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Pride and Glory: Aberdeen Public Library During the Second World War

Between 1939 and 1945 Britain's public libraries often struggled to balance wartime shortages in materials and staff with an increased readership, while also being expected to actively contribute services and skills to the war effort. Government documents, committee minutes, reports, news stories and interviews have been employed in an attempt to build a picture of one particular library's experiences during this period.

In Aberdeen Public Library's Annual Report for the year 1941-1942, City Librarian, Marcus Kelly Milne, included the following quotation:

“Let us see the pride and glory of a public library ... in the magnitude of book circulation among the people, in the number of new readers enrolled, in the speed with which enquiry for any book is satisfied, in the quality of books lent for home reading, and in the number of children led to good reading and use of the library.” So says Lenin in his “What can we do for education?”¹

So affecting was Milne's citation of Lenin, an acceptable icon then of once-enemy-now-ally-soon-to-be-enemy-again Russia,² that the *Library Association Record* was moved to feature it in its 1943 summary of municipal library reports from around the country, writing, ‘It is appropriate and we make no apology for repeating it here, although we are grateful to Aberdeen for reminding us of it.’³ Lenin's words indeed provided a reminder of the library's ultimate purpose: to serve *the people*.

The *LAR* added in its summary, ‘Such “pride and glory” is what Aberdeen, and many another public library, is striving to attain’ and certainly, throughout most of the war, book issues in Aberdeen *did* rise, as they did in other parts of the country. However, this increase occurred against the background of a multitude of disruptions and distractions created by the Second World War. W.A. Munford notes the ‘sharp contrast’ in the government's attitude to the public library service in the First and Second World Wars. In the former conflict, libraries ‘had been harassed much more by HM Government than by the enemy.’⁴ This time, libraries were to be relied on as providers of both useful and entertaining reading material and as information centres. Despite this new attitude, however, books became harder to replace, costs rose, additional civil defence-based duties were undertaken, and staff were called up for National Service at a breathtaking rate. This last-mentioned probably affected

Aberdeen Public Library more than any other disruption. Both the City and Sub Librarian were absent from the library for significant periods during the war; staff on the brink of retirement were asked to stay on; working hours increased; and married women - banished from many types of jobs at this time - were called upon to return. Staffing problems impacted upon opening times, and the library was arguably affected by the quality of staff taken on to fill the gaps created by the absence of experienced members.

Aberdeen Public Library did strive to meet Lenin's ideals throughout the period 1939-1945. In fact, despite the hardships, there was some room for progress (the publication of a quarterly booklist, for example), and, indeed, arguably *because* of the war, other experiments were permitted (such as the opening of the library on Sundays).

Although chief credit for any innovations and for sheer hard work should go to Marcus Milne and the library staff, decisions made and orders acted upon by the Library Committee were of crucial importance at this time. Lord Provost Thomas Mitchell acted as Chairman of the Committee, which met five times a year, when reports from various sub-committee meetings were submitted for consideration or approval. Committee meetings would frequently be reported, and occasionally commented on, in the local press, with the 'Bon Accord Gossip' column in the *Evening Express* often the source for commentary. This daily column was authored by an anonymous reporter employing the *nom-de-plume*, 'The Rambler'. Much of the Rambler's 'gossip' concerning the library was favourable, but occasionally a good-natured dig might be taken, perhaps to the chagrin of the Committee members. For instance, although the Committee undoubtedly took a careful, thoughtful approach to most matters, this particular report concerning the October 1940 meeting might have led readers to think otherwise:

Yesterday's meeting of the Public Library Committee rivalled Harbour Board sittings for brevity. Lord Provost Mitchell took the chair, and the proceedings lasted barely a minute, during which minutes and reports were adopted. Councillor Jones, who arrived half a minute late, had hardly taken his seat before the meeting was over, while Baillie Reid heard nothing at all although only a minute late.⁵

Neither righteous pride nor deserved glory was reflected here; but for all those involved, Committee- and staff-members alike, running a Public Library service in a city of, at that time, approximately 180,000 people could never have been as simple as the Rambler's story might indicate. In 1939, six sites comprised Aberdeen Public Library. The Central Library, which had opened in July 1892, was the city's flagship site, an impressive-looking granite building situated in the Rosemount Viaduct area of the city. It was subsequently joined by branches in Torry, Ferryhill and Ruthrieston, East, Old Aberdeen and the Sir John Anderson Library in Woodside. A further branch was opened in Powis in 1941. Also in 1939, a total of thirty-nine people were recorded as being members of Aberdeen Public Library staff, and 16,009 people were registered as readers. Putting effort and thought into the running of a substantial city library may, then, have been the norm; but, during the Second World War, endeavours would be tested to the limit.

Although the Clydebank Blitz of 1941 remains the most infamous incident of damage inflicted upon Scotland during the Second World War, Aberdeen actually sustained the highest number of bombing raids. Between 1940 and 1943, approximately thirty attacks took place in which a total of 178 people were killed.⁶

When the Second World War was officially declared on 3 September 1939, preparations had been underway in the city for a number of months.⁷ The library had been contacted by the city's Air Raid Precautions [ARP] Co-ordinating and Supervising Officer in the spring of 1939, and in May the Book Sub-Committee authorised the Librarian to 'grant such facilities as may conveniently be given' to provide for the storage of Air Raid Precaution equipment.⁸

Once war began, measures were taken by the Library Committee to secure the library for ARP purposes. On 7 September, for instance, the Book and Building Sub-Committees were considering the subject of obtaining suitable window-blind material for the Central Library and branches, with the Book Sub-Committee resolving that the libraries 'be closed fifteen minutes before dusk, until such time as the rooms are properly blinded.'⁹ Observing blackout regulations was one of the most fundamental aspects of civil defence; *everyone* was expected to follow the rules. Among the relatively low number of offences committed in Aberdeen, however, was one by a member of the Public Library staff. Having left lights on after re-entering a branch

library to lend a book to a desperate reader, the staff member was later informed by police that a 'riot' had broken out near the branch, as local residents suspected that a German spy had left the library's lights on as a signal to enemy bombers. Forgetting to turn the lights back off after the building had been re-entered cost the employee a fine of thirty shillings.

Other ARP measures were taken by the library. On the same date in September 1939 that discussions were held for blinding windows, Marcus Milne and the Building Sub-Committee Convenor, Mr D.W. Beaton, were told to 'take such steps as may be necessary' in order to turn the Juvenile Department in the Central Library's basement into an ARP shelter for staff and visitors, should the need arise. The City Architect was then instructed to 'have the work carried out as early as possible.'¹⁰ The attention given to this project in the Committee minutes might suggest that a striking transformation of the Juvenile Department took place. Henderson describes how 'The entrance to the Juvenile Library was barricaded with sandbags and a baffle-wall.'¹¹ However, recollections by former staff members - and the fact that this 'shelter' is not shown in the Register of public basement shelters in the City of Aberdeen - indicates that the adaptation was less than memorable. One former staff member suggests only that 'probably it was sandbagged outside or something,'¹² so unobtrusive was this particular Air Raid Precaution.

