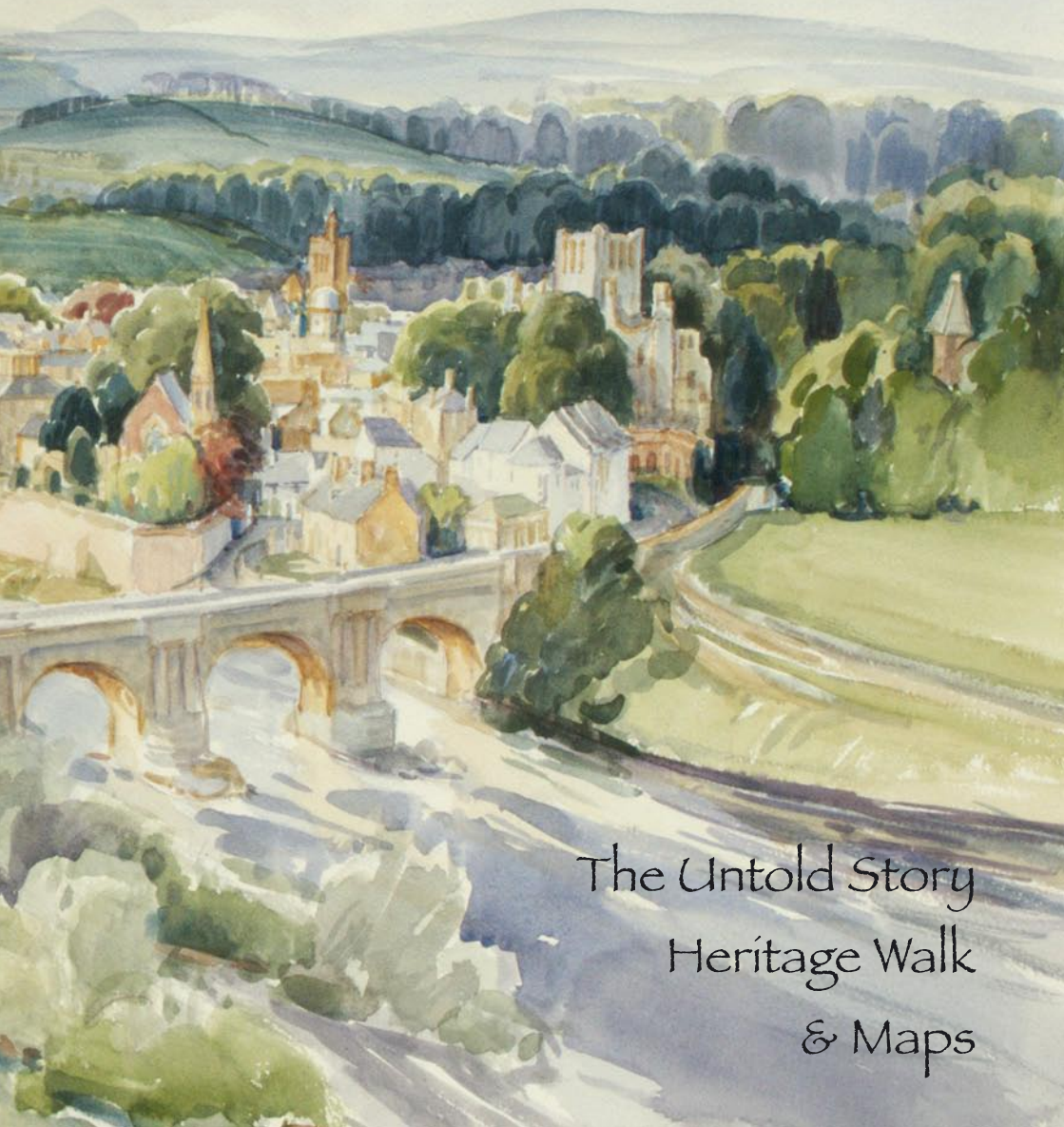


# Walter Scott's Kelso



The Untold Story  
Heritage Walk  
& Maps

# Walter Scott's Kelso



Scott and Kelso, 1773–1827

The Kelso inheritance which Scott sold

The Border Minstrelsy connection

Scott's friends and relations & the Ballantyne Family

The destruction of Scott's memories

KELSO & DISTRICT AMENITY SOCIETY

*Text & photographs by David Kilpatrick*

*Cover & illustrations by Margaret Peach*



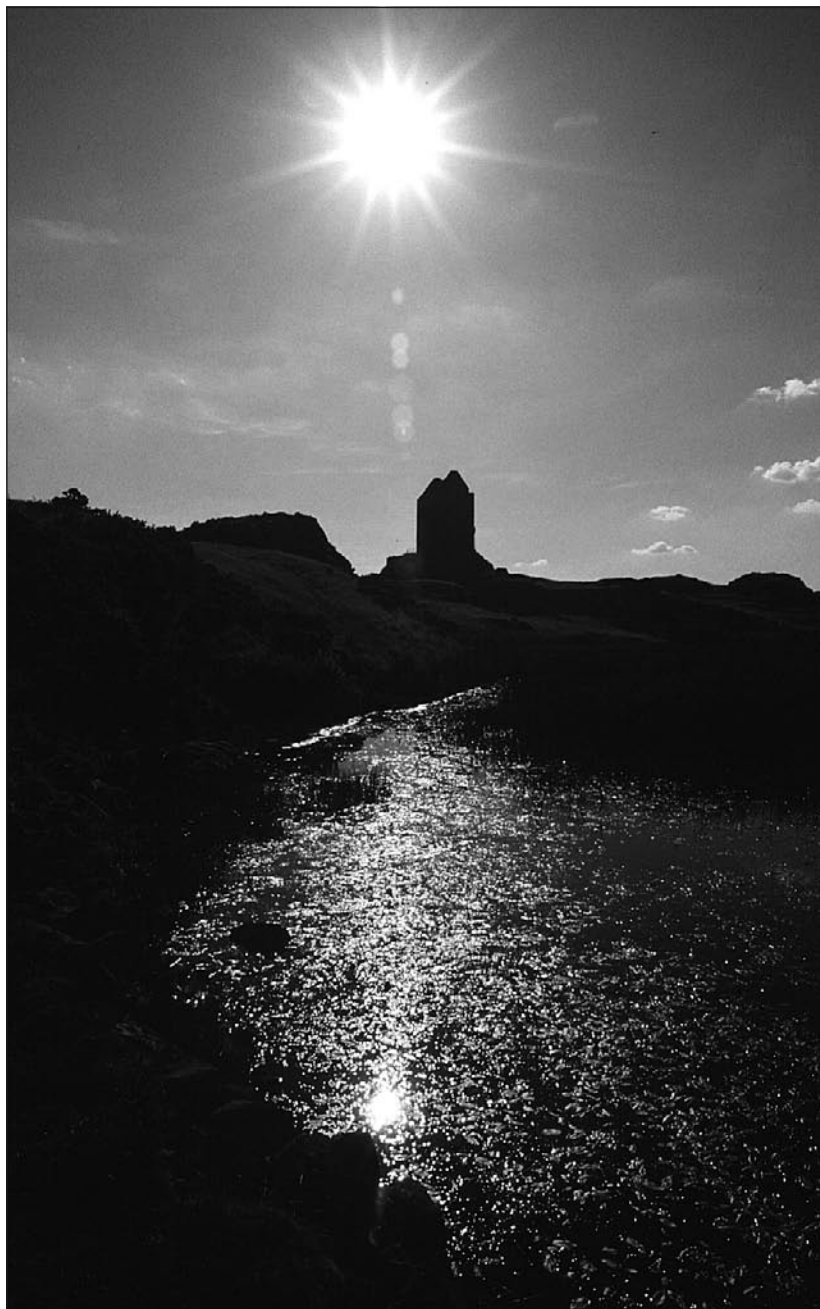
**S**IR WALTER SCOTT's connection with Kelso is more important than popular histories and guide books lead you to believe. Scott's signature can be found on the deeds of properties along the Mayfield, Hempsford and Rosebank river frontage, in transactions from the late 1790s to the early 1800s. Scott's letters and journal, and the biography written by his son-in-law John Gibson Lockhart, contain all the information we need to learn about Scott's family links with Kelso.

