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The Transformation of Edinburgh

Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century

This clear and lucid study explores the physical transformation of Edinburgh in the nineteenth century. It is based on a formidable amount of new archival research and is enriched with fascinating illustrative material. In a powerful analysis of how the law adapted to the new possibilities for profit created by urbanisation, Richard Rodger examines how the city of Edinburgh was transformed in the nineteenth century. A modern form of 'feudalism', he argues, was invented. It was the financial implications of this 'feuing' system, rather than an early form of town planning, that contributed much to the development of the Edinburgh New Town and, more significantly, to the character of urban development in nineteenth-century urban Scotland.

Richard Rodger shows how the Church of Scotland, famous schools and educational endowments, as well as private trusts and small investors, all contributed to and benefited from urban expansion. He also explains how interconnected rural and urban interests were with revenue from the countryside recycled through urban property incomes. These and other relationships associated with the building of the city are explored at various levels, including a study of the largest builder in Edinburgh, James Steel, in a rags to riches, bankruptcy to baronetcy story that unveils how the process of urban development actually took place.

Despite its genteel New Town and 'douce' suburbs Edinburgh, known locally as 'Auld Reekie' for its polluted atmosphere, experienced both environmental damage and congested living conditions. In the final section, Richard Rodger explores civic efforts to address these concerns. He also examines the achievements of a working men's co-operative to provide 'colonies' of houses in an innovative attempt to improve urban lifestyles. And, in an ethnological approach, the adornment and decoration of the tenement is examined in the context of ego, myth and national identity.

Historians – whether political, urban, economic, social or legal – will find challenging new insights here which have a resonance far beyond the confines of one city.

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Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century

Richard Rodger

University of Leicester

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0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

Contents

List of figures *page* vii
List of tables xii
Acknowledgements xv
List of abbreviations xix

Part 1 Urban frameworks

1 Introduction 3
2 Institutional power and landownership: the nineteenth-century inheritance 30
3 Victorian feudalism 69
4 Building capital: trusts, loans and the kirk 123
5 The building industry and instability 174

Part 2 Building enterprise and housing management

6 The search for stability 189
7 Industrial suburb: developing Dalry 211
8 The genesis of a property owning democracy? 239
9 Landlord and tenant 278
10 Postscript: 'firmiter et durabile': the construction of legitimacy 344

Part 3 Complementary visions of society

11 Co-operation and mutuality: the 'Colonies' and the Edinburgh Co-operative Building Company 353

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Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

12 Civic consciousness, social consciences and the built environment 415

13 Adornment, ego and myth: the decoration of the tenement 459

14 Conclusion: reinventing the city 487

Principal sources 509
Index of Edinburgh street names and districts 516
Index of individual building firms 522
General index 523

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

Figures

1.1	The expansion of Edinburgh 1140–1914	*page* 15
1.2a	The royal burgh of Edinburgh in the early eighteenth century	16
1.2b	The royal burgh of Edinburgh in the early eighteenth century: principal jurisdictions	17
1.3	Population growth: Edinburgh 1801–1911	24
1.4	Demographic trends: Edinburgh 1856–1911	24
1.5	Migration and natural increase: Edinburgh 1861–1911	25
2.1	Portrait of George Heriot (?1563–1624)	31
2.2	Portraits of James VI and I and Anne of Denmark	33
2.3	Loving cup; only remaining example of George Heriot's work	35
2.4	George Heriot's Hospital 1628	39
2.5	Heriot's Hospital lands *c.* 1708	44
2.6	Edinburgh from Heriot's northern lands *c.* 1708	45
2.7	Merchant Company Hospitals (a) Trades Maidens Hospital *c.* 1704; (b) James Gillespie's Hospital 1801	46
2.8	Merchant Company lands *c.* 1850	49
2.9	Merchant Company institutions 1697–1889	50
2.10	George Heriot's Hospital feu-duty income 1690–1760	56
2.11	Land feued by Heriot's Hospital to the city of Edinburgh 1766 to form part of the New Town	57
2.12	Property incomes from feu-duties: George Heriot's Trust and city of Edinburgh 1700–1914	59
2.13	Contested development: North Bridge from Register House *c.* 1890	64
3.1	A pyramid of Scottish property relationships and obligations	71
3.2	Sub-infeudation and land values	73
3.3	The affordability of housing in Scotland compared to England and Wales	75
3.4	Property development: Edinburgh 1760–1914	77

