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An engraving entitled: “Melbourne Place and Victoria Terrace from George IV Bridge”

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Abstract

I thought that the members of the Society might be interested in learning about an “engraving” that hangs rather inauspiciously on one of the walls of the Society’s Library in Bristo Place (figure 1). This item is of interest in several regards, but principally because no copy of it is available in the Reference Collection of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh.

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Figure 4. Barium enema showing air in urinary bladder

open the fistula. The track is then laid open and left to heal by secondary intention. This has no effect on faecal continence as the external sphincter remains intact. In higher fistulae, the track can only be opened to the ano-rectal ring. A ligature is thus passed through the upper track and left for 2 to 3 weeks for scar tissue to form.

Goodsall's Rule is useful if the location of the internal opening is not obvious. "If the external opening lies anterior to a line drawn transversely through the centre of the anus, the tract passes radially through a straight line towards the internal opening. If the external opening is posterior to the line, the track curves in a horseshoe manner to open into the midline posteriorly".

Gastro-intestinal fistulae are a surgical challenge. The best outcome is obtained by a multi-disciplinary approach between the surgeon and the gastroenterologist with help from the radiologist for diagnosis and the dietician for overall management.

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An engraving entitled: "Melbourne Place and Victoria Terrace from George IV Bridge"

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I thought that the members of the Society might be interested in learning about an "engraving" that hangs rather inauspiciously on one of the walls of the Society's Library in Bristo Place (figure 1). This item is of interest in several regards, but principally because no copy of it is available in the Reference Collection of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in Bernard Terrace, Ed-

inburgh. A detailed analysis of its features, however, reveals that this image is in fact a photograph of a very rare etching. The original is an anonymous etching that measures 23.9 by 41.3cm including the fine border line around it. It is based on a drawing by the architect George Smith (located in the Daniel Wilson scrapbooks, Vol 1, p 78, in the Library of the National Museums of Scotland). It is likely that



Figure 1. Etching dating from 1835, entitled: "Melbourne Place and Victoria Terrace from George IV Bridge," being the architect's proposal for this area of George IV Bridge.

the photograph was carefully hand-colored to enhance its overall appearance. What is particularly intriguing about it is that it is an architect's impression of what he envisaged this area should look like, rather than a view of the real scene. It was apparently submitted to a meeting of the Plans and Works Committee of the City Improvement Commissioners on 25 August 1834. The minutes of this meeting are located in the City Archives. The overall plan was approved on 12 February 1835. Melbourne Place was named after the 2nd Viscount Melbourne, who was Prime Minister from 1835-41, on 10 December 1835. He was also the premier at the accession of Queen Victoria. Victoria Street and Victoria Terrace were named after the heir to the throne on 6 October 1836. It was suggested on 20 October 1836: "That an engraving of Melbourne Place should be displayed in as many public places as possible."

This item is of interest because of the architectural details displayed. One of the most obvious features is that only the buildings located on the northern side of Victoria Street and Terrace are shown. All of the buildings on the western side of George IV Bridge, principally the Public Library and the buildings on the southern side of Victoria Street are absent. Those on the northern

side of Victoria Street that front onto Victoria Terrace, at a higher level, to the west of the narrow passage known as Fisher's Close, are seen because the majority of them were of a considerably earlier construction. It is of interest that George IV Bridge was originally termed King George IV Bridge, was designed by Thomas Hamilton (1784-1858) and dates from 1829-32. It is curious that earlier maps of this area (e.g. the map of about 1831 published by Peter Brown and Thomas Nelson in the Map Collection of Edinburgh University Library) appear to show numerous small buildings on the south side of what was subsequently termed Victoria Street. These were demolished during the subsequent City Improvement Acts.

