



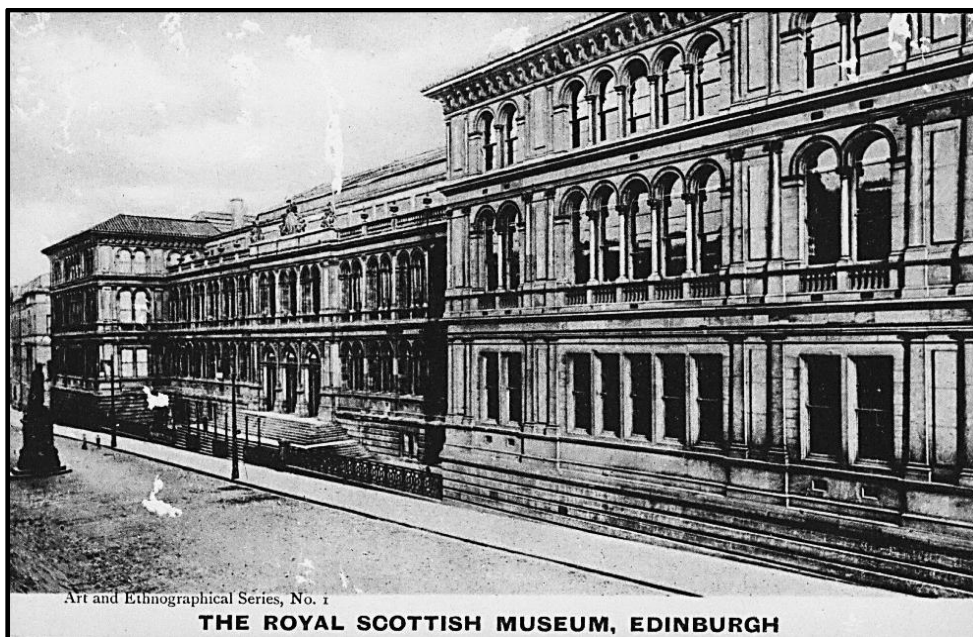
# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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**Towards an Historical Geography of a 'National' Museum: The Industrial  
Museum of Scotland, the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art and the Royal  
Scottish Museum, 1854-1939**

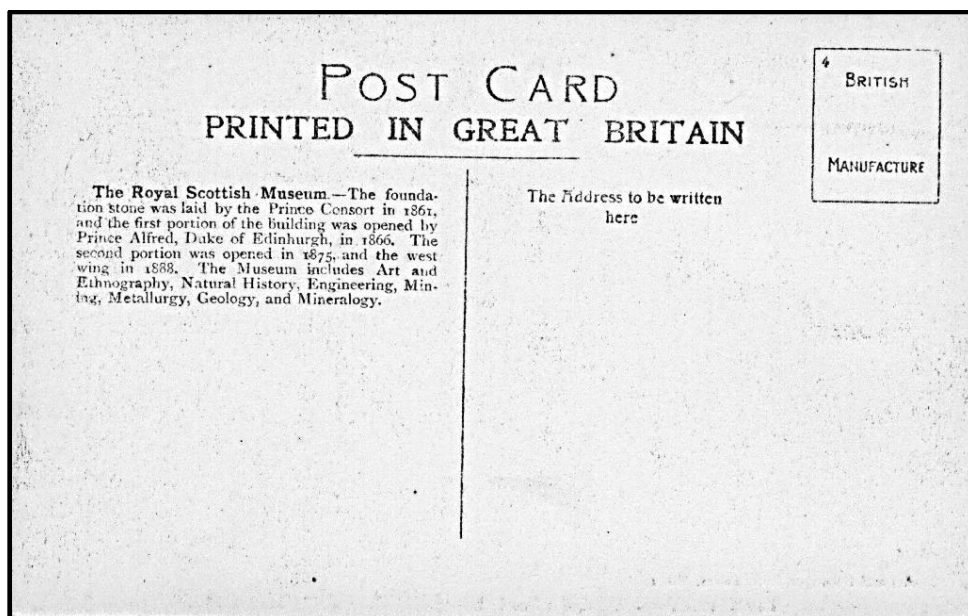
**Geoffrey Nigel Swinney**



**Ph.D.**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2013**



Title page. A postcard, 'Art and Ethnography Series No.1: The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh', published in 1912 (GB587/IS.2012.1)

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work throughout.

Geoffrey N. Swinney  
Institute of Geography  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis adopts a primarily process-based methodology to put a museum in its place as a site of knowledge-making. It examines the practices of space which were productive of a government-funded ('national') museum in Edinburgh. Taking a spatial perspective, and recognising that place is both material and metaphorical, the thesis explores how the Museum's material and intellectual architectures were produced over the period 1854-1939. The thesis is concerned to bring into focus the dynamic processes by which the Museum was in a continual state of becoming; a constellation of tangible and intangible objects constantly being produced and reproduced through mobility of objects, people and ideas. Its concern is to chart the flows through space which produced the Museum.

The thesis comprises nine chapters. An introduction and a literature review are followed by chapters concerned, respectively, with the built space of the museum and with the people who worked there. A further three chapters consider the nature of that work and the practices of space which constituted the processes of collecting, displaying, and educating, whilst another focuses on visiting. The final chapter discusses how the analysis has constructed the museum as constituted through a complex diversity of material and metaphorical settings on a variety of geographical scales. This critical scrutiny of the museum has, in turn, brought to the fore the place of the Museum in contributing to civic and national identity.

Through a case-study of a particular museum, the concern has been to explore how critical geographies of science may be applied to the examination of a museum. In particular the thesis examines how contextual concepts developed largely in conscribed sites such as laboratories apply to a public site such as a museum. The thesis suggests that the ordering terms 'space' and 'place', combined with a focus on practice and performance, may have more general application in constructing an historical geography of museums as sites of production and consumption of scientific knowledge.

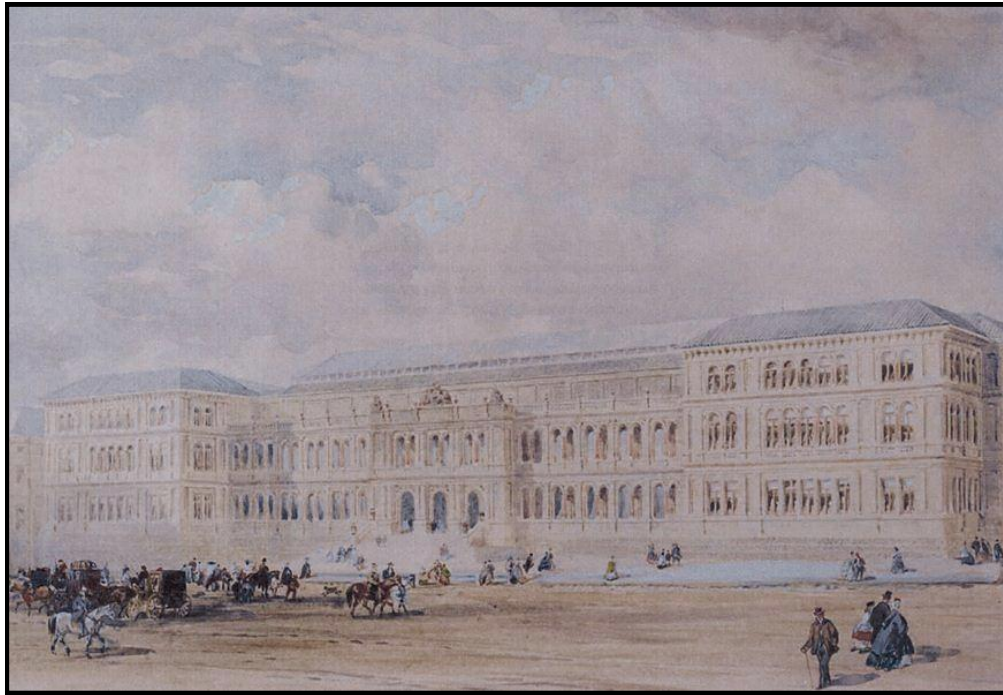


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I would like to thank National Museums Scotland for (following my retirement from the employment of the organisation) making me an Honorary Research Associate, a status which granted me a level of continued access to the institution's archival records without which the research could not have been completed. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to my various Museum colleagues who, over the years, fed my interest in the history of the institution. In particular, I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of the NMS Library, notably Morven Donald, for drawing my attention to a number of archival sources and for facilitating access to documents in their care. I am grateful too for the assistance of the staff of other libraries and archives: Edinburgh City Archives, the House of Commons Library, the National Archive, National Records of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, St Andrews University, the V&A Archive, the Scottish Film Archive, Edinburgh University Special Collections, and Edinburgh Public Library. I acknowledge the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, and the Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh for permission to reproduce photographs of items in their collections. I thank also those visitors to the Museum, interviewed in the course of the research, who kindly gave me permission to quote extracts from their reminiscences about the Museum.





**Frontispiece. ‘The Industrial Museum of Scotland’, watercolour attributed to Captain Francis Fowke, R. E., 1861, and exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy in 1862 (GB587/IS.2009.11).**

This watercolour, attributed to Francis Fowke, presents an imagined geography – a bespoke museum, the largest public building in Scotland, its frontage onto a piazza filled with carriages and fashionable strollers. At the time of the painting’s exhibition in the Royal Scottish Academy in February 1862, only the foundations of the east portion (to the left of the painting) had materialised. This portion opened to the public in 1866, but the building as depicted was completed only in 1889. The piazza was never materialised but a broad thoroughfare, named Chambers Street, opened in the mid-1870s.



## **CONTENTS**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapters</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>xxi</b>



## Chapters

1. Introduction: situating the thesis	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Spaces and places: tangible and intangible objects	3
1.3. Why study museums; why study the Museum?	6
1.4. From where to study the museum?	11
1.5. Scope of the thesis and the location of sources	16
1.6. Constructing an archive of the Museum	18
1.7. The structure of the thesis	24
2. The spaces of science: a theoretical context for an historical geography of a museum	<b>27</b>
2.1. Introduction	27
2.2. The museum's compass: historicizing museums	28
2.3. Contextualising the museum: museology	36
2.4. Contextualising the museum: perspectives from the history and philosophy of science	43
2.5. Conclusion	47
3. The Museum as place: the materiality of site	<b>51</b>
3.1. Introduction	51
3.2. Prologue to an 'epitome of the world': genealogies of collections in Edinburgh	54
3.3. Town, gown and museum	60
3.4. Temporary spaces of collecting: 'The Temporary Museum' 1854-1866	64
3.5. Built space: the Fowke-Matheson building 1866- <i>circa</i>	69

1889	
3.6.	Location and status 81
3.7.	Repositioning the Museum for a new century 82
3.8.	Conclusion 93
<b>4.</b>	<b>Staffing: people, authority and sites 97</b>
4.1.	Introduction 97
4.2.	Establishment matters: where were recruitments made? 104
4.3.	Constables, Watchers, and Patrols 107
4.4.	Cleaners, Attendants and Preparers 110
4.5.	Places of work: workers and workshops 116
4.6.	Occasional staff and volunteers 123
4.7.	Directors and the competitive posts: Assistants, Keepers, Curators 125
4.8.	Extramural sites and the creation of reputational geographies 139
4.9.	Conclusion 142
<b>5.</b>	<b>Collecting: practices of accumulation and discard 151</b>
5.1.	Introduction 151
5.2.	Processes and sites of collecting: ‘register’ as noun and verb 155
5.3.	Collecting streams, disciplines, and departments 161
5.4.	Gravity of collection 180
5.5.	The South Kensington effect 183
5.6.	Temporary collecting: borrowing and practices of keeping-while-giving 186
5.7.	Geographical turns in collecting: where did collections come from? 189
5.8.	Sites of production of museum objects 191

5.9. Practices of discard	194
5.10. Conclusion	202
<b>6. Displaying: sites of public engagement</b>	<b>207</b>
6.1. Introduction	207
6.2. Changing concepts of the role and form of display: what to display	209
6.3. The building as display	211
6.4. Philosophies on display	220
6.5. Constraints on display: the pragmatics of space	230
6.6. Different publics and different displays	237
6.7. Constructing psychological space: displaying beyond the material Museum	255
6.8. Conclusion	261
<b>7. Educating: sites of speaking for objects</b>	<b>267</b>
7.1. Introduction	267
7.2. Speaking for objects: sites of speaking at visitors	269
7.3. Bringing the Museum into view: imaginative geographies of a teaching museum	272
7.4. Audiences, space and pedagogy	276
7.5. Oration, space, and pedagogical technologies	299
7.6. Conclusion	303
<b>8. Visiting: geographies and moments of encounter</b>	<b>307</b>
8.1. Introduction	307
8.2. Fragments for constructing a geography of visiting	309
8.3. Quantifying visits: constructing publics	313
8.4. Distinguishing visits: rituals of privileged entry	320

8.5. Visitor accounts of their visits and experience	325
8.6. Appropriation of space: the Museum as sites of protest and assignation	340
8.7. Visiting by invitation: the Museum as a place of civic entertainment	345
8.8. Conclusion	352
9. Conclusions: towards an historical geography of the Museum	<b>357</b>
9.1. Introduction	357
9.2. The Museums as a site of science making	360
9.3. The administrative geographies of the Museum: the nature of ‘national’	362
9.4. Materialising an historical geography	366
9.5. The sites of the ‘work of science’ and the demonstration of science	372
9.6. The place of the discipline of geography in the Museum	380
9.7. Towards an historical geography of museums	383
<b>End-piece</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>387</b>
Manuscript Sources	387
Published Sources	389
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>447</b>
I. A nomenclatorial history of the Museum	447
II. The Museum library and the Patent Library	453
III. Annual Reports of the Museum	457
IV. Content of photographs as temporal ‘landmarks’	479

V. Form of register numbers	481
VI. Directors and Acting Directors of the Museum, 1855-1939	483



## Figures

<b>Title page illustration.</b> Postcard of the Royal Scottish Museum, 1912 (NMS)	
<b>Frontispiece.</b> ‘The Industrial Museum of Scotland’, watercolour, attributed to Captain Francis Fowke, R.E, 1861 (NMS)	v
1.1. Double page spread from an annotated copy of ‘General Instructions’ (NMS)	21
1.2. The building as archive: pencil sketches for decorative scheme on the wall behind display case removed from east wall of the first floor of the West Wing during Royal Museum Project	23
3.1. Street party to celebrate the fruition of the Royal Museum Project and the opening of the former ‘Royal Museum’ portion of the National Museum of Scotland	52
3.2. The upper hall of the Natural History Museum of the Toun College of Edinburgh by William Lizars, <i>circa</i> 1822 (NMS)	58
3.3. The location of the Natural History Museum in the University of Edinburgh, <i>circa</i> 1852 (NLS)	59
3.4. Plan of the Museum, dated 1871, showing the three phases of construction of Fowke and Matheson’s building (NMS)	65
3.5. The site of the Museum as shown in a painting by James Ogilvie in 1846 (The Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh)	65
3.6. Map of the site and environs for the proposed Museum, <i>circa</i> 1852 (NLS)	66
3.7. Drawing of the north elevation of the Museum, <i>circa</i> 1860, signed by Matheson and David Rae (RCAHMS)	71
3.8. Pen and wash drawing by Francis Fowke of an early	72

iteration of the plan for the Great Hall of the Industrial Museum of Scotland, <i>circa</i> 1861 (NMS)	
3.9. Photograph of the Great Hall <i>circa</i> 1900 (NMS)	72
3.10. Plan of ground-floor of the first phase of Museum, opened 1866 (NMS)	74
3.11. Detail from a panorama of Edinburgh by J. Sulman, 1868, showing the bespoke Museum with the temporary display halls and Museum's offices in the buildings on Argyle Square (from <i>Illustrated London News</i> , 1868)	76
3.12. The Great Hall, before 1875, looking west (NMS)	77
3.13. Contemporary images of the setting of the Museum:	80
A) An imaginative geography of the setting for the Museum, painted by David Cousin, with figures by Sam Bough, 1871 (NMS)	
B) Photograph by Archibald Burns, taken January or February 1871, westward along North College Street (NLS)	
3.14. An imaginative geography of the Museum: an artist's impression of Oldrieve's proposed south façade onto Lothian Street ( <i>The Scotsman</i> )	85
3.15. A section of the Flodden Wall incorporated into the wall of the new central hall, part of Oldrieve's southward extension, opened in 1929 ( <i>The Scotsman</i> )	87
3.16. Diagrammatic representation of phases of construction of Fowke and Matheson's building, and twentieth-century extensions to it, superimposed onto an aerial photograph of the Museum, <i>circa</i> 1976 (NMS and the author)	88
3.17. Plan of the ground floor, <i>circa</i> 1929, showing the allocation of display space and the new southern stacks designed by Thomas Oldrieve (NMS)	89
3.18. Plan showing proposed further southward development following completion of Oldrieve's extension (NMS)	91

3.19. Reinterpreting Fowke and Matheson's configuration of space in concrete: Paterson's 1934 southward extension of the west wing (NMS)	91
3.20. Map showing the Museum and its environs in 1931 (NLS)	92
4.1. The Royal Scottish Museum Staff Register (NMS)	98
4.2. Time-clock in south east basement corridor (author's photograph)	100
4.3. Graffito, 'Corect lekness of Alec Mckinage 1863', on a window casement, ground floor in east pavilion revealed and subsequently obliterated during the Royal Museum Project (author's photograph)	100
4.4. The staff, exclusive of the Assistants, Keepers and Director, assembled in the Great Hall, <i>circa</i> 1885 (NMS)	102
4.5. Stern authority on display: a Patrol (left) and an Attendant confer on the first floor gallery of the Main Hall (SSA)	110
4.6. Smithy and carpenters' workshop: detail from 'No. 11 Industrial Museum Edinburgh, plan of basement floor', 1869 (NMS)	115
4.7. The Museum's mechanical workshop, <i>circa</i> 1926 (NMS)	116
4.8. 'Preserver to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art': advertisements by commercial taxidermists in the <i>Post Office Edinburgh and Leith Directory</i> (NMS)	120
4.9. 'Particulars relating to the Staff of the Science and Art Branches of The Royal Scottish Museum', 19 November 1912 (NRS)	126
4.10. Quarterly account by the Museum to His Majesty's Stationery Office of publications sold (NMS)	143
4.11. Evidence of labour: a bucket, removed during the exposure, has left its ghostly presence in this photograph of the Great Hall, <i>circa</i> 1900 (NMS)	147

5.1. The Industrial Museum Register as site of accession and disposal (NMS)	153
5.2. The Natural History collections as objects and as inscriptions (NMS)	154
5.3. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art Loans Register, Volume 1 (NMS)	160
5.4. Part of a transcript of the Warrant signed on behalf of the King by the Barons of the Treasury imposing an obligation to record additions to the Museum of the College of Edinburgh in response to a petition of 9 July 1812 from Robert Jameson (NMS)	162
5.5. Diagrammatic representation of migration of object records and the construction of new registers productive of the Natural History and Geology collecting streams	167
5.6. Ledger ‘Donations to the Industrial Art Department’ (NMS)	168
5.7. A cascade of inscription within the Department of Art and Ethnography in 2008 (from Swinney, 2012)	169
5.8. Capturing tacit knowledge: a page from the Industrial Register accessioning and describing models of different designs of kiln (NMS)	175
5.9. Percentage of finished goods acquired during Wilson’s and Archer’s tenures	177
5.10. Archer’s proforma letter soliciting the donation of objects from exhibitors at the Paris exhibition, 1867 (NMS)	179
5.11. Numbers of lots of insects registered	181
5.12. A page from an album of certificates of donation sent to Edinburgh fishmonger Charles Muirhead (NMS)	182
5.13. William Eagle Clarke collecting on Fair Isle (NMS)	192
5.14. Department of Technology registers (NMS)	203

6.1. George Wilson's 'map' of technology on his grave-marker in Old Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh (author's photograph)	214
6.2. A specimen label with pre-printed hand and eye emblem (NMS)	214
6.3. The main entrance with spandrels by John Rhind depicting, from left to right, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Michelangelo and James Watt (author's photograph)	216
6.4. Detail from a photograph of the Great Hall, <i>circa</i> 1900 (Figure 3.9) showing a section of the frieze (NMS)	216
6.5. Stencil over archway on the ground floor connecting the Great Hall with one of the stacks to its south (NMS)	217
6.6. Photocopy of a photograph of a statue of Rob Roy at east end of Great Hall, with view through archway to the large animal hall beyond, 1905-1916 (NMS)	220
6.7. A mixture of thematic and geographical categorisations of displays listed in <i>A Guide to the Collections</i> (NMS)	229
6.8. An object out of place: the massive cast of the Bologna Gateway, juxtaposed with heavy engineering (ground floor), ethnography (first floor) and economic botany (top floor), dominating the south wall of the West Wing (NMS)	234
6.9. Architectural casts in the Great Hall, <i>circa</i> 1900 (NMS)	243
6.10. Enlarged model of a longitudinal section through a sea anemone by Les Fils d'Emile Deyrolle (author's photograph)	244
6.11. Part of the cast of the Gateway from Sanchi on display in the Great Hall ( <i>Illustrated London News</i> )	245
6.12. Part of a case in the Evolution Gallery, opened in 1929, representing inherited characters in domestic cattle (NMS)	246

6.13. Golden Eagle eyrie at Corrour Forest, Highland, a habitat group by Charles Kirk, Glasgow (NMS)	250
6.14. Part of a label for an exhibition of Cossar Ewart's research on the selective breeding of sheep (NMS)	252
6.15. The 'museum microscope' with instructions on its use and label informing the viewer what it see (NMS)	254
6.16. A commercially produced stereoscopic image, one of The Waverley Series, showing the Great Hall <i>circa</i> 1900 (NMS)	256
6.17. The Natural History photographic slide loan collection in store at the NMS Collections Centre, West Granton (author's photograph)	258
6.18. A slide labelled 'Natural History preparing room', showing David Wotherspoon spray-painting a model of an extinct elephant for inclusion in the Extinct Animals hall, <i>circa</i> 1930 (NMS)	258
6.19. The Museum as a site of craftsmanship: workshop staff assembling a model of a lift bridge, 1938 (Scottish Screen Archive)	259
6.20. Poster advertising the Royal Scottish Museum, 1930 (NMS)	260
7.1. Plans, signed Colin Macandrew, HM Office of Works, Edinburgh, 30 October 1896, for the conversion of the lecture theatre into display space (NMS)	281
7.2. Making space for production of speech: detail from a plan, dated 1930, for the construction of additional office accommodation to include an office for 'Lady Lecturers' (NMS)	287
7.3. Lecture programme for 1938-1939 (NMS)	288
7.4. Displaying authority: an advertisement for one of the series of lectures given by the curatorial staff (NMS)	289
7.5. The 'almost lethal chamber': a basement workshop converted for use as a lecture room (NMS)	297
8.1. Visits made data: pages from a notebook recording	312

turnstile counter readings (NMS)	
8.2. Number of visits 1866-1996 (Swinney & Heppell, 1997)	316
8.3. Page from Royal Scottish Museum Visitors Book (NMS)	323
8.4. Cuttings pasted into Royal Scottish Museum Scrap Book of classes for visually impaired pupils (NMS)	326
8.5. Visitor behaviours: frames from the film ‘The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh’, 1938 (SSA)	339
8.6. The conversazione celebrating the tercentenary of the University of Edinburgh, 1884 ( <i>Illustrated London News</i> )	347
8.7. Regulating and configuring traffic in the streets around the Museum: a notice issued in December 1904 regarding the reception to celebrate the Museum’s jubilee (NMS)	348
9 1. Emblem of (A) the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art and (B) the South Kensington Museum (NMS; TNA)	366
9.2. Photograph of a group of children in the British Zoology Hall, <i>circa</i> 1911 (NMS)	368
<b>End-piece.</b> Chambers Street and the main entrance to the Museum, 1938 (SSA)	385

## Tables

4.1. Staff complement of the Royal Scottish Museum	101
4.2. Travel and subsistence rates applicable in 1909	114
4.3. Summary of the careers of staff:	
A. Directors	148
B. Curatorial staff in the natural history stream	149
C. Curatorial staff in the industrial stream	145



## INTRODUCTION: SITUATING THE THESIS

Museums are never *just* spaces for the playing out of wider social relationships: a museum is a process as well as a structure.<sup>1</sup>

### *1.1 Introduction*

In an address to the Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh in the winter of 1857, George Wilson declared that ‘The Industrial Museum, like the College, the Court of Session, or the House of Commons, is at once a walled-in space and an embodied idea or cluster of ideas. The walled-in space takes its character from the idea which it embodies’.<sup>2</sup> Wilson was speaking at a time when, as its first Director, he was embroiled in the process of imagining into existence a newly established government-funded museum in Edinburgh. His words highlighted the dual nature of ‘things’. As Simon Knell puts it, through engagement with its inherent materiality ‘our conceptual or intangible object is negotiated into existence’ – an object is, at once, tangible and its ‘intangible twin’.<sup>3</sup> Wilson’s distinction between the material structures and the intellectual structures which shape them equates with Stephen Conn’s concept of museums having both a physical architecture and an ‘intellectual architecture’ which extends through and beyond the physical structure, constituting what to David

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<sup>1</sup> Macdonald (1996), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson (1858), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Knell (2012), 327.

Livingstone are ‘intellectual geographies’.<sup>4</sup> This duality, expressed as a distinction between space and place, is a central theme of the academic discipline of geography. For Henri Lefebvre, tangible ‘absolute space’ is configured into ‘social space’, which for most authors equates to ‘place’, through ‘social labour’.<sup>5</sup> Thus, space is transformed into ‘place’ through performances that Michel de Certeau termed ‘practices of space’.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis adopts these constructivist concepts to interrogate the production of a museum as ‘place’. It aims to examine the practices of space which constituted and shaped the museum of which Wilson was the first Director (henceforth ‘the Museum’). The thesis takes as its timeframe the period between the Museum’s establishment in 1854 and its temporary closure at the outbreak of war in 1939; a period in which it underwent a number of nomenclatorial changes: the ‘Industrial Museum of Scotland and the Natural History Museum, Edinburgh’ (1855-1864); the ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art’ (1865-1904); the ‘Royal Scottish Museum’ (1904-1985) with its collections being amalgamated into the ‘National Museums of Scotland’ (later ‘National Museums Scotland’) in 1985 (a nomenclatural history is presented as Appendix I). The goal is to present a spatial and temporal analysis of the Museum as a site of the production, reception, and mobility of knowledge.

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<sup>4</sup> Conn (1998), 4; Livingstone (2003), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Lefebvre (1991).

<sup>6</sup> de Certeau (1985).

## *1.2 Spaces and places: tangible and intangible objects*

The duality of ‘things’ has also been a focus of attention for scholars working in the field of material culture, notably those, such as Knell, engaged in the field of museology or museum studies. For Susan Pearce, Knell’s ‘twins’ are conjoined and inseparable: ‘social ideas cannot exist without physical content, but physical objects are meaningless without social content. Idea and expression are not two separable parts, but the same social construct’.<sup>7</sup> This inseparability was implicit in Sharon Macdonald’s echoing of Wilson’s words, nearly a century and a half after his speech: ‘a museum is a process as well as a structure’.<sup>8</sup> She continues by demonstrating that the structure and the process, the idea and the expression, are co-produced and dynamic, such that museums ‘inevitably bear the imprint of social relations beyond their walls and beyond the present’.<sup>9</sup> Thus the intellectual geographies of a museum are more extensive than their material architecture; both have a temporal dimension.

Further, Wilson’s metaphor of ideas forming clusters suggests that, for him, ideas themselves occupy spaces relative to each other. Such notions of epistemological spaces in which concepts were either appropriate or ‘out of place’ has itself been at the core of the academic discipline of human geography.

A corollary of the constructivist perspective is that place is produced only through performance and so is continually being made and re-made ‘through constant and reiterative practice’.<sup>10</sup> These practices, however, take place on a stage created through past performances. To quote Lefebvre, ‘Itself the outcome

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<sup>7</sup> Pearce (1992), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Macdonald (1996), 4

<sup>9</sup> Macdonald (1996), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cresswell (2004), 38.

of past actions, social space is what permits fresh action to occur'; social space (place) is both 'product and producer'.<sup>11</sup> As Rhiannon Mason reminds us, 'Museums are palimpsests of culture; they are constantly being rewritten over and over again, while still bearing traces of earlier values and belief-systems in their architecture, collections, design, organisation, and purposes'.<sup>12</sup> The museum at any particular moment is, thus, simultaneously a ghost of the museum(s) of the past. Spectres of past structures, as both material and metaphorical traces, continue to haunt the museum and exert agency long after the ideologies, epistemologies and technologies that shaped them have been displaced.<sup>13</sup> Related to this recursive concept of product and producer is the recognition that the very categories used to analyse museums are not essential divisions of the 'real world' but are heuristic devices created through 'structures of knowledge'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, although for Livingstone the museum organised and arranged specimens 'according to the prevailing norms', museums themselves were simultaneously deeply implicated in the construction of those very 'norms'.<sup>15</sup> There are, in other words, no natural disciplines.<sup>16</sup> As Wilson wrote shortly before being offered the Directorship of the Museum and having to wrestle with the construction of classificatory systems with which to discipline its collections:

As man, however, is not omniscient, he is unable to give perfect definitions of any of the sciences...It is further to be remembered that the division of human knowledge into various branches...is to a great extent made, not because we can show that a sharp line of demarcation separates each of these so-called sciences from all the rest, but because the limitation and feeble grasp of our faculties compel us to parcel out universal science,

---

<sup>11</sup> Lefebvre (1991), 73 and 142.

<sup>12</sup> Mason (2004), 327. See also Evans (1999), 6.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of a site as a ghost of itself, see Cronon (1991).

<sup>14</sup> Hill (2005), 73.

<sup>15</sup> Livingstone (2003), 29.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford (1997), 59.

so as to restrict ourselves to departments of it, small enough to be investigated during the comparatively short life of one individual.<sup>17</sup>

Such concepts posit that museums, like disciplinary boundaries (including those of the intellectual architecture of the museum), are continually in a process of becoming; constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated. For John Mackenzie, ‘if they [museums] constituted performance spaces for the acting out of dramas of identity, power and intellectual grappling with the world, this was a theatrical event that was constantly in the process of renewal and reinterpretation’.<sup>18</sup> His comment highlights the temporal contingency of ‘practices of space’ which Michel Foucault recognised in his call for an ‘effective history’, history which considers practices in their own time, in the ‘historic present’.<sup>19</sup> In this respect Foucault’s ‘effective history’ is a methodological analogue of the Strong Programme’s ‘naturalism’ (see Chapter 2).<sup>20</sup> It demands what Felix Driver dubbed a ‘contextual approach’, with greater sensitivity to ‘the production and consumption of knowledge than that provided by more conventional narrative histories’.<sup>21</sup>

To develop this approach, and responding to Steven Harris’s concern that to adopt a strictly place-based stance circumscribes the sites that are open to investigation, the methodology adopted in this thesis seeks to bring the museum into focus by examining the processes through which it was constituted.<sup>22</sup> The main processes that, *a priori*, were deemed characteristic, even defining, of what

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson (1850), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Mackenzie (2009), 6.

<sup>19</sup> For ‘historic present’ and ‘effective history’, see Foucault (1972).

<sup>20</sup> For a brief discussion of naturalism and the symmetry postulate of the Strong Programme, see Golinski (2005), 7-9.

<sup>21</sup> Driver (1992), 35.

<sup>22</sup> Harris (1998), 297.

a museum is and does were collecting (Chapter 5), displaying (Chapter 6), educating (Chapter 7) and visiting (Chapter 8), although, in the course of analysis, other processes come into view. Such an approach recognises the complex interplay of people, space and time in the production and maintenance of museums as places of knowledge production, and in the kinds of knowledge produced.<sup>23</sup> This is to acknowledge too that ‘spaces of and for knowledge are metaphorical as well as material’.<sup>24</sup> In short, the thesis prompts the bigger question: what might an historical geography of a museum be?

### ***1.3 Why study museums; why study the Museum?***

In the last fifty years, museums have received considerable critical attention (a point elaborated on in Chapter 2). These studies have shown museums to be, to use Macdonald’s phrase, ‘key cultural loci of our times’, fundamentally enrolled in power relations, for, as Carol Duncan writes, ‘To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths’.<sup>25</sup> As Livingstone notes, ‘Museums have thus always been sites of interpretive practice in which the spatial allocation of items fundamentally reconfigures the world of nature’.<sup>26</sup> Matters of spatial arrangement are fundamental to what museums are, thus making them ripe for geographical analysis. For Charles Waterston, contextual shifts, which frequently involved

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the interplay, see Alberti (2011a).

<sup>24</sup> Withers (2001), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Duncan, (1995), 8; Macdonald (1996), 14.

<sup>26</sup> Livingstone (2003), 32-33.

shifts of their material location, ‘profoundly influenced the way in which collections were regarded’.<sup>27</sup>

A study of the Museum is timely for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Royal Museum Masterplan [*sic*] and the initial phase of its implementation, the Royal Museum Project launched in 2004, sought to refurbish the building and to redisplay the collections so as to relocate and recontextualize the Museum within the political landscape of a newly devolved Scotland: ‘Devolution has brought a change to Scotland and Edinburgh as Scotland’s capital is at the heart of this change. NMS’ new Vision, values and aims reflect the new spirit and The Royal Museum Project will be an outward sign of this cultural shift in the nation’.<sup>28</sup> The Project demanded that National Museums Scotland engage with broader epistemological discourses around the nature of its collections and the contexts of their collection, classification and arrangement and of their meanings and value.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, as an institution located in Scotland, but for more than the first half-century of its existence administered from London, its historical geography engages with discourses on the nature of the nation and the roles of material culture in constructing national identity.<sup>30</sup> The term ‘national’ is, however, problematic for Scotland, a nation nested within the larger national identity of the United Kingdom and, at least until the implementation of the *Scotland Act* in

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<sup>27</sup> Waterston (1997), 137.

<sup>28</sup> National Museums of Scotland (2004a), 45.

<sup>29</sup> National Museums of Scotland (2004b); National Museums of Scotland ([2007]).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Taylor (1999); Withers (2001); Knell, *et al.* (2011).

1998, ‘*une nation sans État*’.<sup>31</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 3, whilst the rhetoric used by some nineteenth-century proponents of a government-funded museum in Edinburgh had used the term ‘National Museum’ in the sense of a museum for Scotland, the source of funding for which they lobbied was the United Kingdom government. In consequence of its genealogy, unlike other British national museums, the Museum was not administered through a body of Trustees, but was run directly by a government department – in the nineteenth century, the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education (DSA) based in South Kensington, and in the twentieth century, the Scotch (later the Scottish) Education Department (SED), until 1934 based in Whitehall.<sup>32</sup> The Museum, therefore, was an arm of the British Government. For one Director, Alexander Curle, himself a lawyer by training, the Museum was in the unique position of being ‘unhampered by statutory restrictions of any kind’.<sup>33</sup>

In the British context the concept of nation was inextricably linked with that of Empire. As Livingstone and others have shown, ‘data-hungry museums did much to fulfil the surveillance needs of colonial management’.<sup>34</sup> Museums were one of the key locales in which natural knowledge was institutionalised. Through museums’ roles in cataloguing, classifying and arranging, objects were

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<sup>31</sup> Leruez (1983). The Scotland Act, 1998 devolved certain statutory powers from the Parliament of the United Kingdom to a newly created Scottish Parliament, the first parliament in Scotland since the implementation of the *Act Ratifying and Approving the Treaty of Union of the Two Kingdoms of Scotland and England* (1707).

<sup>32</sup> Established as the Department of Science and Art, the name was changed to the Science and Art Department in 1857, but reverted in 1887. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the terms ‘Scotch’ and ‘Scottish’ were both in widespread usage and were used synonymously – see, for example, *Scotsman* (1855a; b). The name Scotch Education Department persisted in government papers, J. Struthers signing the Department’s reports ‘Secretary, Scotch Education Department’ until 1918. See Committee of Council (1918), 22 [1024]. For an early example of the use of ‘Scottish Education Department’, see *Hansard* (1908).

<sup>33</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928) 89, para. 1091.

<sup>34</sup> Livingstone (2003), 32. See also Miller (1996).

given meaning and value: ‘the museum was, and remains, epistemologically a space in which the *world is ordered*, in which, with the assistance of material objects, the “world” is realized, understood and mediated’.<sup>35</sup> For Martin Lawn, in the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century, ‘Museums were catalogues of the future’: ‘Classification outlines the world, places it into relation, produces hierarchies and allows comparison. Classification produced a grammar or sets of governing rules for understanding the world – the geographies, raw materials and peoples of the world, and in particular, the Empire’.<sup>36</sup>

Through a micro-geography of spatial arrangements and juxtapositions in the museum, the world was ordered and classified so as to produce and make visible both a view ‘over the horizon’ to the remotest parts of the world, and also into matters nearer to home. In this way, the Museum was involved in the project of empire not only in relation to Britain’s territories overseas, but also in the maintenance of the domestic empire, Great Britain.<sup>37</sup> As Crooke noted, ‘The Department of Science and Art at South Kensington may be interpreted as a symbol of a “British nation” which attempted to standardise and take control of science and art instruction through the whole kingdom’.<sup>38</sup> The Royal Museum Masterplan, with its agenda to reconstruct and redefine the niche of National Museums Scotland within a devolved Scotland, is but the latest repositioning of the Museum in the political topography of Great Britain.

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<sup>35</sup> Prösler (1996), 22.

<sup>36</sup> Lawn (2009a), 8; (2009b), 21.

<sup>37</sup> For a brief discussion of Great Britain as empire, see Withers (2001), 35-37.

<sup>38</sup> Crooke (2000), 127.

Thirdly, the processes of re-assessment and re-evaluation associated with the Royal Museum Masterplan have been hampered by the lack of a synthesis of the rich, but widely distributed, sources on the Museum's past. There are only three published histories of the Museum: a pamphlet produced in 1904 for the Museum's Jubilee, a book, based substantially on the Museum's Annual Reports, published for its Centenary, and a volume on the role of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in the establishment of the Museum as a national museum for Scotland.<sup>39</sup> This thesis (although completed too late to inform the Masterplan) contributes to a synthesis and analysis of the genealogy of the Museum. This, in turn, suggests a fourth reason for studying this institution: the demonstration of the utility of a spatial or geographical focus in constructing a narrative of the Museum's development (and re-development). The Museum, which from its inception has been a 'universal-survey' museum, was one of the 'few metropolitan collections to tell a world-story'.<sup>40</sup> In the latter part of the twentieth century, its mission came to be articulated in explicitly geographical terms as to interpret the world to Scotland (as opposed to interpreting Scotland to the world which was the role of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland).<sup>41</sup> As this rhetoric implies, the Museum was, and remains, a site of multi-scale geographies ranging from the global to the architectural spaces of the building and within these to the micro-geographies of the display case, the storage cabinet, the drawer and the specimen box. Livingstone has highlighted the methodological

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<sup>39</sup> Vallance (1904); Allan *et al.*, (1954); Waterston (1997).

<sup>40</sup> *Art Journal* (1853), 283.

<sup>41</sup> McKean (2000), 121.

challenges implicit in addressing spatial considerations on a number of scales and attention to different scales forms a key element of this thesis.<sup>42</sup>

#### ***1.4 From where to study the museum?***

##### *1.4.1 The position of the researcher*

For Susan Digby, material sites are akin to holograms; seen differently depending on the angle of view.<sup>43</sup> It is my contention that it is the construction of these angles of view, and the views that can be taken from them at particular moments in time, that helps constitute an historical geography. Pressing Digby's analogy further, the frontispiece to this thesis is a view from one such vantage point. It established a perspective by selecting and abstracting various elements of form to produce a composition, a representation which stood for the Museum itself and represented both its static materiality and the mobility of those visiting or passing by. Fowke's watercolour captured an imagined moment in the (then) future – at the time of painting's production the building had still to be realised, the foundation stone having been laid only three months before the watercolour's exhibition in the Royal Scottish Academy.<sup>44</sup> The building as imagined and depicted in the painting would not be fully realised for another three decades and the broad thoroughfare onto which the building faced was also aspirational, dependent for its production on demolition of the property to the north of the Museum's site. By contrast with Fowke's watercolour, which captured a moment

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<sup>42</sup> Livingstone (1994), 372.

<sup>43</sup> Digby (2010), 46.

<sup>44</sup> GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Fowke, 21 February 1862, p. 478.

from the future, the thesis seeks to reconstitute views at moments in past presents over the *longue durée*.

Digby's metaphor of the hologram and the angle of view is effectively an expression of the recognition of the crucial nature of place – a realisation that (and of) geography matters. This recognition constituted the spatial turn which has been a feature of many academic disciplines over the last four decades.<sup>45</sup> The spatial turn eschews the 'grand theory', big history, and meta-narrative to analyse the specific and situated circumstances of knowledge making.<sup>46</sup> It makes consideration of space and place vital components of key questions: what is this thing called a museum? From what, where, and why and by whom is it made? Such questions are characteristic of, to use Igor Kopytoff's phrase, 'doing the biography of a thing'.<sup>47</sup> This approach also raises questions of where, and by whom, might knowledge of the nature of museums be made and the biographies constructed – for as Kopytoff acknowledged, objects, like people, have multiple biographies each constructed by the selection of some aspects and the eschewal of others.

Conn characterised the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century as being a period of increasing fragmentation of knowledge into 'disciplines' and a concomitant process of professionalization. Associated with this was a struggle between museums and universities over where knowledge would be produced, the kind of knowledge to be produced, and who would be granted access to it. This was a struggle which, in Conn's opinion,

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<sup>45</sup> Withers (2001); Finnegan (2008).

<sup>46</sup> Withers (2001), 7.

<sup>47</sup> Kopytoff (1986), 66.

museums largely lost, leaving them with ‘the role of educating, and more and more of entertaining, a wider public, though not necessarily about up-to-date ideas’.<sup>48</sup> In his view, prestige and authority shifted away from museums as experiment gained hegemony over description and classification as the means of knowledge production. Museums, however, retained, and in the twentieth century enhanced, their role in ‘validating science for the public’. In the view of another historian, university-based academics relegated museum specialists to ‘subaltern status’ acknowledging them as ‘occasionally useful technicians’.<sup>49</sup> The shift extended, to a greater or lesser extent, across the range of what Adolf Meyer termed ‘museal science’.<sup>50</sup> Yet supremacy in this struggle between museums and universities and colleges was not uniform. In zoology, botany and geology museums exercised ‘contributory expertise’ since practices of classifying and ordering were (and are) crucial in constructing, and reconstructing, the taxonomies and systematics which underpin these sciences.<sup>51</sup>

#### *1.4.2 The two museums: the theorised and the practiced*

In the latter twentieth century, the study of museums became an arena for struggles over what kinds of knowledge should be made, by whom, and where. Research on museums as objects of critical study came to be centred in universities and colleges rather than in museums themselves. In consequence there has been, for some observers, a rupture between theory and practice.<sup>52</sup> As

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<sup>48</sup> Conn (1998), 18.

<sup>49</sup> Starn (2006), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Haxthausen (2002). Meyer quoted by Bather (1903a), 319.

<sup>51</sup> Humphries (2002). On contributory expertise, see Collins & Evans (2002).

<sup>52</sup> Macdonald (1998); Starn (2005); Mason (2006); Knell (2011).

Knell observes: ‘while external commentators have been quick to recognise the performative qualities of the museum...museum practitioners have remained true to the moral necessities of didacticism and the possibility of neutral, or acceptable, authoritative truth’.<sup>53</sup> Museum practitioners found much in the theorising of museums which did not make sense in the context of their own working lives.<sup>54</sup> As Eileen Hooper-Greenhill put it, ‘Museum workers have, until recently, remained unaware of their practices, and uncritical of the processes, they are engaged with every day’.<sup>55</sup> For Conal McCarthy and Joanna Cobley, ‘It is little wonder that many critics complain that museum studies have become theory-heavy, too concerned with external social relations rather than what happens inside museums’.<sup>56</sup> Mason sketched out the situated nature of the dissonance between university-based theoreticians and museum practitioners.<sup>57</sup> She characterised the former as lacking the immersion within the practices of museum to enable the access to the behind-the-scenes information necessary to reflect processes of production and regulation; the latter she considered disinclined to adopt the longer historical view demanded by academia. In consequence, in her view, outsider studies tended to foreground the front-of-house processes of displaying and educating whilst largely ignoring those other processes conducted in the deeper spaces or back regions. For Mason, outsider studies privilege the end-product over the process of its production. To provide balance she called for work which viewed museums holistically and which

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<sup>53</sup> Knell (2011), 4.

<sup>54</sup> Teather (1991).

<sup>55</sup> Hooper-Greenhill (1992), 3.

<sup>56</sup> McCarthy & Cobley (2009), 405.

