

# The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club

## Sir Walter Scott and The Library of Innerpeffray: A Miscellany

*A talk about Scotland's First Lending Library given on Thursday 7th April 2016 at 7pm  
by **Lara Haggerty** to members of The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in Edinburgh.*

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to the Club and for such a warm welcome.

My talk tonight brings together two icons of Scottish literary history, and I make no excuses for the tenuous nature of the connection – however, as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century theory of six degrees of separation and a personal favourite, author Douglas Adams' belief in the 'ultimate interconnectness of all things', I hope tonight to show for your amusement and interest six links between Sir Walter Scott and Scotland's oldest lending library.

I'll start with a little background about Innerpeffray. Writers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the era that established Innerpeffray, are not shy of a classical tag or two, so I will begin with a quotation in that style- Cicero sayeth: If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need: I'm sure both Scott and our Founder would have agreed: certainly both had Cicero in his library. And our founder's books reflect a wide range of interests - and they include a First Edition of *The Scots Gardn'r*, by John Reid, the first book to be written specifically for the Scottish climate, and one of our most popular books today. He put his library in the room in the west end of the Chapel of Innerpeffray and built a small new house to be a school, instructing the family, in his will of 1680 to 'preserve and maintain entire' the collection. His will did more than endow a library and school, it established a vision that endures today.

So who was he, the man who put a library in the middle of nowhere, who in his own quiet way was a reading revolutionary? To begin with he was a Drummond, Perthshire's major landowning family, a cousin of Lord Drummond so he had the money and the status that meant he could afford books. He was David Drummond, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Madertie and his life was lived in one of Scotland's most turbulent centuries- he was born in 1611, and lived until 1692 – or 94– but his was not to be the quiet life of contemplation and learning, planting and growing, his life was filled with turmoil, civil war, the death of friends and family, and disruption to state and religion. We don't have his portrait, or his biography, rather we have tantalising glimpses into the life of the man who gave us such an intriguing legacy. And I rather like to think of him like this – walking the Strathearn countryside with his dogs – especially the hat. The illustration is from a book published the year he was born: *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting*.

But it is still a bit of a puzzle today when & where he developed his taste for reading: he certainly has some family books in his collection – like this superb *Cosmographie*, from 1575, which belonged to his great uncle, Patrick Lord Madertie. And he does not seem averse to purchasing second hand books, particularly later in life – many of the 17<sup>th</sup> century books are signed Andrew Wood (a family connection) or Thomas Strachan or Strahan (a connection we are still trying to quantify).

However, he reads as widely as a museum curator today could wish:

Theology – yes, and very widely within the various sides to the religious arguments of the day.

History, natural philosophy and sciences, collections of travel and military matters – this wonderful 1610 book by William Segar: *Honour: Military and Civil* gives a code of conduct for A True Knight and Gentleman, with simple tenets and lavish phrasing such as to ‘Eschew riot and detest intemperancie’ – ‘to avoid Sloth and superfluous ease’ and ‘to desire no excessive riches, and patiently endure worldly calamities’. The core of this code being of course to honour God and your Prince, and Madertie of course certainly owned a copy of the *Works of King James*. Though I leave you to decide whether he liked best James’ rant against tobacco smoking and discourses on demonology or his advice on kingship for his son Henrie.

He also has a few rather more challenging items, *The Spanish Rogue* 1634 is a translation of novel (in itself a novelty) subtitled ‘a giving an exact account of witty and unparalleled ROGUERIE!’.

*A Treatise of Specters*, promises details of Dreams, visions and prophecies and cunning delusions of the Devil. Richard Sanders in *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, 1665 advises “such readers as are loath to hear or read filthy or bawdy matters, which of necessity are here to be inserted, pass over eight chapters”

Another of Madertie’s books was that of his poet cousin William Drummond of Hawthornden. There is even a little contemporary drama sitting alongside classics such as Holinshed’s *Chronicles* and Boccaccio’s *Fall of Princes and Princesses*.

The present library building was the idea of Robert Hay Drummond, Madertie’s approx great nephew, who inherited, in 1739, the estate and responsibility for the Library and School: he commissioned an architect, and set out to do things in style – though plans for elaborate windows were later simplified. As well as a purpose built library, he also purchased new books setting out to bring the collection up to date with ‘the new books available’ and drawing up a list of books proposed to be bought into the Library as occasion offers. Hay Drummond was Chaplain in ordinary to the King and later archbishop of York:

so we might have forgiven him for ignoring this obscure initiative north of the Border, but his care for the library seems to have been exemplary.

Over the 19<sup>th</sup> century books were acquired in a more haphazard fashion. The annual plea from my predecessor as Keeper, Mrs Birnie, in her Annual Report to the Trustees was for new books, to meet demand. The library seems to have been very short of funds and accepted gifts from societies, authors, even the trustees' themselves donated books. But at this point in our history we acquired novels: the first Scott item was borrowed in 1859.

