

A ‘Quaint Corner’ of the Reading Nation: Romantic readerships in rural Perthshire, 1780-1830

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In 1898, William Stewart of the *Glasgow Herald* wrote an article about Innerpeffray Library, a tiny late seventeenth-century public lending library in rural Perthshire, describing it as ‘a quaint corner of libraria’, and commenting in surprise on its founder’s early commitment to providing rural labourers with access to books.¹ Innerpeffray Library was founded in (or around) 1680 by David Drummond, third Lord Madertie, who left the sum of 5000 Scots marks in his Will for the establishment of a library which was to be ‘preserved entire and to be augmented by my successors yearly in time coming in measure underwritten for the benefit and encouragement of young students’.² Madertie’s Will stipulated that a keeper of books or librarian should be employed, that new books should be purchased yearly, and that a schoolhouse should be built. Madertie’s successors seem to have interpreted the phrase ‘young students’ liberally, and a further Deed of Mortification which solved some of the various legal problems posed by Madertie’s original Will interpreted the will as being for the benefit of the local community more broadly (‘for the benefit of the country’)³, allowing almost any member of the community to read the library’s books, and only ‘restricting the use of the library to six or more parishes around’.⁴

Under the terms of the Mortification, Trustees – drawn from the important local landowning families – were appointed to manage the library, with the assumption that this Trusteeship would be passed down through the later generations of these families. This would become a source of tension in due course, as later generations of Trustees neglected their duties to the library and to its users, who, denied a formal say in the administration of the library and its acquisitions policy, nonetheless felt a strong sense of ownership over it. Books from the library were made available to the local community from at least 1747 (although this may have been earlier; borrowers’ records are only extant from 1747, but Madertie’s collection was presumably available from the time the Deed of Mortification was proved in 1696) to 1968, when the library ceased to function as a lending library and became a ‘historic library’

¹ William Stewart, ‘A Quaint Corner in Libraria’, *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday June 4, 1898. Issue 133.

² David Drummond, third Lord Madertie, Will, 1691. Innerpeffray Library Founder’s MS 1691/ 001.

³ ‘Memorial of the Right Honorable the Earl of Kinnoull for the opinion of Counsel regarding the Library of Innerpeffray’, Innerpeffray Library Miscellaneous MS 1825/002, p.12.

⁴ Anon, *Innerpeffray Library & Chapel: A Historical Sketch, With some Notes on the books of the Library*.

Printed by Authority of the Governors (Crieff: David Phillips, 1916), p.2.

visitor attraction. The library began as Lord Madertie's private collection of some four hundred books, mainly works of divinity, theology, law, science, agriculture and natural history. The collection grew through the generations to encompass philosophy, geography and travel, domestic economy and conduct books, periodicals and journals, and, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, fiction, drama and poetry. Borrowers came from a wide variety of social backgrounds, from local laird to shepherd and schoolchild. Through an analysis of the existing borrowers' records and other extant manuscript material, this chapter will discuss both the extent to which the founder's wishes were interpreted and fulfilled in the Romantic period (c. 1780-1830) and the ways in which scholarship of this nature can shed light on a wider history of reading and communities. Mark Towsey has brilliantly demonstrated how close analysis of library records and other evidence in the history of reading is key to understanding the extent to which the ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment penetrated into what he calls 'provincial Scotland'⁵; in this chapter I will consider how what we now call Romanticism was experienced in one small pocket of rural Scotland.

Romanticism (like Enlightenment) is, of course, a contested term, and much recent scholarship has been devoted to disentangling the particularities of 'national' Romanticisms from an older tradition of an all-embracing European Romanticism. In 1949, for example, René Wellek could suggest that:

If we examine the characteristics of the actual literature which called itself or was called 'romantic' all over the continent, we find throughout Europe the same conceptions of poetry and of the nature and workings of poetic imagination, the same conception of nature and its relation to man, and basically the same poetic style.⁶

Conversely, in 2005, Nicholas Roe wrote that 'in Europe the meaning of "Romantic" has varied from country to country', and that 'no one alive at the time thought of their age in terms of "Romanticism"'.⁷ Ian Duncan, Murray Pittock, Claire Connelly, Jim Kelly and others have lately foregrounded the notions of 'Scottish Romanticism' and 'Irish Romanticism',⁸ while Andrew Hemingway and Alan Wallach have focussed on the

⁵ Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 8 and *passim*.

⁶ René Wellek, 'The Concept of "Romanticism" in Literary History II: The Unity of European Romanticism', *Comparative Literature*, 1: 2 (Spring 1949), 147-172 (147).

⁷ Nicholas Roe, 'Introduction', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1-12 (pp.1 & 3).

