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The People Behind the Philanthropy: An Investigation into the Lives and Motivations of Library Philanthropists in Scotland between 1800 and 1914¹

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Examines Scottish library philanthropists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a key period in the development of the public library service. Utilizing the technique of prosopography, which goes beyond recounting basic biographical details and considers individuals as part of an identifiable group, the article provides an insight into the lives of eleven people (nine men and two women) who were involved in gifting money, land or support towards the establishment and maintenance of public libraries in eight towns and hundreds of villages throughout Scotland.

Background

The period from 1800 until the First World War was one of immense social change in Scotland, as throughout the rest of Britain. The primarily agrarian society rapidly evolved into one centred around new industries such as engineering and ship-building. These new industries, along with increasingly mechanized older industries, were immensely more profitable than farming and thus it became possible for individuals to become rich through their own efforts rather than by inherited wealth. These ‘self-made men’ (and it was largely men) were able to rise to the upper levels of society in a way which had not previously been possible.

Leisure facilities such as art galleries, libraries, and parks became more widespread as people had both increased free time and disposable income. Libraries had always been in existence in one form or another but were often highly specialized, ‘public’ libraries being often subscription-based and therefore only utilized by the privileged few who could afford them. By the mid-nineteenth century, significant moves were also being made to provide better educational opportunities for the

working classes. Libraries were considered important in supporting this and after several attempts the Public Libraries Acts of 1850 (England) and 1853 (Scotland) firmly created a legislative foundation for the establishment of publicly funded libraries. Although a ½d. rate of tax (later raised to 1d.) was levied to support the creation and maintenance of the new public libraries, the many social needs of the time, such as housing and sanitation meant ‘cultural’ pursuits such as libraries and museums became a lesser priority. It is now widely acknowledged that philanthropists who gifted money or buildings were ‘key’ to getting libraries built in many areas.

Philanthropy in library history literature

Library historians have generally paid little attention either to biographical information regarding library philanthropists, or to the factors that may have influenced their actions, the most obvious exception to this being the various works on Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919). While Carnegie is regarded as the father of library philanthropy, there were numerous other individuals who donated not only money, but also tangible assets such as land or buildings or devoted time to support libraries. Works covering these individuals are generally written by local history enthusiasts and do not deal with the subject’s life or actions in any comparative way, either with respect to other philanthropists or the general trends of the time.

There is, therefore, an identified need for a detailed study into the lives of some of the individuals behind library philanthropy in Scotland between 1800 and 1914. This paper aims to supplement the current body of literature on public library history in Scotland by going beyond recounting basic biographical details and considers the philanthropists as forming an identifiable group (a technique known as *prosopography*).² As a result, it will be possible to concentrate on the connections and similarities between the individuals. This paper also moves some way to shift the balance of the literature on library philanthropy away from the current bias towards Andrew Carnegie, perhaps encouraging more critical studies of Carnegie and other philanthropists.

Due to the widespread nature of philanthropy as a social phenomenon at the time, it has not been possible to identify all the philanthropists that existed. Instead, eleven individuals have been chosen and factors such as their background, working and private lives, their library gifts and other acts of philanthropy will be examined and compared. This study focuses on the philanthropy of the following (for brief biographical details of each, see Appendix):

Sir Peter Coats	James Coats
Stephen Mitchell	James Moir
Sir John Usher	James Shepherd
Michael Beveridge	Isabella Elder
Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox	Archibald Sandeman
John Thomson Paton	

Comparisons between the individuals

Family background and early life

The rapid social change witnessed in the nineteenth century meant that philanthropists in general came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Only a few details are known about the early life of the group in this study, with a relatively complete picture available only for some. All but one of the group were Scottish by birth, Lady Caroline being born in England. Most of the birthplaces were concentrated around the heavily populated areas of Glasgow, Fife, and Edinburgh. The only clear exception to this is Shepherd, who was born in Elgin, over 100 miles north of the rest.

Whitaker, in his book *The Foundations*,³ notes that coming from a poor background characterizes many of those who established charitable foundations (whose motivations and actions, we propose, may not be wholly different to the philanthropists in this study). While it is left up to the reader of Whitaker's work to define exactly what he means by 'poor', in the cases of Moir, Beveridge, and Shepherd, little information is available about their family, suggesting that they were modest. All that is recorded about Shepherd is that he has been described as coming from a 'humble' background,⁴ probably a farming family, which in comparison to the industrial cities would certainly have appeared humble.

The rapidly growing industries, especially in the areas around Glasgow and Edinburgh, employed significant numbers of people and the fathers of Peter Coats, James Coats, Mitchell, and Usher were all senior partners or directors in such companies. Sandeman's father was also employed in industry (although it is not recorded what position he held) and a sixth individual, Paton, was connected to industry through his mother, being the daughter of John Paton, director of Paton's mills.

The two women in the group seem to stand apart from the others in that they came from slightly higher-class backgrounds. Isabella Elder's father was a well known lawyer, working in one of the more affluent parts of Glasgow,⁵ while Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox's father was the 6th Duke of Richmond and 1st Duke of Gordon.⁶ While the main Gordon Lennox home was at Goodwood in Sussex, the family spent summers at Gordon Castle near Fochabers in the north-east of Scotland.⁷ The people that Elder and Lady Caroline would have mixed with in social terms would have been very different from those who worked the land in a rural area such as Shepherd's.

