

A SUNDIALS TOUR OF PARKS AND GARDENS IN EDINBURGH

Art, Science, History, People

Sunday 26th August 2018 from 2 pm to 5 pm

In aid of YACHT* Funds

To visit

Grange Cemetery

The Meadows

Fettes College

Inverleith Park

We will start and finish at The Grange

[Estimate three hours]

Alastair Hunter

* YACHT—Youth At Church Today

Grange Cemetery

Sir James Gowans (1821-1890), Architect, was known for his innovative approach to architecture. Described as the “romantic rationalist”, he designed a number of buildings in Edinburgh during the 1850s and 1860s. His most famous house was Rockville, in Napier Road, which was built for his second wife in 1858. It contained many of his imaginative ideas and remained his family house until just before he died. Sadly, it was demolished in 1966.

In 1885 he became Dean of Guild and was largely responsible for organising the Edinburgh International Exhibition on The Meadows the following year. Queen Victoria visited the exhibition on 18th August 1886 and knighted James Gowans for his work. A number of memorials survive the exhibition, including the Memorial Masons’ Pillars, which have red, white and yellow sandstone from 17 different quarries, and the 13’ high Brassfounders’ Column. Both of these were designed by Gowans. The Masons’ Pillars are at the west end of Melville Drive, and the Brassfounders’ Column is now in Nicholson Square gardens. Other surviving works include 23-25 Blacket Place and Lammerburn at 10 Napier Road.

James Gowans was born on 1 August 1821, in Blackness, a small village on the Firth of Forth. He was the son of builder Walter Gowans, and Isabella Grant. He was educated at the Hamilton Place Academy in Stockbridge and trained under David Bryce. His father bought two quarries in 1842, and James worked in the family business. When the family leased Redhall quarry, James began to experiment with unorthodox ways of extracting the stone. He also designed and built Redhall Bank Cottages for the workers at the quarry.

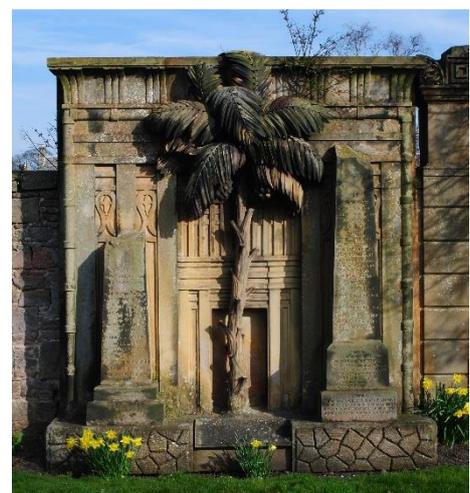
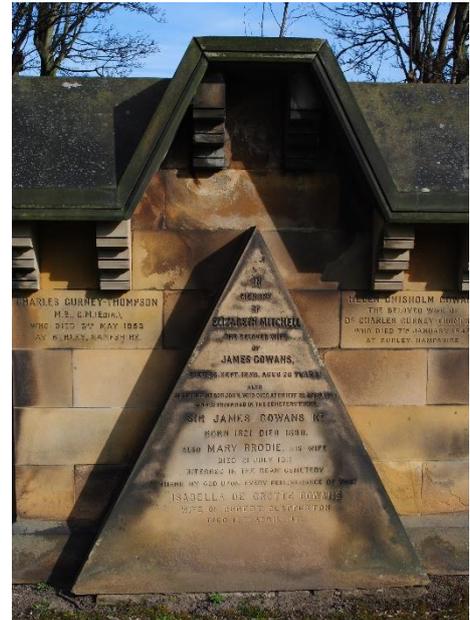
In 1890 Gowans moved to 1 Blantyre Place, as his financial situation had forced him to sell Rockville. He died there on 25 June.

Robert Thomson & Sons, Monumental Sculptors and Carvers.

This firm had premises at Murieston Lane, Dalry Road, close to Dalry Cemetery. The company was known as experts in working with marble, granite and freestone. Robert Thomson designed the spectacular “Egyptian portal to the land of the dead” for his client William Stuart.

