

WHISPERS IN EDINBURGH: HORSE SCULPTURES WITH VETERINARY CONNECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The equestrian statues of civic Edinburgh are on prominent display in the town¹. Visitors to the city can easily find the bronze statue of the iron Duke of Wellington (Fig. 1A) outside Register house at the east end of Princes Street^{2,3}. A walk south from there, over South Bridge⁴ to the High Street, and then up that ancient cobbled way towards the castle, will lead the observer to the statue of Alexander and Bucephalus (Fig. 1B) in the courtyard of the City Chambers⁵. Both of these distinctive examples of nineteenth century sculpture were created by John Steell^{3,5,6}. Across the road from the City Chambers, behind the Mercat Cross and the mass of St Giles Cathedral⁷, in the centre of Parliament square, stands the statue of Charles II (Fig. 2). Thought to have been made by the Dutch sculptor Grinling Gibbons, it was completed in 1685 and is possibly the oldest lead equestrian statue in Britain^{8,9}. It is here that we begin to explore the veterinary links to equine sculptures in Edinburgh.

The horse stands on three of its feet, the right forefoot lifted off the ground. As a consequence, approximately half the approximately five tonne weight of the sculpture was borne by the left forelimb, the internal supporting structure of which had gradually given way in the early nineteenth century^{8,10}. The lead slowly buckled and folded into itself, the shoulder being gradually pushed down onto and over the distal part of the forelimb. In 1824 the statue was taken down for repair¹¹. William Dick was invited to superintend the restoration of the anatomy of the horse's left forelimb. This was done successfully without the removal of the limb^{8,10}. The statue was re-erected in 1835.

The intimate knowledge of mammalian anatomy possessed by William Dick will have naturally drawn him to the public exhibition of the 'anatomical horse' in the university the following year (Fig. 3). This sculpture had been bequeathed in 1824 to the public of Edinburgh by Sir James Erskine, 3rd baronet of Torrie. However, its arrival was delayed until the death of his brother, John Drummond Erskine in 1836¹². William Dick was a patron of the arts and supported the artistic community in Scotland^{13,14}. There were to be other, stone-carved, sculptures of horses prominently displayed in this city of ghosts. They were



Figs. 1A (left) & 1B (right)

Fig. 1A Bronze Equestrian Statue of Wellington (by John Steell 1852)

Fig. 1B Bronze Equestrian Statue of Alexander and Bucephalus (by John Steell 1883)



Fig. 2. Lead Equestrian Statue of Charles II (Attributed to Grindlay 1685)

well known to the residents of Edinburgh of those times. But now, of them, there is little more than whispers.

NOTTINGHAM PLACE HORSE STATUE

The first mystery can be found as a tiny, almost invisible, detail on a map of Edinburgh printed in 1819 by Kirkwood¹⁵. This 692 x 1105 mm sheet of paper displays the elevations of the buildings at that time. Almost hidden away in the lower right-hand side of the page, in a cluster of buildings to the west of Calton Hill, and near the top of Leith Walk, can be found Nottingham Place. Depicted upside down on the map is the row of houses and stables, designed by Richard Crichton, and erected for Samuel Wordsworth in 1805¹⁶. At the west end of this building is an arched gateway. On top of the arch stands a pale-coloured horse, depicted no more than 2mm in length on the map (Fig. 4).