A careful inspection of the individual buildings along the northern side of Victoria Terrace would appear to indicate that relatively little has changed since the preparation of this engraving. It should be noted, however, that some of the detailed features of the premises that belonged to the Melbourne Place tenements block that were located in Victoria Terrace, were not included when these buildings were subsequently erected (figure 2). This includes the balcony associated with the second floor, and the central window of the fourth floor. More particularly, when built,

the end of the tenement block was at right angles to Melbourne Place, and had three rather than five windows on each floor, as shown in the etching. On the southern side of Victoria Street, no buildings are shown. The Highland and Agricultural Society's Museum is clearly seen in the 1852 Ordnance Survey Map, as well as in the 1846 Directory Map of this



Figure 2. Similar view of the southern end of the Melbourne Place tenements to that shown in Figure 1, in 1965, shortly before it was demolished. Crown copyright, RCAHMS.

area, on the corner of the southern side of Victoria Street and George IV Bridge. John Henderson had originally designed this building (the plans are dated 31 July 1836, for a seedsman, Charles Lawson) but it was only built some years later. The upper floors of this building are now used to house the Art Library. The Dean of Guild Court approved the plans for this building on 19 September 1837. A number of other properties are also shown at intervals along the southern side of this street as it descends in a westerly direction towards the West Bow and the Grassmarket in these two maps.

The Public Library is not shown, and is in any case a much later addition to George IV Bridge, being designed by Sir George Washington Browne, and dates from 1887-90. Similarly, India Buildings, constituting 1-6 Victoria Street, dates from 1864, was designed by David Cousin, and is consequently not present in this engraving. More recently, the building that was formerly the Highland and Agricultural Society's Museum has been incorporated into the Public Library. The headquarters building of the Bank of Scotland is clearly seen in the distance, at the top of the Mound, at the northern extremity of Bank Street. The former headquarters building of the Bank of Scotland moved from Bank Close in

1805, to the head of Bank Street in about 1812. This imposing building was designed by Richard Crichton, but was later expanded in about 1846 by the architect David Bryce. Bank Street runs continuously in a north-westerly direction into North Bank Street. Other readily recognisable buildings are also seen where the Lawnmarket crosses George IV Bridge where it runs into Bank Street, such as the building that includes Deacon Brodie's Tavern. According to Grant (1880-3, Volume 1, p. 123), the County Hall building located almost directly opposite Melbourne Place, and presenting fronts to the Lawnmarket and St Giles, on the eastern side of George IV Bridge, consisted of a "very lofty portico [with] finely-fluted columns. The first building on this site was erected in 1817 and contained several spacious and lofty court rooms with apartments for the Sheriff and other functionaries employed in the business of the county." J. McIntyre Henry designed the Midlothian County Buildings, which succeeded them, and these date from 1900-05. In this etching, the earlier building is discreetly hidden by a wall, as the original County Hall building was considered at that time to be rather unsightly. The side of the County Chambers had inadvertently been exposed by the demolitions undertaken to make way for George IV Bridge.



Figure 3. View of the eagle rescued from the central gable above the fourth storey of Number 7 Melbourne Place and now located in the Society's premises in Bristo Place.

The present building of the National Library of Scotland is of only relatively recent construction, dating from 1956, and was built in a Classical-modern style. Reginald Fairlie designed it. The colonnaded building on the far right of the engraving, along the eastern side of George IV Bridge where the National Library of Scotland is now located, although a prominent feature of the drawing, was in fact never erected. It was designed by W. H. Playfair (1790-1857) but was considered too expensive to build. The original architect's drawings of this building are located in the Special Collections Section of Edinburgh University Library.

Clearly when the Royal Medical Society moved from their first hall at number 11 Surgeon's Square, the buildings in Melbourne Place had not only been built in a style similar to that shown in this etching, but were all well established. The architect George Smith designed these tenements along Melbourne Place. Jane Girdwood and others bought the land on which they were built from the Improvement Commissioners. They then petitioned the Dean of Guild Court, and the Warrant that enabled them to build these premises was granted on 17 May 1836. While the original architect's drawings for the Victoria Street end and other parts of the Melbourne Place tenements are available for analysis in the City Archives, the plans for Number 7 are not present. Accord-

ingly, it is not possible to establish whether the central gable above Number 7 contained any sculptural embellishment on the original plans, although the impression is gained that this is unlikely to have been the case.