Visiting the Borders, you might believe that Scott 'belongs' entirely to Galashiels, Melrose and Selkirk. His connection with Kelso has been played down for almost 200 years.

Kelso's Scott is the young, brilliant, genuinely unknown Walter who discovered Border ballads and wrote the *Minstrelsy*, not the 'Great Unknown' literary baronet who exhausted his phenomenal energy 30 years later saving Abbotsford from ruin.

Guide books often say that Scott spent a single summer convalescing in the town, or limit references to his stays at Sandyknowe Farm near Smailholm Tower. The impression given is of a brief acquaintance in childhood. How wrong! Scott had a close association with Kelso until he was almost thirty years of age, spending many summers at his uncle Captain Robert Scott's house Rosebank, and eventually inheriting the Rosebank estate in 1804.

His decision to sell this thirty-acre Tweedside inheritance (originally owned by his father before it was passed to Capt. Scott) marked the end of his long connection with Kelso. His journals and letters show that he put memories behind him, and moved on. The town features little in his writings from this date on.



*Smailholm Tower stands in rugged surroundings beyond its lochan near Sandyknowe.*



Before his uncle's death in 1804, he had persuaded his old friend James Ballantyne, who printed the first volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802, to move his entire printing works from Kelso to Edinburgh (where Scott was then resident, maintaining a city house from marriage right up to confronting his financial nemesis twenty-five years later). When Scott inherited the Kelso property, he promptly sold it off to speculators who carved it up for housing development. Nothing is new! He invested the proceeds in the Ballantyne press. He justified the sale on grounds of taste in property and lifestyle, but he didn't use the £5,000 realised to acquire his planned country estate – yet. Instead, he invested in the printer who was to produce his literary works.

He was not a man to enjoy a provincial market town, preferring either the bustle of the city or the quiet of the country. It would be easy to imagine he forgot his roots, but not so. He remained aware of his debt to his Kelso forbears, and to his uncle who bequeathed him the first property that set him on the long road to building Abbotsford. He simply didn't say much about it in public.

## **The Scott Family**

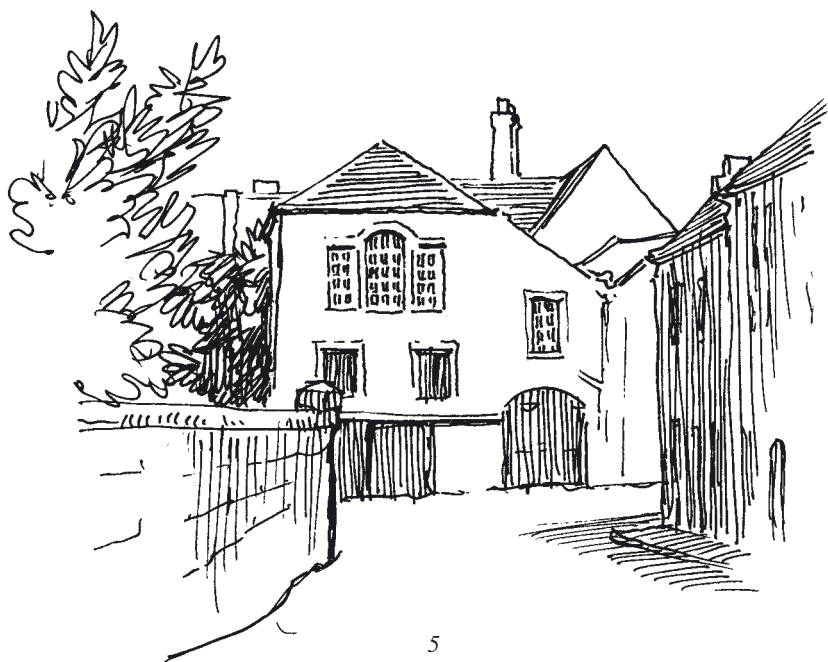
Walter Scott's father (also Walter) was the son of Robert Scott of Sandyknowe, and grandson of 'Beardie' (another Walter) who held substantial land in Kelso and died in what are now the electrical goods store-rooms of James Stewart & Sons (*Simon Square/Abbey Row*) on November 3rd, 1729. Of Beardie, Lockhart notes that he "derived his nickname from a venerable beard which he wore... in token of his regret for the banished house of Stuart". His involvement with the Jacobites doubtless helped inspire works like *Waverley* and *Redgauntlet*.

In 1786, Walter Scott Snr made his Kelso property over to his brother Captain Robert Scott of Rosebank House, '*late commander of the Ship Neptune in the service of Honourable East India Company*'. At that time young Walter was 15 years old, and though born in Edinburgh had spent much of his childhood in or near Kelso.

It is often said in guidebooks and histories that Scott stayed at the 'Garden House' or cottage of his Aunt Jenny (Janet Scott), as if it was one isolated incident. In fact he spent many summers in Kelso as a regular visitor, resident at Rosebank but constantly calling on his aunt.



*Captain Robert Scott's house Rosebank is still visible from the approach to the new Hunter Bridge. In Scott's time most of the land along the north bank of the Tweed to Rennie's Bridge formed the Rosebank estate. Below: Beardie's house on Abbey Row.*





*Scott looks out from the gable end of Waverley Lodge*

The garden house is now called Waverley Lodge. It stands at the end of Maxwell Lane facing the Abbey, with a bust of Scott on the gable wall, a stone hound over the entrance, and an armorially decorated garden gate.