As was not unusual for the time, many of the individuals came from large families, with Peter Coats, James Coats, Mitchell, and Sandeman all having more than nine brothers and sisters. Of all those where family details are known, Mitchell, James Coats, and Lady Caroline were the eldest in their families. Looking at the wider families of the group, the first connection between two of the philanthropists can be made. Peter Coats was uncle to James Coats, through being brother to James's father Thomas.

While the bare facts about the backgrounds can lead to various interpretations about the sort of upbringing the philanthropists had, very little actually has been recorded about their character during childhood. The only thing we really know

about any of them is an observation Andrew Coats, younger brother of Peter, makes in his book *From the cottage to the castle*.⁸ He notes that Peter was more reserved than his other siblings, but was cheerful, extremely kind, and not easy to anger.

Education

Despite primary education not being compulsory until 1872, we know for certain that five of the group were educated as far as the end of secondary school, perhaps indicating their parents placed education in high regard. Peter Coats, Usher, and Mitchell were obviously good students, gaining prizes for being top in class. Usher was even made dux (top in the whole school).⁹

Letters written by Elder are very well formed, suggesting she must have had some degree of education, perhaps a private school or governess.¹⁰ Women's education was a very low priority in the nineteenth century, so again it may have been something valued by the family. Lady Caroline would have had some degree of private education, probably at home rather than at a school.¹¹

Whilst basic education was on the increase, the numbers going to full-time university were very low. Of the individuals in this study, only two went to university, Sandeman and Peter Coats. Sandeman was the only one to complete his course, graduating with an M.A. from Queen's, Cambridge in 1849.¹² Peter Coats matriculated at Glasgow University in 1824. However, the only record of his attendance is his name on a class list for Latin in 1824–1825,¹³ and this, along with the absence of his name from the graduation rolls, suggests that he started but did not complete the course. Although taking part in short classes at university without going on to graduate was common at this time,¹⁴ it is thought his disengagement was because he abandoned the idea of training for the church.¹⁵

Complete lack of a school education was not uncommon, and some of the group may not have had any formal education whatsoever, going straight into trade. This may have taken place as soon as they were old enough. With Moir and Shepherd, for example, it was noted that they left home while young.¹⁶

Work life and involvement in local affairs

By the time the individuals were in their twenties, all but one of the men were in trade and industry, with Sandeman staying in academia, becoming a professor in maths and natural philosophy at Owen's College, Manchester.¹⁷ Many of the men, after serving an apprenticeship, went into their father's or the family's business, usually when their father (or in Paton's case, the director) retired. They then became partners or co-directors with their brothers or sometimes cousins. A few enterprising individuals built their own businesses, generally within the sector in which they had been trained. It is here that the next link between another two members of the group comes to light. Beveridge's business knowledge gained in his apprenticeship made him the perfect partner for Shepherd who was founding his linoleum manufacturing business.¹⁸ They may have met through family links or business contacts, and their partnership was to be a successful one, with the firm soon becoming one of the foremost in the area.¹⁹

Although the unpredictable financial climate of the nineteenth century did not greatly affect the individuals in this study, other factors and challenges did. For example, Mitchell had to move his business to Glasgow after a change in the

customs rules closed the port of Blackness to tobacco trade.²⁰ The move benefited the firm in the long run, with the firm expanding rapidly. The linoleum factory of Beveridge and Shepherd burnt down in 1868 and had to be rebuilt.²¹ The fact the businesses survived these setbacks is testament to the individuals' skill and business flair.

Many of the group took part in local affairs. Usher and Shepherd were involved on a small scale, sitting on committees for school boards, water commissions, and banks,²² while Moir was a member of the library committee at the Mitchell library.²³ Shepherd had been approached on several occasions to stand as an MP, but had refused on the grounds his time was occupied too much by his business.²⁴ Although none of them got involved in national politics, even at a local level some rose to a position of power. Moir became a town councillor in Glasgow, Beveridge first a councillor, then the Provost of a newly expanded Kirkcaldy,²⁵ and Paton a commissioner in Alloa. Moir and Paton were also involved in the legal workings of their respective towns by serving as a police commissioner (Moir), as a magistrate (Moir and Paton), or as a Justice of the Peace (Paton). Moir was additionally an active member of the Chartist movement, the country's first mass working-class political movement that supported, amongst other things, reform of government and the poor laws, and the universal right to vote. Support for Chartism reached a height around the late 1830s, with Moir being one of the main advocates in Glasgow.²⁶

It is known that both Mitchell and James Coats took no part in public life, and indeed James Coats was a virtual recluse in his final years.²⁷ Sandeman also had rather a solitary nature as a result of poor health.²⁸ With the women it was slightly different, as working was not an option for women of the middle/upper classes. Lady Caroline spent much of her time acting as hostess, both at Goodwood and Gordon Castle, and also socializing at her home in London. She also enjoyed outdoor pursuits with the Lady Caroline Spey Fly named after her in honour of her passion for angling.²⁹ Additionally she was a loyal carer to her father and was always seen at his side in his later years, acting as a companion and helper.³⁰