<sup>57</sup> Mason (2006).

followed the ‘circuit of culture’ enacted within and through them. Her plea was for ‘work located at the *intersection* of theory and practice, as opposed to a mode of critique which stands outside looking inwards’.<sup>58</sup> As a practitioner with over 30 years curatorial experience in the Museum, and who through the construction of this thesis is in the process of being ‘socialised’ as a geographer, I find myself to be at the ‘intersection’.<sup>59</sup> Yet Mason’s dichotomy between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ is problematic in relation to studies located in the ‘foreign country’ that is the past.<sup>60</sup> The Museum which I joined as a natural sciences curator in 1976 was not the same place that I left in 2010, nor was it the same place as the Museum between 1854 and 1939. Nonetheless, this thesis aims to address Mason’s plea for a balanced perspective, a call made also by Randolph Starn in his avocation of an ‘historical analysis that investigates rather than theorizes the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of museums’.<sup>61</sup> This form of approach is sympathetic to Bruno Latour’s insistence that studies must be evidence-led not theory-led, and that over-reliance on theory may distort and corrupt interpretation of the available sources. For him, theory should develop out of empirical study, not constrain it.<sup>62</sup> As John Law argues, the practices of methods of enquiry serve the problematic functions of both describing and producing the ‘reality’ to which

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<sup>58</sup> Mason (2006), 29. The concept of a ‘circuit of culture’ comprising stages of representation, identity, production, regulation and consumption, was propounded by du Gay and colleagues. See Du Gay, Hall & Janes (1997); Harrington & Bielby (2001).

<sup>59</sup> The process of socialisation is drawn by analogy with Livingstone’s characterisation of the laboratory as the site in which new students were ‘socialised into their respective scientific communities’: Livingstone (2003), 18.

<sup>60</sup> ‘The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there’. Hartley (1953), 1. See also Lowenthal (1985).

<sup>61</sup> Starn (2005). For an example, see Swinney (2010a; b).

<sup>62</sup> Latour (1987).

they are being applied.<sup>63</sup> For Law, ‘method does not “report” on something that is already there. Instead it makes things more or less different’.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, research is an iterative process. Research questions do not pre-exist to inform the researcher, they become apparent *through* the processes of research and are made to emerge *out of* engagement with the empirical material.<sup>65</sup> Research is essentially a recursive process. As new materials are encountered, selected (or rejected) and analysed as evidence, a ‘thicker’ account is assembled, one from which an ‘effect of truth’ emerges.<sup>66</sup> Thus, this thesis reports on the working, and re-working, of empirical material out of which detailed research questions emerged to address the overarching question of what might constitute an historical geography of the Museum.

### ***1.5 Scope of the thesis and the location of sources***

Having outlined what the thesis is, it is necessary to indicate briefly what it is not and to point out what aspects of the Museum have been excluded, largely because of constraints on time and space. Both the Library and the Patent Library, whilst contained within the building, were separate material and epistemological places, distinct from the rest of the Museum. They had substantially different social agency and different publics and have been excluded from scrutiny in this thesis (Appendix II). The short-lived Educational Museum, which was constituted through its own display space and documentary

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<sup>63</sup> Law (2004), 4. For a clarification of what he means by ‘method’ and ‘methodology’ and their relationship to ‘a way of being’, see Law (2004), 10.

<sup>64</sup> Law (2004), 143.

<sup>65</sup> Midgley (2003), Chapter 3.

<sup>66</sup> Geertz (1993); Rose (2001), 154. See also Tonkiss (1998).

practices, and the Museum's laboratory which operated 1855-1859, are also not considered in detail.

Whilst it is the goal of this thesis to present an analysis based on thick description of one museum and not a comparative study of museums, the focus on the processes of production of the Museum inevitably brought a variety of sites into view. Prominent amongst these throughout the nineteenth century is DSA and its flagship museum, the South Kensington Museum. Through its role as 'organiser and overseer of a system of industrial education for the working class', the Department was deeply involved in the nationwide systems of training of teachers in both the arts and the sciences.<sup>67</sup> For Bruce Robertson, the South Kensington Museum, and by implication the other museums under the Department's administration, was 'an element of an educational program that was a department of the government'.<sup>68</sup> Described by successive Directors as a 'subsidiary museum', a 'branch' museum of DSA, and 'the South Kensington of Scotland', the Museum formed part of nationwide networks of practice: in addition to the South Kensington Museum the other museums administered by the Department included the Museum of Practical Geology in London and the Museum of Irish Industry in Dublin.<sup>69</sup> Developments elsewhere within this network influenced, and were influenced by, the processes and practices of the Museum and, therefore, demand attention. Similarly, the Museum's engagement in discourses within the developing museum profession and in other nascent

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<sup>67</sup> Jarrell (1983), 332.

<sup>68</sup> Robertson (2004), 4.

<sup>69</sup> 'Branch Museums supported by the State' was a section title used until 1872 in the Annual Reports of the Science and Art Department. For example, Archer reported in *Scotsman* (1861a); Science and Art Department (1871), xxvi [106]; Smith (1897), 164; Ogilvie (1902b), 66.

professional and vocational bodies, notably that of teachers (see Chapter 7), require that the Museum be addressed within the broader political and intellectual landscape.

Of the sources available to construct a thick description the voice of the Director is prominent. My attention to directorial vision, and to the way in which the Museum operated in consequence of it, is significant methodologically. The Directors' perspectives, as expressed in their Annual Reports, memoranda, press statements, and correspondence, provide a rich source of information on what successive incumbents of the post took the Museum to be. These sources, however, demand caution, for, as I intend to show, an historical geography of the Museum is more than a reflection of individual biographies of 'museum masters'.<sup>70</sup>

### ***1.6 Constructing an archive of the Museum***

Not all material sites are definable by grid position. Extending the Lefebvrian concept further, practices of space bring places into being. The places in which Museums activities were recorded – notebooks, ledgers, printed reports, and alike – are themselves sites of performance of processes of museum. Through these processes, notebooks and ledgers were transformed into visitor books, registers, disposal books, and such like. The networks within which the Museum was enmeshed are discernible not only through the content of such documents but also through the material locations in which the documentary records now lie. In other words, the empirical materials which form the basis of the analysis

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<sup>70</sup> For examples of the biographical approach, see Alexander (1995).

themselves have geographies. In his book on David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition, 1858-1864, Lawrence Dritsas declared that the archive of the expedition 'is in no place in particular', even declaring that 'There is no archive'.<sup>71</sup> By this he meant that not only is there no single repository for the records of the Expedition, but that the act of his constructing a narrative of the expedition was itself a process of constructing an archive in support of that narrative. This construction process is itself a form of displaying or exhibiting which involves processes of collecting, repositioning and recontextualising. This view of archival fragments garnered to 'exhibit' a narrative has resonance with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's observation, which itself draws on the work of Timothy Mitchell, that exhibitions are inevitably composed of material fragments and that these 'fragments are not simply a necessity of which we make a virtue, a vicissitude of history, or a response to limitations on our ability to bring the world indoors. We make fragments'.<sup>72</sup> Materials with which to construct a narrative of a museum are made through the transformative processes of collecting in the same manner as the material objects which constitute a museum's collections are made 'museum objects' or 'specimens' by the practices enacted upon them in the process of their being collected.<sup>73</sup> Dritsas further argues that the geographical distribution of the empirical materials, rather than being chaotic and inconvenient, constitutes evidence of how the expedition was organised and how it itself organised and contributed to knowledge. His remarks, I contend, may be applied equally to the documentary and other sources which

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<sup>71</sup> Dritsas (2010), 33.

<sup>72</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 19. See also Mitchell (1989).

<sup>73</sup> For a case study of the transformative process of collecting, see Chalk (2012).

might be assembled to construct an historical geography of any other entity, including a museum. Thus, the current organisation and distribution of documentary sources within the buildings occupied by National Museums Scotland are indicative of past practice. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the multiplicity of repositories exposes tensions between the administrative centre, as embodied in the Director, and the operating practices of the various departments of the Museum. It is revealing of flows and counter-flows between the administrative centre and an operational periphery. The tension is particularly evidenced by the production in 1912 of a procedures manual, ‘General Instructions’, and especially in the copy marked ‘Director’s Copy Strictly Private’ which was extensively annotated in the period 1912-1916 (Figure 1.1).<sup>74</sup>

This stipulated:

In 1911 the Secretary [of SED] instructed that the Museum should be administered as a unity not as a number of unrelated departments each exercising a measure of independence. As a consequence of this instruction, all the rules printed or written in this book are so framed as to centre responsibility in the Director...The idea that there may exist a departmental sphere for Keepers into which the Director is not entitled to enter is wholly dis-allowed.<sup>75</sup>

The imposition of protocols by government is further evident in the distribution of documentary sources on a broader geographical scale. The administration of the Museum as part of a department of government is discernible through the documents relating to its operation being deposited in the archives of these government departments (for the administrative history and geography of the Museum, see Chapter 3). The multiplicity of classification prefixes – CR, E, ED, GD, HH, JC, MW, and SOE – applied to records of the Museum in the National

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<sup>74</sup> GB587/ID 126015.

<sup>75</sup> GB587/ID 126015, unpaginated annotation.

Records of Scotland alone attests to the multiple routes by which the various documents reached this archive and therefore to sites formative of the Museum. Even more diffuse, fragmentary and difficult to recover are those records of the Museum's engagement with the millions of individuals who visited (Chapter 8).

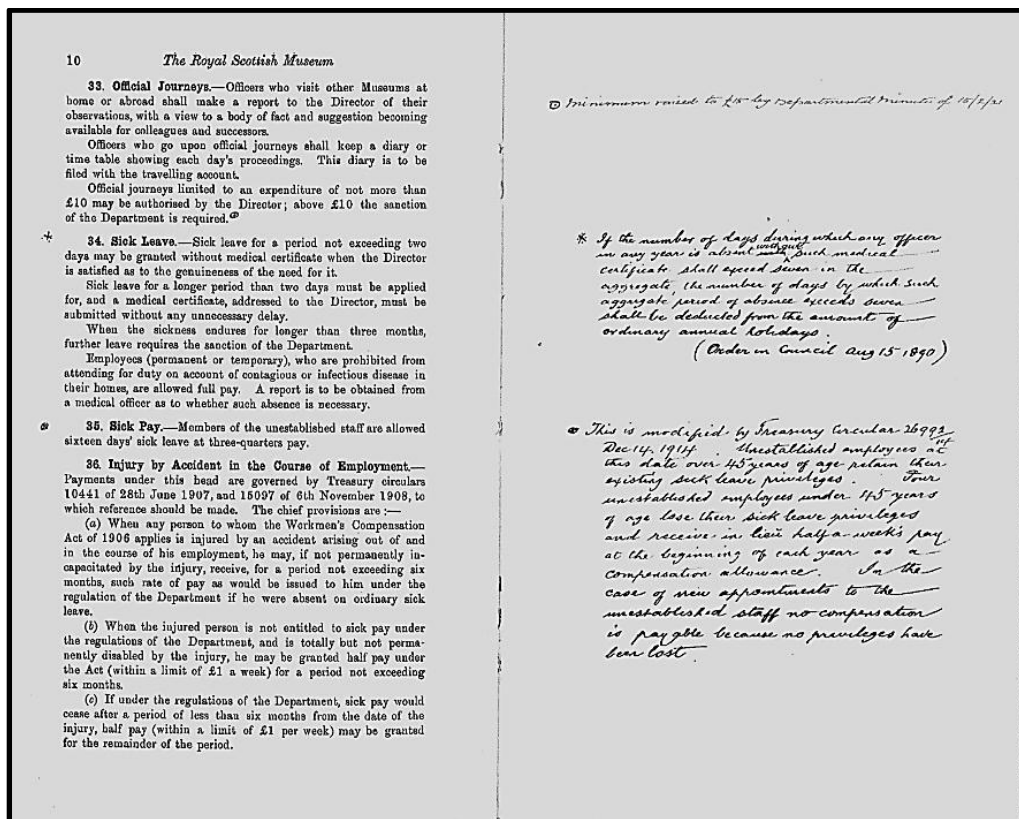


Figure 1.1. A double-page spread from an annotated copy of 'General Instructions', marked 'For Confidential Use' and 'Director's Copy, Strictly Private' (GB587/ID 126015).

The distribution of the documentary sources which have been drawn upon to construct this thesis, whilst being interpreted as evidence of the sites of past practices, is, in itself, a constraint on that construction process. Past attempts to

recover histories of the Museum, in connection with projects such as the creation of identities for the Museum of Scotland in the 1990s and the National Museum of Scotland from 2006, highlighted the need for attention to be given to further cataloguing the documentary sources (and potential sources) held by the Museum. As I have shown elsewhere, the documents which record curatorial practice have not themselves been subject to the rigorous application of those practices.<sup>76</sup> The documentation of the documentary material is an on-going project and, at the time of writing, much of the material carries no unique identifier or reference and the available finding aids are rudimentary and incomplete.<sup>77</sup> This poses a challenge to the application of the conventions of citation (and to the re-location and retrieval of documents previously examined). The multiple sites of publication of the Museum's Annual Reports, which attest to the complex geographies of the administrative arrangements of the Museum, further challenge consistency of bibliographic citation (see Appendix III).<sup>78</sup> Similarly, many of the photographs held in National Museums Scotland collections carry little or no information and so can be identified and dated only from their content – the spatial arrangements depicted providing temporal 'landmarks' (Appendix IV).

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<sup>76</sup> Swinney (2012).

<sup>77</sup> [Rowan] ([n.d.]a; b); GB587/ID 158677, [Heppell, D. & Chambers, S.] National Museums of Scotland, Natural History Department, 1992; Royal Museum Archives: Finding List 3 [in course of preparation]; Museum Archives held in the Library of the National Museums Scotland, July 2011 [in course of preparation].

<sup>78</sup> Swinney (2002). Although there is evidence that, at least in some years, the Annual Report was issued as a pamphlet with its own pagination, throughout the thesis the Museum's Annual Reports are cited with pagination as it appears in *Parliamentary Papers*, since these are the most generally accessible form of the Reports. For *Parliamentary Papers* two sets of pagination are cited: that printed on the paper itself and, since it is the pagination used in indexes such as Anonymous 1906, the pagination ascribed to the bound volume is given in parenthesis.

The practices of registration, considered in detail in Chapter 5, have a complex genealogy which makes consistency in the citation of the registration numbers problematic (Appendix V). Further, as I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, the archive extends beyond the written, printed and pictorial to include other material forms such as the objects in the collections, the building, and its fittings, fixtures, and furnishings (Figure 1.2).<sup>79</sup>



**Figure 1.2. The building as archive: pencil sketches for decorative scheme on the wall behind display case removed from east wall of the first floor of the West Wing during Royal Museum Project. The sketch was subsequently obliterated (photograph by the author, 9 August 2010).**

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<sup>79</sup> For discussion of the material extent of ‘archives’, see Joyce (1997).

Throughout the thesis, published sources and doctoral theses are listed in the bibliography. Archival and other unpublished material is cited in footnotes (for a list of repositories consulted see pp. 387-388).

### ***1.7 The structure of the thesis***

Two principal bodies of literature, outlined in Chapter 2, provide the prism through which to focus the geographic imagination on the situated nature of the Museum. The first is on the history of museums and the theory and practice of museology, the second is on the sociology of scientific knowledge. Chapter 3 presents the Museum as a building. It examines the genealogy of the material architecture of the Museum and analyses the relationship between its form and the production of knowledge. The chapter considers these material spaces as part of the ‘stage’ on which various actors made their entrances and exits in order to perform the Museum. Chapter 4 shifts the focus from the fabric of the building to those human actors who worked within its spaces. It does so with one very significant omission, the visitors, who are the subject of a later chapter. The Museum’s Directors were some of the principal actors who make regular appearances. As a means of avoiding having to re-introduce them at each appearance, these ‘members of the cast’ are presented in Appendix VI.

Those performances which constitute the Museum are addressed in the three chapters which follow. The processes of museum are grouped under three broad headings: collecting (Chapter 5), exhibiting (Chapter 6) and educating (Chapter 7). Like the classification of the literature (discussed in Chapter 2), the three headings are somewhat arbitrary and the processes that they are intended to

corral often overlap the boundaries erected between them. The staging of temporary exhibitions, for example, which involve both practices of displaying and of collecting, might equally be assigned to either category – I have opted to treat them as examples of temporary collecting. Other processes – conserving, researching, securing, vending, and so on – fall outside these groupings and are glimpsed in various chapters. These limitations of structure notwithstanding, the three headings provide a pragmatic framework for addressing many of the processes of the Museum. Chapter 8 turns from processes of production to those of consumption, by focusing on the people not considered in Chapter 4, the visitors. It analyses the dispersed and fragmentary accounts of visitor’s experiences and responses. Chapter 9 concludes with a discussion of how this focus on process produces a narrative of the Museum as social space. It reviews how Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s concepts of ‘lived space’ – echoed in Samuel Alberti’s contention that the museum is the result of dynamic relationships between the built environment, personnel, and material culture – have enabled the construction of a view of the Museum as social space made in consequence of (among other things), curatorial expertise, directorial vision, fiscal control, and the recruitment of staff and the duties they perform.<sup>80</sup> It assesses how the spatially and temporally sensitive approach developed in the previous chapters constitutes an ‘historical geography’ of the Museum and how such an approach offers utility for studying museums more generally.

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<sup>80</sup> Alberti (2011a).



## THE SPACES OF SCIENCE: A THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF A MUSEUM

Any museum or exhibition is, in effect, a statement of position. It is a theory: a suggested way of seeing the world.<sup>1</sup>

### *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter provides a synoptic overview of the literatures which frame the study of the multi-scale geographies of the Museum. Taking as its fulcrum that ‘spatial turn’ or ‘critical turn’ which has occurred in a number of disciplines over the past four decades, the thesis recognises and builds upon views concerning the situated nature of knowledge production and consumption.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, it extends previous internalist narratives of elements of the Museum’s history to produce an analytical and more broadly grounded account which is both temporally situated and attentive to space.<sup>3</sup> Two separate, but related, bodies of literature provide the principal theoretical means by which to situate the Museum within its physical, political, economic and intellectual landscapes. The first is that on the theory and practice of museology – effectively the historiography of ‘museum’ as both process and as space. The second is that on historical studies of science and the sociology of scientific knowledge. This distinction between

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<sup>1</sup> Macdonald (1996), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Withers (2001), 1-2; Powell (2007); Finnegan (2008).

<sup>3</sup> Vallance (1904); Allan, *et al.* (1954); Swinney & Heppell (1997); Waterston (1997); Swinney (1999a; b; c; d); (2002); (2003a); (2004a; b); Watson (2011).

the two is somewhat artificial since there is a degree of overlap. Nonetheless, I contend that this separation provides a pragmatic and convenient way of establishing the theoretical basis of the thesis. Before outlining the two categories of literature, however, I present a brief summary of the genealogy of museums in order to place museums in general, and the Museum in particular, within their broad historical contexts

## ***2.2 The museum's compass: historicizing museums***

Many authors trace the origins of museums in the European tradition from fifteenth-century privately owned *Wunderkammer* or 'cabinets of curiosity' – inclusive of the *Kunstammer*, the collections of human creativity.<sup>4</sup> They have shown how, in the seventeenth century, with the rise of the 'culture of curiosity', in which inductive empirical study displaced earlier forms of knowledge based upon readings of ancient texts, collections became 'a valuable and valid way of knowing'.<sup>5</sup> As John Ray proclaimed, 'Let it not suffice to be book-learned, to read what others have written and to take on trust more falsehood than truth, but let us ourselves examine things as we have opportunity, and converse with Nature as well as with books'.<sup>6</sup>

Macdonald, amongst others, has identified the French Revolution, in which many private collections were claimed as public property, as a pivotal

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<sup>4</sup> For a history of the origins of European collecting, see Murray (1904); Impey & MacGregor (1985); Findlen (1989); Mauries (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Livingstone (2003), 30.

<sup>6</sup> John Ray (1691), cited in Raven (1942), 467.

moment in the Europe-wide development of public museums.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the proliferation of associational science resulted in the founding of many learned societies which, themselves, amassed collections. Michael Gardiner has drawn particular attention to a rapid rise in the quantity of ‘museum space’ in Scotland during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries interpreting this as ‘reflecting the desire to *know* and *place* the outside world’.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collections became increasingly ‘public’ with many new museums being built in national capitals and major provincial centres. The possession of a museum became a matter of civic or national prestige, a symbol of the cultured, civilised, learned nature of the city or nation in which it was located. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, spurred by new legislation enabling councils to fund them from the rates, there was throughout Britain, a proliferation of public museum buildings and of collections to fill them.<sup>9</sup> Many private and society collections came into public ownership. For Livingstone, unlike private collections which were sites of static contemplation, public museums were spaces of mobility through which people passed as on ‘a road to genuine knowledge’.<sup>10</sup>

Discourses on the design and location of buildings to house these public collections were associated with those on who should see collections and how the collections should be seen. In other words, the construction of public

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<sup>7</sup> Macdonald (1998), 9. On the development of public museums, see Murray (1904); Lewis (1984a; b).

<sup>8</sup> Gardiner (2005), 34.

<sup>9</sup> For example, *Museums Act 1845*; *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1850*; *Public Libraries (Scotland) Act 1854*; *Museums and Gymnasiums Act 1891*. For a summary of the legislation, see Lewis (1984b).

<sup>10</sup> Livingstone (2003), 31.

museums went hand-in-hand with the ‘construct’ of publics to view them. Prominent in these discourses were matters of material location, especially in terms of the juxtaposition of museums in relation to other sites of knowledge making. Size and architectural style were also of concern since these buildings were intended to display not only the collections, but, through them, civic or national prestige. Such concerns were expressed in what Sophie Forgan has referred to as a ‘vocabulary of juxtaposition’, which, for her, was later displaced by a ‘vocabulary of separation’.<sup>11</sup> Both vocabularies were themselves set in a language of ‘architectural appropriateness’ used to discuss matters of ‘physical and intellectual topography’. In short, for Forgan, the form of the museum building and its spatial relationship with other sites of knowledge production embodied a sort of visual language, the ‘building as advertising’. Thus, the form and decoration of the building itself suggested how its contents should be viewed and valued, and its proximity to other sites of learning inculcated a harmony of purpose as part of a ‘discourse of place’.<sup>12</sup> In Livingstone’s phraseology: ‘If a museum’s internal geography could condition the cognitive shape of the science produced, its external iconography could speak to the society in which it found itself’.<sup>13</sup>

With the move of the collection from the private realm into the society, university, or public sphere there arose a new vocation, that of ‘curator’ – from the Latin word meaning an overseer or steward – and the practice of labelling

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<sup>11</sup> Forgan (1998), 196.

<sup>12</sup> Forgan (1998), 198-206.

<sup>13</sup> Livingstone (2003), 37.

objects within a collection was adopted.<sup>14</sup> Inspired by the work of natural sciences such as John Ray and Carolus von Linné (Linnaeus) in systematising knowledge, curators turned their attention to developing ‘scientific’ systems of classification of other kinds of objects – examples include the ‘three age system’ of classification of epoch, the stone-, bronze- and iron-age based on the material used to fashion tools and the categorisation of paintings into schools.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as Marina Belozerskaya has argued, in the mid-eighteenth century there developed a new kind of knowledge, connoisseurship: ‘the “science” of identifying and grouping works of art by scrutinizing the visual characteristics that distinguish a particular artist’.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, alongside the notion of objects speaking to the eye, there developed a counter-visual rhetoric based on the rationale that knowledge was more appropriately contained in rich textual narrative. For Barbara Maria Stafford, ‘Analysis meant that material things were decomposed into the normal or customary elements and then recomposed into a superior system knowable only through intellect, not perception’.<sup>17</sup> The curatorial ‘voice’, either spoken or as text in the form of labels and explanatory guides telling the visitor *how* to see the items on display, thus became an essential part of the museum (see Chapter 7).

Another rhetoric associated with exhibitions and museums was that of moral instruction:

we are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to the accomplishment of that great end to which, indeed, all history points – the realization of

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<sup>14</sup> F. M. Misson (1699) *A New Voyage to Italy* (vol. 2), cited in Murray (1904), 206.

<sup>15</sup> On the three-age system, see Thomsen (1836). For a discussion of typological classification of paintings, see Whitehead (2009).

<sup>16</sup> Belozerskaya (2005), 39.

<sup>17</sup> Stafford (1994), 266.

the unity of mankind...His reason being created after the image of God, he [mankind] has to use it to discover the laws by which the Almighty governs his creation and, by making these laws his standard of action, to conquer nature to his use – himself a divine instrument.<sup>18</sup>

The disciplining of material objects through the imposition of order in their arrangement was seen as a means of underpinning the stability of the social order – an illustration that everything *and everybody* had a proper allotted place.<sup>19</sup> Given relatively recent revolutions in Europe, especially in France, and unrest in Ireland, increasing industrialisation in Britain had brought with it fears that the newly urbanised labouring-class population, ‘without tradition and largely unsupervised by squire or Church’, posed a threat to *status quo* – a threat exacerbated by the availability of relatively cheap alcohol.<sup>20</sup> As I show in Chapter 6, museums were considered by some social reformers as offering the potential to divert the working classes toward a ‘thirst for natural knowledge, one which promised to quench the thirst for beer and vicious excitement’ whilst also providing lessons in civics, teaching them their natural station, or place.<sup>21</sup> Much of the rhetoric surrounding museums was that of social control and of ‘civilising’ on a variety of geographical scales. Wilson declared of the Museum that ‘it will increase our civilization and add to our power to civilize the rest of the world’.<sup>22</sup> Thus, by constructing particular ways of seeing, museums and exhibitions were potent sites of moral instruction and social regulation, a means of producing

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<sup>18</sup> Prince Albert’s Mansion House speech of 1850, cited in Cole (1853), 449-450.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault (1972).

<sup>20</sup> Purdue (2003), 394.

<sup>21</sup> Quotation is from Forbes (1853), 9. See also Bennett. (1991); Hooper-Greenhill (1992); Swinney (2010a).

<sup>22</sup> Wilson (1858), 55.

‘docile bodies’, to use Foucault’s term.<sup>23</sup> Much of the rhetoric of ‘increase our civilisation’ was framed within discourses of commercial and economic competition between nations. Educating an ordered and orderly workforce in matters of ‘taste’ and in science was perceived as essential if Britain was to out-compete its industrial rivals: ‘Competition in industry must become a competition in intellect; and the nation which most quickly promotes the intellectual development of its artizans must, by an inevitable law of nature, advance’.<sup>24</sup> For Silvanus Thompson, in order to regain and maintain industrial supremacy Britain had to ‘bring into the field ordered legions of trained workers equipped with intellectual weapons, and clothed with sound science’.<sup>25</sup> Museums were viewed as a vital force in the process of educating the workforce, thereby ‘moulding the destinies of the British nation’.<sup>26</sup> They were, to quote one commentator, ‘educational engines’.<sup>27</sup>

The role of museums in education was, however, not unproblematic. As William Flower commented in 1898, ‘the majority of museums – especially of natural history...confound together the two distinct objects...*research and instruction*’.<sup>28</sup> Museums were promoted as providing ‘rational amusement’ and ‘instruction’ or ‘instruction and enjoyment’, but such dichotomies prompt the question ‘instruction [and entertainment] – in what and for whom?’<sup>29</sup> The relative balance between ‘rational amusement’ (and what in that context

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault (1979), 138. See also Hooper-Greenhill (1992); Bennett (1995).

<sup>24</sup> Playfair (1855), 49.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson (1879), 42.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Brickmore’s account of his meeting with William Flower in the winter of 1893-4, cited in Bennett (1998), 30.

<sup>27</sup> Rudler (1877), 140.

<sup>28</sup> Flower (1898a), 15.

<sup>29</sup> Whittlin (1949), 9.

constituted ‘rational’) and the roles of ‘instruction’ was also contentious (for further discussion see Chapters 6 and 7). Such matters were major topics of discussion in the Committee on Provincial Museums which was formed within the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1887, and they exercised the Museums Association when that body was formed two years later.<sup>30</sup>

The emphasis on instruction made the pedagogic mission more focused: ‘The scope of the museum should be strictly defined and limited; there must be nothing like the general miscellaneous collection of all kinds of “curiosities,” thrown indiscriminately together which constituted the old-fashioned country museum’.<sup>31</sup>

A crowded gallery...at once condemns the curator, as the remedy is generally in his own hands. In order to avoid it he has nothing to do but to sternly eliminate all the less important specimens. If any of these possess features of historic or scientific interest demanding their permanent preservation, they should be kept in the reserve collections; otherwise, they should not be kept at all.<sup>32</sup>

A consequence of this pedagogic focus was an increasing allocation of objects from the public spaces of the museum to ‘cabinet’, ‘reserve’, or ‘study’ collections, those ‘private’ spaces of the museum. The segregation of cabinet collections from display collections was both material and epistemological (Chapters 5 and 6). It created secluded spaces of private contemplation and inspection (possibly involving senses other than sight), distinct from the museum as experienced by the majority of visitors, thereby creating different spaces each offering the potential for the making of different sorts of knowledges and

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<sup>30</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science (1888); (1889); (1921); Lewis (1989).

<sup>31</sup> Flower (1898b), 56.

<sup>32</sup> Flower (1898a), 19. Over-crowding and information overload in displays was a recurrent and persistent theme in museum debate: for example, see Bather (1896); (1903b).

different means for their dissemination. This dichotomy of space required protocols to manage the social distinctions between the public and private realms and to maintain the social distinctions between those who had access to the cabinets (and what they were trusted to do with their contents) and those who did not. The allocation of off-display spaces for collection marked an increased demarcation between public and private space, with non-displayed collections joining those other private space, including offices, workshops, laboratories, stores, study rooms and cabinet collections, kitchens, and toilets. The distinction between these spaces conforms to Erving Goffman's 'front regions' and 'back regions'.<sup>33</sup> Dean MacCannell has, however, argued that this dichotomy is overly simplistic and that there may be intermediate stages or 'stage settings' between 'front' and 'back'.<sup>34</sup> The staging of conversaciones, for example, required the temporary transformation of exhibition areas into private spaces accessible by invitation only.<sup>35</sup>

Within the public spaces there were developed systems to attract visitors to view the objects on display and to regulate visitor behaviour, to channel and direct visitors' movements through the spaces of the building, and to direct them in how to view the objects. It imposed an obligation, not least in different Directors' visions, to allocate space to such facilities as shops, (other) toilets, lecture theatres, classrooms, libraries, seating, and refreshment areas: Christopher Whitehead notes that the provision of such facilities forms part of the 'discursive

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<sup>33</sup> Goffman (1959). See also Alberti (2009); (2011a).

<sup>34</sup> MacCannell (1999), 91-107.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the role of conversaciones as 'socialising' sites of knowledge production, see Gooday (1998), 232-234; Alberti (2003). See also Swinney (2004b).

act' of a museum and signals competition for space between the display of objects and meeting visitors' basic needs.<sup>36</sup>

This contextual background presents the museum as a site for, and constituted by and within, those 'practices of space' which are the processes of museum – collecting, displaying, educating, and alike. It engages with matters of authority and 'voice', and how the boundaries were contested between, among other things, public and private, amateur and professional, 'self' and 'other', education and entertainment, 'high' and 'low' (popular) culture, physical and symbolic, totemic or metaphorical, transient and permanent, display and visitors' needs, and between the 'local' and the 'world view'. The first body of literature for consideration is that on museology.

### ***2.3 Contextualising the museum: Museology***

Until recently, most studies on museums have been chronological narrative histories of the sort which might be termed 'internalist' studies.<sup>37</sup> Others have reviewed the history of collecting more generally.<sup>38</sup> In the 1980s, although not generally citing studies in the history of science (see section 2.4, below), but nonetheless influenced by the same post-modernist paradigm, there was a turn towards a more analytical approach. This analytical approach, which problematised the older concepts by focusing upon what museums *are*, was typified in a series of landmark essays published in 1989 under the title *The New*

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<sup>36</sup> Whitehead (2009), 31.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Miller (1973); Follett (1978); Stearn (1981); Dickson (1986); Pyrah (1988); Markham (1990).

<sup>38</sup> For example, Murray (1904); Lewis (1984a; b); McGirr (2000).

*Museology*.<sup>39</sup> It outlined and fostered a new epistemology of museums, one in which they increasingly became recognised as social constructs, sites of contest and interpretation rather than sites of ‘dead certainties’.<sup>40</sup> Museums have thus been recognised as problematic spaces in which matters of geography address crucial questions: about appropriate locations, about appropriate architecture, about which items should be amassed, which displayed and how they should be arrayed, ordered, and juxtaposed to create the world in microcosm.<sup>41</sup> Juxtapositions, the micro-scale geographies of display, as Forgan insists, convey messages just as much as do labels.<sup>42</sup>

The museum is both a product of, and an agent in, the process of development of identity through ‘its position as an instrument of education’, as well as being a custodian of objects loaded with ‘symbolic capital’ (Chapter 1).<sup>43</sup> For Macdonald, the modern museum embodies ‘technologies of classification’ which themselves inform ways of viewing cultures, people, and objects.<sup>44</sup> For Neil Harris, museums are ‘implicated in the distribution of wealth, power, knowledge, and taste shaped by a larger social order’.<sup>45</sup> Associated with questions of power, authority and credibility are those of access, both physical and intellectual. Museums may be considered as archives of three-dimensional objects and, as Charles Withers observes of archives generally, these are problematic sites. Issues of ‘place, of power, of political and classificatory

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<sup>39</sup> Vergo (1989).

<sup>40</sup> This new approach was manifest in the launch in 2003 of the journal, *Museum and Society*. The phrase ‘dead certainties’ is borrowed from Simon Schama’s (1991) novel of that title.

<sup>41</sup> Forgan (1998); Gooday (1998).

<sup>42</sup> Forgan (1998), 201. For a case-study, see Whitehead (2005).

<sup>43</sup> Kreps (2003), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Macdonald (1996), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Harris (1990), 142.

authority are’, as Withers professes, ‘central to an understanding of what an archive *is* as both topological site and nomological space’.<sup>46</sup> For the museum, as for the archive, public knowledge depends upon processes of ‘interpretation, implication and trust’<sup>47</sup> – what Thomas Osborne has termed ‘principles of credibility’.<sup>48</sup> Museums, like archives, are ‘situated spaces of archontic power’, sites in which items are gathered, classified and ordered according to systems which are the governing or dominant paradigm of the location and the moment – the data they contain is never ‘raw’.<sup>49</sup> There is, however, a crucial difference between archives (*sensu* collections of documents) and collections of (other) objects: objects do not generally contain intrinsic information on provenance. As Dritsas and others note, museum keepers, in many instances not themselves the finders of objects, were (and are) more heavily reliant than archivists upon what they were told an object was, and particularly on what they were told about where it came from.<sup>50</sup> To draw on a distinction offered by Roderick Murchison, the museum curator was less akin to an explorer who made ‘actual observation’ than to the ‘critical geographer’ who worked with testimony rather than himself travelling to be an eye witness in ‘the field’.<sup>51</sup> The curator was undoubtedly an eye witness to the material form and composition of an object (the tangible object) and was in the position to compare objects gathered from different places at different times, but was generally reliant upon the testimony of others

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<sup>46</sup> Withers (2002), 305.

<sup>47</sup> Withers (2002), 304.

<sup>48</sup> Osborne (1999), 53.

<sup>49</sup> Lynch (1999).

<sup>50</sup> Dritsas (2010), 125-128. On how finders are not necessarily keepers and on objects passing through many hands following its initial ‘finding’, see Alberti (2005), 562-568; Kohler (2007); Alberti (2009), 5.

<sup>51</sup> Murchison (1864), 256. See also Dritsas (2011), particularly 166-168.

regarding aspects of its intangibility, such as its provenance.<sup>52</sup> Whilst the curators rarely journeyed, objects travelled to museums, each one accompanied by its own archive of documents – testimony inscribed on labels, in field notebooks, on receipts, in auction catalogues, and alike – which established its provenance, individualised the object, and served as its passport into the ‘afterlife’ provided by the museum.<sup>53</sup> Since objects often passed through multiple sets of hands, and may have resided sequentially in a variety of different collections prior to reaching a museum, they carried with them multiple provenances. For each object the principle of credibility was accrued (or eroded) in a cascade of inscriptions made in a diversity of sites before and within the museum (see Chapter 5).

For Livingstone, museums, like botanic gardens, may themselves be maps of knowledge, ‘agents of empire’, ‘theatres of art’ and ‘symbols of power’.<sup>54</sup> In this ‘contested terrain’ are located discourses not only on what constitutes culture and knowledge but also who enjoys the power to represent it and in what form it may appropriately be represented.<sup>55</sup> For Martin Prösler the internal space of a museum serves as a ‘theatre of memory’.<sup>56</sup> If the analogy with theatre is pressed, then it has some resonance with the ‘actors’ implicit in

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<sup>52</sup> For discussion of contrasting styles of a George Cuvier, a museum-based sedentary naturalist and a scientific traveller, Alexander von Humboldt, see Outram (1996).

<sup>53</sup> Swinney (2011); (2012).

<sup>54</sup> Livingstone (2003), 62. Livingstone’s remarks to this effect refer specifically to botanical and zoological gardens but, in my view, they apply equally to museum displays. See also Duncan (1995).

<sup>55</sup> Kreps (2003), 2.

<sup>56</sup> A concept associated with the sixteenth-century thinker Camillo, ‘Theatre of Memory’ derived from Cicero’s conception of ideas as if they were in rooms, within houses, within a city. Such nesting of concepts, which shares much with mind-mapping, is played out in museums, where the nodes are: object grouping, case, gallery, wing, museum (and conceptually wider, extending beyond the physical confines of the building).

Forgan's 'networks of people' and in that body of work which has come to be known as actor network theory.<sup>57</sup> Foucault, who as Forgan notes viewed museums as 'constructs with distinctive purpose and meaning deriving ultimately from power relationships', recognized the museum as a heterotopic space (by which he meant a space which is both isolated and penetrable, a space in which multiple, often incompatible, spaces are juxtaposed and represented – a real space of tension as opposed to a utopian space).<sup>58</sup> Heterotopic spaces are 'doubled settings' in which 'objects of knowledge are constituted within epistemic spaces that are other than the space occupied by the site'.<sup>59</sup> Foucault's example of the 'guest room' of Brazilian farm mansions, elaborated as his 'fifth principle' of heterotopias, is in many ways analogous to the museum in that the visitor has access to only a portion, 'the public-face', of the site, whilst experiencing the illusion of having entered the museum as a whole.<sup>60</sup> Implicit in the recognition of museums as heterotopic sites is the identification of their audiences as heterogeneous.

Museum visitors present a multiplicity of experiences, voices and languages and have a diversity of relations with power and privilege. Culture being 'multidiscursive', words, practices, objects, beliefs and values are subject to negotiated constructions of meaning.<sup>61</sup> For Jan Golinski, the museum – whilst being an enclosed setting – is but one place/locus/space that 'can open out in various ways to the world beyond'. As Golinski also recognises, museums are

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<sup>57</sup> Forgan (1998), 196-197; Law & Hassard (1999); Latour (2005).

<sup>58</sup> Forgan (1998), 197.

<sup>59</sup> Golinski (1998), 101. On Foucault's concept of heterotopia in relation to art museums, see Trodd (2003).

<sup>60</sup> Foucault (1984).

<sup>61</sup> Giroux (1992). See also, Hooper-Greenhill (2000).

never merely ‘windows’ to the world beyond and he stresses that ‘the place in which the display occurs is crucial’.<sup>62</sup> Such spaces, although enclosed within physical walls, are effectively knowledge-porous with little distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. For Bruno Latour, items are retrieved by an act of ‘translation’ from ‘outside’ to be placed in a local and localized setting within the museum, and through a variety of means knowledge is carried into the society beyond.<sup>63</sup> As Forgan notes, ‘the fugitive moment of encounter’ between person and an object or concept is intimately and inseparably linked with site, and the importance of place is forever fixed in a personal narrative (for examples, see Chapter 7).<sup>64</sup> Personal memory is but one of a variety of means in which knowledge is carried out of museums. Others include posters, postcards, catalogues, guidebooks, press releases, photographs and film, word of mouth (and more recently video, digitized data, the Internet, and blogging and tweeting). This diversity of ephemeral and substantive media produces geographies which extend through and beyond the museum.

For some, these very displacements of knowledge from one site to another underscore the claim that ‘*the* museum does not exist’<sup>65</sup> – namely there is no single model either for museums or for their audiences. Yet this same concept could equally be encapsulated in the statement’s antithesis: it is only *the* museum that exists. Taking this view, Forgan urges an analysis of the ‘particularity of each site’.<sup>66</sup> In a recent study of Manchester Museum, Alberti rejects both these

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<sup>62</sup> Golinski (1998), 97.

<sup>63</sup> Latour (1987). See also Golinski (1998), 98.

<sup>64</sup> Forgan (1998).

<sup>65</sup> Macdonald (1996), 4.

<sup>66</sup> Forgan (1998), 197.

views, substituting a discourse of similarity and suggesting that it is these very similarities with other institutions that made Manchester Museum a worthy subject for historical analysis: ‘the Museum is not unique in its uniqueness’.<sup>67</sup> This stress on similarity has resonance with debates over specificity within the discipline of geography which, some half-century ago, led to the falling out of academic fashion of the ideographic ‘regional geography’ style of doing geography. This style, which focused on difference, was criticised as non-scientific, descriptive rather than analytical, and produced findings applicable only to a specific ‘region’ rather than formulating general laws and theories.<sup>68</sup> Yet, I contend, it is precisely because a museum (*the* Museum) is socially and historically located, and imbued with specificity and complexity that makes it ripe for investigation. *Pace* science’s striving to formulate generally applicable laws, as noted in Veronica della Dora’s paraphrasing of Denis Cosgrove, ‘The geographical imagination is always rooted in a sense of difference between places’.<sup>69</sup>

To draw on another of Latour’s concepts, each object in a museum is an ‘immutable mobile’ – a manageable component of some larger original.<sup>70</sup> As in the laboratory – for Latour, a ‘centre of calculation’ – these mobiles are available to be compared and processed, although the actions of decay, conservation and perhaps most especially taxidermy, would draw into question the immutability of specimens and artefacts.<sup>71</sup> Further, Charles Saumarez Smith has highlighted the

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<sup>67</sup> Alberti (2009), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Cresswell (2004), particularly 16-19.

<sup>69</sup> della Dora (2010), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Latour (1987), chapter 6. See also Miller (1996).

<sup>71</sup> Davis (1996), 64-75.

temporally changing physical and symbolic nature of museum objects at various stages in their existence from manufacture to museum specimen.<sup>72</sup> As Adrienne Kaeppler put it, paraphrasing Shakespeare, ‘all museums are stages, and the artefacts are merely players...and each artefact in its time plays many parts.’<sup>73</sup> Thus, for Latour and others, artefacts and people are together actors in complex social relationships and for Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, ‘human relations were realised, in the sense of being made real, by producing, exchanging, and using objects’.<sup>74</sup> In museums, as elsewhere, objects are put to use.

The literature on the new museology posits museums as sites of multiple contested roles and meanings. Only by careful examination of the specificities of place of the Museum in the temporally unstable political, social, cultural and intellectual contexts in which it has been brought into being and remains in a state of becoming, can a suitably nuanced account of it be assembled. One means of doing this, already indicated through the citing of work by Golinski and Latour, is to draw on the theoretical contexts provided by work in the social studies in science.

#### ***2.4 Contextualising the museum: perspectives from the history and philosophy of science***

Largely contemporary with the unpacking of the meanings that constituted the new museology, the ‘social turn’ in the history of science began to study knowledge production as a located social phenomenon. This was a turn away

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<sup>72</sup> Smith (1998).

<sup>73</sup> Kaeppler (1994), 20.

<sup>74</sup> Callon (1986); Law (1999); Gosden & Knowles (2001), xxi; Latour (2005). See also Appadurai (1986).

from ‘first wave’ studies predicated, as they had been, on a positivist sociology of science, aimed at understanding and explaining the success of science rather than interrogating its basis. This approach, considered by many to be ‘intellectually bankrupt’, was subsumed by a ‘second wave’ which challenged the universality of knowledge production and consumption by viewing these processes as situated activities.<sup>75</sup> These second wave studies revealed a topography made accessible to study by historians, philosophers and social scientists. Within it there developed a genre of studies, social studies of science, a primary focus of which was the processes, the practical activity of scientists, through which knowledge was made. Attention was paid to what scientists *do* rather than what they *say they do*. This activity-based and process-based methodology allowing the study of science as a social construction, offered new insights into the nature of the production of knowledge and enabled the understanding of knowledge as a human product.<sup>76</sup> Particularly influential here was Latour’s ethnographic study of the laboratory.<sup>77</sup> Harry Collins and his co-workers have suggested a ‘third wave’ of science studies, which they term studies of expertise and experience (SEE). These have sought to categorize expertise as either ‘contributory’ or ‘interactional’.<sup>78</sup> Such concepts problematise the embodiment of expertise and pay particular attention to its contextual nature. In relation to museums, SEE, which recognises the role of experience in the construction of expertise, offers insight into such matters as the relative status and knowledge claims of curators and collectors in the field. Similarly, it offers

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<sup>75</sup> Collins & Evans (2002).