Memoranda, circulars and orders were received from the Ministry of Home Security regarding fire-prevention duties - or 'firewatching'¹³ - and, in accordance with these orders, teams of five people (one male and two female members of the library staff, along with two messengers from the city's National Fire Service) were made responsible for fire-watching at the Central Library.¹⁴ Overnight shifts of ten and twelve hours, two or three nights a week, were not uncommon.

Firewatching was, of course, a very necessary part of civil defence, with devastation caused by incendiary bombs and gas attacks a constant threat. Paul Harris quotes one Aberdonian's 'common sense response' to air raids: 'Aye, we can stick it. Fit else is there tae dee?'¹⁵ Harris describes such responses as 'characteristically matter of fact', typical of the approach taken to air raids by Aberdeen's citizens. However, this particular remark perhaps hints at something other than mere 'common sense' stoicism: As with other aspects of the war for those on the homefront, civil defence activities often provided opportunities for excitement, amusement, and -

perhaps for women in particular - freedom from the more traditional authority of the family. A member of staff remembered:

You know, it was a horrible thing to say, but you enjoyed that bit of it, and firewatching we just ... we'd just sit and chat until ... we just had to try and sleep for a bit, and if there was an air-raid obviously we had to get up and go through the building to see if there were any flammatory things. [...] There never seemed to be serious things somehow or other. It was an excuse to get away from our parents for a night. You know how it is when you're that age, you think it's ... it was just a laugh, really.¹⁶

Fortunately, the Central Library was never victim to bombing, so firewatching there generally involved long nights with nothing in particular to do. Sleeping bags were provided, as were tea and biscuits. Table tennis staved off some of the boredom, as did a dart board attached to a bookcase in the Juvenile Library until management discovered the mysterious appearance of small holes in the woodwork, thus putting an end to this particular pastime. Mainly, however, conversation provided the best way of spending time during firewatching duty.

By Summer of 1944, the intensity of the threat posed by attack from overseas was reckoned to be somewhat abated, and measures were brought in that reflected the lesser danger. The Scottish Home Department granted a suspension of firewatching duties, and no further watches were kept at the Central Library after 12 September 1944.

Casualty recording was also performed by Aberdeen Public Library staff, the purpose of this service being to ensure that friends and relatives of air raid casualties and fatalities were informed as quickly as possible, to answer enquiries and provide the public with information, and to supply data on casualties to the Ministry of Home Security.

A scheme was drawn up by Marcus Milne detailing the centres to be used for the recording of casualties (basically, the Central Library and the five branches); and which districts each centre would be responsible for. The information required for the Casualty Recording Service, and the sources of such information were noted too in the draft (hospitals and mortuaries, for example), and further details of which sources would communicate with which CRS Centre were also included. Once the scheme was approved, Milne was able to inform the reader in the Annual Report of 1939-

1940 that 'The Libraries are used as Casualty Recording Centres in connection with A.R.P., the Library staff acting as recording clerks.'¹⁷

A former staff member recollected her experience of 21 April 1943, when at least ninety-eight people lost their lives during the worst bombing raid in Aberdeen. She described the 'huddled groups' of people who took refuge in the library as the bombs dropped, and the 'flickering shadows' caused by paraffin lamps brought into the building when the lights went out. The library as Casualty Recording Centre quickly took over:

Typewriters were set up and extra typists brought in. The schoolboy messengers set off on their bicycles as the hospital phoned to let us know there were casualties. The boys had to collect the lists from the hospital and bring them to the library where they were typed, distributed and displayed at the Central and all branch libraries.

As the night progressed more and more people arrived, anxious relatives, ministers and priests checking lists for names of parishioners, policemen, all moving about in the eerie shadows, the sound of the typewriters, quiet voices.¹⁸

Scenes like this were fairly common throughout the library's CRS career, with worried citizens often pacing the Reading Room floor, awaiting news. The library arguably coped as best as it could under often highly-charged circumstances, but found itself open to criticism nonetheless. In a report to the ARP Controller, for instance, Milne addressed Library Committee member Baillie Reid's complaint about the service's effectiveness. Reid had visited the library shortly after a bombing raid on Loch Street in February 1941, and made it known that he thought the Reading Room 'cramped for space' and those on duty 'did not seem to be slick enough in answering queries.' The Librarian responded by pointing out that no more than thirty people had occupied the Reading Room on that night, but, in any case, it was hardly surprising that 'every time a messenger arrived there was a scramble to find out if there was any word of their friends.' He also defended the staff's handling of enquiries, stating that there had not been as many enquiries as Reid seemed to think, since most questions were being asked by the same people.¹⁹

The CRS continued until the end of the war, members 'discharged' from duties on 5 May 1945, the day after Germany's surrender.

In July 1939 the Rambler informed his readership of a fascinating ‘innovation’ at Aberdeen Public Library. He wrote: ‘Instead of being stamped with the date of issue, books are now being stamped with the day of return.’ A possible saving on stamps for posting reminders was mentioned, but, the Rambler observed, ‘It remains to be proved by experiment whether the new style will actually bring books in earlier.’²⁰

Unfortunately, charting the success or otherwise of the innovation under ‘normal’ circumstances was rendered impossible by the outbreak of war, and the timely return of books remained a problem. In the Annual Report of 1938-1939, Marcus Milne blamed ‘selfishness and carelessness,’ but conceded that another reason could be added:

The past year has been a critical one in our history, crisis succeeding crisis until the commencement of hostilities in September. Readers probably have some excuse for forgetting to return their library books.²¹

The ‘commencement of hostilities’ also perhaps contributed to the disappointing news that home issues had, overall, not risen, despite, as Milne noted, ‘an increase in the number of readers in the past year.’²² The Librarian, however, did not have long to wait for a rise. The following year, Milne reported on earlier speculation that ‘the “black-out” and consequent curtailment of social activities might lead to an increase in readers.’ This indeed proved to be the case, and 1939-1940 saw an increase in both readers and issues, figures totalling 17,018 and 545,429 respectively, ‘the highest number of readers since the Public Library opened,’ as Milne pointed out.²³ By 1943, however, the stock itself was suffering through more negative aspects of the war.

Milne wrote:

It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain books in the quality and quantity we require. Even when books are ordered in advance of publication we cannot be sure of obtaining copies, owing to the increased demand, the drastic limitation in the number of copies printed, and the lack of any unified method in their allocation.