Greater prominence is often given to Scott's two stays with his grandfather Robert at Smailholm, where the country life was hoped to improve his lameness. A well known painting by Sir Henry Raeburn shows an infant Sir Walter in Highland dress, accompanied by Aunt Jenny and a stout little walking stick, in the dramatic setting of Smailholm Tower. Perhaps Sandyknowe (over 400 feet above sea level) would have been thought healthier than the banks of the Tweed where his family had the Rosebank estate, and Raeburn certainly found it more picturesque.

Lockhart says Walter was three years old when he was first sent to Sandyknowe farm in 1773, but Scott's own *Ashestiel Memorandum* indicates he may have been half this age. He recorded that when he was four, his Aunt Jenny read to him from 'two or three books' which 'lay in the window-seat' at Sandyknowe – including Allan Ramsay's *Automathes, a Tea-Table Miscellany*. That edition of 1724 is still at Abbotsford, with annotations in Scott's own hand.

Scott later wrote one of his first imaginary ballads, *The Eve of St John*,

when Smailholm Tower was in a state of dereliction in 1799. His uncle Sir Hugh Scott of Harden (later Lord Polwarth) jokingly accepted the verses to ‘pay’ for repairs to the tower.

At five years old Walter was sent with Aunt Jenny for a year in Bath, to take the waters for his lameness, and while there learned to read. His uncle Captain Robert left Kelso to join them. Scott returned for a summer to Sandyknowe, when he was seven and had already been to school in Edinburgh, in 1778. He was entered into the Second Grade of the Grammar School and was ‘behind’ in class despite having received private lessons in Latin. By the age of ten he and his class were reading Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Virgil, Horace and Terence.

He had already made himself popular through his ability to read and recall stories and poems. He wrote his own poetical transcriptions of the Latin verses which were noted by his masters; in ‘the yard’ rather than the classroom he gathered schoolmates round and recited Border ballads.

## Growing up in Kelso

Because of a deterioration in his health 11-year-old Walter was sent back to the Border country in 1781, this time to Kelso itself.

His father was ‘easily persuaded to let him spend half-a-year’ with his Aunt Jenny, who by now was living in the Garden House (Waverley Lodge), described as ‘a small house, situated very pleasantly in the corner of a large garden, to the eastward of the churchyard of Kelso, which extended down to the Tweed’.

Four hours each day were spent being tutored by Lancelot Whale, “an excellent classical scholar, a humourist, and a worthy man”. Whale was not keen on the ‘profane’ English or Scottish literature which young Scott would stay up to read by firelight at night – his definition of ‘profane’ including Shakespeare!

In Edinburgh Dr Blacklock had provided a solution. He allowed Scott access to his library, where he was able to read Ossian (then considered genuine) and Spenser. Scott also had access in Kelso to ‘*a respectable subscription library, a circulating library of ancient standing, and some private bookshelves*’ – those of the Quaker Lady Waldie, née Jane Ormiston – and also purchased books himself.

His most valued book was Bishop Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.





“I well remember the spot where I read these volumes for the first time”, Scott wrote. “It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour...”. A century ago this book – Scott’s own original copy of the *Reliques* – was claimed to be held in Kelso Public Library.

At the time (*see Wood’s map of 1823, reproduced overleaf with annotations*) the Rosebank estate of 30 acres lay between Rosebank house and the Knowes. Eight acres between what is now Maxwell Lane and the river were devoted to formal gardens, with lead statues, fountains and neat box hedges to line the paths. The once-hilly Knowes, now a car park, was the reputed site of a 17th century plague burial pit. From here in 1785 the pioneer balloonist Vincent Lunardi ascended for the first international air flight – from Scotland into England...

The Garden House and the gardens were in Dutch style, and attributed by Scott to the Quaker Miller or Millar family who published in the 1720s a superb three-volume book called *The Gardener’s Dictionary*. The copy in the library of Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, contains over 300 hand-coloured engravings of plants. There are further copies at Culzean Castle and Alnwick Castle. Their value and rarity means they can’t be viewed by the public.

These gardens were where the Mayfield Garden Centre is now. The first new property on this land (built for the Duke of Roxburghe’s Bailie of Kelso, Robert Nichol) was Edenbank House; now called Maxwell Place, it stands behind the garden centre and was possibly built on the foundations of a banqueting-house which Scott recalled in the Garden (some interior wall thicknesses indicate this). His famous plane tree defined the south-west corner of Edenbank’s boundary with the Garden House’s land in 1806. There was a covenant placed on the tree in the

