

4. Old Calton

4.1. Background

In the early seventeenth century, the legal rights of the Kirk and parish of Restalrig – the Kirk associated with the hamlet of Calton- were conferred upon the parish of South Leith.¹ As a result, residents of Calton, or ‘Craigend’, as it was then known, began using South Leith Kirk and Kirkyard for both religious worship and the interment of the dead. This became problematic not only because it was a mile and a half to the north of the hamlet, but also because the high volume of burials that occurred at this site resulted in residents of Calton only gaining use of South Leith burial ground on specific times and days of the week. In the early eighteenth century therefore, permission was granted to the inhabitants of Calton by the laird, Lord Balmerino to form a burial ground on an area of land on Calton Hill.²

Due to the nature of the establishment of the burial ground, the management of ‘Old’ Calton has never been under the control of a Parish Kirk³, but instead was run as a business by the Incorporated Trades of Calton.⁴ This society used the money collected from trade dues (the annual payment for the privilege of being freemen of Calton), the renting of burial plots, the provision of mortcloths for the dead and the interment of the recently departed within the Old Calton Burial Ground to help freemen of Calton and their families who were poor, infirm or widowed. Further information on this group and how they functioned can be found in two volumes of the *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* from the 1930s⁵, and

¹ James Grant, *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh : Its History, Its People, and Its Places* (London ; New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1881). Vol V, 131

² Henry M. Paton, "The Barony of Calton, Part Ii," *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club XIX* (1933).

³ NB. As religion played a large part in the daily running and recording of Scottish society up until the mid nineteenth century, this burial ground and the hamlet of Calton still had to associated with a Parish to record births, deaths and marriages. This, along with the lands of Restalrig to the east of Calton were part of the parish of South Leith, hence why bodies interred in Calton Burial Ground are recorded as ‘Leith’.

⁴ A society that worked in the interests of the tradesmen, or freemen of the hamlet of Calton.

⁵ See Henry M. Paton, "The Barony of Calton, Part I," *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club XVIII* (1932), Paton, "The Barony of Calton, Part Ii."

in M.S. Irving's the Caldtoun or Calton of Edinburgh⁶. In addition, many of the meeting minutes and account transactions still survive in the Edinburgh City Archives. These record everyone who has been buried within the Old Calton Burial Ground, and who has paid for a burial plot. It should be noted that you did not have to be a freeman of Calton to be interred in the burial ground.

Development

The burial ground was laid out as a rectilinear site on high ground to the north of the Canongate. This is first depicted on Armstrong's map of 1773 (Figure 1) By 1804, (Figure 3) the area of the burial ground has been extended to the south and west to the limits of the craggy hilltop.

In 1816, the development of a new road running from Princess Street eastwards across Calton Hill, cut through the middle of Old Calton, bisecting it into two and removing a large part of the middle of the site, leaving the largest and most prominent part to the south. Despite the development of New Calton burial ground to the east in 1817 (which was, in part, to compensate for the lost part of the burial ground and is the subject of a separate study within this report⁷) interments continued in this southern part throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. In the 1860s a report on the sanitary condition of the City recommended its immediate closure due to severe overcrowding on the grounds of public health.⁸ According to the Third Statistical Account, this was effectuated for all new burials soon after, allowing only families who possessed private tombs to continue intramural interment at this site from this point onwards.⁹ However, the prominence of this site within the City has resulted in a small number of burials and monuments still being approved for this site at least as late as the mid 20th century.¹⁰

⁶ Malcolm Sinclair Irvine, *The Calton of Caldtoun of Edinburgh 1631-1887* ([Edinburgh: s.n.], 1887).

⁷ See *New Calton*

⁸ Henry J. Littlejohn, "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh," (Edinburgh 1863). 96

⁹ David Keir (Ed), 'the City of Edinburgh' the Third Statistical Account of Scotland (1966). 439 ¹⁰ Data in the Edinburgh Town Council Minutes held at the Edinburgh City Archives also concurs with this. Edinburgh City Archives, reference number SL1

Use

Prior to the area's use as a burial ground, this area was used as a grazing and tilling area for the people of Calton.

The setup and management of this burial ground is unusual, being managed by the Incorporated Trades of Calton rather than for the Kirk. Since its development into a burial ground in the eighteenth century, it has been used mainly for the purpose of burial and as a source of revenue for the Incorporated Trades through burial charges.

