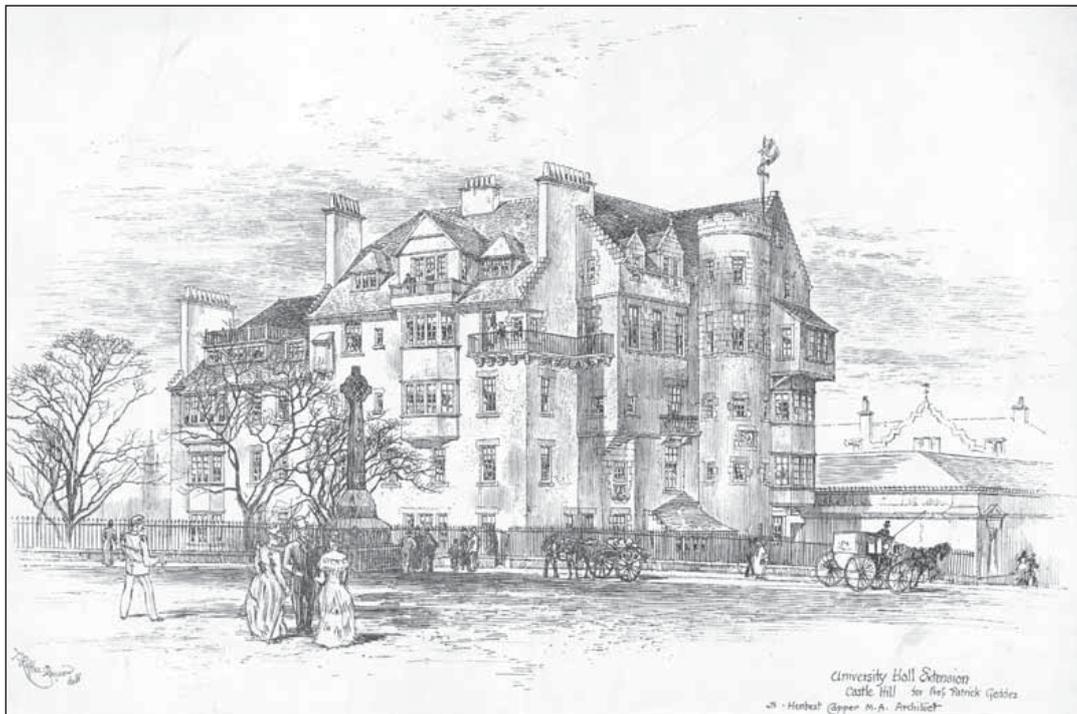


**THE BOOK
OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH
CLUB**

**The Journal for
Edinburgh History**



NEW SERIES

Volume 10

2014

C O V E R

University Hall Extension, Castle Hill, for Prof. Patrick Geddes

This drawing was published in *The Builder*, 19 August 1893. The artist, Thomas Raffles Davison, was the leading architectural illustrator of the period. His pen and ink skills showed a remarkable ability to express plans and buildings. Although it was technically possible to insert photographs into periodical articles, the results were often poor and editors preferred the crispness of the drawing. The short accompanying article entitled 'University Hall Extension: Edinburgh', looked like an interview with Geddes. Accommodation for University students was his major aim, not just to suit the 'generally shorter purse of the average Scottish undergraduate', but also 'it is intended that the students in residence shall be brought into social contact, not only with each other in all the Faculties, but also with their seniors in University life, and more intimately than at present, with outside social influences.' The style contained inspiration from arts and crafts and, with the occasional turret and crow stepped gable, hints of Scottish baronial. There were qualities of a disappearing urban vernacular with strong horizontal lines broken up by the variety of window openings and dormers. It has been compared to older buildings at the head of the West Bow.

The drawing showed the first phase of the Ramsay Garden development in the south west corner. Geddes and his wife Anna lived at number 14 and were shown standing on the balcony in the centre of the picture looking at the view. Views had an intellectual purpose for Geddes as he struggled to understand the city as a whole. His balcony did not give the total view of the Camera Obscura in the Outlook Tower but he could look on the old Castle, the new Princes Street and the industrial suburbs of Tynecastle.

By the 1920s the flat was occupied by his daughter Nora and his son in law, town planner, Frank Mears. In 1952, Robert Naismith joined the Frank Mears partnership. In the late 1970s, Naismith moved into the Geddes flat. Towards the end of his life he transferred the property to the National Trust for Scotland where sadly it remains in the tender care of the Asset Management Strategy Group as a 'non-visited property'. [This note owes much to the report made for NTS by Andrew Wright and to my fellow editor Andrew Fraser, one time resident and secretary of the Ramsay Garden Proprietors Association.]

R.J.M.

Courtesy of Andrew Fraser

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1. Authors are invited to send potential contributions or a preliminary letter outlining a proposed contribution to Professor R. J. Morris, 3 Primrosehill Farm Cottages, Duns, TD11 3TL.
2. We encourage major contributions of c.8000 words. We also encourage shorter contributions and commentaries on sources. We encourage articles on recent history as well as earlier periods. We encourage articles on the wider area of Greater Edinburgh as well as the Old Town, New Town and suburbs.
3. Contributions should be supplied in digital form, with a printout on one side of A4 paper, with wide margins. Consult recent volumes for details of house style.
4. Notes and references should follow the text, with Arabic numerals inserted consecutively at the appropriate places in the text.
5. References to printed sources should be set out as in the following examples:

Sir Daniel Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1891), II, p. 59.

J. B. Morrell, 'Medicine and Science in the Eighteenth Century', in Gordon Donaldson (ed.), *Four Centuries: Edinburgh University Life, 1583-1983* (Edinburgh 1983), pp. 38-52.

R. K. Hannay and G. P. H. Watson, 'The Building of the Parliament House', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 13 (1924), pp. 1-78.

6. References to manuscript sources should be in accordance with the practice of the repository in which the documents are housed. Examples are:

Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Town Council Minutes 12 August 1752.

National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS.638, ff. 9-10.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW

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NOTE ON PRE-DECIMAL CURRENCY

Weights, measures and currency should be presented as used in the relevant period, with footnote explication as required. Especial care should be taken to distinguish Scots and Sterling currency amounts.

Information on pre-decimal currency, and on pre-metric systems of weights and measures is given in Colin R. Chapman, *How Heavy, How Much and How Long? Weights, Money and other Measures used by our Ancestors* (Lochin Publishing 1995).

For the separate system of Scottish weights and measures see A. D. C. Simpson and R. D. Connor, 'Interpreting Scots Measurement Units', in Glen L. Pryde *Dictionary of Scottish Building* (Edinburgh 1996), pp. 104-105.

JAMES KER, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR EDINBURGH, 1747–1754

WILLIAM IRVINE FORTESCUE

JAMES KER'S PARLIAMENTARY career was remarkable and significant on several counts. As a goldsmith, he was an exceptionally rare example of a craftsman sitting in the eighteenth-century House of Commons, for his election as MP for Edinburgh briefly broke the merchant stranglehold over the city's politics. Ker's social status was ambiguous. He was a goldsmith, the son of a goldsmith, poorly educated, and never capable of writing accurate English, but his paternal great-grandfather was the youngest brother of the 1st Earl of Ancrum; business success enabled him to purchase a farm in the Scottish Borders, so he could style himself James Ker of Buchtrigg; his second marriage to a daughter of Lord Charles Ker connected him with members of the Scottish nobility; and his membership of the House of Commons brought him into contact with some of the most prominent figures in Britain's political elite (fig. 1). Yet, despite his interest and importance, historians have almost entirely neglected him.

James Ker's parliamentary career was also remarkable and significant because it coincided with the critical years from 1747 to 1754, when the legacy of the Jacobite Rising of 1745–46 still hung heavy over Scottish and Edinburgh politics. Edinburgh, having endured the trauma of the Jacobite occupation of September–October 1745, had to suffer the indignity of the imprisonment and trial of its former Lord Provost, Archibald Stewart. Yet in this climate of repression and of English hostility towards Scots and Scotland, fundamental long-term changes were beginning to occur. For Edinburgh this meant legislation for urban renewal and modernisation, eventually leading to the construction of the New Town.

British parliamentary politics remained immune to change and reform. Only Edinburgh's town

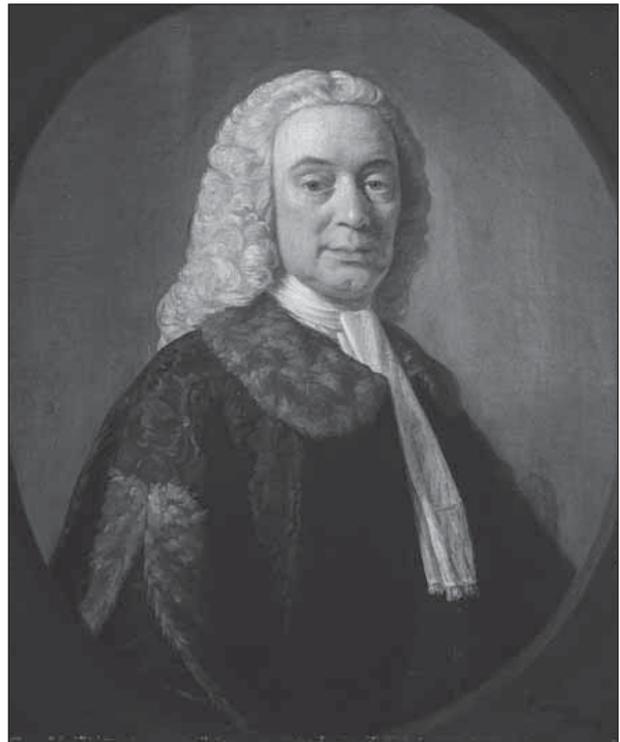


Fig. 1. James Ker of Buchtrigg by Allan Ramsay, 1754 (National Gallery of Scotland, NG 1886). The portrait features no item of silver, unlike the portrait (1736) of Thomas Germain and his wife by Nicolas de Largilliere (The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon) or the portrait of Paul Revere (1768) by John Singleton Copley (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). (Courtesy of the National Galleries of Scotland.)

councillors and city magistrates elected the city's MP, while individual MPs often remained dependent upon some grandee. With the demise of the post of Secretary of State for Scotland following the resignation of John Hay, 4th Marquess of Tweeddale, in January 1746, three figures dominated Scottish politics. Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, brother of the Prime Minister Henry Pelham, Secretary of State for

the Southern Department from 1724 to 1748, and for the Northern Department from 1748 to 1754, became the cabinet minister responsible for Scotland. While not in the cabinet, Archibald Campbell, 3rd Duke of Argyll, exercised an enormous influence on Scottish affairs. One of Scotland's wealthiest nobles, he held the posts of Keeper of the Great Seal and of Lord Justice General, with the right to preside over the High Court of Justiciary, Scotland's supreme criminal court. As an Extraordinary Lord of Session, he could also sit as a judge in the Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court. Having played an active and effective part in the defeat of the Jacobites in 1746, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, Lord Milton, a Court of Session judge and Lord Justice Clerk until 1748, served as Argyll's political agent in Scotland.²

Personal political rivalries influenced James Ker's parliamentary career, particularly his rivalry with the six times Lord Provost of Edinburgh, George Drummond. Both Drummond and Ker rallied to the defence of Edinburgh in September 1745, but Ker was elected the city's MP in July 1747, not Drummond, the obvious candidate. Thereafter Drummond and Ker had to collaborate and co-operate, as Edinburgh's Lord Provost and MP respectively, as promoters of the same bills through Parliament, as members of the same Town Council committees, and as Edinburgh's commissioners to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, but they became bitter rivals. Ker eventually regarded Drummond as one of his principal enemies, responsible for the loss of his parliamentary seat.

MERCHANTS VERSUS CRAFTSMEN

Before the union of the English and Scottish Parliaments in 1707, Edinburgh had been represented in the Scottish Parliament by two MPs, one of whom was traditionally a merchant and the other a craftsman member of one of Edinburgh's fourteen Trades or Incorporations. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, five Edinburgh goldsmiths had represented the city in Scottish Parliaments.³ After 1707 Edinburgh returned just one MP to the Westminster Parliament, and before 1747 not a single member of the Trades was ever elected, though the representatives of the Trades on the Town Council – the two Trades Councillors, the six Ordinary

Council Deacons and the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons – regularly tried to secure the election of one of their number as MP for Edinburgh.

In November 1709 Alexander Nisbet of Northfield, Deacon of the Surgeons and Deacon Convener of the Trades, argued in the Town Council that according to precedent, and to cultivate 'a good understanding betwixt the severall members of this burgh', the MP for Edinburgh should be, alternately, a merchant and a craftsman. However, in the by-election caused by the death of Sir Samuel McLellan, Sir Patrick Johnston, the current Lord Provost, was elected.⁴ Johnston was re-elected in the general election of October 1710, despite strong protests and demands for an 'equality in representation betwixt the Merchants and Craftsmen'.⁵ The protests continued after the election from representatives of the Trades, including the Goldsmiths.⁶ In the next parliamentary election (9 September 1713), surprisingly perhaps, the Lord Provost (Sir Robert Blackwood of Pitreavie) sided with the craftsmen. He reminded the Town Council that before the Union Edinburgh had been represented in the Scottish Parliament by a merchant and a craftsman, and he proposed that the election should be postponed. A majority in the Council disagreed, whereupon the Lord Provost and seven councillors, including the Deacon of the Goldsmiths (Henry Bethune), withdrew from the Council. In their absence Sir James Steuart of Goodtrees, an advocate, was elected MP for Edinburgh.⁷ The Council did subsequently agree that a craftsman who was a burghess and citizen of Edinburgh could be chosen as the city's MP.⁸

Exceptionally, three candidates stood in the Edinburgh parliamentary election of February 1715: George Warrender of Lochend, the current Lord Provost; John Campbell, merchant and bailie; and James Smith of Whitehill, mason burghess of Edinburgh. Smith, the architect of the Canongate Kirk and son-in-law of Robert Mylne, His Majesty's Master Mason, represented the Trades. He repeated the assertion that Edinburgh's MP should be alternately a merchant and a tradesman. He claimed that tradesmen had specialist knowledge relevant to some parliamentary business. For himself he stated that he was well educated, well travelled, of 'fair character in this citie for many years', and a former representative in the Scottish parliament. Unpersuaded by these claims, a majority of the electors voted for George

Warrender, who remained the MP for Edinburgh until his death (4 March 1722).⁹

Kenneth McKenzie, Deacon of the Goldsmiths, in the by-election of March 1722 failed to prevent the election of John Campbell by proposing the candidature of a fellow goldsmith, George Main.¹⁰ In 1727 John Keir of Mourtoun, a Trades Councillor, presented himself as a parliamentary candidate. After the right of the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons to vote had been unsuccessfully challenged ('It is impossible to find out a Reason why six of the Incorporations should have a vote and eight of them have none'), eight ordinary councillors (probably the six Ordinary Council Deacons and the two Trades Councillors) and the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons voted for John Keir. A majority, consisting probably of all the merchant councillors, closed ranks and re-elected John Campbell.¹¹ Even after the election, the protest against allowing the Extraordinary Council Deacons to vote in parliamentary elections was repeated, which prompted William Cant, the Deacon Convener of the Trades, to complain of 'ane overbearing power of the Merchants in Council'.¹² The same issue arose at the next general election in 1734, but again the right of the Extraordinary Council Deacons to vote in parliamentary elections was upheld.¹³

The conflict between the merchants and the craftsmen on Edinburgh Town Council surfaced again during the general parliamentary election of 1741. On 6 May 1741 Alexander Nisbet, once more Deacon of the Surgeons and Deacon Convener, offered himself as a parliamentary candidate.¹⁴ The next day Nisbet launched his candidature at 'a very numerous meeting of the Trades', as the Minutes of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths eloquently reported.¹⁵ The announcement of his candidature 'was received with applause' and given 'all encouragement', since 'it was the right of the trades to have a Representative in parliament with the merchants' perfidy and that since the Union the trades has never had a tradesman a member of parliament for this City and that they judged it now high time to exert their right'. To promote Nisbet's candidature, the Goldsmiths formed a committee which included James Ker. On Saturday 9 May a second meeting of members of Edinburgh's Incorporations agreed to support Nisbet's candidature and to raise funds from their Incorporations and from individual members.¹⁶ The attempt to secure the unanimous support of the Trades for Nisbet, and to use Goldsmiths' money to

back his candidature, had its critics. Hugh Penman, a goldsmith and a Trades Councillor, protested that he was 'at liberty to vote as he pleases he not being chosen by the Corporation;' and Dougal Ged, the Deacon and the other representative of the Goldsmiths on the Town Council, similarly declared: 'I am at Liberty to vote in Council for a member to represent this City freely and according to the best of my judgement ... I must at the same time protest that none of the poor's money be employed in supporting the question of any candidate'.¹⁷

Meanwhile on 8 May 1741 Patrick Lindsay, the sitting MP and Lord Provost from 1729 to 1735, had written to the current Lord Provost offering to serve for another term.¹⁸ The election took place on 16 May. Alexander Nisbet argued that the MP for Edinburgh should be, alternately, a merchant and a tradesman, a claim regularly advanced by the craftsmen and equally regularly denied by the merchants, and that the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons should have the right to vote in the parliamentary election, which, despite a protest, was conceded. On 12 May the Goldsmiths and eight of the other Incorporations confirmed that they would support Nisbet, and 'That it was their opinion that the Crafts of this City had a right of having a Craftsman chosen and Elected Representative in parliament alternately with a merchant'. In the election, twenty-six councillors voted for Archibald Stewart and seven for Alexander Nisbet. Only the Extraordinary Council Deacons voted for Nisbet, while all the other deacons and the two Trades Councillors, including Dougal Ged (Deacon of the Goldsmiths) and Hugh Penman (Trades Councillor), voted for Stewart.¹⁹ Nisbet and the Incorporation of Goldsmiths did not give up easily. They petitioned the House of Commons, 'complaining of an undue Election for the City of Edinburgh'.²⁰

Part of the context of the Edinburgh parliamentary election of July 1747 was the conflict between the merchants and the craftsmen. Since 1707 the craftsmen believed that the MP for Edinburgh should be, alternately, a merchant and a craftsman, and that the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons should have a right to vote in parliamentary elections. The merchants believed that the craftsmen had no such claim or right, and they regularly, though unsuccessfully, challenged the electoral rights of the eight Extraordinary Deacons. In 1710, 1715, 1722,

1727 and 1741, craftsmen candidates representing the Trades had been easily defeated by the merchants, who dominated the Town Council and who united behind a single candidate. These electoral defeats also indicated that a credible parliamentary candidate representing the Trades was likely to be either a surgeon or a goldsmith and probably the current Convener of the Trades, and had to be backed by all the craftsmen on the Town Council.