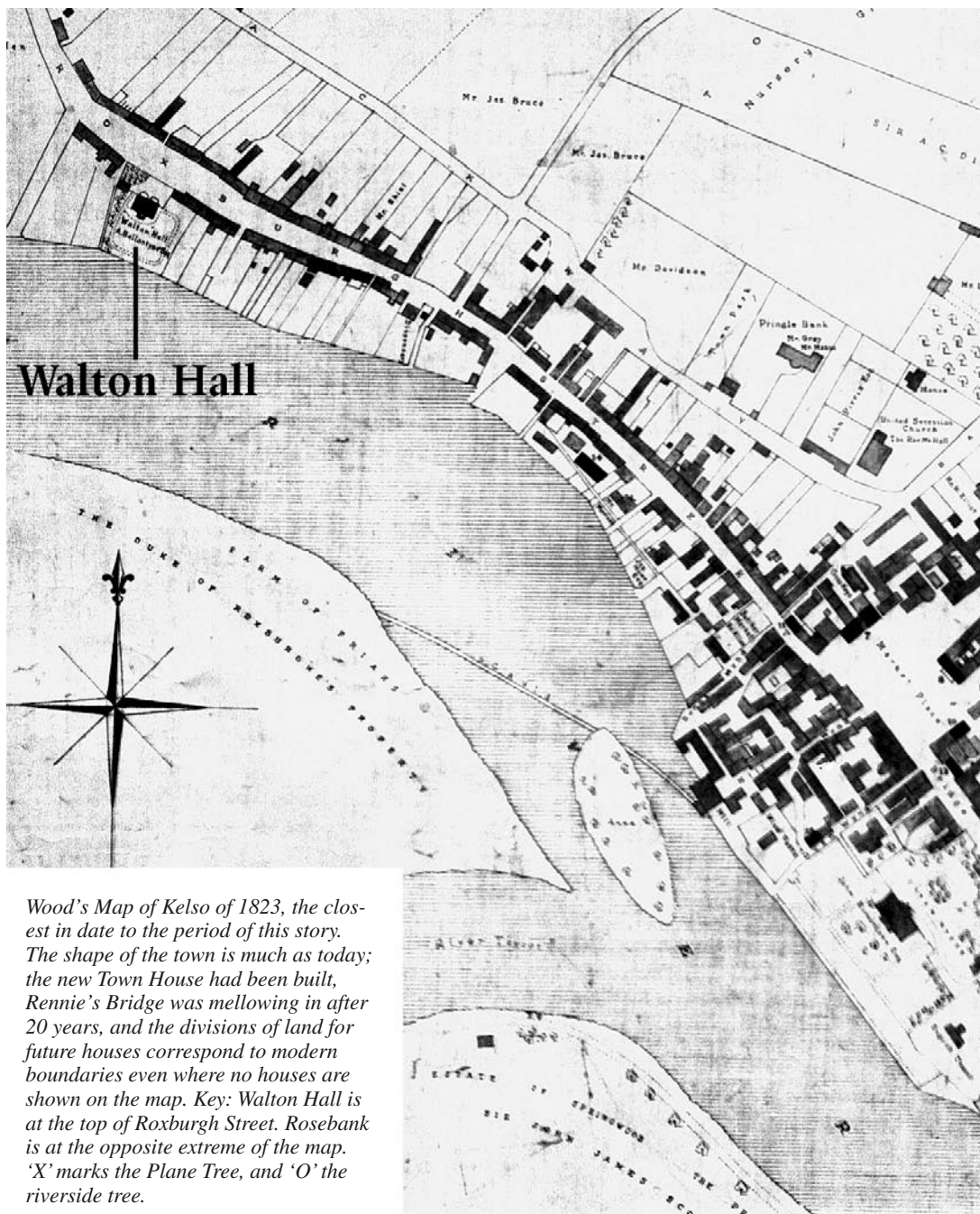


*The Mayfield riverside walk, seen from the end of Abbotsford Grove looking upstream, in autumn. Scott took this route daily to collect his mail from the Garden Cottage, when staying at Rosebank. The location of the plane tree would be in the distance just above the cyclist in this shot.*

deeds of sale, to prevent its ever being cut down or damaged. Its location would be on the line of the fence between Mayfield's customer car-park and overflow car park or storage lot, closest to the river, where flats have been built (*marked with an X on the map overleaf*).

## **Teens and twenties**

Scott now began to spend regular annual seasons in Kelso. He attended the Kelso Grammar School in 1783 (Lancelot Whale had become its schoolmaster). There he met the brothers John and James Ballantyne, who were to become his publisher and printer respectively later in life. "It was our constant practice", wrote James Ballantyne later of the hours they enjoyed away from the schoolroom, "to walk together by the banks of the Tweed... his stories seemed quite inexhaustible".



Wood's Map of Kelso of 1823, the closest in date to the period of this story. The shape of the town is much as today; the new Town House had been built, Rennie's Bridge was mellowing in after 20 years, and the divisions of land for future houses correspond to modern boundaries even where no houses are shown on the map. Key: Walton Hall is at the top of Roxburgh Street. Rosebank is at the opposite extreme of the map. 'X' marks the Plane Tree, and 'O' the riverside tree.





Scott seems to have spent three seasons in Kelso (1783, '84 and '85) and then been absent in 1786 and 1787, based on the lack of any references to Kelso in his letters for this period. If he witnessed or heard of Lunardi's 1785 balloon trip, he never mentioned it despite the launch pad being right between his aunt's house and the school. He was back at Rosebank, staying with his uncle Robert, in August and September of 1788, and looking forward to hare-coursing with two new greyhounds when the corn had been cut. He returned in 1789, and again in 1790, for on August 6th the 20-year-old aspiring lawyer was writing from this address – replies to be sent to “Miss Scott's, Garden (*sic*), Kelso... my letters lie there for me, as it saves their being sent down to Rosebank”.

The August 6th letter is a well-known one relating the incident of the impoverished Jedburgh magistrates heading the procession to open Kelso's St James's Fair on the previous day, *with one single pair of boots between them*. They rode three abreast across the bridge, with the two outer horsemen each wearing one of the pair of fine boots for show, their hidden legs shod with ordinary boots. The Kelso folk noticed this and began to jeer, resulting in a pitched battle with two horses killed before peace was restored.

Jedburgh was a Royal Burgh and had the right to call fairs, while Kelso lacked this status. The town was obliged to hold the fair under Jethart jurisdiction, and to give Jedburgh 50 per cent of the fees paid by traders to set up stalls at the fair (the other half went to the Duke of Roxburghe). The old fair ceased to be held in the 20th century, but in 2004, Kelso and Jedburgh agreed to forget the grievances and cooperate on a later September festival to commemorate its long history, notwithstanding boots. The St James's Fair revival is now an annual event.

We learn in correspondence September 1790 (*Letters of Sir Walter Scott*) that there was, at Rosebank, a “vinery measuring no less than twenty-four feet by twelve, the contents of which... are equally acceptable as if they came out of the most extensive vineyard in France”. He was back in the summer of 1791, travelling with his uncle to Wooler on a fishing expedition which Scott turned into an opportunity to view Flodden Field. In 1792, he was in Kelso by August 2nd, having left Edinburgh immediately the court sessions closed, and expressing every intention of staying for three months.





*Standing on the site of the old grammar school which Scott attended, the Abbey Row Community Centre occupies the Victorian school buildings behind the abbey.*

“I am lounging about the country here”, he wrote on August 15th, “to speak sincerely, as idle as the day is long. Two old companions of mine, brothers of Mr Walker of Wooden, having come to this country, we have renewed a great intimacy. As they live directly on the opposite bank of the river, we have signals agreed upon by which we concert a plan of operations for the day. They are both officers, and very intelligent



young fellows, and what is of some consequence, they have a brace of fine greyhounds. Yesterday forenoon we killed seven hares, so you may see how plenty the game is with us. I have turned a keen duck shooter, though my success is not very great; and when wading through the mosses on this errand, accoutred with the long gun, a jacket, musquito trowsers, and a rough cap, I might well pass for one of my redoubted moss-trooper progenitors, Walter Fire-the-Braes, or rather Willie wi' the Bolt-foot.

“For about-doors’ amusement, I have constructed a seat in a large tree, which spreads its branches horizontally over the Tweed. This is a favourite situation of mine for reading, especially in a day like this, when the west wind rocks the branches on which I am perched, and the river rolls its waves below me of a turbid blood colour. I have, moreover, cut an embrasure, through which I can fire upon the gulls, herons and cormorants, as they fly screaming past my nest. To crown the whole, I have carved an inscription upon it in the ancient Roman taste...”