Surveys

A number of surveys of the inscriptions found on monuments throughout this site were conducted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹ In the late twentieth Century, an Edinburgh wide survey by the City of Edinburgh District Council catalogued both the Burial Ground and more prominent monuments at this site¹² and shortly after this, a survey of the sites eighteenth Century monuments of note¹³ and conservation plan for the hill and burial ground were also carried out,¹⁴ which identified the international significance of this site within the context of the nineteenth century development of the hill.¹⁵ In addition, the relationship of this burial ground to the barony of Calton, and to the monuments found on the top of Calton Hill are included in current ongoing PhD research into Calton Hill which is due to be completed in 2011.¹⁶

4.2. Burial Records and other information on interments

¹¹ John Smith, "Inscriptions, with Numerous Biographical Notes and References, Some Photographs and a Complete Alphabetical Index of Personal Names.," (Edinburgh City Library, 1907). From J F Mitchell, *Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions* (1961)., also in John Smith, *Epitaphs and Monumental Inscriptions in Old Calton Burying Ground, Edinburgh* (1907).

¹² *City of Edinburgh District Council, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volume 1, Primary Files," (1979), ———, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volumes 2-4, Supplementary Information," (1979).*

¹³ Betty Willsher, "Midlothian and Edinburgh " in *Survey of Scottish Gravestones (National Monuments Record for Scotland c.1985).*

¹⁴ Law-Dunbar and Naismith (LDN) Architects, "Calton Hill Conservation Plan," (Edinburgh 1999).

¹⁵ Peter McGowan Associates, "181 Old Calton Burial Ground," in *Edinburgh: Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (City of Edinburgh Council, 2007).*

¹⁶ Kirsten Carter McKee, "The "Athens of the North"? The Cultural, Political and Social Significance of Edinburgh's Calton Hill" (*University of Edinburgh, 2011(TBC).*)

Burial records for this site are held in the Edinburgh City Archives, within the minute and account books of the Incorporated Trades of Calton. These records date from the first interments in 1718 until the management of the burial ground is taken over by Edinburgh Town Council in 1856. After this point, additional information on burials and the erection of monuments in this Kirkyard up to and including the 20th century can be found in the Town Council Minutes held in the Edinburgh City Archives.¹⁷

4.3. Site Chronology

1718- Lord Balmerino granted ground to the barony of Calton for the purpose of a burial ground.¹⁸

1773 - Andrew Mostyn Armstrong's "Map of the Three Lothians"(Figure 1.) Depicts the '*Caltoun Burying Ground*' as a rectilinear area that is situated on high ground above the hamlet of '*Caultoun.*' Two small rectilinear enclosures sit directly to the north of the site and a number of roofed structures are attached to the north, west and east of the curtiledge walls.

1777 – A monument to David Hume is designed by Robert Adam and is erected in a prominent position in the southwest corner of the burial ground.¹⁹

1780 - John Ainslie's "City of Edinburgh" (Figure 2.) Depicts a similar layout to Armstrong's map, but in addition, also depicts a circular covered structure in the southeastern edge of the burial ground, which is most likely David Hume's mausoleum.

1804 - John Ainslie's "Old and New Town of Edinburgh and Leith with the proposed docks." (Figure 3.), depicts the burial ground with extensions to the south and west. The circular covered structure is depicted in this map, but is no

¹⁷ *Edinburgh City Archives, reference number SL1.*

¹⁸ *Paton, "The Barony of Calton, Part II."*

¹⁹ *Ian Gordon Brown, "David Hume's Tomb: A Roman Mausoleum by Robert Adam," Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 121 (1991).*

longer situated on the southeastern edge. Instead, it is now situated within the burying ground and is denoted as '*D Hume's Monument.*'

1805 - "The Strangers Guide, being a Plan of Edinburgh & Leith, exhibiting all the streets principal buildings & late improvements" (Figure 4.) Depicts a rectilinear covered structure is now situated along much of the northern curtilledge of the site. A second, smaller structure (also roofed) is depicted close to the larger building on the northern curtilledge and a circular roofed structure is depicted near the southeastern corner of the site. In addition, this map appears to denote the presence of numerous burial plots situated within the burial ground.

1817 - Robert Kirkwood's "This plan of the City of Edinburgh and its environs" (Figure 5.), depicts the burial ground bisected in two, with a small rectilinear roofed structure in the burial ground on the northern side. The burial ground has extended as far to the south and west as the craggy topography will allow and burial plots are already depicted along the length of the southernmost wall. Burial plots are depicted throughout the site and a pathway is shown through both the northern and southern parts of the site, running north-south.