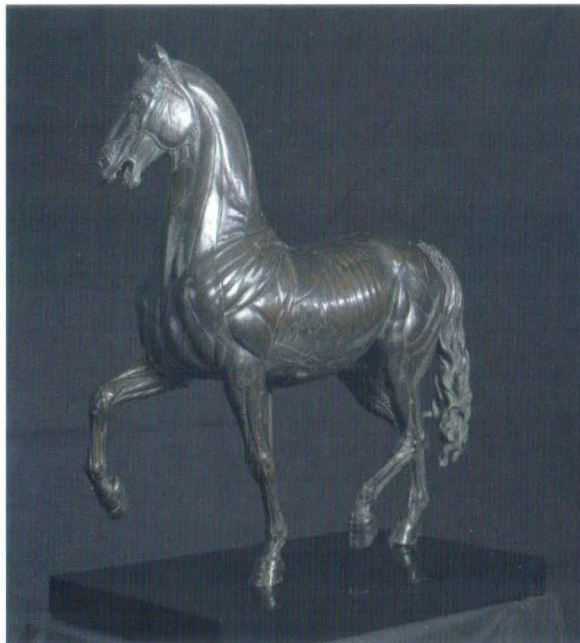


Fig. 3. Bronze Anatomical Horse (by Circle of Giambologna) Bequeathed to the University by Sir William Erskine of Torrie in 1824

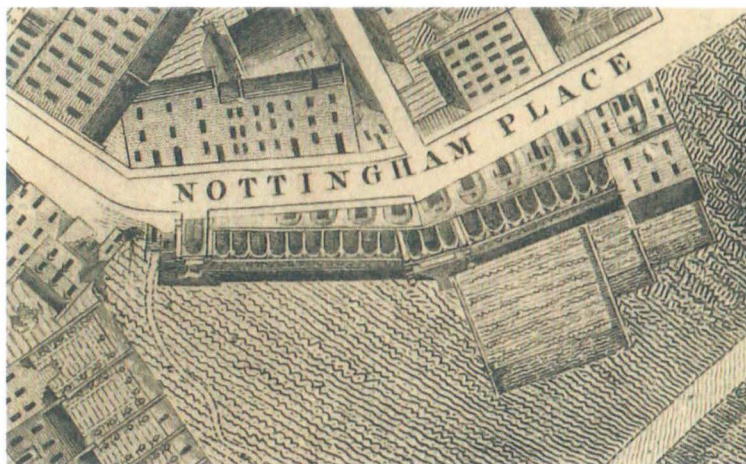


Fig. 4. Statue of a Horse on Wordsworth Stables, Nottingham Place¹⁵

The arched gateway was not featured on the drawing submitted to the Dean of Guild in 21st September 1804 together with the petition to build this row of stables and houses. But who lived in the latter? As it happened, in those days, it was completely natural that John and Jean Dick and their family moved in 1805 from their old cottage in 'Mud Island' up the Calton Hill slope and into one of the newly constructed houses at the east end of the stable block¹³. They were close friends with the Wordsworth family and had professional farriery links with the owners of the new stables¹³. A second petition to the Edinburgh Dean of Guild from Samuel Wordsworth, submitted on 22nd March 1810, was to erect an iron veranda on the long terrace above the arches of his stables (Fig. 4). Curiously, a careful architectural drawing, in pencil, had been added at the west end of the inked illustration of the veranda submitted with the petition¹⁷. This drawing was of a gateway, with doors indicated, and above them, as a component part of the arched structure, a plinth had been set. There was no sign of an equine sculpture there. The suggestion may be proposed that the arched gateway was constructed sometime around 1810. It would appear to have been built at the entrance to the stables, specifically to support the statue of the horse that was still to come. It is not evident from the records found to date when this sculpture was mounted on the arched gateway. There is no trace of who sculpted the standing horse or indeed, where it was formed. Nevertheless, William Dick, as a neighbour and friend, will have been familiar enough with these details throughout his young adult years¹³.

One subtle clue to further developments may lie associated with the name given to the stables. In 1824, the building was referred to as Wordsworth's Repository¹⁸. By 1831, the stables became known as His Majesty's Repository¹⁹. Samuel senior died on the 3rd Nov 1842²⁰. His son, also Samuel, a Writer to the Signet, continued the extensive and lucrative business as horse dealer, stabler and auctioneer²¹. However, on 24th November 1855 he too died (aged 48). The following Spring, on Thursday 3rd April 1856 the 'extensive range of stabling, yard, and other conveniences, known as Her Majesty's Horse Repository, situated in Nottingham Place, as possessed by the deceased Mr Samuel Wordsworth' was sold by public auction²². It is not now known how long the statue of the horse remained in Nottingham Place.

