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Philosopher David Hume's first home joins 'at-risk' list



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By Craig Brown

THE first Edinburgh residence of philosopher David Hume, one of the leading figures in the Scottish Enlightenment, is among more than 100 structures that have been added to the list of significant Scottish buildings at risk in the past six months.

The five-storey property in Riddle's Court was added to the Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) - a list compiled by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS).

The register currently has 2,395 properties on it, and in the past six months a further 143 buildings have been added to the register - 25 in June alone.

The list, which is maintained on behalf of Historic Scotland, was established in 1990 in response to a concern at the growing number of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas that were vacant and had fallen into a state of disrepair.

A spokeswoman for Historic Scotland said: "The Buildings at Risk Register showcases historic buildings who have an uncertain future. They may not fulfil their original purpose any more or could have suffered damage. By maintaining information on these buildings, the register offers people interested in taking on these properties a starting point in bringing incredible historic buildings back into use."

According to Alex Adamson, of the RCAHMS, placing Riddle's Court on the register is part of an effort to draw attention to the building.

"It contains the remains of two 16th century properties, going back to 1590, including some possibly original painted ceilings going back to then," he said. "This is a property that has been vacant for a number of years and Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT] is taking it on to do a restoration project, but they have asked us to raise its profile by including it on the register."

The cost of the restoration was put at £1.5 million by SHBT. Despite being described as "one of the finest surviving burghal residences on the Royal Mile", and once was a venue for a banquet hosted by King James VI and his queen in 1598, it is currently sitting almost empty due to the cost of emergency repairs and poor accessibility.

Another set of distinctive Edinburgh properties added yesterday were the A-listed India Buildings on Victoria Street. Mr Adamson said it was vital that they were included. "In terms of their architectural importance, they are very fine buildings and it's very difficult to imagine the top of Victoria Street if they were lost.

Page 1 of 2

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