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A life-size statue of Greyfriars Bobby was created by William Brodie in 1872, almost immediately after the dog's death. This was paid for by a local aristocrat, Baroness Burdett-Coutts. This stands in front of the "Greyfriars Bobby's Bar", which is located near the south (main) entrance to Greyfriars Kirkyard. The statue originally faced toward the graveyard and pub but has since been turned around, allegedly by a previous landlord of the pub so that the pub would appear in the background of the many photographs that are taken each year.

The monument is Edinburgh's smallest listed building. After being daubed with yellow paint, allegedly by students, on General Election night in 1979, and being hit by a car in 1984, restoration became critical. The monument was subsequently fully restored under the supervision of the then Edinburgh District Council in 1985. The entire base is newly carved but emulates the original exactly.

The monument reads:
Greyfriars Bobby
Died 14 January 1872
Aged 16 years
Let his loyalty and devotion
be a lesson to us all.



Greyfriars Bobby

Many people know the tale and have seen the movies of Greyfriars Bobby – a Skye Terrier who became known in 19th-century Edinburgh for spending 14 years guarding the grave of his owner, John Gray (Auld Jock), until he died himself on 14 January 1872. But is it true or, as researches now suggest, a Victorian-era publicity stunt by local businesses to drum up tourist revenue.

The story goes...

John Gray was born on the 14th May 1814 in Forfar, Scotland; he was the youngest of three children. His mother's name was Elizabeth (nee Allen), he had a brother James and sister Elizabeth. His father, George Gray, was a gardener.

John Gray followed in his father's footsteps becoming a gardener. With harsh weather at the time, like most other young men in Scotland, he was often unemployed. He moved to Edinburgh with his wife Jess (nee Petrie) and his son also named John, to try and find work as a gardener. With young John growing up, the elder John was now nickname 'Auld Jock'. The family lived in squalor, with very little cash left from their savings.

John Gray, after much deliberation, joined the Police Force as Constable No 90 Warrant number 1487; he was paid thirteen shillings a week, rising to fifteen shillings if he proved his worth. He was also provided with an apartment in Halls Court off the Cowgate, Edinburgh at a rent of one shilling a week.

John Gray's beat was in an area that included the Upper Cowgate, the Grassmarket, Greyfriars Kirkyard, Candlemaker Row, the grounds of Heriot's Hospital and the Cattle Market. This part of the Old Town of Edinburgh was one of the busiest, with many criminals at large – robbery, drunkenness and disorder were constant. The new constable had plenty of work to do.

As a constable, John Gray was obliged to have a watch dog. He was given a dog when he first joined the Police Force, but no one knows what breed it was or what happened to it. Obligated to keep to the regulations, he was ordered to find another watch dog. He chose a Skye terrier, about 6 months old. What was the young puppy to be called? There was no doubt he was called 'Bobby' after all he was a police dog!

Bobby now became part of John Gray's life. His shaggy hair from his long body hung over his eyes, with a stump of a tail that wagged continually. He was tenacious in character, distrustful of strangers but devoted to family and friends. He was courageous but not aggressive.

No other sort of dog has more gritty tenacity, cockiness or sparkle than a Skye terrier.

John Gray met many friends at the general weekly cattle market. He was well respected as a policeman. Bobby kept close to his master's heels at these markets, because of the often unruly cattle.

Often John Gray and Bobby would take a leisurely walk to Greyfriars Place, the Coffee House owned by Mr. William Ramsey. They had a favorite seat and watched Mrs. Ramsey coming in and out of the back room where she did the cooking.

Night duty at the Cattle market was not very pleasant. The duty policeman and his dog, in all kinds of weather, had to keep on the move around the pens to prevent theft. In October 1857, the nights were cold and wet, and Auld Jock and Bobby were often cold and wet. Auld Jock had developed a nasty cough which worried his wife and son John. Bobby being often with Auld Jock, on duty, grew accustomed to it.

Later in the year Auld Jock's cough got much worse so he reported to Doctor Henry Littlejohn, the Police surgeon who had succeeded Doctor Glover in August 1854 and already knew of John Gray's good record as a constable. Auld Jock had developed Phthisis (tuberculosis). In November 1857, the doctor called at Hall's court and examined Jock. "I'll report that you are unable for duty until further notice, but I'll do my best to get you back on duty," he remarked. The Doctor turned to Mrs. Gray and said, "Give him plenty of good food and keep him warm".

Auld Jock became weaker over the holiday season in December, and by 8th February he was not able to rise from his bed. Bobby lay at his feet. That evening Auld Jock died.

John Gray had served nearly five years as a Police Constable, making him one of the longest serving Constables of his time.

James Brown the keeper and gardener of the burial ground remembered John Gray's funeral and he said the Skye terrier was one of the most conspicuous of the mourners.

The grave was closed and the next morning James Brown the curator found the Skye terrier lying on the newly made mound of earth. Old James could not permit this, for there was an order at the gate stating that dogs were not admitted into the Kirkyard. Accordingly, Bobby was driven out.

Next morning the same thing happened again, Bobby was lying on the grave. The third morning was wet and cold; James Brown took pity on the faithful animal and gave him some food.

Bobby made the Kirkyard his home. Often in very bad weather, attempts were made to encourage him indoors, but he was not having any of that. At almost any time during the day, he would be seen in or around the Kirkyard. He had made many friends.

