

The Meerkat Crosses of Scotland

How often have you walked past them without a glance? □

Throughout Scotland, in towns and villages from Whithorn to Stonehaven, from Inveraray to Kilwinning, there are pillars and obelisks symbolising the unique provenance of individual communities. Yet they mostly go unnoticed or are taken for granted. □ Largely medieval in origin, what is their purpose?

Why are they there in the first place? □ Mercat Crosses are pivotal to the histories of the locations they occupy. They are the practical and often stylish ornaments of a bygone age when they served as the focal points for communities to get together for matters of mutual concern: business and market places, public announcements, prosecutions, even witch trials.

Each and every one of them has a unique story to tell; each and every one of them is deeply embedded within the story and psyche of the localities in which they were erected. □ A year ago, it was the inspiration of the well – known historian Henry Steuart Fotheringham to create a photographic record of Scotland's surviving 237 Mercat Crosses, and to lend them a humorous appeal by making use of the vernacular Scots pronunciation of "Mercat" and the Dutch word "Meerkat", meaning "a gathering place", to illustrate them. □

Co-opting authors Charles Kinder Bradbury and Roddy Martine, the result is *The Meerkat Crosses of Scotland* which combines local histories with photographic illustrations of visitor interest. □

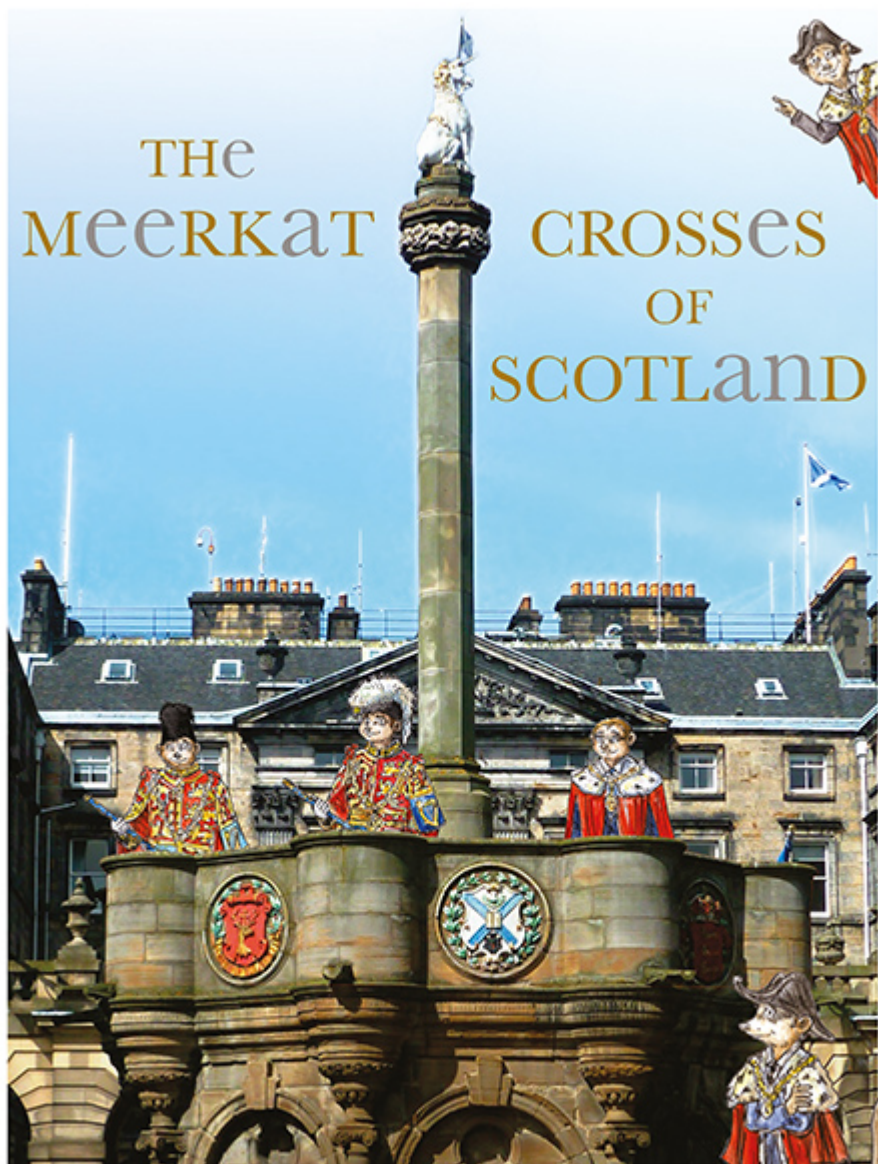
The front cover, indeed, features the Mercat Cross in

Edinburgh's Parliament Square beside St Giles Cathedral when occupied by the Lord Lyon King of Arms and two heralds to proclaim Charles III as monarch of the United Kingdom. Incidentally, Dr Morrow, CVO, CBE, the Lord Lyon King of Arms, was sufficiently amused by the book to have written the foreword. □

With cartoon illustrations by Polish artist Marcin Strzembosz to accompany the lavish use of colour photographs, this is an alternative guide book to Scotland with a quirky appeal for every generation.

The Meerkat Crosses of Scotland by Charles Kinder Bradbury and Roddy Martine (£14.99 + £4 p&p UK) is available from Braykc Publishing www.braykcpublishing.com

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