THE JACOBITE RISING OF 1745–46

James Ker was a staunch Hanoverian, and suffered for his political beliefs. Between 1724 and 1740 he developed a successful business and served the Incorporation of Goldsmiths as quartermaster (1724–25, 1732–34, 1738–39), treasurer (1728–32) and deacon (1734–36) (fig. 2). He was a member of Edinburgh Town Council as an Ordinary Council Deacon (1734–36) and as a Trades Councillor (1738–40).²¹ After 1740 the ascendancy of the Jacobite faction within the Incorporation of Goldsmiths, and to a lesser extent within the Town Council, excluded him from public office. The Jacobite Rising of

1745–46, and its failure, ushered in a new chapter in his life. Within the Incorporation the Jacobite faction lost power and influence, so that Ker could once again serve as deacon and Town Councillor. Edinburgh's merchant class was temporarily disgraced because of its performance in 1745. Ker was able to exploit an exceptional situation to gain election as MP for Edinburgh.

The response of the authorities and citizens of Edinburgh to the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 opened a variety of opportunities to James Ker. News of the rebellion and instructions from London led the Corporation to augment the City Guard and raise six companies of gentlemen volunteers.²² The Lord Provost insisted on choosing Captains for the six companies and did so from a list of 20 to 30 names supplied by the volunteers themselves. James Ker and George Drummond were amongst the six.²³ The choice confirmed Ker's high status. By volunteering to defend the city of Edinburgh and the Hanoverian dynasty, although apparently lacking any previous military training or experience, James Ker publicly confirmed his loyalty to King George II, at a time when many Scots, to a greater or lesser degree, failed to do so. In the short term Edinburgh's resistance

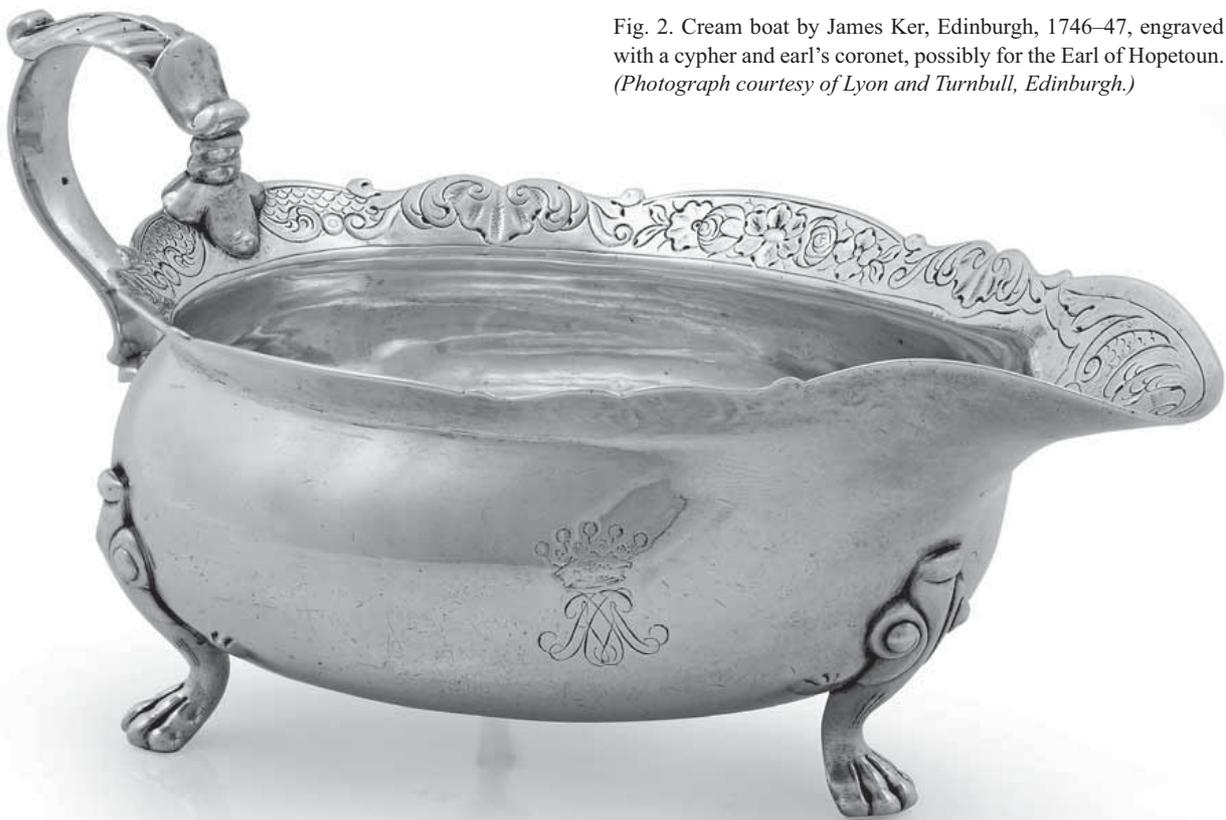


Fig. 2. Cream boat by James Ker, Edinburgh, 1746–47, engraved with a cypher and earl's coronet, possibly for the Earl of Hopetoun. (Photograph courtesy of Lyon and Turnbull, Edinburgh.)

rapidly evaporated. Morale, leadership and the will to resist were poor. On 14 September money from the city banks, silver and other valuables belonging to the inhabitants of Edinburgh, possibly including the stock from James Ker's shop, were deposited in the Castle.²⁴ Two days later, the Lord Provost summoned the inhabitants of Edinburgh to meet in the aisle of the New Kirk. Nearly all those attending this meeting urged capitulation and seeking the best possible terms from Prince Charles, so as 'not to draw Destruction upon the City by a fruitless Opposition'.²⁵ The outcome of this meeting prompted the Edinburgh Volunteers and the Edinburgh Regiment to march up to the Castle and return their arms, to prevent them falling into the hands of the Jacobites, while deputies were sent to negotiate the terms of the city's surrender to Prince Charles. Archibald Stewart, MP and Lord Provost, sensibly agreed to Prince Charles' demand for immediate surrender. Together with the rest of Edinburgh's inhabitants, James Ker thus found himself on the morning of 17 September in a city occupied by the 'Highland Army', without a shot having been fired, though the Castle held out under the command of the redoubtable Lieutenant-General Joshua Guest. By November, the Highland army had 'entirely evacuated the City'.²⁶ On 13 November representatives of the judiciary and the government ceremoniously re-entered the city, including Lord Milton (the Lord Justice Clerk), the Earl of Hume, Lord Belhaven, several judges, and the High Sheriffs of Berwick and East Lothian.²⁷ The following day two regiments of foot and two regiments of dragoons arrived in Edinburgh from Berwick; and on 20 November the Edinburgh Regiment was reconstituted, with a new public subscription and a new recruitment drive.

Archibald Stewart, and by implication the merchant leadership of Edinburgh were blamed for the bloodless surrender of Edinburgh. Stewart spent time in the Tower of London. It was a new political situation of which James Ker, Hanoverian and leading member of one of Edinburgh's most prestigious trades, was to take advantage.

INCORPORATION AND TOWN COUNCIL
ELECTIONS, 1746–47

Unsurprisingly in the aftermath of 1745, Edinburgh Town Council elections were delayed and reduced in complexity in 1746. Instead of the Incorporations voting long leets, or lists, of six members, reduced by the Town Council to short leets, or lists of three, one of whom the Incorporations then voted to be their deacon, the Incorporations directly elected their deacon in one vote without any reference to the Town Council. The Incorporation of Goldsmiths, in a divisive and bad-tempered meeting on 14 November 1746, chose James Ker to be their deacon and hence a member of the Town Council. Seven goldsmiths refused to swear an oath of loyalty to King George II and were excluded from voting.²⁸

In the subsequent Town Council elections, the Jacobite faction effectively no longer existed but the Whigs, those claiming loyalty to the Hanoverians, were split. Two lists were produced. Both included George Drummond (for the post of Lord Provost), James Ker (as an Ordinary Council Deacon) and James Grant to be treasurer. Thus Ker was one of just three candidates considered politically acceptable to both factions of the deeply divided Edinburgh merchant class.²⁹

The elections were held between 24 and 26 November 1746 in the aisle of the New Kirk. Printed 'schedules' had been prepared by the clerks and distributed on 22 November, with all the vacancies listed and a blank opposite each vacancy. Electors had to fill in a name in each blank and sign their 'schedules'. Before handing in their 'schedules', electors were required to swear oaths affirming their religious conformity and loyalty to King George II.³⁰ 'Some were debarred the privilege of voting in consequence of the late act concerning Episcopal meeting-houses', but there seems to have been a high poll – 'Upwards of 600 polled the first day.' Several Church of Scotland ministers allegedly tried to exert their influence on members of their congregations. 'On this occasion several of the Ministers appeared with their fellow-citizens and voted'. The elections did generate objections and protests, but the result seems to have been clear-cut. 'On the 2d of December, after hearing parties, the judges declared the Gentlemen in the first list duly elected.' Consequently, George

Drummond became Lord Provost and James Ker an Ordinary Council Deacon. On 5 December, George Drummond set out for London.³¹

An analysis and interpretation of these elections is given in an undated letter of late November 1746 sent by Lord Milton to the Duke of Newcastle:³²

Before the Poll begun I was sorry to see the Whigs divided, and the animosity ran high between the friends of the Present Administration and such as are in the Opposition; the Language of the last, was mostly the old stale cant of Independancy upon the administration, the colouring used when the true Whig Interest was in the year 1740 & 1741, overthrown in this City, and many disaffected persons introduced into the Town Council, the consequences of which we severely felt.

To make the Whigs unanimous great concessions were offered to those who opposed us, but nothing else would please them than either setting aside George Drummond from being Provost, or putting him under the Power of such Magistrates and Councillours as unavoidably rendered him a Cypher and useless to the administration and enabled them to turn him out before his time.

Saturday last [22 November 1746] we offered to their consideration a List (of which I send a Copy) whereby five of their Leaders were proposed to be in the highest stations in the Town Council, who to do them Justice had behaved with Loyalty during the Course of the late wicked Rebellion, but had been zealous Promoters of the late Patriot schemes: But the longer the Treaty continued afoot, they grew the warmer, and rose in their demands, and all the offers made were candidly interpreted by them to proceed from a sense of our weakness and of their great strength and at last dispensing our friendly proposal, they proceeded to settle a list of their own, and it was ten a clock Saturday night before we received a Copy of their List, and notice by two of their number of their having rejected all offers.

There was then no hopes of an accommodation left, no time to delay longer, as the Poll was to begin Monday morning [24 November 1746], and therefore a list was made of Friends to the Present administration which is the list of persons I first mentioned to have carried the Election.

Most of the Clergy of this City did not vote at all, and those who did were not agreed in their opinions.

The first and generall cry was against George Drummond being Provost, and one of their arguments against him, was, that he came recommended from London, another argument was that while he was formerly in the Town Council about Twenty years agoe, too much money had been laid out in bringing in water to the City, and building the Peer at Leith, whereby the Town continued still subject to great Debts, by the eventual shortcoming of the Funds proposed for the repayment of that money ...

The temperate and sensible men in the opposition greatly condemned the Obstinacy of their patriot Brethren, in rejecting the offers made to them, and for my own part as things have now turned out, I must own that their rejecting the offers made to them has proved of advantage to the administration, seeing the Magistrates and Council Elected, are such as I can have no reason to suspect can be lead by Faction, to oppose his Majestie's measures under any pretence or Colour whatsoever, which is more than I could take upon me to say for some others.

Thus the government tried to ensure that there was just one list, consisting of 'Friends to the present

administration'. However, a group of Whigs who harboured reservations regarding George Drummond and who, partly because of the treatment of Archibald Stewart, wanted to be independent of the government in London, produced their list of candidates, which attracted more votes than the list subsequently produced by government supporters. Lord Milton, nevertheless, predicted that those elected would not oppose 'his Majestie's measures'. James Ker's name, featured on both lists, which augured well for his future political prospects.

On 3 January 1747 the fourteen deacons and two Trades Councillors met for their Convenery meeting and elected James Ker Convener of the Trades and thus the spokesman and leader of the fourteen Incorporations.³³ The Town Council, anxious to affirm the city's loyalties to the Hanoverian dynasty, decided to award the freedom of the City of Edinburgh to the Duke of Cumberland.³⁴ James Ker may have suggested this honour for the Duke. On 25 March 1746 the Goldsmiths had agreed to offer the Duke the freedom of their Incorporation, to be presented with the freedoms of the other thirteen Incorporations in a gold box paid for by all the Incorporations.³⁵ Making this proposal would have advertised Ker's Hanoverian loyalties. Moreover, as deacon of the Goldsmiths he would have known that this very valuable and prestigious commission would almost certainly be awarded to him.