He also pointed to the rising costs of books and binding, costs that had to be met since, ‘the attractiveness of the stock [...] has to be maintained.’²⁴ Aberdeen was, of course, not alone, as libraries around the country tried to cope with book resources

that were becoming both more costly and increasingly limited. Not only was this shortage due to the limited availability of paper and other materials; as Henderson notes, the 'loss of thousands of volumes' from book suppliers through bomb damage in London and other cities also affected supplies.²⁵

Another consequence of the war was that unexpected costs suddenly arose. In the year 1939-1940, for instance, an increase of £687 on the previous year's spending had occurred, most of which was spent on civil defence measures. The introduction of the War Damage Act, 1941 was attended to the following year, with the Committee resolving in May that the library buildings and furniture be insured. In addition, since the terms of the Act did not compulsorily cover stock, the City Chamberlain suggested that a 'first cover insurance should be arranged for £12,500 for the book stock of the Library.'²⁶ Furthermore, cost of living increases also affected spending other than that of salaries, with the Librarian noting in the Annual Report for 1940-1941 'slight increases in practically every other item of expenditure.'²⁷ Other matters of budgeting and accounting remained important, such as the financial welfare of staff, and 'war increases' or 'bonuses' were regularly awarded local authority staff to allow for, as put in the 5 June 1941 report of the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee, 'the increased cost of living arising from the War.'²⁸ On 25 June 1940, the Librarian's salary was also taken into consideration by the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee, and at the following PLC meeting, Milne's grading was adjusted to the scale of £500 - £700, matching the scale of the previous Librarian, G.M. Fraser.²⁹ A proposal by the Sub-Committee to re-grade Milne's salary to a *higher* scale had been rejected by the PLC on the grounds that wartime was probably not an appropriate period in which to consider major adjustments in senior officials' salaries.

In spite of difficulties, however, reading figures continued to rise as the war progressed. In 1943-1944 the library had its most successful year with 882,841 books issued, and 21,123 registered members.

Among the new readers were, of course, members of the Armed Forces. The Scottish Library Association had made it clear in September 1940 that library authorities were to welcome temporary members. Thus, in 1940-1941 alone, for instance, Milne noted that 'Over 500 individual members of the Forces have joined the Public Library.'³⁰

Supplying books to military units was a common practice throughout the

country too, and as early as four days after the outbreak of war, the Book Sub-Committee 'authorised the Librarian to make arrangements for the supply of books to A.R.P. posts, military units, etc., in the city.'³¹ These units would later include HMS Scylla, a frigate 'adopted' by the city in June 1942, which benefited from a box specially marked for the collection of books for its crew.

In Aberdeen, then, along with the rest of the country, people were reading more than ever. A wide range of material was being read too, but certain trends were noted in Aberdeen that may well have been representative of the nation. In the months just before and after war broke out, it was hardly surprising if people were curious about the conflict's protagonist. Milne pointed out in the Annual Report for 1938-1939 that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* 'has been bespoken no less than 110 times during the past six months.' Also noted was a general increase in non-fiction bespeaks. Milne surmised that this was 'possibly accounted for by the demand for books on current affairs,'³² although the following year he noted a decrease in bespeaks for 'books dealing with the European situation.'³³ A 'constant demand' for books on the RAF was observed in 1941 (and would continue through most of the war) as was the popularity of titles such as *The Truth on the Tragedy of France*, and T.E. Lawrence's account of the Arab Revolt, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.³⁴ Cinema also had an influence on what was being read, with the Librarian describing in 1940 a 'tremendous demand' for novels such as *The Citadel*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Rains Came*, *The Four Feathers*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Rebecca*, following their film versions' appearances in local cinemas.³⁵

Decisions also had to be made on which newspapers and journals would be held during this politically crucial time, and some notable additions were made. Allegiance to allied nations was displayed by adding titles such as *France* in 1940, *La France Libre* and *The Soviet War News* in 1941, and the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* in 1942; while patriotism was expressed through subscription to *Navy* and *Civil Liberty* in 1940. Albeit somewhat late in the day, in 1944, publications such as *News Review* and the *Bulletin of International News* were added to the list of periodicals at the Central Library, as was the *London Gazette Supplement* 'for the duration of the war.'³⁶ In September 1942, the Book Sub-Committee also authorised the Librarian to add *The Daily Worker* to the Central and East Branch. This would be a fairly unremarkable addition were it not for the *Worker's* recent troubled history. In January 1941, it had

been banned by the Government, the communist anti-war stance viewed - at a time when the 1939 non-aggression pact between the Nazis and Soviets still stood - as direct subordination. It was soon realised, however, that banning newspapers was hardly democratic, and Churchill himself began backing off from the decision, stating that 'Anything in the nature of persecution, victimisation or man-hunting is odious to the British people.'³⁷ The ban was eventually lifted. Given the *Soviet War News*, *Anglo-Soviet Journal*, and *Daily Worker* additions, as well as that of *Western Socialist* in 1943, the library was evidently keen to show support for, not only the UK's new ally, but also people's rights to access information espousing ideologies central to its culture.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the increased readership already initiated by the war, the addition of various titles was coupled with an effort to publicise the library's stock. More surprising even, given the nationwide paper shortage and salvage campaigns, including efforts by Aberdeen Public Library, was the means by which the stock was to be advertised. The *Evening Express* already published, in association with the library, a fortnightly list of recommended borrowings, but on 19 July 1941, the *Rambler* reported that 'If all goes well, a quarterly readers' bulletin will be issued in future by Aberdeen Public Library.' The proposal had been approved at the previous day's Library Committee meeting, and Lord Provost Mitchell's was the only voice close to dissenting. According to the *Rambler*, Mitchell conceded that 'the bulletin would be an excellent innovation - but was it right for the committee to consider such a departure in time of war and paper scarcity?' Apparently it was, since the 'advantages of the bulletin as a public service [...] outweighed this objection.'³⁸ In October of that year, then, *Books You Can Borrow*³⁹ appeared. A substantial publication of several pages, with an alternating colour cover, it organised its recommendations by theme. It also featured one-page editorials by the City Librarian in which library-related information was reported and issues addressed, and advertisements for local businesses. In the bulletin's second editorial, of January 1942, Marcus Milne was pleased to report that the first issue had been 'very well received and has proved of great value to our readers, and particularly to units of H.M. Forces.'⁴⁰

The library also participated in both city-wide and national schemes to boost morale, promote reading and occasionally do both at the same time. These activities

included the display in the Central Library of photographs issued by the Ministry of Information; an assortment of books 'displayed at the Art Gallery in connection with the National Book Council's "Books for Freedom" exhibition' the following August;⁴¹ and an exhibition which focused on 'the educational and book facilities provided for our Prisoners of War.'⁴² The library even found itself taking part in the national iron salvage campaign, the Building Sub-Committee resolving in September 1940 to 'offer no objections to the removal of railings' from outside the Central, Torry, and Ruthrieston and Ferryhill libraries.⁴³