<sup>76</sup> Withers (2001), 1-2; 14-19. See also Shapin (1995); Thrift, Driver & Livingstone (1995).

<sup>77</sup> Latour (1987).

<sup>78</sup> Collins & Evans (2002), 254-260.

theoretical tools for the study of the status of visitors as active participants in the making of knowledge, and for the study of claims to knowledge between curators in different disciplines. Although pre-dating the formal launch of SEE, Alberti's study of the refashioning of amateur and professional roles in nineteenth-century Yorkshire may be considered a contribution to this academic genre.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, work in book history, which recognised readers as active participants in knowledge production, in a 'circuit of communication' involving numerous other actors – authors, editors, publishers, binders, illustrators, designers, and so on – has resonances with SEE.<sup>80</sup>

The 'social turn' in studies of the history of science was also a 'spatial turn' which placed emphasis on space, paying particular attention to the sites of knowledge production. It recognised sites not merely as passive backdrops or simple containers for activity, practices and processes, but conceptualised them as, to quote Nigel Thrift, Felix Driver and David Livingstone, 'vital links in the chain of production, validation, and dissemination [of knowledge].' For Crosbie Smith and Jon Agar, the application of different analytical techniques of spatial study has resulted in spatial representations which reveal a multiplicity of geographies.<sup>81</sup> In short, various studies over the last four decades have recognised that knowledge production and dissemination are situated activities in which the site of activity has an impact on the activity itself (which may, in turn, have an impact upon the make-up of the site). The recognition of scientific knowledge primarily as a human product, made with locally situated cultural and

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<sup>79</sup> Alberti (2001).

<sup>80</sup> The term 'circuit of communication' is taken from Darnton (1982), 11.

<sup>81</sup> Smith & Agar (1998), 2.

material resources, rather than as simply revelation of a pre-given order of nature' spawned the term 'social constructivism'.<sup>82</sup> This constructivist view, which owes much to the work of Thomas Kuhn, has been a dominant paradigm in the history of science and technology over the last four decades. Implicit elements within a constructivist analysis are the related concepts of 'naturalism' and the 'symmetry postulate' which, by having the researcher '*play* the stranger' (as opposed to *being* that stranger), provides a formalized mechanism for the avoidance of 'presentism' and the application of hindsight to temporally located issues.<sup>83</sup>

Whilst the laboratory has come under considerable scrutiny as a leading site of knowledge production, studies in the history of science have revealed that sites of knowledge production are many and varied – the lecture theatre, the library, the archive, the ship's deck, the parlour, the pub, and, of course, the museum. Forgan, in arguing for the necessity for an analysis of the 'particularity of each site', points to issues of space being associated with those of power and prestige: 'There is an interplay between the context of location, [and] the activities contained within the building, the reputation of those associated with it', a matter which, as noted in Chapter 1, Alberti addresses in relation to the interplay between museum buildings, people, and objects.<sup>84</sup> Such studies emphasising the located nature of knowledge production use the term 'local' not solely in a physical sense, but also metaphorically. In particular, they refer to knowledge production being local in the sense of its taking place within a

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<sup>82</sup> Golinski (1998), i.

<sup>83</sup> Shapin & Schaffer (1985), 6.

<sup>84</sup> Forgan (1998), 214; Alberti (2011a).

community which shares common views, values, and beliefs, even though the individuals comprising that ‘community of practice’ may not necessarily be co-located in space.<sup>85</sup>

## ***2.5 Conclusion***

Used together, and within the general compass of spatial enquiry, these two sets of literature provide a rich theoretical framework and a diverse set of possibilities with which to address the question: what might an historical geography of a museum be? Matters of geography, on a variety of scales, are integral to the processes of museum. *Where* objects are and how they are materially positioned suggests *how* they are, or are intended to be, seen and valued and, perhaps, why. Position and juxtaposition imbue meanings. The act of placing an object in a museum, ‘the musealisation of “things” as Jennifer Walklate terms the process, itself imparts a value, a ‘museum-worthiness’, establishing a reciprocal relationship which contributes status both to the object and to the museum.’<sup>86</sup> As Whitehead observes, ‘the museum embodies theories concerning the relative value of objects and the proper ways of apprehending, studying, appreciating or even revering them – of *knowing* them’. Further emphasising the spatial, he suggests that ‘the articulation of display space can potentialise the construction of different kinds of narrative’.<sup>87</sup> It is, therefore, unsurprising that practices of geography, particularly cartography, provide metaphors which speak to the multiple scales in play. For Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, ‘While the museum

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<sup>85</sup> Collins & Evans (2002).

<sup>86</sup> Walklate (2012).

<sup>87</sup> Whitehead (2009), 24 and 27.

collection itself is an undrawn map of all the places from which materials have come, the floor plan, which determines where people walk, also delineates conceptual paths through what becomes a virtual space of travel'.<sup>88</sup> This crucial role of objects and their material placement in producing meaning further renders the museum ripe for geographical analysis.

As I will show, the interaction between communities of practice, objects and material and intellectual sites are constitutive of a complex of geographies. Appreciation of this complexity has prompted Christopher Whitehead to challenge Macdonald's characterisation a museum as 'a theory', 'a suggested way of seeing the world' on the grounds that it understates the multi-scale complexities (in my terms the multi-scale geographies) of museums.<sup>89</sup> For Whitehead, 'all aspects of the museum are discursive in some way', and even a single display may encapsulate not just a single theory but a multitude:<sup>90</sup>

These theories may overlap and conflict; they may be brutally edited by practical or administrative circumstances such as lack of space or changes in management; they may be vestiges of old practices or rhetorics (e.g. the rhetoric of the private collection transplanted into the museum); and they may be governed by taxonomies and principles (style, chronology, school, etc) which are binding in one area of a display and absent elsewhere.<sup>91</sup>

This is a recognition of the spaces of the museum being heterotopic on a variety of scales. It acknowledges too that, to quote Whitehead, 'the theorising which takes place within the actual or virtual context of the museum may be compromised by circumstantial factors which relate to politics and/or logistics'.<sup>92</sup>

The use of the two primary bodies of theoretical literatures to examine those

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<sup>88</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 132.

<sup>89</sup> Macdonald (1996), 14.

<sup>90</sup> Whitehead (2009), 31.

<sup>91</sup> Whitehead (2005), 205.

<sup>92</sup> Whitehead (2009), 38-41.

practices of space which constitute the processes of museum will, as demonstrated in the chapters which follow, enable account to be taken of the contestations and constraints that have shaped the Museum. They permit the establishment of a methodological framework to assess the various kinds of activity constitutive of the Museum. In particular they provide a set of lenses which bring into focus the interrelationships between objects, people, and sites, at different moments in the past, which together constitute an historical geography. Used in combination these literatures reveal, admit, and examine the complexity and the situated messiness of the Museum. Before analysing the processes that constitute the Museum, I use the next chapter to introduce the Museum as a material site.



## THE MUSEUM AS PLACE: THE MATERIALITY OF SITE

Buildings may remain in the same place, but they rarely stand still in terms of function, representation or in the ways that they are interpreted by historians.<sup>1</sup>

55° 56' 51.21"N 3° 11' 18.41"W; 55° 56' 48.85"N 3° 11' 17.11"W  
55° 56' 47.54"N 3° 11' 23.29"W; 55° 56' 48.84"N 3° 11' 24.96"W

OS Grid reference: NT25879 73366; NT25899 73294  
NT25794 73254; NT25770 73322

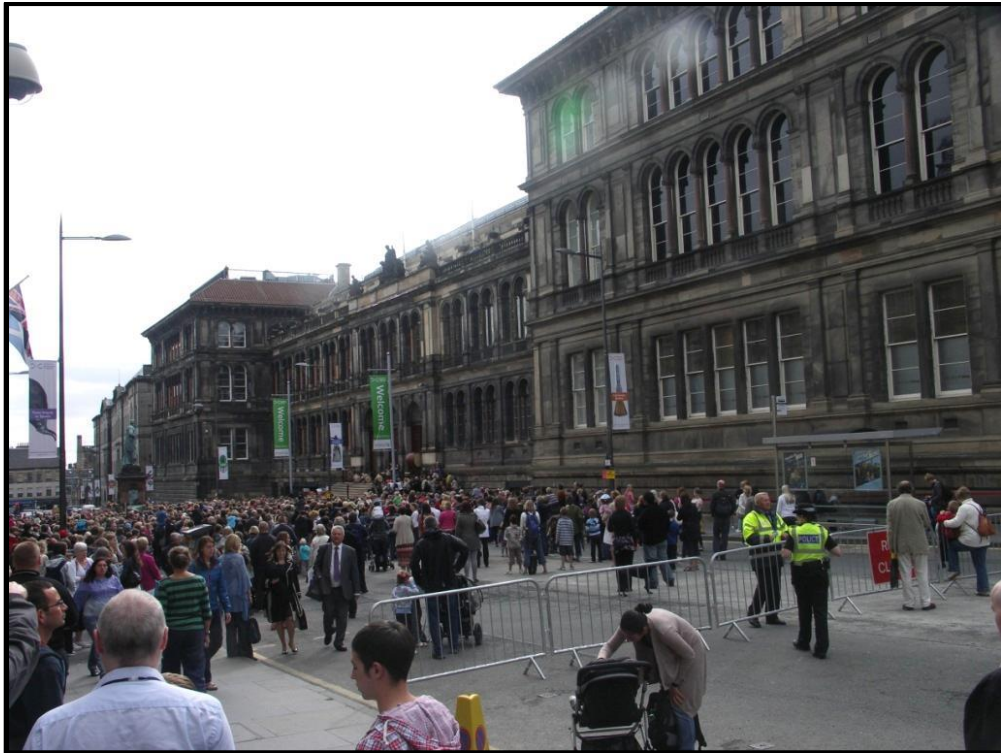
### *3.1 Introduction*

On 29 July 2011 the Chambers Street street party was in full swing; a public celebration to mark to the completion of the Royal Museum Project and the refurbishment of the Museum (Figure 3.1). The party also marked an act of union through which Benson and Forsyth's late twentieth-century stone-veneered cathedral-grade concrete Museum of Scotland building and the conjoined Fowke and Matheson's nineteenth-century secular cathedral of the arts and sciences was publicly united under a single identity, the National Museum of Scotland.<sup>2</sup> The Project had involved years of planning, three years of construction work, a budget of £47.4 million, and the involvement of national and international consultancies to make the Benson and Forsyth building's elder sister, grown

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<sup>1</sup> Forgan (1998), 198.

<sup>2</sup> On the relationship of the Museum of Scotland and the Royal Museum, see Benson & Forsyth (1999); McKean (2000). On the naming of the Museum, see NMS(D)/[n.n.], Rintoul to Janvrin, 6 September 2006.



**Figure 3.1. Street party to celebrate the fruition of the Royal Museum Project and the opening of the former ‘Royal Museum’ portion of the National Museum of Scotland, 29 July 2011 (photograph by the author).**

dowdy with age, fashionably presentable for the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup> The party marked the (re)opening of the Museum as ‘A place where the cultures of Scotland and the world meet. Where the arts and sciences intermingle: a space where the full spectrum of human creativity and invention, across cultural boundaries and through time, can be seen alongside the wonder and diversity of the natural world’.<sup>4</sup> This rhetoric addresses both the epistemic spaces of the Museum and its material manifestation as a site of knowledge making. The Project sought to relocate the Museum as ‘essentially a new museum’ within the

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<sup>3</sup> National Museums Scotland (n.d. [2011]); *Telegraph* (2011).

<sup>4</sup> National Museums of Scotland (n.d. [2004]); National Museums Scotland (2010); Presentation by Gordon Rintoul, launch of Royal Museum Masterplan, 18 November 2004.

material architecture of a Category A listed building constructed in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

The Project was the latest relocation in the history of the Museum and provides a focus for the discussion which follows of the complex processes which brought the Museum into being in its particular physical location and form. This chapter sets the scene for the analysis of the practices of space – collecting, educating, exhibiting, staffing, and visiting – considered in detail later.<sup>6</sup> The chapter departs from the timeframe of the thesis to outline recent events, but more, to set the scene prior to 1854, thereby examining the longer-run narrative of the Museum as a civic space. In so doing, it recognises that buildings are never merely containers for processes but are fashioned by them and have agency in fashioning these processes. Buildings are artefacts which encode ideologies and which reflect the intellectual and material contexts of their production.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the material architecture of a museum, its location and decoration, together with its naming, are, I suggest, matters of epistemic location as much as of grid position.<sup>8</sup> As Forgan has observed, whilst ‘the point of creation is the key moment at which scientific ideas are given material form’, subsequent opportunities for materialising ideas also arise when museums are relocated or existing buildings adapted, expanded or substantially refurbished.<sup>9</sup> Yet, I contend, for the museum in Edinburgh there was no single ‘point of

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<sup>5</sup> Gifford, McWilliam & Walker (1984); National Museums Scotland (2011), [4].

<sup>6</sup> de Certeau (1985).

<sup>7</sup> Wilson (1858), 21; King (1980); Schroeder-Gudhus (1993); Thrift, Driver & Livingstone (1995); Forgan (2005); Yanni. (2005); Withers & Livingstone (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Wilson (1858), 21. For a discussion of the relationship between material and epistemological position of objects, see Waterston (1997), 137-144.

<sup>9</sup> Forgan (2005), 575.

creation’, but rather a punctuated continuum of spatial change as buildings were erected, demolished, adapted, expanded and reconfigured. The form of the material spaces of the Museum were informed by the ‘cluster of ideas’ about what work would be carried out within them, even as the limitations of the material spaces also imposed constraints on these practises. The palimpsestic nature of museums means that these opportunities and constraints themselves have genealogies.

### ***3.2 Prologue to an ‘epitome of the world’: genealogies of collections in Edinburgh***

#### ***3.2.1 Towards a free museum***

In 1861 *The Scotsman* reported on the impending commencement of the clearing of a site for the Museum:

Scotland may at length congratulate herself on having immediate prospect or [*sic*] receiving a too long delayed boon, or rather right, the equivalent of which England has for years enjoyed. And Edinburgh, as the capital of our northern Kingdom, the central seat of education and intellectual industry, may also rejoice in having added to the many noble institutions she can already boast an Industrial Museum, externally not unworthy of a place among the monuments of the most picturesque city in the world, and internally enriched with specimens of the varied natural and industrial resources of not only our own, but of many lands.<sup>10</sup>

In this self-congratulatory piece, the newspaper claimed credit for its role in establishing a government-funded museum in Edinburgh: ‘It is fully twenty years since the idea of an Industrial Museum was popularised amongst us; our own columns were the medium through which its value, practicability, and necessity, were urged earliest and most frequently.’ One of the principal correspondents in the columns of *The Scotsman*, and other newspapers, who had campaigned for a

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<sup>10</sup> *Scotsman* (1861b).

museum for Scotland, was Adam White, an Edinburgh-born zoologist on the staff of the British Museum.<sup>11</sup> In one of a series of letters, signed with the *nom de plume* ‘Arachnophilus’, he wrote:

let it be a nucleus to which the spirited sons of Scotia may give and bequeath pictures, statues, specimens, books, and MSS., – let it be a place to which your hard working sailors, soldiers, merchants, and medical men in active foreign service, may delight to send specimens of Natural History, or curiosities connected with rude and less civilized nations, – let it contain a large collection of casts from the antique for artists and architects to copy and study, – let it contain models of the geological structure of your country, which, in itself...is almost “an epitome of the world”.<sup>12</sup>

White placed the provision of a museum in contexts of national pride, status, and prestige: ‘a building for such a purpose is yet wanting to make Edinburgh (what most other capitals are) a *Museum-endowed city*’.<sup>13</sup> Charles Waterston has outlined the complex and nuanced history of the campaign for a museum in Edinburgh and the sites in which it was conducted.<sup>14</sup> He showed how the campaign was spurred by the creation in 1845 of the Irish Museum of Economic Geology (within a couple of years renamed the Museum of Irish Industry), and how it was fostered amidst a general atmosphere of concern that the Liberal Government was giving undue attention to Ireland whilst neglecting Scotland’s distinctive position within the Union.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst set in discourses of national status and identity, the campaign for a museum in Edinburgh freely open to all-comers also lay within the context of a more general UK-wide movement to foster access to collections as a moral good (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 6).

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<sup>11</sup> Datta (2004).

<sup>12</sup> Arachnophilus (1847a). On the campaign for a government-funded museum in Scotland, see also also Arachnophilus (1847b); Fleming reported in Miller (1849), 2; White (1850); (1851).

<sup>13</sup> Arachnophilus (1847b).

<sup>14</sup> Waterston (1997).

<sup>15</sup> On the establishment of the museum in Dublin, see Wheeler (1944); Cullen (2009). On concerns in Scotland over its role in the Union, see Finlay (1997); Morton (1999).

By the mid-nineteenth century, Edinburgh had several museums but these were ‘closed’ affairs owned or operated either by learned societies, or by colleges, for example: the Museum of the Highland and Agricultural Society; the Free Church Museum; the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries; the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh; and the Natural History Museum and the Torrie collection of the University of Edinburgh (formerly the Toun College).<sup>16</sup> Although some were open to ‘the public’, the concept of who constituted that public was restricted.<sup>17</sup> As Duncan has observed in relation to art galleries: ‘from the point of view of their owners, these spaces were accessible to everyone who counted... Art galleries were thus “public” spaces in that they could unequivocally frame the only “public” that was admissible: well-born, educated men of taste, and, more marginally (if at all), well-born women’.<sup>18</sup> What White and others were campaigning for was a publically-funded museum open to all, ‘an Open Museum in the Scottish capital’.<sup>19</sup>

By a National Museum, is meant a museum in a capital city open to the public gratuitously... To interest the public, a museum must be nearly as free as the air, or the public walks;- to interest the mass of the people, it must be made as useful and accessible as possible... It should contain collections to teach as well as amuse, to profit as well as please.<sup>20</sup>

White wanted not just a ‘public’ but a ‘general public’. That there was a large potential general public was evidenced by the crowds attracted to the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh on the rare occasions that it opened free of charge. On the day of Queen Victoria’s coronation in 1838, for example, free access attracted an estimated 20,000 people and for New Year’s Day 1852, the

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<sup>16</sup> White (1850); Grant (1884); Murray (1904); Stevenson (1981); Swinney (1982); Boud (1985).

<sup>17</sup> Swinney (2010b).

<sup>18</sup> Duncan (1995), 36.

<sup>19</sup> GB587/[n.n.], White scrapbook, ‘On an Open Museum in the Scottish Capital’.

<sup>20</sup> White (1850), 9-10.

initial batch of 1,200 free tickets was oversubscribed within hours and a further 1,200 had to be issued.<sup>21</sup>

### *3.2.2 Towards a public museum and the making of a general public*

The Toun College of Edinburgh (later to become the University of Edinburgh) had owned collections rich in natural history specimens since the late seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> These collections waxed and waned in their use and status but in the later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, during the tenure of John Walker and Robert Jameson as Professors of Natural History – respectively, 1779-1803, 1804-1854 – they occupied a vital and distinctive place in the teaching of natural history.<sup>23</sup> The museum's status was reflected in its relocation, in 1820, to a new purpose-designed three-storey suite of rooms in the central block of the west side of the University quadrangle: 'the most superb and elegant part of the college' (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).<sup>24</sup> The rate of growth of the collections was prodigious, in part due to Jameson's reluctance to refuse donations: 'I make it a rule never to refuse anything. By refusing indifferent specimens my wishes for the increase of the Museum might be misinterpreted, and thus I might deter others from sending what was valuable; I therefore take everything; I do not put them up; I keep them in boxes; I refuse nothing'.<sup>25</sup> From 1823 the museum occupied the approximately 630m<sup>2</sup> of display space in the west block, and crates and boxes

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<sup>21</sup> *Scotsman* (1838), 2; John James Audubon cited in Shufeldt & Audubon (1894); NMS(NH)/UD/12, McLaren to Jameson, 30 December 1851, p. 79. See also Swinney (2010b).

<sup>22</sup> Sibbald (1697); Eyles (1954); Fraser (1989); Withers (1993; 1996a; 1996b).

<sup>23</sup> For discussion of Walker's teaching, see Withers (1993); Eddy (2008). For a discussion of Jameson's teaching, see Jameson (1837); Chitnis (1970); Hartley (2000).

<sup>24</sup> Stark (1825), 181.

<sup>25</sup> Jameson (1837a), 144 [186].

packed with specimens of all kinds, mostly inaccessible, accumulated in rooms above the main gate, the 'east museum'.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 3.2. The upper hall of the Natural History Museum of the Town College of Edinburgh by William Lizards, circa 1822. This hall, fitted with wall cases and desk casing displayed birds, minerals and some invertebrates. A similarly sized hall below, not fitted with display cases, was used to display large mounted zoological specimens and items of ethnography.**

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<sup>26</sup> NMS(NH)/UW/2, McGillivray, report of 15 August 1823, p. 18; *Scotsman* (1826); Fraser (1989).

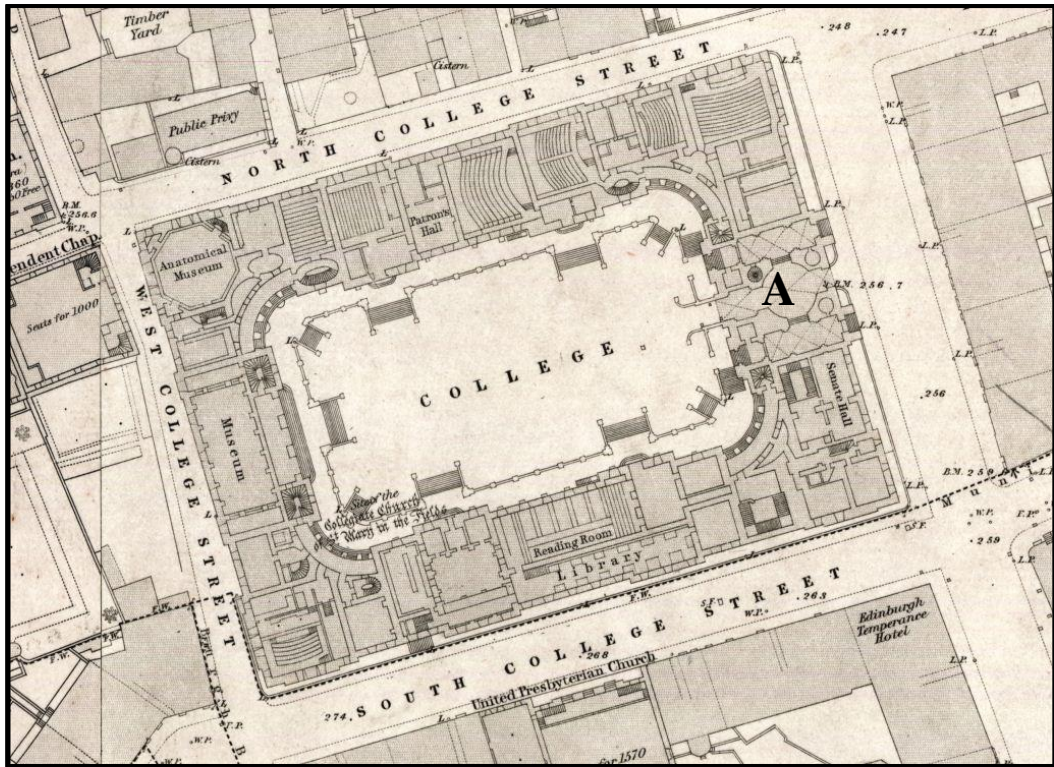


Figure 3.3. The location of the Natural History Museum in the University of Edinburgh, circa 1852. The main portion of the museum is indicated to the east of the quadrangle; other parts of the collection were in the ‘east museum’ (A) in attic rooms in the block above the entrance to the quadrangle. Part of sheet 36 of O.S. Town Plan, 1:1056, Edinburgh, 1852 (NLS).

The Museum was the embodiment of Jameson’s intellectual capital, and he protected it vigorously against use by others’ students. In 1827, for example, he resisted proposals to allow medical students access on the grounds that to do so ‘would fill the rooms with a number of idle mischievous boys; and at the present it could not be done; we have not servants to watch them’<sup>27</sup> – natural history did not become a required course for medical students until after Jameson’s death.<sup>28</sup> Yet despite this, a rhetoric of making the University Natural

<sup>27</sup> Jameson (1837b), 637 [679].

<sup>28</sup> Wilson & Geikie (1861), 114.

History Museum ‘public’ had been expressed at various times. Walker had considered it ‘the foundation of a Publick Museum, which may soon become highly useful and Ornamental, to the University, to the City, and to Scotland in general’ and Jameson spoke of it as ‘a public department connected in some degree with the country of Scotland, it is the National Museum of this country’.<sup>29</sup> It was under Jameson’s tenure that, in 1821, the museum first opened to visitors, although access was regulated through the imposition of an entrance fee of 2s 6d; in 1834 it was reduced to 1 shilling.<sup>30</sup> For Jameson, the fee-paying visitors constituted the ‘public’, a fact demonstrated when, acquiescing to pressures from temperance campaigners, he opened the Museum on New Year’s Day 1852, announcing ‘no admission to day for the Public – that day being appointed for the Working Classes’.<sup>31</sup>

### ***3.3 Town, gown and museum***

In 1825 the bequest by Sir James Erskine of Torrie of his extensive collection of paintings and statues galvanised the Senate of the University into initiating plans to extend the University’s foot-print westward by constructing a new building specifically to house and display its collections.<sup>32</sup> These plans, however, came to naught, and by the middle of the century, concern for the fate of its collections, and an anxiety to protect its interests by maintaining a high measure of control over their use as a teaching resource, prompted the University to exert pressure on

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<sup>29</sup> GB236 MacLeod C0036R, Item 34, manuscript dated 1780, pp. 352-355; Jameson (1837a), 144 [186].

<sup>30</sup> *Scotsman* (1821); Swinney & Heppell (1997).

<sup>31</sup> NMS(NH)/UD/12, Jameson to McLaren, 31 Dec. 1851, pp. 82-83. See also Swinney (2010b).

<sup>32</sup> Playfair (1837), 163 [843]; Rattray, Johnston & Duncan (1837), 165 [843]; Macmillan (2004).

Government to commit funds for a public museum.<sup>33</sup> The University was just one of a number of learned bodies in the city which, whilst each jostling to protect their own interests, co-operated in lobbying the Government. Several sent similarly worded memorials to the Treasury. Typical was that of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh which stressed the utility of a museum in knowing Scotland as a source of raw materials:

The establishment of such an institution in the capital of Scotland would be a great national benefit, by affording the means of obtaining definite information in regard to the mineral wealth of the kingdom, its ores and coals, its building, paving, and ornamental stones, granites, and marbles, the localities and composition of soils, the qualities and capabilities of its different clays for bricks, tiles, or pottery wares, and of its limestones for building purposes and manure, and generally as a means of developing the industrial resources of its territorial products.<sup>34</sup>

Yet at least some factions in the University were suspicious of the government's plans, seeing in them an attempt to establish 'a New School of Geology and Practical Chemistry – with Buildings for these purposes – and a staff of Professors etc'.<sup>35</sup> Such a prospect was viewed as a threat to the University's status and to its income from student fees. The Senate established a committee to consider the matter. A memorandum from the University Senate to the Lords the Treasury described the Natural Museum thus:

It now consists of extensive collections in every branch of Natural History, partly presented by the Professor, and by former students of the University, partly purchased by the Senatus Academicus with funds at their disposal, and partly contributed by Government from the proceeds of various expeditions into foreign parts. Next to the British Museum, that of the University of Edinburgh is by far the most extensive and complete in the United Kingdom.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Waterston (1997).

<sup>34</sup> Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (1854), 16 [433].

<sup>35</sup> GB237/EUA IN1/GOV/SEN/1, Senate Minutes, 31 January 1852, Jameson, 'The Report on the Museum of Natural History', p. 341.

<sup>36</sup> GB237/EUA IN1/GOV/SEN/1, Senate Minutes, 13 March 1852, 'Statement relative to the Natural History Museum of the University', p. 354.

The memorandum sought to aligned calls for a public museum with the University's interests:

A great desire has been expressed in many parts for establishing in Edinburgh a National Museum of Natural History for Scotland, which shall be freely open to the public of all denominations. It is clear however, that Edinburgh cannot support two great collections of this kind, nor could it be reasonably expected, that Government should supply the means for both. But there can be no difficulty, as the Senatus think, in uniting the two into one – in other word, in converting the University Museum into a National one for Scotland.... The Senatus Academicus, however, will cheerfully meet the desire at present so strongly felt, and pressed in other quarters, for the multiplication of the means of rational recreation, and instruction for all ranks of Society in this country, and particularly the working classes of the community, by now proposing to contribute all the available resources at their command for converting the University Museum of Natural History into a National and open one.<sup>37</sup>

There were caveats. The University sought to retain control over the collections by requiring that the Regius Professor of Natural History be the new museum's Keeper of Natural History and 'that the Lectures, and other systems of instruction connected with the National Museum shall continue to form part of the system of Tuition in the University'. Matters of location were, therefore, crucial and another caveat was 'That the new building shall constitute an addition to, and part of the present University building, but with an independent entrance for the public'. The Town Council, as the patrons of the University, lent its weight to the proposal, pointing out that 'As regards the Site, the ground immediately to the west of the present Museum is admirably adapted for the proposed extension'.<sup>38</sup> The press reported:

The immediate vicinity of the College Museum would, as we have said, probably be the most desirable locality for the new museum. The College Museum is already more than overcrowded, and some addition to its accommodation is indispensable. In the grounds between the College and George IV. Bridge, there is full room for any extension that might be desired. The two institutions, also, might be connected materially by a covered

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<sup>37</sup> GB237/EUA IN1/GOV/SEN/1, Senate Minutes, 13 March 1852, 'Statement relative to the Natural History Museum of the University', pp. 354-355.

<sup>38</sup> GB2229 Parcel 30/2, 'National Museum for Scotland, Memorial of the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh to the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, 16 March 1852', quoted from Waterston (1997), 93.

passage, and open on the same days to the public, and yet remain totally distinct and independent in every other respect.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the Government placed matters concerning the establishment of the museum with DSA, which had been established as part of the Board of Trade in the wake of the Great Exhibition.<sup>40</sup> Based at South Kensington, it was headed jointly by Henry Cole and Lyon Playfair. In addition to its direct educational responsibilities, it was charged with the administration of, amongst other bodies, the Her Majesty's Geological Survey, the South Kensington Museum, the Museum of Practical Geology and the Central School of Design in London, the Royal Dublin Society and the Museum of Irish Industry.<sup>41</sup> Playfair, the Secretary for Science in the Department, recalled his role in the negotiations in Edinburgh:

At this time there was no National Museum in Edinburgh. I went down to that city and negotiated with the University and the Town Council for establishing a Museum in the metropolis of the north. The municipality offered free land for building and the University agreed to hand over its splendid collections of natural history. On reporting to Government the result of these negotiations an application was made to Parliament which voted the necessary sums for building and supporting a National Museum in Edinburgh.<sup>42</sup>

From DSA's perspective the site immediately west of the University was suitable not only because of its proximity to an established site of learning, but also because it was situated within the densely-populated working-class housing of Edinburgh's Old Town: the Department identified the working classes as a prime target audience for its museums (see Chapter 5). Further, the site was cheap and the existing buildings, the Trades Maiden Hospital and the Argyle Square Independent Chapel, although far from ideal for adaptation to a museum, offered

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<sup>39</sup> *Scotsman* (1853).

<sup>40</sup> Butterworth (1968).

<sup>41</sup> Jarrell (1983), 332.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in Reid (1900), 151.

premises in which to begin amassing collections.<sup>43</sup> A Treasury Minute, dated April 1854 and ratified by an Act of Parliament the following year, allocated £7,000 for the purchase of the site and a further £1,500 for the recruitment of staff and to fund the acquisition of objects and collections representative of industrial processes.<sup>44</sup> News of the outcome of the negotiations to establish the Museum was carried not only by Scottish newspapers but also by numerous English papers.<sup>45</sup>

Because of downturns in the economy the construction of a bespoke building was conducted in phases. These opened in 1866, 1875 and about 1889 respectively (Figure 3.4).

### ***3.4 Temporary spaces of museum: ‘The temporary Museum’ 1854-1866***

The Hospital, Chapel and adjacent grounds (as site of approximately 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>) were duly acquired and additional premises in the grounds of Surgeons’ Hall (about 120 metres south east of the University) rented to provide a lecture room and laboratory (Figure 3.5 and 3.6).<sup>46</sup> Wilson began forming industrial collections in 1855, but was frustrated by the accommodation:

The public accordingly only profit by the acquisition of industrial objects to the extent that they are shown at the University Lectures on Technology; but as the lecture room is at a considerable distance from the temporary Museum, it is impossible to transfer safely, bulky or fragile articles from one building to the other. In consequence of this state of matters, the accumulation, not the exhibition, of specimens and instruments is the end kept chiefly in view.<sup>47</sup>

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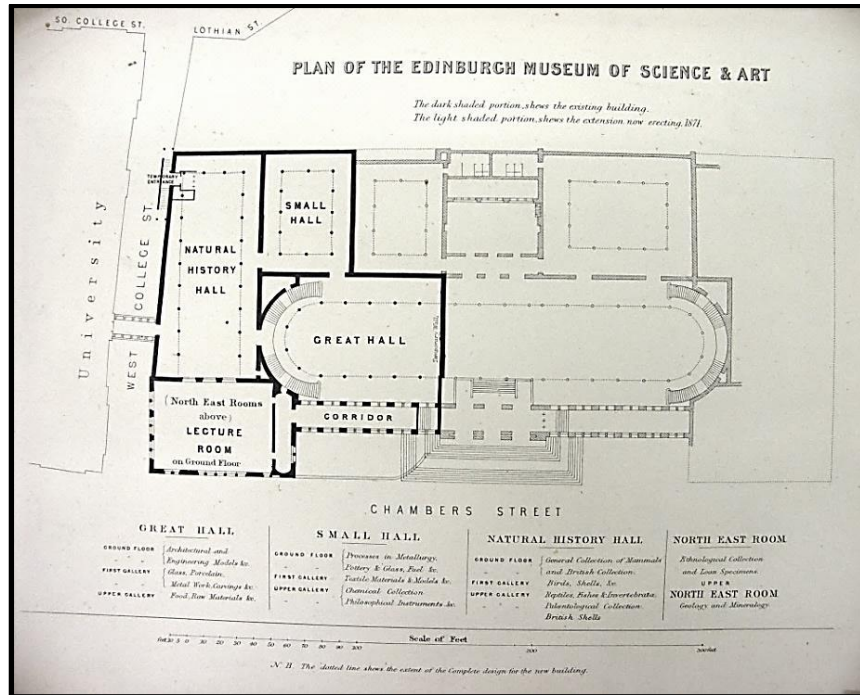
<sup>43</sup> GB2229 Parcel 30/2, ‘National Museum for Scotland, Memorial of the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh to the Lords of Her Majesty’s Treasury, 16 March 1852’. For a history of the former land-use of this site, and of Argyle Square, see Robertson (2010).

<sup>44</sup> Treasury Minute (1854), 18 [434]; Public General Act (1855).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, *Bradford Observer* (1854); *Bristol Mercury* (1854); *Derby Mercury* (1854); *Essex Standard* (1854); *Huddersfield Chronicle* (1854); *Liverpool Mercury* (1854); *Manchester Examiner* (1854); *Royal Cornwall Gazette* (1854).

<sup>46</sup> Public General Act (1855); Parliamentary Accounts (1857).

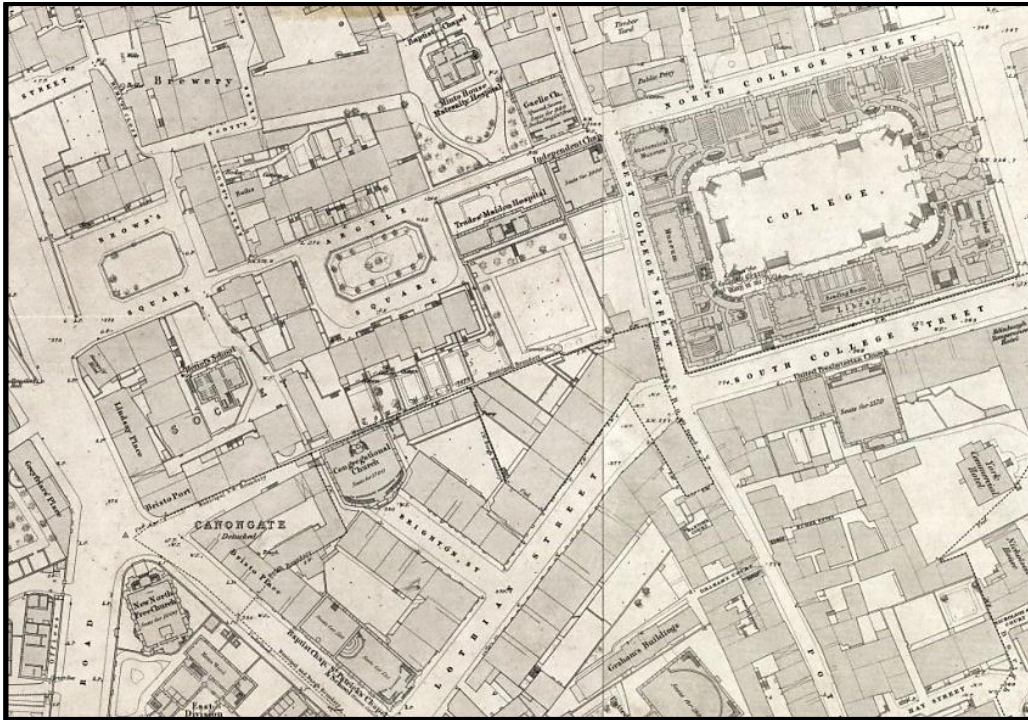
<sup>47</sup> Archer (1858), 7.



**Figure 3.4.** Plan of the Museum, dated 1871, showing the three phases of construction of Fowke and Matheson’s building. The portion opened in 1866 is in black, the second phase under construction is in grey, and the extent of the third phase is indicated by a dotted line (GB587/ GB587/IS.2010.3D).



**Figure 3.5.** The site of the Museum as shown in a painting by James Ogilvie in 1846. The showing Trades Maiden Hospital with pupils in its gardens occupy the foreground of the composition with Argyle Square beyond. The Flodden Wall, in the left of the composition, forms the southern boundary of the gardens of both the Hospital and the properties on the south of Argyle Square (The Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh).



**Figure 3.6. Map of the site and environs for the proposed Museum, circa 1852: parts of sheets 35 and 36 of O.S. Town Plan, 1:1056, Edinburgh, 1852 (NLS).**

Meanwhile, the natural history collections remained in the University building. Although their material location and arrangement was unaltered, with their hand-over to administration by DSA their epistemic location changed. They remained a pedagogic resource for the University Natural History course, but were made freely accessible to all-comers. However, as I show in Chapter 7, the collections presented different lessons to different audiences.<sup>48</sup>

On 8 October 1855 free admission was introduced at the Natural History Museum on Saturdays; and the fee for admission at other times was reduced from one shilling to six pence. Over the summer months, Saturday opening hours

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<sup>48</sup> Swinney (2010a).

were extended to 5 p.m. ‘with the view of affording to the working classes an opportunity of visiting the Museum after the termination of their daily occupations, which in Edinburgh are mostly finished at an early hour in the afternoon of Saturday’.<sup>49</sup> In their separate sites the ‘Industrial Museum of Scotland’ and the ‘Natural History Museum, Edinburgh’ had different operating practices (for discussion of their documentary practices, see Chapter 5).<sup>50</sup>

From the cramped and inadequate accommodation of the Hospital and Chapel and the overcrowded museum of natural history in the University, Wilson and Allman planned their requirements of a bespoke state-of-the-art museum. In July 1856 they provided Playfair with an outline of their thinking, tailoring their plans to the foot-print of the Chapel and Hospital site which would accommodate a building 155 feet by 190 feet adjacent to the University. The geography of the site was a crucial factor in their planning for the building and the disposition of the collections within it: ‘The Upper Gallery in the East side of the Quadrangle could be connected with the upper Hall of the University Museum by a suitable archway crossing West College Street’.<sup>51</sup>

Within months Wilson realised that his original estimate had been too modest. He outlined his reasoning in a letter to the Highland and Agricultural Society:

The Reasons for which I ask for more space are that every industrial Art must be represented in the New Museum; that all the raw materials of all those Arts must be exhibited in full commercial detail, along with all the Stages through which the Materials pass before becoming finished products, besides the tools & often also the Machinery employed in working them; that the condition of those Arts must be

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<sup>49</sup> Allman (1857), 171 [217]. See also Allman (1858a), 15.

<sup>50</sup> Archer & Allman (1858).

<sup>51</sup> Copy of a memorandum from Wilson and Allman to Science and Art Department, 23 July 1856. Parcel 30/12, Royal Highland and Agricultural Society Archive, cited in Waterston (1997, 102).

illustrated historically, at least as practices in our own and other Civilised Countries within recent periods; and that their contemporary condition in the less Civilised Nations must also be illustrated (examples from Africa, India, China, &c).

To render such collections useful, the Museum should contain at least two large Lecture Theatres, and two Smaller Lecture Rooms, for the accommodation at the same hour of separate Classes under distinct Professors or Lecturers. It must contain one or more Libraries, one large Laboratory with accessory furnace rooms, Balance Room, Apparatus Room and Consulting Room, and Store Room, and corresponding Apparatus mutatis mutandis must be supplied for the Natural History Side. Apartments for Housekeeper, Porter, Clerks & other offices must likewise be included.<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, the press urged Government to acquire further property to the west of the temporary museum so as to construct a more imposing building, one ‘worthy of the title of a National Museum’.<sup>53</sup> A letter in the *Caledonian Mercury* urged: ‘Don’t let us have any of your snuffling little buildings put up, but a large, capacious, and, at the same time, ornamental edifice, fitted to contain the numerous contributions which, in the course of years, will be sent in by Scotchmen from all parts of the world’.<sup>54</sup>

After some vacillation, a reaction to the ‘great commercial crisis’ of 1857 and the associated ‘panic’, Parliament agreed to acquire Argyle Square for museum purposes.<sup>55</sup> The site was surveyed in November 1859 and powers taken for compulsory purchase of the nine houses, in a ‘very old and dilapidated state’, on the south and west of the Square.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> GB2229 Parcel 30/11, Wilson to Maxwell, 9 February 1857, quoted from Waterston (1997), 105.

<sup>53</sup> *Scotsman* (1856a).

<sup>54</sup> C.L. (1856).

<sup>55</sup> For an analysis of the extent of the economic crisis, see Evans (1859).

<sup>56</sup> Public General Act (1860); GB234/RHP2676 and 2677, ‘Plan of the houses, buildings, lands, and other property situated in or adjoining to Argyle Square Edinburgh proposed to be taken for the purposes of an Industrial Museum. Surveyed by Robert Smith and Robert Matheson’.

### ***3.5 Built space: the Fowke-Matheson building 1866–circa 1889***

Between 1857 and 1859 Fowke, the in-house engineer for DSA, and Robert Matheson of Her Majesty's Office of Works, independently developed detailed plans for the new building.<sup>57</sup> Fowke represented the circumstances thus:

An industrial museum was proposed to be built in Edinburgh; the requirements of the department were stated by the professors, and they were sent to the Office of Works. Through a misunderstanding, a design was prepared at the same time by the Office of Works, and by the department of Science and Art. The design of the Office of Works was a very beautiful and clever building, but totally unsuitable for the purpose of an industrial museum; and not only was it unsuitable, but, owing to the requirements not having been fully understood perhaps, it is very uneconomical. The two buildings were estimated to cost about the same money, as nearly as possible. The building designed by the Office of Works gave a floor space on all floors of about 58,000 feet, while the plans prepared by the department of Science and Art gave 77,000 feet.<sup>58</sup>

It seems likely that the 'misunderstanding' was wilful, part of Cole's strategy to wrestle control of the department's building programme away from the Her Majesty's Office of Works.<sup>59</sup> Cole, as head of a department charged with promoting an appreciation of design, was anxious to have overall supervision of the architectural values of the building and to control costs: 'My general experience is, that Captain Fowke knows how to make a pound go further than the Board of Works does'.<sup>60</sup> The Treasury arbitrated over the competing designs and brokered a face-saving compromise by deeming both schemes to be 'defective' and instructing that new plans be drawn up.<sup>61</sup> The discarded plans had been for a three-story block to be constructed on the Hospital and Chapel site only. However, by July 1859, Government had accepted that the site was too small to meet the needs of a museum and Matheson met with Fowke to develop

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<sup>57</sup> GB234/RHP6524/36; GB234/RHP6524/49 and technical specification GB234/E885/22.