Elder, though, took a more active working role and showed she possessed the required skills for running a business. After her husband died at the age of forty-five, she single-handedly assumed control of the firm of between 4000 and 5000 employees until her brother John took charge, nine months later.³¹ Widows occasionally took charge of a small business such as a shop, but controlling a factory was virtually unknown.³² The experience left her drained,³³ but shows the strength of character she possessed. In later years, Elder was to become actively involved in supporting several projects covering many areas of social need. Philanthropy was an acceptable way for women to use skills which, had they been men, would have been used in business.³⁴

Marriage and family

Social conventions were such that it was generally expected that a man occupying a position of wealth should be married. It is therefore surprising to note that three of the men (Sandeman, Mitchell, and James Coats) never married. It was suggested at the time that James Coats was a misogynist, but this was dismissed as being unlikely;³⁵ indeed it is recorded that he may have once been in love,³⁶ but without

further elaboration we can only wonder as to whom this woman may have been. Whatever led Mitchell and Sandeman to remaining unmarried may have been rooted in their family life as none of Sandeman's six siblings who reached marriageable age and only two of Mitchell's adult siblings married. Lady Caroline also never married, even though she would have had the opportunity to mix with many 'suitable' people who visited the family estate at Goodwood.³⁷ Two of her aunts had married very well, their husbands being Earl of Lucan and Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar.³⁸ As a daughter, though, the pressure on Lady Caroline to marry would have been very much less than her brothers, as there was no possibility of her inheriting the family estate.

Marriage in the nineteenth century often provided the opportunity for both men and women to link with another major industrial family or to move up the social ladder. Women were especially expected to marry well and Elder's match to John Elder would have been a favourable one as he was an enterprising shipbuilder, whose invention of the compound steam engine revolutionized marine trading.³⁹ Paton's wife and Beveridge's second wife also were linked to industry, being the daughters of a mill merchant and a linen manufacturer respectively (nothing is recorded about Beveridge's first wife).⁴⁰ Peter Coats and Usher married women whose families had military connections, with Peter Coats' father-in-law being a Lieutenant in the 74th Regiment.⁴¹ Through Usher's wife, Mary Balmer, another connection between the philanthropists (although somewhat less direct than previous examples) can be seen. Mary's father was commissioner to the Duke of Richmond, Lady Caroline's father.⁴²

Just as many of the individuals followed into their father's business, it would be expected that the same would happen with the next generation. A number of Peter Coats' sons followed him into the business, as did Usher's two sons and Shepherd's son.⁴³ Elder and Beveridge did not have children. It could be that Beveridge was unable to have children as neither of his two marriages produced children, despite both his wives being young when they married. Moir had three children, all of whom died in their early years.⁴⁴ Of those who had children, only Peter Coats and Usher had large families (eleven and seven respectively). The other two, Paton and Shepherd, had one and three respectively. This fits with the general pattern of declining birth rates towards the end of the century.⁴⁵

Religious and political views

The religious beliefs of the individuals are well documented in sources of the time. Elder, Usher, Paton, and Beveridge were noted as having especially strong links to a church, acting as elders or serving on committees. Shepherd was noted as leading a very Christian life, although he never found a denomination that matched his views.⁴⁶ Only 16% of the population regularly attended church⁴⁷ and it has been proposed that piety may have influenced philanthropy in the Scottish people to a greater extent than the English.⁴⁸ It may be that church commitments were more common amongst philanthropists compared to the general population but this could only be accurately assessed through a much larger study.

Where political views are known, it appears that Liberalism predominates. Liberalism was widespread in Scotland at the time⁴⁹ and the individuals may have been following a trend, although Peter and James Coats had strong family

connections to the Liberals, with Peter's father being a loyal supporter.⁵⁰ Lady Caroline's family were staunch Tories, her father serving as MP for West Sussex for nineteen years.⁵¹ Some studies show that while Conservatives were not actively against the Public Libraries Act, it was Liberals in general who championed it.⁵² It is quite likely, therefore, that individuals who were members of a liberal or radical club, such as Beveridge and Usher, would have debated at times the issue of free public libraries and these discussions may have shaped their thinking in their giving.

Library gifts

This section will concentrate on the reason the eleven individuals were selected in the first place – their library gifts. A summary of these is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY GIFTS

Name	Where	Nature of gift	When
Coats, P	Paisley	Money	1864
Coats, J	Throughout rural Scotland	Libraries (cases and books)	1901–1912
Moir	Glasgow	Books and money	1881
Mitchell	Glasgow	Money	1874
Paton	Alloa	Money	1887
Sandeman	Perth	Money	1891
Usher	Wick	Site	1895
Shepherd	Burntisland	Site	1905
Beveridge	Kirkcaldy	Money	1890
Elder	Glasgow	Money	1901
Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox	Fochabers	Time and support	mostly around 1905

Although the size and type of the gifts vary considerably, investigation into the approach taken in their administration enables the individuals to be grouped as follows:

- Planners: Mitchell, Paton, Beveridge, Elder, Peter Coats, and Moir
- Reactors: Shepherd, Usher, Lady Caroline, and Moir
- Eccentrics: James Coats, Sandeman