⁸ For a discussion of the definition of Scottish Romanticism, see Murray Pittock's introduction to *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,

transatlantic dimensions of Romanticism, placing such writers as Emerson, Thoreau and Dickinson within this context.⁹ Scholars such as Anne K. Mellor, Adriana Craciun, and, more recently, Ann Hawkins, Devoney Looser and others have rightly pointed out the gendered nature of traditional theories of Romanticism, and have posited new definitions that attempt to take better account of the contributions of women writers.¹⁰ Other writers, such as Anthony Mandal, have conclusively proven the importance of expanding our understanding of the Romantic canon to take account of forms other than poetry, in particular the novel.¹¹ And some of the best recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of the growth of the periodical press at this time.¹² Even the ‘characteristics’ that Wellek could take for granted have come under review, and proponents of a revised Romanticism argue that these need to be radically amended based on the scholarship above. (Broadly speaking, these characteristics are the features also identified by M.H. Abrams in his now classic studies of Romantic literature, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953) and *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) – that is, an emphasis on innovation in the form and style of poetry, the concept of writing as organic, rather than artificial, a focus on the relationship between the external world, as represented usually by natural landscape, and the author’s mind, a turn towards the lyric mode, a tendency towards political radicalism and revolution, and a belief in the importance of the faculty of the imagination.)

2011), pp. 1-12, and Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorenson (eds), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), *passim*; see also Pittock’s *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), *passim*, for a discussion of both Scottish and Irish Romanticism, and Claire Connelly’s ‘Irish Romanticism, 1800-1830’, in *Cambridge History of Irish Literature, Vol I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 407-48.

⁹ Andrew Hemingway and Alan Wallach, eds, *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature, 1790-1860* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

¹⁰ See, for example, Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993) and *Mothers of the Nation: Women’s Political Writing 1780-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) and Mellor, ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); see also Adriana Craciun, ‘Romantic Poetry, Gender, Sexuality’, in *Cambridge Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. James Chandler and Maureen McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 155-77 and *British Women Writers and the French Revolution: Citizens of the World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also Ann Hawkins, *Romantic Women Writers Reviewed*, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), and Devoney Looser (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Women’s Writing in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹¹ See Anthony Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), in particular the chapters on ‘Fiction and the Literary Marketplace’ (pp. 3-40) and ‘The Business of Novel-Writing’ (pp. 168-202), and his chapter on ‘Fiction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Women’s Writing in the Romantic Period*, ed Devoney Looser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 16-31.

¹² See, for example, Kim Wheatly, ed., *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 2003) and Mark Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The Literary Lower Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

However, although minor wrangles have occurred over the exact periodization of Romanticism, a broad consensus exists over its basic historical period. Accepting, therefore, that any use of the terms ‘Romantic’ and ‘Romanticism’ should proceed with due caution, for the purposes of this chapter I intend to take a strictly period-based definition, and to consider ‘Romantic’ writing to be texts written or first published within the historical period 1780 to 1830. My first aim will be to establish whether Innerpeffray’s borrowers were able to access such texts, and whether they did in fact do so. My second will be to consider what these findings tell us about the role of this library in the local community.

In *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004), William St Clair poses the hypothesis that most readers of the Romantic period did not read the new works of literature which tumbled from the presses in this rich era of composition. Instead, the copyright act of 1774 effectively created and perpetuated what St Clair calls an ‘old canon’ of literature as publishers took the opportunity to reprint a series of older works that were now out of copyright. These reprints were cheap and numerous, while new books were expensive. Hence, St Clair suggests, the vast majority of labouring and middle-class readers were exposed not to the works of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Shelley, Keats or even Byron or Scott, but to those of the writers of the previous centuries: Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Johnson, Sterne, Milton, Cowper, Pope, Gray, Shakespeare and so on.¹³ From his evidence, he argues that Romantic-period readers were hence saturated in the mind-set and ideals of ‘old canon’ literature, and that ‘there is indeed a recognisable correspondence between historic reading patterns and consequent mentalities [...] For example, the persistence of rural and religious constructions of Englishness far into the urbanised industrialised age was greatly assisted by the entrenchment of the reading of seventeenth and eighteenth-century literary texts in schoolrooms’.¹⁴ St Clair advocates what he calls a ‘systems approach’: ‘a scrutiny of the consolidated empirical records of historic reading’ which shows ‘properties of the whole, rather than properties of its components parts.’¹⁵

St Clair’s is an ambitious method, which has its strengths – particularly in starting to identify patterns and models, however partial and provisional – but in its deliberate attempts to generalise, it tends to lose sight of key details (the ‘properties of its component parts’),

¹³ For a full account of the ‘old canon’, see William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.122-139, and for a full list of the authors of the ‘old canon’, see pp. 128-135, and Appendix 6.

¹⁴ St Clair, p. 433.

