Sir John Robert Steell, RSA
(1804-1891)

Catalogue Raisonné
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Chronology—Sir John Steell, RSA (1804-1891)

1804  Born 18 September at Aberdeen, the first son of John Steell Sr. and Margaret Gourlay.

1806  Family moves briefly to London in April, then to Edinburgh in 1806/7. Steell Sr. starts business at 2 Low Terrace as a carver and gilder.

1811  Business moves to 8 Leith Street; Steell Sr. executes coat of arms for Theatre Royal.

1812  Steell Sr. becomes Freeman of the Incorporated Trades of Calton on 6 August.

1813  Business moves to 44 Leith Street, and in 1815 to 34 Princes Street. Steell Sr. is elected constable of Incorporated Trades of Calton. Steell Sr. executes coat of arms for Leith Customs House.

1817  Steell Sr. is elected Convenor of the Incorporated Trades of Calton.

1818  Steell becomes an apprentice to his father and enters the Trustees' Academy on 23 March under instruction of Andrew Wilson. Steell Sr. executes carvings of Mary, Queen of Scots for fireplace of Duns Castle.

1819  Steell Sr. is confronted by members of Incorporated Trades of Calton and forced into sequestration; proceedings begin on 28 July.

1820  Steell petitions to continue his training at the Trustees' Academy, studying alongside D.O. Hill, David Roberts and William and George Simson. He begins the course, but is forced to drop out due to the family bankruptcy. Steell Sr. moves to Holyrood Debtor's refuge to escape creditors.

1821  Edinburgh School of Arts is founded for working men by Leonard Horner; Steell Sr. teaches here in the 1820s.

1822  Steell Sr. arranges to trade again, the business moving to 3 South St. David Street.

1824  John Steell petitions for re-admittance to Trustees' Academy on 24 May, after a hiatus due to the family's financial problems. He submits a head modelled from life and requests to draw and model from the cast collection. The Edinburgh architect James Gillespie Graham endorses Steell's petition noting, "We consider the petitioner a young man of promising talents..." The business of John Steell & Co. is started at 6 Hanover Street.
1825 Margaret Gourlay's family guarantee a payment to Steell family creditors in December. Sequestration is wound up by February 1826.

1826 John Steell marries Elizabeth Graham on 30 November. Scottish Academy is founded, but Steell remains affiliated with the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland.

1827 Steell business is now called John Steell & Son. Steell executes large oak statue of *St. Andrew* for the North British Fire Insurance Company. The work is shown in the Scottish Academy before its installation at 1 Hanover Street. Steell subscribes to David Scott's Edinburgh Life Academy to draw from life model.

1828 Steell exhibits busts at the Scottish Academy, Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland and Glasgow Dilettanti Society exhibitions. He petitions Board of Manufactures for permission to continue drawing from cast collection.

1829 Steell exhibits two busts at the Scottish Academy and one at the Glasgow Dilettanti Society. He travels to Rome sometime in January/February. He returns to Edinburgh by 27 December. During the year, he joins the Scottish Academy, and maintains a studio at 23 Dundas Street.

1830 Studio moves to 40 Northumberland Street. Begins work on *Alexander and Bucephalus*. Exhibits Bust of a Gentleman at Scottish Academy (Cat. no. 329).

1831 Work continues on *Alexander and Bucephalus*. Submits Scottish Academy diploma piece, a marble portrait bust of David Scott, shown at annual exhibition (Cat. no. 365).

1832 Studio moves to 22 Pitt Street. Exhibits bust of Miss M. Smith (Cat. no. 322) at Scottish Academy. Sir Walter Scott dies.

1833 *Alexander and Bucephalus* completed. Awarded £50 premium by Board of Manufactures, 19 February. Group is cast into plaster in March. Exhibited at Royal Institution, May through June. Sir Francis Chantrey offers Steell help if he moves to London. Steell decides to remain in Edinburgh. Assists in conception of the Royal Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland with D.O. Hill and Henry Glassford Bell.


1835 The *Edinburgh Evening Post* of 3 January reports a visit to Steell's studio, mentioning that he has modelled horses and a bulldog for the 5th Duke of Buccleuch.

1836 Exhibits six works in Scottish Academy, including Sinclair bust (Cat. no. 360) and Boy Fishing, (executed in Rome, Cat. no. 356.) which is bought by
Earl Grey for Kilmaurs Castle. Board of Manufactures accepts Steell's offer to sculpt eight sphinxes for decoration of Royal Institution building for £200 on 16 June. Steell enters open design competition for Scott Monument commission.

1837 Model is finished for Royal Institution sphinxes. Studio moves to 1 Rutland Street. Board of Manufactures commissions Steell to execute two colossal freestone statues for Royal Institution building for £500. Steell executes full-sized statue of Minerva in clay, before project is changed to statue of Queen Victoria by November 22nd.

1838 Steell travels to Windsor in January for five sittings with the new Queen. Studio moves to 11 Darnaway Street. Steell chosen to execute Sir Walter Scott and Maida for Scott Monument in April. Created Queen's Sculptor for Scotland in August. Displays eight portrait busts in the newly chartered Royal Scottish Academy.

1839 Executes The Wise and Foolish Virgins, the first pediment group carved in Scotland, for the Standard Life Assurance building in George Street, Edinburgh. Commissioned for marble statue of Provost Blaikie for Aberdeen in July.

1840 Steell commissioned to provide a portrait bust and model for the Scottish National Monument to the Duke of Wellington. Ostensibly to help the committee evaluate whether the ability of Scottish sculptors is accomplished enough to merit their employment, the members never consider any other artist's work for the project.

1841 Steell travels to Walmer Castle for sittings with Wellington.

1842 Steell is officially commissioned for the Wellington Monument on 18 January. He receives a commission from Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel's government for a marble statue of naval commander Lord de Saumarez in December. He moves his studio for the last time to Randolph Place, where he will remain until his retirement.

1843 Work continues on Queen Victoria, Blaikie, Scott and Wellington projects.

1844 Queen Victoria completed and installed on top of Royal Institution building in January. Provost Blaikie finished and installed in St. Nicholas's Kirk, Aberdeen in March; this was the first large marble statue completed in Scotland by a native sculptor. Steell takes delivery of the fifty-ton block of Carrara marble for the Scott Monument statue in November.

1845 Work continues on Scott and Wellington projects. Works on portrait bust of Dr. Thomas Chalmers

1846 Sir Walter Scott completed in August.
1847  Steell completes marble portrait bust of Sheriff Graham Spiers.

1848  Steell builds and opens Grove Foundry for execution of the Wellington Monument. The first fine-art bronze casting facility in Scotland, it remains in continual operation until 1889. The Wellington is the first bronze statue cast in Scotland.

1849  Steell is appointed by Royal Warrant as a Commissioner of the Board of Manufactures, a post he holds until his death. He sits in rotation upon the standing Design School Committee (which oversees instruction at the Trustees' Academy) from 1850. Steell exhibits his marble statue of Lady Elgin for Jamaica at London's Royal Academy in June.

1850

1851  Statue to 2\textsuperscript{nd} Viscount Melville commissioned for Edinburgh. Portrait bust of Lord Cockburn completed.

1852  \textit{Wellington Monument} completed.

1853

1854  \textit{Lord de Saumarez} statue completed for Greenwich.

1855  Statue and funerary monument of Lord Jeffrey completed. Portrait bust of Lord Mackenzie executed.

1856  Portrait bust of \textit{Lord Colonsay and Oronsay} (Duncan McNeill) executed.

1857  2\textsuperscript{nd} Viscount Melville statue completed for Edinburgh and Dundee. Bronze casts of Florence Baptistery gates completed for Hamilton Mausoleum.

1858  Steell executes bronze profile portrait relief for monument to J.G. Lockhart at Dryburgh Abbey.

1859  Executes marble portrait bust of Florence Nightingale; Nightingale refuses to sit to any other sculptor.

1860  Marble statue of Lord Justice General David Boyle completed for Parliament Hall, Edinburgh. Marble monument to the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Highland Regiment installed in Glasgow Cathedral.

1861  Marble monument to 34\textsuperscript{th} Regiment installed in Carlisle Cathedral. Albert, Prince Consort dies.

1862  Completes marble portrait bust of Edward, Prince of Wales for Royal High School, Edinburgh. He exhibits this work at the London International Exhibition.
1863 Completes Sir David Baxter statue in marble for Dundee and James Wilson and Lord Dalhousie statues in marble for Calcutta. Exhibits busts of Lord Fullerton (Cat. no. 820), John Spottiswoode (Cat. no. 808), “Little Jeanie” (Cat. no. 823) Lord Cockburn (Cat. no. 407) and Dr. Chalmers (Cat. no. 418) at Royal Scottish Academy.

1864 Steell enters three designs into the open competition for the Scottish National Monument to the Prince Consort.

1865 Steell receives commission for the Consort Memorial in March. He completes several statue projects: Lord Boyle for Irvine; Allan Ramsay and John Wilson for Edinburgh; Onesiphorous Tyndall Bruce for Falkland; and a marble portrait bust of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh for Edinburgh University.


1867 Consort Memorial work is at a standstill between March and July, until Steell is granted an audience and Queen Victoria approves the models. Marble relief of Revd. Dr. Robert Gordon completed for New College, Edinburgh. Tympanum relief completed for Bank of Montreal, Canada.

1868 George MacCallum dies suddenly; his group of Honest Labour is allocated to D.W. Stevenson. Steell completes marble relief commemorating 6th Duke of Atholl, for St. Bride's Church, Blair Atholl.

1869 Steell reports in August that the Consort Memorial's bas-reliefs, Brodie's group of Rank and Wealth, and the Classical Emblems are all cast in bronze. He states that the equestrian statue model and the other models are almost completed, and that Stanton's group of The Soldier, Sailor and Engineer is ready to be cast soon. Steell receives commission for statue of Dr. Thomas Chalmers.

1870 Consort Memorial committee continues to debate proper site for monument. Sculptural work continues.

1871 Sir Walter Scott centenary; Steell is commissioned by a group of New Yorkers to create a bronze replica of the Sir Walter Scott for New York's Central Park. Due to a lull in the Consort Memorial work, Steell is able to complete the statue in a year.

1872 Steell completes a large relief monument for the 42 Highland Regiment in Dunkeld Cathedral. Steell also completes a bronze statue of George Kinloch, MP for Dundee, and the Sir Walter Scott for New York.

1873 Steell completes recumbent figure of the 18th Earl of Shrewsbury for Ingestre Church, Staffordshire. Delays relating to the site of the Consort Memorial continue. Steell reports to the committee that he expects to complete the
project by June 1874, but the committee reprimands him harshly for the perceived delay, and forms a subcommittee to keep him to time. Despite this, he accepts a commission to execute a Burns statue for New York for 2000 Guineas. In December he is ordered by his doctor to suspend his work and rest.

1874 In April, a casting accident puts Steell further behind with the Consort Memorial. He is reported working on the clay of the Burns statue in August. Steell is again indisposed by illness in November.

1875 In August, Steell completely reworks the figure of Albert for the Consort Memorial, causing a delay of a further year. He completes a marble portrait bust of the writer Thomas de Quincey for Scotsman publisher John Ritchie Findlay.

1876 The Scottish National Monument to the Prince Consort is inaugurated on 16 August. Steell is knighted in the afternoon by Queen Victoria. A testimonial subscription is launched in September, as it is understood that Steell’s financial situation is precarious. Victoria commissions a marble version of the Albert bust created in collaboration with the Royal family for the monument.

1877 After a ten year hiatus, caused by his many monument projects, Steell exhibits the portrait bust of Thomas de Quincey (Cat. no. 672) in the RSA.

1878 Steell completes the marble bust of the Prince Consort for the Royal Family. Dr. Thomas Chalmers statue installed in George Street, Edinburgh and inaugurated on 7 July.

1879 Steell exhibits three works in the RSA, including his marble busts of Dr. Warburton Begbie (Catalogue no. 750) and Lady Anna Stirling Maxwell (Cat. no. 752).

1880 Steell’s statues of Robert Burns are completed and installed in New York’s Central Park and a fortnight later, in Dundee’s George Square.

1881 The 5th Duke of Buccleuch initiates his scheme to cast the Alexander and Bucephalus in bronze for Edinburgh.

1882

1883 Steell’s Robert Burns for Dunedin, New Zealand is completed. The Alexander and Bucephalus is cast in bronze.

1884 Alexander and Bucephalus is installed in St. Andrew’s Square Edinburgh, and inaugurated on 18 April. The Robert Burns for London’s Embankment Gardens is installed and inaugurated on 26 July.
1885  Steell completes a marble bust of Robert Burns for Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. He also completes a bronze model of the ship San Josef for the Nelson Monument, Edinburgh.

1886  Executes marble medallion relief of Sir Walter Scott for Parliament Hall, Edinburgh.

1887  Steell retires from active sculpture, but continues to work for his own enjoyment. He is granted a £100 annual Civil List pension. The final Robert Burns is installed and inaugurated in Dunedin, New Zealand.

1888  Steell holds a studio sale of his working plant in March. The casts of Scott and Queen Victoria are displayed at the Glasgow International Exhibition. The Grove Foundry remains open until 1889.

1889  Steell shows his last work at the RSA, a marble bust of the late Mrs. James Stewart (Cat. no. 774).

1890

1891  Steell dies just three days from his 87th birthday, on 15 September at his home at 24 Greenhill Gardens, Edinburgh. He is buried on 17 September at the family plot in Old Calton Burial Ground. RSA members attending his funeral include George Reid, George Hay, John Hutchison, Clark Stanton and D.W. Stevenson.
STATUES

1. Alexander and Bucephalus
Bronze
1829-1833; Cast in bronze in 1883
Inscribed on drapery beneath horse: "JN. STEELL Sculpf"
h. 305 cm
Pedestal: freestone
Pedestal height: 244 cm.
Pedestal inscribed: "ALEXANDER & BUCEPHALUS" (front)
"PRESENTED TO THE CITY BY THE SUBSCRIBERS 1884" (group’s right side)
"MODELLED 1832, / CAST IN BRONZE,1883" (group’s left side)
City Chambers, Royal Exchange, High Street, Edinburgh
Exhibitions: Royal Institution, Edinburgh, June 1833.

This combination of figurative and equestrian sculpture was Steell’s first major work, and created a sensation within Edinburgh. Steell organised a public exhibition of the group in the rooms of the Royal Institution in June 1833.

Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey was reportedly impressed with the group, and offered Steell career assistance if he would move to London. Steell declined, citing a wish to remain in Edinburgh to improve conditions for Scottish sculpture.

Steell started the work immediately following his return from Rome in 1829, and was probably inspired by classical and neoclassical work he viewed there. The models for the composition and subject are seen in the classical Dioscuri, or "Horse Tamers" in the Piazza del Quirinale. Steell was also probably influenced by Thorvaldsen’s plaster reliefs entitled The Triumph of Alexander installed in the Palazzo del Quirinale in 1812, which also featured rearing horses. This work is reminiscent of the Parthenon friezes. Also of thematic and formal similarity were the 1795 Marly Horses by Guillaume Coustou. The head of Bucephalus is reminiscent of the head of the Horse of Night, from the Elgin Marbles; Steell would have seen casts of this group in the Trustees’ Academy collection.

In recognition of Steell’s success with the work, and to support his plan to have the group cut in freestone by Scottish stonemasons, the Board of Manufactures awarded Steell £50. This scheme was never enacted, nor was the planned 1833/4 exhibition of the plaster group in London.

In 1881, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch organised a subscription to cast the group in bronze. This was done at Steell’s Grove Foundry in 1883. It was installed in St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh in 1884 and was moved to its present location in 1916 to make way for Pittendrigh MacGillivray’s Gladstone Monument. Statuettes of the group were also published in bronze (see entry 162). An early photograph of the group is in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 81.
2. Sir David Baxter (1793-1872)

Marble
1863
Inscribed on base, sitter’s left: “JOHN STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1863.”
h. 218 cm
Pedestal: marble
Pedestal height: 56 cm
Pedestal inscribed: “THIS STATUE/OF/SIR DAVID BAXTER OF KILMARON,
BARONET,/WAS ERECTED/BY 16,731 SUBSCRIBERS, IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
OF THE/GIFT OF THIS PARK TO THE PEOPLE OF DUNDEE./BY HIM AND HIS SISTERS,/MISS
ELENOR AND MISS MARY ANN BAXTER./WHO, IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF
THEIR LATE FATHER, WILLIAM BAXTER, ESQ. OF BALGAVIES/HAVE DESIRED THAT HIS
NAME BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE GIFT/A.D. MDCCCLXIII”

McManus Galleries, Dundee

Baxter was born in Dundee, and operated the family textile firm Baxter Brothers & Co., manufacturing linen and jute. He was a philanthropist, and donated Baxter Park to Dundee. He also endowed an Engineering chair at Edinburgh University in 1868.

The first public meeting to discuss a subscription for a Baxter statue was held in Dundee’s Corn Exchange on 22 July 1862. The subscription closed in September 1862 at £1049, 6s. 11d. 16,731 people subscribed, including Fox Maule, 11th Earl of Dalhousie; the Earl of Camperdown; Lord Kinnaird and Sir John Ogilvy. Steell was commissioned to execute the statue, contracting to have it ready by 31 July 1863.

The Dundee Advertiser reported that Steell was to complete “the statue of Mr Baxter in marble, with a marble pedestal, having a design in bas-relief, emblematical of Mr Baxter’s connection with commerce and manufactures, and...acknowledging the gift of the park to the town by himself and the Misses Baxter.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 8) The statue was erected in the park’s pavilion. It is not known if the bas-relief for the marble pedestal was ever executed.

The Advertiser’s review of September 10 1863 emphasised the naturalistic detailing of contemporary dress: “The neckcloth seems made of the softest linen...Coat, waistcoat, and trousers are beautifully made...so beautifully that one wonders how such clothy softness and thinness of texture is got in marble...” It said of the likeness: “It is a photograph solidified in marble.” The marble block was reported as costing Steell £215. (SS, Vol. III, p. 11)
3. Lord Provost James Blaikie (1786-1836)

Marble
1844
Inscribed, reverse of pillar: “JN. STEELL. Sculp. /1844.”
h. 208 cm
Pedestal: red granite
Pedestal height: 120 cm

Town House, Union Street, Aberdeen

Pedestal inscribed: “CONSECRATED BY HIS FELLOW CITIZENS/TO THE
MEMORY OF/ JAMES BLAIKIE/PROVOST OF ABERDEEN/1836.”(front)

The Aberdeen Herald reported on 15 September 1838 that Steell had
received the commission for Provost Blaikie’s statue. (SS, Vol. I, p.40)This
was reportedly the first public marble statue completed in Scotland; the
statue of Sir Walter Scott for the Scott Monument was the first marble statue
commissioned.

James Blaikie was the son of John Blaikie, an Aberdeen plumber and
coppersmith. Blaikie the younger was born in 1786 and later studied law.
He was admitted to the Society of Advocates of Aberdeen in 1808. Blaikie
was the first Lord Provost to be elected after the enactment of the Reform
Bill in 1833. He served three years in office before dying suddenly in the
vestibule of the old Town House on 3 October 1836.

The Aberdeen Journal of 13 March 1844 reported: “upwards of £900
were subscribed; and it was resolved that the memorial contemplated
should be a Statue of Marble, to be placed in the Vestibule of the High
Church...The Statue of Provost Blaikie having been safely forwarded to the
place of its destination, Mr Steell paid a visit to our city to superintend its
errection...”(SS, Vol. I, p.56)

Blaikie is depicted standing in slight contrappasto, leaning with his
left hand atop a truncated pillar. He wears a double breasted coat with
wide lapels over a buttoned waistcoat and cravat. His Provost’s chain of
office is around his neck. Drapery rests over his right shoulder, winding
around his lower back and gathered in the crook of his right arm; he holds
a scroll in his right hand. Originally sited in St. Nicholas’s Kirk, the statue
was moved to the newly finished Town House in 1871.
4. **David Boyle, Lord Boyle** (1772-1853)

Marble

1860

Inscribed on base, sitter’s left: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1860.”

h. 167.6 cm

Pedestal: marble

Pedestal height: 132 cm

Parliament Hall, Edinburgh


Boyle was born at Irvine on 26 July 1772, the fourth son of the Hon. Patrick Boyle of Shewalton. He was called to the Bar on 14 December 1793, and in June 1807 was sent to the House of Commons as MP for Ayrshire. He served as Lord Justice Clerk for almost thirty years before his appointment as Lord Justice General and President of the Court of Session. He resigned office in May 1852, retiring to his estate in Shewalton, where he died on 4 February 1853.

As with his production of Lord Jeffrey, (see entry 16) Steell’s depiction of Boyle was one of his most detailed naturalistic studies. This was in keeping with the prevalent style of the other sculptures in the hall, including three works by Sir Francis Chantrey, and a highly naturalistic eighteenth-century statue of Duncan Forbes of Culloden by L.F. Roubiliac. Steell was thus aligning himself within this sculptural lineage, and claiming his place amongst his accomplished predecessors.

The horsehair judicial wig is painstakingly carved, using extensive drill and file work. Of equally elegant and accomplished detailing are the lace cuffs of the judge’s shirt and cravat. The pose was one of Steell’s most vigorous and grand as Lord Boyle presses home his point of law onto an open volume resting on his lap.

The 10 November 1860 Scotsman noted the verisimilitude, stating: “In the present case Mr Steell has carried out much further than in his statue of Lord Jeffrey that principle of a literal rendering of accessories which is now gaining so much favour in art... so long as interpretation of this kind is in skilful hands, and can be used, as in this instance, with powerful general effect, while preserving at the same time the strictest individuality of portraiture, no one will complain of the importation of such pre-Raphaelite [sic] practice into sculpture.” (SS, Vol. II, p.129)
5. David Boyle, Lord Boyle (1772-1853)

Bronze
1865
Inscribed on drapery, reverse sitter’s right: “Jn. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculp. 1865.”
Statue height: 210 cm
Pedestal: red granite
Pedestal height: 200 cm
Low Green, Irvine

6. David Boyle, Lord Boyle

Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
c. 1863
No date or signature
h. 215 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 227)

Literature: SS, Vol. III, pp. 39-42: The Scotsman, 5 October 1865; Dundee Advertiser, 7 January 1863; Edinburgh Courant, 5 October 1865; Daily Review, 5 October 1865; 11 October 1865; Caledonian Mercury, 5 October 1865

Steell executed a seated marble statue of Boyle for Parliament Hall in 1860. (See entry 4.) This bronze statue showed Boyle standing, and according to the Courant, “addressing the inhabitants of his native town with a deed of gift, or similar document, in his right hand.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 39) Steell completed the work at the same time as a statue of Onesiphorous Tyndall Bruce for Falkland. (See entry 8.)

The Scotsman noted a technical change: “Contrary to his usual practice, Mr Steell has tinted these statues before sending them out, so that on being uncovered they will have a deepness and uniformity of colour which it would require many months of exposure to the weather to produce. The results of the tinting are so satisfactory that we understand Mr Steell will treat in a similar way all his future works in bronze.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 42)

In keeping with his customary style for public monuments, Steell employed contemporary costume, which was generalised and classicised with the use of drapery. Virtually all of his bronze statues from 1865 make use of this effect.
Elizabeth Mary Bruce, Countess of Elgin (1821-1843)

Marble

Spanish Town Cathedral, Jamaica


Exhibitions: Royal Academy, 1849

Lady Elgin was the only child of Charles Bruce, an M.P. for Elgin and Nairn, and Mary Elizabeth Bruce. Born on 13 April 1821, she married James, 8th Earl of Elgin and 12th Earl of Kincardine in April 1841. She travelled with her husband to Jamaica in April of 1842; she died a year later on 7 June 1843.

The Illustrated London News of 20 October 1849 reported: “It was voted by the House of Assembly [in Jamaica] as a testimonial of the high sense entertained of the piety of the accomplished Lady Elgin, whose amiable disposition and enlightened exertions had great influence in aiding the interests of Christian morality in that part of the world.” (ILN, 20 October 1849, p. 269)

Steell exhibited the work in the Royal Academy in London in 1849, presumably while on its way to its final destination. Reviewing the exhibition, the London Examiner wrote: “...the most successful productions in the collection seem to us to be Mr Steel’s marble statue of the late Countess of Elgin, and Mr McDowell’s beautiful model of ‘Eve.’ The form, attitude, and drapery of Mr Steel’s statue are characterised by simple and graceful elegance. The countenance is fine, and the rapt expression of adoration harmonises admirably with the action of the figure. The whole is imbued with a deep and gentle sentiment.” (SS, Vol. I, p. 93)

Previously, Steell’s most prominent female seated figure was his colossal freestone statue of Queen Victoria, completed in 1844. (See entry 29.) The statue of Lady Elgin displayed a similar sense of volume, as well as the arrangement of the legs, the right being posed slightly higher than the other, and while resting upon a cushion. The curvilinear decoration of Victoria’s throne is also employed on the hem of Lady Elgin’s dress. The surface of the marble was given a low, uniform polish. The pose of the head, employment of the open Bible, and position of the drapery emphasised the piety and devotion attributed to Lady Elgin’s character.

Early photographs of the monument are in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 87 and Vol. IV, p. 20.
IN MEMORY OF
ONE SIPHORUS
TYNDALL BRUCE
Esquire
OF FALKLAND
Died 19th March
1855.
8. Onesipherous Tyndall Bruce (d. 1855)
Bronze
1865
h. 244 cm
Pedestal: freestone, designed by David Bryce.
Pedestal height: 280 cm
BRUCE/Esquire/OF. FALKLAND/Died 19th March/1855/Erected by/Public
Subscription”(front)
Falkland Parish Church, Fife
Edinburgh Courant, 5 October 1865; Daily Review, 5 October 1865; 11 October
1865; Caledonian Mercury, 5 October 1865; The Scotsman, 5 October 1865

Onesipherous Tyndall was a Bristol barrister who married into the
Bruce family upon wedding heiress Margaret Bruce in 1828. In 1829,
Tyndall was allowed to add the surname of Bruce under royal licence.
Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, he quickly became endeared
to the community of Falkland due to his philanthropic works, including
the erection of the parish church in 1849 at a cost of £7000. Upon his
death in 1855, a subscription was raised among his tenants for a memorial,
and an obelisk was erected on Falkland Hill. The remainder of the fund
was used to execute Steell’s statue.

Steell depicted Bruce in contemporary dress, in what the Daily
Review called “a walking costume,” with a cloak for drapery. (SS, Vol. III,
p. 40) The Edinburgh Courant noted that the likeness was achieved by, “in
addition to access to pictures, the advantage of a vivid recollection of the
deceased.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 39) Bruce had been appointed a Commissioner to
the Board of Manufactures in 1854, and attended some of the same
meetings as Steell.

Along with the Irvine statue of Lord Boyle, (see entry 5) which was
completed the same week, Steell used a chemical patina on the bronze for
the first time. According to the 5 October Scotsman, he was so satisfied
with the results that he decided to adopt the practice unilaterally. (SS, Vol.
III, p. 42) The work was sited in front of Falkland Palace, and was
inaugurated on 10 October 1865. The statue now stands beside the parish
church. Steell executed two additional life-sized bronze statues of Colonel
Robert Bruce and John Bruce, which both disappeared from Falkland
Palace following the Second World War.
9. Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Bronze
1880
h. 275 cm
Pedestal: red granite
Pedestal inscribed: "ROBERT BURNS" (front); Inscribed on reverse:
"PRESENTED TO THE CITY OF NEW YORK/ BY ADMIRERS OF SCOTIA'S PEASANT BARD/ ON THE/ ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIRST ANNIVERSARY/ OF HIS BIRTH."

Central Park, New York City


Steell received the commission for this New York statue almost immediately following the completion of the bronze replica of Sir Walter Scott for Central Park in 1872. (See entry 24) Many of the Burns committee served on the Scott committee. The chairman of the subscription committee was John Paton, an expatriate Scot and partner in Jessup, Paton & Company, a New York banking firm. The work was conceived of as a companion to the Scott statue. According to the Art Journal of 1873, Steell contracted to provide the group for 2000 Guineas.

According to the Art Journal of 1881, Steell had always hoped to execute a major Burns statue. He was allowed complete freedom in his design; the Art Journal of 1873 noted “the sculptor is to treat the subject in whichever way he chooses.” Steell chose as his narrative theme the anecdote told by Burns’s wife of the circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem To Mary in Heaven. (Art Journal, 1881, p. 72.) Steell used the 1787 portrait by Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) to guide his depiction of both the likeness and the costume. This image of Burns was a long established icon of the poet’s likeness, and had been bequeathed to the National Gallery of Scotland in 1872.