THE EDINBURGH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OF JULY 1747

Following his election, James Ker was appointed a member of the Town Council's Public Works Committee (5 January 1747) and a commissioner to the General Convention of the Royal Burghs (21 January), but, with a parliamentary election due in July, a much greater prize beckoned.³⁶

George Drummond was the obvious candidate for the merchant class. All but one of Edinburgh's MPs since 1707 had served as Lord Provost and Drummond, Lord Provost 1725 to 1727, had just been re-elected. He had impressive Hanoverian credentials and an equally impressive record of public service: he had fought at the battle of Sheriffmuir under the 2nd Duke of Argyll; he had worked at the Board of Trade and as a Commissioner of Excise; he had been

a Commissioner and Trustee for improving Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland; he had played a major role in the establishment of the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh; and in September 1745 he had been conspicuous in the attempts to defend Edinburgh and had joined Cope's army at Prestonpans. However, the November 1746 Town Council elections had revealed that the Whigs, embracing most Edinburgh merchants, were divided, and that Drummond was considered too much of a pawn of London and too closely associated with municipal debts arising from ambitious public works projects. Moreover, he had been the first witness for the prosecution in Archibald Stewart's Edinburgh trial.³⁷ James Ker had a much lower profile, but that could have been an advantage; and Ker was well known to his fellow councillors, had a track record as a competent administrator, and had captained a volunteer company in September 1745. In contrast to Drummond, he had offered himself as a defence witness in Archibald Stewart's trial; and his commercial success and his purchase of a country property meant that he could be regarded as a gentleman.³⁸

The government, still concerned with real or imagined Jacobite threats, took a close interest in the election of the sixty Scottish MPs and of the sixteen Scottish representative peers. Responsibility for government management of the elections in Scotland lay with Lord Milton, who reported to the Duke of Argyll. Edinburgh Town Councillors belonged to the list which the government had not supported, but James Ker had been on both lists. Personal relations between George Drummond and the Duke of Argyll were not particularly good. By the beginning of July it seems that Argyll had decided not to oppose Ker's parliamentary candidature. This is suggested by a letter, dated 3 July 1747, written by Ker to Lord Milton.³⁹ In the letter he asked Milton to 'make me compliments to his Lordship in the most obliging manner and please assure him that his recommendation shall I hope alwise determine me in a choice of this kind being intearly satisfied of his superior knowledge both of men and things.' This letter revealed Ker's poor standard of written English, and his ignorance of styles of address (he should have referred to Argyll as 'his Grace,' and he incorrectly addressed the letter to 'Andrew Fletcher Esq.'). Ker added obsequious attempts at flattery to an acceptance of Argyll's political leadership. The

following day Hume of Wedderburn wrote to Lord Milton: 'As to our publick affairs I do think Mr Ker as he has, as Mr Buchan informs me, your Lordship's interest stands a good chance for caring the Election tho Sir John Sinclair by setting up himself has created some uneasiness to Mr Ker but I hope he will be so wise as to give up that affair and see it most for his interest to joine Mr Ker ...'⁴⁰ Sir John Sinclair obligingly withdrew, and a letter from the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, to George Drummond gave Ker's electoral chances a further boost. Ker obtained a copy of this letter, which indicated that Pelham's 'opposition to him was not in the strong manner it had been given out & represented'.⁴¹ Argyll still backed Drummond, but without enthusiasm, as he reported to Pelham on 23 July 1747:⁴²

I saw this morning Mr George Drummond, he did not ask my interest (though we say its a poor whore who is not to be asked the question). I therefore began with him & asked him how matters were going & talked very kindly to him, he could give me very little information. I saw afterwards some who wish him well, they told me that I could carrie it for Mr Drummond but could not tell me how. I acquainted them that I would propose nobody because I would not be refused, but that if I had a vote in the Town Council I would give it to Mr Drummond, & of that I made no secret. I find those who are against him have divisions among themselves, & what will arise out of that I cannot tell. Mr Ker the Jeweller is certainly a Whig, but he was too much a Patriot at a certain time to be a favourite of mine, & I am told that he is weak & whymiscal, though his professions of zeal for the present Administration is strong enough.

Argyll's view of Ker as 'a Patriot' probably refers to Ker's willingness to be a defence witness for Archibald Stewart, while the suggestion that Ker was 'weak & whymiscal' must have come from Ker's opponents. Ker's supporters, unlike Drummond's, were apparently united. On 27 July, two days before the election, Ker could confidently inform Lord Milton (now addressed as 'the Right Honble my Lord Justice Clerk'): 'My bretheren to a man are hearty in there resolution of standing by me and are to mett to night when what your Lordship recommended shall be sure to be remembered.'⁴³

On 29 July 1747 James Ker at the Council meeting defended at length the right of the eight Extraordinary Council Deacons to vote in the parliamentary election.⁴⁴ This was acknowledged, and the Lord Provost, magistrates and councillors proceeded to elect James Ker unanimously MP for Edinburgh.

‘Thereafter Mr Ker made his Compliments to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, Council and Deacons of Crafts for the honour they had done him and the Confidence they had reposed in him by the foresaid choice.’⁴⁵ Ker anticipated the result and had his letter of acceptance ready for the meeting:⁴⁶

I am very sensible of the great honour your Lordship and Council have done my brethren the Trades and me in so unanimously making choice of one of our number to represent this City in Parliament. I know well how unequal my abilities are for the due Discharge of so high a trust. However under these disadvantages, I shall make it my Endeavour steadily to adhere to that which appears to me most expedient for supporting our present happy Constitution, upon which I take the honour and Interest of ye nation and the prosperity of this City so intirely to depend. – I shall endeavour carefully to attend every session of parliament without any expence to the City and shall at all times show the greatest regard to the sentiments of my fellow Citizens when they shall please take the trouble to acquaint me therewith.

In writing such a fluent letter Ker probably had some assistance. He was quick to note that in electing him the Lord Provost and councillors had elected a representative of the Trades. Acknowledging personal inadequacies and promising the conscientious performance of parliamentary duties were conventional in such letters. Equally conventional (and generally thereafter broken) was the promise not to claim parliamentary expenses.⁴⁷ The goal of ‘supporting our present happy Constitution’ was a novelty prompted by the Jacobite Rising.⁴⁸

James Ker also wrote at ‘one a Clock’ a brief note to Lord Milton:⁴⁹

It gives me great pleasure that what your Lordship had so much at heart is now over – and in a very harmonious way too not one contrary vote against me.

I shall doe my self the honour as waite on your Lordship to morrow and acquaint you the particulars occurred amongst us – being now obliged to goe with the Council to dine. I am with the utmost respect and esteem ...

Edinburgh Town Councillors enjoyed entertaining themselves at the Council’s expence, so Ker doubtless had a liquid lunch to celebrate what was perhaps his greatest triumph, securing election as MP for Edinburgh. Lord Milton for his part recorded in his diary for 29 July 1747: ‘went upon a secret Expedition to Edr. Mr James Ker unanimously chosen for that City. Provost Drummond stood firm on the strength of seven votes.’ In a later entry he concluded:

‘all went according to our wishes the Election day’.⁵⁰

The Duke of Argyll sent a report on the election to the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, on 30 July 1747:⁵¹

The Election for Edinburgh was made on Wensday [*sic*], Mr Kerr the Goldsmith was chosen unanimously Mr Drummond giving him the first vote: I believe Mr Drummond has hardly a friend in the whole Town who does not think that he himself was the cause of his bad success: Mr Kerr I am told is to write to you next Post, & promises very explicitly to be a good member, he came to me this morning & made an Apologie for setting up against the person I had told him I was engaged to, if he performs what he says, there will be no great loss in this affair whatever any body may say; I did all I could, but if I am employed to carrie a man upon my shoulders, who instead of making himself as light as possible, shall load himself with more weight than he naturally has, I cannot help it if he falls. The very night before the Election, Mr Oswald had a majority if Mr Drummond had concurred in it, but he had still hopes without the least foundation, & the next morning without asking my advice voted himself for his Antagonist.

On 31 July 1747 James Ker duly wrote a letter introducing himself to Henry Pelham.⁵²

This comes from one whom perhaps you never heard of, and yet for that very reason I think my self obliged to give you this trouble, I am the person who has been unanimously chosen member of parliament for this City, there were other’s far better qualified who appeared desirous of this trust but none more zealous for His Majestie’s person and government, or more willing to support the administration in the hands it now is, than my self. Mr Drummond is very happy in being under your protection, and if no indiscret use had been made of it, his interest its more than probable had been greater, but it was for the first time, that ever a candidate appeared for this City, who declined the asking any assistance here from persons of Rank, for whom the City have the greatest regard till it was too late, and seemed to expect to be him self solicited for the favour he intended us.

I shall not presume to take up any more of your time but to assure you that I shall on all occasions be very proud of throwing my mite into the scale for your service, and that I heartily wish you may long remain in the high station his Majesty has placed you, and long live the head and support of the Whig Party.

It is with the greatest deference and respect that I beg leave to subscribe my self ...

This letter, besides affirming yet again Ker’s determination to be a ‘Friend’ of the government, is interesting for its comments on George Drummond. Ker claimed that Drummond’s electoral chances had been spoiled by his indiscrete flaunting of Argyll’s ‘Protection,’ by his failure to solicit support ‘from Persons of Rank for whom the City have the greatest regard’, and by giving the impression that he expected ‘to be himself solicited for the favour he intended us’. This was the first indication of a rift

between Ker and Drummond, as Ker appeared to be attempting to discredit Drummond in Pelham's estimation. Ker's newly established relationship with the Duke of Argyll was good for business. At the end of August Ker was writing to Lady Milton about a case of knives to be delivered to the Duke.⁵³

Pelham took the trouble to reply to Ker's letter, which prompted from Ker yet another expression of humility and profession of loyalty to King, 'our happy constitution' and Pelham himself.⁵⁴

In September 1747 Incorporation and Town Council elections were held as usual. James Ker was unanimously re-elected deacon of the Goldsmiths on 12 September.⁵⁵ In the Town Council elections there was a considerable turnover, but among those re-elected were George Drummond (Lord Provost), Ker's friend William Keir (Trades Councillor), and Ker himself (Ordinary Council Deacon).⁵⁶ Ker was re-elected Convener of the Trades and re-appointed a member of the Public Works Committee.⁵⁷ Possibly to curry favour with the magistrates, one of whom was the goldsmith James Mitchelson, on 6 October Ker 'moved that the Council's Thanks should be given to the late Magistrates for their faithful services during their offices which was unanimously agreed to' and entertained his fellow councillors at his house.⁵⁸

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND THE SCOTTISH LINEN INDUSTRY

In late October Ker set off on the eleven-day journey to London, adding disarmingly in his letter to Lord Milton: 'I must my Lord own the near prospect of my appearance amongst so many great folks dampns my Spirits a good deall.'⁵⁹ The move to London meant that Ker missed the trial of Archibald Stewart (26–31 October) as well as meetings of the Town Council and of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths (the previous deacon, James Wemyss, chaired meetings in his absence).⁶⁰

At the beginning of November 1747 James Ker arrived in London, in time for the ceremonial opening of Parliament and the King's speech from the throne on 10 November. He eventually found lodgings in Panton Square in Westminster in an area identified with several goldsmiths. The size and wealth of London, its brick-built houses and cultural variety, exceeded anything Ker experienced in Edinburgh. In

the House of Commons James Ker's Scottish accent and way of speaking, his Edinburgh manners and his style of dress differentiated him from English MPs, most of whom belonged to the land-owning gentry or were sons of the nobility. Most Scottish MPs would have regarded an Edinburgh goldsmith and jeweller as their social inferior. The hours of the House of Commons, with sittings starting at around three in the afternoon and often lasting well into the night, were strange for a craftsman used to working in daylight hours. Elegant London dinner parties contrasted with the rough familiarity of Edinburgh tavern meals. This did not deter James Ker from the challenge of Lord Milton's dinner parties. In his diary Milton recorded his dinner parties, with dates and guest lists, three of which included James Ker: '11 February 1750, Lord Home, Mr Ker, Mr Morris'; '30 April 1750, G. P. Campbell and D. Campbell, Mr Ker and Cha. Hope, Lord Cathcart and Col. Lyttleton, Lord Hyndford'; 'Sunday April 22nd 1753, Duke of Athole, Mr Murray, Mr [Gilbert] Elliott, Lord Panmure, Lord Hyndford, Baron Maule, Mr Doddington, Mr Ker, Mr Ramsay.'⁶¹ Significantly, no female guests attended these working dinner parties.

A letter to Lord Milton on 3 December 1747 after acknowledging a favour for the son of his friend and Edinburgh Trades Councillor, William Keir, showed a traditional obsequiousness as well as a man a little unsure of his attitudes regarding his parliamentary career:⁶²

Singularly obliged to your Lordship for your kind intentions towards me, your friendship I gratefully remember and your being so good as to take notice of me, no doubt will be of use to me, a very new scheme of life and amongst very different sett of people from my ordinary ways, shall doe my best to behave with honour and honesty, has no ambition and so shall mett [meet] with little disappointments, were I little more forward could be of more service to my self and friends than its liekly I ever will, shall endeavour to be carefull and trust my self as little as possible, this with my sincere and hearty wishes – for confirmation and continuance of our Lordship's health & prosperity to your family ...

James Ker's first important task as an MP was to help secure parliamentary support for the Scottish linen industry, then Scotland's most important industry, the promotion of which, it was hoped, would help to 'civilise' the Highlands. The Duke of Argyll, George Drummond and Lord Milton had all been involved in the promotion of the industry and in the founding of

the British Linen Company, essentially a Scottish firm which had received its royal charter on 5 July 1746. Ker had demonstrated an interest in the Scottish linen industry in November 1746, when he had persuaded the Incorporation of Goldsmiths to invest three hundred pounds in the 'British Linen manufactory'.⁶³ Lord Milton's diary entry for 12 January 1748 noted: 'The Scotch Members met to consider what was most proper to encourage the Linen Manufacture, appointed a Committee for that purpose.'⁶⁴ On 3 February the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, George Drummond, wrote to Ker thanking him for his letter of 27 January and for 'the Notices you communicate to us of what passes in your House'. He informed Ker that, 'after several Conferences and after taking in the sentiments of the Dealors in Glasgow', a report on the Scottish linen industry had been submitted to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland. Ker was asked to back this report. Eventually, in 1751 Parliament passed an act 'explaining, amending, and enforcing' an act of the thirteenth year of the reign of George I entitled 'An act for the better regulation of the linen and hempen manufactures in Scotland'.⁶⁵ Ker was also reminded 'to apply for a King's Plate to be run for at Leith, the first or second week of August, as the Tide shall determine us to appoint.'⁶⁶ In March 1748 Ker told Milton that it was not possible to 'carry forward' an unspecified 'scheme of our magistrates.'⁶⁷ Ker arrived back in Edinburgh on 7 May.⁶⁸

The Town Council appointed James Ker to be one of their two commissioners to the forthcoming Convention of the Royal Burghs (22 June) and to be one of the managers of the Charity Workhouse (20 July).⁶⁹ In the September Incorporation and Town Council elections, Archibald Macaulay was elected Lord Provost and Robert Gordon Deacon of the Goldsmiths and an Ordinary Council Deacon, while Ker was re-elected a Trades Councillor.⁷⁰ On account of his Jacobite sympathies, Robert Gordon did not at first swear the oath of allegiance and absented himself from Council meetings, so Ker was chosen as his proxy at the meeting on 28 September.⁷¹ Ker seems to have remained in Edinburgh for the rest of the year. The following entries appeared in the Town's Accounts:⁷²

16 Dec. 1748 Drink money to Mr Ker's Servt., the Town's Member £0.10.6.

31 Dec. 1748 Bill in Walker's with Mr Ker Member of Parlt. £1.19.0.

When entertained in a private house, guests usually tipped the servants, so Ker presumably entertained members of the Town Council at his home on 16 December, and was in turn entertained by the Town Council in Walker's Tavern on 31 December.

THE EDINBURGH CHARITY WORKHOUSE AND THE POOR RATE BILL

Edinburgh's Charity Workhouse, of which James Ker was now one of the managers, became his next parliamentary concern after Parliament reassembled on 29 November 1748. In 1619, Edinburgh Magistrates established a poorhouse based on St Mary's Hospital in Leith Wynd. By the early eighteenth century, there was increasing tension between the duty of Christian charity to care for the poor and the need to deter idle beggars and vagabonds. In 1728 the distinction was made between those entitled to the Town's Charity and those not. In 1741, the Town's poor were issued with badges.⁷³

The number of the town's poor continued to grow and in 1739–43 a new Charity Workhouse was constructed at Bristo Port. Initially costs were met by a public subscription launched by the Town Council.⁷⁴ Despite further donations, including £50 in both 1744 and 1745 from the Earl of Hopetoun and £17 15s in 1747 from the Incorporation of Goldsmiths, a funding crisis developed.⁷⁵ By February 1749 the Charity Workhouse was maintaining over five hundred 'poor persons', 'most of them employed in useful Labour and the Boys and Girls carefully educated and put out to service or bound to manufacturers.' In addition, there were 'many outpensioners who have casual supplies when sick or laid aside from work for a little time with others whose needy circumstances entitle them to support although their former rank and station would make it indecent to lodge them under the same roof with the begging poor.' This operation cost on average £2800 (sterling) a year, 'although conducted in the most frugal manner'. Collections at church doors provided the main source of income, but proved increasingly inadequate.

The Town Council on 1 February 1749, having decided that the solution to the problem lay in the introduction of a Poor Rate ‘within the City and Libertys payable by the occupiers and possessors of Tenements, Houses and Shops in proportion to their valued Rents’, drafted a petition to Parliament for the authorisation of the required Poor Rate.⁷⁶ George Drummond had originally proposed and promoted such a scheme, so as to substitute compulsory, public, taxation for voluntary, private, charity. The city’s merchants and the Lords of Session supported the proposal, but the Trades, consistently hostile to increased taxation, opposed it. The House of Commons on 7 February appointed a committee to consider the petition. Members included James Ker, Edward Kynaston (MP for Montgomeryshire), James Oswald of Dunnikier (MP for Fifeshire), and George Grenville (MP for Buckingham, a Lord of the Treasury, and future Prime Minister, 1763–65).⁷⁷

On 8 February 1749 the Lord Provost instructed James Ker ‘to do every thing necessary to have this scheme enacted into a Law’, adding a probably unwelcome, instruction:⁷⁸

As our Late Provost Mr Drummond understands this affair fully and we are sure has it greatly at heart, We Desyre while he continues in London you consult with him in conducting this business, and at the Council’s Desyre I have writ to him to give you what assistance he can during his stay.