The tree Scott used would have been on the riverbank north east of the new Hunter Bridge, and the lane then known as Lodge Loan which led to the Tweed from the Bullet Loan (*now Shedden Park Road – see map of 1823*). It would have lain on his walk from Rosebank to Waverley Lodge to collect his mail. It was still known to townsfolk at the end of the 19th century, and was noted in local histories as an elm tree.



*The original offices and printing works of the Kelso Mail, set up by James Ballantyne in 1796 to counter the influence of the radical Kelso Chronicle. The building has been a barber's shop and hairdresser for over a century now.*

In the summer of 1793, Scott went on his first serious expedition to the Highlands, but September found him once again at Rosebank, writing to his friend Patrick Murray with exhortations to travel south from Meikle and come to Kelso. He describes the town:

“Few villages can surpass that near to which I am now writing; and as to your rivers, it is part of my creed that the Tweed and Teviot yield to none in the world... For antiquities, it is true we have got no temples... but if substantial old castles and ruined abbeys will serve in their stead, they are to be found in abundance.”

And so the summers in Kelso continued. In 1795 James Ballantyne, Scott's school friend from 1783, set up in practice as a lawyer in the town. By the next summer he had so little business he accepted a proposal from ‘neighbouring nobility and gentry’ to set up the *Kelso Mail* in opposition to the *Kelso Chronicle*, a newspaper with a ‘democratic tendency’.

Ballantyne set off to Glasgow to buy type for his new press, and found Scott as his companion on the coach-journey. Their renewed acquaintance – with Ballantyne becoming a printer-publisher just as Scott was setting out to be an author – was to last thirty-five years.

In 1797 Scott married Charlotte Margaret Charpentier, and went to

stay in Edinburgh. His regular habit of spending the late summer with his uncle at Rosebank ended. On April 19th 1799, Walter learned of his father's death, and joined many of his family in Kelso. At Rosebank on May 17th he was signatory to a Disposition by Captain Robert Scott which placed Waverley Lodge and the Garden in the hands of a trust.

In 1799, he had Ballantyne print 'a dozen' copies of a few – mainly translated German – ballads under the title of *Apology for Tales of Terror*, a purely personal venture. Few were sold, most were given to friends, and later he joked that the rest were used by cabin-trunk makers: remaindered books were often recycled as lining-papers. The often-quoted 'dozen' is probably an error, if we are to believe this later comment from Scott. The next year, the plans for the *Minstrelsy* were laid, and in 1801 and 1802 the small press in Kelso turned out the first two volumes including a second edition reprint of Volume 1. At the end of 1802, Ballantyne moved his press to Edinburgh, and the third volume was printed there. A copy was sent hot off the press to Rosebank.

## **Kelso no more**

Captain Robert Scott of Rosebank died on June 10th, 1804, a bachelor. He was a widely-liked man, though Scott himself wrote that "his manners were so much tinged with the habits of celibacy as to render them peculiar, and his profession (that of a seaman) gave a high colouring to the whole".

The estate which Uncle Robert left included Rosebank, the Garden House and Garden, and much of the land between and beyond. Walter inherited it all; for over twenty years he had been visiting his uncle, and his summer stays in Kelso had been an almost unbroken feature of his life for the fifteen years up to his marriage. He sold his inheritance almost immediately.

Why did Scott decide against staying in Kelso? Perhaps it was because he had already made arrangements to live in Selkirkshire as required by his new appointment, at just 23 years old, as Sheriff of that county.

Of his uncle Robert, he wrote:

"He has distinguished me by leaving me a beautiful little villa on the banks of the Tweed, with every possible convenience annexed to it, and about thirty acres of the finest land in Scotland. Notwithstanding,

*The memorial to Captain Robert Scott is set into the wall of the Victorian Grammar School (Abbey Row Centre) which replaced the school Scott attended.*

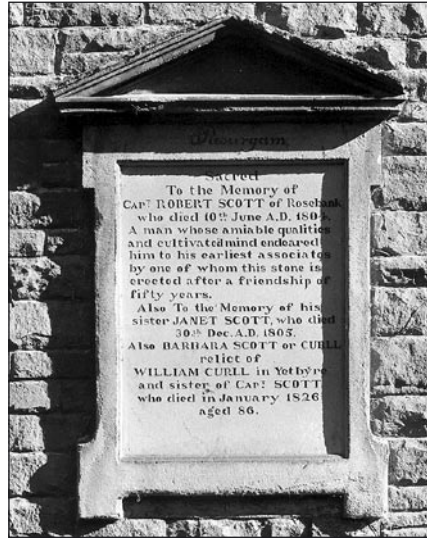
however, the temptation that this bequest offers, I continue to pursue my Reged plan, and expect to be settled at Ashestiel in the course of a month. Rosebank is situated so near the village of Kelso, as hardly to be sufficiently a country residence; besides, it is hemmed in by hedges and ditches, not to mention Dukes and Lady Dowagers, which are bad things for little people. It is expected to

sell to great advantage. I shall buy a mountain farm with the purchase money, and be quite the Laird of the Cairn and the Scaur.”

He did not sell the estate until after the death, the following year, of his Aunt Jenny. The sale fetched £5,000 – which equates to between £1m and £2m today. He did not invest it in ‘a mountain farm’, but in the Ballantyne printing business.

Scott was now at Ashestiel, near Clovenfords where his statue still dominates the village centre. It was seven miles from his work in Selkirk, with few powerful neighbours to provide the kind of social competition he feared in Kelso, a town full of fine houses – Ednam House, Springwood, Broomlands, Hendersyde and Floors to dominate them all. Ashestiel also lay in Scott clan country, the domains of the Duke of Buccleuch, his clan chief. John, Duke of Roxburghe, had given young Scott “attention and kindness... and... the unlimited use of that celebrated collection of volumes from which the Roxburghe Club derives its name” (*Minstrelsy, Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad*). Scott’s romantic loyalty to his own clan influenced him more than the patronage and friendship of Kelso’s great house.

As Abbotsford was later to prove, he fancied a different backdrop to his personal drama.





## The fate of the Garden

Walter Scott seems to have forgotten his earlier love of the town after he let Rosebank and the Garden pass out of his family's hands. The Oriental Plane tree and formal garden were still intact in 1804. Complex financial, social and aspirational factors led him to sell the estate but having done so he looked forward rather than back.

A later revival of Scott's link with Kelso only came after John Ballantyne, the younger brother of James and closely involved as Scott's editor for many years, decided to build himself a summer residence next to the gates of Floors. It was during the construction of this Georgian villa that Scott returned to the town and first saw what changes his sale of the Rosebank estate had led to.

