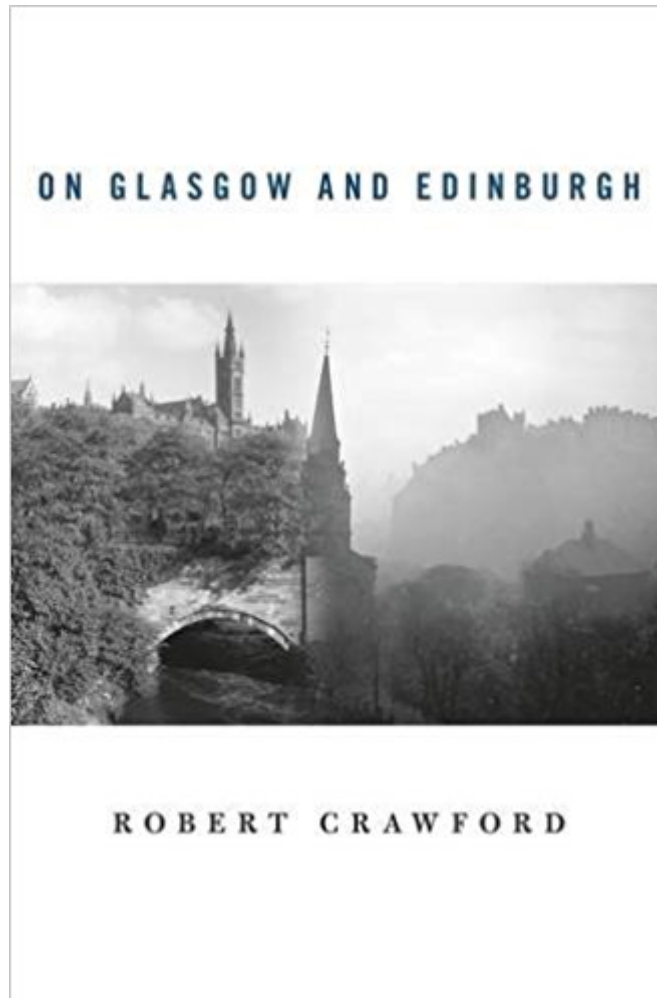




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# **On Glasgow And Edinburgh**



## Synopsis

A mere forty miles apart, these cities have enjoyed a rivalry since wistful Edinburgh lost parliamentary sovereignty and defiant Glasgow came into its industrial promise. Crawford brings them to life between the covers of one book, in a tale that mixes novelty and familiarity, as Scotland's cultural capital and largest commercial city do.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A wonderful book "richly informative, critically astute, and lucidly and vividly written. (Ian Duncan, author of *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*) People familiar with either place will find much to divert them in these pages, and those who have never visited Scotland's great cities will feel that they have been there after reading Crawford's book. (Fiona Stafford, author of *Local Attachments*) A delightfully engaging mix of history, architectural reference, and literary allusion. A most enjoyable read, which will have wide appeal well beyond aficionados of these two great cities. (T. M. Devine, author of *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*) This book is a beautiful idea lovingly accomplished. It is high time that the old and ugly rivalry between Glasgow and Edinburgh ended, and this book shows us how to do it. Like an inspirational couples counsellor, Robert Crawford suggests that bigamy is the answer: we should learn to love both of these great cities with equal passion. He does, and so do I. You should try it, too. (Richard Holloway, author of *Leaving Alexandria: A Memoir of Faith and Doubt*) From the eminent poet and professor of literature comes a thoughtful and provocative account of the rivalry that has dogged these two cities. It's [Crawford's]