¹⁵ St Clair, p. 6 and p.6 fn 8.

without which, I would argue, the larger narrative ceases to be meaningful. In this chapter, therefore, I wish to take a different methodological and disciplinary approach, remaining focussed on a single case study and using archival records to elucidate my findings. The archival records of small libraries are an under-utilised but valuable resource in the history of reading. While the evidence in this chapter bears out St Clair's argument that readers of the labouring classes in the parish of Innerpeffray did not read the new works of Romantic literature, the archival records prove conclusively first that they did not read seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary texts in the Innerpeffray schoolroom either, and secondly that this was not the result of the 'tranching down' effects identified by St Clair as the result of publishers' monopolistic practices. Instead, the records remind us forcibly of the role of chance in histories of reading, and the extent to which events far outside their control could and did dictate the reading 'choices' of labouring-class readers. Access to Innerpeffray's collections was controlled and circumscribed by those in charge of the library, and when those authority figures were dilatory, negligent or actively hostile, there was very little that the users of the library could do about it. In addition, they had no input into the works accessioned by the library. Practice at Innerpeffray therefore contrasted with what David Allan has identified as a key benefit to readers in this period: 'in granting unprecedented access to large numbers of books, and even, in many cases, conferring the chance to play a role in choosing new acquisitions, libraries allowed readers themselves to help shape taste and define the emerging canon'.¹⁶ Although there may have been some informal ways for borrowers to request the purchase of particular works, there was no formal mechanism by which they might have done so, and no records of borrowers' purchasing requests exist before the late nineteenth century.

Much excellent work has, of course, already been done on the habits and practices of labouring-class readers.¹⁷ Research on Innerpeffray Library's borrowers also exists, albeit within a fairly limited compass.¹⁸ All such scholarship emphasises the difficulty of working

¹⁶ David Allan, 'Circulation', in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 2, *English and British Fiction 1750-1820*, eds Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 53-69 (p. 58).

¹⁷ This work began in 1957 with Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. Recent work in the field really commences with David Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom* (1981), which demonstrated how the memoirs of some 142 memoirs by early nineteenth-century British workers could be used to reconstruct a detailed history of reading responses, and Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (1982), which discusses in detail the reading of Menocchio, a sixteenth-century Italian miller. Foremost among such work is Jonathan Rose's *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ See Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London: Library Association, 1969) and 'A Unique Record of a People's Reading', *Libri*, 14 (1964-1965), 227-42; George

with the available evidence – as Ginzburg puts it, ‘the scarcity of evidence about the behavior [sic] and attitudes of the subordinate classes of the past is certainly the major, though not the only, obstacle faced by research of this type’¹⁹ – and I have argued elsewhere for the importance of taking seriously the various difficulties involved in interpreting scarce, patchy, unrepresentative and often anecdotal evidence, as well as of remembering that the evidence of intended reading is assuredly not evidence for actual reading.²⁰ Innerpeffray Library’s borrowers’ registers are certainly therefore problematic in one sense, as we have no evidence that those who borrowed from the library ever did read the books they took away with them, but various factors would suggest that the effort expended in borrowing the books would have been entirely disproportionate if the borrowers did not intend to read them. On average, Innerpeffray’s borrowers in the Romantic period travelled for about ten miles (round trip), usually on foot, and often in the winter through the Scottish climate of cold, rain, mud, and frequent snow, to borrow books. Although borrowing itself was free, they bound themselves to pay fines for non-return or damage of the books that could represent a substantial proportion of many borrowers’ weekly income, and they carried away books that were physically heavy (the collection at this date was mostly folio and quarto volumes) to homes that were deficient in space, quiet, and the amenities for reading that we take for granted in the twenty-first century. Under such circumstances, the balance of probability is that the borrowers did in fact read the books, or at least some portion of them.

The registers are also, of course, unrepresentative, in the sense that they represent only a tiny proportion of the population. Between 1780 and 1830, approximately 1,000 names are recorded in the registers.²¹ The population of Perthshire (the local region) in 1801 was approximately 126,000, the population of Scotland was approximately 1,610,000, and in

Chamier, *The First Light: The Story of Innerpeffray Library* (Published by the Library of Innerpeffray, 2009), pp. 92-96; Towsey, pp. 136-42; Cairns Mason, *Lending Libraries in the spread of Enlightenment Thinking: two Scottish case studies, Innerpeffray Library, Crieff and the Monkland Friendly Society, Dunscore* (Braco: DOICA, 2006).

¹⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. xiii)

²⁰ See, for example, Katie Halsey, ‘Reading the Evidence of Reading’, *Popular Narrative Media*, 2 (2008), 123-137, Katie Halsey and Rosalind Crone, ‘On collecting, cataloguing and collating the evidence of reading: The ‘RED movement’ and its implications for digital scholarship’, in Toni Weller (ed.), *History in the Digital Age* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.95-110, and Katie Halsey, Rosalind Crone and Shafquat Towheed, ‘Examining the evidence of reading: three examples from the Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945’, in Bonnie Gunzenhauser (ed.), *Reading in History: New Methodologies from the Anglo-American Tradition* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), pp. 29-45.

²¹ An exact count is impossible because of the vagaries of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century spelling of names, and hence difficulties of disambiguating borrowers with the same or similar names (e.g. James Anderson, Jas. Anderson, J. Anderson, Jas. Anders.). This difficulty is compounded by the practice of naming sons after fathers and grandfathers.

England and Wales, a population of 7.5 million in 1780 rose to 18.5 million by 1850. As discussed above, the reading choices of the borrowers are also unrepresentative, dictated by the quirks of the collection, which reflected the tastes of the founder and his successors, rather than necessarily those books that the borrowers would have most liked to read.