Steell was working on the clay during a visit by the King of Denmark and Princess of Wales in August 1874. The Scotsman of 20 August 1874 reported: “In this head, for which the Nasmyth portrait and cast of the poet’s skull have furnished the groundwork, Mr Steell has happily expressed the combination of strong manly sense with high poetic enthusiasm. The Royal visitors seemed particularly struck with the broad and massive style of the design, which they pronounced very grand.” (SS, Vol. III, p.44)

The statue was installed opposite the Sir Walter Scott in Central Park, and inaugurated on 2 October 1880. The 1881 Art Journal reported that the statue was received “amid great rejoicings, and produced quite a furor of enthusiasm.” Replicas were ordered for Dundee, London and Dunedin, New Zealand. These were the final large monuments to be executed by Steell and his studio.
10. **Robert Burns** (1756-1796)

Bronze
1880
Inscribed, drapery, sitter’s right: “SIR. J. STEELL. R.S.A./EDN 1880”
h. 275 cm
Pedestal: red Peterhead granite
Pedestal height: 210 cm
Pedestal inscribed: “THOU LING’RING STAR, WITH LESS’NING RAY/THAT LOV’ST TO GREET THE EARLY MORN/AGAIN THOU USHER’ST IN THE DAY/MY MARY FROM MY SOUL WAS TORN/BURNS/INAUGURATED 16th OCTOBER 1880.”
Albert Square, Dundee


The Dundee Burns was a replica of the New York City work, there being virtually no difference between the versions. (See entry 9) It was inaugurated a fortnight after the unveiling of the Central Park statue on 16 October 1880. The unveiling was performed by Frank Henderson, M.P. in front of a crowd of 25,000; the day was a public holiday in Dundee. The Dundee subscription committee was made up of eminent townsmen, most notably Revd. George Gilfillan, a Burns critic and editor of several Burns editions.

The Dundee Burns Club included in its 1880 minutes a careful account of Steell’s intentions for the group, stressing his depiction of “the highest intellectual phase of the bard.” The club also defended Steell’s composition, suggesting that some criticism had been made of the statue’s pose. The minutes read: “The pose of the limbs has been censured as awkward, but the critics...fail to perceive that when a human being’s consciousness is entirely absorbed by some high inspiration, the airs and graces of posture are undreamt of.” (GOODWILLIE, p. 52)

Steell used the 1787 Alexander Nasmyth portrait to guide his treatment of the likeness and costume, but the *Art Journal* further reported that Steell “freely availed himself of every portrait and engraving of the bard extant.” (*Art Journal* 1881, p. 72)

The Dundee poet William Topaz McGonagall composed a typical effort, *The Burns Statue* to commemorate the inauguration, but according to Mark Stocker, was refused access to the podium by the police “as if he had been a dog.” (STOCKER, p. 15) The public did not hear McGonagall’s lines: *And I hope strangers from afar with admiration will stare/On this beautiful statue of thee, Immortal Bard of Ayr.*
11. Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Bronze
1884

Inscribed on drapery, reverse sitter’s right: “SIR JOHN STEELL./SCULPTOR.
1884/EDINR.”

Inscribed on tree stump, sitter’s right: “THE GIFT OF/JOHN. GORDON.
CRAWFORD./1884.”

h. 305 cm

Pedestal: red granite and grey granite
Pedestal height: 230 cm

Pedestal inscribed: “ROBERT BURNS/1759-1796./THE POETIC GENIUS OF MY
COUNTRY FOUND ME AT THE PLOUGH AND THREW HER INSPIRING MANTLE
OVER ME. SHE BADE ME SING THE LOVES, THE JOYS, THE RURAL SCENES AND
RURAL PLEASURES OF MY NATIVE SOIL IN MY NATIVE TONGUE. I TUNED MY
WILD ARTLESS NOTES AS SHE INSPIRED.”

Victoria Embankment Gardens, London

Literature: Illustrated London News, 9 August 1884, p.121; GOODWILLIE

The London version of Steell’s Robert Burns was a gift of John
Gordon Crawford, a retired Glasgow merchant who was a long time
resident of London. Members of the organising committee included Lord
Houghton, Sir Lyon Playfair, Colin Rae Brown and the Scottish painter
Thomas Faed, R.A.. The chairman was a Professor Dewar.

Colin Rae Brown was the founder of the London Robert Burns Club,
and Goodwillie reported that while he, Provost Mackay and a Captain
Sneddon were inspecting Thames Embankment for a suitable site for the
statue, they conceived of the idea for an international federation of Burns
clubs.(GOODWILLIE, 1911, p. 59)

While the compositional elements of tree stump, plough sock and
scroll are identical to the other versions, the pose of the head was adjusted
so that the poet does not look upwards so sharply. Steel1 also made slight
changes to the legs and the right hand. These changes were duly
employed for the Dunedin statue. (See entry 12) The London statue’s scroll
is inscribed differently than the Dundee and New York groups, with the
lines:

O Sweet to stray and pensive ponder/A heart-felt sang.

The statue was the third version of the work, and was unveiled on
26 July 1884 by the Earl of Rosebery. The inauguration ceremony was
“attended by thousands of enthusiastic Scots and admirers of Burns who
thronged the Gardens and the approaches.”(GOODWILLIE 1911, p. 60)

The base is composed of four blocks of red Aberdeen granite from
pedestal’s inscription was taken from Burns’s preface to his second edition
of poems (also known as the Edinburgh Edition). This passage had earlier
inspired the narrative depicted in Peter Turnerelli’s 1819 Burns monument
for Alloway.
12. **Robert Burns** (1759-1796)

Bronze  
1883, installed 1887  
h. 280 cm  
Pedestal: red granite  
Pedestal height: 190 cm  
Pedestal inscribed: “ROBERT BURNS/ 25 January 1759/21 July 1796”  
The Octagon, Dunedin, New Zealand  
Literature: GOODWILLIE 1911, pp 72-5; STOCKER 1999, pp 11-24

This statue was the final version of Steell’s *Robert Burns* to be installed. Dunedin, New Zealand had a considerable Scottish emigrant population. In addition, the poet’s nephew, Revd. Dr. Thomas Burns (d. 1871), was a pioneer of the Otago province, having accompanied Scottish emigrants to New Zealand in 1847.

Mark Stocker reported that the first meeting to consider a statue was sponsored by the Ayrshire Society and held in September 1881. Steell’s group was chosen due to the fact that as a replica, it was both a tested design and less expensive than an original production. Also of relevance was Steell’s reputation as Sculptor for Scotland. Subscription funds accrued slowly, due to an economic recession in the 1880s and concerns by some members of the community with regard to the poet’s reputation as a drinker and womaniser. (STOCKER, p. 18)

Steell modelled his statue for Dunedin on the London version, completed in 1884. This version featured slight adjustments to the pose of the head, and small changes to the legs and right hand. (See entry 11) The work was completed and shipped to Dunedin in 1886.

The foundation stone for the work was laid on 26 March 1887. The inauguration took place two months later on 24 May 1887, some 8000 spectators were in attendance. The work was the first statue of Burns in New Zealand. The committee were tardy in paying for the work, as the *Otago Daily Times* of 28 May 1887 opined:

> ...the Committee who ‘unveiled’ him today would do only a wise and proper thing if they veiled him up again tomorrow...resolved to keep him in that eclipsed condition until the Otago public should pay the uttermost farthing; and they could exhibit Sir John Steell’s receipt in full. (STOCKER, p. 20)
Bronze
1878
h. 275 cm
Pedestal: red granite
Pedestal height: 350 cm
Pedestal inscribed: "THOMAS CHALMERS D.D. D.C.L. /BORN 1780 DIED 1847"
George Street, Edinburgh

Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers was one of the most eminent Scottish clergyman of the nineteenth century. A theologian, preacher, mathematician and philanthropist, he was born in Anstruther, Fife on 17 March 1780. He attended the University of St. Andrews, and soon after entered the ministry. In 1828, he took the chair of Theology at Edinburgh University, which he held until the Disruption of 1843, when he became Principal and Professor of Divinity at the New College of the Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Steell executed a popular marble portrait bust of Chalmers in 1846, which survives in several versions (See entry 44). As Steell was both an eminent artist, and a good friend of Chalmers, he was the obvious sculptor to execute the larger monument to the cleric.

The original 1847 subscription notice called for a marble statue to stand in New College. It was later felt that a more public tribute was required. The first project convenor was Dean Ramsay, who revived the project in 1869. (See entry 92) After Ramsay’s death in 1872, Sir John McNeill was made committee chairman, and the Lord Justice General Inglis the subcommittee chairman.

Dr. Chalmers is depicted in his Geneva robes, in his role as Moderator, with an open bible supported by his left hand. The likeness is closely based upon Steell’s original 1846 portrait bust. Steell shows Chalmers in his prime, emphasising the heroic leadership the cleric displayed during the 1843 Disruption. In May of that year, he led a third of the Church of Scotland’s ministers in the foundation of the Free Church, in which the kirk members would be free to elect their own leaders without the influence of political patronage.

The statue was inaugurated on 7 July 1878; an early photograph of the event is in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. IV, p. 35.
14. James de Saumarez, Lord de Saumarez (1757-1836)

Marble
1854
Inscribed on base, sitter’s left: “JOHN STEELL. R.S.A./SCULPT. EDINBURGH.”
h. 191 cm
Pedestal: Portland stone
Pedestal height: 91.5 cm
Pedestal inscribed: “DE SAUMAREZ” (front)
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich


Steell received the commission for this statue of the naval commander from Sir Robert Peel’s administration in 1842. The commission was part of a larger governmental scheme to assist regional sculptors. The two other commissioned statues were of Lord Exmouth and Sir Sidney Smith, by the Irish sculptors Patrick MacDowell (1799-1870) and Thomas Kirk (1781-1845).

Born in 1757, James de Saumarez first sailed in 1770 under Captain James Alms in the Mediterranean sea. In 1776, he served in North America with Sir Peter Parker in the Bristol. From 1778 to 1780, he was a Lieutenant aboard Victory, the flagship of the Channel. He received his first command, the Tisiphone in 1781, sailing against the French in the West Indies.

The high point of his service career was the summer of 1801, when following heavy damage to his force by the French he retreated to Gibraltar, oversaw the swift repair of his ships and immediately pursued the combined French and Spanish fleets, inflicting a huge defeat at Cadiz on 12 July 1801. He was made Admiral in 1814; from 1824-1827 he was Commander-in-Chief of the fleet at Plymouth. In 1831 he was made Baron de Saumarez of Guernsey.

Steell’s combination of specific naturalistic details with classical outline was remarked upon favourably by contemporary reviews. The ILN noted: “The mode of treatment adopted by Mr Steell is that daily gaining ground—all the essential characteristics of costume, badges of honour, and emblems of rank being retained, although partially concealed beneath the ample and picturesque folds of a boat cloak—the continuous sweep of which...invests the entire figure with true classic feeling.”(ILN, 14 January 1854, p. 28)

The National Gallery of Scotland holds a drawing Steell made of the completed statue (NGS D4443). It has been squared up for an engraving, perhaps the one shown in the Illustrated London News of 14 January 1854, p. 28. (See entry 163) There are two early photographs of the statue, pp.60-61 in Vol. II of the Steell scrapbooks.
15. Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville (1771-1851)

Bronze
1857

Inscribed, bottom of column: "J. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculp."

h. 366 cm

Pedestal: freestone, designed by David Bryce.

Pedestal height: 335.5 cm

Pedestal inscribed: "ROBERT/VISCOUNT MELVILLE/BORN 14TH MARCH
1771./DIED 10TH JUNE 1851./TO COMMEMORATE/THE REGARD AND
ESTEEM/OF/HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN"

Melville Crescent, Edinburgh


Robert Saunders Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville, was born 14 March 1771, the only son of Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742-1811), the formidable and influential politician who for thirty years, acted as the de facto ruler of Scotland. Robert Dundas entered Parliament at age 23 in 1794 as M.P. for Hastings. In 1801 he became M.P. for Midlothian. He was created 2nd Viscount Melville upon his father's death in May 1811. Dundas held many offices and honours in Scotland, among them: Lord Privy Seal of Scotland in 1811; governor of the Bank of Scotland; Chancellor of St. Andrews University in 1814; and Knight of the Thistle in 1821. He retired from politics in 1830, following the dissolution of the Wellington administration. He died at Melville Castle, near Edinburgh on 10 June 1851, aged 80.

The project was considered by Steell as an opportunity to further perpetuate the taste for bronze statues. Meadowbank wrote to the Duke of Buccleuch on 21 August 1851, "Steele...wishes to be allowed to undertake for a statue of Heroic size instead of Life size...His object is to make the work of such importance as to induce others to adopt statues of Bronze wh(ich) have never been executed in Scotland..." (NAS GD 224/511/13)

The expenses of the entire project were reported at close to £2000; the total subscription was listed at £2069, 4s. on 12 December 1851. (SS, Vol. II, p. 75) Steell contracted to provide the statue for £1600.

The statue was originally to stand in front of County Hall, on the High Street near St. Giles, in view of Melville's affiliation with Midlothian politics, but the site was subsequently changed to Melville Crescent.

The Scotsman praised the statue, and a member of the public agreed in a letter to the Editor of 3 November 1857: "Sir,—You are right. It is an honest, manly statue, that of Lord Melville. The head simple, powerful, and like such a head as the sensible, weighty, and good man himself had, and such as Raeburn would have given him." (SS, Vol. II, p. 80)
16. Francis Jeffrey, Lord Jeffrey (1773-1850)

Marble
1855
Inscribed on chair, sitter's left: "JOHN STEELL. Sculp./EDIN. 1855."

h. 137.2 cm
Pedestal: marble
Pedestal height: 132 cm
Parliament Hall, Edinburgh


Francis Jeffrey was born in Edinburgh in 1773, the son of George Jeffrey, a Depute Clerk of the Court of Session. He studied at Queen's College, Oxford and was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1794. In 1802, with Sydney Smith he founded the Edinburgh Review, a periodical which became a leading organ for dissenting political thought. A brilliant and influential literary critic, he served as the editor of the Review until his election to the post of Dean of Faculty in 1829. Jeffrey did much to perpetuate the progressive intellectual traditions of the "Modern Athens." He died 26 January 1850 and was buried in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. His tomb is adjacent to the Rutherfurd, Cockburn and Thomas Thomson plots. Steell executed the freestone relief on the monument designed by William Playfair. (See entry 136.)

The committee formed to erect a statue included his colleagues Lords Cockburn, Murray, and Rutherfurd. The co-operative London committee included the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord Brougham and Charles Dickens. Professor John Wilson stated that the project "was a demand from the heart of the nation, and would be gratifying in after ages to every lover of genius and virtue." (Edinburgh Courant, 28 April, 1855, SS, Vol. II, p. 62)

Steell depicted Jeffrey seated in a deliberative manner, which he later employed for the Boyle statue (see entry 4). Lord Jeffrey's hair and sideburns are treated in a contemporary style, especially the distinctive upright quiff which is seen in all of his portraits. Steell had executed a bust of Jeffrey in 1852. (See entry 70)

The National Gallery of Scotland holds a drawing of the completed statue by Steell in pencil, pen and wash (Inv. no. D4442). A virtually identical drawing is in the Steell Scrapbooks in the National Library of Scotland. (NLS MS.FB.m.55, Volume II, p. 63) (See entry 164)
George Kinloch was a Liberal politician who agitated for parliamentary reform well before the popular movement that culminated in the Reform Bill of 1832. As the *ILN* recounted, "He was marked out, in 1819, for vengeance, because of his attachment to the popular cause, but survived to behold its constitutional triumph, and to take his seat as the freely-elected representative of his native town in the first House of Commons after the Reform Act of 1832." (*ILN*, 25 May 1872, p. 513)

In keeping with the reputation of the sitter, the committee which commissioned the work in 1869 was composed entirely of tradesmen, including a builder, slater, joiner, carpenter and engraver.

The most dramatic incident of Kinloch's career was an address on political reform he delivered to a large crowd on Magdalen Green, Dundee in December 1819. Because of his inflammatory remarks, he was quickly forced to leave town. Steell depicted Kinloch giving this speech; he extends his right hand, in which he holds a scroll, the manuscript of his address.

Depicted in contemporary dress, with boots and long trousers, the *Scotsman* of 29 January 1872 noted "the artist has preserved the happy medium between the insipidly classical and the vulgarly literal. While preserving significant details of everyday dress, the use of the ample cloak enables him, without departing from the truth, to introduce something of the flowing outlines of the classic toga..." (SS, Vol. III, p.72)

A subscriber who visited Steell’s studio in 1871 reported on the artist’s perfectionism:

...the artist deemed he had not been sufficiently successful in catching the expression of the great Reformer's features. Therefore, with that conscientiousness which is always a characteristic of genius, he destroyed the labour of many months and began afresh ...Mr Steell, in his calmly zealous way, says that his aim all along has been to produce a work not only creditable to his reputation, but which will also be a source of pride to Dundee. (Unsourced cutting, SS, Vol. III, p. 70)

The statue was unveiled by Lord Kinnaird on 3 February 1872; it was the first public statue erected in Dundee.
18. Allan Ramsay (1686-1758)
Marble
1865
Inscribed at bottom, sitter’s left: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1865.”
Inscribed at bottom, front: “ALLAN RAMSAY”
Pedestal: freestone, designed by David Bryce
Front die of pedestal: relief of Lord Murray
East die: relief of Lady Campbell & Mrs. Malcolm, poet’s granddaughters
South die: relief of General Ramsay, poet’s grandson
West die: relief of Mrs. Ramsay, wife of Allan Ramsay the younger
Pedestal height: 548.6 cm
West Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh

The statue was commissioned by Sir John Archibald Murray, Lord Murray (1779-1859) to commemorate his great-uncle, the Scottish pastoral poet Allan Ramsay. Intended to sit on a purpose-built embankment terrace in front of Ramsay Lodge in Ramsay Gardens, the site was moved to West Princes Street Gardens after a landslide in 1860.

The pedestal, designed by David Bryce (1803-1876) features relief carvings by Steell of members of the Ramsay family.

Lord Murray was one of Steell’s Whig supporters from the Edinburgh legal community. He took the bench as Lord Murray in 1839 and died at Edinburgh in March 1859. Lord Murray attended Steell’s first bronze casting at the Grove Foundry in May of 1849.

Ramsay is depicted in eighteenth-century costume which includes buckled shoes, knee-length stockings, short trousers, unbuttoned cutaway coat, buttoned waistcoat, collared shirt with ruffled cuffs, and most distinctively, a turban, or “cowl” which was Ramsay’s customary headgear. Ramsay also has a plaid drapery over his left shoulder. This drapery does not bear an inscribed pattern, but a surviving Begbie negative of Steell’s artist’s plaster shows that it was originally intended, and the pattern is also included in the *ILN* engraving.

The Murrays actively assisted Steell in the design of the statue. The *Daily Review* of 25 April 1861 reported, “The statue is to be erected exclusively at the expense of Lady Murray...the statue...is to be executed by Mr Steele, who has received full instructions from Lady Murray with regard to its execution and design.”(SS, Vol. III, p.15)

The statue was inaugurated in a double ceremony with the John Wilson statue (see entry 31) on 25 March 1865.
19. James Ramsay, 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie

(1812-1860)
Plaster (Artist's plaster)
c. 1858
h. 206.7 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 177)

20. James Ramsay, 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie

Marble
1863
h. 206 cm
Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta


James Andrew Broun Ramsay, 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie was born at Dalhousie Castle, Bonnyrigg, on 22 April 1812. Educated at Oxford, he married Lady Susan Hay in 1836. In 1847, at age 36, Lord John Russell made him the youngest Governor-General of India ever appointed. He followed an aggressive expansionist policy in the subcontinent, annexing both the Punjab and Burma, while introducing or improving post, road, rail, sanitation and telegraph services. He held the office from 1848 to 1856.

According to the 18 September 1858 *Scotsman*, the statue was commissioned by subscribers in Calcutta, but organised by a London committee. (*SS*, Vol. II, p.99) Steell presumably owed the commission to previous contacts with the Ramsay family. Steell had executed busts of Dalhousie and his wife in 1847 (See entries 94 & 67). He executed a bust of their oldest daughter, Lady Susan Ramsay in 1859. (See entry 95)

Dalhousie is shown standing, in contemporary dress with a map of the Punjab and Oudh. Beneath his coat is the sash of the Order of the Thistle. A cloak is draped over his shoulders. The result was well received, the *Courant* noting, "It is the first piece of native sculpture, of any magnitude, that has ever been sent from Scotland...We almost grudge this beautiful specimen of art leaving our country." (*SS*, Vol. II p.100)

The statue, originally installed in the Throne Room of Government House, was moved to the Dalhousie Institute in 1870. It was shown at the Indian Museum in 1908 before being moved to its present location in the Sculpture Gallery of Victoria Memorial Hall in 1978. An early calotype of the statue is in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. III, p. 34.
21. St. Andrew
Wood (probably oak)
1827
Inscribed on cross, bottom right: “Steell/Edin./1827”
h. 223 cm
Pedestal: wood
Pedestal height: 158 cm
Pedestal inscribed: “PRESENTED/TO THE/BRETHERN OF THE DALKEITH
KILWINNING LODGE/BY THEIR RIGHT WORSHIPFUL MASTER/SIR JAMES
WALKER DRUMMOND BART. OF HAWTHORNDEN/XXII DECEMBER
MDCCCXLVIII”
Lodge Dalkeith Kilwinning No. 10, Dalkeith.
237; SS, Vol. I, p.2
Exhibitions: Scottish Academy, 1827 (Cat. no. 279)

This statue is the earliest known surviving work by Steell. According to the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, Steell was commissioned to create the work for the North British Fire & Life Insurance Company in 1827. It was installed upon the façade of the company’s offices on the corner of Hanover Street and Princes Street, Edinburgh. Following a fire at the premises the statue was presumed destroyed. A freestone version of the statue was later executed, presumably by Steell, to replace the wooden version. (See entry 22)

In 1848 Sir James Walker Drummond, the new Right Worshipful Master of the Kilwinning Lodge No. 10 in Dalkeith, donated the statue to the Lodge, where it was subsequently installed. Drummond was a director of the North British Fire & Life Insurance Company.

Steell probably followed an engraving of François Duquesnoy’s 1639 marble *St. Andrew* for St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome, for the composition, treatment and expression. According to the 18 August 1829 *Edinburgh Literary Journal* the statue was “carved in oak, but painted so as to resemble stone.” (ELJ, August 18 1829, p. 224)

In 1977, the Kilwinning Lodge asked Historic Scotland’s Stenhouse Conservation Centre to examine the work and suggest conservation measures. At that time, it was thought that the statue was entirely plaster, either cast from the wooden original or from Steell’s clay. Upon implementation of conservation measures, the Lodge discovered that the statue was in fact wood, and irrefutably Steell’s original version; both the 1827 Scottish Academy catalogue and the 1829 *Edinburgh Literary Journal* refer to the statue as wood.

The statues of St. Andrew were some of Steell’s few commercial projects. He also executed tympanum groups for Standard Life, and the Bank of Montreal. (See entries 154 & 128) An earlier relief of *Ceres* for Scottish Widows has been lost.
22. St. Andrew
Freestone
No date or inscription
h. 235 cm
Pedestal: sandstone
Pedestal height: 92 cm
Botanical Gardens, St. Andrews
Literature: St. Andrews Citizen, 14 April 1995; 9 May 1995

John Steell first executed a statue of Saint Andrew in wood for the North British Insurance Company premises at 1 Hanover Street in 1827. The statue was presumed destroyed, following a fire at the building, but it survived, and was kept by company director Sir James Walker Drummond, and given to the Lodge Kilwinning in Dalkeith in 1848. This version is still held by the Lodge. (See entry 21.)

This freestone version of the statue was presumably a replacement by Steell. It was displayed on the front of the company’s new premises, designed by the architect David Bryce at 64 Princes Street before being moved indoors during building renovations in 1905. When the company consolidated with the Commercial Union in 1963, the statue was given to St. Andrews University. The University subsequently gave it to St. Andrews District Council.

In 1995, the Council intended to make the statue a centrepiece for a landscaping project at Petherum Bridge, but a council member’s objections raised the profile of the work, resulting its identification as a work by Steell. The statue was instead cited at the St. Andrews Botanical Gardens.

The stone version of the work exactly matches the wooden statue in composition and effect. The statue itself is a copy of the Baroque masterpiece by François Duquesnoy in St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome.
23. Sir Walter Scott and Maida
Marble
1836-1846
Inscribed on stone seat, reverse left: "JOHN STEELL/SCULPT EDINR/16TH AUGUST 1846."

h. 305 cm
Pedestal: freestone
Pedestal height: 170 cm
Scott Monument, Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh

Steell submitted his model for the group in an open competition held in 1836 by the Scott Monument subscription subcommittee. While the committee requested designs combining architecture and sculpture, Steell's contribution was only sculptural. The subcommittee liked the design and combined it with George Meikle Kemp's Gothic spire. Lord Meadowbank and Scott's publisher Robert Cadell disputed the committee's decision, insisting that Sir Francis Chantrey sculpt the monument, but the majority of the general committee chose Steell in 1838. It was the first Scottish public monument project for a marble statue of a famous Scot to be awarded to a native artist.

Shown seated on a rusticated boulder, Scott wears a wide collared shirt, a coat with wide lapels and turned back cuffs, and a *maud*, (a lowland plaid, or shepherd's blanket) over his left shoulder. His deerhound Maida sits at his right side, facing opposite.

Steell based his likeness upon Chantrey's 1828 bust of Scott. The use of drapery closely paralleled Chantrey's employment of *maud* and Celtic brooch, though Steell dispensed with both brooch and incised pattern on his version. Steell also chose to leave Scott's eyes unincised in a classical mode; Chantrey drilled the pupils in his version.

The statue was cut from a twenty-five ton block of Carrara marble. Steell took delivery of the stone on 5 November 1844, completing the work in summer 1846 for its inauguration on 16 August. In 1849, Steell executed a portrait bust of Scott for the city of Perth, based upon his treatment of the statue. (See entry 100.)

Steell was commissioned for a bronze replica of the group for New York to mark the centenary of the writer's birth in 1871. The replica was installed the following year. (See entry 24.)

There are two Hill & Adamson calotypes of both Steell's artist's plaster and the completed marble. (STEVENSON 1981, p. 215) One of the Hill and Adamson calotypes is identical in composition to a sepia ink drawing by Steell held by the NGS. Steell may have used the calotype to execute his drawing. (See entry 166.) There are two other early calotypes in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, pp. 88-9.

In addition to these works, Steell created a marble statuette of the group, which was published in both bronze and Parian ware as subscription prizes for the Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. (See entries 167-170.)
24. Sir Walter Scott and Maida

Bronze
1872
h. 300 cm
Pedestal: red granite, designed by John Steell
Pedestal inscribed: “WALTER SCOTT”
Central Park, New York City


This bronze replica of Steell’s 1846 statue was commissioned in 1871 by members of the Caledonian Club of New York and the St. Andrews Society, to commemorate the centenary of Sir Walter Scott’s birth. Steell sent a letter on 11 July 1871 acknowledging the commission and accepting the terms of employment. The cornerstone was laid during a large ceremony on 15 August 1871.

According to the Scotsman of 2 March 1872, Steell took plaster casts from the marble statue in Edinburgh to create a negative mould, from which he created his plaster positive for the bronze casting moulds. The work was done in four pours: The first cast, that of the deerhound Maida, was poured on 1 March 1872; it was reported that the second mould for Scott’s head and shoulders was being baked in the kiln. Following the pour, the mould would be left to cool slowly for a week before being opened. The completed pieces were riveted together, then fused with molten bronze and filed down. (SS, Vol. III, p. 54) The Scotsman reported on 30 July 1872 that all four sections were completed, and the work was ready to transport. (SS, Vol. III, p. 55)

The granite pedestal was executed by Macdonald, Field & Co. of Aberdeen, who handled all of Steell’s granite pedestals. According to the Scottish American Journal of 7 November 1872, Steell designed the pedestal himself. (SS, Vol. III, p. 85) This seems to be the only occasion that Steell designed a pedestal.

The work was inaugurated with great fanfare on 2 November 1872. The Scotsman of 27 August 1872 called it “the first great work of art executed in Scotland for the United States…” (SS, Vol. III, p. 55) As far as it has been determined, it was the first major Scottish statue sent to America, as well as the first statue of Sir Walter Scott to appear in the United States.
25. Scottish National Monument to the Prince Consort

Bronze
1865-1876
Equestrian statue height: 450 cm
Pedestal: red granite, designed by David Bryce
Pedestal height: 518 cm
Pedestal inscribed, east side: “ALBERT/PRINCE CONSORT/BORN 1819-DIED 1861”
Charlotte Square Gardens, Edinburgh

Equestrian group by John Steell
Bas reliefs by John Steell:
   The Opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851
   The Royal Marriage of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort
   The Royal Family at Home
   The Prince Consort Distributing Academic Prizes

Figure groups:
   Rank and Wealth by William Brodie, after Steell
   The Soldier, Sailor and Engineer by Clark Stanton, after Steell
   Honest Labour, by D.W. Stevenson, after Steell
   The Artist, Student and Venerable Sage by D.W. Stevenson, after Steell

Symbolic elements:
   The Prince Consort's Heraldic Bearings by William Brodie, after Steell
   Literary Honours by William Brodie, after Steell
   Symbols of Defence by A.H. Ritchie, after Steell
   Symbols of Art, Science, Literature and Religion by A.H. Ritchie, after Steell

John Steell entered the open competition for the Scottish National Monument to the Prince Consort in 1864. Steell presented Albert as he appeared at the Volunteer Review of 1860, when the prince was seen by tens of thousands of Scots. Albert is depicted in his Field Marshal's uniform, his right arm extended in greeting with his feathered hat. The pose of the horse suggests a slow walk, coming to a halt. Steell presented a general classical effect, combined with specific naturalistic details and verisimilitude. The four mourning groups at each corner of the staged pedestal depict the social classes of Scotland united in their grief and respect for the man.