1819 - Robert Kirkwood's - "Plan elevation of the New Town of Edinburgh." (Figure 6.) depicts numerous monuments around the boundary walls of the burial ground. A number of substantive 'obelisk' monuments are shown within the site, as well as headstones and lairmarkers. The northern part of the site, now cut off by the road is not denoted as a burial ground on this map, but instead is shown as an area of open ground with a scattering of trees throughout the site. In addition, It appears that a structure may have been developed over part of the northeastern corner of the northern burial ground.

1844 - Monument to Political Martyrs Erected. Inscribed "*To the Memory of Thomas Muir, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, William Skirving, Maurice Margarot and*

*Joseph Gerald. Erected by the Friends of Parliamentary Reform in Scotland and England, 1844*²⁰

1851 - Alfred Lancefield's "Johnston's plan of Edinburgh Leith" (Figure 7.) Depicts and denotes 'Hume's Mon' and 'Martyrs mon' within the burial ground. The northern part of the burial ground is again not denoted on this map, but an open area to the north of Waterloo Place is depicted between two roofed structures.

1852 - The Ordnance Survey's "Large Scale Town Plan" (Figure 8.) depicts both the northern and the southern parts of this site in detail. The Northern part of this site shows four unroofed wall tombs, 2 to the north, 2 to the south and a large unroofed structure in the northeastern part of the site.

1856 - Edinburgh Municipality Extension act. The Burgh of Calton is now the responsibility of the City. This includes the management of the burial ground.

1863 - The Littlejohn *Report on the Sanitary Condition of Edinburgh* notes that Old Calton burial ground is too small and its situation on a rocky eminence is unsuitable for interment. Littlejohn reports that its severely overcrowded nature should have resulted in it being closed long ago and he calls for its immediate closure.²¹

c.1865 - The burial ground is closed to new interments.

1893 - The Emancipation, or Lincoln monument is unveiled in the August of this year to commemorate the Scottish-American soldiers who fought in the American civil war.²²

²⁰ Alex Tyrrell and Michael T. Davis, "Bearding the Tories: The Commemoration of the Scottish Political Martyrs of 1793-94," in *Contested Sites : Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain*, ed. Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

²¹ Littlejohn, "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh." 97

²² The Lincoln Monument in Memory of the Scottish-American Soldiers, (*Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893*).

1907 – A survey of monuments in the burial ground is conducted by John Smith. This includes photos, inscriptions and an index of personal names.²³

1951- RCAHMS Inventory of Monuments in Edinburgh²⁴

1955-61 - John Fowler Mitchell records a list of inscriptions for Old and New Calton, Canongate and Holyrood Abbey, Saint John's church, Jewish, Quaker and Buccleuch burial grounds.²⁵

1979 – City of Edinburgh District Council produce the Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. This includes a concise description and brief historical background on Old Calton in Volume 1 and further detailed information and documentary evidence on some of the monuments found in the burial ground in Volumes 2-4.²⁶

c.1985- Betty Willsher survey of eighteenth century gravestones- Midlothian version.²⁷

1999 – A condition report to assess stone decay in Old Calton Burial Ground is carried out by Inge Bertels²⁸

2003 - Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions survey by John F. Mitchell jnr..²⁹

2007 - Landscape survey carried out by Peter McGowan Associates for the City of Edinburgh Council for the Edinburgh Survey of Gardens and Designed

²³ Smith, *Inscriptions, with Numerous Biographical Notes and References, Some Photographs and a Complete Alphabetical Index of Personal Names..*"

²⁴ Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland., *"An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of the City of Edinburgh (with the Thirteenth Report of the Commission, HmsO),"* (1951).

²⁵ Mitchell, *Some Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions.*

²⁶ City of Edinburgh District Council, *"Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volume 1, Primary Files,"* (1979), ———, *"Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volumes 2-4, Supplementary Information,"* (1979).

²⁷ Willsher, *"Midlothian and Edinburgh "*.

²⁸ Inge Bertels, *"Assessing Stone Decay in the Old Calton Burial Ground of Calton Hill, Edinburgh,"* AHSS Magazine(?) (1999(?)).