<sup>58</sup> Fowke (1860), 130 [677].

<sup>59</sup> Butterworth (1968); MacDonald (2004).

<sup>60</sup> Cole (1860), 32 [573].

<sup>61</sup> GB37/ED84/35(1864), 252, minute for 28 July 1859.

new designs for a building three-times the size and extending over Argyle Square.<sup>62</sup> It was to be the largest public building in Scotland.<sup>63</sup>

Matheson was credited as the Museum's co-designer on the inscription on the building's foundation stone and in reports produced by the Office of Works. In publications produced by DSA, however, his role was described as merely supervising the implementation of Fowke's designs<sup>64</sup> – the extent of Matheson's contribution to the building's design is unclear (Figure 3.7). Fowke and Matheson's planning had to provide a building which was sufficiently flexible in form not only to accommodate the existing natural history collections but also to house and display collections yet to be made. DSA, defining and distinguishing its educational role *vis-à-vis* the Department of Education and the University of Edinburgh, took care to stipulate that the new building should incorporate no facilities which might suggest encroachment on the educational activities of these bodies: 'Office of Works to be informed that laboratory, &c., should not be included in any plan, and that my Lords cannot sanction erection of additional class rooms, nor any other teaching than such as may be addressed to schoolmasters of public schools and the industrial classes'.<sup>65</sup> Fowke and Matheson's design was for a series of interconnecting three-storey halls or stacks, the two upper floors taking the form of galleries surrounding a large atrium (Figure 3.8 and 3.9; see also Frontispiece).

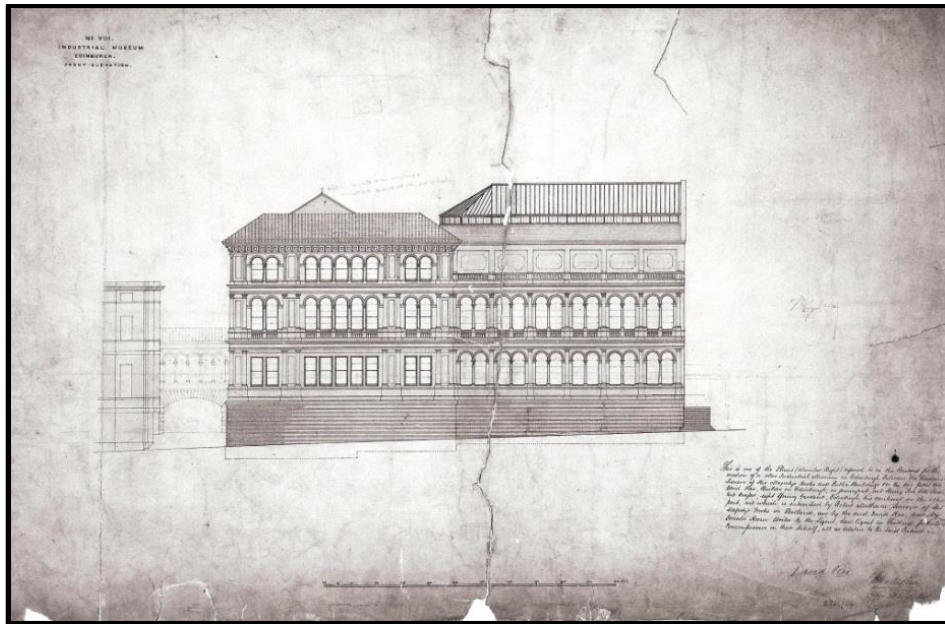
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<sup>62</sup> GB66/ED28/10, Memorandum by Cole, 24 July 1859, in minute stamped 3 August 1859, p. 113 [75].

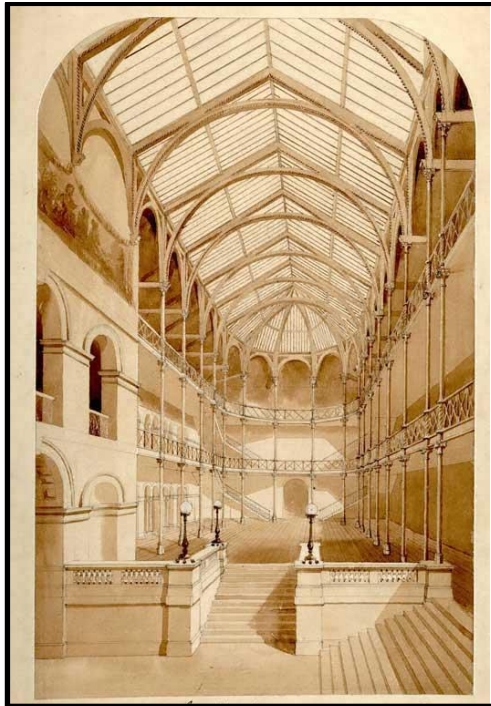
<sup>63</sup> *Scotsman* (1861b); Ward & Lock (n.d. [c.1880]). See also Gifford, McWilliam & Walker (1984).

<sup>64</sup> Austin, evidence to Select Committee (1860), 137 [683]; Science and Art Department (1867), xx. [18]. See also *Scotsman* (1861c).

<sup>65</sup> GB73/ED84/35(1864), 271, minute of 16 February 1960. For a discussion on the long-run power-struggle between the Science and Art Department and the Education Department, see Butterworth (1968).



**Figure 3.7. Drawing of the north elevation of the Museum, circa 1860, signed by Matheson and David Rae: ‘This is one of the Plans (Number Eight) referred to in the Contract for the erection of a New Industrial Museum in Edinburgh between the Commissioners of Her Majesty’s Works and Public Buildings on the one part, and David Rae, Builder in Edinburgh, as principal, and Henry Rae, Silk Mercer and Draper, eight Spring Gardens, Edinburgh, his cautioned [guarantor], on the other part, and which is subscribed by Robert Matheson, Surveyor of Her Majesty’s Works in Scotland, and by the said David Rae, and by Donald Horne Writer to the Signet, Law Agent in Scotland for said Commissioners on their behalf, all as relative to the said Contract’. The entrance steps are shown to the right and the bridge over West College Street, linking the Museum and the University is shown on the left (GB551/PSA-Y/700/16 [RHP 6524/56]).**



**Figure 3.8. Pen and wash drawing by Francis Fowke of an early iteration of the configuration of the Great Hall of the Industrial Museum of Scotland, *circa* 1861 (GB587/IS.2009.13).**



**Figure 3.9. Photograph of the Great Hall *circa* 1900, showing Fowke and Matheson's leitmotif of a central atrium surrounded on two storeys by galleries (GB587/IS.2009.7/9).**

A glazed roof, on curved wooden trusses set atop slender cast-iron pillars, which also supported the galleries, allowed daylight to flood into each stack.<sup>66</sup> One commentator noted, ‘The building is Venetian in style, though, to suit a “weeping climate”, the corridors have a frontage of glass, and their open side is inwards instead of outwards, in the form of piazzas or balconies’.<sup>67</sup> The open galleried structure embodied those epistemologies of mutual surveillance which had been espoused for prisons but which, by the middle of the century, were being applied to the design of other kinds of interior space such as the department store.<sup>68</sup>

Recent analysis has shown Fowke and Matheson’s building to be integrated both vertically and horizontally: ‘the layout combines a clear overall structure within a high degree of individual choice. It informs people about its organisation without restricting the visit into specific and prescribed sequences of spaces’.<sup>69</sup>

The topography of the site which sloped downwards both to the north and to the east meant that the ‘ground floor’ at the north-east corner was five metres above street level. Much of the ‘ground floor’ was over vaulted cellars which provided space for various stores, workshops, boiler-rooms, kitchens, and alike.

In the then prevailing economic climate, a building that occupied the whole of the Argyle Square site was too costly. The decision was taken to defray

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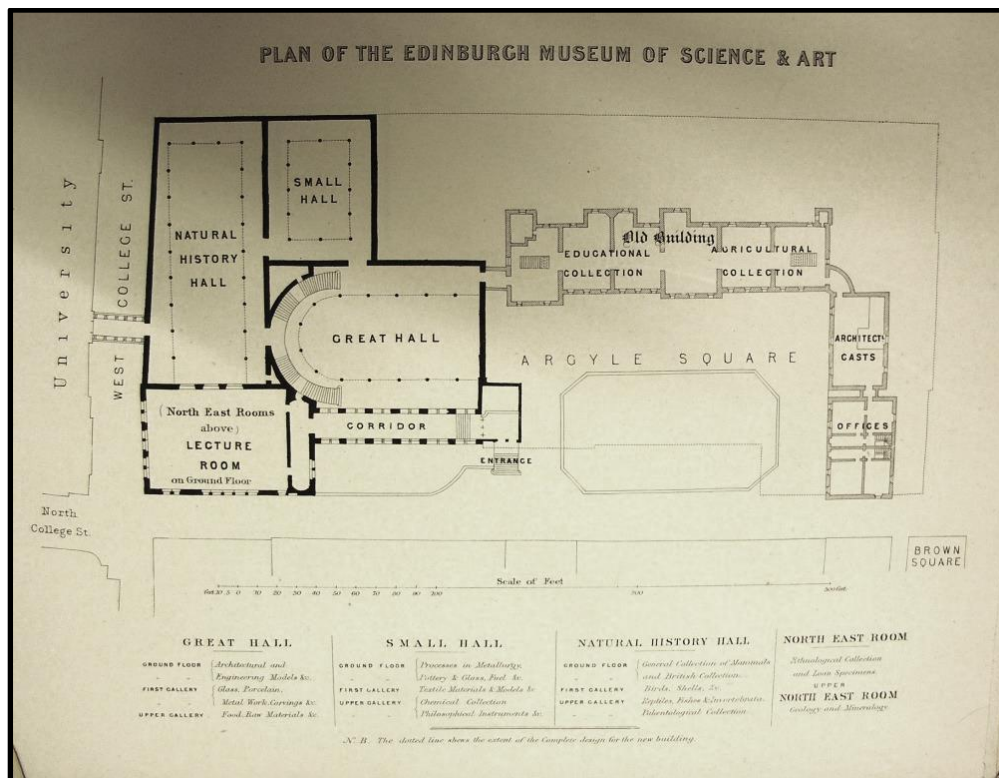
<sup>66</sup> *Builder* [Fowke] (1858); Fowke (1866). See also NMS(RMP)/14, Patterson, D. & Hopton, M. [for LDN] ‘Royal Museum Project Business Plan: Conservation Plan and Appendices’, September 2004.

<sup>67</sup> *Penny Illustrated* (1866), 3; *Times* (1866), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Bennett (1988; 1991).

<sup>69</sup> NMS(RMP)/[n.n.], Psarra S. & Grajewski, T. ‘Museum of Scotland (MS) and Royal Museum of Scotland (RMS): A study of the existing layouts and their effects on the patterns of movement and use’, 30 June 1999.

the costs by constructing it in phases and detailed plans for a first phase were drawn up accordingly.<sup>70</sup> The foundation stone was laid on the afternoon of 23 October 1861 by the Prince Consort, Prince Albert – his last public engagement. The ceremony itself emphasised the juxtaposition of the Museum and the University as conjoined sites of knowledge making. The Royal party was welcomed in the University by its Chancellor, Sir David Brewster, before being escorted through the lower hall of the Natural History Museum, and across a



**Figure 3.10. Plan of ground-floor of the first phase of the Fowke and Matheson’s museum building opened 1866, and the temporary museum provided in the converted buildings on Argyle Square. Note the bridge between the Museum and the University (GB587/IS.2010.2A).**

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, GB234/6524/34; GB234/6524/56; GB551/PSA-Y/700/3; GB551/PSA-Y/700/16.

temporary bridge over West College Street, onto the building site.<sup>71</sup> The bridge, later transformed into a permanent structure, was a material manifestation of the links between the University and the Museum allowing staff, students, and knowledge to flow back and forth between the substantially private spaces of the University and the open and accessible space of the Museum, thereby bridging between the educated elites and the working classes. As the Prince said, ‘your Museum will not be a mere receptacle of curiosities to excite the wonder to stir the interest of casual visitors, but that by its immediate connection with the University, it will afford the means of supplying the student with practical illustrations of what he has been taught in his class-room’.<sup>72</sup>

The decision to build in phases solved the problem of accommodation for the collections already made. The first phase of construction left the tenements in Argyle Square intact and the majority of these buildings were converted into display space whilst: ‘The remaining attic floor, will afford ample room for storing such specimens as cannot be shewn [*sic*]’ (Figure 3.10).<sup>73</sup> The existing buildings provided also the Museum’s office and residential accommodation for Archer, the Curator, and the porter.<sup>74</sup> The creation of this new temporary museum enabled existing collections to be decanted from the Hospital and Chapel so that these buildings could be demolished to allow the construction of the first phase of the bespoke museum. It was in the temporary accommodation of Argyle Square that the Industrial Museum of Scotland first opened to the

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<sup>71</sup> *Scotsman* (1861d), 2.

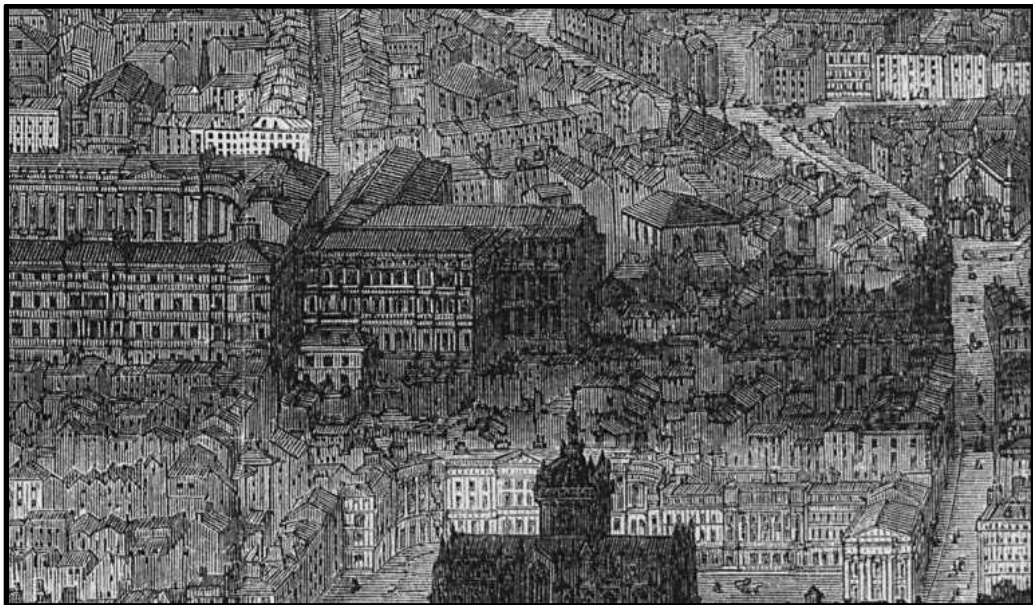
<sup>72</sup> *Scotsman* (1861b), 3.

<sup>73</sup> GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 13 June 1861, 182-185.

<sup>74</sup> GB234/E885/24, ‘Case for the Commissioners of H M Works & for the opinion of council, January 1863’.

public. It was open on Saturdays from May 1862: Wednesday opening was introduced two months later.<sup>75</sup>

Phase one of the bespoke building was opened by Prince Alfred on 19 May 1866 (Figures 3.10 and 3.11). As with the previous ceremonial, the event highlighted the Museum's association with Royalty and with the University, the Prince being awarded an honorary degree before being escorted across the now permanent bridge into the Museum.<sup>76</sup>



**Figure 3.11.** Detail from a panorama of Edinburgh by J. Sulman, 1868, showing the bespoke Museum with the temporary display halls and Museum's offices in the buildings on Argyle Square (Supplement to *Illustrated London News*, 18 July 1868).

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<sup>75</sup> Archer (1862a); (1863), 279.

<sup>76</sup> *Scotsman* (1866), 6.



**Figure 3.12. The Great Hall, before 1875, looking west. The photograph shows the temporary west wall which was removed when the Hall was completed in 1875 (GB587/IS.2009.1).**

As Wilson and Allman had suggested, the juxtaposition with the University was instrumental in dictating the disposition of the collections within the new building; particularly the allocation of its eastern portion to natural history. Other practicalities also dictated the arrangement of the displays. Large and bulky specimens were confined to the ground floors (Figure 3.12). The limited display space provided by the first phase required that most of the industrial collections remained in the cramped domestic-scale buildings of Argyle Square which severely constrained Archer's ability to construct the displays in any satisfactory classification. Galletly noted the relationship between objects, curatorial practice and space:

The classification which Professor Archer has adopted for the Industrial Department is to a considerable extent provisional. In a collection to which it is still desirable to add largely this must of necessity be so. The peculiar construction of the building has also influenced the arrangements, by requiring that all large and heavy objects should be on the ground floor'.<sup>77</sup>

Archer himself commented on a further impediment imposed by the available accommodation:

I have had to keep in mind the necessity for having those objects brought forward and exhibited which are most liable to damage by moth, damp, and other causes; and notwithstanding almost constant changes, these evils cause continued anxiety, as the old and badly situated buildings in which the Museum is now located are most unfavourable to the preservation of our specimens.<sup>78</sup>

Reporting on the opening of the first phase of the new Museum building, *The Newcastle Courant* commented 'the collection, large as it is, cannot be said to have attained anything like the dimensions suitable to a real National Museum of Scotland', whilst the *Scotsman* called it 'a fragment of the building' and pressed for its completion.<sup>79</sup> Shortage of funding delayed further building works and caused tension between the Office of Works and DSA over such matters as which should meet the costs of temporarily re-housing the collections while a new phase of the Museum constructed – the Office even suggested that the clearing of the Argyle Square site begin with the collections *in situ*.<sup>80</sup> A second phase, eventually opened on 15 January 1875. It included the main entrance, setting the Museum within the architectural context of the newly-developed broad thoroughfare named Chambers Street, itself part of the regeneration and reconfiguration of the Old Town embodied in the *Edinburgh City Improvement*

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<sup>77</sup> Galletly (1869), v.

<sup>78</sup> Archer (1863), 282.

<sup>79</sup> *Scotsman* (1866); *Newcastle Courant* (1866).

<sup>80</sup> GB37/ED84/36(1872), 83, minute of 10 April 1869.

*Act* (1867).<sup>81</sup> This phase not only provided further display spaces but also a refreshment room and basement kitchen, and workshops and offices.<sup>82</sup>

Delays in completing Fowke and Matheson's building, its third phase, caused some quarters of Scottish opinion to feel aggrieved that the country was being accorded subaltern status. One commentator observed that whilst there was an Irish Office of Works, 'Scotch public buildings are under the control of the English Office of Works, which grudges every penny spent upon them'.<sup>83</sup> Matters of public economy prompted competition for space within the final phase of the Fowke and Matheson building. It was suggested that both the 'Life School and other Art classes now under the Board of Manufactures' and the Museum of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland be accommodated in the new wing.<sup>84</sup> These suggestions, attempts to resolve problems over the future use of the Royal Institution building in which both were then housed, represented different ways in which the collections of the Museum were valued; the first sought to associate them with the formal teaching of art, the latter to associate primarily Scottish collections with those from elsewhere in the world. Both schemes faltered and on completion in 1888, the wing was occupied by the Museum and the collections of the Geological Survey of Scotland.

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<sup>81</sup> Gifford, McWilliam & Walker (1984).

<sup>82</sup> *Scotsman* (1874a).

<sup>83</sup> *Scotsman* (1881).

<sup>84</sup> *Scotsman* (1882); Science and Art Department, (1884), 155, minute of 5 April 1882.



**Figure 3.13. Contemporary images of the setting of the Museum. A) Painting by David Cousin, with figures by Sam Bough, exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy in 1871. It shows the view eastward along an imagined new thoroughfare lined with other prestigious buildings. The Museum, on the right, is depicted in its imagined completed state. (NMSA 1924.630). B) Photograph by Archibald Burns, taken January or February 1871, westward along North College Street and, beyond the horse-drawn vehicle, along the north side of Argyle Square. The north façade of the first phase of the Museum, facing onto Argyle Square, is obscured by the University building which frames the left side of the composition (NLS Phot.la.2).**

### ***3.6 Location and status***

As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, the building, as imagined and as materialised, was itself part of the display. The illustrations published at the time of the laying of the foundation stone in 1866 (and a copy of one of which was encapsulated in a sealed glass jar within the stone itself) depicted the completed building and located it within an expansive open space, a place of fashionable promenade (see Frontispiece).<sup>85</sup> This imaginative geography was at odds with the building's location in the densely-populated slums of Edinburgh's Old Town. A decade later David Cousin exhibited another imaginative geography elaborating what the Museum's setting could become (Figure 3.13A). A photograph taken by Archibald Burns in the same year the painting was exhibited shows the empirical setting to be rather different, the Museum fronting onto the narrow muddy lane which formed the north of Argyle Square (Figure 3.13B). This location was considered by some inappropriate for the effective display of public collections:

The front is to the north, and the sunshine cannot play amongst the pretty rows of red sandstone columns nor light up the pale grey of the structure. It was at one time proposed to place the Scottish National Memorial to the Prince consort in front of the building he had founded, but it was seen to be a cruelty to keep even a statue for ever in the cold shade.<sup>86</sup>

However, the reporter noted that there were plans for a 'wide handsome street in front of the Museum'. The construction of Chambers Street in the mid-1870s 'relocated' the Museum as a vital architectural element of a broad fashionable thoroughfare. The new street, hushed into reverential silence by being surfaced

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<sup>85</sup> *Illustrated London News* (1861); Fowke (1862a; b).

<sup>86</sup> *Times* (1866).

with wooden sets, gave a vista of the Museum's façade with its broad flight of stone steps leading to the entrance.<sup>87</sup>

### ***3.7 Repositioning the Museum for a new century***

Fowke and Matheson's building, completed in 1888, provided a building 395 feet by 190 feet (approx. 120 by 58m), with a total floor area of 158,970 square feet (14,769m<sup>2</sup>) configured to include 118,500 square feet (11,009m<sup>2</sup>) of display space, 36,020 square feet (3,346m<sup>2</sup>) of basement stores, 3,500 square feet (325m<sup>2</sup>) of offices, 2,370 square feet (220m<sup>2</sup>) of workshops, and 690 square feet (64m<sup>2</sup>) of lavatories.<sup>88</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the Museum had outgrown even this accommodation and additional building was being planned. The collections were increasing rapidly and new styles of display required more, and different kinds of space (see Chapter 6). Elements of the Scottish press again championed the case for the Museum's expansion as a matter of national prestige: 'Scotland in the matter of grants for science and art has been most shabbily treated...If the Museum is to live up to its title, a much larger grant will be required, and perhaps at no distant date the premises will require to be extended in the direction of Lindsay Place'.<sup>89</sup>

By 1907, with the number of visitors to the Museum was approaching half a million a year, which was 'more than half the average attendance for the last five years at the British Museum and equals the attendance at the British Museum (Natural History)', SED argued that further development of the

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<sup>87</sup> Grant (1882), 274.

<sup>88</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897a).

<sup>89</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News* (1904).

‘usefulness’ of the Museum was dependent on expansion of its premises.<sup>90</sup> In

1908 its Secretary wrote:

It is unnecessary to remind the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty’s Treasury that My Lords did not put forward the proposal for an extension of the Museum building until they were convinced that the provision of additional accommodation was urgently required, and they desire to point out that delay must now prove seriously detrimental to the scheme of technical and scientific education which they are bringing into operation in Scotland. They regard the Museum as an essential part of this scheme, and they cannot rest satisfied until, both as regards accommodation and equipment, it is made efficient for their purposes.<sup>91</sup>

Demolition of the existing property to the immediate south would rid the Museum of a threat caused by its neighbours – buildings adjacent to the south wall were being used to store paint, spirits and other flammable materials.<sup>92</sup>

Discussion of extensions to the building was couched in terms of protection from fire and of competition for Treasury funding with other parts of the United Kingdom: ‘No adequate excuse, no just or reasonable cause, can be advanced on behalf of the Treasury for turning a deaf ear to the claim of Scotland in this matter. Government aid flows freely towards London and Dublin institutions of the kind’.<sup>93</sup> *The Scotsman* claimed that, in the previous ten years, investment in museum building projects in England had been £550,597 and in Ireland £7,837, whilst Scotland had received just £1,274.<sup>94</sup> There were calls for more equitable treatment for Scotland:

Unless strenuous effort is made by Scottish Members of Parliament and others seeing that justice is done to Scotland in this matter the Treasury may still let the subject sleep for another twenty years. This policy on the part of the Treasury towards Scotland is all the more unjustifiable when one remembers the huge sums which have been spent in recent years on the London Museums. It is quite right that the London Museums should be kept in an efficient state; they are at the centre of Empire, and deserve every consideration. But this is no reason why a Museum of the standing of the Royal Scottish, doing useful work, which is visited by over half a million of [*sic*] people every year

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<sup>90</sup> GB234/MW5/80, Smithers to Treasury, 22 June 1907; Dobbie (1908), 2 [858].

<sup>91</sup> GB234/MW5/80, Todd to Treasury, 4 December 1908.

<sup>92</sup> *Hansard* (1907); Dobbie (1909).

<sup>93</sup> *Scotsman* (1908a).

<sup>94</sup> *Scotsman* (1909b).

from all parts of the country, including many from the North of England, should be starved, and that every penny required for it should be grudged from the public purse.<sup>95</sup>

This article drew attention to the fact that, in addition to attracting tourists, the Museum was a resource for local citizens: ‘the building in Chambers Street, though a national and State-supported institution, has also a local and municipal value. It is one of the attractions – one of the assets – of Edinburgh’. Other articles in *The Scotsman* placed the calls for further expansion in the context of discourses on formal education: ‘Without this the Department [SED] cannot hope to obtain from the Museum the assistance in carrying out their schemes of education which such an institution, if more fully developed, could afford’.<sup>96</sup> One editorial asserted:

It has been obvious to visitors that there is not room to display effectively the splendid specimens which are crowded together in the cramped space of the present building. It has been still more apparent to students that the facilities for study which are found in all the newer museums are wanting in the Chambers Street building. There is no opportunity for quiet observation, no lecture-room or study, no escape from the noise and distractions created by the ordinary visitors perambulating the floors or galleries.<sup>97</sup>

Even as *The Scotsman* was running such articles, the Government was acquiring the properties between the Museum’s southern wall and Lothian Street, from West College Street in the east to Brighton Street in the west, with a view to extending the Museum<sup>98</sup> – the property included the portion of the tenement in which Charles Darwin had lodged whilst a student and that section of the city’s old defensive wall, the Flodden Wall, which had formed the southern boundary

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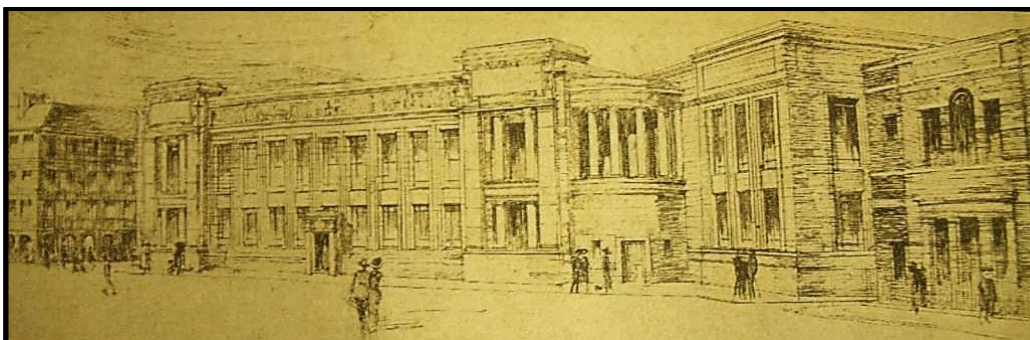
<sup>95</sup> *Scotsman* (1909a).

<sup>96</sup> *Scotsman* (1908b).

<sup>97</sup> *Scotsman* (1909b).

<sup>98</sup> GB234/RHP141661/1, ‘Property acquired for extension in Lothian Street and West College Street’, 20 May 1909; GB234/RHP 141661/4 ‘Key plan of property to be demolished’, 7 June 1909; GB234/MW5/79, 80, 82, 89. See also Select Committee (1913); *Royal Scottish Museum (Extension) Act, 1912*.

to the plot developed by Fowke and Matheson.<sup>99</sup> Not until 1910, however, was William Thomas Oldrieve, Principal Architect of the Board of Works for Scotland, instructed to draw up plans for an extension which would ‘add dignity to the internal appearance of the building, and provide greatly needed space for the proper display of the many interesting and ever increasing specimens with which the officials have to deal’.<sup>100</sup>



**Figure 3.14. An imaginative geography of the Museum: an artist's impression of Oldrieve's proposed south façade onto Lothian Street (*Scotsman*, 1914).**

Key to the proposal was the demolition of the stack of halls south of the centre of the Main Hall and in its place ‘provide upon an axis running at right angles to the present great hall, lying east to west, another large hall running south, so that from the main entrance an imposing vista will meet the eye of the visitor’ and

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<sup>99</sup> On Darwin's residence, see *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (1888); Browne (1996); Thomson (2009). On the Flodden wall, see Bryce (1910); Finlay, (1934); Cruikshank, (2010); Robertson (2010).

<sup>100</sup> The quotation is from *Glasgow Herald* (1913). For further details of the proposed extension, see *Scotsman* (1913a). For plans of proposed extension, see GB234/MW5/113; GB234/RHP141634/1-5; GB234/RHP 141635/1-5; GB234/RHP141636; GB234/RHP141639-41; GB234/RHP142864-70.

also to create ‘an imposing frontage onto Lothian Street’ (Figure 3.14).<sup>101</sup> In addition to display space for the Museum’s own collections the extension was to include an administration block, a lecture theatre and a temporary exhibition hall – temporary exhibitions were, for Martin, a vital component of his strategy to attract new audiences.<sup>102</sup> Work on the administration block commenced in 1912 but, amidst a deteriorating economic climate, the Secretary of the Office of Works intimated to Martin, ‘it must be understood that further extension must be regarded only as a future and somewhat remote contingency’.<sup>103</sup> The matter of inequitable funding for Museum was again raised in Parliament:

The Royal Scottish Museum, as I know from my own official experience, has been almost starved by niggardly Governments. For many years we had the greatest difficulty in obtaining funds, and it was only by using all our powers of persuasion that we were able to attain even a fair state of efficiency. We were always prevented by a hard-hearted Office of Works, and a still harder-hearted Chancellor of the Exchequer, from extending the museum.<sup>104</sup>

Martin protested that lack of space was hampering the operation of the Museum: ‘I am speaking not of a reasonable provision for the future, but of present and compelling demands when I say that all sections of the Museum are suffering from lack of space’.<sup>105</sup> His comment was made amidst his concerns that the University also had designs on the site: ‘It is regretted that there is no immediate hope of the entire extension being treated as a single necessity and building operations carried on without arrest from the University along the Lothian Street frontage’.<sup>106</sup> *The Scotsman* bemoaned that ‘The prevailing

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<sup>101</sup> *Scotsman* (1911a).

<sup>102</sup> Martin (1912), 11.

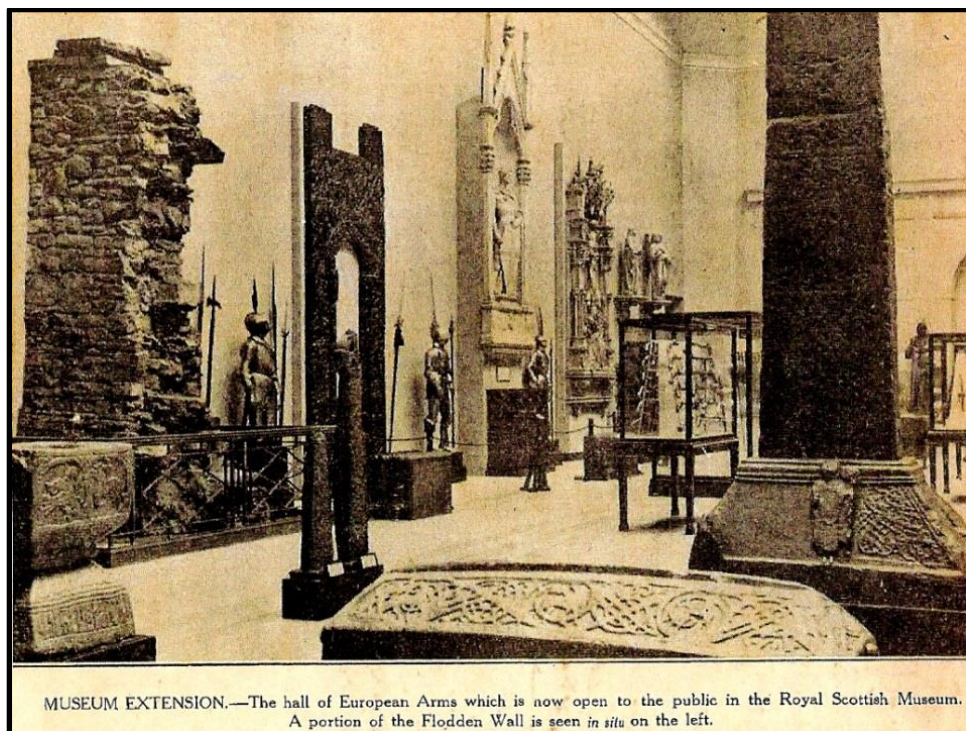
<sup>103</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 8 March 1912, pp. 223-228.

<sup>104</sup> *Hansard* (1912).

<sup>105</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 8 March 1912, pp. 223-228.

<sup>106</sup> Martin (1915), 3.

congestion, despite the utmost administrative ingenuity, had reached a point at which it made impossible the proper functions of the Museum'.<sup>107</sup> Despite this, Oldrieve's full plan was scaled down and replaced by more modest proposals which excluded the Lothian Street façade, the lecture theatre and the temporary exhibition space. Construction began in 1913.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, the administration block was completed but, following the outbreak of World War I, further construction largely ceased and progressed only slowly during the economic depression of the 1920s.



**Figure 3.15.** A section of the Flodden Wall incorporated into the wall of the new central hall, part of Oldrieve's southward extension, opened in 1929 (*Scotsman*, 1929).

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<sup>107</sup> *Scotsman* (1914).

<sup>108</sup> *Glasgow Herald* (1913); *Scotsman* (1913a).

The extension of the Museum southwards conflicted with the agenda of those who lobbied for the preservation of the Flodden Wall, a potent symbol of Scotland's struggles against its powerful southern neighbour:

As a contemporary memorial of valour and racial determination of character, the Flodden Wall has no equal in any other city in the kingdom; and it is, to the citizens of Edinburgh an historical document of supreme importance. Within recent years large portions of the wall in Drummond Street – undoubtedly part of the original wall of 1513 – has been wantonly sacrificed to the manes of modern utilitarianism; and it is to be hoped that the sections of the wall which still remain to us will now be jealously guarded from further desecration at the hands of our City Fathers.<sup>109</sup>

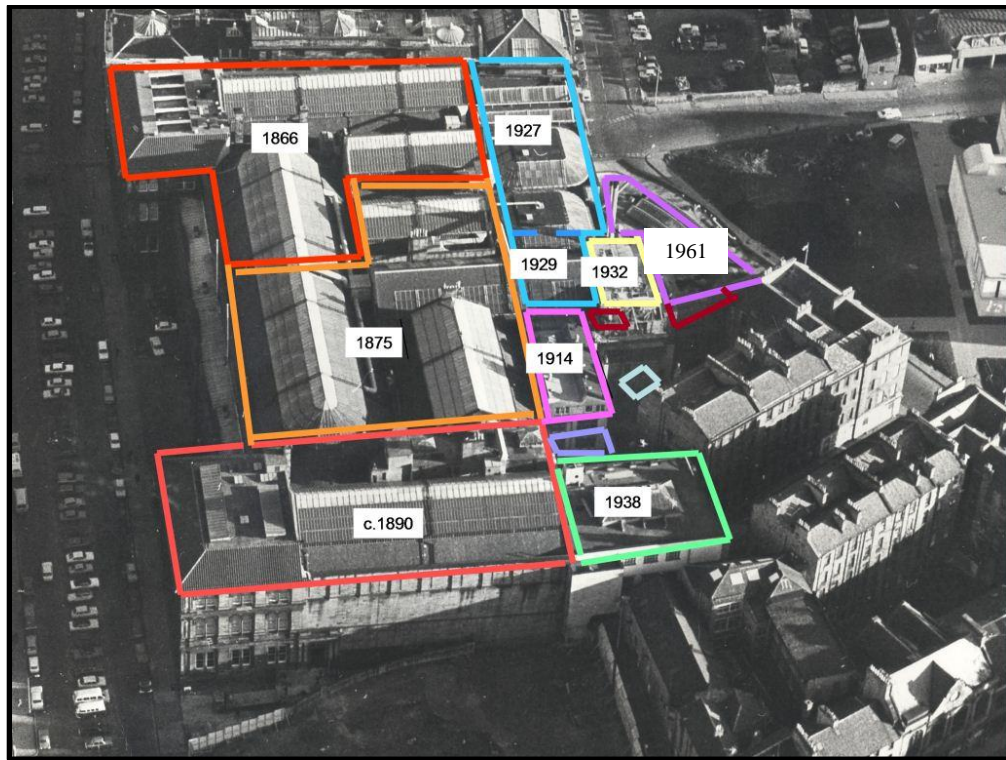


Figure 3.16. Diagrammatic representation of phases of construction of Fowke and Matheson's building, and twentieth-century extensions to it by Oldrieve, Paterson, and, in the 1960s by Sim, superimposed onto an aerial photograph of the Museum *circa.* 1976. (aerial photograph GB587, Plan Chest, [n.n.]; superimposition by the author).

<sup>109</sup> Bryce (1910), 18.

In the end a compromise was reached whereby, although much of the wall was demolished, small sections were preserved *in situ* on either side of the new north-south ‘Main Hall’: ‘the black, weathered stone contrasted strikingly with the white newness of the walls into which they were built’ (Figure 3.15).<sup>110</sup> This hall was the venue for a *conversazione* in October 1923, but it did not open as public display space until September 1929, when it was used for the display of armour and weapons, and of some large architectural objects of which the portions of the Flodden Wall formed part.<sup>111</sup> The other display spaces created in the southern extension opened between 1927 and 1931 (see Figures 3.16 and 3.17).

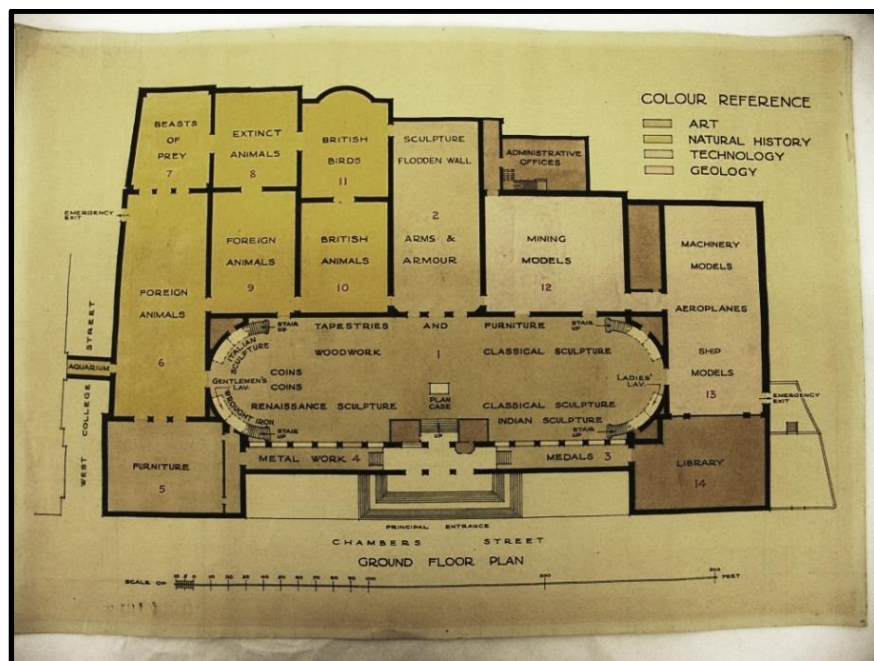


Figure 3.17. Plan of the ground floor *circa* 1929 showing the allocation of display space and the new southern stacks designed by Thomas Oldrieve. The plan was produced as part of the preparation for the three-dimensional plan of the building, the ‘Plan Case’ shown in the plan itself, at the entrance (GB587/IS.2010.28).

<sup>110</sup> *Scotsman* (1923). See also Robertson (2010).

<sup>111</sup> *Scotsman* (1929).

Attempts in the 1920s to revitalise plans to build a block extending to Lothian Street came to naught, although in 1932 a new staircase, the South Stair, was constructed (Figure 3.18). In the mid-1930s, the former Congregational Church at the head of Brighton Street (see Figure 3.6) was demolished so as to extend the west wing (Figures 3.18 and 3.19).<sup>112</sup> By late 1938, however, detailed plans for the lecture theatre and frontage onto Lothian Street were fully developed but the outbreak of war caused their implementation to be postponed (the plans were not realised until 1961). Both Oldrieve's extension and the west-wing extension, designed by John Wilson Paterson, continued Fowke and Matheson's leitmotif of a three-storey galleried stack structure with a central atrium and a glazed roof (although Oldrieve configured the south east stack as halls, the middle floor being used as a study room). New technologies for pouring concrete and concern about fire-safety influenced the design. The substitution of concrete for timber in the roof structure, and in Paterson's extension for the galleries themselves, gave these southern stacks a utilitarian appearance which lacked the delicacy of the Fowke and Matheson portion of the building (Figure 3.19).<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, Paterson's structure, which was completed in 1936, was proclaimed to be an embodiment of modern museum design, including under-floor heating, indirect artificial lighting from up-lighters and 'the latest thing in museum furniture'.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> GB234/RHP42871, 'Edinburgh Royal Scottish Museum 1925'; D.L.M. (1935).

<sup>113</sup> NMS/RMP, McQueen, W. 'Royal Scottish Museum: Documentary Research'. Appendix 1 in Patterson, D. & Hopton, M. [for LDN] 'Royal Museum Conservation Plan' (2nd Draft), April 2004 [\\nms2k\dfs\NMS\Masterplan\RMMP Conservation Management Plan, accessed January 2005]. For plans of extension, see GB234/RHP 42880-84.

<sup>114</sup> *Scotsman* (1938).