The Town Council Minutes also recorded the text of the Lord Provost’s letter to George Drummond.⁷⁹ Having informed Drummond, ‘The Council reckon it very Lucky that you happen to be at London’, the Lord Provost continued:

We have writ to Mr Ker to consult with you in the conducting this Business, and by appointment of Council I desyre while your other affairs call you to stay at London youle give Mr Ker what assistance you can which we flatter ourselves youle do the more cheerfully as it is helping to bring a Scheme to perfection of which you have the merit of having been the author and always a zealous Promoter.

George Drummond was in London on parliamentary business, appearing before a House of Commons Committee considering a petition relating to Kinghorn in Fife on 13 February, and the next day giving evidence about a fund for the widows and children of Church of Scotland ministers and of the

principals and professors of the universities of St Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh.⁸⁰

Opposition to the proposed Poor Rate was growing, led by the trades within the Council and a public meeting of heritors and householders.⁸¹ In February, the Council instructed James Ker ‘to stay further procedure upon the Bill till he receives fresh instructions’.⁸² On 15 March the Council approved an amended Poor Rate Scheme and Ker was told ‘to proceed in his Endeavours to procure the said act of Parliament’.⁸³ The Lord Provost, most of the Bailies, and the Deacons of the Surgeons, Baxters, Wrights and Weavers voted for this amended scheme, while the Deacons of the Goldsmiths, Skinners, Hammermen, Masons, Fleshers, Walkers and Bonnetmakers voted against. Robert Gordon declared that he would sign a petition to Parliament opposing the scheme. Ker was thus in the embarrassing situation of having to introduce in the House of Commons a measure opposed by the Goldsmiths in the Town Council.

On 20 April 1749 James Ker presented to the House of Commons the report of the Edinburgh Poor Rate Committee, incorporating evidence submitted by George Drummond. This was probably the first occasion on which Ker had addressed his fellow MPs. Reporting parliamentary debates at this time was illegal, but the *Caledonian Mercury* did publish a summary in the form of ‘a Letter from London, April 21’.⁸⁴

Yesterday [20 April 1749] Mr. Ker presented to the House of Commons the Report of the Committee upon the Petition for imposing a Poor’s Rate on the City of Edinburgh with their Resolutions, which were read and are as follows.

That it is the Opinion of the Committee, That since the Workhouse hath been erected in the City of Edinburgh, a considerable Number of indigent Persons have been annually fed and cloathed, and such of them as were capable, have been employed in useful Labour, by which Means, the said City has been kept free from Beggars.

That the necessary Charge of supporting said Workhouse amounts annually to a large Sum, Part whereof hath arisen from voluntary Collections at the Church doors, and other Places of divine Worship, that other Parts of said Sum, arising from Donations, Legacies and the Charity Boxes has decreased gradually, and such Deficiency has from Time to Time been supplied by extraordinary voluntary Collections.

That the said Workhouse is proper and useful for the Maintenance and Employment of the Poor, has been hitherto managed with Care and Oeconomy, and ought to be supported, and in order to make an equal, just and effectual Provision for its Support, the Aid of parliament is requisite.

That the House be moved for Leave to bring in a Bill, to make the above Provision for the same.

The three first Resolutions being read a second Time, were agreed to by the House; Leave is given to bring in a Bill accordingly; and Mr. Ker, Mr. Haldane [Lieutenant-Colonel George Haldane of Gleneagles, MP for Stirling Burghs], and the Lord Advocate of Scotland [William Grant of Prestongrange, MP for Elgin Burghs] are appointed to prepare and bring in the same.

Charles Erskine, MP for Ayr Burghs and subsequently Lord Justice Clerk, was an additional committee member.⁸⁵ Because of the opposition in Edinburgh, the bill was dropped. Ten days after the end of the parliamentary session on 13 June Ker returned to Edinburgh with the royal warrant for the hundred-guinea King's Plate.⁸⁶ The following week he was appointed a commissioner to the forthcoming Convention of Royal Burghs and publicly thanked by the Lord Provost.⁸⁷

James Ker's membership of the Edinburgh Poor Rate Committee indicated an important aspect of his parliamentary career, membership of House of Commons committees. These committees performed essential tasks, particularly considering petitions submitted to the House of Commons and scrutinising the texts of parliamentary bills at their second reading. On 6 February 1749 he was appointed a member of a committee to consider a petition concerning the road between Wisbech and March in the county of Cambridge, and subsequently to committees concerned with a road in Northumberland (17 February) and the property and debts of Viscount Dillon (22 May). Serving on these committees introduced Ker to committee stalwarts, such as Edward Kynaston, MP for Montgomeryshire, James Smith Stanley, Lord Strange, son of the Earl of Derby and MP for Lancashire, and Thomas Hay, Viscount Dupplin, son and heir of the 8th Earl of Kinnoull. Although a Scot, Lord Dupplin (as he was known) represented Cambridge, and was currently a member of the Board of Trade, chairman of the committee on privileges and elections, and an election manager for Henry Pelham, the Prime Minister. Key Scottish MPs Ker met through committees included Sir Hew Dalrymple (MP for Haddingtonshire East), Sir Henry Erskine (MP for Ayr Burghs, 1749–54), William Grant of Prestongrange (the Lord Advocate for Scotland), Lieutenant-Colonel George Haldane of Gleneagles, and James Oswald of Dunnikier. Committee memberships provided opportunities for networking, for winning goodwill from fellow

MPs by assisting in the passage of their bills, and for earning a reputation in government circles for industry and competence. In subsequent parliaments Ker became an exceptionally assiduous member of House of Commons committees.

In 1749, 1750 and 1751 James Ker served in a variety of roles, Trades Councilor from 1749, and Deacon of Goldsmiths from 1750. In 1750 his former apprentice, current business partner and future son-in-law, William Dempster, was chosen one of the two Trades Councillors.⁸⁸ The deacons and Trade Councillors again selected Ker to be their Deacon Convener (20 September).⁸⁹ He was also appointed a member of three Town Council committees: Treasurer and Tradesmen's Accounts, Public Works, and College Affairs.⁹⁰ On 27 November he wrote a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, soliciting for 'a near relation' the post of Deputy Wardrobe Keeper in Scotland.⁹¹ In 1751 he participated in committees on a bill regarding 'the Roads and Highways, leading through the County of Edinburgh to the City of Edinburgh', on petitions concerning two other Scottish towns, Greenock and Haddington, and on breaking entails for Sir William Maxwell of Monreith and Thomas Needham, 9th Viscount Kilmorey.⁹² The Edinburgh roads and highways bill became an act.⁹³ On 20 March 1751 the Town Council chose as their commissioners or representatives at the forthcoming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland James Ker and George Drummond, who had been re-elected Lord Provost in October 1750.⁹⁴ The Town Council also appointed Ker and Drummond to present the Council's address of condolence to King George II following the death of Frederick Prince of Wales.⁹⁵ Before the end of the parliamentary session on 25 June 1751, Ker was back in Edinburgh and was thanked for his 'Good Services' in Parliament.⁹⁶ A tavern celebration followed, recorded in the Town's Accounts.⁹⁷

In the 1751 Incorporation and Town Council elections, James Ker was re-elected Deacon of the Goldsmiths (14 September) and chosen again as an Ordinary Council Deacon (18 September) and as Deacon Convener of the Trades (19 September).⁹⁸ Both the Trades Councillors were now goldsmiths, Robert Gordon and William Dempster, making three out of the thirty-eight councillors goldsmiths.⁹⁹ Goldsmiths also now had a significant presence on Town Council committees, James Ker and Robert Gordon on Treasurer and Tradesmen's Accounts,

James Ker and William Dempster on Public Works, Robert Gordon on College Affairs, and James Ker on the Poor Committee.¹⁰⁰ Ker was eager to claim credit for the outcome of the Town Council elections, as his letter to Lord Milton of 5 October 1751 suggests: ‘We have now got over all the fatigues of our annual elections pretty agreeable, and flatters myself my conduct was satisfying to our friends.’¹⁰¹ He hinted at further legislative needs of ‘our poor City’. This was almost certainly the renewal of the City’s right to levy a tax on ale and beer.

EDINBURGH’S ALE AND BEER TAX

By an act passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1693, and regularly renewed thereafter, Edinburgh Town Council possessed the right to levy a tax of two pence Scots on every pint of ale and beer sold in Edinburgh, except in Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The Town Council’s right to collect this tax was not due to expire until 1 July 1762, but it made such an important contribution to the city’s finances that the overseers responsible for supervising the collection of the tax had recommended in July 1751 that Parliament should be requested to renew the tax for thirty-eight years from the expiry date. James Ker’s lobbying of Lord Milton and the Duke of Argyll evidently succeeded. Having left Edinburgh for the opening of the new parliamentary session (14 November), he wrote to Milton on 21 December:¹⁰²

As his Grace of Argyle has been so good as prevail with Mr [Henry] Pelham [the Prime Minister] to have the two pennies upon the Pint of Ale reserved to the City, a circumstance which hopes may be greatly improven to the Town’s advantage, and what indeed the great & heavy debt we labour under made absolutely necessary – I could not but take this opportunity to return your Lordship thanks, for your good offices with his Grace in the City’s favours, and begs you’ll remember Mr [Andrew] Fletcher [son of Lord Milton, MP for Haddington and Dunbar, who had been appointed Auditor-General of the Exchequer in Scotland following the death of Sir James Dalrymple of Hailes in February 1751] to give us his friendly assistance, that what seems now so favourably begun by his Grace may goe forward, and have the effect all true well wishers of the City desires ...

James Ker reported to George Drummond, who had been re-elected Lord Provost in October 1751, that the Duke of Argyll and Henry Pelham had promised their support. Thus encouraged, a Town Council

committee drew up and transmitted to Ker a petition to Parliament for the renewal of the ale and beer tax. The Lord Provost empowered Ker ‘to employ Lawyers, Solicitors and what other agents he thought necessary to carry forward this affair and authorized him to draw on the City’s Treasurer for the sums necessary for this service.’ He also sent letters about the ale and beer tax to the Duke of Argyll, Henry Pelham, and Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons.¹⁰³

Presented to the House of Commons on 10 January 1752, the petition was referred to a committee including James Ker, the Lord Advocate (William Grant of Prestongrange), Lord Dupplin, Sir Henry Erskine, Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant (MP for Elgin Burghs), and Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane.¹⁰⁴ On 17 January this committee reported to the House of Commons, which instructed the Lord Advocate, James Ker, Andrew Fletcher younger of Saltoun (Lord Milton’s son, secretary to the Duke of Argyll, and MP for Haddington Burghs), Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane, and Sir Henry Erskine to draw up the text of a bill.

On 25 January 1752 James Ker provided Lord Milton with a brief progress report:¹⁰⁵

I had the honour of your obliging favours and nothing can give me greater pleasure than your Lordship’s concerning yourself to support our poor City with your good offices. Mr Fletcher is extremely obliging, and does us all the good offices in his power but it’s the Duke, and the Duke only could carry us forward. I see we are to mett with opposition, but when we fight under his Grace’s bander [banner] hopes we shall have success ...

Ker on 4 February presented the committee’s draft bill to the House, which two days later passed it on a third and final reading and ordered Ker to take the bill to the House of Lords for their consent.¹⁰⁶ With the support of Argyll and Pelham, and despite opposition in Parliament, the renewal of the ale and beer tax was secured, as Ker triumphantly informed Lord Milton in a letter dated 16 February 1752:¹⁰⁷

Mr Fletcher showed me your kind letter in regard to the country’s conduct in our affair, which pardon me to say does them no great honour. Your Lordship would know Thursday last, our Bill passed the House of Lords, and so all our fears over and the malicious artfull opposition intended to throw our poor City into the utmost confusion and distress, vanish into smoack [smoke]. His Grace of Argyle has acted a most friendly part and taken a fatherly care of us, for which hopes neither the City nor myself shall ever be ungrateful...

During this parliamentary session (14 November 1751 to 26 March 1752) James Ker first emerged as a dedicated member of House of Commons committees, serving on no less than twenty-one. These committees dealt with a wide range of matters: roads in various English counties, the naturalization of foreigners, a petition from Chester hat-makers, breaking the entails of landed estates, 'what laws are expired, or near expiring', rates for travelling in hired post chaises, the manufacture and sale of woollen goods in England, and the 'Recovery of small Debts within the Borough of St. Albans'.¹⁰⁸ None of these topics related to Edinburgh or even to Scotland, but Ker was demonstrating his commitment and competence, and earning goodwill among both MPs and peers.

Before James Ker left London on 17 March he wrote a letter to the Duke of Newcastle asking him to support the translation of John Gibson to the Canongate Church, as recommended by the magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh.¹⁰⁹ Travelling remarkably quickly, he was in Edinburgh by 21 March, shortly after he and George Drummond had been re-appointed Edinburgh's commissioners to the forthcoming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.¹¹⁰ Four days later the Town Council minutes recorded:¹¹¹

The Council ordered the Lord Provost to return their hearty thanks to Mr Ker the City member for the Great and Good Services done by him to his Country this Session of Parliament, particularly for the eminent services he did to this City in being so active in procuring a prolongation of the Act granting the City two pennies Scots on the pint of Ale etc.

The Town Council's thanks also took a more tangible form, as the following entry in the Town Council's Accounts indicates: '31 March 1752 Bill in Saunders's Entertaining the Citie's Member of Parliament on his Return – £6.14.6.'¹¹²

NEW BUILDINGS AND NEW STREETS FOR EDINBURGH

Parliament's renewal of Edinburgh's ale and beer tax, despite some opposition, probably arising out of anti-Scottish prejudice, demonstrated that bills favourable to Edinburgh could be passed by both houses of Parliament. This doubtless emboldened

James Ker and Edinburgh Town Council to consider more ambitious legislative proposals. As early as July 1751 Ker had reported to the Town Council that the pier and harbour of Leith were in need of major repairs. The Council's Public Works Committee, to which his concerns were remitted, agreed.¹¹³ Shortly afterwards, on 6 September 1751, 'The east wall of a stone land six stories high, on the south side of the Cross of Edinburgh, fell down from top to bottom', causing a fatality.¹¹⁴ 'This melancholy accident', the *Scots Magazine* reported, 'occasioned a general survey to be made of the condition of the old houses; and such as were insufficient were pulled down; so that several of the principal parts of the town were laid in ruins.'¹¹⁵ This provided both the opportunity and the impetus for schemes of urban improvement.

By April 1752, the Town Council was drawing up plans for the improvement, not just repair, of Leith harbour, 'considering that of late the trade of their port of Leith is greatly increased.'¹¹⁶ Moreover, on 6 May the Council discussed, besides the enlargement of Leith harbour, the construction of a new Royal Exchange Building, so that merchants would have a convenient place in which to transact business, instead of just congregating in the open air around the Cross in the High Street or, more recently, around the statue of King Charles II in the Parliament Close or Square.¹¹⁷ Consequently, George Drummond, the Lord Provost, invited the architect John Adam to 'make out a plan of Buildings to be erected at the Cross upon the north side of the street with a view to having ane Exchange or public forum by removing the middle front of the new buildings so far back from the street as to leave room for a large area with a handsome covered walk on the north side for the convenience of merchants and others frequenting the Exchange.' Drummond also asked John Adam to draw up plans for a new building on the south side of the High Street to contain 'a large hall or Burrow [Burgh] room for the annual convention of the Royal Burrows {Burghs} of Scotland and their annual committee to meet in, a convenient Council Chamber and a house for the Residence of the Lord Provost during his office.' Drummond envisaged two more projects: 'making ane Easy and convenient access to the High Street from the South and north', and 'the plan of making the Lake called the North Loch a beauty and ornament to the City in place of the hateful nuisance it now is'.¹¹⁸

Financing all these projects presented a challenge, particularly as the City lacked the necessary funds. George Drummond therefore presented his proposals to ‘some persons of quality, Judges and others’, representatives of Edinburgh’s legal and judicial establishment. Unsurprisingly, they produced a long shopping list of new buildings they wanted: ‘a Library for the Faculty of Advocates, a Room for the Lords of Session to robe in, and convenient offices for the principal Clerks of Session, Clerk to the Commission of Tiends, Clerk of Justiciary, and Keeper of the Register of Saisines, where the papers under their care might be kept in safety, and the Records of the nation allowed to be placed in the Faculty’s present Library.’ They also suggested, amazingly, ‘that there was no room to doubt but that money enough might be raised by voluntary subscription’ for all these ambitious plans and projects.¹¹⁹

When George Drummond reported all this back to the Town Council at its next meeting (1 July 1752), he proposed that the Council should appoint a committee to consult with the Lords of Session, the Faculty of Advocates and the Writers to the Signet, ‘and such men of quality as they had access to, and in concert with them to prepare a plan for obtaining Subscriptions and for executing the above purposes in the most useful manner.’ The committee appointed comprised George Drummond (Lord Provost), Bailie John Brown, James Stuart (Dean of Guild), William Sands (Treasurer), Bailie Alexander Kincaid, James Ker (Convener of the Trades), and Deacon William Keir.¹²⁰ The activities of this committee are unclear, but Ker did alert his fellow goldsmiths at the Incorporation meeting on 27 July:¹²¹

Mr Ker represented there was now a subscription going on for building a square on the north side of the street opposite the Cross and for carrying on several other Works and Improvements for beautifying the town. Several noble men and Gentlemen have very largely subscribed and as this scheme will not only tend to the Good of the City in general but to every individual Citizen they would consider what sum they choose to subscribe. The Incorporation having considered thereon unanimously agreed and hereby empower their Deacon to subscribe in their name the sum of 40 pound sterling to carry on and finish said Public Works.