Steell's entry was approved by Queen Victoria and Sir Charles Eastlake in March of 1865. Steell collaborated with Queen Victoria and the Royal Family on Albert's portrait. The Queen supervised the execution of the bust, and Steell was allowed to work from the Royal family's photographs, drawings and paintings. From surviving letters it is known that the Queen also made other suggestions with regard to the bas-reliefs.

All of the bronze work was cast in the Grove Foundry. Steell's use of figure groups representing the social classes of Scotland was in keeping
with sculptural traditions in Britain and Europe, but Steell’s specific portrayal slightly differed with the generalised, allegorical use that was seen in other Albert memorials.

**Rank and Wealth**  
**Bronze**  
Father: 185 cm  
Mother: 170 cm  
Child: 104 cm  

Executed by William Brodie, this group depicted members of the nobility, a peer, his wife and their daughter. Dressed in contemporary clothing, the peer wears the robes of the Order of the Thistle. His wife wears a small coronet. The daughter carries a flower garland.

**Honest Labour**  
**Bronze**  
Father: 185 cm  
Mother: 152 cm  
Child: 108 cm  

Executed by D.W. Stevenson, this group was originally assigned to George MacCallum, who died in 1868 after completing only a sketch model. A working class man, with a mattock and plaid, approaches with a chaplet wreath. His wife, also in contemporary dress, but barefoot, with rolled up sleeves, explains to their son who the Prince Consort was.

**The Soldier, Sailor and Engineer**  
**Bronze**  
Soldier: 182 cm  
Sailor: 162 cm  
Engineer: 175 cm  

Executed by Clark Stanton, this group represents the services. A sergeant of the 42nd Highland Regiment stands on the left, his busby removed in respect. At right is a Royal engineer, in work apron, with a sledgehammer. Between the two is the sailor, moving forward to present his chaplet.

**The Artist, Student, and Venerable Sage**  
**Bronze**  
Artist: 185 cm  
Student: 146 cm  
Sage: 170 cm  

This group was the second executed by D.W. Stevenson. The artist is on the left, extending his wreath with his left arm. In his right hand he carries a portfolio, which is filled with brushes, tools and a small hammer. At right is the Venerable Sage, explaining to the student the worth of the
Prince Consort as a model for an exemplary life. The model for the Sage may be Robert Scott Lauder, both a friend of Steell, teacher of Stevenson, and the distinguished master of the Trustees’ Academy, where Steell had studied. Stevenson executed an 1861 bust portrait of Lauder similar to the depiction of the “Venerable Sage.”

**Royal Wedding of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort**
Bronze
90 x 185 cm
Victoria and Albert are depicted hand in hand before the Archbishop, who is in the process of conducting the service. At the right stands Victoria’s mother, the Duchess of Kent. At left is Queen Adelaide and King Leopold. The flower girl at centre left is Duchess Mary of Cambridge.

**The Opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851**
Bronze
90 x 185 cm
Steell’s depiction of the Great Exhibition was an opportunity to include a wealth of specific detail. The Queen is shown in the centre, seated on the dais. In front of her are objects symbolic of the industrial arts. Victoria, the Princess Royal sits by the Queen, while Edward, Prince of Wales stands nearby on the steps, in Highland dress. Prince Alfred stands on the opposite side. The Prince Consort stands to the right of the Queen, reading an address.
Steell may have especially enjoyed depicting the nations of the world. Present at the opening ceremony are Mandarin Chinese, Native Americans, Russian Hussars, Sikhs, and of course, a Scot with kilt, sporran, Glengarry cap and basket-hilted claymore. Also visible are sculptural exhibits that were present, specifically August Kiss’s *Amazon Attacked by a Lion* and John Gibson’s *Hunter with Dog*. Also visible are a steam locomotive and a stone lion.

**The Royal Family at Home**
Bronze
90 x 90 cm
The royal family is shown together at home, enjoying conversation and cultured pastimes. Albert and Victoria are at centre, with the infant Princess Beatrice upon the Queen’s lap. Prince Leopold stands at his father’s knee, reading an open book, and costumed in Highland dress. Princess Louise stands immediately to the right of Albert, holding a clay-modelling tool.
At the left, Edward, Prince of Wales, Victoria, The Princess Royal and Prince Arthur (in Highland dress) stand around a globe. At the right, Prince Alfred explains the use of the quadrant to Princesses Helena and Alice.
The Prince Consort Distributing Academic Prizes
Bronze
90 x 90 cm

Albert is shown seated, giving awards to young men representing different classes of society. The Prince of Wales is standing at his side in Highland costume. On the wall behind Albert is a picture of a lighthouse, a symbolic allusion to the Prince Consort’s belief in practical industry and intellectual achievement.

Prince Consort’s Heraldic Bearings: 86 cm
Literary Honours: 65 cm
Symbols of Defence: 75 cm
Symbols of the Arts: 75 cm
26. Scottish National Monument to the Duke of Wellington

Bronze
1840-1852
h. 427 cm
Pedestal: red Peterhead granite, designed by David Bryce
Pedestal height: 366 cm
Pedestal inscribed: “WELLINGTON”

Register House, Princes Street, Edinburgh


In 1840, Steell was asked by the Wellington committee to submit a portrait bust (see entry 113) and a design model of the monument independent of the final commission, ostensibly to help the committee to determine whether Scottish artists were capable of honouring the Duke in sculpture. This was seen by some committee members as a dubious strategy to secure the commission for Steell. The subcommittee chairman, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch, nearly resigned in protest. The general committee was asked four times if they would rescind their resolution favouring Steell, but they refused each time. Popular opinion supported a Scottish artist for the Scottish monument.

Steell depicted Wellington astride his horse Copenhagen at a crucial moment of the battle of Waterloo. The Duke is dressed in his Field Marshal’s uniform with a military cloak. The horse and riding gear are all described in detail, though the overall visual effect is generalised and classical. The anatomical detail of the animal is considerable, and Steell is known to have modelled his figure on horses borrowed from the 5th Duke of Buccleuch.

This project has additional historical importance, as it was the first statue in Scotland to be cast in bronze at a native foundry. Steell built the Grove Foundry at his own expense in Edinburgh’s Fountainbridge neighbourhood in 1848 so that he could complete the statue under his own supervision. The work reportedly contains 12 tons of bronze. (ILN, 19 June 1852, SS Vol. II, p.26)

Unveiled on Waterloo Day (18 April) 1852, the day was declared a public holiday, and the ceremony was photographed, the stages of the uncovering captured in surviving calotypes in the Steell scrapbooks (SS, Vol. II pp.40-41, 44-5). Steell left the work unpatinated, to darken naturally. Steell was commissioned by the RAPFAS in 1852 to execute three bronze statuette reductions of the group for prizes, but it is not known if he ever completed the task, as later RAPFAS minutes show that by 1855 he had not yet provided the casts. (NG4/1/1, p.24).

Early photographs of the monument are in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, pp. 2, 49, 51 and 53.
27. Sphinxes
Freestone
1837-1840
h. 183 cm
Royal Scottish Academy building, Edinburgh

Steell accepted the commission in June of 1836 for “eight Sphynxes each 12 feet in length and 6 feet in height, to be placed on the top of the Royal Institution.” (NAS NG1/3/25) Steell was paid £200 in three instalments for the work. The design was subject to the approval of the Royal Institution’s architect William Playfair. Steell and his assistants carved the figures in a temporary shed erected on the Mound, near the Royal Institution. (NG1/3/25, p. 338)

Esme Gordon suggested that the Board of Manufactures chose the sphinxes due to their being “fashionable as a result of Napoleon’s Egyptian exploits.” (GORDON 1976, p. 75.) However, the combination of the Egyptian figures with the Doric ordered columns and honeysuckle coursing was more akin to later Victorian eclecticism. Earlier sphinxes were seen on top of Edinburgh’s Parliament House, as well as eighteenth-century facades in Charlotte Square. Steell’s sphinxes were larger and grander than either of these examples.

The combination of Greek and Egyptian styles was the subject of comment, but the reaction to Steell’s handling of the project was favourable: “...we have in this splendid effort of genius, what has hitherto only been treated as Egyptian, completely Grecianized.” (Edinburgh Evening Post, 21 January 1837; SS, Vol. I, p. 24)

Though the Edinburgh Evening Post reviewer felt that Steell’s sphinxes were “Grecianized,” in form they were an orthodox example of the Egyptian motif. Greek sphinxes are customarily seated and feature wings. Steell’s versions displayed the typical Egyptian-styled traits of being recumbent, and wearing the nemes head-dress.
28. Henry Talbot, 18th Earl of Shrewsbury (1803-1868)

Marble

1873

Inscribed, bottom right: "JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr. 1873."

l. 235 cm x 72 cm wide

Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Ingestre, Staffordshire


Born in 1803, Henry John Chetwynd Talbot, 18th Earl of Shrewsbury was a naval officer, and was promoted to a captaincy after commanding HMS *Philomel* at the battle of Navarino; he was later promoted to Rear Admiral. He subsequently sat in Parliament, where he took special interest in matters involving the Navy. The Earl was the father of Constance Harriet Mahonesa, the Dowager Marchioness of Lothian, of whom Steell executed a portrait bust in 1873. (See list of untraced works.) According to the *Daily Review*, Steell received the commission for the recumbent statue in 1870, the Earl having died on 4 June 1868. The work was commissioned by the Earl’s widow, Lady Sarah Elizabeth Beresford.

The Earl is depicted in his ermine trimmed Peer’s robes, but its folds are thrown back to show the epaulette of his Admiral’s uniform, and the badges of the various Orders conferred upon him in recognition of his services.

The *Daily Review* mentioned, “The usual position of the hands, with the palms placed together and the fingers pointing upward, has been abandoned. The hands are allowed to rest in an easy manner upon the breast, and the whole position of the statue, with the skilful treatment of the drapery, is most expressive of repose.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 38)

The work is a fine example of the verisimilitude of which Steell was capable, but is most significant as the only recumbent funerary figure he ever produced.
29. Queen Victoria (1819-1901)
Binny freestone
1838-1844
h. 450 cm
Royal Scottish Academy Building, Princes Street, Edinburgh


Steell undertook the £500 commission from the Board of Manufactures for this statue in March 1837, after completing the eight sphinxes (see entry 27) for the Board of Manufactures’ Royal Institution building, now known as the Royal Scottish Academy. Steell originally agreed to supply a twenty-foot depiction of Minerva, that followed a general design of architect William Playfair. The accession of Victoria in late 1837 inspired the Commissioners of the Board of Manufactures to honour her with a slightly smaller monument. The statue was built from nineteen large blocks of freestone from the Binny quarry in Midlothian. Steell and his masons carved and constructed the statue in a rented workshop in Bread Street between 1840 and 1844, before the work was reassembled on the roof of the Royal Institution building. This work was the very first statue of Victoria as Queen.

The treatment of the figure is broad and ideal due to its size, but there is considerable decorative detail in the carved trim of the robes, which depict thistles. The badge of the Order of the Thistle is clearly described on the left shoulder of her robe. The overall effect is of a young monarch surveying her realm, at ease with herself and her responsibilities.

Steell travelled to Windsor in 1838, receiving five sittings for a bust which he utilised for the statue likeness; the artist’s plaster of the bust is held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (see entry 112). The disposition of the original marble version is unknown. Steell is recorded exhibiting a “colossal marble bust, modelled from sittings...at Windsor Castle” at the 1859 RSA exhibition, but it is unknown whether this work was based upon the 1838 bust or was an original execution; the disposition of this version is also unknown.(LAPERRIERE 1991, p. 238)

The Queen Victoria was Steell’s last major statue in freestone; the two freestone versions of The Wise and Foolish Virgins for the Standard Life buildings in Edinburgh and Dublin were tympanum reliefs (see entry 154).
30. James Wilson (1805-1860)
Marble
1863
Inscribed on base: "JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1863."

h. 202 cm
The Economist Building, 52 St. James Street, London


James Wilson was a Scottish politician, journalist and banker. Born in Hawick in 1805, he established The Economist Newspaper in 1843 and entered Parliament in 1847. Appointed as the Joint Secretary of the Board of Control for India, he also founded the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, which later became the Standard Chartered Bank. In 1859 he became the first Finance Minister of the Viceroy’s Council in Calcutta, introducing paper currency to the subcontinent. Upon his death in 1860, the British merchant community of Calcutta formed a subscription committee to erect a statue in his honour.

Steell probably received the commission through his contacts with Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India from 1847 to 1856; the subscribers were the same men who had commissioned the 1863 Dalhousie statue. (See entry 20.) In addition, Steell had previously executed a portrait bust of Wilson commissioned by the Royal Scottish Academy in 1859 (see entry 119).

The statue originally stood with Steell’s Dalhousie in the Dalhousie Institute in Calcutta. In 1955 it was moved to the Standard Chartered Bank, and was displayed in their main Calcutta branch. With government permission, the statue was returned to stand in Standard Chartered Bank Group Headquarters at 38 Bishopsgate, London in 1986. When the bank sold its premises in 1989, the statue was moved to the foyer of The Economist Building, at 52 St. James’s Street, London.

The Scotsman and the Hawick Advertiser reported that a bronze copy of the work was being discussed for Hawick. It does not seem that the plan was followed through; Steell was reported in the Advertiser suggesting the project would cost £500 for statue and pedestal.(SS, Vol. III, p. 38) An engraving of the work was reproduced in E.I. Barrington’s book The Servant of All (London, 1927), Vol. II, p. 315.
31. **Professor John Wilson** (1785-1854)

Bronze
1865

Inscribed on palm tree stump: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1865”
h. 356 cm

Pedestal: freestone; designed by David Bryce
Pedestal height: 300 cm

Pedestal inscribed: “JOHN WILSON/BORN 18TH MAY 1785/DIED 1ST APRIL 1854” (front)

Prince’s Street Gardens, Edinburgh


John Wilson was a popular writer in both English and Scots dialect. Born in Paisley on 18 May 1785, he entered Glasgow University in 1797 and moved on to Magdalen College, Oxford, graduating M.A. in 1810. A progressive Tory, he wrote under the pseudonym of ‘Christopher North’ for *Blackwood’s Magazine* starting in 1817. In 1820, through political connections, he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University.

His published works included *Isle of Palms* (1812) and *City of the Plague & Other Poems* (1816). He is best remembered for his serial contributions of *Noctes Ambrosianae* to *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which he started in 1822. He retired from his university post in 1851. He died following a stroke on 3 April 1854.

The *Scotsman* of 27 March 1865 named the subscription committee as Duncan McNeill (chairman), Lord Neaves, Sir John Watson Gordon, John Blackwood, Robert Chalmers, P.S. Fraser and Dr. John Burt. (SS, Vol. III, p. 22) The final subscription was reported at £1400 by the *Daily Review* of 25 March 1865. (SS, Vol. III, p. 29)

Steell portrayed the writer in a heroic, Romantic fashion, with particular emphasis on his noble features and build. The *Daily Review* of 25 March 1865 remarked:

The artist had advantages for his task beyond what are usually available for posthumous statues. He had taken several sketches, preparatory to the modelling of a bust, and these, with his familiar acquaintance with the Professor, who was a frequent visitor to his studio, have enabled him to work with about as much confidence as if he had been modelling from life...

(SS, Vol. III, p.29)

The work was unveiled along with the Allan Ramsay statue on March 26 1865. An early photograph of the statue in place is in the Steell scrapbooks, Volume III, p. 9.
PORTRAIT BUSTS

32. Dr. John Abercrombie, M.D. (1780-1844)
Marble
1846
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculpt./1846/JOHN ABERCROMBIE/1780-1844.”
h. 72 cm
Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh

33. Dr. John Abercrombie, M.D. (1780-1844)
Marble
1846
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculpt./1846.”
h. 73 cm
Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh

John Abercrombie was born 10 October 1780 in Aberdeen. He was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and Marischal College before attending Edinburgh University. He graduated MD from Edinburgh in 1803, and began to run a large medical practice from his home in Nicolson Street, while holding clinics at the Royal Public Dispensary. Between 1819 and 1844 he spent most of his time as a medical consultant, and was widely respected and consulted throughout the UK.

Among his honours, he was made Physician to the King in Scotland, and an Honorary MD of Oxford University. He died suddenly of heart disease on 14 November 1844.

According to the 1843-1851 minute book of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, upon Dr. Abercrombie’s death, Steell was asked to take a death mask for the execution of the portrait. (RCPE minute book, 1843-1851, p. 3540) Another marble version of the bust is held by the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.

Steell presented a typical moderate portrait, utilising general classical drapery and soft idealising of the features. Dr. Abercrombie’s head turns slightly to the right. The hair is in contemporary style, but given a classical treatment by the carving of the locks. It is not known if Steell had ever seen the sitter during his lifetime.
34. Albert, Prince Consort (1819-1861)  
Marble  
1878  
Inscribed on reverse: “SIR JOHN STEELL./R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1877.”  
h. 67 cm  
The Royal Collection Trust  
Literature: ORMOND 1973, p. 15

Steell actually completed this bust of Albert in 1878, though it is inscribed 1877. He was commissioned by the Queen immediately following the unveiling of the Consort Memorial in Edinburgh. Steell modelled this work from the 1865 plaster portrait bust he executed under the supervision of the Queen and the Royal Family for the likeness of the Edinburgh monument. The sculptor had also been given access to many paintings and photographs for reference.

Albert wears his Field-Marshal’s uniform with cravat. The collar bears the insignia of an artillery officer. His decorations include the Order of the Bath, the Order of the Thistle and the Order of the Garter, as well as the badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Legion of Merit. Depictions of Albert customarily utilised his military uniform, as it helped to avoid the issue of the Prince Consort’s lack of constitutional position within the government.

Queen Victoria did not care for the equestrian statue of the Edinburgh Consort Memorial, citing that the figure was “heavy, unlike dearest Albert, & too small for the horse”(RA QVJ 17/8/1876) but the portrait, executed with her consultation, must have pleased her, as she commissioned the marble bust almost immediately following the unveiling of the monument in August 1876. Steell acknowledged the receipt of the commission in a letter to Sir Thomas Biddulph of 31 August 1876:

> I have the honour to be favoured with your very kind letter intimating that Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to wish me to execute a Bust in Marble of the Prince Consort the same as the one I had the high honour of modelling under the superintendence of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle, which command I shall indeed be delighted to obey with my whole heart… (RA Vic Add 1/239)

Steell wrote to inform Biddulph that the work was completed on 6 April 1878. (RA PP/Vic/1878/1145)
35. Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh (1844-1900)
Marble
1865
Inscribed on reverse: “Jn. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1865”
71 cm
Playfair Library, Old College, Edinburgh University

36. Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh
Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
h. 69.9 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 170)
Exhibitions: RSA, 1867 (Cat. no. 937); RSA, 1926 (Cat. no. 45)

The artist’s plaster held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery was created for the marble bust which Steell executed for the University of Edinburgh in 1865. Prince Alfred, the second son of Albert, Prince Consort and Queen Victoria, was born at Windsor on 4 August 1844. He was prepared for a naval career, and started service at age 14. He was assigned to the Euryalus in 1858, and continued to work at sea throughout his life. Offered the crown of Greece in 1862, he was unable to accept due to political considerations.

In 1866 he was promoted to Captain, and was assigned to his first command, the Galatea in 1867. After four years steaming in the South Pacific, he was assigned to the ironclad Sultan in 1871. He enjoyed a good reputation as an officer, and received steady promotions, attaining the rank of Admiral of the Fleet in 1893. He died suddenly of heart disease at Rosenau, near Coburg on 30 July 1900.

The bust combines elements of classical and naturalist expression, but is more idealised than usual for Steell. While Steell uses classical drapery, and customary softening of features, the treatment of the hair is much more contemporary, employing a side parting. The surface of the marble was given a uniform matte finish.

Steell depicted the Order of the Garter on the Duke’s chest.

According to the 1863 diary of Noel Paton, the Queen diplomatically settled the commission:

"...She then said that a bust of P. Alfred was talked about for the University of Edinburgh—but that there were two sets of subscribers one set wishing Steell to do the bust the other wishing Brodie...She then directly asked if I thought Brodie would make a good bust of the Prince which I expressed my strongest conviction he would do, adding that it would be a commission of the greatest importance and benefit to him. The Q. nodded and said "then the P. shall sit to Mr Brodie; and if there is any difficulty with the other set of subscribers he must sit to both.”(NLS Acc 9591)

On 28 April 1864, the Queen noted in her journal: “saw a good bust of Affie for Edinburgh by Steel.”(Royal Archives, QVJ)
36. Dr. James Warburton Begbie, M.D. (1826-1876)
Marble
1877
Inscribed on reverse bottom: “SIR. JOHN. STEELL./R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1877.”
h. 77 cm
Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh

37. Dr. James Warburton Begbie, M.D.
Plaster
No date or inscription
h. 72 cm
Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh

Literature: SS, Vol. IV, p. 11: Glasgow Herald, 27 February 1877;
LAPERRIERE, Vol. IV, p. 239
Exhibitions: RSA, 1879 (Cat. no. 750)

James Warburton Begbie was born in Edinburgh on 19 November 1826. He was the second son of James Begbie (1798-1869) also a noted physician. He entered Edinburgh University in 1843 to study medicine, earning his M.D. in 1847. After travel and additional medical study in France, he settled in Edinburgh in 1852, and started a general practice. Shortly after he was made a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. He may have been Steell’s doctor, as a letter from Sir John McNeill from 1873 refers to “Drs. Smart and Begbie.” (GD 224/666/3/11/12)

After 1865 Begbie withdrew from both teaching and hospital work, and practised only as a consulting physician. His opinions and knowledge were constantly in demand, the DNB noting that “For the remainder of his life he was the most popular and highly esteemed physician in Scotland.” (DNB, Vol. II, p. 127) He retired due to a heart condition in 1875, and died in Edinburgh on 25 February 1876.

A late Steell bust, it is one of few which depict the sitter in contemporary dress. Steell continued to employ classical drapery in bust portraits until the very end of his career. The Begbie bust is one of two which depict a coat and bow tie, the other being the bust of John Gibson, W.S. (See entry 60.)
38. George Wauchope Hunter Blair (1857-1858)

Marble

1858

Inscribed on reverse: “Jn. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1858.”

h. 42 cm

Blairquhan Estate, Maybole, Ayrshire

George Wauchope Hunter Blair was the third son of Sir Edward Hunter Blair, 4th Baronet (1818-1896), who served in both the Royal Navy and the 93rd Highland Regiment. George Hunter Blair was born in Edinburgh on 14 February 1857 and died in Edinburgh on 8 March 1858.

Steell employed classical dress in his depiction of the young boy. This was in keeping with the nineteenth-century emulation of characters from Greek or Roman mythology. Employment of the chiton, pallium or toga encouraged associations which emphasised the commissioning family’s erudition and taste. George was probably meant to be likened to Cupid, or a young Aeneas.

Steell was noted for his productions of children, and during the course of his career he executed several busts of young people, often posthumously for the remembrance of their families. In 1834, the sculptor had executed a portrait bust of William Leigh Canning Sinclair, the late son of Alexander Campbell, 13th Earl of Caithness (see entry 101). Steell appears to have had a particular aptitude for child portraiture; he had nine children of his own.
39. Robert Burns (1756-1796)
Marble
1885
Inscribed, sitter's right: “SIR JOHN STEELL RSA/Sculpt./1885”
h. 75 cm
Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey

40. Robert Burns
Marble
1885
Inscribed on reverse: “SIR. JOHN. STEELL. R.S.A./sculpt. EDINR./1885.”
h. 75 cm
Burns Monument, Alloway

41. Robert Burns
Plaster
c. 1885
Inscribed on reverse: “SIR JOHN STEELL R.S.A.”
h. 75 cm
Burns Cottage, Alloway

Literature: The Scotsman, February 1885 (NAS NG1/68/1, unpaged);
GOODWILLIE 1911.p. 62.

Steell executed this bust in 1885. The likeness is similar to his monumental Burns statues of 1880-87, but was reportedly conceived of earlier. Steell presented a broad, idealised treatment of the poet's features, accounting for the site of the work and remaining in line with the treatment of the statue. Burns is shown with the same cravat and high-collared coat employed in the statue. The lapels are striped, in keeping with the 1787 bust portrait painting of Burns by Alexander Nasmyth, now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

According to an edition of the February 1885 Scotsman, the commission originated in Glasgow as a "shilling subscription among Scotsmen and others in all parts of the world." The chairman was reported as a "Preceptor Wilson." The subscribers' intention was for a suitable monument to the Scottish bard in Westminster Abbey. (NAS, NG/1/68/1, unpaged.)

This was the last depiction of Burns which Steell executed; the Dunedin statue had been completed in the same year. Both the marble and plaster copies of the bust were presented to the trustees of the Burns Monument in the 1920s by the architect John Keppie, RSA. (1862-1945)
John Campbell was born at Cupar in Fife on 15 September 1779. His father was the Reverend George Campbell, the parish minister in Cupar. Campbell first attended St. Andrews University at age eleven. He originally intended to enter the ministry, and enrolled in St. Mary’s College, St. Andrews, studying theology for three years.

In 1798, he accepted a tutorship in London, and after two years, decided to pursue a legal career. He was called to the English Bar on 15 November 1806. At the same time, he began revising, editing, correcting and publishing legal papers and reports.

Campbell was a member of the Liberal party, but was an instinctive conservative. He once advised his brother: “For God’s sake do not become radical.” (DNB, Vol. III, p. 833) After initial misgivings he supported the Reform Bill of 1832, the same year he was appointed Solicitor-General. He had worked steadily for legal reforms in real property laws since 1828.

Campbell was made a Baron in 1841, and spent much of his leisure time writing legal histories and biographies. He worked quickly and prolifically, but his scholarship was inaccurate and often plagiarised; most of this work has been discredited, though his early legal writing is still consulted. Palmerston appointed him Lord Chancellor in 1859; he died in 1861, aged eighty-two.

This early bust by Steell shows his continued interest in the employment of classical drapery, coupled with slightly idealised features that soften, but do not deaden the aspect of the sitter’s expression.
George Chalmers (1773-1836)
Marble
1838
h. 62 cm
Chalmers Hospital, Edinburgh
Literature: WATSON, W.N.B., A Short History of Chalmers Hospital;
LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238
Exhibitions: RSA, 1838 (Cat. no. 402)

George Chalmers was an Edinburgh plumber and burgess. Upon his death in 1836, he left his property to the Faculty of Advocates for the express purpose of building a hospital. At the same time, his trustees commissioned Steell for a portrait bust. The Faculty of Advocates subsequently purchased Lauriston House, and the hospital was opened on 22 February 1864.

The bust was exhibited in the 1838 Royal Scottish Academy, under the mistaken title of Robert Chalmers, but it is definitely the same work, as the catalogue noted the bust was “to be placed in the hospital endowed by him.” (LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238)

The portrait is in keeping with Steell’s work of the time. It is not known if Steell had ever seen Chalmers during his lifetime, or if he had access to a death mask or paintings. Steell depicted Chalmers in a gently idealised, but straightforward manner. He employed classical drapery, enveloping the upper shoulders and chest. The marble was given an even, matte finish. The depiction of the hair was slightly classical; the style was contemporary, but the individual locks of hair were clearly described shapes that alluded to Roman bust portraiture.
44. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D. (1780-1847)
Plaster
1846
Inscribed on reverse: “STEELL Sc /1846”
h. 52 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 175)

45. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D.
Marble
1846
Inscribed on front: “CHALMERS”
Inscribed on reverse: “John Steell. Sculpt./Edinburgh./1846.”
h. 63 cm
The Museum of Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

46. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D.
Marble
1846
h. 65 cm
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1846.”
Dalmeny House, South Queensferry, Edinburgh

47. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D.
Marble
1875
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1875”
Base Inscribed: “THOMAS CHALMERS. / D.D: D.C.L.-OXON.: COR. MEM: ROYAL INST
FRANCE./ 1780. - 1847.” Inscribed on reverse: “D.D: D.C.L.-OXON: /V.P.R.S.E.: 1780-
1847”
h. 66 cm
Playfair Library, Old College, Edinburgh University

48. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D.
Marble
1877
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL R.S.A./Sculpt./1877.”
h. 66 cm
New College Senate Room, Edinburgh

49. Revd. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, D.D.
Marble
1883
Inscribed on reverse: “SIR. JOHN STEELL. R.S.A/SCULPT. EDINR./1883”
h. 55 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 564)
Dr. Thomas Chalmers was one of the most eminent Scottish clergymen of the nineteenth century. A theologian, preacher, mathematician and philanthropist, he was born in Anstruther, Fife on 17 March 1780. He attended the University of St. Andrews, and soon after entered the ministry.

In 1828, he took the chair of Theology at Edinburgh University, which he held until the Disruption of 1843, when he led dissenting ministers in breaking away to form the Free Church of Scotland, in protest over the political system of lay patronage within the Church of Scotland. Chalmers subsequently became Principal and Professor of Divinity at the New College of the Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh.

This bust of the celebrated Edinburgh cleric was one of Steell’s most popular productions. The preacher was an early acquaintance of Steell, and gave him several sittings between 1844 and 1845. Letters pertaining to these sessions are held in New College Library, Edinburgh University. (Chalmers Papers: CHA 4)

The sitter’s gaze is directed downwards to the right, the eyes are set deep beneath a strong brow and high forehead. Steell employed his customary treatment of the hair, presenting a rhythmic portrayal of locks in a classical mode of expression.