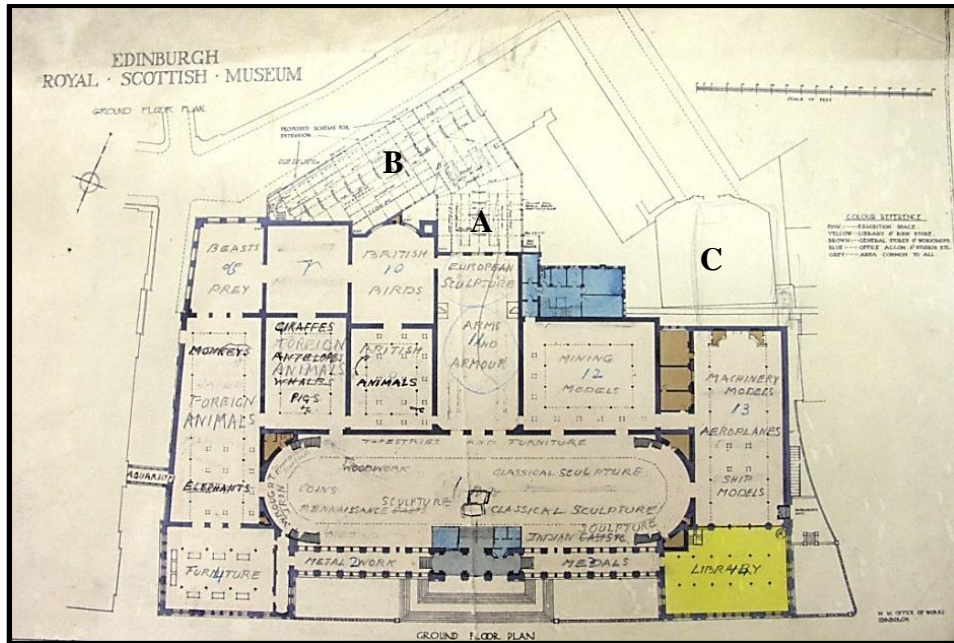
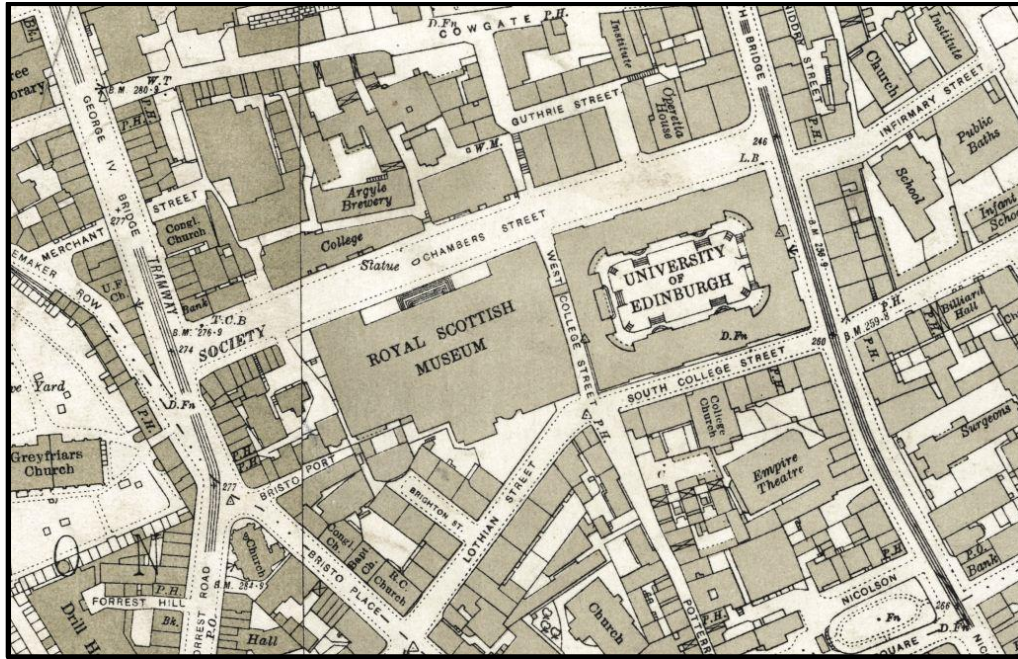


Figure 3.18. Plan showing proposed further southward development following completion of Oldrieve’s extension to include a staircase linking all levels (A) and a block incorporating a lecture theatre (B). The church building at the head of Brighton Street (C) is shown as proposed expansion space. The sections of the Flodden Wall are shown jutting out on either side of the hall allocated to European sculpture and arms and armour (GB587/IS.2010.34).



Figure 3.19. Reinterpreting Fowke and Matheson’s configuration of space in concrete: Paterson’s 1934 southward extension of the west wing, photographed in 1939 (GB587/ ‘Small illustrations of the Museum’, Box 1/ ‘Hall 22?, Oriental Gallery’).



**Figure 3.20. Map showing the Museum and its environs in 1931. A vacant site on the northeast of Lothian Street was earmarked for development of a lecture theatre, whilst Society, the area between Chambers Street and Bristo Port (the western edge of which was Lindsay Place) was viewed as offering further space for expansion. Detail from O.S. County Series 1:2500 map of Midlothian, Sheets 3.7 and 3.8 (NLS).**

Despite extensions being added to its south, the Museum’s authorities had not abandoned ambitions to expand westwards towards Lindsay Place. In 1928 the Treasury scotched proposals for a new Edinburgh Sherriff Court be built on the site to the west on the grounds that ‘if and when the Royal Scottish Museum requires to be extended, the extension can only be in that direction’.<sup>115</sup> Figure 3.20 shows the Museum in 1931 in relation to the surrounding areas into which it might expand. Plans to further extend the building, however, were interrupted by World War II. During the First World War, despite a government directive to close national museums, the Museum had remained open for the duration.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> *Evening News* (1928).

<sup>116</sup> Committee on Public Retrenchment (1916); *Scotsman* (1916a; b).

However, by 1939 there was concern that its glass roof made it particularly vulnerable in the event aerial bombardment. As war loomed plans to evacuate objects were drawn up and implemented. The Museum closed to the public on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September<sup>7</sup>: war was declared the following day.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

It has not been my intention to write a history of the Museum *per se*. Yet the lack of any overarching narrative of the Museum has necessitated an attempt to situate its practices in time and space. To use Reginald Golledge's terms, it has been necessary to present some observations 'of the spaces' of the Museum as a prelude to constructing knowledge 'about the nature' of the Museum.<sup>117</sup> Adopting a 'biography of things' approach, examining the building as a museum (Museum) object, the chapter has presented an outline of the genealogy, morphology and development of the 'walled-in space' which contained, and was configured by, suites of practices.<sup>118</sup> It has introduced something of 'the intimate relationship between content and container', which receive scrutiny in the chapters which follow.<sup>119</sup> Examination of the the materiality of the Museum has brought into view a multiplicity of sites in which the 'discourse of place' took place, bringing to the fore the Museum's place in the complex of museums, schools, collections and administrative apparatus of South Kensington, and later, as an element of the Whitehall-based SED. Further the examination of the siting of the Museum provides a vivid illustration of what, for Diarmid Finnegan, was 'a "politics of location", connecting science with wider civic and national

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<sup>117</sup> Golledge (2002), 1.

<sup>118</sup> Kopytoff (1986); MacLeod (2012).

<sup>119</sup> Giebelhausen (2006), 223.

concerns’ and of how ‘The physical location of museum buildings often announced the significance of scientific knowledge for national life and local society’.<sup>120</sup>

The chapter has also demonstrated the relationship, often one of constraint, between the materiality of building and the intentions and aspirations of the Director, his superiors and his staff. It has provided too an illustration of how, as noted by Mackenzie, Whitehead and others, although buildings embody ideologies, these were tempered by material practicalities – availability of sites, funds, pre-existing material structures, available technologies – as well as matters of political will.<sup>121</sup> Whilst such factors change over time, past decisions over the architectural structure persist to inform and constrain future actions. As has been shown, the size and form of the building influenced the kinds of objects that it could contain, thereby imposing constraints on the Museum’s practices. Past construction also influenced the form of additions and modifications to the building. This is evident particularly in Fowke and Matheson’s leitmotif of a three-storey stacked galleried structure influencing the form of further additions to the building, even though developments in material sciences, particularly the technologies of artificial lighting and the use of concrete, offered new possibilities for configuring space. As will be shown in Chapter 6, the phased expansion of the building meant that objects in the collections were subject to material relocation and were in a continual state of flux, subject to material and

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<sup>120</sup> Finnegan (2008), 375. For discussion of the politics of location, see also Forgan (1998); (1999); Spary (2000); Yanni (2005).

<sup>121</sup> Mackenzie (2009), 6; Whitehead (2009), 38-41.

epistemic re-arrangement as new spaces and new disciplinary formations were made available.

In summary, the chapter has demonstrated the relationships between space, objects and curatorial practice, relationships discussed by Alberti for UK museums generally, which are addressed further in the chapters which follow.<sup>122</sup> Before turning to the practices of the Museum, however, in the next chapter I wish to continue the theme of biography and to focus upon the people who worked in the building and whose labours (together with the actions of the visitors, considered in Chapter 8) animated the ‘walled-in space’ as a site and locus of active process.

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<sup>122</sup> Alberti (2011a).



## STAFFING: PEOPLE, AUTHORITY AND SITES

“museum” has no specific reference to a building or a collection: it is something that has been created by a special type of human being.<sup>1</sup>

### *4.1 Introduction*

This chapter turns the focus away from the building to the people who worked there, whether as staff, contractors, or volunteers, and who (along with the visitors – see Chapter 8 – and, as discussed in the previous chapter, others working beyond the material spaces of the Museum) enacted those practices of space which constitute the Museum as place. As the material size of the building increased to accommodate the growing collections and views of the role of the Museum changed, the numbers of staff increased. Associated with this there was an increasing division of labour and the partitioning of roles within different material and epistemological spaces of work.

This chapter address the changes in the numbers, roles and status of those who worked in the Museum. It engages with matters of expertise, authority, and credibility, both of individuals, of categories of staff, and of the Museum as an institution. In particular, the chapter addresses the questions: Who worked in the Museum? From where, and how, did the Museum recruit its staff? What expertise and authority was sought, and where and how was this constructed?

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<sup>1</sup> Duggan (1957), 210.

Addressing these questions brings into view a variety of people and a range of activities – securing, administering, directing, curating, printing, painting, orientating, cleaning, vending, to name a few – otherwise missed by the broad categorisation of collecting, displaying, educating and visiting. Further, it reveals the processes of staffing – recruiting, training, disciplining, and alike – and the trajectories by which individuals entered and moved through the material and metaphorical spaces of the Museum.

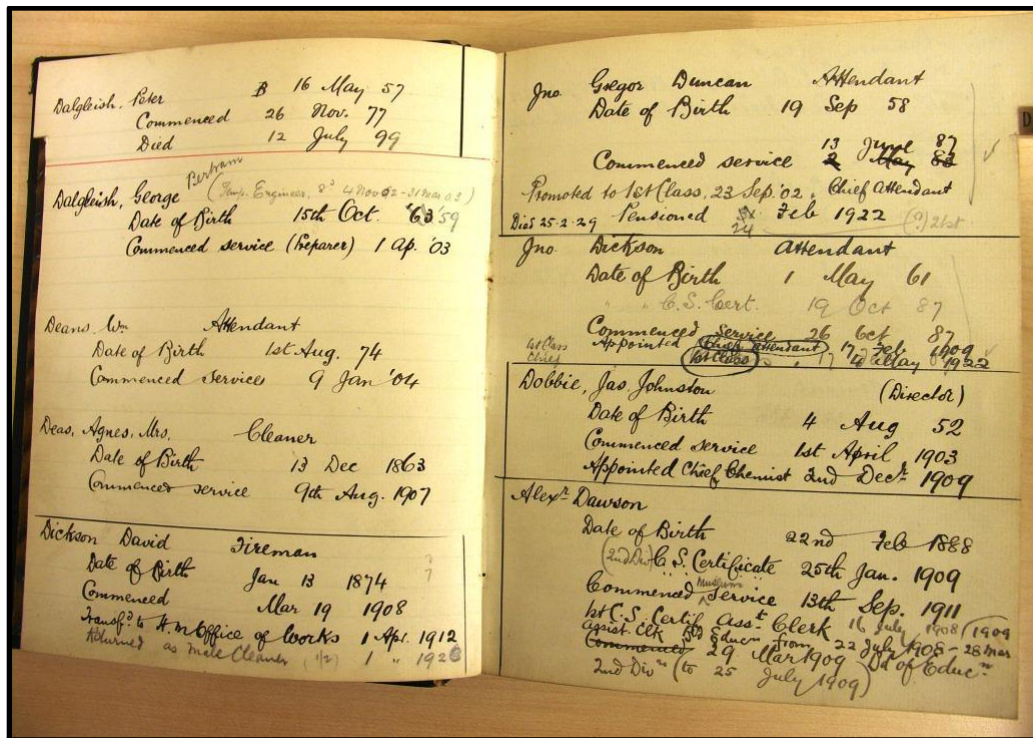


Figure 4.1. The Royal Scottish Museum Staff Register. Annotations show that this undated document was in use for much of the twentieth century (GB587/103808).

The primary sources for an historical geography of staffing include a Staff Register (Figure 4.1) and address lists, letter books, and a few staff photographs.

Floor plans and descriptions of the building showing the allocation of space for particular jobs or job categories – a smithy, carpenters’ workshop, mechanical workshops, photographic studio and printing shop, offices, kitchen, and beer cellar – suggest something of the range of activities undertaken. ‘General Instructions’, issued in 1912 to put the staff in their place (see Chapter 1), outlined the authorities and responsibilities of each grade, and provides further evidence of the relationship between people, activity and space.<sup>2</sup> Those who worked in the Museum have left their mark in multiple ways, in their handwriting in ledgers, notebooks and labels, in the angle of entomological pins, in the patina of the floors and balustrades that they scrubbed and polished, in their skills embodied in the engineering models or taxidermy they made, or the collections they rearranged. Some museum fittings provided material evidence of the activities of some staff. Notable among these was a time-clock (Figure 4.2) which marked one of the waypoints on the beat patrolled by the security staff and was part of the technology for surveillance of those staff who themselves performed process of surveillance of objects and visitors. Graffiti on a window casement brought into view some of the people whose labour translated Fowke and Matheson’s plans into a material presence (Figure 4.3). The records and publications of DSA, SED and of the Civil Service Commission, are a source of information on the recruitment and the employment practices operated, whilst reminiscences of visitor engagement with staff, considered more fully in Chapter 8, provide a further source on the role of the people employed.

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<sup>2</sup> GB587/ID 126015.



**Figure 4.2. Time-clock in south east basement corridor (photograph by the author, 8 March 2005).**



**Figure 4.3. Graffito, 'Corect lekness of Alec Mckinage 1863', on a window casement, ground floor in the east pavilion revealed and subsequently obliterated during the Royal Museum Project (photograph by the author, April 2008).**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Number of posts</b>
Director	1
Keeper/Assistant Keeper	9
Librarian	1
Clerk	2
Typist	2
Messenger	1
Chief Attendant	4
Attendant	14
Superintendent of Patrols	1
Chief Patrols	2
Patrols	17
Technical Assistant (1 <sup>st</sup> class)	3
Technical Assistant (2 <sup>nd</sup> class)	3
Preparer	7
Storeman	1
Housekeeper	1
Ladies' Waiting-room Attendant	1
Cleaner (male)	13
Cleaner (female)	17

**Table 4.1. Staff complement of the Royal Scottish Museum ('Royal Scottish Museum: Names and Addresses', 1939 (NMS IS 2009.36).**

When the Museum was founded, its initial allocation of personnel comprised a Director and eight staff: in the Industrial Museum there were posts of Assistant Chemist, Resident Assistant, and Porter. The Natural History Museum had a Regius Keeper, who was also Professor of Natural History in the University, an Assistant Conservator, and three Museum Assistants.<sup>3</sup> An undated photograph, probably taken in about 1885, shows the Curator, Alexander

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<sup>3</sup> Wilson & Allman (1858).



- 1 Thomas Tyrie, Head Porter
- 2 William McLeod, Constable
- 3 John Innes, Constable
- 4 William Hay, Attendant (b. 23 Oct 1845. Joined staff in 1874 as Attendant, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, and was appointed Head Porter in 1894. Retired 1910)
- 5 John Walker, Foreman of workshops (b. 21 Oct 1830. Joined staff in 1868. Resigned 1899)
- 6 John Douglas, Attendant
- 7 [?]
- 8 W. Henry, Attendant
- 9 William Brown, Attendant (b. 11 June 1848. Joined staff as Attendant 2<sup>nd</sup> Class 1874, Promoted 1<sup>st</sup> Class 1891. Retired 1905)
- 10 Peter Dalgleish, Attendant (b. 16 May 1857. Joined staff 1877. Died July 1899)
- 11 William Samuel, Attendant (b. 14 January 1839. Joined staff 1866. Retired 1899)
- 12 Alex. Coutie, Joiner, contractor
- 13 John McLeod, Constable
- 14 Charles Norman Boswell Muston, Librarian (b. 12 March 1848. Joined staff 1874. Appointed Assistant Keeper 1901. Died 1909)
- 15 [?]
- 16 Sergeant Rae
- 17 Salvo Lomb Hutchieson, Printer (b. 29 Aug. 1845. Joined staff 1875, appointed Preparer 1903. Retired 1915)
- 18 Walter Clark, Art and Ethnography Department (b. 4 Sept 1847. Joined staff 1869. Appointed Assistant Keeper 1901. Retired 1912)
- 19 Walter Craig, Attendant (b. 12 April 1845. Joined staff 1874. Appointed Attendant 1<sup>st</sup> Class 1888. Retired 1910)
- 20 William Weddle [Alex Weddell], Gas attendant (b. 26 Jan 1840. Joined staff 1870. Appointed Preparer 1903. Died 1903)
- 21 J Stoke, Natural History Department
- 22 Donald Mackenzie, Attendant (b. 13 Dec 1845. Joined staff 1874. Promoted Attendant 1<sup>st</sup> Class 1888. Retired 1910)
- 23 James Alexander, Attendant
- 24 Henry Kinninmont Brown, Art Preparer (b. 12 Oct 1847. Joined staff as Attendant 1873. Appointed Chief Art Preparer 1903).
- 25 Alexander Galletly, Curator (b. 15 Oct 1829. Joined staff 1855 as Resident Attendant. Died 1894)
- 26 Robert Coates [Coats], Engineer (b. 13 Dec 1854. Joined staff 1876. Appointed Foreman of Workshop 1899. Transferred to South Kensington Feb 1893. Re-transferred to Edinburgh as Attendant Mar 1893.
- 27 David Hislop [Hyslop], Attendant (b. 3 Feb 1844. Joined staff 1867 as Attendant 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. Promoted 1st Class 1881, Retired 1909)
- 28 William Lawson, Fireman
- 29 Donald Knight, Natural History Preparer (b. 1 May 1843. Joined staff as Technical Assistant 1880. Appointed Preparer 1903. Resigned 1906)
- 30 John Gibson, Natural History Department
- 31 George Elsworth, Attendant
- 32 James Lyons, Constable
- 33 Henry Morgan, Attendant
- 34 J Smith
- 35 David Milne

**Figure 4.4. The staff, exclusive of the Assistants, Keepers and Director, assembled in the Great Hall, circa 1885 (NMS(NH)/153, Arthur S. Clarke's papers).**

Galletly, and twenty nine of the staff (Figure 4.4).<sup>4</sup> It does not include the Director, the Keeper of Natural History, the Assistants or the Cleaners, but does show seven of the police officers who patrolled the Museum. The descriptive titles in the key to this photograph indicate the diversity of roles conducted to enact the Museum at that time. By 1939 the Museum's staff numbered 100 persons (Table 4.1).

#### ***4.2 Establishment matters: where were recruitments made?***

In 1907 Dobbie described the Museum's complement thus:

Besides our staff of C. Servt<sup>s</sup> we employ regularly at the Mus<sup>m</sup>. 11 preparers, 2 firemen, 1 storeman, 1 housemaid, 1 ladies' W. R. [wash room] Attend<sup>t</sup>, 12 cleaners, together with 1 Inspector of Police and 11 constables hired fr. The Corp<sup>n</sup> of Edinb. We have also usually at the premises from 6 to 9 persons employ<sup>d</sup> directly by us & engaged in rendering techn<sup>l</sup>. or prof<sup>l</sup>. Ass<sup>ce</sup>. of a temporary character.<sup>5</sup>

Five years later, in the context of concern about the security of the collections, Alexander Galt, the Keeper of the Technological Department, identified four categories of workers who arrived and commenced their duties before 'the staff' arrives:

- a) The women cleaners come in every week day from 6 to 10 am, and on Mondays and Thursdays from 5 to 9 pm, also two or three on Saturdays from 1 to 4 and one on Saturdays from 10 to 11 pm...
- b) Office of Works staff – 2 joiners, 1 labourer, 1 plumber, 1 electrician. These come in at 6.40 am and many are working in different parts of the building. Their numbers are reinforced or diminished without notice to us as to where they may be working or what they are doing. We have no control over these men...
- c) Contractors' men employed by the Office of Works, such as painters, tile layers, window cleaners, chimney sweeps. These men come at 6.30 am and wait at the door till the Office of Works foreman arrives...
- d) Contractors' men employed by the Museum, such as J & T Scott, Coutie, Dickson & Walker, Scott Wallace & Co. These men were formerly allowed in between 6 and 9 am, but of late it has been customary to arrange that they do not come till 9 or 10 am.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> NMS(NH)/153, undated photograph with traced overlay and legend identifying sitters, Arthur Clark's files.

<sup>5</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 29 April 1907, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> NMS(T)/Letter-book 10, Memorandum 'Precautions for safety of exhibits', 7 August 1912.

Both Dobbie's and Galt's listing constructed taxonomies of the staff: civil servants, non-civil servants, external contractors and casual employees. The Civil Servants were the senior staff, the 'officers of the museum', whose recruitment and conditions of employment were regulated through the United Kingdom-wide recruitment and superannuation protocols of the Civil Service Commissioners. A minute, dated February 1860, outlined the Commissioners' role:

SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT, Rules for APPOINTMENT and REMUNERATION of all persons in the, and establishments connected therewith. I. Certificate of AGE and HEALTH must be obtained from Civil Service Commissioners. II. Secretary, Assistant Secretary, General Superintendent, Inspector General for Art, Architect and Engineer, Inspectors, Scientific Superintendents and Keepers, Directors of Geological Museum, of Geological Survey, Professors, Directors of Industrial Museum of Scotland, and Museum of Irish Industry, may be appointed at ANY AGE and WITHOUT EXAMINATION by Civil Service Commissioners. III. Chief Clerk, Deputy General Superintendent, Assistant Keepers, Occasional Examiners, Secretarial Clerks, other Clerks, Accountant, Book-keeper, Storekeeper, Curator and Librarian Of Geological Museum. Keeper of Mining Records, Assistant Curators, Geological Surveyors and Assistants, must have served ON PROBATION at least six months, must be between 18 and 25 years of AGE except in specified cases, and must have obtained CERTIFICATES from Civil Service Commissioners in certain prescribed subjects. IV. Writing clerks, messengers, cleaners, skilled artisans, mechanics and labourers, must have served six months ON PROBATION, and except the artisans, &c. obtain a CERTIFICATE from Civil Service Commissioners in certain prescribed subjects. PAYMENT will be made as far as possible by the day; officers who have served for ten years and obliged to retire by reason of ill-health or abolition of office will be recommended for SUPERANNUATION.<sup>7</sup>

The procedures for filling vacancies in posts such as Preparer, Artisan, and Cleaner, required that recruitment and appointments were subject to approval by the administering Department (DSA and later SED), but were not governed by the regulations of the Civil Service Commission: 'the Director may fill vacancies in any of these classes, thereafter reporting the particulars to the Department'. Attendant posts were 'usually filled by nomination, subject to a qualifying examination only, but may be offered for competition at the digression

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<sup>7</sup> GB37/ED84/35(1864), 271, minute of 16 February 1860.

of the head of Department which has the right to nomination'.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, the regulations governing appointment of Attendants were amended so as to give preferential treatment to ex-military personnel: 'Candidates must be under thirty-five years of age except in the case of ex-Service man. A second class army education certificate is accepted by the Civil Service Commissioners as dispensing with an examination'.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the Commissioners, the Treasury also exercised control over appointments to DSA and later to SED, and hence to the Museum. For instance, in 1862, in response to Archer's request for additional staff, DSA minuted: 'Request sanction of Treasury for an additional attendant at 39*l.* and a housemaid at 25*l.* per year' and in 1876 it was noted that: 'Proposed engagement of army pensioner as Temporary Messenger *vice* Attendant transferred to Philadelphia Exhibition. "Agree, if authorised by Treasury"'.<sup>10</sup> As shown in what follows, approval of the Department was required also for the appointment of casual staff employed under that portion of the budget, or Vote, allocated for 'occasional assistance' or 'professional assistance'. Thus the Museum was enmeshed in a complex geography of recruitment practices conducted in distributed sites.

As Dobbie's outline of the complement indicated, some roles within the Museum were undertaken by personnel employed by outside agencies. Principal among these during his tenure as Director were police officers and staff of the

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<sup>8</sup> Civil Service Commission (1887), viii.

<sup>9</sup> GB587/ID 126015, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> GB37/ED84/35(1864), 378, minute of 14 March 1862; GB37/ED84/37(1878), 146, minute of 11 January 1876.

Geological Survey, who until 1907 maintained the Survey's collections housed in the Museum, the contractors and Office of Works staff involved in constructing and maintaining the fabric of the building and its fittings, and the Assistant Secretary of SED. At other times in the period 1854-1939 other non-staff included personnel who operated the Refreshment Room and its kitchen and beer cellar, teachers on secondment from the local authority, and volunteers and professional assistants. Despite the diversity of roles of personnel working within the building, for most visitors, the conspicuous public face of the Museum was provided by the security staff.

#### ***4.3 Constables, Watchers, and Patrols***

As noted in the previous chapter, the material architecture of the building played a role in directing, controlling, and regulating the behaviour of visitors. The deployment of uniformed personnel further aimed to control visitors and 'to preserve order in the building'.<sup>11</sup> By using police officers from the local constabularies within its various museums, DSA relied on a force whose uniforms were familiar and conspicuous symbols of authority and command – uniform conveys a double valency, the wearer being simultaneously the subject and the agent of power.<sup>12</sup> Thus the authority of the police extended through the Museum, but did not emanate from it. The city police had protocols, knowledges, and powers which extended beyond the Museum.

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<sup>11</sup> GB587/[n.n.], 'Memorandum regarding the Police in the Museum', 13 March 1897.

<sup>12</sup> Cavallaro & Warwick (1998), 76.

The Museum became one of the city's beats. Initially this was commanded by a Sergeant, but from 1887, and with the opening of the third phase of the building imminent, the role attracted a responsibility allowance and the courtesy rank of Inspector.<sup>13</sup> By 1897, eleven constables were assigned to the Museum and, as Smith noted, there was relatively little turnover of personnel comprising the beat:

As a rule, the same men are kept continuously on this service, and changes are very rarely made except in case of superannuation, misconduct or death... Their duties are to preserve order in the building; to protect the Collections from wilful injury, theft and robbery; to take part in rotation in the monthly inspection by the Museum staff of the fire-extinguishing appliances & apparatus; and at all times, day & night to be specially watchful regarding fire.<sup>14</sup>

Annotations to 'General Instructions' outlined the Inspector's accountability as it was defined by 1916: 'In matters of discipline they are subject to the Head of the City Police, their duties in the Museum are regulated by the Director who communicates with the Inspector. The Inspector is responsible for the efficient watching and patrolling'.<sup>15</sup> The annotations further stipulated that, during the Museum's opening hours seven constables were normally to be on duty, at other times only two. The two on night duty were required to show that they patrolled through the building by punching-in at a 'tell-tale clock' or time-clock, one located on the top floor, the other in the basement.

In April 1920, as part of a UK-wide initiative to reduce government expenditure and to create employment opportunities for demobilised servicemen, SED dispensed with the services of the City of Edinburgh Police Force. Instead the Museum was patrolled by a specially recruited security force of ex-

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<sup>13</sup> GB37/ED84/39(1892), 138, minute of 23 Nov 1887.

<sup>14</sup> GB587/[n.n.], 'Memorandum regarding the Police in the Museum', 13 March 1897.

<sup>15</sup> GB587/ID 12601, unpaginated annotation, 'Inspector of Police'.

servicemen, initially all former non-commissioned officers.<sup>16</sup> At first termed ‘Watchers’, within a couple of years they were restyled ‘Patrols’. Unlike the police, they had no jurisdiction beyond the Museum and no power of arrest. Their bearing and military-style uniform conveyed an authority to command carried over from their previous careers conducted on the parade ground and the battlefield (Figure 4.5). For at least one regular Museum visitor who recalled his visits as a child in the 1920s, the patrols conveyed a ‘stern authority’: ‘You didn’t dare to approach any of the staff ... er, for information, even for information or that’.<sup>17</sup> Other young visitors were not so readily intimidated. By the 1930s the behaviour of some youngsters, particularly on a Sunday, was causing concern. Printed notices were displayed announcing that ‘the patrols have instructions to eject any visitors not behaving themselves’.<sup>18</sup>

Although the primary role of the Patrols was to safeguard the security of the building and its contents, other functions fell to them. In the 1930s these included not only manning the entrance but also acting as the vendor of the Museum’s publications. As Ward wrote, ‘In the present circumstances the selling of most of the publications has been done by one of the patrols in addition to other duties, and it cannot therefore receive proper attention’.<sup>19</sup>

The visible presence of uniformed personnel, whether police or Patrol, not only regulated visitor behaviours directly, but signalled to the worth and value of the Museum’s contents.

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<sup>16</sup> Curle (1922); GB587/DP(C)/6.1, Applications 1920-1922.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Harry Hawthorne (b. 1917), 20 May 2008. See also Chapter 8.

<sup>18</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.3, Rowatt to Eggleton, 9 March 1938.

<sup>19</sup> Ward (1933), 2.



**Figure 4.5. Stern authority on display: a Patrol (left) and an Attendant confer on the first floor gallery of the Main Hall. A frame from the film ‘The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh’, 1938 (GB2120/ 2274).**

#### ***4.4 Cleaners, Attendants and Preparers***

Whilst the majority of Museum’s paid employees were male, throughout much of the nineteenth century the task of general cleaning was undertaken mainly by women. By 1939, however, the number of male cleaners (13) approached that of female cleaners (17).<sup>20</sup> The Museum’s location in a city with the nickname of ‘Auld Reekie’, and with its building lit by inefficient gas burns, meant that soot and dust were a continual challenge.<sup>21</sup> The activity of cleaning, since it was conducted mostly whilst the Museum was closed, went largely unseen by the visitors and those involved in this vital task have been substantially effaced from the historical record. An exception is provided by a case made for reassessing the arrangements for cleaning following the expansion of both office and display

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<sup>20</sup> GB587/IS.2009.36, ‘Royal Scottish Museum: Names and Addresses’ [1937-1939].

<sup>21</sup> On pollution from gas lighting in the Museum and elsewhere, see Swinney (1999c); (2003b).

accommodation with the completion of the Fowke and Matheson building in 1888. The handing-over of the new space coincided with the recruitment of a new Housemaid to replace a Mrs Jessie who was retiring:

Now that the new west wing has been completed which will soon be open to the public, it will be necessary to make some proper arrangement for the supervision of the women cleaners. The cleaning has necessarily to be done at a time when the Museum is closed, and most of it when none of the Museum Staff are present. The building is now far too large for the cleaning to be properly done without responsible supervision. I would therefore propose that in addition to her special duties of attending to the different offices in the Museum the new housemaid shall superintend the cleaning of the whole building.<sup>22</sup>

In 1912 the role of the Housemaid was defined thus: ‘The housemaid directs the operations of the staff of women cleaners and is responsible for the condition of all the floors and stairways’.<sup>23</sup> Although the processes of cleaning were largely invisible to visitors, the products of these processes contributed to the visitor experience. The care lavished on the maintenance and cleanliness of the building’s interior, like the conspicuous presence of Patrols, attested to the worth of its contents.

As ‘General Instructions’ shows, in 1912 the Cleaners were responsible for cleaning the offices and general public areas. The cleaning of exhibition areas and the exhibits was no part of their role, but was the responsibility of the Attendants.

By the turn of the century each Attendant was assigned to a particular specified part of the building. An Attendant’s typical routine was, ‘From 7 to 9 AM each Attendant dusts & cleans the cases in his section; on the mornings of Mondays, Thursdays, & Saturdays they all sweep the floors. From 10 to 4 p.m.

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<sup>22</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Murdoch Smith to Secretary DSA, 10 December 1888, pp. 619-622.

<sup>23</sup> GB587/ID 126015, unpaginated annotation, ‘Housemaid’.

they clean & dust cases & specimens & assist in any rearrangement of specimens which may be going on in the part of the collection with which they have to do. All of the Attendants on The Museum Staff are on duty on the open evenings'.<sup>24</sup> Attendants also had a role in engaging with the visitors. As Ogilvie wrote in 1900:

Experience has shown that certain of the men may safely be intrusted [*sic*] with such work...I may also state that, more especially on the open nights, the attendants come in contact with many visitors, often of the working class, who desire information about the specimens but who hesitate to approach a higher officer. It is therefore important in the Museum as an Educational Institution that those of the attendants who have the aptitude should be encouraged to acquire familiarity and some knowledge – even if only elementary – of the objects among which they work.<sup>25</sup>

As working men themselves, they were considered appropriately placed to mediate between the working class visitor, the objects, and the learning of the 'higher officers'. Their role in interpreting the displays was formalised in about 1912 (see Chapter 7). The Attendants in the public areas had a role not only in directing visitors but also in the regulation of their behaviour. As the costs of hiring additional police would have imposed an increased strain on the budget, in 1889, and in anticipation of the opening of the West Wing, Attendants were given a formal role in visitor surveillance and control (for further discussion see Chapter 8). Each was issued a distinctive blue military-style cap with black-leather peak and red hat-band bearing the badge 'V.R.' [Victoria Regina], designed to convey an authority (and responsibility) conferred by the Museum and, indirectly, by the Crown. In 1927, to bring the practices in Edinburgh into line with practice in museums in London, additional elements of uniform were

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<sup>24</sup> GB587/[n.n.], 'Query Book', 22 April 1899, p. 180.

<sup>25</sup> GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 8, Ogilvie to Secretary Board of Education, 9 November 1900, pp. 532-533.

provided, each Attendant being issued annually ‘one navy suite and one extra pair of trousers’.<sup>26</sup> In addition to those Attendants assigned to the exhibition halls and galleries, one was stationed at the turnstiles at the entrance. Another, the only Attendant not regularly in the public spaces of the building, was assigned to the Museum office. His duties: ‘Copies letters, sees to postage & attends to visitors at the Offices: mounts photographs, mounts & repairs specimens, makes out & copies lists &c, dusts Library, supplies visitors to the Library with books & assists them in searching Patents’.<sup>27</sup> With the installation of electric lighting in 1902 two Attendants were designated ‘electricians’. This arrangement was reviewed in 1909 when following a number of fires in the building caused by faulty wiring, the Office of Works insisted that a qualified electrician from its staff take responsibility for the Museum’s electrics. As part of the same negotiations it was agreed that two stokers would transfer from the Museum’s employment to that of the Office of Works, but that they would be made available, during the busy summer months, to assist with Museum duties.<sup>28</sup>

The diversity of roles undertaken by Attendants led to the creation of new grades and responsibilities. In 1903 six of the Attendants were re-graded as Preparers. At the same time, in the Art and Industrial Department, Henry Kinninmont Brown, who joined the staff as an Attendant in 1873, was appointed Chief Art Preparer. The careers of these men point to an increasing complexity of work resulting in a division of labour associated with increasing status. The

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<sup>26</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] to Secretary SED, 20 May 1938; GB587/DP(C)/1.2, Messrs Manclark & Son to Royal Scottish Museum, 9 April 1937.

<sup>27</sup> GB587/[n.n.], ‘Query Book’, 22 April 1899, p. 180.

<sup>28</sup> GB587/ ID 148376, correspondence with Office of Works, 9 August 1909-30 November 1911, pp. 203-217.

relative status of posts is indicated by their remuneration and most clearly by the travel and subsistence rates that they enjoyed (Table 4.2). The status of posts was evident, also, in the spaces to which they had access. In the 1920s, following the creation of the Patrols, there was a reassessment of the role and deployment of Attendants:

In the cause of economy certain alterations have been made effected in the staff of attendants. The number of chief attendants has been reduced from five to four, and, as the supervision of the door has been placed in the hands of the patrols, one attendant's post has been eliminated and two others have been filled by a new class designated cleaners. It is intended further as opportunity offers to reduce the number of ordinary attendants to fifteen and to increase the number of cleaners proportionally. By gradually relieving the attendants of much of the simple cleaning of glass, and dusting of the outsides of cases, a greater opportunity will be afforded them for assisting the keepers in technical work.<sup>29</sup>

The phrase 'assisting the keepers in technical work' indicated a change in status of the Attendant. Whilst it remained a part of Attendants' role to polish the glass of the display cases, some Attendants also undertook the more skilled work of

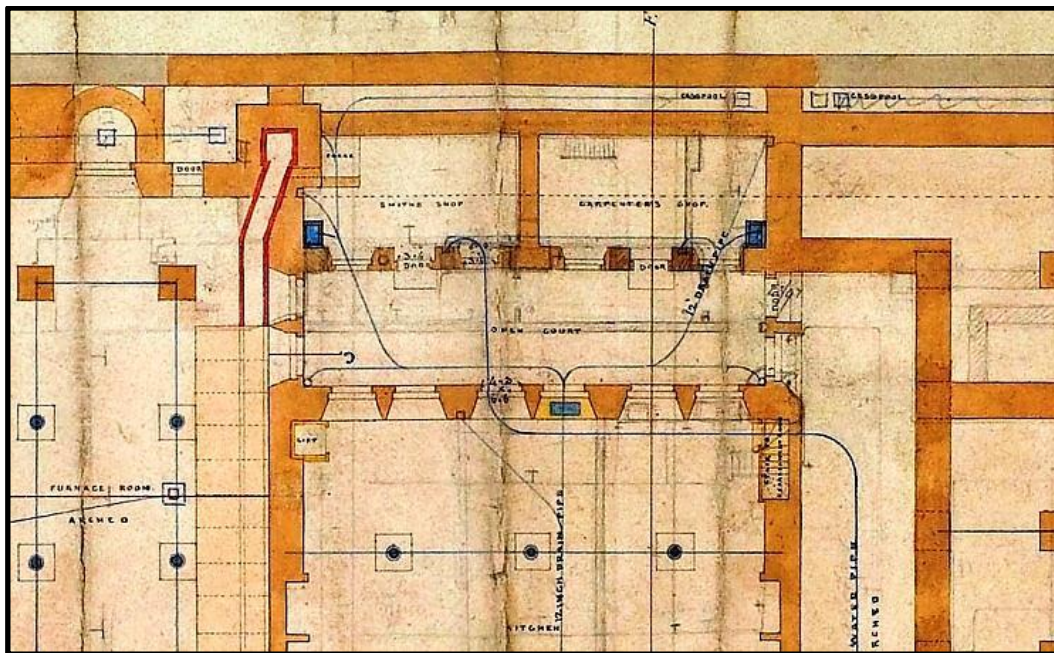
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Subsistence per Day</b>	<b>Rail Travel</b>
Director Keepers	£1/1/0	1 <sup>st</sup> class
Assistant Keepers Assistant in Geology	15/-	1 <sup>st</sup> class
Clerk Assistants (exc. Assistant in Geology)	10/-	2 <sup>nd</sup> class
Head Attendant 1st Class Attendants Chief Preparers Natural History Preparer Photographer	7/6	2 <sup>nd</sup> class
2 <sup>nd</sup> Class Attendants Other Preparers and Artisans	5/-	3 <sup>rd</sup> class

**Table 4.2. Travel and subsistence rates applicable in 1909 (Source: GB587/[n.n.] RSM 'Minute Book', 1907-1913, 10 February 1909).**

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<sup>29</sup> Curle (1923a), 5.

accessioning and preparing specimens. Attendants Mackay and Kirkpatrick, for example, skinned birds and mammals and assisted with the documentary practices of registration, whilst MacTaggart mounted insects and maintained card indices.<sup>30</sup> In taking on such tasks these Assistants joined the more senior staff in being empowered to cross the boundary between the front and back of house and that formed by the glazed panels of the display case – the case was a space into which they were permitted, but into which others could only gaze.



**Figure 4.6. Smithy and carpenters' workshop: detail from 'No. 11 Industrial Museum Edinburgh, plan of basement floor', scale 1:120, signed by Robert Matheson, August 1869 (GB587/IS.2010.10).**

<sup>30</sup> NMS(NH)/156, James Ritchie Memoranda 'Qualifications of Attendants in the Royal Scottish Museum', February 1922.

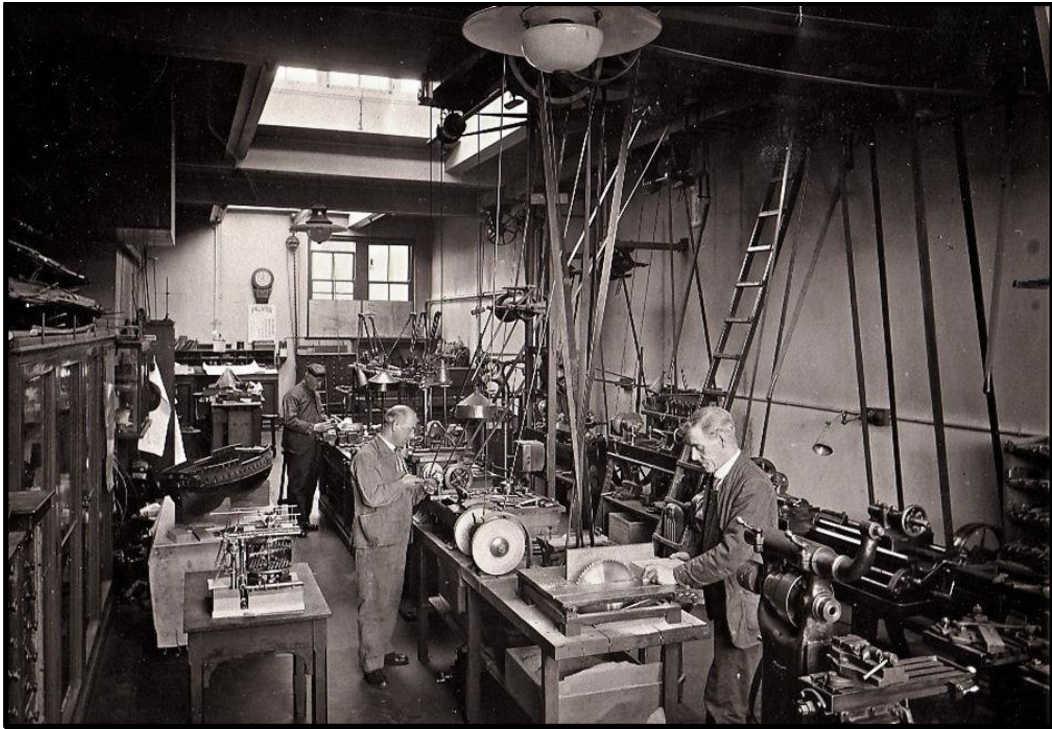


Figure 4.7. The Museum's mechanical workshop, *circa* 1926 (NMS(T)/[n.n.]).

#### *4.5 Places of work: workers and workshops*

Whilst the Police, Patrols and Attendants were conspicuous components of the Museum, other locally recruited personnel, particularly those involved with the fabrication of the building and its fittings, worked behind the scenes and so were largely invisible to the visitors. The planning and development of the building made provision for a variety of behind-the-scenes spaces. For example, the plans for the second phase of construction show a smithy, complete with forge, and a carpenters' workshop, each with access from an open courtyard (Figure 4.6).<sup>31</sup> The third phase of construction included the allocation of attic space as a photographic studio, an area of the basement being designated the beer cellar,

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<sup>31</sup> GB587/IS.2010.10, 'No. 11 Industrial Museum Edinburgh, plan of basement floor'.

and some workshops being relocated from the basements to ‘the well-lit upper storey of an outbuilding on the same level as the main floor of the Museum, to which it has direct access’.<sup>32</sup> In 1914 the top storey of the newly-constructed Administration Block, the rooms of which had large sections of glazing in the roof, was allocated to the geological and art ‘preparators’. The mechanical workshop relocated in another upper-storey room in the West Wing (Figure 4.7).

The workshops were work sites not only for Museum employees, but for a variety of contractors and the employees of other government departments. Initially the Museum was dependent upon HM Office of Works, not only for the commissioning and construction of the building, but also for the design, construction and supply of the display furniture and other fittings.<sup>33</sup> By the 1870s Archer had negotiated for the protocols governing this centralised commissioning to be relaxed enabling the Museum to recruit craftsmen and to commission some minor works directly from local firms. Thus the Museum engaged, in its own right, with local tradesmen. In the spring of 1884 Archer summarised this geography of supply:

The rule here is I believe substantially the same as at South Kensington. The Office of Works supplies office furniture and removes it when worn out. At first the Office of Works also supplied exhibiting cases but for want of special knowledge as to Museum requirements they had all to be reconstructed. Now we largely make our own cases at much less cost, and when the quantity wanted is larger than we can manage we make a contract with an outside firm which having worked for us for fifteen years has the experience we require.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897a); Smith (1889), 270 [314].

<sup>33</sup> Matheson was employed by the Office of Works as were the architects of the twentieth-century southward extensions. The Office also prepared the tender specifications and selected local builders to conduct the construction works. Although Fowke specified the design for the wall cases, much of the free-standing casing was produced to the standard design used at the South Kensington Museum. See Swinney (2003a).

<sup>34</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer, a note on letter from Kemp, 8 April 1884, p. 288.

The completion of the third and final phase of Fowke and Matheson's building in the late 1880s not only generated an urgent need for display cases but also prompted a need for the casing in the earlier phases of the building to be adapted to accommodate different kinds of displays as items were redistributed throughout the enlarged building (see Chapter 6). In 1893 the Museum recruited five joiners and a painter to undertake this work.<sup>35</sup> Annotations to 'General Instructions' reveal that in November 1912 the Treasury attempted to re-centralise the production and standardise the design of exhibition cases, enquiring whether any objection was seen to 'following of the same procedure with regard to exhibition cases as is followed in the British Museum and the V&A, with a view to making use of the experience of the Office of Works'.<sup>36</sup> Although Martin declared his objection, by the early 1920s the role of the Office of Works in supplying exhibition casing had been re-imposed: 'By a Treasury regulation the normal supply of cases, which formerly were ordered direct by the Museum, have now to be obtained through the Office of Works'.<sup>37</sup>

The annotations to 'General Instructions' show that by 1912 the Museum had a list of approved cabinet-makers and engineering firms in Edinburgh who could be 'invited to tender' for works and a post of Overseer, or Chief Mechanical Preparer, whose responsibility was 'charge of the Workshops in respect of the engineers, carpenters, painter and printers on the staff, and also in respect of any other artisans temporarily employed'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 3, Smith to Secretary DSA, 25 September 1893 and 6 October 1893, p. 129 and pp. 137-138.