Access to Romantic Texts

Here we return to my first research question: did Innerpeffray's borrowers in fact have access to Romantic texts, or indeed, to those of the 'old canon'? It is certainly true that the vast majority of the books listed in Innerpeffray's 1813 manuscript catalogue date from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, although there is also a significant minority of sixteenth-century books. Very few Romantic-era texts appear in the catalogue. However, almost equally few of the works in the catalogue are those identified by St Clair as the 'old canon'. For obvious reasons, the founder's original collection of four hundred volumes could not be 'old canon' works, but those books added to the collection by his successors (most notably Robert Hay Drummond, Archbishop of York, who left some two thousand of his own books to the library in 1776, and oversaw the purchase of many more between 1744 and 1765) seem to have been chosen more for Classical and theological learning, and practical utility than with an eye to giving the library's users access to canonical works of British literature. A memorandum of 'books proposed to be bought into the Library at Innerpeffray, as occasion offers' from May 1744 shows that emphasis was placed on buying the most recent works in subjects such as 'Divinity, Classicks, History' and a footnote adds: 'a list of Mathematical books to be got from some Professor'.²² The collection represented by the 1813 catalogue remains heavily weighted towards divinity, law, Ancient and Modern history, Classics, theology, agriculture and husbandry, and philosophy.

Books listed in the 1813 catalogue written or published within our period (1780 to 1830) are very few; almost all date from the 1780s, and none are by mainstream Romantic authors. The first entry is Jacob Bryant's *Observations upon the poems of Thomas Rowley: in which the authenticity of those poems is ascertained* (1781), a disquisition on the Chatterton controversy, interesting here in that no copy of Chatterton's poems was (or is) present in the library – familiarity with contemporary debates was therefore perhaps considered to be more important than reading the poems themselves. The catalogue next lists the four volumes of

²² 'Note of Books Proposed to be Brought into the Library', Innerpeffray Library Hay-Drummond MS 1744/001.

William Russell's *History of Modern Europe* (1782), the *Decisions of the Court of Session 1752 to 1768* (1780), Hugo Arnot's *A collection and abridgement of celebrated criminal trials in Scotland* (1785), William Lothian's *History of the Netherlands* (1780), the Comte de Buffon's celebrated *Natural History* in 8 volumes (1780), John Smith's *Gallic Antiquities* (1780), a work identified in the catalogue as 'Stewart's Queen Mary Vols. 2 (1783)', which is almost certainly Gilbert Stuart's *The history of Scotland, from the establishment of the Reformation, till the death of Queen Mary* (1783), eighty-two volumes of the *Monthly Review* (up to 1786), forty-eight volumes of the *Scots Magazine* (up to 1785), three volumes of Isaac Newton's *Works* (1782), Dr Ducarel's *History of the Palace of Lambeth* (1785), and Goldsmith's *Roman History* in two volumes (1785). Added in another hand at the end of the 1813 catalogue is the entry: 'Nicolson's Christian's Refuge – Donation from the author (1827)' (full title *The Christian's refuge under the shadow of Christ: being an illustration of the nature of that rest, protection, and support which the Christian enjoys by virtue of his union with the Saviour*). William Nicolson was a 'preacher of the Gospel' as the frontispiece of his book proclaims, in nearby Muthill, just four miles from Innerpeffray. Donations of books, such as Nicolson's, played an important role in the expansion of Innerpeffray's collections in the eighteenth century and Romantic period. While the Trustees did periodically think seriously about the gaps in the collection (as evidenced by the 1744 Memorandum and the Mortification Book (the Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees, incorporating the yearly Accounts)), more commonly Madertie's desire that the collection should be augmented by his successors was honoured in the breach, and accessions throughout the period under consideration were patchy and haphazard, largely dependent on the goodwill and largesse (or otherwise) of the neighbourhood 'great families'.

Although these do not appear in the 1813 catalogue, for reasons that remain unclear, evidence in the Borrowers' Registers also shows that the library held the following books written or published in the period: Alexander Cunningham's *History of Great Britain* (1787), William Marshall's *The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire* [sic] (1789), and his *Rural Economy of the Midland Counties* (1790), *The Works of the Right Reverend Thomas Newton* (1782), Lord Monboddo's *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1792), Thomas Sinclair's *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (1782), *The London Mercury* of 1781, Jacques de Villamont's *Les voyages du Seigneur de Villamont* (1786), a 1790 Berlin edition of Plato's *Dialogues IV*, a new (1801) edition of John Flavel's *Divine conduct; or, The mystery of providence* (first published 1678), a later edition of Buffon's *Natural History* (in 40 volumes;

1785/7), and Thomas Chalmers' *The evidence and authority of the Christian revelation* (1818). What all this evidence suggests is a simultaneous determination to keep the collection current (hence the *Monthly Reviews* and *Scots Magazine*, along with the work on the Chatterton controversy) with a refusal to succumb to literary fashions. New and newly-published works of science (Buffon, Isaac Newton) and history (Russell, Lothian, Stuart, Ducarel, Goldsmith) take priority, and an interest in the law is also evident. The acquisitions of the 1780s suggest an accessions policy focussed on practical and useful knowledge, not on what we would now call Literature.

