity to posterity - for many ages."³

Even more than the buildings, he admired the beauty of the neighbouring hills, in comparison with which "Shooter's Hill, Gad's Hill and Hampstead Hill are but molehills."⁴

Much later in the century, further legislation affected

1 T. Brown, op. cit., p. 21

2 S. Sitwell and F. Bamford, Edinburgh, p. 128

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

the mode of building. An Act was passed in 1698, restricting the maximum height of new buildings to five storeys, and requiring the thickness of walls at the base to be a minimum of three feet. These regulations reveal a public concern about such important matters as fire protection and structural stability, but little else. However, if we look more closely at the history of the late seventeenth century, we will find the first evidence of an influential figure adumbrating a planned expansion of the city to the north.

Brown, in his New History of Edinburgh,¹ relates how in 1680 James, Duke of York, together with his Duchess and the whole court of Scotland were entertained by the city in the Parliament House, at an expense of £15,000 Scots.² He adds, somewhat tersely and without any further explanation,

"At this time it is said that the scheme of building a bridge over the North Loch was projected by the Duke."

In whatever way James presented his proposal for bridging the North Loch, the idea was evidently not

1 Op. cit., p. 20

2 The £ Scots was equal to one twelfth of the £ English

forgotten. Eight years later, during his brief reign as James II and VII, he received the Lord Provost who had come to London specifically to discuss with him the extension of the city. On his return to Edinburgh, the Lord Provost reported to the Town Council on 12th October 1688 the success of his mission:

"Edinburgh, the 12th October, 1688 years.

The said day the Lord Provost reported to the Magistrates and Councill that by vertue of the commission given to him to act for the good Town's interest at Court, he had made it his great study and endeavour to acquitt himself worthie of the trust and confidence reposed in him, And to make it evidently appear that his paines and endeavours had not been ineffectuall, notwithstanding of many unlooked for discouragements and difficulties he mett with, Yet had reason to say that by good assistance he was verie fortunate in procuring gifts and grants and transactions and letters in favour of the good Town from his Maj. as certainly cannot but tend to the honor and advantage of the good Town and particular interest of all the comuntie thereof As follows ...

As also his Lordship produced ane new gift under his Majestie's royall hand in favour of the good Town and Communitie thereof containing several other priviledges not heretofor obtained, as whenever the good Town shall think it

convenient to enlarge the bounds thereof by buying in ground without or purchasing closes and tenements within the town or for building bridges or arches for accomplishing any such designs the good Town has not only the priviledge of all these purchest erected in a Royaltie but also in case of the deficiencie of the proprietors who may be obstinat and unwilling to quatt with the houses without exacting upon the Town the good Town has the priviledge of appointing proprietors for that effect as well as the erecting these purchases in a royaltie by which no stop can be put to any such designs as also produced ane letter under his Majestie's royall hand directed to the Lords of his Majestie's Privie Councell ordering and appointing the super plus of the principal sum and annual rents (i.e. interest) of umquhile Thomas Moodie his mortification after that the sum contracted for building the church of the Canongate is satisfied and paid, for building of bridges and arches for this noble design for enlarging of the cittie and for which they are hereafter no more to be comptable as likewyse there is contained in the forsaid gift ane new right to the good Town of all the cellars and vaults that are digged and built under the high street of the Cittie and suburbs thereof notwithstanding of the same being

forfaulted to the King as being done without his royall warrant or consent all publik streets being his Majestie's rytt of propertie. By which the good Town and the severall proprietors of the cellars and vaults are secured the same being of new disposed to them and surely discharged by his Majesty for all tyme bygane and to come but likeways gives libertie to the Magistrates and Councell for the time being to grant licences for digging and building such cellars and vaults as they shall think fitt upon a favourable composition and to make such acts and statutes for causing the several heritors on both sides of the streets lay before their houses walks of plaine stones upon their own expenses. And his Lordship furder declared that if he had not carefully manadged the affair of the vaults the gift thereof was designed in favour of ane particular persone who certainly would have given the good Town and the inhabitants a great deal of trouble and disquiet besides extraordinary charges and expenses. And sick-lyke his Majestie produced ane letter under his Majestie's royall hand directed to the Lords of his Majestie's Privie Councell requiring them of new to take under their serious consideration the true circumstances and low condition of his good Town occasioned by many publick accidents and to report the same

to his Majesty. By which out of his Royall bountie he will give such orders for their relieff as in his Royall wisdom he shall think fitt. This his Lordship reported was the soumes of which was possible for him to act or doe considering the circumstances of the present time all which papers were produced by him in presence of the whole Councell which after perusall the Councell unanimously approved and declared they were all extraordinary sensible of so great and good services"

It is not altogether clear what were the "many publick accidents" - possibly this is a reference to a number of recent collapses of unsound buildings - but there is no doubt that a major scheme of expansion is here envisaged. A confirmatory Charter was issued from Whitehall on 25th September 1688.¹

But the politico-religious situation at this time was far too turbulent to allow any comprehensive development to take place in Edinburgh for many years. Before 1688 was ended. William of Orange had landed at Tor Bay in November, James had fled from England on 23rd December, the Roman Catholic Chapel at Holyrood already pillaged and the Chancellor Perth driven out of Edinburgh.

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 172

Thus within barely three months the Revolution nullified the Lord Provost's negotiation to secure Royal approval for an extended Edinburgh. Two improvements, however, were put in hand about this time by Robert Mylne.¹ Named after their author, they were Milne's Square and Milne's Court, of which only the latter now remains.

"These open places or squares were found to be most popular with the chief denizens of Edinburgh, and many eminent people might be mentioned as having inhabited the tenement erected in 1689 which represents one of the earliest of the improvements in Old Edinburgh, to afford more breathing space to the aristocratic dwellers in the crowded and narrow closes, before the gentry moved across to the green fields on the other side of the Nor' Loch."²

Nearly forty years elapsed before any further scheme was realised. James Court, famous for its associations with Hume and Boswell, dates from c. 1727. Between 1742 and 1762

1 Master mason not only to Charles II and James II, but also to William and Mary and Queen Anne

2 The Master Masons to the Crown of Scotland, p. 228

Argyle Square, Alison Square, Brown Square and Adam Square were built, all to the south of the Cowgate. None of these schemes was of any size, "each of them enclosing a space little larger than a tennis court."¹ Quite different in scale was George Square,^{*} begun in 1766, and of which more will be said later.

In this brief review of the physical form of the Old Town, emphasis has been placed upon the gradual growth of population and the accompanying tendency for Edinburgh to extend upwards, rather than outwards, owing to the extraordinary obstacles which impeded horizontal expansion for such an unconscionable time. The acute over-crowding can be ascribed to three main causes:-²

1. The increase of population which ensued after Edinburgh became recognised as the capital of Scotland.
2. The need to keep the city compact in order to minimise the danger of the recurrent English attacks.
3. The principle that enjoyment of the rights of burgess-ship entailed residence within the Burgh.

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol XXII, p. 173

2 Ibid., p. 168

* 33

The actual mode of growth is well described by Robert Louis Stevenson:

"It grew, under the law that regulates the growth of walled cities in precarious situations, not in extent, but in height and density. Public buildings were forced, wherever there was room for them, into the midst of thoroughfare; thoroughfares were diminished into lanes; houses sprang up story after story, neighbour mounting upon neighbour's shoulder, as in some Black Hole of Calcutta, until the population slept fourteen or fifteen deep in a vertical direction."¹

Houses of fourteen or fifteen storeys have not in fact existed in the Old Town since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The tallest of all the tenements, a block eight storeys high facing Parliament Close and extending to fifteen storeys on the Cowgate side, was destroyed with many others in the Great Fire which broke out on the night of February 3rd. 1700. Regulations were subsequently passed to restrict the height of buildings in Edinburgh,² though the observant eye scanning the Old Town can still trace houses rising to ten or eleven storeys in certain declivities north and south

1 R. L. Stevenson, Edinburgh, pp. 35-36

2 S. Sitwell and F. Bamford, *op. cit.*, p. 191

of the central ridge. But it would be quite wrong to regard Edinburgh's immense problem in the seventeenth centuries as a purely statistical and spatial one: the health of the populace was constantly at risk; and as comparisons with other cities became more frequent when the more leisured class began increasingly to travel, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the deficiencies of what was still "in all essentials, a medieval city."¹

The plague was a frequent visitor to the Old Town. We know from Maitland² and other sources that in the space of less than two hundred years, there were at least seven major outbreaks of plague, in 1475, 1513, 1568, 1574, 1585, 1605 and 1645. How much was this due to the physical layout of the town, and how much to the insanitary habits of those who lived in it? Certainly in the mid-sixteenth century, under the administration of Mary of Guise, an attempt was made to improve conditions in the streets of the capital. Lanterns were hung "in such places as the magistrates should appoint"³ and arrangements instituted to cleanse the narrow closes and wynds of their daily accumulation of filth. An eighteenth-century writer found that, although the majority of the

1 Edinburgh 1329-1929, p. 403

2 W. Maitland, History of Edinburgh, 1753, passim

3 S. Sitwell and F. Bamford, *op. cit.*, p. 60

population lived in crowded tenements, " you rarely find an obscure lodging that has not some degree of neatness to make it comfortable."¹

So there is some evidence, at least, to suggest that the inhabitants of the Old Town did what they could to combat the filth and squalor. Defoe thought that the "scandalous Inconveniences" from which Edinburgh suffered were the inevitable outcome of its physical conditions, and he argues that other cities in similar circumstances might be even less bearable:

"Were any other People to live under the same Unhappiness, I mean as well of a rocky and mountainous Situation, throng'd Buildings, from seven to ten or twelve story high, a Scarcity of Water, and that little ... difficult to be had, and to the uppermost Lodgings, far to fetch, we should find a London, or a Bristol, as dirty as Edinburgh, and, perhaps less able to make their Dwellings tolerable, at least in so narrow a Compass."²

Some of the dirt to which Defoe refers was no doubt the

1 Ibid., p. 234

2 D. Defoe, Tour Through Great Britain, vol. III, p. 29

result of smoke pollution. Not for nothing did Edinburgh earn the sobriquet of "Auld Reekie": it has been estimated that in the eighteenth century coal was burned in the city at the rate of about 500 tons daily, the price being then less than sixpence per hundred-weight.¹ But worst of all was the problem of human excrement. The means of disposal is graphically - if ungrammatically - described in Win Jenkins' letter to her friend Mary Jones:

"Behold there is nurro geaks² in the whole kingdom, nor any thing for poor sarvants [sic], but a barrel with a pair of tongs thrown a-cross; and all the chairs in the family are emptied into this here barrel once a-day; and at ten o'clock at night the whole cargo is flung out of a back windore [sic] that looks into some street or lane, and the maids call gardy loo³ to the passengers and this is done every night in every night in every house in Haddingborough [sic]; so you may guess, Mary Jones, what a sweet savour comes from such a number of profuming pans."⁴

1 D. Young, Edinburgh in the Age of Walter Scott, p. 32

2 Literally, no jokes

3 This is, of course, a corruption of "Gardez l'eau!"

4 T. Smollett, Humphry Clinker, p. 257

A more detailed account of the lack of sanitation is given in Matthew Bramble's letter to Dr. Lewis:¹

"Every story is a complete house, occupied by a separate family; and the stair being common to them all, is generally left in a very filthy condition; a man must tread with great circumspection to get safe housed with unpolluted shoes - Nothing can form a stronger contrast, than the difference betwixt the outside and inside of the door; for the good-women of this metropolis are remarkably nice in the ornaments and propriety of their apartments, as if they were resolved to transfer the imputation from the individual to the public. You are no stranger to their method of discharging all their impurities from their windows, as the custom is in Spain, Portugal, and some parts of France and Italy - A practice to which I can by no means be reconciled; for notwithstanding all the care that is taken by their scavengers to remove this nuisance every morning by break of day, enough still remains to offend the eyes, as well as other organs of those whom use has not hardened against all delicacy of sensation."

1 T. Smollett, op. cit., p. 257

What Matthew Bramble - or Smollett - does not tell us is that the scavengers never laboured on the Sabbath, and ordure could remain in the streets as long as from 10p.m. on Saturday till dawn on Monday. Nor does he mention the danger to one's head as well as one's feet: during his stay in Edinburgh, Dr. Johnson saw "many a full-flowing periwig moistened into flaccidity."

Periodic attempts were made by the magistrates to control the accumulation of filth. It would be reasonable to suppose that conditions improved gradually between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such was not necessarily the case. Even as late as 1868, some parts of the Old Town remained in an appalling state:

"Hyndford's Close, on my trying to get into it lately was inaccessible (literally) from filth."¹

Under an Act of Council dated 15th October 1553, it was made illegal for a citizen to keep a dunghill in the street opposite his own door, as was formerly the practice. But this Act was evidently ignored, for after celebrating his marriage to Anne of Denmark in 1589, James VI wrote to the

1 Robert Chambers, quoted in Grant's Old and New Edinburgh, vol. I, p. 275

Provost before returning to Edinburgh, "Here we are drinking and driving in the auld way for God's sake see a'things are richt at our hamecoming."¹ Clearly he did not wish his capital to appear ill-kept and squalid to either his queen or her Danish attendants, and he asks particularly for the removal of the numerous middens.

Whatever special efforts were made on this occasion, the battle against the pungent squalor of the Old Town was continuous and never really reached a successful conclusion.² Despite the energetic example of Sir James Dick of Prestonfield (elected Provost in 1679), who "transported away a vast stratum of the refuse of ages and therewith enriched his lands by the margin of Duddingston Loch, till their fertility is proverbial to the present day,"³ conditions in the streets and closes remained deplorable, even in the eighteenth century, as Smollett and Johnson testified.

The qualities of the Old Town so far adduced are almost all pejorative, chosen deliberately to emphasise the severe physical hazards which threatened all those who lived there - the hazards which, by the end of the seventeenth century, were already acute enough to point towards the necessity of creating a New Town. But it would be wrong to imply

1 Ibid., p. 193

2 D. Young, op. cit., p. 33

3 Grant, op. cit., p. 203

that it was only physical factors - and negative ones, at that - which caused the eyes of Edinburgh's more percipient citizens to turn to the sloping green fields beyond the Nor' Loch. There were questions of taste and fitness, prestige and patriotism, too.

Even in the year 1750 Edinburgh possessed no meeting-place for its merchants, no proper accommodation for the Town Council, no theatre and no concert hall. Lawyers and doctors had the choice of holding consultations either in their own humble, cramped apartments or in one of the dark but convivial taverns, where claret could be had for tenpence a bottle:¹

"O'er draughts of wine the beau would moan his love,
O'er draughts of wine the cit his bargain drove,
O'er draughts of wine the writer penned the will,
And legal wisdom counselled o'er a gill."²

Clearly, such inconveniences were hardly compatible with the status of a Capital city. Moreover, it was now becoming commoner for Edinburgh's leading citizens to have some knowledge of conditions in London and Dublin, either through having seen these other capitals for themselves, or by receiving first-hand accounts from visitors.

1 R. Chambers, Traditions of Edinburgh, p. 176

2 Sir Alexander Boswell, quoted in R. Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 162

In either case, comparisons were bound to be unflattering to Edinburgh.

Only on paper, however, did any scheme emerge for large-scale expansion of the city before the latter half of the eighteenth century. John, eleventh Earl of Mar, spent the last seventeen years of his life in lonely exile at Aix-la-Chapelle as the penalty for his part in the 1715 Rebellion. According to Grant,¹ his only amusement during these years was to conceive plans for improving his native country and its capital. The paper on Edinburgh which he wrote in 1728 was not published² until some sixty years after his death; but it could well have been circulated privately (a natural enough procedure for a document written by a Jacobite) and could therefore have been seen by George Drummond and, too, by James Craig. It is in any case, of great intrinsic interest:

"All ways of improving Edinburgh should be thought on: as in particular, making a large bridge of three arches, over the ground betwixt the North Loch and Physic Gardens, from the High Street at Liberton's Wynd to the Multersey Hill,

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. I, p. 335

2 Old Statistical Account of Scotland, 1793, vol. VIII, p. 648

where many fine streets might be built, as the inhabitants increased. The access to them would be easy on all hands, and the situation would be agreeable and convenient, having a noble prospect of all the fine ground towards the sea, the Firth of Forth, and the coast of Fife. One long street in a straight line, where the Long Gate is now [Rose Street today]; on one side of it would be a fine opportunity for gardens down to the North Loch, and one, on the other side towards Broughton. No houses to be on the bridge, the breadth of the North Loch; but selling the places or the ends for houses, and the vaults and arches below for warehouses and cellars, the charge of the bridge might be defrayed.

Another bridge might also be made on the other side of the town, and almost as useful and commodious as that on the north. The place where it could most easily be made is St. Mary's Wynd, and the Pleasance. The hollow there is not so deep, as where the other bridge is proposed, so it is thought that two storeys of arches might raise it near the level with the street at the head of St. Mary's Wynd. Betwixt the south end of the Pleasance and the Potter-row, and from thence to Bristo Street, and by the back of the wall at Heriot's Hospital,

are fine situations for houses and gardens. There would be fine avenues to the town; and Edinburgh, from being a bad incommodious situation, would become a very beneficial and convenient one; and to make it still more so, a branch of that river, called the water of Leith, might it is thought, be brought from somewhere about Coltbridge, to fill and run through the North Loch, which would be a great advantage to the convenience, beauty, cleanliness, and healthiness of the town."

Apart from the suggested diversion of the Water of Leith, this is a remarkably accurate adumbration of the events which followed much later in the century. It is worth recalling that Mar was the friend and patron of James Gibbs. It is not inconceivable that Gibbs actually prepared some sketches based on his patron's proposals, though there is no evidence that this is so. If he did, and if the sketches were known to James Craig, this would certainly help to explain the extraordinarily close correlation between these early proposals and Craig's plan of 1766.

At the time when the Earl of Mar wrote his paper, the Town Council had already possessed the estate of Lochbank^{1*} for ten years. The acquisition of this land, however, is not quite as

1 Better known subsequently as Bearford's Parks

significant as it might appear: the previous owner, Robert Hepburn, had been vexing the Council since the early years of the century with his encroachments on the Town's rights, and after prolonged negotiations the Treasurer was able to report in 1718 that he had purchased the estate at a total outlay of £29,000 Scots, with the obligation to pay an annual feu-duty of £6.4s. Scots to the superiors, Heriot's Hospital.¹

If the Town Council had acquired this immensely valuable land fortuitously and for a comparatively modest sum, they did show two years later some inkling of its possibilities. Writing on 11th January 1720 to Lord Provost Campbell then in London, they gave him among other instructions the following:-

"The good town being now possest of the estate of Lochbank, and the North Loch being raither a nuisance as a convenience to the city, the draining of the loch, and opening an easie communication with that estate will not only improve and add to the estate, but by affording convenient dwellings to a number of persons of note and character, their residences which now are at some distance from the city will be fixt to it. Wherefore we judge it will tend much to the benefit of the community if your Lordship can obtain

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XIII, pp. 89-90

a clause in an Act of Parliament whereby the execution of so good a design may be encouraged and facilitate."

Although the thirty acres contained in the estate of Lochbank eventually carried a fair number of New Town houses, it is clear that the Council were thinking in their letter to the Lord Provost not of a development to relieve the congestion of the teeming Old Town, but of a suburb which would draw in some of the "persons of note" then living at some distance outside the town.

So the narrative has to move on for some years, to the time when George Drummond's influence on civic affairs was at its zenith, before we can detect a conscious move on the part of the Town Council to beget a New Town. Meanwhile, we must take a look at the political situation in Scotland, for it is clear that the kind of stability which great building schemes require was still lacking. It is no exaggeration to say that despite the Union of 1707 - or perhaps even because of it - Scotland remained a backward, under-developed country as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. When on 1st May the Act of Union came into force, the bells of St. Giles pealed out over the city with the tune "Why should I be sad on my wedding day?" If there was optimism in the air on this spring morning, the winter of discontent was not far away.

The system of free trade established between England and

Scotland certainly favoured the larger, richer country, at least initially. Scottish entrepreneurs who had carefully built up small manufactories and businesses found themselves open to unchecked competition from across the Border, and even the linen industry, in which Scotland had certain natural advantages, suffered for some years from the fiscal legislation of the united Parliament.¹ But above all Edinburgh itself was keenly conscious of having lost all that was involved - socially as well as financially - in the regular meetings of an independent Parliament:-

"The height of Edinburgh's glory was before the Union of 1707, in the days when meetings of the Scots Parliament drew to the capital nobles and persons of quality from every county, when periodically the city was full of the richest, most notable and best-bred people in the land, and the dingy High Street and Canongate were brightened by gentlemen in their brave attire, by ladies rustling in their hoops, brocade dresses and brilliant coloured plaids, by big coaches gorgeous in their gilding, and lackeys splendid in their livery. For the capital of a miserably poor country,

1 J.D. Mackie, op. cit., p. 265

Edinburgh had then a wonderful display of wealth and fashion. After 1707 all this was sadly changed."¹

It is not surprising, then, that the Union was particularly unpopular in Edinburgh, nor that a motion was tabled in the House of Lords in 1713 to rescind the Act of Union. The poet Allan Ramsay epitomised the sense of desolation in the burgh of Canongate in some verses written in 1717:-

"O Canongate, poor elritch hole!
What loss, what crosses dost thou thole,
London and death gar thee look droll
And hing thy head."²

Although the loss of the Scottish Parliament was a grievous one for Edinburgh to bear, and though conditions were now as discouraging as could be imagined for the launching of a project such as a New Town, the early years of the century were not completely devoid of plans to promote the well-being of the city. In April 1710 a petition was sent to Queen Anne seeking Royal approval of a scheme to establish at Leith, long recognised as the port of Edinburgh, wet and dry docks "for the Convenience of building, fitting and careening her Majesty's

1 H.G.Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, p. 81

2 Allan Ramsay, Poems vol. I, p. 169

Ships of War and trading Vessels." That the petitioners were fully aware of the economic and political advantages of this proposal is clear from their reasoning:-

"It's hoped the Queen and Government will readily incline to have it at Leith, not only because it is the most convenient Place; but likewise because the City of Edinburgh has lost ... the Benefit of the frequent Meetings of the Parliament, the Privy Council, and the Residence of severable considerable Persons that were in eminent posts in the Government; and by these means the City of Edinburgh begins to decay very fast and sensibly; which is a universal Discouragement to all people in that Part of the Country, whereof the City of Edinburgh is the Center (sic) and Heart; and therefore it seems expedient, that some Thing should be done for the Encouragement of that Place, which will be most natural and easy by setting a Dock at Leith; especially seeing the reviving of that Place will gratify the greater Body of the People of Scotland, will remove Jealousie and Discontents of disaffected People to the Union; and by the Improvement of the Harbour, will contribute very much to her Majestie's Service and Trade in general."¹

1 W. Maitland, op. cit., p. 116

Thus the proposed docks were seen not only as a prelude to renewed commercial vitality, but also as a prophylactic against Jacobitism! In the event, the financing of the project, which included 32,000 cubic yards of stonework, proved more difficult than its promoters foresaw; and, worse still, only five years after the commendable petition of 1710, the stability of the whole country was imperilled by the first of the two Jacobite rebellions. In 1717, after the Government had declined to make available any money for this purpose, the Town Council decided to finance the harbour scheme by extending for a term of nineteen years an existing duty of twopence Scots on every pint of ale sold within the city of Edinburgh. Despite the ale duty, however, the municipal debt, which in 1718 amounted to £25,418 sterling, was increased by 1725 to "above the Sum of £45,000, to the no great Credit of the Projectors."¹ Had Maitland lived to see the enormous debts resulting from the public works embodied in the New Town, what he would have said can scarcely be imagined.

After the Leith docks scheme, no further initiative regarding building or civil engineering was taken by the Town Council for nearly half a century - until, in fact, proposals for the North Bridge were drawn up. Meanwhile,

1 Ibid., p. 120

it is worth noting that for those interested in the improvement of Scotland and its capital, a new means of communication was available from 1739 onwards, when the Scots Magazine appeared for the first time.

It is interesting to find ⁱⁿ one of the earliest issues¹ a letter from an anonymous Englishman exhorting the Scots to expand their trade and manufactures in general and to improve their fishing industry in particular. The same writer - for so it must surely be - resumes his friendly correspondence with the Scots only three months later, in July 1739. This time he supplements his previous advice on the fisheries and commends the "increase and improvements ... lately made in the Linen manufacture of Scotland From what we have now seen, there is room to conceive hopes of seeing you match the productions of your rivals of Ireland." He suggests that, "after an attentive perusal of the Design and Institution of the Dublin Society, and of the very useful papers published by them," his readers might consider "whether an Association upon the same principles in Edinburgh would not ... be attended with much advantage to Scotland." He ends his letter:

"And you must allow me to say, from what I have been able to judge of the present

1 Scots Magazine, vol. I, pp. 221-2

state of Scotland, it appears to stand in much need of every assistance her sons can lend her, to balance the many inconveniencies she labours under, by lying so remote from the seat of the British empire, and the at least annual absence of those from whom she would otherwise receive her principal support. - Yet it is confessed on all hands, that the country throughout is capable of considerable improvements, even enough to change the face of the land much to the advantage of the inhabitants: and as this is the ALONE EXPEDIENT left to retrieve your content at home and your character among your neighbours; to neglect the only means of your recovery at a time it is so much in your power, would be suffering yourselves to sink, without laying hold of a certain help to save you from drowning. - Your prosperity is plainly in your own power: embrace it then, and amidst the many disadvantages you are known to labour under, let not your own indolence be included; but, by a diligent application of your faculties to every possible method of enriching your country, convince mankind that only your situation prevents you from equalling, in every respect, the most flourishing of your neighbours; and that SCOTLAND wanted only an opportunity of growing a flourishing, opulent country, to make her so. I am

SIR, A hearty well-wisher to Scotland,
and your most humble servant,
AN ENGLISHMAN"

The subject-matter of these two letters is wholly commercial, yet their tone is moral, even patriotic. The writer does not mention architecture at all. He speaks at one point of "changing the face of the land", though it is clear that he is concerned with agricultural improvement rather than visual appearance as such. Nevertheless, his economic prognosis is fundamental to the development of Scottish architecture in the eighteenth century, for, without a great increase in national trade and prosperity, the initiative of laying out the New Town of Edinburgh would have been unthinkable.

The importance of this correspondence, therefore, as a catalyst of public opinion in Scotland at the time can hardly be over-emphasised. Proof that these letters were influential is not lacking. In May 1754 about thirty gentlemen assembled in the Advocates Library, Edinburgh, for the inaugural meeting of the Select Society of Edinburgh. At first, their meetings consisted merely of debates, but by March of the following year the members, now numbering about a hundred, were bent on more practical aims. Renaming themselves the Select Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Sciences, Manufactures and Agriculture, they published a list of premiums offered for the best endeavours in many fields. As with the premiums initiated some years earlier by the Dublin Society, the list is too long to quote in full, but the following excerpt¹ illustrates its

1 Scots Magazine, vol. XVII, p. 127

laudable aims and diversified scope:-

"For the best discovery in Sciences;
 For the best essay on Taste;
 For the best dissertation on Vegetation,
 and the principles of Agriculture;

An honorary premium, being a gold medal with a suitable device and inscription.

For the best printed and most correct Book, of at least ten sheets;
 Best imitation of English Blankets, not under six yards;

Best hogshead of Strong Ale;

An honorary premium, being a gold medal with a suitable device and inscription.

And the following articles are intitled to a lucrative premium, as follows, viz.

For the most useful invention in Arts, £20.

Best carpets as to work, pattern and colours, of at least forty-eight yards, £5.5.

Best Drawings of fruit, flowers, and foliages by boys or girls under sixteen years of age, £5.5."

Thus by 1755 the more dynamic members of Edinburgh society were prepared to give practical encouragement to the community to develop both technical and artistic skills, and we can sense that the Scottish capital had at last reached the threshold of economic confidence and commercial expansion.

All the pent-up energy and initiative which had hitherto enjoyed little opportunity for expression in either the arts or the sciences was now about to enter a new era, in which during the next eighty years Edinburgh formed the natural centre of a renowned Scottish civilisation - the civilisation of Hume, Scott, Burns, Adam and Raeburn.

We have seen how several powerful incentives for an expanded city had existed for many years: the extraordinarily high density of the buildings in the Old Town, ^{*} the accompanying fire hazard, the appalling filth of the streets and stairs, the incidence of plague, and not least, the total lack of fitness for a capital city. We have seen, too, the abortive schemes of James, Duke of York, and John, Earl of Mar, to build a northern suburb - schemes that were predestined to remain on paper because of hostile political circumstances.

But no tide of genuine and altruistic ambition to create a better environment is likely to be capable of being contained indefinitely. The first unmistakable sign that the dam of inertia was finally about to collapse came three years earlier than the system of premiums described above, in 1752. It was then that a remarkably far-sighted document was published, Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh, which provide the essential moral impetus for a scheme of large-scale expansion. It is with these Proposals and their immediate consequences that the next part of this study is mainly concerned.

* 1,2,3

PART TWO**IMPETUS: LORD PROVOST DRUMMOND AND THE PROPOSALS OF 1752**

Architecture ... smooths the way for commerce; she forms commodious roads through marshes or other grounds naturally impracticable; fills up valleys, unites or levels mountains; throws bridges over deep or rapid waters; constructs canals of navigation, builds ships, and contrives ports for their secure reception in the hour of danger; facilitating thus the intercourse of nations, by conveyance of merchandise from people to people.

Sir William Chambers

Among the founders of the Select Society mentioned in Part One was Sir Gilbert Elliot. Born in 1722 of an aristocratic family, he studied at the Universities of Edinburgh and Leyden, earning the description of "a distinguished classical scholar".¹ He was a friend of the philosopher David Hume, who submitted to him for comment the manuscript of Dialogues of Natural Religion, written in 1751; largely as a result of his friend's advice, Hume never published

1 T. Somerville, Own Life and Times, p. 120

this manuscript. A further testimony to his intellectual and literary calibre came many years later from Dugald Stewart, who spoke of his "sound philosophy" and "purity of style." It is not surprising, therefore, to find Elliot's name appearing as author of the Proposals of 1752.

It has sometimes been suggested that the real author of the pamphlet was George Drummond, rather than Elliot. It is certainly possible that Drummond was the driving force behind its publication and that he persuaded Elliot, with his acknowledged literary skill, to take on the task of translating his ideas into the highly-polished form in which they now exist. But how much Elliot was expressing his own thoughts and how much those of others such as Drummond will never be known, and indeed scarcely matters. Much more important is the document itself.

Before we examine the Proposals in detail, however, we ought to look at the character and personality of the putative author, for if there is any one individual who made the New Town a reality, it is Drummond himself. Born in 1687 in Newton Castle, near Blairgowrie, he was sent to Edinburgh at the age of fourteen to complete his education. He appears to have had a remarkable ability in mathematics, for when only eighteen he was given an important task in calculating some of the financial adjustments to be made as a result of the Union of the two kingdoms. So well did he perform this task that two years later, when the Act of Union became law, he was

chosen for the new office of Accountant-General of Excise. Again his ability attracted favourable attention and in 1715 he was promoted to be one of the Commissioners of Customs, at a salary of £1000 a year - a handsome sum for a man of twenty-eight.

By a strange irony of history, Drummond, who in later years fought harder than anyone else for the realisation of a New Town, found himself waging war for a short time in 1715 against the man who was soon to while away his enforced exile on the Continent by formulating plans for the very same goal - the Earl of Mar. For the first Jacobite Rebellion was instigated by Mar, formerly Secretary of State for Scotland under Queen Anne; and Drummond was not only responsible for warning the Government of Mar's moves, but personally carried arms under the Duke of Argyle at the battle of Sheriffmuir in November 1715 and subsequently sent a dispatch to the magistrates of Edinburgh announcing the crushing of the rebellion.

Encouraged perhaps by the successful engagement at Sheriffmuir, Drummond presented himself the following year as a candidate for Edinburgh Town Council and was duly elected. Only a year later, in 1717, he was chosen to be City Treasurer, a post for which his previous accounting experience clearly qualified him. But his service as a member of the Town Council was not entirely untroubled by opposition. Indeed, when Drummond's name was put forward in 1718 for re-election, the Jacobite section of the Council tried their utmost to

unseat him.

After a further term as Treasurer, Drummond withdrew voluntarily from the Council for a period of two years. On his return in 1721 he was elected Second Bailie, and in the following year he became Lord Dean of Guild - an office which must have given him ample opportunity to observe the pitiful inadequacy of Edinburgh's urban environment. In 1725 he reached the highest position in the municipality, being unanimously elected Lord Provost by the Council members.

One of his first acts as leader of the Council - and very typical of his strong social conscience - was to promote a scheme for building an infirmary. Jointly with Dr. Alexander Monro, Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at the University of Edinburgh, he opened a public subscription for this purpose. After the Infirmary had been established on a small scale in a rented house in Robertson's Close, near the University, Drummond continued to press for a larger and more permanent institution.

Largely as a result of Drummond's persistent efforts, a Royal Charter was granted by George II in 1736. With the more abundant money which now flowed in, the promoters were able to purchase a site and start building in what became known as Infirmary Street. The structure, designed by William Adam and started in 1738, was to be the home of the Royal Infirmary for nearly 135 years.¹ During its construction the building

1 The present site in Lauriston Place was acquired in 1873

committee consisted virtually of two men - George Drummond and Dr. Monro - who not only supervised all the work but even went as far as "paying the workmen's wages with their own hands."¹

Drummond's interest in the Royal Infirmary extended beyond the building itself. The University was at that time under the complete control of the Town Council, and, during his several periods of office as Lord Provost, Drummond strove constantly to raise standards of teaching throughout, and to improve medical education in particular. For nearly half a century he "practically appointed the Professors, the majority of whom had European reputations."² Alexander Monro, himself chosen in 1720 to be Professor of Anatomy and Surgery largely through Drummond's influence, was instrumental in impressing on the Lord Provost the need for making appointments to the Medical Chairs with the utmost care, irrespective of personal influence:

"His liberal plan of exercising patronage was adopted; the various branches of medical education were successively supplied with teachers the most approved and celebrated ... the number of students multiplied rapidly, and the University has now become the most illustrious school in Europe for medical instruction."³

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- 1 Book of Old Edinburgh Club, vol. IV, p. 16
 2 Ibid., vol. XXVII, p. 7
 3 T. Somerville, op. cit., pp. 22-23

In November 1727, at the close of his second year of office as Lord Provost, Drummond had withdrawn from his active participation in municipal affairs. As Commissioner of Customs, and with immense labours still to perform before his great scheme for the Infirmary finally took shape, he no doubt felt fully employed.

It was a national crisis which brought Drummond back into the forefront of civic duties. Always a staunch Hanoverian and unafraid of personal combat, Commissioner Drummond responded to the arrival in Scotland of the Young Pretender in 1745 by volunteering immediately to command one of the six companies formed to defend the city against the Jacobite forces. The situation was not propitious for the volunteers. Edinburgh had not been threatened with an enemy at its gates since the days of Flodden, its defences were consequently quite unprepared, and the volunteers totalled only 418 men, including a number of University students. Drummond himself was prepared to make a stand - or even to march out against the enemy - but Lord Provost Stewart, who was suspected of Jacobite sympathies, vacillated and failed to give a decisive lead to those councillors who were uncertain whether the citizens should offer resistance to Prince Charles Edward and his Highlanders. In these circumstances the surrender of the city was a foregone conclusion. But soon, under the generalship of Sir John Cope, Drummond and some of his volunteers were able to contribute to the defeat of the

Jacobites at Prestonpans in September 1745.

For more than a year there was no municipal government in Edinburgh. Occupation by the Highlanders had prevented the usual elections from taking place, and Provost Stewart was, moreover, in jail awaiting trial on a charge of neglect of duty.¹ But, after a petition had been successfully lodged with George II, arrangements were made for an election to be held in November 1746, when Drummond was elected Lord Provost.

On completion of the usual two-year term of office, he retired into private life, mainly to devote more time to the affairs of the Royal Infirmary. In November 1750 he was persuaded to re-enter the Council, and once again he was chosen to be its leader. It was during this third term of office as Lord Provost that Drummond made by far his most fecund contribution towards the New Town.

When on 6th May 1752 a petition from the "principal inhabitants" of Edinburgh was laid before the Town Council, pointing out that the lack of "a forum or convenient place of Exchange"² had long been regretted, Drummond must have rejoiced to sense that the tide of public opinion was now moving strongly in the direction of civic improvement. Not only did

1 i.e., for failing to arrange for the defence of the city against the Jacobites

2 Town Council Minute 6th May 1752

the petition refer to the ruinous condition of several tenements near the Market Cross as being a splendid opportunity for building a "well-situate Exchange", but it desired the Town Council to employ "the best hand for drawing a proper plan." The Council agreed to this request, and in less than two months John Adam was busy preparing plans¹ for the first Exchange which Edinburgh ever saw. So far as we know, this was also the first occasion on which any member of the Adam family received a commission from Edinburgh Town Council, and its significance vis-a-vis later developments in the New Town should not be overlooked.

Some of John Adam's plans for the Council were never realised. His remit included designing :

"a building on the ruins to the south of Parliament Close where the burgh room and Council Chamber formerly stood, containing a large hall or burrow room for the annual Convention of Royal Burghs to meet in, a convenient Council Chamber and a house for the residence of the Lord Provost during his office."

1 Ibid., 1st July 1752

But until new sources of revenue were found, there was no prospect of effecting substantial improvements, as the same Minutes show clearly:

"Considering that the City's revenue is not sufficient for carrying on these necessary good works, and of making an easy and convenient access to the high street from the south and north, which in the view of extending the Royalty of the City is absolutely necessary to be done, nor was there any fund for following out the plan for making the lake called the North Loch a beauty and ornament to the City in place of the hateful nuisance it now is, he [Drummond] therefore had talked with some persons of quality, judges and others, upon these subjects and showed them the plans, who approved of the same, gave it as their opinion that if to the above plans there was added a library for the Faculty of Advocates, a room for the Lords of Session to robe in, and convenient offices for the principal Clerks of Session, Clerk to the Commission of Teinds, Clerk of Justiciary and Keeper of the Register of Sasines, where the papers under their care might be kept in safety, and the Records of the Nation allowed to be placed in the Faculty's present library, the whole

undertaking would be so acceptable to the nation in general, that there was no room to doubt but that money might be raised by voluntary subscription to carry on the whole."

We may be forgiven for smiling inwardly at some of the learned judges' notions of civic improvements. However parochial they may seem - and we must remember that much of the legal work in the capital was carried on at this time in appalling physical conditions - the idea of inviting subscriptions to defray the cost of public works was sound enough, and the hour was very close, in fact, to the first announcement of a national appeal.

We have seen that representatives from the Royal Burghs were in the habit of meeting annually in Edinburgh. When the Convention assembled on 8th July 1752, the momentous Proposals had not yet been published, but the mood of the meeting, nevertheless, must have been highly constructive and purposeful. The Burghs passed a resolution not only confirming the Town Council's decision of a week earlier to build a merchants' exchange, but proposing to build a Burgh Room and a repository for national records as well. And, not least, they recognised that the best means of realising these schemes was to appeal for voluntary subscriptions to the country at large.

The actual printing and distribution of the pamphlet entitled Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh must have been quite rapid. The Lord Provost

raised the matter in the Town Council on 12th August 1752, and the proposals were reproduced (in slightly abbreviated form) in the Scots Magazine for the same month.

But if the publishing was pushed through at top speed, there is no evidence to suggest that the arguments expressed in the pamphlet were themselves conceived in haste. Indeed, the whole document is a master-piece of intellectual and emotional persuasion.

The arguments are of six kinds: comparative, hygienic, patriotic, common-sense and economic. The author begins with a telling comparison of the contemporary state of the English and Scottish capitals, and cleverly develops his theme by emphasising the excessively crowded and insanitary conditions in which the Edinburgh populace is forced to live. Next, without relying too heavily on emotional overtones, he appeals to the strong sense of identity of the Scottish nation (linked though it is to the future of the English people), and goes on to remind his readers, in a thoroughly tactful way, of the artistic enjoyments which are generally only to be had in times of peace. Finally, having stressed the artistic, he gives due weight to the practical, in pointing out the favourable opportunity afforded by the ruinous condition of some parts of the town; and in the closing section of the pamphlet he marshals the economic argument most effectively, whilst still maintaining a high tone of idealism.

The pamphlet is too long to quote here in full, but some

excerpts will illustrate the persuasive combination of reason and emotion:

"Among the several causes to which the prosperity of a nation may be ascribed, the situation, conveniency, and beauty of its capital, are surely not the least considerable. A capital where these circumstances happen fortunately to concur, should naturally become the centre of trade and commerce, of learning and the arts, of politeness and of refinement of every kind. No sooner will the advantages which these necessarily produce, be felt and experienced in the chief city, than they will diffuse themselves through the nation, and universally promote the same spirit of industry and improvement.

Of this general assertion the city of LONDON affords the most striking example. Upon the most superficial view, we cannot fail to remark its healthful, unconfined situation, upon a large plain, gently shelving towards the Thames; its neighbourhood to that river; its proper distance from the sea; and, by consequence, the great facility with which it is supplied with all the necessaries, and even luxuries of life. No less obvious are the neatness and accommodation of its private houses; the beauty and conveniency of its numerous streets and open squares, of its buildings

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and bridges, its large parks and extensive walks. When to these advantages we add its trade and navigation; the business of the exchange, of the two houses of parliament, and of the courts of justice; the magnificence of the court; the pleasures of the theatre, and other public entertainments: in a word, when we survey this mighty concourse of people, whom business, ambition, curiosity, or the love of pleasure has assembled within so narrow a compass, we need no longer be astonished at that spirit of industry and improvement, which, taking its rise in the city of LONDON, has at length spread over the greatest part of SOUTH BRITAIN, animating every art and profession, and inspiring the whole people with the greatest ardour and emulation.

To illustrate this further, we need only contrast the delightful prospect which LONDON affords, with that of any other city, which is destitute of all, or even of any considerable number of these advantages. Sorry we are, that no one occurs to us more apposite to this purpose, than EDINBURGH, the metropolis of SCOTLAND when a separate kingdom, and still the chief city of NORTH BRITAIN. The healthfulness of its situation, and its neighbourhood to the Forth, must no doubt be admitted as very favourable

circumstances. But how greatly are these overbalanced by other disadvantages almost without number? Placed upon the ridge of a hill, it admits but of one good street, running from east to west; and even this is tolerably accessible only from one quarter. The narrow lanes leading to the north and south, by reason of their steepness, narrowness, and dirtiness, can only be considered as so many unavoidable nuisances. Confined by the small compass of the walls, and the narrow limits of the royalty, which scarcely extends beyond the walls, the houses stand more crowded than in any other town in Europe, and are built to a height that is almost incredible. Hence necessarily follows a great want of free air, light, cleanliness, and every other comfortable accommodation. Hence also many families, sometimes no less than ten or a dozen, are obliged to live overhead of each other in the same building; where, to all the other inconveniences, is added that of a common stair, which is no other in effect than an upright street, constantly dark and dirty. It is owing to the same narrowness of situation, that the principal street is encumbered with the herb-market, the fruit-market and several others; that the shambles are placed upon the side of the North-loch, rendering what was

originally an ornament of the town, a most insufferable nuisance. No less observable is the great deficiency of public buildings. If the parliament-house, the churches, and a few hospitals, be excepted, what other have we to boast of? There is no exchange for our merchants; no safe repository for our public and private records; no place of meeting for our magistrates and town-council; none for the convention of our boroughs, which is intrusted with the inspection of trade. To these and such other reasons it must be imputed, that so few people of rank reside in this city; that it is rarely visited by strangers; and that so many local prejudices, and narrow notions, inconsistent with polished manners and growing wealth, are still so obstinately retained. To such reasons alone it must be imputed, that EDINBURGH, which ought to have set the first example of industry and improvement, is the last of our trading cities that has shook off the unaccountable supineness which has so long and so fatally depressed the spirit of this nation.

Mr. FLETCHER of Salton, a very spirited and manly author, in his second discourse on the affairs of SCOTLAND, written so long ago as the year 1698, has the same observation.



'As the happy situation of LONDON (says he) has been the principal cause of the glory and riches of ENGLAND; so the bad situation of EDINBURGH has been one great occasion of the poverty and uncleanness in which the greater part of the people of SCOTLAND live.'

To enlarge and improve this city, to adorn it with public buildings, which may be a national benefit, and thereby to remove, at least in some degree, the inconvenience to which it has hitherto been liable, is the sole object of these proposals. Before we enter upon a more particular explanation of them, it will be proper to mention the motives which have induced us at this time to offer them to the consideration of the public.

At no period surely did there ever appear a more general, or a better directed zeal for the improvement and prosperity of this country. Persons of every rank and denomination seem at length to be actuated by a truly public and national spirit. Private men who adventure to propose schemes for the public good, are no longer ridiculed as vain projectors; nor are the more extensive undertakings of societies and companies condemned without examination, as the engines merely of the factious and designing. Had we therefore this general spirit of

our countrymen for our sole encouragement, we might rest assured that our proposals would meet with no unfavourable reception. But when we consider the rapid progress which our trade and manufactures have actually made within these few years, and attentively compare the present state of this country as to these particulars, with what it was in former times, we are persuaded, that an attempt to enlarge and beautify this metropolis, will now at length be deemed necessary. To trace the gradual advancement or decay of our trade and manufactures, through the several revolutions which this kingdom has experienced, would far exceed the bounds we have prescribed to ourselves: A very few observations will sufficiently answer our present purpose ... before the Union of the crowns in the person of James VI the arts of peace were but little known or cultivated. Before that period, even those kingdoms which have since ingrossed the trade of the world, had made but very inconsiderable advances ... amidst the distractions which constantly prevailed in this country, we had neither leisure nor inclination to improve those arts, which are generally the offspring of quiet times, and a well-ordered state....

Few persons of any rank, in those days, frequented our towns. The manners

of our peers, of our barons, and chiefs of families, were not formed to brook that equality which prevails in cities. The solitary grandeur of a country-life. at their own seats, and amidst their own vassals, suited better with the stateliness and pride of those petty sovereigns. EDINBURGH, though perhaps it might be styled the capital, yet in reality possessed none of those advantages by which a capital is really distinguished. Though strengthened by the castle at one end, and a lake on each side, yet was it too near ENGLAND to be thought perfectly secure....

The union of the two kingdoms, an event equally beneficial to both nations, is the great era from which we may justly date the revival of that spirit and activity which the union of the crowns had well nigh suppressed.... In some parts of the country, indeed, both trade and manufactures were, from about that time, very remarkably increased; yet in EDINBURGH and the neighbourhood of it, there was still a total stagnation. But since the year 1746, when the rebellion was suppressed, a most surprising revolution has happened in the affairs of this country.... Husbandry, manufactures, general commerce, and the increase of useful people, are become the objects of universal attention....

The meanness of EDINBURGH has been

too long an obstruction to our improvement, and a reproach to SCOTLAND. The increase of our people, the extension of our commerce, and the honour of the nation, are all concerned in the success of this project. As we have such powerful motives prompting us to undertake it; so chance has furnished us with the fairest opportunity of carrying it into execution. Several of the principal parts of the town are now lying in ruins. Many of the old houses are decayed; several have been already pulled down, and probably more will soon be in the same condition. If this opportunity be neglected, all hopes of remedying the inconveniences of this city are at an end....

The extending the royalty, and enlargement of the town, make no doubt the most important article. So necessary and so considerable improvement of the capital cannot fail to have the greatest influence on the general prosperity of the nation. It is a vulgar mistake, that the greatest part of our principal families chuse to reside at LONDON. This indeed is true with regard to a few of our members of parliament, and some particular families who were settled there before the union. The rest go only occasionally; and if their stay be long, and their expense by consequence greater than this country

can well bear, it must be entirely imputed to the present form and situation of EDINBURGH. Were these in any tolerable degree remedied, our people of rank would hardly prefer an obscure life at LONDON, to the splendour and influence with which might reside at home. An uninterrupted country-life, is what they will never be brought to submit to. Attention to the forming of an interest, the pleasures of retirement, or a taste for agriculture, may induce them possibly to pass some part of their time at their country-seats; more cannot reasonably be expected. It might indeed be otherwise in ancient times, when the feudal customs prevailed, with their large dependancies and extensive jurisdictions. The institution of our government is now different: our manners must be different also. A nation cannot at this day be considerable, unless it be opulent. Wealth is only to be obtained by trade and commerce, and these are only carried on to advantage in populous cities. There also we find the chief objects of pleasure and ambition, and there consequently all those will flock whose circumstances can afford it. But can we expect, that persons of fortune in SCOTLAND will exchange the handsome seats they generally possess in the country, for the scanty lodging, and

paltry accommodations they must put up with in EDINBURGH? It is not choice, but necessity, which obliges them to go so frequently to LONDON. Let us improve and enlarge this city, and possibly the superior pleasures of LONDON, which is at a distance, will be compensated, at least in some measure, by the moderate pleasures of EDINBURGH, which is at home.

It has been objected, that this project may occasion the centre of the town to be deserted. But of this there can be no hazard. People of fortune, and of certain rank, will probably chuse to build upon the fine fields which lie to the north and south of the town: but men of professions and business of every kind, will still incline to live in the neighbourhood of the exchange, of the courts of justice, and other places of public resort; and the number of this last class of men will increase in a much greater proportion, than that of the former. Turin, Berlin, and many other cities, show the truth of this observation. In these cities, what is called the new town, consists of spacious streets and large buildings, which are thinly inhabited, and that too by strangers chiefly, and persons of considerable rank; while the old town, though not so near commodious, is more crowded than before these late additions were made. The national advantages which a populous capital

must necessarily produce, are obvious. A great concourse of people brought within a small compass, occasions a much greater consumption than the same number would do dispersed over a wide country. As the consumption is greater so it is quicker and more discernible. Hence follows a more rapid circulation of money and other commodities, the great spring which gives motion to general industry and improvement. The examples set by the capital, the nation will soon follow. The certain consequence is, general wealth and prosperity: the number of useful people will increase; the rents of land rise; the public revenue improve; and, in room of sloth and poverty, will succeed industry and opulence....

Such being the nature and end of these proposals, we can have little doubt but they will meet with general encouragement. Whoever is warmed with a sincere concern for the prosperity of his country, will cheerfully contribute to so national an undertaking. Extensive projects, which little minds are apt to condemn as impracticable, serve only to excite generous spirits to act with greater industry and vigour. Peace is now generally established; the rage of faction in this country is greatly abated: there is a concurrence of almost every circumstance, which can prompt us to

undertake, or enable us to execute great designs. Such of our young men of rank and fortune as are not sunk in low pleasures, must find employment of some kind or other. If the great objects of war and faction no longer present themselves, may they not find a more humane, and not less interesting exercise of their active powers, in promoting and cultivating the general arts of peace? In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, ENGLAND was but a forming state, as SCOTLAND is now. It was then that the spirit of the ENGLISH began to assert itself. Ships were fitted out, nay fleets were equipped, by private gentlemen. In the same manner public buildings were erected, colonies were settled, and new discoveries made. In a lesser degree, the same disposition begins to discover itself in this country. Building bridges, repairing high-roads, establishing manufactures, forming commercial companies, and opening new veins of trade, are employments which have already thrown a lustre upon some of the first names of this country. The little detail of an established commerce, may ingross the attention of the merchant: but it is in prosecution of greater objects, that the leading men of a country ought to exert their power and influence. And what greater object can be presented

to their view, than that of enlarging, beautifying, and improving the capital of their native country? What can redound more to their honour? What prove more beneficial to SCOTLAND, and by consequence to UNITED BRITAIN?...

And whereas an act of parliament will be necessary, in order to annex so much land as shall be thought proper on the north side of the North-Loch (on which streets are to be laid out and houses to be built), to the royalty of EDINBURGH, and also some other parts round the city not now under the royalty, That it shall be in the power of the said Directors, to determine when such act of parliament shall be applied for, and to prepare a proper act, and give proper directions for carrying the same through, and for preparing the streets and avenues to lead from the high-town towards the places to be brought under the royalty."

As well as the moral suasion evident in the above passages, the pamphlet contains four distinct proposals:

- "1. To build upon the ruins on the north side of the High Street, an exchange, with proper accommodation for our merchants.
2. To erect upon the ruins of the Parliament-Close a large building, containing such accommodation as are still wanting for the Courts of Justice, the royal boroughs, and town-council offices for the clerks, proper

apartments for the several registers, and for the Advocates Library.

3. To obtain an Act of Parliament for extending the royalty; to enlarge and beautify the town, by opening new streets to the north and south, removing the markets and shambles and turning the North-Loch into a canal, with walks and terrasses on each side.
4. That the expense of these public works should be defrayed by a national contribution."

The responsibility for carrying out the entire scheme was to be vested in thirty-three Commissioners. Three of these were chosen by the Senators of the College of Justice, two by the Barons of the Exchequer, three by the Faculty of Advocates and three by the Clerks to the Signet, eight by the Magistrates and Town Council (the Lord Provost, Dean of Guild, Treasurer and Deacon-Convener of the Trades were Commissioners ex officio), and ten by those who subscribed to the extent of £5.

The Exchange, the first of the proposals listed (and the first actually implemented), was, of course, intended purely for the benefit of the Edinburgh merchants. Hence it is remarkable that subscriptions were received "not only from all parts of Scotland, but from the Scottish population resident in England, notably in London where the intensive efforts of Lord Provost Drummond met with marked success."¹

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 5

On 4th December 1752 the Commissioners appointed a committee to consider the state of the subscriptions, the several buildings to be erected, and the communications to be made with what shall to them appear necessary towards the erection thereof".¹ A fortnight later it was reported that the subscriptions, including those of the Convention of Royal Burghs and the Clerks to the Signet, amounted to nearly £6,000 - a substantial sum in those days, though not nearly sufficient for the improvements proposed. Renewed efforts were made to gather in contributions. Drummond, assisted by James Ker,² mounted a campaign in London, whilst subscription forms were sent out to every county in Scotland, addressed particularly to "Gentlemen of distinction and publick spirit", and with the intention that "all endeavours should be used with the heritors of this and the counties of East and West Lothian to prevail with them to show a good example to the other counties".

Within a matter of months it seemed fairly clear - especially to Drummond, whose optimism was such that he confidently expected to receive "liberal subscriptions"³ even from Scots now resident abroad - that it was possible to proceed with the first of the four proposals.

1 Minute-Book of Commissioners for carrying out City Improvements, 1752-1761

2 Member of Parliament for Edinburgh in 1753

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 9

Accordingly the Commissioners set up a committee for the express purpose of drafting the necessary legislation for submission to Parliament. The Bill was intended to facilitate the purchase of property near the Market Cross, in order to clear the site for the Exchange,^{*} as well as to secure ground for "opening an easy communication with the High Street from the north, south and west". It received Parliamentary assent in 1753 and empowered the Commissioners to buy at valuation the ground and houses in the area bounded by Writers' Court on the west, Fairholm's Land on the east, the High Street on the south, and the Nor' Loch on the north, being one hundred and fifty feet from east to west, and "comprehending the whole houses and ground northwards from the said south-boundary to the North-Loch".¹ The measure is described as "An Act for Erecting several Publick Buildings in the City of Edinburgh; and to empower the Trustees therein to be mentioned to purchase Lands for that Purpose; and also for Widening and Enlarging the Streets of the said City, and certain Avenues leading thereto"; but it says nothing of the intention to extend the Royalty.

We have already noted that in July 1752 John Adam was commissioned by Lord Provost Drummond to design the Exchange. Whilst the committee was busy with its legislation affecting the site, the architect, with his brother Robert, must have been

¹ Contract of Agreement for building an Exchange in the City of Edinburgh between the Magistrates and Town Council and the Tradesmen, 1754, p. 3

engaged in obtaining estimates of cost from the various tradesmen they were proposing to employ. For, according to the Minute-Book, the Commissioners met on 21st August 1753 to consider estimates submitted by "John and Robert Adam, architects", and by the "Gentlemen of Mary's Chappel" (Patrick Jamieson, mason, Alexander Peter, George Stevenson, John Moubray, wrights, and John Fergus, architect). But although it was unanimously resolved that John Adam's design "shall be the plan according to which the Exchange is to be built", the Adam brothers' estimate of £25,484 was rejected in favour of that of the "Gentlemen of Mary's Chappel; for theirs, besides being lower, appeared additionally attractive to the Commissioners in that they bound themselves to pay four per cent interest on the money advanced to them during the construction period. So the five "Gentlemen" were appointed "undertakers for executing the Exchange agreeable to the aforesaid plan".

The building was to be U-shaped on plan, consisting of "a body of a house $111\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length from out to out, and $51\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad over walls in the centre line ... and two jambs projecting forwards to the south from the ends of said body, 131 feet each, for forming the east and west sides of the Square, with a range of buildings on the south along the sides of the street, 19 feet high from the level of the court ... with an entry in the centre of 10 feet wide ... all to form a square court of 83 feet from south to north, exclusive of a piazza 13 feet deep ... and 89 feet wide from east to west".*

The piazza was intended for the use of the merchants, who would meet there instead of at the Market Cross.