Subsequently, the sum seems to have been raised to £50. Of the thirteen other Incorporations, the Tailors also gave £50, the Baxters £100 and the Surgeons £105. Leading members of the Scottish nobility were

the principal subscribers: £200 each from the Dukes of Argyll, Atholl, Buccleuch, and Queensberry, and £100 each from the Duchess of Argyll, Lord Braco, the Countess of Dalkeith, the Earl of Findlater, the Earl of Hopetoun, the Duke of Montrose, the Marquess of Tweeddale, and the Earl of Morton. The Earl of Abercorn, the Earl of Breadalbane, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Lord Dupplin, George Drummond, Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant, James Oswald of Dunnikier, the Marquess of Lothian and the Earl of Leven each gave £50. Lord Milton gave £40 and James Ker £25.¹²²

Meanwhile, on 8 July 1752, the annual Convention of Royal Burghs had ‘passed an act, heartily approving of the design [the plans commissioned by George Drummond and drawn up by John Adam]; injoining every member to use his interest with his constituents for promoting it’.¹²³ To win over public opinion, the Convention also agreed to issue a pamphlet ‘explaining and recommending the design’. The pamphlet, entitled *Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh* and written by Gilbert Elliot, son of Lord Minto, developed Drummond’s ideas. Circulated with the pamphlet was a printed letter, dated 29 August 1752 and signed by Drummond, inviting subscriptions.¹²⁴

The ‘design’ was thus not just a construction project, but also a massive public relations and fund-raising exercise. Thirty-three directors were appointed to oversee the public subscription. They included Robert Dundas of Arniston (Lord President of the Court of Session until his death in August 1753), Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Minto and Hugh Dalrymple, Lord Drummore, representing the Lords of Session; Lord Chief Baron John Idle and Baron John Maule, representing the Barons of the Scottish Exchequer; George Drummond (Lord Provost), James Ker (Convener of the Trades), William Keir (Deacon of the Baxters), and nine other members of Edinburgh Town Council; three representatives of the Faculty of Advocates, including Robert Dundas, younger of Arniston (Dean of Faculty), and Gilbert Elliot (son of Lord Minto); and three representatives of the Clerks to the Signet.¹²⁵ In addition, on 22 November the subscribers chose ten directors ‘of the Edinburgh public works’: the Dukes of Hamilton and Argyll, the Marquess of Tweeddale, the Earls of Morton and Hopetoun, Lord Milton, Charles Erskine (Lord Justice Clerk since 1748), Sir Alexander Dick

of Prestonfield, James Dewar of Vogrie, and John Forrest of West Grange.¹²⁶

George Drummond presented a revised outline of the 'design' to the Town Council on 12 August. Included were a hall for meetings of the Scottish Burghs, new buildings to accommodate the judges, the Director of Chancery, and the clerks to the various courts, a new Register Office for the public records, a new Advocates' Library, a new Exchange for the merchants, and new access roads into Edinburgh. Excluded was Drummond's earlier proposal for 'a house for the Residence of the Lord Provost during his office'.¹²⁷ The priority given to new buildings for the Edinburgh legal and judicial establishment reflected their influence and importance.

In the 1752 Town Council elections, two goldsmiths, James Ker and James Mitchelson, were elected Trades Councillors, so that, together with the new Deacon of the Goldsmiths, William Gilchrist, there were once more three goldsmiths on the Town Council. Again, goldsmiths were exceptionally prominent on Town Council committees, James Ker and William Gilchrist on Treasurer and Tradesmen's Accounts, James Mitchelson on Public Works, James Ker on College Affairs, and James Mitchelson on the Committee on the Poor.¹²⁸ Ker did cease to be Convener of the Trades (21 September 1752), but he was succeeded by William Keir, his friend and almost certainly his preferred successor, and he was warmly thanked 'for his many great and happy Services to the City'.¹²⁹ At the end of December the Town Council appointed William Keir, the city magistrates and James Ker as a committee 'to take the proper measures anent the purchasing a sufficient Quantity of meall for the immediate supply and Relief of the Poor of this City'.¹³⁰

George Drummond had recognised in his presentation to the Town Council on 12 August that 'ane Act of Parliament will be necessary in order to annexe so much land'.¹³¹ This was because parliamentary consent was required to give the directors powers of compulsory purchase of private property, in particular, the properties on the north side of the High Street between the entry to Writers' Court on the west and Allan's Close on the east for the new Exchange, and, on the south side of the High Street down to the Cowgate, properties between Elphinston's Land and Marline's Wynd for new access roads. The latter were considered

desirable not just to improve communications, but also to encourage what now might be described as 'gentrification'. The Councillors considered that the block of properties between Elphinston's Land and Marline's Wynd:

consists of very mean houses which affords only accommodation for the very lowest of the people which is a source of numberless evils, the most solid remedy for which appeared, the having as many convenient openings from the street to that space of ground as could be got, in order to Encourage undertakers to purchase and build thereon such houses as might accommodate Inhabitants of better Rank to the great benefite of the City ...

This introduced a new and enduring feature of Edinburgh's 'Improvements', namely that one of the principal objectives was to 'accommodate Inhabitants of better Rank'.¹³² On 11 October the Council agreed with Drummond that the first priority should be the construction of a new Exchange; and that yet another committee should be formed to negotiate compulsory purchases of property and interest-free loans from 'the two Banks', the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank of Scotland. The eight members of this new committee included George Drummond and James Ker.¹³³

On 26 December 1752 James Ker wrote to Lord Milton: 'Designing soon to set my head Southwards, shall doe myself the honour to call upon your Lordship Saturday morning [30 December] for your commands, or any other time you please to appoint.'¹³⁴ Ker presumably arrived in London in time for the opening of the new parliamentary session on 11 January 1753. He again plunged into committee work, serving on nineteen committees during the new session on matters including roads, a will, a trusteeship, an entail, a change of surname, church repairs in London, the navigation of the English river Dee, and petitions of English framework knitters. Of Scottish interest were committees on the ale and beer duty in Dysart and on roads in Fife and Berwickshire.¹³⁵

Meanwhile Edinburgh Town Council on 31 January had accepted a recommendation from its Public Works Committee that George Drummond should 'repair to London' to help Ker secure the passing of a compulsory purchase bill and promote the public subscription for the 'Intended Improvements'.¹³⁶ As in the case of the Poor Rate Bill of 1749, Ker probably regarded Drummond's assistance as unwelcome. On

14 February the Council authorised the Lord Provost (William Alexander, who had succeeded Drummond in September 1752) to sign two petitions to Parliament for compulsory purchase orders, one for ‘houses and Grounds within this City’ and the other ‘for enlarging the Harbour at Leith and purchasing such grounds as may be necessary for that end’.¹³⁷ After receiving the two petitions, Ker presented the first to the House of Commons on 2 March. He outlined the ‘several inconveniences’ from which Edinburgh currently suffered and the new buildings that were needed, mentioned that a public subscription had already been launched, and stressed the necessity for Parliament to grant the directors or commissioners powers of compulsory purchase. The House referred the petition to a committee which included Ker, who reported to the House of Commons on 12 March.¹³⁸

That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the Petitioners have fully proved the Allegations of their Petition: And that it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the House be moved for Leave to bring in a Bill, for erecting several publick Buildings in the City of Edinburgh, and to empower the Trustees therein mentioned to purchase Lands for that Purpose, and also widening and enlarging the Streets of the said City, and certain Avenues leading thereto.

The House accepted this report and appointed James Ker, James Oswald, Andrew Fletcher, and subsequently William Grant of Prestongrange (the Lord Advocate), to draw up the text of the first bill.¹³⁹ Ker presented the bill to the House on 23 March, and, after second and third readings (27 March and 10 April), took the bill to the Lords.¹⁴⁰ With approval from the Lords, the bill duly received the royal assent on 15 May 1753.¹⁴¹ The Act rehearsed the reasons why new buildings and ‘Streets and Places of Resort’ were needed, listed the proposed new buildings, and, for the first time, mentioned the proposed new streets: ‘Opposite the Tron Kirk, northwards; from the High Street to the Cowgate; from the head of Peebles Wynd on the north, to the head of Hastie’s Close on the south; from the West Bow to the top of Henderson’s Stairs at the back of the Parliament or Sessions House.’ The Act also empowered commissioners to purchase property with the agreement of the owners and occupiers. The list of commissioners reproduced the list of the thirty-three directors of the public subscription, with the odd substitution, such as the Duke of Atholl for the Duke of Hamilton.¹⁴² For securing the passage of

this Bill through Parliament, the Town Council paid Ker £100 in expences in March 1753, and a further £76 3s in June.¹⁴³

The *Caledonian Mercury* reported that the Duke and Duchess of Atholl, James Ker and Lieutenant-General Anstruther of Airdrie (MP for Anstruther Easter Burghs) had arrived in Edinburgh from London on Saturday 5 May 1753.¹⁴⁴ If they had all travelled up together in the same coach, then Ker would have spent over a week in their company, a rare experience for even the most successful eighteenth-century goldsmith. His relations with such people must have been awkward, as this extract from a letter of 30 June 1753 by Ker to Sir Ludovick Grant indicates:¹⁴⁵

I had the agreeable pleasure of hearing by your friends at ye Assembly that good Lady Margaret, you and all the family were well, the continuence of which I most sincerely wish, and hope see you as you pass earlie this way, shall probably move soon too, as it’s the last session and take my leave of our great friends, I wish they have as agreeable work the next parliament, as I persuade my self the Nation suffers by the disagreement and ambition of the great folks. Mr Dempster tells me he sent your Articles according as you ordered, and doubts not but you’ll order the payment when its convenient.

Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant was the seventh baronet, who had inherited Castle Grant and its accompanying estate near Grantown on Spey and who served as MP for Elgin Burghs from 1741 to 1761. He had also been an important customer of Ker since at least 1731.¹⁴⁶ Yet here was his goldsmith, now a fellow MP, commenting in an over-familiar manner on the health of himself and his wife (Lady Margaret Ogilvie, elder daughter of the fifth Earl of Findlater and second Earl of Seafield), referring a little too obviously to attendance as one of Edinburgh’s two lay representatives at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, observing incautiously that the Nation suffered from ‘the disagreement and ambition of the great folks’, and reminding him of an outstanding bill for items sent by Ker’s partner William Dempster. Moreover, the letter was written in poor English, employed phrases (‘great friends’, ‘great folks’) that Sir Ludovick would probably have never used, and was sent free of charge, Ker availing himself of his MP’s privilege of free postage. Sir Ludovick’s opinion of Ker may have been further damaged by a letter he received the following September critical of Ker.¹⁴⁷

Meanwhile in Edinburgh James Ker had attended the Town Council meeting on 9 May, when 'The Lord Provost at the request and in name of the Magistrates and Council returned Mr Ker the City's Representative in parliament their sincere and hearty thanks for the good and faithful Services done by him to the City in parliament.'¹⁴⁸ Thereafter Ker regularly attended Town Council meetings, urging on 11 July that those who owed the Council money should be pursued.¹⁴⁹ On 4 August he wrote to Lord Milton soliciting his support for a petition, presumably to Parliament, regarding the payment of turnpike tolls.¹⁵⁰ At the end of August the Lord Provost, William Alexander, sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, requesting him to 'Interpose his good offices with his Majesty to extend his Royal Bounty for promoting the publick Schemes presently carrying on in the City'. Pelham's reply, dated 19 September 1753, was sent to Ker and read out at the Council meeting on 26 September:¹⁵¹

My Lord and Gentlemen,

Mr Ker your member has in a manner very agreeable to me acquitted himself of the Trust you reposed in him, by Transmitting to me your Letter of the 31st August Last, in which you desire me to intercede with his Majesty, to extend his Royal Bounty to you for your Encouragement and assistance in the Execution of your scheme for erecting the several Buildings mentioned in your Letter – I have laid your Request before his Majesty: and I have the satisfaction to acquaint you that his Majesty being assured of your Zeal for his person and Government, and highly approving of your Design, is pleased to show you a mark of his Royal favour and has empowered me to signify to you that he will contribute towards enabling you to complete a work which will not only add a Lustre to the Capital city of North Britain, but will also be of publick utility...

To be singled out for praise in a letter from the Prime Minister, read out at a Town Council meeting, must have been very gratifying for Ker. Moreover, in publicly expressing his good opinion of Ker, Pelham was ignoring attempts by Drummond to blacken Ker's reputation.¹⁵² Praise had also come from the Conventry of Deacons. When Ker had presented copies of the House of Commons Journals to the Conventry on 20 September, he was thanked not only for his gift but 'also for his Late good behaviour in parliament and procuring the Acts of Parliament for building the Exchange and a renewal of the grant of the Duty of two pennies Scots on the pint of Ale brewed.'¹⁵³

THE EDINBURGH TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS
OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 1753

The Edinburgh Town Council elections of September and October 1753 were particularly important because they determined the composition of the Edinburgh electorate for the parliamentary election due in 1754. At the Council meeting of 26 September James Ker and James Mitchelson were re-elected Trades Councillors, so that, with William Gilchrist (also re-elected) there were once again three goldsmiths on the Town Council. The strong presence of goldsmiths on Town Council committees also continued, with James Ker and William Gilchrist on the Treasurer and Tradesmens' Accounts, James Mitchelson on Public Works, James Ker and William Gilchrist on College Affairs, and James Mitchelson on the Poor, High Streets and Causeways. Meanwhile Ker and the other commissioners responsible for executing the 'Act for erecting several Publick Buildings in the City of Edinburgh' had been meeting regularly since 18 June 1753. George Drummond, Grand Master of the Society of Free Masons in Scotland, had laid the foundation stone of the new Exchange on 13 September.¹⁵⁴ This must have enhanced Drummond's prestige in Edinburgh, at a time when he was emerging as Ker's most bitter political enemy.

The Town Council elections of 26 September 1753 were only a partial success for James Ker, since several of his supporters, notably William Keir, were not re-elected. George Drummond, in his continuing campaign to blacken Ker's reputation with Henry Pelham, provided an explanation. Keir had provoked hostility by opposing a scheme for the purchase of property required for harbour improvements at Leith and by raising difficulties over the proposed new passage from the High Street to the Cowgate. As Keir's close friend and political ally, Ker had consequently suffered. Also, Ker's prolonged membership of the Town Council and enhancing of the status of the Conventry of the Trades had allegedly caused so much resentment that only the valiant efforts of the Lord Provost, William Alexander, and Drummond himself, had saved Ker:¹⁵⁵

A universal Conspiracy was formed to turn him [James Ker] out of the Council. The Provost and I did all we could to stem the Torrent, but, for some time, without any certain prospect of being able to

prevent it, to such a height was the Envy, hatred and Resentment against him, carried, by all kinds & ranks of the Inhabitants.

Pelham received a more measured analysis from the Duke of Argyll, writing from Inverary on 15 October 1753:

When the Elections came on was here, & heard that there was a run against Ker amongst his Brethren of the Trades, & the best information I could get was that Mr Ker had highly disoblged many members of the Council by bringing in last Year one of the opposing party to the Office of Treasurer of the Town [Adam Fairholm], this office has always an influence among the several corporations of Tradesmen, & as I am informed this very man began the cry against him, Mr Ker had also made the merchants his enemies by opposing a scheme they had of improving the Harbour of Leith & used Ld. Milton's name in his objections to it without authority & directly contrary to My Lord's opinion: the several Trades also complain of him for treating them with haughtiness & contempt. In the last parts of the Election he has assisted in bringing into the Council two persons of the opposite party & left out two I could have depended upon; in the middle of all this bustle he writ me a letter in which there was an expression pretty familiar & not very civil, however I was willing to believe he did not well understand the force of words, & therefore I sent a very kind answer with assurances of my good wishes & interest. As to George Drummond I know nothing certain, but I do very much suspect that he has not supported Ker, if he has not directly opposed him, they were Rivals at the Election of this Parliament 1747 when you & I were for Geo: Drummond, but he by his behaviour has so far lost the good will of the Town Council, that they were willing to chuse anybody I should recommend except Geo: Drummond; in this situation I pitched upon Mr Ker as a person I thought would behave himself well towards you, & the first knowledge you had of him was a letter to you from him advised by a friend of mine, notifying his Election & promising his assistance to you, in which I really think he has kept his word, & though he has his own weaknesses, he is very little troublesome, & having your favour I shall at the expence of my own interest among them endeavour to support him: it is very remarkable that as formerly they were willing to take any body but Geo: Drummond, so now I am told some of them say they will take any body but Mr Ker.