The revolutionary and counter-revolutionary political and philosophical works of the 1790s, by Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke and others, the great poetic movement begun by Wordsworth and Coleridge with the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, the surge in women's writing of the 1780s to 1810s, the huge popularity of the Gothic novel, even the upsurge in conduct books and works of spiritual self-help in the wake of the French revolution, simply went unnoticed in Innerpeffray's collections. It seems improbable that even the most isolated of rural readers, or the most unpolitical of Trustees, could have remained ignorant of the events unfolding across the Channel, even if they were unaware of literary movements taking place. Why, then, should the library's collections so dramatically fail to reflect world events at this point?

To find an answer we must turn, not to questions of the economics of production, as St Clair's systems approach might, but instead to the library's archives. The evidence is patchy, but certain facts nevertheless come to light, which once again remind us of the problems faced by labouring-class readers who were dependent on others for their access to reading matter. After the death of Hay Drummond in 1776, Madertie's heirs and the other Trustees of the library seem to have become less interested in the library, and money that should have been dedicated to the library to have been used for other purposes. The archival record tells us little beyond the names of the Keepers of Books (William Dow (c. 1763-c.1799), James Fulton (1807-20), Widow Fulton (1821), and Eben Reid (1822-1837)), and it is impossible to know precisely who was in charge of book acquisitions at this time. It is clear, however, that towards the end of the period under consideration in this essay, considerable dissatisfaction with the library was felt by the local community, some of whom seem to have been refused entry to the collection. Among the uncatalogued manuscript materials at Innerpeffray, there is a copy of 'The Petition of Wm. Young, 1823', to the Sheriff of Perthshire, in which Young complains that he had been 'arbitrarily [...] expel[ed] from the enjoyment of his right' to

enjoy the ‘positive advantages’ of the use of the library, by the ‘distinct power of a man of rank’. The Petition further claims: ‘The Library in question is the property of students and others, instituted chiefly to obviate the many hardships above described [these are the want of books, or of proper books, to enable working-class students to receive proper instruction], incident to a great body of the most meritorious students’.²³ We might note here the language of this petition, in which we see a strong sense that the library belonged to its *users*, not to its proprietor. Young speaks of his ‘right’ to use the library, and the library as the ‘property of students and others’. These claims of ‘right’ and ‘property’ are important, and will be further explored below.

In strict legal terms, of course, the library did not belong to the students or its users, but in 1825, the Proprietor of the library, Thomas, 11th Earl of Kinnoull, was anxious enough about local opinion to take legal advice to ascertain the extent of his legal and financial responsibilities, and to try to find out who had the right to hold him to account for moneys owing to the library. The ‘Memorial for the Right Honorable the Earl of Kinnoull for the opinion of Counsel regarding the Library of Innerpeffray’ outlines the library’s financial problems, brought about by the non-payment of interest on the rents of the lands dedicated for the purpose of providing an income for the library. It also demonstrates the difficulties with the heirs of the original trustees who should have been sitting on the board of trustees, but who were unwilling to act in any way, and seeks advice on whether or not members of the local community are entitled ‘to call the Memorialist [i.e. Kinnoull] to account for the funds in his hands’.²⁴

In addition, Kinnoull sought advice as to whether the long practice (‘upwards of sixty years’) of allowing members of the community to use the library conferred on them any legal rights.²⁵ It seems that Kinnoull sincerely wished to improve the library’s management, since he further asks whether he would be ‘justified in appropriating the said funds according to his own discretion towards bettering & augmenting the Library; or in increasing the Salary of the School master; adding to the premises or in adopting any other measure which in his own discretion he may consider for the ultimate benefit of the establishment’ without reference to the absent (and non-functioning) other trustees. Tellingly, he also asks: ‘Would the Memorialist be justified in turning out the present incumbent [who was acting as both

²³ ‘The Petition of Wm. Young, 1823’. Innerpeffray Library Miscellaneous MS 1823/001

²⁴ ‘Memorial’, p. 12.

²⁵ ‘Memorial’, pp.12-3.

Schoolmaster and Librarian]. It is understood he is quite unfit...'²⁶ The 'present incumbent' was Eben Reid (in post 1822-1837).

Counsel's advice, contained in the 'Opinion by Sir James Moncrieff On Memorial for Lord Kinnoull [*sic*]' was that 'the inhabitants of the parish' would be held to have a legal interest in the running of the library, and hence that 'those to whom the direction of it [the parish] is committed'²⁷ would be entitled to call Kinnoull to account for any missing funds that should have been used for the purposes of buying books or paying the Librarian or Schoolmaster's salaries. He further advised that Kinnoull could proceed without the consent of the absent trustees, as long as he had laid a formal complaint against them, but advised proceeding with great caution in the matter of sacking the Schoolmaster. What then happened remains obscure, although it is known that Reid remained in post until 1837. Between 1837 and 1854, it is believed that there was no Keeper of Books, or only temporary incumbents, as the keys were held by the Grounds Officer (gardener) in the absence of a Keeper.²⁸ And a note written in 1855 suggests that matters did not improve significantly until the dynamic James Christie was appointed in 1854/5. Volume II of the 1855 Catalogue contains a statement as follows in a currently-unidentified nineteenth century hand (possibly that of Christie):