For a building of this period, the accommodation was remarkably heterogeneous and showed a bold speculative spirit. It was to contain "Firstly, ten shops on a line with the street, with rooms over them; secondly, four shops behind the range to the street, with rooms over them; thirdly, seven shops within the Square, with rooms over them; fourthly, ten laigh shops to the street; fifthly, eleven laigh shops within the court; sixthly, two houses on the east wing; seventhly, one house on the west wing; eighthly, three other houses, whereof two on the south end of the wings to the street, and one on the north end of the east wing; ninthly, two printing-houses; tenthly, four dwelling-houses under the level of the court; eleventhly, three coffee-houses; and twelfthly and lastly, a custom-house".¹

Although the Custom House is mentioned last of all, it was really the most important element in the whole project - both financially and physically. Occupying the central position in the plan, it was valued at nearly £6,000 and was to remain the property of the Magistrates, but its twenty rooms were to be leased to the Government at an annual rent of £360. Except for an office for the Chamberlain, all the rest of the property was to be controlled by the undertakers, who were expected to recoup themselves by selling the new shops and houses, but in

1 Contract of Agreement, pp. 11-12

the event suffered considerable financial loss.

The foundation stone of the Exchange was laid on 13th September 1753. For some unexplained reason nothing further happened for nine months, and it was only in June 1754 that building actually began. Even then, progress was slow: the roof was not completed until March 1758. As the last recorded entry in the Minute-Book of the Commissioners is dated 23rd November 1761, it is not possible to determine exactly when the whole building was finished, but it is reasonable to suppose that completion took place some time between 1762 and 1764.

At whatever date building work finally ceased, the undertakers had frequent cause to regret their involvement and must have wished heartily that the Adam brothers had succeeded in gaining the contract, rather than themselves. The Town Council had originally agreed to advance £18,000 to the undertakers, payable in instalments, to ensure their solvency until such time as the properties were ready for sale. The Council had, moreover, obtained from the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank two loans of £5,000 each, free of interest, specifically to finance the building of the Exchange.¹

By contract the sum of £12,950 was due to the undertakers whenever the roof was put on the whole building. They were also entitled to a further £1,010 at the end of each half-year

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 12

thereafter until the total sum of £18,000 was paid. Thus by the summer of 1759 the Magistrates owed the undertakers a sum of no less than £14,970 (the roof sum, together with two amounts of £1,010 payable at Martinmas 1758 and Whitsunday 1759). It was little wonder, then, that the undertakers presented a memorial to the Commissioners on 14th August 1759, pointing out that their expenditure to date amounted to £17,335, whilst all they had received in the way of advances from the Magistrates was £4,100. The Commissioners produced no further money themselves, but merely allowed the proceeds from the sale of certain houses and shops - £6,130.3s.3d. in all - to pass direct to the undertakers, who throughout the contract were obliged to borrow varying sums of money at the recognised rate of five per cent interest.

Things did not improve so far as the undertakers were concerned. By the time the Exchange was ultimately finished, they had still received only £4,100 from the town, and even allowing for moneys obtained from the sale of completed properties, they were more than £2,000 out of pocket. So far as we know, they never recovered this sum.

Two comments may be made regarding the town's position in this matter. First, the failure of the Magistrates to honour the terms of their agreement with the undertakers was evidently unavoidable: public subscriptions in response to the national appeal were not coming in as fast as had been anticipated, and, incredible though it may seem, there was no other sources "from

which the town's indebtedness to the undertakers could be paid".¹ At this time there were two main streams of civic revenue. The first was a miscellaneous one, consisting of the duty on wines; shore dues at Leith; market dues at the vegetable, corn and cattle market, and feu duties. This fund was available for general expenditure. The other stream was derived from the duty of twopence on every pint of beer or ale brewed within, or brought into, the city boundaries. The latter fund was intended primarily for the financing of public works, but for reasons which will be discussed later this source of revenue was declining steadily; and in any case, as already noted in Part One, the town had overspent heavily on public works in the period 1718-1725, as a result of the Leith Docks scheme. So, several years before the first house appeared in the New Town, the city's finances were undoubtedly precarious.

The second point worth noting is a more encouraging one. Despite the losses suffered by the undertakers for the Exchange, the town itself had gained rather than lost on the project, and there was nothing in the financial outcome which would have enabled Drummond's opponents to ridicule the notion of continuing with the proposed civic improvements. By January 1765 all the shops and houses included in the scheme had been sold. The two bank loans were repaid, and a balance of rather more than £200 was handed over by the Commissioners to the Town Council. The

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 18

surplus money, small though it might be, was now available to assist in the financing of another project - the North Bridge - which was absolutely vital if Drummond's vision of a New Town was to be realised.

We saw in Part One that the idea of constructing a bridge over the Nor' Loch was first publicly mooted in 1680 by James, Duke of York. During the next eighty years the need for such a bridge became increasingly more urgent, but effective action was not finally taken until 1763. In the spring of that year Lord Kames, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, wrote a letter to the Town Council urging them to proceed with the bridge, lest the town should spread southwards beyond their jurisdiction:

"For obtaining a commodious passage from the town to the neighbouring fields on the north, the following proposal is made to the Town Council: The Town of Edinburgh, by the industry of its inhabitants, and by the growing relish for Society among the nobility and gentry, has of late years been much improved both as to the number of inhabitants and as to its buildings. All the vacant areas within the Town have been covered with houses, and yet the demand for ground to build on is as great as ever. The fields mentioned are of the most commodious for enlarging the Town; partly by stretching towards Leith the port of Edinburgh and partly by making the Town more square and compact, and yet for want of a commodious passage

to these fields the arrears to the south of the Town are the only resources for building upon, and those will soon be filled with houses not subject to the jurisdiction of the Town unless the Council interpose by facilitating a passage to the north which at once will afford sufficient space for enlarging the Town within its own property. It was in this view that a purchase was lately made from Heriot's Hospital the benefit of which purchase has hitherto been prevented by the difficulties of procuring money to effectuate this passage. For tho' by feus for building upon, the revenue of the Town will be greatly augmented, yet this addition to the revenue depends upon a commodious passage, and the Town it seems is not in a condition to advance the expense, however beneficial the measure may prove.

Upon viewing the hollow betwixt the Town and the fields mentioned, and calculating the height to which it must be filled up for an easy passage, the most frugal manner of execution in the opinion of good judges, is to raise four arches to the height of sixty feet or near it upon the hollowest part, and to fill up both ends of the passage with earth. The expense of this work will not exceed £3400, which sum is proposed to be raised by subscription, and no more is demanded on the part of the subscriber than a security from the Town upon the surplus rents that

shall be raised by the building for payment of the money advanced with interest. In order to encourage the subscribers it is accepted that the largest subscription to the number of six shall be rewarded with a choice of areas to build on, at a moderate rate to be fixed by the Town Council and the Council will find it their interest to make the rate moderate, not only for soliciting subscriptions but also for encouraging people to purchase, and the price of the areas may afterwards be raised in proportion to the demand. It is thought that the space under one or at most two of the arches will make an excellent flesh market, having a free ventilation and covered from the sun and rain. It is expected that whatever rents be raised from these areas the subscribers shall be secured in them, also for their payment."¹

The Town Council resolved to construct the bridges, but the remainder of the proposal was held over for consideration. Lord Kames' estimate of £3,400 proved very wide of the mark, as we shall see, though he could not have foreseen the structural failure which was to ensue within a few years.

The Nor' Loch had been drained in 1762² and a plan for a

1 TCM 9th March 1763

2 An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Edinburgh, p. lxxiii

bridge must have been prepared some time in the following year, as this newspaper advertisement seems to show:

"As it is greatly desired, for the public utility, that a road of communication be made betwixt the High-street of Edinburgh, and the adjacent grounds belonging to the city and the other neighbouring fields, as well as to the port of Leith, by building a stone bridge over the east end of the North Loch, at least forty feet wide betwixt the parapets of the said bridge, and upon an equal declivity of one foot in sixteen from the High-street, at the Cap and Feather-close, in a straight line to the opposite side leading to Multrees-Hill.

As the proposal for carrying on the above work was some time ago made to the Town-council, and they having cheerfully agreed to the same, this advertisement is publicly given to all who are willing to undertake the said work, to give in plans, elevations, estimates, etc., be put into the hands of Mr. George Fraser, Deputy Auditor of Excise, before the 25th day of July instant, that the work may be commenced this very season. And it is realised that a subscription be forthwith opened, for a voluntary contribution, as gratuitously as by way of loan, for carrying on the Bridge over the North-Loch; subscriptions will be taken in by the Town clerks of Edinburgh, where any person willing to subscribe will see the conditions, and the proposals upon which they are to lend their money; and so soon as there shall be a sufficient sum subscribed, the subscribers shall be duly advertised to meet,

in order to make choice of proper persons as Trustees, for carrying what is proposed into execution.

N.B. - A plan of the intended bridge may be seen in the hands of the above Mr. George Fraser, from which any undertaker may make his calcul [sic] and proposals.

The Magistrates and Council of the city of Edinburgh, hereby intimate to all gentlemen, farmers, and others, that they are at full liberty to take and carry off the dung and fulzie of the North-loch, immediately, and that without payment or other gratuity therefor."¹

For a time preparations for the bridge seemed to be going well. In September 1765 the Lord Provost reported that suitable stone was available from a quarry in Bearford's Parks; the mud and dung in the bed of the Nor' Loch had been cleared away, and experts who had been asked to examine the trial pit were satisfied that the foundation was good clay.² A model of a brander (gridiron) was produced by Mr. John Fraser, and, after being tested in situ with two courses of stone laid over it, was pronounced to be "fully sufficient to carry any bridge that might be built."³

1 The Caledonian Mercury, 2nd July 1763

2 TCM 14th September 1763

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 191

On 21st October, with great ceremony, the foundation stone was laid:

"Yesterday being appointed for laying the foundation stone of the new bridge over the North-loch, the ancient and honourable fraternity of Free-masons, in order to promote by their influence and example an undertaking so important, and so promisingly advantageous to this city, assembled in the parliament house at two o'clock in the afternoon, from whence about three, they walked in procession down the High-street to the ground, by the way of Leith-wynd ...

All the brethren were new cloathed; the masters and wardens of the respective lodges forming the last ranks, in their proper cloathing, jewels, and other badges of dignity.

Immediately preceeding the Grand Lodge, walked a body of about thirty of the brethren who sung the whole way several fine airs, accompanied by French-horns, etc.

Being arrived at the place (a few paces to the northward of the New-port), the brethren formed a large circle round the Grand-lodge, and everything being prepared, the stone was laid with great solemnity and ceremony, by the Right Honourable George Drummond, Esq., Lord Provost of this City, who officiated as Grand-master, in absence of the Right Honourable the Earl of Elgin; - the repeated acclamations

of the brethren, and of a most numerous concourse of spectators, expressing the pleasure they felt on seeing this noble work at last so happily commenced. - The whole concluded with an anthem, about five o'clock, when the brethren repaired to the Assembly-hall, where this important event was celebrated with that social harmony and joy, which so peculiarly characterises the ancient and honourable craft. - It was computed there were present near six hundred brethren."¹

Drummond, acting as Past Grand Master, declared the stone "well and truly laid". In the course of his speech he referred to the programme of civic improvements and modestly pointed out that "he was only beginning to execute what the Duke of York had suggested so far back as 1618 when residing at Holyrood ... but no one from the time of the Revolution had thought of putting in practice those plans which James had formed."²

It has often been said that Drummond deliberately concealed the real purpose of the bridge, so as not to re-awaken opposition to his further plans, and presented it merely as a new route to Leith, avoiding the devious journey via the Nether Bow Port and the Low Calton. Whatever the

1 TCM 22nd October 1763

2 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. IV, p. 50

truth about Drummond's conduct of the bridge affair, there is no doubt that the idea of extending the Royalty was calculated to arouse bitter antagonism in some quarters during the 1750's and '60s.

Before continuing the narrative of the North Bridge, it is pertinent to recount the Town Council's efforts to obtain proper sanction for the enlargement of the Royalty. In 1759 the Town Council had arranged for a survey of the area which was to be appropriated:

"In view of feus and long leases specially of Heriot's and Trinity Hospitals, and buildings of houses already built or about to be built whereby the burgesses of Edinburgh may be undersold in trade etc., the Royalty ought to be extended by Act of Parliament, Mr. Fergus, Mr. Lesly and Mr. Scot, architects and land surveyors, are to make a survey, map and plan of lands to be included in the extended Royalty."¹

The persons who could be relied on to oppose any enlargement of the city were, of course, the proprietors and feuars of the lands lying to the north. In an attempt to argue the case for the extension of the Royalty, a meeting

1 TCM 18th April 1759

was convened in July 1759 at which the following proposals were laid before the heritors of the shire:

"GENERAL HEADS relating to the intended Enlargement of the Limits of the City of Edinburgh

I. That the boundaries of this intended Enlargement of the Limits of the City may comprehend as follows: viz. The lands lying on the north-side of the public road leading from the West-port to the Colt-bridge, and from thence down to Leith, keeping the Water of Leith for the march, including no lands on the north thereof, but such as belong to Heriot's hospital: That South and North-Leith, and the links of Leith, shall be included; and from hence up the coach-road to the Water-gate, including no lands on the east-side of the coach-road, but such as belong to Heriot's hospital and the Trinity hospital: And, as these Limits on the north are pretty extensive, those on the south may be more restricted, but so as to comprehend at least the Meadow, and Bruntsfield's links, which are the property of the City. - It is proposed also, that the Enlargement should comprehend all the feus granted by Heriot's or the Trinity hospital, where the feuars, by their charters, are bound, in the event of an extension of the Royalty of the city of Edinburgh, to bear a proportion of the public burdens and taxes of the City.

II. That even within these Limits nothing shall be declared by the Act to be included as a part of the City, except such lands as are at present the property of the city of Edinburgh, or

which may hereafter become the property of that City: but, that the Trustees to be named in the Act shall have a power of including within the Enlargement of the City, the lands of such heritors, lying within the general Limits aforesaid, as shall, at any time afterwards, be willing to enter into an agreement with the Trustees for that purpose.

III. That the lands which shall be so included within the Limits of the Town, shall remain subject, as before, to a proportion of the cess imposed upon the county; and that all houses which are now built upon these lands, or which before the date of the Act may be built thereon, shall pay no higher cess, or other public burden, than what they are at present subject to pay.

IV. That no part of the lands to be included within the Limits of the Town, shall be feued out by the Town-council, without the consent of the Trustees, or a quorum of them.

V. That no stent, or other public burden, shall be imposed upon these who shall inhabit within the new Limits, without the like consent.

VI. That persons intending to build, or to take down houses within the new Limits, shall be intitled so to do, upon application to the Trustees, and obtaining their authority; but that, without applying for such authority, every person shall be intitled to build walls or other fences for inclosures, as at present.

VII. That all the privileges of the corporations, as now exercised within the present Town, shall remain entire and unhurt. - That every person, who shall reside within the new Limits, shall, by such residence, and upon payment of £1 sterling for

a burgess-ticket, become a burgess and free-man within these Limits only, but not within the limits of the present Town; provided, that all burgesses and free-men of the present Town shall be held as burgesses and free-men within the new Limits, by virtue of their present Burgess-tickets, without payment of any sum whatsoever."

As Drummond no doubt apprehended, the General Heads did not allay the fears of the county landowners. Indeed, the meeting seems to have generated a good deal of further debate, as one contemporary document shows:

"1. The public revenue now raised from the inhabitants, which consists of the annuity, watch-money, and impost on liquors, will increase in proportion to the increase of the inhabitants. But new churches must be built and endowed, the number of the city-guard or watchmen must be augmented, and streets of the new city and the bridge to be built over the North Loch must be paved and lighted, which will more than counter-balance the increase of these funds.

The inhabitants in the new city will have a much greater space proportionately than those in the old, as every family in the new city is to have a whole house, which will render a greater number of watchmen necessary; and as the new city is not to be walled, the impost cannot, as now, be collected at the city gates, but the merchant must pay or give bond for it at Leith, and get a drawback for such

parts of it as shall not be considered within the liberties, which will be an embarrassment on trade, and open a door for frauds.

2. The advantages proposed for the old city are: a free communication to the north and west by a bridge to the erected over the North Loch; and a relief in part of public taxes, from the new city; but the Trustees for the Edinburgh public works had resolved to build a bridge, whether the city Extension should take place or not. So that the advantages arising from the bridge are quite independent of the Extension; and as to relief from taxes, the annuity, watch-money, and impost on liquors having been already considered, the only remaining subject is the Cess. This tax is raised from the land and Royal burghs. The sum to be raised by the burghs, is proportioned on the several burghs by the annual convention, according to the trade and wealth of each. So that the Cess to be paid by Edinburgh must increase in proportion as the trade and wealth increase.

3. As the inhabitants of the new city are not to be free-men of the old one, the only advantages to be reaped by them are: the convenience of churches; well-paved and lighted streets; and security to their persons and houses by an augmentation of the city-guard. But let the valuable considerations, to be paid for these benefits, be considered. The poor artificer, who can at present work in his own cottage upon payment of a small rent, must either pay twenty shillings for his freedom, or remove. The landholder, who now pays only a proportion of the Cess of the county must pay an additional cess for every house he shall build after date of

the Act, while the houses in his neighbourhood, built prior to that period, will be free from that tax.

No landholder can neither [sic] build nor pull down a house, without a licence from the Trustees.

The nobleman or gentleman who resides in the Limits to be comprehended in the Royalty, is to be loaded with the Town's impost on his foreign liquors - a tax he grudges more than all the taxes he pays, as it comes immediately out of his own pocket, and he thinks it hardship to pay a tax for the support of a city in which he spends his money and enjoys none of the city's privileges; and all the inhabitants of the new city shall pay annuity."¹

We do not have any record of the further discussions, both public and private, which must have ensued during the next few months. But the Town Council had only two courses of action open to them at this juncture: either tacitly to drop the scheme for extending the Royalty, or to try to counter some of the opposition's objections. They chose the latter. The General Heads were published in the form of a pamphlet on 6th March 1760, together with an appendix summarising the objections and giving the Lord Provost's replies:

¹ Scots Magazine 1759, quoted in Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, pp. 184-5

"N.B. - At a General Meeting of the Heritors of the County, held upon the 30th July last, in order to consider of this intended Extension, several material particulars, in which the Shire are interested, were properly taken care of.

One was, That the City of Edinburgh was at present exempted by law from the quartering of soldiers; and, if the proposed Extension was to have the like privilege, it would throw an additional burden of quartering upon the County.

As to this, the Lord Provost assured the Meeting, That there was no such intention, and that the new Limits should be subject to the quartering of soldiers as formerly.

Another particular was mentioned, That if the Extension took place, wine and other liquors, which are now subject to the Town's impost, might, in passing through those new Limits, be made subject to such impost.

To this the Lord Provost answered, That no wine or other liquors passing through the City at present are subject to the Town's impost, but are allowed to pass, upon getting a permit; and that the like would certainly be the case, if the Extension shall take place.

A third observation was very properly made, That the Extension should not comprehend any Gentleman's freehold from the Crown; and certainly no such freehold can be included within a Royalty.

These particulars are taken notice of here, to satisfy the Gentlemen of the County, that every interest of theirs will be most carefully preserved; as the Enlargement proposed is most sincerely meant for the mutual advantage of the County and the City."

Such pleading on the part of the Lord Provost did not, unfortunately, quench the shire's heated opposition. As we shall see, the city was not successful in obtaining Parliamentary approval for the extension of the Royalty until as late as 1767, by which time Drummond himself was no longer alive.

We must remember, too, that the Lord Provost had responsibilities other than the projected New Town. In 1760 a water crisis arose in Edinburgh. The city's supplies had been scarcely adequate for some time, and by an Act of 1757 the Town Council were empowered to obtain water from springs on the Mortonhall estate. The proprietor, however, refused access altogether and retreated behind prolonged legislation. Eventually the situation became so critical that Drummond was compelled to petition Parliament. In his letter to James Oswald of Dunnikier, seeking support for the petition, we can see his intense concern for the city and its people:

"You have, I dare say, somehow or other, heard how much this city were [sic] distressed for want of water for these last five months: our pit-wells were, a good many of them, quite dry, so that our brewers were, many of them, forced to bring their water at some distance out of town. Our springs at Comiston, three miles south of the town, from whence our fountains on the street are supplied, gave so little water, that almost one half of the inhabitants were obliged to buy water from off

the farmers' carts ... Three years ago we got an act of Parliament to supply the town with water from a place above a mile south of our present reservoir. The ground belongs to Trotter of Mortonhall, whose madness, etc., nobody in this country is a stranger to. He is living in a garret in Petersburg at present, but has given orders to his doer here to oppose our getting this water every possible way he can ... Will the House, on the case being justly represented to them, on which no less than the lives and properties of the whole of the inhabitants may, in certain events, depend, be prevailed on to allow our petition to be brought in? For God's sake, sir, consider of this matter, and save this city from ruin, if it's possible."¹

Again, shortly after Drummond had entered on his last year of office as Lord Provost in 1763, he found himself confronted with an equally serious civic emergency: the threat of rioting in the city as a result of the scarcity of food. For some years past the crops had been "wretchedly poor",² and as oatmeal was the staple food in Scotland at this time, the result was inevitably a famine. In some cases dealers or growers who had grain to sell were holding it in the expectation of prices rising still higher. A serious riot

1 Memorials of James Oswald of Dunnikier, pp. 136-9

2 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. IV, p. 52

broke out in November 1763 in the Meal Market, which was then situated "eastward of the back stairs leading down to the Cowgate from the Parliament Close".¹ The merchants were suspected of withholding what supplies they had. On the evening of the 21st November a large mob proceeded to the girnals in the Meal Market, carried off all the grain that was there, rifled the keeper's house and smashed all the furniture that was not carried off. At mid-night, after the arrival of some companies of infantry from the Castle, the mob dispersed. The following day they returned to the Meal Market and were dispersed only by the presence of "the Provost (George Drummond), bailies, train-band, constables, a party of military, and the city guard".² The scarcity of oatmeal continued to be felt severely in the city for some time, but the Magistrates, "acting vigorously under Drummond's personal influence",³ used every means to have the market well supplied with meal.

To return to the narrative of the North Bridge, after the ceremony of laying the foundation stone had taken place - exactly as in the case of the Royal Exchange - nothing further happened for about a year. It is only in November 1764 that we find any mention of the bridge in the Council records, and this tells us merely that the appointment of a

1 Ibid.

2 J. Grant, Old and New Edinburgh, vol. II, p. 246

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. IV, p. 53

Bridge Committee had been approved,¹ consisting of the Lord Provost, the four bailies, the Dean of Guild, the Treasurer, "Old Bailie" Andrew Alison, with William Mylne² as Convener.

The setting up of this new committee implies that the plans on which the first estimates were based had not proved satisfactory. This conjecture is confirmed by the appearance two months later of the following advertisement:

"The Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Edinburgh, being sensible of the great advantage which will accrue to this city and to the public in general from having a proper communication between the High Street and the fields on the north, have unanimously resolved to follow out the design of making one, and have appointed a committee of their number for carrying the scheme into execution.

This public notice is therefore made, inviting all architects and others to give in plans and elevations for making a communication, by bridge or otherwise, for the Cap-and-Feather Close, in a straight line to the opposite side, leading to the Multer's Hill, with an equal declivity of one foot in eighteen to one in seventeen. Such persons as intend to give in plans and elevations must send

1 TCM 7th November 1764

2 William Mylne was one of the famous family of architects and engineers, whose history can be traced in The Master Masons of the Crown of Scotland

them sealed, addressed to the Lord Provost, to the care of Mr. James Tait, or Mr. Alexander Duncan, Depute Town Clerks, at the Council Chamber, on or before the first day of February next. Within the plan, upon a separate piece of paper, sealed up, the person offering the plan will write his name, the seal of which paper is not to be broke [sic] up, unless the plan it belongs to is approven.

The person whose plan is approved of will receive thirty guineas, or a medal of that value. - When a plan is fixed upon, it will be made public, and intimation will be given in the news papers, inviting Architects or others, to give in proposals for executing the same; the lowest of which will be preferred, upon sufficient security being found for the execution of the work.

It is expected that the plans to be given in will be done in such a manner, that the estimates of the expence [sic] may be made from them; and it is required that the breadth of the bridge, betwixt the parapet, be forty feet."¹

A further advertisement was published in February 1765, announcing the Trustees' findings and inviting tenders for the work:

"The Trustees did accordingly meet upon Wednesday the 13th ult. with several other noblemen and Gentlemen of knowledge and taste in architecture;

1 Edinburgh Advertiser, vol. III, p. 22

and, after examining, with great attention and deliberation, all the plans given in, among which were found several of great merit, they at length gave the preference to the plans marked No. 5 and No. 7. It was then proposed, by several of the Judges, to divide the premium; but this proposal being contrary to the terms of the advertisement, the same was laid aside. Before determining between the two plans above mentioned, it was unanimously agreed, that whatever plan should be preferred, that the bridge most proper for the town to build, and best calculated for giving an easy access between the High-street and Multrees-hill, was a bridge upon a horizontal line. The question being put, a preference was given to plan No. 7; and, upon breaking up the sealed paper, covering the name of the author of said plan, there was found written, upon a slip of parchment, David Henderson, who is entitled to the premium offered by the advertisement."¹

Architects and others were asked to give in signed proposals for carrying out the work according to either of the two preferred plans, no. 5 or no. 7. A maximum construction period was specified of three years.

But this was not the end of the advertisements. On 13th March a notice appeared cancelling the former ones and stating that a new proposal had appeared which merited great attention.

1 Ibid.

A week later undertakers were invited to consider plan no. 8, along with the others.

Finally on 17th July 1765, it was announced that William Mylne's plan (no. 5) was accepted, and the contract between Mylne, as undertaker for the bridge, and the Magistrates was signed on 27th August.* The work was to be completed by Martinmas 1769, and was to be maintained for a period of ten years, all for the sum of £10,140.

There were to be three arches of 72 feet and two of 20 feet span. The piers were 13 feet 6 inches thick. The length of the bridge was 1134 feet overall and the width between the parapets 40 feet. The height to the springing of the arches was 20 feet, or 56 feet to their crowns, and from the ground to the top of the parapet almost 70 feet.

Progress under Mylne's direction was quite good. Now that the construction was at last under way, the City Chamberlain began to feel concerned about subscriptions:

"The Bridge over the North Loch, being now in great forwardness, it is expected, that the subscribers for the public works will order the several balances, due by them, of their subscription money, to be paid in to Hugh Buchan, Chamberlain to the city of Edinburgh, at the Chamberlain's office, in the west front of the New Exchange."¹

¹ Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXII, p. 197

* 11, 12

The first of the three great arches was completed on 1st June 1768 and the last on 7th December.* Early in 1769 the bridge was open, at least to pedestrian traffic. But in August of that year a disaster followed:

"About half-an-hour after eight in the evening of Thursday August 3rd, part of the side-walls of the south abutment of the bridge now building at Edinburgh, gave way all of a sudden. As people were constantly passing along this bridge the town was very greatly alarmed, for it could not be immediately known who had suffered by the disaster, though it was almost certain that several must have suffered, therefore everyone was anxious to know if their friends and acquaintances had escaped. One or two were hurt and five perished ... by digging in the rubbish, the bodies were found at different times. All the arches of the bridge are entire."¹

Emergency meetings of the Bridge Committee and the Town Council were called. As a result of these discussions, a special technical committee, consisting of J. Smeaton, John Adam and John Baxter, was appointed to advise on the best method of carrying out repairs and ensuring the future stability of the structure. The remedial work undertaken by Robert Mylne is described in the following report prepared for the Council in 1773:

1 Ibid., p. 198

"The walls and arches of both abutments of the new bridge (excepting the retaining walls of the south end which are of no other use but to keep up the earth, and the retaining wall at the north and next the theatre) were taken down and rebuilt in a most proper and substantial manner. These retaining walls on the south end and the east retaining wall of the north end were not taken down because the inspectors upon oath reported them to be then sufficient. But the magistrates and town-council gave the greatest attention to this matter for the safety of the public, and upon a surmise that the east retaining wall on the south end next Halkerston's Wynd appeared now to be insufficient, the Lord Provost instantly wrote a letter to the Dean of Guild desiring him to inspect that wall which was done. And upon a petition in the name of the procurator-fiscal the Guild Court appointed a jury of 15 unexceptionable persons, narrowly to inspect those three retaining walls, and they have unanimously, upon oath, returned a verdict giving it as their opinion 'with respect to the east retaining wall on the south end next Halkerton's Wynd, from the small arches to the corner of William Home's house, that the said wall is insufficient and dangerous'. The Dean of Guild has caused a rail in that part of the found insufficient, that the public may know the same and take the middle or west side of the bridge ... till as this retaining wall, which has no connection with the body of the bridge, be made sufficient."¹

1 Ibid., p. 199

The bridge was passable again in 1772. Not everyone using it was satisfied even then, owing to the lack of closed balustrades. Apparently a complaint was made in 1783 that "passengers continue to be blown from the pavement into the mud in the middle of the bridge."¹ Though this situation is perhaps hard to visualise, the ferocity of Edinburgh's winds is attested by Arnot's report that in 1778 "the Leith Guard, consisting of a sergeant and twelve men of the 70th Regiment, were all there blown off the Castle Hill, and some of them sorely hurt."²

Despite the disaster of 1769 neither William Mylne nor the Magistrates seem to have suffered great financial loss. Most of the additional cost was borne by the Town Council, who must have gained some consolation, however, from the fact that "areas near the bridge ... were sold for good prices - the Postmaster General for Scotland paid £650 for a site for a post office - and in the end the Town Council probably made rather than lost money."³ But loss of money is one thing, and loss of reputation quite another; Mylne was never asked to carry out any further work in Edinburgh. Fairly soon after the collapse of the bridge, he departed for Dublin, where he settled for the rest of his life, becoming engineer to the city waterworks.

1 J. Grant, Old and New Edinburgh, vol. I, p. 338

2 H. Arnot, The History of Edinburgh, p. 244

3 A.J. Youngson, The Making of Classical Edinburgh, p. 65

The completion of the North Bridge overlaps the commencement of the New Town by a period of five years. This was clearly no fault of Drummond's, for in all his pronouncements and actions the building of the bridge is seen as an essential preliminary to the expansion of the city.

Indeed, before we leave Drummond and turn to the exciting events of 1766 and 1767, we would do well to pay tribute to a truly outstanding man, whose six periods of office as Lord Provost left an indelible imprint on the city he served - nowhere more than in the New Town. Even "Claudero", alias James Wilson, the contemporary satirist whose pungent lampoons were the scourge of public figures in Edinburgh, had nothing derogatory to say about Drummond:

"The Chief Magistrate is devoted to the service of the city, and its glory is his greatest aim. Disinterested are his views; his noble plans proclaim his merit, and his memory shall be dear to posterity."¹

Drummond retired from the Town Council in November 1764, after nearly fifty years' service, and shortly afterwards withdrew also from the Commissionership of Excise, a post he had held since 1738. In November 1766 he died at Drummond Lodge, in his eightieth year. It was at this time that Dr. William

1 J. Wilson, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse by Claudero, Son of Nimrod the Mighty Hunter*, p. 55

Cullen dismissed his medical class at the University before the conclusion of the hour, with the explanation that he was going to attend the funeral of "the greatest character Edinburgh saw."¹

No monument to his memory stands in the streets or squares of the city. But a man of his stature does not need a conventional memorial. Perhaps the measure of his achievement is most powerfully epitomised in an appreciation which appeared some years after his death:

"No Magistrate of any city ever left behind him more lasting monuments of patriotic spirit, or held that dignity with more activity for the public good ... The Royal Infirmary, the Exchange, and the New Town of Edinburgh itself were either executed or planned by him while in office. He changed the face of the metropolis, and from a mass of ruinous and neglected buildings brought it into rivalry with the first cities of Europe."²

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club. vol. XXVII, p. 2

2 Scots Magazine, vol. LXIV, pp. 375-384, 466-470

PART THREE

**THE COMPETITION OF 1766 AND THE
BUILDING OF THE FIRST NEW TOWN**

August, around, what PUBLIC WORKS I see!
 Lo, stately streets! lo, Squares that court the breeze!
 See long Canals and deepened Rivers join
 Each part with each, and with the circling Main,
 The whole entwined Isle.

James Thomson

The Competition of 1766

Although George Drummond never witnessed either the opening of the North Bridge or the raising of the first house in the New Town, the last year of his life must have been gladdened by news which reached him of the competition held in the spring of 1766. This was not really an architectural competition, as it has sometimes been described, but rather a town-planning one, and, as such, perhaps the most important ever held in Britain during the period when the language of architecture was spoken with a classical inflexion. But before examining the competition and its consequences, we ought first to review the progress of the moves towards the extension of the Royalty, and then to look at the features of the New Town site as it was when "there were thatched cottages there ... and farms, where corn was sown and reaped, where pigs grunted in styes or roamed in the yard; where fowls laid eggs ... and ducks drove their broods into the North Loch, where the trap caught eels and the otter and water-rat lurked amid the

sedges, and where cattle browsed on the upland slopes that were crested by the line of the Lang Dykes."¹

We have seen that in 1763 Lord Kames wrote to the Town Council urging them to proceed with the North Bridge scheme as quickly as possible, before the natural growth of the town caused building to take place in areas outside the jurisdiction of the Council. In looking at the development of George Square later on, we shall find that Kames' apprehension was well founded, but meanwhile it is interesting to note that precisely the same argument is used three years later to hasten the extension of the Royalty:

"The opening of communication with those grounds where there are proper areas for erecting buildings is necessary as well for the benefit of trade and commerce as for the conveniency and health of the inhabitants of late greatly increased. Unless the Royalty is extended over these grounds, the greater part of the inhabitants may be induced to retire to the New Town and take up their residence there from a view of being there relieved of the Cess and other public burdens laid upon the trade and prosperity of the city, whereby the present city and its remaining inhabitants must suffer greatly."²

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 114

2 TCM 17th January 1766

When Drummond died on 4th November 1766, the matter was still unresolved. His successor as Lord Provost sent the following letter a month later to the Lord President:

"My Lord, - As a Bill is proposed to be brought into Parliament this session, for annexing certain lands on the north of the City (their own property, or belonging to Heriot's hospital) to our royalty, we could wish that it might be so framed, as that all parties having interest may concur in the application. If your Lordship would take the trouble, as Conveener [sic], to call a county meeting to consider of this matter, it will be highly obliging to this community ...

Gilb. Laurie, Provost."¹

During the next three months no less than forty-seven further letters passed from, or into, the Lord Provost's office in connection with the proposed Bill. Most of these are concerned either with a certain Mr. Dickson, who was the lessee of forty valuable acres where Princes Street now stands and who objected vehemently to his land being included in the Royalty; or with the Earl of Morton, who as Lord Register was obsessed with the notion of building a Register Office of Scotland on "the highest level ground" of the new lands, and who therefore obstructed the proposals in every way possible. But

1 Letter from Gilbert Laurie, Lord Provost, to the Lord President (Robert Dundas of Arniston) 13th September 1766

there are just two letters with interesting architectural overtones. The first contains the following paragraph:

"Mr. Mylne, the Architect, is very zealous to have some clause in the bill with regard to the Building the Houses, which seems to me necessary unless the town are already possessed of powers within themselves, to make the proper restrictions. He has also communicated to me an idea of his which I think merits consideration, that a Clause should be put in the bill empowering the Magistrates (with proper consent) to move the Colledge [sic] to the New Town when thought eligible, but perhaps such a power already exists, as to which I should be glad of information, as also with respect to the other public buildings of the City, which perhaps you may think eligible to have a power of removing."¹

It is not surprising that an architect should be concerned about the conditions under which the new houses might be built, but it is certainly remarkable that at this stage, when not a single house has been built, Mylne is already considering the University and other public institutions being transferred to the New Town. The reply to this letter is more cautious:

"We are obliged to Mr. Mylne for suggesting what may tend to perfect the Bill.

1 Letter from J. Coutts to the Lord Provost, 5th February 1767

What he proposes may very probably one day take place with respect to moving the College to the New Town and some other public building, but there is no necessity of introducing a clause in the Bill to empower the magistrates to that effect as such power already exists, nor doth it seem necessary to insert a Clause with regard to the form of building private houses as the Town has power to regulate that matter when feuing the ground, besides any general rule from which the Town could not depart might prove hurtful in many particular cases."¹

Thanks to diligent lobbying behind the scenes on the part of some of the Scottish Members, the Bill for the extension of the Royalty received Parliamentary approval on 22nd April 1767.

The site of the proposed New Town, which must have seemed a veritable promised land to the pent-up inhabitants of the Royal Mile, had certain limiting features: some topographical, others in the form of existing property boundaries.

The chosen site extended for about three-quarters of a mile from east to west, along a low broad ridge of which the side facing the Nor' Loch was steeper than that which faced the Forth, about two miles distant. Just beyond the eastern limit, and in line with the North Bridge route, lay Multree's

1 Letter from the Lord Provost to J. Coutts, 10th February 1767

Hill, scarcely higher than the ridge itself and destined later to be developed as St. James' Square. The whole of this area was sharply separated from Calton Hill on the east by a deep crescent-shaped valley - almost a ravine - not unlike that which lies between Castle Terrace and the Castle Rock. The road to Leith, which crossed the Royal Mile just east of the Netherbow Port, skirted the eastern side of Trinity College Church, entered the valley and then climbed its western side before joining the "Foot Walk to Leith."¹ A short distance to the north, the road forked and the left-hand branch led to the small village of Broughton.*

Running from the Leith road across Multree's Hill and continuing westwards was an almost straight country road, the Lang Dykes. Long famous as the exit taken by Claverhouse and his troopers as they rode off towards the Highlands in 1689, this was virtually on the line now occupied by Rose Street. It served then as a "somewhat primitive bypass"² linking the roads from the west and north-west with those from the north and east, that is, from Leith and Haddington. A less important track known as Gabriel's Road³ started from the east end of the Lang Dykes and ran in a north-westerly direction towards Canon Mills on the Water of Leith.

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXIII, p. 3

2 Ibid.

3 A fragment of the line of this road can still be traced in Register Passage

The area was intersected by other isolated routes, such as Kirk Loan,¹ which led northwards from St. Cuthbert's Church to Stockbridge, and the fork on the Water of Leith at the back of the present Malta Terrace, where it joined the continuation of Gabriel's Road. Finally there was the road to Queensferry, which at that time descended into a deep hollow at Bell's Mills before continuing towards the Forth.

The Town Council had managed to acquire almost all the land required for expansion, but for reasons unknown today they were unsuccessful in the case of Clelland's Feu - an omission which had an important effect on the planning of the eastern end of the New Town, as we shall see later.

The Queensferry Road formed the western boundary of the extended Royalty, which, after skirting the south-west side of St. Cuthbert's burial ground, turned due north for a short distance on the line of the future Lothian Road and then turned north-west again just before meeting the Lang Dykes.* Before reaching the south end of the future Randolph Crescent, the boundary line left the Queensferry Road and followed an irregular course north-eastward, along the edge of a parcel of land later purchased by an astute Earl of Moray. It then turned south-east towards the future Princes Street and performed two more right-angle turns to exclude Lord Barjarg's Feu. From a point approximately at the junction of Castle

1 In 1966 this was renamed Gloucester Lane

Street and Young Street the northern boundary followed a straight line to the eastern end of Queen Street, to where the National Portrait Gallery now stands. On the east side the boundary was generally defined by Gabriel's Road, though it did depart eastwards to take in a parcel of land north of Clelland's Feu. Finally, on the south, the extension ran right up to the boundary of the Royalty, following the edge of the Loch as far as St. Cuthbert's burial ground.

Barefoot's Parks and Wood's Farm together formed the bulk of the site of Craig's New Town. St. George's Church is now in the centre of the former, and Wemyss Place of the latter.¹ The hamlet and manor house of Multree's Hill are now replaced by the Register House. Where the Royal Bank of Scotland now stands in St. Andrew Square was a cottage called "Peace and Plenty", where "ambulative citizens regaled themselves with fruit ... and cream."² We learn also that Broughton, although now completely surrounded by the city, was at that time considered so far afield that "people went to live in it for the summer months, under the pleasing idea that they had got into the country."³

The undeveloped site is well shown on a map prepared by Kirkwood in 1817 from surveys made in 1759,* and gives a better idea than any other of the relation of the city to its environs

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 115

2 R. Chambers, Traditions of Edinburgh, p. 17

3 Ibid.

* 3.

before the New Town was built. Another useful map of this period is dated 1763 and signed by James Craig. Apart from supplementing the information given by Kirkwood, it is particularly interesting in that it shows certain suggestions for new lines of communication - which, if they had been carried out, would have given Edinburgh the framework of a ring road on its northern and western perimeter, and would have influenced the later development of the city considerably. The proposals are described in the inscription as follows:

"A plan of the City of Edinburgh and the Environs showing how all the Roads (Excepting those by the Gibbet and the Powburn) lead to the Intended New Bridge over the North Loch into the Center [sic] of the City. And that without going through the Streets thereof.

All the Western Roads & even the Road from Linton may be made to lead directly to the Port of Leith, which will be a Public Utility as well as a relief to the City from the Number of Carriages being lessened, that at present pass along the narrow streets, & of consequence a great Saving in the Charge the City is put to in the Expensive paving & Repairs of these streets."

The new road system was to start from Abbeyhill, foreshadowing the line of the present Regent Road; to

1 Craig was at this time only nineteen years of age

continue by a bridge over the Calton ravine; and to extend as far west as Haymarket, following almost precisely the alignment of Princes Street. The whole of this scheme now exists, of course, but it is unfortunate that the final link, between Haymarket and the head of Bruntsfield Links was not implemented before the nineteenth-century canal- and railway-builders cut savagely into the western sector of the city.

It is worth noting that the proposals shown on this map, unlike those shortly to be presented in the competition drawings, were of a strictly practical kind, designed simply to serve the needs of traffic. Probably it is no exaggeration to say that in the eighteenth century Edinburgh was the most traffic-conscious city in Britain, for the density of development in parts of the Old Town was of the order of four hundred persons to the acre. This statement is supported, too, by the fact that the plan of 1786 - also by Craig, oddly enough - for improving the area near the Tron Church was designed with urban traffic very much in mind - "to prevent the accidents to which both carriages and foot-passengers would be liable, if entry to so great a thoroughfare was at right-angles to the High Street",¹ in Craig's own words.

By January 1766 the first pier of the North Bridge was almost complete,² and the Town Council, in one of their

1 James Craig, Plan for Improving the City of Edinburgh, 1786

2 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXIII, p. 6

earliest meetings of that year, appointed a committee to the general responsibility for the proposed buildings within the extended Royalty, and in particular to arrange for a competition to be held for the layout:

"The Council appointed the present and old Magistrates with Mr. Rae, present deacon of the Surgeons, as a Committee to confer from time to time on all matters relative to the intended Improvements on the fields to the north of the present City, and Recommend to them to cause publish in the Newspapers such premium as they shall judge reasonable to be given for the best plan of a new Town to be erected there, so soon as such plan shall meet with the approbation of persons of honour and skill to be named by the Council in the same manner as was done with respect to the plan of the new Bridge."¹

No doubt conscious that private development was proceeding apace in George Square, the magistrates hastened to publish a preliminary advertisement giving advance notice of the competition arrangements:

"By the honourable the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh. Whereas the Bridge

1 TCM 29th January 1766

building over the North Loch of this City, (whereby an early and commodious communication will be made between the City and the Fields on the north), is already considerably advanced, the Magistrates and Town Council are now taking the necessary measures for the further improvement of the City, by Feuing out the said Fields, for the purpose of building thereon; they have accordingly ordered a Survey and Plan to be made of the said Fields, which will be ready about fourteen days hence, and will then publish another advertisement, inviting Architects and others to call for copies of the said Plan at the Council-chamber, that from them they may make Plans of the Regular Streets, and Buildings, to be built upon the above-mentioned Grounds, and will then also be ready to grant Feus thereof."¹

It is worth noting that the bridge is now openly described as providing a means of communication with "the fields to the north", instead of being referred to in connection with the port of Leith. The survey plan^{*} mentioned was evidently proving

¹ Edinburgh Evening Courant, 22nd March 1767

more difficult to produce than was anticipated, for in one of the many letters written to London by the Lord Provost about this time we find that although the Council had employed a "proper person" to prepare a plan, he was finding this "a work of so much difficulty and so much time that it cannot soon be got ready."¹ However, a second, more informative advertisement did appear little more than "fourteen days" after the first:

"By the honourable the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh.

The Bridge of Communication between the High-street of Edinburgh and the Grounds lying to the North of the City, being in great forwardness, and it being expected that the Bridge will be completed before the time fixed upon by the contract between the Town-council and the Undertakers, the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council, are desirous to give all encouragement to such persons as incline to build upon the grounds belonging to the Town upon the North, and propose to feu them with all expedition, according to a Scheme to be hereafter made public, for preventing the inconveniences and disadvantages which arise from carrying on buildings, without regard to any order of regularity. This notice is therefore made inviting Architects and others, to give in Plans of a New Town marking out

1 Letter from the Lord Provost to Mr. Coutts, 19th February 1767

streets of a proper breadth, and by-lanes, and the best situation for a Reservoir, or any other public Buildings which may be thought necessary. They will be furnished in the Council-chamber with a Survey of the Grounds, and their Heights or Risings upon a proper scale.

The plans must be sent under sealed covers, directed to the Lord Provost, to the care of Mr. Alexander Duncan, or Mr. James Tait, Depute Town-Clerks, at the Council-Chamber, on or before the fifteenth day of May next. Within the respective Plans, the persons offering them, are desired to write their names upon a separate piece of paper, sealed up, the seal of which paper is not to be broke sic up, unless the plan it belongs to is approved and made choice of.

The person whose Plan shall be judged most proper, will receive as a reward of merit, a Gold Medal, with an impression of the Arms of the City of Edinburgh, and the Freedom of the City in a silver box.

N.B. - It is required that in the Plans the declivities in each Street, from the greatest height in that Street, should be marked."¹

The conditions for the Competition deserve some comment. The main emphasis seems to be, first, on the Town Council being able to feu the grounds "with all expedition", and, secondly,

1 Edinburgh Evening Courant, 9th April 1767

on conducting the affair in a business-like way. There is no real brief for the "Architects and others". But if we reflect for a moment, this is not unreasonable. The true brief for this project lies in the remarkable Proposals, now almost fourteen years old. The pamphlet received a wide circulation, and in a city as comparatively small as Edinburgh in the eighteenth century anyone with intellectual or artistic pretensions could scarcely have escaped reading and discussing it. The comparison with London, it will be remembered, was cogently made, and the competitors will have had an image of "its healthful, unconfined situation, upon a large plain, gently shelving ... the beauty and conveniency of its numerous streets and open squares, of its buildings and bridges, its large parks and extensive walks". So, with a difficult and none too specific problem to solve and with only five weeks at their disposal, the competitors set to work.

Who were the competitors and how many of them were there? It is possible to answer the second question but not the first. The City records contain the following minute:

"Six plans of a new Town opened and marked by James Steuart, Esq., Lord Provost, the last marked by Bailie Hunter -

- No. 1 on a flat pasteboard with a secret mark, neither having a direction.
- No. 2 with the secret mark sealed to it.
- No. 3 with a secret mark sealed to it
- No. 4 with an Explanation and Sealed Letter & anonymous Letter all marked by the Lord Provost.

No. 5 consisting of eight pieces, an Explanatory Letter with a separate sealed mark.
 No. 6 consisting of two pieces, an Explanation and a separate Letter all marked by Bailie Hunter.
 Edinburgh 21st May 1766. This is the List of Plans referred to in the Sederunt of the Bridge Committee of this date.

(Sgd.) James Steuart, Provost"¹

From this description of the entries it appears that nos. 4 and 5 were the fullest of those received. A little more than two months later we are given the number of the prizewinning plan:

"Having examined the Plans in the Council Chamber of a New Town we are of opinion that the Plan mark't no. 4 pasted upon Linen Cloth is the best of those we have seen.

(sgd.) George Clerk

" John Adam"²

Plan no. 4 was, of course, the work of James Craig and merits careful analysis. But before we examine his plan it is perhaps worth considering briefly who the other competitors could have been.

1 TCM 21st May 1766

2 Ibid. 2nd August 1766

The architectural profession in Scotland in the 1760's was extremely small. If we leave out the Adam brothers (for reasons which will be evident later) and Craig himself, there were hardly sufficient to account for the remaining five entries submitted. Chambers, although a Scot, does not appear to have resided in Scotland at any stage in his career. Moreover, the amount of work which he executed in Scotland is minute compared with that in England, and it is unlikely, therefore, that he was among those who entered for the competition. Much more likely candidates are the Mylne brothers. A few years younger than Chambers, they were by no means too young to have taken part: Robert was thirty-three at this time, and William thirty-two. The younger brother's reputation was not yet tarnished by the unhappy collapse of the North Bridge, and both came from a family with a strong tradition of undertaking public works in Scotland. In addition, during the brother's five-year Grand Tour, Robert had demonstrated his aptitude for architecture by winning a silver medal in the Concorso Clementino at the Accademia di S. Luca in Rome. Finally, there was John Fergus, the architect responsible for the building (though not the design) of the Exchange, but whose name is not connected with other buildings of any significance.

The competition conditions, it will be remembered, called for designs from "Architects and others". When we come to consider who the "others" might have been, the position is of course, even more difficult. Only two names offer themselves

readily: James Brown and Michael Nasmyth. Brown was the builder who developed the George Square area from 1766 onwards. A man of considerable ability and initiative, he could well have had the necessary interest to submit an entry, though whether he had a firm grasp of architecture and civic design is another matter. Nasmyth also had a building background. He came from a family who had been builders in Edinburgh for several generations and was himself involved in the building of George Square, as well as "some of St. Andrew Square and other houses in the New Town".¹ His son Alexander undoubtedly had creative ability - he studied painting under Allan Ramsay, practised both architecture and landscape design and entered for the Calton Hill competition of 1812 - but whether he took up architecture himself is doubtful.

If James Craig's rivals were a motley group, as fairly clearly was the case, this does not lessen his achievement per se. His plan, which has provoked both fulsome praise and hostile contempt since it was first published, is in fact a masterpiece of classical town design.* Let us look at it first of all in terms of geometric form. The main circulation is roughly the shape of a dumb-bell about 3600 feet long. The principal street, George Street, runs approximately east-west along the central ridge and terminates at each end in a place 500 feet

1 I.G. Lindsay, Georgian Edinburgh, p. 22

square. The two places, St. Andrew Square and St. George's Square, are treated as garden squares, each with an equestrian statue in the centre; but more important, the plan shows a church sited centrally on the east side of the former and on the west side of the latter. The significance of this strongly-emphasised axial arrangement is underlined by a thumbnail sketch which appears above the plan itself. Without any caption accompanying the sketch, it is uncertain whether the view is towards the east or the west, but nevertheless the intention is clearly to generate a stately, formal vista in each direction, closed decisively by an imposing church. Parallel to the main spine are two further principal streets, notable for the unilateral layout of the houses. These face towards the valley of the Nor' Loch on the one hand, and towards the Forth Valley on the other. Finally, intersecting George Street at right angles, are three shorter streets which first rise towards the central ridge and then, once past the intersection, begin to fall again. The network of streets described above thus presents us with not only with two symmetrical, linked squares, but with a formal array of eight main rectangular blocks of houses - rectangles identical in shape and of a proportion reminiscent of the oblong panes of glass which the completed houses later contained. We have not yet looked at the minor geometry of the meuse lanes, but these are a matter of convenience, rather than contrived effect, and their rôle will be discussed later.

Less subtle, less dramatic than the series of inter-related squares at Nancy built in the middle of the eighteenth century by Stanislaus Lesczinski,¹ the arrangement conceived by Craig is nevertheless well-calculated and produces effects of harmony, order, proportion and symmetry which will bear comparison with most, if not all, the classical town planning schemes in Europe. With the advantage of two centuries of hindsight, it is easy for us to criticise some of Craig's assumptions as being naive. He did not, for example, make any allowance in his plan for the possibility of the town extending east or west beyond the two great squares. Nor did he envisage the building of any markets or shops - commerce was to remain wholly in the Old Town. The entire New Town, therefore, was to be regarded as a residential unit, with the two churches as the only non-domestic buildings. But we should remember that Craig was a product of the Zeitgeist. As much as the philosophers Hume and Ferguson he belonged to the Scottish Enlightenment, to the Age of Reason in which they were "citizens of the world, looking out upon a universe seemingly brand new because so freshly flooded with light".² And, paradoxically, the lines which Craig put on paper, though drawn during the Age of Reason, were not solely the result of rational processes of thought. The pattern which he aimed to create was something

1 Duke of Lorraine and King of Poland, he employed Héré as architect

2 Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the 18th Century Philosophers, p. 34

more than merely a commodious grouping of a thousand houses¹ and two churches. It is clear from the poetic inscription which appears on his plan² that Craig sought to impart a harmony to the streets and squares which would subscribe some dignity to Man's existence on earth. In short, his vision was of an Ideal City. During the next seventy years Edinburgh, more than any other town in Britain, moved towards the realisation of such a vision, at first with uncertain steps but ultimately with great boldness.

We have already noted the basic symmetry inherent in Craig's layout. Axial symmetry was, of course, a sine qua non of town planning in the Age of Reason. Here, in the First New Town, a glance at the plan instantly reveals the use of bi-axial symmetry, the nodal point being the interection of George Street and Frederick Street. But if we examine the layout more closely, we find that, in a sense, the symmetry takes on a further dimension here. For looking at the scheme in section, we see the slope of the ground towards the Nor' Loch is echoed by the falling ground north of Queen Street. To be sure, this characteristic is a by-product of the decision to lay out the principal streets along the east-west ridge, but the competition

1 No actual number of houses is indicated in either the competition requirements or Craig's plan, but slightly over 1000 houses were built in the original New Town

2 The inscription is reproduced at the head of this chapter

plan does show some evidence that what we may call a symmetry of landscaped space has been considered. On the south side the unsavoury Nor' Loch has been transformed into an ornamental canal with tree-lined walks; to the north there is no canal shown - it would have been difficult to retain water satisfactorily on this side - but there are similar tree-lined walks, again depicted in a rather stylised, formal manner. One commentator, describing Scottish society in the period up to 1750, remarks on the lack of interest in landscape at that time and maintains that love of natural scenery was then an unborn emotion, "owners of houses being utterly heedless of any beauty of position, and quite indifferent to the picturesque".¹ Be that as it may, when Craig prepared his plan in 1766 he evidently had at least an elementary understanding of the importance of landscape in relation to buildings, even though the lines of trees which he drew are really as hard and stiff as any man-made object.

Our examination of the plan of the First New Town has so far been concerned mainly with its outward and visible form. What is perhaps equally important - though less susceptible of analysis - is its inner symbolism. In the earlier Parts of this study we have already noted in passing the ambivalent attitude of the Scottish nation towards England and the English people during the first half of the eighteenth century.

1 H. G. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, p. 5

Drummond himself was an ardent Hanoverian and so influential was he ultimately, after many years of selfless action and wise advocacy, that by the time the competition was held, there was with little doubt a strong current of opinion among the leading citizens of Edinburgh which favoured the burial of old enmities and a complete rapprochement with their cousins south of the Border. In the plan of the New Town we can see something of a conscious wish on Craig's part to underline the interdependence of the two nations and indeed to encourage their harmonious co-existence. This becomes clear when we look at the names proposed for the new streets and squares.

In the earliest known proof of the engraved plan, dating probably from August 1767, the names are somewhat different from those subsequently adopted. The principal street is certainly George Street and the eastern square St. Andrew Square, and the eastern and western cross streets are Hanover Street and Castle Street respectively. But the two main streets parallel to George Street are shown as Forth Street and St. Giles Street, and, most significantly, the western square is called St. George's Square. Thus, symbolically speaking, the patron saints of England and Scotland are harmoniously united through the medium of the reigning monarch, whilst tactful reference is made to the Queen and the Royal house itself in the names Queen Street and Hanover Street.