Argyll's complaints about Ker to Pelham continued. On 28 October he referred to Ker's 'Vanity which during these 6 Years has gradually made him the object of the hatred & contempt of his fellow Citizens', and reported that he was accusing Lord Milton of being an enemy and the reason why he was being attacked; and on 5 November he complained of Ker 'disoblging & quarrelling with people of all Ranks in the Town', of 'bringing in some of his mortal Enemies merely to preserve himself a place in the Council', and of promising 'the Provost (who has declared against him) to take no step without his consent'. The Lord Provost, William Alexander, had

told Argyll 'plainly that the Town will not bear Mr Ker';¹⁵⁶ and he also wrote to Pelham about the Town Council elections:¹⁵⁷

I should not have presum'd to trouble you with this were it not to be fear'd, that the Town Council, may have been misrepresented to you Sir in what was done, at the last election of Magistrates & other members of that Society, as it appears that very few have been either brought in or continued there that favour the interest of Mr Ker, our present City Member, who had been so happy as to find favour with you Sir, by which, & his approving himself at same time, to His Grace the Duke of Argyll, he has been enabled to doe very good & important services, to this Community, and in this his prudent conduct, he has been approved & applauded even by many of his opposers, & had that gentleman been so happy as to have conducted himself in the Counsel here, with the same prudence, modesty & inoffensiveness as he seems to have done above, its firmly believed that his interest had been favoured more at last election, but in this particular he has been unlucky, as it has been thought by considerable inhabitants, that Mr Ker & some of his friends & several of the Incorporations for some years past overvaluing themselves upon the Weight that his representation in parliament was thought to give, have assumed to themselves, more of the management of the affairs in Council, & with less regard to the Magistrates & other members of equal at least, if not superior rank to themselves, & to have some times opposed measures of public concern, in a way, not esteem'd very decent or suitable to the duty of their offices... A very few days before the election of the members of the Incorporation, when the opposers declared themselves openly to intend to expel from the Council Mr Ker himself & every friend he had there & in this opposition succeeded so far as that, of the 14 Incorporations where Mr Ker's chief interest was thought to lye, 13 were chosen who, entered fully into the keenest voices of the opposeres, were for the expulsion of him & all his friends, & this torrent could not have been stop'd.

Although Pelham had already received similar reports from Drummond and Argyll, in his reply to Alexander he professed to be surprised:¹⁵⁸

I must own to you, that it was some surprise to me to hear, that almost all his [James Ker's] Friends were left out of the new Council, and that publickly known to be so, because they were his Friends. Mr Kerr I never heard of, till your City sent him up to Parlt. You must remember that We, at this distance, were a little surprised at that; but his behaviour during the course of six years, has been so disinterestedly & so uniformly directed for his Majesty's Service, his attendance in Parlt. so regular, & his application both there, & in all other places in this part of the Kingdom, so entirely devoted to the service of your body, and, I may say, that not without success, that I wonder'd a little, how this spirit came to be rais'd effectually against him, so on a sudden. You say, it was owing to his personal Behaviour; if so how came that not to appear before the day of Trial? When Mr Drummond was in town, He & I had some Conversation upon the subject of this Gentleman. I told him, if Mr Kerr's behaviour was agreeable to his Constituents, it had certainly been so to the King's Friends & Servants here: He assur'd me of his intention to serve Mr Kerr, & never once mention'd his having lost the friendship or esteem of his fellow citizens by any part of his Behaviour; the Duke of Argyll was of the same opinion

when I parted with him last; & I am confident, is so still if he has not good reasons to the contrary. I have not yet seen his Grace, but in a few days hope to have the honour of a full conversation with him upon this subject. You yourself Sir but a few weeks before this happened, applied to me for H. Mty's benefaction to your new scheme of improving your Publick buildings in Edinburgh thro Mr Kerr; & in your letter, took very friendly Notice of him for the several services he had done your City.

The Prime Minister, therefore, impressed by Ker's parliamentary record, remained a Ker supporter. Argyll and Alexander were also prepared to admit, albeit a little half-heartedly, that Ker had been a good constituency MP. However, Ker was always going to suffer from the resentment of the Edinburgh merchant class; his allegedly arrogant behaviour had alienated not just the merchants, but also members of the Trades; he had succeeded in annoying two key political figures, Argyll and Milton; and he had ranged against him the jealousy, scheming and duplicity of Alexander and Drummond. Too many influential people in Edinburgh were waiting for an excuse to get rid of Ker, and the project to improve and enlarge the harbour of Leith provided that excuse.

IMPROVING AND ENLARGING THE HARBOUR OF LEITH

A petition for the improvement and enlargement of the harbour of Leith had been drawn up in 1752, but had not been presented to the House of Commons 'for prudential considerations'. The 'merchants in Edinburgh and other subscribers concerned in trade and shipping at the Port of Leith' had renewed their pressure on the Town Council in July 1753, as 'the Inconveniences arising from the smallness of the Harbour were daily more sensibly felt, especially since the late increase of the Greenland Trade'.¹⁵⁹ The Town Council responded positively and the Lord Provost, William Alexander, informed a meeting of the Freeholders of the County of Edinburgh held on 1 October that the Town Council would apply to Parliament for a Leith Harbour bill. The chairman of the meeting, Robert Balfour Ramsay of Whitehill, MP for the County of Edinburgh, reported to Alexander that the Freeholders had agreed to support 'any reasonable Scheme for the Improvement of Trade and navigation'. However, they expected, 'before any application is made to parliament, That

the Town Council will first lay the scheme before the Gentlemen of the County for their approbation'.¹⁶⁰ The Freeholders of the County of Edinburgh thus considered that they had a right to approve the details of any legislative proposals concerning Leith harbour.

On 12 October 1753, having received Robert Balfour Ramsay's report, the Town Council appointed a committee of six of its members, including James Ker, 'to prepare a Bill to parliament for Enlarging the said harbour of Leith'.¹⁶¹ Ker did not leave Edinburgh for London until 6 November, possibly after entertaining members of the Town Council.¹⁶² The next day a draft of a petition to the House of Commons for the improvement of Leith harbour was presented to the Town Council.¹⁶³ The Council resumed discussion of the petition on 21 November, when it was agreed that the Lord Provost should write to Ker to have the following named as commissioners: the Lord Provost (William Alexander), the oldest Bailie, the Dean of Guild (David Flint), the Treasurer (Adam Fairholm), the Baron Bailie of the Canongate, the Baron Bailie of Leith, and the Convener of the Trades (James Russell, Deacon of the Surgeons).¹⁶⁴ A week later, 'The Lord Provost reported [to the Council] that a Draught of the Bill for Enlarging and Improving the Harbour of Leith (after lying for some time on the Table for the perusal of all concerned) was now ready.' He was authorised to transmit the draft to Ker 'without loss of time'. The same commissioners were listed, and they were instructed 'to correspond with Mr Ker the City's member on the whole of that affair relative to the said Bill'.¹⁶⁵

Parliament re-assembled on 15 November 1753. The next day James Ker was appointed a member of the prestigious Committee of Privileges and Elections, and, until the dissolution of Parliament on 8 April 1754, he served on a further thirty-five House of Commons committees.¹⁶⁶ This constituted a formidable total and demonstrated that Ker had become a trusted and effective committee man. Topics covered included, as usual, roads, a surname change, naturalizations, and the enclosure of common lands, as well as the London poor of Whitechapel, Clerkenwell and Limehouse, the manufacture of sailcloth, and coal-burning kilns for the production of porcelain and earthenware. Ker also considered a petition 'from several merchants in Georgia, North America', and helped to draft a bill 'for the more effectual preventing of Frauds and Abuses committed

by Persons employed in the manufacture of Clocks and Watches’.

Leith harbour nevertheless remained James Ker’s main concern in this parliamentary session. The petition from Edinburgh’s Lord Provost, magistrates and Town Council was presented to the House of Commons on 26 November 1753 and referred to a committee including Ker, Job Charlton (MP for Newark, chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, and an election agent for the Duke of Newcastle), William Grant of Prestongrange (the Lord Advocate), Lord Dupplin, and William Pitt the Elder. On behalf of this committee, Ker reported to the House of Commons and was instructed, together with Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane, to prepare and introduce a bill. Ker presented the Bill to the House on 11 December when it was referred to another committee including Ker, Nathaniel Newnham (MP for Aldborough, a Director of the East India Company, and an ally of the Pelhams), William Grant of Prestongrange, Edward Kynaston, and William Pitt the Elder. On 15 January 1754 Ker, on behalf of this committee, reported to the House and the bill was finally passed. The bill also passed the Lords and received the royal assent on 5 March.¹⁶⁷

For piloting the Leith Harbour Bill through the House of Commons, James Ker successfully claimed from the Town Council substantial expences: £102 5s in January 1754, £50 in February, and a further £10 9s 6d in March.¹⁶⁸ This totalled £168 9s 6d, a considerable sum, the equivalent to approximately £14,310 in today’s money. Having returned to Edinburgh on 7 March, he attended a Council meeting on 20 March, when he was again appointed one of the two commissioners to represent Edinburgh at the forthcoming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Also ‘the Lord Provost in name and at Desire of the Council Returned thanks to Mr Ker for his faithfull services to the City as its Representative in parliament.’¹⁶⁹

This was probably the peak of James Ker’s parliamentary career. During a period of over six years he had successfully secured the passing by Parliament of a series of Acts relating to Edinburgh, for which he had been regularly and publicly thanked. However, the last Act, for ‘improving and enlarging the Harbour of Leith’, proved to be his undoing. Like its predecessor ‘for erecting several Publick Buildings in the City of Edinburgh’, this Act

appointed trustees or commissioners. These trustees included all the commissioners previously appointed to liaise with Ker, seven Edinburgh merchants, the MPs for the county and city of Edinburgh, and seven grandees: the Earls of Morton and Hopetoun, James Lord Somerville, Lord Milton, Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, Robert Dundas of Arniston, and James Clerk younger of Penicuik.¹⁷⁰ This list had been ‘agreed to betwixt the City and the County’. Yet Ker, acting independently and on his own initiative, had added the two Trades Councillors (himself and his fellow goldsmith James Mitchelson) and Robert Montgomery (an Old Provost and currently a member of the Town Council). Ker, fearing that he would not be re-elected in the forthcoming general election, may have wanted to ensure that he would still be a trustee even if he were no longer an MP. Robert Montgomery may have been included to secure his support and influence in the forthcoming general election. Ker may also have thought that, as an MP, he was perfectly entitled to act in this way. The ‘Noblemen and Gentlemen of the County’ and the members of Edinburgh Town Council, on the other hand, believed that an MP should possess no latitude for independent action but should simply carry out precisely all instructions given to him. They professed to be outraged at the addition of the two Trades Councillors and Robert Montgomery to the list of trustees, prompting a grovelling letter of apology from Ker to the Lord Provost:¹⁷¹

My Lord,

I had the honour of your Lordship’s Letter sent me by Mr [William] Dempster. I am heartily sorry for the anxiety your Lordship and some other members of Council seems to express, at the liberty I took as a member of parliament to add a few names to the Trustees of Leith harbour. My Lord, so far as regards the Town Council, I do in the most candid manner declare I never had the least hint or Insinuation to make such addition from any member of Council or Community, Did it purely of myself, thinking I did an advantage to the Scheme, if I have been mistaken I deserve forgiveness. I am greatly concerned to hear this Conduct of mine has given offence to any Gentleman of the County, for whom I have the greatest respect, and with whom I always thought it the Interest of this City to live in a good understanding. I shall take every occasion to Justifie your Lordship and the Town Councill, as well as others the Inhabitants, from having the least concern in what’s complained of, and if a fault shall take the whole burden upon myself. I am with great regard etc.

Robert Montgomery confirmed that he had been appointed a trustee without his knowledge, and declared that he would not accept the nomination or act as a trustee.¹⁷² At a council meeting on 10 April Ker had to listen to his letter being read out and to the Lord Provost expressing ‘the Council’s disapprobation of ... his Conduct’.

THE EDINBURGH PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTION OF APRIL 1754

By the autumn of 1753 a general parliamentary election had been scheduled for April 1754. Lord Milton, anxious to be informed of the political situation in Edinburgh, asked Alexander Lind and his brother George Lind (a future Town Councillor, Lord Provost and MP for Edinburgh) to investigate. Alexander Lind reported on 27 October:¹⁷³

Yesterday my Brother and I went to Edinburgh to get information of what your Lordship wanted to know, and in the manner you directed us. The sum of what we learnt was, that the present Council of this City is under five heads or Leaders, each of whom has their Party, viz. the Provost [William Alexander], who has including himself nine, Mr Ker five, Mr [George] Drummond six, Mr [Robert] Montgomerie eight, but most of his are more your Lordship’s friends than his, and would be directed by you, as are likewise some of those under the others. Mr [John] Forrest has four and two viz. [James] Squire and Fairly [Patrick Fairlie], not reckoned of any Part ... Each Leader pretends to double the number I have assigned them. They all seem to agree that it is in the Provost’s power to cast the balance in favour of the side he inclines to. Mr Ker complains loudly of Mr D-d [George Drummond] having betrayed him ... others again make the same complaints of Mr Ker. In this Inquiry I had the pleasure to find out that most, if not all the Leaders, as well as their followers, pretend to have a most profound Veneration for the Duke of Argyll, and every body here is of opinion that the nomination of the Member will be left intirely to his Grace. There has yet been no candidate named in opposition to Ker, he himself only suspects two that may set up against him, Drummond and Forrest, the last of which he is only afraid of ...

Another of Lord Milton’s correspondents, a certain Ebenezer McCulloch, wrote a revealing letter to Lord Milton on 21 November:¹⁷⁴

I have just now been with Baillie Alexr Grant who tells me the City member [James Ker] by his Letter the preceding post does by no means seem to be pleased with the Instability of the Administration in the measure presently on foot for repealing the Act for Naturalization of the Jews. For (says the Member) it does not look like people of Common sense to make a Law one Session & repeal it the very next Session of parliament.

I have seen Mr [George] Drummond who proposes by tomorrow to get a full account and if possible a Reading of this Letter to the Provost.

The Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 allowed Jews to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance without using the word ‘Christian’. Propaganda misrepresenting the terms of the act whipped up such fierce public opposition that Pelham feared it would affect support for his Administration in the April 1754 general election. The Act was therefore repealed in December 1753. Ker’s criticism of the repeal was understandable and arguably creditable but politically unwise, particularly as enemies such as Ebenezer McCulloch and George Drummond were only too happy to use his criticism as ammunition against him with Lord Milton and the Lord Provost.

James Ker’s own views regarding the politics of Edinburgh Town Council and his chances of re-election were set out in a long letter of 8 December sent from London to his friend William Keir.¹⁷⁵ He claimed that he ‘never had any Views in publick concerns but to serve the Duke of Argyle interest’, and that he had never ‘taken any step here, but by his advice and direction’, otherwise he would not have succeeded ‘so well in the service of the City’. He hoped that ‘his Grace’s friends’ might ‘still have the merit’ of his re-election if he continued to be the Duke of Argyll’s choice. He realised, though, that there would probably be rival candidates, whom he briefly reviewed:

The [Lord] Advocate is thought of, by some friends of yours. The [Lord] Provost has his own designs for himself or son. Mr [John] Forrest has his views, and does not know but Mr English [David Inglis] may have his, so you see its all those people’s interest to unite against me, as its necessary I be out of the way; or any their schemes takes place ... All I ask or require off Baillie [Robert] Montgomerie and his friends, is that if I am the Duke of Argyle’s choice they should have no objections, and this would be a ready means to procure the many valuable things for the Community, satisfie the Great folks here of his Grace’s interest in our City, [and] re-unite his Grace’s friends.

He argued that he had always supported the interests of the Duke of Argyll, that he had served the City well by securing parliamentary approval of a series of bills, that the King, Argyll and the rest of the ministers were pleased with his conduct, and that as long as the Edinburgh electors continued to support the ministerial candidate, the King would continue ‘to show all regard to the City’. He also criticised

George Drummond: ‘Unhappy man G. Drummond’s vanity and deceit has occasioned all this delemma, hurt the City more than ever he will be able to replace again, were he 40 years old, when he is 70.’