Of greater interest to present members of the Society, is the fact that there appears to be no evidence of an eagle with spread wings (Figure 3) surmounting the central gable of what shortly afterwards became the Society's premises at Number 7 Melbourne Place (Figure 4). The reason for this is straightforward. It was a feature that did not appear in the original architect's drawing, but was probably added as an embellishment to enhance the dignity of these properties when they were eventually built. It is unlikely that the eagle that surmounted the central gable of these premises had any other significance. This union of sculpture and architecture had been suggested by George Smith (1793-1877) in a lecture to the School of Arts in August 1827 (Anon, 1827).

Reference to Gray is particularly instructive in this regard, as he indicates that the Society purchased Number 7 from its original owners, and that the Society first occupied their New Hall in 1852. According to Gray: "*Melbourne Place was a recent City Improvement when the Society removed there*" (Gray, 1952, p.205). He continued: "*Dr George [sic] Wilson, ... in his Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time* (Wilson 1848, Volume 1, 172), indicated that ... *Old Bank Close ... was demolished in 1834 to make way for it. The Old Bank, now known as the Bank of Scotland, which gave the ancient alley its name, carried on all its business in the close.*" According to this source: "*The antique mansion that formed the chief building in this close, excited very great and general attention from the time that it was exposed to view in opening up the approach to George Forth's Bridge, until its demolition in 1834, to make way for the central buildings of Melbourne Place, that now occupy this site.*" Gray (1952, p. 206) continued: "... *Messrs. James and John Grey, the owners of the building purchased by the Society ... were established in Melbourne Place towards the end of 1837.*" Messrs. J. & J. Grey were the proprie-

tors of the *North British Advertiser* and a number of short-lived publications such as *Grey's Monthly Record* and *Grey's Weekly Record* (Gray, 1952, p. 206).

The antique mansion referred to here was Robert Gourlay's House that dated from "1569" (Gray, 1952, p.206, citing Wilson, 1848, Volume 1, p. 172), although Wilson (1848, Volume 1, 173-4) indicated that this house bore the date "1588". This somewhat later date coincides with the date that he and his wife, Helen Cruik, received a Royal Mandate from the King at Dumfries to build this house.

Two of the principal features that are evident in this engraving, however, are the gas fittings that illuminate all of George IV Bridge, and the iron railings that are shown along the western boundary of this thoroughfare. Almost identical railings are still seen at intervals along the western side of George IV Bridge. Mr. Thomas Hamilton had designed both these railings and the gas lamps, and the Committee in due course accepted his proposal. It appears that the subsequent cost of the railings and the gas lamps was £226-15-0. John Paterson of the Edinburgh Foundry made them. In order to prevent the iron railings from rusting, an extra charge of £10 was made by the Foundry so that they could be exposed to oil while they were still hot. It is clear that this treatment was extremely effective, as these railings still show no evidence of rust.

Reference to the detailed Ordnance Survey Maps of this area is particularly instructive, in that they provide information on the approximate date of construction and first appearance of the principal buildings displayed – if they were built. Confirmation of the relevant dates of many of the buildings seen in this engraving and their architects are available from the various books and other items of reference in the Edinburgh Room of the Public Library on George IV Bridge (see e.g. Anon (undated)).

Acknowledgements

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Figure 4. Frontage to Number 7 Melbourne Place in 1965, shortly before it was demolished, showing the Society's main entrance doorway, flanked on either side by shops. The Society's premises consisted of five windows on the first, second and third floors. The eagle, with spread wings, is mounted on the central gable above the fourth storey. Crown copyright, RCAHMS.

Bridge and the Edinburgh City Archives for their assistance.

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