

New technology reveals 16th century Edinburgh

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The lost townscape of sixteenth-century Edinburgh has been brought back to life by researchers at the University of St Andrews.

The new digital reconstruction is the first to be created of the period, and is based on a drawing from 1544, thought to be the earliest accurate depiction of the capital.

The virtual time travel technology – which will be released as an app in May – provides a unique window into the capital around the time of the birth of Mary Queen of Scots.

The technology is the result of a collaboration between St Andrews historians, art historians, computer scientists and University spinout company Smart History. The result is an interactive tour of the capital as it appeared in 1544, just before the city was sacked and burned by an English army led by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford.

Dr Bess Rhodes, an expert on sixteenth-century Scottish history who collaborated on the reconstruction, said:

"For the first time visitors and residents can compare the city they know with the capital of James V and Mary Queen of Scots. It has been amazing seeing the recreation of a lost townscape. I hope this project makes the public more aware of the layers in the capital's history, and furthers understanding of the complex way in which Edinburgh evolved."

The reconstruction is inspired by a sixteenth-century drawing of Edinburgh made by Richard Lee, an English military engineer who later designed the massive artillery defences at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Lee accompanied the Earl of Hertford's forces to Edinburgh in 1544, and his drawing is thought to be the first realistic portrayal of Scotland's capital.

The interdisciplinary team of St Andrews researchers supplemented the information from Lee's plan with archaeological evidence, sixteenth-century written sources, and information about the geography of the modern city, to create an updated reconstruction of Edinburgh.

Dr Rhodes continued: "The 1540s were a tumultuous period in Edinburgh's history. In December 1542 King James V of Scotland died, leaving his baby daughter Mary as monarch. Not long after the English King Henry VIII ordered an invasion of Scotland, with the aim of forcing the Scots to accept a proposed betrothal between the infant Mary and his young son (the future Edward VI of England).

"One of the first major actions in the conflict later known as the 'Rough Wooing' was the Earl of Hertford's attack on Edinburgh in May 1544. Hertford's forces failed to capture Edinburgh Castle, but set fire to the city, destroying much of the medieval townscape, before they retreated. Our reconstruction is the first digital representation of Edinburgh at this eventful moment in the capital's past."

The new reconstruction gives an overview of the townscape of the entire sixteenth-century city, with a particular focus on the Royal Mile – the historic spine of Edinburgh. The digital development was largely financed by a grant from Innovate UK.

The [reconstruction](#) will be available on a number of digital platforms (including a mobile app, a 3-D virtual experience, and more traditional

web-based resources) from 1 May 2017.

The technology was premiered at the EPSRC Impact Accelerator Account (IAA) Industry Showcase in St Andrews yesterday (Thursday 16 March 2017). The aim of the all-day event was to stimulate long-term strategic industrial engagement, to increase collaboration and to widen public access to the latest physical sciences research at the University.

Other research on display included current projects in the fields of cancer recognition, explosives and water pollutant detection, low-cost organic solar cells, virtual museums and a smoking-cessation app.

More information: For more information, see [www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/online ... i00002u00056000.html](http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/online...i00002u00056000.html)

Provided by University of St Andrews

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