The amendment of some of the street names is revealed in a curious way. The Town Council apparently began to realise

in October 1767 that although they now had a plan for a New Town they lacked a plan for the layout of the common sewers. Accordingly they agreed to pay James Craig's expenses to go to London to enable him to obtain advice there.¹ Craig's journey was evidently not very fruitful as far as the sewers were concerned - a competition for the layout had eventually to be arranged a year later² - but he did take the opportunity of having his plan submitted to the King, as the following letter shows:

"My Lord, - On Saturday last I received the Honour of your Lordship's letter, with one inclosed for Mr. Craig which was delivered, I was sorry sic that your Lordship's commands with regard to the Inscription³ of the plan, came so late, as one had been already made, shown to, and approved of by those who must first see and give their sanction to everything of that kind before it be presented in form. In such a case your Lordship and the Magistrates will be sensible that one word cannot be altered. If I had kept a copy I should not have failed to have sent it herewith. But I shall be sure either to procure one myself from Mr. Craig or to desire him to make one and transmit it to your

1 TCM 4th November 1767

2 Ibid., 26th October 1768

3 Craig's personal dedication to the King, at the foot of the plan as published in January 1768

Lordship without delay. It was drawn up by some well-wishers not only of the young architect but of the design in general. Sir Laurence Dundas has seen it, and liked it, and having told him that your Lordship's letter did not come to my hands till the Inscription was seen and approved of by those nearest the King's person, he was clearly of the opinion that nothing could now be changed in it. It is true that the Dedication is solely made by the Architect, as it is expressed. But in such cases it is always understood that the compliment cannot be made without the consent and approbation of the Masters of the Buildings. I must likewise observe that the Town of Edinburgh has in this plan shown their dutiful attention and Loyalty to their Sovereign by the names of some of their principal streets in the intended addition to it, you may be assured that the appellations of George Street, Queen's Street and Hanover Street were not overlooked and that His Majesty when he objected to the name of St. Giles Street, and was graciously pleased to desire that it should be called Prince's Street, had more in view the addressing himself to the Magistrates of the City than to the Draughtsman, who was not present. It appears that Mr. Craig has made some mistake about those names. For the King not only gave no other than that mentioned, but even declined doing it; after that I took the liberty to tell his Majesty that I believed nothing would be more acceptable to the Magistrates than learning His pleasure upon that occasion. As to the name

Charlotte Street instead of Queen's Street. that mistake was occasioned by me, for when I had first mentioned it to the Queen, Her Majesty made no objection and therefore I proposed the alteration to Mr. Craig; but two days after, when I had the honour to be in the Queen's apartment in the King's presence and with his approbation she told me that she thought Queen's Street would sound better than Charlotte Street and therefore desired that the name might stand as it was. The name of Frederic [sic] was never mentioned by either of their Majesties, but it came of myself, as one that I believed would be agreeable both to the King and Queen, and so I told Mr. Craig that he might propose the same to your Lordship when he acquainted you with what had passed otherwise. My idea was to give their Majesties the satisfaction of seeing that the Magistrates of Edinburgh not only took the hint about calling a principal street after the heir of the crown, but another after their second son. For it was the Bishop of Osnaburgh I meant and not the late Prince of Wales. I need not tell your Lordship how liable to objection the name of St. Giles was; if you will be pleased to recollect that a Quarter of this City, always infamous for its low and disorderly inhabitants is so called: His Majesty, it seems, was no stranger to the character of that disgraceful part of the plan, he smiled and told me the name would sound ill in English ears. I beg that your Lordship would believe that nothing would make me so happy as to see that plan put

into execution as I shall ever reckon my honour and Interest strictly connected with the flourishing state of my native country, and in particular with that of our own Capital, where I received my education and where I lived so many of my best years under the patronage of its Magistrates. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect, My Lord, Your lordship' most obedient humble servant

(signed) John Pringle

P.S. - Since writing, having procured a copy of the Inscription I have enclosed it for your Lordship's perusal. Follows the foresaid Dedication:-

'To His Sacred Majesty George III the Munificent Patron of every Polite and Liberal Art. This Plan of the new Streets and Squares intended for His ancient Capital of North Britain; one of the happy Consequences of the Peace, Security, and Liberty his people enjoy under his mild and auspicious Government, is with the utmost Humility inscribed by His Majesty's most devoted Servant and Subject, James Craig'.¹

The plan referred to in this interesting letter and thus seen by King George III himself may have been a manuscript copy by Craig of the one approved by the Town Council, but

1 Letter from Sir John Pringle to the Lord Provost, produced in Council, TCM, 23rd December 1767

with the addition of a dedication which tactlessly omitted any reference to the Lord Provost and the Magistrates. If this is so, it may help towards explaining what is otherwise almost inexplicable: why Craig, after such an extraordinarily promising start to his career, never really made any further progress in his profession and seems within a matter of years to have become completely estranged from the Town Council.¹

What was Craig's background and where did he cull his architectural ideas from? If we can in some measure answer these questions, it will enable us better to understand the provenance of his plan, and it may incidentally throw a little light on the relative failure of his subsequent career.

James Craig was the son of an Edinburgh merchant, William Craig, and nephew of the poet James Thomson, author of "The Seasons". He was born in Edinburgh on 31st October 1744,² and was almost certainly the grandson of Robert Craig, a person of some importance in the city, for he was appointed Commissioner of Royal Burghs in 1714 and Dean of Guild in 1714 and 1715. It has frequently been said³ that he studied architecture in London under Sir Robert Taylor, but even this meagre statement about his education cannot be taken as reliable. Taylor certainly

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- 1 His dispute with the Town Council over fees for his design of the old observatory on Calton Hill confirms this estrangement
- 2 Not in 1740, as is sometimes stated
- 3 As in I.G. Lindsay's Georgian Edinburgh, p. 21

had a pupil called Craig - and this explains how the confusion arose - but this pupil's other names were Charles Alexander.¹

So we know virtually nothing about James Craig's education or employment before he entered for the competition at the age of twenty-one, save for the fact, noted earlier in this chapter, that he drew a map of the town with some interesting road proposals in 1763. If, as seems quite likely, Craig received no training in architecture from any practitioner of acknowledged standing, how did it come about that he was able to devise a plan for the New Town of sufficient merit not only to win the competition, but to endure as the basis of central Edinburgh for more than two centuries? We should remember, first of all, that in the eighteenth century the planning of towns was an increasingly popular activity, both at home and abroad. Moreover, by 1766 several important and influential books were available in this country.

Among the architectural books in Craig's possession at the time of his death were Campbell's Vitruvius Britannicus, Palladio's On the Five Orders of Architecture and Gwynn's London and Westminster Improved.² The first two would have

1 H.M. Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1680-1840, p.156

2 Executry and Testament of James Craig, dated 11th November 1795

given him some insight into the tradition of Palladian architecture in this country, and the last, as will be discussed shortly, would have stimulated in his mind many ideas about town planning. Possibly he knew something of the Italian "ideal cities" of the theorists: of the fictitious city of Sforzinda with its canals, by Filarete; or the rectangular city proposed by Scamozzi with its five principal squares. But if Craig drew inspiration from abroad, France had perhaps more to offer than Italy in the sphere of town planning, at least among contemporary designers and theorists. We do not know whether he ever travelled abroad, as many Scotsmen of his time did. Even if he never visited France, however, he is likely not to have been completely unaware of the major improvements which had been carried out there from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards.

During the reign of Louis XV axially-planned places were created in several French cities: in Bordeaux, Valenciennes, Rennes, Nancy, Reims and Rouen, as well as Paris. Even well before this period developments had taken place in Paris to which the First New Town of Edinburgh is geometrically related. In the Place des Vosges,^{*} for example, built in 1606-12 by Henri IV and lined with three-storey houses of uniform height, we find that the dimensions are very similar to those of Craig's two places - 460 feet square as against 500 feet - and there is an equestrian statue placed centrally in the symmetrical plan. Again, in Hardouin Mansart's Place des

Victoires and Place Vendôme,[†] both designed in the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were instructive features for anyone in this country interested in formal planning. The first, although circular in form and rather small in scale,¹ has a pronounced axial approach along the Rue des Fosses Montmartre, culminating in a frontal view of the Hôtel de Toulouse, against which a statue of Louis XIV was silhouetted; the second, though having a less extensive approach, was intrinsically grander in conception and, as originally built, had two magnificent vistas along the single street which crossed it - one towards Orbay's Capuchin convent and the other towards the convent of the Feuillants, whose church had a doorway by François Mansart. Although the church of the Madeleine as we know it bears the mask of a Roman temple, A.J. Gabriel's design for it, part of the Place de la Concorde project, shows a domed structure standing majestically at the end of the Rue Royale, on the same axis as the original equestrian monument.

Outside Paris itself, the two examples of French town planning which may conceivably have been in Craig's mind in 1766 are the little town of Richelieu^{*} and the fine scheme of improvement in Reims by Legendre. A recent writer has drawn attention² to the comparatively isolated new town

1 It measures only about 260 feet in diameter

2 A.J. Youngson, op. cit., p. 79

* 14

† 7

initiated by Cardinal Richelieu in 1633 on a site about thirty miles north of Poitiers. Here the layout of the two squares and the three longitudinal streets is similar to the arrangement which Craig adopted, but the scale is quite different: the main streets at Richelieu are only thirty-three feet wide measured between the walls of the opposing houses,* and the cross streets only twenty-one feet wide. Much more comparable with Edinburgh in scale is the scheme for the Place Royale in the centre of Reims, designed in 1756 and described by a twentieth-century critic as "the last of the French Royal squares and the most classical, perhaps the most perfect."¹ Legendre's design has a monumental Rue Colbert approaching the Place Royale axially, with the Hotel de Ville as the climactic feature; in the opposite direction the vista is closed by the Hotel des Fermes, which has its own spacious place in front. The total distance between the two hotels is almost 1500 feet, though the length of the buildings in the Rue Colbert is much less than this, owing to the interpenetration of three cross streets. Though superficially the resemblance to Edinburgh is rather less marked than in the case of Richelieu, since there are subsidiary lateral places in this plan, Reims is on the whole a more significant basis for comparison, especially as its two great squares are each firmly closed by a major building on the terminal side.² And even if James Craig

1 P. Lavedan, French Architecture, p. 243

2 At Richelieu the space leaks out on the axis of the principal street, through an archway at each end

never set foot in France, as is quite possible, there is another reason why Legendre's design - as well as a number of others which we have briefly reviewed - may have greater significance than Richelieu.

In 1765 a most important book¹ was published by Pierre Patte (1723-1814), the architect and engraver who completed J.F. Blondel's Cours d'Architecture. Inspired by the competition held in Paris in 1748 and 1753 for the design of a royal place in honour of Louis XV, the book not only describes the nineteen projects submitted, each embodying a statue of the King and located on a site of the competitor's own choice, it shows also the squares at Reims and the other provincial towns mentioned above. It is thus a compendium of the most recent and useful examples of civic design available to an architect of Craig's time. Not the least interesting scheme illustrated is Patte's own project for a setting for the statue of Louis XV. A bold plan, it postulates the unification of the Ile de la Cité with the Ile St. Louis and depicts a great cathedral near the western end of the former island with a majestic dome rising far higher than the towers of Notre-Dame. So far as we are concerned, however, the most notable features of the plan lie further east. On the newly-won ground gained by filling in the channel between the two islands a large market square is

1 P. Patte, Monumens érigés à la Gloire de Louis XV

laid out. Owing to the configuration of the islands the new road layout is linear in form, and three main longitudinal roads run both eastwards and westwards from the market square. Taking the eastern route, at the end of the Ile St. Louis one reaches a large circular place, in which the focal point is a statue of Henri IV balancing - intellectually at least - the corresponding statue of Louis XV far to the west, beyond the new cathedral. If we examine the relationship between the two places themselves, however, we find that they are linked in precisely the same way as the two squares in Craig's New Town: even the intersections of the north-south streets are mirrored by the corresponding streets in the Edinburgh plan. Moreover, if Patte's project had in fact been built, the view westwards from the market square towards the domed cathedral would have been singularly like the view we experience today when we look westwards along George Street towards the copper-covered dome of St. George's Church.

Perhaps Craig knew nothing of the ferment of ideas about town planning which was current in France at that time. Or perhaps any Cartesian attitudes¹ which he shared with French were derived from the art of garden design: certainly the kind of planning evident in the seventeenth-century layout of the

1 H. Rosenau, The Ideal City, p. 60

Tuileries gardens is not essentially different from his plan for Edinburgh.¹ But it is time that we turned to England, to see whether any developments there could have formed a starting-point for Craig's ideas.

The first real square in London, the Convent Garden Piazza, with the church of St. Paul's firmly on the axis of Russell Street, was no doubt known to Craig, at least through the pages of his copy of Vitruvius Britannicus. And, although the English tradition of town planning in the seventeenth centuries had little of the autocratic formality of French design, there were several comparatively modest schemes in London which may have caught his eye: Soho Square, St. James' Square, Grosvenor Square, Berkeley Square, Hanover Square and so on. Of these Hanover Square is perhaps the most interesting, especially when we read a contemporary description of its effect:

"I must own this ... that the view down George-Street, from the upper side of the square, is one of the most entertaining in the whole city: the sides of the square, the area in the middle, the breaks of building that form the entrance of the vista, the vista itself, but, above all, the beautiful projection of the portico of St. George's Church, are all circumstances that unite in

1 The individual gardens which Craig shows at the backs of the houses are all laid out geometrically (6)

beauty, and make the scene perfect."¹

Outside London the most notable achievement was the scheme at Bath started by John Wood the Elder in 1725. The most magnificent part of the whole scheme, Royal Crescent, was not built until 1767 and makes, in any case, a more interesting comparison in both form and detail with early nineteenth century developments in Edinburgh.* But Queen's Square, Gay Street, and the Circus form a fine series in themselves and were all complete before the New Town competition was held. How much could Craig have known about this ensemble? Bath is almost four hundred miles from Edinburgh. In the 1760's a round trip between the two cities, including two or three days to look at the recent developments and to meet some of those concerned with them, would have taken upwards of a fortnight. Unless, therefore, Craig had some family connections in the West of England - which does not seem to be the case - it is unlikely that when he entered for the competition at the age of twenty-one he had undertaken this long and expensive journey.

But however improbable it may be that he actually visited Bath, it is certainly quite likely that Craig knew something of what was happening there. We have already seen that he acquired at some stage in his career a copy of John Gwynn's London and Westminster Improved. If he had this at the time of the competition, among many important passages he

1 Ralph, A Critical Review of the Public Buildings in and about London, p. 105

will have read the following:

"In the city of Bath, the fronts of the houses which comprise the celebrated circus there, are built of stone of the three Greek orders, three quarter columns in couplets with their proper entablatures, and the doors and windows in character; and so far when finished will be the most elegant structure in the kingdom, though rather too small; but how is the spectator offended when he comes to view the back part of this very circus, which is entirely exposed, and finds that it has no kind of connection with the front and exhibits only a heap of confused irregular buildings ... This could have been removed by building an outer circle, forming a double row of houses, or a square, which would have answered the same purpose ... Though they are now building in that city at a prodigious rate, no regard is paid to a general plan."¹

This description of the Woods' work does not really give any adequate idea of the sequence of urban spaces which they were aiming to create, but the comment on the mean appearance of the circus is apt and has some bearing on the treatment of Princes Street and Queen Street in the Edinburgh plan.

Before we discuss this, however, there are several

1 J. Gwynn, London and Westminster Improved, p. 13

extremely important passages in Gwynn's treatise which merit the closest attention. In the preface he laments the rejection of the "noble plan of Sir Christopher Wren" which he considers "did irreparable harm to the city of London."¹ He then puts forward interesting proposals of his own, which are hardly less applicable to Edinburgh than to London and Westminster:

"If attention was paid to the widening rather than the lengthening the town, it would certainly render the whole town more compact, be more convenient for the inhabitants in every advantage of situation, and consequently equally healthy and commodious ...

In settling a plan of large streets for the dwellings of the rich, it will be found necessary to allot smaller spaces contiguous, for the habitations of useful and laborious people, whose dependence on their superiors requires such a distribution; and by adhering to this principal [sic] a political advantage will result to the nation; as this intercourse stimulates their industry, improves their morals by example, and prevents any particular part from being habitation of the indigent alone, to the great detriment of private property ...

In the present state of building, the

1 Ibid, p. vi

finest part of the town (where only real improvement can be hoped) is left to the mercy of capricious, ignorant persons, and the vast number of buildings, now carrying on, are only so many convincing proofs of the necessity of adopting the following... hints, in order to convince the world that blundering is not the only characteristic of English builders.

One inconvenience deserves particular notice. Some streets that would naturally open into the country are shut up and darkened by houses built cross [sic] them at the end next the fields. This ought to be avoided, as well for the sake of convenience as of elegance ... the mean appearance of the backs of the houses, offices, and hovels, will in time render the approaches to the capital so many scenes of confusion and deformity, extremely unbecoming the character of a great and opulent city."¹

The note which is being struck here sounds not unlike some of the reasoning which we have already heard in the Proposals of 1752. The same broad moral and social theme is maintained when the author passes from the preface to the text proper:

1 Ibid., p. viii-x

"In the same proportion as publick magnificence increases, in the same proportion will a love of elegance increase among all ranks and degrees of people, and that refinement of taste, which in a nobleman produces true magnificence and elegance, will in a mechanick produce at least cleanliness and decorum."¹

Later he considers the general strategy of town planning in relation to street design and it is here that his remarks are of the greatest interest. The phrases which apply most tellingly to the Edinburgh situation are underlined:

"Wherever any builders have contrived a narrow street, lane or alley, yet they may be assured that as the rage for building increases, whenever a more spacious avenue is built, those ill-contrived things will be deserted, and the inhabitants flock to places where they can breathe freely and better enjoy the conveniences of life ...

It is utterly impossible to determine any precise form in the plan of a great city, as so much will always depend upon the situation of the ground and the disposition of the river, if there is one ... but then it ought always to be an established rule that every possible advantage should be taken that the situation

1 Ibid., p. 1

is capable of producing, for the preservation of health and the conveniences of the inhabitants. It is to be wished, that the ground-plans of all great cities and towns were composed of right lines, and that the streets intersect each other at right angles, for except in cases of absolute necessity, acute angles ought for ever to be avoided, as they are not only disagreeable to the sight, but constantly waste the ground and spoil the buildings; in the center [sic] of which in a spacious opening the King's palace should be situated ... Such a vast city as that of London ought to have had at least three capital streets which should have run through the whole, and at convenient distances been intersected by other capital streets at right angles, by which means all the inferior streets would have an easy and convenient communication with them."¹

Although these remarks of Gwynn's are fairly generalised, it is astonishing how they adumbrate the plan for Edinburgh, with the references to "three capital streets", "other capital streets at right angles" and "inferior streets". So close is the resemblance, in fact, between prose and plan that one is led inexorably towards the conclusion that Craig had almost

1 Ibid., pp. 5-6

certainly seen Gwynn's book before he produced his competition plan. This conclusion is perhaps strengthened when we look at some of the actual "improvements" which Gwynn illustrates in the plans at the end of the volume. In Plate 1, for example, we see a new square north of Oxford Street and east of Portman Square, measuring about 600 feet by 500 feet. Then there is a somewhat smaller square, called Queen Anne Square, about 400 feet by 300; and also an ambitious circus north of Charlotte Street, 700 feet in diameter. It is true that Craig did not, at least at the time of the competition, propose any circus for Edinburgh, but the scale of the places drawn by Gwynn - far larger than most of those existing in this country at that time - matches reasonably well those in the first phase of the New Town.

There is a curious feature in the chronology of the competition which we would do well to explore, for the sake of the light which it may throw on Craig's skill as an architect-planner. Although it was announced on 2nd August 1766 that plan no. 4 was the best of the six designs submitted, it was not until eight months later that the Town Council actually resolved to reward the winner with the promised gold medal and freedom of the city:

"Appoint the Dean of Gild and his Council to admitt and receive James Craig, Architect in Edinburgh, to be Burgess and Gildbrother of this City agreeable to a Minute of the

Bridge Committee the 26th August last bearing him to be entitled to the premium for the best plan of a New Town in terms of the advertisement in the Newspapers for that purpose, dispensing with the dues for good services."¹

Perhaps more significant still is the advertisement which was inserted in the newspapers in the summer of the same year:

"The Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of this City, have this day finally adjusted the Plan of the New Town, which against Monday next, and on every lawful day thereafter for a month, will lie open at the Council-chamber, from the hours of twelve noon to two afternoon, for the inspection of such as incline to become Feuars, where they may also see the Terms and Conditions on which Feus will be granted."²

The expression "finally adjusted" implies strongly that several adjustments had to be made to the plan before the Town Council was wholly satisfied - an implication which is confirmed from another source. Thus we have a probable explanation of the interval of eight months which separates the selection of the winning plan from the announcement of the

1 TCM 17th April 1767

2 Edinburgh Evening Courant, 29th July 1767

award to James Craig. But what was the nature of these adjustments and who assisted Craig in making them? While the first question can be answered only by speculation, the second is answered at least partially by the record of a Town Council meeting of July 1767:

"The Lord Provost from the Committee to whom it was remitted by Minute of Council 24th June last to consider what would be necessary to settle the Plan of the new Buildings and for feuing out the grounds on the north of the City as soon as possible, Reported that the Committee after many meetings and consulting with Lord Kames, Lord Alemour, Commissioner Clerk and Mr. Adams [sic] and other persons of skill in these matters had reviewed all the former Plans with the greatest care and attention and considered several amendments proposed by Mr. Craig, and that Mr. Craig by their direction had made out a new Plan, which Plan signed by the Lord Provost of this date was produced. That the Committee after considering the terms and conditions upon which other areas proper to be brought under view are now or have lately been feued, Have formed a scheme for feuing one of the Plots on each side of the principal street of the New Town divided into different Lotts with the price of each Lott in purchase money and feu duty, which scheme and explanation thereof signed by the Lord Provost of this date was

also produced. That the Committee were of opinion that the aforesaid plan ought to be approved and that the several areas or lotts in the first Plot above mentioned should be feued out at the respective purchase monies and feu dutys contained in the said scheme."¹

On the face of it, any of the four Adam brothers could have been one of the four main consultants. But almost certainly it was the eldest, John, for it is his signature which appears on the original competition report of August 1766. What help could John Adam and "other person of skill" have given to Craig in adjusting his plan? The single clue which we have in this difficult problem lies in a map of 1766 whose significance has until recently been totally ignored. In that year John Laurie published his Plan of Edinburgh and Places Adjacent, drawn to a scale of approximately three-quarters of an inch to a mile. As in the case of his map of Midlothian of 1763, it was engraved by Alexander Baillie, an Edinburgh engraver of some repute. The astonishing thing about it is that it shows very clearly a New Town situated on the central ridge in exactly the same way as on the Craig plan which was first published on 1st January 1768.* It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Laurie actually saw

1 TCM 29th July 1767

the original prizewinning plan some time in the summer of 1766 and decided to make his map as up-to-date as possible by incorporating into it Craig's proposals: for there are so many small details which correspond. There is, for example, a public building shown facing towards the North Bridge, and a new road leading towards Leith on virtually the line of Leith Street today. The two great eastern and western squares are shown, each with its intended church in the correct position.

There are, however, some major differences. Between the two squares three main blocks of buildings are shown instead of four; the meuse lanes seem to have as much importance as the principal east-west streets; and, not least, both Princes Street and Queen Street are shown as conventional streets, with houses on both sides.

It is, of course, possible that Laurie was himself one of the six entrants to the competition: architecture was hardly in those days a distinct profession, and there was nothing to prevent someone who called himself "geographer" from attempting to plan a new town. But on the whole the resemblances are so strong that we may reasonably conclude that in looking at Laurie's map of 1766 we are, in fact, seeing Craig's plan as it stood in the summer of 1766.¹ If we

¹ An interesting detail of this plan is the octagonal treatment of the two squares, a feature which recurs in Craig's scheme of 1786 for improving the area adjacent to the Tron Church

accept this proposition, it is clear that John Adam and the other advisers appointed by the Town Council must have made a substantial contribution to the final version of the plan.

Had the Council been willing to see the New Town built exactly as it is shown on Laurie's map, there is little doubt that in a number of respects it would have been very unsatisfactory. The lines of communication in an east-west sense have none of the clarity of those in the final plan. Anyone circulating along the north-south routes would be confronted with ten rows of buildings stationed on either side, the five streets serving them having no apparent hierarchical order. There is no possibility of providing stabling to the houses, since there are no meuse lanes. The position of each of the two churches, although axial, is very odd in relation to its square, and would lead to its being completely obscured by houses from most viewpoints. Finally, the arrangement shown for Princes Street and Queen Street would not only have led to the combination of handsome fronts and squalid backs condemned by Gwynn, but would have meant the loss of that magnificent openness of prospect which is so apparent even today in these two streets.

In short, therefore, the plan of the New Town at which we have just been looking is a comparatively clumsy - one might say amateurish - effort. Perhaps the form in which it appears in the 1766 map is a crude, over-simplified version of the original, for Laurie was attempting to portray an area much larger than Edinburgh itself and could hardly be expected

to show the New Town proposals correct in every detail. But even allowing for some infidelity of reproduction, it seems that a good deal of work was necessary before the plan reflected that degree of simplicity and inevitability which it had attained a year later. It is intriguing - though perhaps not very rewarding - to speculate on the extent to which the older architect guided the younger's hand. Although John did not accompany his brother Robert Adam on his Grand Tour of 1754-58, he was certainly a more experienced architect than young James Craig, who was twenty-three years his junior, and he would have been quite capable of giving sound advice. And there is, of course, the imponderable influence of Gwynn's London and Westminster Improved, which may not have been seen in Edinburgh until the process of revision was just beginning.¹ The final truth of what happened in the way of advice and discussions between those two crucial summers will, in all probability, never be known. All we can conclude from the slight evidence available is that the final plan is probably an amalgam of ideas from Craig, John Adam and Gwynn's book, with criticism from Lord Kames and others possessing both common sense and sensibility.² Moreover, if we are willing

1 The book was published in London in 1766, the same year as the competition, but we do not know in which month it appeared

2 Kames, otherwise Henry Home, combined with his judicial career a keen interest in architecture. His Elements of Criticism is reputed to have influenced James Adam

to concede that James Craig needed - and received - fairly substantial assistance before he finally moulded his plan into a wholly acceptable form, then we can understand more easily why his subsequent career met with little real success and why he died almost a pauper.

But whatever the extent of the help which Craig was given, there were two limiting conditions which no amount of ingenuity could overcome completely. Both are concerned with communications from the south. First, the Town Council had been unable to secure the ground as Glelland's Feu^{*} and other properties to the east of Gabriel's Road. Consequently no clear, logical relationship could be set up between the New Town and the North Bridge. Had this additional ground been available, Craig would have been able to plan St. Andrew Square quite differently, with an axial, or near-axial, approach from the Bridge, and perhaps with a more satisfactory relationship with Leith Street than that existing today.

A rather similar condition obtained at the western end of what was to be Princes Street. The existing Queensferry Road¹ ran approximately northwards past St. Cuthbert's Church and then turned sharply to the north-west before reaching the line of Princes Street. As this oblique line marked the

1 This extended further south than the present street which bears this name

boundary of the Royalty, Craig had no option but to plan the intersection of Hope Street and Princes Street a little to the east of Queensferry Road, yet not quite in line with the southern portion of it. As the latter was to define the present position of Lothian Road, the unsatisfactory relationship of the two intersections persists to this day.

The two limiting conditions described above were not the only instances of awkward land tenures in the Extended Royalty. A large parcel of land to the east of Allan's Parks still belonged to Lord Barjarg.¹ This was to be the site for a considerable part of the western end of the New Town, embracing roughly the area bounded by Princes Street, Castle Street and Charlotte Street, and including part of Charlotte Square. Fortunately Craig ignored this limitation and in 1785, by the time building had proceeded this far westwards, the Town Council were able to reach an agreement with the owner. Yet another obstacle existed in the shape of the Earl of Moray's estate.² The south-eastern boundary of this land ran diagonally from what is now the junction of Queensferry Street and Randolph Place to the western corner of Albyn Place: worse than this, a servitude existed which prohibited any building on the adjoining lands within a distance of ninety

1 It passed to Lord Alva before being acquired by the Town

2 For convenience it is referred to thus, although in fact it was not purchased by the ninth Earl until 1782

feet from the boundary. Again Craig ignored the obstacle, and fortunately the Council were able once more to negotiate satisfactorily with the owner. The effect of the servitude, however, can be traced on Brown's map of 1820, which shows the back gardens on the north side of Charlotte Square cut off obliquely. This irregularity was overcome a few years later when St. Colme Street was laid out, although the bevelled corner at the western end of Queen Street still remains as a reminder of the original difficulty.

The Building of the First New Town

We have already seen that at the end of July 1767 the Town Council arranged for the plan of the New Town to be available for public inspection throughout the next month. Evidently they felt that it might take a long time for the first feuars to come forward, for as an encouragement to the timid they offered to feu "the two Plots ... contiguous to the great east Square ... at an easier rate than other Areas have been feued, not so valuable and commodious".¹ In the event the Council did not have to wait many months before the first lot² was purchased: * on 26th October of the same

1 Edinburgh Evening Courant, 29th July 1767

2 The word "lot" is used here to refer to the site for one house only, while "plot" signifies a piece of land between two streets, intended to accommodate a number of houses

year the foundation stone of the first house was laid in Rose Court¹ by James Craig, "and the building of that and of other houses is going on".² Nor was it long before work was started on the Theatre Royal, the first stone being laid on 19th March 1768.³ It was situated immediately to the north-east of the North Bridge, in a small place known as Shakespeare Square, where the General Post Office now stands. The architect is not known, but evidently its appearance from the south left a good deal to be desired. Arnot, writing in 1779, complained that "it produces the double effect of disgusting spectators by its own deformity, and obstructing the view of the Register Office, perhaps the handsomest building in the nation".⁴ The north elevation, although modest in scale, must have seemed a good deal more pleasing. Finished throughout in polished ashlar, it presented to the street a gable pierced with three large circular-headed windows at first-floor level, the centre window being Venetian in shape. At ground level the entrance to the theatre was protected by a simple colonnade with a central pediment supported by Tuscan columns.* The building was opened in December 1769 and remained the centre for drama in Edinburgh

1 This was later renamed Thistle Court

2 Caledonian Mercury, November 1767

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXIII, p. 16

4 H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 371, (1788 ed.)

for almost ninety years, suffering demolition in May 1859 to make way for the new General Post Office.

Directly opposite the theatre the Register House rose slowly upwards from its foundations from 1774 onwards. But before we turn to examine this fine building - which was not completed until 1788 - let us consider the progress of house-building in Craig's New Town and the conditions controlling its development.

To begin with, the New Town was far from popular and the first feus were taken up quite slowly. Partly this was a matter of climate. The exposure to the keen north and east winds was felt to be a serious disadvantage, the more so whilst houses in this area were so few. Even the North Bridge itself was unpopular, "that windiest spot, or high altar, in this northern temple of the winds".¹ Indeed, according to Chambers,² a gentleman living in the Old Town who enjoyed the favours of a mistress in the New Town told her that when he visited her, he felt he was performing an adventure not unlike that of Leander, when he nightly swam the Hellespont in order to woo Hero, the beautiful priestess of Aphrodite. Again, one of the earliest feuars, a Mr. Shadrach Moyes, when having a house built

1 R.L. Stevenson, Edinburgh, p. 17

2 R. Chambers. op. cit., p. 16

for himself in Princes Street in 1769, instructed the builder to erect another alongside, so as to shield him from the west wind.¹

Two lots at the east end of the north side of Princes Street, those now numbered 10 and 15, are exceptional in that they bear only a nominal feu duty. For long it was believed that this was because a premium or bonus had been offered by the Magistrates to those who erected the first houses in Princes Street, but this is incorrect. The error seems to be attributable to Robert Chambers. In 1825 he described the house of Mr. John Neale, a well-known Edinburgh haberdasher, as "the first house designed and founded in the New Town of Edinburgh, and, as such, is exempted from all burghal taxation, that having been the bonus offered by the Magistrates to the enterprising individual who should first favour their great object by the purchase of a feu or piece of building ground".² It appears, however, that this curious anomaly originated with one John Graham, a plumber who owned the land where these properties now stand. Before the plan for the New Town was finally accepted, Graham agreed to part with his land, provided that the Town Council allowed him to "have a feu of a quarter of an acre of ground for building a dwelling-house and what

1 Ibid., p. 18

2 R. Chambers, quoted in Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. I, p. 138

other conveniences I need for myself upon such a spot of ground as I see convenient for me; and I shall hold it of the city for payment of one penny Scots of feu-duty yearly, if demanded".¹ The Council, having no other option, agreed to this rather high-handed request, but by the time that feuing began in the New Town in the autumn of 1767, Graham had died without having chosen his "spot of ground". Graham's representatives, Charles Robertson, painter, and John Humble, plumber, claimed their ground, which was found to include part of the ground intended to be occupied by the roadway of Princes Street, and they declined to move further back, alleging that the ground to the south had been quarried² and was unsuitable for building. Eventually a way out of the difficulty was proposed by John Home, a coachbuilder who had taken the first feu on the line of Princes Street. He offered to make an exchange with Graham's representatives, receiving their feu in return for his own and undertaking "to keep back his building to the line of the new street".³ The offer was accepted and an excambion prepared by which Home obtained Graham's lot, modified as required; while Graham's representatives took the other lot on Graham's

1 Letter from John Graham to Lord Provost, 22nd January 1763

2 It is known that stone was quarried from hereabouts for the North Bridge

3 P. MacNaughton, The Planning of the New Town of Edinburgh

original terms, including the reduction of feu duty to 1d. Scots per annum.

More popular at this time as a place of residence than Princes Street was St Andrew Square. As Chambers put it, "the novelty of a Square in Edinburgh, and the overwhelming degree of elegance which this one was expected to possess, made it more popular at first, than any other of the plan".¹ Among the early residents of the Square were the Earl of Northesk, the Countess Dowager of Leven, Sir Adam Ferguson, Sir William Forbes,² Sir Laurence Dundas and Henry Brougham, whose son, the future Lord Brougham, was born at no. 21 and was to be one of the founders of the Edinburgh Review in 1802.

From the architectural point of view, the most notable of these residents was Sir Laurence Dundas. The son of Thomas Dundas, an Edinburgh bailie of modest means, he is said to have started life serving behind the counter of a shop. In due course, however, he achieved high rank in the army, becoming Commissary-General in Flanders in 1748, and amassed a large fortune. Created a baronet in 1762, he doubtless felt that he wanted to live in houses which were commensurate with his position in society and had fine mansions built at Moor Park and Arlington Street, London.³

1 R. Chambers, op. cit., p. 67

2 Forbes' bank later played an important part in providing finance for public works in the New Town

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXIII, p. 23

Whilst Craig was in London in the autumn of 1767, Dundas was able to see an early proof of his plan for the New Town - which incidentally shows that at some date before this Dundas had already acquired a piece of ground lying mainly outside the Extended Royalty, but centred exactly on George Street. In this proof the lots on the east side of St. Andrew Square are 115 feet deep, with a lane 30 feet wide at the rear; 190 feet back from the square is a dotted rectangle partly within, partly without, the Royalty. This rectangle measures about 360 feet by 175 feet and is marked "Sir Laurence Dundas' Property". In the centre of the east side of the square a large undefined building is shown, with its facade in line with the adjacent houses. In the 1768 edition of the plan, however, the lots are enlarged to a depth of 160 feet and the back lane now abuts Dundas' site, which is shown laid out with parterres and radiating paths. The large building facing the square is now described as a church.*

But by this time Sir Laurence must have known - even if no one else did - that the building of a church in this position would be quite impossible. For in September 1767 he had stealthily purchased the site immediately to the west of his existing property, that is, the site for the proposed church. How he managed to do this without encountering opposition is obscure. It is not inconceivable that he bribed the clerk in charge of the feuing records to conceal the transaction. Certainly it is curious that the site is not

properly specified, but described merely as "an Area in the East Square".¹ At all events he now possessed one of the finest sites in the New Town: what he still needed was to select an architect capable of designing for him a suitable town mansion.

Evidently the first architect he commissioned was James Byres (1733-1817), who was awarded a silver medal at the Accademia di S. Luca in Rome in 1762, four years after his fellow-countryman Robert Mylne had gained a similar prize. Byres, described by one commentator as "painter, architect and art-dealer",² seems to have had greater interest and ability in painting than in architecture. Indeed, according to a contemporary account, he had spent five years in Rome studying painting, "in which he succeeds to admiration, and will infallibly make a great figure in that art, if he lives; and was only pushed to concur for the prize in this class of Architecture by a laudable ambition to maintain the honour of our country at this concourse ..."³ The design which Byres prepared for Sir Laurence Dundas is now preserved in the Royal Institute of British Architects' Library and shows an elaborate five-storeyed mansion* which is clearly designed to show off the occupant's paintings and sculpture to the best advantage - in

1 Record of Feus, 4th September 1767

2 J. Fleming, Robert Adam and His Circle

3 Scots Magazine, vol. XXIV, p. 611

fact, one feels that a good deal of comfort and convenience has been sacrificed to this end.

Whether Sir Laurence rejected Byres' design on grounds of inconvenience and impracticality, or whether he merely felt that the whole project would be too expensive, we do not know. Or he may have simply seen Duddingston House, which was built in 1768, and been attracted by Sir William Chambers' particular brand of Palladianism. At any rate, Chambers was the architect whom he finally chose.

Begun in 1772, the resulting building is three storeys high and, until it became the headquarters of the Office of Excise for Scotland in 1795, undoubtedly formed the most dignified private house in the New Town.* It is unique in several ways: it is the only detached house built within the area of Craig's plan; unlike all its neighbours it has no basement: it is set back about 135 feet behind the line of the adjacent house; and some of its exterior decorative details, as for example the pulvinated frieze of the first floor windows, are not paralleled elsewhere in the New Town. Although some of the decoration is quite rich, the general effect of Chambers' design is sober and restrained, with more than a hint of Roman gravitas. The composition of the west elevation facing St. Andrew Square is simple: rather more than a third of the facade is projected forward to form a broad central feature, which is emphasised by means of four Corinthian pilasters extending through the first and second floors. The pilasters

carry a tastefully enriched entablature, with a well-proportioned pediment above, and the side wings have a reticent air, with only a single window at each floor level. The master mason was William Jamieson,¹ and the workmanship of the stonework is of a high order, in both the channel-jointed ground storey and the polished ashlar of the upper storeys. The interior, since 1825 the head office of the Royal Bank of Scotland, has lost most of its domestic character, though the Directors' room on the first floor, with its fastidiously decorated doorways, retains something of the spirit of Chambers' work. It is unfortunate that the proportions of the west elevation have been altered by the addition of a large entrance porch in the centre of the ground storey, and by the removal of all the original astragals from the windows. Despite these changes, however, and ignoring the fact that it is really a usurper of Church land, Chambers' building forms a not unworthy focus to the square, especially at night, when the facade seems to gain appreciably in stature through being illuminated with floodlights.

What of the other houses in St. Andrew Square? Is there anything to compare in any way with the house for Sir Laurence Dundas? One other house, built between 1770 and 1772, is attributed to Sir William Chambers, though it is a very modest

1 Jamieson was also employed on the building of the Register House

affair compared with the house at which we have just been looking. This is no. 26, on the north side.* Like the Royal Bank, it is three storeys in height, excluding basement and attics, but the frontage extends to less than fifty feet and the five wall openings at each main floor level are all in the same plane. What architectural character it has is derived largely from the treatment of these openings. The central doorway is emphasised by a slightly projecting portico, with plain Tuscan columns, and this feature forms the starting-point for an articulated pattern which runs horizontally through the ground and first floors. The window opening above the entrance doorway is pedimented, the adjacent windows merely have cornices, and the end windows are pedimented once more. On the ground floor the end windows are treated similarly, but at second floor level all five windows have architraves without either cornices or pediments, repeating the detail of the intermediate ground floor windows. A stone balustrade rests on the moulded wall-head and the first-floor windows have continuous cills, forming in fact a narrow belt which divides the two upper storeys from the second floor. Thus a carefully-studied treatment of the facade has raised the architectural merit of this house above that of its immediate neighbours and tends to confirm the view that it was designed by Chambers. The rough-textured rubble walling is out of character with the rest of the design and was probably covered originally with a cement rendering, as no. 25 is at present.

The internal planning of this house may be taken as fairly typical of the spacious self-contained houses which in the eighteenth century formed nearly all the accommodation in St. Andrew Square. The plan is oblong, with staircase occupying the middle of the east side and receiving its light from a cupola above. The ground and first floors each contain six rooms, and the second and attic floors each have five. Most of the joinerwork is in pine, though in the drawing-room on the first floor veneers of bird's eye maple were used for panelling. The mantelpieces in the principal rooms are of marble.

It has sometimes been said that Craig's New Town, unlike later extensions to it, consisted entirely of self-contained houses built on the English model. Whilst this is true of the George Square development (which we shall refer to shortly) on the south side of the city, it is no more true of St. Andrew Square than it is of the first New Town as a whole. No. 21, for example, at the western end of the north side, was built with a maindoor house at ground and basement levels, with two flats and a third to the east, above the maindoor house at no. 22, access to all three flats being via a common stair. Both nos. 21 and 22 were erected as a speculation by John Young, wright, about 1778, and, as we have noted already, Henry Brougham junior was born in the former, actually in the upper east flat.

The side of no. 21 facing North St. Andrew Street is built of droved ashlar,* while that fronting the square is of polished

ashlar up to the ground floor and of rubble above. If we look at Kirkwood's engraving of 1819, however, it is evident that the polished ashlar and the projecting Doric portico through which the ground floor is now entered are both subsequent additions. The maindoor house was extensively altered many years ago for commercial purposes and now contains nothing of architectural interest. The two flats above, designed as separate units with entry from a common stair at the south east corner, now communicate directly with each other by means of an internal stair. Each contains six rooms, none of special interest, although one or two of the original fireplaces, of marble or of pine with composition enrichment, remain in position. The remaining flat to the east, originally a self-contained double flat but now in direct communication with the maindoor house below, has four rooms and a kitchen on the lower floor and five bedrooms on the attic floor. The drawing-room, situated in the south-east corner of the lower floor, has a panelled dado and a enriched cornice; the mantelpiece is of pine with composition enrichment.

Spacious and comfortable though the interiors of these houses on the north side must have been before they were generally converted to commercial use, it is fairly clear that as a group within the square they did not possess any appreciable degree of architectural unity, even before the numerous nineteenth and twentieth-century additions and alterations were made. If we wish to see a notable example of unified planning

in this area, we must return for the moment to the east side of St. Andrew Square and examine the two apparently symmetrical houses which stand guard in front of the Royal Bank.

The northern member of this pair, no. 35, is by Robert Adam and is, in fact, the earliest of all the houses in the square.* It was built in 1769 for Andrew Crosbie of Holm, advocate, a partner in the Douglas and Heron Bank of Ayr. Only a few years after it was completed, Crosbie was forced to dispose of his house, as the result of the failure of the Bank at Ayr, and in 1781 it became the property of John Wright, the same speculator who took the first five feus in the New Town in 1767. After changing hands several times, the house was used as an hotel from 1830 to 1878, and it was during this period that the building was not only extended eastwards but underwent considerable internal remodelling.¹ Now occupied by an insurance company, it is completely devoid of its original character internally, but fortunately enough of the exterior remains unspoiled for us to be able to recognise much of Adam's delightful design.

The building consists of two principal floors, with a sunk storey and an attic. Each floor of the facade is pierced with five openings and the central part of the floors is brought forward. At basement level the masonry of the front

1 W. Forbes Gray, A Brief Chronicle of the Scottish Union and National Insurance Co., p.83

is channel-jointed. Above this rusticated base, the masonry is of polished ashlar and there is a strong rhythmic pattern set up by the four three-quarter Ionic columns of the central part, echoed by pilasters at the corners of the front. The order extends through the two main floors and the entablature has a fluted frieze, which is punctuated with roundels over the columns and pilasters. The attic storey continues the rhythm of the front below, though in a much simplified manner: the five window bays are divided by piers with fluted capitals, which rise beyond the cornice to terminate with four urns in the centre and two globular finials at the corners. None of the fifteen openings in the facade is moulded.

The south elevation, which was extended eastwards by a further two bays in the nineteenth century, is likewise divided into five bays; though in this case there are no columns, only pilasters, and the two end bays are much narrower and have no windows. The central part is still brought forward, however, and the treatment of the entablature and the attic storey remains unaltered, except that the four central pilasters do not carry urns.

It is unfortunate that the windows have had their astragals removed and are now glazed with large sheets of plate glass. Even worse is the lowering of the cills of the ground floor windows, destroying the harmonious balance between the two tiers of windows on the principal floors. Despite these changes, however, the external character is still strong

enough for us to be able to appreciate the quality of the original design. What is astonishing about this house is the way in which it contrives to combine two qualities which we normally regard as being opposites: the qualities of robustness and delicacy. The boldly-projecting columns and piers, separated by the deep entablature, impart a feeling of great strength to the whole composition, while the quick, light rhythm of the fluted frieze and the subtle skyline produced by the crowning urns help to create a definite sensation of movement. There is, indeed, an interesting comparison to be made between this building and the nearby house of Sir Laurence Dundas, which has already been described. Chambers' design has immense dignity in its basic composition, and the ornament is applied with great scholarship and discretion, even if we do not agree entirely with the contemporary observation that it is "incomparably the handsomest town-house we ever saw".¹ Robert Adam's design, on the other hand, although it uses elements from the same classical language of architecture, speaks with a more flexible voice and achieves, some would say, a better-modulated tone. Adam and Chambers, the two great rivals of the second half of the eighteenth century - there is a curious irony in the fact that here, in St. Andrew Square, we are able to see from the same viewpoint two representative

1 H. Arnot, History of Edinburgh, p. 245

works, one from each architect. It is fortunate that the two houses were built on their present sites: Chambers' facade, essentially static, gains even more dignity by standing back so far from the square; whilst Adam's composition, intrinsically fluid, is seen to great advantage close to the pavement, for the effect of parallax heightens the feeling of movement which the observer receives as he walks towards the building.

One would expect that in an age as conscious of architecture as that of George III someone would be concerned about whether or not any future building to the south of the forecourt to Sir Laurence Dundas' house matched the building to the north, that is, the house by Robert Adam which we have just been examining. This is exactly what happened. Writing about this house in 1779, Arnot says that it "answers as a wing to Sir Laurence's house. It is to be hoped that, when the magistrates dispose of the correspondent area on the south end they will take care to preserve uniformity by making the house, to be raised on it, be built after the design of Mr. Crosbie's".¹

Very fortunately the Town Council were wise enough to adopt this suggestion, and they laid down the condition that any feuar of this land should have his house built so that the front wall and the north gable end should conform outwardly to

1 Ibid.

the corresponding parts of Crosbie's house. Not surprisingly, the restrictions placed upon developing this lot delayed its feuing. Only in 1781, when the feu was exposed to auction at the very low upset price of £120,¹ was it eventually taken up. The only effective bidder at the roup was John Young - the same speculator who had just purchased no. 34 from the luckless Crosbie - and the price he paid was £125.

Anticipating that he might well have difficulty in selling a single house of this size, Young decided to build two houses within the same area. It was only after building was actually started in 1781 that he was found not only to be departing from the conditions expressly laid down, but to be encroaching upon Sir Laurence Dundas' property to the north. An action was raised in the Court of Session, where Dundas' complaint was expressed as follows:

"In the year 1767, the pursuer, Sir Laurence Dundas of Kerse, Baronet, applied to the City of Edinburgh, for a feu of an area upon the east side of St. Andrew Square in the Extended Royalty, consisting of 100 feet in front. And in the year following (1768), Mr. Andrew Crosbie, Advocate, purchased another area of 50 feet in front immediately to the north. Neither of them, however, obtained a charter for several years thereafter; and although Mr. Crosbie was

1 This was only about half the normal price in this square

the later purchaser, his charter is considerably prior in date to the pursuer's . Although the different lots for building in the Extended Royalty were limited to a precise number of feet, an extraordinary allowance was given to each purchaser. This was generally fixed at an inch for every ten feet. But to many of the lots a greater allowance (additional) was given. And in some of them, whether through design or want of attention in the City's Surveyor, the excess above the ordinary allowance appears to have been very considerable. (So Sir Laurence and his agent aver.)

Mr. Crosbie began to build an elegant house upon his area in the year 1769, but the pursuer, Sir Laurence Dundas, did not commence his building till the year 1772, before which time Mr. Crosbie's house was completed. The south side of the pilasters, or ornamental parts of Mr. Crosbie's south gable (which jut out from the main body thereof), forms a straight line with the middle of the mutual wall inclosing his own and the pursuer's respective properties to the east of Mr. Crosbie's house; and the south side of the pursuer's property was likewise inclosed several years ago by a similar wall, dividing his area from the waste ground then unfeued, and belonging to the City of Edinburgh.

In order to preserve uniformity, and to beautify the Square, it was the general wish that a house similar to Mr. Crosbie's in front, and in the gable exposed to view, should be

built upon the area lying to the south of the pursuer's property, and to attain an object so much desired, the magistrates and town-council of the city did, upon 24th January last(1781) expose that area to public auction, at a price greatly below the common rate of feuing, but under this express condition, 'that the front and north wall or gable end of the building to be erected on the said area or plot of ground, shall be exactly similar to the front and south wall or gable end of house belonging to Andrew Crosbie, Esq., on the north side of Sir Laurence Dundas's property, and of the same height with these.'

In the same articles of roup, the subject exposed was thus described:- 'The area of building ground measuring about 50 feet in front, lying in the Extended Royalty, on east side of St Andrew's Square, marked on the feuing plan W.W. and bounded by that part thereof feued, to Robert Sheriff, merchant in Leith, on the south, and by a meuse lane on the east, belonging to the City of Edinburgh.' The upset price was £120 ... and the term of payment was postponed till Whitsunday, 1782. No bidders appeared at the roup but two, John Young, architect in Edinburgh, and Alexander Reid, mason in Edinburgh. The first offered £125, and the other, £126. Mr. Reid, however, immediately declared that he made his offer for the behoof of Mr. Young, and Mr. Young was accordingly preferred as the highest bidder, and enacted himself in terms of the articles.

Mr. Young immediately set about fulfilling the conditions of his bargain. At this date, January 31, 1781, he applied to the Council by letter signifying that his intention was to divide the building into two houses, by making one of the windows a door, and asking the Council to agree to allow plain ashler [sic] in place of the rustics in the sunk area, which are expensive and not seen. The answer given by the Council, as appears from a minute of the same date on the back of the letter, was - 'the Clerk is to write Mr. Young that before any deviation whatever from articles of roup can be agreed to, an elevation of his front and north gable must be given in to the Council for their consideration.' These were sent in, signed by Mr. Young's initials, and the following docket by the Clerk appears subjoined: 'This plan is approved of by the Council, 14th February, 1781. (signed) David Steuart, Provost.'¹

The action between Sir Laurence Dundas and his neighbour on the south was ultimately resolved and John Young was allowed to continue building the two houses. Viewed from the front, the resulting building, no. 36, corresponds reasonably well with the earlier no. 35; though two entrances

1 Court of Session Record, 1781

from the street were provided,¹ at opposite ends of the facade, in place of the central doorway of the other house, and there are some subtle differences in the proportioning of elements such as windows which make the house by Robert Adam the more distinguished of the two. But when we look at the north elevation, we find that Young still managed to avoid reproducing all the features of the south elevation of Crosbie's house. The four central pilasters are omitted altogether, leaving only two pilasters at the corners. Between these pilasters only the upper member of the cornice is returned, and where the full entablature does appear above the east pilaster, it has an awkward return to the east. Instead of polished ashlar, dressed masonry is used.

Fortunate though Young was in being able to economise on some of the external embellishments of no. 36, he was not so lucky when it came to selling his new building. Initially he had to let it for use as an hotel. At length in 1785 the property was purchased by the eighth Earl of Dalhousie. After both the Earl and the Countess had died, their son, the ninth Earl, sold it in 1807 to the present proprietor, the British Linen Bank, making a profit of £2,687 10s. on his father's outlay.²

1 The southern one is no longer used

2 Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh, p. 190

We have looked at five out of the thirty-eight houses which St Andrew Square originally contained. Little needs to be said of the remainder, for they followed the general form of the relatively unsophisticated houses still to be seen on the north side and had none of the refinement and scholarship evident in the Crosbie and Dundas houses. Not a single original building now remains on either the south or west sides, a very mixed collection of wholly commercial buildings of varying heights now replacing them, and it is extremely difficult for us to visualise the square through the eyes of Arnot, who speaks of it as "the finest square we ever saw ... the houses are much of a size. They are of a uniform height, and are all built of freestone".¹ How did this uniformity come about? Was it merely the result of a consensus of taste existing at this time? It will be useful if we turn now to the regulations which were in force whilst the square was being built.

The first Act promoted by the Town Council to regulate development in the New Town was passed in 1786 and imposed very few restrictions on feuars. Indeed, the whole tone of the Act sounds as though its prime objective is to hasten the taking up of feus:

"The Lord Provost, from the magistrates

¹ H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 244

and convener, reported, That in order to obviate objections, and to encourage the feuing out of the area in the square¹ and the other building plots now in the market, they were of opinion - (1) That the streets, so far as the said square and areas go, should be chalked out: which will enable those inclining to take feus to judge of the beauty of the situation, and the elegance of the intended streets, and also what areas are proper for them to pitch out, - of which, at present, they can form but very imperfect notions by looking at the plan, or even viewing the ground; and for this purpose, (2) That application should be made to the Sheriff to alter the present roads, so as to answer the streets marked out in the plan, and, at the same time, to ascertain the boundaries of the extended royalty, in terms of the late Act of Parliament. (3) That an exact survey should be taken, so as it may be determined what is the proper place for building a reservoir within the bounds of the extended royalty, and in what course a pipe should be carried to it from the reservoir on the Castlehill, which will satisfy the town's feuars that they will soon be supplied with water in the same way that the inhabitants of the city are at present, and shew demonstrably the superiority that the town's grounds have in this respect for building upon, over the

1 i.e., St Andrew Square

other grounds in the neighbourhood. (4) That as several persons have been discouraged from taking feus, on account of the improper division of the lots, and as people's taste of building is so different, that it is not possible to lay down a fixed and determined rule of what dimensions each lot should be, every person should be allowed to take so many feet in front as they choose, upon paying at the same rate as is contained in the scheme already adopted by the Council. The only objection that occurred to this manner of feuing, viz. 'That an improper remainder might be left', can easily be obviated, by beginning at one corner or end of the respective areas, and to stop feuing in that manner when within fifty or sixty feet of the other corner or end; which remainder will answer well for the ~~space~~ stance of one elegant or two smaller houses."¹

It is remarkable how much sheer common sense this Act shows, especially in its flexible attitude towards the lengths of frontage which could be taken. If all the feuars in the New Town had possessed the same kind of architectural sensibility which Arnot and Dundas evidently had, then further legislation would have been superfluous. But the fact is that taste in architecture was really in a state of transition in Edinburgh

1 Act of Town Council, 24th February 1768

in the 1760's and 1770's - perhaps even up to the end of the century - and it was possible within this loose framework of control to find somewhat naive, homespun elements entering incongruously into the cool, classical elegance of Craig's plan. Even today we can see one or two rough intruders which show quite clearly that there were certain aesthetic problems inherent implementing the plan. The house on the corner of Queen Street and St. David Street, probably the first house to be built in Queen Street, is one example. Basically three storeys high above street level, it carries a gablet facing north which rises a further storey and accords ill with the rest of the houses in Queen Street. We find a similar arrangement near the intersection of George Street and Hanover Street, at no. 32 George Street: again the facade is predominantly three-storey but rises at one point to form a gablet about twenty feet wide overall. Finally, until it was demolished in 1964, there was an interesting tenement in South St. David Street, nos. 5-11,* which, with its rubble masonry and its central gablet carrying a heavy chimney, looked very much as if it had strayed into the New Town from the Old.¹

Picturesque though such buildings can look in appropriate surroundings, they cannot avoid seeming incongruous when

¹ The tenement was built in 1773-4 and represented a type which was - and is still - very common in the inner suburbs on the south side of the city

standing alongside more sophisticated structures - above all when the entire street layout is consciously planned in a formal manner. At best, they merely look out of place; at worst, they look mean and impoverished by comparison with their more elegant neighbours. It was not surprising, then that the 1768 Act of Council was felt eventually to be inadequate, and much wider powers to control building were sought:

"The Lord Provost moved that no feus shall be granted in the Extended Royalty for houses above three storeys high exclusive of the garret and sunk storeys. Also that before granting charters the feuars be obliged to lodge with one of the City Clerks, Plans and Elevations of the buildings they intend to erect to be submitted to the inspection of the Council. And if by them approved, these Plans and Elevations must be lodged in the City's Charter House in perpetuam rei memoriam ... And that the Meuse Lanes shall be solely appropriated for the purpose of building stables, coach-houses or other offices. And that the houses in the two streets that are parallel to George Street, Princes Street and Queens sic Street shall not exceed two storeys exclusive of the sunk and garret storeys, as the building of houses in these streets higher, would materially injure the principal streets above-mentioned. He likewise moved that the easing of the roofs should run along the side walls immediately

above the windows of the third storey, and no storm or other windows to be allowed in the front of the roof other than skye [sic] lights."¹

The Council approved the motion and on 17th July 1782 the Act of the preceding year was renewed, with an added clause to authorise the forfeiting of the feu and the imposition of a fine of £30 sterling in case of contravention. Evidently after these Acts a good deal of evasion of the regulations still continued, and three years later even more stringent legislation was effected:

"The Right Honourable the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of the City, in Council assembled having taken into consideration that the rules and regulations contained in former Acts of Council, with regard to feuing out the extended royalty, and buildings to be erected thereon, have in some instances been disregarded and attempted to be evaded, to prevent which it was resolved and appointed that the following rules and regulations be observed in all time coming. (1) When any application is given in to the Council for a feu, the same to be remitted to a Committee, but the Committee to make

1 Act of Town Council, 14th February 1781

no report thereupon, nor is the feu to be granted, until such time as a plan and elevation of the intended building, signed by the person applying, be given in to the Committee and approved by them. (2) That no feus shall be granted in the principal streets of the extended royalty for houses above three storey high, exclusive of garret and sunk storeys, and that the whole height of side-walls from floor of sunk storey shall not exceed 48 feet. (3) That Meuse Lanes shall be solely appropriated for purposes of building stables, coach-houses or other offices, and these shall in no cases whatever be built on any of the other streets of the extended royalty. (4) That the street running parallel with and situated between George's Street and Prince's Street shall be called Rose Street, and that the street running parallel with and situated between George's Street and Queen Street shall be called Thistle Street. That the houses in those two streets now to be called Rose Street and Thistle Street, shall not exceed two storeys, exclusive of the sunk and garret storeys, and that no storeys shall exceed eleven feet in height including the joisting and floor, at least that the whole height of the side-walls from floor of sunk storey, shall not exceed 33 feet. (5) That the easing of the roofs shall run along the side-walls immediately above the windows of the upper storey, and no storm or other windows to be allowed in the front of the

roof, except sky-lights, and that the pitch of roof shall not be more than one third of the breadth or span over the walls. (6) That every person or persons acting contrary to all or any of these rules and regulations, shall be bound to pay to the City Chamberlain or his successors for behoof of the community, the sum of £30 of additional purchase money besides being liable in damages, and repairing his or her own transgression. (7) That in all time coming every person who obtains a feu in the extended royalty shall be bound to build thereon, within one year from obtaining the feu, otherwise he shall not only forfeit the same, but also be liable in payment of £30 sterling to the City Chamberlain for behoof of the community. (8) That no proposal for a feu be agreed to unless it contains a reference to this Act, and an obligation on the proposer to observe and fulfil the articles before enumerated, and that every such proposal shall be written on a paper to be annexed to a printed copy hereof. And they appoint this Act of Council to be printed and published, that none may pretend ignorance."¹

Detailed building legislation was by no means unknown in Britain before 1785. Apart from the Acts of 1707 and 1709,

1 Act of Town Council, 29th June 1785

which affected the construction of wooden cornices and windows respectively, London had the great Building Act of 1774, drafted by Sir Robert Taylor and George Dance the younger, which aimed at "stopping once and for all the slipshod construction of party-walls and evasive quibbling between adjoining owners ... and making the exterior of the ordinary house as near incombustible as possible",¹ as well as categorising domestic buildings into four separate "Rates". But in the Edinburgh Act we see provisions designed, not to exclude forms of construction which were unsound technically, but to regulate building in the New Town in such a way as to safeguard beauty and convenience. How did it come about that the northern capital, so much smaller than its southern counterpart and with a stable social life established barely a generation ago, cared sufficiently about the quality of urban environment to enact powerful town planning measures? We do not know all the personalities involved or the arguments voiced in favour of strict controls. The very smallness of Edinburgh and the consequent opportunities for frequent and intimate discussion among the leading figures in its society may well have helped to produce agreement about the need for such controls. But perhaps the unifying force at this critical time in the development of the New Town was the conviction that all those taking part were contributing towards

1 Sir John Summerson, Georgian London, pp. 125-6

the realisation of George Drummond's vision - the vision of an earthly paradise - in which a harmonious balance between all the elements was essential and where no marked eccentricities in the outward form of individual houses could be countenanced. That it is reasonable to interpret events in this way is evidenced by the fact that when, as we shall see later, various disputes arose over the details of the completion of the New Town, in every instance - at least during the Georgian era and sometime well beyond it - idealism triumphed over the forces of materialism.