belief that this ongoing duel has played a significant part in shaping Scotland, but also that it ought now to be resolved. (Rosemary Goring Sunday Herald 2013-01-06)As with all good ideas, one wonders why no-one has ever written a book about Glasgow and Edinburgh before...Crawford attempts, with admirable evenhandedness, to explain their parallel stories...It is of course remarkable that two cities just 50 or so miles apart are so different in character and sensibility. Travel from one to the other and you could be in another country...Far from seeing the Glasgow-Edinburgh rivalry as debilitating, Crawford regards it positively. (Alan Taylor Glasgow Herald 2013-01-19)A fascinating book filled with pithy observations and unexpected anecdotes. Crawford comes across like an erudite, beady-eyed flâneur, alive to the relationship between topography and history, combining spirited insight with irreverent characterizations... Melding personal reminiscence with inspired historical research he has a keen eye for the ironies and contrasts of city life. As a result there is enough surprising information here to delight even those who know the territory well... Crawford assembles a compelling case for the idea that the two cities get more from their colorful rivalry than they would from a bland collaboration...This richly illustrated, intelligent and compelling work of history and reflection offers heartfelt tribute to both. (David Stenhouse Scotland on Sunday 2013-01-27)On Glasgow and Edinburgh is a thoroughly enjoyable book, all the more so for provoking arguments (the Glaswegian's favorite hobby). Readers familiar with the two cities will enjoy the recitation of familiar history and the frequent occurrence of unfamiliar fact and anecdote. Those who have not (yet) gazed from Castle Street in the New Town to Castle Rock, the high glory of the Old, will read about it and make plans to visit. After Edinburgh, they should fly around the world and arrive at Glasgow and discover Scotland all over again. (James Campbell Wall Street Journal 2013-02-08)Robert Crawford is that rarest breed of Scotsman: one who professes to love Edinburgh and Glasgow equally...He has produced a walking guide to Scotland's greatest cities that will delight any literary-minded tourist. Many natives will learn much from this agreeable book too. (Alex Massie New Statesman 2013-02-15)Crawford's aim is not to create a fast-paced travel guide to each city. Instead, he takes the reader in hand, moves to the center of town, selects 24 sites of interest in each city, and sets off on a walking tour. By journey's end, the reader is utterly--and equally--beguiled by Edinburgh and Glasgow...Crawford is a Scottish Walt Whitman, singing of the cities he loves. (Jo Gibson Cleveland Plain Dealer 2013-02-05)This is an unfailingly intelligent and sympathetic book. (Stuart Kelly The Scotsman 2013-02-09)This is a fascinating book, if in some ways a peculiar one, part coffee table, part high table, elegant and erudite but wearing its learning lightly...Beautifully illustrated--the images of the Falkirk Wheel are stunning--and written in an effortlessly engaging style, On Glasgow and Edinburgh is a bold and

breezy book. (Willy Maley Times Higher Education 2013-02-14)The book offers a portrait, not a narrative history, and is intended for visitors as well as for natives and other Scots, many of whom will find, as I did, that they don't know either city as well as they supposed...On Glasgow and Edinburgh is an enjoyable book, its learning leavened by the author's wit and sense of the absurd. (Allan Massie Times Literary Supplement 2013-04-12)Crawford, impartially analyses the character, past and present of Scotland's two combatants, not in a dry academic treatise, but a lively and interesting urban exploration which I found captivating...Architecture, streets, parks, gardens, citizens of note, industry, government, history, the arts, vice; all these, and more, are covered here in fascinating, minutely researched detail...Eminently readable, enlightening and entertaining, On Glasgow and Edinburgh is truly a tale of two modern cities. This might be the only book you'll ever need to read if you want to learn what makes these two places tick; elements in common and aspects which set them apart. (Ian Neilson The Scots Magazine 2013-04-01)Affectionate, sharply observed and sharply written...On Glasgow and Edinburgh...is a highbrow guidebook, as useful to carry on a visit as it is pleasurable to read far away. (Brian Morton The Independent 2013-04-28)This new book--written 'for both with love'--is about the two cities the poet appears to care about most...Alas, he is fair. His personification of these cities is so thorough, and so in keeping with his overall aesthetic as a poet who tenders contradiction, that you cannot--despite my evil attempts--use the book as a primer on how to stoke up the ancient and holy rivalries...Edinburgh/Glasgow is a culture clash between two cities forty miles apart, and Crawford's book seeks to do it honor. He calls it 'a treasured rivalry,' and he isn't wrong: each city would be slightly less without the other's countervailing charm...You could take a walk in each city with the book in your hand and see where ideas have shaped the stone. It's a tale of two cities as represented by their storytellers, their makars, their minstrels and their celebrants. (Andrew O'Hagan London Review of Books 2013-05-23)Excellent. (John McDermott Financial Times 2013-07-26)Crawford has in On Glasgow and Edinburgh yoked together the two warring siblings of urban Scotland, seeking to calm their feud by writing separately, perceptively and in great detail about each...Crawford's is a rich piece of work--a kind of literary guidebook, which demands that you go to one or both of these cities and see for yourself. (John Lloyd Financial Times 2013-12-13) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Poet and critic Robert Crawford is Professor of Modern Scottish Literature at the University of St. Andrews.