The drapery is simple, and is not particularised as either classical or clerical robes. Steell used the likeness to execute his 1878 statue of Chalmers for Edinburgh’s George Street. (The Scottish Press, 23 October 1847, SS, Vol. I, p. 81). (See entry 13.)

According to Notes Concerning Thomas Duncan, compiled by James Finlayson, Chalmers agreed to sit for Steell, but had no time for Duncan. Upon hearing this, Steell arranged the sittings in Duncan’s studio, giving the artist the opportunity to paint Chalmers. (NLS Acc 9297, Vol. IV, pp. 1311-12)

The Inverness Courier quoted a Steell letter: “Accept ... this bust of Dr Chalmers, for which that great and good man sat to me so many times; for there was often during its progress more speaking than modelling—he took such an interest in the work, discussing with prodigious power the principle and object of fine art.”(SS, Vol. II, p. 110)
Marble
1851
Inscribed on reverse: “LORD COCKBURN/ J. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. EDINR./
1851.”
h. 71 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

51. Henry Thomas Cockburn, Lord Cockburn
Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
c. 1851
Inscribed on reverse: “J. STEELL/Scult.”
h. 73 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 173)

Edinburgh Advertiser, 18 March 1857; Edinburgh Courant, 10 March 1857;
photograph, p. 122; PHP, no. 75; LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238;
RINDER 1975, p. 383; WOODWARD 1979, p. 233; GUNNIS 1964, p. 371
Exhibitions: RSA, 1857 (Cat. no. 687); RSA, 1863 (Cat. no. 407)

Lord Cockburn was one of the most eminent citizens of nineteenth-century Edinburgh. He kept a lively journal which chronicled the events and people of the city in a vibrant but caustic manner. A life-long reformer and Whig, he supported the Reform Bill of 1832 and was a supporter of the emergent Royal Scottish Academy. The agreement he arranged with John Hope (1794-1858) and the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland—now known as the Hope and Cockburn Award—allowed Steell and twenty-three other fellow artists to join the Academy en masse in late 1829.

Born in 1779, and educated at Edinburgh University, he was an intimate friend of Thomas Thomson (1768-1852) and Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850), both of whom were later patrons, clients and supporters of Steell. He joined the Faculty of Advocates in 1800, but was dismissed in 1810 due to his politics. In 1834 he was called to the Bench of the Court of Session, serving until his death on 26 April 1854.

A vocal advocate of good design and architecture, he is best remembered by his Letter to the Lord Provost on the Best Ways of Spoiling the Beauty of Edinburgh, as well as the Memorials Of His Time and Journal. The Cockburn Association was founded in 1875, and still works to preserve Edinburgh’s architectural heritage.

Like many of his judicial busts, Steell balances his depiction of facial features between idealism and realistic expression—features are slightly softened, but never to the point where they become bland. A balance is struck between clear likeness and a flattering directness. The Scotsman of 21 February 1857 called it: “one of the finest works of the class that has ever passed from the artist's studio, and certainly the most worthy memorial of Cockburn we possess.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 71) An early photograph of the bust is contained in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 122.
52. Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859)
Marble
1875
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL R.S.A./Sculpt. Edin./1875”
h. 67.6 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 581)

53. Thomas de Quincey
Plaster
1875
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL R.S.A./SCULPt. EDINr./1875”
h. 68.5 cm
National Portrait Gallery, London; (Inv. no. NPG 822)

Exhibitions: RA, 1876 (Cat. no. 1495); RSA, 1877 (Cat. no. 672); RSA 1916, (Cat. no. 1)

De Quincey, best known for his work Confessions of an English Opium Eater, was born in Manchester in 1785. He attended Worcester College, Oxford, where he studied Hebrew and deepened his knowledge of English and German literature. While his diverse educational pursuits were in earnest, he never obtained a degree.

A friend and correspondent of such distinguished literary figures as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, de Quincey first established a connection with literary circles in Scotland through the acquaintance of Professor John Wilson (see entry 31). By 1826, and encouraged by Wilson, de Quincey was making contributions to Blackwood’s Magazine. The connection with the periodical led to his settling in Edinburgh in 1828. He died in Edinburgh on 8 December 1859.

According to the 19 March 1877 Scotsman, Steel1 executed this bust using only a daguerreotype and a painted portrait—the writer’s friends marveling at the accuracy of not only the physical likeness, but the overall presence of “the English Opium-Eater.”

The Scottish poet and painter, William Bell Scott, donated his plaster version of the bust to the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1889. The letters regarding the donation are in file number 822 of the NPG files, Heinz Archive, London.

According to Richard Ormond, an 1882 marble replica is held by Worcester College, Oxford; a woodcut was reproduced in The Bookman, XXXI (1907), p. 215 (ORMOND 1973, p. 135)
54. Edward VII (1841-1910)

Plaster

C. 1861

Inscribed on reverse: “J. STEELL/Scult.”

H. 71.4 cm

Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 169)


Exhibitions: London International Exhibition, 1862.

This plaster bust held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery is a replica, or conceivably, the artist’s plaster of the marble which Steell executed for the Royal High School, Edinburgh. Edward, while Prince of Wales, attended a session there in 1859, primarily to study the classics. According to Noel Paton’s 1863 diary entry, Queen Victoria did not like this work, and Paton himself at the time allowed that “it might be a little hard from over finish...” (Paton Journals, NLS Acc 9591)

Steell employed simple linear drapery and included the sash and badge of the Order of the Garter. It was inaugurated at the High School on 10 November 1862. An elaborate pedestal for the bust, consisting of an upper and lower plinth of Carrara marble, was designed by the architect David Bryce. The total subscription for the project was reported at the inauguration as £271, 17s. 1d.

Steell sent both this bust, and the bust of Florence Nightingale to the London International Exhibition of 1862. It was also shown at the RSA in March 1863 to commemorate the marriage of the Prince of Wales. According to staff at the current Royal High School, Balnatan, the original marble for the Royal High School, Edinburgh, was destroyed following vandalism.
55. Professor Edward Forbes (1815-1854)
Marble
1856
Inscribed on bottom rear corner: “J.N. STEELL. R.S.A. /Sculpt. 1856”
Inscribed on front: “EDWARD FORBES”
h. 61.5 cm
Playfair Library, Old College, Edinburgh University

56. Professor Edward Forbes
Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
c. 1856
Inscribed on reverse: “J. STEELL/Sculpt.”
h. 58.7 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 174)
Literature: NAS NG1/1/48; SS, Vol. II, p. 68-9; The Scotsman, 7 June 1856;
Edinburgh Courant, 7 June 1856; Edinburgh Evening Post, June 1856;
ORMOND 1973, p. 176

Forbes was the Regius Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University. He was born 12 February 1815 on the Isle of Man, the son of a banker. He attended Edinburgh University, initially to study medicine, but actually studying geology and botany under Professors Robert Jameson (see entry 69) and Graham. In 1833, at age 18, he went on a study excursion to Norway to examine both botanical and geological specimens. Forbes became Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh upon the death of Professor Robert Jameson in May 1854, but only served a few months before his own death on 18 November 1854 from kidney disease brought on by the chronic malaria contracted during a study excursion in 1841. He is buried in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh.

The Scottish National Portrait Gallery’s bust is the artist’s plaster for the marble version which Steell executed in 1856 for Edinburgh University, now displayed in the Playfair Library. On 4 November 1886, the Board of Manufactures agreed to buy the plaster bust, along with eight other busts, for £5 and 5 shillings for the SNPG.

The Scotsman remarked: “Mr Steell’s work is excellent as a likeness, and a fine piece of art... he has succeeded wonderfully in depicting the mingled intellectuality, ideality, earnestness, and humorous playfulness which chased each other like waves of light over the living face of the illustrious dead... The subscribers to the bust will each, we understand, receive a photograph of it by [the Edinburgh portrait photographer James Good]Tunny.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 68)
Ormond lists a plaster replica held by the Linnean Society in London.
(ORMOND 1973, p. 176.)
57. John Fullerton, Lord Fullerton (1775-1853)
Marble
1852
Inscribed on reverse: “LORD FULLERTON/ JN. STEELL R.S.A. SCULPT. EDINR./1852.”
h. 74cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

58. Lord Fullerton
Marble
1852
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./SCULPT. EDINR./1852.”
h. 64 cm
Signet Library, Edinburgh

59. Lord Fullerton
Plaster, (Artist’s plaster)
No date
Inscribed on reverse: “J STEELL/SCULPT”
h. 71 cm.
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 172)


Exhibitions: RSA, 1863 (Cat. no. 820)

John Fullerton was born in 1775, the son of William Fullerton of Carstairs. He was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1798. Upon the death of Lord Alloway in 1829, he was called to the bench after a distinguished career, serving as a judge until 1853. According to Parliament House Portraits, “An able and learned judge, his opinions are frequently quoted and referred to with the greatest respect.” (PHP, no. 68)

This fine marble bust is one of Steell’s most vibrant and direct. Employing his moderate neoclassical style, Steell imparts the natural characteristics of the judge’s face. Treatment of the flesh is particularly evocative, as it pulls tightly over the cheekbones, giving Lord Fullerton a sagacious, wizened look. The squared, herm-like base, and palpable skin suggests a tribute to Samuel Joseph’s 1822 bust of Henry Mackenzie. While most portrait busts by Steell feature a matte finish to the marble, this example was given a smoother, brighter polish than was customary.

The Daily Scotsman of 5 August 1859 noted “The bust was modelled from life in 1852, some two years previous to Lord Fullerton’s decease. Regarded either as a work of art or as a specimen of portraiture, it is one of the most pleasing of Mr Steell’s many successful efforts.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 117)

A second version of the bust, which features a truncated, rounded edge, is held by the Signet Library. An early photograph of the Advocates bust is contained in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 116.
60. John Gibson, W.S.
Marble
No date or inscription
h. 66 cm
Signet Library, Edinburgh
Literature: John Physick typescript, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

Nothing is known of John Gibson, Writer to the Signet. The bust is presumably a later work, as it features contemporary dress. It is attributed to Steell through a list compiled by John Physick held by the Henry Moore Institute.

61. Sir William Maynard Gomm (1784-1875)
Marble
1843
Inscribed on reverse: “STEELL. Sculp./EDIN. 1843.”
h. 72 cm
Keble College Library, Oxford

Sir William Maynard Gomm was born in Barbados in 1784. He was the eldest son of army Lieutenant-Colonel William Gomm of the 55th Regiment. Educated at Woolwich, he entered the service as a gazetted ensign in the 9th Regiment at the age of ten. He completed his education in 1799, and joined his unit as an acting officer.

For the next fifteen years he served in campaigns that took him to Holland, Spain, Gibraltar, Portugal, Ireland, Denmark, France and Belgium. He served with the Duke of Wellington in Spain and at Waterloo. He was made General in 1854 and Field Marshal in 1868. He became Constable of the Tower of London in 1872.

In spring of 1842, he returned to England after three years of commanding troops in Jamaica. It could be that Steell executed his portrait bust at this time, as Gomm was appointed as Governor of Mauritius in the autumn of the same year. He served as Governor in Mauritius for seven years. In 1850, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of India, where he served for five years during the Governorship of James Ramsay, the 10th Earl of Dalhousie (See entry 20). Gomm died on 15 March 1875, aged ninety-one.

The marble bust of Gomm demonstrates several customary traits of Steell’s portraiture of the 1840s. The overall effect is classical, especially the use of Flavian drapery and the gentle idealisation of the facial features. Steell paid close attention to the treatment of the hair, employing a classical description of the locks, combined with a contemporary hairstyle. The surface of the marble was given a matte finish, with a low polish to emphasise the face.

Marble
1855
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculp. / EDINr. 1855”
h. 77cm
Presbytery Room, Free Church College, Edinburgh

Robert Gordon was born on 5 May 1786 at Glencairn, Dumfriesshire. He was the son of a schoolmaster, and was appointed a parish teacher himself at the age of fifteen. He studied at Edinburgh University before moving to Marischal College, Aberdeen where he graduated D.D. in November 1823. He received his licence to preach in the Church of Scotland at Perth in July 1814 and worked at several Edinburgh parishes, including St. Cuthbert’s, Hope Park, New North Church and the High Church.

Elected Moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1841, Gordon supported Dr. Thomas Chalmers and the Free Church movement, and upon the May 1843 Disruption left the established church with virtually his entire congregation. He died following a short illness on 21 October 1853.

In the 1831 Scottish Academy exhibition, Steell showed a bust of a Dr. Gordon. This was presumably the same Dr. Gordon depicted in the 1855 bust.

Steell’s acknowledgement of the commission and agreement to the terms of the contract for the 1855 Dr. Gordon are in a letter of 11 January 1854, addressed to D. Maclagan, Esq.: (NLS MS 10695, f. 21)

Sir,

I am favored with your note, intimating that you have been requested by a committee of the friends of the late Rev. Dr. Gordon to intrust me with the execution of a bust of that esteemed clergyman, under the conditions that I engage to exhibit it to the committee half finished within six months and have it completed & placed in the library of the new College, within one year from this date.

In reply I beg to state, that I fully agree to these conditions & accept of the commission with very great satisfaction.

It is a work, the execution of which will be deeply interesting to me.

& with many thanks I am
Your Most Obedt Sert
John Steell

As this contract specified the approval of a half-finished bust, it would seem that the 1855 bust was of a different composition, and not a replica of the 1831 work. An early photograph of the 1855 bust is in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, page 90.
63. Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey (1764-1845)
Marble
1838
Howick Hall, Northumberland

64. Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey
Marble
No date, c. 1838
Inscribed on reverse: “Steell”
h. 71 cm
New Council Chambers, Edinburgh

Exhibitions: RA, 1837 (Cat. no. 1264); RSA, 1838 (Cat. no. 406)

Charles Grey was born on 13 March 1864 at Fallodon, near
Alnwyck. Grey was Educated at Eton and King’s College Cambridge and
became a Member of Parliament for Northumberland in 1786, serving until
1807. A Whig, he was a close ally of Charles Fox.

Upon his father’s death on 16 November 1807, he became 2nd Lord
Grey, taking his seat in the House of Lords in 1808. In 1830, as leader of the
opposition against Wellington’s government, Grey began to strongly
advocate parliamentary reform. The Tories were voted out of power on 15
November 1830, and the new king, William IV asked Grey to form a
government. Grey became Prime Minister in November, and worked
steadily at a scheme for reform, bringing the first reform bill before the
House of Lords in March 1831. The bill was defeated in the House of
Lords three times, but was finally carried in summer of 1832.

Grey continued as Prime Minister with the reformed House of
Commons, passing reform legislation that abolished slavery in the
colonies. Grey’s government also succeeded in passing the 1833 Factory
Act and the 1834 Poor Law. Difficulties with his Irish policy forced him to
resign in July of 1834. He remained in retirement until his death on 17 July
1845.

Earl Grey may have sat to Steell for his bust; there had definitely
been contact between them. A plaster bust by Steell of Lord Charles
Barrington was shown in the 1838 RSA exhibition: it was noted that the
marble version was “in the possession of Earl Grey.” (LAPERRIERE 1991,
Vol. 4, p. 238.) The bust of Grey was lent to the 1838 RSA exhibition by
Thomas Thomson. Richard Ormond’s catalogue notes that a version of the
bust was shown at the Royal Academy in 1837.

The bust at Edinburgh is similar to the work at Howick Hall, but the
Edinburgh bust depicts Grey all’ antico with drapery. The Howick bust
only depicts generalised classical drapery, terminating in a squared herm
base.
65. Revd. Dr. Thomas Guthrie, D.D. (1803-1873)

Bronze
Modelled, 1856; Finished and cast, 1895 by James Pittendrigh MacGillivray
h. 49.5 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 805)
Exhibitions: RSA, 1926 (Cat. no. 46)

Born in Brechin on 12 July 1803, the son of a merchant and banker, Guthrie was most noted for the founding in Scotland of the “Ragged Schools” which provided a free education for poor children. He attended Edinburgh University from 1812 to 1825, starting at age twelve. He was licensed to preach in 1825, but went to Paris for two years to study at the Sorbonne. He returned to Brechin in 1827 and spent two years managing his father’s bank before being ordained minister in the Church of Scotland at Arbirlot, near Arbroath in 1830.

A supporter of Thomas Chalmers, following the Disruption of 1843, he established Free St. John’s Church at Castlehill, Edinburgh; the church was built for him. He became Moderator of the Free Church General Assembly in 1862, and retired in 1865. He died at St. Leonard’s hospital on 24 February 1873. He is buried in Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh.

According to a letter from the sitter’s son Lord Guthrie, to the SNPG, Steell sketched the head of the bust in clay in 1856 for Lord Rutherfurd, but the work was put into storage following Rutherfurd’s death. Steell also executed a marble version for one of Lord Guthrie’s sisters. (SNPG accession file PG 805)

In 1895, the work was cast in bronze by Pittendrigh MacGillivray for Lord Guthrie. Lord Guthrie also directed MacGillivray to add shoulders to the head and neck. In a letter in the archives at Aberdeen Art Gallery, (which cast a plaster version of the bust for their collection in 1913) MacGillivray had warned the casters: “I do not advise a reproduction of the head with shoulders added by me. I made that addition a good few years ago at Lord Guthrie’s wish, but it is a thing I would not countenance now. For your purposes...only the Autograph work of the artist is permissible...”(Steell artist docket, Aberdeen Art Gallery)

Steell’s depiction of Guthrie is one of his most naturalistic and remarkable productions. The preacher is shown in his clerical dress looking straight ahead, which is atypical of Steell busts. The cassock was MacGillivray’s addition, but another bronze version held by a private owner displays classical drapery. (See entry 66.) The Aberdeen Art Gallery’s plaster version was reported as unlocated in 1967.
Bronze
No date
Inscribed, reverse of collar: “JN STEELL/Scult”
Inscribed, reverse of base: “JN STEELL”
h. 52 cm
Private Collection, London

This second bronze bust of Thomas Guthrie is similar to the SNPG version, (see entry 65) but with two significant differences: the work features generalised drapery, and the work is inscribed with Steell’s signature stamp.

Given the evidence of the signature stamp, which Steell often used to sign his bronze funerary reliefs, this version of the Guthrie bust may have been cast at the Grove Foundry. If so, it is one of only two bronze portrait busts known to have been cast by the sculptor himself, the other being the bronze bust of General the 9th Earl of Dalhousie for Wellington College. (See entry 93.)

There is mention of a Guthrie bust, presumably plaster, sold at the Steell studio sale in March 1888 for 21 shillings.

The most written about Steell’s bust was a *Daily Review* article of 8 March 1873, on Guthrie images, contained in Volume III, p. 35 of the Steell scrapbooks:

Like most other people, I presume, I was not even aware that there was a bust of Dr. Guthrie in existence - far less that one had been taken by Her Majesty’s sculptor for Scotland...The bold features and strongly marked lines are there in all their rugged grandeur, and there is over the expressive countenance a glow of Christian benevolence, with traces of shrewdness and humour so characteristic of the man that you almost expect the clay to speak. The eyes have that dreamy thoughtfulness one often sees in men of genius; Chalmers had it, and Sir Walter Scott had it...The work has evidently been a labour of love with the artist, for there is not a trait of his character which may not be read in the face. At the same time, there is not the least appearance of elaboration. The result is obtained by the free and bold handling of a sculptor whose art instincts and practised hand give him the *savour faire* in perfection...
Lady Susan Hay was the daughter of the 8th Marquess of Tweeddale, and wife of the 10th Earl and 1st Marquess Dalhousie. (See entries 20 and 64.) She travelled to India with Dalhousie in 1849, but suffered ill health while residing there. She died during her return voyage to Britain in 1853.

This bust is one of the finest Steell ever created. The carving of Lady Hay’s plaits is superlative, as is the depiction of the thirteen daisies and chrysanthemums on her headdress. Steell also employed contemporary dress, an unusual departure for him, as he customarily utilised antique costume and drapery for his female sitters. Lady Hay’s dress is décolleté, and extremely detailed, with a small checkerboard patterned trim along the neckline.

A uniform smooth, matte finish was employed on the surface of the work, imparting a graceful, elegant effect. The features were idealised and softened, but exquisitely modelled. In reporting the RSA exhibition of 1852, the 24 April 1852 Edinburgh Evening Post described the bust as: “conspicuous over all the rest for elegance and delicacy of contour.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 67)
68. Professor Thomas Charles Hope (1766-1844)
Marble
1844
Inscription on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculp./1844.”
h. 75 cm
Playfair Library, Old College, Edinburgh University

Thomas Charles Hope was born in 1766 and studied at both Edinburgh High School and Edinburgh University. He graduated in 1787, publishing his dissertation, *Tentamen Inaugurale quaedam de Plantarum Motibus et Vica, complectens*. In the same year he became Professor of Chemistry at Glasgow University, becoming an Assistant Professor of Medicine in 1789.

He returned to Edinburgh in October 1795 to become joint Professor of Chemistry with Professor Joseph Black. Upon Black’s death in 1799, he became sole professor, and stayed at the post for a further forty-two years, resigning in the winter of 1842-3. Hope’s most significant research achievement was to confirm that water attains maximum density several degrees above freezing point.

Professor Hope is presented in Steell’s customary moderate style: the overall effect is classical, but the treatment of the features is natural, though slightly softened, and the hairstyle is contemporary. He is clothed *all’ antico*, with Flavian classical drapery that encompasses the shoulders and chest. Steell often utilised this style of portraiture for sitters from the academic and legal profession. The marble was given a soft, matte finish in the style of Thorvaldsen.
Robert Jameson was Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University. Born at Leith on 11 July 1774, he was educated at Leith Grammar School and Edinburgh University. He first worked as a surgeon's assistant, but after studying natural history with Dr. John Walker in 1792-3, he turned to science. In 1798 at age 24, he published his first book *Mineralogy of the Shetland Islands and of Arran*.

He succeeded John Walker as Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University in 1804. Jameson amassed a collection of natural history specimens which was ultimately designated the Royal Museum of the University, and housed in rooms of the University Quadrangle in 1812. Before his death, he arranged for the collection to be housed in a new National Museum. This institution, first named the Museum of Science and Art, later became known as the Royal Scottish Museum, and is now an integral part of the National Museums of Scotland.

Professor Jameson, like many of the other institutional busts Steell created, is dressed *all' antico*, but his drapery is reminiscent of his academic robes. Steell has given the marble a very smooth, satin finish, which gently softens the sitter's features, but without rendering the likeness cold or hard.

The bust was subscribed for by friends of the Professor, the *Scotsman* of 23 February 1842 reporting that: “The meeting... resolved that a marble bust of Professor Jameson, executed in the best style of the art, should be placed, on a suitable granite pedestal, in the Museum which he had laboured so devotedly and successfully to render worthy of this University and of the metropolis of Scotland...Sir Thomas Brisbane proposed that, if agreeable to the professor the sculptor should be Mr John Steell...” (SS, Vol. I, p. 46)
70. Francis Jeffrey, Lord Jeffrey (1773-1850)
Marble
1852
Inscribed on back: “LORD JEFFREY/JN. STEELL. SCULPT./1852.”
h. 76 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

71. Francis Jeffrey, Lord Jeffrey
Plaster
1852
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. SCULPT./1852.”
h. 77.2 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 345)


Jeffrey was an outstanding thinker, writer, reformer and Whig. He was born on 23 October 1773 at Edinburgh. His father was George Jeffrey, a depute clerk in the Court of Session. He started university at Queen’s College, Oxford, but disliked it and returned to study law in Edinburgh in 1792. He was admitted to the Bar in 1794, but attracted so few cases in the Tory dominated legal world that he turned to literature.

In 1802 he and Sydney Smith founded, wrote, edited and published the influential Edinburgh Review. It was an immediate success, and Jeffrey devoted more and more time to it, until by 1804 he was the prime mover of the periodical. Noted for his eloquence, taste and acute faculties, he did much to perpetuate the progressive intellectual traditions of the “Modern Athens,” one example being his aid in founding Edinburgh Academy. He died 26 January 1850, and was buried in Dean Cemetery four days later. His tomb is adjacent to the Rutherfurd, Cockburn and Thomas Thomson plots.

As with his many other busts of the Edinburgh legal community, Steell depicted Jeffrey in a balanced fashion, combining classical drapery with a naturalistic portrayal of the facial features. Steell knew Jeffrey in life; as Lord Advocate, Jeffrey sat on the General Committee of the Scott Monument project. As the Courant reported: “The accomplished artist is well acquainted with the features and expression of the deceased judge, who was a frequent visitor to his studio.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 56)

The bust subscription was independent of the statue project, but was probably used by Steell to execute the seated monument of Jeffrey completed in 1855, and sited in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Edinburgh. (See entry 16.) Steell also executed the freestone relief of Jeffrey for his monument in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh (See entry 136.)
Robert Scott Lauder, R.S.A. (1803-1869)
Marble
1849
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1849.”
52 cm
Private Collection, Scotland
Exhibitions: RSA, 1857 (Cat. no. 688)

Robert Scott Lauder, R.S.A. was a noted Scottish history and figure painter, and Director of the Trustees’ Academy from 1852 to 1861. Lauder and Steell evidently enjoyed a warm friendship; there are two Lauder portraits of Steell and one of Steell’s wife Elizabeth. The small cabinet paintings of Steell and Elizabeth held by Dundee University were painted circa 1827. The later portrait of Steell is held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, dated circa 1832. Both men were friends with the painter David Scott, and are mentioned in Scott’s memoirs as visiting his studio in 1831. (SCOTT, 1845, p. 45)

This portrait bust is unusual for Steell in its employment of the herm base and lack of Flavian drapery, which was typical of his portraiture of the time. Special attention was paid to the depiction of Lauder’s side whiskers, which required the extensive use of drillwork and filing. A matte finish was employed over the entire surface.

In 1851-2, Steell sat on the Board of Manufactures Design School committee which recommended a fine artist for the Directorship of the Trustees’ Academy. Steell suggested that an aesthete capable of instilling “Promethean fire” in the design course was necessary; Lauder was subsequently hired for the post.

Lauder was a particularly inspirational instructor, and taught some of the finest Scottish painters of all time, including William McTaggart, William Quiller Orchardson, George Paul Chalmers and Robert Herdman. Partially disabled by a stroke in December 1861, Lauder died in 1869.

The sculptor D.W. Stevenson also studied under Lauder while at the Trustees’ Academy. In addition to executing his own portrait bust of Lauder, Stevenson executed the figure group of The Artist, Student and Venerable Sage after Steell’s design for the Consort Memorial. (See entry 25.) He may have used Lauder as a model for the figure of the Sage. This tribute would have been in keeping with both Lauder’s professional position and friendship with both sculptors.

An image of the bust is included in an early group photograph of busts within the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 91.
73. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder (1774-1848)
Plaster
h. 65.4 cm
No date or signature
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 226)

Lauder was the son of Sir Andrew Lauder, 6th Baronet of Fountainhall. He succeeded to the Baronetcy upon the death of his father in 1820. He had wide interests and areas of expertise, but focussed mainly upon literature and natural history, publishing scientific papers in Professor Thomas Thomson of Glasgow’s *Annals of Philosophy*. His literary works included two romances, *Lochindhu* and *The Wolf of Badenoch*, published in 1825 and 1827, respectively.

Lord Cockburn praised his wide range of talents, stating that he could have enjoyed success, “as a player, or a ballad-singer, or a street-fiddler, or a geologist, or a civil engineer, or a surveyor, and easily or eminently as an artist or a lawyer.” (DNB, Vol. XI, p 639.)

Lauder was appointed as Secretary to the Board of Manufactures in 1839, and worked towards improvements in technical and artistic training in Scotland. He also served as the Secretary of the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland.

He knew Steell through the Edinburgh art world, and sat on the subcommittee which organised the Scott Monument from 1833 to 1838. He would also have been acquainted with Steell through the Board’s dealings with the Royal Scottish Academy. He died on 29 May 1848.

Steell employed the Greek herm form for the bust, which features a square base, truncated at the shoulders. The drapery is broadly depicted, the simple geometric folds accentuating the classical effect, while directing the viewer’s attention to the face. The simple, straightforward portrayal was in keeping with the neoclassical style widely employed in Scotland in the mid-nineteenth century.
Professor Sir John Leslie (1766-1832)

After Samuel Joseph (1791-1850)
Marble
No date
Inscribed on front: "JOHN LESLIE."
Inscribed on sitter's left: "BORN 1766  DIED 1832"

Playfair Library, Old College, Edinburgh University


Leslie was Professor of Mathematics from 1805-1819 and Professor of Natural Philosophy from 1819-1832 at Edinburgh University. Born in Largo, Fife on 16 April 1766, he studied at St. Andrews until 1783 or 1784, when he moved to Edinburgh University as a divinity student. He preferred science to theology, and continued his scientific work until 1787. Between 1792 and 1802 he devoted his time to travel and scientific research; many of his experiments centred on the properties of heat.

In March 1805 he was elected to the chair of Mathematics at Edinburgh University, though the city's clergy were united in their opposition of him, citing his use of Hume's remarks on causation in his scientific papers.

Leslie continued at his post until 1819, when he was elected to the chair of Natural Philosophy upon the death of Professor John Playfair. He dedicated himself to the improvement of the department's laboratory equipment and facilities, and continued to teach and publish on a wide range of scientific subjects until his death on 3 November 1832.