²⁹ John F. Mitchell, *Edinburgh Monumental Inscriptions (Pre 1855). Vol. 1, Old Calton Burial Ground, New Calton Burial Ground, ed. Stuart E. Fleming. (2003).*

Landscapes, which includes some detailed archival research into the history of this site.³⁰

4.4. Key features

Monuments

Old Calton is calculated to contain some 170 monuments, 112 tombs and 128 wall plaques, monuments, and ledgers.³¹ Information and archival notes on some the better-known monuments erected at Old Calton are recorded in the City of Edinburgh Council Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds, dating to 1979.³² This includes a broad description of the site and supplementary information from the Edinburgh City Archives but is in no way an exhaustive list of all of the monuments of note that are found at this site. The *Buildings of Scotland* series notes that the most interesting monuments are to be found in the southern part of the burial ground and that there are some very primitive headstones that commemorate shoemakers and their families.³³ Historic Scotland's Listed Building report notes that "Calton Old Burial Ground is one of the most significant and important of Edinburgh's graveyards... [It contains] ...many excellent quality eighteenth and nineteenth century monuments in a juxtaposition of styles and dedicated to a variety of famous persons."³⁴ Some of the most notable of these include: the David Hume Monument by Robert Adam of 1776,³⁵ the Monument to Scottish Political Martyrs of 1794 by Thomas Hamilton

³⁰ Peter McGowan Associates, "181 Old Calton Burial Ground."

³¹ Figures produced by the City of Edinburgh Council Graveyard Regeneration and Marketing Project (2007-08)

³² City of Edinburgh District Council, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volume 1, Primary Files.", ———, "Catalogue of Monuments and Burial Grounds. Volumes 2-4, Supplementary Information."

³³ John Gifford et al., Edinburgh, *The Buildings of Scotland: Pevsner Architectural Guides* (London : Penguin, 1991). 438

³⁴ Historic Scotland, "Regent Road, Calton Old Burial Ground and Monuments, Including Screen Walls to Waterloo Place," in Historic Scotland Statutory List HB Number 27920 (1966). In addition, Inge Bertels notes this in her 1999 article as dominating features that define this site. See Bertels, "Assessing Stone Decay in the Old Calton Burial Ground of Calton Hill, Edinburgh."

³⁵ Brown, "David Hume's Tomb: A Roman Mausoleum by Robert Adam."

in 1844,³⁶ and the Emancipation Monument of Abraham Lincoln by American Sculptor George E. Bissell in 1893.³⁷

The Willsher survey carried out in the 1980s³⁸ recorded some monuments from the eighteenth century of key architectural and artistic significance. These are:

1741 –Elizabeth Wilkie and Thomas Grey’s monument – noted as ‘A magnificent stone’

1804 - Headstone, Adam Brown

There are also a number of early eighteenth century grave markers that are associated with the early use of this site by the Incorporated Tradesmen of Calton. William P. Anderson, in his 1931 publication, *Silences that Speak*, notes that there are many older tombs of the cordiner³⁹ or shoemaking trade, the oldest of which is that of Thomas Robertson’s, which is located on the western wall of the north side division and dates to 1720. ⁴⁰ This particular type of monument is particularly noticeable in the small division on the north side of Waterloo Place.⁴¹

Other Architectural Features

Old Calton Burial Ground, its monuments, and boundaries are category ‘A’ Listed.⁴² This includes the screen walls, which were constructed either side of Waterloo Place, in order to support the weight of the earth in the burial ground and which are ornamented in a neo-classical style.

In the northern section of this site, the foundations of a building can still be identified within the burial ground boundaries. This is the remnant of a

³⁶ Tyrrell and Davis, *Bearding the Tories: The Commemoration of the Scottish Political Martyrs of 1793-94.*

³⁷ The Lincoln Monument in Memory of the Scottish-American Soldiers.

³⁸ Willsher, *Midlothian and Edinburgh* ".45-46

³⁹ Also called a ‘cordwainer’- someone who uses a specific type of soft leather in shoemaking

⁴⁰ William Pitcairn Anderson, *Silences That Speak. Records of Edinburgh’s Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There (Edinburgh,1931).* 576

⁴¹ Ibid. 576 Anderson notes that “these stones have a trade sign carved on them, which is a shoemakers knife with a crown shape above it. The smiths trade has a similar sign, with a hammer instead of a knife.”

⁴² *Historic Scotland, "Regent Road, Calton Old Burial Ground and Monuments, Including Screen Walls to Waterloo Place."*

convening house for the Incorporated Trades of Calton, which is noted as a small roofed structure on the 1805 and 1817 maps (Figures 4 and 5, respectively.) This became disused and derelict after a new convening house was built on Waterloo Place in 1818-1819.⁴³

Landscape and setting

The present extent of Old Calton Burial Ground (both parts) is measured at 0.49 hectares.⁴⁴ This site is included in the City of Edinburgh council's list of gardens and designed landscapes in Edinburgh⁴⁵ and its inclusion in this list is recognition of the importance of this landscape to the City. A detailed report on the attributes of Old Calton was produced in 2007, which identified some of the key landscape features within the burial ground that are of significance.⁴⁶ These include Old Calton's association within a wider landscape of monuments on Calton Hill and the southern part of the sites' visual prominence from the Old Town and North Bridge. Within the southern burial ground, the trees situated around the curtiledge of the site and on surrounding landscape of Calton Hill to the north adds a leafy prominence to the middle vision and its sloping entranceway retains a feeling of openness within parts of the site, despite the presence of towering and dominant memorials within this part of the site.