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

3.5	The structure of landownership in Edinburgh 1817	78
3.6	Property development in Edinburgh 1770–1870: George Heriot's feus granted (number per annum)	79
3.7	Protracted development: partially completed streets on Heriot's property 1800–1830	80
3.8	Residential hierarchies: the feuing sequence in Heriot Row 1803–1819	81
3.9	Arrested development: Drumdryan and Orchardfield estates in the 1820s	83
3.10	Drumdryan estate of James Home Rigg	85
3.11	Orchardfield: George Grindlay's Trust land	89
3.12	Property receipts: Orchardfield 1825–1842	90
3.13	'Great Fire' at the Tron Church 1824	93
3.14	Improvement Scheme 1824–1831	97
3.15	Merchiston Park and the development of George Watson's feu, 1862	100
3.16	Southern suburbanisation: Grange 1825–1868	102
3.17	Property development: Edinburgh 1850–1915	107
3.18	Merchant Company institutions: income from property 1850–1910	109
3.19	George Watson's Merchiston estate elevations 1897	110
3.20	Heriot Foundation Schools: pupils 1838–1885	112
3.21	Heriot Foundation Schools 1838–1885	115
4.1	Property relationships: a diagrammatic summary	125
4.2	Church of Scotland property income from urban feu-duties 1874–1914	134
4.3	Purchase price of heritable securities in Scotland 1870–1914	136
4.4	Scottish property investment and yields 1870–1914	137
4.5	Feu-duties in Edinburgh assigned to the Church of Scotland 1870–1914	139
4.6	Trinity area	154
4.7	Trinity Land Company: street development	159
4.8	Trinity Land Company: receipts and debts 1875–1901	161
4.9	Trinity Land Company: revenue and interest charges 1874–1901	162
5.1	Housebuilding and land development in Edinburgh 1855–1914	180
5.2	Building materials and housebuilding: Edinburgh 1896–1915	181
5.3	Residential and industrial building in Edinburgh 1880–1914	183

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

5.4	Residential building in Edinburgh 1880–1914	183
5.5	Edinburgh building: the release of land for building purposes 1760–1914	184
6.1	Drumdryan feus 1824–1867	199
6.2	Brougham Place from the Meadows	204
7.1	Dalry land obtained by James Steel 1869–1878	217
7.2	Caledonian Place: typical of early James Steel building developments at Tollcross, Sciennes and Dalry 1866–1875	218
7.3	Part of the General Property Investment Company development, Watson Crescent, Dalry	225
7.4	a and b Pape's Cottages, Coltbridge, 1894	227
8.1	Debts outstanding: James Steel 1867–1914	243
8.2	Easter Murieston, Midlothian, bought by James Steel from Sir Alexander Learmonth MP in 1878	246
8.3	Eglinton Crescent 1876–1877	248
8.4	a and b Buckingham Terrace and Belgrave Crescent 1860–1877	250
8.5	a and b West end development: James Steel's property and institutional landownership	253
8.6	Barrasford Quarries near Corbridge, Northumberland, leased by James Steel from the Duke of Northumberland	258
8.7	a and b James Steel's final building phase: Comely Bank and Learmonth	260
8.8	Building by numbers 1890–1900: the sequence of development in Comely Bank Road	263
8.9	Comely Bank Avenue (1893–1895) looking north to Fettes' College (1863)	264
8.10	Comely Bank Avenue: the spine of James Steel's final housing development	265
8.11	House ownership and housebuilding: Edinburgh 1868–1914	270
8.12	Tenement flats and social status: purchase prices in Comely Bank and Learmonth 1890–1914	274
9.1	James Steel's Edinburgh property development 1868–1914	282
9.2	Rental income: James Steel 1868–1914	284
9.3	Rents and housing vacancies, Edinburgh 1868–1914	292
9.4	Comely Bank and Learmonth streets before 1914	304
9.5	Average house rents, Edinburgh 1890–1914	305
9.6	Comely Bank Avenue 1893–1895	307
9.7	Plans and elevations, 13–23 Comely Bank Avenue	308
9.8	Plans and elevations, 17–19 Dean Park Street	312
9.9	Housing hierarchies: Comely Bank 1890–1914	317