The *DNB* mentions Samuel Joseph's bust and the copy by John Rhind (1828-1892) held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Steell's copy was for the University. Following Joseph's neoclassical, yet animated style, the professor is shown gazing directly forward. Joseph often employed partial drapery around the neck, as well as the squared herm base for his male subjects.

Joseph was an active Edinburgh sculptor, and was a founding member of the Scottish Academy in 1826 (he was the first sculptor elected as an Academician). He executed many portrait busts of the Edinburgh elite, and was a popular local artist, but he was unable to develop the powerful patronage relationships necessary to win commissions for larger projects. He left Edinburgh for London, pursued by debts, in 1829.

There is no concrete evidence that Steell and Joseph knew one another, but both men were active in the Edinburgh art world at the same time, and Steell joined the Edinburgh Phrenological Society (of which Joseph had been an active member) in 1830, shortly after Joseph's return to London. Steell would also have been aware of Joseph's portrait busts of local figures, including Henry Mackenzie (1822), Sir Walter Scott (1824), and Professor Dugald Stewart (1827).
Joshua Henry Mackenzie was the son of Henry Mackenzie, (1745-1831) the popular novelist and essayist, and author of The Man of Feeling. Called to the Bar in 1799, he was Advocate-Depute in 1810 and became Sheriff of Linlithgow in 1811. In 1822 he was elevated to the Bench, serving nearly thirty years until his resignation in 1851. He died in November of the same year.

According to Roger Craik and Colin Sutherland in Parliament House Portraits, Mackenzie was described in the 1840s as “a striking figure with his lean, long face, from which two keen shrewd eyes looked out through gold-rimmed spectacles. Looking very dried up, and suggesting a human spelding [Scots for a dried sea fish], he nevertheless had a keen sense of humour.” (PHP, no. 71)

Steell followed his customary treatment of the surfaces, employing an overall matte finish, with segments such as the cheeks and forehead given a low polish. The Edinburgh Evening Courant described the completed bust as “a very beautiful piece of sculpture and a good likeness.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 70)

Given the completion date, it is very likely that the bust was posthumous. Steell may have known Lord Mackenzie in life, as he had contact with many of the Faculty of Advocates. Alternatively, Steell would have been required to use portraits, miniatures, calotypes, drawings, deathmasks, or a combination of all of these resources to achieve a successful likeness.
76. Duncan McNeill, Lord Colonsay and Oronsay
(1793-1874)
Marble
1856
Inscribed on reverse: “LORD PRESIDENT McNEILL/ J. STEELL R.S.A. Sculp. Edinr./1856.”
h. 81 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

77. Duncan McNeill, Lord Colonsay and Oronsay
Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
c. 1856
Inscribed on reverse: “J STEELL/ Sculpt”
h. 83.8 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (Inv. no. 171)


Exhibitions: RSA, 1862 (Cat. no. 839)

McNeill was born on the Isle of Colonsay in 1793, where his father John McNeill was the laird. His younger brother was the British diplomat Sir John McNeill (1795-1884), another Steell patron and client. (See entry 78.) McNeill was called to the Bar in 1816, becoming Advocate-Depute in 1821. A Tory, he served as Lord Advocate from 1842 until 1846. He was elected as the Dean of Faculty in 1843, serving also as representative for Argyllshire in Parliament until 1851, when he took the Bench as Lord Colonsay. The following year he became Lord President and Lord Justice General, resigning in 1867. He served upon the subcommittee of the Wellington Monument project with his brother.

As with his other busts of advocates, Steell employed classical drapery coupled with a slightly idealised portrait treatment, but with natural features and a direct likeness. Colonsay’s high crest of hair and beard are given an energetic, distinctive depiction.

A replica version of the bust was reported in the Scotsman of 24 October 1874 as executed for the courthouse at Inveraray. (SS, Vol. III, p. 47-8) An early photograph of the bust is contained in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, page 123.
78. Sir John McNeill, M.D. (1795-1883)

Marble
1859
Inscribed on reverse: "JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1859."

h. 87.8 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 149)


Sir John McNeill was born on the Isle of Colonsay, off the west coast of Scotland in 1795. He studied medicine at Edinburgh University, graduating MD in 1814. He was appointed an assistant surgeon in the East India Company, and sent to Bombay in 1816. He worked in the medical service for twenty years, retiring as a surgeon in 1836. His medical service required extensive travel in Persia and Afghanistan, and in 1835 he was appointed as Secretary to the delegation sent to Tehran to congratulate the new Shah.

In 1845, McNeill returned to Scotland to chair the Board of Supervision administering the Scottish Poor Law Act of 1845. In 1855, he and Sir Alexander Murray Tulloch were sent to investigate arrangements and mismanagement during the Crimean War. McNeill remained as chair of the Board of Supervision until 1868. He died at Cannes on 17 May 1883.

During his time in England and Scotland, McNeill served on some of the most important public monument projects involving Steell. He sat on both the Wellington Monument committee, where he recommended Steell as an example of the ability of native sculptors, and on the Consort Memorial project. In 1859, he served as the executor of Lord and Lady Murray's project to erect the marble statue of Allan Ramsay in Edinburgh. (See entry 18.)

Steell's bust of his supporter and patron Sir John McNeill is also one of his most austere and grandiose in effect. McNeill appears as a Roman emperor or statesman, with a grave and stoic expression. Swathed in overwhelming drapery which dominates the composition, the features are more idealised than usual for Steell—the effect produced being rather severe.

Florence Nightingale, a family friend, as well as a sitter for Steell, wrote of the bust to Lady Emma McNeill: "I must write a word myself to thank you for the photographs from Steell's bust. The original I liked better than any portrait in marble I have ever seen, except Thorwaldsen's Byron (which was a very inferior subject.)" (McNeill, 1910, p. 415)

The bust was left to the SNPG by Sir John's brother Duncan McNeill, Lord Colonsay. (See entry 77.) A second version was recorded in Woodward's 1979 list as held by the Scottish Development Office, now the Scottish Office. This work has not been found. It could be the same bust that was offered by Phillips, Scotland on 30 September 1988, Lot 32. This bust was also dated 1859.

63
James Miller was born at Essie, Forfarshire, on 2 April 1812. He was schooled at home before being sent to St. Andrews University in 1824. In 1827, after a time under Dr. Ramsay of Dundee, he transferred to Edinburgh and became a medical student. He was licensed by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1832.

In 1842, Miller was appointed Professor of Surgery at Edinburgh University, succeeding Sir Charles Bell. In 1848 he was made Surgeon in Ordinary to the Queen and Prince Consort. The DNB noted: "In his latter years Miller devoted much of his time to religious and social questions, and became an ardent advocate of temperance. He died on 17 June 1864, and is buried in the Grange cemetery in Edinburgh." (DNB, Vol. XIII, p. 412)

Miller was acquainted with the painter, calotypist and RSA Secretary D.O. Hill, and appears in the calotype entitled The Morning After, a suitable subject, given the Doctor’s activities within the temperance movement. Miller also lectured as the Professor of Pictorial Anatomy in the Royal Scottish Academy and the Trustees’ Academy.

A Professor Miller is mentioned as "a gr.[eat] friend" of Steell in an 1856 letter from a Mr. Campbell to Isabella Gore-Booth in the Strathclyde Regional Archives; this may be Dr. James Miller. (Strathclyde Regional Archive, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, TD/459)

Professor Miller is seen with generalised classical drapery. As with many Steell busts, the hair is portrayed in its contemporary style, though the treatment is stylised by the separation of locks. Steell also executed an 1864 bronze profile portrait relief for Miller’s funerary monument in Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh. (See entry 141.)
80. Revd. Dr. William Muir, L.L.D. (1787-1869)
Marble
1837
Inscribed on reverse: “Steell Sculp. 1837”
h. 74 cm
St. Stephen’s Church, Edinburgh
LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238
Exhibitions: Scottish Academy, 1831 (perhaps an earlier version) (Cat. no. 376); RSA, 1838 (Cat. no. 405)

William Muir was born in Glasgow, 11 October 1787. He was educated at Glasgow, and at the Divinity Hall of Edinburgh. He was licensed to preach in the Church of Scotland on 7 November 1810, after receiving an LLD from Glasgow University.

In 1822, after ten years at St. George’s Church, Glasgow, he transferred to New Greyfriars in Edinburgh. In 1829 he moved to St. Stephen’s in Edinburgh. In May 1838 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly. According to the *DNB* “At the disruption Muir threw in his lot with the established church, and , being frequently consulted by the government, is said to have exercised an unprecedented influence in the disposal of patronage.”(DNB, Vol. XIII, p. 1167)

In 1845 he became Dean of the Order of the Thistle, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Victoria. Due to blindness, he retired in 1867, and died at Ormelie, Murrayfield, Edinburgh on 23 June 1869. He is buried in Dean Cemetery, with a funerary monument relief by Steell. (See entry 142.)

Steell displayed a portrait bust of a Dr. Muir at the Scottish Academy exhibition of 1831. It is not certain whether this version is the same one, or an earlier example. Steell reportedly executed this bust for the congregation of St. Stephen’s in 1837 but Muir was too modest to display it during his incumbency, and it was kept in storage. (Courant, 27 October 1866, SS, Vol. II, p. 19) The Session of St. Stephens lent it for display at the RSA exhibition of 1838. (LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238)

Muir’s features are idealised, but the hair is depicted in a contemporary style, especially the side whiskers. The carving of the hair shows an extensive use of drillwork. The minister is shown with generalised drapery that suggest his clerical robes. Steell made several plaster copies of the bust, which he sold for two guineas each, according to a letter in the National Library of Scotland.
(NLS 3109 f. 134)
Dr. Patrick Neill (d. 1851)
Marble
1844
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculpt./1844.”
h. 61 cm
Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh

Dr. Patrick Neill was a distinguished Edinburgh naturalist. From 1809 to 1850, Neill was the Secretary of the Caledonian Horticultural Society, the body which commissioned the portrait. The Scotsman of 28 December 1842 reported:

It is the intention of that influential body... to request Dr. Neill to sit for a bust, to be executed in marble by John Steel, Esq., R.S.A., to be placed in the Society’s Hall. This mark of approbation however, should not be confined to the members of the Horticultural Society. The Doctor’s services as a citizen of Edinburgh, and the interest he has taken in every public and benevolent undertaking, entitle him to a more general compliment.

Neill was indeed an active Edinburgh citizen. He was a member of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society, and the Secretary of the Wernerian Natural History Society from 1808 to 1849. To this day, the Horticultural Society awards the Neill Medal biennially to a distinguished Scottish cultivator or botanist. The Royal Society of Edinburgh also awards a Neill medal, the first being given in 1859, following a bequest from Neill after his death in 1851. In addition to his scientific pursuits, Neill owned the printing and typefoundry Neill and Co., which had been started by his father Adam Neill in 1768.

Steell closely followed a neoclassical mode of expression with the Neill bust. The work employed Flavian drapery, and the sitter’s hairstyle presumably emulated classical depictions. The carving is relatively shallow in comparison to Steell’s other busts of the period. This is may be due to the quality of the marble; a brittle block of stone would preclude deep undercutting in fear of breakage.
82. Florence Nightingale (1820-1910)
Plaster (probably artist’s plaster)
No date or signature, c. 1862
h. 50.5 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 222)

83. Florence Nightingale
Marble
1862
h. 69 cm
National Army Museum, Chelsea, London

This version is the original edition executed for a penny subscription raised by Crimea veterans. It was originally held by the Royal United Services Institute, but was given to the National Army Museum in 1963.

84. Florence Nightingale
Marble
1862
Derby Art Gallery (Inv. no. 827-121)

85. Florence Nightingale
Bronze
1862
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A. Sculpt. Edinburgh. 1862” with bronze label: “ARTISTIC FOUNDRY/LONDON/A PARLANTI”
h. 71 cm
Florence Nightingale Museum, London

None of the bronze versions of the Nightingale bust were cast by Steell. The Parlanti casts were made at the Artistic Foundry, London, in the 1920s. The Florence Nightingale Museum currently publishes full-size limited edition bronze replicas of the bust.

86. Florence Nightingale
Bronze
1862
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A. Sculpt. Edinburgh. 1862” with bronze label: “ARTISTIC FOUNDRY/LONDON/A PARLANTI”
h. 71 cm
National Portrait Gallery, London; (Inv. no. NPG 1748)
87. Florence Nightingale

Marble
1865
Inscribed on reverse: "Jn. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1865."
h. 69 cm
Wilton House, Salisbury

88. Florence Nightingale

Bronze, replica
1977
Kaiserswerth Hospital, Düsseldorf


Exhibitions: London International Exhibition, 1862.

Steell's marble bust of the nursing reformer was commissioned through a "penny subscription" started in 1859 by veteran servicemen of the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale loathed sitting for portraits, and according to her biographer Woodham-Smith, only agreed to the project because it was instigated by veterans, and Steell was the sculptor:

On April 9th, 1859, Hilary Bonham Carter wrote to M. Mohl: "I should tell you... that the bust of the soldiers with their penny subscription has been done... She could not sit regularly... nor could a stranger have done it. Fortunately she had known in Edinboro' more than two years ago a sculptor of much talent, whom she liked too, so much that she said she would sit to him if ever she sat to anyone... So the sculptor was telegraphed for. He had thought and dreamed about making this bust, and I don't think it could have been better. Under the circumstances it is astonishingly good—for she could only give two sittings and not long ones, they wearied her so." (Woodham-Smith, p. 361-2)

This bust, an excellent example of Steell's naturalism tempered with a classical treatment, was originally executed in clay by Steell in 1859. All surviving versions in both marble and bronze are dated 1862, with the exception of the copy at Wilton House. The version owned by the National Portrait Gallery, London is in bronze, and labelled: "ARTISTIC FOUNDRY/LONDON/A PARLANTII." It was not cast by Steell. News reports upon the bust's completion make reference to a marble bust, exclusively.

A bronze replica was cast from the NPG bronze in 1959 for Kaiserswerth Hospital, Düsseldorf, but was stolen in 1976. Another replica was cast to replace it in 1977.

Steell exhibited the bust, along with a bust of the Prince of Wales, (see entry 54) at the London International Exhibition of 1862. (SS, Vol. III, p. 5)
89. George Patton, Lord Patton (1803-1869)
Marble
1862
Inscribed on reverse: “JUSTICE-CLERK PATTON/ JN. STEELL
R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1862.”
h. 76 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament Hall, Edinburgh
Literature: DNB, Vol. XV, p. 509; PHP, no. 90; WOODWARD 1979, p. 234

Patton was the third son of James Patton of Glenalmond, the Sheriff
Clerk of Perthshire. He was born at Cairnies in 1803 and educated at
Oxford and Edinburgh University. Admitted to the Faculty of Advocates
in June 1828, he was appointed Solicitor-General in May 1859, but was only
in the post a few weeks due to a change in government.

During the 1840 commission process for the Wellington Monument,
Patton was described by architect William Burn as an over-zealous
advocate of John Steell receiving the commission (NAS GD 224/511/8, f.
28)

Patton was narrowly elected to a parliamentary seat for the borough
of Bridgewater in 1866. He was later appointed Lord Advocate, but was
unable to win back his seat. In 1867 he was appointed Lord Justice-Clerk
after John Inglis took the post of Lord President. Shortly following,
questions regarding electoral irregularities in his old constituency led to an
inquiry by a Parliamentary commission. Patton, though most likely
innocent of any wrongdoing, became depressed at the prospect of a
scandal. On 20 September 1869, he drowned himself at his Glenalmond
estate. He is buried at Monzie.

As is customary for his busts of Advocates, Steell employed Flavian
drapery in rhythmic folds to augment the dignity and position of the sitter.
The surface was lightly polished, with special attention paid to the facial
features.
90. Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850)
Plaster
No date or signature
c. 1850, based on bust by Sir Francis Chantrey
h. 59 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 223)

Peel was the son of a textile manufacturer, and represented the burgeoning middle classes' rise to political power during the nineteenth century. After a long and distinguished political career that began in 1809, at age 21, he became the Tory Prime Minister in 1841. Guizot called him "the most liberal of conservatives, the most conservative of liberals, and the most capable man of all in both parties." (*DNB* Vol. XV, p.659)

Peel was also an important arts patron and an accomplished collector; Peel's personal holdings of Dutch art became the basis of the National Gallery's collection. Within government, Peel played a major role in the encouragement of British artists. He served on the Select Committees on the Arts, facilitating the use of British painters and sculptors in the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament in 1844-5. Of great consequence to Steell was Peel's commissioning of regional artists to create three full size statues to commemorate naval heroes; Steell was awarded the commission for the statue of Lord de Saumarez in 1842. (See entry 14.)

Steell met Peel at least twice; a letter from Steell in the British Museum (MSS Add. 40509, f. 80) arranged an appointment in May 1842. In a letter of August 1843, Peel wrote to his wife to arrange for Steell to view the gallery and library in the Peel residence, mentioning that Steell especially wished to see Peel's 1828 bust of Sir Walter Scott by Sir Francis Chantrey. An 1842 Steell bust of the statesman George Canning owned by Peel was also mentioned. (PEEL 1920, p. 246) This evidence confirms the fact that Steell consulted Chantrey's bust of Scott for his own version. (See entry 23.)

The design of the bust held by the SNPG may be a version originally intended for Dundee. According to an 1850 *Scotsman* article, a bust of Peel was commissioned by the Dundee Chamber of Commerce, the treatment to be based upon Chantrey's 1835 bust of the statesman. (*SS*, Vol. II, p. 4) The Dundee bust remains untraced.

Steell presented a truncated bust, depicting the head and neck. Most of Steell's busts include the shoulders, and virtually all present generalised drapery. As Steell was supposedly following Chantrey's example, this may account for the truncated form.

Two plaster replicas were reported sold at the studio sale of 1888; one for nine shillings, the other for five. (*The Scotsman*, 14 March 1888, p. 6)
90A. John Archibald Primrose, Lord Dalmeny (1809-1851)
Marble
1852
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculptr./EDINr. 1852.”
h. 65 cm
Dalmeny House, Edinburgh
Literature: ROSEBERY, n.d., Dalmeny House

Lord Dalmeny was the only son of Archibald, 4th Earl of Rosebery (1783-1868). He was active in Scottish politics, and served as M.P. for Stirling for fourteen years. His wife Catherine had been a bridesmaid to Queen Victoria; the Queen visited Dalmeny House in 1844, and reportedly enjoyed both the house and views of the Firth of Forth.

Lord Dalmeny was fond of walking the seven miles to Edinburgh to enjoy the Turkish baths there. Unfortunately, he contracted pleurisy from one winter excursion, and died at age 42.

Steell executed this posthumous bust for the 4th Earl of Rosebery in 1852. Steell charged £79 and fifteen shillings for the work. Rosebery paid him in two installments of £37. 7/6 d. The Rosebery family also hold a plaster version of the bust.
91. Revd. Edward Bannerman Burnett Ramsay (1793-1872)  
(Known as "Dean Ramsay")  
Marble  
1885  
Inscribed on reverse: "SIR. JOHN STEELL. / R.S.A. / Sculp. EDINR. / 1885."  
h. 75 cm.  
St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, Lothian Road, Edinburgh.

92. Dean Ramsay  
Plaster (Artist's plaster)  
No date  
Inscribed on reverse: "J. STEELL / Sculp."  
h. 71.4 cm  
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (inv. no. PG 176)

Literature: The Scotsman 14 March 1888; SRO NG1/1/48, p. 338; DNB Vol. XVI, p. 685

Born Edward Bannerman Burnett in Aberdeen, he took the surname of Ramsay upon inheriting lands in Yorkshire from his uncle Sir Alexander Ramsay. He was educated at Durham and Cambridge University, and held the position of Curate at Somerset in the Church of England before returning to Scotland.

Dean Ramsay was the Priest of St. John's Episcopal in Edinburgh from 1830, and made Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh in 1846. In 1869, at his instigation, the subscription for a monument to Dr. Thomas Chalmers was renewed. Upon Ramsay's death in 1872, it was suggested that Steell execute a similar project for the Dean, but a stone and bronze Celtic cross designed by the Edinburgh architect Sir Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921) was used instead. This may have been due to Steell's preoccupation with the Consort Memorial.

The Board of Manufactures minutes from 4 Nov. 1886 noted that the SNPG committee resolved to purchase nine plaster busts from Steell, including one of Ramsay, for £5.5/each. (NAS NG1/1/48, p. 338.)

A later production by Steell, the portrait bust employs a careful representation of Ramsay's clerical dress. Other Steell depictions of clergymen customarily depict classical drapery, or generalised robes to approximate a drapery effect. Steell particularly emphasised the naturalistic portrayal of Ramsay's rugged features.
93. **General the 9th Earl of Dalhousie (1770-1838)**

Bronze  
c. 1861  
Inscribed, front of base: “1838”  
h. 71 cm  
Wellington College, Crowthorne, Berkshire  

George Ramsay was the 9th Earl of Dalhousie, and the father of James Ramsay, the 10th Earl, and Governor General of India (see entry 94). During his military career, General Dalhousie commanded the 7th Division of the British Army during the French and Peninsular campaigns of 1812-1814. From 1819 to 1828 he was Captain-general and Governor-in-Chief of Canada. From 1829 to 1832 he served as Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies. He died on 21 March, 1838.

The bust is displayed at Wellington College, which was founded in 1853 as a tribute to Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. The red brick quadrangle buildings feature exterior niches for bronze busts of Wellington’s generals. The majority of these busts were executed and cast by William Theed (1804-1891) using the electroplate technique. Steell was presumably commissioned for the Dalhousie bust due to his connections with the Ramsay family.

The *Scotsman* of 23 March 1861 noted the completion of this work “for the decoration of Wellington College.” The bust, which is unsigned, is attributable to Steell by this reference, as well as the fact that virtually all the other busts held by Wellington College are electroplate casts, and not solid bronze.

The General is shown in his army uniform. His service decorations for the Pyrenees and Egypt campaigns are described in detail. This specific treatment of costume was relatively rare for Steell, who usually employed classical drapery for depictions of military officers. Though he depicted specific uniforms in his later productions of Prince Albert (1876-8) and the 18th Earl of Shrewsbury (1873), (see entries 34 & 28) this is the first known instance of such a depiction in a portrait bust. It is also one of the few surviving bronze busts that Steell is known to have cast at the Grove Foundry. The bronze busts of Florence Nightingale (see entries 85 & 86) and Thomas Guthrie (see entry 65) were cast after the originals had left Steell’s studio.
94. James Andrew Broun Ramsay, 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie (1812-1860)
Marble
1847
Inscribed on reverse: "J.N. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1847."

h. 75 cm
Private collection, Scotland
Exhibitions: RSA, 1855 (Cat. no. 779)

Dalhousie was born 22 April 1812 at Dalhousie Castle, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian. He was Oxford educated, and became the 10th Earl upon the death of his father George Ramsay (1770-1838) in 1838. (See entry 93)

Dalhousie married Lady Susan Hay, eldest daughter of George, 8th Marquess of Tweeddale in 1836. (See entry 67.)

Dalhousie was first elected to the House of Lords in 1837, and quickly gained the attention of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, who appointed him Vice-President of the Board of Trade in 1843. Two years later, he succeeded William Gladstone as President. In 1847, Lord John Russell appointed him Governor General of India. He was sworn in on 12 January 1848; at 36 years old he was the youngest man to ever serve in the position.

As Governor, he introduced the railways and the telegraph to the subcontinent, as well as improving post, roads, irrigation and the opening of the Ganges Canal. He followed an aggressive annexation policy, enveloping the Punjab, Burma and Oudh. He was created 1st Marquess of Dalhousie in 1849.

In 1840, Dalhousie was the Chairman of the General Committee for the Scottish National Monument to the Duke of Wellington. This may have been the first time he encountered Steell.

During his career, Steell executed busts of Dalhousie, Lady Hay, and their oldest daughter, Lady Susan Ramsay (See entries 67 & 95). Steell may also have executed a bust of their youngest daughter Lady Edith Christian Ramsay. (See appendix 2) Lady Hay died on the return voyage from India in 1853, the death greatly affecting the Earl’s health. He died in 1860 at age forty-nine.

Dated 1847, the bust may have been commissioned to commemorate the sitter’s appointment as Governor General of India. Dalhousie appears handsome and in the prime of his life. Steell employed Flavian drapery with graceful folds to frame the head. The finish was uniformly smooth and matte. The features were slightly idealised, but the treatment of the hair, especially the sidewhiskers, was lively and refined.

An 1861 marble replica was noted as belonging to the Marquess of Tweeddale; a woodcut of the work is reproduced in Curzon's The British Government in India, London, 1925, Vol. II, p. 92. (ORMOND 1973, p. 129.)
95. Lady Susan Ramsay (d.1898)

Marble
1859
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1859”
70 cm
Private collection, Scotland


Exhibitions: RSA, 1862 (Cat. no. 854)

Susan Georgiana Ramsay was the oldest daughter of the 10th Earl of Dalhousie and Lady Susan Hay. She married 1st Lord Connemara in November 1863, before divorcing him in 1890. In October 1894, she wed a second time to Surgeon-Lieutenant Colonel William Hamilton Briggs (later Broun). In 1878 she was made a Lady of the Imperial Order of the Crown of India.

Steell exhibited the bust at the RSA in 1862. The Dundee Advertiser of 7 January 1863 described the work as “an admirable portrayal of a sweet and ingenuous countenance.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 103) As was customary in his portrait busts of female sitters, Steell employed an approximation of classical dress, while emphasising a good likeness, carefully softened depiction of the features, and a contemporary hairstyle. The hair featured extensive drill work in the depiction of the ringlets which frame the sitter’s face.

Two early photographs of the marble bust are contained in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, pages 124-5.
96. **George Ross** (1814-1863)
Marble  
1864  
Inscribed on reverse: “GEORGE ROSS/JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt./Edinr./1864.”  
h. 77 cm  
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh  

George Ross was born in Edinburgh in 1814. Admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1835, he was appointed Professor of Scots Law at Edinburgh University in 1861. He authored the 1849 book *Leading Cases in the Law of Scotland*.

Steell’s treatment of Ross is unique within the collection of Faculty of Advocates busts in the use of Ross’s academic robes in lieu of classical drapery. Steell’s customary moderated combination of naturalism and idealism is employed in the depiction of the features, but a brighter polish is given to the surface, instead of the usual matte finish.

Given Ross’s position as a law professor, it could be that Steell modelled his original in robes with a view towards securing an additional order from the University of Edinburgh; Steell executed several busts of academics for that institution.
97. Lady Sophia Frances Rutherfurd (d. 1852)
Marble
1853
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. SCULPT. / 1853. / EDINBURGH.”
h. 75.6 cm
Exhibitions: RSA, 1855 (Cat. no. 783)

Lady Sophia Frances Rutherfurd was the daughter of Sir James Stewart of County Donegal, Ireland. She married Lord Advocate Andrew Rutherfurd on 10 April 1822. Given her husband’s prominent position, she was a noted Edinburgh hostess. The family’s close friends included Lord Jeffrey, Lord Cockburn, and the architect William Playfair.

Upon Lady Rutherfurd’s death in October 1852, Steell made a death mask for her portrait bust in marble. (NLS MS 9688 f. 167) Lord Rutherfurd had often patronised the English sculptor William Theed (1803-1891), but in this case, Steell had the advantage of being nearby. Steell had also recently completed portrait busts of Lord Cockburn (1851) and Lord Jeffrey (1852). During 1853, Steell executed a bronze bas-relief panel with both Rutherfurds in profile for their red granite funerary pyramid designed by William Playfair in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. (See entry 145.)

The portrait bust of Lady Sophia dates from the middle period of Steell’s career. While Steell customarily combined classicism, naturalism and idealism in his portraits, this bust has its basis in neoclassical style. Lady Rutherfurd is dressed all’ antico, wearing a Roman tunic, known as a dalmatic toga, given its buttoned sleeves; the folds are in mezzo relief. The carefully separated and carved locks of hair are banded together, with a veil flowing gently down in linear folds to accentuate her neck and shoulders. This veiled form of female sitter is seen in Roman Vestal figures of the 2nd Century AD.

Steell’s depiction of Lady Rutherfurd as a Roman matron was probably in view of her husband’s erudition and love of the antique; Lord Rutherfurd’s first design for his wife’s tomb was for a marble copy of an antique cinerary urn upon an altar.

The bust was offered at auction by Christie’s, London on 20 February 1992, lot no. 158.
98. David Scott, R.S.A. (1806-49)
Marble
1831
Inscribed on reverse: “J. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1831.”
h. 70 cm
Royal Scottish Academy Collection

99. David Scott, R.S.A.
Plaster
No date or inscription
h. 69.9 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 1312)
Literature: GUNNIS 1964, p 370; LAPERRIÈRE 1991 Vol. 4, p 238;
Scottish Academy; RINDER 1975, p. 383; WOODWARD 1979, p. 234
Exhibitions: (R)SA, 1831 (Cat. no. 365)

David Scott was born on 10 October 1806. His father, Robert Scott
(b.1777) was a noted Edinburgh engraver. Scott was employed in his
father’s workshop, and attended Edinburgh High School, as well as the
Trustees’ Academy.

John Steell executed this bust in 1831 as his required Diploma
submission, after entering the Scottish Academy as a full Academician
under the auspices of the Hope and Cockburn agreement in 1829. Steell
and Scott were friends, and had studied together at the Trustees’ Academy
under Andrew Wilson in 1820. Steell was also a subscribing member of
the “Edinburgh Life Academy” which Scott organised in 1827, before live
models for figure drawing were regularly employed in Edinburgh. A
charcoal drawing of Steell by Scott is held by the University of Dundee.

