

Kidnapped statue is a suburban Treasure Island

One of the most prolific contributors to the Edinburgh cityscape is the brilliant sculptor Alexander Stoddart (1959-).

His style is neoclassical, and his bronze statues have exquisite detail, unlike the modern smooth polished art that makes him contemplate reaching for “a glass of whisky and a revolver”.

His sculptures across the city include Hume and Smith on the High Street, James Clerk Maxwell on George Street and Playfair outside the National Museum of Scotland. One of my personal favourites is a monument to the novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). The statue is located near the former Scottish & Newcastle offices in a small enclave on Corstorphine Road near the junction with Ellersly Road.

The bronze statue depicts the two principal characters from Stevenson’s novel *Kidnapped*, Alan Breck Stewart and the 17-year-old David Balfour. Breck is based on the real Scottish soldier and Jacobite, Colin Roy Campbell of Glenure, who in 1752 was tried in absentia for the assassination of the Crown rent collector. David Balfour (Balfour was Stevenson’s mother’s maiden name) on the other hand is the naïve lad making his way in the world, outsmarted by his uncle, and simultaneously in awe and afraid of the Highlanders.

Through his relationship with Breck, Balfour matures and hardens. He begins to respect the Highlanders and their way of

life. He emerges heroic and competent, outwitting his devious uncle and claiming his rightful inheritance.

As we expect with Stoddart, the monument is exquisitely detailed. The engraving on Breck's pistol and Balfour's claymore are clearly visible as is the braiding on their jackets. The clothing flutters as if the characters have just emerged from wardrobe on the set of a Hollywood period drama.

On the pedestal we see in bronze bas relief the head of Stevenson with the simple inscription "1850 Robert Lovis 1894 Stevenson". A bronze plaque just to the right of the statue states: "This memorial to Robert Louis Stevenson depicts two characters from Kidnapped, Alan Breck Stewart and David Balfour, who famously parted near this spot. The statue, unveiled by Sir Sean Connery, was made by Alexander Stoddart with the support of Scottish and Newcastle plc. September 2004".



Robert Louis Stevenson. Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam
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