EQUESTRIAN STATUES ON CALTON HILL AND ST ANDREWS SQUARE

On Saturday 14th July 1832 an exhibition of four large equestrian statues, carved by Robert Forrest, was opened on Calton Hill²³. These formed a hugely popular attraction. People flocked to see them, and then also to the other sculptures subsequently placed with them on Calton Hill^{24,25,26}. William Dick had at that

time been making plans to have a new, purpose-built veterinary school constructed in Clyde Street¹³. The preliminary 1832 drawing of the façade of this three-storey building²⁷ was topped by the figure of a standing horse, perhaps inspired by Wordsworth's statue of a standing horse (Fig. 5). That particular concept for an equine statue was not used, however. Instead another was carved in 1833 by Andrew Wallace²⁸. The 'recumbent horse rising' was based on a small model owned by William Dick^{29,30}. And the following year, in St Andrews Square, just around the corner from Clyde Street, the bronze equestrian statue of Lord Hopetoun by Thomas Campbell was erected in front of the Royal Bank of Scotland³¹.

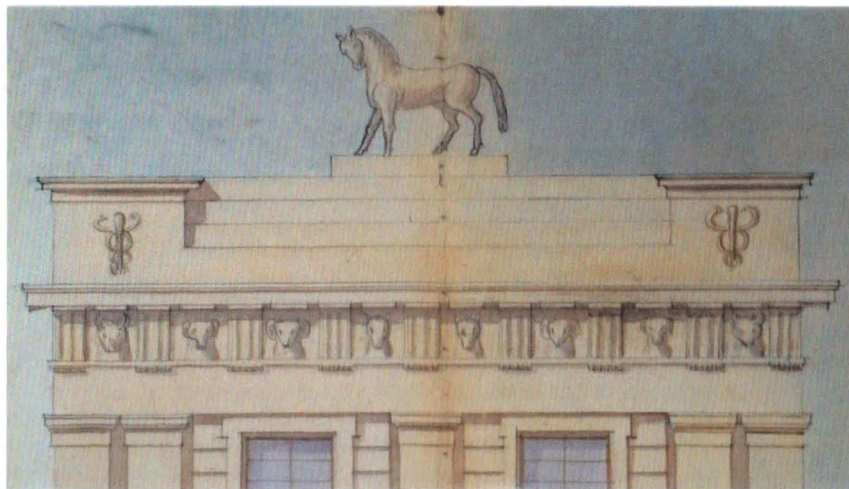


Fig. 5. Drawing, in 1832, of a Standing Horse Statue Above the Proposed Facade of the Clyde Street Veterinary school²⁷

LOTHIAN ROAD HORSE STATUE

At the beginning of 1842, Isaac Scott had moved with his 'Job and Posting Establishment' from Young Street, in the New Town, due south to Brae House on Lothian Road, Edinburgh; he rented out horses, hearses and mourning carriages, and also sold carriages^{32,33}. The funeral business was maintained there until about 1862 when it merged with the larger Edinburgh Funeral Establishment run by John Croall and Sons^{34,35}. The company of Scott, Croall and Sons retained an office in Lothian Road³⁶ until February 1864. In the Spring of 1865, the photographer John Ross moved from 90 Princes Street to Brae House on Lothian Road³⁷.

On an invoice dated 1846³⁸, issued by Isaac Scott to Sir George MacKenzie for the hire of various horses and carriages, the letterhead contains an image of Brae House viewed from Lothian Road (Fig. 6A). On the south-east corner of the walled property stood a sculpted standing horse, on a plinth over a doorway. Curiously, on the signed receipt of payment issued to Sir George the sculpted horse had been moved and placed on a plinth to the north of the entrance to the Brae House yard (Fig. 6B). The vacated south-east corner now carried the royal crest, symbolic of Isaac Scott's position as Postmaster to the Queen in Scotland. The rest of the two etchings by Robertson remained essentially the same.