The sculptor mentioned was probably Steell. The sculptor
Alexander Handyside Ritchie (1804-1870) had also been in Rome and
studied at the Trustees’ Academy, but he had not attended at the same
time as Scott.

Steell displays his early use of classically idealised features, but does
not render the likeness too cold or austere. Scott is depicted in heroic
neoclassical grandeur, with particular attention to the treatment of hair
and flesh to impart the suggestion of the sitter’s creative spirit and genius.
The upturned pose of the head emphasises this heroic portrayal.

The bust’s signature inscription must have been added after 1838, as
the signature reads “R.S.A.” The Academy’s royal charter was not granted
until that year.
100. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Marble
1849
Inscribed on reverse: "Jn. STEELL. Sculpt. / EDINR. 1849."
Relief on base, a scene from *The Fair Maid of Perth*

h. 98 cm

Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perthshire

Literature: *SS*, Vol. II, p. 4; *Perth Constitutional*, 17 April 1850; *Perthshire Advertiser*, 11 April 1850

Steel was commissioned by the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society to execute this bust of Sir Walter Scott, based upon his own statue of the writer for the Edinburgh Scott Monument. The bust’s pedestal features a scene in high relief from Scott’s novel *The Fair Maid of Perth*. The *Perthshire Advertiser* wrote: “It stands upon a marble pedestal, which is decorated by a view of Harry Wynd’s smithy, with Harry himself rushing from the half-opened door, and catching in his arms the fainting Fair Maid of Perth. The fainting figure of the young woman is an exceedingly sweet and beautiful piece of workmanship.” (*SS*, Vol. II, p. 4)

Scott was born on 15 August 1771 at College Wynd, Edinburgh. Educated at Edinburgh High School, he started at the University in 1783. He apprenticed to his father as a writer to the signet in 1786, joining the Faculty of Advocates in 1791. After initial literary projects translating German plays and poems, he published *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* in 1802-3. Narrative poems such as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* made him even more popular, and with the anonymous publication of *Waverley* in 1814, Scott became one of the most celebrated writers in the world.

In 1826 Scott was nearly ruined financially when the James Ballantyne publishing firm, of which Scott was a partner, underwent bankruptcy. To write himself out of debt, Scott famously published six novels and two histories in six years. The strain contributed to his declining health, and he died at his estate at Abbotsford on 21 September 1832. His legacy is enduring, and he is credited for the invention of the historical novel, as well as influencing the literature of Balzac and Proust. Scott’s antiquarian pursuits and stories are now sometimes criticised as overly nostalgic, but his fiction indelibly influenced the enduring conceptions of Scottish nationhood.

Steel’s likeness of Scott for the Scott Monument closely followed the 1828 portrait bust by Sir Francis Chantrey. Steel’s use of drapery approximates to the lowland plaid drapery used by Chantrey to indicate Scott’s status as bard for the Scottish Borders. The alto-relief on the base is a unique feature of the bust within Steel’s œuvre.
101. William Leigh Canning Sinclair (d. 1834)
Marble
c. 1834/5
Inscribed, reverse centre: “WILLIAM LEIGH/CANNING SINCLAIR./SECOND SON OF/ALEXR EARL OF/CAITHNESS./AGED 8 YEARS/AND 3 MONTHS./OBt. 3 JANUARY 1834.”
Inscribed, reverse sitter’s right: “J. Steell./Sculpt./Edinr.”
h. 46.7 cm
Aberdeen Art Gallery
LAPERRIERE 1991, p. 238
Exhibitions: (R)SA, 1836 (Cat. no. 360)

William Leigh Canning Sinclair was the second son of Alexander Campbell, 13th Earl of Caithness. He died at eight years old. For this bust, Steell dressed his sitter in a hairshirt, perhaps as an allusion to the young John the Baptist. The head is posed looking sharply to the left. Steell most likely executed the bust posthumously by using a death mask, or from any paintings and drawings supplied by the family. During his career, Steell executed several busts of children.
102. Robert Cunningham Graham Speirs (1797-1847)

Marble

1847

h. 84 cm

Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculp. /1847.”

Sheriff’s Court Library, Edinburgh.


Speirs was an advocate, and Sheriff of Midlothian from 1841 to 1854. As a Free Church elder, he appears in several Hill and Adamson calotypes; both he and his wife’s likenesses were used in D.O. Hill’s Disruption Picture. The bust may be posthumous, given that the date corresponds to the year of Speirs’s death.

The bust is an excellent example of Steell’s moderate portrait style. The sitter looks straight on, with a calm, resolute expression. The overall effect is neoclassical, which is emphasised by the employment of Flavian style drapery around the neck and shoulders. Though the depiction of the individual locks is classical in execution, the hairstyle is contemporary. Steell created many marble busts in this style, usually for the commemoration of lawyers, professors and clergymen. The marble surface is given a soft, matte finish; Steell rarely finished his marble works with a high, bright polish.
103. Lady Katherine Steuart of Allanbank (d. 1868)
Marble

Inscribed on reverse: “J. Steell/ Scul.”
h. 59.2 cm
National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, (Inv. no. NG 557)
Exhibitions: Royal Academy, 1837; RSA, 1838 (Cat. no. 400)

Katherine Steuart was the second daughter of Alexander Monro III, M.D. of Craiglockhart, Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh University. She was the second wife of Sir John James Steuart of Allanbank (1779-1879).

Both Lady Katherine and Sir John were important Scottish patrons of the arts. In 1819, Sir John was a founding member and director of the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland. This body sought to improve taste and conditions for the fine arts by holding annual exhibitions of both Old Master and contemporary works.

In 1864, Lady Steuart donated £400 to the Royal Scottish Academy for the endowment of annual student prizes. She stated to the RSA council that her gift resulted from: “being impressed with the idea that latent talent might often be brought to light by a timely...inducement held out to those who profess to have it, to prove that they possess it...” (RSA Annual Report, 1864) Steell sat on the RSA committee which devised the terms and conditions of the awards.

The bust is undated, but was shown in the RSA exhibition of 1838, and was reviewed by the Edinburgh Evening Post:

Mr Steele has infused much of the Grecian style of art into this splendid bust... It was this fine bust which our distinguished contemporary, the Morning Post, described as one of the very best pieces of sculpture in last year’s exhibition of the Royal Academy; and this unbiased eulogium emanated from one of the most accomplished critics of the British press.(SS, Vol. I, p. 25)

Steell’s treatment of Lady Steuart is highly idealised, and the composition of the drapery, hair and use of the tiara approximate a classical depiction of a goddess such as Diana or Athena. Particular skill was demonstrated in the carving of the hair; the hollowed ringlets which frame the face are each a formidable technical challenge in marble. Steell employed a smooth, uniformly matte finish to the surface.

The bust was bequeathed by Lady Steuart to the National Gallery of Scotland upon her death in 1868.
104. Elizabeth Graham Steell (1838-1846)
Marble
1846
Inscribed, front: “1846/ELIZABETH G. STEELL.”
h. 43 cm
Museum Services, University of Dundee
Literature: LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 239
Exhibitions: RSA, 1867 (Cat. no. 910)
A letter in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery files, dated 30 November 1973 from University of Dundee Professor N.B.B. Symons to Robin Hutchison, Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, reported that: “In 1968...we received from Miss Elizabeth Steell, granddaughter of Sir John Steell, a gift comprising two marble portrait busts of the Steell daughters, Elizabeth and Jane, when they were little girls (1846).”
This bust is one of only two known works that portray family members. Elizabeth Graham Steell was named after her mother, and was born 12 June 1838. She died aged 8 in 1846, the cause of death being listed as “water in the head.” She was buried in the family lair at Old Calton Burial Ground. Steell’s granddaughter, also an Elizabeth, presented the bust, as well as the bust of Little Jeanie, a drawing of Steell by David Scott, and two Robert Scott Lauder paintings of Steell and Steell’s wife Elizabeth to the University of Dundee in 1968.

105. Jane Steell (“Little Jeanie”) (1842-1847)
Marble
No date, c. 1846
Inscribed on front :“LITTLE JEANIE”
h. 40 cm
Museum Services, University of Dundee
Exhibitions: RSA, 1863 (Cat. no. 823)
“Little Jeanie” is the portrait bust of Steell’s youngest daughter Jane Spink Steell, born 26 March 1842. “Jeanie” was presumably her nickname.
The assumption that the bust is of a family member is based upon a cutting in the Steell scrapbooks, and supported by the 1973 SNPG letter. An undated Scotsman article from 1863 reported on that year’s Royal Scottish Academy exhibition: “Mr John Steell exhibits a labour of love—an exquisitely sweet and graceful bust in marble of “Little Jeanie”—a dear child loved and lost. It is executed with great tenderness and beauty.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 98) Jane’s death certificate stated that she “Died of decline aged 5 years and 4 months.” She was buried in the family plot at Old Calton Burial Ground on 7 August 1847.
The bust was gifted to the University of Dundee from Steell’s granddaughter Elizabeth Steell in 1968.
Lady Anna Stirling-Maxwell (d. 1874)

Marble
1877
h. 71 cm


Exhibitions: RSA, 1879 (Cat. no. 752)

Lady Anna Maria Stirling-Maxwell was the second daughter of David, 8th Earl of Leven and 7th Earl of Melville. (See entry 137.) She married Sir William Stirling-Maxwell in Paris on 26 April 1865. Lady Anna died in December 1874.

The posthumous bust of Sir William Stirling-Maxwell’s first wife is typical of Steell’s portraiture in general, and his later busts in particular. The sitter is depicted in a classical mode of expression, featuring antique costume but with only slightly idealised features. Late in his career, Steell only took portrait commissions that offered him particularly interesting compositional, technical or expressive challenges, or which featured especially prestigious sitters. Steell wrote to Stirling-Maxwell of the project: “it is a work in which...I feel the deepest interest.” (T-SK 29/25/387) Steell used two photographs of Lady Anna to execute the likeness.

Stirling-Maxwell was a major patron of the arts. His 1848 book The Annals of the Artists of Spain was one of the first systematic treatises on the art of that country. It was also one of the first books to use calotype photographs for illustrations. In addition to his writings, Stirling-Maxwell served on committees that oversaw the organisation of the National Wallace Memorial in Stirling, and the 1871 Loan Exhibition to mark the Sir Walter Scott Centenary in Edinburgh. This bust, however, was the only project that Steell ever executed for Stirling-Maxwell.

The work remained in the Stirling-Maxwell family until May 1995, when it was offered by Christie’s in an auction of the property of Archibald Stirling of Keir at Keir Mains, Perthshire.
107. Professor John Thomson (1765-1846)
Marble
No date
Paper label on reverse: “JOHN THOMSON, M.D./PROFESS@R OF
GENERAL PATHOLOGY/1831-1842/STEELL Sculptor”
h. 68 cm
Department of Pathology, Edinburgh University

John Thomson was born at Paisley on 15 March 1765. He attended
Glasgow University for a year before moving to Edinburgh University in
1790. After two years as the assistant apothecary at the Royal Infirmary, he
resigned, citing ill health, and moved to London, studying medicine
further at John Hunter’s school in Leicester Square.

Upon his return to Edinburgh in 1793, he was made a fellow of the
College of Surgeons, Edinburgh and attended the Royal Infirmary as a
surgeon. The College of Surgeons created a chair of surgery in 1805 and
appointed Thomson as its first Professor. After an active surgical and
teaching career, in 1831 he petitioned the Home Office Secretary Lord
Melbourne with a memo advocating the establishment of a separate
professorship of Pathology. This was agreed to, and Thomson was
appointed Chair of General Pathology at the university in 1832. He retired
from the post in 1841. He died at Morland Cottage, Blackford Hill,
Edinburgh on 11 October 1846.

The DNB mentions two portraits of Thomson, an 1822 painting by
Geddes and “A characteristic marble bust copied from that executed by
Angus Fletcher about 1820…in the hall of the library of the university of
Edinburgh.” As the University’s bust is not inscribed by Steell, it may be
that Steell copied the Fletcher work. This could account for the bust’s
truncation at the upper chest, and lack of drapery: Steell customarily
employed the Flavian mode of shoulders and drapery in his academic
subjects.
108. Thomas Thomson (1768-1852)
Marble
1844
Inscribed on reverse: “THOMAS THOMSON/ J. STEELL. Sculp. /1844.”
h. 74.5 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

109. Thomas Thomson
Plaster (Probably the Artist’s plaster)
No date or signature
h. 55.5 cm.
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 224)

Literature: DNB, Vol. XIX, p. 750; PHP, no. 57; The Scotsman 14 March 1888, p.6

Thomson was born at Dailly, Ayrshire on 10 November 1768. He was the elder brother of the painter Revd. John Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840). Thomson became an advocate in 1793. A talented scholar and historian, he catalogued and reorganised the national system of public registers and records. He was appointed Depute Clerk Register in 1806 and was made Principal Clerk of Session in 1828.

Steell gives a gentle, sober treatment to the bust of his early supporter and patron. The realistic portrayal of features is lightly softened and idealised. Steell’s use of drapery is also moderate and even, stressing the linear nature of the jurist’s robes. As is customary of Steell’s busts, the head is slightly turned, imparting an additional spark of life and intelligence to the stone. The entire surface of the bust was given a matte finish, with a low polish for facial details. A plaster version was purchased for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery for 5 shillings at Steell’s 1888 studio sale.

Thomson had supported Steell while on the subcommittee of the Scott Monument project, and according to Lord Meadowbank’s speech to the general committee, it was Thomson who had brought Steell to the attention of Meadowbank in 1833. Thomson was close friends with both Lord Jeffrey and Sir Walter Scott. In 1823 he was Vice-president, and upon Scott’s death in 1832, President of the Bannatyne Club, which was dedicated to the research and publication of Scottish history. Thomson also owned a Steell bust of Earl Grey, which he lent to the RSA exhibition of 1838. (See entry 64.) (LAPERRIERE 1991, p. 237) He died at Shrub Hill, Leith on 2 October 1852.
110. William Thomas Thomson
Marble
1865
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1865.”
h. 87.5 cm
Standard Life Assurance Company, 1 George Street, Edinburgh
Exhibitions: RSA, 1867 (Cat. no. 895)

William Thomas Thomson was the manager of The Standard Life Assurance Company from 1837 to 1874. Little else has surfaced with regard to his life. Steell presented Thomson as a Greek or Roman leader, with a vigorous use of Flavian drapery, and a direct portrait that was presumably only slightly idealised.

Steell first provided sculpture for the Standard Life Assurance Company in 1839, when he executed the tympanum relief depicting The Wise and Foolish Virgins for the company’s building at 1 George Street. (See entry 154.) This building had been designed by the Edinburgh architect David Bryce. Standard Life also employed Steell’s design for the masthead of its insurance policy certificates.

111. Charlotte Anne Thynne, Duchess of Buccleuch
(d. 1895)
Marble
1845
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculp/.EDINr. 1845.”
h. 70 cm
Private collection, Scotland

The 5th Duke of Buccleuch was among Steell’s most powerful patrons. The Duke married Charlotte Thynne on 13 August 1829. She was the youngest daughter of Thomas, 2nd Marquess of Bath. She served as Mistress of the Robes to Queen Victoria.

In an 1836 letter to his son William Henry, Buccleuch wrote of his wife:

She has been a most kind, attentive, affectionate and Faithful Wife to me, in whom I have placed the greatest confidence, in whose judgement I have the greatest reliance and whom I have always loved with the greatest attachment and affection. (GD 224/1031/6/8-10)

The Morning Post of 8 August 1845 reported: “Mr. Steele has...finished an exquisitely modelled bust of the Duchess of Buccleuch, and on bringing it to Montague House the Duke of Buccleuch immediately commissioned him to execute a bust himself as a companion to that of the Duchess.” It is not known if a bust of Buccleuch was ever executed.
112. Queen Victoria (1819-1901)
Plaster (Artist’s plaster)
1838
Inscribed on reverse: “JOHN STEELL. R.S.A./1838”
h. 56.2 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (Inv. no. PG 168)
Exhibitions: RA, 1839 (Cat. no. 1332)

Upon receiving the commission for the colossal statue of the Queen for the portico of the Royal Institution building in Edinburgh, Steell travelled to Windsor in January of 1838 to execute this bust. Steell received five sittings from the Queen, and upon completion of the marble bust was created Sculptor in Ordinary to Her Majesty for Scotland.

Steell created the likeness to execute his colossal statue,(see entry 29) but the portrait was a fine work in itself. It was the second bust ever taken of Victoria as Queen. The first bust was executed by Henry Weekes (1807-1877), a former pupil and assistant to Sir Francis Chantrey; Weekes executed his bust only a few weeks before Steell.

Steell also completed a marble version of the bust for the Queen, which was mentioned in her diary entry of 19 July 1838; the location of the marble version is currently unknown.

The likeness stresses the youth, energy and spirit of the new monarch. Steell used the slightly idealised mode of his early portraiture, especially in the treatment of the tightly arranged hair and facial features. Favourable comment was made that Steell’s treatment emphasised the Queen’s youth, which created an energy and life within the countenance. The *Scotsman* of 4 March 1840 described the work as “purely Greek.”(SS, Vol. I, p. 40)

The Queen’s dress was linear, featuring a six-point star. Steell imparted a delicacy to the bust by truncating the shoulders and chest to mid-sternum, which granted a lightness to the composition, and focused the viewer’s gaze upon the head. The depiction of the crown was also noted in the press as an accurate and appropriate accoutrement for Her Majesty. The 28 July 1838 *London Morning Post* described: “a plain tiara, on which are wrought the stars of the Garter, the Thistle, and St. Patrick.”(SS, Vol. I, p. 39)

Ormond’s *Early Victorian Portraits* noted that the bust was displayed at the Royal Academy in 1839. (ORMOND 1973, p.481)
113. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852)
Marble
1843
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL Sculp. / EDIN. 1843”
h. 75 cm
Private collection, Scotland

This was the very first version in marble, which Steell executed for the committee of the Scottish National Monument to the Duke of Wellington. The committee gave the bust to its chairman Lord Dalhousie in January of 1854. (NAS GD 224/1031/11/7) The bust is still held by his descendants. Though the original commission was £50 for a plaster bust, the committee paid Steell £100 for the marble.

114. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington
Marble
1843
Inscribed: “JN. STEELL. Sculp. / Edin. 1843.”
75.5 cm
Cirencester Park, Glouchestershire, England

115. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington
Marble
77.2 cm
1845
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inv. no. PG 967)
This version was commissioned by the RAPFAS for £78. 15/ in June 1868, as a gift to the National Gallery of Scotland. (NAS NG4/1/2, pp 99-100.) It was transferred to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 1924.

Marble
1845
Eton College

The Duke chose Steell’s bust over an earlier work by Thomas Campbell to give to Eton College. (Edinburgh University Library Special Collections, La.II 509, f. 1528) The Morning Post of 8 August 1845 reported: “The bust in question is destined to adorn the walls of Eton College, where his Grace received his early education... so pleased was the Duke with the execution of the bust... he commissioned a counterpart of it... for Oxford University, in memory of his connexion with that venerable seat of learning.”(SS, Vol. I, p. 59)
117. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington
Marble
1846
Inscribed: "JN. STEELL. Sculp. / EDINR. 1846."
74 cm
Apsley House, London

118. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington
Marble
h. 78.5 cm
1854
Inscribed: "JN. STEELL. SCULPT. 1854"
Collection of W.H. Callender, Preston Hall

Exhibitions: RSA, 1864 (Cat. no. 724)

Steell first executed this bust upon the request of the committee organising the Edinburgh monument to the Duke in 1840. The committee ostensibly wanted Steell’s work as an example of what Scottish sculptors could achieve. He was also required to submit a model of his proposed equestrian monument. It was a condition on which he later received the full commission, though the committee never considered any other artist’s work.

Steell travelled to Walmer Castle in 1841, where he sketched Wellington, who also rode for the sculptor. Steell submitted the bust in marble, though the committee was only intending to pay £50 for a plaster example. The committee later paid Steell £100 for the bust. (Edinburgh University Library Special Collections, La.II 509, f. 1526)

Wellington was so impressed with the finished bust that he ordered two copies made for Eton College and Oxford; as Oxford does not hold an example, it may be that their intended version is the one kept at Apsley House.

Wellington’s image was one of the most recorded in British history. Given the fame of the sitter, this was one of Steell’s most popular works; no less than seven editions survive. Steell showed the Duke as middle-aged, as he would have appeared at Waterloo. He presented a heroic, noble image, with a vigorous, rhythmic use of Flavian drapery. The emphasis was on the Duke as a soldier and statesman, and less as the controversial politician.
119. James Wilson (1805-1860)

Marble
h. 73.8 cm
1859
Inscribed on reverse: "J. STEELL. R.S.A. /Sculp. Edinr./ 1859."
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh; (Inventory no. PG 968)
Exhibitions: RSA, 1860 (Cat. no. 867)

Wilson was born at Hawick, Roxburghshire on 3 June 1805, the third son of William Wilson, a woollen manufacturer. Educated by Quakers from 1816 to 1819, he was apprenticed to a hat manufacturer at Hawick, later taking over the business. In 1824 he moved to London, continuing in several businesses until 1844.

Wilson contributed many articles to the Morning Chronicle and the Examiner, but a desire for more column space led him to found The Economist in 1843. The DNB noted that the paper "at once became a recognised power in the newspaper world, and has maintained its position ever since." (DNB, Vol. XXI, p. 572)

First elected to parliament as a Whig for Westbury, Wiltshire in 1847, Wilson quickly became a respected and influential orator. He served as Financial Secretary to the Treasury from 1853 to 1858, and in 1859 had just taken the post of Vice-President of the Board of Trade when he was offered the newly created office of Financial member to the Governing Council of India. His major implementation there was the introduction of paper currency to the subcontinent. He died on 11 August 1860.

Steell received this commission from the Royal Scottish Academy. The DNB noted that the RSA commissioned the bust, "in recognition of his services in obtaining a grant from the treasury for the erection of the buildings in its occupation." (DNB, Vol. XXI, p. 573) A letter acknowledging the project is in the RSA library files.

As with the Queen Victoria, Duke of Wellington, and Chalmers projects, Steell made use of the bust when executing a larger statue of Wilson which was sent to Calcutta in 1863. (See entry 30.)

Richard Ormand's 1973 publication, Early Victorian Portraiture noted that a replica of the bust was presented to Wilson's wife; a plaster replica was reported as given to Hawick Museum. Both of these versions remain untraced.
120. **Unknown Man**  
Marble  
1845  
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculpt./1845.”  
h. 67.4 cm  
Offered by Christie’s London, 15 July 1993, Lot. no. 239

121. **Unknown Boy**  
Marble  
1849  
Signed and dated on reverse  
h. 33.5 cm  
Private Collection, Scotland

122. **Unknown Woman**  
Marble  
1851  
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. Sculpt./EDINR. 1851.”  
h. 63 cm  
National Trust Collection, Beningbrough Hall, Yorkshire

This marble portrait bust from Steell’s middle career features generalised classical drapery, moderated by the depiction of the sitter’s contemporary hairstyle. The hair is shown parted in the centre, and gathered in a bun behind the head. Steell depicted the full upper body of the young woman, including the breast, rather than truncate the bust at the sternum. This was in keeping with the Flavian mode of bust portraiture that Steell often employed during the 1850s.

The sitter remains unidentified. The work was presumably owned by the Dawnay family, which owned Beningbrough Hall from 1827 to 1916.
123. **Unknown Woman**
Marble
1856
Inscribed on reverse: “J. Steell 1856”
h. 68.5 cm

124. **Unknown Man**
Marble
1867
Inscribed on reverse: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1867.”
h. 74 cm
Private collection, London

125. **Unknown Man**
Marble
1882
Inscribed on reverse: “SIR. JOHN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr./1882.”
h. 64 cm
Private Collection, California
RELIEFS

126. Monument to Revd. Archibald Alison, L.L.B. (1757-1839)
Marble
1845
Inscribed on right corner, top of base: "JN. STEELL. Sculptr./1845"
St. Paul’s and St. George’s Church, York Place, Edinburgh

Archibald Alison was an Episcopal minister, but was best known for his Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste, first published in Edinburgh in 1790. He was the son of Patrick Alison, Provost of Edinburgh. In 1775 he matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford, receiving his L.L.B. in 1784. His first ministry was with the Church of England, as the Curate of the church at Brancepeth, Durham.

In 1800 he came to Edinburgh as minister of the Episcopal chapel in the Cowgate. He lived the rest of his life in Edinburgh, dying at age 82 on 17 May 1839. He is buried in St. John’s Episcopal churchyard in Edinburgh.

Alison was a member of a social circle which included the painter Sir Henry Raeburn and Professor Dugald Stewart. All were influenced by the ideas of philosopher Thomas Reid. He corresponded with both Reid and Robert Burns. (MacMillan, 1990, pp. 219-20) In his Essay on Taste, Alison suggested certain implications of Reid’s theories with regard to the concept of ideal beauty.

The monument features Alison’s medallion relief profile on a funerary sarcophagus, attended by allegorical figures of Faith, Hope and Charity. Charity is shown holding an infant, Faith carries a large cross, and holds the hand of the third figure, Hope. An anchor is depicted at the lower right corner of the group. The monument’s dedication inscription was composed by Lord Jeffrey.
MOURN TO THE MEMORY OF

MAJOR ALEXANDER VISCOUNT BALCOMIE.

BORN 17TH NOVEMBER 1821, DIED 21ST AUGUST 1897.

AFTER SERVING AT THE COMMERCE WAR, AND UNDER THE DRIFT DURING THE WHOLE OF THE

WAR, AND VALUABLY DETERMINING HIMSELF IN THE BATTLES OF THE ARMISTICE, AND THE

EXISTING WAR, HE WAS IMMEDIATELY IN HIS RETURN HOME, AND ON THE EVE OF A

GREAT BATTLE, DEDICATED TO HIS COUNTRY AND HIS FAMILY, HIS BATTLE FAME AND HIS

IMITATION OF THE WISDOM, THE PRINCIPLE, AND HIS FAMILY'S DEEDS, SHAPED HIM TO

ALL WISE AND DECENT DISPOSITION. ERECTED BY THE TENTANTRY ON THE HELVILLE ESTATES.

AND NEIGHBOURING GENTLEMEN.
Alexander, Viscount Balgonie was born on 19 November 1831, the eldest, and last surviving son of the 8th Earl of Leven. He served as a Major in the Grenadier Guards in the Crimean War, and was made a Knight of the Legion of Honour. He survived the conflict, but succumbed to a fatal illness almost immediately upon his return to Monimail. He died on 29 August 1857. According to the inscription on the monument, it was “Erected by the tenantry on the Melville estates and neighbouring gentlemen.”

Lady Mary Ruthven mentioned the work in a letter to Sir William Stirling-Maxwell of 16 January 1860, stating that if he would visit Steell’s studio: “…you would also see his Alto Relivio of Viscount Balgonie for the church at Melville—The tenants of the estate are quite pleased. I am glad for it as I persuaded them to have this instead of a Hopetoun needle by a hill …” (Stirling-Maxwell papers, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-SK/29/74 f.1)

The alto-relief bust portrait is a unique element in a Steell funerary memorial; his work almost exclusively utilised a mezzo-relief portrait in full profile, a format exemplified by the monument to the 8th Earl of Leven on the opposite side of the church altar. (See entry 137)
128. Bank of Montreal Tympanum
Binny freestone
1867
h. 259 x 3110 cm
Saint-Jacques Street, Montreal
Literature: SS, Vol. III, p. 48; Montreal Herald, March 1867

This tympanum group is Steell’s only known work in Canada, but it remains unclear as to how Steell received the commission. Established in 1817, the Bank of Montreal is Canada’s oldest bank. In 1845, the bank built a new headquarters, designed by the Norfolk architect John Wells (c. 1790-1864). The building is neoclassical, and features a dome and portico with Corinthian columns. Construction was completed in 1847. The tympanum sculpture was added in 1867. The building is still occupied by the Bank of Montreal.

The Steell scrapbooks include only two items regarding the group: a printed newspaper article and an engraving of the work. The newspaper article gives a detailed description:

In the centre of the design is the shield of the Bank of Montreal... Below the shield is a cornucopia pouring forth not merely corn and the vintage fruits, but money in plenty, and a ribbon is carried beneath in the form of a scroll, with the words “Bank of Montreal.” ... Right and left of the shield are two Indian chiefs in sitting posture, and with the full costume and decorations of their rank...

Right and left again of the Indian figures are two examples of the stronger race—the one a stalwart colonist, the other a swarthy mariner. The colonist, in an interval of leisure earned by labour is smoking the calumet of peace; while the sailor is working the rope on the capstan on coming into port. All the figures are bold and striking, fine specimens alike of white man and red. The sailor in particular is a model of manly vigour and manly intelligence. The background is richly filled in with relative symbols, and at either end the design is prolonged by emblematic objects representing the industrial gradually blending with the decorative arts, and typifying labour in its progress to social refinement and mental culture...

The crouching Indian at the left is reminiscent of a Native American figure in Benjamin West’s 1771 painting The Death of General Wolfe, which depicted a Canadian battle.