James Ker thus realized that political opponents and rival candidates might create problems, but hoped that, so long as he retained Argyll’s support, he would probably be able to count on the votes of Robert Montgomery, of another councillor called James Rothead, and of their ‘friends’. He apparently failed to appreciate that the merchants were determined to reassert their power and that Argyll would support any candidate who would serve his interests and those of the administration. It may have dawned on him rather late in the day that he could not count on Argyll. On 9 March 1754 he wrote quite a dignified letter to the Duke of Newcastle, probably not knowing that Newcastle was now the Prime Minister following the recent death of his brother Henry Pelham on 6 March. Ker evidently hoped Newcastle might encourage Argyll to back his parliamentary candidature:¹⁷⁶

I beg being allowed to return you my sincere and unfeigned thanks for the kind regard you have been pleased to show me, and the assistance you gave in supporting me to carry some usefull and servisable acts very necessary for this City, however ungratefull others may be, please be assured, I shall ever retain the most dutyfull sence of the obligations I owe you, upon my own, as well as the City’s account... as I find the Trades almost all hearty in my interest, dares assure you, could the Duke [of Argyll] be prevailed to give his assistance my affair could succeed ...

Ker concluded, unfortunately in the circumstances: ‘I hope you shall continue [in government office], until it please God to call you from this world, of toill and trouble, unto a world of rest and happiness’. To Argyll himself he wrote with more than a hint of desperation (20 March):¹⁷⁷

I had not the most distant wish to be concerned in publick affairs, but with the Duke of Argyle’s countenance and approbation, and although am sencible has had ill offices done me of late, by being misrepresented to your Grace, yet hopes to give such proofs of my attachment to your interest in my future, as well as my past conduct, as will quash any bad impressions may have been made of me, and satisfie your Grace, that I really am, what I have ever taken upon me to affirm, a jealous friend and sincere well-wisher to your Grace, and the family of Argyle.

Three lists survive, dated 21 March 1754, of Scottish parliamentary candidates proposed by Pelham,

with variations noted by Argyll. For Edinburgh Ker is bracketed with Alexander, and each list clearly indicates that while Pelham had still favoured Ker, Argyll backed Alexander, and Pelham was now dead.¹⁷⁸

The timing of Ker’s humiliation over his three trustee nominations could not have been worse for his electoral chances. Abandoned by Robert Montgomery, and an embarrassment to the demoralised fourteen deacons and two Trades Councillors, he had to face the merchant class, who closed ranks against him. It had already been agreed on 6 March ‘the severall members of Council’ should ‘have their thoughts on that subject [the election of Edinburgh’s MP] as the most likely way to preserve a good understanding and unite the sentiments of the Council in a matter of so much importance to the Community.’¹⁷⁹ The merchant majority on the Council was determined to avoid divisions such as had permitted Ker’s election in July 1747. The election took place on 20 April. David Flint, the Dean of Guild, ‘for himself and in behalf of the Magistrates and Merchant Council Did protest that none of the Eight Extraordinary Deacons should be allowed to vote for a member of parliament to serve for this City ...’ As usual they did vote, but Ker’s disgrace may have so cowed them that they did not propose a Trades candidate. Instead, the Lord Provost, William Alexander, was unanimously elected MP for Edinburgh.¹⁸⁰

In April 1754 James Ker thus ceased to be an MP. Payment of a government pension, worth £300 a year, was abruptly terminated.¹⁸¹ Lord Milton and the Duke of Argyll immediately dropped him, since he could no longer be of any use to them. His reputation in Edinburgh and beyond having been severely damaged, others may have similarly dropped him, though his goldsmith and jewellery firm, Ker and Dempster, does not seem to have suffered from a significant loss of patronage. Ker remained a member of the Town Council, and was even appointed a committee member to oversee a road improvement scheme (17 April), but he did not attend another council meeting until 5 June, and thereafter his attendance was a little spasmodic.¹⁸² In the council elections of September and October 1754, Ker’s political rival George Drummond was elected Lord Provost for the fourth time, while the only goldsmith on the council was now Patrick Robertson, as an Ordinary Council Deacon. Ker never again sat in the House of Commons or in Edinburgh’s council chamber.

James Ker died on 24 January 1768, pre-deceased by William Keir (30 June 1757), Archibald Campbell, Duke of Argyll (15 April 1761), Sir Gilbert Elliot, Lord Minto (16 April 1766), George Drummond (4 December 1766), and Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton (13 December 1766).¹⁸³ Drummond's grand official funeral (8 December), memorial concert in St Cecilia's Hall (20 December) and funeral meeting at the Canongate Kilwinning masonic lodge (7 January 1767) contrasted with Ker's funeral, which went unreported and unremarked. Whereas Drummond's reputation remained high at the time of his death, and has continued to remain high ever since, Ker ceased to count after 1754 and his parliamentary career was rapidly forgotten. Certainly, Ker's exit from national and local politics in 1754 could reasonably be described as a failure, a failure which arguably embraced Edinburgh's Trades as well. Taking a

longer view, though, the decline of the status of the craftsman, and particularly of the provincial craftsman, meant that a situation in which goldsmiths simultaneously occupied Edinburgh's sole parliamentary seat and three council seats was never likely to be repeated. Moreover, Ker's fall, partly the result of petty jealousies and personal rivalries, should not obscure his remarkable achievement in gaining election as MP for Edinburgh, the only representative of the Trades to do so during the entire eighteenth century. Moreover, he entered Parliament at a time when the '45 and its aftermath had created in England an unfavourable political climate for Scotland and the Scots. Yet James Ker succeeded in piloting through the House of Commons a series of bills of great importance to Edinburgh, the city which always remained the centre of his life.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

I would like to thank Robert B. Barker for computer assistance and research suggestions, George Dalgleish for encouragement and advice, Richard Hunter for his help with manuscript sources at Edinburgh City Archives, and Professor Robert J. Morris for guidance on secondary sources and for slimming down an over-long article.

- 1 J. S. Shaw, *The Management of Scottish Society, 1707-1764: Power, nobles, lawyers, Edinburgh agents and English influences* (Edinburgh 1983), p. 92, briefly refers to James Ker. Curiously, Shaw inaccurately asserts that Ker 'had plotted inside and outside the [Edinburgh Town] Council to thwart the Ilay [Argyll] interest'.
- 2 The political roles of Newcastle, Argyll and Milton are discussed in A. Murdoch, *'The People Above': Politics and administration in mid-eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh 1980), and Shaw, *Management of Scottish Society*, pp. 43-48, 147-186. See also M. S. Bricke, 'The Pelhams vs. Argyll: A struggle for mastery of Scotland, 1747-1748', *Scottish Historical Review*, 61 (1982), pp. 157-165; R. A. Houston, *Social Change in the Age of Enlightenment: Edinburgh, 1660-1760* (Oxford 1994); B. P. Lenman, *Integration and Enlightenment: Scotland, 1746-1832* (Edinburgh 1981), pp. 14-23; A. Murdoch, 'The Importance of Being Edinburgh: Management and opposition in Edinburgh politics, 1746-1784', *Scottish Historical Review*, 62 (1983), pp. 1-16.
- 3 The five goldsmiths were James Dennistoun (1643), George Foulis of Ravelston (1604-21), Michael Gilbert (1585), Edward Heriot (1586), and Gilbert Kirkwood of Pilrig (1633). See M. D. Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland: Burgh and Shire Commissioners*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1992-93).
- 4 Edinburgh City Archives, Town Council Minutes (hereafter TCM), 25 November 1709, ff. 541, 542; Helen Armet (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1701 to 1718* (Edinburgh 1967), p. 180.
- 5 TCM, 27 October 1710, ff. 951-969.
- 6 National Archives of Scotland, Minutes of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh (hereafter NAS, Minutes), 17 October 1710, f. 264, 16 November 1710, f. 264, 12 September 1711, f. 265.
- 7 TCM, 9 September 1713, ff. 164-167; Armet, *Extracts, 1701 to 1718*, pp. 254-255.
- 8 TCM, 23 September 1713, f. 193; Armet, *Extracts, 1701 to 1718*, p. 256.
- 9 TCM, 19 and 21 February 1715, ff. 19-33; Armet, *Extracts, 1701-1718*, pp. 280-285.
- 10 TCM, 21 March 1722, ff. 206-207.
- 11 *Ibid*, 12 September 1727, ff. 396-406.
- 12 *Ibid*, 12 September 1727, f. 410.
- 13 *Ibid*, 13 May 1734, ff. 99-100.
- 14 *Ibid*, 6 May 1741, ff. 13-14. The *Scots Magazine* (hereafter *SM*), 20 (August 1758), p. 444, reported the death of Alexander Nisbet of Northfield on 15 September 1758 'in the 86th year of his age.'
- 15 NAS, Minutes, 11 May 1741, ff. 102-104.
- 16 *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (hereafter *EEC*), 12 May 1741, pp. 2-3.
- 17 NAS, Minutes, 11 May 1741, f. 105, 12 May 1741, ff. 106, 107. The other committee members were David Mitchell, William Aytoun, James Mitchelson, Hugh Gordon, Kenneth McKenzie, Thomas Mitchell, James Tait and Edward Lothian.
- 18 TCM, 13 May 1741, ff. 18-20.
- 19 *Ibid*, 13 May 1741, f. 15, 16 May 1741, ff. 22-39; ECA, Moses series, no. 6217; H. Steuart Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons of the Trades of Edinburgh, 1577-1755*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 2011), II, p. 414.
- 20 NAS, Minutes, 24 November 1741, ff. 129-131; *EEC*, 28 December 1741, p. 3. Dougal Ged refused to sign the petition: NAS, Minutes, 24 November 1741, ff. 127-128.
- 21 For James Ker's career up to 1745, see W. I. Fortescue, 'James Ker, 1700-45: Master Goldsmith and Edinburgh Politician,' *Silver Studies*, 27 (2011), pp. 33-53.

JAMES KER, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR EDINBURGH, 1747–1754

- 22 TCM, 23 August 1745, ff. 276-278, 7 September 1745, f. 178. M, 29 August 1745, f. 289, 2 September 1745, f. 291, 9 September 1745, f. 308.
- 23 The other company commanders were Archibald Macaulay (Lord Provost, 1727-29), James Nimmo (Dean of Guild), Alexander Blackwood (merchant and Bailie), and Sir George Preston of Valleyfield: G. Charles, *History of the Transactions in Scotland, in the Years 1715-16, and 1745-46*, 2 vols (Leith 1817), II, p. 20. See also *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk* (Edinburgh & London 1860), p. 111; *The Trial of Archibald Stewart Esq; late Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Before the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland, For Neglect of Duty, and Misbehaviour in the Execution of his Office, as Lord Provost of Edinburgh, before and at the Time the Rebels got Possession of that City in the Month of September 1745* (Edinburgh 1747), part 1, p. 101. J. Home, *The History of the Rebellion in the Year '45* (London 1802), pp. 78-85, 97-98, highlights George Drummond's role.
- 24 See 'Accompt of Disbursements for the Family of Breadalbane by John Campbell Cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland, since last settlement 19 October 1744. To 14 November 1745: September 25, 1745 To Charges securing his Lordship's plate in the Castle of Edinburgh and Elsewhere during the troubles £2.12.3': NAS, GD112/35/24. See also *SM*, 7 (September 1745), p. 432.
- 25 *Trial of Archibald Stewart*, part 2, p. 165.
- 26 *Caledonian Mercury* (hereafter *CM*), 4 November 1745, p. 3.
- 27 *SM*, 7 (November 1745), p. 538.
- 28 NAS, Minutes, 14 November 1746, ff. 48-54. The six goldsmiths were: James Wemyss, Dougal Ged, William Gilchrist, Ebenezer Oliphant, Charles Dickson, Alexander Campbell, Robert Craig.
- 29 *SM*, 8 (November 1746), pp. 545-547.
- 30 For the texts of these oaths, see *SM*, 8 (August 1746), pp. 362-363.
- 31 *SM*, 8 (November 1746), p. 546.
- 32 Saltoun Papers, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), MS 16648, ff. 112-114.
- 33 Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, p. 471; TCM, 3 January 1747, f. 4; *EEC*, 5 January 1747, p. 3.
- 34 TCM, 3 January 1747, ff. 16-17. See also C. B. Boog Watson (ed.), *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-Brethren, 1761-1841* (Edinburgh 1933), p. 3. Glasgow had already (11 June 1746) admitted the Duke of Cumberland as a burgher and guild brother, and his burgher ticket had been presented to him in a gold box: James R. Anderson (ed.), *The Burgesses and Guild Brethren of Glasgow, 1573-1750* (Edinburgh 1925), p. 459; I. Finlay, revised H. Steuart Fotheringham, *Scottish Gold and Silver Work* (Stevenage 1991), p. 184.
- 35 See Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, pp. 447-464; NAS, Minutes, 25 March 1746, f. 183.
- 36 TCM, 5 January 1747, f. 20, 21 January 1747, f. 41. *Ibid.*, 12 September 1727, ff. 406-411. William Keir, Deacon of the Baxters and Convener of the Trades, subsequently protested that the Extraordinary Council Deacons had not voted in the elections to choose members of the Town Council committees: *ibid.*, 4 October 1728, ff. 83-86.
- 37 *Trial of Archibald Stewart*, part 2, pp. 10-19.
- 38 *Ibid.*, part 2, p. 153.
- 39 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 240.
- 40 *Ibid.*, f. 144.
- 41 Andrew Fletcher to Henry Pelham, Saltoun, 21 July 1747; Henry Pelham Correspondence, Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham (hereafter Pelham Correspondence, U of N), NeC 1926.
- 42 Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 1946/3.
- 43 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 242.
- 44 TCM, 29 July 1747, ff. 273-280.
- 45 *Ibid.*, f. 281.
- 46 *Idem.*
- 47 See the letters of acceptance of John Campbell, Patrick Lindsay and Archibald Stewart: TCM, 21 March 1722, f. 206, 13 May 1734, f. 101, and 16 May 1741, ff. 40-41. Patrick Lindsay had promised 'to observe and obey all the Commands which the Honourable Council shall at any time be pleased to entrust me with', while Archibald Stewart had declared: 'I shall upon every Occasion have a tender Regard to the Sentiments and Instructions of the Great Council of this City, and the Several Corporations thereof, as well of Craftsmen as Merchants'.
- 48 TCM, 13 May 1734, f. 101, 16 May 1741, f. 41.
- 49 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 244.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 17746, ff. 7, 8.
- 51 Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 1948.
- 52 *Ibid.*, U of N, NeC 1936. See also Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 246.
- 53 James Ker to Lady Milton, 27 August 1747; Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 249.
- 54 James Ker to Henry Pelham, 20 August 1747: Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 1937.
- 55 TCM, 12 September 1747, f. 68. The long leet included Edward Lothian, James Mitchelson, James Campbell, Thomas Mitchell, and Robert Gordon, and the short leet James Mitchelson and Thomas Mitchell.
- 56 William Keir was, among James Ker's contemporaries, one of the longest serving members of Edinburgh's Town Council, as Trades Councillor (1723-25, 1735-37, 1747-51), Deacon of the Baxters (1727-29, 1733-35, 1746-47, 1751-53), and Deacon Convener (1728-29, 1734-35, 1752-53).
- 57 Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, p. 480; TCM, 23 September 1747, f. 358, 7 October 1747, f. 7. The Convenery thanked Ker for having agreed to stand as a parliamentary candidate, for having gained election, and for having revived 'the Valuable and ancient privilege of a Craftsman representing this City in parliament'.
- 58 TCM, 6 October 1747, f. 4. See ECA, Common Good and Proper Revenue Accounts, 1742-1752 (hereafter Accounts, 1742-1752), f. 231: '31 October 1747. To Mr Ker Member of Parlt. his servt: when the Council supped in his House £0.10.6.'
- 59 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 250 and 252; *Ibid.*, NLS, MS 17746, f. 9.
- 60 NAS, Minutes, 24 November 1747, f. 203.
- 61 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 17750, ff. 4, 5, 10. Mr Ramsay was probably the portrait-painter Allan Ramsay, whom Lord Milton subsequently invited to dinner, but he could have been Robert Balfour Ramsay of Whitehill, MP for the county of Edinburgh.
- 62 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, ff. 254-255.
- 63 NAS, Minutes (GD1/482/3), 14 and 25 November 1746, ff. 55, 57. 'The Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh was the only institution among the original subscribers of capital stock of the British Linen Company': A. J. Durie, *The Scottish Linen Industry in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh 1979), p. 118. See also A. J. Durie, *The British Linen Company, 1745-1775* (Edinburgh 1996); C. A. Malcolm, *The History of the British Linen Bank* (Edinburgh 1950); Shaw, *Management of Scottish Society*, pp. 135-143, 155-163.
- 64 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 17746, f. 12.
- 65 For an abstract, see *SM*, 13 (June 1751), pp. 273-276. See also *SM*, 13 (October 1751), pp. 469-478.