In 1844, Isaac Scott had advertised the establishment on Lothian Road of an additional business, the Royal Academy for Riding. He advertised that the school was comfortably warmed and was very handsomely fitted up³⁹. Two years later, in response to demand, he secured the assistance of Mr Krauter as Riding Master to superintend this aspect of his business⁴⁰. In December 1851, Isaac Scott reported to his clients that his son, William Scott was now looking after the riding classes in the Royal Riding Academy⁴¹. Some fourteen years later, in 1864 William Scott announced⁴² that the Royal Riding School had moved from Brae House to a new site at Tollcross⁴³, on Home Street opposite the entrance to Melville Drive (Fig. 7). Riding lessons were regularly advertised there⁴⁴. On 25th February 1868, Henry Scott Seton, the grandson of Isaac Scott took over the management of the Royal Riding Academy⁴⁵. Edwin Knowles was appointed as the Riding Master, and W. MacKenzie as his assistant⁴⁶. Thirty-three years earlier, Henry Seton had passed his veterinary examination at Clyde Street (in April 1835) and obtained his Highland Society diploma as veterinary surgeon⁴⁷. The Royal Riding Academy business flourished⁴⁸. In 1880, Henry Seton retired and passed the Riding Academy business over to his nephew, Isaac Scott⁴⁹. However, two years later Isaac found it necessary to form a partnership with his cousin, Miss Marson, an 'accomplished equestrienne'⁵⁰. The following year (1883) Miss Scott Marson, the granddaughter of the late Mr Isaac Scott who had built and established the Royal Riding Academy, became the sole proprietress of the business⁵¹. She ran it until 1887, when John Player became the proprietor^{52,53}.

John Player had had over twenty-five years of experience with an extensive coach-hiring business⁵⁴ when he took over the Royal Riding Academy. He ran it, listing himself as its Riding Master, in addition to his other business interests until 1899-1900⁵⁵. Player advertised both riding classes and horses kept at livery at the Academy⁵⁶. In 1893, he expanded the Royal Riding Academy business by developing and rebranding one of his home bases, at the Pitt Street Stables which lay just north of the Water of Leith⁵⁷; he called this the Northern Riding Academy⁵⁸. His son, James Fairbairn Player, who had studied at Clyde Street

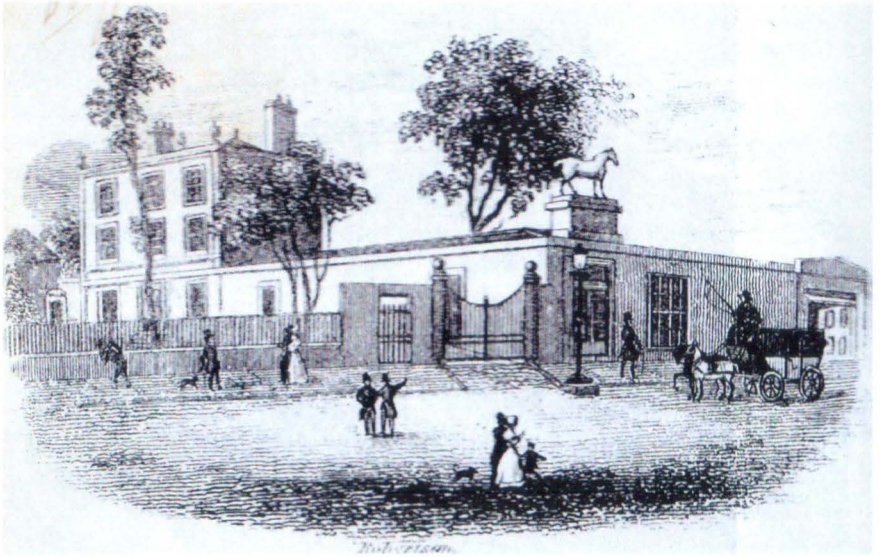


Fig. 6A Standing Horse Statue at Brae House, Lothian Road, Illustrated on the 1846 Letter Head Bill Issued by Isaac Scott to Sir George MacKenzie