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

9.10 Female household heads: Comely Bank Road, Edinburgh, 1890–1914 318
9.11 Tenements and trams: Comely Bank Road, Edinburgh 321
9.12 Privacy and exclusivity: South Learmonth Gardens 323
9.13 Privacy and exclusivity: plans and elevations for North Learmonth Gardens 1901 324
9.14 Rents, residential persistence and class: Edinburgh 1868–1914 329
9.15 Social class and residential stability: Edinburgh 1868–1914 330
9.16 Trends in rents: comparative rent levels in Edinburgh and Leith 1875–1914 331
9.17 Housing sub-markets: Edinburgh 1870–1914 332
9.18 Dispersion of rents: Edinburgh streets 1868–1914 334
10.1 Sir James Steel (1830–1904) 345
10.2 Boroughfield: Sir James Steel's home 1883–1904 347
11.1 The founders of the ECBC 1861 355
11.2 Subscribers' addresses: the clustered location of shareholders in the ECBC 1862 357
11.3 The Beehive, Dalry 359
11.4 Rosemount Buildings, Fountainbridge, 1860 360
11.5 Free Church of Scotland ministers Rev. Dr James Begg (1808–1883) and Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) 363
11.6 Tenement collapse 1861 365
11.7 a, b and c Early ECBC houses at Stockbridge, Edinburgh 369
11.8 Newspaper advert for ECBC houses in Leith 1867 373
11.9 Industrial estates in the nineteenth century: London Road Foundry, Abbeyhill, 1867 376
11.10 Industrial landscape: Dalry transformed in the 1860s 378
11.11 Aerial view of ECBC developments at Restalrig 382
11.12 ECBC plaques and public proclamations: North Merchiston Park plaque 1880 384
11.13 Design developments: ECBC housing, Barnton Terrace, 1877 386
11.14 ECBC housebuilding 1861–1914 387
11.15 ECBC housing and social aspirations: Balgreen/Glendevon 390
11.16 Housebuilding fluctuations 1862–1914: ECBC activity compared to all housing construction in Edinburgh 394
11.17 The suburbanisation of share ownership: ECBC shareholders' addresses 1862 and 1914 398
11.18 Unsold ECBC housing stock and the rise of ECBC landlordism 1862–1914 401
11.19 Owner occupiers in ECBC housing 1911 403

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

11.20 Wall plaques and building trades insignias: ECBC houses, Stockbridge 404
12.1 a and b Dilapidated housing: High School Wynd and the Cowgate in the 1860s 424
12.2 Edinburgh Improvement proposals 1866 434
12.3 a and b Plaques commemorating the Edinburgh Improvements 1867 435
12.4 Edinburgh Improvement Trust 1867–1889: expenditure on housing clearances 436
12.5 Edinburgh Improvement Trust 1867–1889: by clearance area 437
12.6 Desecration of the High Street *c.* 1908 439
12.7 Scots 'baronial' tenements and Edinburgh Improvements 1867: St Mary's Street–Holyrood Road 440
12.8 Plaque commemorating William Chambers' role in the Edinburgh Improvement Scheme 1867 442
12.9 Death in Edinburgh 1863–1883: sanitary districts 443
12.10 Improvements in death rates: Edinburgh sanitary districts 1863–1883 446
12.11 Water supply and death rates: Edinburgh wards 1874 447
12.12 a and b Well Court, Dean Village, 1883–1886 448
12.13 Council housing: Portsburgh Square 1901 451
13.1 Scottish nationalism in the built environment: thistles and tenements 463
13.2 Builders' initials and dates on tenements 465
13.3 Date-stamped buildings: Edinburgh plaques 1860–1914 467
13.4 Commemorative plaques on tenements 468
13.5 Scott's Monument 1840–1846 473
13.6 a and b Scots 'baronial' architecture 478
14.1 Signature in stone: a plaque typical of those on Edinburgh School Board buildings 490
14.2 a and b Industrial estates nineteenth-century style 494