<sup>36</sup> GB587/ID 226015, Treasury Minute of 2 November 1912, unpaginated annotation.

<sup>37</sup> Curle (1923a), 4.

<sup>38</sup> GB587/ID 126015, unpaginated annotation.

SED sought to regulate the mixed economy of Museum staff, staff of other government agencies such as the Office of Works, and local contractors, and sought to differentiate between sites of labour of these different categories of worker. 'General Instructions' stipulated:

It is not permissible to bring Contractors [*sic*] men into the Museum workshops, to have their wages paid by their employers and the account thereafter rendered by the employer as the account for a specimen. Besides the objection of possible difficulty in the case of injury sustained by workmen, there is the objection that an account so rendered conceals the true nature of the transaction and cannot be audited.<sup>39</sup>

As this instruction implied, the Museum's workshop practices effectively enacted two different kinds of site: those concerned with constructing and maintaining the structure of the building and those involved in the construction of exhibits. The making of models, particularly of technological items too large to be represented by full-size objects, was an important function and was undertaken from about 1868, the *Annual Report* for that year noting that 'Mr. Galletly, besides the various duties which devolved to him as curator and accountant, has superintended the making of a very beautiful series of models, illustrating the apparatus used in the manufacture of gas'.<sup>40</sup> In addition to making new models, often from manufacturers' original production drawings, the workshops were involved in renovating and restoring existing models, both those which had been constructed in the Museum and those produced elsewhere. Thus the Museum workshop was engaged in making the massive manageable enough to be brought indoors and exhibited, a process which involved a circuit of communication including engineers, ship-builders, mining engineers, draughtsmen, model makers, and the Museum's exhibition spaces, staff and visitors. This circuit was

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<sup>39</sup> GB587/ID 126015, annotation, opp. p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Archer (1869), 412 [582].

temporarily disrupted and realigned by World War I when the workshops were given over to the production of munitions, a task in which Curle himself participated three days a week.<sup>41</sup>

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Figure 4.8. 'Preserver to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art': advertisements by commercial taxidermists in the *Post Office Edinburgh and Leith Directory*, 1878-1879, 101.

<sup>41</sup> Ritchie (2002), 30.

The Museum was also involved in another modelling practice, taxidermy. The natural history displays had long relied on taxidermy to preserve animals. The University collections contained numerous mounted specimens but, with the move into the new building new specimens were required to fill the additional space and to replace old and shabby mounts. From 1866 onwards the Museum turned particularly to the London-based taxidermy firm of Edward Gerrard, and later also to Rowland Ward, to supply larger mounts.<sup>42</sup> Small mounted specimens continued to be commissioned from local commercial taxidermists (Figure 4.8)<sup>43</sup> – for many years in William Hope advertised his firm as ‘Stuffer to the National Museum’.<sup>44</sup>

The turn to ecological rather than taxonomic displays in the 1920s demanded new sorts of taxidermy and the material spaces of the Museum became the sites of its production (see Chapter 6). In 1929 David Wyper Wotherspoon, who had been running a commercial taxidermy company in Glasgow, was recruited into a new post of Technical Assistant in Natural History in the Museum.<sup>45</sup> His role was to produce ‘artificial “environments”’ and to construct ‘models illustrating life-histories or special habits’.<sup>46</sup> Although, with Wotherspoon’s appointment, the Museum began producing its own taxidermy it continued to purchase other mounted specimens. From 1929, the provision of

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<sup>42</sup> Between 1866 and 1872 Gerrards alone supplied 154 mounted specimens. For a history of Gerrards, see Morris (2004).

<sup>43</sup> *Post Office Directory* (1878), 101.

<sup>44</sup> *Post Office Directory* (1912), 52.

<sup>45</sup> GB587/ID 103808, ‘Royal Scottish Museum Staff Register’.

<sup>46</sup> For Wotherspoon’s role see NMS(NH)/156, Ritchie (undated) ‘Circulation of Museum Objects to Schools etc’; Frost (1987).

mounted specimens, like other processes discussed in the chapter, was part of a mixed economy comprising both external contractors and Museum staff.

Another trade crucial to the Museum was printing. Here again, the Museum operated in a mixed economy, with some printing being undertaken in the Museum, other printing being done by local firms and yet other work centralised on government printers. The Museum produced its own display labels and in 1864 took delivery of a Columbian press, manufactured by D. and J. Greig of Edinburgh.<sup>47</sup> Archer reported, ‘I have also studied to make the objects exhibited both interesting and instructive, by attaching thereto carefully prepared descriptive labels, the usefulness of which is greatly increased by having them printed, which largely increases the utility of the objects exhibited.’<sup>48</sup> As with other trades, the processes of printing constructed different spaces and practices of space within the building. Initially part of the basement was used as a printer’s workshop, but with the opening of the West Wing it moved to the top floor.<sup>49</sup> The print-shop produced items largely for use within the building, although for a while Curle harboured ambitions to offer a service further afield: ‘There is good demand for labels from local museums which we are unable to satisfy’.<sup>50</sup> Although labels were printed in house, other textual materials such as the *Annual Report*, the *General Guide*, and specialist guides were printed for HMSO by the government printer. Other items, such as the Museum’s postcards and enamelled labels, were commissioned directly from commercial companies.

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<sup>47</sup> The press was in use for a century and was decommissioned in the early 1960s, ceasing to be a working tool and becoming instead a museum piece and, registered as NMST.1964.1.

<sup>48</sup> Archer (1865), 245 [579].

<sup>49</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897a).

<sup>50</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 93, para. 1195.

Some other contractors involved in the mixed economy of the Museum were engaged through UK-wide processes. The operation of the Refreshment Room was a function contracted by the Crown Agents to a catering company, several of which had developed to meet the demand for facilities on the stations of the expanding railway network.<sup>51</sup>

#### ***4.6 Occasional staff and volunteers***

Craftsmen and artisans were not the only workers to be employed on a casual basis. The administrative arrangements initially devised by DSA recognised the occasional need for additional workers by including a category in the Museum's budget for 'Police & Occasional Assistance'. Around 1900, concerns within the Museums Association about the increasing fragmentation and specialisation of knowledge, prompted debate over the relative merits of generalist curators versus subject specialists.<sup>52</sup> Ogilvie made a case to SED for the need to retain and expand the ability to temporarily engage people with expertise, introducing the term 'professional assistance'.<sup>53</sup> This established a mechanism whereby people with particular skills and expertise could be employed to undertake specific project-type work, often of a specialist nature. Under these provisions, in 1876, the Museum secured the services of 'an expert to assist in the Geological Department' for 20 weeks, at 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> d per hour, later extended for further periods at

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<sup>51</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to Department, 19 April 1881, p. 161; GB587/[n.n.], 'Completion of Industrial Museum' 1884.

<sup>52</sup> Platinauer (1901), Petrie, (1897), 74.

<sup>53</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Ogilvie to Secretary SED, 14 November 1900, p. 529.

a rate of 1/6d per hour.<sup>54</sup> In subsequent years other specialists were engaged on a temporary basis. For example, Robert Kidston, who advised the Geological Survey on palaeozoic plants, was engaged in 1882 to label and arrange collections of fossil plants; Cosmo Innes Burton, later appointed Professor of Chemistry at the English Technical Institute in Shanghai, in 1890 re-arranged and labelled the chemistry collections, and in 1892 Matthew Foster Heddle, retired Professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy at St Andrews University, was engaged to arrange the mineral collections.<sup>55</sup> Three years after his retirement from the Museum in 1906, Traquair was engaged to catalogue the fossil collections.<sup>56</sup> Professional Assistants normally worked within the building: one exception was George Wilson Stout of Busta who was paid record observations and to collect specimens on Fair Isle as part of William Eagle Clarke's investigations on bird migration (see Chapter 5).<sup>57</sup>

DSA required that work be remunerated. As Traquair responded to one offer of assistance in 1874, 'I regret to be under the necessity of declining your offer, as it is a fixed rule in the Museums of the Science and Art Department not to accept assistance gratuitously'.<sup>58</sup> Under the administration of SED, this restriction was relaxed. In 1905 Norman Boyd Kinnear, a volunteer, began assisting Clarke in his field research and in the curation of the ornithological

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<sup>54</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 6 October 1876, pp. 160-161; GB37/ED84/37(1878), 146, minute of 12 April 1875.

<sup>55</sup> Traquair (1883), 597 [717]; Smith (1893), 277 [337].

<sup>56</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 4 April 1909, 11 April 1911 and 13 May 1913, pp. 132, 164, 366.

<sup>57</sup> Berry (1948).

<sup>58</sup> GB587/[n.n.], 'R. H. Traquair Letterbook, 1874-1905', Traquair to Forbes, 3 Nov 1874, p. 22.

collections.<sup>59</sup> Following Clarke's retirement in 1921, the curation of these collections fell entirely to John Hutton Stenhouse who, following his retirement from the Navy in 1920, worked in the Museum in a voluntary capacity.<sup>60</sup> The fact that Kinnear and Stenhouse both enjoyed high social status was undoubtedly a factor in their gaining this sort of access to collections: Kinnear's great-grandfather had been Sir William Jardine of Applegirth, an eminent naturalist; Stenhouse had retired with the rank of Surgeon Rear-Admiral.

Another form of voluntary labour is almost completely effaced from the records – that of the wives of the staff. A few contributions can, however, be glimpsed in the documentation. Phoebe Traquair, an established artist, assisted her husband in the preparation of illustrations of fossil specimens.<sup>61</sup> Anne V. Borthwick, a science graduate, who was employed as a Professional Assistant in 1931 to assist Grimshaw and subsequently married Stephen (then an Assistant Keeper in the Department), prepared many of the pastel drawings which illustrated the Children's Gallery and the Foreign Fish Gallery.<sup>62</sup>

#### ***4.7 Directors and the competitive posts: Assistants, Keepers, Curators***

When first established the posts of Resident Assistant in the Industrial Museum and the Regius Keeper and his Assistant Conservator in the Natural History Museum were responsible, through the Director, for building and maintaining the

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<sup>59</sup> In 1907 Kinnear was appointed officer in charge of the Bombay Natural History Society and subsequently joined the staff of the British Museum (Natural History) rising to the post of its Director. See Barclay-Smith (2004).

<sup>60</sup> Pennington (2004); McGowan & Stenhouse (2010).

<sup>61</sup> Curle (1923a), 13.

<sup>62</sup> Ward (1932), 9; NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Pastel sketches signed 'AVB' ex Children's Gallery (dismantled 2008) and Foreign Fish Gallery (dismantled 1990).

collections.<sup>63</sup> Over the years, their activity, and that of their successors in increasing the size and scope of the collections was accompanied by an increase in the number and diversity of these keeping roles. The records documenting the careers of these ‘higher officers’ are richer than for those in roles considered in previous sections.

*Particulars relating to the Staff  
of the Science and Art Branches of The Royal Scottish Museum.*

Name of officer.	Rank.	Date of appointment to present position.	Age at appointment.	Academic qualifications at first appointment, and summary of Career prior to first appointment.
B. F. Halliwell.	Curator and Keeper of the art and ethnographical Dept.	June 25, 1894.	45.	Trinity College, Hartford, in the history of art (Yale University); Assistant Professor of Chemistry; Lecturer on Geology in Duke West College; University Lecturer in Art; University Lecturer in Archaeology; Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (A.S.A.).
A. Galt.	Keeper of the Technological Department.	October 1, 1901.	26.	B.Sc.; official assistant to Lord Kelvin in the University of Glasgow for eight years; Lecturer on Technological Science in the Glasgow School of Art; Lecturer one year; Lecturer on Technological Science in Secondary Schools, eleven years.
W. T. Clarke.	Keeper of the Dept. of Natural History.	August 19, 1906.	53.	Commenced service on June 4, 1857 (age 25) as Assistant; promoted Assistant Keeper Oct. 1, 1901; promoted Keeper August 19, 1906; previously appointed curator for four years to Royal Museum; had edited 'The Naturalist' for four years; was joint author of the 'Naturalists' Journal of Yorkshire; and had published many papers describing original work in Natural History.
F. H. Sprinckle.	Assistant Keeper.	August 19, 1906.	17.	Commenced service as Junior Assistant (age 23) on January 23, 1899, after competitive examination with Practical and Theoretical Geology for the principal subject; promoted Assistant October 1, 1901; promoted Assistant Keeper August 19, 1906; was an active member of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union; Secretary to the Leeds' Naturalists' Club; had contributed papers to the 'Naturalist'.
J. Rowatt.	Assistant Keeper.	January 23, 1909.	29.	Commenced service as Assistant (age 23) on <del>January 23, 1899</del> <sup>September 8, 1902</sup> after competitive examination with Practical and Theoretical Geology for the principal subject; promoted Assistant Keeper January 23, 1909; had Lecturer in Engineering of the Duke West College.
Edwin Ward.	Assistant Keeper.	September 5, 1912.	32.	Commenced service as Assistant (age 20) on October 31, 1900, after competitive examination with special subjects in the history of art and knowledge of art objects; promoted Assistant Keeper September 5, 1912.
J. Ritchie.	Assistant.	April 1, 1907.	25.	M.A.; B.Sc., with special distinction in Geology, Botany and Botany; appointed after competitive examination, the principal subject being Geology and Botany; had special research work in Geology, Aberdeen University and the Edinburgh School of Geology; had published papers in the journals of the Geological Society (London) and the Royal Society (Edinburgh).
J. J. Kelly.	Assistant.	March 4, 1911.	22.	M.A., with honours in Classics; appointed after competitive examination, the special science subject being Practical and Theoretical Geology.
W. F. W. Kirkwood.	Assistant in charge of the Geological Collections.	September 16, 1911.	24.	B.Sc., with special distinction in Botany, awarded in Geology and Mineralogy; commenced service in the Geological Survey (London) on October 10, 1907; after competitive examination, the special science subject being Chemistry and Mineralogy, transferred to Edinburgh September 16, 1911.
Robert Kerr.	Assistant.	November 16, 1912.	22.	M.A., with honours in Classics; appointed after competitive examination, the special science subject being Practical and Theoretical Botany.

T.C.M.  
19 11 12

Figure 4.9. ‘Particulars relating to the Staff of the Science and Art Branches of The Royal Scottish Museum’, 19 November 1912: a list initialled ‘T.C.M.’ compiled by Martin shortly after his appointment as Director. It lists the senior staff under his management with a brief summary of the careers of each. Note that ‘Age at Appointment’ is that to the post currently occupied, not to age at recruitment to the Museum (GB234/ED 7/3/7).

<sup>63</sup> Davies post as ‘Assistant Conservator’ was restyled ‘assistant curator’ in 1857, Galletly’s title was changed from Resident Assistant to ‘Chief Clerk’ in 1863 and ‘Curator’ in 1866. Allman (1858b), 158 [384]; Archer (1864), 228 [202]; (1867), 254 [287].

There was, of course, no standard career trajectory: each member of staff's career was unique, since the selection of those who would develop the Museum was a matter of how the authorities envisaged it developing (Figure 4.9; Table 4.3A-D). It is not the intention here to trace the career trajectories of each of the curatorial staff. Instead a few examples provide focus for the questions: Who were the people who were recruited to these posts? Where did they come from? How were they trained? How did they and their experience relate to that of those who populated other spaces of intellectual endeavour, of knowledge making and knowledge dissemination? Such questions bring into focus a suite of practices associated with the roles of 'keeping', processes which, by the mid-nineteenth century, were collectively termed 'curating'.<sup>64</sup> These roles involved expert knowledge about the subject matter of the collections and of the collections themselves, although the nature of that knowledge, and the relative roles of the Director, the Curator, and curators were complex and varied in the period 1854-1939 (The existence of a specific role of 'Curator' with administrative duties beyond those of 'curating' as generally understood in the academic literature on museums, problematizes the use of the term within this thesis. I therefore use the term with a capital letter to indicate the post and with a small 'c' to refer to staff in curatorial roles).

In 1911, when questions were raised in Parliament about Martin's appointment as Director, the Lord Advocate responded that: 'The Directorship of the Museum is an administrative office for which special qualifications are not

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<sup>64</sup> On the nature of curatorial expertise, see Alberti (2001); (2011a).

required. Each department is in charge of an expert'.<sup>65</sup> This statement recognised a division of labour reflected in the development of different status and expertise – the description of the role of Director relative to that of the subject 'expert' recognised a need for his possessing skills, knowledge and expertise that transcended disciplinary boundaries (or constructed management and administration as a distinct discipline). This division of labour, together with formal and informal association between staff in different museums, led also to the development of different subject specialist vocations and professionalisms. In turn, this enabled and reflected a fragmentation of knowledge into disciplines which itself demands attention to a number of questions: Who had authority to validate and warrant expertise? What forms of expertise were recognised and warranted? In what sites was expertise produced and validated?

#### *4.7.1 Making curators: sites for forging professional identities*

Throughout most of the nineteenth century the training in what was to become termed 'science' was largely provided in the context of preparing men for a medical career. Medical schools provided an environment in which young men were trained to examine the human body and engendered ways of knowing those other 'bodies' – animal, botanical, miasmatic, chemical, bacterial, and alike – which surround and impinge upon it. Directors Wilson and Archer and successive Keepers of Natural History, Forbes, Allman, Thomson and Traquair, each had medical or surgical training, although neither Forbes nor Thomson

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<sup>65</sup> *Hansard* (1911); *Scotsman* (1911b).

graduated.<sup>66</sup> All but Archer trained at Edinburgh University, most having included Jameson's course in natural history in their studies. Before being appointed to the Museum all had established themselves as university or college teachers, as scientific orators and authors. They had become accomplished performers to audiences of students and fellow men of science, in the formal sites of scientific oration – the lecture room and the meeting room of the learned society – and from such spaces their status and reputation spread into sites of the popularisation of science – the columns of the press, the salons of the conversazione, the public meeting hall, and the book. Each was skilled in promoting himself in what, for Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, was the marketplace for science.<sup>67</sup> Wilson, before being appointed Director, had been Lecturer in Chemistry in the Edinburgh Veterinary College, and at the Edinburgh School of Arts, and at the Scottish Institution, and had provided training in chemical analysis at his own private laboratory.<sup>68</sup> He lectured frequently to a diversity of audiences and, as one of his obituarists wrote, 'Perfect in all the courtesies of society, and able to delight the most refined circles with his exquisite wit and knowledge, he could turn with still greater relish to correspond with children, or to enjoy the wonder of some ragged city-mission audience at a voluntary scientific lecture'.<sup>69</sup> His lectures were reported in the columns of newspapers and published as pamphlets, and he performed also in other print spaces. His textbook *Chemistry* enhanced his reputation as an independent

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<sup>66</sup> Allman, Forbes, and Thomson all took Jameson's Natural History course; Traquair, who did not become a medical student until 1857, studied under Allman.

<sup>67</sup> Fyfe & Lightman (2007a). On sites of performance, see also Finnegan (2011).

<sup>68</sup> Wilson (1844); Wilson (1860).

<sup>69</sup> Cairns (1860), 202.

teacher and sold steadily in several editions.<sup>70</sup> His work on colour-blindness – influential in establishing protocols for assessing the suitability of those to be engaged as ships’ officers and on the railways, where new technologies of signalling made distinguishing between colours crucially important<sup>71</sup> – broadened in scope into a popular book on all five senses, *The Five Gateways to Knowledge*, which Charles Dickens described as ‘Wise, elegant, eloquent, and perfectly unaffected’.<sup>72</sup> Wilson’s career exemplifies the ways in which in mid-nineteenth century processes and sites of knowledge making were inextricably bound up with those of communication and ‘popularisation’.<sup>73</sup> It was through this engagement with varied audiences in varied settings that Wilson constructed his status as an authority, at the same time constructing an audience for that authority, and for the Museum. Almost simultaneously with his appointment to the Directorship, Wilson was appointed to the newly-created professorship of technology in the University of Edinburgh, thus linking the authority of the Museum to that of the University.

Wilson’s successor Archer, although trained as a surgeon had, before his appointment to the Museum, enjoyed a twenty-year career as a customs officer in Liverpool. In this capacity he had taken a particular interest in the raw materials entering the port and in their potential for British industry and had arranged

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<sup>70</sup> By the time of Wilson’s death, the book, in various editions, had sold in excess of 24,000 copies. Gladstone (1860).

<sup>71</sup> Coloured navigation lights had been introduced for UK steam shipping in 1848 and extended by Admiralty Regulations to all sea-going vessels in August 1852. Wilson (1855).

<sup>72</sup> Wilson (1856a); Storey & Tillotson (2002), 218.

<sup>73</sup> For discussion of the problematized nature of ‘popularisation’ of science, see Lightman (1997); Secord (2004a); Fyfe & Lightman (2007b); Topham (2009).

Liverpool's display at the Great Exhibition.<sup>74</sup> Although Archer succeeded Wilson to the Directorship, the post of Professor of Technology was abolished. The arrangement whereby the Regius Professor of Natural History was *de facto* Keeper of the Natural History Department of the Museum, however, persisted. This arrangement contributed to animosity between Archer and Thomson over their relative status – Thomson being of the opinion that his appointment made him answerable directly to the DSA, not to Archer.<sup>75</sup> Despite Archer's surgical training, and the fact that he was the author of a book on vegetable products, for Thomson, he was a 'non-scientific officer'.<sup>76</sup> The dispute between Thomson and Archer was largely a clash of personalities but it also revolved around contestation of what constituted 'science'. It resulted in the dissolution of the arrangement linking the Professorship and Keepership and to the appointment in 1872 of Traquair to a newly-constituted post of Keeper of Natural History, one which had no responsibility to the University.<sup>77</sup> However, despite divergence in the sorts of knowledge produced and the audience for that knowledge, in Edinburgh the university and the Museum remained entangled in complex interrelationships. These included: Traquair, Galt, and Vallance serving as University examiners; Traquair being awarded an honorary degree and a professorship; the Museum developing exhibits specifically to engage with courses taught in the University; the University acting as a venue for lectures

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<sup>74</sup> *Scotsman* (1885). Archer was appointed as 'Superintendent', although that post would be: 'charged with the direction of the Museum'. The title 'Superintendent' was short-lived and reverted to 'Director' by 1866 – see Archer (1867), 259.

<sup>75</sup> Swinney (1999a; b).

<sup>76</sup> Hooker, Busk & Donnelly (1872), 38.

<sup>77</sup> Swinney (1999a; b).

organised by the Museum.<sup>78</sup> Other Universities also conferred honorary degrees on the Museum's staff, Curle and Dobbie each receiving honorary doctorates from the University of Glasgow.<sup>79</sup> In the acquisition of staff, too, museums were caught up in the university system. The Museum recruited most of its curatorial staff from universities. By 1912 the prescribed protocols for recruitment to the grade of Assistant gave precedence to Scottish graduates: 'The Director will take measures to obtain candidates (of whom no fewer than three should be nominated to the Department for examination) by requesting the Secretary of the Appointments Committee of two of the Scottish Universities to exhibit an appropriate notice of the vacancy'.<sup>80</sup> The Natural History and Industrial streams were treated as distinct operational units, their staff selected through subtly different processes: 'the assistants are quite separate; the assistants in the natural history department and the assistants in the art industry department; they are never interchanged; they are appointed by separate examinations'.<sup>81</sup>

Whilst within the Museum natural history was constructed primarily by men with medical training, the backgrounds to those who constructed the industrial steam were more varied. Take, for example, Galletly's career. A stonemason to trade, Galletly had been book-keeper at the Shotts Iron Company in Edinburgh whilst pursuing courses in draughtsmanship and other aspects of industry at the Watt Institution: whilst with Shotts he designed four lamp-posts

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<sup>78</sup> For appointments as University examiners see GB237/EUA IN1/GOV/SEN/1, Senate Minutes 25 March 1882; Entry for Galt in *Who's Who* 1922. For University premises serving as venues for Museum events see, for example, GB587/Scrapbook (RSM) 6, handbill for Tait's lectures on electricity, 1871-2, p. 86; GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] to Secretary SED, 16 October 1934. See also chapter 8.

<sup>79</sup> *Times* (1908a).

<sup>80</sup> GB587/ID 126015, pp. 13-14.

<sup>81</sup> Smith (1897), 165 [187], para. 326; GB587/ID 226015, pp. 14-15.

for the ‘Princes Street entrance to Waverley Bridge’.<sup>82</sup> He was appointed to the Museum as Resident Assistant in 1855. According to one biographer, ‘until his last years he was little known even in the local scientific associations...official duties, as well as self-culture, occupied his days and nights’.<sup>83</sup> In 1863 his role was described as ‘Chief Clerk’, and a few years later his post was styled ‘Curator’. The role was the day-to-day running of the Museum and deputising for the Director in addition to curation of the Industrial collections. His status is indicated in his seated pose in the staff photograph taken in about 1885 (see Figure 4.4). Galletly’s career illustrates how the status of certain roles increased with the size of the Museum, the numbers of its staff and the size of its collections.

#### *4.7.2 Curatorial work and centres of calculation*

The work of the curators was substantially the interpretation of text to enable the identification and naming of objects based on published descriptions and taxonomies established elsewhere. Their expertise lay largely in establishing concordance between ‘published specimens’ and specimens collected.<sup>84</sup> For Dritsas, the methodology of diagnosis of objects through comparison, either directly or through descriptions, illustrations or the tacit knowledge of curators, with objects held in collections elsewhere challenged the notion of a museum as a centre of calculation. For him calculations were made in diverse sites making

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<sup>82</sup> *Scotsman* (1894); Taylor, (1896), xi.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor (1896), xi.

<sup>84</sup> On the publication of species, see Alberti (2011a), 62.

museums akin to entrepôts for material culture.<sup>85</sup> The curatorial processes of assigning identity by comparisons included identifying when an object failed to correspond to existing descriptions. However, such instances were infrequent and rarely were staff engaged in describing new taxa. This is reflected in the relatively small numbers of type specimens (in the sense of those specimens which serve as name-bearers) in the natural history collections.<sup>86</sup> As I show in Chapters 5 and 6 curatorial effort was directed more towards constructing type collections (*i.e.* displays of ‘typical’ forms) and the amassing of specimens as vouchers for spatial or temporal distributions of already established taxa, than in erecting new specimens.<sup>87</sup> Of those type specimens held, many gained their name-bearing status anterior to the Museum.<sup>88</sup> The erection and stewardship of type specimens, did not contribute as substantially to the authority and status of the Museum and its staff as, according to Alberti, was the case in some other museums.<sup>89</sup>

#### *4.7.3 Amateurs and professionals in one museum*

Drawing attention to the dichotomy between university and museum science, George Bean Goode described the professional men of science in universities and colleges as ‘strangely indifferent’ to how ‘the public at large is to be made

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<sup>85</sup> Dritsas (2010), 139.

<sup>86</sup> On type specimens, see International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (1999); Daston (2004).

<sup>87</sup> On voucher specimens, see Huber (1998).

<sup>88</sup> Heppell, Smaldon & Watt (1976); Paton (1976); Andrews, (1982); Herman, McGowan & Swinney (1990).

<sup>89</sup> Alberti (2011a), 61-62.

familiar with the results of their labors'.<sup>90</sup> This indifference opened a niche for the development of what might be termed 'professional men of museums'. The professionalising of museum keeping was manifested in the tendency in Edinburgh, particularly in the twentieth century, for both Directors and curatorial staff to be promoted from within the Museum rather than being recruited directly into senior positions. Writing in 1870, Archer drew attention to the link between experience, expertise and the collections, 'Each year increases the experience which the permanent officers bring to bear upon their work, and continued improvements in the arrangement and display of the specimens is the consequence'.<sup>91</sup> The practice of internal promotion in Edinburgh followed that of DSA generally. As Frederick Donnelly, the Secretary to the Department, told a Select Committee in 1899, within the museums under the Department's auspices, 'As it was found in practice very objectionable to have a second open competition for Assistant Keepers, instead of filling that grade, by promotion, from Junior Assistants, the Treasury agreed to the abolition'.<sup>92</sup> Men recruited as Junior Assistants or Assistants acquired skills and tacit knowledge through their engagement with the collections and with their more senior colleagues<sup>93</sup> – as Alberti states, material collections served as an extension of its keeper's memory and that memory constructed and developed amongst the collections.<sup>94</sup> The Museum itself became a site of training akin to apprenticeship.

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<sup>90</sup> Goode, 1888, quoted in Osborn (1901), 20.

<sup>91</sup> Archer (1870a), 478 [934].

<sup>92</sup> Donnelly (1899), 16 [602].

<sup>93</sup> For the creation of Junior Assistantships, see Civil Service Commission (1892).

<sup>94</sup> Alberti (2011a).

The creation of a caucus of knowledge and skills which defined a distinct professionalism, a community of practice, in museums was one of the aims of the Museums Association, founded in 1890.<sup>95</sup> That there was developing a museum vocation and professionalism, in the sense of a perception of an appropriate background for a senior officer, was evidenced by the reaction of the Association when Martin, a candidate from outside the nascent ‘profession’, a newspaper editor/proprietor, was appointed to the post of Director of the Museum in 1910.<sup>96</sup>

An editorial in the *Museums Journal* stated:

we have been unable to discover what particular qualification he may have for the post of museum director.... The director of a museum cannot of course have an intimate knowledge of all the objects contained in the museum, any more than the editor of a newspaper can be an authority on all the subjects dealt with in his columns. For specialist knowledge the director and the editor rely on the competence of their staff. But a museum director should undoubtedly have had a practical training in some branch of work, which is in itself a quite special branch of human activity.<sup>97</sup>

This issue prompted the Lord Advocate’s assertion of the distinction between the role of Director and that of ‘expert’. Martin’s appointment notwithstanding, there was, nonetheless, an increasing trend for career progression within the Museum (Table 4.3A and B), although opportunities largely depended on vacancies arising from resignations, retirements or deaths.

Ritchie’s description of Grimshaw’s career was telling in regard to relative roles of universities and the Museum as training-grounds: ‘Yorkshire has made many contributions to the company of amateur naturalists for which Britain is justly renowned, and ranking high amongst them must be reckoned Percy Hall

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<sup>95</sup> Alberti has argued that the Museums Association’s admittance of unpaid curators made it a vocational rather than a professional association. Alberti (2011a), 58. In the nineteenth century the principal defining character of a ‘professional’ was the earning of one’s a living through one’s labours. See Fyfe (2005).

<sup>96</sup> *Scotsman* (1910). See also entry for Martin, *Who’s Who*, 1914.

<sup>97</sup> *Museums Journal* (1911), 192-3.

Grimshaw, who, beginning as an amateur botanist, rose to become Keeper of the Natural History Department of The Royal Scottish Museum'.<sup>98</sup> Ritchie's allying of Grimshaw with a tradition of amateurism, points to the problematic and nuanced nature of the terms 'amateur' and 'professional' and to the construction of expert identities in nineteenth and early twentieth century natural sciences.<sup>99</sup> Grimshaw had been appointed to a post of Junior Assistant in 1893; Ritchie to that of Assistant in 1907. Over the years both men rose to the Keepership; Ritchie in 1921, Grimshaw succeeding him a decade later (Table 4.3B). As Ritchie's use of the term 'amateur' implied, their pre-Museum experience had been very different. At the time of his appointment Ritchie had gained a Masters degree from Aberdeen University and was the author of several papers on hydroids, a group on which he was establishing a reputation as an authority. Grimshaw had no university training. After leaving school he worked in a bank in his native Yorkshire. He developed an interest in the local flora, publishing two papers, and becoming assistant secretary and librarian of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union.<sup>100</sup> Ritchie's contrasting of 'amateur' against his own 'professional' status, was predicated upon his own authority being warranted (initially) by a University. Yet the fact that both men rose to the Keepership signals to the status of the Museum in establishing and validating the authority and expertise of its staff and, through them, the authority and credibility of the Museum as a whole.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ritchie (1939), 290.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion, see Alberti (2001); Desmond (2001).

<sup>100</sup> Ritchie (1939); Smart (1945).

<sup>101</sup> On site and performance in constituting expertise, see Finnegan (2008); (2011).

Ward's career provides a further example of the accrual of knowledge and status through engagement with the collections. On leaving school, Ward, the son of artist and critic James Ward, studied art and design for a year before being appointed a Junior Assistant in the Museum in October 1900.<sup>102</sup> Whilst in this post he attended Gerard Baldwin Brown's course in fine art at the University and was appointed Assistant in the Art and Ethnographical Department in 1904.<sup>103</sup> At this time the Museum was receiving collections from the excavations being undertaken by Matthew Flinders Petrie under the auspices of the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund. Ward participated in the excavations during two seasons of fieldwork in Egypt, acquiring objects for the Museum. Vallance reported: 'The interest and value to the Museum of these objects from Egypt is considerably increased, not only by the authenticity which they bring with them direct from the excavations, but also by the fact that the Museum was represented on the spot by Mr. Ward, one of its officers, who took an important part in the work of excavating in Egypt all through the season'.<sup>104</sup> Vallance's comment suggests association with particular people and sites (other than universities), remote from the Museum, as a means of accruing expertise. For Vallance, the objects received gained value, authentication and 'authenticity' through having been witnessed coming 'direct from the excavations'. The process also conveyed status on Ward who, as an on-the-spot witness, gained authority as also having, himself, come direct from the excavations. Ward rose rapidly through the hierarchy of the Art and Ethnographical Department

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<sup>102</sup> According to the Museum's staff register (GB587/ID 103808), he worked in the 'Industrial Department', although that department was not established until 1901.

<sup>103</sup> *Scotsman* (1931a); (1934a); *Nature* (1934), 243.

<sup>104</sup> Vallance (1908), 9 [865].

becoming its Keeper in 1914. He was the first Director to be promoted through the ranks of the Museum, succeeding Curle in 1931. Ward's successor Rowatt enjoyed a similar career trajectory from Assistant to Director.

As these examples show, the establishment and maintenance of the professional identity of the curator as a particular kind of scientific elite was contingent on constellations of place, things and people.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, that expertise was created not exclusively within the confines of the Museum.

Curle recognized the relative academic and professional isolation of his staff, noting that in Edinburgh they 'have not the many advantages of intercourse with foreign students and collectors that are enjoyed at the National Museums in London'.<sup>106</sup> In an effort to increase the connoisseurship and curatorial skills of his arts, beginning in 1921, he arranged short periods of secondment to other museums:

In continuance of the arrangement made with the Victoria and Albert Museum, Mr. Wallis, the assistant in the Art department, had in the autumn the advantage of a three weeks course of study in the Ceramic department of that museum, and by courtesy of the Director of the British Museum, Mr. Kerr, the assistant keeper in the Art department, was attached for three weeks to the Ethnographical section of the department of Ceramics and Ethnography in the British Museum.<sup>107</sup>

#### ***4.8 Extramural sites and the creation of reputational geographies***

The establishment and maintenance of their professional identity, authority and expertise was performed not solely in the Museum building but in a variety of other sites. Honorary degrees and awards, civic honours, election to membership of domestic and foreign learned societies and being called upon to give evidence

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<sup>105</sup> For other examples of such relationships, see Forgan & Gooday (1996); Forgan (2010); Alberti (2011a).

<sup>106</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 86, memorandum para. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Curle (1923a), 6.

to, or to serve on, government committees and commissions all bolstered individual curators' expertise and authority and brought kudos to the Museum – processes which occurred in a multiplicity of sites and constituting what Livingstone has dubbed a 'reputational geography'.<sup>108</sup> Among numerous examples may be cited: Archer's acting as UK government representative to international exhibitions in Copenhagen, Moscow, Paris, Philadelphia and Vienna, a role which brought him numerous honours; Clarke's membership of the advisory committee of the Board of Trade in relation to the Plumage Importation Bill, his participation in the International Committee for Bird Protection, and his election to honorary membership of the American Ornithologists' Union and the Ornithological Society of Vienna and Buda-Pest; Curle's serving on the Commission on Ancient Monuments of Scotland and his receipt of an honorary LL.D. from the University of Glasgow; Traquair's election to Fellowship of the Royal Society, his receipt of the Society's Royal Medal, and his serving as the Swiney lecturer at the British Museum; and Ogilvie's appointment as a Commissioner to the St. Louis Exhibition, and the Museum acting as the administrative centre for various research programmes including an anthropometric survey of Scotland.<sup>109</sup> Directors, with the notable exceptions of Curle and Ward, and those Keepers whose interests were in zoology, geology or engineering, were elected fellows of the Royal Society of

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<sup>108</sup> Livingstone (2011), 180.

<sup>109</sup> Entries for Clarke, Martin, and Vallance in *Who's Who*, 1914; Archer (1873a); *Scotsman* (1873a); Marwick (1887); *Times* (1903); *Scotsman* (1934a); *Times* (1934); *Times* (1935); Cassillis (1935); Paton, (2004). Archer was awarded various international honours including from Austria Commander of the Order of Franz Joseph, from Portugal Chevalier of the Order of St Hiago, and from Russia the Great Gold Medal of the Ministry of Crown Domains.

Edinburgh, thereby the prestige of these individuals, of the Museum, and of the Society were enmeshed and mutually reinforcing (Table 4.3A-C).<sup>110</sup>

The natural history curatorial staff in particular played an active role in the learned societies of Edinburgh, most notably the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh. John Gibson served for 15 years as Assistant Secretary to the Society and Galletly, Traquair, Ritchie and Stephen all held office and presented papers which were published in its *Proceedings*.<sup>111</sup> The Museum's staff also constructed their expert status through publication in other learned journals, books, monographs and through contributing articles to encyclopaedia, newspapers and popular magazines. No attempt has been made here to construct a comprehensive bibliography but a few previously published examples serve to demonstrate the range of staff authorship and the nature of their output.<sup>112</sup> Gibson wrote a weekly column for *The Scotsman* on natural history and authored books on popular science.<sup>113</sup> He also contributed sections on dogs and elephants to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (9<sup>th</sup> edition) and contributed to the popular magazines *Leisure Hour* and *Longman's Magazine*.<sup>114</sup> Galletly had a similarly varied output, contributing, together with Archer, to *Chambers Encyclopaedia* and to *British Manufacturing Industries*.<sup>115</sup> As one obituarist wrote of Galletly's eclectic range of publications:

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<sup>110</sup> Waterston & Shearer (2006).

<sup>111</sup> Examples include Traquair (1878); Galletly (1883a; b); Traquair (1879); (1885); Ritchie (1909a; b); Stephen (1928); (1929).

<sup>112</sup> Wilson (1866), 525-529; Smart (1945); NMS(NH)/52, 'W. E. Clarke. List of papers (1879-1906)'. See also entries, including Clarke, Galletly, Ritchie, and Traquair, in Royal Society (1867-1925).

<sup>113</sup> Gibson (1884); (1887a; b; c).

<sup>114</sup> *Scotsman* (1887a).

<sup>115</sup> Bevan (1876-77) and subsequent editions.

Probably no other contributor wrote on subjects so various, and yet all requiring specialist knowledge. The range of his information was truly encyclopædic in all that concerned manufacturing industries in almost every respect – botanical, zoological, chemical and economical, as well as technical. And in many departments of art and archaeology his judgement is swift and cultured.<sup>116</sup>

Through their engagement with the collections, each member of the curatorial staff established expertise in the subject matter of the collections that he, or she, curated.<sup>117</sup> They also established expertise in the processes of curation and in the means of presenting objects through exhibition, which Meyer dubbed ‘museal science’.<sup>118</sup>

#### ***4.9 Conclusion***

The focus on the people who worked in the Museum has further extended analysis of the relationships between them and the objects with which they worked and the sites of their labour. It has demonstrated the complexity and something of the geography of these relationships, in particular the multiplicity of sites involved in their production. It has been shown that through these intra- and extra-mural sites the Museum operated in a number of mixed economies involving not only staff, but also contractors, and employees of other government departments. This chapter has further shown that many of the practices and protocols governing the recruitment and development of staff, and the work they could do, were set beyond the authoritative control of the Museum and beyond Scotland. Control lay with the administering department of government, which itself was subject to strictures imposed by the Treasury and answerable to

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<sup>116</sup> *Scotsman* (1894).

<sup>117</sup> Until the appointment of Marjorie Platt in 1931, all the curatorial staff were male.

<sup>118</sup> Meyer cited in Bather (1903a), 319.

Parliament. The United Kingdom-wide standardised systems operated by the Civil Service Commissioners and by the Crown Agents also impinged on the operation of the Museum, as did the requirements for the Museum to operate within the systems of other government agencies such as the Stationery Office and Office of Works (Figure 4.10).

**THE ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM.**

THE SCOTCH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT in account with His Majesty's  
Stationery Office for Government Publications during the Quarter ended  
*31<sup>st</sup> March 1914.*

NAME OF WORKS.	1		2		3		4		5		6		7.		Price.	Produce of Sales during the above Quarter.	
	Total number of copies received from Stationery Office down to last day of the above Quarter.	Number remaining in store on the last day of the above Quarter.	Total number sold as shown in the last quarterly statement.	Total number issued for official use during the above Quarter.	Total number issued as mentioned in the preceding or preceding quarters of the above Quarter.	Total number received in Stationery Office up to the last day of the above Quarter.	Number sold during the above Quarter and in the past year.	s.	d.	£	s.	d.					
General Guide to Fabrics	10,000	484	8426	2	3	22	763	1	3	3	4						
Guide to Geological Collection	10,000	1000															
"    Scottish Mineral	1000	316	96	6	37	12	13	1									
"    Rock Collection	1000	245	398	38	4		15	1									
"    Persian Collection	980	878	56	3		3	40	1									
"    Agate Collection	1000	461	462	48	25	1	3	1									
"    Crystal Collection	200	251	222	13	8		3	1									
"    Egyptian Collection	480	263	178	15	31	3	10	3									
"    Livingstone Exhibits	10,000	4523	3553	28	113	1	1452	1									
General History Catalogue	250	191	6	23	28	2		4									
"    List of Books on Architecture	500	358	113	20	24			3									
"    Furniture	500	382	77	19	22			3									
"    Arms & Weapons	500	394	60	20	22			3									
"    Travels &c	500	424	32	22	22			6									
"    Class	500	432	24	21	20	3		3									
"    Pottery & Porcelain	500	405	46	24	25	2		4									
"    Botany & Zoology	500	426	19	26	29			1									
"    Ornament &c	500	401	26	26	44	3		1									
Post cards	20,000	14,841	4,642	103			382	2									
																	15 11
																	£ 10 14 2

Director of Museum

Figure 4.10. Quarterly account by the Museum to His Majesty's Stationery Office of publications sold. From a bound volume 'Quarterly Accounts of Guides &c.' (GB587/[n.n.]).

With the Department based in Whitehall, for a while the Museum *was* SED in Scotland: ‘The Museum will become headquarters of the Department in Scotland and the deputations on educational questions may be received there. The Secretary or any other officer of the Department will also attend there when in Scotland on official business’.<sup>119</sup> From 1904 until government offices were opened in Edinburgh’s Queen Street in 1908, the Assistant Secretary in the Department, Dr (later Sir) George Macdonald, had his office in the Museum<sup>120</sup> – not until 1940 did SED relocate its headquarters from Whitehall to St Andrews House in Edinburgh.<sup>121</sup>

The chapter has shown that sites where knowledges, skills, and authority of curatorial staff were constructed and validated changed substantially during the twentieth century as expertise created in the Museum became increasingly differentiated from that produced in other sites, a non-architectural example of what Forgan described as a shift from a vocabulary of juxtaposition to one of separation.<sup>122</sup> As Graeme Gooday has demonstrated for other sites of science-making, the authority of the Museum’s staff did not map neatly onto social elites or those educated in particular ways.<sup>123</sup> Authority was context and site contingent. In Alberti’s terms, ‘Curators spoke with authority because of *where* they worked’; or, to use Livingstone’s phrase, authority was a matter of ‘locution and location’.<sup>124</sup> The increasing trend for career progression within the Museum offered the potential for and the accrual of knowledge from one generation of

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<sup>119</sup> *Scotsman* (1901).

<sup>120</sup> *Hansard* (1908).

<sup>121</sup> Scotland (1969); Gibson (1985).

<sup>122</sup> Forgan (1998), 196.

<sup>123</sup> Gooday (2008).