Steell only executed two other tympanum projects, both for Standard Life Assurance, and both illustrating the parable of The Wise and Foolish Virgins. Steell provided the first group for Standard Life’s Edinburgh office in 1839. He executed a larger version in 1863 for Standard Life’s office building in Dublin. (See entry 154) Both buildings were designed by the Edinburgh architect David Bryce.
129. Monument to Monteith Douglas Campbell
Marble
c. 1847
h. 88cm x 102 cm
New Church of All Hallows, Inchinnan

This marble tablet relief was erected to the memory of Monteith Douglas Campbell, the son of Archibald Campbell, Esq. of Blythswood. Monteith Campbell was drowned accidentally on 18 November 1847; he was seven years old.

Throughout his career, Steell executed several memorial tablets which employed winged angels. This work was perhaps one of the most dynamic and unique, featuring a large idealised figure at the top of the tablet, balanced against a wide asymmetrical area of negative space. The flowers at the left are presumably Scottish bluebells.

The Campbells of Blythswood became patrons of the Inchinnan parish church in 1737. There were three previous church buildings at the site; Steell’s work was first sited in the second church, which was built in 1828 by Major Archibald Campbell. This church was replaced by the third church, completed in 1904, by the architect Sir Robert Rowan Anderson. This church closed in 1965, and was demolished to make way for Glasgow Airport. The New Church of All Hallows was completed at its current location in 1968.
130. Lord Cockburn Funerary Monument

Bronze

c. 1860

Inscribed, bottom of neck: “JN STEELL/Sculp”

h. 36 cm

Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh


Lord Cockburn was one of Edinburgh’s most eminent nineteenth-century citizens. Born in Edinburgh in 1779, he was called to the Scottish Bar in 1800. He was appointed to the Bench in 1834, serving until his death in 1854. He possessed an acute sense of social justice, and was an ardent Whig in his political views. Among his friends and colleagues were Lord Jeffrey, Lord Rutherfurd, Lord Murray and Thomas Thomson.

Steell executed a portrait bust in marble of Lord Cockburn in 1851. (See entry 51.) Cockburn offered favourable opinion of Steell’s talent several times in his Journals of 1831-54. Cockburn wrote of Steell’s 1852 Wellington Monument: “It is certainly a noble work. Is there a better modern statue of the heroic order in Europe? We are all proud of Steell, a son of Edinburgh.” (Cockburn, Journal of Henry Cockburn, Edinburgh, Vol. II, p. 283)

Lord Cockburn’s funerary monument in Dean Cemetery is Gothic in style, in contrast with the nearby neoclassical tombs of Lord Rutherfurd, Lord Jeffrey and William Playfair. (See entries 136 & 145.) Steell’s bronze bas-relief profile portrait composes a small classical element, among the arches of the stone façade. The tomb design may allude to the architecture of Cockburn’s residence of Bonaly Tower, a Scottish Baronial house built on the northern side of the Pentland Hills, near Colinton.
131. Lieutenant-Colonel J. Drysdale Funerary Monument

Bronze
c. 1866
h. 32 cm x 92 cm long
Kirk of St. Nicholas kirkyard, Strathbrock, Uphall, Linlithgow
Literature: GUNNIS 1968, p. 371

This funerary monument is unsigned, but attributed to Steell in the 1968 edition of the Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851 by Rupert Gunnis. According to the monument inscription, Major and Lieutenant-Colonel J. Drysdale was an officer of the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment (also known as the Black Watch.) Drysdale joined the unit in 1836, and served until his death in 1866. He died of disease contracted in India. Drysdale served in both the Crimea and Indian Mutiny campaigns.

The monument itself was erected by a subscription from the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the regiment. The bronze relief element of the work features a busby and a basket-hilted claymore. Both of these items featured in the uniform of the 42nd Regiment. In 1872, Steell executed a large marble relief commemorating the entire regiment, which was sited in Dunkeld Cathedral, Perthshire. (See entry 156.)
Marble
1867
Inscribed, bottom of neck: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A. /Sculpt. 1867.”
h. 38 cm; entire tablet, 150 cm.
New College Sanctuary, Edinburgh
Literature: WOODWARD 1979, p. 235

The conditions of this commission are unknown, but Steell executed a bust of Dr. Gordon in 1831, and again in 1855. (See entry 62.) Robert Gordon was born in Glencairn, Dumfriesshire on 5 May 1786. He studied at Marischal College, Aberdeen, graduating D.D. in 1823. He preached at several Edinburgh parishes, including St. Cuthbert’s and the High Church. Gordon was Moderator of the Church of Scotland Assembly in 1841. Following the Disruption of 1843, he was a Free Church minister.
His portrait is included in D.O. Hill’s painting of The Signing of the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission. He died in October 1853.

During the course of his career, Steell executed many bas-relief profile portraits, usually in bronze for funerary monuments. This bas-relief in marble is something of a departure for the sculptor, though the treatment of the profile is in keeping with his customary restrained and formal style. The use of the profile portrait on a stone slab or obelisk was particularly popular in nineteenth-century Edinburgh. This example, while not a funerary monument, is a memorial to Revd. Gordon’s life and works. It is located in the Sanctuary of New College, an intimate space for worship within the Divinity School of New College.
133. Hamilton Mausoleum Doors
After Ghiberti’s Florence Baptistry Gates
Bronze
1857
h. 352 cm x 114 cm
Hamilton Mausoleum, Hamilton

In November 1850, the Edinburgh architect David Bryce (1803-1876) applied to the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland for permission to make moulds of the plaster casts of Ghiberti’s Florence Baptistry gates held in the Trustees’ Academy collection. These casts were of superior quality, having originally been commissioned for the French government. Bryce intended to make replica bronze casts of the gates for a mausoleum at Hamilton Palace, for Douglas Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton (1767-1852). The Board minutes recorded that Bryce “had consulted with Mr Steell, Sculptor to the Queen, who was of opinion that copies could be taken without the slightest injury to the Casts.” (NAS NG1/1/39, p. 222)

At this time, Steell sat on the Board as a Commissioner. The minutes continued that:

The Board received a full verbal explanation from Mr Steell, shewing [sic] that by a particular method of taking copies quite unknown in this country, he considered every risk of injury [to the casts] was obviated...he regarded it as of the highest consequence to Art in Scotland to give opportunities of introducing and making known such improvements, and the present was an admirable occasion for bringing into notice this style of casting.

Sir John Watson Gordon, another artist and Commissioner, supported the scheme. The minutes reported that Gordon “pointed out the discouragement inflicted on native Art by resorting to the Continent to obtain specimens when they could be furnished out of the National Collections by the skill of Artists at home.” (NAS NG1/1/39, pp. 222-3) The Board concurred with its artist-members, and permission was granted for casts to be made “under the Superintendence of Mr Steell, provided that the Board is assured that the Bronze Castings are to be made in Scotland, and that the moulds are to become the property of the Board after the first cast is taken.”(NG1/1/39, p. 223)

The Duke objected to the last condition, but it was agreed that the moulds would instead be destroyed after the castings were completed. What exactly constituted the “particular method” of mould making that Steell was eager to introduce is unknown: no report or description of the procedure has surfaced.

Bryce’s design for the mausoleum was neoclassical in origin, and featured a large dome. The freestone sculptures of two lions, and heads representing Time, Death, and Eternity, were executed by Alexander Handyside Ritchie. The entire project was completed in 1852.
Sacred
To the Memory of
Frances Hermitage,
Wife of John Houston Barry.
Edinburgh.
134. Francis Hermitage Funerary Monument
Marble
c. 1850
Inscribed on drapery at centre: “J. STEEL”
h. 73 cm x 120 cm.
Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh

This relief is in keeping with many of Steell’s funerary monuments, both in its neoclassically derived style and the employment of the draped mourning figure, which Steell utilised several times in his career. The figure also holds a torch, which Steell employed in his early monument for Mary Lewins in Haddington. (See entry 138.) Steell rarely employed marble for funerary monuments; this relief is only the second known example.

Francis Hermitage was the wife of J. Houston Barry, but virtually nothing is known of the family. The tablet in the composition is inscribed: “Died 22nd April 1850”, which suggests the date of the work. The work was presumably finished by a stone mason, as the signature inscription is misspelled. Steell always spelled his surname with two Is.
135. Robert Jamieson Funerary Monument
Freestone
h. group: 165 cm; monument: 385 cm
1839
St. Cuthbert's Kirkyard, Edinburgh

Robert Jamieson was a respected Edinburgh attorney who died on 31 December 1834, aged 51. He was the son of Revd. John Jamieson, D.D. (1759-1838), a noted minister of the Scottish Secessionist Church, theologian, lexicographer and antiquarian. Revd. Jamieson’s most significant scholarly work was his *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, first published in 1809. Dr. Jamieson’s funerary monument is inscribed on the reverse of Robert Jamieson’s pedestal tomb marker to his memory, which was completed in 1839. The inscription states that the monument was a tribute to the subject’s “practical sagacity...profound judgement, and high legal talent...” A cutting from the *Advertiser* in the Steell scrapbooks describes the monument:

It is...identified with the celebrated lawyer to whose memory it has been erected, by the introduction of his medallion, on a sarcophagus, over which is placed a figure of Justice, in the attitude of defending a child from the grasping hand of the Oppressor. (SS, Vol. I, p. 42)

This funerary monument is one of the largest and most elaborate private grave markers that Steell ever created. Both regimental and funerary monument sculpture afforded Steell an opportunity to execute ideal, or allegorical sculpture with the promise of a pecuniary return. Steell’s later funerary work mostly consisted of small profile medallions in bronze, which were incorporated into larger stone markers such as mural tombs, recumbent stones or obelisks. An early photograph of the work is included in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 131.
Lord Jeffrey was one of the most important individuals of the final years of the Scottish Enlightenment. Born in Edinburgh in 1773, he was considered to be one of the greatest British literary critics of all time.

Jeffrey founded the *Edinburgh Review* with Sydney Smith in 1802. The quarterly periodical became one of the most influential literary organs of the day, and the de facto public voice of the Whig party. Jeffrey served as editor of the *Review* until his election as Dean of the Faculty of Advocates in 1829.

Lord Jeffrey was known for his erudition and taste. He had studied Greek from the age of three, and was an accomplished writer. Lord Cockburn wrote simply of his friend’s intellect and character: “head and heart included, his was the finest nature I have ever known.” (COCKBURN, 1874, Vol. I, p. 254)

According to the *Scotsman* of 20 September 1851, “The committee of the Jeffrey Monument having a surplus out of the fund required for the public statue on which Mr Steell is at present engaged devoted it to the erection of a monument over the grave at the Cemetery of the Dean...” (SS, Vol. II, p. 66)

The monument was designed by William Playfair, and featured a simple medallion profile relief of Jeffrey on one end of the tomb. The monument was made from freestone. Lord Jeffrey enjoyed walking through Dean Cemetery, and he was the first of his circle of friends to purchase a funeral plot there in 1849. The Rutherfurs, Lord Cockburn, Thomas Thomson and William Playfair all subsequently purchased plots adjacent to Jeffrey’s.
SACRED TO THE MEMORIES OF DAVID, 8TH EARL OF SELVIE AND 7TH EARL OF MELVILLE ADMIRAL OF THE RED BORN JUNE 22, 1785 DIED OCT 8, 1860 AND OF ELIZABETH ANNE HIS WIFE BORN AUG 5, 1804 DIED NOV 6, 1863 DAUGHTER OF SIR A. J. CAMPBELL, BAR. OF SUCCOTH.

THIS MONUMENT COMMEMORATES THEIR MOTHER TO THE MEMORY OF HER HUSBAND WAS COMPLETED IN AFFECTUOUS REMEMBRANCE OF BOTH THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR SURVIVING CHILDREN.

ELIZABETH ANNE, SUSAN AND EMILY 1863.
137. Monument to the 8th Earl and Countess of Leven
Marble
1865
Inscribed, bottom right: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A. 1865.”
h. 145 cm x 98.5 cm
Monimail Parish Church, Monimail, Fife

This monument was commissioned by the daughters of the 8th Earl and Lady of Leven. It was designed as a companion group to the earlier monument of Viscount Balgonie, executed by Steell in 1859. (See entry 127.)

David, 8th Earl of Leven and 7th Earl of Melville was born on 22 June 1785. A representative peer, and Vice-Admiral in the Royal Navy, he married Elizabeth Anne, daughter of Sir Archibald Campbell, Baronet, in June of 1824. Their first son was Alexander, Viscount Balgonie, an army Major who served in the Crimea. The Leven’s second daughter, Anna Maria, married Sir William Stirling-Maxwell in June 1865. (See entry 106.) The 8th Earl died on 8 October 1860; Lady Leven died in November of 1863.

Lady Mary Ruthven, who advised the family with regard to the design, mentioned the relief to Sir William Stirling-Maxwell in a letter of 23 November 1863. (Stirling-Maxwell Papers, Strathclyde Regional Archive, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-SK29/74, f.6)

The patrons decided to include a portrait of their mother as a winged angel at the top of the arch in the composition. Steell utilised this kind of idealised portraiture again in 1876, when he depicted the late Lady Jane Tennant as an angel. (See entry 148.)
138. Mary Westwood Lewins Funerary Monument
Marble
c. 1828
Inscribed, top of base: “I. STEELL/SCULP”
h. 91.5 cm x 58 cm
St. Mary’s Kirkyard, Haddington

From the monument’s inscription of 1828, this work is one of few surviving from Steell’s very early career, between the 1827 Saint Andrew and the 1833 “debut” of Alexander and Bucephalus. Steell presents a neoclassical profile portrait medallion upon a draped funerary urn. The mourning child figure at the right holds a flaming torch.

The memorial inscription is in Latin, and is worn away in many places. What remains legible reads: “SACRUM MEMORI. E/ MARI E./ Uxoris A ... ... Orantusimae/ ROBERTI LEWINS MD ... MARTII 1828”
Most remarkable is Steell’s use of the Latin “I” for “J” in his signature.

Mary Westwood (née Wright) was a young widow originally from Leeds, who married Dr. Robert Lewins (1792-1847). Lewins was educated at Edinburgh University, and practised at Haddington until Mary’s death in 1828. Dr. Lewins married as his second wife Margaret Shireff, and practised in Quality Street, Leith, until he moved to Castletown, Isle of Man, where he died from fever on 16 May 1847. (Isle of Man Family History Society Newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 3, July 1980)

Steell executed very few funerary monuments in marble; virtually all of his later funerary works are bronze reliefs set into stone tablets or obelisks. The only other marble funerary work by Steell is a monument to Francis Hermitage in Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. (See entry 134)
139. John Gibson Lockhart Funerary Monument
Bronze
c. 1858
Inscribed, bottom of neck: “JN STEELL/Sculpt”
45 cm
Dryburgh Abbey

John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1853) was the son-in-law and biographer of Sir Walter Scott. He was born on 14 July 1794 at Cambusnethan. He attended the University of Glasgow from the age of 12, and entered Baillol College, Oxford in 1809. He studied law in Edinburgh, becoming an advocate in 1816, but he practised indifferently, and was drawn towards literary work. He began contributing to Blackwood’s Magazine in 1817.

Lockhart met Scott in May 1818 when the latter, who was interested in the young writer’s encounters with Goethe, invited him to Abbotsford. The men became good friends, and Lockhart married Scott’s oldest daughter Sophia on 29 April 1820. The couple lived in a cottage on Scott’s estate, and Lockhart subsequently met all the major Scottish writers of the age: John Wilson, Thomas Carlyle and James Hogg. In 1825 he became the editor of the Quarterly Review, moving to Regent’s Park London.

Increasingly withdrawn following his wife’s death in 1837, he continued as editor of the Quarterly Review until 1853. After a year in Italy, he returned to Abbotsford, where he died on 25 November 1854.

The committee formed to fund a memorial to Lockhart was organised in London. Sir John McNeill was an active committee member, and represented the committee when the monument was installed at Dryburgh Abbey in April 1858.

This work is typical of Steell’s funerary profile medallions, which impart a classical effect while maintaining the moderate use of naturalism in details such as the hair. As this work is under cover, the original patina has remained in good condition. The relief is set into a large, recumbent slab of polished red granite. Lockhart rests only inches away from the tomb of his illustrious father-in-law.
140. John L. H. McFarlane Funerary Monument

Bronze
1874
Inscribed, bottom of neck: "JN STEELL/Sculps"
h. 48.5 cm
Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh

Little is known of the life of John Lisle Hall McFarlane. According to the monument inscription, he was the son of Andrew John C. McFarlane, and was "House Physician in the Royal Infirmary." He died at age 22, in March 1874.

The portrait relief itself is unusual for Steell, in that its medallion form includes an oval ground for the portrait; Steell's bronze profiles were often set directly into the monument, with no surrounding edge.

Steell executed many relief portraits for funerary monuments. The majority of these works were in bronze. As Steell maintained his own bronze foundry, reliefs could be executed quickly and easily.

141. Professor James Miller Funerary Monument

Bronze
c. 1864
Inscribed, bottom of neck: "JN STEELL/Sculps"
h. 39 cm
Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh

James Miller (1812-1864) was Professor of Surgery at Edinburgh University from 1842 to 1864. Steell executed a marble portrait bust of Miller for the University in 1861. (See entry 79.) Miller also lectured on anatomy at the Trustees' Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy.

Professor Miller was also acquainted with the pioneering photographers D.O. Hill and Robert Adamson. Miller appears in both a portrait calotype and Hill's humorous calotype The Morning After, which visually comments upon the effects of a hangover. Miller was a dedicated leader in the temperance movement.

The profile portrait of Miller is typical of Steell's bronze reliefs. There is a balance between the classical form of the relief and the direct representation of the sitter's features. Steell's bronze reliefs were employed on a variety of funerary monuments, including upright headstones, recumbent gravestones, obelisks and mural monuments. The profile portraits always depict the head, and terminate at the spring of the neck. The funerary profile medallion portrait was widely employed in nineteenth-century Edinburgh, both in stone and in bronze.
142. Revd. Dr. William Muir Funerary Monument
Bronze
c. 1869
Inscribed, bottom of neck: “J[STEELL]/Sculp.”
h. 43 cm
Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh

Revd. Dr. William Muir, LLD (1787-1869) was born at Glasgow in 1787. He received an LLD from Glasgow University, and was licensed to preach in the Church of Scotland in 1810. He worked for ten years at St. George’s Church, Glasgow before moving to Edinburgh in 1822. In 1838, he was elected as the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Following the Disruption of 1843, Muir remained with the established Church of Scotland. In 1845, he became Dean of the Order of the Thistle, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Victoria. He retired from the ministry in 1867, due to blindness. He died at Murrayfield, Edinburgh on 23 June 1869.

As with many of his other posthumous subjects, Steell had executed an earlier portrait bust of Muir. The cleric was one of Steell’s first sitters; a bust of Muir was exhibited at the Scottish Academy in 1831. A marble bust held by St. Stephen’s Church is dated 1837. (See entry 80)

Steell’s contribution to the funerary monument is a profile portrait relief, similar to his many other funerary works.
143. Mrs. Isabella Robertson Fullarton
Marble
No date or inscription, c. 1855
h: 47 cm x 38 cm
Aberdeen Art Gallery
Exhibitions: RSA, 1855 (Cat. no. 757); Virtue and Vision, 1990

According to letters in the Aberdeen Art Gallery docket, Isabella Robertson Fullarton was the wife of John James Muirhead of Edinburgh. Their daughter Constance donated the relief of her mother to the Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1939. According to a January 1936 letter from Dr. Stanley Cursiter, Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, to Aberdeen Art Gallery, the work was “exhibited by Steell under another title.” Constance Muirhead informed the Gallery that Steell had executed it around 1877. The relief may well be older than this, and is presumably the work shown in the 1855 Royal Scottish Academy exhibition, entitled Medallion in Marble of a Lady.

This form of three-quarter alto-relief sculpture was an unusual departure for Steell. He only executed one other similar portrait work: a marble alto-relief bust of Viscount Balgonie for the parish church at Monimail. (See entry 127.) Given that the sitter’s head is draped, the portrait may have originally been intended as a similar memorial to a departed loved one, perhaps integrated with a larger funerary monument.

Steell’s depiction of Mrs. Fullarton displayed his customary balanced approach to his subjects. The overall treatment suggests classicism, but the features are not overly idealised. The depiction of the hair is linear, the incised lines echoing the folds of the surrounding drapery. The surface is uniformly smooth and matte in finish. These elements are combined to impart a serene, austere and elegant effect.
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

GEORGE AUGUSTUS FREDERICK JOHN MURRAY, 5TH DUKE OF ATHOLL, Etc.

WHO DIED AT BLAIR CASTLE 27TH OCTOBER 1824. AGED 60.

AND WHERE REMAINS LIE IN THE VARIOUS CHURCH.

THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY, TRUSTED HE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US VICTORY.

BLESSING BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

JER. 10:10.

THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY HIS WIDOW.
144. Monument to the 6th Duke of Atholl (1814-1864)

Marble
1866
Inscribed, bottom right: “J. STEELL, R.S.A./SCULPT. EDINR./1866.”
h. 149.5 x 114 cm
St. Bride’s Kirk, Blair Castle, Atholl Estates, Blair Atholl

George Augustus Frederick John Murray, 6th Duke of Atholl, died at Blair Castle on 16 January 1864, aged 49. The Duke was a Knight of the Thistle, and had served as a Lieutenant in the 2nd Royal North British Dragoons. The monument was commissioned by his widow, Anne, Duchess of Atholl, who was a lady in waiting to Queen Victoria. The Duchess (d. 1897) often hosted the Queen at Blair Atholl.

The Duchess probably knew Steell through his work on the Consort Memorial; a letter dated 9 May 1867 to the Queen’s secretary General Sir Charles Grey mentions the Duchess’s opinion of Steell’s bas-reliefs for the monument (RA Vic/Add 1/146). The Duchess also commissioned the Edinburgh architect David Bryce to make alterations on the side chapel of the ruined church of St. Bride, where the Duke’s monument is located. (FIDDES & Rowan, 1976, p. 115) In 1872, the Duchess unveiled the monument to the 42nd Highland Regiment in Dunkeld Cathedral. (See entry 156.) The Duke and Duchess’s only son, John James Hugh Henry, 7th Duke of Atholl was an honorary Colonel of the 3rd Battalion of that unit.

Steell’s memorial compositions often featured mourning figures in contemplation. In this example, a soldier of the Duke’s regiment leans upon his rifle in mourning attitude. Symbolic elements referring to the Duke surround a broken tree entwined with ivy; most notable is the feather in the Glengarry bonnet, a traditional attribute worn only by the Chieftain of a Highland clan.

An early photograph of this work is in Vol. IV of the Steell scrapbooks, p. 19.
**145. Rutherfurd Funerary Monument**

Bronze  
1853-4  
Inscribed, bottom of Andrew Rutherfurd neck: “JN STEELL/Sculpt”  
h. 124.5 x 71 cm  
Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh

The tomb for Lord and Lady Rutherfurd in Dean Cemetery was originally to be a sculptural monument to Lady Sophia Rutherfurd; the design was for a funerary urn and pedestal executed by the English sculptor William Theed (1804-1891). Theed’s procrastination and distance from Edinburgh, coupled with anxiety about the durability of marble for the work, prompted Lord Rutherfurd to decide upon a chiefly architectural monument, designed by his friend William Playfair. Playfair designed a pyramid made from red granite. Steell was commissioned to provide the bronze relief panel for the tomb’s front.

Upon Lady Rutherfurd’s death in 1852, Steell was asked to take a death mask for her posthumous marble portrait bust. (See entry 97) Lord Rutherfurd was pleased with the completed work and Steell was commissioned to provide the pyramid’s relief panel.

The portrait panel was also originally planned to be in marble, but Steell suggested that bronze would be better suited to the red Aberdeen granite of the pyramid. Steell executed the double portrait in a neoclassical style. Lord Rutherfurd was an accomplished classical scholar, and his taste in antiquities was well known. The panel inscription was composed by Rutherfurd.

Dean Cemetery was the most fashionable place to be interred in mid-nineteenth century Edinburgh. The Rutherfurd plot is adjacent to those of Lord Cockburn, Lord Jeffrey, Thomas Thomson, and William Playfair. Steell executed reliefs for all of these funerary monuments, with the exception of Playfair’s, which is a single austere column.
146. Sir Walter Scott
Marble
1886
Inscribed: “1771. SCOTT. 1832.”
Inscribed, bottom of drapery: “SIR JOHN STEELL. RSA./SCULPr.
EDINrs. 1886.”
h. 76.5 cm
First Division Court, Parliament House, Edinburgh
Literature: READ 1982, p. 349

147. Sir Walter Scott
Plaster
1886
Inscribed, bottom of drapery: “SIR JOHN STEELL R.S.A./SCULPr.
EDINrs./1886.”
h. 76 cm
Faculty of Advocates, Parliament House, Edinburgh

This medallion relief portrait of Scott was one of the final works of John Steell’s active career. The terms of the commission are not known. Steell’s most famous depiction of Scott was the statue group in Carrara marble for the Scott Monument, Edinburgh. (See entry 24.) Though he did produce some reliefs in stone, Steell’s usual material for medallion portraits was bronze. Steell executed many of these types of profile portraits, which were customarily employed on funerary monuments.

The marble medallion for Parliament House is made up of four sections of moulding, bonded around the portrait. Scott is seen in left profile, with generalised drapery that could be seen as either classical dress, or an allusion to his lowland plaid, or maud. Though its origins lie in antiquity, the medallion portrait was a popular form of commemoration throughout the Renaissance and into the nineteenth century. Usually of smaller dimensions, befitting a more intimate, domestic display, larger medallions could be adapted to more public settings. Sir Walter Scott’s literary pursuits somewhat eclipsed his legal career, but the portrait may have been commissioned to recognise his contributions to the Edinburgh Faculty of Advocates.

The plaster version displayed in the lower level of the Faculty of Advocates’ rooms in Parliament House is either a cast of the marble version, or perhaps Steell’s artist’s plaster.
IN FEAR AND HOLT MEMORIAL OF
JANET ELSOET DAUGHTER
OF CHARLES AND ENNA TENNAK OF THE OLD
BORN 9TH MAY 1875 DIED 19TH JUNE 1895
148. Monument to Janet Tennant (1850-1866)

Marble

1876

Inscribed, bottom right: “Jn. STEELL. R.S.A. Sculpt.”

196.5 x 96.5 cm

Traquair Parish Church, Peebleshire


The 19 June 1876 Daily Review noted: “The sculpture is to be erected in Traquair Parish Church as a memorial to Miss Tennant, a daughter of Mr Tennant of The Glen, and a granddaughter of Mr Tennant of St Rollox. The face, happily for the artist, was one beautiful in itself and easily idealised. The deceased is represented as if she had for a moment left the abode of the blest to comfort her afflicted friends with the assurance that, though she cannot return to them, they may join her; and she points to the cross in her arms as the way. The whole is spiritualised and refined, the execution being worthy of the conception.” (SS, Vol. III, p. 83)

Steel would combine portraiture with allegorical modes if his clients requested it. Another example of this amalgamation is the Leven monument at Monimail Parish church, where Lady Leven’s portrait head is fused with angel’s wings. (See entry 137.)
Thomas Thomson was an early patron and supporter of John Steell. Born on 10 November 1768 at Dalry, Ayrshire, he became an advocate in 1793. He was the elder brother of the painter Revd. John Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840). Thomson was a skilled scholar and an accomplished legal historian. Appointed to the position of Depute Clerk Register in 1806, he undertook a systematic reorganisation of public record keeping, ensuring that many Scottish national historical documents and records were properly edited and preserved.

Steell executed a marble portrait bust of Thomson in 1844. (See entry 108.) During debates regarding the Scott Monument, Alexander Maconochie, Lord Meadowbank, mentioned in a public meeting that he, Thomson, and others had arranged for Steell to execute the portrait bust and colossal statue of Queen Victoria. (See entries 29 & 112.)

Thomson’s funerary monument is a large Celtic cross in red granite. The carved lettering is in a Gothic script. Steell’s bronze profile relief depicts Thomson as he appeared later in life, with long hair and a receded hairline. Steell’s funerary reliefs are employed on many of the adjacent monuments, including Lord Cockburn’s, Lord Rutherford’s and Lord Jeffrey’s. (See entries 130, 136, 145.) Steell’s bronze reliefs were often employed on a variety of monument types, including obelisks, recumbent gravestones, and mural tombs.
150. Hugh William Williams Funerary Monument
Bronze
1861
Inscribed, bottom of neck: “J. STEELL / Sculp.”
h. 34.5 cm
Canongate Cemetery, Edinburgh

Williams was an original member of the Associated Artists in Watercolour, and an associate of the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland. He carefully followed the founding of the Scottish Academy, but died a month before the Hope and Cockburn settlement in July 1829; he died on 23 June 1829.

The Scotsman wrote of Steell’s relief: “It has been modelled from an original portrait by Sir Henry Raeburn, which has been kindly lent for the purpose by Mr Raeburn of St. Bernard’s. Mr Steell has also had a miniature painting and a profile sketch to assist him; and judging from the model, the medallion will be highly expressive and artistic.” (SS, Vol. II, p. 118)

151. Hugh William Williams (1773-1829)
Marble
No date or inscription, c. 1861
h. 39.3 x 35 cm
National Gallery of Scotland, (Inv. no. NG 524)

Williams was born at sea, en route to the West Indies in 1773. His father was a ship’s captain, but both his parents died while he was young, and Williams was raised in Edinburgh by his grandparents. His grandfather recognised Williams’s talent for drawing and painting and encouraged him to pursue art.