First, there are those who clearly identified their desire to fund a library and planned out their gift very carefully in a trust deed or will (the 'Planners'). Conditions were frequently attached to the acceptance of the gifts or indications made as to how they wished the library to function, a common practice for philanthropists of the time. A lengthy document exists regarding the running of the Mitchell Library, although it is unclear to what extent Mitchell himself dictated these rules.⁵³ Two of the group, Peter Coats and Paton, insisted the Public Libraries Act had to be adopted if the gift was accepted (Paton also gave to two other small village libraries in the area, with the same condition attached).⁵⁴ A letter published in the Glasgow *Herald* at the time

of Paton's gift praised this tactic and proposed that had Mitchell, or indeed Moir, made adoption of the Act a condition of their bequest, it would undoubtedly have been done in Glasgow as well.⁵⁵ Whether Mitchell and Moir considered this is not recorded. Certainly Moir would have been aware of the arguments for and against the Act, given his positions as a member of the library committee and as a local councillor. Mitchell may not have been as aware of the particulars of the Act, especially since he died before the movement really gained momentum.

Although through their measured planning the individuals in the first group were very influential in the development of libraries in their area, those in the second group (the 'Reactors') also made a contribution. They saw an opportunity for a gift to be of use and gave as a result of what they saw. (Moir, by giving to an existing library, is slightly different from the rest of the planners, but by waiting to give until after his death shows some of the planning traits and thus straddles the two groups.) In all three cases in this group, the gift was connected to a Carnegie bequest. Carnegie's gifts came with the understanding that a suitable site was already provided;⁵⁶ therefore by buying the sites, Shepherd and Usher played a significant role in the founding of the libraries. Carnegie also expected a degree of financial commitment from those living in the area and so Lady Caroline's efforts in instigating and supporting a fund-raising bazaar at the family's Gordon Castle and generally raising the library's profile were important in prompting Carnegie to consider Fochabers suitable for a gift.

While there is less of the formal written planning in connection with the philanthropy of the 'Reactors' compared to that of the 'Planners', it is nonetheless 'directed' help, given with careful thought, unlike the approach taken by the two individuals in the third group, James Coats and Sandeman. The label for this is group, the 'Eccentrics', is derived from pieces written about them by others⁵⁷. James Coats, especially, was viewed by contemporaries as eccentric. Stories exist of him feeding the birds in his garden with bread soaked in champagne!⁵⁸ The total number of Coat's library benefactions will never be known, but estimates of 4000 libraries costing collectively in the region of over £150,000 are thought not to be unreasonable.⁵⁹ His gift in most cases consisted of between 300 and 400 books in a standardized bookcase. These were given to villages throughout Scotland, along with outposts such as army barracks and lighthouses,⁶⁰ and were often accompanied by extras such as reading glasses or packets of tobacco. Coats' gifts were in addition to the £7000 he gave for an extension to the Paisley Public Library, built by his uncle Peter.⁶¹

Sandeman's gift was given through his will, but the method of administration could not have been more different to the thoroughly constructed documents of group one. The direction for his gift was thus:

To the Trustees acting under my settlement. Garry Cottage, 12 Dec[embe]r 1891.
Gentlemen, I hereby direct you to pay and make over the residue of my estate to the Town Council of Perth for the formation of a Free Library in the City of Perth. I am, yours truly, Archibald Sandeman.⁶²

This simple statement was scrawled in pencil on a piece of light blue card measuring 18cm × 11cm and pinned to the back of his will! There was some debate at the time as to the legality of this bequest as it had been written in pencil and not

formally included in the body of the will. Additionally, a letter to the city council from one of Sandeman's acquaintances reads:

It is not for me to say whether he was then [at the time of the writing of the card] of sound mind or not, but in my humble opinion, were the case *in its whole circumstances*, fully brought before the Court of Session, *the pencil writing would not stand*.⁶³

Much of the argument came from Sandeman's few remaining relatives who had been ignored in the will in favour of other women who had kept house for him. As a result of some skilled negotiation by the town council, however, the bequest was granted largely in its original form with only a few of Sandeman's personal items going to the family.⁶⁴

Civic pride and public need

By founding or supporting libraries, the philanthropists very much hoped that the buildings would appeal and be useful to all members of the town; indeed, many made reference to this in opening speeches. This hope is perhaps especially evident where the library was connected to another amenity such as a town hall or art gallery. Beveridge's views on the need for a public hall and library were recorded in a newspaper article that he wrote a year prior to writing his will. He felt the Corn Exchange was unsuitable for the purposes to which it was put and an alternative was required.⁶⁵ The final hall was partly funded by the subscriptions originally given for the Adam Smith Hall,⁶⁶ and partly through Beveridge's gift, with the completed hall being known as the Adam Smith Hall and Beveridge Public Library. Part of the money also went towards the founding of a branch library, called the Beveridge Branch Library. Shepherd, at the time of the gift, noted that had the library been built during Beveridge's lifetime, he (Beveridge) would have altered his gift to help another cause.⁶⁷ This indicates that Beveridge was aware of the needs of the city and was ready to respond, whatever they might be, rather than prompted by a definite motivation to provide a library. Paton too included a town hall with his gift and Peter Coats had an art gallery and museum connected to the library. It is perhaps a good indication of the planning that generally went into the buildings that they are still in public use today, although in Beveridge and Paton's cases the library part has since been rehoused.

