

Scots at the court of Catherine the Great

From the start of her reign, Catherine II sought to surround herself with men of ability who could help her to transform Russia. They ranged from administrators, military and naval officers and physicians to architects, master craftsmen and philosophers. Several had come to Russia from Scotland, and some of their stories are told in the exhibition.

Medical men

Catherine the Great was a pioneer in her approach to medicine and health care. Not only did she found Russia's College of Medicine in 1763, but she also created the first teaching hospital and decreed provisions for medical care throughout the Russian provinces.

Among the Scottish physicians at her court was **Dr John Rogerson**, who arrived in Russia in 1766. He came to the attention of the Empress after saving the life of her close friend Princess Dashkova, and became Catherine's personal physician.

In 1768, Catherine invited **Dr Thomas Dimsdale** to come from Aberdeen to Russia to inoculate her and her son Paul against smallpox, the main cause of death in the eighteenth century. This was a bold decision, as the effectiveness and safety of vaccination was still a contentious issue at the time. Dr Dimsdale went on to inoculate many members of the nobility, and ran vaccination hospitals set up by Catherine in Moscow and St Petersburg.

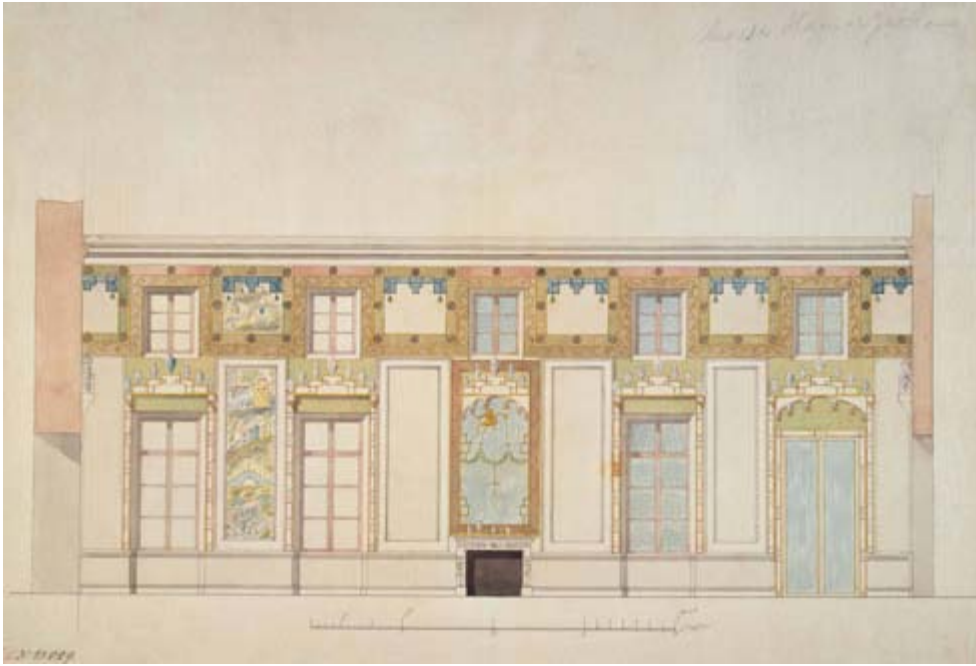
Edinburgh-born **Dr Matthew Guthrie** first arrived in Russia in 1769. He went on to become the Chief Medical Officer of the Corps of Noble Gentlemen, a post he held until his death. A man of many interests, Guthrie wrote a work on Russian peasants, comparing them to the ancient Greeks. It was dedicated to Catherine, who was delighted with the comparison. Guthrie also sent articles to the Edinburgh magazine, the Bee, and was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Architects and craftsmen

Catherine engaged several foreign architects and builders. She invited the Neo-classical architect **Charles Cameron** to Russia in 1779; he worked mainly at Tsarskoye Selo (the 'Tsar's Village') and Pavlovsk, near St Petersburg.

Cameron was instructed by Catherine to place an advert in an Edinburgh newspaper for Scottish craftsmen to assist him in Russia. On 3 May 1784, 140 people set sail from Leith. Amongst them were **Adam Menelaws** and **William**

Hastie, who – like Cameron – would find patronage with the Imperial family.



Above: Design for the Window Wall of the Chinese Hall in the Great Palace at Tsarskoye

Selo by Charles Cameron, c. 1780. Image © The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

During the early 1780s, the Scottish gem-engraver **James Tassie** received orders from Catherine to supply thousands of copies of Classical carved gemstones from public and private collections. The finished cast copies were delivered between 1783 and 1788, in specially made cabinets, accompanied by a five-volume handwritten catalogue.

Catherine's patronage enabled Tassie to expand his business. In all, the Empress acquired about 15,000 copies, which has resulted in the Hermitage Museum having the largest collection of Tassie's work in the world.

Naval know how

Admiral Samuel Greig was a born in Inverkeithing, Fife, where his father owned a merchant ship, 'The Thistle', which regularly traded with Russia.

A British naval officer, Greig responded to Catherine's call for naval expertise. He excelled himself at the Battle of Chesme in 1770, where he was responsible for the four fire ships which were sent in to destroy the Turkish fleet.



Above: Painting depicting The Destruction of the Turkish Fleet at the Battle of Chesme, by Jacob Philip Hackert, 1771. Image © The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

Greig was held in such high esteem by the Empress that when he fell gravely ill she sent her own physician, Dr John Rogerson, to attend him. Greig never recovered and died on board his ship, the Rostislav. His state funeral was held in Tallinn Cathedral and Catherine ordered her architect Quarenghi to produce drawings for Greig's tomb.

Lioness of the nursery

Catherine employed a Scot, **Jane Lyon**, to look after her third grandson, Nicholas, the future Tsar Nicholas I. Jane followed her father and brothers who had come to Russia in 1779 to work for Charles Cameron. For the first seven years of Nicholas's life, Jane was responsible for his welfare and education. He called her 'my lioness' and she remained with the Imperial family for over 40 years.

In 1816 Nicholas visited London and Edinburgh. During his time in Edinburgh, he bought three paintings by William Allan of Russian scenes. He also seems to have acquired a full Highland outfit for his brother, Tsar Alexander I.