Lockhart described Walton Hall from a visit in the autumn of 1820 in the company of Ballantyne and Scott:

"John has purchased two or three old houses of two stories in height, with notched gables and thatched roofs, near the end of the long original street of Kelso, and not far from the gateway of the Duke of Roxburghe's magnificent park, with their small gardens and paddocks running down to the margin of the Tweed", he wrote.

"His new corps de logis... included a handsome entrance-hall, or saloon, destined to have the old Piscator's bust, on a stand, in the centre, and to be embellished all round with emblems of the sport."

Walton Hall, as this passage shows, was named by Ballantyne after Izaak Walton, and was intended as a fishing-lodge. Today, the entrance-hall houses no central bust of Walton ('old Piscator') and there are no trappings of angling there. Only the name remains.

"Behind this were spacious rooms overlooking the little pleasance, which was to be laid out somewhat in the Italian style, with ornamental steps, a fountain and a jet d'eau, and a broad terrace hanging over the river, and commanding an extensive view of perhaps the most beautiful landscape in Scotland.

"We then walked with him over this pretty town, lounged away an hour among the ruins of the Abbey, and closed our perambulation with the Garden, where Scott had spent some of the happiest of his early summers, and where he pointed out with sorrowful eyes the site of the Platanus under which he first read Percy's *Reliques*".



*Walton Hall was planned as a summer fishing lodge, dedicated to the angling anthologist. It looks out towards Friarshaugh over the Tweed.*

Lockhart wrote that John Ballantyne “always retained a fondness for his native place”, but he never enjoyed a single summer at Walton Hall. While it was being built he lived in some of the older buildings next to it. He died on June 16th the following year, in Edinburgh. His brother Alexander (father of R. M. Ballantyne, of *Coral Island* fame) lived at Walton Hall for three years.

Sir Walter returned to Kelso for a walk round the town, and a final sentimental visit to the Garden, in 1827. This time, he recorded drastic changes in his own journal.

“The little cottage in which I lived with Aunt Jenny is still standing, but the great garden is divided betwixt three proprietors. Its huge platanus tree withered, I was told, in the same season which was fatal to so many of the species. It was cut down. The yew-hedges, labyrinths, wildernesses, and other marks... are all obliterated, and the place is as common and vulgar as may be. The lady the cottage belongs to was very civil...”

What Scott was deprecating in 1827 would have been Eden Bank (now Maxwell Place), the first house built on the land by Robert Nichol in 1806, and St Leonard’s Manse, built for the Relief Congregation minister. Wine merchant Nichol was the Duke of Roxburghe’s Baron Baillie and his modern plain neo-classical freestone the exact reverse of Scott’s romantic ‘baronial’ ideals.

The final chapter in this history has a twist. While Ballantyne built Walton Hall, Scott was engaged on the huge extravagance of Abbotsford.

He astounded the world by installing his own coal gas plant and lighting his baronial hall with blazing gas chandeliers. The townsfolk of Kelso, in 1819, resolved to have the same facility. Using a plot right next to Waverley Lodge and the old Garden, they raised a public subscription and eventually built a gas works in 1831 (*its site is now the Abbotsford Court business centre*).

The new ‘vulgar’ Regency mansions found themselves blighted by a pre-Victorian coal-gas works. Eden Bank was split up and rented out; the gardens became allotments and market gardens. Not until the gasworks ceased operation did the area begin to recover, in the 1960s. By chance Maxwell Lane and Abbotsford Court revived the ‘media’ tradition which Scott and Ballantyne started in Kelso – a printing works, a publisher, and a design agency were all within a few yards of each other here 200 years after Ballantyne set up his press.

The school buildings Scott attended were replaced long ago (and a charnel-pit discovered under their foundations), but on this site Border folk are still educated and entertained with classes, societies and meetings often touching on the literature, landscape, history and music he loved.

Despite two centuries of change, Scott would recognise Kelso today as the same town he enjoyed in his youth.

## **The Ballantyne Family in Kelso**

*We are indebted to Ann Scott for notes included in the following section on the history of the Ballantyne family, which is so closely linked to Scott and Kelso.*

James and John Ballantyne were sons of Kelso merchant John Ballantyne, who ran a grocery business in the square. James – a year older than Scott – became his firm friend when Scott attended Kelso Grammar School in 1783. He was also at Edinburgh University at the same time, though they do not seem to have been so close in 1788. James trained in law to become a Writer (*Scottish solicitor*) in Kelso Court, but was persuaded to set up *The Kelso Mail* as a Tory paper to rival the radical *Kelso Chronicle*. The two newspapers almost faced each other across Bridge Street, and certainly confronted each other in politics.

On a journey to Glasgow to buy new type, he shared a coach with

Scott, and renewed the friendship, as recounted earlier on. In 1799 the *Mail* office printed what is thought to be Scott's first publication, *An Apology for Tales of Terror*. This was a small edition of books for friends of the author. Scott had agreed to contribute to a volume called *Tales of Wonder* being edited by M. G. 'Monk' Lewis, a wonderfully eccentric gothic novelist and poet whose manner of dress gave rise to his nickname. Since this volume was delayed, Scott wanted to print a little of his material himself; the 'Apology' in the title was his nod to Lewis's first claim on their use. Monk Lewis's untimely death was probably one of the factors which persuaded Scott to forge ahead and create the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. He might well have left this until later in life, as a back-burner interest for a successful lawyer and public servant.

Starting in 1801, James Ballantyne printed the first two volumes of *Minstrelsy* at the *Mail* printing works in Bridge Street, Kelso. At the end of 1802 with a third volume in the making and signs that reprint editions would be needed, he was persuaded by Scott to move to Edinburgh and set up the Ballantyne Press.

Scott became his partner in 1805, investing the money from the sale of Rosebank. Following the 1826 credit crisis, both James and Scott were faced with crippling debts. James had to sell everything of value which he possessed, but he and Scott remained firm friends until Scott's death.

John Ballantyne followed his father into business, but later quarrelled with him over his marriage and set up in competition. A lively and endearing character, he was a little too fond of racing, gambling and women (for which Kelso Races were famous, attracting regular attendance from Edinburgh's finest courtesans).

At one stage his marriage and business collapsed and he considered emigrating to Jamaica, but James persuaded him to stay and patch things up. He moved to Edinburgh where he set up as an auctioneer, and in 1818 he became Scott's publisher and agent, which suited his temperament better. He bought land and a row of old houses and started to build Walton Hall (the architect was William Elliott of Hermitage House). Scott criticised his choice of dwelling as being too far away from Edinburgh for convenience and not suitable for one in poor health.

When James moved to Edinburgh, the third Ballantyne brother Alexander was left in charge of the *Kelso Mail*. In 1806 following a

good marriage he bought James out with money from the dowry; he lived first at 8 Belmont Place, but cramped for space with his growing family, bought ground at the townhead (*between the roads at the junction just beside Floors Castle gates*) to build a new house, Seven Elms (now The Elms). Alexander was known as a fine fiddle player.