Elder, some sixteen years previous to the building of the library, had laid out the park in which the library stands. The unhealthy working conditions in many industries led to the gifting of parks where workers could exercise.⁶⁸ Even at this stage, though, Elder was considering the need for a library, and placed a clause in the deeds allowing for one to be built.⁶⁹

While the locations for James Coats' gifts were, to all appearances, completely random, they tackled the needs of rural communities, something generally overlooked by philanthropists. Rural library provision was not adequately addressed until the Adams report of 1915,⁷⁰ and it is unlikely that such a large-scale project would have been undertaken by anyone had Coats not done so. On the whole, however, the libraries were intended for use by the general public, with schoolhouses often chosen due to their central location in a village or area.

Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox occupies a slightly different position to the rest of the group in that it would have been very much expected that her family would be supportive of the local community. Her mother had taken a keen interest in libraries and had set up a reading room in Fochabers,⁷¹ with Lady Caroline taking up this interest herself on her mother's death. Although the family were involved in the new library, it was very much 'her' project, with the fund-raising bazaar being instigated at her suggestion.

Maintaining the libraries

Although the building of a library in an area was celebrated once the libraries had been established, the next issue was their continued maintenance. Elder and Moir took account of this, with Moir indicating the monetary part of his gift was to be used for the purchase of rare or significant books to be added to the original bequest. Of the £27,000 of Elder's gift, £17,000 was earmarked by her for upkeep, an important commitment to the continued working of the library. While Beveridge had left it up to the Burgh if Kirkcaldy to decide upon the apportioning of his bequest, who then set aside part of it for upkeep, Perth Council made no such plans for Usher's gift and only a small amount was left after the library had been built and furnished.

James Coats made some effort to maintain his libraries, by sending some new books to them. However, with no financial provision made for them after his death,⁷² his libraries were largely not maintained.

Alloa Library (founded by Paton) found the income from tax was insufficient due to both low population numbers and low wages in the area. The number of new titles that could be purchased was minimal, leading to a decline in usage and fears for the library's future. A subscription library was therefore introduced running parallel to the public one for a number of years. Subscribers could enjoy the new titles purchased by their money, which were then made available for public use after a period of twelve months.⁷³

Memorials and honours

The chance to perpetuate one's name for eternity was often promoted as a motivation for people to establish or give generously to a library and the names of six of the individuals in this study are connected to their libraries or collections. Two of them (Mitchell and James Coats) dictated that the libraries bore their name (Coats attached a plate to each book case clearly stating it was a gift from him). Elder, by commemorating her husband, also added her own name but she always made it known that the library was in memory of her husband.⁷⁴ Naming a gifted public building after a husband was very common in instances when women founded libraries, both here and in the United States.⁷⁵ The other three libraries titled after the donor appear to have been named by others.

In contrast to Carnegie, who received many honours bestowed upon him, official recognition of the philanthropists in this study was less high profile. Peter Coats and Usher were knighted, Coats' title being the direct result of his bequest.⁷⁶ Additionally, there are suggestions that Paton declined being nominated for a knighthood as well as for the new building to be called after him saying: 'No . . . I should never

think of such a thing. If the people are benefited I am repaid'.⁷⁷ Although Usher and Elder received honorary degrees, this was in response to gifts to the universities involved rather than to their library gifts.

Six individuals (Paton, Usher, Elder, Mitchell, Shepherd, and Sandeman) have a bust or plaque in their libraries recording their generosity (Elder's bust stands by that of her husband). Statues of Moir, Peter Coats, and Elder exist in places other than the libraries, with those of Peter Coats and Elder being full length. The money for Elder's statue came from a public subscription fund started shortly before her death and until 1980 was the only statue of a woman in Glasgow other than Queen Victoria.⁷⁸ Elder is also the only woman to be recorded on the memorial gates of Glasgow University,⁷⁹ and is further commemorated in a stained glass window in Bute Hall in Glasgow. Beveridge is commemorated in a fountain his wife gifted to the Beveridge Park in 1931.⁸⁰

Two of the individuals though are not commemorated in any way. The nature of James Coats' gifts were such that there was no library building to bear his name or to house a bust. Few of the bookcases still exist and the book collections have generally been broken up and sold off.⁸¹ It appears that no memorial exists in his home town of Paisley either. Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox is also not commemorated, despite the family's status.⁸² It is sad that in these cases neither the libraries nor a monument exists to remind others of their generosity, especially James Coats, whose contribution was so widespread.

Philanthropy in the culture of the time

Philanthropy was an integral part of the culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a range of organizations aiming to tackle a range of social and moral problems. Indeed, a newspaper article detailing Paton's gift of a gymnasium and public baths to Alloa (his second major gift) noted that: 'Mr Paton had already discharged . . . [in giving the library] . . . his duty to the community as a successful and prosperous townsman'.⁸³ Books such as Andrew Carnegie's *The Gospel of Wealth*,⁸⁴ emphasized that those who had reaped the economic benefits of the new industries had a moral obligation to support those less fortunate. Additionally, for Coats, Sandeman, Elder, Beveridge, and Moir, with no heirs (and in Sandeman's case no surviving siblings), there would be no one to inherit their estate upon death. Many of the major philanthropists of the time were childless, and some have proposed this to be the major factor forming a philanthropic nature.⁸⁵

A large number of factors would have influenced the philanthropists studied here in their decision to support libraries. The educational nature of the institution may perhaps have been in mind, particularly in the latter stages of the nineteenth century when the issue of education for all was gaining national support. Some may have had a sense that the building would be well received, either through their knowledge of the city and its people or through a prior association with the building itself. Others may simply have been altruistic in their actions, with no expectation of reward or thought of the effect the gift would have on their standing in the community. Without an ability to return to the past and understand the full range of society's pressures and expectations, the precise motivations of each individual are elusive and no 'exact' conclusions can be made.