Scotland beckons. We've taken vacations to the United Kingdom for the last four years, and focused on London and southern England. But given the fact that my first novel has scenes set in Edinburgh, which I've never visited except via the internet, Scotland has started exerting a stronger pull. After reading Robert Crawford's *On Glasgow and Edinburgh*, the pull has become irresistible. This is not traditional travel writing. This is more like a well-researched, filled-with-fascinating-facts love letter to two cities, which, Crawford points out in a long introduction, maintain a usually friendly rivalry for pre-eminence in Scotland. What Crawford does for both cities is to take the areas where most visitors would see "the historical areas, the museums, the shopping districts, the historical neighborhoods" and then provide a detailed look at where they came from, who lived there, what life was like, and interesting facts (like murders and trials). The result is a rich tapestry of understanding, a look into life and people across different historical eras, and how these two cities developed as they did. This is the kind of book you read before you visit. Perhaps you even bring it with you to consult during your visit. You walk with Crawford on streets and neighborhoods, like the Royal Mile in Edinburgh and Buchanan Street in Glasgow, and you find history, commerce, art, literature, architecture, science, medicine, and people. You discover who built the universities, where the great art collections and libraries came from, and how Edinburgh became a royal capital and Glasgow a manufacturing one (and why both revere the poet Robert Burns). And you discover Edinburgh's poetry library, and Glasgow's Mitchell Library. You learn who it was who pioneered what today we called an English literature course (Adam Smith, he who wrote *The Wealth of Nations* and the "father of capitalism"). You meet Mary Queen of Scots, Lord Kelvin, Dr. Joseph Lister (pioneer of antiseptic surgery), the murderers Burke and Hare who supplied cadavers to Edinburgh's medical school, the architects, artists, sculptors, tobacco merchants, and shipbuilders. Best of all, Crawford does this in a well-written narrative; this is no laundry list of facts and figures but a story, a great story of two cities which have had a tremendous influence worldwide. *On Glasgow and Edinburgh* is an informative, entertaining delight. Yes, Scotland beckons.

I bought *ON GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH* as background for a forthcoming brief trip to Edinburgh, where I have never been. It proved to be more than I desired, and, I suspect, it is more detailed than all but the most ardent Edinburghers or Glaswegians would probably want to read. Plus, the writing, while impeccably smooth, proved to be soporific for me. Robert Crawford begins the book with a forty-page "Prelude", in which he posits that Edinburgh and Glasgow share a rivalry that puts them

in the same bracket as Los Angeles and San Francisco, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Only Glasgow and Edinburgh are somewhat smaller (600,000 and 485,000 people respectively). The rest of that Prelude describes the rivalry, both now and through history, in such detail that it almost suffocated my desire to read further. Crawford devotes the next 134 pages of text to Edinburgh, and the last 138 pages of text to Glasgow (reversing the order of presentation from the listing of the cities in the title of the book). Crawford's approach to his account of each city is to focus on about twenty specific sites in the historic core of each city, i.e., "city-centre heritage sites that present-day tourists may readily visit." This makes the book more useful to tourists, but at the same time better facilitates discussion of historical, literary, and commercial aspects of the cities than a traditional travel guide would. For each city there is a very good map locating the sites discussed, and integrated into the text there are about fifty-five black-and-white photographs, most of which are contemporary. The book is informative, and I am willing to believe that it is quite reliable. My problems with it, as already indicated, are with the degree of detail and the quality of the writing. With regard to the latter, each sentence is well-written, but as a whole the text is smooth and superficial, with no personality, pizzazz, or passion. Each time I sat down to read the book, I ended up dozing off after twenty or so pages (relatively unusual for me). The somnolence was such that I did not read the section on Glasgow, inasmuch as I will not have time to go there on my upcoming trip.

First, my credentials. I've actually visited for a while, both Edinburgh and Glasgow. This is a highly useful book who want to dig far deeper, beyond any tourism oriented overview, yet still want to have a good time. Every paragraph is absolutely packed with references to topics to follow up on, some current, some reaching back a millennia. Case in point among thousands, near the end of chapter One, "The Royal Mile: From the Castle to a Song", Crawford references a short film made in 1951, "The Singing Street", showing children chanting and skipping rope. My followup brought me to a clip on YouTube and I could see these children skipping rope out on the street, 1951. Many references to deeds and works by Burns and Stevenson and many other local boys.

If you've ever lived in or visited these two cities, this book will fascinate. It captures the character of each place and helps the reader understand how they evolved along their very different paths. Full of fascinating historical facts, it could be used as a guide to exploring the history of two great cities.

Interesting, entertaining and equally balanced. Some old stories but lots I didn't know about. Ready

for a trip down nostalgia lane.

I liked this book a lot, although I doubt that I would have been attracted to it had I not lived in Glasgow for almost a year.

My wife and I have made six 3-week trips to Scotland in the past 20 years. We both enjoyed this book and wish it had been published sooner. It is very complete and very descriptive. We have made our last visit, so the book has triggered memory bites we didn't realize we had retained.

Just getting into reading, but looks to be great book! Recommended by Wall St Journal and my brother in law.

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