<sup>124</sup> Livingstone (2003), 7; Alberti (2011a), 52.

post-holder to the next, thereby creating a situated expertise, a corporate memory and particular ways of knowing and ways of doing.<sup>125</sup> As Adrian Desmond has shown, the establishment of such an ‘insider’ group involved situated practice and the creation of a community of practitioners within which an increase social status, authority and credibility went hand in hand.<sup>126</sup> This is revealing of something of the relationships between site and the construction of expertise and status; for as Diarmid Finnegan put it, ‘the particularities of place and contingencies of scientific practice’.<sup>127</sup> However, as I have discussed, and will demonstrate in the chapters which follow, the development of a distinctive Museum way of doing museal science was subverted by the imposition of practices and protocols established elsewhere.

Matters of authority and status were reflected not only in where staff came from; they were reflected too in where they went to. For example, with 23 years of experience on the staff of the Museum, in 1930 Ritchie was the successful candidate for the chair of Natural History at the University of Aberdeen (in 1936 he was appointed to the chair at the University of Edinburgh a post he held until 1952). Ogilvie moved from the post of Director to that of Principal Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education (later to become Secretary), and from 1911 to 1920, he was Director of the Science Museum, London, before becoming Principal Assistant Secretary at the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. In 1909, Dobbie resigned the Directorship to accept the post of Principal of the Government Laboratory, London.

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<sup>125</sup> Alberti (2011a), 64.

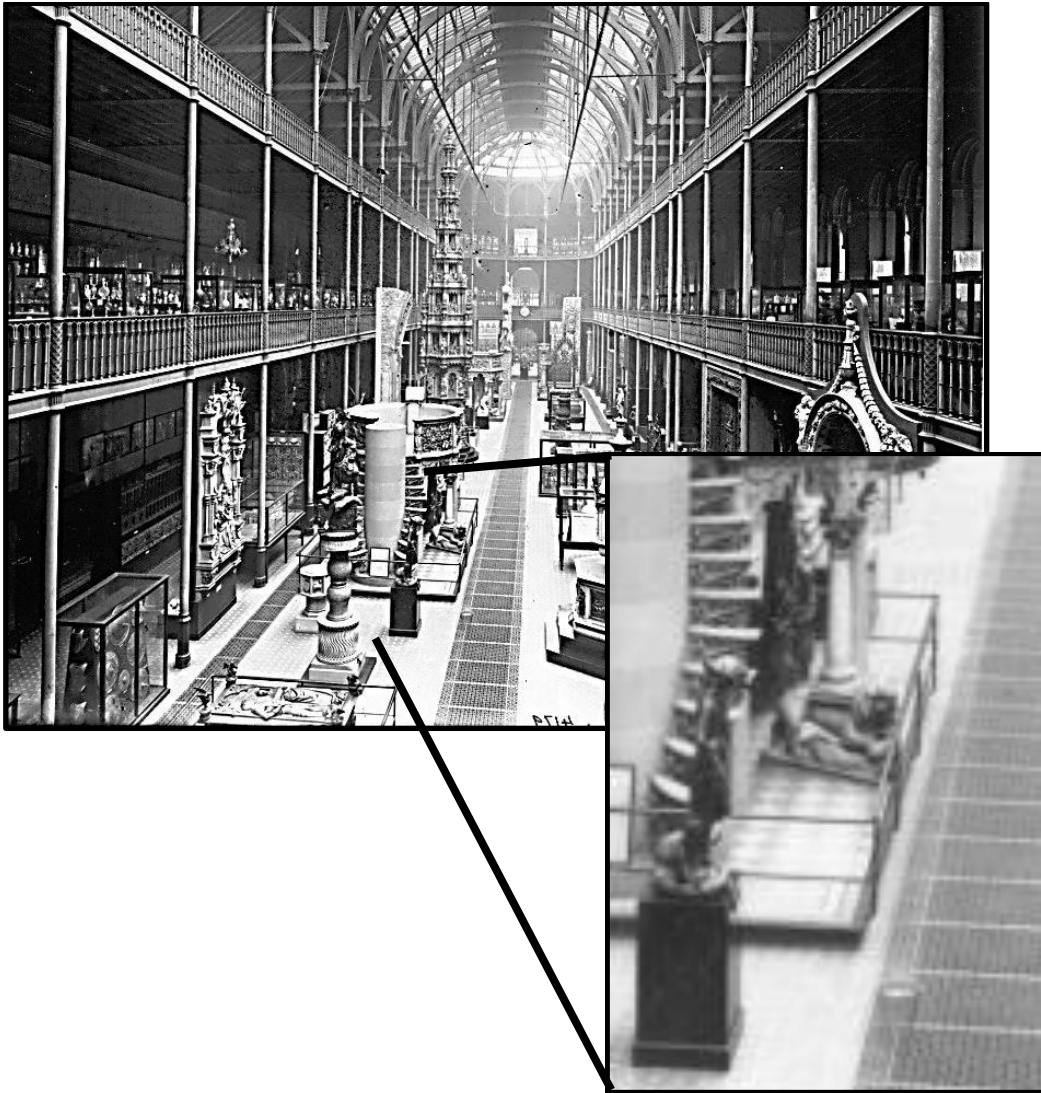
<sup>126</sup> Desmond (2001).

<sup>127</sup> Finnegan (2008), 374; Albert (2011a).

Attention to the people who worked in, and for, the institution has provided a prism through which to bring into view those staff, Cleaners, Attendants, Housekeepers, Preparers, and alike, whose roles are often considered as subaltern to those of the curators and who have generally been written out of museum histories. For these artisan and labouring staff their assigned roles in the Museum appear in job specifications, such as those in ‘General Instructions’, but details of their actual day-to-day working practices are difficult to recover. They generally appear in the documentary record only through their being involved in exceptional incidents: such as the fatal fall of a watchman, George Granville.<sup>128</sup> In a photograph taken in the period 1889 and 1896, a Cleaner’s bucket, probably positioned to catch drips from the leaky roof and removed partway through the long exposure, has left its ghostly image evoking impressions of labour otherwise unseen (Figure 4.11). However, the chapter has brought into view most conspicuously those people who performed the processes of collecting, exhibiting, and educating which are addressed in detail in the three chapters which follow.

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<sup>128</sup> *Scotsman* (1887b).



**Figure 4.11.** Evidence of labour: a bucket, removed during the exposure, has left its ghostly presence in this photograph of the Great Hall, *circa* 1900 (GB587/IS.2009.3 [NMS(I)/24358]).

	Junior Assistant	Assistant	Assistant Keeper	Keeper	Curator	Director	Served until	Formal training	Degrees	FRSE
George Wilson (1818-1859)						1855	1859 (d.)	medical/surgical/chemistry	M.D. (1839)	1845
Thomas Archer (1817-1885)						1860	1885 (d.)	medical/surgical		1862
Robert Murdoch Smith (1835-1900)						1885	1900 (d.)	engineering/military		1886
Francis Grant Ogilvie (1858-1930)						1900	1903 (res.)	engineering/mathematics	B.Sc; M.A.	1888
James Dobbie (1852-1924)						1903	1909 (res.)	chemistry	M.A. (1878); D.Sc (1879) FRS 1904	1903
Thomas Carlaw Martin (1850 -1920)						1909 [1911]	1911 (ret.)	art ?	LL.D. (hon.)	1912
Alexander Ormiston Curle (1866-1955)						1916	1931 (ret.)	law		
Edwin Ward (1880-1934)	1900	1904	1912	1914		1931	1934 (d.)	art (one year)		
Thomas Rowatt (1879-1950)		1902	1909	1920		1934	1944 (ret.)	engineering (diploma)	M.I Mech.E.	1935
William Ian Finlay (1906-1995)		1932	through graded?	1955		1961	1971 (ret.)	arts	M.A.	

**Table 4.3A. Summary of the careers of Directors. d. = died in post; res. = resigned; ret. = retired.**

	Clerk	Junior Assistant	Assistant	Assistant Keeper	Keeper	Served until	Formal training	Degrees	FRSE
Edward Forbes (1815-1854)					1854* (Nat. Hist.)	1854 (d.)	medical/surgical (non-graduate)		
James Davies (?-1872)			1854 (Nat. Hist.)			1872 (d.)			
George Allman (1812-1898)					1855* (Nat. Hist.)	1870 (res.)	medical/surgical	M.D. (1847)	1856
Charles Wyville Thomson (1830-1882)					1870* (Nat. Hist.)	1872 (term.)	medical/surgical (non-graduate)	LL.D (hon.) (1853 & 1860)	1855
John Gibson (?-1887)		Attendant 1866 (Nat. Hist.)	1872 (Nat. Hist.)			1887 (d.)			
Ramsay Traquair (1840-1912)					1873 (Nat. Hist.)	1906 (ret.)	medical/surgical	M.D. (1862)	1874
T. Stock (?-?)	? (Nat. Hist.)					1888 (res.)			
A. Macconochie			?**(Geol.)				geology		
John G. Goodchild (1844-1906)				?**(Geol.)		1906(d.)	geology		
F. G. Bainbridge (?-?)	1888 (Nat. Hist.)					?			
William Eagle Clarke (1853-1938)			1888 (Nat. Hist.)	1901 (Nat. Hist.)	1906 (Nat. Hist.)	1921 (ret.)	natural history (non-graduate)		1903
Percy Grimshaw (1869-1939)		1893 (Nat. Hist.)	1901 <sup>st</sup> (Nat. Hist.)	1906 (Nat. Hist.)	1930 (Nat. Hist.)				1909
James Ritchie (1882-1958)			1907 (Nat. Hist.)	1919 (Nat. Hist.)	1921 (Nat. Hist.)		natural history	M.A.	1916
Samuel J. Shand (1882-1957)				1907 (Geol.)		1911 (res.)	geology	B.Sc., Ph.D.	1952
William McLintock (1887-1960)				1911 (Nat. Hist.)		1920 (trans.)	geology	B.Sc (1907), D.Sc. (1915)	1916
David Balsillie (?-?)				1921 (Geol.)		1944 (res.)	chemistry	B.Sc	1918
Leonard Gill (1877- ?)			1922 (Nat. Hist.)			1924 (res.)			
Alexander Stephen (1893-1966)			1925 (Nat. Hist.)	through graded	1935 (Nat. Hist.)	1958 (ret.)		B.Sc. (1919).	1929
Marjorie Platt (?-1953)			1931 (Nat. Hist.)	through graded		1953 (d.)		B.Sc	
Andrew Roger Waterston (1912-1996)			1935 (Nat. Hist.)	through graded	1958 (Nat. Hist.)	1973 (ret.)		B.Sc (1935)	

**Table 4.3B. Summary of the careers of curatorial staff in the natural history stream. term. = post terminated; trans. = transferred; \*denotes post held by virtue of being the Regius Professor of Natural History; \*\* denotes member of staff of the Geological Survey of Scotland (other abbreviations as in Table 4.3A).**

	Clerk	Assistant	Assistant Keeper	Keeper	Curator	Served until	Formal Training	Degrees	FRSE
Alexander Galletly (1829-1894)		'Resident Assistant' 1855			1866 Acting Director 1859-60 and 1887		stone mason; draughtsman		
Thomas Bloxam (?-?)		1855				1859 (term.)	chemistry		
Walter Clark (1874-1916)		1869	1901						
Charles N. B. Muston (1848-1909)	1874 (Lib.)	1888 (Lib.)	1901 (Lib.)						
Adam B. Steele (1846-1922)	1882 (Patent Lib)					1911 (ret.)			
T. W. Nask (1864-1900)		1888				?			
David Vallance (1849-1915)					1894 Acting Director 1910-1911				
I. A. K. Burnett (?-?)		1909 (Lib.)				?			
John Stephen Jolly (1889-1916)		1911 (Lib.) 1912 (Art)	1914 (Art)			1916 (d.)			
Alexander Galt (1854-1938)				1901 (Tech.)		1920 (ret.)	engineering/physi cs	B.Sc (1887); D.Sc (1898))	1887
Robert Kerr (1890- ?)		1912 (Art)	1914 (Art)	1931 (Art)		1955 (ret.)***		M.A.	
Walter C. Wallis (1890-?)		1920	?			1955 (ret.)***		M.A.	
N. D. Cuthbertson		? (Lib.)						M.A.	
Alexander Hutchieson (1892- ?)		1925 (Tech.)	through graded	1934 (Tech.)		1957 (ret.)		B.Sc., M.I.Mech. E.	
Robert W. Plenderleith (1901-1974)		1935 (Tech.)	through graded	1957 (Tech.)		1966 (ret.)	engineering	B.Sc (1922)	1957
Cyril Aldred (1914-1991)		1937 (Art)	through graded	1961 (Art)		1974 (ret.)	art history	B.A.	1978

**Table 4.3C. Summary of the careers of curatorial staff in the industrial stream. Lib. = Library (other abbreviations as in Table 4.3B). \*\*\* Kerr and Wallis were retained, on a part-time and full-time basis, respectively, until *circa* 1957.**

## COLLECTING: PRACTICES OF ACCUMULATION AND DISCARD

It [collecting] is not merely a reflection of the material world...collecting is a dynamic process in which the collector struggles to impose himself and to control others. Collections make a difference.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

Forming and maintaining collections of objects is fundamental to what a museum is.<sup>2</sup> The process of making collections disciplines objects and constructs particular views of the material world: ‘Collections are a significant element in our attempt to construct the world, and so the effort to understand them is one way of exploring our relationship with the world’.<sup>3</sup> For Susanne Keene, ‘An assemblage of objects becomes a collection by imposing order and classification on it’.<sup>4</sup> The processes of classification implicit in collection making are quintessentially matters of geography, of putting things in their *place* – geographical knowledge-making through objectification. Moreover, the place of an object is a matter of epistemology as much as one of material location: ‘understandings may change even when artefacts remain constant’ or in Knell’s terminology, the intangible object may change its nature about its tangible twin.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pearce (1995), 181.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald (2006b), 81.

<sup>3</sup> Pearce (1992), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Keene (2006), 190.

<sup>5</sup> Pickstone (1994), 112; Knell (2012).

This chapter places the Museum's collections and the processes and practices of collecting in their temporal and spatial contexts. The extent of the collecting activities precludes the (re)construction of the career trajectory of each object.<sup>6</sup> Instead, to construct a geography of collecting, I seek to discern some general trends in the processes of accumulation and discard of objects and ideas which 'shaped' the collections. In respect of collecting and collections as central themes in an historical geography of the Museum, certain questions are key. *What* was acquired, rejected or discarded? *Why* and by *whom* was it collected? *How* were objects collected and disciplined and how did these practices change? *Where* were the processes of collecting enacted, and how did these actions configure and re-configure the 'territorial features', the material and intellectual architectures, of the Museum?

Because of the processes of discard, the collections, as they exist today, provide only a partial source.<sup>7</sup> Also, as Knell points out "miscuration" can leave just about any collection of objects decontextualized and historically unreliable. By contrast, the meaning of seemingly more fragile collections of words on paper in archives and libraries (and museum files) survives abuse far more readily'.<sup>8</sup> To show not only what was retained, but also what was discarded or lost, it is necessary to examine the documentary practices of the Museum – the Museum's collections were, simultaneously, a group of material objects and a set of documentary inscriptions (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Interrogation of the registers and associated documents thus allows the reconstruction of the collections as

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<sup>6</sup> Kopytoff (1986).

<sup>7</sup> Alberti (2005), 567.

<sup>8</sup> Knell (2007), 8.

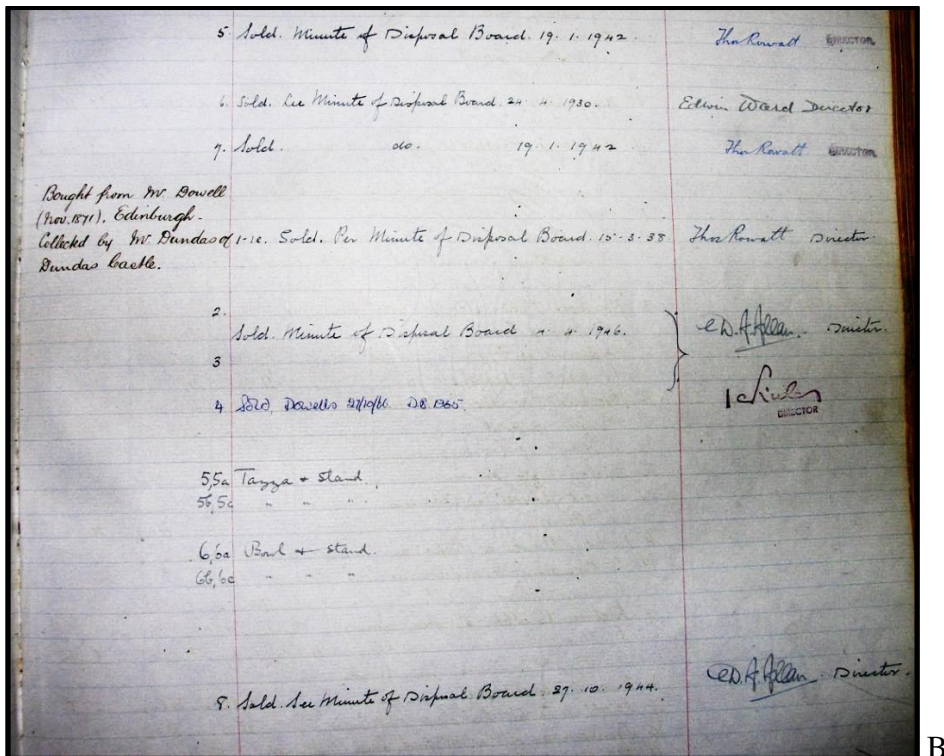
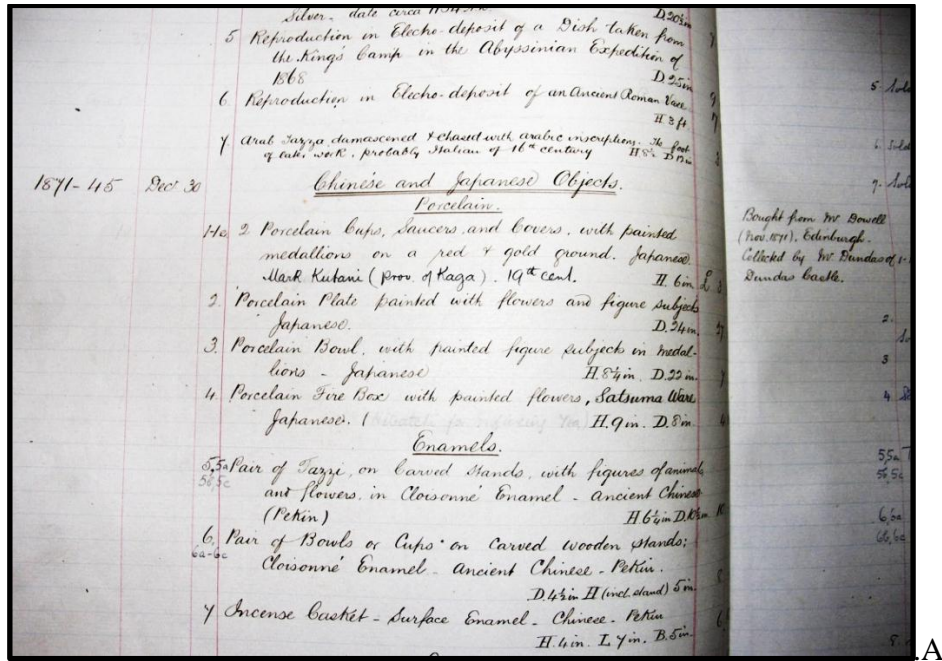


Figure 5.1. The Industrial Museum Register as site of (A) accession and (B) disposal, left and right hand pages. Entries relating to the accession of collection of Chinese and Japanese porcelain ([A].1871-45 and the disposal of certain items from that collection (photograph by the author).

they existed at moments in the past – the documents provide discarded objects with an ‘absent presence.’<sup>9</sup> Examination of the documentation extends our analytic gaze beyond the objects themselves and beyond the material spaces of the Museum to expose the networks along which objects were made to travel, to and within (and occasionally out of) the Museum.



**Figure 5.2. The Natural History collections as objects and as inscriptions: (A) the Natural History collections on display *circa* 1900; (B) Natural History Register, the upper shelf holds eight of the volumes recording specimens received prior to 1900 ((A) GB587/IS.2009.9; (B) photograph by the author, 18 July 2012).**

The inscriptive practices and sites of documentation – registering and registers, cataloguing and catalogues, labelling and labels, reporting and reports; receiving and receipts, indexing and indexes – imposed order on collections. The registers in particular were the means by which objects were disciplined and, as I show in what follows, they were a vital mechanism by which the complex

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<sup>9</sup> Hetherington (2004).

epistemological spaces of the Museum were formed and structured. Further, the chronological arrangement of entries in the registers constructs a history of collecting.

The heterogeneity of the records challenges rigorous quantitative analyses, such as those applied to smaller and (apparently) more consistently documented collections.<sup>10</sup> For example, some accessioned lots in the registers consisted of single specimens, whilst at other times the quantity of objects received overwhelmed the staff's ability to document them and many register entries consist of lots, some comprising thousands of objects, which were not enumerated individually. The diversity of records notwithstanding, some quantitative data are presented as indicative of general trends in the shaping of the collections.

Before further interrogating the sources available to construct an historical geography of collecting the term 'collecting' itself requires some consideration.

### ***5.2 Processes and sites of collecting: 'register' as noun and verb***

'Collecting', as I use the term, denotes the processes involved in the complex trajectory by which an object arrives at (and, in some instances, leaves) a museum, as well as those many processes conducted within the museum – processes of 'finding' and 'keeping' to adopt Robert Kohler's terms; 'hunting' and 'gathering' in Alberti's terminology.<sup>11</sup> It encompasses a diversity of physical

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<sup>10</sup> Petch (2006); Gosden & Larson (2007). For an example of a quantitative study of part of National Museums Scotland collection, see Whittington (2002).

<sup>11</sup> Alberti (2001), 122; 63; Kohler (2007); Alberti (2011a).

and epistemological displacements. For Hannah-Lee Chalk that moment when an object is removed from its place of discovery ('finding') constitutes the 'coming into being' of a specimen; an epistemological transposition from something 'out there' into an object which is possessed.<sup>12</sup> Since finders are not necessarily themselves keepers, objects may pass through the hands of a series of collectors. In consequence, 'collecting' encompasses and enmeshes a variety of motivations and practices which accrete (and may be eroded) as dynamic associations – objects collect people as people collect things, or to use Latour's phrase, 'there is a social history of things and a "thingy" history of humans'.<sup>13</sup> As components of networks of accumulation, and of credibility and authority, museums were (and are) constituted not solely through their own practices but as participants in repertoires of practices which themselves had genealogies, and geographies, beyond the museum. On arrival at a museum, each object carries with it an embedded 'archaeology' of decision-making – field notebooks, labels, diaries, catalogues, and alike – which may travel with the object but are not, generally, intrinsic to it. For Frances Larson and co-workers, collecting involves 'a complicated, shifting circulation of people and things that is literally endless'.<sup>14</sup> Further, this circulation does not cease when an object enters a museum. As Alberti shows us, acquisition is 'but the first in a convoluted series of meaning and context shifts' making the museum 'not a static mausoleum but a dynamic,

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<sup>12</sup> Chalk (2012), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Latour (1999), 18; Alberti (2009), 91.

<sup>14</sup> Larson, Petch & Zeitlyn (2007), 212.

mutable entity where specimens were added and preserved, discarded, and destroyed'.<sup>15</sup> To quote Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles:

[Objects] are always in a state of becoming, and this is true not just when they are produced and used in their original context, but once collected and housed in a museum. The physical circumstances of the object change continuously, but so also do its sets of significances as it accumulates a history ... An object is best viewed as indicative of a process, rather than static relations, and this process is ongoing in the museum as elsewhere, so that there is a series of continuous social relations surrounding the object connecting the 'field' and the 'museum'.<sup>16</sup>

Collecting is, therefore, not a single moment of acquisition, but a series of processes continually at play before and within the Museum. Collections are the products, at any moment in time, of these on-going processes through which objects are judged and classified (and re-classified), values and meanings assigned (and reassigned), and decisions made about acquisition or rejection, retention or disposal. Processes of collecting involve classification, an epistemic relocation which generally involves degrees of movement and physical or documentary re-location which may extend before and beyond the museum. Thus, networks of connections brought a variety of sites into conjunction and delivered objects into museums. Allan imagined nodes in these networks as the experiences of objects which he described as being:

like so many ships, come to rest in some sheltered moorings, after world-wide journeying – for rocks, animals, weapons, and costumes are gathered here from world-wide sources, many after unimaginable adventures by camp-fire, in deep jungle or by Polar iceberg. Nor is that the only wonder- that they have been found and brought here: there is the other wonder, so often forgotten by the onlooker, that they have been preserved and shown in as close an approximation to their pristine beauty as skill, experience and scientific aids can secure.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Alberti (2005), 562.

<sup>16</sup> Gosden & Knowles (2001), 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Allan (1961), 40.

Pre-Museum collecting took place in a variety of sites – domestic spaces, associational spaces of learned societies, colleges, and universities, commercial spaces of auction houses and antique and curio dealers, in zoological gardens and menageries, and in spaces of public display such as national and international exhibitions. Yet, within these networks of collecting, as Alberti reminds us, ‘Museums are passive recipients as often as they are active collectors’, dependent on what, for Pearce, is the ‘flux and muddle’ that determines the survival of both objects and their contextual associations.<sup>18</sup> What could be acquired was dependent upon what was available for acquisition. This was generally beyond the control of individual museums, and although they produced lists of *desiderata* and actively solicited donations and bequests, much acquisition was the result of decisions made earlier and elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> That the Museum exercised little direct control is illustrated by some of the less promising objects donated and accessioned: [G.] [Z.]1857.11 ‘7 specimens of Rock from the Crimea & 10 [ditto] from Brit. Cafraria – worthless specimens’; [Z.]1858.28 Skin of reindeer male, seven years old from Hudsons Bay ‘The skin was so much injured that only the head and 2 of the legs were presented as specimens’; [Z.]1860.33 Exceptionally large *Uromaster glacialis* from Harris ‘in very bad condition’.<sup>20</sup> The registers show too that atypical objects tended to attract attention with the consequence that melanistic, albino, exceptionally large specimens and rare vagrant species were over-represented, and weapons, and objects associated with social elites or special events, predominated over the quotidian.

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<sup>18</sup> Pearce (1992), 120; Alberti (2009), 92.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 1, Archer ‘List of Desiderata to Illustrate the Manufacture of Gloves’ and similar lists for lace and hose, pp. 217-226.

<sup>20</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Natural History Register.

The Register was central to the process of collecting. In it, through documentary practices of scribing, objects were ascribed identity and identifiers as Museum objects. These assigned identities, inscribed onto the objects themselves or on labels attached to them, associated each objects with the corresponding entry in the ledger. The Register was (and is) the site in which an object was made ‘the property of the Museum’; an act which has been described as a form of ‘consecration’.<sup>21</sup> To register an object brought an object into being as a ‘museum object’, and imposed responsibilities and obligations of accountability. Registration generally carried with it a presumption of keeping in perpetuity and these ‘consecrated’ objects were subject to conservation technologies which sought to maintain their material state, imbuing them with a ‘socially produced durability’.<sup>22</sup> The inscription of a unique accession number in the register, and onto an object itself (or label attached to it), was the mechanism by which an object was associated with – brought *into register* or concordance with – its documentation. Further, the Register, together with the Minute Book of the Disposal Boards, was also the place in which, through processes of de-accessioning, the consecrated status was revoked.

From the registers and the labels stemmed a range of other documentary processes and locations, ‘a cascade of inscriptions’ to use Latour’s term, assigning objects to their material and metaphorical places within the Museum and facilitating the construction of finding aids to the collections (Figure 5.2).<sup>23</sup> Since practice was generally to arrange objects in systematic series, thereby

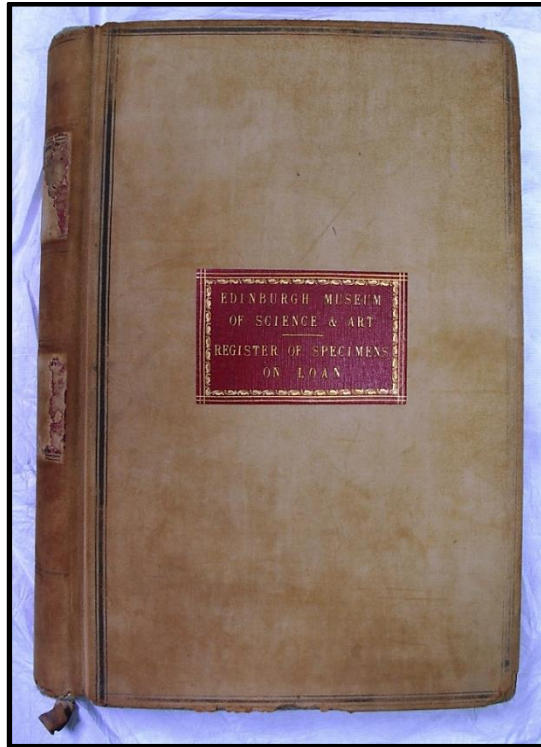
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<sup>21</sup> Pearce (1995), 406; Macdonald (2006), 83. For use of ‘property of the Museum’, see *Leeds Mercury* (1866).

<sup>22</sup> Buchli (2002), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Latour (1987), 241.

disassembling previous juxtapositions, the registers provide glimpses of previous assemblages.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 5.3. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art Loans Register, Volume 1 (NMS(CS)/[n.n.]).**

As I have discussed elsewhere, the documents of the Museum are themselves material objects. Registers may be considered “meta-objects”, collections of records of collections, “an archive of an archive”.<sup>25</sup> They embody haptic memory, a ‘corporeal way of knowing’, and their continued use as working documents involves the sorts of engagement with past practice that for

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<sup>24</sup> For an example of reconstruction of past collections, see Waterston (1997). See also discussion in Knell (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Swinney (2012), 31.

Caitlin DeSilvey is ‘a moment of mimetic labour [which] opened up a channel of communication that tracked along networks of relation and resonance’.<sup>26</sup> The nineteenth-century ledgers exude a tangy aroma of smoke, evoking, for me, images of the coal-fired-heated offices and gas-lit rooms and exhibition spaces in which they were written and consulted. This, together with the handwriting, signals to the labour involved in their production and to particular interrelationships between, spaces, objects and those charged with their care.

A further set of ledgers begun in May 1865 as the ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: Register of Specimens on Loan’ (hereafter the Loan Register), documented a different sort of collecting, one predicated on ephemerality rather than permanence of accumulations and juxtapositions (Figure 5.3).<sup>27</sup> Before considering this temporary collecting, however, I address further the documentation of ‘the property of the Museum’.

### **5.3 Collecting streams, disciplines, and departments**

#### *5.3.1 The construction of Registers*

The initial pages of a ledger ‘Catalogue of the Museum of the College of Edinburgh’ outline the context of its production (Figure 5.4). Copied extracts from a correspondence reveal that, in 1812, as a condition to providing annually funds for collecting, from ‘Our Revenues arising in Scotland applicable to the uses of our civil government’, the Barons of the Exchequer in Scotland required

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<sup>26</sup> DeSilvey (2007), 41.

<sup>27</sup> NMS(CS)/[n.n.], ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: Register of Specimens on Loan’; See for example, NMS/(CS)/[n.n.], ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: Register of Specimens on Loan’, 4 volumes (1865-1905; 1905-1922; 1922-1956; 1956-1998). See also GB587/133947, ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: Specimens on Loan’ (1865-1886).

that the collections be catalogued: 'the Professor should lodge with this Court an accurate Inventory or List of all the Articles of Natural History at present in the Museum the property of the Public, And that he annually afterwards make a Report to us of the State of the Museum and additions made to it in the course of the year'.<sup>28</sup>

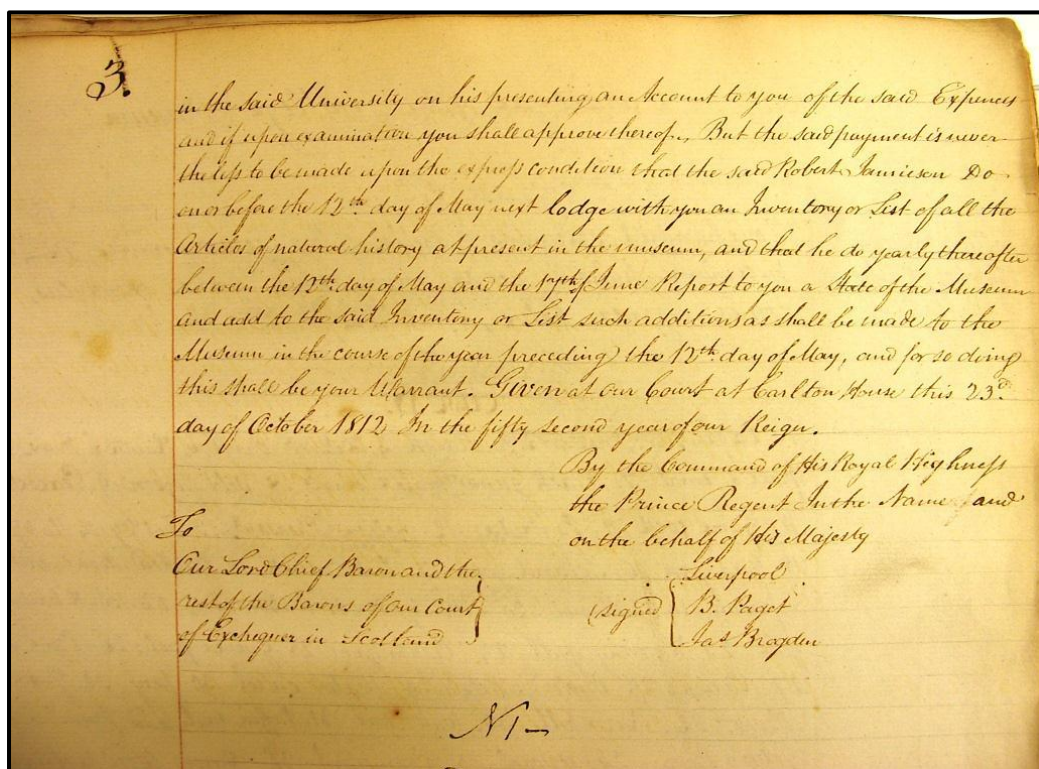


Figure 5.4. Part of a transcript of the Warrant signed on behalf of the King by the Barons of the Treasury imposing an obligation to record additions to the Museum of the College of Edinburgh in response to a petition of 9 July 1812 from Robert Jameson (NMS(NH)/[n.n.], 'Catalogue of the Museum of the College of Edinb<sup>r</sup>', p. 3).

<sup>28</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], 'Catalogue of the Museum of the College of Edinb<sup>r</sup>'.

In compliance annual additions were added to the Catalogue, each inscription being numbered in the form: year, lot number, item number. The process of inscribing additions to the collections was continued following the handover of ownership to government, although the term ‘Register’ was substituted for ‘Catalogue’. This nomenclatorial change reflected the transcription of the accession numbers both into the ledger and onto specimens or their labels – in the University many objects were unlabelled. A set of broadly similar practices were established for the industrial collections in 1855.<sup>29</sup> Together, they disciplined the objects into two collecting streams, the natural history collections and the industrial collections. The use of pre-bound ledgers for registration was a security device, since entries could not easily be removed without leaving a trace of their presence.

The two-volume Catalogue handed over from the University shows the collections to have comprised a diversity of objects of the sort which formed the ‘extended natural history’ practised generally in Victorian Britain.<sup>30</sup> The diversity of objects was encapsulated in a press report of 1826 which noted that, in addition to zoological and geological specimens, the collections included ‘weapons, cloth, implements and other articles indicating the state of the arts among rude and savage nations – a curious lot of models of the cars, ploughs, weavers’ looms, cistern wheels, &c. used in the East Indies, with small figures (about a foot high) carefully moulded and coloured from nature, shewing [*sic*] the varieties of complexion and

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<sup>29</sup> The practices were brought fully into line with each other until the collections were co-located in the bespoke building in 1865. Prior to that entries in the Industrial Register were numbered as a continuous running sequence from 1855 through to 1865 (*i.e.* were not reset to one at the beginning of the year as was the practice in the Natural History register).

<sup>30</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Catalogue of the Collections [Natural History Registers 1 and 2]. For discussion of the ‘extended natural history’, see Pickstone (2000).

feature among the different *castes* of Hindoos'.<sup>31</sup> When, in 1865, the natural history collections were re-arranged in the new building these objects were excluded from the material spaces allocated to of the Natural History Department (Chapter 3). In 1882 Walter Clark, a Senior Assistant, began the process of abstracting and transcribed the records of the material, by then classified as 'ethnographical', from the University's catalogue into a ledger entitled 'University Collection Art and Ethnography' (subsequently termed the 'UC Register') which was lodged with the 'Art and Industrial Section'.<sup>32</sup> The construction of the UC Register was but one in a series of documentary interventions by which collecting streams were reconfigured and divided and new disciplines delineated. Further interventions in the early twentieth century split the two primary collecting departments. In 1901 the Industrial Department was split to form a Technological Department and an Art and Ethnographical Department and, in 1907, the Natural History Department, was divided into a zoology department, which retained the name Natural History Department, and a Geological Department. The creation of the Geological Department was a rationalisation of the complex arrangements relating to the collections of fossils, minerals and rocks. Prior to 1907, the Museum effectively had three geological sections: the geological collections within the Natural History collections, those illustrative of economic geology in the Industrial Department, and the collections of the Geological Survey of Scotland which were not registered in the Museum but in which the specimens were identified by the Survey's own numbering

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<sup>31</sup> *Scotsman* (1826).

<sup>32</sup> GB587/ID 107654; ID 107655, 'University Collection: Art and Ethnography', 2 volumes. See also Smith (1900), 249 [379].

system and were in the stewardship of the Survey's seconded staff.<sup>33</sup> In housing this latter collection and its staff the Museum was effectively part of the Survey's distributed sites of operation. In 1907 'the arrangement under which an officer of H.M. Geological Survey was stationed permanently in the Museum in charge of the Survey Collections was brought to an end', although the collections remained the property of the Survey.<sup>34</sup>

Part of the process of forming these new departments was the abstraction, translation, and migration of relevant entries from the existing registers into new departmental registers. Thus, for example, the Natural History scroll registers created in 1907, and subsequent translations of the natural history object records, included object records dating back to 1813 (Figure 5.5). Similarly the process of production of the Technology and Art and Ethnography registers involved translation and transcription of records dating back to 1855.

The ledgers themselves reveal something of the complexity, and inconsistency over time, of the processes of registration and the documentary sites in which they were enacted. The six volumes constituting the Natural History ('permanent') Register for the period 1886 to 1904 and the four volumes for 1904-1915, carry stationers' marks indicating that the ledgers themselves were manufactured in 1903 and 1912 respectively.<sup>35</sup> This shows that, at least in some periods, the rituals of registration involved multiple documentary sites and processes of translation from one to another. The practices and sites involved cannot now be reconstituted, although a few ledgers such as 'Donations to the

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<sup>33</sup> Anderson (1936); Waterston (1954); Mike Taylor, *pers. comm.*, 4 April 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Dobbie (1908), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Swinney (2012), 38; NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Natural History registers.

Industrial Art Department' (Figure 5.6) and an untitled notebook listing accessions January 1859 to October 1873, are indicative of the stages involved.<sup>36</sup>

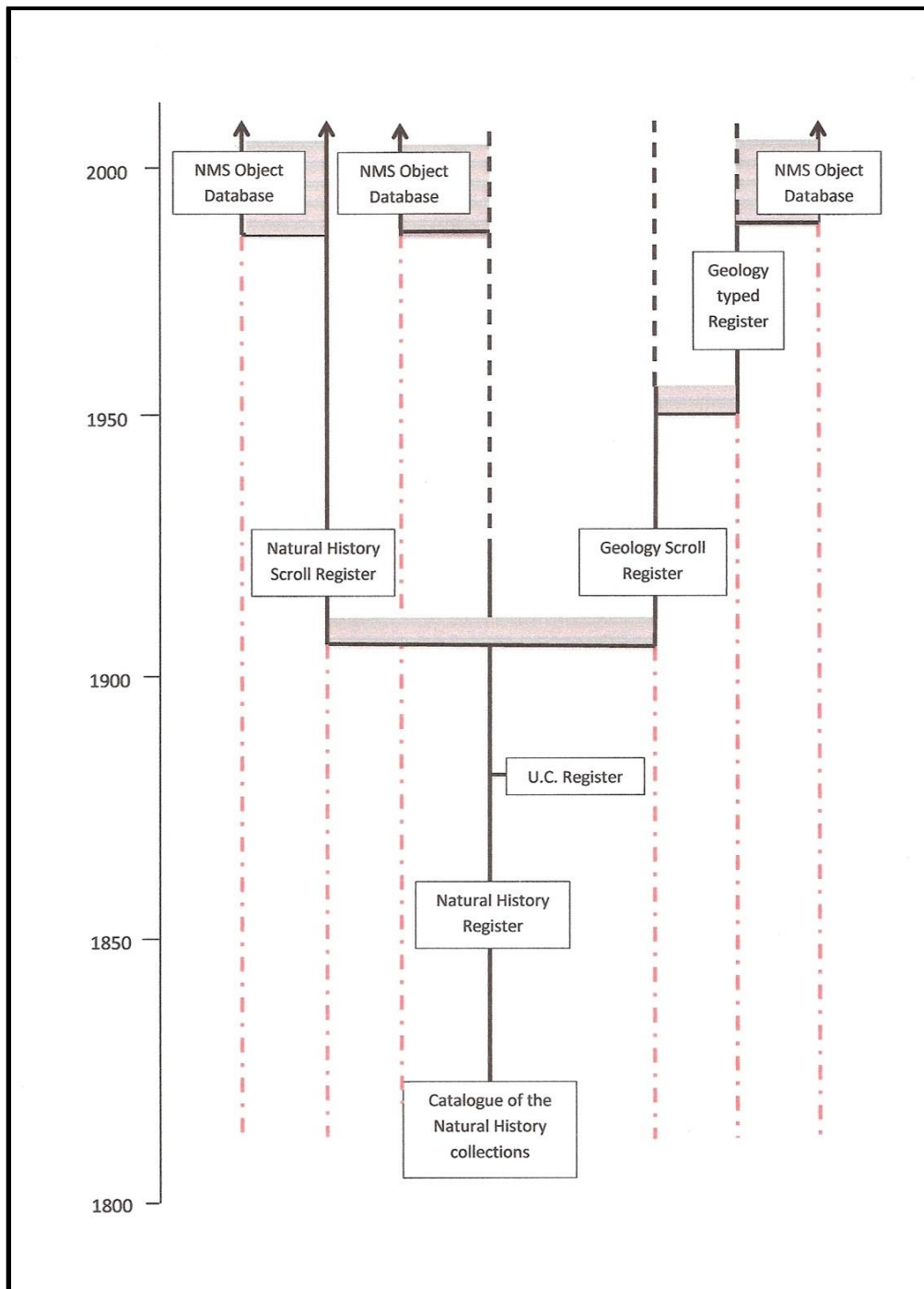
The Museum's Minute Book shows that the multiplicity of sites of registration subverted attempts by the Director to impose uniform practices on the institution as a whole. Amidst a background of governmental concerns about accountability for objects in national collections generally, in 1912 Martin instructed that:

1. The books use The method of Registration to be uniform throughout the Departments, simple in its working, and in the result capable of satisfying the requirements of an Audit officer at any moment:
2. On the receipt of a specimen the appropriate entry, whenever possible, to be made at once in the permanent Register:
3. If, as is sometimes inevitable, time is wanted to identify and describe the object, or otherwise complete the information to be put on record, the transcription from a Scroll Register into the permanent Register to be done as speedily as possible, so as to leave the smallest amount of room for error or omission:
4. The books used for the permanent Register to be of a durable nature in respect to paper and binding:
5. The permanent Registers to be kept in a fire-proof chamber, and, when removed for reference, to be returned to this chamber every night:
6. Printed lists of acquisitions are not to be regarded as part of a registration system or as in any way taking the place of the permanent Register, which is the only record that will be held valid by the Audit officer.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> NMS(A)/[n.n.], 'Donations to the Industrial Art Department'; GB587/133951, [untitled notebook].

<sup>37</sup> GB587/226015, p. 6-7. See also GB587/ID 148376, 5 June 1912, pp. 248-249.



**Figure 5.5. Diagrammatic representation of migration of object records and the construction of new registers productive of the Natural History and Geology collecting streams. Horizontal lines indicate migrations, with shading indicating on-going process. Unbroken lines indicate the time periods during which a document was a site of registration. Black broken lines indicate periods when a document was not a site of registration, although annotations recording subsequent actions might have been made. Red broken lines indicate time period of the object records included in the document.**

DONATIONS TO THE INDUSTRIAL ART DEPARTMENT.