Conclusion

Can any broad generalizations therefore be made about the philanthropists in this study? Certainly, similarities exist in that eight out of the eleven were employed in industry and all held significant positions of power in their company. This fits neatly with Ditzion's findings in his study of male philanthropists in the United States.⁸⁶ Ditzion further proposed that, generally, philanthropists would have a flair for innovation and often hold public office. This again matches those in my study, as many were involved in public bodies such as school boards or local government. The fact that their businesses were so successful, despite the economic fluctuations of the time, is illustrative of their business flair.

The two women in the study fit with Watson's observations,⁸⁷ in that lady philanthropists were often long-lived with an interest in the welfare of women and children. This can certainly be applied to Elder, whose passion for the rights of women to have access to higher education and decent maternity care was well renowned. Lady Caroline fits less comfortably with Watson's findings, although this may be due to her position of nobility compared to the mostly untitled women in Watson's study.

The family and private lives of the individuals show less similarity, with variations in their marital status and number of children. Political views seem to be constant, however, as does an involvement with religion (although as noted, religion played a large part in society at the time).

The one thing this study has clearly shown, though, is that to understand truly the lives of the library philanthropists examined involves going beyond the basic biographical details into the wider areas of their work, family, and the society and culture of the time in which they lived. The findings of this study provide possibilities for further research, perhaps considering a single geographical area in more detail or undertaking a much wider look at those who gave to libraries during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The role of philanthropists in the development of rural libraries would be worthy of a study on its own, as would a closer comparison to urban development. Doing this would add to the value of this study, the aim of which has been to contribute not only to the history of the individual libraries involved, but also to that of the public library movement in Scotland as a whole.

Appendix. Brief Biographical Information for Each of the Philanthropists

Sir Peter Coats

Born 18 July 1808, Paisley

Director of J. and P. Coats Thread Mills, Paisley

James Coats

Born 28 November 1841, Paisley

Senior member of J. and P. Coats Thread Mills, Paisley

Stephen Mitchell

Born 19 September 1789, Linlithgow

Director of Stephen Mitchell and Son, tobacco and snuff manufacturer, Glasgow

James Moir

Born May 1805, Stenhousemuir, Stirlingshire

Owned and ran a tea shop in Glasgow

Sir John Usher

Born 18 January 1828, Edinburgh

Senior partner Andrew Usher and Sons Distillery

James Shepherd

Born 1830?, Elgin

Partner in Nairn and Son Linoleum Company/Shepherd and Beveridge Linoleum Manufacturers, Kirkcaldy

Michael Beveridge

Born 1836, Kirkcaldy

Partner in Shepherd and Beveridge Linoleum Manufacturers, Kirkcaldy

Isabella Elder

Born 15 March 1828, Glasgow

Wife of John Elder, shipbuilder

Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox

Born 12 October 1844, England – exact place unrecorded

Daughter of 6th Duke of Richmond and Gordon

Archibald Sandeman

Born 24 July 1822, Perth

Professor of Queen's College and Owen College

John Thomson Paton

Born 14 July 1831, Alloa

Director of Patons Thread Mills, Alloa

Notes

- ¹ This paper is based on research conducted for an M.Sc. in Information and Library Studies at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. The completed thesis of the same name was submitted by Katrina Sked, under the supervision of Dr Peter Reid.
- ² The basic dictionary definition is 'a description of a person's life and career; the study of such descriptions as part of history'.
- ³ B. Whitaker, *The foundations: an anatomy of philanthropy and society* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974).
- ⁴ The late Mr James Shepherd, Rossend Castle, *Fifeshire Advertiser* (22 September 1906) 5.
- ⁵ C. J. McAlpine, *The lady of Claremont House: Isabella Elder, pioneer and philanthropist* (Glendaruel: Argyll, 1997).
- ⁶ P. H. Reid, 2004, *Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox (1844–1921)*, available via http://rgu-sim.rgu.ac.uk/history/gordonchapel/caroline_gordon_lennox.htm [last accessed 15 April 2004].
- ⁷ R. Baird, pers. comm.
- ⁸ A. Coats, *From the cottage to the castle* (Perth: Private publishers, 1890).
- ⁹ S. Mitchell, *Mitchell family history* (Bristol: Mardon, Son and Hall (for private circulation), 1923); The Project Team, *Six cord thread: the story of the Coats and Clarks Paisley threadmills* (Paisley: The Project Team, 1995); M. Usher, *The Usher family of Scotland: Sir John Usher*, available via <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~usher/ushersct/3154.htm> [last accessed 29 June 2004].
- ¹⁰ McAlpine, *The lady of Claremont House*.