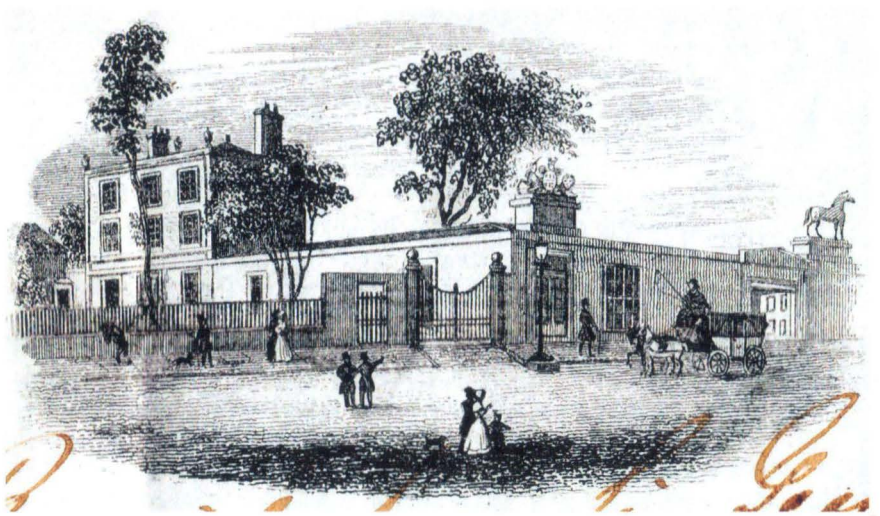


Fig. 6B Receipt from Isaac Scott Showing the Horse has been Moved and Replaced by the Royal Crest



**Fig. 7. Extract of the Ordnance Survey Map of Edinburgh (1894)⁴³
Indicating the Royal Riding Academy at 8 Home Street**

Veterinary College, and had obtained his veterinary qualification on 24th April 1885⁵⁹, took over the management of the Northern Riding Academy in 1895⁶⁰. Four years later, in December 1899, he was assigned the running of the Royal Riding Academy as well⁶¹. Both academies were well run and successful. And then, between 1910 and 1920 three photographs were taken of the frontage of the buildings on the west side of Tollcross. Above the second floor, in front of the sloping roof of the Royal Riding Academy^{62,63}, stood the stone sculpture of a standing horse (Fig. 8). James served with the Royal Army Veterinary Corps in France during the war from 28th September 1915 until the end of the war, after which he served with the army of occupation in Germany until he was demobilised in Cologne on the 30th September 1921^{64,65}. It was from France, in March 1817, that he instructed John Croall & Sons to sell by auction the contents of the Royal Riding Academy⁶⁶. One year later, he closed the business⁶⁷. Another photograph of the building taken in the early 1930s showed that the horse had been removed⁶³. Thereafter no trace of the standing horse could be found.

NEW VETERINARY COLLEGE STATUE

About thirty years earlier, in late 1883 or early 1884, a group of three sculpted animals, including a standing horse appeared on the front of the New Veterinary



Figs. 8A (left) & 8B (right)

Fig. 8A Photograph by J.R. Hamilton (1914), Looking West, of the Stone Statue of a Standing Horse Above the Royal Riding Academy, 8 Home Street, Tollcross, Edinburgh

Fig. 8B Photograph by an Unknown Photographer (1919), looking east, of the Stone Statue of a Standing Horse, Above the Royal Riding Academy, 8 Home Street, Tollcross, Edinburgh⁶²

College, Elm Row (Fig. 9). William Williams had recently transferred his New Veterinary College from Gayfield House to these freshly constructed facilities near the top of Leith Walk⁶⁸. Newspapers reported in October 1883 that the statue of a horse, bull and dog by John Rhind (1828-1892) was soon to be placed on a pedestal above the Elm Row entrance to the New Veterinary College⁶⁹. An illustration of these animals was published on the cover of the prospectus of the new College (Fig. 10). The College functioned very successfully until 1900 when William Williams died⁶⁸. He was succeeded by his son, Owen, who in 1904 took the College south to Liverpool to establish the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the University there⁶⁸. The buildings were advertised for sale in 1904 and 1905⁷⁰ and finally sold to William Perry in



Fig. 9. Overview of the Frontage of the New Veterinary College, Elm Row, Edinburgh (1883-1904)

1908⁶⁸. It is not clear for how long the three-animal logo remained on the front of the building together with the various animal heads incorporated into the street floor pier heads⁶⁹. However, we do know that the three component animals became separated from one another⁶⁸. No trace of the horse has yet been found.

