

1125-01-253 **Amy Ackerberg-Hastings*** (aackerbe@verizon.net). *John Playfair's Approach to "the Practical Parts of the Mathematics"*. Preliminary report.

Best known for *Elements of Geometry* (1795) and *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (1802), University of Edinburgh mathematics and natural philosophy professor John Playfair (1748–1819) also wrote several dozen books, expository articles, and opinion pieces as individual publications or for *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, and *Edinburgh Review*. Most of these works have been digitized and are readily available for study. In contrast, Playfair's 1793 *Prospectus of a Course of Lectures on Some of the Practical Parts of the Mathematics* has nearly disappeared, with as few as eight surviving copies. In this talk, I will consider what we can learn from this document, which consists of a nineteen-page list of potential topics. Despite its brevity, the *Prospectus* includes a number of themes and priorities that recurred throughout Playfair's writing and teaching. It also suggests how Playfair understood the role of mathematics with respect to the physical and natural sciences and reminds us of his influence as an educator and cosmopolitan intellectual. (Received August 18, 2016)