BOOK OF THE OLD EDINBURGH CLUB

- 66 TCM, 3 February 1748, ff. 74-75. The prize was for a horse race.
- 67 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16648, f. 128.
- 68 *CM*, 10 May 1748, p. 3.
- 69 TCM, 22 June 1748, f. 193, 20 July 1748, f. 217.
- 70 NAS, Minutes, 17 September 1748, f. 214; TCM, 21 and 28 September 1748, ff. 273, 274, 278.
- 71 TCM, 28 September 1748, f. 275.
- 72 Accounts, 1742-1752, f. 289.
- 73 TCM, 4 October 1723, f. 168. See in general A. Birnie, 'The Edinburgh Charity Workhouse, 1740-1845', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 22 (1938), pp. 38-55; R. Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: the experience of poverty, 1574-1845* (Edinburgh 2000); TCM, 18 December 1724, ff. 404-405, 6 December 1728, ff. 128, 129. 7 January 1741, f. 202.
- 74 TCM, 23 December 1741, ff. 237-238.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 21 March 1744, f. 220, 6 February 1745, f. 118; NAS, Minutes (GD1/482/3), 10 February 1747, f. 59, 3 March 1747, f. 60, 10 March 1747, f. 62.
- 76 See TCM, 1 February 1749, ff. 27-43. See also TCM, 24 January 1752, f. 86: 'The number of poor maintained and supported in the Charity Work House have been yearly increasing. On the 30th June 1748 they amounted to 473. On the 30th June 1749 to 514. On the 30th June 1750 to 561. On the 30th June 1752 to 566, and on the 21 instant they amounted to 596, besides outpatients and many poor families who receive occasional supplies when they happen to fall into particular circumstances of distress.' Cf. *CM*, 3 February 1752, p. 2.
- 77 *Journals of the House of Commons* (hereafter *Journals*), 25, p. 719.
- 78 TCM, 8 February 1749, ff. 44-45.
- 79 *Ibid.*, ff. 45-46.
- 80 *Journals*, 25, pp. 738, 741-742.
- 81 TCM, 15 February 1749, f. 49; NAS, Minutes, 14 February 1749 (GD1/482/3), ff. 89-90, 24 February 1749 (GD1/482/4), f. 217..
- 82 TCM, 24 February 1749, ff. 53, 55. See also NAS, Minutes, 24 February 1749, ff. 217-218, 4 March 1749, f. 218.
- 83 Baron John Maule to Lord Milton, 16 and 21 March 1749: Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16667, ff. 144, 145; TCM, 15 March 1749, f. 63.
- 84 *CM*, 27 April 1749, pp. 2-3.
- 85 *Journals*, 25, pp. 840-841.
- 86 *Penny Post or Morning Advertiser* (London), 3-5 July 1749; *General Advertiser* (London), 4 July 1749.
- 87 'The Lord Provost in name and at the Desire of the Council returned their hearty thanks to Mr Ker the City's Representative in Parliament for his Good and faithfull Services Done to this City and his Country During the Last Session of Parliament': TCM, 28 June 1749, ff. 125, 129, 130.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 26 September 1750, f. 103. William Dempster was the son of William Dempster, brewer, and Mary Ker, daughter of John Ker, stabler in the Canongate (TCM, 8 September 1710, f. 889). Through his mother he may have been related to James Ker. He was first apprenticed to Charles Dickson in 1732 but transferred to James Ker in 1739. On 9 June 1742 he was admitted a Freeman. He married Violet Ker on 6 January 1751: F. J. Grant (ed.), *Marriage Register of the City of Edinburgh, 1751-1800* (Edinburgh 1922), p. 188.
- 89 Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Conventery of Deacons*, II, p. 492.
- 90 TCM, 19 September 1750, f. 101, 26 September 1750, f. 103, 3 October 1750, f. 113; Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Conventery of Deacons*, II, p. 492.
- 91 Newcastle Correspondence, British Library (hereafter BL), Add. MS 32723, f. 310.
- 92 *Journals*, 26, pp. 38, 81, 106, 207, 209. 268.
- 93 *An Act for repairing the High Roads in the County of Edinburgh, to and from the City of Edinburgh; and from Cramond Bridge to the Town of Queen's Ferry in the County of Linlithgow* (1751). This was followed by *An Act for repairing the Post Road from the City of Edinburgh, through the Counties of Linlithgow and Sterling, from the Boathouse Ford, on Almond Water; and from thence to the Town of Linlithgow, and from the said Town to Falkirk, and from thence to Sterling; and also from Falkirk to Kilsyth, and to Inch Bellie Bridge, on the Post Road to the City of Glasgow* (1752).
- 94 TCM, 20 March 1751, f. 228. Parliamentary business prevented James Ker from attending the General Assembly: TCM, 6 May 1751, f. 253.
- 95 *Ibid.*, 5 April 1751, f. 236. Frederick Prince of Wales had died on 20 March 1751. For the text of the address, see *ibid.*, ff. 236-238.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 12 June 1751, f. 279. Similarly, Robert Gordon, after James Ker had thanked him for acting as chairman at Incorporation meetings in his absence, 'at the desire of the Trade returned Mr Ker thanks in their name for his care and diligence during his stay in Parliament': NAS, Minutes, 24 June 1751, f. 248.
- 97 '27 June 1751 Bill in Mrs Sanders's entertaining Mr Ker the Cities Member of Parl. on his Return £4.5.0d': Accounts, 1742-1752, f. 411.
- 98 NAS, Minutes, 14 September 1751, f. 250; TCM, 18 September 1751, f. 8; Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Conventery of Deacons*, II, pp. 495-496; *EEC*, 19 September 1751, p. 1: 'This Day, at Ten o'clock, the Deacons of all the Incorporations met in Magdalen's Chapel, and unanimously re-elected James Ker of Bughtrig, Esq., Member of Parliament for this City, for their Conveener.'
- 99 NAS, Minutes, 14 September 1751, f. 250; TCM, 18 September 1751, f. 8, 25 September 1751, f. 10.
- 100 TCM, 2 October 1751, ff. 19, 20, 21.
- 101 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16675, f.137.
- 102 *Ibid.*, f. 139.
- 103 TCM, 15 January 1752, ff. 73, 75, 76.
- 104 *Journals*, 26, p. 345.
- 105 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16675, f. 131.
- 106 *Journals*, 26, pp. 418, 420.
- 107 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16679, f. 132. See also George Drummond to Henry Pelham, 15 January and 18 February 1752; Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 1978, 1979.
- 108 *Journals*, 26, pp. 320, 328, 335, 372, 427, 433, 434, 437, 439, 440, 447, 450, 453, 455, 473, 477, 483, 494.
- 109 Newcastle Correspondence, BL, Add. MS 32726, ff. 288-289.
- 110 *CM*, 24 March 1752, p. 2; TCM, 11 March 1752, f. 110. Ker left London before the parliamentary session ended on 26 March 1752.
- 111 TCM, 25 March 1752, f. 116. See *An Act for enlarging the Term granted by Two several Acts of the Third and Ninth Years of His late Majesty's Reign, for continuing the Duty of Two Pennies Scots upon every Pint of Ale and Beer sold in the City of Edinburgh, for the Purposes therein mentioned; and for discontinuing Payment of the Petty Port Customs there*, 1752.
- 112 Accounts, 1742-1752, f. 421.
- 113 TCM, 31 July 1751, ff. 318-319, 21 August 1751, f. 333.
- 114 *SM*, 13 (September 1751), p. 453.
- 115 *Ibid.*, 14 (August 1752), p. 369.
- 116 TCM, 15 April 1752, ff. 123-125.
- 117 *Ibid.*, 6 May 1752, ff. 136-140; *SM*, 12 (October 1750), p. 502. James Ker reported to the Incorporation that Goldsmiths' Hall

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- had been considered as a place ‘for people to retire and do business’: NAS, Minutes, 20 October 1750, f. 240.
- 118 TCM, 1 July 1752, ff. 186, 187.
- 119 *Ibid.*, ff. 187, 188
- 120 *Ibid.*, f. 188.
- 121 NAS, Minutes, 27 July 1752, f. 257.
- 122 List of Subscriptions for Carrying on the Publick Works in the City of Edinburgh, 1753-1758: ECA, Rm 41, Shelf 12. See also A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh, 1750-1840* (Edinburgh 1970), p. 55.
- 123 *SM*, 14 (August 1752), p. 369.
- 124 *Ibid.*, 64 (June 1802), p. 467. Youngson, *Making of Classical Edinburgh*, pp. 3-12, extensively cites the pamphlet. Youngson emphasizes George Drummond’s role but never mentions James Ker. See also: ‘An account of a scheme for enlarging and improving the city of Edinburgh, and for adorning it with certain public buildings, and other useful works’, *SM*, 14 (August 1752), pp. 369-380; W. Forbes Gray, ‘The Royal Exchange and Other City Improvements’, *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 22 (1938), pp. 1-37, which contains one brief reference to James Ker (pp. 8-9).
- 125 *SM*, 14 (August 1752), p. 379.
- 126 *Ibid.*, 14 (November 1752), p. 559.
- 127 TCM, 12 August 1752, ff. 239-242.
- 128 *Ibid.*, 4 October 1752, ff. 303-304.
- 129 Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, pp. 499-500.
- 130 TCM, 27 December 1752, f. 8.
- 131 *Ibid.*, 12 August 1752, f. 244.
- 132 *Ibid.*, 11 October 1752, ff. 308-312; *SM*, 15 (February 1753), p. 91.
- 133 TCM, 11 October 1752, ff. 311-312.
- 134 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16679, f. 136.
- 135 *Journals*, 26, pp. 551, 593, 622, 636, 639, 640, 644, 671, 700, 729, 733, 734, 744, 751, 752, 766, 778.
- 136 TCM, 31 January 1753, ff.47-48. On 17 March 1753 George Drummond gave evidence to a House of Commons committee considering a petition from ‘the Heritors, Feuars, and principal Inhabitants, of the Town and Parish of Preston Pans, in the Shire of East Lothian’: *Journals*, 26, p. 696.
- 137 TCM, 14 February 1753, f. 51.
- 138 *CM*, 20 March 1753, pp. 2-3. See also *SM*, 15 (February 1753), pp. 94-95, 15 (March 1753), p. 155.
- 139 *CM*, 20 March 1753, pp. 2-3.
- 140 *Journals*, 26, pp. 712, 720, 753.
- 141 For the Bill’s progress, see *CM*, 2 April 1753, p. 3, 12 April 1753, p. 2, 16 April 1753, p. 3, 23 April 1753, p. 3; *SM*, 15 (May 1753), p. 249.
- 142 *An Act for erecting several Publick Buildings in the City of Edinburgh, and to empower the Trustees therein mentioned, to purchase Lands for that Purpose, and also for widening and enlarging the Streets of the said City, and certain Avenues leading thereunto* (1753). See also *SM*, 15 (April 1753), pp. 161-165. For properties acquired by the Town Council, see TCM, 2 May 1753, f. 116.
- 143 TCM, 28 March 1753, ff. 78-79, 20 June 1753, ff. 148-149. See also ‘Charge of the Improvements in the City paid by the Treasurer for his first year to Michaelmas 1753’: ECA, Moses series, no. 6411.
- 144 *CM*, 7 May 1753, p. 3. See also the *Public Advertiser* (London), 15 May 1753. Anstruther was the only Scottish MP to vote in favour of measures punishing Edinburgh after the Porteous Riots, and he was a controversial Lieutenant-Governor of Minorca.
- 145 Seafeld Papers, NAS, GD248/176/1, f. 63.
- 146 *Ibid.*, NAS, GD248/105/2, f. 10, GD248/102/2, ff. 8, 53, 55, 56, 125. Confusingly, Sir Ludovick was known as Sir Ludovick Colquhoun of Luss while owner of the Luss estates (1729-1739). There may have been another connection between Sir Ludovick and James Ker, since the former owned a house in Panton Square, London (GD248/102/2, f. 13).
- 147 Lachlan Grant (probably a relation) to Sir Ludovick Grant of Grant, 6 September 1753 (Seafeld Papers, GD248/176/1, f. 90): ‘Your friend James Kerr is like to be turned out of the Management of this place. Several of his old friends having deserted him, & are opposing his interest, to wit Baillie Montgomery, B. Alexr. Grant your friend and many others they call themselves the friends of the Duke of Argyle and don’t look upon Mr Kerr as of your interest – matters are carrying very high so its suspected those Gentlemen are supported under the Curtain.’ Bailie Robert Montgomery, a brewer, and Bailie Alexander Grant, a merchant, were both senior members of Edinburgh Town Council.
- 148 TCM, 9 May 1753, f. 122. For similar grateful thanks from the Convenery of the Deacons of the Trades, 20 September 1753, see Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, p. 505.
- 149 TCM, 11 July 1753, f. 175.
- 150 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16683, f. 150.
- 151 TCM, 31 August 1753, ff. 249-250, 26 September 1753, f. 295, 28 September 1753, f. 301.
- 152 See George Drummond to Henry Pelham, 17 July and 28 August 1753; Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 2205.
- 153 Fotheringham, *Act Book of the Convenery of Deacons*, II, p. 505. A board hung in the Magdalen Chapel commemorated the gift of the House of Commons Journals.
- 154 *SM*, 15 (June 1753), p. 309, 15 (September 1753), pp. 425-430. See also Youngson, *Making of Classical Edinburgh*, pp. 55, 58.
- 155 George Drummond to Henry Pelham, 4 October 1753; Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 2205.
- 156 *Ibid.*, U of N, NeC 2214, 2215.
- 157 William Alexander (Lord Provost of Edinburgh) to Henry Pelham, 13 November 1753; *ibid.*, U of N, NeC 540.
- 158 Henry Pelham to William Alexander, 22 November 1753; *ibid.*, U of N, NeC 2206.
- 159 TCM, 18 July 1753, ff. 178-181. The ‘Greenland Trade’ consisted of whale-hunting.
- 160 *Ibid.*, 2 October 1753, ff. 305-306, 12 October 1753, ff. 310-311.
- 161 *Ibid.*, 12 October 1753, ff. 311-312. The other committee members were Bailie John Carmichael, David Flint (Dean of Guild), James Grant (Old Dean of Guild), John Forrest (Old Bailie), and James Russell (Deacon of the Surgeons and Convener of the Trades).
- 162 *EEC*, 8 November 1753, p. 3. The following entry in Accounts, 1752-1767, f. 19, suggests an entertainment by Ker: ‘27 December 1753 Drink Money to Mr Ker the Citie’s member, his Servant £0.10.6’.
- 163 TCM, 7 November 1753, f. 328.
- 164 *Ibid.*, 21 November 1753, f. 336-337.
- 165 *Ibid.*, 28 November 1753, ff. 346-347.
- 166 *Journals*, 26, pp. 842, 845, 848, 851, 852, 853, 860, 861, 862, 864, 867, 868, 899, 901, 906, 908, 914, 915, 928, 933, 940, 944, 946, 950, 951, 952, 953, 959, 961.
- 167 *Ibid.*, 26, pp. 860, 868, 899-900, 978.
- 168 TCM, 2 January 1754, f. 383, 6 February 1754, f. 424, 20 March 1754, f. 24.
- 169 *Ibid.*, 20 March 1754, ff. 21, 24; *EEC*, 2 April 1754, p. 2.
- 170 *An Act for improving and enlarging the Harbour of Leith*,

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- and to empower the Trustees therein mentioned to purchase Lands for that Purpose; and for erecting Docks and other Conveniences on the Sides thereof*(1754).
- 171 TCM, 10 April 1754, f. 48.
172 *Ibid.*, f. 50.
173 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16683, f. 167.
174 *Ibid.*, f. 181.
175 *Ibid.*, ff. 152-153.
176 Newcastle Correspondence, BL, Add. MS 32734, f. 206.
177 Saltoun Papers, NLS, MS 16688, ff. 64-65.
178 Pelham Correspondence, U of N, NeC 2217/1-3. Ker subsequently claimed in a letter (4 September 1755) to the Duke of Newcastle that Pelham had backed his parliamentary candidature in the April 1754 general election: Newcastle Correspondence, BL, Add. MS 32858, f. 436.
- 179 TCM, 6 March 1754, f. 16.
180 *Ibid.*, 20 April 1754, ff. 66-68.
181 'Diminution of Pensions since April 1754', BL, Add. MS 33038, f. 352. See also 'Pensions in March 1754', *ibid.*, f. 370.
182 TCM, 17 April 1754, f. 58.
183 *SM*, 30 (January 1768), p. 55, 19 (June 1757), p. 326, 23 (April 1761), p. 222, 28 (April 1766), p. 223, 28 (November 1766), p. 615, 28 (December 1766), p. 669.