When John died, Alexander took over Walton Hall where he and his family lived happily until 1824. *Kelso Mail* was in decline and Alexander, who was commissioned to hand-copy all Sir Walter's novels to conceal his authorship, moved to Edinburgh where his youngest son R. M. Ballantyne was born (*see earlier reference*).

Money from the sale of *Kelso Mail* was invested in James Ballantyne's firm. Alexander was very badly hit by the crash of 1826, and had to sell his remaining property in Kelso; however, the family kept its links with the town and in 1844 Alexander's widow and daughters moved back (after the death in childbirth of daughter Madaleina) to run a school and boarding-house at Duncan House.

## Kelso's Scott Trail

Lockhart's *Life* and Scott's *Journal* and letters describe the connections set out here, and show that for almost a quarter of a century between 1781 and 1804 – when his uncle died, shortly followed by Aunt Jenny – Scott spent much of his summer leisure time in and around the town. This was once recognised. Susie Hogg's Lane was renamed Abbotsford Grove, and the Garden cottage given its decorations and 'Waverley Lodge' title. Scott's 1827 walk from Walton Hall to the Garden can be followed using the **Scott Trail** map reproduced overleaf (also published separately as a fold-out map with translations).

Follow Roxburgh Street north-west from the Town Square (*dotted section on map*) until you are in sight of the Golden Gates of Floors Castle. Walton Hall (1) is to your left, and a little beyond it a way leads down to the Tweed riverside walk known as the Cobby. Return to the Square via the Cobby; there are various passages back at the town end, and the final exit is suited to wheelchair use.

From the Square, follow Bridge Street to the old Mail Offices (2) on the left-hand side as you walk. Turn left beside the Abbey, then right to the Abbey Row Community Centre, site of the old Grammar School (3).



A gateway in the long wall enclosing the burial aisle of the Scott family gives access to Captain Robert Scott's memorial. Cross the churchyard to Beattie's House (4) on the opposite side of the Abbey Row facing The Butts.

Return down The Butts, to the east of the Old Church and Knowes car park. At the corner of Maxwell Lane is Waverley Lodge (5), the former Garden House or cottage of Scott's Aunt Janet, with a bust of Scott and statue of his dog Maida. Turn right and follow the road round and down towards the River Tweed.

Pass the Garden Centre entrance, to the Mayfield Walk, heading downstream past the site (6) of Scott's famous oriental plane tree (*Platanus*). Continue to follow the river past Abbotsford Grove and Hemsford, taking the riverbank cycle and foot path until steps lead up to the end of Hunter Bridge. The alternative small side road took over the name Bullet Loan (*lane*, named for playing bowls or 'bullet'), but was known as Lodge Loan in Scott's time. You can make a detour on to the bridge to see Rosebank House, Wooden Anna (*island*) and Wooden Mill, and other views back towards the town.

Returning to the town, walk north to the mini-roundabout and cross over to Shedden Park, following the path to the memorial gates then diagonally back to the town square via Horsemarket.

With two bridges now crossing the river, Kelso's Scott Trail can be extended to take in both a tour of the town centre landmarks, and a much longer ramble on 'both sides the Tweed'. The Kelso and District Amenity Society arranged plaques to mark buildings with Scott connections, and produced this booklet and the trail map, following the bicentenary of the *Minstrelsy* in 2001-2003 which revived interest though the "heritage industry" managed to miss the chance.



