



## The earliest series of town prospects published in Britain

SLEZER, John.

Theatrum Scotiae: Containing the Prospects of His Majesty's Castles and Palaces: Together with those of the Most Considerable Towns and Colleges; The Ruins of many Ancient Abbeys, Churches, Monasteries, and Convents Within the said Kingdom. All Curiously Engraven on Copper-Plates. With a Description of each Place.

London: D. Browne, John Senex et al, 1718. Folio, contemporary panelled calf, rebaked, inner hinges taped; title printed in black and red; pp. 12; large engraved folding prospect, 60 double-page engraved plates (numbered to 57).

£6,500

A collection of views drawn by John Slezer (pre 1650-1717), a German-or-Dutch born army officer who moved to Scotland in 1671, becoming an officer of the Scots Train of Artillery, Chief Engineer for Scotland and 'Surveyor of his Majesties Stores and Magazines'. Part of his latter role was producing ground plans of the chief fortifications, including those at Edinburgh, Stirling, Dumbarton and the Bass Rock. While travelling around the country he also drew views of the towns and conceived the idea of publishing them in a book. Despite spending a year in prison for refusing to recognise William III as monarch after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, he received Royal consent for the 'Theatrum Scotiae' in 1693. It did not sell well, but Slezer continued with his scheme to publish more views. When promised financing fell through, Slezer fell into debt and was forced to live the last years of his life in a debtor's sanctuary within Holyrood Abbey,



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although he remained Captain of the Train of Artillery of Scotland and was allowed out to visit his family on Sundays. In 1716, after a military re-organisation in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, Slezer retired from the army dying the following year. Despite being drawn c.1690, the two-sheet prospect of Edinburgh did not appear in the 'Theatrum Scotiae' until after Slezer's death, when further volumes became unlikely. This version was only issued in 1718, being replaced the following year with a larger version dedicated to Queen Anne. The bookplate, dated 1724, is that of George Baillie (1664-1738), a Scottish soldier who served in the horse guards of William of Orange, returning to Britain with William in 1688. He served as MP for Bewickshire, Commissioner for Trade and Plantations, a Lord of the Admiralty and a Commissioner of the Treasury. An investor in the ill-fated Darien Scheme, Baillie campaigned for the Act of Union in 1707.

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