In issue number six of *Books You Can Borrow*, Marcus Milne wrote of the continued increase in Aberdeen Public Library's supply of home-reading issues to the public. He also complained about finding it 'extremely difficult to read anything worth while, quite apart from the difficulty of obtaining it.' 'But,' he continued,

if one is fortunate enough to obtain a decent book, you can picture a sitting-room cum dining-room with one easy chair, a small fire, and perhaps up to 20 or more men - some noisily playing cards, one playing the piano, others animatedly discussing the shortcomings of the C.O. or his N.C.O. underlings; on top of that the wireless may be tuned on at full strength.⁴⁴

The City Librarian was, in fact, writing this January 1943 editorial from an RAF station somewhere in England, where he was on military service. That Milne had ended up in such an environment was the culmination of a long, drawn-out, often frustrating conflict of interest, in which the Library Committee had attempted - and ultimately failed - to take on the might of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

In the January 1942 edition of the *Library Association Record*, editor L.R. McColvin had written of the Association's dissatisfaction 'with the way in which the man and woman power problem in relation to the public library service has been handled by the Ministry of Labour.'⁴⁵ McColvin conceded that, certainly, people were needed for National Service; the loss of library staff was not what irked him. Rather, it was what he saw as a 'breach of faith' on the part of the Ministry. McColvin wrote of the 'kaleidoscopic rapidity' with which the position of library staff had changed on a seemingly daily basis. He described how

Once men were reserved at 30, then at 35, then dereserved; then we were told that key men would be given deferment and that such deferment could be regarded as renewable for the duration unless exceptional circumstances arose; then we were told that such deferment would be only for three months.

McColvin also found himself complaining about a similar flux in the attitude of the MoL towards female employees. Having been encouraged to employ women as replacements for absent men, libraries were promised that female library staff would remain reserved. McColvin now noted that 'we are informed that they will be taken unless they are in key positions.' He described the overall effect of the Ministry's constantly changing attitude as 'deplorable,' adding that, 'Library authorities are unable to make any long term plans because the Ministry has made none.'

Ironically, the Ministry of Labour had, earlier in the war, expressed its reliance on public libraries to provide recreation for those involved in war work, when libraries were encouraged to maintain, and indeed, if need be, to *extend*, their services. Also, up until the end of 1942, staff at Aberdeen Public Library had been permitted to *volunteer* for military duties, and it was only during a special meeting called by the PLC in November that this general permission was withdrawn. The PLC resolved that 'since it is the Committee's view that the work of the Public Library is an essential National Service [...] all applications from members of the staff to volunteer for National Service should be declined.'⁴⁶ Staffing difficulties were, of course, cited.

Because of these difficulties, married women were being retained or asked to return. Younger women's services were also attained to fill vacancies left by those who had joined the forces, as were the services of staff of retirement age, such as Annie Henderson in 1943 and Jessie Stewart in 1944. Gratitude towards such women for stepping into the breach was not always forthcoming. In an *LAR* article of November 1940, Edmund V. Corbett bemoaned the 'disadvantage' experienced by the man eligible for National Service, comparing his situation unfavourably with men over thirty 'as well as with his feminine colleagues.'⁴⁷ He ruefully noted that less senior appointments, which 'in normal circumstances would present good jumping-off places for the keen young assistant [...] must now inevitably go to women.'⁴⁸

It was not only assistants such as Donald Begg, Norman Wilcox and Ethel Shaw who were called up or who volunteered for war work. In June 1941, the City

Librarian reported to the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee that cataloguer, William Chalmers, 'had requested to be released from his duties this month in order to take up Forestry work under the National Service Scheme'⁴⁹; and in October that same year, the Committee agreed that the Sub-Librarian, Eric Ward, could 'volunteer for service with H.M. Forces before he is actually called up.'⁵⁰

Earlier that year, the Committee had noted that the latest Schedule of Reserved Occupations, the April 1941 Schedule, no longer exempted librarians from the military, and had remitted the matter to the Town Clerk, G.S. Fraser, who was given powers to 'take any steps necessary to secure, on behalf of the City Librarian and Sub-Librarian, exemption or deferment from military service under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939.'⁵¹ The procedure for deferment applications was described in a *Press and Journal* story which referred to the course of action laid out in a recent circular issued by the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin. Employers were to 'obtain forms from an employment exchange and send them to the Government Department for which they are principally working,'⁵² which, in the library's case, was the Scottish Education Department. The story went on to explain that, although subject to renewal, six months was 'the maximum period of deferment in any circumstances,' but that the 'general maximum' period would be three months for those needed for 'vital' war work. In a letter dated 27 September, from the MoL to the Library Association, a copy of which was sent to the Town Clerk, it was further explained that the education departments responsible for British libraries would support deferments for 'key men' aged between thirty-five and forty-one, and that, in most cases, 'subject of course, to the exigencies of the military situation' the MoL would accept the Education Department's recommendation.⁵³

On 17 October, however, G.S. Fraser reported upon a letter from the Scottish Education Department in which regret was expressed that the SED did 'not feel able to recommend deferment in the case of Mr Ward,' although it did agree to support a deferment for Marcus Milne.⁵⁴ Bearing in mind the MoL's instruction to the Library Association that, in most cases, recommendations by the SED would be accepted, hopes were most likely high within the Committee that a significant deferment - or even exemption - for Milne would be granted. However, in December 1941, a special meeting of the Library Committee was called to consider a report by the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee which focused on a letter received from the SED, dated 22

November 1941. The letter advised that

the Ministry of Labour and National Service, after consultation with the Library Association, have now intimated to the Department that the calling-up of Mr Milne will be deferred until 17 February, 1942, and that no subsequent extension of the period of deferment can be considered.⁵⁵

The letter went on to inform the Committee of the MoL's opinion that there was 'no reason why, after a short period of training, the work of librarians should not be done adequately by men over military age, or by women.'

Yet, curiously, correspondence of 29 November 1941 addressed to Marcus Milne from P.S.J. Welsford, Secretary of the Library Association revealed that the MoL may not have been entirely honest in its depiction of the matter. The letter contained a copy of another letter, one that Welsford had sent to the Scottish Education Department. This second letter included the following:

I beg to state most categorically that we have not be [sic] consulted in the individual case of Mr Milne, nor do we acquiesce that his deferment should be limited to 17th February, 1942. [...] On the 14th November the Ministry of Labour wrote to us that it had been decided to grant three months' deferment in those cases sponsored by the Education Departments, but no further extension. There has been no consultation with us, we were simply informed of the decision.⁵⁶

The letter closed by urging the SED to make 'strong representations to the Ministry of Labour in the case of Mr Milne, and also in others in a similar position.' Despite strenuous efforts, the SED then reported to the Town Clerk that, having communicated with the MoL, it understood that there was 'no prospect' that the Ministry would review its decision.⁵⁷