Yet it would be wrong to give the impression either that the progress of building was uniformly smooth from 1767 onwards or that the resulting street architecture was satisfactory in all respects, once the more stringent legislation had come into force.

Taking the first point, although in the first two years of feuing nearly thirty lots were purchased, there was a definite lessening of demand for feus in the New Town in 1769 and the pace of building did not quicken again until well into the 1770's.* This was probably the result of the collapse of the North Bridge, in which, as we have seen, five persons lost their lives in August 1769. There was a further slowing down in the early 1780's, no doubt reflecting the uncertainties caused by the American War of Independence. In the words of the American naval song "Paul Jones":

"Thro' a mad-hearted war, which old England will rue,

At London, at Dublin, and Edinburgh, too,
 The tradesmen stand still, and the merchant bemoans
 The losses he meets with from such as Paul Jones."

Once the war was over, the taking up of feus accelerated and remained brisk until 1793, when war, this time with France, again interrupted building activity, though the brief peace of 1802 encouraged a renewed impetus.

Certainly something like twenty years passed from the time of the first feu to the point at which the New Town began clearly to appear as the Mecca for all those families who had sufficient means at their disposal to escape from the dismal overcrowding of the Old Town. For a decade or more it looked as though a smaller, though in some ways more favourably-placed, development was going to attract almost all the migrants. George Square,* situated on a gentle southern slope less than half a mile from the High Street, began to be erected in 1766 by James Brown, an enterprising builder.¹ It consisted of four rows of terraced houses, each with a meuse lane at the rear, arranged round a rectangle measuring about 650 feet by 500 feet.² Building proceeded apace, for the square was immediately popular, and by 1779 three sides were complete. The southern terrace was

1 Brown named the square not after the King, but after his brother George

2 The dimensions are larger than those of any of the New Town squares

was finished about 1785.¹ Although Arnot was not at all impressed by the houses on the north side,² there was no shortage of eminent citizens anxious to live in the square. Before the end of the century the residents included Lord Braxfield, Admiral Duncan, and Duchess of Gordon, Sir William Jardine, Lord Melville, Sir James Pringle, Lady Ruthven, the Countess of Sutherland - and Walter Scott. Only comparatively late in the nineteenth century did George Square cease to be a haven for the aristocracy.

So far as its architecture is concerned, it is interesting to observe how taste changed during the fairly brief period in which the square was built. The roughly-squared rubble of the earlier houses gave way quickly to well-finished ashlar, and the wall-heads at varying levels were soon replaced by fairly constant eaves lines. It must be remembered that this important development, being outside the Royalty, was not subject to any building legislation,³ and changes in appearance can be taken at their face value. That is, we can vouch for the fact that the vernacular roughness of the earliest houses, dating from, say 1766 to 1770, somehow became transmuted within the short space of about twenty years into a style of building which, if

1 Book of Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXVI, p. 4

2 He found that they had "a poor appearance, and give a bad effect to the whole ... being of a mean and unequal height."

3 Nor was it subject to any public burdens

not yet highly refined, at least formed a flexible and polished language. It is true to say, therefore, that the series of Acts passed about this time by the Town Council to regulate building on the other side of the city reflected a spontaneous and growing desire for a more homogeneous kind of street architecture. If we now follow through the development of the New Town up to the point at which Charlotte Square was designed and built, we shall be able to detect quite significant changes in the design of the houses themselves, though in almost every respect Craig's original plan is faithfully maintained.

As we have seen, the implementation of the plan commenced at the eastern end.¹ St. Andrew Square was complete by about 1780,² and so were the approaches to it, St. Andrew Street and St. David Street. With minor exceptions, the whole movement of building was in a westerly direction. Let us turn to the principal artery in the plan, George Street, and see what kind of architecture it contains, following the progression from east to west.

It must be said at once that, of all the streets forming part of the first New Town, George Street has suffered the most through thoughtless alteration. Originally 116 feet wide between the lines of opposing buildings, it has now shrunk

1 This was entirely logical, as this end was much more accessible from the Old Town, even before the North Bridge was opened

2 Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 116

almost everywhere to a width of barely 100 feet, owing to the venal practice of rebuilding properties right up to the outer limits of the sunk areas, and simultaneously the height of the previous buildings has been virtually doubled in many cases. Consequently we do not see the original proportions as we look along the street today, nor can we expect to find more than a handful of houses dating from the eighteenth century.

Out of a total of almost 150 houses,¹ the only ones retaining a Georgian character externally to any recognisable extent are the following nine: nos. 36, 38, 84, 91, 110, 112 and 125. It is curious that all but two of these bear even numbers. This may well be explained by the fact that the even numbers have their street windows facing north. If we accept that such houses are intrinsically a little less desirable than those facing south, it follows that they have changed hands less often and have consequently been less prone to alteration.²

At all events, there are no houses at all that merit even passing attention in the first quarter of George Street, that is, in the north and south terraces lying between St. Andrew Square and Hanover Street, for wholesale rebuilding has taken place here.³ Moving on to the next block, between the last-named street and Frederick Street, at no. 36 we find the entrance

1 The exact number was 141

2 The same characteristic is found elsewhere in the New Town, e.g., in Great King Street

3 There are two public buildings that must be mentioned, but these will be discussed later

to a group of three flats. The entrance is very plain: merely a doorway, without a fanlight, set in a masonry opening emphasised by the simplest of architraves. The flats are approached by means of a winding stair set in a well measuring 12 feet by 8 feet 6 inches, with the treads supported partly by a masonry pier 4 feet by 8 inches. The staircase, which is lighted by two sash windows¹ and a small skylight at the top, is totally devoid of any architectural features, apart from the slight rounding of the soffit of each tread, and is described here simply because it is so similar in form and materials to hundreds of winding stairs built earlier than this in the Old Town. Each flat contains four principal rooms, none of particular interest.

Next door, at no. 38, is what was no doubt a maindoor house, but which, judging by the Regency-type window divide on the street floor, was converted fairly early in its life into a shop.* Immediately underneath, in the sunk floor, is a front of similar date, and it is reasonable to infer that two shops were fitted up at the same time. This assumption is strengthened by inspecting the steps and railings. Each flight is not only similar in length - for street level is midway between the two floors - but matches in materials also. The present occupation of the street floor is by a firm of

1 The position of these windows is determined by external appearance, not internal convenience

publishers, and there is a bookshop below. It is to be hoped that these two businesses will continue in their present location for a long time to come; this two-tier arrangement of small shops, which was such a characteristic feature of the New Town in the nineteenth century, is now becoming increasingly rare.

Further west, just beyond the intersection with Frederick Street, there is at no. 74 a repetition of the arrangement already seen at no. 36, and this is echoed on the north side of the street, at no. 73. In each case the entrance and stair are as utilitarian as the example previously described,¹ and the flats themselves have undergone considerable alteration, particularly at no. 73, where on the second (top) floor a moderate-sized hotel has been formed by extending into the adjoining flat.

It is only when we reach no. 84, nearly two-thirds of the way along George Street, that the eye discovers something which not only appears as a reasonably intact whole house, but one having some sign of refinement. The design is plain enough, it is true, with three tiers of openings in a wall of droved masonry, reflecting the three principal floors, the whole surmounted with a slated roof which hugs the wall-head very tightly in a typically Scottish manner. But the doorway

1 The entrance to no. 73 is partly obscured by an extension towards the street

has a shy elegance which gives just a hint of the splendours so close at hand in Charlotte Square. The opening is much wider than any we have seen in any of the previous houses in the street and has at its head a segmental arch, still formed in droved ashlar.* The door is flanked by a pair of well-executed Ionic columns, each followed by a blind recess and finally a half-pilaster, the four shafts carrying a simple entablature. Above this there was no doubt a restrained but elegant fanlight, but unfortunately this segmental opening now contains merely a sheet of plate glass.

Continuing westwards, we find a slight but unmistakable increase in formality of design. No. 91 is admittedly rather featureless - apart from a clumsily-designed modern portico with ill-proportioned Ionic columns - but nos. 110 and 112 are both fairly handsome houses and form a reasonably well-matched pair.¹ Of the two, the former is slightly more ornate. It has four openings on each of the three principal floors, as compared with three in the adjoining house, and the entrance near the north-east corner has a particularly fine doorway flanked by Corinthian pilasters; above is a semi-circular fanlight, metal-framed and very similar to a number of the larger fanlights in Queen Street.† It is by no

1 In all the eight terraces which George Street contains, this is the only opportunity we now have of seeing two of the original houses side by side

* 59

† 58

means inconceivable that the Adam brothers were called upon to give advice on the treatment of some of the larger houses such as this, although there are no drawings remaining to confirm authorship.

As no. 112 is built on a rather more modest scale, it may be regarded as fairly typical of the original houses in George Street and will now be described in detail. The lot on which this house stands was feued in 1786 by David Stewart, a man variously described as a "banker" or "merchant"¹ in Edinburgh who became Lord Provost in 1780 and whom we shall meet again in connection with the grounds north of the Queen Street Gardens. Two Edinburgh masons, James Hill and Alexander Porteous, sub-feued from Stewart, obtaining a feu-charter direct from the city in 1790. Hill and Porteous no doubt erected the building at, or possibly a little before, this date² and then sold it to the first occupant. Apart from the three main floors it contains the usual basement, finished in rubble masonry in place of the more expensive dressed ashlar above, and an attic floor which is lit by skylights in the slated roof. The entrance, a good deal simpler than that of its neighbour and unfortunately lacking the original fanlight, is near the north-west corner of the front. It leads into a vestibule with an

1 A.J. Youngson, op. cit., p. 205

2 From a number of other instances, it is clear that quite often the feu-charter was obtained a year or two after a house was completed

enriched plaster ceiling, giving access through an archway to the staircase beyond. The front room at street level, the original dining room, has two windows facing north and on the opposite wall a sideboard recess, which is flanked by two symmetrically-placed doorways. One of these gives access to a press, whilst the other, on the east side, communicates with the study. The walls are finished in moulded timber panels up to dado height, and above this are well-proportioned plaster panels with enriched mouldings. The mantelpiece is of pine, decorated with composition ornaments and enclosing a marble insert.

The study, which faces south and is lighted by a single window, can also be entered directly from the stair hall. It has a good mantelpiece in pine, with rather unusual composition ornaments depicting shells and seaweed. The north wall is treated in a similar manner to the south wall of the dining room, that is, one door gives access to a press and the other is a communicating door. Between the two doors a recess is provided for a bookcase. The smaller room which completes the south-west corner of the plan, and is entered directly from the stair hall, is of no particular interest. The staircase, as in so many New Town houses, is lit from a skylight above the second floor, and is of the geometric type. It is simply treated, the stone steps being surmounted with plain wrought-iron balusters and a solid mahogany handrail. At first floor level the landing provides access to three rooms. The most

important of these, the drawing-room, is to the north and extends the full width of the house, having three windows overlooking the street. On the opposite wall are two doorways, one communicating with the back drawing-room and the other being the entrance from the landing. The walls are panelled up to dado height and there is a mantelpiece of white and coloured marble. Both the cornice and the ceiling are enriched. The smaller drawing-room has a single window facing south and is treated rather more simply. There is still a timber dado, but the ceiling is plain apart from an enriched cornice. A simple pine mantelpiece incorporates a marble insert. The third room at this level, a small dressing-room, intercommunicates with the back drawing room and is devoid of any features except a window facing south and a plain pine mantelpiece.

The second floor was clearly designed as the main bedroom floor, as the finishings are much simpler than on the piano nobile below. The space above the large drawing-room is occupied by two bedrooms of unequal sizes, the east rooms having two windows and the west room only one. The south-west corner of the latter is encroached upon to accommodate the attic stair. Both rooms complete the accommodation on this floor, each having one window facing south. The attic floor was no doubt intended as servants' sleeping quarters and is, like most attics in the earlier phase of the New Town, extremely rudimentary. Of the three rooms at this level, two are coomb-ceiled and are lit

only by skylights; the third has a dormer window facing south.¹

If the thesis is generally correct that the elegance of the houses increases in proportion as we move westwards from St. Andrew Square, as we have now almost reached the end of George Street, we ought here to be able to point to one or two houses of some special interest. So we can. Perhaps the most interesting house façade in any of the eight terraces is that of no. 115. A third of the original design has unfortunately been destroyed, owing to the insensitive act of a commercial company in thrusting the ground floor accommodation out as far as the heel of the pavement. The remaining two-thirds of the design is therefore hardly seen in favourable circumstances. However, we can still make out a front four bays wide, with well-proportioned Corinthian pilasters marking the limits of each bay. The pilasters rise through two storeys and carry an unusual entablature, which includes a frieze carved with festoons. The whole effect is striking and leads us to consider who the designer could have been. All that can be said with certainty is that it does not correspond with Robert Adam's work - or indeed that of John or James. The scale of the festoons is rather coarse and heavy: more reminiscent of Robert Reid's work, though he would have been too young to have been

1 As will be remembered, attics facing the principal streets could be lit only by skylights, according to the regulations then in force

associated with this building.¹ Most likely the front was designed by some enterprising mason or wright, anxious to join the headlong quest for elegance.

Perhaps less striking, but pointing forward rather more clearly to the direction which the architecture of the New Town was going to take near the close of the century, is the front of nos. 120-124. According to a nineteenth-century historian, the building was erected as the George Street Tontine, and "owing to some legal dispute, which left the houses there unfinished, they were occupied as infantry barracks during the war with France".² As in the case of no. 115, the interior has been so extensively altered to suit commercial use as not to concern us here, but the arrangement of the exterior will repay a little analysis. The front, which occupies the equivalent width of three houses, is treated in a unified way and can be regarded, therefore, as the first of the numerous palace-front designs in Edinburgh, albeit a rather embryonic one.³ There are nine bays in all, and the three central ones are emphasised in two different ways. First, there is the obvious difference that each bay is defined by pilasters,

1 Even assuming the house was designed as late as 1790, Reid would still have been only fourteen years of age

2 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 139

3 Other palace-front designs occur in the main cross streets, but these incorporate bow fronts are not strictly comparable

whereas the outer windows have no pilasters flanking them except at the ends. But there is also the very subtle easing forward of the middle third of the facade - so slight is the break that it is practically imperceptible, even in the silhouette of the cornice against the sky. Evidently someone has been experimenting here, groping a little tentatively towards a richer and more expressive vocabulary for Edinburgh's street architecture. If the manipulation of the profile is hesitant, there is nothing indecisive about the way in which the purely decorative elements are handled. The six Ionic pilasters rise through two storeys and carry a boldly decorated entablature. The frieze is enriched with unusually broad fluting interspersed with Roman paterae at wide intervals. The treatment is slightly reminiscent of some of the details of the Crosbie house by Robert Adam and may represent a craftsman's attempt to interpret the elegance of that design in the context of a continuous street frontage.

One further house calls for comment. No. 125 is unique in this street, in that the ground storey is faced with channel-jointed ashlar. Again, this feature is a pointer to the nineteenth century, for soon it was to become so widespread as to be the sine qua non of the ground floor in every new Edinburgh street. It is also worth noting the detail at the base of the first floor windows. There is no individual cill to each window; instead a continuous belt runs the full width of the front, foreshadowing if not a universal detail, at least

a generally-accepted one.

Having examined ten or more houses in varying degrees of detail, how can we summarise the development of George Street, which after all was intended to be the principal thoroughfare of the New Town? Perhaps it is as well first to admit that the general effect of the original development was probably none too successful. A visitor to the city in 1788 found the street "so wide in proportion to the height of the buildings that in the declining line of perspective they appear like Barracks".¹ Certainly the impression which we get from contemporary prints is not wholly favourable and there seems to be more than a hint of monotony.* But it is likely that the fault arose from the design of the units, not from the design of the street itself. It is worth remembering that Farington was an Englishman, from an old Lancastrian family, and although he had travelled fairly widely in England, Scotland must have seemed to his eye very much - literally - a foreign country. It is hardly surprising that he found George Street so remarkably wide: he could not have seen a street 116 feet wide anywhere else in Britain at this time. The width, in any case, is not excessive in relation to three-storey Georgian buildings. If a fairly uniform eaves height of 40 feet from pavement level is assumed, this gives a ratio of just under

1 J. Farington, Notebook no. 3

1 to 3 for the proportion of building to street width. The investigations of Maertens into the scale of spaces in front of buildings are of some relevance here:

"In order to see at its best a building as a whole (i.e. leaving aside the detailing) the observer should be separated from the building by a distance equalling about twice its height, which means he should see it at an angle of 27 degrees. In this latter case the building will fill the entire field of vision of an observer who holds his head motionless. If the observer wants to see more than just the one building, if for instance he wants to see this building as part of a group ... he should see it at an angle of about 18 degrees, which means he should be separated from the building by a distance equal to about three times its height. If thus placed the observer, although losing many of the effects of the detailing, will still get a good view of the building as a whole, and his field of vision will be large enough to include considerable parts of the objects surrounding the building, say adjoining buildings of the group, colonnades, trees or vistas ... Yet this distance of three times the height between observer and building is not too great to prevent the building, if the observer keeps it in his centre of vision, from dominating the picture presented to the eye".¹

1 W. Hegemann and E. Peets, Civic Art, p. 44

So, if we accept these theories, those responsible for the design of George Street had a fairly exact intuitive appreciation of the optimum height of façades if the buildings were to be seen as belonging to a group; and Farington's complaint, though well-founded, was loosely expressed. The trouble was surely that no one - until perhaps the street was almost completely built - had stopped to consider what kind of effect would result from repeating more or less the same kind of unit for a distance of half a mile. The majority of the houses were of the three-bay type: it was rather as if a player kept strumming a waltz rhythm over and over again without any variety or inflection.

Apart from the monotony of the scene as a whole, there was a dearth of modelling, as we have seen, in the individual houses: a pair of columns at a doorway here, a range of windows there with architraves and cornices, but little else. Internally, the houses were a good deal more satisfactory and must have provided an excellent setting for the activities of the well-to-do families who came to live there - families of bankers, noblemen, advocates, artists, booksellers.¹ Within limits, each incoming family would have chosen the amount of floor area required, for as we have seen, even the later (and more stringent)

1 Some interesting notes on residents are given in J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 139-44

regulation allowed freedom to determine the length of frontage taken. In practice, the smallest frontage taken for a house in this street seems to have been about twenty-seven feet and the largest about forty, allowing for the erection of a three-bay and a four-bay house respectively. Most of the houses had a total of twelve or thirteen rooms, arranged according to a fairly standard plan, similar^{to} that which has already been described in detail. The slated roofs were constructed at a pitch of approximately forty degrees, rising to a fairly high central ridge, and incorporated skylights on the slopes facing the street, giving light not only to two or more attic bedrooms but to the staircase as well.¹ As far as the domestic arrangements were concerned, the kitchen was generally located directly under the dining room, with storage and wine cellar close by; while stables and wash-houses were sited in outbuildings in the back gardens, facing the meuse lanes. A water supply was provided at this level, but there is no trace of cisterns having been installed at roof level when these buildings were first erected.

Consideration of the public buildings in George Street has been deferred until now. This is not because their interest is minimal - each of the three buildings we are going to look at is interesting for different reasons - but because the houses

1 The practice of using a cupola to light the staircase did not become widespread in Edinburgh until early in the nineteenth century

we have been considering were, in fact, the only type of building originally intended for this street.¹

Let us begin by looking at the earliest of the three buildings, a design by James Craig himself. In 1722 the Royal College of Physicians had erected a new building for themselves at Fountain Court;² but after less than forty years it became clear that it was too small for the increasing activities of the College. In particular the library accommodation was inadequate and the number of volumes was mounting steadily.³ The Fellows evidently sent a plan for a new College costing £800 to Robert Adam for his comments. After inspecting the plan in 1760, Adam "gave it as his opinion that it was unsuitable, and quite unworthy of the Body for whom it was intended; - and with great liberality, Mr. Adam gave, spontaneously and gratuitously, a plan of his own, the execution of which was estimated to cost between £5000 and £6000, exclusive of the statues, bustos, and bas-reliefs, which he recommended as appropriate and almost necessary". Adam's plan,* however, came no nearer to being built than the College's own meagre plan, for "after being handed about and admired, it was laid aside as unsuitable to the finances of the College".⁴ These two schemes

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- 1 This intention is quite clear from looking at Craig's plan
 - 2 Near the Cowgate Port
 - 3 A rule enacted in 1696 obliged every new entrant to donate at least one book to the library
 - 4 Historic Sketch of the Royal College of Physicians, p. 41

were for quite a small site in the Cowgate. For a time the idea of erecting a new building was abandoned and the College found temporary asylum in the Royal Infirmary. Then in 1770 the premises at Fountain Close were sold for £800, further money was raised "by mortgage and other means",¹ and Craig was asked to act as architect. The College was actually offered three alternative sites by the city for its new building: one in George Square, one where the Scott Monument now stands, and one on the south side of George Street about two hundred feet from St Andrew Square. It was the last which the Fellows chose. The foundation stone was laid on 27th November 1775 by Professor Cullen of the University and the building was completed about two years later. Among the mementoes of the foundation ceremony placed in the stone laid by Professor Cullen was a large silver medal, "in compliment to his [Craig's] professional talents"² - evidently the architect was still held in high esteem at this time.

What was the building like? It was competently composed, dignified and well-proportioned, though not revealing any particular originality.* A broad flight of steps led from the pavement to a handsome portico with a triangular pediment carrying three classical figures. The four Corinthian columns of the portico stood about seven feet above street level and

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 147

2 Ibid., p. 146

six feet in front of the north wall. The frontage extended to a length of eighty-four feet and was of vaulted construction and contained rooms for the librarian and other officials. At the entrance level a spacious vestibule thirty-five feet wide gave access to four large apartments. The largest of these, fifty feet by thirty feet, was the library. Well-lit by two tiers of five windows facing Rose Street and with a fine gallery on three sides, it must have been a handsome enough room, though the arrangement of the bookcases does not seem to have been very practical. The final cost of the building was almost £4,000. Craig, who was responsible for constructing as well as designing the building, had submitted a tender for £2,725 and the work was started on this basis. But apparently, by the time that the contract had been completed, no less than £3,850 had been paid out by the College, and Craig was complaining that he was still £105 out of pocket:

"If the Committee does not pay me the account of Extraordinary work I presented to Dr. Grant the 2nd curt. amounting to £105 beside the rise of wages which I was obliged to pay the masons and wrights etc. owing to their Combination, I shall repent the day I ever laid a stone of their building - The Royal College are all Gentlemen as individuals, how far they will behave genteely as a Society time

must soon determine".¹

Whether there were any extenuating circumstances to justify the rise of well over a third in the contract amount, or whether it was due to incompetence and lack of control on the part of the architect, we do not know. All we can be certain of is that the College was constantly short of money - so much so, according to Grant, that even before they had moved into their new building the Fellows were wondering how much capital they could raise by selling it:

"The same poverty which had prevented the college from availing itself of the plans of Adam, and which had caused its desire to part with its new hall in George Street, even before its occupation, still pressed heavily upon it. Having at that time no funded capital, it was entirely dependent on the entrance-fees paid by Fellows, a fluctuating and inadequate source of income. Besides, beautiful as the George Street hall was in its outward proportions, its internal were not so convenient as might have been desired, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that when the college found their site was coveted by a wealthy banking corporation their poverty and not their will consented; and in 1843 the George Street hall was sold to the Commercial Bank for £20,000 - a sum which

1 Letter from James Craig to Royal College of Physicians, 10th November 1779

it was hoped would suffice to build a more comfortable if less imposing, hall, and leave a surplus to secure a certain, though possibly a small annual income. Although the transaction was obviously an advantageous one for the college, it was not without some difficulty that many of the Fellows made up their minds to part with a building of which they were justly proud".¹

So Mammon replaced Hippocrates.* It is unfortunate that the old Physicians' Hall has gone, because it was the only building of any size in Edinburgh with which Craig's name is definitely associated, and if we had been able to walk about in it in reality and not merely in imagination, it would have given us an accurate account of Craig's ability as an architect. Happily the original drawings are still preserved, as well as a handsome model which Craig commissioned from a cabinet-maker before presenting his design to the Fellows, and from these we can to some extent gauge his architectural talents. He was clearly an accomplished draughtsman and, judging by the well-placed decorative elements in the interior of the library, he had some sensitivity in the application of ornament; but, as we have noted earlier, he had no particular flair for manipulating the commonly-accepted components into new forms.

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 147

Let us turn to a most interesting building designed by an amateur. By 1780 St Andrew Square was complete, and quite a number of houses had been built in the eastern sections of George Street, Queen Street and Princes Street, especially the last.¹ In April of that year James Hunter Blair, a former Lord Provost, proposed to the Town Council that the inhabitants of the New Town should have their own place of worship, so that they could continue to be active members of the Church of Scotland without having to repair to the Old Town on Sundays. The proposal was unanimously agreed to by the Council in January 1781.² A premium of ten guineas was offered for the best plan of a church, which was to be sited in the centre of the north side of George Street, midway between St. Andrew Square and Hanover Street.³ The competition was won by Captain Fraser of the Engineers, chief engineer in Scotland.^{4*} Fraser declined the premium for himself and asked for it to be given to David Kay, a drawing-master in Edinburgh who had himself submitted a design, which was considered "highly meritorious".⁵ We do not know Fraser's motives in doing this, but it is quite

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XII, p. 211

2 TCM 31st January 1781

3 As will be remembered, Sir Laurence Dundas had usurped the intended site

4 Captain Fraser lived at no. 5 George Street and must have known the site intimately

5 G. Christie, The Story of St. Andrew's Edinburgh, p. 11

likely that he persuaded Kay to collaborate with him - the sophisticated enrichment of the ceiling and other parts of the interior certainly suggests that a first-class draughtsman was involved in the detailing.*

The Town Council had wanted a building which would accommodate about 1,500 persons, but the chosen plan showed seats for only a little over 1,000. Perhaps they were prepared to overlook this deficiency on account of the originality of the design, for it appears to be the first church in Britain built on an elliptical plan. Where Captain Fraser took this idea from is uncertain: as he lived in Edinburgh, he doubtless knew the interior of St. Cecilia's Hall in Niddry Street, built by Robert Mylne in 1762 on the model of the Opera House at Parma, and may well have been influenced by this.

The exterior of St. Andrew's Church is restrained but handsome. The entrance, which is planned on the short axis of the ellipse, is marked by a well-proportioned rectangular portico facing George Street. Four Corinthian columns support an entablature which is forty-one feet long and returns twenty-six feet to join the main body of the church. The northern half of the portico is enclosed and contains two symmetrically-disposed staircases which give access to the spacious gallery. The interior is lighted by two tiers of windows spaced at regular intervals round most of the ellipse, which measures eighty-seven feet from east to west and sixty-four feet from north to south. Owing to the curved form of the building and

the shape of the windows - those in the upper tier are semi-circular-headed and the remainder segmental - the modelling of the wall and ceiling surfaces is extremely subtle and shows to advantage the fine plaster-work and woodwork. The decorative treatment of the ceiling, with its two broad elliptical margins and central lozenge, echoes the plan of the church and is carried out in low relief with delicate scroll-work, festoons and paterae,* very much in the late Adam manner.

The church was formally opened on 12th December 1784,¹ though the rather squat steeple² of the original design had not been built. After a further competition had been held it was decided to proceed with the design of "a young man of the city, named M' Leish"³ who apparently received a premium of sixty guineas from the Town Council for his work, which included making a model. His design for the spire, which was found to be too broad at the base and had to be amended by Captain Fraser, was carried out in 1786-87 and two years later, after about £5,000 had already been expended on the building, a further £389 10/- was spent on providing a chime of "six good and musical bells".⁴ Farington re-visited the city in 1801 and the remarks

1 G. Christie, op. cit., p. 12

2 This may be seen in the Scots Magazine of March 1781

3 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 144

4 G. Christie, op. cit., p. 14

in his Diary refer to the uniqueness of these bells and incidentally give us his second thoughts on the appearance of George Street:

"September 20. - I was much surprised this morning at hearing a peal of bells ringing at St. Andrew's Church in George Street, as, though I had previously been some weeks in Edinburgh and in many other parts of Scotland, I never heard a peal of Bells in any part of the Country. - On enquiry I found was told that there is no other peal of Bells in Scotland, and these Bells were hung since the year 1788, when I was much in this town. - It is a proof how prejudices are by degrees weakened. I have always understood that Bells, except what were necessary to give notice of the time of Service by simply tolling, were esteemed a remnant of popery.

George Street is certainly a very spacious and handsome street, but it is not compleat in all respects. The Houses are not sufficiently high and stately for the width of the street, and too much of their roofs is seen which gives it in some degree a mean appearance compared with what it might be. I walked across the street and found it 37 of my paces wide".¹

¹ J. Farington, Diary, quoted in Morning Post, 8th May 1922

Leaving aside Farington's comments on the width of George Street - for we have already discussed this aspect of the New Town at some length - it is worth remarking that the spire of St. Andrew's is perhaps the most graceful to be found in Edinburgh. Rising to a height of 168 feet above the pavement, it is strongly Gibbsian in character and performs the same function for Edinburgh's skyline even in the twentieth century as did St. Martin in the Fields for London in the eighteenth. The tower is in three sections and changes plan at each level, the lowest being rectangular, the intermediate one octagonal and the topmost one circular; the last two tiers are enriched with orders, Doric below and Ionic above. Polished ashlar is used here, as well as in the portico, though the main body of the church is finished in droved masonry.

The last of the three public buildings in George Street was erected in 1784-87. For some time it had been customary in Edinburgh to hold regular Assemblies, with the twin objectives of offering an elegant setting for public dancing - for the well-to-do - and of raising funds for the relief of the poor.¹ Just as the need for a church in the New Town had been felt as a result of the growing exodus from the Old Town, so it was necessary to do something about providing a new place of assembly. At first two enterprising hoteliers hired

1 According to Maitland (History, p. 187) Assemblies began about 1710

out rooms for this purpose, but after only brief experience of this expedient it was resolved to erect a new building:

"The New Assembly Rooms, for which the ground is staked out in the new town, will be among the most elegant of any in Britain ... in addition to the ballroom there is to be a tea-room, fifty feet by thirty-six, which will also serve as a ball-room on ordinary occasions; also a grand saloon, thirty-eight feet by forty-four feet, besides other and smaller rooms. The whole expense will be 6,000 guineas, and the building will be to be begun immediately Since the peace a great deal of ground has been feued for houses in the new town, and the buildings there are going on with astonishing rapidity".¹

The architect was John Henderson, who does not appear to have been responsible for any other work in the New Town, and he was succeeded by William Burn, who carried out additions in the form of the Music Room in 1818 and 1834. The building is^{*} sited on the south side of George Street, mid-way between Hanover Street and Frederick Street. The street front is in polished ashlar, with a rusticated basement and a pilastered superstructure; in the centre is a tetrastyle portico with a pediment above and three round-headed archways below. The

¹ Edinburgh Advertiser, April 1783

appearance is restrained and dignified, or as Arnot puts it, "rather heavy looking on the outside".¹ The curious apsidal features in the upper part of the portico were added by Burn.

The interior, described by one visitor as "elegance itself",² calls for little comment. The ballroom, measuring ninety-two feet by forty-two feet, was, according to Arnot, the largest public room in Britain, "the large one at Bath excepted".³ It relies for its effect largely on good proportions, accentuated by Corinthian pilasters supporting an enriched entablature, and with three magnificent crystal chandeliers softly illuminating the pale green decoration of the walls and the polished hardwood floor, little more was needed to provide an appropriate background for what an eighteenth-century writer described as "an assembly of as elegant and beautiful women as any in Europe".⁴

Some of those who frequented the Assemblies lived in Queen Street. Of the three great east-west streets in Craig's plan, this is by far the best preserved and merits fairly close attention. Just how conscious Craig himself was of the magnificent prospect towards the Firth of Forth beyond, we cannot be sure. All we can say is that the plan adopted by

1 H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 543

2 W. Stark, The New Picture of Edinburgh, p. 185

3 H. Arnot op. cit., p. 543

4 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 148

the Town Council in 1767 clearly showed houses laid out on the south side of the street only, mirroring exactly the arrangement shown for Princes Street, and offering an unimpeded view seawards. It was only somewhat later that instances occurred of building being allowed on the north side of the street, at its two extremities; but neither York Place at the east end, nor Albyn Place at the west end, formed part of the original layout.¹ Although the Town Council in fact owned the south side only, they were able indirectly to exercise effective control over the opposite side as well: so strongly were they represented on the Board of George Heriot's Hospital, proprietors of the land to the north, that they were able to ensure that public interests prevailed. Neither body, however, had any jurisdiction over the site of the Albyn Place terrace, which was erected on the Earl of Moray's property.

First to take up a feu in Queen Street was Lord Chief Baron Ord, of the Scottish Exchequer, and for many years the streets remained entirely residential, providing "homes for the upper professional classes and town houses for the nobility and landed gentry, who passed the summer and autumn on their estates and wintered in Edinburgh".² Now, alas, it is used almost wholly for office accommodation, though miraculously a good

1 They began to be built in 1794 and 1822 respectively

2 Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh, p. 197

deal of its Georgian character, both externally and internally, has survived into the twentieth century - far more so than in George Street.

Baron Ord feued his lot at no. 8 in 1769 and the house which he built there is worth examining in detail,* for of the several ostensibly Adamesque houses in Queen Street it is the only one which is indisputably the work of Robert Adam.¹ The house was apparently designed in 1770-71. Planned on three main floors, with an attic and basement, it has a sunk area towards both the street and the small back garden to the south. Each area has a group of vaulted cellars opening off it; one of the cellars to the north continues beneath Queen Street and emerges in Queen Street Gardens, which were formerly used as a drying green.² Both the kitchen quarters and the stabling were detached from the body of the house in Adam's design, though rebuilding has obscured this arrangement; the former stood close to North-east Thistle Street Lane, while the latter extended between the lane and Thistle Street itself.

The north front is considerably wider than most of the frontages in Queen Street³ and accommodates five openings on each of the main floors. It is constructed of ashlar, droved on the basement floor, channel-jointed⁴ at street level and

1 The drawings are preserved in the Soane Museum

2 It is not generally known that this tunnel exists

3 Only no. 64 approaches it in width

4 The channels are square-cut in section, in contrast to the V-joint commonly found in the New Town

polished on the two upper storeys. The ground floor is further emphasised by a horizontal belt enriched with a guilloche moulding. The entrance doorway is centrally placed and is tripartite in arrangement, with two narrow sidelights flanking the door. Four engaged shafts carry a well-proportioned entablature, the frieze of which is enriched with fluting and paterae.* On each side of the doorway are two symmetrically placed windows. Above, at first floor level, five windows sit on a continuous cill-course and are finished with architraves, plain friezes and moulded cornices; the second-floor windows have moulded architraves only. The front is surmounted by a dentilated cornice and a blocking-course above. The slated roof has five modern dormers inserted into it, as well as the original skylights.

On the three principal floors the accommodation is planned in intercommunicating suites of rooms - a type of planning which is widespread in the New Town houses generally, though often confined to the piano nobile. The rooms are large and well-lit, for all but the smallest room on each floor have at least two windows. The entrance vestibule on the ground floor is unusually spacious by Queen Street standards, being about fifteen feet long by ten feet wide, and has an enriched ceiling. Three doorways at the inner end of the vestibule give access to the dining-room on the east, the study on the west, and the main staircase ahead on the south. The door-heads are ornamented with trusses, fluting, dentils and pearls.

Both the principal ground-floor rooms are excellently planned and ornamented, although the enriched ceilings have been removed at some later date. The dining-room - or to use Adam's own description, the "eating-room" - is placed in the north-east part of the house and has an apsidal south wall, no doubt intended to take a sideboard of corresponding shape. There is a fine green marble mantelpiece, and all three door-heads are enriched with fluting, dentils and pearls. The ceiling is ornamented with garlands and human masks. The study, in the north-west corner of the house, is similar in general treatment, but the mantelpiece in this case is of white statuary marble. Of the five remaining compartments on the ground floor, two are occupied by staircases. The main staircase, lit from above by means of a square cupola, contains a scale-and-platt stair of generous proportions: there is a moulded mahogany handrail, but - rather surprisingly - it is carried on plain, undecorated iron balusters. The service stair is of the geometrical type and, unlike the main stair, continues down to basement level. The parlour, bedroom and dressing-room which complete the accommodation on this floor all face south towards the small garden, and are more simply treated than the rooms facing towards the street. All have moulded cornices and the dressing-room is unusual in having a semi-octagonal bay window. The cornices are enriched with egg-and-dart mouldings, but the mantelpieces vary: the parlour has a moulded wood surround enclosing a marble insert, the

dressings-room has a plain mantelpiece of white marble, while the fireplace in the bedroom simply has plain stone jambs. The basement floor, which has undergone some alteration, consists of four habitable rooms¹ and several store-rooms.

The first floor of Baron Ord's house is now connected to the (new) Physicians' Hall immediately to the west, though fortunately, with the exception of the south-west room, little loss of character has been suffered. There are five rooms at this level, of which the two facing the street are the most important. They are both drawing-rooms, the west and east rooms being a cube and a double cube in proportion respectively. The larger room has a fine ceiling decorated with scrolls, urns and griffins. The treatment of the cornice and door-heads is equally good, with delicately-garlanded frieze, and there is a large mantelpiece of white statuary marble. The smaller drawing-room, connected to the larger with folding doors, also has an enriched ceiling, this time with four circular allegorical paintings, which were possibly added later. The principal bedroom of the house, which also communicates with the larger drawing-room, has a plain ceiling and the finishings are generally simpler than in the public rooms, although still in character with them. The dressing-room to the west and the smaller bedroom are also finished in a fairly

¹ Probably a housekeeper's room and servants' bedrooms

simple manner. The upper bedroom floor and the attic floor are of no particular interest. The fireplaces, which have plain stone jambs, are duplicated in two of the rooms, indicating no doubt that these rooms have been enlarged by the removal of partitions.

Although the finishings in some of the minor rooms are quite simple, there is no doubt that the house as a whole is planned on a generous scale¹ and must have formed a highly suitable setting for the private and social life of Baron Ord - who unfortunately enjoyed the fruits of Adam's skill and taste for a very few years only, dying there in 1777.² Before we leave this fine house and step further westwards along Queen Street, one or two further remarks may not be out of place. It is noticeable that although the amount of enrichment in particular rooms varies from much to virtually none, there is really nothing arbitrary about the way it is used. Adam was keenly sensitive to the degree of elaboration required in each component part of the house³ and this characteristic is traceable in some degree in nearly all the houses subsequently built by others in the New Town - in fact, we can say that

1 The offices at the rear included three coach-houses and stables for a dozen horses

2 J. Grant, op cit., vol. II, p. 152

3 An interesting commentary on this aspect of Adam's work occurs in Sir John Summerson's Georgian London, pp. 144-45

when it is no longer evident, we have passed from the Age of Enlightenment to - the Railway Age. Secondly, the provision of a service staircase, though eminently sensible in a nobleman's house and frequently used in contemporary London houses, was never repeated in later developments in the New Town. Perhaps the ancient Edinburgh tradition of everyone rubbing shoulders on the common stair has something to do with this.

For more than ten years no. 8 had no neighbouring houses on either side. Then, in about 1783, houses began to be built at the west corner of North St. David Street and development gradually spread westwards. It is instructive to look at one or two of these houses in the eastern part of Queen Street and to see how they differ from the one designed by Robert Adam. The most extreme contrast is offered by no. 2A. If we did not know that it was built after Baron Ord's house, we would surmise that it dated from twenty, perhaps thirty years earlier. The whole of the front is built in rubble masonry - and not very good rubble at that - while the proportions of the house are generally mean. The window openings are only three feet wide by about five feet high - it is remarkable how narrow a three-foot window seems in the context of a main street in the New Town - and the doorway, though fractionally wider, appears tall and narrow on account of the rather bald pilasters and entablature which enclose it tightly. The entrance vestibule, too, is cramped, being less than four feet wide, and we have to travel about half the length of

Queen Street before we finally take leave of narrow vestibules.

Most of the houses in the street were designed on the English model, that is, as self-contained houses. But there are several groups which depart from the prevailing pattern. These are based on an Edinburgh plan-type which first appeared about 1784 in Buccleuch Place^{*} and consists of two main-door houses, each of which has two flats built above. A variant of this arrangement was used at the intersections with the four cross-streets: here a single main-door house is combined with two flats above. Examples of the former type were built at nos. 18-20, 35-37, 40-42, 45-47, 55-57, 61-63 and 75-77.

Apart from Baron Ord's house there are several other main-door houses worth looking at in some detail. Let us take no. 28 next. In 1789 two Edinburgh bankers, Robert Allan and David Steuart, feued adjoining lots from the Town Council, taking the east and west respectively. The houses which they had built, nos. 28 and 29,[†] although of different depths,¹ have identical fronts. These have three principal storeys, with basement and attic. The wall at basement level is finished in rock-faced ashlar² - the first time we have encountered this finish so far - the ground floor is of channel-jointed

1 No. 29 is the deeper of the two

2 As Robert Adam used the same finish in Charlotte Square, it is tempting to speculate whether he had anything to do with this house

* 92

† 87, 88, 20

ashlar, and the two upper storeys are of droved ashlar. Each house is pierced with three wall-openings on each of the main floors, the entrance doors being located at opposite ends in order to balance the composition.¹ The first-floor windows have moulded architraves and appear to have been extended in length by lowering the cills to the channel-jointed masonry. A belt enriched with fluting separates these windows from those on the second floor, which are also architraved. Near the wall-head, below a dentilated cornice, is an interesting frieze enriched with festoons. The cornice is surmounted by a blocking course, which carries at each end an urn of cast iron.

The entrance vestibule of no. 28 is finished with a pilaster treatment, and the pilasters are enriched with plaques showing cupids and classical heads. There are three rooms situated on the ground floor, and one of these, the dining-room, can be entered directly from the vestibule. The windows on the north wall look out on the street and the opposite wall is apsidal in shape. The walls have a timber dado and a panelled plaster finish above. A very refined festoon pattern appears on the ceiling. The door-heads are also enriched with festoons and have plaster panels above showing classical

1 The present owners, having bought the adjoining property and slapped through the mutual wall, have recently converted the door of no. 28 into a window

subjects. There is a mantelpiece of pine with composition enrichment enclosing a marble insert. The dining-room communicates with the study, the north wall of which is apsidal, echoing the curved dining-room wall. The general shape of the room, however, is awkward owing to an encroachment on the east side, where a corridor is inserted to connect with the basement stair.¹ A single window facing south lights the room, and the mantelpiece on the west wall has composition enrichment. The cornice is delicately enriched. A fine oval room in the south-east corner of the house completes the accommodation on this floor. It is lighted by a large central window on the south wall, flanked by two shorter windows - an arrangement which is echoed on the north wall by the disposition of the three doorways: the entrance door in the centre, with a door giving access to a press on either side. The stair is in this case a geometrical one, with cast-iron balusters and a mahogany hand-rail. The basement contains no rooms of any interest.

On the first floor there are three rooms. The largest of these, the drawing-room, originally extended the full width of the house on the north side and therefore had three windows facing the street. Unfortunately, however, the room has been divided into two unequal parts, spoiling the excellent enriched ceiling as well as the proportions of the room itself. The

¹ This arrangement may not be original

larger division, to the west, has two windows and retains the original mantelpiece of plain marble. The walls are dadoed and have an enriched cornice. On the south wall are double doors with enriched door-heads which formerly gave access to the rear drawing-room.¹ The latter is located at the south-west corner of the house and is lighted by a Venetian window on the south wall. The opposite wall, to the north, is apsidal in shape and has three carefully-arranged doorways: on the east is the entrance door, balancing it on the west is the door of a press, and finally in the centre are the double doors mentioned above. These have an enriched door-head with a coved cornice. As in the front drawing-room, the walls are dadoed but the mantelpiece differs, in that it is of pine, with composition enrichment and a marble insert. A door on the east wall communicates with a second back room, which can also be entered via the landing. In this instance it is the outside wall which is apsidal in form; it includes a central window facing towards the garden and two presses, one on either side. The finishings of the walls and fireplace repeat those of the drawing-room.

When we ascend to the second floor we find that again a large room on the north side of the house has been sub-divided to give two smaller rooms, but it appears that there have been

1 In the present occupation this access is no longer used

other alterations as well. The main change is that the attic stair has been replaced by a modern timber one which occupies the same position on plan as the stone stair serving the floor below. There are still two rooms facing south, one with an apsidal end on the window wall. The style of the cornices on this floor is somewhat different from those in the rest of the house, suggesting that decorative as well as structural alterations have been carried out. The attic floor has also been modernised, but the circular cupola over the staircase remains and is interesting on account of the bold enrichment of its coving.

The house described above, no. 28, although not as spacious as Baron Ord's, is clearly the kind of residence to which only someone of considerable means and acknowledged social standing - such as a banker - would aspire. If we wish to select a nearby house of more modest pretensions with which to compare it, we have only to pass beyond the second banker's house to reach a good subject at no. 30.* At first glance it is not very different. There is still a stone front of almost precisely the same width and height, pierced in a similar way with three wall-openings at each of the three main floor levels. But if we look more closely, some significant differences are apparent. To begin with, although the stonework is the same colour, the texture has changed: the street floor is still in channelled ashlar,¹ but the superstructure has a droved finish.

1 An interesting detail is that the joints revert here to the more common V-section, in place of the square-cut jointing next door

Furthermore, the treatment of the openings and the detail at the wall-head is much more rudimentary: no window architraves, no festooned frieze or blocking-course with ornamental urns. Only the entrance doorway is marked by a feature which is decorative rather than functional; a simple architrave, with plain frieze and cornice above, gives the merest emphasis to what is, after all, the most important opening in the whole facade. Yet, for all its plainness, the street elevation is still handsome enough to convince us that the house is architecture and not merely building.¹ and with its northern severity foreshadows, like many of its neighbours, the grand simplicity of some of the later developments in the New Town.

We may surmise that the interior of no. 30 is simpler than that of its neighbour, Robert Allan's house, and we are not mistaken. The entrance vestibule, about six feet wide, leads towards the stair hall. There is the common arrangement of three rooms on the ground floor, and two of these are not without refinement. The dining-room, entered from the stair hall, occupies the north-east corner of the plan and has two windows looking north on to the street. There is an apsidal wall opposite, which has been obscured by the later addition of a

1 This conviction arises first from the good proportions of the front, and secondly from the subordination of the parts to the whole

straight partition wall immediately in front of it.¹

Because of these alterations, it is not possible to say with certainty whether there was originally a doorway in the centre of this wall which gave access to the room to the south, though this could well have been a feature of the plan. The one door which is visible is carefully worked to the same radius as the circled wall. There is no dado and the finishings are of the simplest variety. The mantelpiece is plainly finished in marble, and there is no enrichment to the ceiling. The room to the south, which may have been either a study or a parlour, is rectangular in shape but has an attractive Venetian window which looks south towards the garden. Again there is no dado and the finishings are simple. A second doorway in the south-west corner communicates with a smaller room lighted by a single window to the south. There are no features apart from an angled fireplace in the south-west corner, which is now concealed.

A geometrical stair, which continues down to a basement floor of no particular interest, rises as far as the level of the second floor. There are three rooms on the first floor. The finest of these is the main drawing-room, which originally extended across the front of the house, with three windows facing north towards the street. As in the case of no. 28,

1 This unfortunate act was evidently prompted by a desire to gain additional storage space

it has been divided into two unequal parts. There are two single doorways, placed symmetrically near the two ends of the south wall. A simple marble mantelpiece is placed on the east wall, and there is an enriched cornice. The back drawing-room also has two doorways on the wall furthest from the window. Between the two rooms is a large press. It is possible to pass from one room to the other through the press, using the eastmost door in each room, but the doors do not line through exactly and were probably not intended as communicating doors. There is a Venetian window on the south wall, corresponding to the one on the floor below. The cornice is enriched and the mantelpiece is more interesting than the one in the front room, consisting of a timber surround with husk ornaments in composition and a marble insert.

On the second floor there are four rooms. These are plainer than the corresponding rooms in no. 28. The largest bedroom occurs in the north-east corner of the house and is lighted by two windows on the north wall. A plain dado¹ is fitted to the walls, and there is a simple marble mantelpiece on the east wall. Near the northern end of the west wall there is a doorway which communicates with a small room, no doubt intended to serve as a dressing-room. This has a second doorway connected with the landing, but there are no other

1 i.e., one without panelling

features in this room apart from a small fireplace on the west wall. Between the bedroom and the corresponding room to the south there is a large press. This appears to be part of the original plan and is entered through a doorway on the landing. The second bedroom is situated above the back drawing room and has the same plan, except that there are only two doorways, there being no direct entry to the press which lies behind the north wall. There is a Venetian window on the south wall, overlooking the garden, and the walls are dadoed in a similar manner to the front bedroom. A simple marble mantelpiece occurs on the east wall, and on the opposite wall, near its southern end, there is a doorway leading to the fourth room on this floor. It is lighted by a single window on the south wall, and in the south-west corner there is an angled fireplace similar to the one on the first floor. Owing to the south wall of this room projecting about four feet beyond the line of the main wall, the pitched roof above produces a coomb-ceiling over the outer third of the room. The main stair terminates at the second floor, and a narrow timber stair located on the opposite side of the landing provides access to the attic floor. At this level there are three rooms, two facing north and one facing towards the garden. Those facing north are lit by skylights in the slated roof, and the third has a dormer window.¹ There are no features of any interest

¹ The different method of lighting is no doubt the result of the building regulations of 1785 and earlier

in these rooms.

Apart from the alterations to the dining-room and the installation of sanitary facilities on the second floor, the main floors of no. 30 have undergone relatively little change, and we can regard this house as being fully representative of the normal Queen Street house dating from about 1790. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the houses in this street followed any stereotyped pattern: the highest common factor amounted to no more than a fairly flexible uniformity of street facade, coupled with a common attitude to matters of internal planning. Within these general limits, there is more individuality of detailed design and decoration in Queen Street than in any other street in the New Town.¹ Not all the eighteenth-century individuality, of course, has been allowed to remain - the pressures of commercial activity today are too intense - but enough is still evident to arouse our interest. To take one detail, at nos. 44, 48 and 49 we can see above the entrance doors excellent examples of fanlights - that component in the Georgian vocabulary of design which can do so much to enliven what might otherwise be a rather dull street front.² Again, in the enrichment of the

1 Probably the same was true of Princes Street, and to a lesser extent George Street, but the widespread rebuilding of these streets prevents us from making further comparisons

2 The interior fanlights, e.g. at no. 47, should not be overlooked

interior spaces there is no suggestion of uniformity: although the prevailing style of decoration is classical,¹ we find at no. 52 a piquant example of a Gothic entrance vestibule. This, paradoxically enough, was the house of a famous man of medical science, Sir James Young Simpson.²

Before we take leave of Queen Street, let us move further westwards and pause at no. 64.[†] This was built by Francis, seventh Earl of Wemyss, as his town house and is perhaps the most elaborately finished house in the street. It is not quite the largest house, for that honour belongs to Baron Ord's house, but its frontage certainly exceeds that of its neighbours and allows for four wall-openings to be formed on each floor, both back and front. There are three main storeys and the texture of the masonry conforms to what is now almost an accepted convention: droved ashlar on the basement floor, channel-jointed on the ground floor, and droved ashlar again on the superstructure, this time with projecting quoins. The entrance doorway^{*} on the west, if not the work of Robert Adam himself, is at least very much in the Adam manner. Of excellent proportions and scale, it has side-lights between pilasters and a fine semi-circular fanlight. Larger pilasters and their

1 It is, of course, Roman, without any hints yet of Greece

2 According to Grant (op. cit., vol. II, p. 153), "no man ever attracted so many visitors to Edinburgh" as the pioneer of anaesthetics

* 90

† 25-30

accompanying entablature frame the doorway. The frieze of the entablature is delicately enriched with fluting and paterae. The first-floor windows stand on a continuous moulded belt, in place of individual cills, and are emphasised with architraves, friezes and cornices. The second-floor windows have only architraves and cills. The wall-head is finished with a dentilated cornice of only slight projection. An interesting feature of the street front is the arrangement of the two tiers of four windows on the upper floors. Instead of being evenly spaced, as one might expect, the window nearest the western end of the facade is kept rather far from the remaining three; this has the advantage of ensuring that there is a window on each floor centred over the handsome entrance, and it also allows the groups of three to "read" on their own, thus repeating the rhythm experienced in the neighbouring houses.

The plan of the ground floor is broadly similar to many of the other houses in Queen Street. At least, this is true as far as the number of compartments is concerned. Including the vestibule and the staircase, which is placed centrally on the west mutual wall, there are five, but there are one or two interesting divergences in the detailed planning. To begin with, the vestibule is square, not oblong, and more spacious than usual. It has an enriched ceiling and cornice, and there are six oval panels inset in the walls, showing classical figures in low relief. The vestibule leads into the staircase, which contains a scale-and-platt stair with a fine wrought-iron

balustrade carrying a solid mahogany handrail. The dining-room occupies the north-east corner of the plan. It is unusual in having three windows on the north wall, and there are two doorways on the west, of which one is a dummy. The door-heads are shaped and enriched with classical figures and trophies. The walls are dadoed and there is plaster panelling above. As well as an enriched cornice, there is an enriched ceiling which incorporates eight classical figures. The mantelpiece on the east wall is of white marble, and the frieze is carved with an urn and two rosettes. Behind the dining-room, in the south-east corner, lies the study. It is lighted from the south by a Venetian window and has two doorways; these are enriched with festoons and classical heads. The walls are dadoed, with plaster panelling, and an enriched cornice. Again there is an enriched ceiling with classical figures. On the east wall there is a mantelpiece of white and coloured marble. A smaller room is located in the south-west corner. This has a single window on the south wall, and the mantelpiece is of plain grey marble. The cornice and ceiling are both enriched, the latter incorporating cupids and trophies in the design. Extensive alterations have been carried out in the basement, which originally contained five rooms, including the kitchen at the south-east corner.

There are four rooms on the first floor. Above the dining-room, at the north-east corner, lies the main drawing-room. This is lighted from the north by three windows and on the

opposite wall generously-proportioned folding doors connect with the back drawing-room. The walls are dadoed, and the plaster panels above are framed by a bead¹ which breaks out into a bunch of grapes at the corner of each panel. Both the cornice and ceiling are enriched. The mantelpiece on the east wall is of dark green marble, and above its Doric columns the frieze is carved with lion masks. Although smaller, the back drawing-room is the finer room of the two. It is situated at the south-east corner of the house and is lighted by a Venetian window. The walls are dadoed and have an enriched cornice; the plaster panelling is similar to that in the front drawing-room. On the east wall is a simple mantelpiece of white and coloured marble. The ceiling is enriched with classical figures, except for the portion at the west end of the room. Here what is really a small ante-room is formed. The separation from the main part of the room is effected by means of a splendid Ionic arcade, which includes two free-standing columns and one pilaster attached to each of the north and south walls. The ante-room is lighted by a narrow window on the south wall - in reality, one half of a normal-sized sash window, the other half of which appears in a room at the south-west corner of the plan. This room, which also has a full window further to the west, is treated fairly simply. The walls are dadoed and there is an

1 The bead was originally gilded

enriched cornice. There is a plain mantelpiece of white and coloured marble on the west wall. The last room of the first floor is located at the north-west corner of the plan. There is one window on the north wall, and the ceiling is enriched. The walls are dadoed and have plaster panelling above. On the west wall is a white marble mantelpiece which retains its cast-iron interior grate; this is enriched with two caryatids in Egyptian costume and the lictorial fascēs in relief.