William was a partner in the firm of J&W Stuart, who, in 1869, were reputed to be the principal manufacturers of net in Scotland. He married Susan Anne Bridges (1825-1868), the daughter of a lawyer, and they had seven children. When Susan died, William commissioned the sculpture for their family tomb.

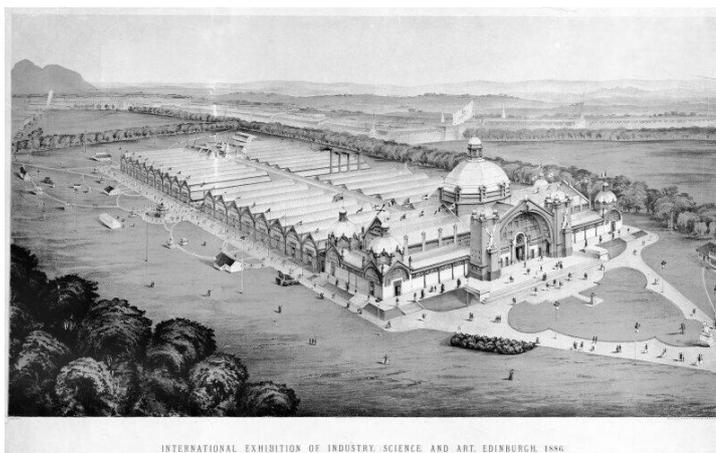
This sculpture masterpiece employs religious symbolism of the Victorian period. The palm tree represents a good and righteous life, while the broken obelisk stones are life cut short. The doorway leads to the afterlife. The rustic carving of the base stones is a distinctive feature that reappears on the sundial at Inverleith Park. The work is signed by Robert Thomson.



The Meadows

The Edinburgh International Exhibition of Industry, Science & Art, ran from the 6th of May to the 30th of October 1886. Prince Albert Victor, grandson of Queen Victoria, cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony which took place in the city's Meadows parkland.

The magnificent structure of the exhibition building faced Brougham Place and took up approximately half of the Meadows. The impressive main pavilion at the front of the building was topped with a 120ft high domed roof decorated with the signs of the zodiac. Beyond the main hall were numerous corridors and galleries filled with all the wonders of the Victorian age. Over 20,000 exhibits were arranged throughout a structure that could hold tens of thousands of visitors at any one time. Fascinating exhibits from around the world ranged from 'educational appliances; Italian furniture and marble; violins from Prague; Turkish embroidery; illustrations of mining, pottery, sugar-refining, sea industries, paper-making, printing, and railway, tram-way and other vehicular appliances'. The pièce de résistance, however, was undoubtedly the large-scale reconstruction of a typical 17th century Edinburgh street complete with legendary buildings that had long since been demolished.



Diploma of Merit. Awarded to The Kirkcaldy Linoleum Coy Ltd. For Excellence In Manufacture Of Linoleum.



Surviving relics of the Edinburgh International Exhibition are few and far between. The 26ft high unicorn-adorned masonic pillars located at the entrance to the Meadows and at the top of Middle Meadow Walk are among the most impressive, along with the Brassfounders' Pillar, now in Nicolson Square and the Prince Albert Victor Sundial found in the Meadows itself.

The Sundial and the Masons' Memorial pillars were designed by James Gowans. The sundial marks the opening of the exhibition. The original armillary sphere on the top was much larger than today's modern replacement. The sundial stones again come from different quarries and are of different colours. They are incised with the quarry names and the mason's marks. The huge pillars flanking the entrance route from Brougham Place, and the sundial as well, must have been a tremendous advertisement for the Gowans family business.

Sundial inscriptions: "Erected In Commemoration Of The Opening Of The International Exhibition By H.R.H Prince Albert Victor Of Wales On 6th May 1886." | "The Most Honourable Marquis Of Lothian K.T. President." | "The Right Honourable Thomas Clark. Lord Provost Of The City." | "James Gowans. Lord Dean Of Guild. Chairman Of The Executive Council." There are numerous sundial mottoes round the base.