- ¹¹ Baird, pers. comm.
- ¹² J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge, from the earliest times to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).
- ¹³ University of Glasgow, *The matriculation albums of the University of Glasgow from 1728–1858* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1913); University of Glasgow Archives (Glasgow), R 9/1/1: Latin class list, 1824–1825.
- ¹⁴ McAlpine, *The lady of Claremont House*.
- ¹⁵ Coats, *From the cottage to the castle*.
- ¹⁶ *Fifeshire Advertiser* (22 September 1906) 5; Death of Councillor James Moir, *Glasgow Herald* (2 December 1880) 4.
- ¹⁷ Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.
- ¹⁸ The late Provost Beveridge, *Fifeshire Advertiser* (7 March 1890) 5.
- ¹⁹ Kirkcaldy Civic Society, *Kirkcaldy's famous folk: Volume 3* (Kirkcaldy: Kirkcaldy Civic Society, 1997).
- ²⁰ B. Gittings and D. Munro, 1995–2004b, *Stephen Mitchell 1789–1874*, available via <http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/people/famousfirst1585.html> [last accessed 22 June 2004].
- ²¹ T. Manson, *Start of the floorcloth industry in Kirkcaldy*, available via <http://www.thefifepost.com/floorcloth.com> [last accessed 28 June 2004].
- ²² *Fifeshire Advertiser* (22 September 1906) 5; Kirkcaldy Civic Society, *Kirkcaldy's famous folk*; Kirkcaldy Civic Society, *Centenary of the Beveridge Park 1892–1992* (Kirkcaldy: Kirkcaldy Civic Society, 1992); *The Student, Edinburgh University Magazine, volume XVII 1902–1903* (Edinburgh: The Students' Representative Council, 1903).
- ²³ R. Youngs, pers. comm.
- ²⁴ Banquet to Mr James Shepherd, *Fifeshire Advertiser* (17 December 1904) 3; *Fifeshire Advertiser* (22 September 1906) 5.
- ²⁵ Kirkcaldy expanded rapidly because of the success of the linoleum trade. In 1876, it assumed the towns of Linktown, Pathhead, Sinclairtown, and Gallatown within the boundaries, stretching the town along the coast and increasing the population almost overnight. This new layout was also the source of its nickname the 'lang town' (long town) (Kirkcaldy Town Centre Management Ltd, *The many towns of one Lang Town*, available via <http://www.kirkcaldytowncentre.co.uk/touristhistory.htm> [last accessed 28 June 2004]).
- ²⁶ Crail, pers. comm.
- ²⁷ Ferguslie's laird, *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette* (30 March 1912) 3.
- ²⁸ The late Professor Sandeman, *Perthshire Advertiser* (3 July 1893) 2.
- ²⁹ Reid, *Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox*.
- ³⁰ Death of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, *Banffshire Advertiser* (1 October 1903) 7.
- ³¹ S. Driscoll, A. Jackson, S. Jones, M. Moss, and I. Russell, *Isabella Elder*, available via <http://www.thegovanstory.com/theme.php?content=39&theme=5> [last accessed 6 July 2004].
- ³² McAlpine, *The lady of Claremont House*.
- ³³ University of Glasgow Archives (Glasgow), DC122/9: Personal papers of Isabella Elder, 1869–1892.
- ³⁴ W. H. Fraser and R. J. Morris (eds), *People and society in Scotland: volume II 1830–1914* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1990).
- ³⁵ Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette (30 March 1912) 3.
- ³⁶ G. H. Coats, *Rambling recollections* (Paisley: Printed for private circulation by Alex Gardner, 1920).
- ³⁷ Baird, pers. comm.
- ³⁸ *Burke's peerage and baronetage*, 105th edn. (London: Burke's Peerage, 1970).
- ³⁹ S. Driscoll, A. Jackson, S. Jones, M. Moss, and I. Russell, *John Elder*, available via <http://www.thegovanstory.com/theme.php?content=40&theme=5> [last accessed 6 July 2004].
- ⁴⁰ Marriage rejoicings, *Alloa Journal and Clackmannanshire Advertiser* (6 June 1863) 2; Kirkcaldy Civic Society, *Kirkcaldy's famous folk*.
- ⁴¹ *Burke's peerage*.
- ⁴² Usher, *The Usher family of Scotland*.
- ⁴³ Usher, *The Usher family of Scotland; Fifeshire Advertiser* (22 September 1906) 5.
- ⁴⁴ *Glasgow Herald* (2 December 1880) 4.
- ⁴⁵ Fraser and Morris, *People and society in Scotland*.
- ⁴⁶ *Fifeshire Advertiser* (17 December 1904) 3.
- ⁴⁷ S. Nenadic, The Victorian middle class, in W. H. Fraser and I. Maver (eds), *Glasgow volume II: 1830–1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) 265–299.
- ⁴⁸ D. Owen, *English philanthropy: 1660–1960* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965); O. Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: social welfare and the voluntary principle* (Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd, 1980).