The second floor contains six rooms, clearly intended as bedrooms and dressing-rooms, none of which is of any particular interest. At this level the main stair terminates and there are some good decorative features above. A frieze enriched with classical heads and garlands is surmounted by a cornice, also enriched. Higher still, in the lunettes formed by the pendentives supporting the enriched circular coving of the cupola, are classical figures and trophies. The attic, which is approached by means of a separate stair of geometrical form, contains one large room of no interest which was no doubt used as servants' quarters.

In the remaining part of Queen Street there is no house which rivals Lord Wemyss' in sophistication. But there is an interesting pair at nos. 66^{*} and 67[†] which we should perhaps look at before leaving this street altogether. The Town Council granted a feu-charter in 1791 for the lot at no. 66 to Major-General Abercromby of Tullibody, and another in the following

* 89

† 31

year to William Tait for the other lot.¹ As in the case of nos. 28 and 29, two houses were then built to a generally similar plan, but with a mirror reverse. The fronts are similar, though no. 66 is fractionally wider. They are constructed of ashlar, drowed on the basement floor, channel-jointed on the ground floor, and polished on the superstructure, with projecting quoins. The zone of channel-jointed masonry is bounded by belts above and below.

The entrance doorways are situated at opposite ends of the facade and incorporate shallow porches surmounted with pediments; they also have the detail which by now is becoming quite common: the provision of side-lights as well as a fanlight. The first-floor windows are emphasised with moulded architraves and cornices, and underneath are blind balustrades of which the coping acts also as a cill. The second-floor windows have moulded architraves and cills, below which are carved festoons.

As the two houses are now used as office premises under the same ownership, openings have been slapped through the mutual wall to provide intercommunication and the entrance doorway of no. 67 has been converted into a window, forming an additional room in place of the original vestibule. The entrance to no. 66 thus serves both properties. It leads into a spacious vestibule with an enriched ceiling, and there is no division between the vestibule and staircase, as commonly

1 Record of Feus, 1791-92

occurs in Queen Street. Another unusual feature is the placing of the study on the street side of the house and the dining-room at the rear. The study has two windows facing north, and there is an excellent mantelpiece of carved pine and marble on the west wall. Alterations have made the dining-room somewhat smaller than it was originally, but even in its shortened form it is a handsome room. Lighted from the south by a Venetian window, it has on the west wall a finely-carved mantelpiece of pine enclosing a marble insert. The walls are dadoed with plaster panelling above and there is an enriched cornice. The third room on this floor, at the south-east corner of the plan, has no features of any interest.

A scale-and-platt stair rises as far as the second floor. In the original arrangement there were three rooms on the first floor, but the front drawing-room, which occupied the full width of the house, is now divided into two unequal parts. The larger part, lighted by two windows on the north, retains the original mantelpiece of white marble on the west wall. The walls are dadoed and have an enriched cornice. The back drawing-room, like the dining-room below, is lighted from the south by a Venetian window. There is a particularly good mantelpiece on the west wall, consisting of a timber surround with composition enrichment and a marble insert. The room occupying the south-east corner of the plan has undergone alteration, but on the east wall there remains the original mantelpiece enriched in composition with garlands.

The second floor contains four bedrooms. Of these three have a single window and a fireplace with plain stone jambs, while the fourth, in the north-west corner, has two windows facing the street and a mantelpiece with a marble insert surmounted by a pine frieze and shelf enriched in composition. The attic rooms are of no interest, but the main stair is lighted by a singularly graceful circular cupola with an enriched coving.

As we have seen, the development of Queen Street spanned a period of almost exactly twenty years; that is, from about 1772 to 1792. What characteristics of house design in the New Town emerge during this period? Apart from the general uniformity of height and building-line - which was, of course, the result of the Town Council's legislation - perhaps the most striking feature is the apparent quest for an accepted vocabulary of design. Taking the treatment of masonry as an example, we can pass from rough rubble at one end of the street to quite a sophisticated approach at the other, where the street-floor is given strong emphasis by the use of channel-jointed ashlar and contrasting textures occur above and below. The use of horizontal belts in opposition to the vertical shapes of the windows is an interesting characteristic. At first applied rather tentatively to divide the street floor from the two upper floors, belts are used with increasing confidence in the later houses, not only to stress divisions between floors, but sometimes to act as

continuous cills to first-floor windows as well. Entrance doorways, initially little more than openings in walls with small rectangular fanlights above, have become by the end of this period quite dominant features: often with sidelights and a graceful semi-circular fanlight above. Windows, apart from showing a general tendency to become rather larger, undergo a second and more subtle development. By the time Queen Street is nearing completion, there appears to be fairly general agreement about the relative proportions of the three tiers of windows on the main floors: first-floor windows, instead of more or less repeating the height of those on the ground floor, are usually made appreciably taller, while those on the bedroom floor tend to become squarer in proportion. So, as the eye travels upwards over these later façades, its movement is quickened by the elongation of the first-floor windows and then decelerated as it approaches the roof line.

In terms of materials there is little real change during these two decades: either in choice of materials, or in the way they are assembled. Apart from an isolated instances at the east end,¹ all the houses in Queen Street are built of stone quarried at either Craigleith or Redhall, and they are roofed with slates at a pitch of about forty degrees.² Mutual

1 No. 2A is built of Craigmillar stone

2 The slates were brought from either Easdale or Ballachulish

walls, as well as outside walls, are invariably of stone, about three feet thick, but partition walls within each individual house are usually of brick. In instances where two smaller rooms are situated over a single large room on the floor below, as sometimes occurs when the front drawing-room extends the full width of the house, a timber-framed partition with a lath-and-plaster finish is used instead. As the thickness of plaster on each face of the partition is seldom less than a full inch, the sound insulation value of such partitions is remarkably good. In the case of external walls the plaster finish is similar, though, on account of the unevenness of the internal face of the masonry, timber straps are first fixed to the walls and then the plaster laths are nailed to the straps. In this way a perfectly true face can be given to the plaster finish. Quite incidentally, of course, this method provides a substantial cavity between the masonry and the plaster lathing, and we find that the thermal insulation of these outside walls is very often superior to the values obtained in much more recent houses.

In stair construction we find no marked preference yet for either scale-and-platt or geometrical design, but in each case the treads of the main stair are invariably of stone, built into the masonry of one or other of the mutual walls and usually into the staircase walls also. The balusters are of wrought-iron, either plain or enriched, according to the taste and purse of the original feuar, and the handrail is of mahogany, nearly

always veneered rather than solid, for economy's sake. The staircases of this period are seldom well-lit. Always internally-planned - except for the common stairs serving flats - they are usually lit by means of a skylight set into the slope of the roof, and the projecting landings at second- and first-floor level progressively reduce the amount of light reaching the ground floor. Some of the better houses, as we have seen, have circular cupolas in place of skylights, and here the lighting is more satisfactory.

If we now retrace our steps eastwards and travel as far as York Place, we will find almost all the above characteristics reflected in the buildings there. This street, although a direct continuation of Queen Street, was not part of James Craig's plan. But as the ground belonged to the Governors of George Heriot's Trust, who were a very public-spirited body,¹ it was natural enough that they should consent to feu it out, once Queen Street itself was fully built up. Feuing began in 1794² and one of the earliest houses to be erected was that of Sir Henry Raeburn, begun the following year.³ Most of the lots in York Place were developed as self-contained houses;

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- 1 It was largely through their co-operation that the first large-scale extension to the New Town was realised
 - 2 According to A.J.Youngson (op. cit., p. 92) feuing did not begin until 1798, but it is difficult to reconcile this date with that of Raeburn's house
 - 3 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 188

though, as in Queen Street, there is a small proportion of flatted houses. The house fronts are all three storeys in height, with basements and attic floors in addition. Neither externally nor internally is there any real advance on the houses which we have already examined, though it is worth noting that more attention has been paid to the design of entrance vestibules than was the case in the earlier Queen Street houses. The enriched ceilings of those at nos. 7, 13, 15 and 49 are particularly good.

Near the eastern end of York Place are the mutilated remains of an unusual building by James Adam.* In 1792, a year after the penal laws against Episcopalians had been repealed, James Adam was commissioned to design St. George's Episcopal Chapel, which was converted some years ago into showrooms for a firm of plumbers' merchants at no. 5B. The original contract drawing, signed by Adam and endorsed by the contractors, are exhibited on the premises. It is unfortunate that so little of the original design can now be appreciated, for this chapel and the adjoining manse at no. 7 represent the only occasion on which James Adam ventured into the Gothic style in Edinburgh.¹ On plan the main body of the chapel was octagonal, lit by a central lantern, and it was surrounded on all sides by a low aisle, also octagonal. The aisle and

1 Robert Adam prepared a design for a Gothic house in Queen Street, of which the drawings are preserved in the Soane Museum, but this was not carried out

the central area were connected by an arcade elaborately decorated in plaster. At the time of the conversion, the interior of the chapel, excepting only the arcade and the lantern above, was gutted and an upper floor was inserted. The tracery of the lantern windows was replaced by modern frames.

The survival of the manse next door does not really compensate for the destruction wrought in the chapel. Although the exterior is an interesting example of how what is really a typical three-bay New Town house can be tricked out in Gothic cosmetics, the interior does not appear to be the work of James Adam. An architect by the name of Alexander Laing held the feu between 1795 and 1818, and after the death of Adam in 1794 the interior of the house may well have completed to Laing's instructions.¹

If we now turn our attention to the three main cross streets in James Craig's plan - Hanover Street, Frederick Street and Castle Street - do we find anything of significance in them, or are the houses simply close cousins to those in York Place and Queen Street? The general pattern of development in these streets was very similar to what we have seen already. But there is one notable advance which foreshadows later experiments with non-rectangular forms: the introduction of bowed fronts in some of the houses.

With the exception of the northern part of Castle Street,

1 Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh, p. 189

much alteration has taken place in the three streets mentioned. It is not easy, therefore, to see at first glance beyond the obtrusive confusion of the modern shopfronts and to discern the original character of the houses. In Hanover Street remnants of the fronts are visible on the east side in nos. 77, 79-89, 91-109, 115-117; and on the west side in nos. 62-72, 80-98, 104-112, 116-118. Constructed of droved ashlar, they are very plain and there are few features of interest, either externally or internally. No. 85 has an unusual segmental-headed portico with Tuscan columns, but the most interesting front is that of nos. 79-89. This block is based essentially on a plan-type we have met before, the combination of two main-door houses on the street and basement floors with separate flats planned on the first and second floors, but the treatment of the elevation is different from the earlier examples. The western end of the principal ground-floor room in each of the two houses is swept outwards in a graceful bow which incorporates three windows, and this curve is repeated on both the basement and the upper floors. A rather tentative triangular pediment surmounts the wall-head in the centre of the block, giving slight emphasis to the centre of the composition. We do not know why the bowed front suddenly appears in Edinburgh at this time.¹ Curvilinear forms are

1 This first example must have been built about 1790

very much part of the tradition of building in Scotland, but this is surely not a sufficient explanation in itself. The two most probable reasons for this new development are these: either the feuars wanted to obtain better oblique views from the front windows of their houses than could be had from windows set in a straight wall, or they were beginning to be highly conscious of the sameness of most of the house-fronts in the New Town and wanted to build something quite novel. Either explanation is plausible. Taking the latter one first, we have already seen some of the evidence which points to the monotony of the earlier groups of buildings. As for the other explanation, it would be quite logical for someone feuing this particular lot in Hanover Street to be concerned about oblique views, for in this part of the street any window set in the northern half of a bowed front is bound to command a fine prospect of the Firth of Forth and the hills of Fife.

Development in Frederick Street followed much the same pattern. In the 1767 version of Craig's plan the street is described as Queen Street, but at the suggestion of Sir John Pringle, physician to George III, the name was altered as a token of respect to Frederick, Duke of York. With the exception of a few self-contained houses, the street consisted originally of main-door houses and flats. In most cases shops have been built out over the basement areas, and the spacious effect of the original layout has thus been compromised. On the east side, not far from Princes Street, a short section at

nos. 9-19 retains the arrangement which must have constituted the earliest kind of alteration carried out in the streets of Craig's New Town. This consisted simply in converting the front rooms of the street floor and the sunk floor into shops, at the same time providing a new flight of steps down to the lower shops.¹ As in many cases the pavement level lay roughly midway between the two floor levels, it was an admirably logical idea, economical not only in the small amount of building work needed to make the alteration, but also in providing two shops on a site which in normal circumstances would carry only one. Apart from its intrinsic economy, the arrangement can be an attractive one physically, offering a kind of visual counterpoint as a result of the interaction of the two different levels of shops. The example quoted in Frederick Street is not the only one still remaining at the present time but this two-tier arrangement of shops is becoming increasingly rare - especially in the central area - and it will be a great pity if it is allowed to disappear altogether.

Among the other house-fronts surviving (either in whole or in part) in this street are nos. 3, 21-31, 37-39, 43-45, 47, 51-55, 57-61, and on the west side nos. 4-10, 12-16, 18, 20-22, 24, 26, 34, 46-50, 52A, 54, 56 and 58-62. As in Hanover Street,

1 The original area steps in these houses were invariably too steep and too narrow to provide satisfactory access to shops

the fronts are generally of droved ashlar and are mostly very plain. That of nos. 43-45, occupied by a firm of whisky merchants, has a good Ionic colonnade at street level; this feature can hardly be original but was most probably added in the nineteenth century. Two blocks, at nos. 12-16 and 58-62, repeat the double bow-fronted arrangement which we have just been looking at in Hanover Street. The treatment of both is fairly straightforward, but the unit at nos. 58-62 is the more interesting, as - quite remarkably - it retains its original wrought-iron link-extinguishers and lamp-standards. Even more miraculously, the standards are allowed by the City Engineer to be fitted with ordinary tungsten lamps, which give out in the evening a clear white light in strong contrast to the baleful yellow light of the sodium lamps all round.

Castle Street, the most westerly of the main cross-streets, is the most distinguished of the three. Like its sister streets, it consisted for the most part of main-door houses with flats above, only a few units, such as nos. 28, 40, 48 and 52, being designed as self-contained houses. Both types of accommodation were built and finished in very much the same manner as in the neighbouring streets. Consequently it is not necessary to comment on them further, except to say that the quality of the interiors tends generally to be a little better than in the earlier streets¹ and one or two houses have

1 Castle Street did not begin to be feued until 1792, which helps to explain the improvement in quality

particularly good enriched ceilings, such as in the front room on the first floor of no. 22. Where the greatest interest lies, however, is in six blocks built in the northern section of the street, nos. 39-43, 45-49*, 51-55, 57-61, 42-46 and 54-58, all of which embody the double bow-fronted plan with which we are now familiar. Each unit contains two main-door houses, consisting of basement, street and first floor, together with two double flats above. The units are not identical, either internally or externally, and there are differences of detail at two entrances. The block at nos. 57-61 is rather less plain than the earlier examples we have noted in Hanover Street and Frederick Street, for it is embellished with a blind balustrade under the first-floor windows. But the most elaborate front of all is that belonging to nos. 39-43, † the southernmost part of which has a further interest, in having been the home of Sir Walter Scott from 1802 to 1826.¹ We know that the building must have been erected in the early 1790's, because the feu-charter was granted by the Town Council in 1795 to the Rev. James Brown, minister of Newbattle, who sold the house to Scott in 1802.

The whole of the front of nos. 39-43 is constructed of ashlar, rusticated on the basement floor, channel-jointed on the ground floor and polished on the two upper floors.

1 A panel on the front of the house gives the information that Scott lived there from 1798 to 1826, but the first date is incorrect

* 98

† 99

Including the bowed projections at each end, there are eleven wall-openings on each floor and the three central bays are advanced slightly, producing a palace-front appearance.* The centre is further emphasised by the use of four Composite pilasters, which rise through the first and second storeys and carry an entablature and pediment. The entrance to Sir Walter Scott's former house, no. 39, is situated beside the southern bow-front, and the vestibule leads through an archway to the staircase beyond. Four rooms are provided at street level, of which the largest is the dining-room at the south-west corner of the plan. This is lighted by three windows set into the apsidal wall on the west. The walls are dadoed and have an enriched cornice. On the south wall is a painted timber mantelpiece with a marble insert. A doorway at the south-east corner of the room connects with Sir Walter's study, which has been described thus:

"It had a single Venetian window, opening on a patch of turf not much larger than itself, and the aspect of the place was sombrous ... A dozen volumes or so, needful for immediate purposes of reference, were placed close by him on a small movable form. All the rest were in their proper niches, and wherever a volume had been lent its room was occupied by a wooden block of the same size, having a card with the name of the borrower and the date of the lending tacked on its front ... The only table was a massive

piece of furniture which he had constructed on the model of one at Rokeby, with a desk and all its appurtenances on either side, that an amanuensis might work opposite to him when he chose, with small tiers of drawers reaching all round to the floor. The top displayed a goodly array of session papers, and on the desk below were, besides the MS. at which he was working, proof-sheets and so forth, all neatly done up with red tape ... His own writing apparatus was a very handsome old box, richly carved, lined with crimson velvet, and containing ink-bottles, taper-stand etc. in silver. The room had no space for pictures, except one, an original portrait of Claverhouse, which hung over the chimney-piece, with a Highland target on either side, and broadswords and dirks (each having its own story) disposed star-fashion round them. A few green tin boxes, such as solicitors keep their deeds in, were piled over each other on one side of the window, and on top of these lay a fox's tail, mounted on an antique silver handle, wherewith, as often as he had occasion to take down a book, he gently brushed the dust off the upper leaves before opening it. I think I have mentioned all the furniture of the room, except a sort of ladder, low, broad, and well carpeted, and strongly guarded with oaken rails, by which he helped himself to books from his higher shelves. On the top step of this convenience, Hinse, a venerable tom-cat, fat and sleek, and

no longer very locomotive, usually lay, watching the proceedings of his master and Maida with an air of dignified equanimity."¹

It was in these surroundings that Scott wrote his most brilliant novels, from which he derived an annual income of "not less than £10,000 a year for several years".² He appears to have developed a strong attachment to his house, for on the day he finally left it he wrote in his diary, "This morning I leave no. 39 Castle Street for the last time! 'The cabin was convenient', and habit made it agreeable to me ... It has sheltered me from the prime of life to its decline, and now I must bid good-bye to it."³

Two further rooms, at the north-east and north-west corners, complete the ground-floor plan. Neither of these contains any features of any interest, nor does the basement, which consists of four habitable rooms and several store-rooms.

The scale-and-platt stair which rises to the first floor has moulded cast-iron balusters and a mahogany handrail. The half-landing is lighted by a Venetian window flanked by fluted pilasters. There is an enriched ceiling above the main landing, which gives access to four rooms and a deep press.

1 J.G. Lockhart, quoted in J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 163

2 Ibid

3 Sir Walter Scott, Diary, entry for 15th March 1826

The main drawing-room is situated above the dining-room, at the south-west corner of the plan. It is lighted by three windows on the apsidal west wall. Opposite, at the eastern end of the room, is a recess framed by pilasters and an accompanying entablature, where large folding doors formerly opened into the back drawing-room. The walls have an enriched cornice and there is a plain marble mantelpiece on the south wall. The back drawing-room has an apsidal end in which there is a Venetian window facing towards the garden. There is an enriched cornice and the mantelpiece on the south wall is of black marble. The remaining two rooms at this level are both bedrooms. The larger has an enriched cornice and a plain marble mantelpiece, while the smaller has no feature apart from a fireplace with plain stone jambs.

No. 43, the corresponding house at the northern end of the block, has undergone a good deal of alteration, but in its original condition it did not differ greatly from Sir Walter Scott's house. It contained the same number of rooms, disposed in a similar manner, and it is only in the finishings that differences are apparent. Some of the mantelpieces are of pine with composition enrichments and there is a particularly good one of white marble in the main drawing-room.

As for the flats planned above the main-door houses which we have been examining, it may be of interest to describe one of these. Both flats are approached by means of a common stair entered at no. 41, and we will consider the northern one of this

pair. There are four rooms on the lower floor - which is, of course, situated at second-floor level - and the finishings in the two principal rooms are superior to those in the corresponding rooms of the adjoining houses. The drawing-room at the north-west corner of the plan has an apsidal end containing three windows which face west towards the street. At the opposite end there is a fine arrangement of Composite pilasters and columns which must originally have framed a pair of large doors opening into the back drawing-room. The walls have a dado and enriched cornice, and there is a mantelpiece of black marble on the north wall. The dining-room lies to the south of the drawing-room and is lighted by two windows facing west. Flanking the entrance to this room are two circular-headed display-cupboards, and above it is a circular panel which probably contained a borrowed light. The walls are dadoed, with plaster panelling above, and there is an enriched cornice. The back drawing-room is lit by a three-light window facing east and contains a mantelpiece of grey marble on the north wall. The remaining room on this floor is the kitchen, which is located at the south-east corner. It provides access to a coal cellar under the stair leading to the attic, and has been reduced somewhat from its original size. The attic floor contains four rooms, none of which is of any particular interest.

Before we leave Castle Street, two passing comments are perhaps worth making. First, although no. 27 is now much altered, it is of some interest, as it was the home of the

architect Robert Reid, whose work in the northern part of the New Town was so widespread. Secondly, we should not be misled by the cast-iron balconies which are fitted to the first-floor windows of nos. 54-58. These are not part of the original design, but were probably added in the 1820's.¹

It is time that we turned our attention to what was not intended to be the most important street in Craig's plan, but which has indisputably become so in present-day Edinburgh.² In many ways, the less said about modern Princes Street the better. There are one or two unexceptionable buildings, it is true, but the whole street is now so chaotic in its forms and masses that one can only say - with gross understatement - that the buildings generally are quite unworthy of their magnificent setting.³ The retort may be made that the eighteenth-century houses, for quite different reasons, were equally unworthy, and it must be admitted that this contention has a good deal of truth in it.

Only a few pathetic fragments of the original houses remain, and it is difficult to imagine how the street looked when it contained almost a hundred and fifty houses, nearly all three storeys high. If we visualise it as a kind of

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- 1 They match exactly those which appear on the Moray Estate, developed from 1822 onwards
 - 2 Its present importance lies, of course, in the enormous volume of retail trade which is carried out in its shops and stores
 - 3 These words were written before the erections of the British Home Stores and New Club buildings, both of which give promise for the future of Princes Street

unilateral George Street,¹ with the same emphasis on the individuality of the house rather than on the coherence of the street as a whole, we can get a general picture of its appearance at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Just as Farington and other observers did not react altogether favourably to the buildings in George Street,² so they must have found Princes Street rather dull and undistinguished when it was first built. Nearly 4,000 feet long and capable of being seen almost in its entirety from vantage points such as the Mound or the Castle Esplanade, it is essentially a street in which the architecture requires a broad scale and bold modelling if it is not to appear completely insignificant. Apart from the Register House, it is very doubtful if any of the eighteenth-century buildings met these requirements.

Remnants of the houses can be seen at nos. 63, 98, 99 and 139 Princes Street. None of these includes the original street front at ground-floor level, and internally the alterations have been so extensive to suit modern shopping needs as to leave nothing of any interest still visible.³ Consequently we have to turn either to contemporary prints, or

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- 1 The only houses built on the south side, nos. 1 to 9, stood at the extreme east end, on the site of the present North British Hotel
 - 2 See p. 191
 - 3 Ironically enough, one of the very few places where fragments of the old ceiling and cornice can be seen is inside a clumsy modern store at the extreme west end, built in the 1930's

to Kirkwood's remarkable Plan and Elevation of the New Town, in order to see the fronts of the typical Princes Street houses. From these sources, especially the latter, it is clear that, as suggested earlier, the design of these houses did not differ markedly from those in George Street. Indeed, there are some close parallels to be drawn between the two streets. Most important of all, perhaps, was the undoubted tendency for the quality of detailing to improve as the tide of building moved westwards. This improvement was gradual but nevertheless real. The span of building in Princes Street covered a period of more than thirty years, for the first feu was taken up in 1771 and the last in 1805.¹ To begin with, its houses, like those in St. Andrew Square, were almost certainly of rubble masonry, and the fenestration, although generally regular within each house-front, was haphazard in terms of a group of ten or twenty dwellings. In at least one case, nos. 26-27, there was a taller frontage (again echoing instances in George Street) featuring a gablet at third-floor which contained two windows. A little further west, at nos. 43-46, there are no gablets but the facade rises to a height of four storeys throughout. Such irregularity was probably picturesque from certain viewpoints, but it was really quite alien to the Cartesian nature of Craig's plan.

1 Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh, p. 192

A building without any parallel in George Street formerly stood at nos. 55-59, in the terrace between South St. David Street and Hanover Street. This was called the Bow Building, since it was of similar profile on plan to the blocks which we have noted in the cross-streets, and apparently dates from 1780.¹ If this is correct, it clearly pre-dates the other bow-fronted units and is thus of some importance in the history of the New Town, even though it is no longer physically present. As far as we can judge from the elevation in Kirkwood's engraving, the plan must have been similar to that of the later examples and probably included two main-door houses as well as flats above.

In the terrace between Frederick Street and Castle Street, at no. 108, there was the first example in Princes Street of channel-jointed ashlar being used to give textural interest at street level.² This type of finish was then employed rather spasmodically in the remainder of the same terrace. In the next block, between Castle Street and South Charlotte Street, channel-jointing was not resumed immediately, but once begun at no. 123 it was continued without a break, right up to the end house at no. 134. Crossing South Charlotte Street, we find that,

1 Town Council Records, 2nd June 1800

2 For the sake of comparison, the first example in George Street was a little further east, at no. 86

in the latest terrace of all, this type of masonry was used consistently throughout. It is interesting to note that, despite this degree of uniformity which prevailed between South Charlotte Street and Hope Street, the width of frontage still varied from house to house, and although all the houses were three-storeyed the eaves line was not quite constant from end to end.¹

But more important than the matter of surface texture was the question of how the facades were actually composed. It is quite clear that the majority of them were very simple, with the fenestration arranged neatly, but with an eye to internal function rather than outward effect. A few houses appear to have had architraves surrounding the first and second-floor windows. Some of the plainness may be accounted for by the fact that in all the seven terraces² which go to make up the street there was a proportion of flatted accommodation - which was quite possibly finished in a handsome manner inside, but which tended always during this period to be treated as simply as possible on the outside. There was, however, just one block which must have given some relief to those wearied by the plainness of the remainder of the street. This was at nos. 129-131, a little to the east

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- 1 This description is taken from the elevations on Kirkwood's Plan
 - 2 Seven terraces lie between the Register House at the east end and Hope Street at the west end; if we include the site now occupied by the North British Hotel, there were eight in all

of South Charlotte Street.¹ It was three storeys high, excluding the basement, and nine bays wide. We do not know how the accommodation was arranged inside, but the block probably contained three self-contained houses on the English model, each with a frontage of about thirty feet. The channel-jointed masonry of the street floor was not exceptional in this part of the street, as we have seen, but quite unique was the application of four pilasters to the superstructure of each of the flanking houses, with the centre house left plain. It is not clear whether the emphasis given to the outer units was reinforced by advancing them slightly, but there is no doubt that here was a conscious attempt - probably the only attempt in Princes Street - to design a block of three houses in an impressive, unified manner.

So far in our examination of Princes Street we have confined our attention to the houses. What about the public buildings? In Craig's plan one is shown, on a site at the extreme east end facing the North Bridge, and for many years no further public buildings were proposed. Then, in the nineteenth century, two buildings - three if we include the Scott Monument - were erected: St. John's Church and the Royal Institution. But as neither of these formed part of the original plan, let us consider the Register House next.

¹ Judging by its position, it must have been built some time between 1795 and 1805

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In medieval times the public records of Scotland had been kept in Edinburgh Castle because of the security it offered, but from 1662 onwards they began to be transferred to the Laigh Parliament House, where it was thought that access to them would be easier and more convenient.¹ But this arrangement had practical disadvantages. The chief trouble seems to have been caused by the prevalence of fires in those days, as a result of which, it was reported, the papers lay "in a great disorder, yea in heaps".² Later, the activities of vermin made matters worse and the papers were said to be "in a perishing condition for want of being rebound, the ratts, mice and other vermine having defaced the most valuable of them". The onus for providing suitable accommodation for the national records seems to have rested not on the Government, but on the Town Council; and the inertia which paralysed so many aspects of municipal life in Edinburgh during the first half of the eighteenth century was no less effective in delaying a solution to this particular problem.

At length, however, "a great fire in 1750, and the collapse of much old property in the High Street in the following year"³ spurred the Council to formulate comprehensive plans for dealing with the city's many urgent problems.

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XVII, p. 149

2 Papers relating to Records, preserved in the General Register House

3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XVII, p. 151

It will be remembered that among the Proposals of 1752 was the idea of providing "proper apartments for the several registers", but the money which should have been used to this end appears to have been applied towards the cost of the North Bridge instead. Only in 1765 did funds actually become available for this project, when the Treasury announced that the King had authorised "the sum of £12,000 sterling, out of the money arising from the scale of estates forfeited in Scotland by the Rebellion of 1745, to be applied towards purchase of ground, and building a proper repository".¹ Trustees were appointed to administer the fund, and after considerable further delay caused by the death of the Lord Register as well as other setbacks, they agreed at a meeting held on 10th August 1769 to accept the Magistrates' offer of the fine site facing the North Bridge.² After further properties had been acquired to the north and west to augment the rather small parcel of ground, the Trustees requested Lord Frederick Campbell, the new Lord Clerk Register, to obtain plans for the new building. In 1772 he reported that he had instructed Messrs. Robert and James Adam of London to prepare a design, which was duly exhibited to, and approved by, the Town Council.³ The Adam

1 Ibid., p. 153

2 It seems that one of the Magistrates' motives in offering the site free of charge was the hope that the proposed building would not only add to the beauty of the city but would help to promote the feuing of the land within the Extended Royalty

3 The drawings, rendered in monochrome, are preserved in the Register House

brothers were thereupon appointed as architects and James Salisbury, on the architects' recommendation, as Clerk of Works.

Robert and James Adam were instructed to obtain tenders for carrying out the first phase of the work, and they undertook to:

"... visit the work once every year, if necessary, or once in two years, at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the money expended on the building, and Fifty Guineas as the expense of each journey to Edinburgh, without charging anything for the plan already drawn or their trouble in adjusting thereof".¹

On the face of it, the charge of fifty guineas for each visit to Edinburgh sounds rather exorbitant, but we must remember that in those days the four-hundred-mile journey from London was both slow and costly, and the sum demanded was probably no more than the actual expense of travelling between the two cities - at least travelling in the manner to which Robert Adam was accustomed.² More surprising is the leisurely

1 Minutes of the Trustees, 12th October 1773

2 An idea of the degree of comfort expected by Robert whilst travelling can be gained from the account of his Grand Tour in J. Fleming, op. cit., p. 121 et seq.

pace of building which Adam proposed and which the Trustees apparently accepted without demur:

"When the work comes to go on, there shall be no building during the winter, that is after the last day of October, nor before the first of March, and that the building shall be carried on so leisurely from year to year as to allow the parts built successively to settle and consolidate, before the others are put above them."¹

It is extraordinary that, while dampness, moth and vermin continued to attack the irreplaceable records, the Trustees were content to contemplate the cessation of building work for a period of four months in every year - perhaps they would have been less patient if they had known of the delays which were to arise a few years later.

However, on 27th June 1774 the foundation stone was laid, "under a royal salute of cannon",² by the Lord Clerk Register in the presence of the Lord Provost, the Magistrates, the Trustees and "an immense number of spectators".³ The Clerk of Works James Salisbury, who was paid a salary of £100 per annum, was responsible for supervising the work during the architects'

1 Minutes of the Trustees, 30th July 1772

2 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. I, p. 367

3 H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 246

absence, although John Adam, resident in Edinburgh at this time, visited the work periodically. In August 1776 Robert himself travelled from London to inspect progress. By this time the masons had carried the walls as high as the cornice, and it was now hoped to complete the carcass of the building and to have it roofed, including the lead-covered dome,¹ by the summer of the following year. But soon the funds were running dangerously low, and although the Trustees managed to extract a special grant of £2,000 from the Treasury in the spring of 1778, this was soon used up. By the end of the same year building operations ceased completely. Writing in 1783, Arnot observed that the public records were still kept in the Laigh Parliament House, "although a most magnificent building has been erected for the purpose; but hitherto it has been unfinished, and only occupied by pigeons. Edinburgh may indeed boast of having the most magnificent pigeon-house in Europe".²

After six years of inactivity, in November 1784 the Government finally voted an additional £15,000,³ and with this sum the Register House - or at least the first instalment of it - was carried to completion during the period 1785-88. Although complete in itself, the building as it stood

1 Adam originally proposed to cover the dome with slates

2 H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 523

3 This, like the original sum of £12,000, came from the proceeds of the forfeited estates

in 1788 represented only part of the scheme conceived by the Adam brothers sixteen years earlier. The total scheme resembles the plan of Syon House in essence,¹ for the dominant idea of both buildings is a central rotunda inscribed within a hollow rectangle consisting of four symmetrically-composed wings. The decision to omit the north wing was evidently taken before construction commenced,² but there was one change made just after the preparatory work on the site had been begun in 1772. This was to continue the basement storey round all four sides of the building, instead of constructing it on the north side only. This later arrangement is shown on a fine wooden model, which one would expect to have been prepared at the time of the original design but was actually constructed between the years 1790 and 1798,³ at the request of Lord Frederick Campbell. It was made by the Clerk of Works, James Salisbury, to a scale of about 1:40 and is now kept in the basement of the Royal Scottish Museum.

From this model we can gauge - perhaps better than from the building itself, standing so close to a welter of traffic - the noble quality of the design. The form of the building is clearly intended to appear as having two storeys; for

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- 1 Syon House was planned in 1761 (J. Swarbrick, Robert Adam and his Brothers, p. 158)
- 2 Working drawings dated October 1772 show only three wings
- 3 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XVII, p. 160

the basement is concealed from view at the sides by means of an area wall, and at the front Adam used a terrace and a monumental screen-wall to provide an elevated base from which the main structure could rise. The front originally included a curved perron, which must have contributed powerfully to that sense of movement which Robert and James sought to convey in their works,¹ but unfortunately this was removed and replaced by a rectangular staircase in 1890-91.²

The sunk floor and the whole of the back and sides are of droved ashlar, while the rest of the front is of polished ashlar, with the ground floor emphasised by means of channel-jointing. The three central bays of the south front are advanced, and at first-floor level they are enriched with four Corinthian shafts supporting an entablature and pediment. Two bold, yet sensitively-modelled, towers^{*} at the south-east and south-west corners of the plan complete the composition of the facade facing the North Bridge. The towers, like the central feature, have applied Corinthian columns, but there are some interesting differences in detail. The most conspicuous feature is a Venetian window at first-floor level - which in this context recalls the designs of Sanderson Miller at Hagley and Colen Campbell at Wanstead, although Adam does not continue the towers beyond the level of the rest of the facade, as was

1 J. Fleming, op. cit., pp. 315-317

2 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XVII, p. 169

done in these earlier designs. Instead, he has placed open balustrades on top of the blocking-course of the main cornice, and within these rise delicately-profiled turrets, of which the silhouette, with angle columns in the Doric order, changes constantly according to the viewpoint of the observer. The east turret incorporates a clock and the west one a wind-dial.

A frieze enriched with fluting and roundels extends across the whole front, except the three central bays, which have horizontal panels beneath the entablature carved with festoons. All the ground-floor windows facing south are contained within arched recesses, while the first-floor windows, except in the towers, are emphasised with moulded architraves, plain friezes and moulded cornices. There is a continuous cill-course at first-floor level, and in the centre and the two towers this acts as the coping to a blind balustrade.

Although, as we have noted, the plan of the Register House is related to that of Syon House, the functions of the two buildings are, of course, very different. Consequently the finishings of the former are generally much plainer than we are accustomed to find in the domestic work of the Adam brothers. Moreover - and this is a factor which seems to have been overlooked by some commentators - it was extremely important that, within the limits of eighteenth-century building materials, the construction of the Register House should be as fireproof as Adam could make it. Hence the elimination of timber wherever possible, and probably too the adoption of a system of

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masonry vaulting for most of the ceilings.

The main elements of accommodation which Adam provided were vestibules, a spacious public hall (the rotunda), sixty-six offices and forty store-rooms; such was his skill in planning that he was able to manipulate the various parts into a thoroughly coherent whole. In his design he linked the rotunda on its north-south axis to large vestibules in the north and south wings, whilst on the other axis, where the rotunda does not actually come into contact with the east and west wings, he interposed connecting links which contained staircases on the north side and water-closets on the south. Round the four sides of the rectangular structure a continuous vaulted passage was constructed, lighted from the courtyards and providing ready access to all the rooms. These were ceiled with brick vaults, the larger spans being groin-vaulted and the smaller ones having barrel-vaults. In the case of the rotunda, the sub-structure was arranged in four concentric rings and covered with vaults which alternated in direction of span. In this undercroft stood the four stoves forming the heating system for the rotunda, which received a supply of warm air through vents in the floor. The other rooms were heated by open fires, which had rather a complicated arrangement of flues. The fireplaces were situated generally on the mutual walls between rooms, but presumably because Adam wanted to conceal the chimney-stalks as much as possible, he carried the flues right over the line of the passage, until ultimately they had

travelled far enough to be supported on the courtyard walls.

The two main floors of the Register House are very similar in general arrangement, the main differences occurring in the centre of the south wing, where the entrance is situated, and in the rotunda. In the latter Adam originally intended to build a fairly massive sub-structure to carry the circular gallery above, which was itself to have a heavy stone balustrade. No doubt realising the practical disadvantages of this proposal, he constructed instead a light stone balcony supported on corbels and finished it with a graceful iron balustrade. In this way a greater usable area was made available on the ground floor, and it was possible to line the wall under the gallery with bookshelves. The rotunda measures fifty feet in diameter and the height to the summit of the ceiling, excluding the oculus, is seventy feet. It is interesting to note that although Adam lightened the structure of the gallery, the radiating walls of the sixteen vaulted compartments surrounding the rotunda on each floor form a massive and very effective buttressing system, capable of resisting any thrust from the circular wall which carries the timber framing of the dome.

Round the perimeter of the first-floor gallery stand eight piers linked to each other by a series of unmoulded blind arches. An entablature articulates the junction of the arcaded wall with the dome above. The surface of the dome is divided into eight compartments, reflecting the rhythm of the structure below, and the plasterwork is enlivened with

a variety of enrichments, including anthemias, hexagons, paterae and festoons, as well as eight cameo medallions. This masterly arrangement of decorative forms was probably designed not much earlier than 1785¹ and is remarkable for the ease with which the various devices are fused into what is essentially a chaste and simple composition. The only other room which called for any decorative features was that intended for the Lord Clerk Register. A long, vaulted room, thirty-five feet by twenty-four, it is situated on the first floor at the south-east corner and originally contained a handsome marble mantelpiece, which has since been removed.

In both planning and elevational design the Register House is a work of rare architectural quality. Even if no other Adam building survived in Scotland, it would be sufficient in itself to demonstrate his great dexterity in building up a satisfying composition out of a relatively simple vocabulary of forms. It is pleasing to note that when Robert Reid was asked by the Trustees in 1822 to increase the accommodation by building the north wing, the alterations which he felt obliged to make to Adam's plans were confined to the interior; and thus, some fifty years after the design had first been prepared, the external form of the building was now exactly as Adam had visualised it.

But far less gratifying is the constriction exerted upon

1 J. Lees-Milne, The Age of Adam, p. 136

the site by developments which began to take place later in the nineteenth century. Before the construction of the Register House was complete, Arnot observed that:

"Most of the plans of this eminent architect, either from justice not being done them in the execution, or from the choice of materials ... appear far more beautiful in the drawing, than when realised; but the reverse is the case with the Register Office, which excels the ideas we form of it from the plan".¹

Had he been writing a century and a half later, his remarks would surely have been coloured strongly by the presence of two massive buildings immediately to the south of Adam's work. The General Post Office, completed in 1866 to the design of Robert Matheson, is not an unseemly building; but the same can hardly be said of the huge and graceless North British Hotel, built at the turn of the century, and together these two buildings overpower the south front of the Register House. Indeed, it is no longer possible to approach it from the North Bridge and view it without losing sight of the corner towers; and although the building has a noble, generous scale woven into the fabric of its two-hundred-foot-long facade, this

1 H. Arnot, op. cit., p. 246

can scarcely be appreciated in the present context.

If the posthumous march of events in the East End had an adverse effect on a major work by Robert Adam, the same can be said of events in the West End. This will become evident as we consider the development of Charlotte Square, though in this case the untoward influences took a very different form.

Just how Adam came to be concerned in the building of Charlotte Square is not altogether clear. The plan of the square had, of course, been settled in 1767 when James Craig's competition entry was chosen by the Town Council; and if the elevations of houses erected on the various lots had followed the same pattern as hitherto, we would today have inherited a square in which the individual houses were very similar to those in the western part of Queen Street. That is, they would have had fronts showing a general family likeness, without, however, any attempt at a broad, unified treatment.

But evidently, by the time the last decade of the century was approaching, enlightened opinion in Edinburgh was coming round to the view that the typical New Town houses which had been completed up to then were simply not good enough to stand on the four sides of the great western square. Whether the citizens reached this conclusion merely through their own observations in, for example, St. Andrew Square and George Street,¹

1 These two areas are cited because they are located on the main spine of Craig's plan and are therefore most relevant to the situation of Charlotte Square

or whether they were influenced by those who had seen such seminal developments as the Adelphi in London or the Woods' terraces in Bath, we do not know. Nor is there any surviving letter from the Town Council to Robert Adam instructing him to prepare plans for the square. But there is a letter, still preserved in a private collection, which throws some light on how the Council were thinking at this time. According to Adam's chief assistant in Edinburgh, what they wanted was a series of house-fronts "not much ornamented but with an elegant Simplicity such as the north front of the College to use the provests [sic] words".¹ The foundation-stone of the University had been laid in November 1789; and although by the date of this letter even the portico alone could not have been complete, there can be little doubt that the austere dignity of Adam's elevations had caused a stir among the cognoscenti of Edinburgh, and that they were now eager to secure his services in order to complete as handsomely as possible the final section of Craig's layout.

The designs for Charlotte Square,² including the church for the site on the centre of the west side,³ were prepared in

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- 1 Letter from John Paterson to Robert Adam, 23rd March 1791 (in the possession of Dr. D.C. Simpson)
 - 2 In Craig's plan it was "St. George's Square", but in 1786 the Town Council resolved to name it after the Queen, probably to avoid confusion with George Square on the south side of the city
 - 3 It will be remembered that the church was one of the salient features of Craig's scheme

1791, only a year before Robert Adam's death. In a letter written in 1792 James Adam reminded the Town Council of their agreement with his late brother and asked for payment of the outstanding fees. But although the agreement was evidently that the brothers should receive two hundred guineas from the Town Council (as well as five guineas from the builder of each individual house for supplying working drawings), the Council agreed to pay one hundred guineas only.¹ An original elevation, still preserved in the City Chambers, is entitled "Design for the ^{North E} South Sides of Charlotte Square, extends 325 feet, and contains 9 houses".* The drawings of the east side are also in the possession of the City, while those of the west, including the original design for the church, are now in the Scane Museum. A careful inspection of the drawings shows to what extent Adam's intentions have been compromised, not only in changes made by Robert Reid while the square was being built, but by subsequent alterations as well, particularly above cornice level.

The lots on the north side were exposed to public roup in the spring of 1792, and the feus were taken up at purchase prices ranging from £235 to £330; each feuar undertook to pay an annual feu-duty of £6 for each 42½ feet of frontage commencing Whitsuntide 1794, "and the purchasers are also

1 TCM 13th June 1792

taken bound to have the outside of their buildings completely finished against the term of Whitsuntide 1793".¹ It is interesting to note that, of the nine feuars on the north side, no less than seven were engaged in trade of one kind or another: one shoemaker, two upholsterers, one wright and three masons.² The implication seems to be that, to begin with, the landed gentry and the professions were much less eager to take up feus in Charlotte Square than were the tradespeople, whether or not they were connected with the building trades. Moreover, as four of these early feuars were engaged in building, it looks as though they were astute enough to realise the strength of potential demand for houses in the square - particularly on the north side - and decided to build as a speculation one house apiece. If this is how they operated, they probably made a substantial profit: according to Sir William Fettes, two houses on the west side were sold for £3,420 and £3,700 respectively, and in 1815 no. 7 on the north side, realised no less than £5,005.³ Yet even if speculative building was an important factor in the early development of Charlotte Square, from an inspection of the later feuing records it seems to have been much less important in relation to the houses built after, say, 1800 - and this is equally true of the principal streets

1 TCM 4th April 1792

2 Ibid.

3 Sir William Fettes, Diary, quoted in A.J. Youngson, op. cit., p. 311

in the extended New Town north of Queen Street. Out of the forty-seven lots in the square, more than two-thirds were feued by persons evidently intent on taking up residence there, and they must have had to make their own arrangements for employing builders.

But it is time that we began to look at the architecture itself. The most important part of the square is the north terrace. Although not even a single stone could have been laid by the time that Robert Adam died in London on 3rd March 1792, this is the one part of the square in which his design was executed reasonably faithfully. Robert Reid, a young man who appears to have had no architectural training, was entrusted some time after Adam's death with the task of supervising the completion of the square.¹ Until his own death in 1794 James Adam no doubt continued to have some responsibility for what happened to his brother's plans, and this probably helps to explain why the deviations which occurred on the north side were, on the whole, much less serious than those on the other three sides. The original design showed single units on the north and south sides, identical with each other; and two units on each of the two remaining sides, but again with the opposite

1 Reid (1776-1856) is an important figure in the later progress of the New Town, but his background remains obscure. He apparently started his career as an estate factor in Perth but soon moved to Edinburgh, where he managed to practise extensively in architecture, though without any real distinction. He became Master of the King's Works, an office which was abolished in 1840

sides of the square reflecting each other. The fact that St. George's Church was to be built on the west side did not substantially affect the symmetry of the houses: the site for the church was equivalent to the space taken up by George Street on the east side.

On all four sides the houses were to consist of three main storeys, exclusive of attic and basement, and at nos. 1, 2, 8, 10 and 11, where the ground falls away sharply to the north, they have been built with sub-basements also. As is generally the case in the principal streets of the New Town, the attics were at first lit by skylights mounted in the roofs facing the square, dormer windows being expressly forbidden in the conditions of feuing; but later this restriction was not enforced and some houses have had their wall-heads raised or dormers added.¹ Some years ago the late Marquess of Bute instituted the systematic removal of the excrescences which were disfiguring the north side, and as a result of his far-sighted action we can now see the whole unit very much as it must have looked early in the nineteenth century.

The general form of the terrace probably owes something, albeit subconsciously, to the great Palace of Diocletian at Spalatro.* As part of his Grand Tour, Robert Adam had crossed the Adriatic to see this remarkable building in 1757 and had surveyed it very assiduously, spending five weeks there with

1 Examples are at nos. 13-19, 22, 24-26, 29, 34-38, 41-43 and 45

three assistants.¹ The links between the two buildings are not obvious; but they share a boldness of scale and massing, and the predilection which Adam shows for arcuated forms - especially in the street floor of the east and west wings - is at least reminiscent of the Peristyle Court at Spalatro.²

At all events, the north side of Charlotte Square is certainly designed as a palace-front composition.³ The whole of the front and the exposed sides is built of ashlar, rock-faced on the basement floor, channel-jointed on the street floor and polished on the upper floors. The central feature occupies a width of seven bays and has an arched doorway in the centre with a graceful fanlight, flanked by two rectangular window openings. Above, rising from short pedestals, four Corinthian columns continues through the two upper storeys to support an entablature and pediment. The centre bay at first-floor level contains a three-light window set within an arched opening; the tympanum is enriched with an urn and scroll-work.* On either side of the pediment there is one recessed bay, followed by a projected bay which is marked by a pair of Corinthian columns. The latter share the same entablature as the four central columns. A beautifully-modulated system of enrichment is applied to this part of the design: in the seven bays of the central feature,

1 J. Fleming, op. cit., p. 240

2 There is an interesting correspondence between the column capitals also

3 As such, it is the first fully-fledged example in Edinburgh domestic architecture

the frieze is carved with a leaf ornament in the outer bays, next fluted, then carved with foliage again, and finally in the centre - a master-stroke of simplicity - there appears a long horizontal panel, with guttae at each end centred over the columns below.* The arrangement of balustrades is worked out with equal subtlety. Open balustrading extends between the column pedestals; that is, in five out of the seven bays. In the two bays where there are no columns, Adam simply lifts the balustrading to roof level and deposits it between the attics of the central pediment and the two wings. Next to this balustrading, the attics of the outer bays are carved with festoons and rosettes, while those belonging to the pediment were intended to be completed with statues. Finally, before we leave these central bays, which are so rewarding to study in detail, it is worth looking at the column capitals.† These by themselves are quite sufficient to demonstrate the nature of Adam's attitude to design. At first glance Corinthian, they are in fact far from being a routine reproduction of an antique order. In place of the usual caulicoli at the angles of the abaci with two tiers of leaves, such as are found in the temples in the Roman Forum, Adam used very beautiful leaves which extend the full height of the bell; and for the central rosette which normally occurs below the abacus he substituted lion masks.

By contrast, the two recessed wings which run out towards the terminal blocks are very simple. The doorways and the windows at street-level are all arched and recessed within the

* 134

† 135

channel-jointed masonry, while the upper-floor windows are straightforward openings set on continuous cill-courses.

The terminal blocks themselves are three bays in width. As the facade is three storeys in height, a proportion approaching the square is thus generated, affording powerful punctuation to the movement inherent in the two wings extending outwards from the central block. The channel-jointed zone provides a base for a series of four broad pilasters which rise through two storeys and have fluted capitals. The pedestals of the pilasters are linked together with open balustrades, echoing the motif in the central unit. The doorway also repeats the previous arrangement, except that the flanking windows in this case are Venetian in type, set within an arched recess. At first-floor level there is a Venetian window in the centre, and on either side is a rectangular window with back-set margins and a moulded cornice supported on carved trusses. The second-floor windows are plain and have individual cills.

The entrance steps to the front of each house are flanked by lamp-standards of wrought iron. These were provided with trumpet-shaped extinguishers for the torches of the link-boys who were a feature of the evening street-scene before street lighting came into general use.¹

In his design for the north block, Adam included carefully-

1 Many of the standards are actually modern replacements

composed returns at each end.¹ But when it came to building the end house only the design for the south-east corner was followed - and even then the length of the northward return was abbreviated. There is, however, sufficient frontage actually built here for us to be able to appreciate the care with which the design was kept in harmony with the south elevation. The channel-jointed masonry of the street-floor is returned, and the central part of the gable is advanced to correspond with the pilasters returned at each end. Above the entablature runs a balustrade which is penetrated at the centre by a chimney-stalk decorated with a fluted panel. In the centre of the elevation there is an arched entrance doorway with a moulded impost. The latter extends across the full width of the elevation, except where it is interrupted by the two windows on either side of the entrance. At first-floor level there are three arched and recessed windows, with a broad impost which is enriched with flutes and roundels, and blind balustrades are inserted in the window breasts. On the second floor the windows are treated plainly and have individual cills; the central one is flanked by two roundels enriched with rays and festoons.

The design of the roof of the north block is rather unusual and calls for some comment. It is carried out in the

1 He may well have been influenced by the clumsiness of the earlier corner treatments in the New Town

customary dark grey slates¹ which can be seen in all parts of the New Town, and in the central part and the two recessed wings alongside it simply runs parallel to the facade at a pitch of a little under thirty degrees on both the north and south slopes. But above each of the two terminal units Adam has turned it into a little pyramid, which acts as an effective background for the sphinx which he has placed on the blocking-course of the cornice. It is a pleasing conceit which does not in any way impair the balance of the whole composition - rather the reverse - and it may have suggested itself to Adam as a means of commemorating the Battle of the Nile. Or it may merely reflect the fact that Adam was favourably impressed by the sphinxes he had seen during his lengthy Grand Tour.²

We have looked at the design of the north side in some detail. Let us now turn to the other three sides of the square and see to what extent Adam's intentions were realised.

The south side, it will be recalled, was intended to be a replica of the north. The elevation facing the central garden has been reproduced quite faithfully, apart from the fact that the sphinxes have been omitted altogether, but the return ends facing Charlotte Street and Hope Street echo the finesse of Adam's

1 Unlike the stone, which the specification required to come from Craighleith Quarry, the provenance of the slates is not certain, but they probably came from Easdale, Argyllshire

2 There are fine ones at both Spalatro and the Piazza del Popolo, Rome

design very feebly indeed.

On the east and west side of the square the arrangement which Adam proposed was rather different from that on the north and south, principally because of the break in the middle caused by George Street on the one hand, and the insertion of a church on the other. The two breaks were of the same length, so he could easily have used precisely the same elevation on both sides. That is, he could have designed one unit and merely repeated it four times in all, twice on each of the east and west sides. But instead Adam chose to make some small and subtle differences between the two sides, possibly because he felt that having to include a design for a church in the composition of the west side made it necessary to adjust carefully the visual weights and tensions of the two flanking blocks of houses.

If we compare one unit on the east side with the equivalent unit on the west, we are struck first by the fact that the divisions of the two fronts do not correspond exactly in terms of the number of bays. The central feature on the east side has a total of five bays, while that on the west has seven, if we count the very large Venetian window on the first floor as three normal window openings; the difference is compensated for in the recessed wings of the two units, the east side having four bays as against three in the other. The terminal blocks are treated in a very similar way in the two designs, and thus the overall length of the two different types of unit is the

same.¹ But perhaps more significant in one sense than the matter of bay-divisions is the way the roof-line of the two units differs. On the east side Adam intended to give the central feature of each unit some greater emphasis by building an attic storey above the general level of the blocking-course, while on the west he limited the height of the unit to three storeys throughout. The reason for this change is probably not very hard to find: the presence of the church in the centre of the composition on the west side would hardly allow too much emphasis to be placed on the centres of the flanking units, whereas on the opposite side some greater variety in massing would not only be permissible, but positively desirable. Apart from the question of the roof-line, Adam seems to have been very conscious of the need to gauge the scale of the houses on the west side correctly. The three-bay terminal blocks, which approach to within about sixteen feet of the side walls of the church, are quite clearly domestic in scale, but in the centres of the units the scale seems deliberately to be heightened by the use of the vast Venetian windows, which rise from the level of the first-floor balustrades and, with their segmental heads, reach as high as the second-floor windows. Inflating the scale of part of a group of terraced houses is, of course, a risky affair, but in this instance the risk seems to have been justified: without

1 The actual length is 204 feet

an accent as bold as this, the houses would have been dominated too much by the large-scale treatment of the church. Another subtle detail concerns the use of pilasters. The units on the east side have none, but on the west Adam framed the end bays with Ionic pilasters, which again help to provide a satisfactory visual relationship between church and houses.

Superficially the changes made by Robert Reid and others in the detailed design of the houses on the east and west sides of the square do not amount to much. In the former, the attic storey and some enrichment in the form of sphinxes on the blocking-courses at the ends were omitted; less noticeably, arched openings were built at street level in the recessed portions in place of rectangular openings, and there is now an uneasy inference that all the ground-floor openings should have been arched. On the west side the changes consist of the omission of ornament above the cornice level and, more seriously, the contraction of the end blocks, spoiling their proportions and upsetting the balance of the terrace as a whole.

Evidently the subtle proportions of Adam's original elevations were not entirely overlooked by some of the proprietors in Charlotte Square. A famous law-suit took place in 1811, in which certain departures from Adam's plans were argued out at length. In this case, known as Boyle v. Butterworth, the complaints concerned with windows proportions were these:

"1. In every house, by the original plan, the windows in the rustic storey, in place of 7 feet, as in Mr. Adam's plan, are made 8 feet high.

2. In drawing-room flat, they are made 9 feet, instead of 8 feet high.

3. In attic flat, they are made 5 feet 9 inches, instead of 4 feet 6 inches high".¹

The Court apparently decided that the complaints were justified, and Butterworth was held bound to "adhere to the general plan and to alter his building accordingly".² But unfortunately it was really too late in 1811 to insist on any house being built strictly according to the proportions shown on Adam's drawings: already several houses on the east and west sides, either under construction or completely finished, showed enlarged windows. All that could be done now was to ensure that other kinds of deviation, such as altering the position of entrance doorways, did not take place.

Commenting on this case, Lord Bannatyne observed:

"The rights of the whole New Town of Edinburgh depend on this case. If every man is entitled to build as he likes, what would be the situation of this city? We have the

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXIII, p. 29

2 Ibid., p. 36

Magistrates, for the community of the town, proprietors of the ground. We have them forming a general plan on which the New Town is to be built. And when persons acquired feu-rights under that plan, the town of Edinburgh is bound to go on in conformity with it. The Magistrates are bound in duty to protect every individual from the smallest deviation, even with consent. If that had been done from the beginning, none of these questions would have arisen."¹

What Bannatyne said was, of course, absolutely true and the principles embodied in his observations apply to many situations other than merely the New Town of Edinburgh. But the irony of the situation in Charlotte Square is that the Magistrates themselves had made - literally - the most colossal deviation from Adam's plans less than a year before. How this arose and what it meant in architectural terms are worth enquiring into.