The northern part is enclosed by surrounding buildings to the north, east and west and trees to the south. The limited number of scattered smaller memorials gives a less cluttered feel to the site - in comparison to the southern part - and creates a private, peaceful and passive ambience.

Associations with historical events

The commemoration of the Scottish-American soldiers of the American Civil war was an occasion of great pomp and circumstance, which attracted a large crowd during the unveiling of a statue of President Lincoln in Old Calton in 1893. The

⁴³ Gifford et al., Edinburgh. 443

⁴⁴ Peter McGowan Associates, "181 Old Calton Burial Ground."3

⁴⁵ ———, "Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes - List of Sites," in Edinburgh: Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (City of Edinburgh Council, 2009). Appendix 1

⁴⁶ ———, "181 Old Calton Burial Ground."

images and the transcript of this day were published in a book published to memorialise the event, which was circulated in both Scotland and the USA.⁴⁷

4.4. Key figures

Anderson's *Silences that Speak* notes that the earlier monuments in this burial ground are chiefly to the memory of "homely, but, in some cases, well-to-do burgers." However, many later monuments are of "City residents of a wider renown."⁴⁸ A number of eminent figures of local and national renown are found within this burial ground, indeed it is considered that the number landed or titled families are represented in a considerable number for the comparative size of the burial ground.⁴⁹

Many of these notable figures and their monuments are described in detail in Rogers 1871 book on *Monuments and monumental inscriptions*⁵⁰ Turnbull's *Edinburgh Graveyard Guide*⁵¹ also includes some information on significant interments within the burial ground, as does Anderson's *Silences that Speak*. A variety of personages have therefore been taken from a selection of these secondary resources in order to bring context to the range of people buried at this site and the dates at which they were interred within the site.

1776 - David Hume- Eminent philosopher and historian.

1795 - William Cruickshank, MA. Rector of the Canongate School before becoming a classics teacher at the High School in Edinburgh and a friend of Robert Burns.

1794 - James Playfair (not marked) – Architect. Buildings include Melville Castle, Midlothian and Cairness House, Aberdeenshire.

1796 – David Allan - Historical Painter and tutor to H.W.Williams

1799 - Peter Williamson – Instigated the 'Penny Post' in Edinburgh and brought out the first Edinburgh Street directory.

⁴⁷ The Lincoln Monument in Memory of the Scottish-American Soldiers.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Silences That Speak*. Records of Edinburgh's Ancient Churches and Burial Grounds, with Biographical Sketches of the Notables Who Rest There. 576

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 576

⁵⁰ Rev. Charles Rogers, *Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions in Scotland vol. 1 (1871)*. 91-95

⁵¹ Michael T R B Turnbull, *The Edinburgh Graveyard Guide (2006)*. 101-116

1801 - Richard Gall – Scottish song writer. Author of songs such as “*The Braes of Drumlee*” and “*Farewell to Ayrshire*.”

1814 - Daniel Stewart – founder of Daniel Stewarts Hospital for boys, now a prominent boys school in the City.

1816 - Robert Burn. Architect. Designed the Nelson Monument on Calton Hill. His mausoleum is reputed to have been designed by his son, William Burn.

1819 - Professor John Playfair – Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh University, Author of “*Elements of Geometry*” (1795) and “*Illustrations of the Hutton Theory of the Earth*” (1802). Uncle and guardian to William Playfair, Architect.

1827 - Archibald Constable – Publisher who was involved with the circulation many of Sir Walter Scott’s most notable works.

1831 - Thomas Reid, - Horologist, whose work can be found throughout the UK. Author of “*On Clock and Watch-making*”, which was to become the standard work of its time.

1834 - William Blackwood. Town councillor and founder of Blackwoods Magazine.

1838 – Baron David Hume, of the Scots Exchequer, author of “*Commentaries on the Law in Scotland, respecting the description and punishment of crimes*”(1797), which was considered a seminal work in Scots Law. Nephew of David Hume, Philosopher.

1891 - Sir John Steell- Sculptor who was responsible for many prominent statue in Edinburgh.

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