

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

## Online edition

### WALKER, George

*fl.* Edinburgh 1781; – Edinburgh 13.X.1815  
Scottish landscape painter and drawing teacher. A pupil of Alexander Runciman, he started to take pupils in 1781 and from 1782 he advertised drawing classes, with emphasis on landscape and watercolour, in Edinburgh (e.g. *Caledonian Mercury*, 2.XI.1782, where he mentions that specimens of his performance might be seen at Mr Sibbald's Circulating Library etc.). From 1810 until his death in 1815, his drawing academy at 1 Hunter Square appeared in Edinburgh directories. He exhibited three topographical pieces (medium unspecified) at the Royal Academy in London in 1800; he is also likely to be the honorary exhibitor with this name at the Royal Academy between 1792 and 1815. A set of prints from his *Select views of picturesque scenery in Scotland* (1794) was sent to George Washington with a letter dated 20.VIII.1795 from the "Drawing & Painting Academy, Edinburgh", with the unconcealed object of adding Washington's name to the list of subscribers. Washington kept the prints.

His illustrations to Crie's *Scottish scenery* (London, 1803) were engraved by W. Byrne from crayon sketches which "may be seen at Mr Walker's Drawing and Painting Academy, Edinburgh" according to the preface. Walker evidently used the crayon pencils made by George Riley: attached to Riley's letter to the *Newcastle courant* of 25.X.1788 was a letter from Walker praising his "ingenious improvement of the Patent-coloured Crayon Pencils; for by them nature may be imitated, not only with great truth, but with more facility than any other method of drawing I am acquainted with." He noted in particular the excellent effect when the crayons were "worked on paper of a dark ground", particularly for moonlit, nocturnal or storm scenes or "towns on fire", while the richness and brilliancy of effect in landscapes were "nothing inferior to painting in oil." No pastels known to be by Walker have survived, but one Scottish view from the 1790s has plausibly been attributed to him which appears to be a mixture of gouache and pastel perhaps applied in such a form.

An article "by the late George Walker" providing "Directions for painting landscape in crayons" appear in *The Scots magazine*, LXXVIII, II.1816, pp. 104–5 (reproduced in [TREATISES](#)). It provided useful advice on the need to use soft crayons which can work freely. He recommends genuine Swiss pastels, failing which the common sort of English crayons, prepared with chalk, are preferable to those prepared with white lead (as French crayons do), as these invariably change colour. Boxes of London-made crayons should also be rejected as they generally contain yellow and orange orpiments. He advises that the best wove paper should be used, prepared with size and pumice powder. Colours should be blended with the fingers rather than with pieces of cork.

Doubtless an early draft of these directions were those sent by "Mr Walker, drawingmaster" to Jane, Lady Grant in 1802 (National Records of Scotland, GD248/516/14) in which he "sends a few remarks on crayon painting for

Penuel Grant, in hopes of enabling her to accomplish a landscape in crayons by herself." Penuel (1779–1844) was then 22 years old, but it is unclear if she was a pastellist before 1800.

Other correspondents include the Earl of Buchan, with a group of early nineteenth century letters to him on painting, art education and collecting in Edinburgh preserved in the Edinburgh University Library.

Gibson (1816) dismissed him: "He painted most usually in crayons, but his pictures are of little value considered as works of art"; of the designs for Crie, "neither in point of accuracy, of delineation, nor beauty of effect, are they entitled to our consideration." Walker was nevertheless appointed Landscape Painter in Crayons in Ordinary to George III in 1806. Walker also had a large collection of landscapes, including work by Jacob More (*q.v.*).

On 10.III.1813 Walker was obliged to compound with his creditors, placing his property in trust (*Caledonian Mercury*, 15.IV.1813; the trust again advertised for claimants there, 21.III.1818). His death in Edinburgh on 13.X.1815 was reported in the *Scots magazine* (1.XI.1815). A posthumous auction of prints, drawings, paintings, busts, drawing materials etc. was held by Bruce and Son in his house at 10 Nicolson Street, 13.I.1816.

### Bibliography

Robert Brydal, *Art in Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1889, p. 294f; [Patrick Gibson], "View of the arts of design in Britain", *The Edinburgh review*, IX, 1816, p. cccclxxix; Joe Rock, hughwilliamwilliams website, accessed 30.V.2011

### Pastels

J.7804.101 View of Bonnington Linn, Lanarkshire, pstl, gch., 58x71, c.1790 (Agnew's. Cirencester, Dominic Winter, 9.X.2020, Lot 359, as anon. French sch.; 24–25.III.2021, Lot 319, £300. UK PC 2023). Attr. φα

