

Rome in the Footsteps of an XVIIIth Century Traveller

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Notes:

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Their Travel Journals

about Rome: Sir Charles Fergusson

(John Evelyn in 1687 and an etching he made for a friend)

This page is published by courtesy of Mr. Martin Cotter and the Fergusson family.

Sir Charles Fergusson Dalrymple, 5th Baronet of Kilkerran, was born in Scotland in 1800. He studied as a lawyer, practicing at the Scottish bar until 1838. He was a religious man, contributing to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland, and he established at his own expense churches at several parishes in Scotland. He was keenly interested in art and architecture, interests which led him to undertake tours of Northern Europe in 1824, and Italy & Switzerland in 1825. On these trips, he was accompanied by various acquaintances, notably a fellow advocate, John Colquhoun, with whom he had a close friendship in Scotland.

Whilst on those journeys Sir Charles maintained daily journals, a few of which still survive. These contain detailed observations on his thoughts and experiences upon his travels. I first came across one of these journals while engaged in research at Newhailes House & Gardens - he had inherited Newhailes House in 1838, and one of his journals was still in the property's archives. I undertook the work of transcribing it in 2022, at the request of the National Trust for Scotland. A second journal is stored at the National Library for Scotland, and was transcribed in 2023-24. Two others are in the possession of the Fergusson family, and transcription of these will be completed this year.

The Fergusson family maintain a strong interest in their ancestry, and were happy to allow extracts from these journals to be published.

Martin Cotter, Kirkcaldy 22nd April 2024.

 Portrait and a page of his travel journal

(left) Portrait of Sir Charles Fergusson, based on chalk drawings which were made when he was alive; (right) a page of his travel journal in which the Blessing from the façade of St. Peter's is described

(Visit to Villa Adriana - January 1825) (..) Below is a space called a Circus, in wh., added sagely our Guide, were Games transacted. Above from this is a little Place, wh. Vasi says was only so called because it occupies the highest Ground; a Gallery there is for Summer walking. (..) The ruins wh. are near this have been called The Palace of the Imperial Family, but without any certain knowledge of the Fact.

From this passage we learn that Sir Charles Fergusson used Mariano Vasi's Guide of Rome; his account of Rome is interesting chiefly because it touches on the ceremonies which were held for the 1825 Jubilee and