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

Tables

1.1	Social segregation in Edinburgh 1831	*page* 19
1.2	Occupational structure of Edinburgh 1841–1911	22
1.3	Population of the city of Edinburgh 1801–1911	23
2.1	Land accessions by governors of George Heriot's Hospital 1626–1707	40
2.2	Prices of feus: New Town streets 1806	62
3.1	Principal builders in east Edinburgh 1885–1905	108
3.2	Landownership in Edinburgh 1872	117
3.3	Composition of larger Edinburgh landowners 1872	118
4.1	Churchgoing in Edinburgh 1835 and 1851	128
4.2	Church of Scotland Extensions financed from feu-duties 1875–1905	131
4.3	Church of Scotland property investments 1854–1914	132
4.4	The changing landscape of Church of Scotland property investments 1874–1913	133
4.5	Size distribution of Church of Scotland property investments to 1914	135
4.6	Sources of mortgage finance: James Steel's house sales 1869–1914	152
5.1	The building industry and the scale of production: Scottish burghs 1873–1914	176
5.2	The scale of business operations: Edinburgh housebuilders 1885–1894	177
5.3	Building indicators: feu-duties, property taxes and planned building correlation matrix 1856–1914	181
8.1	Bonds issued on borrowing by James Steel 1866–1910	241
8.2	Building sequence and occupancy: Dean Park Street	263
8.3	Sources of mortgage finance: Edinburgh 1868–1914	271
8.4	Principal building, co-operative and friendly societies: Comely Bank, Edinburgh, 1890–1910	271
8.5	The structure of mortgage finance: north Edinburgh 1890–1910	272

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

8.6	Class structure of home ownership: Edinburgh 1890–1914	276
9.1	The rental–house vacancy relationship	287
9.2	'Hard to let' property: Edinburgh 1868–1914	288
9.3	The duration of tenancies in Edinburgh 1868–1914	299
9.4	Female heads of household: Edinburgh 1868–1914	301
9.5	Vertical variations in rent: Comely Bank, Edinburgh, 1890–1914	306
9.6	Housing hierarchy: the Comely Bank estate, Edinburgh, 1890–1914	316
9.7	Occupational structure: Comely Bank and Learmonth, Edinburgh, 1890–1914	320
9.8	Gendered persistence in an elite suburb: Learmonth, Edinburgh, 1898–1914	326
9.9	Hard to let elite addresses: Edinburgh	326
9.10	A correlation matrix of housing influences	336
9.11	Housing indicators: typical rented housing, Edinburgh, 1868–1914	338
11.1	Model dwellings: Edinburgh 1850–1865	361
11.2	Houses built by the ECBC 1862–1872	380
11.3	ECBC contribution to housing in Edinburgh 1861–1911	391
11.4	Comparative mortality rates: ECBC housing, Edinburgh and Leith, 1878–1884	392
11.5	Share transfers: ECBC 1867–1869	395
11.6	Geographical distribution of ECBC shareholders 1914	396
11.7	Women as shareholders: the composition of ECBC shareholding 1914	399
11.8	Occupational composition of ECBC Colonies households: 1871–1891	406
11.9	Household structure: Edinburgh Colony housing 1871–1891	407
11.10	Birthplaces of Colonies' residents:1871 and 1891	410
13.1	Vertical distribution of heraldic plaques, Edinburgh, 1860–1914	462
13.2	Heraldic shields and decorative types: external detailing 1860–1914	464

Appendices

3.1	Composition of landownership in Scottish burghs 1872	120
3.2	Acreages and values of landowners in Scottish burghs 1872	121
3.3	Landownership in Edinburgh 1872	122

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Cambridge University Press
0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

4.1 Church of Scotland income from property: revenue from heritable securities in various burghs 1874–1914 172
4.2 Edinburgh building associations 1869–1874 173
9.1 Landlordism in Edinburgh 1868–1914: principal properties rented by James Steel 342
9.2 Rent indices: Edinburgh and Leith 1871–1914 343

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0521602823 - The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century - Richard Rodger
Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

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Frontmatter/Prelims
More information

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More information

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More information

Abbreviations

ACC	accession number
BS	Building Society
DGC	Dean of Guild Court
ECA	Edinburgh City Archives
ECBC	Edinburgh Co-operative Building Company
ECL	Edinburgh Central Library, Edinburgh Room
GG	George Grindlay's Trust
GHH	George Heriot's Hospital
GPIC	General Property Investment Company
GWH	George Watson's Hospital
HL	House of Lords
JGH	James Gillespie's Hospital
MC	Merchant Company of Edinburgh
MMH	Merchant Maiden Hospital
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
NAS	National Archives of Scotland (formerly Scottish Record Office (SRO))
NLS	National Library of Scotland
PP	*Parliamentary Papers*
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
RHP	Register House Plans
RS	Register of Sasines
SL	Search List, Edinburgh City Archives
SLBS	Scottish Lands and Buildings Society
SLEC	Scottish Land Enquiry Committee
TCM	Town Council Minutes
TLC	Trinity Land Company
VR	Valuation Rolls

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