The management by the Trust was for a long period unsatisfactory [...] But since 1854 upwards of 450 of the old volumes have been rebound since the same times and above 300 new works added including the works of Scott, Wordsworth, some of Irving's texts, mostly of a class more suited to the general intelligence of the district than formerly.'²⁹

What this suggests is that, for a long time, those charged with the financial management of the library and hence its acquisition of books, were simply not fulfilling their duties. The comment above demonstrates that once an effective Keeper of Books was appointed, attempts were made to fill in perceived gaps in the collection. Thus at least some of the major works of the Romantic movement (those by Scott, Wordsworth and Irving) were perceived as necessary to the collection, but only once that movement was effectively over. This legal wrangle also sheds some light on the ways in which the library's role was perceived within

²⁶ 'Memorial', p.17.

²⁷ 'Opinion by Sir James Moncrieff On Memorial for Lord Kinnoull', Innerpeffray Library Miscellaneous MS/003, p.2.

²⁸ George Chamier, *The First Light: The Story of Innerpeffray Library* (Published by the Library of Innerpeffray, 2009), p. 125.

²⁹ Innerpeffray Library 1855 Catalogue. Recorded on the page for entries beginning with the letter 'K'

the community; users clearly recognised its importance as a resource for the students who borrowed from it, felt a sense of ownership over it, and a proportional sense of grievance when it was ill-managed. This sense of ownership, and of 'right' to the library should be read in its socio-political context. As a student in 1823, William Young grew up in the era immediately following the French Revolution, when discourse about the 'rights of man' formed a central part of both political and cultural life in Britain. He lived through the wars with France of 1793-1815, and experienced the repressive counter-measures against freedom of speech and freedom of assembly usually known as the Gagging Acts (1817), when the British government attempted to limit the dissemination of democratic, radical, and revolutionary ideas. The question of the working man's access to education, in this political climate, was a live one. William Young may never have read Thomas Paine's famous *Rights of Man* (1792) but there are striking similarities between the 'Petition' and Paine's central emphasis on the individual's inherent and inalienable rights, juxtaposed against his criticism of aristocratic government which does not act in the best interests of the people. Young's is, in fact, a Paineite reading of the situation at Innerpefferay.

Both William Young and Kinnoull had good grounds for complaint against Eben Reid, although it seems that the rot must have set in earlier than his tenure. In the period under consideration, the Library's Mortification Book demonstrates a significant dereliction of duty with regards to the buying of books which, according to the Founder's will, should have happened every year ('augmented by my successors yearly'). It is clear that this did not happen. Although the librarians' salary is duly recorded every year, along with sundry expenses such as panes of glass, door locks, shoring up the foundations of the library, whitewash and harling, building new presses, a yearly supply of coals for the use of the librarian, and similar costs, records for buying books only appear four times between 1780 and the end of the Mortification Book in 1811, after which the lack of records is entirely consistent with the narrative of neglect and dereliction of duty by the Trustees. In addition, expenditure on books dramatically decreased during this period. Whereas in 1778-9, the sum of £71.1s.6d. was expended on books, with £3 3s on Tillotson's *Sermons* alone, in 1780, £30 13s. 3½d. was spent plus Arnot's *Criminal Trials*, listed separately for 18s. Between 1788 and 1798, only £4 14s. 7d. was spent (incidentally this must have been on books published before 1788, not on recent books, as there are no entries in the 1813 catalogue for books published after 1788). And then there is no mention of book buying until May 1811, when £1 10s. is recorded.

These various documents reveal a depressing story of financial woe and neglect of the library by those charged with its care. The Founder's ambition for a collection regularly augmented with new material for the benefit of its borrowers was sadly undermined in the Romantic period, because of dereliction of duty by the Trustees. Perhaps because they themselves did not need to borrow materials from the library, they were unaware of its potential importance to the actual users. Or perhaps they were simply uninterested and disengaged, inheriting familial ties to the Trusteeships which they found to be distasteful or irrelevant. Whatever the reasons for their failings, the result was that Innerpeffray's readers in the period 1780 to 1830 therefore had no first-hand access at all to what would now be considered mainstream Romantic material from this library (although it is at this stage of research impossible to say whether or not they found it by other means).³⁰ Nonetheless, the borrowers' registers for the period show an extremely healthy amount of borrowing activity. They may not have been borrowing Paine, Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron or Jane Austen, but readers in this corner of rural Perthshire were nonetheless making the most of the books that were available to them. Innerpeffray Library did not give them the latest books or news, it seems, but it still gave them something of value. We must turn now to the registers to see what they took away with them.

