



Edinburgh Fringe Review: Enlightenment Titans *****

by Alastair Stewart

article from Wednesday 22, August, 2012

Venue: The Royal College of Physicians, 9 Queen Street;
22 & 23 August (6.30pm)

ENLIGHTENMENT TITANS is a rare review of three titans in Scottish history. It forgoes the clichéd sentimentality surrounding David Hume, Adam Smith and Robert Burns and opts to explore their representation in Scotland today.

The hour's talk is divided between David Purdie and Alexander Stoddart discussing each 'titan.' Given the calibre of both presenters and subjects, the Royal College of Physicians provides an atmospheric degree of opulence for the occasion.

With such authoritative speakers, you'd be forgiven for anticipating a historical lecture. To the contrary, the hour is a well tailored, engaging and above all informative, without

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ever being condescending, to an audience comprised of locals and visitors to Scotland.

Professor Purdie's examination of each titan is broad but never lacking. His achievement is encapsulating, in the time allowed, each man's spirit, their influences and motivations, supported by his selective use of National Archive visualisations. The result is an audience appreciation not only for the scale of these men's achievements, but their shared humanity and individual sense of Scottishness.

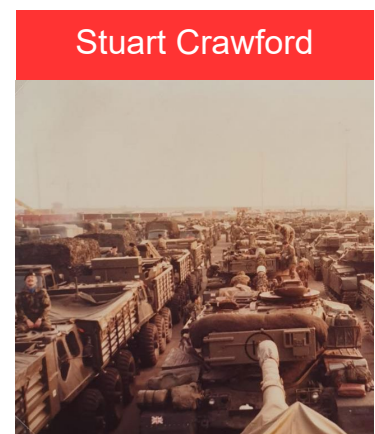
Alexander Stoddart is highly complementary to Purdie's erudite preamble. Both presenters share a wit and genuine enthusiasm for their subjects. Stoddart omits the usual artist's reticence and speaks delightfully about his zeal for his profession; exploring in detail his reasoning for depicting the life stories of these stars of the enlightenment in the manner we recognize and appreciate in statuary around Edinburgh today.

The recurring theme between the two presenters is an iconoclastic take on Hume, Smith and Burns. Justly appreciative of their accomplishments, they inject a dose of well-needed humility into their legacy by encouraging the audience to refocus on the links between humanity and sculptures rather than accomplishment and statuary.

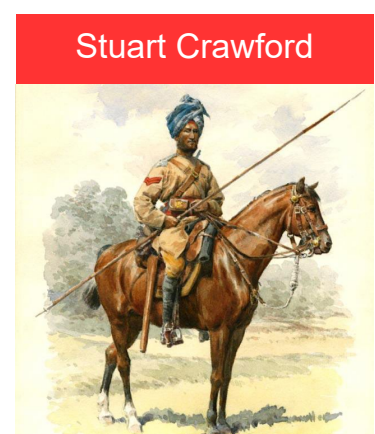
Purdie and Stoddart, while accounting for the latter's Edinburgh sculptures of Hume, Smith and Burns; actually touch upon the key process that creates the enduring images of humanity's great figures. After an hour the result is an illuminating exploration of how depictions of great people are seldom exclusively born from fact, but rather the amalgam of truth, exaggeration, achievement and human foible.



*Image without substance:
Nicola Sturgeon and the
SNP*



*Musings of a REAL Tank
Commander – Part 14
Overrun by Yanks but
saved by very cheap Gin*



*Musings of a REAL tank
commander – Part 13*

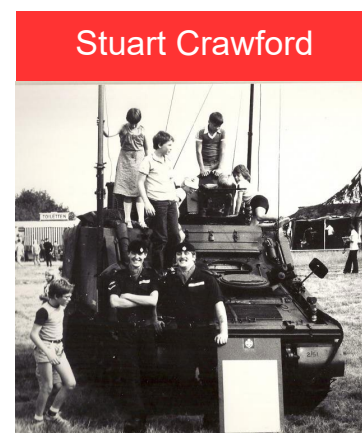
*Adventuring in Swat with
the 13th Lancers*

By their own admission the meshing of a historian's eye and a sculptor's vision was an experiment. If a successful presentation is making the audience want more they have succeeded. If it demonstrating that their subject matter, far from being stuffy and centuries old, is alive and well in the tapestry of Scotland, they have triumphed.

A highly enjoyable evening and one I would highly recommend to anyone with a interest in history and art, a curiosity about Edinburgh, or a desire to see how great titans are turned into the images that last a lifetime.



The two Brians: Scotland Matters interviews Brian Wilson & Brian Monteith



*Musings of a REAL Tank Commander – Part 12
Parading, partying and
some training*

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