A weekly treat of steak given by Sergeant Scott of the Royal Engineers from Edinburgh Castle. Punctually at the sound of the One O'clock time gun, Bobby would appear at the Coffee House for his dinner.

The stone where Bobby sheltered had been there for many years. The higher one was put up in the year of the battle of Waterloo to commemorate a woman called Jean Grant and it is inscribed with a text from the Bible - which may well equally apply to Bobby. *'With such sacrifice God is well pleased.'*

Due to a very hot summer, some dogs in Edinburgh developed distemper and an epidemic broke out. Dogs ran about snapping at people. The Town Council ordered that all dogs had to be muzzled, but this was not easily done. The license on every dog in Scotland was twelve shillings (a large sum of money in those days) and only a few people could pay this amount so it was reduced to seven shilling for the first year dropping to five shilling after that. The dogs that did not have a license were put to sleep.

One morning a policemen call at the Eating House and asked, 'Where is your dog Mr. Traill' 'I haven't got one,' was the reply. Bobby, at that time, was having his dinner at the Eating House. Mr. Traill continued, pointing to Bobby, 'His master lies in Greyfriars Kirkyard'.

Next day John Traill was summoned to appear at the Burgh Court to answer the charge of keeping a dog without a license. After much argument the case was dismissed. As Bobby had no owner it was likely he would have to be destroyed. The Lord Provost Sir William Chambers heard of this and asked the Town Clerk, Mr. MacPherson to bring Bobby along to his house. He was delighted with Bobby. He argued with the Town Council that they encourage Bobby to live in the Kirk yard so they are the owners, and as head of the Town Council the Lord Provost said, 'I will pay his license.' Bobby was saved.

The Eating House (now The Temperance Eating House) was a place that John Gray and Bobby used to visit. At this time color Sergeant Scott, serving in the Royal Engineers Survey Company and Royal Artillery, was on special duties which involved priming the 1 o'clock time gun. He lived at 28 Candlemaker Row overlooking the Greyfriars Kirkyard and used to see Bobby running after the cats. He befriended Bobby and encouraged him to recognize that the boom of the One o'clock Time Gun, as a call for dinner.

William Dow a cabinet maker at George Heriot's Hospital (now a School) frequently used the path through the Kirkyard to the eating house. His daughter, writing in *The Scotsman* newspaper in 1953, said that she had stroked and held Bobby in her arms many times and that she went to the Eating House with her father where Bobby would have his dinner.

Robert Richie and his daughter used to see Bobby chasing the cats in the Kirkyard, also James Anderson, an Upholsterer, lived in Candlemaker Row overlooking the Kirkyard, both tried to encourage Bobby, during the harsh weather, to come inside but to no avail. This area in Candlemaker Row is now occupied by Bobby's Bar.

From May 1862 John Traill, the new owner, gave Bobby his dinner, until Bobby's death on 14th January 1872. According to records Bobby died in John Traill's home and friends got together and buried him in the triangular flower bed beneath the tree in front of the old Greyfriars Kirk, on unconsecrated ground. They marked the spot with a stone but it was later removed.

Baroness Angela Georgia Burdett-Coutts commissioned a granite fountain with the statue of Bobby placed on top. The bronze was sculptured from life, by Wm. Brodie RSA, in 1870 (see insert for more information). In the 1950's, due to hygiene regulation, the water to the drinking troughs has been turned off.

The original sculpture, together with an Engraved Collar from the Lord Provost Sir William Chambers, Bobby's Dinner Dish from John Traill and photographs can be seen in The Museum of Edinburgh on the Royal Mile.

The inscription which can still be seen, reads: "A tribute to the affectionate fidelity of Greyfriars Bobby. In 1858 this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars Churchyard and lingered near the spot until his death in 1872, with permission erected by Baroness Burdett-Coutts."

Truth or fabrication...

In 2011, after five years of research, Jan Bondeson published *Greyfriars Bobby: The Most Faithful Dog in the World*, the most detailed biography of Bobby to date. In it he dispelled the story as traditionally told and offered a different version. In Bobby's case, he was originally a stray that hung around nearby Heriot's hospital, but became such a nuisance the hospital gardener threw him into the graveyard. James Brown, the curator of the graveyard, was fond of Bobby's company and began to feed him to keep him around. Visitors saw Bobby and liked to believe he was loyally staying by his master's grave, and provided Brown with tips to hear Bobby's "story".

After an article about Bobby appeared in *The Scotsman*, visitation rates to the graveyard increased by 100 fold with people arriving from all over England and Scotland. They would give James Brown a handsome tip and have lunch in the Traills' restaurant. It was a lucrative situation for Bobby, Brown and the local community.

Bondeson believes in May or June 1867 the original Bobby died and was replaced with a younger dog because he states pictures of him show a clear change. The first was an old tired-looking mongrel, the second was a lively youthful Skye terrier that ran around and reportedly fought with other dogs. This also explains the longevity of Bobby, 18 years, since Skye terriers usually only live around 10-12 years.

Over the years local Edinburgh residents who knew the facts had talked in public, there were even newspaper articles that cast doubt on the story, and even while Bobby was alive some councilors cast doubt on his story when it was discussed at Edinburgh City Council. However, the romantic legend of Bobby was so ingrained and beloved that any revisionism over the years went largely unnoticed. Jan Bondeson stated:

"It won't ever be possible to debunk the story of Greyfriars Bobby – he's a living legend, the most faithful dog in the world, and bigger than all of us."

Until next month,

Sláinte