The Committee, however, refused to give up and on 8 January 1942 the Town Clerk was instructed 'to lodge a formal application for Mr Milne's deferment, and to request that an opportunity should be given to a Deputation from the Committee [...] to interview the Local Board, and state the views of the Committee.'⁵⁸ Fraser thus informed the MoL that the Committee was 'gravely concerned over the prospect of losing this official, for whom it is impossible to find a substitute.'⁵⁹ He contrasted the situation in Aberdeen Public Library with others in Scotland, noting that in Glasgow

and Edinburgh, for instance, many senior members of staff were over military age, and so these services were largely unaffected by National Service call-ups. The letter closed by, once again, calling attention to the 'great concern' felt by the Committee over the City Librarian's calling up, and requested 'an interview between a deputation from the Committee and your Board.' The MoL acknowledged receipt of the letter, but informed the Town Clerk that, since this was a matter for the Man-Power Board, it had been forwarded to the local Man-Power office.⁶⁰

Unfortunately, what happened next is not clear. The PLC minutes make no further mention of the matter until November 1942; nor does the Town Clerk appear to have received any further correspondence concerning the case. It is not even certain whether an interview between the Committee deputation and the Man-Power Board took place. What *is* known is that no exemption was granted, and in November 1942, Marcus Milne joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserves - just over nine months from the deferment date quoted by the MoL.

Any explanation of the nine-month gap between the deferment date given and the date of Milne's enlistment remains purely speculative. It is possible, for instance, that a further deferment *was* granted following an interview with the Man-Power Board; it is also possible that, given the circumstances of trying to obtain a suitable replacement for the Librarian, Milne simply was not called up until one was found.⁶¹ A further element of the circumstances surrounding Milne's calling up is perhaps found in his replacement as City Librarian. In the Annual Report for 1940-1941, it was reported that the library had 'lost the services of Mr W.P. Chalmers, who is engaged in forestry work for the duration of the war.'⁶² However, at some point, unspecified in the minutes, during 1942 William Chalmers returned to the library. Given the earlier expectation that he would be absent until the end of the war, it might possibly be suggested, then, that Chalmers was returned to civilian life primarily to fill the gap left by the Librarian's absence, his appointment a natural solution to the problem of obtaining a replacement for Milne. Whatever the exact circumstances may have been, on 24 November 1942, the PLC called a meeting to discuss arrangements for Milne's absence, and William Chalmers was appointed Assistant Librarian, with 'the powers of engaging, dismissing and of suspending the Library Staff [to] be dealt with by Mr Chalmers in consultation with Mr Fiddes,'⁶³ James Fiddes being the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee Convenor.

That same day, the Rambler informed his readers that ‘Many people in widely different circles will be sorry that we are losing the services of Mr Marcus K. Milne, our city librarian, who reports this week for service with the R.A.F.’⁶⁴ Note was taken of how Milne had ‘made his mark’ at the library, ‘where he took command just over four years ago.’

On 27 November, 1942 Marcus Kelly Milne enlisted in the RAF Volunteer Reserves and began training straight away. Then, in April 1943, William Chalmers, ‘appointed to carry out the duties of the City Librarian during the absence of the latter on service with H.M. Forces,’ was made Acting Librarian.⁶⁵

Keeping mostly to himself except when undertaking duties, Chalmers perhaps represented the antithesis of Milne’s more dynamic, creative approach. Yet, a wry, knowing sense of humour was contained beneath his unassuming exterior, as evidenced in his second editorial for *Books You Can Borrow*.⁶⁶ With the tone of one who dare not be questioned, the Acting Librarian briefed readers on various regulations. He pointed out, for instance, that

You may have at one time, and for as long as a fortnight, as many as four volumes, two of which may be fiction. Books in special demand may be retained for only one week.

You may have books longer than a fortnight by giving intimation personally, in writing or by ‘phone.

You may bespeak any two books concurrently.

You may recommend any book for addition to the Library.

External readers (army posts, schools, institutions) may have boxes of books up to one hundred for one month at a time.

‘Make your requirements known to the Librarian,’ was Chalmers’ blunt directive.

‘Make full use of your Library.’⁶⁷

When the Committee decided in September 1939 to close libraries earlier while provisions were made to obtain blackout curtain material, it was probably not known that this was only the beginning of what would turn out to be a fairly frequent exercise in necessarily ‘creative’ opening hours throughout the Second World War. Problems

with staff numbers, anxieties about air raids, and a wish to make up for disruptions would all contribute to adjustments in library access.

Extending the library's daylight opening hours in view of wartime circumstances may well have been the reason for the Book Sub-Committee's resolution in January 1940 to open the Central Lending Department on Wednesday afternoons, traditionally a half-holiday,⁶⁸ although the purpose for this change went unexplained in the minutes. The July holiday of 1940 was affected too, with the Committee deciding that 'owing to the war,' the library be opened over this period.⁶⁹ Another, arguably bolder, decision was to extend opening hours to Sundays, similar experiments having been conducted around the country by the time the Committee discussed the matter on the 19 January 1940. Committee member, J. Everard Rae, explained to the *Press and Journal* why he had proposed opening the library on Sundays from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.: "There are many people who are not so fortunate as I am in being able to sit at the fireside on a Sunday afternoon and enjoy a quiet read of a newspaper or a book." Rae expressed sympathy for the 'poor fellow who lives with his family in a one-room house and the fellow from the country who has nowhere to go,' (sympathy did not extend to the 'poor woman' or 'unfortunate child') but added that he had no intentions of recommending Sunday opening hours for other leisure activities. "A quiet read on a Sunday afternoon is a very different thing from going to a football match or a cinema," he observed.⁷⁰

Thus, Sunday opening of the Central Reading Room and Reference Department was undertaken. However, the experiment's lack of success was commented on in the 1939-1940 Annual Report, where it was noted that 'attendance has been most disappointing.'⁷¹ Average Sunday attendance figures of '110 in the Reading Room and 26 in the Reference Department' were compared to average week-day attendances in the same period of 320 and 140 respectively. Figures continued to decrease, but, determinedly, Sunday opening continued until Spring of 1942, when the Book Sub-Committee 'resolved that [the] Reading Room and Reference Department should be closed on Sundays as from the 1st May.'⁷²

Nor were evenings positively affected by the wartime reading boom. By the time another major adjustment to opening hours was made in December 1940 eleven air raid attacks, beginning in June of that year, had taken place. Near the end of the year, it was decided to close the Lending Department earlier 'in view of the likelihood

of increased air raids'.⁷³ The *Evening Express* reported on the changes, to take place from 16 December:

The central lending department and those at the East and Woodside branches will close at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. Reading-rooms will close at 8 p.m. instead of the present times - 9.30 p.m. or 10 p.m.⁷⁴

Not everyone was understanding. Although the *Evening Express* had neglected to note it, the Reference Department was also closing earlier and, on 17 December, the *Press and Journal* reported on a protest letter it had received, signed by sixty University students, against the new Reference Department hours. The students' objection was based on the opinion that, since they relied on the department making available books they could not otherwise afford, 'Interruption of their studies half-way through the evening [...] would have a detrimental effect.'⁷⁵ The newspaper reported that Marcus Milne had said 'that the reference department is not used by the students to the extent that it might be.'