In Edinburgh, Williams exhibited with the Society of Associated Artists from 1810 to 1816. He travelled extensively in Italy and Greece, and published his book Travels in Italy, Greece and the Ionian Islands in 1820. He returned to Edinburgh and in 1822, held an important exhibition of watercolours which was critically acclaimed, and led to his nickname “Grecian” Williams. Williams was an associate artist of the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland, but died in June 1829, a month before the RIEFAS artists joined the Scottish Academy.

It is not known if Steell executed this marble relief before or after the bronze version for Williams’s funerary monument in Canongate Cemetery, Edinburgh. (See entry 150) The majority of the profile portrait reliefs Steell executed were for funerary monuments like these. The marble relief was presented to the National Gallery of Scotland in 1866. It is framed, and accompanied by a gold medal and letter from Charles X of France, acknowledging the King’s approval of Williams’s 1824 publication Select Views in Greece.
John Wilson, vocalist, was born in Edinburgh on 25 December 1800. The Scotsman of July 1857 noted that upon his death at Quebec in 1849: “...erecting a monument was taken into consideration by a numerous circle of friends and admirers in Edinburgh...” The monument is a freestone obelisk, eighteen feet high. Steell’s bronze profile portrait relief is set into one side of the base.

Wilson sang at the inauguration of the Scott Monument on 16 August, 1846. The Caledonian Mercury of 17 August 1846 reported “Mr Wilson, the vocalist, sung, and with great effect, the Pibroch of Donald Dhu, a dirge having previously been executed by the band.” (SS, Vol. I, p. 64)
Steell's artist's plaster; calotype from Steell scrapbooks
153. The Wise and Foolish Virgins
Freestone
1839

Steell’s tympanum group for the Standard Life Assurance Company was the second of his few architectural works, the first being the 1833 Ceres relief for the Scottish Widows building in St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh. (See list of missing work.) He executed versions of the Virgins for Edinburgh (1839) and Dublin (1863), as well as a pediment tympanum for the Bank of Montreal, Canada in 1867. (See entry 128.) The Standard Life building at 3 George Street was designed in 1838, and was the first commercial commission of the Edinburgh architect David Bryce (1803-1876). Steell and Bryce collaborated many times during their careers; he designed at least five bases for Steell’s Edinburgh monuments. The relief was the only element of Bryce’s building to survive its demolition in 1898. (FIDDES & Rowan, 1976, p. 99)

Steell’s composition illustrated the Biblical parable (Matthew 25:13) of the wise virgins, who brought extra oil for their lamps while awaiting the arrival of their master, in contrast to the foolish virgins, whose lamps ran out. This was used by Standard Life as an analogy for preparedness. Steell’s treatment of the figures was classical, employing traditional drapery and hairstyles within the group. Standard Life used the group as a company logo; it subsequently appeared on the company’s policy certificates. Steell’s composition was also copied by James Young for the Standard Life building at 82-92 Gordon Street, Glasgow.

The work was also one of few Steell groups which illustrated a Biblical theme. It was an intriguing amalgamation of Greek neoclassical expression and Christian narrative, presented within a contemporary commercial context. William Blake painted the subject in 1822, as did the Pre-Raphaelite painters Edward Burne-Jones and J.E. Millais in 1859 and 1863, respectively. An early photograph of the group is contained in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 99.

154. The Wise and Foolish Virgins
Freestone
1863
66 Upper Sackville Street, Dublin

This was the second version of Steell’s 1839 group for Dublin’s Standard Life building. The building was designed by David Bryce and constructed in 1853. Reportedly, “the directors were desirous that the original design should be copied, with such modification only as the greater size of the figures and the bolder relief from the greater space disposable would permit. Accordingly, with these exceptions, the work is a reproduction of the original design.” (Saunders’ News Letter & Daily Advertiser, SS, Vol. II, p. 98) The group was carved from four blocks of Binny Freestone.
155. Monument to the 34th Cumberland Regiment
Marble and Freestone
1859
h. 183 cm
Carlisle Cathedral

Literature: SS, Vol. II, pp.106-8: The Scotsman, 30 May 1861; ILN, 7 December 1861; Carlisle Patriot, 22 June 1861; Carlisle Journal, 21 June 1861; Carlisle Examiner & Northern Advertiser, 22 June 1861

This monument to members of the 34th Cumberland Regiment killed in the Crimean War was subscribed for by surviving unit members, chiefly General Sir Thomas Makdougall Brisbane, (1773-1860) the regimental Colonel. In 1833, Brisbane became the fourth President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Brisbane was acquainted with Sir John McNeill, and had sat on the evaluation committee proposed by McNeill during the commissioning of the Wellington Monument in 1840. In 1842, Brisbane had suggested that Steell execute a marble bust of Professor Robert Jameson. (See entry 69.)

A winged allegorical figure in alto-relief, representing Fame stands at the left of a Gothic memorial tablet, clutching a trumpet, and presenting three memorial wreaths. The regimental flags are draped over the tablet.

According to the Scotsman, the freestone architectural elements of the corbels and arch were designed by David Bryce.

There is a photograph of the artist’s plaster in Vol. II, p. 106 of the Steell Scrapbooks.
156. Monument to the 42nd Highland Regiment

Marble
1872
Inscribed bottom right: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt. Edinr. 1872”
Inscribed beneath standing figure: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt.”
Inscribed bottom left: “JN. STEELL. R.S.A./Sculpt.”
h: 235 x 193 cm
Dunkeld Cathedral, Dunkeld, Perthshire


The 42nd Royal Highland Regiment, the Freacadan Dubh, or ‘Black Watch’ was first formed on 25 October 1739 and first mustered in May 1740 between Taybridge and Aberfeldy. The monument is to commemorate the members who fell between the creation of the unit, and the close of the Indian Mutiny in 1859. It was publicly unveiled by the Duchess of Atholl and provided by the officers of the regiment. The Duchess’s son, John, 7th Duke of Atholl, was an honorary Colonel of the regiment’s 3rd Battalion.

According to the ILN, the scene is derived from lines in The Black Mousquetaire in the Ingoldsby Legends:

But a sombre sight is a battle-field,
To the sad survivor’s sorrowing eye.
Where those who scorned to fly or yield
In one promiscuous carnage lie:
Where the cannon’s roar
Is heard no more.
And the thick dun smoke has rolled away,
And the victor comes for a last survey
Of the well-fought field of yesterday.
No triumphs blush that haughty brow,
No proud, exulting look is there.
His eagle glance is humbled now,
As earthward bent in anxious care
It seeks the form whose stalwart pride
But yesternorn was by his side.
And there it lies—On yonder bank
Of corpses which themselves had breath
But yesternorn—now cold and dank
With other dews than those of death!
Powerless as it had ne’er been born
The hand that clasped his yesternorn!

The figure at centre is an officer in regimental kilt, sporran and basket-hilted claymore, who looks upon a young ensign still clutching the regimental colours. Face down on the right is a Russian soldier, identified by the Imperial double headed eagle on his cartridge box, and helmet at lower right. The kilt and leg of a partially unseen figure is at left.

Particularly minute verisimilitude is displayed in the carving; extensive drill work is used on the officer’s bearskin cap, sporran, stockings, leggings, and flashes, as well as the detailing of the claymore, and assorted other depictions of the gabion, cannonball and shattered cannon. The officer’s flesh is given a matte finish, but the dead soldier at left is highly polished.

The Duchess of Atholl was particularly close to Queen Victoria, whom she often hosted during the annual summer Highland holidays. Steell mentioned the Duchess in a letter of 9 May 1867 during the work on the bas-reliefs for the Consort Memorial. (Royal Archives, Windsor, Vic/Add I/146)
A Thomas Begbie negative exists for this work; Steell sent a photograph to General Sir Thomas Biddulph of the Royal household in August 1876: “I have taken the liberty of sending by this post the Photograph of the 42nd monument to Lady Biddulph which we spoke of when in my studio & please beg of Her Ladyship to accept it...” (Royal Archives, Winsor, Vic/Add 1/243)

The combination of scale, cyclical composition, verisimilitude and emotional content are all a marked departure in this Steell sculpture; it is unlike any other work he produced before or afterwards. A photograph of three Black Watch soldiers is in Volume IV of the Steell scrapbooks. It is possible that Steell may have used these men as models for the monument, as their uniforms virtually match those in the relief.
THE SOULS OF TWEENTHEIGHT CORPORALS,
NINE DRUMMERS,
AND THIRTY NINE PRIVATE.
FOURTEEN OF WHOM HAD TWENTY FOUR CHILDREN,
OF WHOM TWENTY EIGHT WERE MAN AND WOMAN;
ALL HAVING BEEN KILLED AND SIXTY NINE.
WHO DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN SMIRCE, BETWEEN
THE SIXTH DAY OF MAY AND THE TWELFTH OF AUGUST, EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY FOUR,
AND THE FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER, EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY FIVE.
157. Monument to the 78th Highland Regiment

Marble
1850
Inscribed, lower left corner: “J. STEELL. Sculpt. / EDINR. 1850”
h: 93 cm x 124 cm
St. Giles’ Cathedral, Edinburgh

The 78th Highland Regiment, nicknamed “The Ross-Shire Buffs” was raised at Fort George, near Inverness in 1793 by Colonel Francis Humberstone Mackenzie, Lord Seaforth and head of the Clan Mackenzie. The unit fought in the Napoleonic Wars, and was first sent to India in 1797. After the unit distinguished itself at the Battle of Assaye in September of that year, the 78th was allowed to wear a badge which featured an elephant as its design.

This monument is to 669 men, women and children associated with the 78th Highland Regiment in India, who died of cholera near the banks of the Scinde and Indus river at Sukkar Sind between September 1844 and March 1845 while the unit was combating Afghan risings. A draped female mourning figure bends over a casket, which bears a bas-relief carving of an elephant; to the right, a busby and claymore serve as further symbols of the military unit. The claymore is entwined with the vines of a poisonous upas tree, which symbolised, as the ILN noted: “the subtle plague proving more deadly and powerful than the sharp and polished steel.” (SS, Vol. I, p. 104)

An early photograph of the work is in the Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II, p.111.
ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF

MAJOR ROBERT MURRAY BARKER, BREVET MAJOR JOHN AKSTRUTHER McCORMAN.

LIEUTENANTS, WILLIAM LEAN MACMILLAN, WILLIAM TURNER, JAMES WENVEYS, ROBERT ABERCROMBY.

EDWARD ALFRED BALL, FRANKLIN KNIGHT KIRBY.

THIRTEEN NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS, FOUR DRUMMERS, AND TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY EIGHT

PRIVATE OF THE NINETY THIRD SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS.

WHO FELL IN ACTION OR DIED DURING THE CRIMEAN CAMPAIGN OF 1854-56.
158. Monument to the 93rd Sutherland Highland Regiment
Marble
1859
Inscribed, front lower right: “J.N. STEELL. R.S.A. Sculp. Edinr. 1859.”
h. 136.5 x 119
Glasgow Cathedral

The 93rd Sutherland Highland Regiment of Foot was raised in April 1799 in the most remote parts of Scotland: Sutherland, Ross, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. A majority of the men were Gaelic speakers, and had previously served in “Fencible” units—home guard forces which had been raised in view of a possible French invasion. The unit was formally gazetted into the army in 1800.

The monument was dedicated to officers and servicemen of the regiment who died during the Crimean War, 1854-6. The 25 August 1860 Glasgow Herald opined: “There is a refreshing originality about every one of Mr. Steell’s symbolical representations; and in the present commemorative work that rare and inestimable quality is not wanting.”

The composition depicts an officer, fatally wounded, and supported by an allegorical figure representing Fame blowing a trumpet. The soldier has his drawn sword in his right hand; his left hand holds the regimental flags, which are inscribed with names of battles, surmounted by a memorial wreath. Behind the banners is a gabion; at lower right is a Russian helmet.

In the Crimea, the 93rd, 42nd, and 79th regiments formed the Highland Brigade under Sir Colin Campbell. The unit fought at Alma, Sebastopol and Balaklava. During action at Balaklava on 25 October 1854 they succeeded in defeating a superior force of Russian cavalry; a news report of the action in the Times resulted in the 93rd’s nickname The Thin Red Line.

Steell blends both neoclassical forms and naturalistic details. The allegorical figure of Fame wears a classical robe with buttoned sleeves. Her hair is given a general Greek treatment; the feathers of her wings are painstakingly carved for verisimilitude. The soldier is also depicted in minute detail, especially his uniform and accoutrements, particularly the badger’s head sporran and the patterning of his uniform and kilt. This was very much in keeping with Steell’s middle career, where he strove for an overall classical effect, but included minute detailing within it.
159. Alexander and Bucephalus Statuette
Bronze
Inscribed on base: “J STEELL Sculp. EDINR. 1833”
h. 51 cm
Private Collection, London

160. Alexander and Bucephalus Statuette
Bronze
h. 52 cm
Inscribed on base: “J STEELL Sculp. EDINR. 1833”
Dalmeny House, Edinburgh

161. Alexander and Bucephalus Statuette
Bronze
No date or inscription
h. 52 cm
Private Collection, Scotland

162. Alexander and Bucephalus Statuette
Bronze
No date or inscription
h. 52 cm
Collection of His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, Bowhill

Literature: The Art Journal, 1882, p. 348

Very little is known about the bronze statuette versions of Steell’s popular group. At least four copies are known to be held by private collections. The London and Dalmeny copies are dated 1833, but this was the date of the original statue’s completion. If any editions were cast by Steell, they must postdate 1849, as the sculptor did not start his foundry until that year.

Receipts from the Rosebery archives show that Archibald, 4th Earl of Rosebery (1783-1868) purchased a statuette for £21, paying the first installment in November of 1837. This suggests that Steell had the editions cast elsewhere. The Art Journal of 1882 remarked: “Many noblemen and gentlemen...subscribed for small copies which were executed in bronze.” (Art Journal, 1882, p. 348)

The group was Steell’s first major statue, and was a critical success. (See entry 1.) The statuette differs from the original in terms of costume: Alexander is barefoot in the original, while he wears sandals in the statuette.
163. Drawing of Lord de Saumarez statue
Pencil and ink wash on paper
c. 1854
h. 22.3 x 15.1 cm
National Gallery of Scotland Printroom (Inv. no. D 4443)

This drawing has been squared for engraving, and is identical to the picture published in the *Illustrated London News* of 14 January 1854, p. 28.

164. Drawing of Lord Jeffrey statue
Pencil, pen and ink wash on paper
c. 1855
h. 24.6 x 18.9 cm
National Gallery of Scotland Printroom (Inv. no. D 4442)

165. Drawing of Prince Consort Memorial
Pencil, ink and goache on paper
c. 1865
Royal Archives, Windsor, RA Vic I/ Add

This drawing was done prior to the completion of the monument, as the composition of the figure group representing the Services is different.

166. Drawing of Sir Walter Scott statue
Sepia ink on paper
c. 1866
h. 31.10 x 24.7 cm
National Gallery of Scotland Printroom, (Inv. no. D2699)

This drawing was executed by Steell as a gift to the Edinburgh bookseller and antiquarian W.F. Watson. It exactly matches the composition of a c. 1840 calotype by D.O. Hill and Robert Adamson.
167. Sir Walter Scott Statuette
Parian ware
1850
h. 33.2 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (Inv. no. PG 1302)
Literature: SS, vol. I, pp. 104-5; Daily Mail, 18 March 1850; Edinburgh Evening Post, 13 March 1850; The Scotsman, 12 March 1850; Edinburgh Advertiser, 12 March 1850; Caledonian Mercury, 18 March 1850; Scottish Agricultural Journal, 12 March 1850; RAPFAS Annual Report, 1853-4

168. Sir Walter Scott Statuette
Parian ware
h. 33.2 cm
Writer's Museum, Edinburgh
Exhibitions: Virtue and Vision, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 1990

169. Sir Walter Scott Statuette
Bronze
Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh

170. Sir Walter Scott Statuette
Parian ware
1850
h. 34.5 cm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Exhibitions: The Lamp of Memory: Scott and the Artist, Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, 1979

John Steell’s 1846 group of Sir Walter Scott and Maidie, for the Scott Monument had always been a popular work. In 1849, the governing committee of the Royal Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland commissioned Steell for a reduced version in marble, from which porcelain copies were made by Copeland to be given as annual prizes for RAPFAS subscribers....(SS, Vol. I, p. 102)

Steell’s marble statuette was shown for only one day in the Royal Institution before being sent to Copeland. As the RAPFAS had purchased the copyright, they regularly had copies created for prizes. In 1853 the RAPFAS had twenty-five copies made, with a further twenty-five produced in 1854. In 1866, the RAPFAS ordered another fifty copies. This may have been the last set created. Bronze versions of the statuette were also created, ostensibly cast at Steell’s own foundry.
171. Sir Walter Scott Statuette
Plaster
1865
Inscribed on reverse: “Jn. STEELL. R.S.A. /Sculpt. Edinr./1865.”
h. 66.1 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (Inv. no. PG 1523)
Exhibitions: RSA, 1865 (Catalogue no. 908)

This large plaster statuette is a replica of Steell’s famous 1846 Scott Monument group, Sir Walter Scott and Maida. It is not known why Steell created this large model in 1865, though a marble version was displayed in the RSA exhibition of that year. (DE LAPERRIERE 1991, Vol. 4, p. 238) This work may have been the artist’s plaster for a version in stone. Steell carved another statuette in marble in 1850 to create 100 parianware prizes for the Royal Association for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland. There were also a number of bronze replicas created. (See entries 167-170)

A note in the SNPG accession file on PG1523 states that the statuette was “Presented by the sculptor to the late Mr David Reid for many years Clerk to the Council of the Royal Scottish Academy who was a close personal friend of the sculptor.” It is also noted that the work is “the original model of the Statue in the Scott Monument...” This seems unlikely, given the work is dated 1865; Steell first displayed his design in the open competition held in 1836.

The Scotsman of 31 May 1939 reported that Steell’s original plaster model for the Scott Monument statue had been presented as a gift to the Royal Burgh of Tain. This was probably Steell’s original design model, as it was reportedly inscribed: “J. Steell R.S.A. sculptor, Edinburgh, 1845” The Scotsman reported that the model measured 27 inches (68.7 cm) high.
(ECPL Edinburgh Room, YPR 5539 Vol. I) This plaster version is still held by the Tain and District museum.
172. Stern of the *San Josef*

**Bronze**

1885

h. 49 cm x 105 cm

Nelson Monument, Calton Hill, Edinburgh

Literature: Edinburgh Town Council Minutes, SL/7/1/335, p. 31

Steell cast this model of the stern of the ship *San Josef* in bronze for Edinburgh's Nelson Monument in 1885. Designed by the architect Robert Burn (1752-1815) (the father of Scottish architect William Burn), the Nelson Monument was completed in 1807. The tower commemorates the British Admiral Horatio Nelson, the naval commander at the Battle of Trafalgar.

The model is a detailed depiction of the rear of the ship, including its rudder, cannon, and nameplate. The work was presumably commissioned to replace a wooden model that previously occupied the position. Steell provided the work for £45. (Edinburgh City Archives, SL/7/1/335, p. 31)

Lord Nelson captured the Spanish ships *San Nicholas* and *San Josef* on 14 February 1797 during the Battle of Cape St. Vincent. Nelson received the Spanish admirals' swords in a gesture of surrender on the deck of the *San Josef*. At the time of the battle, Nelson was a Commodore, in command of HMS Captain. The bronze model of the *San Josef* is installed above the main entrance to the tower.

173. Professor John Wilson Statuette

**Parian ware**

c. 1865-7

h. 45 cm

The Royal Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland commissioned a statuette of the *John Wilson* statue in 1865 for reproductions in parian porcelain to be given as subscription prizes. The 1865 RAPFAS report stated: "Fifty copies of the statuette will be distributed among the Subscribers for the year 1866, and another fifty copies among those of 1867. Each copy will be examined and approved by Mr Steell before being delivered to the Association." (SS, Vol. III, p. 37)

Wilson himself had been a member of the RAPFAS governing committee. Wilson's statue was a popular local monument in Edinburgh, and the commissioning of a statuette illustrated both the writer's popularity and influence and Steell's success with the statue. The statuettes were produced by the Copeland ceramics manufactory, which had executed the previous parianware replicas of Steell's *Sir Walter Scott* for the RAPFAS.

This copy was offered by Christie's London, 2 March 1995, lot 330.
APPENDIX ONE

List of untraced work

The following works are known from various sources, mainly exhibition catalogues, news cuttings in the Steell scrapbooks, and Woodward's 1979 list of works. The works are arranged by date. Wherever possible, the last known location of the work is given. There are several instances where a photograph of an unidentified work exists.

**Plaster Dog.** 65 cm. This painted plaster dog, dated 1821 and signed "J. Steell" was reported as held by the antique dealers Biggs of Maidenhead in 1972. (Conway Library files) The work may also be attributed to John Steell Senior. If it was done by Steell, it would be his earliest surviving work.

**Bust of John Robison Esq.** Glasgow Dilettanti Society, 1828, Cat. no. 268

**Bust of a Lady** Glasgow Dilettanti Society, 1828, Cat. no. 267

**Bust of a child** Glasgow Dilettanti Society, 1828, Cat. no. 271

**Bust of John Baird, Esq.** Glasgow Dilettanti Society, 1828, Cat. no. 272

**Bust of John Baird, Esq.** RSA 1828, Cat. no. 315

**Bust of an Architect** RSA 1829, Cat. no. 292

**Bust of an Artist** RSA 1829, Cat. no. 303

**Bust of a Gentleman** RSA 1830, Cat. no. 329

**Bust of Revd. Dr. Muir** (may be the same as the 1837 work) RSA 1831, Cat. no. 376

**Bust of Revd. Dr. Gordon** RSA 1831, Cat. no. 377

**Bust of Miss M. Smith** RSA 1832, Cat. no. 322

**Ceres,** freestone, c. 1833 for Scottish Widows building, Edinburgh (reported @ Stenhouse Conservation Centre, Edinburgh; Woodward 1976)

**Marble statue of Boy Fishing.** (Sold in 1836 to Lord Grey for Kinfauns Castle) RSA 1836, Cat. no. 356

**Bust of Mrs Francis Grant** RSA 1836, Cat. no. 357
Adam and Eve relief

Bust of Alexander Cowan
Cribb, for Duke of Buccleuch RSA 1836, Cat. no. 361
Bust of Lord Meadowbank RSA 1838, Cat. no. 401
Bust of Wardlaw Ramsay RSA 1838, Cat. no. 403
Bust of William Speirs of Elderslie RSA 1838, Cat. no. 404
Sketch bust of the Hon. Charles Barrington RSA 1838, Cat. no. 413
Bust of Lord Panmure, for Dundee Town Hall, c. 1839 (Steel scrapbooks, Vol. I, p. 41)

Unknown Young Woman, marble, 1838 (reported @ Braemar, Invercauld; Woodward 1979)

Bust in marble of Master A. Reginald Forbes RSA 1841, Cat. no. 544
Bust of Neill Ballingall, Esq. RSA 1841, Cat. no. 545

Sir James Fergusson, 4th Bart., marble, 1842 (reported @ Kilkerran; Woodward 1979)

Bust of Lord Abinger (Caledonian Mercury, 9 April 1842)

Bust of George Canning, c. 1842, owned by Sir Robert Peel (Peel 1920, p. 246.)

Thomas Thomson, MD, Chemist, (1773-1852) for Glasgow Philosophical Society, (Steel scrapbooks, Vol. I, p. 49; Glasgow; Argyll 27 March 1843)

Bust of Revd. John Brown, DD RSA 1844, Cat. no. 558 (reported @ Highland Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh; Woodward 1979)

Relief of Adam and Eve, plaster, c. 1844, h. 24 x 27 cm (offered by Christie’s London, 15/2/1990, lot 154.)

John Smart Funerary Monument, 1847, Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh (Woodward 1979)

Bust of Ferrooz McNeill RSA 1849, Cat. no. 336

Monumental figure of Lady Melville (Scotsman, 31 March 1849)

Bust of Sir Robert Peel, c. 1850, Dundee Chamber of Commerce (Steel scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 4)

Monument to Lt. Sprot, marble, 1851, St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh (Steel Scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 5)

Wellington Statuette, c. 1852 (Steel scrapbooks, Vol. II, pp. 48-50)

Bust of Alexander Cowan RSA 1855, Cat. no. 749 (reported @ Lockhouse Farm, Beattock; Woodward 1979)

Bust in marble of a Lady RSA 1855, Cat. no. 777

Bust in marble of Mrs. Prevost RSA 1857, Cat. no. 686

Colossal Bust in Marble of HM the Queen RSA 1859, Cat. no. 708
Unknown Woman. 1861

Unknown Boy. 1861

William Small. 1864

Revd. James McFarlane. 1866

"Gracie," c. 1879
Bust of the son of Lord Murray.
(Steell scrapbooks. Vol. II. p. 113; North Briton, 12 March 1859.)

Sir John McNeill, marble, n.d., c. 1859 (reported @ 21 George Street. Scottish Development Office; Woodward 1979)

Marble bust of Col. Baker, Chief Secretary of the Military Dept
(Scotsman, 23 March 1861)

Bust of Unknown Woman, 1861, Private Collection, Troon (unable to trace owner, 2002)

Bust of Unknown Boy, 1861, Private Collection, location unknown

Bust of Edward, Prince of Wales, marble, 1862
(reported @ Royal High School Edinburgh; Woodward 1979) Reported destroyed by High School staff, 2002.

Bust of John Spottiswoode, Esq. RSA 1863, Cat. no. 808

Bust of William Small, R.S.A., 1864, Inscribed on reverse: "BUST OF WILLIAM SMALL ESQ DUNDEE SCULPTURED AND PRESENTED BY JOHN STEELL R.S.A. AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE GREAT REGARD AND ESTEEM HE ENTERTAINED FOR HIS SUBJECT. 3RD MARCH 1864 R.S.A." h. 74 cm; Steell scrapbooks, Vol. III. p. 15
held by Joanna Barnes Fine Arts. London in October 1989

Revd. James McFarlane, marble, 1866, h. 80.7 cm

Bust of Revd. John Cook, marble 1875
(reported @ Highland Tolbooth Church. Edinburgh; Woodward 1979)

Bust in marble of "Gracie" RSA 1879, Cat. no. 747
(belonged to J.R. Findlay; offered by Sotheby's London, 23/11/1996, lot 219.)

Bust in marble of Mrs. William Allan RSA 1880, Cat. no. 781

Bust of Dowager Marchioness of Lothian (reported in studio sale, March 1888)

Bust of Sir Neil Douglas (reported in studio sale, March 1888)

Bust in marble of Mrs James Stewart RSA 1889, Cat. no. 774

Bust of George Ross, marble, n.d.
(reported @ Royal High School Edinburgh; Woodward 1979) reported destroyed by High School staff, 2002.

Bust of Albert Prince Consort, for Dundee Chamber of Commerce
(Steell scrapbooks, Vol. II. p. 98)

Bust of Mr. Venebles, for Calcutta (Steell scrapbooks, Vol. III. p. 91)

Bust of Mr Plenderleath, treasurer of Destitute Sick Society, Edinburgh
(Steell scrapbooks, Vol. I.)

Bust of Sir Robert Cautley for Calcutta Town Hall, India
(John Physick typescript, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, p. 1363)
**Bust of Sir Robert Cantley** for Calcutta Town Hall, India
(John Physick typescript, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, p. 1365)

**Statue of Colonel Robert Bruce**, Falkland Palace (reported destroyed in 1940s)

**Statue of John Bruce**, Falkland Palace (reported destroyed in 1940s)

**Bust of Unknown Woman**, date and location unknown, negative from Conway Library

**Relief of Mourning Soldier**, date and location unknown, photograph from Steell scrapbooks

**Relief of Sleeping Child**, date and location unknown, photograph from Steell scrapbooks. (This may be a work for Lord Murray, see NLS MS 19736, f. 144-7)

**Unknown busts**, dates and locations unknown, photographs from Steell scrapbooks. (The bust at top left is R.S. Lauder, see catalogue raisonné)
APPENDIX TWO

Works attributed to John Steell

Lady Edith Christian Ramsay (d. 1871)
Plaster
No date or signature
h. 57 cm
Private collection, Scotland

Lady Edith was the youngest daughter of the 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Dalhousie. She married Sir James Fergusson, 6th Baronet of Kilkerran on 9 August 1859.

Family tradition holds that the bust is by John Steell. In view of its moderate style, and the other commissions Steell undertook for the Ramsay family, it would be likely that this is his work. The base is in a style seen in other Steell artist’s plasters.

Celtic Cross
Freestone
1875
Edinburgh Castle Esplanade

This stone cross is attributed to Steell in GIFFORD, p. 90. It is a monument to Col. Kenneth Douglas Mackenzie. Steell and his studio were certainly capable of such work, though there is no documentation regarding the project.

Funerary Monument to Jane Jack
Marble
No date or signature
196 x 86 cm
Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh

This marble relief is set into the huge funerary monument to James Buchanan in Dean Cemetery. William Brodie (1815-1881) executed the large portrait bust of Buchanan in the 1860s. Steell presumably provided the relief for Buchanan’s widow Jane Jack upon her death in 1883. The work is attributed to Steell in Pevsner, Edinburgh, 1991, p. 389.
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