- ⁴⁹ T. C. Smout, *A century of the Scottish People 1830–1950* (London: Fontana Press, 1986).
- ⁵⁰ The Project Team, *Six cord thread*.
- ⁵¹ *Burke's peerage*.
- ⁵² K. A. Manley, Food for the mind or food for the belly? The Irish famine and the Public Libraries Act of 1850, *Library History* 17:3 (2001) 203–212.
- ⁵³ The document appears to have been written by a very close friend of Mitchell's who claims he is stating Mitchell's wishes.
- ⁵⁴ Paisley adopted the Act in 1867 and Alloa in 1885.
- ⁵⁵ Glasgow did not adopt the Public Libraries Act but, like Kirkcaldy, utilized rate-levying powers in local acts to raise the necessary funding for the continued maintenance of the libraries; The Free Libraries Act in Alloa, *Alloa Journal and Clackmannanshire Advertiser* (4 July 1885) 4.
- ⁵⁶ D. R. Grover and S. A. Bhagi, Public library movement in Great Britain, *Society and Leisure* 6:3 (1974) 25–35; Whitaker, *The foundations*.
- ⁵⁷ E. J. Clark, James Coats ... a life well spent, *Paisley Pattern* 47 (1987) 2; J. C. Crawford, James Coats: the countryside's Carnegie, *Scots Magazine* (December 1987) 286–289; Sandeman Public Library, *The Clan, Volume III No.4* (Edinburgh: Printed for private circulation by George Waterson and Sons) 153–154.
- ⁵⁸ Clark, *James Coats*.
- ⁵⁹ Aitken, *A history of the public library movement in Scotland to 1955*; Coats, *Rambling recollections*.
- ⁶⁰ Paisley Central Library, Paisley, *The Coats libraries in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: an essay* (n.d.).
- ⁶¹ Paisley Museum and Art Galleries, *Centenary 1870–1970* (Paisley: Paisley Library, 1970); Storr, *Centenary 1870–1970: a brochure to commemorate the centenary of the gift of the Library and Museum building by Sir Peter Coats to the Town Council of Paisley on 28th September 1870* (Paisley, 1971).
- ⁶² Perth and Kinross Council Archives (Perth), PE 6/1/1: Sandeman Library committee minute book, 1896–1905.
- ⁶³ R. Morrison, personal letter to the City Clerk of Perth, 17 August 1893.
- ⁶⁴ Perth and Kinross Council Archives (Perth), PE 1/1: Perth Council minutes 1893.
- ⁶⁵ Kirkcaldy new memorial halls, *Fife Free Press* (14 October 1899) 2; Public men on public affairs: Provost Beveridge on a new hall for Kirkcaldy, *Fifeshire Advertiser* (15 March 1889) 4.
- ⁶⁶ Adam Smith, the famous economist had come from Kirkcaldy. Beveridge, at the time of his death, had been head of a committee to raise funds for a public memorial to Smith (The late Provost Beveridge, *Fife Free Press* (8 March 1890) 4).
- ⁶⁷ *Fife Free Press* (14 October 1899) 2.
- ⁶⁸ *Elder Park*, available via <http://www.sunnygovan.com/PLACES/Places/ElderPark.html> [last accessed 6 July 2004].
- ⁶⁹ A. Craig, *The Elder Park Govan: an account of the gift of the Elder Park and of the erection and unveiling of the statue of John Elder: with notices on the lives of David Elder and John Elder and historical sketches of Govan* (Govan: James MacLehose and Sons, 1891).
- ⁷⁰ A. Anderson, *The old libraries of Fife* (Kirkcaldy: Fife County Library, 1992); T. Kelly, The historic role of the public library in Great Britain, *Society and Leisure* 6:3 (1974) 25–35.
- ⁷¹ Reid, *Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox*.
- ⁷² Crawford, James Coats: the countryside's Carnegie, 286–289.
- ⁷³ Proposed subscription library, *Alloa Journal* (19 February 1898) 3.
- ⁷⁴ Craig, *The Elder Park Govan*; McAlpine, *The lady of Claremont House*.
- ⁷⁵ D. A. Farnie, *Enriqueta Augustina Rylands (1843–1908), founder of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester: John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 1989); D. A. Farnie, *John Rylands of Manchester* (Manchester: The John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 1993); P. D. Watson, Carnegie ladies, lady Carnegies: women and the building of libraries, *Libraries and Culture* 31:1 (Winter 1996) 159–196.
- ⁷⁶ Paisley Free Library and Museum, *Memorial volume of the proceedings in connection with the establishment of the Free Library and Museum, Paisley, with portrait and four full-page illustrations* (Paisley: J. and J. Cook, 1871); Paisley Free Library and Museum, *Centenary 1870–1970*.
- ⁷⁷ Death of Mr John Thomson Paton of Norwood, *Alloa Journal* (5 February 1910) 2.
- ⁷⁸ E. King, *The hidden history of Glasgow's women: the new factor* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1993).
- ⁷⁹ Driscoll *et al.*, *Isabella Elder*.
- ⁸⁰ Kirkcaldy Civic Society, *Kirkcaldy's famous folk*.
- ⁸¹ Crawford, James Coats: the countryside's Carnegie, 286–289.
- ⁸² Reid, *Lady Caroline Gordon Lennox*.

⁸³ Another munificent gift to Alloa by Mr Thomson Paton, *Alloa Advertiser* (15 September 1894) 2.

⁸⁴ A. Carnegie, *The gospel of wealth* (London: F. C. Hagen and Co., 1889).

⁸⁵ Owen, *English philanthropy 1660–1960*.

⁸⁶ Ditzion, 1947 quoted by Watson, Carnegie ladies, lady Carnegies, 159–196.

⁸⁷ Watson, Carnegie ladies, lady Carnegies.

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