"We took a census during November . . . At 8 p.m. the average number in the room was twenty-eight, at nine o'clock it was twenty-one, and at ten o'clock three."

Although some readers were disappointed with the decision to adopt earlier closing times at various departments, no one appeared more perturbed than an R.S. Massie, whose decidedly singular letter in the 'Other People's Opinions' section of the *Evening Express* appeared on 26 December. The author noted the new reading-room closing times, and stated with exasperation that, 'Public-houses remain open till 9.30! The religious and tee-total fanatics, I think, should have something to say to this reinforced insult to their doctrines.'⁷⁶ Massie suggested that reading facilities 'would play their part' as a 'counteract to the "stuffie" that Holy Writ tells us "biteth and stingeth like an adder",' but concluded that, now, 'the fiat has gone forth - Join our alcohol club and to blazes with the innocent devotion to print!' The letter compared the Town Council to the 'ancient Christless clamouring crowd' who had chosen Barrabas over Jesus. 'Can we take this also?' Massie asked, presumably rhetorically.

The situation was eventually reviewed and from 3 March 1941 departments

were opened until 8 p.m. apart from the earlier-closing Juvenile Department. It was left to the Book Sub-Committee Convenor and the Librarian to extend the Central Reference and Reading Rooms' closing hours. Whether or not R.S. Massie was at all appeased by the hour-long extension to 9 p.m. eventually decided on is not known.

The last major change to opening hours took place two years later, by which time the main problem with organising hours of service was staffing shortages. In 1942, Milne had requested that, because of difficulties in staffing the Central Library, 'he should be authorised to increase the hours of the members of his staff from 42 to 44 hours per week.'⁷⁷ Now, in March 1943, Chalmers reported to the Book Sub-Committee that 'it was almost impossible to obtain replacement of members of the staff who have had to leave on account of ill-health or National Service.'⁷⁸ In July, Chalmers submitted a memorandum to the Staffing and Grading Sub-Committee, where he proposed a plan which involved spreading half-days for staff at the Central Library more evenly across the week than was the present case, in order to avoid having to close the Central Library at any time. Branches, however, did not escape daytime opening restrictions. Chalmers later noted that

Owing to the withdrawal of staff by the Ministry of Labour, curtailment of the hours of opening was found necessary. Accordingly, it was decided to close five of the six Branch Libraries⁷⁹ from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on certain days of the week, thus obviating the necessity of relief duties.⁸⁰

By this time, six staff were absent on National Service, and a further seven had resigned that year alone,⁸¹ putting a great strain on the library's employee resources. In his July memorandum, Chalmers stated that the library would 'make good any deficiency by recruitment of young girls, married women, and women over forty, wherever possible.'⁸²

Throughout the war, the best efforts of the staff and Committee were used towards keeping the library running as 'normally' as possible. The reading public *might* have noticed the deteriorating condition of books, or even that certain members of staff were no longer to be found at the Central Library or Branches, but the library was still open for business as almost-usual. What probably affected readers most was the hours of service the library was inspired, or forced, to adopt. Opening hours had been adjusted to accommodate a greater demand for reading (even if Sundays had

proven unsuccessful); to allow for blackout conditions; and ultimately because the library, with the limited staff available, found it increasingly difficult to operate as usual.

On 4 May 1945, Germany surrendered, and four days later V.E. Day was celebrated. In June, Chalmers reported that the baffle walls that had been erected in front of certain library windows as an ARP measure had now been removed. In October, the Book Sub-Committee remitted the matter of blackout curtain disposal to James Fiddes and Baillie Fraser, and the curtains were subsequently sold off. Restricted opening hours remained in force, however, since staffing was still short.⁸³ By the publication of the 1944-1945 Annual Report, nine staff were still noted as being absent on service with HM Forces, this figure reduced to three by the same time the following year.

Although measures such as rationing continued for some time - preventing things from returning exactly to 'normal' - a renewed sense of freedom was experienced by citizens throughout the country. In 1943-1944, Aberdeen Public Library had recorded its highest number of readers and issues ever, and between 1939 and 1944, according to figures in the Annual Reports, a total of 4,217,953 titles had been loaned, over 25 times the total stock recorded at the end of September 1944. By mid-autumn, 1945, the boom period was seemingly over. 'To-day's Comment' in the *Evening Express* on 20 October, discussed the library's report that 'during the last quarter people have been reading less, and the decline is mainly in fiction.' Possible reasons, such as school vacation periods or, in the Librarian's opinion, a shortage of new fiction, were mused upon; but another possibility was considered primary by the 'Comment' author:

The first, and chief, [reason] is probably that, though the dark nights have come the black-out is gone. Many people who sat, willingly or unwillingly, at home during the war can now go out to cinemas, theatres or meetings.⁸⁴

Indeed, the Annual Report for 1944-45 was the first since 1939 to record a decline in reading issues from the previous year, the figure being 856,017 - a decrease of 26,824 from 1943-44. The intensity of the decrease however, proved temporary. Despite the problems with staff, opening hours and the supply of books; and despite the extra duties staff had had to contend with, the Second World War had provided Aberdeen

Public Library with an opportunity to show the public the value of its service. Although Milne had earlier expressed discontent that the library's popularity was down to blackout conditions, the war had seemingly just acted as the instigator. The people of Aberdeen *had*, it appeared, caught the reading bug. So, while the excitement and euphoria created by victory and the end of conflict perhaps understandably contributed to a downturn in reading activity, at the end of 1946 an increase of 22,251 on the previous year's issues was recorded. This meant the library had lost *some* footing compared with the all-time high of 1943-44, but not much.

Nineteen forty-six brought more good news. Throughout the year, employees who had been absent on National Service drifted back to the library. Staff members Norman Willox, Ethel Shaw, Isobel Sellar, Katherine McCulloch, Joan Steele and Sub-Librarian Eric Ward all returned.⁸⁵ Helen Reid, who had been withdrawn from the library to serve in the WRNS, was now married and retired from the library, while Ewan MacPherson, Bill Critchley and Cathy Mair were still engaged in the Forces by the time of the Annual Report. Earlier that year, on 30 January, *The Rambler* had also remarked on those coming home: 'One by one,' he wrote,

the old familiar faces are returning from the wars. Well-known city officials are among ex-Service men restored to their old posts in 'civvy street'.[...] And now comes Mr Marcus Milne, City Librarian, from R.A.F. service in India.⁸⁶

Flight Lieutenant Milne had spent just over three years in the military undertaking 'photographic interpretation and intelligence work'⁸⁷ and had served as adjutant of No. 347 Wing, Calcutta. On his return, he expressed, on behalf of the library, 'our appreciation of the work of Mr W.P. Chalmers,'⁸⁸ but was obviously pleased to be back where he belonged. Although, as noted in the *SLA News* years later, he 'was hampered, as were all other chief librarians, by five years of building and financial restrictions' after the war,⁸⁹ his enthusiasm for the library service never dimmed. Between 1950 and his being elected President of the Scottish Library Association in 1967, four further branch libraries were opened, a mobile book service started, a service for housebound readers created, and various branches and departments reorganised to fit with changing times. Marcus Kelly Milne retired from Aberdeen Public Library in 1968. He died in 1989 at the age of 87.