DISCUSSION

These figures of the standing horse with veterinary connections represent a number of puzzles. The first question is who carved the horse placed by Samuel Wordsworth over the entrance to his stables (Fig. 4)? And where was it carved? Wordsworth had many business links within people in Edinburgh, Glasgow and

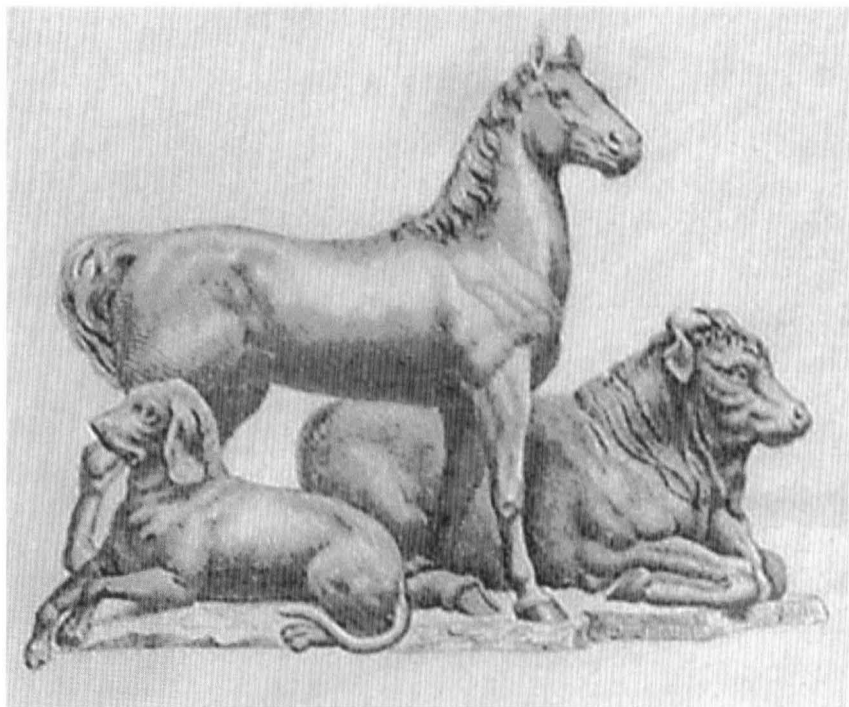


Fig. 10. Illustration of the Stone Statue of the Dog, Standing Horse and Bull by John Rhind (1884) Placed on the Frontage of the New Veterinary College, Elm Row, Edinburgh, from the Front Cover of the 1903/04 Prospectus of the New Veterinary College

more distantly, with his hometown of Nottingham¹³. The pale colour indicated on the map might suggest a stone carving, or alternatively it may reflect the map-engraver's need to depict it somehow against the dark colour of the stable's roof. When was it installed over the gateway to the stables? Was it before or after the Dick family flitted in 1815 from Nottingham Place to their new accommodation at 15 Clyde Street¹³?

It is perhaps only something of a co-incidence that the appearance of a standing horse on a plinth in Isaac Scott's Lothian Road premise (ca. 1846) occurred at about the same period of time as the death of Samuel Wordsworth senior (3 Nov 1842). Although the business undertaken at 'Her Majesty's Repository for Scotland' passed on to his only surviving heir, the latter was a writer to Signet, a member of the legal profession⁷¹. Nevertheless, sales of horses and carriages

continued to be undertaken at Her Majesty's Repository for Scotland^{72,73}. Whether the ownership of the statue was transferred to the Royal Riding Academy (in 1844?) will for now remain a matter of speculation. No written evidence of the disposal of Woodsworth's statue of a standing horse has yet come to light.