Fettes College

History of the old Warriston sundial. In 1640 John Kincaird died and left his estate at Warriston to be divided among his four daughters, the eldest getting the house and garden. About this time a new sundial was erected in the ground similar in design and date to that at Holyrood House [1633], built by John Mylne the King's [Charles I] master mason, and much later repaired by order of Queen Victoria.

Warriston was sold in 1774 to William Ramsay who demolished the old house and rebuilt on the same site, but with the entrance from the new Inverleith Row and Bridge of Canonmills, instead of by the ford at Puddocky. In the same year Rocheid rebuilt Inverleith House and formed a new terraced garden overlooking the Water of Leith. The old sundial which had graced Warriston for about 135 years was now installed in the garden of Inverleith House.

The Fettes Trustees purchased Inverleith house and grounds in 1863, as an investment. In 1877 they sold the house and a large part of its policies to the City of Edinburgh, who presented them to Queen Victoria for the Royal Botanic Gardens. On 11th December 1893 the Governors approved the old sundial being repaired and removed to a site adjacent to the Headmaster's House, where it now stands.



Warriston House, Edinburgh—sundial description by Thomas Ross[†]. *This dial is probably all that remains of the old mansion house of Warriston. It has a stepped base, like that at Holyrood, but only a portion of it now remains; otherwise the dial is perfect. On the top of the remaining step there is a square pedestal ornamented with Oriental-looking heads, above which rises the moulded baluster for supporting the dial stone, which rests on a point. Round the centre the dial is six-sided, with flat dials on its numerous faces, except on one side [sic], where there is a cup-hollow.*



There are six square facets and eight triangular ones, fourteen in all. Each facet is carved as an individual dial marked with the time, and made to catch the sun at particular hours of the day and particular seasons of the year.



This sketch shows the sundial in what must be the terrace garden at Inverleith House.

[†] *The castellated and domestic architecture of Scotland from the twelfth to the eighteenth century*, by David MacGibbon, and Thomas Ross. This five-volume work was published by David Douglas in 1892. The sketch used by Thomas Ross would be from a date before then, which suggests it must be a view of the sundial in the terrace garden below Inverleith House.

Inverleith Park

The Kinloch Anderson Sundial has been standing in Inverleith Park since 1890. Councillor William Joseph Kinloch Anderson gave it to the City of Edinburgh ahead of the new park's official opening in 1891. In 2018, to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the foundation of the Kinloch Anderson company in 1868, the family completed restoration of the sundial.

On 1st May 1890, four years after the The Meadows exhibition of 1886, a great International Exhibition of Electricity, Engineering, General Inventions and Industry opened in Edinburgh at Meggetland. It was a truly international event with almost three million visitors. Bailie Kinloch Anderson was Vice-Chairman of this Exhibition and that was where he had bought the sundial. It was displayed by Robert Thomson & Sons, Monumental Sculptors and Carvers, as exhibit 299D.

On Wednesday 10th September 1890, The Scotsman newspaper reported:

City Council Business "A letter from Mr Kinloch Anderson to Mr J C Dunlop, Ranger of Inverleith Park, was read, in which Mr Kinloch Anderson intimated the presentation by him of a Sundial to Inverleith Park, 'as an expression of goodwill from the Sunny South to the North Side of the City'. (Applause) The Lord Provost said they were much indebted to Mr Kinloch Anderson for his gift. He wished he could have sent a little sunshine along with it. Mr J C Dunlop said that they were still open on the North Side to further contributions. (Laughter)"



The sundial made by Robert Thomson for the 1890 International Exhibition at Meggetland in Edinburgh.

The Marquis of Lothian, Secretary for Scotland, was Exhibition President. Thomas Edison was Vice-President. One of the most interesting exhibits at the fair was Edison's latest phonograph recordings, which visitors could listen to in the Lecture Hall.



*2017
Sundial in poor condition before restoration.*



*2018
Sundial stone conservation and restoration work in progress.*



*16 June 2018
Sundial at official opening ceremony with members of Kinloch Anderson family.*