Throughout the war years, as in libraries across the country, Milne, Chalmers, and members of the Library Committee and staff strove to make the best of a very difficult time. Also as in other towns, Aberdeen's library held a symbolic status in the city as the centre of knowledge and wisdom, as well as being the acceptable, most open face of local government. However, Aberdeen Public Library's geographic location gave this symbolism a dimension many other cities lacked. Its flagship, the Central Library, was (and still is), as its name suggests, in the centre of the city. It could be viewed, for instance, from Aberdeen's main road, Union Street, when one stood at the corner of Union Terrace. Standing at Rosemount Viaduct itself, one could also observe the library's juxtaposition to two other buildings on its left: Saint Mark's Church, and His Majesty's Theatre. This troika has long been known to locals as representative of the three basics of civilised living: Education, Salvation and Damnation. The juxtaposition may have been unconscious, a planning 'accident' by city officials, but the symbolism of this erudite/holy/unholy trinity would have weighed heavy at a time when relief was needed from uncertainty, fear and, frequently, sadness.

As one form of mitigation, the library was important to the public and stationed forces, whether it supplied information relevant to the current crisis, or reading matter the primary goal of which was to entertain. *Books You Can Borrow* may have appeared at a seemingly odd time, but paradoxically, it was perhaps also the most appropriate period for the emergence of the booklist. As previously suggested, it drew visiting military personnel, strangers in unfamiliar surroundings, to a place where they knew they would be welcomed; it also represented 'normality' when many were unsure whether things would ever return to normal; above all, perhaps, it reminded visitors and locals alike that libraries were there for *them* (books *you* can borrow) at a time when both individuals and communities mattered more than ever - books for *the people*, as Lenin's quote had advised.

Showing a willingness to act outside of its usual remit in those abnormal times also mattered to the library. By undertaking a duty such as firewatching, Aberdeen Public library was 'mucking in' with the rest of the country; in recording lists of casualties, library staff took the skills they knew best and adapted them to perform a task few would have envied; and various war-related causes were supported, whether through participation in book-based exhibitions or through simply allowing advantage to be taken of the library's place in the community.

This study, based on scraps of evidence collected from various sources, has only been able to hint at the great effort that went into maintaining and expanding Aberdeen's library service in the years from 1939 to 1945. Public libraries remain essential for both academic and recreational purposes, but it is unlikely that library Committee-members or staff will ever again be called upon to respond to conditions such as those brought about by the Second World War. That Aberdeen Public Library *did* ultimately cope with the potentially overwhelming circumstances of staff shortages, the deterioration of stock, cost increases and early closing is admirable, to say the least.

Notes

¹ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-eighth annual report of the Committee for the year 1941-1942* (1943) p. 3.

² More recently, of course, reservations have been expressed regarding Vladimir Ilich Lenin's conduct during both the Bolshevik Revolution and his subsequent position as Soviet Leader. His reputation as one of the most *significant* figures of 20th-century politics, however, remains intact.

³ 'Municipal library notes', *Library Association Record*, 45(March 1943) pp. 51-52.

⁴ W.A Munford, *A history of the Library Association 1877-1977* (London: Library Association, 1976) pp. 226-27.

⁵ The Rambler, 'Bon Accord gossip: swift work', *Evening Express* (19 October 1940) p. 4.

⁶ David Atherton et al, *Far wis ye fin the sireen blew: Aberdeen air raids remembered* (Aberdeen: City of Aberdeen, 1994) p. 5.

⁷ This is despite Paul Harris' assertion that the Scottish Office 'did not expect attacks on any great scale in the north east [...]. Indeed, the reports of the District Commissioner were not even submitted to Edinburgh but instead went direct to the Home Office in London. You can search in the Scottish Records Office in vain for any reference to a war ever having taken place in Aberdeen ... for there is none.' (Paul Harris, *Aberdeen and the North East at war: a pictorial account 1939-1945* (Aberdeen: Press and Journal, 1987) p. 4.) In fact, a warning of troubles to come had occurred on 3 August, when the *Graf Zeppelin* airship, in the words of Robert Smith, 'appeared off Aberdeen, looking for all the world like the ghost of the L20 from the First World War.' (Robert Smith, *The Granite City: a history of Aberdeen* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998) p. 152.)

⁸ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1938-1939* (1940) p. 53.

⁹ *Minutes and proceedings 1938-1939*, p. 66.

¹⁰ *Minutes and proceedings 1938-1939*, pp. 69-70.

¹¹ Moira Henderson, *On the Viaduct: being a short account of Aberdeen Central Library 1892-1992*. (Aberdeen: City of Aberdeen, 1992) p. 25.

¹² Interview conducted by author with wartime library employee (August 2001).

¹³ Amongst others, these included the *Fire Watcher's Order, 1940*; and the *Fire Prevention (Business Premises) Order, 1941*, accompanied by an *explanatory memorandum*. Up until 1944, however, the *Fire Prevention (Business Premises) (No. 2) Order, 1941* was the document referred to on the Corporation of Aberdeen firewatching duty sheets.

¹⁴ Interviewees recall that staff were not required for firewatching at branch libraries, since these sites would have been covered by, for instance, local police stations. Indeed, duty schedules still available from the period are for the Central Library only.

¹⁵ Quoted in Harris, p. 7.

¹⁶ Interview, wartime library employee.

¹⁷ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-sixth annual report of the Committee for the year 1939-1940* (1941) p. 8.

¹⁸ Private Source.

¹⁹ Marcus Milne, *The Casualty Recording Service* (1941) [Report to ARP Controller] p. 4.

²⁰ The Rambler, 'Bon Accord gossip: latest at the library', *Evening Express* (22 July 1939) p. 4.

²¹ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-fifth annual report of the Committee for the year 1938-1939* (1940) p. 6.

²² *Annual report 1938-1939*, p. 3.

²³ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-sixth annual report of the Committee for the year 1939-1940* (1941) p. 6.

²⁴ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-ninth annual report of the Committee for the year 1942-1943* (1944) p. 3.

²⁵ Henderson, *On the Viaduct*, p. 24.

²⁶ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1940-1941* (1942) p. 34.

²⁷ *Aberdeen Public Library fifty-seventh annual report of the Committee for the year 1940-1941* (1942) p. 4.