The indicated movement of the standing horse statue from one site to another at Brae House suggested that when the Royal Riding Academy business transferred to Tollcross the statue may have gone there too. The fact that various members of the same family sequentially took over proprietorship of the riding academy business at the same Tollcross location suggested that had the standing horse statue been moved there it would likewise have remained there. So far, no record has been found of the placement of the horse. There was a suggestion that the timing of the appearance of John Rhind's statue (1883) on the frontage of the New Veterinary College on Elm Row coincided with the apparent business uncertainty at the Royal Riding Academy, Tollcross. There were many points of postural similarity between the drawing of Rhind's horse and that of Isaac Scott. The currently available evidence suggests that the three animals forming the New Veterinary College 'logo' were carved separately from one another; the dog was rediscovered some years ago⁶⁸. This observation prompts the question, was the (Isaac Scott) standing sculpture of the horse recycled into the Elm Row group of three animals by Rhind?

Although it is unknown what happened to the Elm Row standing horse, again the timing of James Fairbairn Player's successful ownership of the Royal Riding Academy, his membership of the veterinary profession, and the apparent availability from the Elm Row building of the Rhind statues in 1904 strongly suggests that he may have bought the group of them and placed the horse on the frontage of his business (Fig. 8). The similarity of the postures of the horse sculptures is striking (Fig. 10). But is it the same horse? Indeed, is it the same horse that Samuel Woodsworth erected in Nottingham Place 100 years earlier? Or did that one get 'lost'? Whatever, we think that the statue shown in Fig. 8 still exists, somewhere. As with the other two companion sculptures, the dog and the bull, it may lie unrecognised, out there, in the countryside. Like other statues of its (possible) age, it will likely show signs of wear²⁴.

We recognise that our current exploration of this topic has left open and unexplored archives of information potentially relevant to the questions raised. Further research will undoubtedly yield answers, and more than likely, generate further puzzles too. In this piece it was our intention to stimulate enquiry, and by careful listening, to encourage the discovery of further substance to these whispsers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to Joe Rock for bringing to our attention the statue of the horse on Wordsworth's stables, shown on the map by Kirkwood, R. 1819, plan & elevation the New Town of Edinburgh. (<https://maps.nls.uk/view/74400075>) We would also like to thank Chris Fleet for his help and to the National Library of Scotland for permission to use the extract from that map in our Fig. 4, and for the extract of the Ordinance Survey plan of Edinburgh 1895. We would like to thank Capital Collections, Edinburgh City Libraries, for permission to use in Fig. 8A an extract of the photograph by J.R. Hamilton (Item 6135 – Home Street looking west from Tollcross). Likewise, we are very grateful to the University of Edinburgh for permission to reproduce the photo of the Anatomical Horse shown in Fig. 3. The archive guidance of the late W.T. Johnston, librarian, Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, was much appreciated. The financial support of the University of Edinburgh and the Balloch Trust is also gratefully acknowledged.

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BROKEN BOTTLES DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

Lieutenant General Sir Colin Campbell wrote to the Major General Airey, the QMG on 15 March 1855: ‘The neighbourhood of the bazaar [at Kadikoi] is covered with broken bottles to such an extent that is excessively dangerous for horses – so much so four artillery horses have already been wounded there, one of which it was found necessary to kill. Besides which this bazaar is very dirty. I have ordered the broken bottles as well as the dirt to be cleared away – and until the whole of the broken bottles are removed and proper arrangements made to prevent any more being thrown there – I have desired that no more liquor in bottles shall be sold there.’ The letter was annotated by Airey: ‘Inform him that the Provost Marshal should take up and punish any individual throwing broken bottles about, and that the shopkeepers ought to be forced to bury’ – night and morning any broken glass.’

The National Archives: WO 28/196

DID YOU KNOW? Nache – informal word referring to the rump, especially of cattle.