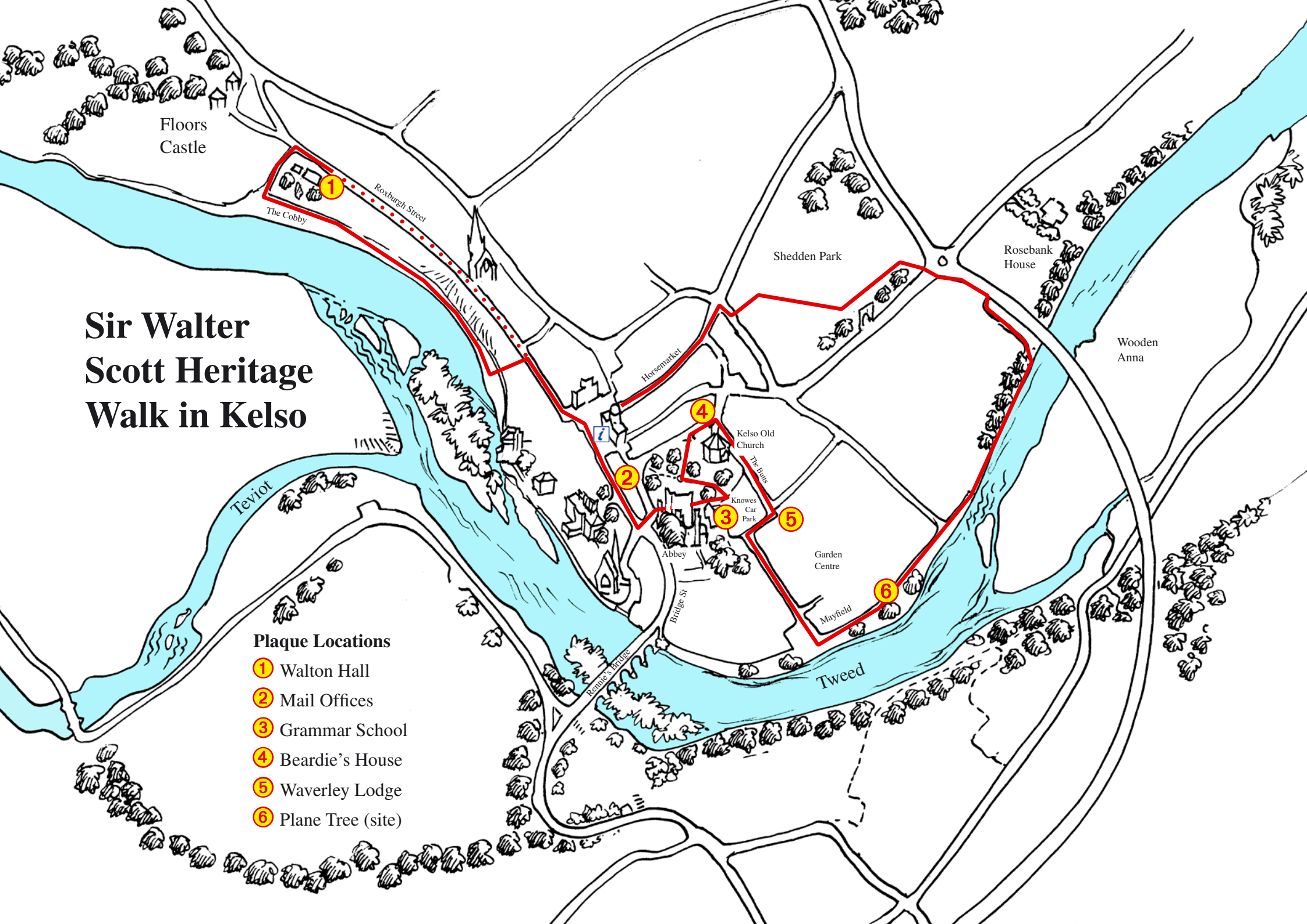
### *References:*

*Too many sources have been used to gather quotations and information to permit a bibliography in this booklet. Sources included Scott's own essays and prefaces to the editions of the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'; the Letters of Sir Walter Scott, in various editions; the Journal of Sir Walter Scott, ditto; and John Gibson Lockhart's Life of Scott, ditto; Rutherford's History of Kelso (1891); Alistair Moffat's 'Kelsae' (1985) and others.*

# Sir Walter Scott Heritage Walk in Kelso

## Plaque Locations

- ① Walton Hall
- ② Mail Offices
- ③ Grammar School
- ④ Beardie's House
- ⑤ Waverley Lodge
- ⑥ Plane Tree (site)



*This booklet is based on an article which I wrote for Pat Miller's excellent but short-lived 'Borderland' magazine in 1990, two years after we moved to Kelso and purchased one of the houses on the former Rosebank lands. Walter Scott's signature on the original deeds – permitted a brief leave of absence by the Bank of Scotland to allow transcription of the records of owners and tenants – aroused curiosity. The story turned out to be much fuller than those standard token mentions, trotted out year after year in guide books.*

*When the bicentenary of the Scott's 'Minstrelsy' passed without official recognition, the Kelso and District Amenity Society realised an opportunity had been lost. The aims of the Society, to enhance and preserve the town's value to its residents and many visitors, were readily extended to cover the creation of a new heritage trail once the story was presented to the members. Scott's connection with Kelso was far from unknown to local historians but invisible to townsfolk and tourists alike.*

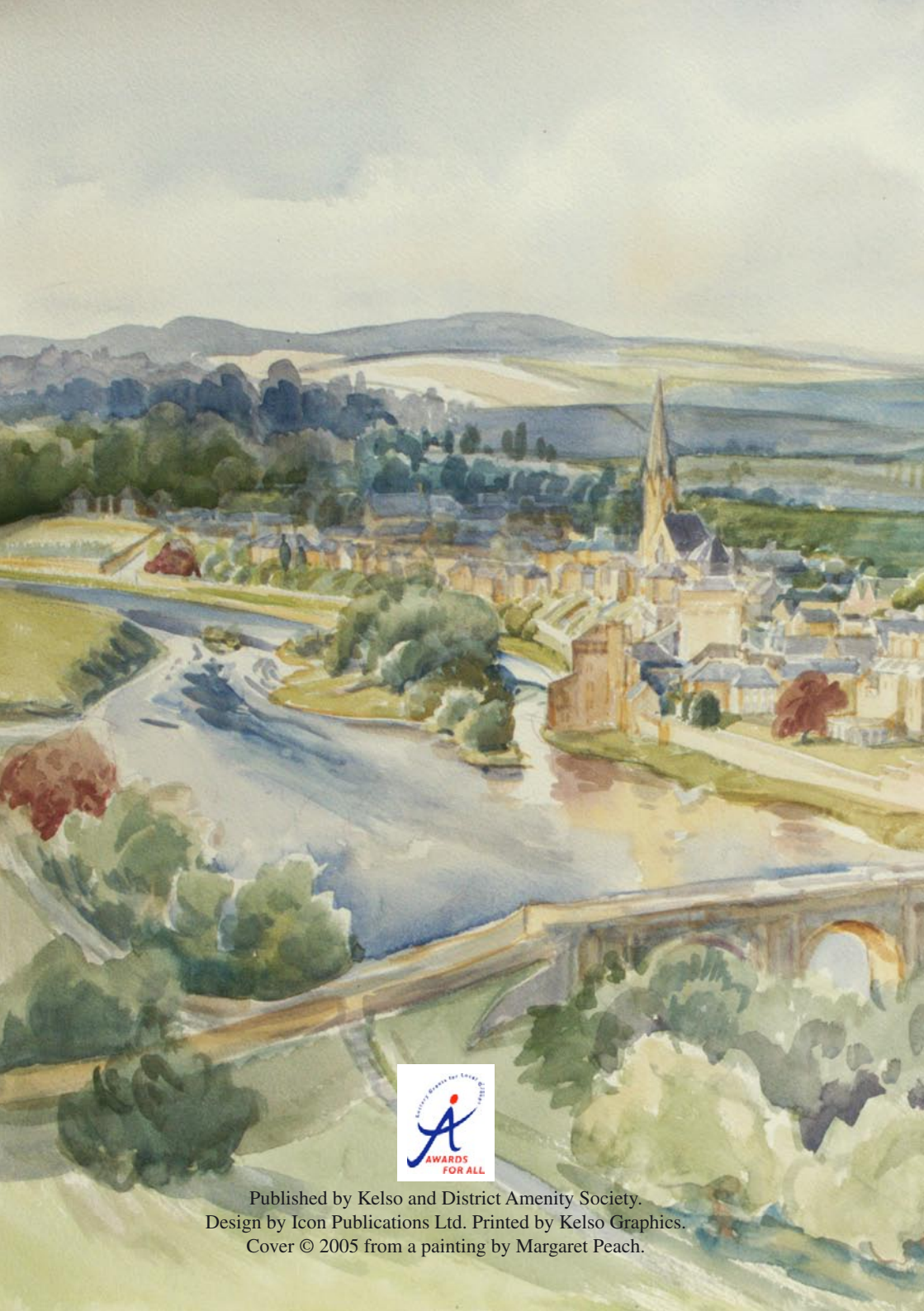
*In 2003-4, with the invaluable help of Brian Roberts (proprietor of Waverley Lodge, the former Garden House) and Kelso historian Christine Henderson, many small ambiguities and errors in my original text were tidied up, gaps filled and the material extended to form this booklet. Margaret Peach provided the cover illustration of old Kelso and the sketches of locations.*

*A great deal of hard work by the Amenity Society secured funding for the trail map, plaques (with approval of their design and permissions for fixing to buildings), and this booklet. Borders Regional Council staff and the Roxburgh Association for Voluntary Service helped ensure all went smoothly. The project was made possible by the generous financial help of 'Awards of All'.*

*– David Kilpatrick, Maxwell Place, Kelso, 2005*

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