As part of the comprehensive scheme for the square which he prepared in 1791, Adam had designed a very beautiful church* on a centralised plan, which was to be sited in the centre of the west side, precisely on the axis of George Street. There was to be a flight of twelve broad steps rising from the pavement and leading to a handsome portico, which was to

1 Ibid., p. 37

* 122 - 125

consist of four sets of coupled Corinthian columns supporting an entablature and pediment. The design included four corner turrets, similar in placing though not in profile to those of the Register House, and a large central dome rising to a height of about 110 feet. Despite the Adam brothers' boast that they had "not trod in the paths of others, nor derived aid from their labours",¹ it is quite clear that Robert had been influenced by the west front of St. Paul's Cathedral: the scheme is a good deal smaller,² of course, and the details of his dome are very different from Wren's, but nevertheless there is a striking similarity in the general composition of the two fronts.

For the interior Adam had prepared two alternative plans.* There is little difference between them except in the arrangement of the seating. In the later plan he moulded the four great piers at the crossing so as to provide a semi-circular recess in each, measuring about six feet across and facing towards the centre of the crossing. This gave a natural location for the stair leading to the pulpit and enabled him to improve the seating layout somewhat. Perhaps the plan would not have been entirely successful from the point of view of the congregation, for to many the minister would have been out of sight; but the appearance of the interior, judging

1 R. and J. Adam, preface to the Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, quoted in J. Lees-Milne, *op. cit.*, p. 70
 2 There was certainly no need for superimposed orders here

from the plans, would probably have been just as splendid as the exterior design.

Although private house-building did not cease during the Napoleonic Wars, little in the way of public works was undertaken in Edinburgh at this time.¹ When at length in 1810 the Town Council decided to discuss the building of St. George's Church, they did not feel able to proceed on the basis of Adam's design.² Possibly, as in several projected schemes which he drew up for the Council,³ the difficulty was one of money, rather than of the architect being no longer alive. We do not know how much Adam's church would have cost if it had been built,⁴ but at all events the Council appointed Robert Reid as architect, perhaps with the suggestion that he should build something on the lines of the original plans but at a reduced cost.

Reid's report was considered at a Council meeting in the spring of 1811. He gave a verbal estimate of £18,000 for the construction of the new church, and it was resolved to borrow money for this purpose.⁵ The first idea was to invite the inhabitants of the New Town to assist the project by renting

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- 1 The University suffered greatly through being left unfinished during the Wars
 - 2 TCM 18th July 1810
 - 3 For example, the scheme for extending the Assembly Rooms in George Street
 - 4 According to T. Shepherd (Modern Athens, p. 43), Adam's estimate was £26,000
 - 5 TCM 11th April 1811

seats in the unbuilt church for a period of fifteen years in advance, but when it became apparent that this revenue was inadequate the Town Council asked four banks if they would assist. The Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank declined to do so, but loans were obtained from Sir William Forbes and Co. and the Commercial Bank, and also from the Incorporation of St. Mary's Chapel.¹

The foundation stone was laid with due ceremony by the Lord Provost on 14th May 1811.² Building continued at a fairly steady pace, though evidently Reid had some trouble with the construction of the dome.³ This was by far the most complicated structure which he had so far designed - he was then only thirty-five - and it seems that initially he had rather underestimated the amount of sub-structure required to support the dome. However, in fairness to Reid's structural skill, it may be pointed out that the type of arch which he used for the wider spans, the transformed catenary, was an extremely sophisticated choice for this period, using the barest minimum of material for the compressive stresses involved.

As a result of the extra masonry which Reid found he had to include, the cost of the project mounted sharply. Although

1 Ibid., 19th June 1811

2 Arnot, op. cit., p. 540

3 TCM 3rd March 1813

by the spring of 1811 almost £16,000 had been spent, the architect now estimated that a further sum of £7,875 was needed to complete the church,¹ making a total of nearly £24,000.² With renewed assistance from the banks the remaining work was finished by June 1814.

What did the Town Council gain from discarding Adam's plan? Probably very little financially, certainly nothing artistically. In a criticism written within a few months of the service of dedication, a contemporary writer describes it thus:

"This Church may, perhaps, be said to belong to the Italian, the lowest specimen of the Roman school; although, speaking ingenuously, it resembles nothing of any authority ever seen or heard of in time past. In place of a portico with a projecting flight of steps, (as designed by Mr. Adam), we have a vestibule, the columns of which are nearly on a level with the fronts of the wings, where there is seen only a small window in the centre of a circular-headed recess. Above the cornice, most enormous pedestals are erected, to

1 Ibid.

2 This figure is difficult to reconcile with the totals given by Arnot (op. cit., p. 541) and others. Probably we are justified in assuming that the final cost was about £33,000

receive the ends of the balustrade above the entablature of the columns, exhibiting nothing but a mere mass of stone, and possessing no greater claims to admiration, than could be given with facility, and very little ingenuity, to the face of Craigleith quarry, by cutting it regularly, and excavating a small opening in the centre".¹

For a building which was intended to be the chef-d'oeuvre in Craig's New Town, no criticism could be more damning. Reid's design^{*} is undoubtedly coarse in detail, and his grasp of form and massing is childishly clumsy in comparison with Adam's, but he does not really deserve this degree of opprobrium. Perhaps the most positive thing that can be said about Reid's church is that the dome, though obviously derivative,² is strikingly effective in silhouette at a distance and the skyline of the New Town - indeed of Edinburgh itself - would be immeasurably the poorer without it.

The dome, as it happens, is also a very significant pointer to Reid's attitude to design. In appraising the work of the great figures in British architectural history - Wren, for example - sooner or later we tend to look for some

1 Scots Magazine, October 1813, quoted in T. Shepherd, Modern Athens, p. 43

2 The resemblance to the dome of St. Paul's is far too close to be accidental

evidence of intellectual fibre. The dome of St. George's Church evinces none. The building, like Adam's design, is in the form of a Greek cross. Naturally, we expect the dome to rise directly from the crossing. But we find on inspection that the dome is really a sham. It is unrelated to the scheme of the church and has simply been conceived as a huge piece of civic scenery.¹ Strictly as such, it is very much to be welcomed.

The interior is one of the least interesting of the Edinburgh churches. The portico gives access to a large vestibule, which in turn connects with the main body of the church. As we have already noted, the plan is of the Greek cross type,^{*} and at the intersection of the limbs of the cross there are massive piers spanned by the catenary arches referred to above and supporting a flat, coffered dome with a circular light in the centre.² This provides most of the light in the interior, though there are also three-light windows in the north, south and east arms, each of which contains a gallery.

About six years ago a severe outbreak of dry rot in the upper walls of the church was discovered, and since that time

1 The height to the summit is 160 feet

2 The external dome already referred to was quite independent of the internal dome and was located further to the east

it has not been used for public worship.¹ On investigation it was found that some more serious defects were also present, and these cast an interesting light on the methods of construction which Reid used to tie together the structure supporting the dome.

Reid must have been concerned about the possibility of the stonework of the storey immediately under the drum tending to shift outwards as a result of the superimposed load. To obviate this risk he used a number of heavy baulks of timber, about 2 feet by 1 foot 6 inches in cross-section as diagonal ties across the four corners of this part of the structure. No doubt to get the necessary frictional bond between the masonry and the timber, he built the baulks right into the core of the walls and connected together the ends of adjacent timbers by means of wrought-iron ties built completely into the walls. This unusual method of providing restraint was repeated in three tiers, at intervals of several feet.*

The walls themselves measure about 3 feet 9 inches overall. The method of construction was evidently to build two skins of Craigleith stone each about 9 inches thick, with a heartening of rubble. The latter has now become loose and friable in places, and it is not in the least surprising that over the

1 It is at present being converted by the Ministry of Public Building and Works into a public record office, to supplement the Register House

years the baulks of timber - which have been used in a manner much more appropriate to reinforced concrete - have absorbed sufficient moisture from the masonry walls to generate dry rot. It is interesting to note, however, that the timber framing to the copper-covered dome is still in excellent condition after a hundred and fifty years, no doubt because there is a free circulation of air on the underside of the framing.

Serious though the decay of the timber ties was in itself, the worst aspect of the defects noted a few years ago was that the rotting of the ties was causing severe subsidence of the masonry immediately above, which was naturally acting in compression. Quite apart from these defects, though, it appears that the workmanship of the square storey beneath the drum was fairly casual, perhaps because from normal eye-level it is obscured by the wings and balustrading below. The variation in level of the horizontal joints is as much as four or five inches in a length of less than fifty feet.

Some, but certainly not all, of this unevenness may have been caused by subsidence of the foundations. Under the foundation stones there is a curious six-inch deep layer of sand, suggesting that Reid may have used this material as a means of levelling up the excavations. Be that as it may, it has been calculated that the loading on the subsoil directly under the dome is as high as three tons per square foot, while the bearing capacity of the subsoil is estimated at approximately

one-and-a-half tons per square foot.¹

When these major structural defects have been put right, the bell of St. George's will never toll again² and no congregation will cross its threshold on a Sunday morning. Yet even though its function will be rather prosaic one of accommodating public records, it is much to the credit of Edinburgh Corporation and the Ministry of Public Building and Works that they have both recognised the great importance of conserving this admittedly imperfect building.

Before we finally leave the precincts of St. George's, let us return briefly to the houses for a look at their internal planning. In general, the organisation of the plan does not differ greatly from the three-bay type of house which we have already studied in Queen Street,³ except that the cupola has now ousted the skylight as the accepted means of lighting the staircase.

With a few exceptions, the frontage width falls between twenty-six and thirty feet, while the depth of the houses is about fifty feet. Each house has a basement and, as we have seen earlier, there are five instances where a double basement occurs also.⁴ The basement areas at the front are ten feet

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- 1 From investigations carried out by Messrs. Blyth and Blyth, Edinburgh
 - 2 It had a bell taken from St. Giles' in 1814, which had become cracked and was recast for use in the new church
 - 3 E.g., nos. 28 and 30
 - 4 These are probably the earliest double basements in the New Town

in width and give access to fuel stores under the pavement.¹

At basement level a passage runs through the centre of the house from front to back, giving access to a habitable room at each corner of the plan, as well as to store-rooms and a wine cellar within the body of the house. The kitchen is usually placed at the back of the house and the remaining three rooms are for the servants' use. Where a second basement is included it contains the wash-house and laundry.

The street floor plan is very simple and invariably allows for well-proportioned rooms to be provided. Two out of the three bays are taken up by the dining-room facing the street and the library at the rear. The third bay is divided into three compartments: from front to back, vestibule, staircase and parlour. The vestibule is lit by a semi-circular fanlight over the entrance door, and there is usually a second fanlight above the glazed door leading into the staircase. The walls of the vestibule are treated in various ways. Some are panelled in plaster (nos. 3, 8 and 33), some are arcaded (nos. 2, 5 and 13), but the majority are left plain. Sometimes the location of the dining-room and library is reversed, but the former can usually be recognised by the presence of a sideboard recess in the wall opposite the windows. There is usually a panelled dado in the dining-room and sometimes plaster panelling above (nos. 3, 8 and 33); the cornice is always enriched. Most mantelpieces

1 In three instances wine cellars were built under the pavement also

are of marble, though some dining-rooms have ones of pine, usually with composition enrichment. The doors, window shutters and dado panelling are invariably of Memel pine.

The treatment of the library is nearly always similar to the description of the dining-room given above. The parlour, however, is simpler in character. Always a small room, lit by a single window facing the garden at the back, it usually communicates with the larger room to its side, as well as with the staircase. The walls are sometimes dadoed, and the cornice is moulded but not enriched. The stair, as we have noted in the case of Queen Street, is geometrical in some houses and of the scale-and-platt type in others. The steps are invariably of stone, cantilevered from the walls, and are furnished with a wrought-iron balustrade and a mahogany handrail.

The first-floor landing gives access to four rooms at the most. Two large rooms are planned above the dining-room and library; that is, the main drawing-room and back drawing-room, which normally communicate with each other. The two smaller rooms, above the vestibule and parlour, comprise either two bedrooms or one bedroom and a boudoir. Sometimes the main drawing-room extends the full width of the house, lit by three windows, and in this case one of the smaller rooms is omitted.

The drawing-room normally has dado panelling and sometimes plaster panelling above. There is always an enriched cornice, and in some houses the ceiling is decorated in the Adam manner. The mantelpieces are of marble, usually white and sometimes

decorated with coloured inlays. In the back drawing-room the treatment is generally simpler. Mantelpieces are more commonly of pine with stucco enrichment and the ceiling is usually left plain. In a few houses this room has been given an apsidal end (nos. 6, 18 and 20); while in nos. 27, 28 and 29 the same shape was adopted for the smaller rooms at the back of the house. But normally the latter is finished in a straightforward manner, with a simple mantelpiece and a plain cornice.

The second floor contains four bedrooms. The two larger ones are usually provided with presses and marble mantelpieces, while the others have fireplaces with plain stone jambs enclosed by a simple timber surround. The attic, approached by a timber stair, contains either three or four bedrooms with coomb-ceilings. Those at the front were fitted with skylights only, while the back rooms usually have dormer windows.

To move from these houses in Charlotte Square to Rose Street* and Thistle Street is - and always was - like moving into another world. These two narrow streets, "for the accommodation of shopkeepers and others",¹ run the whole length of the New Town from St. Andrew Square to Charlotte Square. Only thirty feet wide between buildings, they have a scale which is totally different from the main streets of the New Town, and the houses

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 158

were built rising sheer from the pavement without any areas intervening. Rose Street does not appear to have had any houses of architectural merit built in it. Its original character has largely disappeared, since it is now used almost entirely for commercial purposes, but it seems likely that the whole street was constructed in rubble masonry, and that the buildings were finished very plainly both outside and inside. It will be remembered that dormer windows were permitted in this street, and as the prevailing height was three main storeys, daylighting and sunlighting can never have been very good in Rose Street.

The same conditions obtained in Thistle Street, but here - or rather in the continuation known as Hill Street - some evidence of architectural quality can be seen. In particular, there is a type of entrance doorway occurring in a number of houses,¹ which is worth noting. Divided vertically into three unequal parts, it incorporates narrow sidelights as well as the door itself, and is thus reminiscent of many doorways in Queen Street, although naturally the scale is much smaller.* In a few instances the friezes are fluted, and there are also paterae used as decoration.² Even this limited amount of elaboration is difficult to understand, until we look at some of the

1 Examples are at nos. 1, 3, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 22

2 Examples are at nos. 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10

residents who first lived in this street. Clark of Comrie lived in no. 9, and Buchanan of Auchintorlie in no. 11; while the Right Hon. Charles Hope of Granton, Lord Justice Clerk, had his chambers in no. 6.¹

Moving further westwards into Young Street - itself a continuation of Hill Street - we find that the quality of architecture falls off again, although it is not quite so unsophisticated as in Thistle Street. With the exception of nos. 1, 3 and 5, which are built of rubble, the fronts are of droved ashlar. The design itself is still very plain, but the improvement in finish reflects the fact that these houses were constructed later than any others in Rose Street or Thistle Street, probably between 1790 and 1800.

We have now surveyed the whole of the New Town envisaged by James Craig when he prepared his plan in 1766, amounting to 192 acres. With the exception of Charlotte Square, which was not completed until about 1820, all this area was developed by the end of the eighteenth century. But there is one small development also planned by Craig, which is worth looking at briefly.

The site for this was on Multrees Hill, somewhat to the east of St. Andrew Square. It had been acquired in 1762 by Walter Ferguson, writer in Edinburgh, who decided in 1773 that it was opportune to develop his land. He commissioned Craig to

1 J. Grant, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 159

*
prepare a plan, and on this we can read of the advantages which Ferguson held out to prospective feuars:

"1. It is dry, healthy, and commands pleasant and extensive views, particularly about twenty miles of the Firth of Forth and great part of the Harbours and Grounds on both sides of it.

2. It is of easy access from the New Bridge by a Road thirty-four feet broad along the east side of the Reposition for the Records.

3. It is at the distance of a moderate walk of eight minutes from the Parliament House, the High Church, and the Exchange; of nine minutes from the College of Physick Gardens, of six minutes from the Markets, and not three minutes from agreeable airings in the country.

4. Being without the Royalty, it is free from all the Taxes, Imposts and Burdens to which the inhabitants within the Liberties of the City of Edinburgh are subject; and of the Land Tax:-

N.B. There is plenty of Clay and sand on the Ground for making Bricks."

Ferguson's proposal to build on this site was opposed by the superiors, the Governors of Heriot's Hospital, who instituted a legal action, but he won his case. Building commenced in 1775 and Ainslie's map of 1780 shows that three sides of the new square had been built by that date. On no. 5, at the south-east corner of the square, was carved the legend "St. James Square 1779". The architect of this house was probably Thomas

Hill.¹ The east side of the square was the last part to be built and consisted of a single block of main-door houses and flats. This terrace was built by Robert Wemyss in the 1780's, and the development is shown as complete on Arnot's map of 1787.

Being outside the New Town proper, St. James' Square^{*} did not come within the area affected by the regulations which had been made by the Town Council to control development. Consequently there was no limitation on the height of the houses and most of these were built with four main storeys, exclusive of basement and attic. The architecture was severe and plain, the majority of the houses having fronts of droved ashlar. Two fronts were finished with channel-jointed masonry on the ground floor. Not only was the architecture rather poor, but the planning was none too satisfactory, for the height of the buildings was excessive in proportion to the size of the square and daylighting was adversely affected. St. James' Square is chiefly memorable for the fact that Robert Burns lived there for some months in 1787, and it is no great loss that the buildings are now being demolished to make way for a redevelopment scheme.

Before we go on to consider the extensions which were made to Craig's New Town in the nineteenth century, a word must be said about the two gardens contained in the plan: in St. Andrew Square and Charlotte Square.

1 Proceedings of the Scottish Architectural Society,
vol. XII, p. 184

Perhaps in the eighteenth century the citizens of Edinburgh were not too concerned about having in front of their houses a carefully-tended garden. If we look at the situation in George Square, on the south side of the city, we find that the central area was used for some years as a railed-off pasture for cows and sheep, and it was only in 1813 that the inhabitants began to show an energetic interest in the tasteful laying out of the garden.¹ The feuars of St. Andrew Square sent a proposal as early as 1769 to the Town Council, asking for the centre of the square to be enclosed at an estimated cost of £750,² although it is not clear whether the enclosure was proposed for ornamental purposes only. What the earliest inhabitants of the New Town were perhaps most interested in was having a pleasure-ground within walking distance of their houses. In 1780 the Town Council received a Memorial from feuars of the extended Royalty, who wished to have formed a pleasure walk along the verge of the Nor' Loch, and to have erected a parapet wall and gates, and to have the loch drained and formed into a canal.³ Nothing came of this request and the ornamental canal is, in fact, the only proposal in Craig's original plan which was totally ignored. No doubt the Town Council felt that with the money which they had available it was better to see to the

1 Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXVI, p. 15

2 TCM 5th April 1769

3 Ibid., 16th August 1780

paving and lighting of the new streets than to spend money on expensive earth-moving and drainage works.

In the case of Charlotte Square the laying out of the garden seems to have been done at minimum expense. The central area was levelled in 1803 by soldiers of the Inverness-shire regiment, under the direction of their commanding officer, General Alexander Diron.¹ It should be noted, however, that at this time the garden was laid out as a complete circle, and it was only some fifty years later that the enclosure was reconstructed to give the present octagonal shape.

Neither Craig nor his contemporaries foresaw in 1766 that in the space of little more than thirty years some major extension of his New Town would be required. But the population of Edinburgh, which in 1750 was probably 50,000, had risen to over 66,000 by the end of the century and was still increasing rapidly. Moreover the exodus of the well-to-do from the Old Town to the New, which had been a small trickle in the late 1760's, was now a swiftly-flowing current. Despite the advent of the war with France, the demand for elegant new houses in a handsome setting did not diminish. How this demand was met we must now consider.

1 Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh, p. 207

PART FOUR

PLANNED EXTENSIONS TO THE FIRST NEW TOWN

A tame monotony will be sure to result from a complete uniformity of plan; a fact but too well exemplified in many parts of the new town of Edinburgh.

William Playfair 1819

The Second New Town

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the City had acquired the lands of Bellevue, which had been partly purchased by Lord Provost Drummond from earlier feuars and partly feued by him from the Governors of George Heriot's Trust. Another feu of thirteen acres originally belonging to Lord Provost Stewart, who had succeeded Drummond in 1767, and which contained ground lying between Abercromby Place and Cumberland Street, had come into the possession of a syndicate of building speculators by the name of Winton, Nisbet, Morrison and Gordon,¹ and in 1806 a joint plan was adopted for the feuing of the whole ground north of Queen Street Gardens to Fettes Row and from Bellevue Crescent to India Street. But before we consider the implementation of this plan let us go back a few years and look at the earliest proposals for this area.

A letter addressed by Lord Provost Stewart to George Heriot's Trust in 1792 reads as follows:

1 P. MacNaughton, op. cit., p. 16

"My Lord, In consequence of what passed between the Committee of the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital and me I have with the assistance of Mr. William Sibbald your Surveyor made out a plan for building on the ground lying on the north of Queen Street the property of the Hospital and myself - This plan I now take the liberty of transmitting to your Lordships for the inspection of the Governors who I request will take it into their consideration with as little loss of time as possible".¹

Later the same year the Governors evidently hoped that it would be possible to feu the land according to Sibbald's plan and to realise "Upwards of Fifteen thousand Pounds Sterling".² After this there is a curious chronological gap, perhaps reflecting the temporary uncertainty caused by the war with France.

At length, in 1796, a plan was prepared by David Stewart himself. It is an amateurish effort, but there are several features of interest to us. First, as in Craig's plan, there are three arteries running approximately east-west. Secondly, at either end of the central artery is a large open space surrounded by buildings - reminding us, in their relationship to each other, of St Andrew Square and Charlotte Square.

1 Minutes of George Heriot's Trust, 20th June 1792

2 Ibid., 13th December 1792

The situation of the principal street on the south side is very similar to that of Princes Street, in that it faces south over open ground - in this case the Queen Street Gardens. The principal street on the north side is much less regular and undulates in an uncertain way to accommodate two crescents, one facing outwards to the north, the other facing inwards. At the centre of each crescent is a site reserved for a public building; the type of building is not specified but was no doubt intended to be a church. There are six main blocks of buildings shown on the plan, each with an arrangement of meuse lanes and stables similar to those in the first New Town, though none of the blocks is completely regular in shape. No names are given to the streets, but it is possible to pick out the line of what is now Great King Street connecting the two places, which can themselves be recognised as Drummond Place to the east and Royal Circus to the west. Similarly, the southern street foreshadows Heriot Row, while to the north the somewhat irregular street has its counterpart today in Royal Crescent and Fettes Row.

Again, nothing concrete occurred for several years. But in 1801 George Heriot's Trust resolved "that a plan of a large scale should be made out with all possible despatch by Messrs. Sibbald & Reid from the Sketch or plan now presented to the Governors".¹ Only two months later Reid and Sibbald duly produced their plan

1 Ibid., 31st December 1801

for the area "belonging to the good Town and Mr. Steuart and the Hospital".¹ The plan was approved by the Governors and, with the consent of the Town Council, the first feuars could now come forward. Building started in 1803 and the first house to be erected in the Second New Town was almost certainly at no 13 Heriot Row.²

In Craig's new town we saw how building controls, at first rather loose, became progressively tighter as development continued. It is not surprising, therefore, that the regulations devised jointly by the Town Council and the Governors of George Heriot's Trust were fairly onerous. Let us look at some of the conditions in the contract of 1806:

- "First The houses in Heriot Row and at the west end of Abercromby Place to be two storeys plus a basement or sunk storey, not to rise more than thirty-three feet above street level, except for the projecting houses which are to be limited to fifty-one feet.
- Second The houses in Dublin Street, Howe Street, India Street, Pitt Street, and other streets running north from Abercromby Place and Heriot Row shall not overtop the projecting

1 Ibid., 15th February 1802

2 I. Lindsay, op. cit., p. 48

houses mentioned in the first clause.

- Third** The houses in Drummond Place, Great King Street, Royal Circus etc. shall not exceed forty-six feet except for the projecting houses; in Northumberland Street they shall not exceed thirty-three feet. Also the roofs of all the houses in the different Streets, Rows, Squares etc. shall not exceed one third of its [sic] breadth.
- Fourth** That no storm windows nor any raised Breaks in the roof in imitation of french roofs or otherwise shall be allowed except in Cumberland, Spencer, Dundas, Pitt, Nelson, Duncan and Jamaica Streets.
- Fifth** That the houses in all the foresaid places, except in Jamaica Street, Nelson Street, London Street, King Street, Dublin Street, Scotland Street, Duncan Street, Dundas Street, Pitt Street, Howe Street, St. Vincent Street and India Street shall be built as follows:-
The sunk storey shall be of broached ashlar, or rock work, and all above to be polished, droved or broached ashlar, and shall have blocking courses fifteen inches high, and the slates not to project above three inches over the said blocking courses.
- Sixth** That in the foresaid places there shall be sunk areas in front of all the houses with a good iron railing and foot pavement of the following dimensions [details follow, varying as between different streets] and water closets

shall be allowed to be built, but these shall not project farther from the back wall than five feet, nor be higher than six feet above the level of the parlour floor; and further it is hereby expressly stipulated that the ground marked in the plan for stable ground shall be applied to no other purpose than for stables, and coach houses, or washing houses, or other offices for the use of the occupiers of the front tenements alone.

Seventh That the common sewers shall be executed agreeable to a plan to be made out by the said William Sibbald and the Purchasers shall be taken bound not only to make and construct the common sewers and lay the side pavements with a sufficient rail and to causey the streets, but also to keep the whole in good and sufficient repair, in all time thereafter, at the sight and to the satisfaction of the Dean of Guild of the City of Edinburgh, and his Council for the time being, all to be made and constructed in a manner to be pointed out by the said William Sibbald.

Eighth Feus in the different streets are to be disposed of at not less than the following prices per foot in front:

Seven shillings. Bellevue Crescent, Cornwallis Place, Drummond Place, Great King Street, London Street, Mansfield Place, Royal Circus.

Five shillings. Abercromby Place, Heriot Row, Dublin Street, Duncan Street, Dundas Street, Howe Street, India Street, Nelson Street, Northumberland Street, Pitt Street, St. Vincent Street, Scotland Street.

- Four shillings. Royal Crescent, Fettes Row, Cumberland Street, Jamaica Street and Spencer Street.
- Thirteenth** The Royalty shall be extended over all the grounds referred to.
- Fourteenth** The City binds itself in order that [these streets] may be sufficiently supplied with water to lay a main pipe of seven inches diameter to the South boundary of the lands of Bellevue, and the Hospital binds itself to lay a main pipe of the like diameter from the main pipe in George Street to Heriot Row facing Queen Street before or so soon as any house in the said Heriot Row shall be finished.
- Fifteenth** That from the main pipe water shall be distributed along several streets and other places by service pipes at the expense of the respective proprietors or their feuars".¹

These regulations are striking in several ways. The rates quoted for feuing in the different streets would raise an ironic smile from present-day proprietors: properties in streets such as Abercromby Place and Heriot Row are today considerably more valuable than those in streets such as

¹ Contract between City of Edinburgh, Governors of George Heriot's Hospital and Owners of David Stewart's Lands, 1803

Bellevue Crescent and Cornwallis Place, but it seems that the principle on which prices were fixed was that Great King Street was the main street in the second New Town and those streets which were axially related to it were also considered important. In this respect, of course, posterity did not agree with the classification, just as in Craig's New Town Princes Street ultimately became more important than George Street. But the most remarkable aspect of the conditions quoted above is the strictness of the building controls imposed upon feuars. We are entitled to deduce from this that both the Town Council and the Governors of Heriot's Trust were vitally concerned about the quality of development which was about to take place on their lands. Before we go on to consider this development in detail, let us examine the Reid-Sibbald plan and see to what extent it differs from the earlier plan prepared by David Stewart.

Perhaps it should be pointed out first of all that the ideas embodied in the 1802 plan could hardly have been produced by Reid and Sibbald alone, even allowing for the fact that they must have seen Stewart's plan. What evidently happened is this. The Town Council had decided in the autumn of 1800 to hold a competition to secure the "best Plan or Design for laying out in streets, squares, etc. the grounds of Bellevue belonging to the City, also the grounds westward and on the north of the Gardens north of Queen Street belonging to David Stewart Esq. and to Heriot's Hospital as far west as the

grounds belonging to the Earl of Murray".¹ The premium offered was 100 guineas and in February 1801 four plans were given in to the Town Council. They were found to be so equal that the Council decided to divide the premium, and "as each contained qualities which the others wanted they had agreed to give 50 guineas more upon their producing a Plan made up by them from the four plans to contain what shall be thought best in each of them".² Later in the same year we find that the Town Council resolved to pay 25 guineas to a Mrs. Stratton as a gratuity for her late husband Major Stratton "having been employed by the City to revise and improve the Plans given in for a new Town to be erected upon the lands of Bellevue".³

So the plan submitted by Reid and Sibbald and approved by the Town Council was really the culmination of a whole series of plans produced in recent years. It is certainly a great deal more accomplished than David Stewart's plan. The principal street, Great King Street, ran approximately east-west and extended between the open spaces of Drummond Place and Royal Circus. Parallel to it ran two other main streets, Heriot Row and Fettes Row, each of which led eastwards to a curved street: Abercromby Place and Royal Crescent respectively. Running north-south were two main streets, Dundas Street and Howe Street,* which

1 TCM 22nd October 1800

2 Ibid., 11th February 1801

3 Ibid., 16th December 1801

were really a continuation northwards of Hanover Street and Frederick Street.

It will be seen that the plan is similar to Craig's layout in several respects. Great King Street clearly parallels George Street, while Heriot Row and Fettes Row correspond to Princes Street and Queen Street. In the matter of vistas there is also some resemblance to Craig's New Town. On the west side of Royal Circus, on the axis of Great King Street, Reid and Sibbald showed the site for a public building, namely a church. Looking in the opposite direction - eastwards - there was a ready-made terminal feature, in the shape of the Excise Office which stood in the centre of what is now Drummond Place Gardens; the designers obviously chose the alignment of Great King Street with this in mind. But their plan continued eastwards beyond Drummond Place, and the vista along London Street did not have any termination at all - unless we are prepared to believe that Reid and Sibbald were relying on this function being performed by Gayfield House, an isolated three-storey mansion which stood about three hundred yards beyond the boundary of their plan.¹ If we explore the provision of meuse lanes, coach-houses and stabling, we find that much the same procedure was followed as in Craig's plan: the main terraces, Great King

1 This existed before the New Town was built, as it was erected in the early 1760's by Charles and William Butter, Wrights in Edinburgh

Street and Royal Circus for example, each had individual meuse lanes. We must beware, however, of classifying the streets of the Second New Town in terms of the categories seen in Craig's New Town, that is, simply major and minor streets. The hierarchy is more complicated than this. For example, Jamaica Street, Cumberland Street and Northumberland Street*, apparently all minor streets of the same kind, differed essentially from each other. Jamaica Street, like Rose Street and Thistle Street, was built without any front areas to the houses; although it was somewhat wider, extending to 42 feet between buildings. Cumberland Street and Northumberland Street, on the other hand, both had areas along the whole length of the street, though they do not otherwise correspond, the first having a width of 55 feet and the second 66 feet. There is thus a difference of more than fifty per cent in the width of the narrowest and widest secondary streets in the Second New Town - despite the fact that these streets were intended to be developed to the same height of three main storeys. As for the principal streets, however, there was no very substantial difference in width: all fell within the range of 80 to 100 feet, Great King Street receiving the greatest width on account of its importance in the plan.

But our discussion of the Second New Town has so far ignored the topography of this area - and there is some evidence to believe that Reid and Sibbald ignored it also. Between Heriot Row and Great King Street there is a fall to

the north of no less than fifty feet over a distance of about five hundred feet, and from here to Fettes Row there is an equally sharp descent. The severe cross-fall of the site is reasonably well camouflaged in Great King Street and Drummond Place by the simple process of cut-and-fill, but in Royal Circus, where there is a difference in level of more than twenty feet between the north and south sides, topography clearly triumphs over axial planning. There is thus no symmetry of cross-section such as we noted in the First New Town, and the north-south streets, instead of rising to a climax in the centre and then falling again, simply run downwards from south to north at a fairly constant gradient of almost one in ten. However, the steady fall produces in streets such as Dundas Street and Howe Street a bonus which was surely not foreseen by the designers. Given sunlight at an appropriate angle, the rhythm of the bold cornices descending these streets creates a kind of giant's-staircase effect. In the one street, the eye is led irresistibly towards the Forth and the hills of Fife; in the other, towards Playfair's remarkable St. Stephen's church.

But in terms of architectural design it is the east-west streets which claim our attention first. In the main streets the unified palace-front type of house design, pioneered in Edinburgh, as we have seen, by Robert Adam in his design for Charlotte Square, was extensively used as the basis of the layout. The four terraces which make up the east and west

halves of Great King Street* are a good illustration of this device. Each block is about six hundred feet long - it is curious how this dimension of approximately a furlong, traditionally considered the natural distance for walking without pausing, occurs so often in the New Town - and is divided into five main parts: central feature, two wings and two end pavilions. The general height is three main storeys, exclusive of basement and attic, but in the centre and in the end pavilions the height is increased by one storey. If we analyse the accommodation contained within, we find that it consists of two large main-door houses in the centre with almost equally large flats planned above; six self-contained houses in each of the wings; and a further combination of main-door houses and flats in the end pavilions. It is interesting to see to what extent this accommodation is reflected in the external appearance of the units. On the whole, Robert Reid suppressed, rather than expressed, the different types of houses which lay behind the façade. Thus on each of the first and second floors Reid repeated no less than fifty-nine times a virtually identical window unit. The block as a whole, however, is redeemed from monotony by the emphasis which is given to the centre and the two end pavilions. The central feature is nine bays wide and four storeys high. It is subdivided into five compartments. The centre of these, three bays wide, has four Ionic pilasters rising from a belt above the street floor and carrying an entablature and cornice

* 151, 153, 46, 58-64

above the second floor windows. The intermediate compartments, two bays wide, have no pilasters; while the end ones, a single bay in width, are flanked by two pilasters. All the first floor windows in the central feature are fitted with architraves and cornices, and three of them, in the centre and at the ends, have triangular pediments as well. All except those in the recessed compartments have blind balustrades in the window-breasts. There is thus a conscious attempt to produce a piano nobile effect, and the street floor - as in Charlotte Square - is treated rather more simply. In the central feature, as throughout the elevation, the street floor is carried out in channel-jointed masonry, in which nine semi-circular-headed openings occur. Graceful fanlights are provided above all the doors, which have the impost returned across the doorway to form a lintel above two stone jambs. The windows are actually rectangular, but like those in the Register House they have plain stone margins set within the arched openings. The second-floor windows have no architraves and rest on a continuous cill-course between the pilasters. Above the main cornice level the third floor is treated very simply. There are eight plain rectangular windows, while the central one is made semi-circular, in a rather clumsy attempt to reproduce the effect which Adam gained in Charlotte Square by the use of non-rectangular windows. There is a subsidiary cornice and also a blocking-course, which includes an elongated horizontal panel above the semi-circular window.

The end pavilions are very similar in general conception, but as they are only seven bays wide there are three compartments instead of five, and only the central one has pilasters running through the first and second floors. Again, at third-floor level, there is a semi-circular window, but in place of the horizontal panel above the subsidiary cornice there is now a large chimney-stalk incorporating a moulded panel. In the two wings, each approaching 200 feet in length, the architecture is very simple. All window- and door-openings are rectangular and although a radiating pattern was generally used for the astragals in the fanlight, these were fitted within a rectangular frame. The ground- and first-floor windows are both the same height, approximately 8 feet, but the design of the façade is such that a piano nobile effect is still created. A wide belt separates the channel-jointed masonry of the street floor from the polished ashlar of the superstructure above, and there are two narrower belts from continuous cill-courses to the first and second floor windows. The fenestration of the six houses within each wing is extremely straightforward. Each house has two windows on the ground floor and three windows on the upper floors. At first glance the rhythm of the windows appears to be constant throughout, but this is not the case. The normal interval is about 5 feet, but between windows of adjacent houses there is an interval of 7 feet. In one or two instances the alignment of windows on the ground and first floors is not quite perfect - the maximum irregularity is

almost 12 inches - but so uniform is the general appearance of these façades that the eye tends automatically to correct minor irregularities such as these.

Over the years many of the fanlights have been removed from doorways and most of the windows are now without their astragals. The consequent loss of scale is unfortunate, as can be gauged from those windows which retain astragals - usually in the flats rather than the houses. But what is really astonishing is that in the whole length of Great King Street not a single individual façade has been spoilt by the addition of a further storey above the original cornice level.

If only the same could be said of Heriot Row! As we have seen, this was not intended to be the pre-eminent street in which to live in the Second New Town, but, no doubt because of the proximity of the beautiful Queen Street Gardens and the southern exposure which this street enjoys, it has gradually acquired a cachet which Great King Street does not quite possess. Its very popularity has therefore encouraged the addition of an extra storey to many of the already-substantial houses. But let us look at Heriot Row as Robert Reid first designed it, as two dignified terraces, each conceived as a palace-front type block about 600 feet long.

Designed almost a decade earlier than Great King Street, Heriot Row^{*} follows almost precisely the same arrangement.¹

1 The elevation by Robert Reid is dated 1803

* 140, 142, 53

The chief difference is that the prevailing height is two main storeys, rising to three storeys in the central feature and the two end pavilions. Again the central feature has nine bays and is divided into five compartments, though the method of sub-division is somewhat different. The third and seventh bays are advanced and the blocking-course above these bays carries a horizontal panel carved with festoons. The three intervening bays are recessed and above the cornice a blind balustrade joins the two panels already mentioned. All the first-floor windows, both here and in the remainder of the elevation, have architraves and cornices, and those in the projected bays and the central bay have triangular pediments as well.

The arrangements of the end pavilions is broadly similar to those we have studied in Great King Street, though neither here nor in the central feature did Reid employ any pilasters. Again we find in the centre three semi-circular-headed doorways grouped together, the central one leading in this case to elegant and spacious double flats planned on the second and attic floors. A horizontal panel carved with festoons surmounts the blocking-course and serves to emphasise the centre of the end pavilions; it is flanked by two short lengths of blind balustrading above the adjoining bay on either side.

The same straightforward treatment of the wings which we noted in Great King Street can be seen here also. The street floor is finished throughout in channel-jointed masonry, with

polished ashlar above and rock-faced masonry in the basement. Both window- and door-openings are rectangular. The heads of the openings on the street floor appear to be bridged by carved voussoirs, but in fact Reid employed here a detail which occurs in countless streets in the New Town: a deep rectangular stone lintel carved in such a way as to represent voussoirs.

Apart from the imbalance caused by the addition of extra storeys and dormer windows, Heriot Row has suffered changes in external appearance resulting from the disappearance of window astragals and also from the lowering of first-floor windows to the level of the wide belt above the street floor. Internally, too, the houses have undergone considerable alteration over the years and it is difficult to find a house which retains its original character throughout. But let us look at a typical self-contained house, no. 5, and describe it as it was originally planned.

This house was completed about 1805, and the feu-charter was obtained in 1808. The entrance vestibule, situated at the south-east corner of the plan, is spacious and has an enriched ceiling and a frieze decorated with festoons. The east wall has a plaque with figures in relief and the west wall contains a niche with festoons above. At the north end two columns partly conceal the staircase beyond, which gives access to the three rooms on the ground floor. The room in the south-west corner, facing the street, is the library. It is lighted by two windows facing south, and on the west wall is a good mantel-

piece of carved pine, which is probably not original. The walls are dadoed with plaster panelling above, and there is an enriched cornice. The other large room at this level is the dining-room, in the north-west corner of the plan. The north wall is apsidal in shape and contains a single window, while the opposite wall contains a deep recess for a sideboard. As in the library, the walls are dadoed with plaster panelling above. The cornice is enriched and there is a pine mantelpiece on the west wall. The third room, in the north-east corner of the plan, was originally a small dressing-room and contains nothing of any particular interest.

The basement floor was laid out in the usual manner, with a central passage, and does not differ from those described previously. A scale-and-platt stair rises to the first floor and is finished with cast-iron balusters and a mahogany hand-rail. There are three rooms on the first floor, and the largest of these is the drawing-room, planned above the vestibule and library. L-shaped on plan, it is lighted from the south by three windows. The walls have plaster panelling and an enriched cornice, and the mantelpiece on the west wall is of carved pine, though like the one on the ground floor it is probably a later addition. The large room at the back of the house at this level is the principal bedroom, which like the room below has an apsidal wall at the north end. The walls are dadoed, and the original mantelpiece of white marble remains on the west wall. The third room on this floor is a small dressing-

room. The main stair continues to the second floor, which contains four rooms. All are well-proportioned, but none contains anything of particular interest. The staircase is lighted by means of a circular cupola, of which the coving is enriched with plaques.

Such was the general arrangement of the self-contained houses in Heriot Row. And, with countless minor variations, the same generic plan was used in numerous streets of the Second New Town and further extensions also. The flats, which have been referred to in passing, vary more widely in plan. Sometimes planned on a single floor, sometimes as a double flat, they usually contain between four and eight rooms. Naturally, in the century and a half which has elapsed since most of the Second New Town was built, a vast number of conversions have been carried out and it is now possible to find flats on any level from the sub-basement to the third or fourth floor of a terrace. But the original flats - of which there are many - are not normally found below first-floor-level.¹ The commonest type, in fact, is that containing four or five rooms on a single floor and built as a group of either two or four flats in conjunction with a pair of main-door houses on the ground and basement floors. Examples of this arrangement -

1 There are a few exceptions to this, e.g., on the east side of Dundonald Street, where the original scheme included flats on the ground floor

especially in the cross-streets, such as Dundas Street and Howe Street - are too numerous to mention individually.

One feature which all these original flats have in common is an extremely plain staircase leading from the street door to the entrance-door of the flats themselves. On plan the staircase nearly always takes the form of a simple rectangle, a little over 8 feet wide and about 16 feet long. The scale-and-platt type of stair is almost invariably used, each storey having two flights with a half-landing at the intermediate level. This typical arrangement of the common stair in the early nineteenth century contrasts with that which we saw in the First New Town. There, it will be remembered, the dimensions were much more meagre, and the stair flights were made up almost exclusively of winders. But perhaps the strongest contrast is that the central wall which we saw in the earlier staircases has now disappeared altogether. The lighting of stairs, however, has not changed in essence: the light still enters the staircase through a sash-window in the wall facing the street, and the location of this window is determined, not by internal function, but by reference to the general pattern of fenestration of the façade. So we find that, in almost every case, part of the window appears just above the half-landing, and part appears immediately below. Although visually this is rather strange - and the internal cleaning of stair windows becomes difficult - the general distribution of light is surprisingly satisfactory, because

the horizontal surfaces of both ceiling and landings are well-lit and consequently a good deal of reflected light penetrates to the inner part of the staircase.

The use of the geometrical type of staircase to give access to flats is extremely rare, and only one example has been traced in the Second New Town. This occurs at no. 5 Nelson Street. Here a short rectangular entrance vestibule at street level leads into an oval staircase. The stair rises in a beautiful continuous sweep from street level to the second floor, where a small landing gives access to a single flat; the staircase is lighted from an oval cupola above. The whole effect is very striking, and so powerful is the sense of movement generated by this form of stair that on entering one feels almost as if one is being sucked upwards into a vortex. But it is unlikely that this extraordinary plan was adopted purely for visual reasons. There were one or two practical advantages of which the designer - whoever he was - must have been aware: pushing the staircase some distance back into the body of the house meant that one additional room could be fitted into the plan on the street side of the house and could be given natural light. And the choice of an oval form for the staircase meant that presses, accessible from the other side, could be inserted in the position which would otherwise be occupied by the four corners of a rectangular staircase.

In both this very unusual geometrical staircase and the typical rectangular staircase which was used to give access

to flats, the construction of the stairs themselves was basically the same. The stone steps were built 6 inches or more into the staircase walls and were of the spandrel type. They were invariably finished with plain wrought-iron balusters and a plain oval-section mahogany handrail.

Although the finishings of the common staircases were extremely plain, the interiors of some of the original flats were remarkably elegant. This is particularly true of the larger flats, that is, those containing seven or eight rooms, arranged either on a single floor or on two floors. A few examples of the latter type occur in Heriot Row, and as we have already examined one of the self-contained houses in this street it may be of interest to look briefly at one of the large double flats at no. 21. If we climb the common stair as far as the second floor, we arrive at a landing where there are two entrance doors, each giving access to a double flat planned on similar lines; we will consider the one on the west side.

The entrance at the south-east corner of the plan, gives access to a very spacious hall, about 16 feet square. There are four rooms at this level, the two larger ones being situated in the north-west and south-west corners of the plan; these are the dining-room and the drawing-room respectively. Both are well-proportioned rooms, with dado panelling and good marble mantelpieces. Adjacent to the dining-room, in the north-east corner of the plan, is the kitchen, which is

lighted by a single window to the north. The floor is finished with stone flags, laid directly on the floor joints, and the same finish is used in the hall itself. The fourth room at this level, in the south-east corner of the plan, is smaller and was probably used as a bedroom. The most interesting feature in the whole flat is the generously-proportioned stair which rises from the hall, commencing in the north-east corner. The stair hall is roughly a cube in proportion, and is lighted by an oval cupola with an enriched coving. The stair follows the east wall and the south wall, reaching the landing at a point about half way along the south wall. The landing is returned across the whole of the west wall and gives access to a total of four rooms. These were all planned as bedrooms, those on the south side facing the street having coomb-ceilings with skylights, and none is of any particular interest. In view of the simple treatment of the bedrooms, it is perhaps surprising that so much space was lavished on the hall and that considerable care was taken to finish the stair as elegantly as possible, with enriched cast-iron balusters and a moulded mahogany handrail. But this apparent imbalance between different parts of the flat becomes quite comprehensible when we remember that it was the public parts of the flats which were really by far the most important, because it was here that the social life of the family was carried on. This no doubt explains why we find, encapsulated within a Georgian terrace, a double-height

living-space which reminds us in essence of some of Le Corbusier's experiments in combining single-height and double-height volumes in domestic planning.

But in the main streets running east-west there are on the whole comparatively few original flats. The terraces were conceived as consisting for the most part of self-contained houses, and such experimentation as took place in these streets was directed, not so much towards the internal planning, but towards the layout of the streets themselves.

Although according to Cockburn, Abercromby Place* attracted great crowds when it was originally built, this first excursion into curved façades in the New Town is really rather a tentative one. Built to a radius of about 2000 feet, it is in fact the shallowest crescent in the New Town. Nelson Street, which connects it to Drummond Place, was deliberately cranked so as to enter Abercromby Place in its centre. Building appears to have started at the east and west ends of the western half, and if we look closely at the fronts of nos. 23 and 24 we find that the smoothness of the curve is broken at this point, as a result of the original setting-out being not quite accurate.

Much more interesting as examples of curved terraces are those which we find in Drummond Place and in Royal Circus - particularly the latter. The elevations of Drummond Place† were designed by Robert Reid in 1803 and for this work he

* 144, 145

† 153-153, 47

received a sum of £52.10/-.¹ On three sides the place is rectangular but on the east side Reid had provided in his original layout plan two quadrants, between which lay the entrance to London Street. It is possible that Reid introduced these curves here partly for the sake of symbolism: the place was named in honour of George Drummond, whose tremendous contribution to municipal affairs we have already studied, and Reid may have felt it appropriate to base the general plan on the letter D. Whether or not this conjecture is correct, it is certainly interesting to realise that the plan of the square reflects the shape of many of the dining-rooms which we have already encountered, with their apsidal ends. The scale, of course, is very different - Drummond Place measures 400 feet across - but the proportions are not dissimilar. The elevations are conceived basically as three-storey terraces, with the end pavilions and also the central features in the north and south block rising an additional storey. For the most part, they are composed of self-contained houses similar in arrangement to those in Great King Street mentioned earlier. At the intersections with the other streets Reid used that combination of main-door houses with flats above which is really a standard solution in the New Town to the problem of turning a corner in urban housing.

1 TCM 20th June 1804

The elevations of the north and south blocks and of the two quadrants are the most interesting. Taking the latter first, we find in each a simple arrangement of four terraced houses in the centre and a four-storey pavilion at each end. Reid has attempted to introduce some architectural character into the pavilions by recessing the three central bays and framing them on the first and second floors with Ionic pilasters. Above the entablature and main cornice, the window of the central bay of the pavilion is emphasised by setting it within a semi-circular recess, and a horizontal panel above the blocking-course adds further emphasis. The frieze of the entablature is decorated above the pilaster capitals with roundels and blind balustrades occur in the first-floor window-breasts. This quasi-Adam treatment might have been successful in a straight terrace, but here, in a concave façade, the effect is a little grotesque - indeed, to be thoroughly critical of Reid as an architect, it is astonishing in this part of Drummond Place how he contrived to produce a design which appears at the same time to be both heavy and insubstantial. In the north and south terraces he was much more successful. The composition is quite straightforward: two four-storey houses form the central feature, and on either side two wings made up of three three-storey houses terminate in four-storey pavilions; each of these contains one main-door house with flats above. The architectural details are almost precisely the same as in the two quadrants, but in the longer terraces the appearance is a good deal less crowded

and the proportions more harmonious. The façade is particularly impressive when viewed obliquely, and it is only in approaching it frontally that one realises that the central feature is made up of six bays, with two entrance-doors in the centre - a duality which would never have been perpetrated by Reid's luminary, Robert Adam.

It will be remembered that in the First New Town the quality of building improved as the streets spread westwards, and that, to counter adverse comment about the mediocrity of a good deal of the earlier development, the Town Council engaged the services of the most eminent architect of the day to design the elevations for Charlotte Square. Although history never repeats itself exactly, a rather similar situation is apparent in the later development of the Second New Town. Among the Town Council archives there is no minute recording the appointment of William Playfair to design the elevations for Royal Circus, but he was certainly the architect and several drawings in his own hand are preserved in the library of the University of Edinburgh.*

Playfair was born in 1789, the son of a Scottish architect who conducted from his London office what was largely a country-house practice. In 1804 James Playfair died and his fifteen-year old son went to live with his uncle, Professor John Playfair in Edinburgh. It was here that he was apprenticed to William Stark, an accomplished designer who was responsible for the fine interior of the Signet Library. Later he

returned to London to work in the offices of Wyatt and Smirke, where he assisted in the scheme for rebuilding the Convent Garden Theatre, a job which had to be done at break-neck speed. He made a short tour of France and returned to Edinburgh some time before 1815, when he was successful in the competition for completing the University.

It is not immediately obvious on the ground that Royal Circus^{*} was intended by Robert Reid to act as the western termination to Great King Street. The drop in level of more than 20 feet from south to north is distracting, and - perhaps even more disturbing - a main road enters the Circus at its south-east corner and runs north-westwards towards Stockbridge, bisecting the central garden. It is therefore a circus only in name: it is more accurate to regard it as two crescents facing each other.

Playfair used the same design for both terraces, varying it only in the pavilion at the western end of the north side, in order to accommodate more flats instead of self-contained houses at this point. Each terrace consists of three main storeys, with an additional storey in the central feature and the two end pavilions. The composition is thus very similar to that of the longer terraces in Drummond Place, except that by planning three houses in the central block, Playfair has managed to avoid that duality which tends to mar Robert Reid's design. As in the quadrants in Drummond Place, the wings consist of four self-contained houses. The end pavilions,

however, are somewhat wider than at Drummond Place, having five bays instead of three; this naturally gives a more horizontal and reposeful effect.

But the great interest of Royal Circus lies not in its composition - which is accomplished, if unoriginal - but in its excellent proportions and refined detailing. The central feature is emphasised by a series of six Tuscan pilasters framing the first- and second-floor windows. On either side of the pilastered front there are two bays slightly recessed, and free from any elaboration apart from the frieze being returned with the cornice above. Beyond these two bays the facade sets back a further 8 inches at the junction with the wing. There are thus three different planes which we recognise as we approach the centre of the block, and the intermediate plane provides a wonderfully smooth transition between the horizontal forms of the wing and the vertical forms of the pilasters. Playfair shows the same sensitivity in his treatment of the end pavilions: there is no space to use two intermediate bays here, but as a transitional element he advances a short length of plain walling between the wing and the first pilaster. The main cornice steps forward in sympathy at this point, and so we have a junction which is as satisfying as the one we have just been studying.

The main cornice projects about 2 feet, and as the attic storey is fairly low, a considerable portion of it is obscured when seen from pavement level. But Playfair's treatment of

this storey, in the central block and the end pavilions, is nevertheless of some interest. It consists of only three main elements: wall, windows and subsidiary cornice. The interest lies in the way that Playfair has repeated the theme of the pilasters below, by projecting a series of piers from the walling between the windows - a detail which recalls the piers which Adam used in his design for Andrew Crosbie's house in St. Andrew Square. The cornice follows the projections of the piers; thus - consciously or unconsciously - Playfair obtains a rhythmic serration of the skyline at the salient points in the terrace.

It is illuminating to consider for a moment not what Playfair has included, but what he has omitted. There are no architraves to windows, no pediments, no semi-circular recesses, no panels carved with festoons, nor any of the other decorative details which another architect of this period such as Reid, might have used. Yet despite this lack of decoration - or perhaps because of it - these two terraces belong to the highest level of street architecture in Edinburgh and represent an astonishing achievement for a man of only thirty-one years.

In the same week in February 1820, Playfair prepared two drawings, one showing part of the northern side of Royal Circus, the other showing the southern half.* A curious feature of these drawings is that, although the composition is exactly the same in both, the heights of all the elements such as doors, windows and pilasters vary considerably, and the difference in

the total height of the two elevations amounts to more than 5 feet. Why was Playfair experimenting in this way? A possible explanation is that, in order to compensate to some extent for the sharp drop in level towards the north, he wanted to raise the northern terrace as high as possible without spoiling its proportions. But an examination of the two terraces shows that both were built in accordance with the earlier drawing, that is, to the lower height. Perhaps the Town Council, with their constant interest in matters such as the height of frontages, expressed some concern to Playfair when they saw his proposals for the northern terrace.

Be that as it may, the proportions of the two crescents are undoubtedly very fine. If we compare the window proportions with those in, say Drummond Place, we find that Playfair has made a greater distinction in their heights in the various storeys. The first-floor windows dominate, with their heights of no less than 11 feet 6 inches, while the ground- and second-floor windows are 8 feet 8 inches and 6 feet 3 inches high respectively; the attic windows are only 4 feet 3 inches high. There is thus no doubt whatever about the importance of the piano nobile, and this is underlined by the robust character of the street storey, which has the channel-jointed finish typical of this period in the New Town. All the masonry is ashlar, except in the basement floor where it has a fine droved finish.

Among the Playfair drawings of Royal Circus which have

survived is one showing a detail for the cast-iron balconies which were to be fitted to the first-floor windows.* Playfair evidently had some second - or even third - thoughts about these balconies. In the elevational drawings already mentioned he showed in the first-floor window-breasts blind balustrades carried out in stone. Just why he eventually omitted these we do not know, but there is no doubt that the cast-iron balconies which he provided instead are an attractive feature, and their elliptical fronts have a more three-dimensional quality than the stone balustrading would have given. The design as carried out is different from that shown on the detailed drawing of March 1821, and includes two tiers of conventionalised foliage, though the length and projection of the balcony remain unchanged at 6 feet and 2 feet respectively. It is worth noting that the foliage theme of the balconies is repeated in a different form in the design of the area railings, which are particularly good and also incorporate Maltese crosses in the main balusters.

If we reflect for a moment on one of the significant differences between Royal Circus and, for example, Charlotte Square, we find that some of the main elements in Playfair's design are much more standardised - in fact, we may even say that they are beginning to be industrialised. Each terrace has a total of forty-three windows or door-openings on each of the three main floors - and this figure does not include the returns at the four ends, where further repetition occurs. So in the main façades alone, including the attic storeys,

there are very nearly three hundred openings which vary in height according to their position but all have a standardised width of 4 feet 3 inches. Unfortunately we have no record of the organisation of the constructional processes which must have taken place in the erection of these buildings. But it is clear that Playfair's design allowed for a considerable measure of standardisation, particularly in the manufacture of components such as sash-windows, cills, entrance doors, balconies and so on.

At the same time, some of the details apparent in the Royal Circus show an almost Greek quest for refinement. If we examine the lengths of stone used for the entrance steps to houses we find that they are curved on plan so as to be concentric with the façade itself. Perhaps this is not so surprising, because the steps are almost 9 feet long, and if they had been made simply straight this would have created a slight, though obvious disharmony. But to place a straight-edge along one of the individual stones of the wall is to make a remarkable discovery: each stone, even those less than 2 feet long, is worked to a precise curve. As the diameter of the circus is 470 feet this is a refinement which few architects would have bothered with, for the difference in profile over the length of a two-foot block of stone is little more than one-sixteenth of an inch.