Today the Library has 5000 books, the most recent major acquisition being a gift from the American bibliophile, Janet St Germain. In typical Innerpeffray style, Mrs St Germain found the library serendipitously, whilst visiting Scotland to borrow books for an exhibition she was curating at the Grolier Club in New York. Introduced by the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Perth, another David Drummond, she was captivated by the setting and the unchanged nature of the place she offered her collection to our Trustees: the library is frequently offered books, and as you can appreciate, we cannot accept them all. When it transpired that Mrs St Germain had been collecting for 35 years and her offer was nearly 400 Scottish First Editions, the trustees felt they should say yes please!

So, I promised you some connections and, not in any chronological order..... Here is connection the first – through an Innerpeffray Trustee

If you had visited Innerpeffray prior to 2011 you would have encountered this rather large and cumbersome piece of furniture: a leather studded armchair that once resided in Ashiestiel.

The chair front pulled up and formed a footstool, the back could likewise be lowered forming a full length bed. An invalid chair, that belonged to Scott.

The Haldanes of Gleneagles have been trustees at Innerpeffray since the foundation of the Innerpeffray mortification in 1696. J Martin Haldane, is the present proprietor of Gleneagles therefore Governor of Innerpeffray. He came into possession of the chair through his 3x Great Grandfather was the maternal uncle of Walter Scott. James Alexander Haldane ( Great Great Grandfather) married Margaret Rutherford and her father was Scott's uncle. General Sir Aylmer Haldane inherited Ashiestiel, a house on the Tweed in which Scott lived for sometime (1804 - 1812) before he moved to Abbotsford, and my understanding is that the chair (Scott was an invalid for a long time) came into Sir Aylmer's possession when he inherited the house.

As you will be aware, during 1782 Scott's father employed Rev James Mitchell as tutor of arithmetic and writing to the family – subjects not covered by the curriculum at the High

School of Edinburgh. My second Innerpeffray connection is that Mitchell, living just across the river Earn from Innerpeffray at Strageath, between 1774 and 1778 borrowed books from Innerpeffray. Describing himself as a Student of Divinity, he was perhaps training at the college we believe existed in the vicinity.

The first book he borrows is Innerpeffray's most borrowed book before 1800 – William Robertson's History of the Emperor Charles V. He reads more history including Samuel Pufendorf, some philosophy including John Locke and of course theology.

Scott's novels were popular with the Borrowers at Innerpeffray.

Our earliest editions are from 1856 as pictured here, when Arthur Hay Drummond was patron of Innerpeffray as you can just see on the bookplate. We have many duplicate copies of Scott's works, but most are of a later date and these editions are evidently very cheaply produced, indeed homemade linen covers have been added, presumably to extend their lives. These have been in effect, borrowed to death, they are only two to survive from the early period: despite the tiny text size and lack of illustrations.

As I mentioned earlier, the first book borrowed was in 1859 - so perhaps even these editions were second hand. Out of a total of 308 borrowings that year, 20 were of Scott's works. Borrowing peaks in 1887 with 37 out of 155 borrowings. The most popular book is not surprisingly, *Waverly*, followed closely by the *Antiquary* and *Quentin Durward*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there hardly seems a page in the register that does not mention a Scott volume.

The Borrowers are varied, people from all walks of life enjoyed reading Scott's work: they include my favourite occupation in the Register – River Watcher, alongside minister, priest, school master and governess, farm labourer and gamekeeper.

This connection was suggested by one of the volunteer guides at Innerpeffray – Bill Gray. Two years ago Bill devoted his time at the Library, when not showing visitors around the collection to reading the Scots magazines we have, from the first year in 1739 to 1784 – when Burns' *To a Mountain Daisy* was reviewed. To his delight, the 1758 edition gives a full account of the Scottish regalia and its resting place in Edinburgh. In 1781 the description is reprinted, along with splendid engraving of the regalia and Robert the Bruce's helmet and sword. He wonders whether Scott's 'discovery' in 1818 owes something to his own perusal of a certain long running publication.

As I mentioned, the generous gift of Mrs Janet St Germain to Innerpeffray of 400 Scottish First Editions has brought some exciting new books to the Library – amongst them, this little gem. The *Young Chevalier* is a very nice addition to our collection, what is even more special is that it bears the signature of Sir Walter Scott, plus the unprecedented note 'Duplicate'.

I am hoping to tempt you to Innerpeffray to investigate further.

And Mrs St Germain's generosity does not stop with the present collection: she has bequeathed to Innerpeffray a set of Scott first editions, which, whilst I hope it will be in my time at Innerpeffray, as they come to us on her death, we hope we will not be seeing for a very long time.

I hope you have enjoyed this little miscellany of connections between Sir Walter Scott and Innerpeffray Library. I would love to think Scott had visited: he would doubtless have enjoyed the books and the vision of the place; but though our visitors' book is honoured with JM Barrie and GB Shaw, there is no evidence of literary tourists lining up to sign their name. Innerpeffray remains what it always has been, a quiet place dedicated to reading, a place almost of pilgrimage, and as our Founder intended: for the benefit of all.

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