Borrowing Romantic Texts

There are 4,608 records of borrowings for the period 1780-1830. Of these, only 216 were of books written or published during the Romantic period. We must omit the editions of Plato's *Dialogues* and Flavel's *Divine Conduct* published during the period from our analysis, as these were reissues of older works. When we do this, the figure for borrowings of Romantic-period books from the period is 203. This equates to approximately 4.4% of total borrowings 1780-1830, which is unsurprising, given the library's paucity of Romantic texts (under 2% of the collection at this point). Buffon's *Natural History* was by far the most popular Romantic-period work, borrowed 93 times in the period. Stuart's *History of Scotland* was next in popularity, and remained so throughout the period, being borrowed 23 times between 1787 and 1829. In comparison to older works, however, this was a fairly negligible result – the older work of Scots history, Patrick Abercromby's *The Martial Atchievements* [sic] of the

³⁰ An important caveat to this statement is, of course, that the borrowers *did* have access to both the *Monthly Review* and the *Scots Magazine*, but only up to the years 1786 and 1785 respectively. It seems that the subscription to these periodicals then lapsed. For the first years of our period, however, the practice of eighteenth-century reviewers of quoting extensively from the texts under review would potentially have given borrowers the possibility of seeing at least some parts of texts which were not in the library.

Scots Nation (1711) was also borrowed 23 times in the same period, and Robertson's *History of Charles V* (1769) was borrowed 69 times. Of Romantic-era works, Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities*, a work which included 'a dissertation on the authenticity of the poems of Ossian', and specimens of 'ancient poems translated from the Galic [*sic*] of Ullin, Ossian, Orran, &c.', also proved relatively popular, with 14 borrowings between 1790 and 1825. Cunningham's *History of Great Britain* was slightly less popular, borrowed 13 times, between 1791 and 1827. The *Works of the Right Reverend Thomas Newton* were also borrowed 11 times, between the dates 1804 and 1822. Arnot's *Criminal Trials* was also borrowed 11 times between 1786 and 1812. William Russell's *History of Modern Europe* was borrowed 7 times, between 1799 and 1826. Sinclair's *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* was borrowed 8 times between 1790 and 1818. Monboddo's *On the Origin and Progress of Language* was issued 6 times, between 1803 and 1823. The work on the Chatterton controversy, *Observations on the Poems of Thomas Rowley*, was borrowed twice, in 1796 and 1806, in both cases many years after the heat of the controversy was over. The *History of the Netherlands* was borrowed 4 times between 1782 and 1791. Marshall's *Rural Economy of Gloucestershire* was borrowed once (in 1796), and his *Rural Economy of the Midland Counties* was issued three times (twice to the same borrower, James Faichney) in the relatively short time span of 1803-1808. *The London Mercury* (in 1807), the *History and Antiquities of the Archiepiscopal Palace of Lambeth* (in 1808), and Chalmers' *Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation* (the only nineteenth-century text borrowed in this period, published in 1818 and borrowed in 1823), were all borrowed only once. While the borrowers of this period did occasionally take out the library's few works of drama and poetry (including those of the Classical world), the genres most often borrowed were, as other scholars have noted in relation to the eighteenth-century borrowings, religious and spiritual works, followed by works of history, and natural history.

It is difficult to do more than speculate on what motivates these borrowings, at this stage of research. There is a clear emphasis on an interest in Scottish history and Scottish culture (as evidenced by the borrowings of Abercromby, Stuart, Smith and Sinclair), which might suggest a nascent Scottish nationalism, of sorts. In particular, the frequent borrowings of Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities*, with its emphasis on the importance of the works of Ossian, lends credit to this hypothesis. On the other hand, Innerpeffray's borrowers were clearly also interested in the wider world (as shown by their borrowings of Robertson, Cunningham, Russell and Lothian). The relative popularity of Monboddo's somewhat eccentric work of

historical linguistics, dealing with the languages of colonised peoples, including Carib, Eskimo, Huron, Algonquian, Peruvian and Tahitian peoples, might be a further manifestation of this desire to know more about the world outside rural Perthshire, but Monboddo is an odd choice. It is an Enlightenment text rarely found in subscription or circulating libraries where users have control over acquisitions, and was no doubt a remnant from Hay Drummond's own collection which probably appealed to the library's users because of Monboddo's reputation, rather than necessarily because of the work's contents, although it is also possible that Monboddo's evangelical missionary project attracted at least some of Innerpeffray's borrowers.³¹ Arnot's *Criminal Trials* were most likely borrowed by law students reading up on precedents, while the two works on rural economy have an obvious practical application in a farming community.