Evidence of a refined approach to design is not lacking in the interiors either. The internal planning is of no

great importance to us, because in both the houses and the small number of original flats it follows the same general principles of spacious domestic planning which we have studied in the earlier streets of the New Town, such as Heriot Row and Queen Street; but it is nevertheless interesting to see how rectangular plan-forms were accommodated behind the curved facades. The majority of the houses in Royal Circus have a frontage of 30 feet. This is divided unequally by a partition wall so as to give one large and one smaller space both back and front on each floor. The general principle which seems to have been followed in setting out the rooms is to build these partitions at right angles to the external walls and then to finish the three remaining walls of each room by reference to the line of the partition. This sounds a rather laborious procedure, but it should be remembered that the techniques in current use at that time lent themselves to the ready production of non-structural surfaces: the interior surfaces of stone walls were never normally plastered direct, and it was in any case necessary to fix timber straps to the wall and then to apply a lath-and-plaster finish. So if we examine these houses carefully we find that the planes of the walls enclosing the various interior spaces lead an independent life of their own, without direct reference to the front and rear walls of the terrace. This divergence, of course, is not normally experienced in exploring these houses and only comes to light if we stand near a window-head and look up at

the soffit, when it becomes obvious that the planes of the window and the plastered wall are not parallel with each other.

A useful by-product of the traditional technique of applying a lath-and-plaster finish to the external walls is the excellent thermal insulation which results. It has not been possible to carry out field measurements to determine the insulation value of these thick stone walls with their separate plaster lining,¹ but it is fairly clear from a series of crude thermometer readings, taken in some of these interiors during the winter season at times when no heating appliance was in use, that this type of construction compares very favourably indeed with the kind of external walling which is commonly used in domestic buildings at the present time.

If the excellent thermal insulation of these Georgian houses was at least partly fortuitous, it was certainly no accident that the sound insulation between one floor and another was equally good. Probably as a result of the age-old tradition in Edinburgh of building flats, it had been customary for some years to improve the sound insulation of the ordinary floor by fixing boards a few inches below the level of the top of the joists, and then filling this trough with a layer of ashes or other suitable material. This

1 From discussions with architectural physicists it is clear that experiments of this kind would pose great practical difficulties in existing buildings of this kind.

technique of deafening was, of course, essential in the construction of flats, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century it was so widely understood in Edinburgh that it seems to have been used in the construction of self-contained houses, to provide better insulation between intermediate floors. Even when the ceiling laths were fixed direct to the underside of the floor joists, a very appreciable reduction of sound was achieved;¹ but there was another factor which helped, even if fortuitously, to improve the insulation still further. An inspection of one house in Royal Circus has shown that the construction of the floors and the ceilings below were in fact quite independent, with a void of about 12 inches between.

This rather surprising detail of construction probably arises from the comparatively long spans which were necessary in the larger rooms of such houses. With a typical frontage of 30 feet divided into two unequal parts, the larger rooms on each floor were usually at least 17 feet in width, and sometimes as much as 20 feet. Although some of the larger early Georgian houses in Edinburgh appear to have been constructed with floor joists approaching 20 feet in length,²

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- 1 It should be remembered that the plaster itself was a very much heavier finish than it normally is to-day - the thickness was rarely less than a full inch
- 2 This was the case in some of the houses in Buccleuch Place, now demolished

the accepted method for dealing with spans of this magnitude had changed by the early nineteenth century. Massive timber beams, usually two in number and about 12 inches in cross-section, were commonly used to span across the shorter dimension of the large rooms; in a typical instance, this would leave three spans of perhaps 7 or 8 feet at the most to be bridged by joists running parallel to the main axis of the room. The joists were dovetailed into the sides of the beams, but even so the soffits of the beams were usually at least 6 inches lower than those of the joists. Consequently, wherever this type of construction was used, it was clearly impossible to apply a lath-and-plaster ceiling direct to the underside of the joist without leaving the beams partially exposed - a feature which would be quite unacceptable in all the rooms of the house, except the servants' quarters. The natural solution, therefore, was to use separate ceiling joists to support the lath-and-plaster finish, and the resulting independent construction is probably as good acoustically as most twentieth-century attempts to provide sound-resisting floors in domestic buildings.

Apart from the remarkably satisfactory acoustic qualities of the houses and flats in Royal Circus, and other contemporary streets, there is another interesting side-light which this area of the New Town throws on one aspect of modern urban life: the integration of shops within residential areas. It will be remembered that in Craig's New Town no provision

whatever was made for shops, but evidently in the 1820's it was realised that it was no longer sensible to go on building further streets in the New Town without making some attempt to provide sufficient shops also. If we move just beyond the western end of Royal Circus into North-West Circus Place we find ourselves confronted by an attractive terrace of shops with no less than four storeys of flats above. Although this terrace is a direct continuation of one of the end pavilions of his north crescent it is doubtful whether Playfair had anything to do with this scheme, as none of his drawings for Royal Circus extends beyond the pavilion. Possibly he was asked to give some advice on the elevation of the shops, which are simple, unified, and well-proportioned; though the successful integration of these shops into the terrace arises partly from the slope down the hill towards Stockbridge, which allows the shop fronts to be built at what is really basement level in the circus itself.

If on the ground it is difficult to recognise Royal Circus as being on the direct axis of Great King Street, it is even more difficult to realise that Gloucester Place^{*} is a continuation of the same axis. Partly, of course, this is because the planting in the gardens of Royal Circus has now reached such a height that, at least during the summer, it is impossible to see beyond the trees to any appreciable extent. If we look at contemporary engravings of this area we find that the whole appearance was quite different in the early nineteenth century.

* 167, 173, 174

The gardens at that time were little more than shrubberies,* and those who lived in that part of the New Town must have been able to see the whole of the area in the vicinity of Royal Circus in a way which, for us, is now quite impossible. The two pairs of flanking blocks of houses which form, as it were, an entrance gateway as we approach either Great King Street or Gloucester Place, can only be seen at short range and appear rather massive and perhaps out of scale. They are, in fact, the only houses in the whole of the New Town which exhibit the giant order.† In each of the four blocks, four huge Ionic pilasters rise from the belt marking the top of the street floor and continue upwards through three storeys to support an entablature, above which an attic storey is provided.

Although in both Great King Street and Gloucester Place the units in these flanking blocks are five bays wide in each case, they are not identical. In the former case the pilasters are mounted on pedestals, which are of the same height as the graceful cast-iron balconies of the first-floor windows; while at the entrance to Gloucester Place the pilaster bases sit directly on the belt immediately above the channel-jointed masonry of the street floor, and the single bays to either side of the pilastered feature are provided (on the south side only) with two tiers of three-light windows at the first- and second-floor level. These windows have segmental recesses above, a detail which is found nowhere else in the New Town except in the blocks on the east side of Charlotte Square.

* 160

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The individuality of this design raises an interesting question: who designed these two sets of corner blocks?

They do not appear on any of the Playfair drawings in the University of Edinburgh's collection, nor on any of Reid's drawings in the possession of George Heriot's Trust. So we can only make a conjecture based on the styles - and skills - of the two architects. Reid was not averse to using 30-foot orders, as we have seen in the portico of St. George's church in Charlotte Square. But most of the evidence points towards Playfair as the architect: the pilasters are tapered - a refinement which is uncharacteristic of Reid's work - and the iron balconies at the entrances to both streets are similar to those which Playfair used in Royal Circus itself.¹

On the other hand, the mouldings which occur between the three-light windows and the segmental recesses above have that curiously thin quality which we can see in most of Reid's mouldings. Perhaps the explanation is that Playfair worked out the design for these blocks, as part of his general remit from the Town Council for the Royal Circus area, but that Reid was responsible for the execution of the work - a not improbable division of labour, as Reid's official position as Architect to His Majesty had resulted in his being employed

1 It is interesting to note that for the three-light windows special balconies are provided, oblong on plan instead of elliptical but still incorporating the same motifs

by the Town Council to supervise building work over a wide area of the New Town.

We have already noticed the ubiquitous channel-jointed masonry of the street-floors in the Second New Town. Indeed, at the period which we are considering - that is the first quarter or more of the nineteenth century - for any architect, builder or feuar to have finished the street-floor of a house in any other manner would have been as unthinkable as for one of Edinburgh's advocates to set out from his home in the New Town for the Courts in the Old Town without donning his hat.

But some time about 1823 an interesting development of this standard uniform occurs. In Gloucester Place, part of the west side of India Street,* and the northern part of Dundas Street, a considerable number of houses possess street-floors where the masonry is channelled only in a horizontal direction, with the vertical joints being made as fine and inconspicuous as possible. Not only this, but wide recessed margins are used round the windows, leaving comparatively short lengths of channel-jointed walling in each bay. The texture of the two planes of the ground-floor wall is so very different - the margins are polished smooth - that we get the impression of robust but quite narrow stone piers supporting the structure above. To make the articulation of the ground- and first-floors more complete still, the first course of masonry above the window recesses is sometimes chamfered along the lower edge immediately above each pier. Thus even in these sober

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facades we find, as Sir John Summerson puts it in his illuminating essay on Gothic architecture, "a device by which the onset of gravity, of inert mass, is dissipated at those places - chiefly openings - where it would normally be most felt".¹

One instance of this elevational treatment occurs at nos. 26-30 India Street, which are composed as a single unit nine bays wide. This unit is really none other than the familiar one of two main-door houses planned in conjunction with flats above, a type of design which was then nearly half a century old. Though the planning is unoriginal, this should not deter us from recognising the stylishness of the street elevation, and it is perhaps surprising that the novel treatment of the ground-floor was not repeated a little more widely in other parts of the New Town. It is only in Gloucester Place - a very short street about 200 feet long - that this detail is used throughout both sides of a street. It does recur towards the end of the west side of Dundas Street, where it is interesting to see it applied in a situation where there are no less than three storeys of superstructure above. But perhaps in essence it is too emphatic a treatment to be used in long lengths of frontage. It seems most natural and unforced when it occurs in the cross-streets, where the slope

1 Sir John Summerson, Heavenly Mansions, p. 17

to the north is such that in almost every case the houses are grouped into units of either two or three with their floors, windows and cornices built all at the same level.

Of the various cross-streets of the Second New Town the most successful is undoubtedly India Street.* With a width of 90 feet between buildings, it is no wider than the other cross-streets; but it is more dignified and impressive because it is completely free from those projecting shopfronts which tend to disfigure streets such as Howe Street and Dundas Street. Probably the maintenance of the dignified and well-heeled character of India Street can be attributed to the presence of so many lawyers and advocates, for if Heriot Row is the legal street par excellence, India Street is certainly its closest adjunct. But the architecture is in any case generally of high quality and combines formality and informality in a remarkable successful way.

Apart from a short break on the east side, giving entry to Jamaica Street, both sides were developed as continuous frontages but had, of course, to be stepped down at fairly frequently intervals to conform to the slope of the site. The steps do not occur at precisely regular intervals, nor is there any formal linking of one unit to the next, such as we find in some of the later Georgian terraces in Bath, where ramped quadrants are used to give some sense of continuity; but the façades have a homogeneity due partly to the universal use of Craigleith stone, and partly to a common scale being

present in all the houses. So the individual details, such as fanlights and doors, do not have a disruptive effect despite their variety. Some doorways have rectangular fanlights, others semi-circular ones; some first-floor windows are emphasised with architraves and cornices, others have none - but the general framework of the street is so well organised that this kind of individuality does not seem to matter.

The treatment of the space between the two rows of houses is probably important in this respect. As it does not connect at either end with a main traffic route, India Street is fortunate enough to have retained its granite setts, with which all the streets of the New Town were originally paved. These setts, together with the iron railings which form a continuous but delicate stockade in front of the houses, provide strong textural interest in the foreground, and the architecture, especially when there is some pedestrian activity on the pavements, is seen as a kind of urban backdrop. Nor is the element of landscape absent from India Street. To the south the trees of Queen Street Gardens terminate the vista up the street, while the view downwards includes part of the garden enclosure enjoyed by South-West Circus Place.

Although the lots in the Royal Circus area were not exposed for sale until 1820, both halves of the Circus appear to have been completed by 1823 - a remarkably rapid rate of building. In the same year Great King Street and India Street were also completed, with Gloucester Place following about a

year later. And by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century most of the Second New Town was in existence.

There remain one or two public buildings to be mentioned. Before we consider these, let us try to define the main characteristics of this first extension of Craig's New Town - which is, in many ways, the most important of the several extensions which took place, because its present use is still largely residential and thus the original character can still be sensed in most parts very strongly indeed.

What is most striking of all - especially in the main streets running east-west - is that the individual houses, which in the First New Town were of considerable importance, are now overshadowed by the significance of the street as a whole. This principle applies most clearly, of course, in instances such as Great King Street, where the elevations of the entire street were designed in advance and feuars were obliged to build in strict conformity with the drawings of the overall scheme; but even in the more informal streets, such as India Street, there is an implicit understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The general effect of unity which we experience as we explore the streets of the Second New Town comes about partly from the broad treatment which is given to important components such as cornices and doorways. Most of the main cornices have a bolder projection than those which we saw in the First New Town, usually of the order of 2 feet. The shadows thrown by

these cornices are important because they contribute considerably to the modelling of what are often rather severe facades, and they offer a satisfactory contrast of the insistent verticality of the sash-windows. The slated roofs are distinctly lower in pitch than the earlier ones - the average now being about 30 degrees - and are commonly of M-section, that is, with a valley gutter as well as two external gutters.

The reason for this change is not hard to find. In the First New Town, it will be remembered, many of the staircases were lit by means of skylights set in the plane of the roof, but by the turn of the century the cupola, mounted on a lead-covered platform, had become increasingly common. Now to instal a cupola above the staircase in a typical New Town house with an ordinary pitched roof demands some unnecessarily complicated construction, as the cupola tends to occur at the natural position for the ridge of the roof; and even when this difficulty is overcome, the cupola is likely to be exposed to view from the opposite side of the street.

Once the simple roof section is duplicated, however, there is a more logical location for the cupola platform to be constructed, between the two ridges, and the cupola itself becomes completely concealed from normal eye level. Sometimes, as in the north side of Drummond Place, the roof assumes a double M-section, with no less than three ridges and two valleys. The reason for this is a little obscure, unless the intention was to construct ridges as close as possible to the desired location for the large chimney-stalks which each house

required. In the example quoted, the two outer ridges coincide with chimney-stalks, while the cupola platform is built between the central and rear ridges.

Two other factors are relevant to the evolution of roofs in the New Town. First, apart from the need to comply with the building regulations framed by the Town Council, from about the beginning of the nineteenth century there seems to have been a definite desire to make the roof a thoroughly inconspicuous element in the total design of the houses. This shows itself not only in the attempt to make the roof as low-pitched as possible, but in the method of dealing with rain-water disposal at the front of the house; in the more important streets the standard practice is to build a blocking-course above the cornice and to form a concealed gutter. Secondly, there was a gradual but unmistakeable tendency for the average depth of houses to increase, and we find that by the 1820's few houses were being built in the main streets with an internal depth of less than 48 feet. So, for both constructional and aesthetic reasons, there was every incentive to adopt the M-section roof.

But from the point of view of someone looking at these houses from street level, the two most characteristic details - as compared with the houses in the First New Town - are the texture of the masonry on the ground floor, which we have already discussed at length, and the simplified treatment of doorways.

It will be remembered that at the time when Craig's New Town was first being developed, almost every doorway was marked by features which projected from the face of the front wall - most often by architraves and a cornice. The kind of doorway which Robert Adam used in Charlotte Square is in a sense transitional; in most of the houses the degree of elaboration is considerable, in that fairly complicated fanlights are included, but the significant step which he took was to treat the doorway as a hole cut in a wall, keeping all the incidents connected with the doorway behind the plane of the wall. The typical entrance-doorway in the Second New Town obeys the same general principle but is usually a good deal simpler than the type which Adam favoured.

The opening itself may be rectangular or circular-headed - there is no clear-cut preference in the Second New Town as a whole. In some streets, for example Dublin Street* and Dundas Street, there is a tendency for the entrances to flats to have rectangular openings, contrasted deliberately with round-headed openings for main-door houses; but this distinction is by no means universal. In the circular-headed opening the commonest treatment is to exhibit a pair of fairly substantial stone jambs, set back several inches from the plane of the wall, with a stone lintel spanning across at the height of the springing and carrying the fanlight above. The fanlights are often a simplified version of those used in Charlotte Square by Adam and incorporate

astragals radiating like the spokes of a wheel. Sometimes the astragals rise from the base of the fanlight and then curve inwards, as if to represent the interior of a dome seen in perspective. But whatever the detail of the fanlight - and there are many variations which can be seen - there is nothing projecting beyond the wall itself to interrupt the rhythm of the window and door openings.

As far as the windows are concerned the main development which occurred in the Second New Town was to accentuate the first-floor windows increasingly and to modulate the remaining window openings accordingly. It is probably to Playfair that we owe the popularisation in Edinburgh of the first-floor window which extends right down to the drawing-room floor, for Royal Circus was the first large-scale development in which this feature occurred. Similarly it was he who pioneered the use of cast-iron balconies for the first-floor windows, reflecting a practice which had been common in London for some time.

Even the most casual observer can hardly fail to notice one characteristic common to all the houses built in the New Town during this period: their fine craftsmanship. Most of the masonry in the principal streets is polished to a smooth surface, and even in the basements, where rock-faced walling is often used, the cutting has been done with a verve which a present-day mason would find hard to emulate. It is true that the backs of houses are still built in rubble masonry;

but at least it is coursed rubble, in contrast to that in the First New Town.

In terms of interior planning there are no very significant changes. The location of key elements such as staircases became more standardised, but the main tendency was for the average house to become more spacious, particularly in the public areas. The commonest height for terraces was still three main storeys; but a not inconsiderable number of houses were built during this period with an additional storey-height above the main cornice - in some streets as part of the overall design, and in others where the Town Council evidently did not reject the idea of houses being built to a uniform height of four storeys.

At the same time, houses were extended downwards also. The double basements which we noted in Charlotte Square were probably the only ones built within the area of Craig's New Town, but by the 1820's it had become very common for a second basement to be provided wherever the ground conditions made it suitable.* Since most of the Second New Town was laid out on a site which sloped steeply to the north, it was logical to include double basements in houses built on the north side of the east-west streets, and in at least some of the houses built in the north-south streets, in those instances where the level of the ground-floor was some considerable distance above pavement level.

This is exactly what was done; and although many of the

second basements are ill-lit on the street side, it is remarkable how many of them have windows of a generous size facing the gardens. The first basement normally included a large kitchen at the rear of the house, together with servants' rooms and store-rooms; while the second basement contained a laundry and wine-cellar, with further store-rooms and sometimes additional accommodation for servants also. Thus, quite apart from the finish of the masonry, many of the four-storey terraces present a very different appearance when seen from the rear, where frequently as many as six storeys rise sheer from the gardens.

As may be expected, the quality of workmanship inside these houses generally matches the excellent finish seen on the outside. The degree of elaboration of the interiors varies often from street to street - and sometimes from one house to another within the same street. There is no documentary evidence surviving to show to what extent the architects who designed the street elevations for this part of the New Town were responsible also for the interior details. But if we examine sufficient of these details in different streets, it is fairly clear that they reflect in many cases the idiosyncrasies of the various architects whom we know to have carried out the elevational design. So, either with the aid of rough sketches which have now perished, or perhaps simply through verbal instructions given to the craftsmen, architects such as Robert Reid and William Playfair exerted a considerable influence on

the design of components such as cornices, doorways, mantelpieces and so on. At the same time, however, we must beware of assuming that the architects always exercised a firm control over interior details: in Georgian Edinburgh there must have been countless feuars, both householders and builders, who had enough knowledge and taste to select, say, an appropriate mantelpiece or cornice.

But if we compare interiors in representative streets such as Great King Street and Royal Circus, we can see noticeable differences, despite the fact that both developments took place in the 1820's. The cast-iron balusters to the stairs in the Royal Circus houses are more elegant and refined, and other details in these houses, such as cornices and door- and window-mouldings show the same tendency. Even the internal doors themselves, which we might reasonably expect to be fairly standard by this time, show some subtle differences of proportion: the heights are much the same, but in Royal Circus the centre of the lock-rail generally occurs at a height of 3 feet above the floor, while the corresponding height in Great King Street is 3 or 4 inches above this.

Of all the interior spaces in the typical house of the Second New Town, it is perhaps the entrance vestibule which shows the greatest change compared with its counterpart of forty or fifty years earlier. The average width is now about 8 feet - twice as wide as some of the early vestibules in Queen Street. The staircase, too, has increased in width,

and between the two there is usually either a colonnade or a screen with glazed doors and side panels. Within the fairly standard dimensions of about 8 feet by 16 or 18 feet, the proprietor of each house had ample scope to express within the vestibule the character which he felt most appropriate. So in the houses of this period we find a considerable variety of enrichment in the entrance vestibules, ranging from a trabeated classicism at one extreme to a rather weird Gothic at the other.

The Gothic style is not common, however, being represented by only a very small number of examples in any one street;¹ and when it does occur in entrance vestibules, it is not often carried through into the main rooms of the house.² On the whole the style of enrichment favoured at this period is still Roman or Adamesque though there is some use of the Greek leaf and tongue and gilloche motifs, and a few houses in the north-western section of Great King Street incorporate classical friezes in the entrance vestibules.

Some reference has already been made to the prominence of gardens in the Second New Town. Interest in landscape design, as indeed in classical architecture itself, began somewhat later in Edinburgh than in London and elsewhere in England, and it was

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- 1 Examples occur at no. 26 Heriot Row and nos. 77 and 78 Great King Street; in the latter, the screen at the inner end of the vestibule has side-lights in the form of Gothic lancet windows
- 2 No. 26 Heriot Row is very unusual in having a dining-room enriched with Gothic motifs

really only from the 1820's onwards that gardens began to be enclosed and planted more or less simultaneously with the erection of the houses which overlooked them. The Queen Street Gardens - which today form a wonderful finger of landscape extending for half a mile from east to west and separating the First New Town from the Second - were not properly laid out for some years after the earliest houses in Heriot Row were built; but in the somewhat later developments, Drummond Place^{*} for example, the gardens were enclosed and planted within a year or so of the houses being erected.

We have now completed our exploration of the domestic architecture of the Second New Town. Apart from the houses, what public buildings formed part of the original plan? If we ignore one or two Scottish Episcopal and Dissenting chapels of little architectural interest, there were really only two: the churches of St. Mary's and St. Stephen's.

St. Mary's Church was designed by Thomas Brown¹ and built in 1824 as the centre-piece of Bellevue Crescent.[†] It has a fine hexastyle Corinthian portico surmounted by an elegant steeple and forms an impressive terminal feature when seen from East Claremont Street. The summit of the steeple, 168 feet high, incorporates the elongated dome which was favoured for

1 Overseer of Public Works in the City at this time

* 162

† 179, 180

classical churches of this period.¹ It is interesting to note that Brown managed to build this church, which accommodates a congregation of 1800 persons, for a cost of about £13,000; this means that he provided an additional 200 seats for approximately half the cost of Robert Reid's design for St. George's Church in Charlotte Square. The interior of St. Mary's is built on the usual gallery plan and retains its original pulpit based on the Monument of Lysicrates.

The site for St. Mary's was on fairly level ground. But when the Town Council appointed William Playfair to design a new church - with the instructions that "all Gothic design [was] to be left out"² - the site which they provided was not only a sloping one, but was extremely difficult in that it lay at the bottom of a steep hill, at the foot of Howe Street. The Magistrates evidently spent a good deal of time considering where the new church should be located and it was only in 1825 that the present site was chosen.³ Legend has it that one of the motives in building on this site was to obscure the view of Edinburgh Academy, which stood beyond the boundary of the Second New Town (though on the axis of Howe Street) and had been built in 1823 in defiance of the Town Council's wishes, but there is

1 e.g., at St. Mary's, Wyndham Place, London, by Smirke (built 1823-24)

2 TCM 3rd June 1818

3 Ibid., 23rd February 1825

no evidence to support this story.¹

Viewed from the south, St. Stephen's ^{*} appears as a square set diagonally to Howe Street, and with a lofty tower planted at the southern corner. The diagonal axis was clearly intended to run parallel to the line of Howe Street and certainly gives this impression; but the builder evidently made a mistake in setting-out and the front is slightly skewed to the west, so that a line drawn normal to the tower does not run to the statue in George Street but strikes the west side of Howe Street near Jamaica Street. Or possibly Playfair skewed the building himself, in order to conform to the existing diagonal line of St. Vincent Street.

At all events, the planning of the church is highly accomplished and there is probably no other Scottish architect of this period who could have tackled this difficult problem and emerged with such success. Although as we approach the church it appears to be a square building, the basis of the plan is actually a most ingenious combination of an octagon within a square. The main entrance is by a monumental stairway leading to the entrance doors, which give access not to the main floor but to the gallery level of the octagonal interior. The remaining three corners of the square are filled with two skilfully-planned staircases and the vestry and session house.

1 The Hon. Lord Sands, The Story of St. Stephen's Edinburgh, p. 5

Considerable alterations have taken place in the interior, but Playfair's drawings¹ show very well the heroic conception of the original design which included a dignified layout for the long communion tables. The lighting from the side windows is supplemented by a large circular cupola, measuring 24 feet in diameter, with a laylight below; while the two staircases have unusual but attractive triangular skylights, which echo the shape of the enclosing walls below.

Despite the plain appearance of those walls which are not intended to be seen, with their finish of droved masonry, the exterior has tremendous scale and grandeur, and is perhaps most compelling when it is approached from the north-west, along St. Stephen's Street - the geometry of the external forms then takes on an almost Baroque quality. But from the point of view of impressive scale, there is no single feature to compare with the gigantic porch at the south side of the tower, which reminds us irresistibly of Piranesi's imaginative sketches. Playfair must have realised that nothing but a design conceived on the broadest possible scale would be satisfactory at the end of the immense vista from Frederick Street. The tower, which rises to a height of 162 feet, has received some criticism from time to time.² Certainly its

1 They are preserved in the Library of The University of Edinburgh

2 The Hon. Lord Sands, op. cit., p. 27

termination is not entirely satisfactory - the four crosses at the corners are neither reposeful enough for a classical silhouette, nor spiky enough for a Gothic one - but according to one writer it was not built to the height which Playfair originally intended, "in consequence of weak foundations".

A few months before the church was completed the Town Council proposed to the architect that the clock on the tower should be lighted with gas. Playfair was not impressed with this suggestion and replied rather coldly that "the stone dials which I have already designed will be much more appropriate and in harmony with the other parts of the tower than a glass dial plate".¹ The Council bowed to this judgement but in 1832 some of the parishioners complained that they could not read the clock owing to the colour of the stone dial plates.² Eventually, however, convenience triumphed over aesthetics and the clock has now been illuminated for many years.

More serious complaints have been levelled against the acoustics. A Dr. Theodore Marshall compared preaching in St. Stephen's to "the voice of one crying in the wilderness".³ From time to time the Town Council spent small sums of money trying to improve matters. In 1847 they agreed to an

1 Ibid., p. 6

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 30

expenditure of £68, the specification for the work including "330 yards of cloth to sew and stretch the same on wood frames covering the three front angles of the gallery. 436 feet of wood framing. To lower part of the church, 210 yards of cloth and 383 feet of wood framing".¹ Apparently the greatest acoustic difficulty was experienced during the ministry of Dr. Norman McLeod, whose "voice was harsh and husky, and whenever he was moved his accents were high".² But it is fair to comment that Playfair's remit was to design a church which provided accommodation for the largest possible number of persons within the area at his disposal - for the Town Council were naturally interested in the annual revenue from pew rents - and in the 1820's very little was known about acoustics in any case.

Further Extensions

So infectious was the wave of planning and building which swept through Edinburgh during the early part of the nineteenth century that, even before the Second New Town was complete, three further developments had been planned, each important and interesting in its own particular way. In order of conception - though not strictly of execution - these were: the Calton

1 Ibid., p. 31

2 Ibid., p. 30

Hill area with its access via Waterloo Place, the Melville Street area and the Moray Estates. It will be convenient to take the last-named scheme first.

As we have seen earlier, the ninth Earl of Moray had been astute enough to purchase some property adjacent to the First New Town in 1782. This comprised an awkwardly-shaped area lying between Charlotte Square to the south and the Water of Leith to the north, and fringing the western boundary of the Second New Town.* Possibly Moray would have realised his investment earlier if the Napoleonic Wars had not intervened, with their generally unsettling effect on both private and municipal enterprise, but it was several years after Waterloo when he commissioned James Gillespie Graham to prepare a scheme for developing his property.

Not much is known about James Gillespie's early years. He was born in 1777 and came from a humble family in Dunblane. In his youth he became apprenticed to a joiner, but in due course his fortunes improved and he married Margaret, heiress of William Graham of Orchil. After marriage he styled himself James Gillespie Graham and practised as an architect, specialising in Gothic country mansions and collaborating later on with A. W. Pugin, most notably on the Tolbooth Church. The scheme which he prepared for the Earl of Moray in 1822 is one of his few classical works.

An important aspect of this development is that it stemmed wholly from private enterprise, and in contrast to the First

and Second New Towns, the Town Council played no part in promoting it. Conscious perhaps of some of the difficulties which the Magistrates had experienced in enforcing building controls, the Earl of Moray prepared a very detailed set of regulations, to which all feuars were obliged to subscribe. The most important conditions are given below:

- "Primo That Warren Hastings Sands, writer to the signet, shall be judge of the roup with power to ascertain the duration of the roup of each lot, and to adjourn the roup from time to time as he shall see proper, and also to determine all disputes and differences which may arise during the roup, either between the exposer and offerers, or between the offerers themselves, in relation to the said roup
- Secundo That the lot shall be exposed at an annual sum of feu-duty per foot in front neat measure, to be fixed by the judge of the roup, at the time of exposing the respective lots. That the persons making offer of the upset feu-duty, or in case of more offerers than one, the last and highest offerer at the elapse of the time fixed by the judge of the roup, shall be preferred to the purchase, and each offer shall exceed the immediate preceding one in threepence sterling per foot, at least, and the person or persons preferred to each lot, shall respectively take instruments with one guinea in the clerk's hands. And it is hereby declared, that the

said Earl reserves to himself and his successors, the whole wood and shrubs upon the property, and that the feuars shall not have the power to cut down any tree or trees, or shrub, without the permission of the exposor, or the said Earl, or his foresaids in writing.

Tertio That the feu-duty of each lot shall be payable to the said Earl, his heirs and successors, or to his assignees, the first payment whereof shall commence at the term of Whitsunday, 1825, for the year then preceding, and so forth yearly thereafter in all time coming, with interest, from the term of payment during the not payment

Quarto That the houses to be erected on the several lots, shall be built on a regular plan, conform to an elevation prepared by the said James Gillespie, approved of by the said Earl, and signed by his lordship as relative hereto, and the whole of the fronts as well as the ornamental parts to be done of polished Craigleith, Redhall, or Maiden Craig stone, or stone of an equal colour and quality with the stone of the above quarries, and the fronts of the sunk story to be of best broached work; the slates to be employed to be Easdale, Ballichilish, or Birnam, or slates of equal colour and quality, as shall be approved of by the architect for the time: that the said James Gillespie,

and failing him, such other architect as the said Earl or his foresaids may appoint, will furnish the builders with working elevations, and a set of drawings of the full size for the mouldings, and for which the said James Gillespie, or other architect for the time, shall be entitled to five guineas from the proprietor of each lot; that the under part of the building in the sunk areas below the rustic work, and the courses of the ashler above the belt of the rustic work, shall be thirteen inches high; and that the range of the buildings may be properly connected, the ashler is to be tusked twelve inches at least, which will preserve a uniformity in the heights of the buildings: that the whole of the chimney stalks shall range with the fronts, and by no means come nearer the fronts than the edge of the platform, nor shall the roof be made higher than represented on the elevation; that the depth of the breaks or projections shall be the same as shown by the ground plan, described on the same sheet with the elevation; that the ground, marked stable-ground, on said ground plan shall be applied to no other purposes than for stables, coach houses, or washing houses; and the said stable ground shall be sold to those only who wish that accommodation; but in order to give access to the back ground of the

stances adjoining the stable ground, there will be a lane of four feet preserved for that purpose; that the elevations of the stables shall be built according to a plan, to be prepared by the said James Gillespie or other architect, to be named as aforesaid: that there shall be no storm windows allowed, or any raised breaks above the line of the roofs in front of the said buildings; and in respect the said Earl has resolved to preserve the beauty of the banks on the south side of the river, between the boundary walls of the feus, on the north of the property and the river, and to reserve, the same as pleasure ground, for the benefit of himself and his feuars, as represented on the said ground plan, and to which the feuars shall have access in common, on paying a proportion of the original expense in laying out the said bank as pleasure ground, and also of the annual expense of dressing the said piece of ground, and keeping it in proper order. It is hereby declared, that the feuars of those lots whose back ground is connected with the said pleasure ground, shall not have it in their power to build stables or offices of any description on the said back ground, or to raise the north boundary wall of their respective feus higher than three feet from the surface of the ground, which shall be

formed on a regular slope, as shall be directed by the said James Gillespie, or other architect, to be named as aforesaid; and they shall be taken bound to place and keep in proper repair a light iron railing, on said north boundary wall, in order that the view of the river and bank may be preserved to the feuars on that side of the property that minor alterations may be made upon the elevations, as shall be suggested for the better internal arrangement of the plan, such as altering or transposing the position of a door or window, keeping down windows for balconies, provided the same are previously approved of by the said Earl or his foresaids, and the said James Gillespie, or other architect to be appointed as aforesaid: that all the sunk areas shall be twelve feet in breadth, and shall have a foot pavement ten feet in width, except those in St. Colme Street, Glenfinlass Street, Forres Street, and Darnaway Street, where the areas will be ten feet in breadth, and the foot pavement nine feet in width; that the walls enclosing the back ground shall not exceed in height nine feet, and the height of the stables, coach houses, or washing houses, shall not exceed twenty-six feet to the ridge of the roof; that the feuars will have the power and liberty to erect on the back ground attached to their respective houses, such out-buildings as they may consider necessary to afford

additional conveniency, but on this express condition and provision only, that such outbuildings are in no case, or on any account whatever, to rise higher than the walls enclosing the back ground, or nine feet, the roofs thereof to be flat and covered with lead and where vents are placed in such outbuildings, these must be carried to the top of the houses to which they are respectively attached; that the feuars on the north side of the property, and on the east and south of Moray Place, will be taken bound to keep the back elevation of their respective houses of the height, and on a level with, the front elevation, and to build them of neat hammer-dressed stone, laid in regular courses with belts and breakings, and a cornice and block course on the top, as shewn by the elevations; that the windows in the back of these houses must be placed in a regular and uniform order, and according to elevations furnished by the said James Gillespie, or other architect to be appointed as aforesaid; and it must be understood that no projections from the back of the houses shall be allowed higher than nine feet from the level of the ground.

Quinto That the purchasers shall be at the sole expense of forming, causewaying, and paving the street in front of their respective buildings and meuse lanes opposite to, or any way connected with, their properties, and shall also make and construct the common sewers, agreeably to a plan to be

made out by the said James Gillespie, or other architect to be appointed as aforesaid; and the purchasers shall be bound to enclose the areas in Moray Place and Ainslie Place, and to lay them down in shrubbery and walks, as shewn by the plan; and they shall be further bound to enclose these areas with parapet and retaining walls and iron railings in a suitable and handsome manner, according to drawings and directions to be given and furnished for executing the same by the said James Gillespie, or other architect to be appointed as aforesaid, and which shall not be more expensive than those adopted in the Royal Circus; and the feuars shall have the exclusive privilege along with the said Earl and his foresaids of using the same as ornamental pleasure ground; and they shall also be bound to make the roads and streets delineated on said plan, it being hereby declared, that the said Earl and his foresaids are to be at no expense whatever in enclosing the said areas, nor making any of the said roads, nor maintaining the same, the purchasers taking the whole burden thereof upon themselves, and the feuars shall be bound not only to make and construct the said streets, lanes, roads, causeways, common sewers and side pavements, parapet walls, retaining walls and railings, but also to keep the whole in good and

sufficient repair in all time thereafter, at the sight and to the satisfaction of the said Earl, or any architect to be appointed by him or his foresaids, all to be made and constructed in manner to be pointed out by the said James Gillespie, or other architect for the time, and to his satisfaction: that where the cellars and common sewers have been built, and the streets and side pavements, or any part thereof, made by the said Earl or his foresaids, opposite to any of the lots to be exposed for feuing, the purchaser or purchasers of such lots or areas shall make payment to the agent, factor, or other person appointed by the said Earl, to receive the same, of the expense of erecting and making such cellars, common sewers, causeway and side pavements, opposite to their respective areas, as the same shall be ascertained by a measurement and valuation according to the rates current, certified under the hands of the said James Gillespie, or other architect, to be appointed as aforesaid, with interest from the date of payment by the said Earl or his foresaids...."¹

These Articles of Roup are clearly drafted and on the whole speak for themselves. But there are one or two points

1 Articles of Roup, 7th August 1822

which are worth referring to in particular. In the earlier phases of the New Town a good deal of thoughtless felling of trees had taken place, and it is no doubt for this reason that the Earl insists that no tree or shrub shall be cut down without his written permission. He is, in fact, as much concerned with the landscape quality as with the design of the buildings themselves, and he has resolved "to preserve the beauty of the bank on the south side of the river" - this is the first time that the word "beauty" has occurred in any Articles of Roup.

The liberty of transposing a door or window, on the other hand, was a fairly common concession by this time, but the Earl is particularly scrupulous about the erection of outbuildings and stables, and it is noteworthy that the elevations of the latter had to be prepared by "the said James Gillespie or other architect". Another unusual requirement is the obligation to build the rear elevations in conformity with the architect's drawings, and if we walk down Gloucester Lane we can see today at the back of Doune Terrace a most unusual sight in the New Town: a rear elevation with a rudimentary cornice and blocking-course above.

Despite the stringency of these conditions and the fact that the feuars were expected financially to shoulder "the whole burden themselves", a number of lots were purchased at the first opportunity and it was reported in October 1823 that "the plan of the elegant octagon in Lord Moray's ground

is beginning to develop itself, and at the west end of Queen Street, on the north side several noble houses (Albyn Place), are newly finished as to masonry".¹ The successful feuing of the ground was perhaps due partly to the fact that the Earl himself intended to live in Moray Place, in the central house on the north side, and this area has always included a number of titled proprietors among its residents.

Gillespie Graham's plan is a very ingenious and beautiful one.* The main elements are a polygon, an ellipse and a semi-circle: these are Moray Place, Ainslie Place and Randolph Crescent respectively. The three geometrical figures are linked together by means of two short streets, the two halves of Great Stuart Street. Apart from Randolph Crescent, which binds the layout harmoniously to the existing line of Queensferry Road, there are four outlets; these connect the new layout to the existing streets of the First and Second New Town. Although the boundaries within which Graham had to work were very awkward and the variety of levels posed further problems, the geometry of these junctions is brilliantly worked out - some of the connections appear so effortless as to remind us of those astonishing modulations of key which occur in the later symphonies of Mozart.

The development which took place on the Moray Estates was relatively small, extending to only thirteen acres;

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 200

yet Graham planned there a sequence of urban spaces unsurpassed not only in Edinburgh, but in Georgian London and Bath also. It may well be argued that the houses designed by the Woods in the Circus and Royal Crescent in Bath are finer in architectural detail, but in the way which Graham manipulated the basic stereometric forms his work is singularly successful. There is a Baroque sense of movement in these spaces which forms a perfect foil to the classical, static quality of Craig's design. Not only is the form of the enclosing elements varied as between the curve, the straight line and the polygon, but there is variety in the size of the enclosures: Randolph Crescent has a diameter of 440 feet, Ainslie Place measures 320 feet across the short axis, while Moray Place is the largest of all, measuring 600 feet across and containing a central garden of no less than 3.6 acres. It is not too far-fetched to say that Gillespie Graham was able to model urban spaces here in a way which was comparable to Robert Adam's manipulation of the interior space of houses half a century earlier.

Randolph Crescent and Great Stuart Street were conceived as terraces having three main storeys, and Ainslie Place^{*} as four storeys, while Moray Place[†] was really a combination of the two heights, using the palace-front type of composition. Channel-jointed ashlar is used on the street floor throughout, and the central features and end pavilions exhibit the Tuscan order on the first and second floors. In Moray Place, Graham uses three-quarter engaged columns in the centre of each block, supporting

* 182-186

† 187-190, 195

a heavy entablature and triangular pediment. The effect is magnificently pompous, but the pediments have been fitted in only at the cost of an awkward rake on the cills of the attic windows. The ironwork of the area railings matches the character of the houses exactly, though the detail which Graham used between the two horizontal rails near the top - an enriched cast-iron sleeve slipped over each baluster - has led to a good deal of rusting.* The first-floor window balconies are more ornate than any we have seen hitherto and incorporate the Greek anthemion motif.† Graham, however, in spite of his firm grasp of three-dimensional design, was not as inventive in his detailing as Playfair, and some features such as fanlights show a sameness throughout the whole scheme. The internal planning follows very closely the general pattern evinced in the Second New Town, though there is less variety of enrichment on the wall and ceiling surfaces; many of the entrance vestibules, for example, repeat the same wreath motif in the enrichment of the frieze.¹

But even if the enrichment of the interiors does not match the fineness of some of the houses in Charlotte Square - or even in Royal Circus - the rooms are all well-proportioned and spacious. And it is a perpetually delightful experience

1 There is however an interesting allusion to the Panathenaic frieze in no. 41 Moray Place

* 201

† 199

to walk past the fifty-five houses which form the northern limit of Graham's layout: a continuous but undulating frontage extending from Queensferry Road to Doune Terrace. It is surely a tribute to Graham's skill as a designer of urban spaces that we do not realise that this is the longest street frontage in Edinburgh; the whole block contains more than 350,000 square feet of accommodation - more than two-thirds of the floor area of the Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles!

If the progression from Queensferry Road to Moray Place is almost symphonic in its rise and fall of facades and its swelling and contraction of spaces, there is at the end of this walk a coda in the form of Doune Terrace. This is a short street, containing a block of nine houses on one side only. But the terrace is built to a graceful convex curve, contrasting with all the concave terraces we have just passed, and stands in a commanding position facing north at the head of the steep slope which leads down towards Stockbridge. The quality of workmanship in the Craighleith stone front is particularly good.

Actually the whole of the long terrace between Queensferry Road and Moray Place lies only a short distance from the deep, wooded ravine in which the Water of Leith runs. The fact that these houses appear to turn their backs upon this magnificent natural scenery has provoked a good deal of adverse criticism. As one writer puts it, these houses "though stately, have been - perhaps justly - regarded by some critics as 'beautifully monotonous, and magnificently dull;' and by others as the beau-

ideal of a fashionable west-end quarter; but whatever may be their intrinsic elegance, they have the serious and incurable fault of turning their frontages inwards, and shutting out completely, save from their irregular rows of back windows, the magnificent prospect over the valley of the Water of Leith".¹ In a sense the criticism is fair, because on the south side of these houses there is no hint whatever that a beautiful valley lies to the north, but in a very approximate way the line of Graham's terrace does follow the curving path of the river, and the undulating plan-form allows a greater number of residents to share this prospect than would have been possible if straight terraces had been used.

So far, we have not come across any instance of one architect being employed by a client to design the interior of a house, the street elevation of which had already been determined by another architect. But within the Moray Estates this happened at least once. In 1824 Andrew Rutherford² evidently commissioned William Playfair to design a house for him at no. 9 St. Colme Street, one of the streets already designed by Gillespie Graham two years earlier.* Playfair had to conform to Graham's elevation, of course, and also to work within the width and depth of the lot,³ but apart from this he

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 202

2 Afterwards Lord Advocate

3 31 feet and 43 feet respectively

was free to arrange the accommodation and enrich it in the manner best suited to his client's wishes.

The two basement floors are of no particular interest, except that they confirm that the servants were still expected at this date to retire to a bed recess adjacent to one of the larger rooms. The planning of the ground and upper floors follows the same general pattern as we have studied in some of the earlier houses, though on a rather more generous scale. The ground and second floors, however, are very unusual in having water-closets installed and there is even a bathroom; though evidently a fixed bath is not yet provided and there is simply a stove of some kind for heating the water. The details which Playfair prepared show that combination of refinement and technical competence which characterises his work. Perhaps the most interesting room is the boudoir, which communicates with the drawing-room on the first floor through an opening 9 feet wide and which also has, concealed among the bookcases, a secret door leading to the staircase.

Gillespie Graham was also involved somewhat earlier in preparing the plan for the Melville Street area.* The lands of Coates had for many years been in the possession of the Walker family, and the mansion of Easter Coates in the Scoto-French style, built about 1611,¹ survives today as the deanery of St.

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 116

Mary's Cathedral. The mansion of Wester Coates, however, was demolished in 1869 to make way for Grosvenor Street.

We do not know exactly when Graham's plan was prepared, but the elevational drawings of Melville Street, by Robert Brown, have survived and these are clearly dated 1814, so the feuing plan must have been in existence by then.* Feuing began just before the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but this area did not develop nearly as rapidly as the Earl of Moray's Estates; perhaps because houses to the west of Queensferry Road were considered to be too far from the centre of the city. Melville Street, however, was largely built by 1826 and the central feature facing Stafford Street contained the Walker's own family house.† By the same date Maitland Street, Coates Crescent and Atholl Crescent were also complete. According to Grant, the latter contains some "stately old trees, which only vigorous and prolonged remonstrance prevented from being wantonly cut down, in accordance with the bad taste which at one time prevailed in Edinburgh, where a species of war was waged against all growing timber".¹ Alva Street, which is unique in this area in having elevations designed by Gillespie Graham, followed a little later, the feuing plan being dated 1826. Despite this steady, if unspectacular, progress there followed a long period in which the streets shown on Graham's plan remained nothing more than lines on paper. In 1850

1 Ibid., p. 209

* 86

† 88

Melville Street was still the northern limit of this part of the New Town, and in 1860 no new houses had been built further west than Manor Place.

However, in some ways this Western New Town, as it has sometimes been called, is the least interesting of the several extensions to the original New Town. The planning, while spacious and orderly, does not have the panache of some of the other work, and the individual houses, though well-planned and detailed in the earlier examples, gradually become coarser and more mundane. Nevertheless, Melville Street with its breadth and symmetry is impressive and gains considerable piquancy from the vast neo-Gothic St. Mary's Cathedral which closes the vista at the western end.

This great church, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and completed in 1879, cost more than £132,000 and was paid for from the bequest of the Misses Walker of Coates.¹ Gilbert Scott based his design on thirteenth-century Gothic and included three spires, of which the central one rises to a height of 275 feet. By a happy accident, the three majestic spires not only form an effective termination to Melville Street, but figure prominently in the view westwards along Princes Street, though they are of course slightly skewed from this angle.

As the principal street in the plan, Melville Street is emphasised by being given a very spacious crossing in the form

1 Ibid., p. 211

of a diamond at its intersection with Walker Street. The four blocks of houses forming Melville Crescent*, as it is rather oddly called, give the appearance of having been built at about the same date as Melville Street, though it is clear from the drawings that the elevations were not designed until 1864.¹ And as soon as we enter these houses, we are aware of the change in taste which has occurred. No longer do we find an elegant staircase springing lightly from floor to floor; it is now a distinctly clumsy affair, with an ornate handrail and balusters. Similarly the ceilings and walls, which, in the earlier houses of this area often had delicate enrichments, are now loaded with rather coarse and heavy ornamentation.

But the general character of this western extension to the New Town is governed more by the nature of the site than anything else. Although the prevailing pattern of broad, straight streets recalls the plan of Craig's New Town, there is really little parallel between the two areas; for in the latter there is that slight but significant fall between George Street and the two main streets to the north and south, whereas in this western area the ground is almost entirely flat - except at the northern boundary, where a slight fall gives a foretaste of the river valley below.

Moreover, in the original New Town there is a balanced, if formal, relationship between buildings and landscape. Here,

1 They were the work of an architect called Lessels

however, the relationship between the two contrasting elements is less satisfactory. Thus if we stand on the corner of Melville Crescent and look southwards along Walker Street, we are immediately aware of a symmetrical vista terminated by the gardens of Coates Crescent; but if we turn and face the opposite direction the symmetry vanishes and there is no satisfactory termination to the vista. Again, the gardens enclosed by crescents such as Eglinton Crescent and Grosvenor Crescent are very elongated and although pleasant to look at are hardly as useful to the residents as better-shaped spaces elsewhere in the New Town, such as Moray Place Gardens and Drummond Place Gardens.

If the architectural character of this area becomes more ponderous without and more coarse within as we move westwards into the Victorian streets, the scene is by no means devoid of interest. Indeed, in a sense, one or two interesting discoveries are to be made some distance to the west of Queensferry Road. Although the present study does not pretend to go beyond the Georgian period, there is a rather delightful Victorian elevation to be seen in the south-east part of Rothesay Place. This terrace has a highly individual arrangement of first-floor windows grouped into triplets, with good cast-iron balconies below, the whole having a distinctly Venetian character.*

Opposite is the shallow crescent of Rothesay Terrace. This is undistinguished and of no particular interest, except

in so far as it shows very clearly how the general standards of terrace design has fallen by the time we reach the middle of the nineteenth century. Although the block is ostensibly a crescent, the builder economised by making the front wall of each house quite straight, and the result is a feeble echo even of Edinburgh's first rather tentative crescent of Abercromby Place.

But if we move a few yards further to the west, at the end of the same street we receive a most extraordinary surprise. Here is an Edwardian block of flats erected so late that it contains electric passenger and goods lifts as an integral part of the plan.¹ Built more than a decade after Sullivan's earliest essays in Chicago, it is intrinsically a more conservative design. But the proportions of the elevations are much better than in most of the Victorian terraces nearby, and its main interest to us at the moment is as a living example of the urban tradition in the New Town which thus spans over a period of 140 years.

Smaller in terms of the number of buildings executed - but fundamentally more important as a piece of town planning - is the Calton Hill scheme. The history of its evolution is rather complicated, though worth tracing in outline. The

1 It dates from 1906

first move was taken by the Town Council in 1812, when it was announced that the area had been surveyed and that an architectural competition was to be held. The site, which belonged to three proprietors - George Heriot's Trust, Trinity Hospital and a Mr. Allan of Hillside - covered a larger area than any previous scheme and included not only Calton Hill but all the ground between Leith Walk and Easter Road. A correspondingly longer time was allowed for the competitors to prepare their plans: newspaper advertisements appeared in March 1812 and entries had to be received by 1st January 1813. William Stark acted as assessor, and plans were received from Richard Crichton, Milne and Bell, Alexander Nasmyth and Robert Reid. Stark died in October 1813, before he was able to complete his report, but enough of it was written to show first, that none of the plans submitted was sufficiently good to form the basis of a viable scheme; and secondly that he himself had a very sound grasp of the principles of town planning in the broadest sense. Cockburn described Stark as "the best modern architect that Scotland had produced",¹ and certainly some of the passages in his report convey the impression of a highly intelligent and flexible mind:

"It were sacrificing too much, perhaps,
to scenery, to make it a cause for giving up

1 Lord Cockburn, Memorials of his Time, p. 175

elegance or convenience in the arrangement of the buildings, or even for incurring any considerable loss of ground; although this last falls to be a matter of calculation; for beauty of site will be found most probably a vendible commodity. It may indeed be intended with a sacrifice of another kind, though that surely will not be deemed of any importance; it may injure the symmetry of the ground plan, and disturb the harmony and measured allotment of streets, squares, and crescents. Yet it were easy to show of how little consequence all this is, except upon paper ... To a stranger occupied in the examination of the present New Town, it would import little to be informed, when looking along George's [sic] Street, that it is precisely parallel to Prince's Street and Queen's Street; or, if admiring Charlotte Square, to be told that it forms the exact counterpart upon the ground plan to St. Andrew's Square ... Among the qualities we value in the distribution of a town, variety and unexpected change of form, both in the streets and buildings, are by no means the least acceptable ... It seems to be now admitted to have been a prejudice, that trees and town buildings are incongruous objects. They must surely be admitted to assimilate well together, since our best landscape painters, Claude and the Poussins, never tired of painting them, nor the world of admiring what they painted. From the practice of those great masters, whom we

must regard as unerring authorities, of constantly combining trees and architecture, it might be inferred to have been their opinion that there could be no beauty where either of these objects was wanting.

Were it to be asked, to what circumstance does Grosvenor Square owe its beauty and attraction? The answer would surely be, to its architecture and its trees would the view of the Colleges of Oxford excite the same sensation of pleasure, if the gardens and the trees were away? Or the scenery of the Mall, or the Bird-Cage Walk or the streets of the towns in Holland?"

There are really four main principles embodied in Stark's observations - the need to study the characteristics of the site, the unimportance of symmetry, the use of varied and unexpected forms, and the partnership between trees and buildings - all of which remain as valid today as when the report was first written. But the project was shelved for five years, no doubt because by now the Town Council were beginning to be seriously alarmed about the level at which public expenditure was running.¹

Meantime a quite separate project was getting under way. This was to form at the east end of Princes Street a new roadway and bridge as a means of easy communication with Calton Hill.

1 TCM 21st April 1813

This was almost as vital in 1815 as the projected North Bridge had been in 1766, for according to Cockburn, "the way of reaching the Calton Hill was to go, by Leith Street, to its base (as may still be done) and then up the steep, narrow, stinking, spiral street which still remains".¹ Moreover, apart from the idea of building new houses to the east of Princes Street, which must in 1815 have seemed a rather nebulous project, there was the much more urgent question of providing satisfactory access to the new jail; this was sited on the southern slope of Calton Hill, close to the Bridewell,² and was now being built to a design by Archibald Elliot.

The Commissioners appointed for the Calton Bridge scheme first commissioned Robert Stevenson to act as engineer in January 1815 and then arranged to hold a competition to choose the architectural treatment of the bridge and its approaches.³ Plans were received from Richard Crichton, Archibald Elliot and Gillespie Graham, and Elliot's design was selected.

In the blocks which form the approach to the bridge Elliot employed the usual grouping of a central unit with wings and end pavilions. Greek Ionic pilasters form the basis of the design, except in the old Post Office,[†] which has columns of the same order. At the north-east corner, where the Calton

1 Lord Cockburn, op. cit., p. 143

2 This was designed by Robert Adam, but neither the Bridewell nor the jail remain now, except for the Governor's house

3 A design had been prepared as long ago as 1780 by Robert Adam

* 230, 232

† 221

Meeting Rooms are planned as a single-storey building, † the Greek Doric order is used,¹ and this is repeated on the south side to form a screen to the old Calton burial ground.² Finally, the third Greek order, the Corinthian, appears in the large columns which flank the triumphal arches on the bridge itself.

At the western end of the scheme, facing Princes Street, the symmetrical facades have tetrastyle Ionic porticos,* which recall those of Waterloo Place in London, built at the same time as its Edinburgh namesake.³ The Waterloo Hotel, which formed an integral part of the development, was opened in 1821 and was the first purpose-built hotel in Edinburgh.

The engineering and building of the Calton Bridge scheme was a fine achievement. It was, perhaps, a sign of the impending divorce of engineering and architecture that Stevenson and Elliot worked for the most part independently; though in his report to the Commissioners, Stevenson made some interesting remarks which show that he was very much concerned about the appearance of the town from his bridge, especially northwards to Leith Walk, "one of the greatest thoroughfares in town".⁴ Today as we stand on the bridge in front of the open screens which link the adjacent buildings, we can still sense the

1 In its unfluted version

2 The burial ground includes the tomb of David Hume, designed by his friend Robert Adam in 1777

3 The porticos in London differ in that they have no pediments above

4 Report to Calton Bridge Commissioners by Robert Stevenson

excitement which Elliot wanted the citizens to enjoy. The single arch which carries the roadway is almost 50 feet high, and the flanking buildings have no less than seven main storeys, four of these being below the upper road.* Waterloo Place was formally opened in 1819, on the visit of Prince Leopold; but the bridge must have been open for traffic about two years before, as according to Grant, it was crossed by the 88th Connaught Rangers in 1817 on their return from the army of Occupation in France.¹

When at length in 1818 the Commissioners felt able to proceed with the "proposed New Town between Edinburgh and Leith"² they appointed William Playfair as architect. No better choice could have been made. Playfair was not only the most gifted architect of his time; he was, as we have noted before, a pupil of Stark, and eminently able to don his master's "mantle".³

By the spring of the following year Playfair's scheme † was ready, and in submitting it to the Commissioners he produced a report which follows Stark's observations fairly closely. He describes his own plans thus:

1 Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 104

2 Minutes of Committee for feuing Calton Hill Grounds, July 1812

3 Cockburn, op. cit., p. 176

* 223

† 94

"Rising from among the trees is a handsome row or terrace sufficiently elevated to give a prospect over the tops of the houses immediately below and enjoying an extensive view of the more distant country. Easy and by no means circuitous approaches can be obtained. Going on towards the East, the terrace sweeps round with an easy curve into a long line of building proposed to be built by the side of Regent Road. The large tract of ground lying behind these buildings I would convert into gardens, which, when properly arranged and planted will become an agreeable and inviting retirement; and at the same time present a pleasing foreground to the enchanting landscape which is to be seen from the public walks above. This, then, is all the building I would place upon the Calton Hill, and which, by being kept quite subordinate, will, I trust, throw an additional charm over the surrounding scenery".¹

Like Stark, he was keenly interested in promoting a partnership of buildings and trees, and he specifically mentions that he intends to retain the fine elms in Leith Walk. Branching off the proposed London Road his plan includes a large crescent with streets radiating from it, and he comments that "the good effect of the diverging of several Streets from a Central point has long been felt and acknowledged particularly in the Piazza

1 Playfair's Report 1819

del Popolo at Rome". He sums up his intentions in the following words:

"I trust that I have been actuated by a due respect for the beauty of the Calton Hill, and of the plan in general, and by a proper regard for the interest of proprietors. A person standing on the terrace in question, instead of looking at the ugly part of the street below, will now see the whole town lying at his feet, with a noble crescent and extensive garden immediately below him. This arrangement will not only add to the beauty of the scene, but will, I am sure, render all the adjoining houses much more valuable, beauty of situation being so much and justly prized in Edinburgh. Who would not regret if the gardens below Queen Street were to be swept away and their place occupied by an insipid and monotonous pile of buildings?"¹

His scheme was duly approved and work on the new roads began within a matter of months. But all did not go well. The danger which he foresaw at the time he wrote his report seemed as if it were materialising - the formidable rivalry of the new houses being erected at the western end of the town

1 Ibid.

was causing a lack of interest in taking up feus in the Calton Hill area. Part of his agreement with the Commissioners had been that he would receive five guineas for the elevation of each new house which was to be erected. But by 1821 he had received only forty guineas, which means that in more than a year only eight feus in the entire area had been taken up - and this at a time when the demand for houses in the New Town as a whole showed no sign of lessening.