²⁸ *Minutes and proceedings 1940-1941*, p. 38.

²⁹ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1939-1940* (1941) p. 48.

³⁰ *Annual report 1940-1941*, p. 6.

³¹ *Minutes and proceedings 1938-1939*, p. 66.

³² *Annual report 1938-1939*, p. 4.

- ³³ *Annual report 1939-1940*, p. 4.
- ³⁴ *Annual report 1940-1941*, p. 4.
- ³⁵ *Annual report 1939-1940*, p. 5.
- ³⁶ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1943-1944* (1945) p. 12.
- ³⁷ Quoted in Angus Calder, *The myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991) p. 88.
- ³⁸ The Rambler, 'Bon Accord gossip: for readers', *Evening Express* (19 July 1941) p. 3.
- ³⁹ This was the same name used for the *Evening Express* list.
- ⁴⁰ Marcus K. Milne, [Editorial], *Books You Can Borrow*, 2(January 1942) p. 1. The National Book League had, in October 1939, published a *Catalogue of Books for the Services*, recommending a wide range of titles. *Books You Can Borrow's* quarterly publication would, of course, have provided more up-to-date information as well as indicating which books were available locally.
- ⁴¹ *Annual report 1940-1941*, p. 7.
- ⁴² *Annual report 1942-1943*, p. 6.
- ⁴³ *Minutes and proceedings 1939-1940*, p. 57.
- ⁴⁴ Marcus K. Milne, [Editorial], *Books You Can Borrow*, 6(January 1943) p. 1.
- ⁴⁵ L.R. McColvin, 'Women in the library service', *Library Association Record*, 44(January 1942) p. 1.
- ⁴⁶ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1942-1943* (1944) p. 7.
- ⁴⁷ Using the term 'feminine colleagues' to refer to female staff is, of course, a misnomer, since 'feminine' is merely an adjective - based on notions of gender - that can be attributed to either sex.
- ⁴⁸ Edmund V. Corbett, 'Current views: appointments in wartime', *Library Association Record*, 42(November 1940) p. 286.
- ⁴⁹ *Minutes and proceedings 1940-1941*, p. 38.
- ⁵⁰ *Minutes and proceedings 1940-1941*, p. 59.
- ⁵¹ *Minutes and proceedings 1940-1941*, p. 32.
- ⁵² 'Unreserved men's call-up', *Press and Journal* (17 September 1941) p. 3.
- ⁵³ Copy of Ministry of Labour and National Service letter to Library Association (27 September 1941).
- ⁵⁴ Scottish Education Department letter to Town Clerk (10 October 1941).
- ⁵⁵ Scottish Education Department letter to Town Clerk (22 November 1941).
- ⁵⁶ Copy of P.S.J. Welsford letter to Scottish Education Department (29 November 1941).
- ⁵⁷ Scottish Education Department letter to Town Clerk (17 December 1941).
- ⁵⁸ *Minutes and proceedings of the Public Library Committee 1941-1942* (1943) p. 7.
- ⁵⁹ Town Clerk letter to Ministry of Labour and National Service (12 January 1942). Sadly, G.S. Fraser died later that year, aged only fifty-seven, in a fatal tramcar accident on 27 December 1942.
- ⁶⁰ Ministry of Labour and National Service letter to Town Clerk (13 January 1942).
- ⁶¹ Deferment dates did not necessarily refer to the date on which a person was called up; rather it was the date *from* which an individual could be called up.
- ⁶² *Annual report 1940-1941*, p. 8.
- ⁶³ *Minutes and proceedings 1942-1943*, p. 6.
- ⁶⁴ The Rambler, 'Bon Accord gossip: many activities', *Evening Express* (24 November 1942) p. 2.
- ⁶⁵ *Minutes and proceedings 1942-1943*, p. 36.
- ⁶⁶ The first editorial to bear Chalmers' name merely listed Aberdeen Public Library's opening hours.
- ⁶⁷ W.P. Chalmers, [Editorial], *Books You Can Borrow*, 9(January 1944) p.1.
- ⁶⁸ *Minutes and proceedings 1939-1940*, p. 7.
- ⁶⁹ *Minutes and proceedings 1939-1940*, p. 48.
- ⁷⁰ 'Public reading room for Sunday use?', *Press and Journal* (19 January 1940) p. 3.
- ⁷¹ *Annual report 1939-1940*, p.7.
- ⁷² *Minutes and proceedings 1941-1942*, pp. 21-22. On p. 7 of the 1941-42 *Annual Report* it is stated that Sunday opening was discontinued in April, not May, but this is a slight discrepancy, and it is certain that Sunday opening was brought to a close around this period.
- ⁷³ *Minutes and proceedings 1940-1941*, p. 3.
- ⁷⁴ 'Public libraries to close earlier', *Evening Express* (7 December 1940) p. 3.
- ⁷⁵ 'Students object to 8p.m. closing', *Evening Express* (17 December 1940) p. 3.
- ⁷⁶ R.S. Massie, 'Other people's opinions: reading room hours', *Evening Express* (26 December 1940) p. 4.
- ⁷⁷ *Minutes and proceedings 1941-1942*, p. 34.
- ⁷⁸ *Minutes and proceedings 1942-1943*, pp. 20-21.
- ⁷⁹ By this time, the Powis Branch was open.
- ⁸⁰ *Annual report 1942-1943*, p. 5.

⁸¹ It seems unlikely, however, that seven members of staff had resigned due to 'ill health.' Other possibilities, such as women unwilling or unable to stay on upon marriage, should also perhaps be taken into account.

⁸² *Minutes and proceedings 1942-1943*, p. 38.

⁸³ These restrictions actually continued until 1948.

⁸⁴ 'To-day's comment: books', *Evening Express* (20 October 1945) p. 4.

⁸⁵ Although both are mentioned in the Annual Report along with others who had returned from the Armed Forces, McCulloch and Steele never appeared on staff lists as being on National Service. McCulloch appears as a staff member in 1939-40, the absence of her name on further lists up until 1946 intimating perhaps that her return to the library was uncertain. The name J. Steele, on the other hand, appears not at all. Also, Donald Begg, who left for the Forces in 1940, never appeared on subsequent wartime lists. Given these discrepancies and omissions, figures quoted in this study concerning staff on National Service should be taken as a guide only, since the number of staff directly affected may have been greater than annotated staff lists indicate.

⁸⁶ The Rambler, 'Bon Accord gossip: in Civvy Street', *Evening Express* (30 January 1946) p. 4.

⁸⁷ Moira Henderson, 'Marcus Kelly Milne: obituary', *Library Association Record*, 91(12, 1989) p. 703.

⁸⁸ *Aberdeen Public Library sixty-second annual report of the Committee for year 1945-1946* (1947) p. 13.

⁸⁹ 'Marcus K. Milne, President of the SLA, 1967', *SLA News*, 77 (January/February 1967) p. 4.