This wide time range between borrowings of all these books – with works published in the 1780s regularly borrowed in the 1820s – suggests that Innerpeffray's borrowers were not particularly interested in keeping up with the latest publications; indeed it might well be that they did not even have a sense of what the latest publications were. In addition, we very rarely see 'clusterings' of borrowings of the same text, suggesting that the borrowers were relatively immune to fashions of reading, even within their own small community. Instead, the evidence strongly implies that they were willing to read works that were of an older date, and indeed that they believed those works were still useful or relevant to them. Although newer works of history (Cunningham's *History of Great Britain*, for example) were available to them, borrowings of works of history from Madertie's original collection, such as John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (1580) remained constant. Similarly, they remained loyal to older writers of theology and divinity, borrowing relatively modern collections of sermons, such as Clark's and Atterbury's of the mid eighteenth century (borrowed 71 and 38 times respectively in our period), but remaining remarkably fond of Archbishop John Tillotson's early- to mid- seventeenth-century sermons (borrowed 66 times in the same period). The choice of Tillotson is unsurprising – Tillotson remained one of the most popular sermon writers of the eighteenth century (and was one of Jane Austen's favourites) – while Clark and Atterbury were similarly enjoyed as much for their style as for their religious messages. Conversely, the borrowers showed a marked preference for the newer works on agriculture, husbandry and natural history, with Buffon's *Natural History* being not only the most popular

³¹ Monboddo, an Enlightenment polymath, was probably known to Innerpeffray's borrowers primarily because of his celebrity as the solicitor in the scandalous Douglas inheritance case of 1767-9 – a *cause celebre* of the eighteenth century.

Romantic-period book, but in fact the most borrowed book in the whole of the Romantic period (93 borrowings as noted above).³² As Mark Towsey has shown, these borrowers also borrowed other key texts of the Enlightenment, in the years 1780 to 1820.³³

It seems then, that for Innerpeffray's borrowers, the Romantic movement was happening elsewhere. For them, the great works of the Romantic period were still those of the Enlightenment and their counter-Enlightenment opponents – Buffon, Robertson, Ferguson, Hume, Kames, and Beattie. The question remains as to whether these borrowers would have wished to read the literary works of Austen, Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Shelley, Hemans, Smith, Ferrier, Burns, or the many other Romantic novelists, poets and dramatists, had they been offered the opportunity to do so. Given their training and habits of borrowing primarily spiritual, philosophical or historical texts, they might have preferred the philosophical works of Hegel, Kant, Goethe, Schelling or Wordsworth and Coleridge, or the political writings of Burke, Paine and Wollstonecraft. It seems probable that the Evangelical novels of writers such as Mary Brunton and Hannah More would have appealed to the borrowers' existing habits of seeking spiritual help in written works. And the later nineteenth-century records strongly suggest that Walter Scott's historical novels, and Byron's poetry, would have found an avid readership much earlier, had they been available.

Innerpeffray's Romantic-period borrowers thus encountered neither the latest works of the Romantic period, nor William St Clair's 'old canon' of literature. Instead, their choices reflect both the limitations and opportunities of the collection with which they were presented. This case study suggests that the library was important to its users not as a repository of works that would allow them to keep up with the latest publications, but, as William Young suggested in his Petition in 1823, as a place where those who wished to remedy their intellectual privations could do so. Interestingly, William Young himself was not a very frequent borrower from the library, with records between 1780 and 1830 showing only three visits to the library. On 18th April, 1822, Young borrowed James Dalrymple Stair's *Institutions of the Law of Scotland* (1693). On 21 December 1826, he borrowed the first volume of George Harris's translation of Justinian's *Institutes* (1761). Both of these were standard texts in the teaching of Scots law. On 4th June, 1827, Young took out Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (1779). His anger at being excluded from the library (an

³² Nonetheless, Edward Topsell's comprehensively outdated *The History of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607) was still borrowed once in the period.

³³ Towsey, pp.139-142.

exclusion that cannot, in fact, have lasted long, given the dates above) therefore seems disproportionate. It seems most probable that Young was the spokesman for a group of disgruntled students who felt that the Schoolmaster/Librarian was not fulfilling his duties correctly, some or many of whom used the library much more frequently than Young.

Their idea of the library as belonging to its users, not its owners, and their strong sense of grievance at having been deprived of a 'right' to access printed matter is striking. Ironically, although there is no evidence that Young or his local peers ever read Romantic works of revolutionary philosophy, such rhetoric partakes strongly of Romanticism's revolutionary impulses and beginnings, and equally strongly of that famously transatlantic document, the Declaration of Independence. Young's Petition suggests that a borrower did not necessarily need to read the revolutionary writings of Wordsworth, Coleridge or Shelley, or even the strongly pro-democratic writing of Paine or Wollstonecraft to feel justified in asserting his rights. As Jonathan Rose has demonstrated, readers may take radical messages from the most conservative of texts, and *vice versa*.³⁴ Readers, as Michel de Certeau famously insists, are 'poachers', not passive sponges.³⁵ Like their counterparts in Revolutionary America, Innerpeffray's borrowers may have absorbed radical ideas not directly from their reading, but from discussions about reading held with friends, peers and authority figures. Indeed, the very fact of access to education, once granted and now denied, was enough to turn the minds of Innerpeffray's users to thoughts of rights and duties, rank and privilege. Mismanagement of the library deprived the borrowers of Romantic books to read, but ironically it seems also to have brought them together as a community who understood and valued their rights to read.

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³⁴ See, for example, Chapter 4 of Rose's *Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, entitled 'A Conservative Canon' (pp. 116-145).

³⁵ Michel de Certeau, 'Reading as Poaching', *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 165-176.

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