Much later, in 1838, a decision of the Court of Session that the proprietors on the lands of Hillside were bound to pay double poor-rates, that is, to both Edinburgh and the parish of South Leith, aggravated matters still more. Consequently what building did take place in the Greenside area after this date took the form of houses for the artisan class, the wealthier preferring to build on the north or west of the town.

But the terraces built on the slopes of the Calton Hill are of considerable interest. The layout is simple and bold, yet sympathetic to the site and its contours. The area we are concerned with is roughly in the form of a triangle, the apex of which is rounded. The longest side is aligned east-west and consists almost entirely of one continuous block, almost 1200 feet long. A narrow gap, serving as the entrance to a meuse lane, separates this from the next block, the curve of which carries us round the eastern end of the site until we are facing south-eastwards towards Arthur's Seat and the

Salisbury Crags. In Playfair's original plan this curved block continued in a straight line until it reached the southwest boundary of the site, but before the terraces were built a break was introduced in this section to give access to the stables behind. The garden which lies within the triangle is the largest and most delightful of all the private gardens in the New Town, extending to nearly 12 acres. It is reputed to have been designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, though no evidence exists to support this.

Of the three terraces lining the slopes of the hill, Regent Terrace^{*} is the finest. It is carried out in a refined Greek style, each doorway being framed with Doric columns and an entablature. Above, at first-floor level, there is a simple but pleasing iron balcony which extends the full length of the terrace and acts as a strong unifying element in the total design. Unlike many other instances in the New Town, the balconies here are long enough to be more than merely decorative; and although it must be admitted that the strength of the wind in Edinburgh is usually such as to discourage sitting in an elevated place, the prospect from the first floor is certainly the finest that can be had in any of the New Town terraces. Apart from the sublime natural forms in Holyrood Park, the view over the Old Town extends far enough to the west to include the spire of the Tron Church. It is tempting to believe that in laying out this terrace Playfair aligned it carefully so that as we walk down the street west-

wards this spire beckons to us.

Carlton Terrace^{*} is not so fine in detail - the entrance doorways are less interesting - but the bold convex curve is very effective in leading us towards Playfair's tour de force: Royal Terrace.[†] This has often been referred to as the longest block in Edinburgh, though in fact it is about 700 feet shorter than the one we examined earlier, between Queensferry Road and Moray Place. The whole facade is divided into seventeen compartments which include four Ionic and three Corinthian units with three-quarter columns rising through the first and second floors. The linking wings are designed with one main storey less, but these have open stone balustrades concealing mansard roofs. This vast terrace seems to have been conceived in the same spirit as some of Nash's terraces in London, though the detailing is very much better and it has the advantage of being built in stone instead of brick and stucco. If it appears to us rather cold and formal, we should remember that this terrace was only a small part of the biggest section of the New Town that had ever been projected; and, standing 200 feet above sea level, it was intended to form a gigantic back-drop to the lower parts of the whole scheme.

Royal Terrace was not completed until 1860, and the forty houses which it contains have interiors enriched with a variety of motifs, usually Greek or Roman, but occasionally

* 242

† 243

Gothic.¹ But the exterior was completed remarkably faithfully to Playfair's design, and even the simple cornice and blocking-course on the rear elevation was included.

It is not inconceivable, of course, that when Playfair prepared his plan in 1819 he benefited to some extent from having seen some of the competitors' drawings dated from 1813. Certainly if we inspect Crichton's plan, Playfair's two main terraces can be seen there in embryo, though the third terrace at the eastern end is straight instead of curved. In the main part of the development further north there is not a great deal of similarity between the proposals of the two architects, except that both show a large crescent halfway along Leith Walk, with several streets radiating from it.

Crichton's plan, however, is interesting in its own right.* The many diagonal and curved lines in it are foreign to Craig's layout for the original New Town, yet the part centred on what is now London Road is fundamentally rectangular and includes a large square measuring 500 feet by 470 feet - almost precisely the same size as St. Andrew Square and Charlotte Square. Further north there is a large circus only slightly smaller in scale than Moray Place, and the whole of the north-east sector is devoted to a layout of detached villas. These are situated in roads only 50 feet wide, but each has grounds extending to 2 acres or more. The principal streets, 100 feet wide,

1 The best example of Gothic enrichment is at no. 37

incorporate a novel proposal: each row of houses has in front of it an area 25 feet wide, starting level with the heel of the pavement but ramped down towards the basement storey, forming a large "shrubby".¹ The main entrance door is still approached via the usual platt, with cellars built underneath. In his planning - though not in his elevations - Crichton was clearly willing to experiment: the main block facing London Road is almost 2000 feet long.

Nasmyth's plan, as we might expect in the case of an artist, is calculated to produce some fine picturesque effects.* If his scheme had been built, a most magnificent view would have been obtained on looking down the main street radiating south-eastwards from a circus opening off Leith Walk: in the foreground we would have seen a church set centrally in a fine square; in the middle distance two splendid terraces on the lower and upper slopes of the Calton Hill, the lower curving away from us and the upper curving towards us; and finally in the background, the dramatic silhouette of Salisbury Crags on the left and the Nelson Monument on the right. But to have been successful, the plan would have needed considerable modification, for the buildings really encroached too far on Calton Hill itself and were curved in a rather impractical way.

Neither Reid's nor Milne and Bell's plans show much merit. Both are very much rectangular in general form, and Reid uses a

1 This is the word used on the plan itself

few places, two of them curved, to obtain a little variety.* The open spaces are very large, about 600 feet across, and being somewhat exaggerated in the bird's eye views, they have an Italian rather than a Scottish character. Reid shows no houses at all built on the Calton Hill, but Milne and Bell seem intent on covering it completely with an appalling layout of suburban villas.† Their plan also shows a strange piece of development in the northern section, where a mammoth symmetrical space above 3200 feet by 500 feet appears at first glance to be laid out with some kind of formal garden, but the centre actually contains three large public buildings and a host of small suburban villas.

Playfair's plan, although not completely free from awkward corners caused by the irregular site boundaries, is really very much better than any of the plans we have looked at. If we climb to the summit of Calton Hill we can take in with a single glance the vast area of 300 acres covered by his proposals. The question may well be asked: how far did this splendid scheme actually get? Apart from the terraces on the hill itself, only a few small fragments of his plan were realised - a few houses in Hillside Crescent, Leopold Place, Blenheim Place, Windsor Street, Brunswick Street, and one or two blocks fronting Leith Walk. The scheme as a whole was really doomed to failure for the reasons already given, and even if this part of the town had been more popular with prospective residents, the advent of the Steam Age was so close

at hand that orderly planning was likely to be wrecked anyway. There is a sad irony in the fact that Playfair Street - named in honour of the architect by an appreciative Town Council - was never built and is now the site of a large railway goods yard.

It is ironical, too, that when Mr. Allan of Hillside commissioned Playfair to design an entire house for him he chose to live in Hillside Crescent^{1*} rather than one of the terraces on Calton Hill, for although these retain their salubrious atmosphere the Crescent today is a hotch-potch affair with several different styles of building in it and a constant stream of traffic thundering along London Road. However, Playfair's design was an elegant, spacious one.[†] Compared with the house for Andrew Rutherford, which we looked at earlier, the frontage is very much the same, increasing from 31 feet 4 inches at the front to 32 feet 4 inches at the rear owing to the curvature of the terrace. The depth, on the other hand, is considerably greater: 54 feet 4 inches generally but with an additional 4 feet 6 inches where a segmental projection occurs at the rear.

Within this area Playfair has arranged the accommodation in a deft manner, and the oval shape of some of the spaces recalls the work of Robert Adam. The two basement floors are of no particular interest, but on the ground floor the dining-

1 At no. 5

* 244, 134 - 136

† 137 - 147

room and library are well planned, the former with a segmental recess for the sideboard. Even the rectangular part alone of the dining-room measures 27 feet by 18 feet 6 inches, and the library, which is oval on plan, measures 25 feet 6 inches by 19 feet. There are two curved windows in the segmental outer wall. Between the library and the butler's pantry there is a small water-closet, and another is provided two storeys higher, on the bedroom floor. The first floor is the most spaciously-planned of all. The two drawing-rooms are placed end-to-end, and are linked by means of an opening 8 feet wide. Both rooms have an apsidal wall at the inner end (the smaller room at the outer end as well), and within the opening between the rooms there is a most ingenious arrangement of curved sliding doors which can be pushed back into specially-designed recesses.

The whole plan is beautifully fitted together and Playfair has been at pains to increase the thickness of the mutual walls towards the rear of the house, so that the opposite walls in every room are kept strictly parallel. The main staircase, which is planned within an unusually spacious well of 23 feet by 12 feet, is lighted from above by an elegant oval cupola. The enrichment of the various features, both inside and outside, incorporates Greek motifs, notably the anthemion and the fret pattern. The latter is used both in the long iron balcony which extends the full width of the house and in the soffit of the cornice in the dining-room.

If Playfair experienced some frustration in seeing only

a fragment of the great Leith Walk- Easter Road scheme completed, he was at least given some opportunity to exercise his talents on the Calton Hill, quite apart from the houses which he built there. Except for the old Observatory,^{*} designed by James Craig in 1776, the hill consisted entirely of natural scenery at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After the victory at Trafalgar, it was decided to erect a monument in honour of Nelson. At first Alexander Nasmyth was commissioned, but when his design proved too expensive the work was handed over to Robert Burn and the foundation stone was laid in October 1807. Progress was slow and after Burn's death it was completed in 1816 by two other architects, R. and D. Dickson. It is a curious circular tower,[†] rising from a pentagonal base of one storey, which has served a variety of purposes since it was built but is now used simply as a residence for the caretaker and his family.¹ Much criticised over the years, "its demolition has been more than once advocated",² but its presence helps to make Calton Hill a magnificent termination to the vista along Princes Street from the west.

Playfair's turn to contribute to the varied collection of

1 After being used for formal Nelson dinners for some years it became a public refreshment room, where "breakfasts, confections, soups, jellies, ices, pastry, fruit, tea, coffee, ginger beer and soda water may always be had" (Jottings from the Past 15th October 1845)

2 Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 107

* 224

† 225, 97

buildings which now enlivens the hill came in 1818, largely through the activities of his uncle, Professor Playfair, who was President of the newly-formed Astronomical Institution. He was commissioned to design a new Observatory to replace the old one, which had been completed in 1792 but had never been properly equipped with instruments. Not much bigger than the old Observatory, but with a totally different character, it looks like a small Doric temple, with its four symmetrical porticos.* The building is founded on solid rock and in the centre of the interior a great monolith acts as a base for the main telescope. The proportions of the building are excellent, though the original dome has been replaced by a slightly stilted one.¹ To the screen wall which surrounds the Observatory's site Playfair added a small Doric monument in memory of his uncle in 1827.

A little to the east of the Observatory stands the most remarkable monument of all.[†] The idea of erecting a memorial to those who fell in the Napoleonic Wars had been canvassed as early as 1817, and five years later the promoters, who included Sir Walter Scott and Lord Cockburn, opened an appeal for £42,000 to build a replica of the Parthenon on Calton Hill. Despite a poor response the Committee went ahead and appointed C. R. Cockerell as architect, with Playfair as resident architect.

1 This has been done to give more working height under the dome

* 235, 236, 98, 99

† 237-239, 148, 149

Cockerell seems to have given general advice and no more, for all the detailed drawings are in Playfair's own hand.

The building was to be 228 feet by 102 feet on plan and the foundation stone was laid with great ceremony on the 27th August 1822, during the visit of George IV.¹ Even this stone weighed 6 tons and the drums of the columns are estimated to have weighed from 10 to 15 tons. It is little wonder that considerable horse-power (literally) was required to move the larger stones up the hill, or that the cost of each column including the base and frieze was more than £1000.² By 1829 the funds were exhausted and work ceased completely, leaving only twelve magnificent columns silhouetted against the sky.

Only a year later a smaller and more original monument was completed by Thomas Hamilton on the southern slope of Calton Hill.* This was to the memory of Robert Burns. Circular on plan, it is based loosely on the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates. It was then Playfair's turn in 1823 to design a monument, this time in memory of Dugald Stewart. His design resembles the Choragic Monument much more closely - it seems as if he was trying to outdo Hamilton - though it has eight columns instead of six in the original.

But, speaking artistically rather than chronologically, the last word in the classical dialogue on Calton Hill had

1 Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 108

2 Ibid., p. 109

* 228

† 234

already been spoken in 1830 by Thomas Hamilton in his design for the Royal High School.* Apparently inspired by the Propylae at Athens, it has in the centre a pseudo-dipteral block which rises above two colonnaded wings which are terminated by solid pilastered pavilions. The way in which the outline of the masses on the elevated site has been carried down to the lower level at the extreme ends by the one-storey blocks, placed at irregular angles to the main group, has been carried out in a masterly fashion.¹

By the time that George III died in 1830, practically the whole of the New Town as we now know it was complete. There were, in any case, only three more years to pass before financial memesis overtook the City as surely as it had done to Sir Walter Scott in 1826.² In our survey of the New Town we have not crossed the Water of Leith to look at the delightfully informal character of Ann Street or the austere Grecian façade of St. Bernard's Crescent,^{3†} nor have we paused in front of the Gothic confectionery of the two Episcopalian

1 It is also worth noting the change from the narrow pycnostyle intercolumniation of the centre to the wide areostyle of the colonnades

2 The state of bankruptcy of the City in 1833 has been brilliantly analysed in A.J.Youngson's recent book, "The Making of Classical Edinburgh"

3 Both were part of the development initiated by Raeburn in 1813, when he began feuing his lands near Stockbridge

* 226, 227

† 266

churches of St. John's and St. Paul's, in Princes Street and York Place respectively.¹ But before an attempt is made to draw conclusions from the astonishing programme of planning and building which took place in an intensely creative period of about seventy years, let us glance back very briefly at Craig's New Town and see what significant changes took place during that period.

We have already noted the lack of shops in Craig's plan and the consequent tendency for some of the houses in Princes Street to take on a commercial character. But although as trading became more systematised much conversion work undoubtedly took place in the early nineteenth century, we can see from contemporary engravings that the shopfronts did not extend out towards the pavement and there was, as yet, little deterioration in appearance caused by the growth of commerce.² So far as Princes Street is concerned, the two most important changes before 1830 both took place on the south side.

The first of these was not a building at all, but the Earthen Mound, as it was called at the time. The story of its origin is well told by Grant:

1 The first was by William Burn and appears to have been inspired by St. George's Chapel, Windsor; the second, rather less competent in its use of Gothic forms, was by Archibald Elliot. Both were completed in 1818

2 It must be remembered that at this time little alteration was needed to convert a house into a shop (v. Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. XXX, pp. 119-141)

"Huge as the mass is, it originated in a very accidental operation. When the bed of the loch was in a state of marsh, a shopkeeper, Mr. George Boyd, Clothier, at Gosford's Close, in the Old Town, was frequently led from business or curiosity to visit the rising buildings of the New, and accommodated himself with 'steps' across this marsh, and he was followed in the construction of this path by other persons similarly situated, who contributed their quota of stone or plank to fill up, widen, and heighten what, in rude compliment to the founder, was becoming known as 'Geordie Boyd's Mud Brig'. The inconvenience arising from the want of a direct communication between the Old Town and the New began to be seriously felt about 1781, when the latter had been built as far west as Hanover Street".¹

About this time a publican called Robert Dunn opened a subscription list with the aim of effecting a proper means of communication. But soon there was no need for subscriptions to be gathered in. Lord Provost Grieve, who lived in a house at the corner of Hanover Street, authorised the spoil from the foundation of the new houses to be deposited on the south side of Princes Street - partly, it seems, with the object of filling in a quarry which stood opposite his house.² From then

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 82

2 TCM 21st February 1781

on the construction of the Mound proceeded steadily, and by 1830 it had been levelled off and finished with tarmacadam.¹ It is more than 800 feet in length and varies in height between about 60 feet and 100 feet; the average width is 300 feet. It has been computed that it contains more than 2,000,000 cartloads of earth and in the words of one writer, "this is a work unrivalled by any but Alexander the Great's at Tyre".²

Before the Mound was completely finished the construction of one of Edinburgh's finest Grecian buildings had commenced. Designed by William Playfair in 1822, the Royal Institution³ was built to house three separate bodies: the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Society, and the Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland. As the level of the site had been artificially raised by the construction of the Mound, Playfair had to use more than 2000 timber piles to support his building. Despite difficulties over the supply of stones, the Royal Institution was completed in 1826. Only five years later the Board of Manufactures asked Playfair to increase the accommodation by almost as much again. So, at the end of 1832, work started once more and this time Playfair was able to finish the outside of the building in a more ornate manner, enriching not only the new work but the building as a whole.

1 J. Grant, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 82

2 H. Arnot, *op. cit.*, p. 538

3 Now the Royal Scottish Academy

Completed in 1835 at a total cost of about £40,000,¹ it stands long and low at the foot of the Mound, much more handsome than the rather plain four-square structure of the 1820's. If we look at contemporary engravings of the Royal Institution before it was extended, we find that the pediments had no enrichment and the cornice was surmounted by a plain parapet on all four sides.* Between the pilasters at the corners stood eight large pedestals intended for statues, but these were evidently never used.

When Playfair produced his second set of drawings in 1832 he clearly made every effort to render the building more worthy of its prominent site. Both the north and south fronts now have finely-proportioned porticos, triple and double octostyle respectively, and the pediments of both are enriched with beautifully-carved scroll-work and anthemion motifs. At the four corners there are smaller, distyle porticos, and here the intercolumnation is areostyle, in place of the prevailing pycnostyle. Both the parapet wall and the metopes of the frieze are enriched with circular wreaths.† In 1844 the eight sphinxes and the colossal statue of Queen Victoria were added: the latter is remarkably successful in drawing all the lines of the composition to it as the apex of the structure, without interfering with the repose we look for in Greek architecture.

1 J. Grant, op. cit., vol. II, p. 83

* 251, 252

† 253-259, 150-153

If it does not quite deserve the epithet of "the noblest monument of the Scottish Greek Revival",¹ it is nevertheless a most accomplished design.

The sculptor of the statue of Queen Victoria referred to above was Sir John Steel, who was appointed in 1838 to the office of Her Majesty's Sculptor for Scotland.² Only one of the three prominent statues marking the street intersections in George Street is by Steel - that of Dr. Chalmers - and it was executed towards the end of his career, in 1878.* The other two, of George IV and Pitt, were both the work of the English sculptor Chantrey and date from 1831 and 1833 respectively.† The former stands on a granite pedestal 18 feet high, and it is interesting to note that the largest of the stone blocks weighed 15 tons and was placed in position by means of some of the cranes used in the erection of the National Monument of Calton Hill.³ Steel's statue of the Prince Consort in the centre of the Charlotte Square Garden is inaccessible to the general public and probably goes unnoticed by most passers-by; but the answering statue of Lord Melville in St. Andrew Square stands on a Roman Doric column 136 feet high,⁴ which tends to destroy the scale of the square in the same way that the Place Vendôme is dwarfed by its column.

1 This has been applied to the Royal High School (Sir John Summerson, Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830, p. 311)

2 R. Forbes Gray, An Edinburgh Miscellany, p. 69

3 Ibid.

4 The architect was William Burn and the engineer Robert Stevenson. It was finished in 1822, but the statue by Robert Forrest was not placed in position till 1828

* 279

† 280, 281

φ 282

PART FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

What gives our dreams their daring is
that they can be realised.

Le Corbusier

1. Origins of the New Town

In 1750 no other European capital needed a New Town as sorely as Edinburgh. For more than a century living conditions in the Old Town had been growing steadily worse, the inhabitants suffering not only serious overcrowding, but periodic outbreaks of fire and plague. Even in the early eighteenth century some of the population "slept fourteen or fifteen deep in a vertical direction", but turbulent political and religious circumstances - as well as unusually difficult topographical conditions - discouraged any action being taken. Sporadic efforts were made to build better houses within the Old Town, in Mylne's Court and James Court for example, though even in 1750 the essential impetus to break out beyond the confines of the Old Town seemed to be lacking.

But in 1752 the momentous Proposals were published and from this date onwards action was imminent. The author was ostensibly Sir Gilbert Elliot, but it is likely that some of the ideas expressed in the document came from George Drummond, who was six times Lord Provost between 1725 and 1764. The first building project carried out was the Royal Exchange,

started in 1753, and this was followed ten years later by the construction of the North Bridge. The latter, however, partially collapsed in 1769 and was not in proper use until 1772.

Two pre-requisites were essential to the success of the New Town. One was the Bridge and the other was the extension of the Royalty; without the latter the City would be unable to levy taxes on the inhabitants of the New Town. But before either the Bridge or the extension of the Royalty had been concluded the Town Council, under Drummond's leadership, had organised a competition for the layout of the New Town. Six designs were received, but only that of the winner, James Craig, has survived.

His plan has an elegant, classical simplicity and was well-suited to the level ridge where George Street is now situated, though Craig did not visualise any extension to it ever taking place. It is by no means certain where Craig's ideas came from, but possibly he learned something from John Gwynn's book¹ and also from John Adam, who was practising as an architect in Edinburgh at this time. Drummond did not live to see the New Town being built, but there is no doubt whatever that he was the prime mover in the whole project; in conversation with Thomas Somerville in 1763 he said, "I have

1 J. Gwynn, op. cit.

never lost sight of this object since the year 1725 when I was first elected Provost".¹

2. The First New Town

In 1767 the first house was built in Thistle Court and during the next thirty years most of the New Town envisaged in Craig's plan was completed, only Charlotte Square continuing into the nineteenth century. Apart from the re-siting of St. Andrew's Church and the omission of the canal the layout was followed faithfully though the quality of the architecture itself was initially rather poor. In St. Andrew Square the only houses of real merit were those of Sir Laurence Dundas and Andrew Crosbie, by Sir William Chambers and Robert Adam respectively. The regulations made by the Town Council to control heights of houses and other matters were initially sometimes ignored, but later in the century the regulations were progressively tightened and compliance became essential. Simultaneously the quality of individual houses improved gradually and a number of houses of considerable merit can still be seen today in Queen Street. There was no serious attempt to introduce unity into the design of a whole terrace until Robert Adam was commissioned to design the elevations for Charlotte Square. Despite certain changes which were made

1 T. Somerville, My Own Life and Times, 1741-1814, p. 48

to the design after Adam's death in 1792, this square represents supreme achievement in the domestic architecture of Edinburgh and rivals the residential squares of any other city in Europe. The design for St. George's Church by Robert Reid was inferior to Adam's design but as a piece of civic scenery the church has some merit with its prominent dome.

Craig's layout was based on a series of rectangular blocks measuring about 600 feet by 400 feet between the main streets, which were planned with a width of about 100 feet. These dimensions were sufficiently generous to allow re-development to take place in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and today the major part of Craig's New Town is a thriving business and commercial centre.* Little of the original character remains in Princes Street and George Street, though in the cross-streets such as Castle Street a number of interesting bow-fronted houses survive. Craig did not foresee the need for any shops in the New Town, but today the Princes Street area is extremely important for shopping and virtually all the present shopfronts extend outwards to the heel of the pavement. Only a handful of earlier shops remain, usually with a two-tier arrangement.† This is an attractive and economical layout for smaller shops and should be retained wherever possible.

Apart from the two churches, Craig's plan did not include any public buildings in George Street or the two squares. The Physicians' Hall and the Assembly Rooms were, however, fitted

* 273, 274

† 100

into the plan without much difficulty. The former, designed by James Craig himself, was demolished in 1843. As this was the only large building which he designed in Edinburgh, we cannot now assess his architectural ability very accurately. Robert Adam's Register House, facing the North Bridge, is an exceptionally fine building. It contains a number of architectural details which were later applied extensively in some of the later domestic architecture of the New Town, but it deserves better surroundings than it has at present.

By 1800, when most of the 192 acres of Craig's New Town had been developed at a cost of about £3,000,000,¹ it was clear that the venture was, on the whole, successful and that an extension would shortly be necessary.

3. The Second New Town

In 1803 building started in Heriot Row on the basis of a layout prepared by Robert Reid and William Sibbald, and the contract of 1806 between the City, George Heriot's Trust and David Stewart was of fundamental importance in determining the character of the development in this area. Some of the features of Craig's plan are echoed in the Reid-Sibbald plan and it is arguable whether a basically symmetrical layout was appropriate for such a sloping site. But much of the character of this part of the New Town derives from the generally unified treatment of whole facades, particularly in

1 J. Lees-Milne, op. cit., p. 131

the main east-west streets. As in Craig's New Town, there was a tendency for the quality of house design to improve as building progressed in a westerly direction and by the early 1820's many houses exhibit considerable refinement, both inside and outside. The commissioning of William Playfair to design Royal Circus was a step not much less important than that taken by the Town Council thirty years earlier, when Robert Adam was entrusted with the design of Charlotte Square. Despite the physical separation of its two halves, Royal Circus represents the highest achievement in the domestic architecture of this area, and Playfair's church of St. Stephen's nearby is a most ingenious essay in designing for a difficult site.

The Second New Town was built largely between 1803 and 1823 and during this period the internal planning of the houses became fairly standardised. In the self-contained houses a spacious vestibule leads to the staircase, which is almost invariably situated next to one or other of the mutual gables and the ground floor contains three rooms. Of these, the dining-room is normally at the front, with two somewhat smaller rooms at the rear. There is always a basement with a generously-sized area in the front,¹ and often there is a second basement where the slope of the ground permits. The first floor contains either three or four rooms, depending on

1 The width of the area is seldom less than 12 feet, which is large by London standards

whether the main drawing-room extends across the full width of the front. The bedroom floor always contains four rooms, and where an additional storey was permitted in the original development of the street, the third storey follows the same plan.

But a great many flats were included in the original scheme. In some ways the planning of these flats represents one of the great achievements of this period. Nearly always built in combination with main-door houses of two or more storeys below, they exhibit a considerable variety of internal arrangements and sometimes contain as many as eight rooms, extending over a frontage of as much as 50 feet. Commonly these original flats are planned on one floor; but their design is less stereotyped than the self-contained houses and a number of double flats occur also, some being of considerable interest in plan and section.

The external character varies from street to street according to the amount of detail which is included, but the more important streets are composed on the palace-front principle. However much or little elaboration of detail is used - and on the whole the character is fairly severe - the elevations conceal rather than reveal the internal planning which goes on behind the façades. The common stairs giving access to flats are almost always located immediately behind the street fronts, but the windows lighting them are indistinguishable from the remainder.

Polished ashlar is used throughout in the main streets, and the channel-jointed street floor is even more universal.

Cast-iron balconies are fairly numerous at first-floor level, but in all probability only streets designed after 1820 incorporated balconies in the original design. The slated roofs are constructed at a lower pitch than in Craig's New Town and are usually M-shaped in section, with cupolas rising no higher than the ridges.

The two open spaces of Drummond Place and Royal Circus were not closed in at the outer ends, as in Craig's New Town, and the communal gardens were developed almost simultaneously with the houses. Only one public building was shown in the Reid-Sibbald plan - a church on the west side of Royal Circus - and even the site of this was changed. But the two churches which were ultimately built in the 1820's, St. Mary's and St. Stephen's, are both of considerable interest.

4. Further Planned Developments

The impetus shown in the planning and building of the First and Second New Towns was by no means fully spent by the time the latter was nearing fruition. Three highly important schemes were initiated, all in the first or second decade of the nineteenth century, and only one failed to be fully implemented.

The scheme which took place on the Earl of Moray's Estates was unusual in two respects: it was purely a matter of private enterprise; and the architect chosen by the Earl of Moray based his plan on a largely symmetrical but much freer and bolder geometry than had been seen in Edinburgh previously. The

Earl of Moray laid down a very strict set of feuing conditions and showed a concern for the preservation of trees which was not evident in the earlier developments. The architecture contained within these thirteen acres, particularly in Moray Place, is conceived on a massive scale, but the spaces between buildings have a surging vitality which contrasts very effectively with the static quality of Craig's New Town immediately to the south.

The larger scheme in the Melville Street area, likewise planned by James Gillespie Graham, is less exciting spatially, but the site is in any case much flatter - it is in fact the only site among the various parts of the New Town which is virtually level throughout. Although several curved streets are used, the planning of gardens is not entirely satisfactory, as none of these is quite large enough for effective use of residents.

The planning of the houses themselves follows the same general pattern which had already evolved in earlier developments, and even streets built in the Victorian era show a commendable sense of order, though the detailing shows a general loss in quality. The ironwork of balconies and lamp standards in this area is frequently of a high standard, even after the end of the Georgian period.

Public buildings did not form part of the original layout, but Melville Street has a striking termination in the form of a neo-Gothic Cathedral by Sir George Gilbert Scott. Even after the completion of the cathedral in 1879 a spacious and orderly

arrangement of streets was continued as far west as Magdala Crescent, and thus in Edinburgh the Georgian tradition of town planning continued right through the Victorian period and even into the Edwardian era.

The early years of the nineteenth century were really the Golden Age of Edinburgh in architecture as in almost every field of human endeavour. As Cockburn expressed it, "there were more schemes, pamphlets, discussions, and anxiety about the improvements of our edifices within the ten years after the war, than throughout the whole of the preceding one hundred and fifty years".¹ The greatest of all these schemes, William Playfair's plan for the area between Calton Hill and Leith, covered an area almost twice as large as Craig's original New Town. Only a comparatively small section was built, mostly on the slopes of Calton Hill itself, but there is quite sufficient to indicate the scale of Playfair's conception, and in Regent Terrace in particular we can see an extremely refined and competent use of Greek details applied to domestic building. Perhaps through experience of working with William Stark, Playfair had a thorough understanding of the importance of trees in the urban scene, and the central garden enclosed by the Calton Hill terraces is the most spacious of all the communal gardens in the New Town. The public buildings sited on Calton Hill cater for a strange combination of functions, but each is appropriate in its own way and adds to the general picturesqueness of this splendid hill; while the Royal High

1 Lord Cockburn, *op. cit.*, p. 176

School, like the Royal Scottish Academy at the foot of the Mound, shows convincingly that Edinburgh possessed architects capable of submitting to the exacting discipline of working within the framework of the Greek Revival.

5. The Essence of the New Town

The first part of the New Town was a direct response to the immense problem of physical overcrowding in the Old Town. But this was not all. The intention, as stated clearly in the Proposals, was to create a city which "should naturally become the centre of trade and commerce, of learning and the arts, of politeness, and of refinement of every kind" and they lamented the lack of "beauty and convenience" in the Old Town. Despite the extensive rebuilding which has taken place during the last hundred years or more in Craig's New Town, if we ascend to some vantage point such as the lantern above the dome of St. George's Church, we can still see the Cartesian clarity of the original layout. As subsequent extensions were planned, a much greater variety of layout was introduced, but one factor which remained constant for many years was the generous width of the streets. Rarely less than 70 feet wide, they often extended to 90 or 100 feet, and a sense of spaciousness permeates the full extent of the New Town. It is worth noting also that whatever experiments were made subsequently to vary the forms of street layout, the concept of an ordered environment was still maintained as strongly as ever, in a sense that it would be

quite impossible to remove one terrace or a single original building from any part of the New Town without the risk of visual disorder.

The spaciousness which is so apparent externally is experienced equally in most of the interior. There was, of course, no absolutely standard plan for the houses - let alone the flats - but by 1810 or 1820 there was a very clear understanding, on the part of all those concerned with building, of the appropriate proportions of space which were needed for the various rooms within a house. Naturally to our eyes some of the interior spaces of the larger houses tend to look unnecessarily large, even wasteful. What is the use of an entrance vestibule which occupies 150 feet, or a staircase of 250 square feet? Such areas seem unnecessarily lavish compared with present-day housing standards, but they are not out of proportion if two public rooms on one floor alone total as much as 1000 square feet.¹

The technology on which the Georgian builders and architects depended - the basic materials of stone, brick and timber - did not permit the intimate mingling of interior and exterior space which is one of the characteristics of modern architecture. Yet in a certain sense those who built during the early nineteenth century seem to have been conscious of the essential unity of space. Thus in a place such as Drummond Place or Saxe-Coburg Place we can see the D-shape not only in the plan

1 The figures quoted are from Mr. Allan's house at no. 5 Hillside Crescent, by William Playfair

of the open space, but in dining-rooms with apsidal ends and sometimes also in the entrance vestibules.¹

Nor should we overlook the actual flow of space within the houses. Most of the New Town houses were built for the well-to-do, rather than the wealthy, and there is nothing quite so elaborate as Adam's house for Lord Derby in London. But within the generally-accepted dimensions of 25 to 35 feet for the frontage and 45 to 55 feet for the depth there is a skilful manipulation of space, often involving inter-communicating rooms which can be thrown together for social occasions. When balls and routs took place in these houses, as must have occurred frequently, there was a freedom of movement which only generously-planned spaces can give - and more than this, there was often a dialogue between one space and another: between square and oblong, or rectangular and apsidal.

If there was thus a general harmony between the various plan components, in both houses and flats, there was another kind of harmony produced by the choice of suitable details for doors, windows, pilasters, cornices, and so on. Rarely do we find a cornice detail which is at variance with a door moulding, or a window-shutter which is out of key with an architrave. But it is not simply a matter of mouldings or details. The question of proportion is very central to any discussion of

1 In those with segmental ceilings

Georgian architecture. It would be too sweeping a statement to say that there are no badly-proportioned elevations in the New Town - for one thing, most of the rear elevations simply happened, instead of being designed, and consequently at the backs we fairly frequently find one element jostling against another in a rather uncouth way. But if we reflect on the interiors - excepting the clumsy conversions which have often taken place since the houses were first built - there is scarcely an ill-proportioned room in any of the hundreds of terraces which the New Town contains, and this in itself is surely a remarkable achievement. Moreover, although the street elevations are not always so excellent that they cannot be faulted, the proportion of building façade to space enclosed is nearly always first-class - and in classical town planning this is really just as important as the composition of the facades themselves.

Part of the attraction of the New Town lies very much in its gardens. As we have seen, those who guided the development of the New Town in its earlier stages were not very conscious of the value of gardens in themselves. Indeed, if we are to believe Cockburn, they massacred "every town tree that comes in a mason's way; never sacrificing mortar to foliage". But at length this insensitivity ceased and architects and others began to strive for a balance between artefact and foliage, and a harmony between man and nature.

One of the paradoxes of Edinburgh is that although it is a

northern capital, a great deal of its environmental quality, including the landscape-building relationship, is derived from the Mediterranean tradition of design. The palace-fronts which adorn so many terraces relate, of course, to Robert Adam's design in Charlotte Square; but this in turn derives, however remotely, from Adam's studies of Roman work in the Mediterranean countries - particularly at the Palace of Diocletian at Spalatro. As Edinburgh was almost at the end of the artistic line of communication which stretched between Britain and the Mediterranean basin, this circumstance worked out rather happily so far as the New Town was concerned. For although the greatest building boom in Edinburgh did not occur until the 1820's, fully-fledged classical architecture had not then been established so long that it had become completely stereotyped and devoid of fresh expression. Certainly, a visitor who perambulates in the New Town for the first time may be reminded, by the repetition of some of its stock elements, of the unkind gibe about Vivaldi's music, that he "wrote not four hundred concertos, but the same concerto four hundred times over".

But as we have already seen in our study of the different parts of the New Town, there is much more to it than the mere application of borrowed forms to embellish blocks of houses. And if we examine some of the astylar streets, Scotland Street for example, we find that there is a satisfying simplicity in its well-proportioned units - almost a New Town vernacular creeping in, one might say. If on the other hand we turn to the

more sophisticated façades of Gillespie Graham's Moray Estates scheme and imagine these tall blocks stripped of their shafts and pediments, we can see in our mind's eye a dynamic handling of stereometric forms which many a twentieth-century architect would have been proud to conceive.

In attempting to draw conclusions about the essential qualities inherent in the New Town of Edinburgh, it is not sufficient to approach it with eyes conditioned to the generally blander and more delicate kind of Georgian architecture which can be seen in many parts of England. There is a shy northern grace in nearly all the New Town terraces which does not reveal itself instantly. Time and again in looking at these sober palaces of Craigleith stone, one is reminded of Stair's classic remarks about the nature of Scots law:

"As everywhere the most pregnant and active spirits apply themselves to the study and practice of law, so those that apply themselves to that profession amongst us have given great evidence of sharp and piercing spirits, with much readiness of conception and dexterity of expression Our forms are plain and prompt we do always prefer the sense to the subtilty of law, and do seldom trip by niceties or formalities".¹

The allusion to law in discussing the "plain and prompt"

¹ Viscount Stair, quoted in D. Young, Edinburgh in the Age of Sir Walter Scott, pp. 48-49

forms of architecture may not be inapt in the case of Edinburgh, for the New Town owes much to the legal profession. The regulations affecting building in the New Town - both those originating from the Town Council and those laid down by private individuals, such as the Earl of Moray - were of paramount importance during the whole of the period which we have been studying, and without a capable body of Writers to the Signet to draft and interpret regulations, and of advocates to conduct proceedings in court against those who had infringed the regulations, the successful execution of the New Town would have been impossible simply from the administrative point of view. But the legal profession in Edinburgh was very strong, and, at least in the 1820's, was the most numerous of all the professions. As against 31 professors and 700 teachers of all kinds, 40 physicians and 70 surgeons, there were no less than 400 advocates and 800 Writers to the Signet and solicitors.¹ Much of the legal business conducted in Edinburgh, of course, was concerned with people and estates in the rest of Scotland, but even this had its repercussions on the New Town, giving rise to:

"the well-known saying ... that not a big house is put up in Scotland but another house is put up in Edinburgh, signifying

1 T.S. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 22

thereby that managing the estates and arranging the mortgages and siting the boundary disputes of Scotland, would always provide an Edinburgh lawyer with a happy home. Not very long ago the Writers to the Signet managed all the great estates, and, without giving any guarantee for rents, earned a five per cent commission by simply collecting them; but in these days of falling revenues the lairds looked more closely to their siller [sic] and for the most part employ a local man to do this work at half their charge. But when Heriot Row was built, these five per cents blushed and bloomed like a briar-rose at ilka door".¹

But even if the Writers to the Signet profited handsomely from the management of estates, they probably ploughed back some of their capital into the financing of new houses, and thus contributed ultimately to the development of the New Town as much as anyone else. Some of the differences between Scots law and English law are well known and there is no need to draw attention to them here, except to stress that the Scottish system of buying and selling flats was another pre-requisite without which the New Town as we know it could not have been built. The proportion of original flats provided in different parts of the New Town varies somewhat,

1 J. Bone, Edinburgh Revisited, pp. 264-66

but in no single area is there a complete absence of flats. Moreover, although most of the street elevations are "negative", in that they do not often express readily the arrangement of accommodation behind the facades, there is no doubt that the admixture of flats and houses which occurs in many streets such as India Street gives rise to a more subtle and varied rhythm than would exist if the streets were composed entirely of self-contained houses. Thus, instead of finding an entrance-door always followed by two windows, we find it flanked sometimes by two doors, sometimes by a single window on each side, or even by three or four windows. This flexible and well-modulated language was fully developed by about 1825 and can be studied most easily, on the whole, in the streets running north-south in the Second New Town.

In recognising the part played by the legal profession, we must not overlook the immense contribution made by George Heriot's Trust. As superiors of much of the land on which the New Town stands, their co-operation was, of course, essential; but they did more than merely give assent to proposals devised by others, they took an active part in initiating development - especially in the Second New Town - and were at pains to ensure that the buildings were worthy of the New Town. So, in a sense, Edinburgh is indebted to Anne of Denmark, of whom it has been said "never, truly, did tradesmen get a better customer",¹ for

1 W. Steven, History of George Heriot's Hospital, p. 5

it was her custom which lead to Heriot's prosperity and thus to the foundation of the Trust.

Apart from the quality of the buildings themselves, the Trust was also concerned with the gardens overlooked by the houses, particularly the Queen Street Gardens. And probably in the final analysis it is the combination of building and landscape which makes the New Town perhaps the most interesting example of Georgian development anywhere in Britain. Again, Edinburgh profited by the fact that most of its streets and squares were built quite late in the Georgian period, when an appreciation for landscape was beginning to be widely shared.

We may say, in fact, that around 1820 the creation of a residential quarter was really a comprehensive affair, involving not only the design of the houses themselves, but the layout of the communal garden, the provision of suitable street-furniture in the way of lamp standards and railings, and sometimes even the construction of bridges as well. Apart from the dichotomy which was just beginning to develop between engineering and architecture, there was no professional demarcation and an architect such as Playfair was expected to be equally adept in the three spheres of town planning, architecture and landscape design.

If after Robert Adam died in 1792 no architect of real genius emerged in the Edinburgh scene, at least the city was extremely fortunate in having a number of highly accomplished designers during the period in which they were most needed.

The lives of all except the Adam brothers remain rather obscure and we may wonder whence came their devotion to, and knowledge of, their art. Some, like James Gillespie Graham and Thomas Hamilton, had a background of joiner-work which no doubt gave them their firm three-dimensional grasp of form; others were versed in a more abstract way, through mathematics in general and geometry in particular. Here Edinburgh probably had an advantage over London at this time, for the general level of mathematics teaching was undoubtedly higher, as is shown by the fact that during both the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic Wars the British artillery arm depended very largely on Scots officers.¹

It may well be the strong mathematical and philosophical background of society in Georgian Edinburgh which is responsible for the emphasis which is placed in the New Town on unity and repetition, rather than diversity and elaboration. The writer of this thesis was privileged five years ago to conduct round the New Town a well-known architect of the younger generation. He was most impressed with what he saw and made a remark which perhaps sounds derogatory but was in fact a great compliment to the designers of the New Town: "My God, nobody would ever dare to design anything as dull as that nowadays!"²

We have noted more than once the breadth of treatment of

1 D. Young, op. cit., p. 86

2 James Gowan

many of the streets, and if sometimes the character of the New Town appears by comparison with Georgian London, Bath or Dublin, to be severe and unsmiling we should remember that the life which went on behind these sober façades was for many years the most uninhibited and unbuttoned anywhere in Britain. Robert Mudie, author of "The Modern Athens", found that the practice of drinking (chiefly claret and port) was habitual and deep, and he noted that Edinburgh folk were "democrats in their drink"; it was an Edinburgh maxim that "the bottle raises or lowers all people to the same level".¹ This tradition was perhaps as strong among the judges as any other group and Mudie relates how a judge having disappeared for three days, when required for an important case, was eventually found on the tower of St. Giles, drinking and playing cards with two or three caddies, or street messengers. So much for the naive statement in the Proposals that "as it [Edinburgh] is not the seat of Government, it can never become the scene of luxury and vice".

But if over-indulgence in eating and drinking taxed the constitution of many inhabitants of the New Town - as the extraordinary number of clubs suggests - there was certainly a chance that the keen winds for which Edinburgh is notorious would freshen next morning some of those who had been too convivial the evening before. Perhaps indeed that harshness of climate of which Stevenson complained so bitterly

1 D. Young, op. cit., p. 141

has exercised a strong influence on the architectural details of the New Town. There is certainly a general avoidance wherever possible of exposed timber on the outside of buildings, replaced by the immensely hard and durable Craigleith stone. But if the climate is sometimes harsh and the wind so ferocious as to result in "a four-wheeled cab [being] blown upside down"¹ there is at least some compensation in the quality of light which pervades the City. This characteristic has been well described by a recent writer:

"The light of Edinburgh is luminous because it makes the objects on which it falls seem to give out light by themselves, and not merely reflect the light.... The long streets and wide squares and places of the New Town are luminous in silver and in half-tone on fine winter afternoons, and shine with a subdued light suitable to their dignity and grace. The prospect of the City from the Castle on a fine summer's day is luminous through a mid-day haze, luminous in grey and green and pale gold. The views to the Firth of Forth and to the countryside upon the far shore as seen from the many avenues of sight that open up in the foreground and in the distance are full of a light of their own coming back into the enclosure of the town".²

This description sums up very well the sensation of

1 J. Bone, op. cit., p. 13

2 M. McLaren, The Capital of Scotland, p. 175

luminosity which can often be experienced in the New Town at the present time, even though most of the stonework is now much darker than when those streets and squares were new. But one of the most perceptive comments that has ever been made on the New Town was written in the early years of the nineteenth century and incidentally gives us a most interesting comparison between Edinburgh and Bath:

"The general resemblance which Edinburgh and Bath bear to each other, (the new town of Edinburgh is meant as the old has no similitude whatever) is commonly admitted....

Their locality is certainly opposite. Bath spreads itself in a plain, among very luxuriant meadow grounds; and is encircled with every luxuriance which a rich and fertile country can bestow. It has, too, the advantage of a river, an accompaniment so essential to the health and cleanliness of a town, that nothing can supply the want of such an acquisition of nature.... New Edinburgh, surrounded by hills, stands on an eminence, sloping on each side, and two miles distant from the broad, and often impetuous river, Forth, which here forms a large and beautiful estuary....

The buildings and streets in Bath are in general regular, as in Edinburgh; some, however, occasionally rise abruptly

on little eminences.... Bath can boast of few magnificent public edifices the Assembly Rooms, little superior to those of Edinburgh, are the largest and most elegant in Britain. Sydney House placed at one end of Pultney Street is a very pretty modern building, and has much of that lightness and gaiety for which the Bath houses are conspicuously attractive....

The similitude between these two cities, therefore, seems to arise, not from situation, but from the sameness of the stone of which they are constructed, and the style of building. The Bath stone, however, is much whiter than the Edinburgh, and the slates larger and a livelier blue; these together give an air of splendour and gaiety very captivating. Less so in Edinburgh, owing to the roofs of the houses, whose slate is a much more deadened blue, being also too much exposed, while the fronts are devoid of decoration. A simple plainness seems to pervade the whole, and this poverty of ornament gives a heaviness and dullness offensive to the eye accustomed to Bath.... The squares of the cities cannot reproach each other, but perhaps the Charlotte Square of Edinburgh, when completed, will claim the palm. Edinburgh comparatively wants spires and steeples.¹ Bath has them

1 This lack was overcome before many years passed

embellishments which always denote a great city, and proclaim the importance of a capital....

Hitherto, has been attempted to draw a parallel between Bath and New Edinburgh, but Old Edinburgh forms a beauty of contrast with the New which is so commonly striking and interesting, that Bath must undoubtedly yield the pre-eminence to Edinburgh, taking the two towns as a whole. Indeed, there is perhaps not a town in the world which will bear a fair comparison....

The romantic and picturesque hill in the immediate vicinity of this Metropolis, furnish views and subjects for the pencil which can nowhere be surpassed; and the panoramic seen from Calton Hill, or the beautiful and extensive range of nature and art it embraces, has perhaps not an equal on the globe. This hill is a choice site for the Observatory which stands on its summit.

On the whole, therefore, if Bath has more splendour and gaiety, Edinburgh has more dignity and variety. Bath, amidst the tame and sweet scenery of cultivated nature, impresses a sense of loveliness. Edinburgh, surrounded by the bold and more imposing features of nature, demands respect and admiration. Strangers who are used to Bath are delighted with Edinburgh, and strangers accustomed to Edinburgh are delighted with Bath."¹

1 Unidentified magazine cutting c. 1800 in Edinburgh Miscellanea vol. II, in Edinburgh Room of Edinburgh Public Library

Many houses were added to the New Town after these words were written - and in the later nineteenth century the transformation of Craig's New Town into a commercial and business centre began to alter its character increasingly - but the description remains astonishingly true.

The New Town at present, however, is in an uncertain state owing to the pressures which are being steadily exerted on it. Partly commercial in use, partly residential - partly even industrial in a few places - it is subjected all the time not only to the effects of wind and weather, but to changing social demands and the insistent pressure of the motor vehicle. The oldest part is now two hundred years old. When first built it was a capital investment on a far larger scale than was ever attempted by any other city in Britain. Apart from costly undertakings which included the North Bridge, the Calton Bridge, four churches and a host of other public works,¹ there was a private expenditure up to 1833 of something like £10,000,000 on new houses.² Today the New Town is still an asset of immense practical, social and architectural value, extending to an area of almost 700 acres. Most of it was

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- 1 It should be realised that, except in the case of the Register House, not a penny from Treasury funds was spent on building the New Town
 - 2 An exact computation is clearly impossible. This is a conservative estimate, based on 5,000 houses costing about £2,000 each - which is almost certainly less than the average cost

extremely well built, in first-class materials, and the inherent flexibility of the accommodation is amply demonstrated by the wide range of uses to which it has been applied. Socially, it is almost unique in this country in that it provides houses for the whole spectrum of society: from artisans to the aristocracy; from young bachelors to elderly pensioners. The tradition of the common stair is certainly not yet dead - one stair in St. Vincent Street embraces a wide range of occupants, from 'bus driver to botanist.

It would be foolish to pretend that the architecture of the New Town is uniformly distinguished. It is not. There are relatively few buildings of really outstanding architectural merit: what is so important is the ensemble. In no other city in Britain is there a better instance of the classic principle of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts; above all, there is no other city where the works of man and nature are in more perfect accord.

Given the will, there is no reason why the greater part of the New Town should not be actively used and appreciated two hundred years from now. It is the unique product of a late flowering in Edinburgh of culture of every kind: such conditions are unlikely to recur in the near future. But given even a modicum of the far-sightedness and imagination possessed by Drummond and his contemporaries, we should be able for many years to enjoy this splendid artefact of the Age of Enlightenment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: SOME NOTES ON CRAIGLEITH STONE

The vast quantity of stone required for the construction of the New Town came from several different local quarries, including those of Barnton, Craigleith,* Hailes, Maidencraig, Ravelston and Redhall. Of these Craigleith stone is the most important, in terms of both its quality and its frequency of use. The majority of the buildings in the New Town are, in fact, constructed of Craigleith stone, which has been described as "the finest sandstone in Great Britain.... Craigleith is to Edinburgh what Portland stone is to London, Pentelic marble to Athens, and Pietra Serena to Florence. Rarely has there been another stone with the same weathering qualities, consistency of texture and mellow glow."¹

Its great merit lies in the fact that although extremely hard and durable, it is nevertheless capable of being carved quite intricately where the details of a building demand this. A contemporary observer refers to it as a "freestone of a very white appearance and of solid texture. Hence have been

1 The Architectural Use of Building Materials, p. 19

obtained blocks of immense size, which are susceptible of great delicacy of sculpture, as exemplified in the capitals of the columns in Waterloo Place, and in other parts of modern Edinburgh."¹

The words "immense size" do not tell us very much about the maximum size of the blocks of stone transported from Craigleith Quarry to the New Town, but fortunately another source gives us this information:

"In 1823 there was excavated a stone of such dimensions and weight as to be without parallel in ancient or modern times. In length it was upwards of 136 feet, averaging 20 feet in breadth, and its computed weight was 1500 tons. It was longitudinal, cut from a stratum of very fine rock. The greater part of it was conveyed to the Calton Hill, where it now forms the architrave of the National Monument, and the rest was sent by sea to Buckingham Palace".²

It is very difficult now for us to visualise the Sisyphean task of transporting even part of this immense block of stone a distance of three miles from the quarry to the summit of Calton Hill, though we can climb to the foot of the National Monument and contemplate its prodigious architrave.

1 T. H. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 37

2 Edinburgh Weekly Journal, November 1823, quoted in G. Craig, Building Stones used in Edinburgh, p. 1

One reason why Craigleith stone has been so much admired is no doubt its capacity to reflect light, which derives in turn from its extremely high silica content. Its chemical composition, which was evidently first analysed in the early 1890's, is as follows:

Silica	98.3%
Carbonate of lime	1.1%
Iron and alumina	0.6% ¹

In an attempt to discover its typical crushing strength, two sample stones were taken from an internal wall at no. 4 Royal Circus,² prepared and tested in the laboratories of the Department of Civil Engineering and Building Science. The following test results were obtained:

Cube A (1.4"x1.3"x1.5" high)	9,500 lb./sq. in.
Cube B (1.4"x1.2"x1.2" high)	11,750 lb./sq. in.

While fully conclusive results would be obtainable only by building a sample wall, complete with lime mortar joints, and testing it to destruction, it is clear from these results that Craigleith stone - apart from being one of the handsomest building stones available in Britain - has a very high crushing strength, equivalent to that of first quality engineering bricks in use at the present day.

1 G. Craig, op. cit., p. 2

2 As the stones were taken from an internal wall, they have not suffered any deterioration through weathering

APPENDIX II: CHANGE OF USE IN THE NEW TOWN

So far no comprehensive study has yet been published of the widespread change of use which has taken place in many parts of the New Town. This is an extremely interesting subject, though one which lies outside the scope of this thesis. It can be seen, however, from the following table¹ that much of the New Town remains predominantly residential, and any policies affecting the future of the New Town should take into account this social characteristic:

Street	Still complete house	Now converted into flats	Still original flats	Other use	Total
Regent Terrace	10	11	-	13	34
Carlton Terrace	6	2	-	6	14
Royal Terrace	12	3	-	18	33
Heriot Row	17	12	3	13	45
Great King Street	9	17	13	27	66
Drummond Place	5	18	10	5	38
Moray Place	2	29	9	10	50
Royal Circus	2	9	4	10	25
Northumberland Street	20	28	8	15	71

¹ David Keir, The City of Edinburgh, p. 61

APPENDIX III: SIZE OF OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE NEW TOWN

The communal gardens which occur throughout the New Town are a vital part of its total environment. Most of them are private, in the sense that keys are available only to proprietors whose houses overlook the gardens, although in some cases nearby residents are able to obtain keys on payment of the annual subscription. There is no completely uniform procedure for maintaining these gardens, as each has an individual feu-charter and consequently its own set of regulations; but, in general, all proprietors of houses overlooking such gardens are required to pay a stated annual sum¹ towards their upkeep - whether or not they use them - and they elect a small voluntary committee to regulate income and expenditure. The gardens vary considerably in size, but from observation it appears that those gardens exceeding about $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres in area are the most widely used at the present time, as these are large enough to give some degree of privacy and to permit the playing of suitable games by young children. A list of the more important gardens, with their areas and ages of trees,² is appended overleaf:

1 The average sum at present is about £6 per annum

2 From a survey carried out by Mr. Frank Clark in March 1966

	Acres	Ages of Trees in years
Ainslie Place	0.9	40-80, 80+
Bellevue Crescent	0.6	40-60, 60+
Charlotte Square	2.7	60-80
Drummond Place	2.7	40-80, 80+
Moray Place	3.6	40-80, 80+
Moray Place Bank	4.5	40-80, 80+
Princes Street East	8.0	40-80
Princes Street West ¹	15.5	40-80
Queen Street East	6.9	60-80, 80+
Queen Street Central	4.3	60-80, 80+
Queen Street West	5.7	60-80, 80+
Randolph Crescent	0.9	30-50
Regent Terrace	11.7	20-80
Royal Circus	1.8	40-80
Royal Terrace	10.0	40-80, 80+

1 For more than a century the Princes Street Gardens have been open to the public. After overtures made in 1851 by the Scottish Association for Suppressing Drunkenness, who wished "to provide open places for the people at Christmas and the New Year, with the view of keeping persons out of the dram shop (D. Robertson, The Princes Street Proprietors, p. 32) the proprietors agreed to open the gardens to the public for the first time on 25th December 1852

GLOSSARY

A number of terms, both legal and architectural, commonly used in Scotland are listed below:

ADVOCATE	barrister
BELT	string-course
BLOCKING-COURSE	course of masonry laid above the cornice
CAUSEY	to lay a street with granite setts
CHIMNEY-STALK	chimney-stack
COMMON STAIR	stair giving access to two or more flats
COOMB-CEILING	ceiling splayed on account of roof slope
DEAFENING	sound insulation in floors
FEU	perpetual lease of land at fixed annual rent (feu-duty), or parcel of land so held ¹
HEARTENING	core (of masonry wall)
MAIN-DOOR HOUSE	house having its own separate entrance from street
MUTUAL WALL	wall between two adjacent houses
PLATT	platform (usually at house entrance)
PRESS	cupboard

1. There is no freehold system of land tenure in Scotland

ROUP	public sale by auction
SKEW	junction of roof with vertical element such as wall
STRAP	timber fixed to masonry wall before lath-and-plaster finish is applied
SUPERIOR	person or body to whom feu-duty is payable
TRUSS	ornamental bracket supporting door or window architrave
TUSKING	practice of leaving alternate masonry courses projecting at end of wall, to allow future wall to be properly bonded
WRITERS TO THE SIGNET	body to which most solicitors in Scotland belong

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