

A history of the statue in Parliament Square



Most visitors to Edinburgh will have passed the statue outside St Giles Cathedral on Parliament Square but only a few will know the identity of this remarkable man and even fewer will know the history behind the monument which was unveiled by the Earl of Stair on 7 February 1888.

The regal bronze cast of a standing figure wearing Order of the Garter robe depicts Walter Francis Montagu Douglas Scott, 5th Duke of Buccleuch and 7th Duke of Queensberry,

Such was the respect in which the Duke was held by the people of Scotland that following his death on 16 April 1884 the statue was commissioned and paid for by a public subscription and was created by world famous sculptor Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm.

Walter Francis was born at Dalkeith Palace Midlothian on 25 November 1808. He was the fifth child of seven, and second son of Charles Montagu-Scott, 4th Duke of Buccleuch, and the Honourable Harriet Katherine Townshend.

When his older brother, George Henry, died at the age of 10 from measles, he became heir apparent to the family titles, and then, aged only thirteen, he succeeded his father to the Dukedoms of Buccleuch and Queensberry in minority.

The noted author Sir Walter Scott (no relation) who was a great friend of his father was appointed his guardian.

Three years later the youngster hosted King George IV at Dalkeith Palace during his historic visit to Scotland, as the

Palace of Holyroodhouse was uninhabitable at the time.

The visit was the first by a sovereign to Scotland for almost two centuries and the first occasion when the wearing of tartan, which had been banned since the '45 uprising was not only permitted but required.



The King is reported to have spent an incredible £1354 on his outfit which would be equivalent to more than £100,00 at today's prices and he commissioned a full length portrait by Sir David Wilkie which he gave as a gift to the young Duke.

Walter Francis was educated at Eton and Cambridge University then in 1829 he married Lady Charlotte Anne Thynne, daughter of the Marquess of Bath, a choice very much approved of by Sir Walter Scott. Their marriage was to prove an extraordinary partnership which lasted 56 years and the couple were very much part of the court circle. The Duchess was Mistress of the Robes to Queen Victoria and the Duke became a conservative Member of Parliament serving in the Peel Government.

During their marriage, the pair set about expanding Bowhill House near Selkirk utilising the services of renowned architect William Burns and they collected numerous painting, tapestries and pieces of mainly French furniture which can still be seen in the building.

He was appointed a Knight of the Garter, a Privy Councillor and served as Lord Privy Seal from 1842 to 1846 however after Peel's fall, the Duke's political career came to an end and he became Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, a position he was to hold until his death.

After leaving politics, he became a progressive manager of the traditional family landed estates, but this was the age of coal and railways, and he took advantage of both. He was also commercially minded enough to develop a new harbour with pier

and breakwater at Granton in Edinburgh at a cost over half a million pounds, from where his coal was exported.

He was also responsible for creating significant employment throughout the country as well as building churches, houses and village halls.

In his later years, his habits were simple, and his appearance that of an Elder of the Kirk. He always wore a dark grey cutaway coat, shepherd's plaid trousers, and a cap with a large peak, and out of doors carried a plaid over his shoulder. His manner was brusque, and he was describes as being 'fond of a rough sort of chaff, but no one had a kinder heart.'

He died aged 77 at Bowhill House and was buried at St. Mary's Chapel, Dalkeith, Scotland leaving over £910,000 in his will.

The story has an unhappy ending however. His loving wife Charlotte Anne had become greatly influenced by Cardinal Newman and converted to Roman Catholicism which meant that she was not buried with her husband but rather at nearby St David's Roman Catholic Church in Dalkeith.

Bowhill House is open to the public throughout the month of July with guided tours available. Visitors can take the train from Waverley Station to Tweedbank near Melrose and the house is a short taxi ride away.

Inside the house are paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Thomas Gainsborough, Van Dyck, Claude Lorraine, Joli, Guardi, Marieschi, Griffier and Canaletto, Tapestries woven by Flemish weavers depicting the Triumph of Julius CaeA sar, French furniture, Meissen and Sevres porcelain, Joseph Knibb clocks and much more.