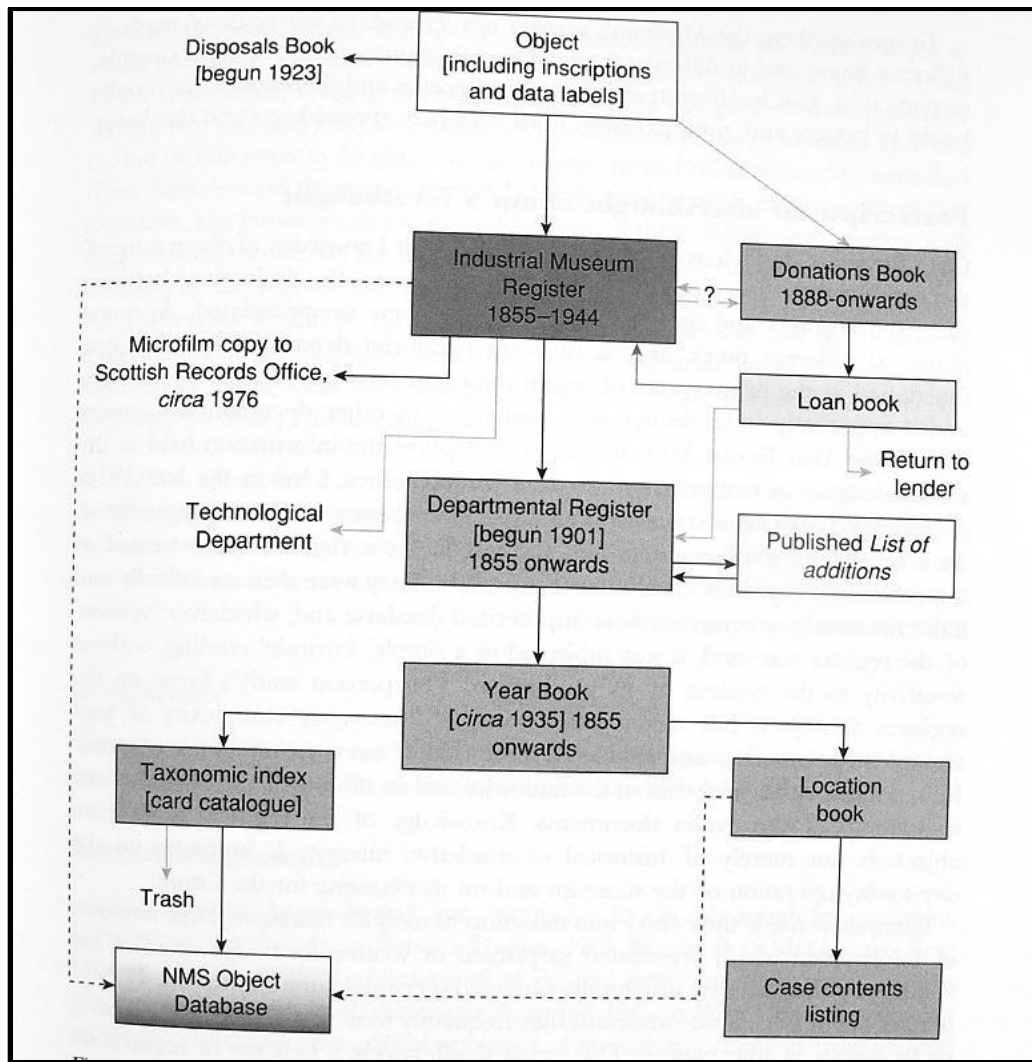
20  
1894

When Received.	DONOR'S NAME	RESIDENCE.	OBJECT GIVEN.	Letter of Thanks sent.
June 11	R. Miln Esq.	Russell's Marine Hotel, Blandford	1894. 213 Polished block of Craylockhart Jasper	11 June
21	The Glenfield Co. Ltd Kennedy's Patent Water Meter Co. Ltd The Kennedy, Hunt, Street, Kilmarnock		1894. 216 3/8" <del>Water</del> model of Kennedy's patent water meter	21 June
July 21	H. Livingstone Leamond	Parshall, Belmont	1894. 227-233 Eosinid series	24 July
Aug. 9	J. H. Smith & Co.	Blandfield Chem. Works, Edin.	1894. 258, 1-23 Opium alkaloids (renewal of 1868-20) plus 2 new extracts	24 Aug
14	Miss M. Agalop Maxwell	The Grove, Dumfries	1894. 259 2 Photos of growing plants of the 3. glass	14 Aug
15	J. H. Smith & Co.	Blandfield Chem. Works, Edin.	2 samples of "Persian Opium"	24 Aug
15	J. H. Owens & Sons	Chem. manuf. Manuf. Salt	1894. 260 Cotton seed cake made fr. Egypt Cotton	15 Aug
23	J. H. Smith & Co.	Blandfield Chem. Works, (Ganemills)	Turkey Opium fr. Salonica, renews of (see above)	24 Aug
27	D.	D.	Jalap. & Scammony & roots of jalap. Scammony roots	24 Aug
Sept 12	J. H. Smiles	Bangkok, Siam	1894. 292-337 Siamese Collection	13 Sept
Sept 9	Miss M. Agalop Maxwell	The Grove, Dumfries	2 Photos of N Zealand flax	Letter sent by Canadian process, same date
Oct 12	Science & Art Department Authorities of Dublin Museum		1894. 290, 1-33 54 Photos of industrial machinery Cast of Shaft of Steam Cross (see sent 1893)	X

Figure 5.6. Ledger 'Donations to the Industrial Art Department'. Annotations in red indicate which objects were subsequently registered (NMS(A)/[n.n.]).

In the late 1960s there was a move away from handwritten registers to type-written ones which involved a change of form of the register. Loose-leaf listings of 'the register numbers of all the specimens' in the Art and Ethnological Department was underway in 1938 and in 1970 Finlay described new documentary practices in the Geology Department: 'Modernisation of the departmental registers on a loose-leaf system...is continuing. Entries from 1813 to 1958 have now been incorporated'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Rowatt (1939), 6; Finlay (1970), 19.



**Figure 5.7. A cascade of inscription within the Department of Art and Ethnography in 2008 (from Swinney, 2012). The diagram shows the sources available with which to construct an historical geography of collecting. Grey arrows indicate partial flows: dotted arrows indicate on-going processes of translation into electronic media.**

The complexity of the documentary sources is further compounded by the fact that they show that creation of new registers did not totally supersede previous documentary practices and entries continued to be made both in the ‘permanent’ (original) Natural History or Industrial register as well as in the new

departmental or ‘scroll’ registers.<sup>39</sup> The extant documentary material for an historical geography is, therefore, a complex and confusing ‘cascade of inscriptions’, which accrued in layers, or strata, as objects and their associated records were rearranged (an on-going process) to form new assemblages (Figure 5.7). These strata were subject not only to accretion but also to erosion as documents were lost or the contexts of their production forgotten. As a result the finding aids to the collection, including in recent decades a computerised database, have been produced, somewhat indiscriminately, from various parts of the cascade and as a consequence have to be interpreted with caution.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.3.2 *Objectifying the Museum*

As discussed in Chapter 3, in lobbying for a government-funded museum in Edinburgh, some proponents envisaged its role as local (in either a Scottish or British sense): ‘affording the means of obtaining definite information in regard to the mineral wealth of the kingdom’, part of a technology for knowing Scotland (as part of the United Kingdom) as ‘a means of developing the industrial resources of its territorial products’.<sup>41</sup> Other lobbyists considered that the Museum should collect on a global scale being ‘a place to which your [Scotland’s] hard working sailors, soldiers, merchants, and medical men in active service, may delight to send specimens of Natural History, or curiosities connected with rude and less civilized nations’ whilst being also a site for the of training of artists and architects through the display of great works of classical

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<sup>39</sup> For use of terms ‘permanent’ and ‘scroll’, see GB587/ ID 226015; GB587/ID 148376 ‘Minute Book’, pp. 248-249.

<sup>40</sup> Swinney (2012).

<sup>41</sup> Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (1854), 16 [432].

antiquity.<sup>42</sup> When the Museum was eventually created it encompassed both rationales. Although the natural history collections were global in scope, a declared objective in the Natural History Department included the building of comprehensive collections of the British fauna, and the Geological Survey's collections, housed in the Museum, were entirely local and constructed and presented a geological view of Scotland. Carla Yanni has discerned a distinctive utilitarian character to the collections which she dubbed 'Nature as Natural Resource'. Drawing her evidence from what was on exhibit in the nineteenth century, she argued that the collections were assembled according to 'a now-forgotten organizational schema in which science, industry and art were presented together, almost as fluid categories' and which presented nature as the source of the raw materials of industry.<sup>43</sup> Statements by DSA support her view:

The fact of the natural history collections forming part of the new Museum will give an advantage to the new institution which few places possess. A scientific museum showing the mode of occurrence of the objects which are afterwards applied in industry, forms a most important step in the efficient study of technical collections. In London, collections of this kind are much dispersed, and can only be studied in their necessary connexions with great inconvenience. In Dublin, the Royal Dublin Society possesses an excellent museum of objects of natural history, and fortunately at no great distance from the technical Museum of Irish Industry, but the management is different. . . . In the new Museum in Edinburgh the scientific and technical collections will be under the same roof and one management, and may be made materially to support each other.<sup>44</sup>

Yanni's analysis is, I believe, correct only in respect of the Industrial collecting stream, which included the botanical collections. The concern within the Natural History stream was primarily to show the diversity of the Animal Kingdom and the Earth's structure, rather than with its utility to agriculture or industry. This distinction notwithstanding, there was, in the early years,

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<sup>42</sup> Arachnophilus (1847a; b).

<sup>43</sup> Yanni, (2005), 91.

<sup>44</sup> Science and Art Department (1855), xli [255].

considerable overlap in the kinds of objects accessioned into the two streams. The initial entries in the Industrial Museum register, dated October 1855, include timepieces and other metal objects damaged by fire, Indian minerals, a section of jointed submarine cable, a cast of a fossil footprint, a series of lead pipes from Edinburgh tenements illustrating processes of decay and damage by rats, a shepherd's crook from the Cheviot Hills, and a mollusc shell discovered in the mortar in the wall of the crypt of Glasgow Cathedral.<sup>45</sup> In the same month acquisitions by the Natural History Museum included the skin of an albatross, a specimen of 'a double kitten', fossils from the Lias deposits at Whitby, twenty skins of birds from the Ganges, a pectolite from Lauder Foot in Ayrshire, a collection of shells from Mazatlan [Mexico] and 'An Inca Mummy – child – and Peruvian pottery'.<sup>46</sup> Whilst the diversity and range of acquisitions to the two streams was materially similar, the objects acquired represented and enacted different epistemic spaces of collecting. Whereas mounted specimens of salmon, tench, and wrasse, and a 'pair of godwits' ([A.]1871.21.1-4) in the industrial collections represented items of human diet, similar objects in the Natural History registers were representatives of their particular taxa.

Accessions of the electric catfish, *Malapterurus beninensis*, further illustrate the difference of approach. The Industrial Department acquired a specimen ([T.]1858.308) as an example of a 'machine' used for electro-therapy; an illustration of a medical technology used in a particular geographical and

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<sup>45</sup> GB587/[n.n.], Industrial Museum Register 1.

<sup>46</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Natural History Register 1.

cultural context.<sup>47</sup> In the Natural History Department specimens ([Z.]1855.27) had meaning as part of the fauna of the rivers of West Africa, and as an element in the construction of the taxon *M. beninensis*: the batch of specimens included part of the syntypic series.<sup>48</sup>

Arrangement and re-arrangement of the collections was a necessity as the number of objects increased and new material spaces were constructed to accommodate them. The new spaces, and the arrangements and juxtapositions of objects within them (see Chapters 3 and 6), were constitutive of new knowledge which itself informed (in so far as the Museum had control of the process) further collecting. As discussed by Whitehead and others, through the ordering, classifying and arranging and re-arranging of objects, and their allocation to sites (both material and documentary), museums were a crucial technology in the ordering and categorisation of knowledge into disciplines.<sup>49</sup> The division of the Museum into departments or collecting streams exemplifies this. As shown in Chapter 4, curatorial staff were recruited and employed in one or other of the major collecting streams: the disciplining of objects effected a disciplining of staff. Within the primary streams, classification of objects constituted and reflected a classification and taxonomy of staff (Chapter 4) – as Egyptologist, entomologist, ornithologist, palaeontologist, and so on.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Wilson, who had a particular interest in the use of electrical therapies, described the fish as a ‘machine’. Wilson (1857a); (1859).

<sup>48</sup> Swinney (1990), 1 and 4.

<sup>49</sup> Whitehead (2009). See also Alberti (2009), 2-4.

<sup>50</sup> For discussion of shaping of expertise see Daunton (2005); Forgan (2005).

### 5.3.3 *Vision and the shaping and re-shaping of collections*

Wilson set the Museum on a course to become ‘a castle stored with the ammunition and the weapons of commercial warfare’, a site ‘where the nature and value of the unknown products of this country and of foreign countries might be ascertained and made public’.<sup>51</sup> With this end in view, he set about recruiting his personal contacts and his students as ambassadors and collectors for the Museum and undertook the promotion of its objectives and the solicitation of exhibits, through his lecturing and through visiting and corresponding with Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils, suppliers and manufacturers.<sup>52</sup> He sought to acquire not only material objects but also tacit knowledges associated with them:

On the objects of my Museum, and the Arts connected with them, my plan will be as follows: – If a shoemaker comes to the Museum, I’ll talk to him about nothing but Hats, and screw information out of him about Shoes. When a Hat-maker arrives I will pour into his ears all the learning I have acquired from the Shoemaker, and extract from the Hatter information to give the Cobbler on his next visit.<sup>53</sup>

For Wilson, ‘art’ was process not aesthetics. Hence his priority was to collect items which illustrated the manufacturing process rather than to acquire fine examples of its products. His aim was to create assemblages through which the manufacturing process could, itself, be reconstituted and visualised (Figure 5.8). So for him, broken, chipped, cracked, damaged, and malformed pieces were valued as illustrative of the details of those processes. Typical of such items are ‘Two plates and one compotier of green glaze ware. Glaze speckled in the gloss oven. Mr Wedgewood supposes this fault is owing to the copper not being

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<sup>51</sup> Wilson (1885a), 9 and 36.

<sup>52</sup> *Aberdeen Journal* (1856); *Dundee Courier* (1856a); Wilson (1857b), 165 [212]; Wilson (1860), particularly p. 441.

<sup>53</sup> Wilson to his sister Jean in 1855, cited in Wilson (1860), 415.

sufficiently mixed with the glaze at some particular point in the fusion' ([A.]357.11-13) and from, the South Kensington Museum, a chipped Böttcher [Böttger] teapot in which 'the fracture demonstrates all the more distinctly the absence of vitreous glaze which characterises this lustrous ware, and makes it none the less acceptable in an Industrial Museum'.<sup>54</sup>

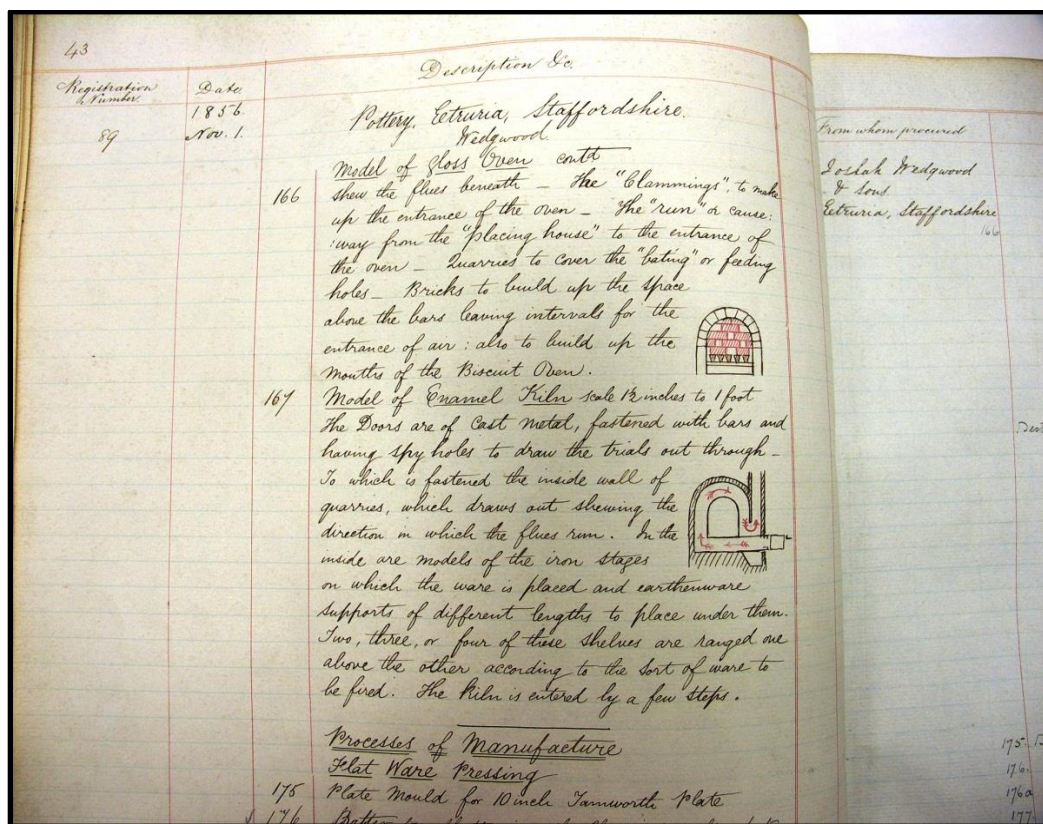


Figure 5.8. Capturing tacit knowledge: a page from the Industrial Register accessioning and describing models of different designs of kiln, [A.]89.166 and 167 (GB587/[n.n], Industrial Register).

<sup>54</sup> Wilson (1857c).

Archer initially broadly continued this form of collecting:

not that we shall in all instances seek that which is novel, startling, or beautiful, but in many instances, we shall endeavour, by our selections, to extend the knowledge of common things, which has been by far too much neglected in this country. Many a man writes brilliant essays upon fancy topics who could not for his life tell us how the steel pen was made with which he writes or knows the means by which the paper he uses is produced, and is probably equally ignorant of the composition of the ink which flows from his pen.<sup>55</sup>

Like Wilson, Archer approached Chambers of Commerce with requests that they assemble and forward representative collections of the typical products made in their areas.<sup>56</sup> In 1862 he was able to report: ‘Upwards of three thousand specimens have been presented to the Museum and Library, all, with the exception of about two hundred and fifty, through personal application to the donors, who have been unsparingly liberal’.<sup>57</sup> Yet, hobbled by constraints of space, and the need to make the collections attractive to audiences, Archer’s collecting gradually shifted away from gathering objects illustrative of processes towards acquiring fine finished products (Figure 5.9). The shift is evident in his response to a plea from the Japanese Ambassador to Austria for assistance in establishing a new museum in Jedo. Archer informed DSA, ‘there is in our stores the Collection presented in 1853 by H. M. Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, consisting of Raw and Partly Manufactured Produce shown in the Exhibition of 1851. This is quite useless to us and consequently could be well spared if my Lords approve’.<sup>58</sup>

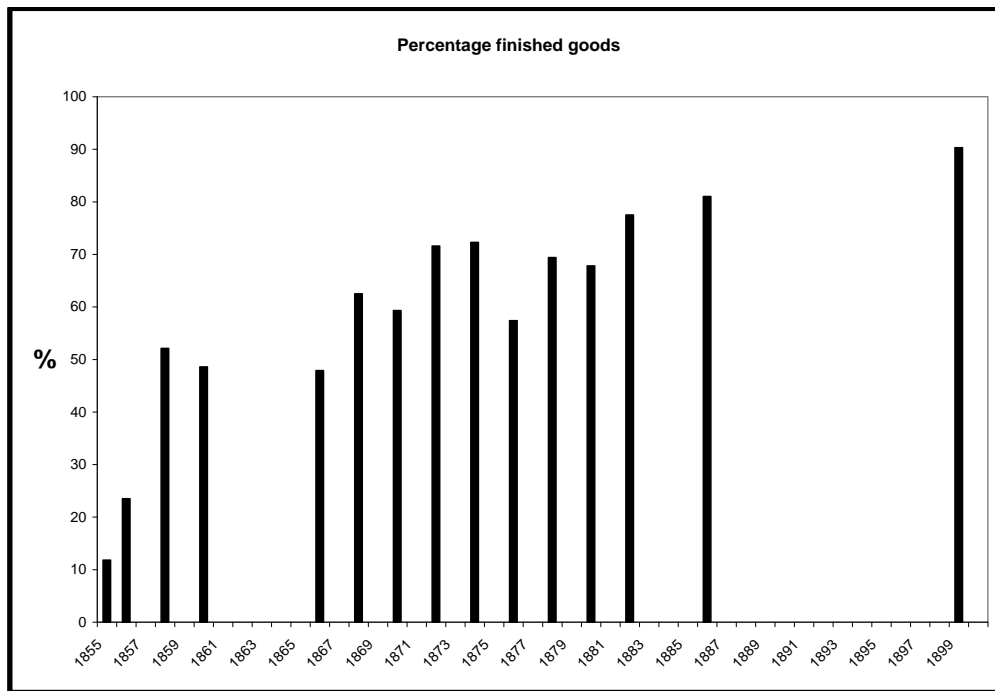
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<sup>55</sup> Archer reported in *Scotsman* (1861a).

<sup>56</sup> For an example, see *Huddersfield Chronicle* (1868). See also Archer (1861a), 189.

<sup>57</sup> Archer (1862b), 175 [519].

<sup>58</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 25 January 1875, pp. 670-671; GB37/ED84/3 (1878), 146, minute of 28 January 1875.



**Figure 5.9. Percentage of finished goods acquired during Wilson’s and Archer’s tenures. The series is continued to the end of the century to show that the trend to finished goods continued after Archer’s death (Source: NMS Object Database).**

Whilst samples of raw materials and many objects illustrative of stages (and failures) in manufacturing processes could usually be had as gifts, finished products often had to be purchased. Archer’s approach to exhibitors at the Paris Exhibition of 1867 offered the inducement that the munificence of donors would be prominently displayed, but recognised that the anticipation of gifts might be unrealistic: ‘If not convenient to present specimens, will you please inform me upon what other terms you can send them?’ (Figure 5.10).<sup>59</sup> He urged that Britain’s museums needed to be better funded so as to be able to compete with overseas museums to buy objects at international exhibitions. Of the 1873 Vienna Exhibition he wrote:

<sup>59</sup> GD587/IS.2009.7.3, Archer proforma letter to exhibitors at the Paris Exhibition 1862.

before the exhibition had been opened a week there was hardly an exhibitor of art industry from one end of the vast building to the other who had not got one or more of his choice objects ticketed as bought by the director of some museum...Ten thousand pounds would have been a small sum for Great Britain, but if well spent would have been a most profitable investment; several continental governments spent more than a fourth of that sum, but hardly a thousand was spent by us.<sup>60</sup>

The shift in Edinburgh towards collecting finished products was not solely a matter of physical space. It was associated with a shift towards connoisseurship which was occurring in British museums generally, promoted by writers such as John Ruskin who advocated: ‘The absolute best in each art, so far as attainable by the communal pocket, should be authoritatively exhibited, with a simple statement that it is good, and reason why it is good’.<sup>61</sup> The shift gathered pace into the twentieth century. In 1928 Curle declared that ‘Since I went there we have systematically weeded out anything that was thought of inferior quality. The higher the quality of the exhibits in the museum the more people will take an interest in it. We have removed a great deal of stuff to cellars which, I think, artistically was very bad’.<sup>62</sup> What in the nineteenth century had been trumpeted as ‘the largest collections of raw products anywhere in the world’, by the early decades of the twentieth century had become an encumbrance.<sup>63</sup>

under the name of the “Industrial Museum” enormous quantities of raw material, intermediate and finished products, and manufacturing processes extending over the whole field of Art, Science and Industry were accumulated with disastrous results. Much of this useless material cumbered the stores for many years, and the effect of these ill-considered acquisitions is still felt in the Museum.<sup>64</sup>

As Curle put it:

The ideal of the first Director, over and above the teaching of Natural History, was the formation of an Industrial Museum designed to illustrate the whole of the various steps

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<sup>60</sup> Archer (1875a), 307.

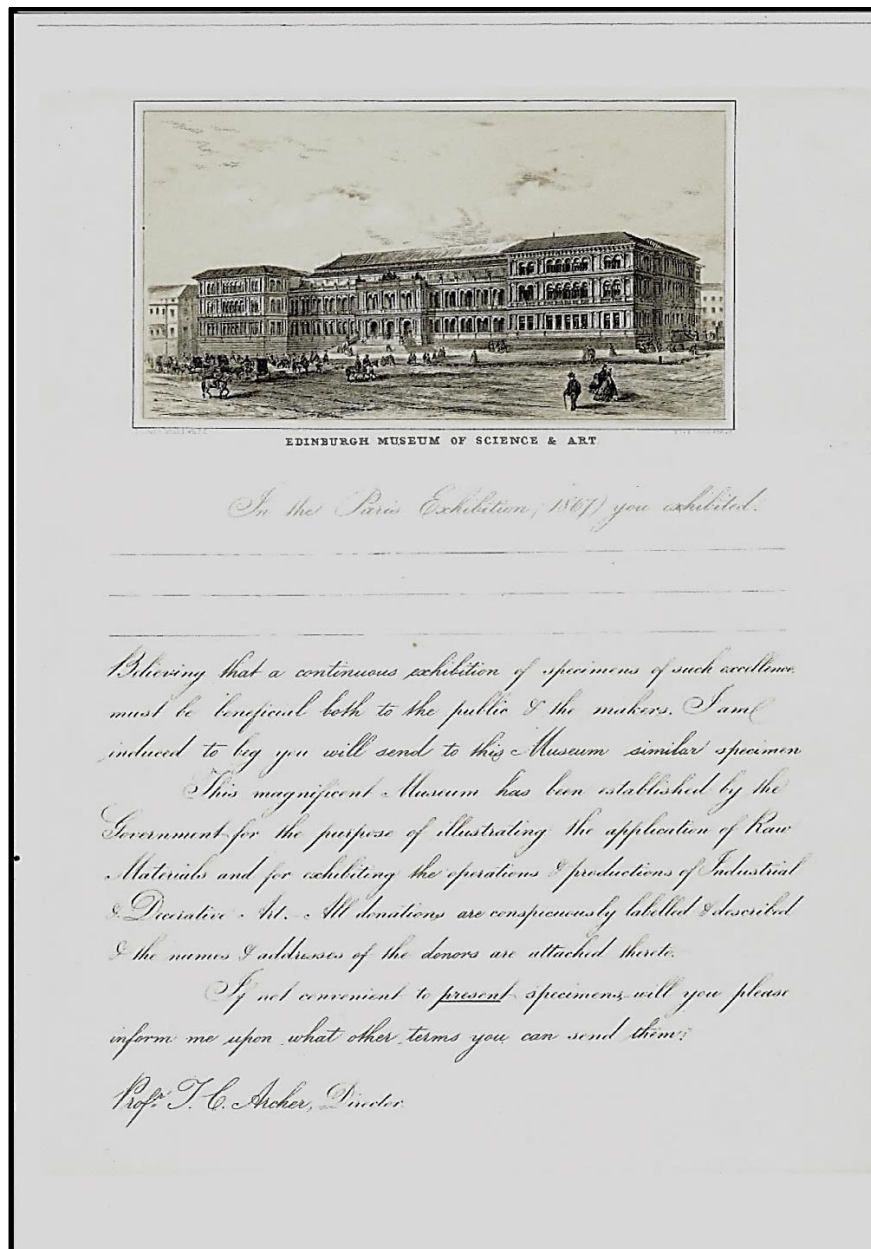
<sup>61</sup> Ruskin (1880), 163.

<sup>62</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 91, para. 1124.

<sup>63</sup> Black & Black (1865), 58; Dodson ([1893]), 34.

<sup>64</sup> GB587/ID 126015, unpaginated annotations, ‘The Keeper’.

in manufacture from raw material to the finished article. Owing to the vast number of specimens for which it would have been necessary to find accommodation this ideal soon proved impossible of fulfilment, and from 1860 onwards, the tendency was to concentrate upon objects illustrative of Science and Art. The Museum was, however, already encumbered with an immense amount of purely industrial material which hampered its development for many years.<sup>65</sup>



**Figure 5.10. Archer's proforma letter soliciting the donation of objects from exhibitors at the Paris exhibition, 1867 (GB587/IS.2009.7.3).**

<sup>65</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 85, memorandum, para. 1.

#### ***5.4 Gravity of collection***<sup>66</sup>

For Richard Dunn, ‘Acquisition ... is a process which affects the way existing material is perceived, the way an institution perceives itself and the material it collects thereafter’.<sup>67</sup> Wilson’s collecting policy attracted certain kinds of donations and offers of objects for sale. Similarly, the particular interests and agendas of later staff influenced, and were influenced by, the nature of objects collected (see Chapter 4). The amassing of particular categories of objects influenced further acquisition. Alberti terms this the ‘gravity of donation’, although I contend that such gravitational forces also influence purchasing policy, in attracting staff and in attracting visitors.<sup>68</sup>

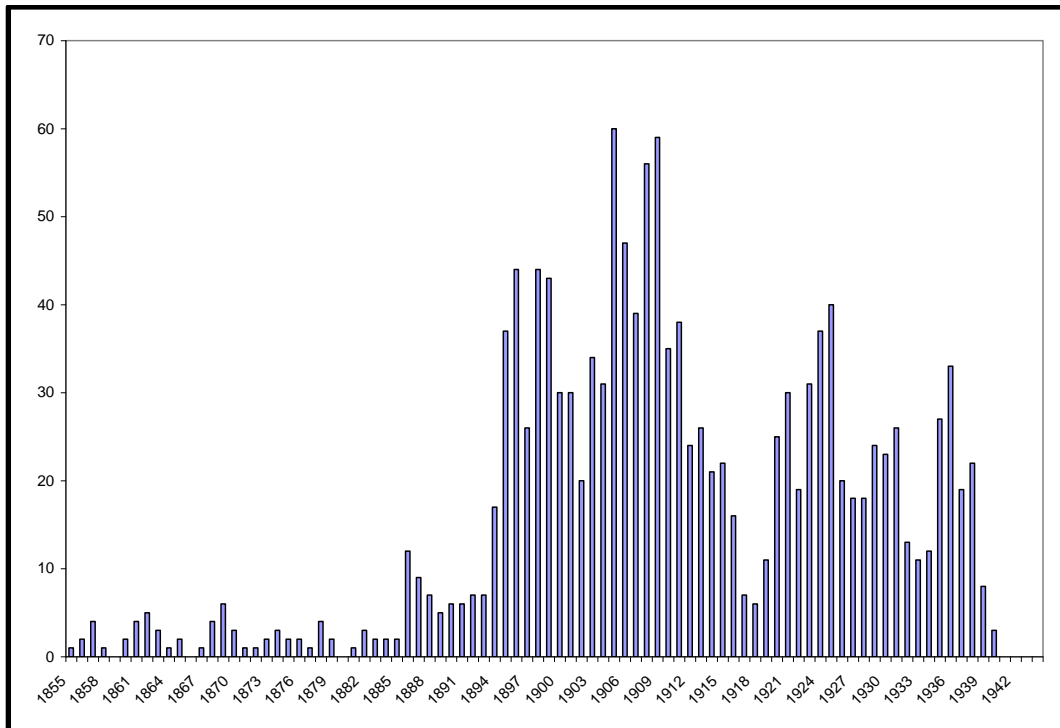
The association of expertise and the ‘gravitational effect’ is discernible in the Museum’s registers. The influx, by donation and loan, of Persian objects following the appointment of Smith, an established expert on Persian art and archaeology, as Director in 1885, and the increase in the acquisition of Egyptian artefacts following Ward’s visits to Egypt, and again after following his appointment as Director, are but two examples. The effect is particularly marked in the natural history registers where, following Grimshaw’s appointment in 1893, there was (given his focus on entomology) a marked recorded increase in the acquisition of insects (Figure 5.11).

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<sup>66</sup> For use of the metaphor of gravitational-like force acting on objects, see Alberti (2009), 92-95.

<sup>67</sup> Dunn (1999), 35. See also Knell (1997).

<sup>68</sup> Alberti (2009), 92.



**Figure 5.11. Numbers of lots of insects registered each year (Source NMS object database)**

These gravitational effects not only swelled the quantity of things kept; it also increased the status and authority of the Museum. The greater the numbers and range available for close comparison the greater the opportunity for verification and authentication of an object’s identity.<sup>69</sup> The status of collections and that of their curators were intimately intertwined and mutually reinforcing.<sup>70</sup> The Museum acknowledged donations with certificates, each a memorial to an act of bestowment (Figure 5.12). In addition, donations and loans were made conspicuous events by publishing the names of donors and lenders in the Annual Report and in *A Guide to the Collections*, the preface to which declared that ‘The Museum is maintained by moneys voted annually by Parliament, but its

<sup>69</sup> Knell (2007), 13.

<sup>70</sup> Alberti (2007; 2011a).

collections owe some of their chief treasures to the munificence of private benefactors'.<sup>71</sup>

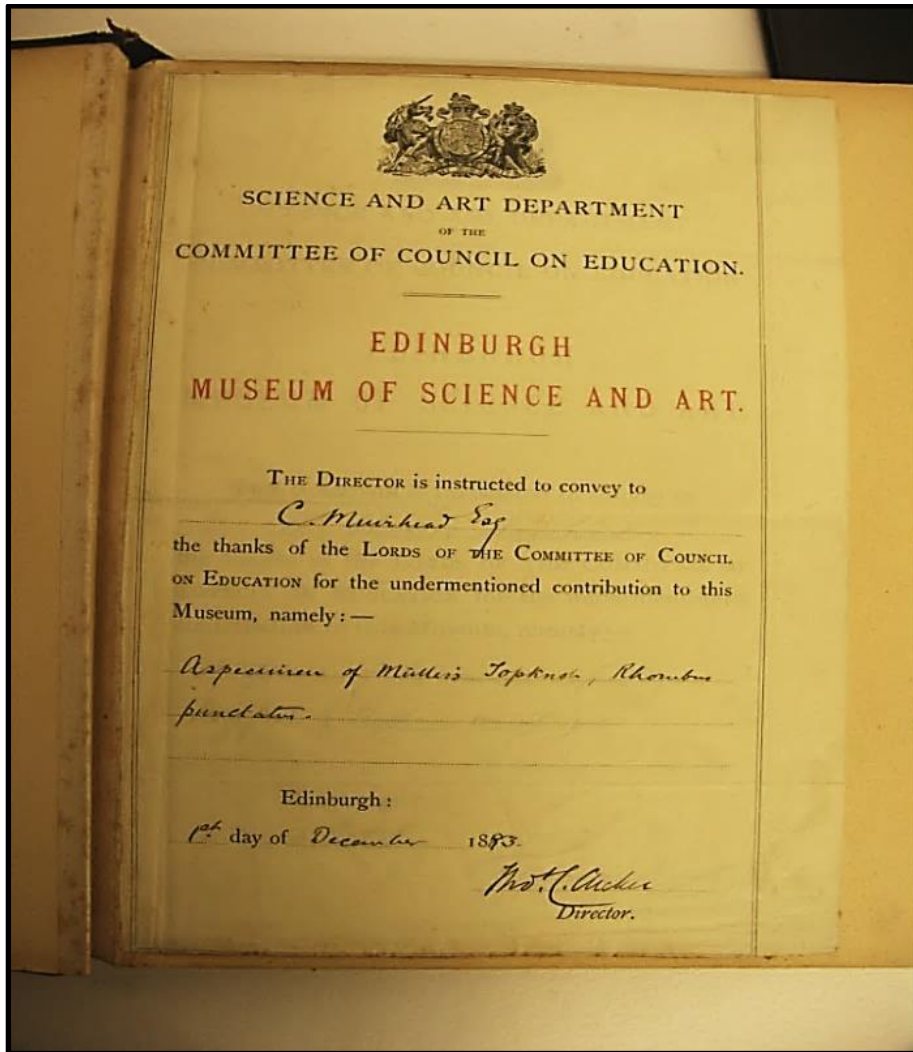


Figure 5.12. A page from an album of certificates of donation sent to Edinburgh fishmonger Charles Muirhead. The two-volume collection of certificates, dating from the period 1883 to 1900, themselves became a 'museum piece' when they were donated to the Museum by his grandson's wife (GB587/ID 126857).

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Royal Scottish Museum (1908), 4.

### *5.5 The South Kensington effect*

South Kensington, the site of the headquarters of DSA and of its flagship museum, the South Kensington Museum, exerted a particularly strong ‘gravitational’ effect. Archer noted a geography of collecting opportunity:

It is quite clear that the enormous resources of South Kensington arising from the confidence which the world generally feels as to its being the best place for the display of art make it impossible that provincial museums can obtain any better specimens for illustrating the applications of art to the various branches of industry...than those reproductions which have been made either by or with the aid of the Department. And it must frequently occur that original art objects for improving the taste of the public can be spared on loan or purchased from the vast collections of South Kensington.<sup>72</sup>

Over half a century later, Curle made a similar point when he stated that the national museums in London ‘receive by donation and bequest, valuable collections to an extent which is not to be expected outside of the capital’.<sup>73</sup> The combination of DSA control of purchase budgets and protocol, and the South Kensington Museum’s ability to attract the best quality objects, and through its setting agendas over the style of presentation (discussed in Chapter 6), exerted a strong and lasting influence over the shaping of the collections in Edinburgh. This controlling influence was a matter of critical comment by the 1898 Select Committee on the Museums of the Science and Art Department:

It appears to us that the Edinburgh Museum suffers from the centralising tendency of South Kensington. We find that the Director has no right to spend more than 20*l.* without obtaining permission of the Director for Art in London; and it is the Director for Art who settles whether an object offered for purchase shall go before that Board or not. This is objectionable because the art expert, the Director of the Museum, is not consulted; while the teaching expert, the Director for Art, has the controlling voice in matters of purchase.<sup>74</sup>

Traquair noted the workings of the system when in 1879 he fell afoul of it over his purchase of a specimen for £70: ‘In ordering the Rhinoceros I find that I have

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<sup>72</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 11 July 1871, 439-440.

<sup>73</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 88, Memorandum para. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Select Committee (1898), xxxii [40].

quite overlooked an order of the Science & Art Department, to the effect that we cannot purchase any object above the value of £20 without their express sanction'.<sup>75</sup> DSA justified its controlling role arguing that 'Very few objects of value above £20 are, as might naturally be expected, purchased in Scotland. They are generally obtained from dealers or at sales in London or abroad'<sup>76</sup> – Traquair's source for the rhinoceros was the London firm of Edward Gerrard.

South Kensington Museum's control and influence was viewed with suspicion by some in Scotland. One correspondent in *The Scotsman* expressed his fear that the Museum would receive only the leftovers, once London had taken its pick of the prime material: 'We are mocked with a portion of the refuse of some of their collections, after everything rare has been selected...To accept their leavings after they have selected at pleasure...is submitting to a position involving degradation'.<sup>77</sup> Although Wilson denied that this would be the case, the evidence of the next forty-odd years is that South Kensington exerted a strong 'gravity' and the Museum in Edinburgh was effectively in competition with South Kensington for donations and bequests of objects illustrative of the decorative arts, a competition which the Museum generally lost.<sup>78</sup> In 1922 Curle complained: 'Though the Royal Scottish Museum is a Scottish national institution it hardly receives in the province of art from Scottish collectors and members of the public such measure of support as it might reasonably look for in

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<sup>75</sup> GB587/[n.n.], 'R H Traquair Letterbook, 1874-1905'. Traquair to Gerrard, 21 April 1879, p. 59; Traquair to Archer, 28 April 1879, p. 63. For approval of purchase, see GB37/ED84/38(1882), 362, minute of 2 May 1879.

<sup>76</sup> Donnelly (1899), 19 [605].

<sup>77</sup> F.S.A. (1857).

<sup>78</sup> Godfrey Evans, *pers. comm.*, January 2004.

the matter of donations and bequests of objects of value'.<sup>79</sup> The gravitational effect of London was not confined to the arts and industry. The natural history collections of the British Museum exerted a huge effect on the networks through which specimens flowed, the collections and expertise amassed in that institution, attracting collections from Scottish and non-Scottish collectors alike. Scottish collectors were torn between directing their collections to the Scottish museum or to a British national museum. Some collectors, such as Andrew Smith, the Hawick-born author of *Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa*, did both.<sup>80</sup> In 1859 he presented over three-and-a-half thousand specimens, mostly South African reptiles, to Edinburgh ([Z.]1859.13.1- 2101), but retained further specimens, including many of the type specimens erected in his publications, which he later donated to the British Museum.<sup>81</sup> On rare occasions individual objects were literally divided between the collections. One such instance involved a number of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century (A.D.) embroidered robes from Ottoman tombs in Turkey. The collection was purchased by the South Kensington Museum, but subsequently some of the garments were divided, one part, usually the front, being retained in London and the other being deposited in Edinburgh ([A.]1884.65.1-31): dividing those textiles in which it was the pattern on the fabric, not the form of garment itself that was valued, was an accepted curatorial practice at this time.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Curle (1922), 7.

<sup>80</sup> Smith (1838-1849).

<sup>81</sup> Boulenger (1906); Herman, McGowan & Swinney (1990).

<sup>82</sup> NMS(CS)/[n.n.], [Textile Conservation Laboratory], Turkish textile project file, Report on certain oriental collections in Paris visited by Mr C. P. Clarke, 14 & 15 March 1884. Photocopy of memorandum in Tiano File, V&A Register entry for 28 February 1884; Scarce (1990), Baker (1990). On the practice of dividing textiles, Friederike Voigt, *pers. comm.*, 10 June 2010.

South Kensington exerted its effect on collecting in Edinburgh not only in relation to what the Museum registered into its permanent collection, but as an influence upon practices of temporary collecting.

### ***5.6 Temporary collecting: borrowing and practices of keeping-while-giving***

A press report of its opening in 1866 indicated importance of the process of lending to the materialisation of the Museum:

The collection may be said to consist of four parts – first, those treasures which are the property of the Museum; second, the contributions of the Department of Science and Art, not strictly belonging to the Museum, but exhibited here either for a period or permanently; third, the contributions of the Queen, of the Secretary of State for India, the War Office, and other Government departments; and fourth, the loan collection, formed on the principles established at South Kensington, whereby the great producers of artistic furniture on the one hand and the collectors of antique art treasures on the other may benefit the Museum by exhibiting them for a period. In this way it is in the power of eminent firms to show their products, and of ladies and gentlemen to exhibit their treasures, without surrendering their property in them. In this way, also, the different State departments become lenders to the museum, and Royal or national treasures may be transferred year after year from one end of the kingdom to the other.<sup>83</sup>

This description situated the Museum as part of a UK-wide network of sovereign, governmental and private collecting, and associated its practices with those of South Kensington: ‘One portion of the new museum has, from the first, been set aside for a loan collection. In this matter I have followed the admirable plan at South Kensington’.<sup>84</sup> Not only were substantial proportions of the collection on loan from the South Kensington Museum but Edinburgh formed part of a circuit for exhibitions co-ordinated through South Kensington Museum.

As Cole reported:

The collection of porcelain, enamelled jewels, &c. lent by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., was replaced by a collection of Italian porcelain, maiolica, &c. belonging to His Excellency the Marquis d’Azeglio, and Mr. Gladstone liberally permitted the enamelled jewels, &c. to be transferred as a loan to the Edinburgh

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<sup>83</sup> *Leeds Mercury* (1866).

<sup>84</sup> Archer (1867), 253-254 [285-286].

Museum, having arranged to lend the collection of porcelain, &c. to the Free Library and Museum at Liverpool for a period of five years.<sup>85</sup>

The practice of temporary collecting was a means of ‘bringing together a greater variety and more valuable specimens than could otherwise be acquired by the museum; and at the same time affording to the possessors of collections an opportunity of gratifying those generous feelings which are by no means uncommon, and which make it agreeable to them to give others the pleasure of studying their treasures’.<sup>86</sup> For Annette Weiner, lending is a particular and conspicuous form of ‘keeping-while-giving’, which provided the private collector with opportunities for accruing social and cultural capital, legitimated and validated his or her collecting practices, and attested to his or her taste and discernment (see also Chapter 6).<sup>87</sup> Lending also imbued these objects with a caché which boosted their cultural and (at least potentially) their commercial worth. The auction catalogue for the sale of the McCallum collection of Chinese artefacts, for example, advertised that ‘The collection is removed direct from The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, and The Corporation Art Galleries, Glasgow’ whilst the advertisement for Sotheby’s sale of the Fergusson standing mazer noted that it had for some years been exhibited in the Museum.<sup>88</sup> The flow of cultural capital was, however, not one-way. Association with collections of renowned or high status collectors conferred status to the Museum.

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<sup>85</sup> Cole (1868), 211 [653].

<sup>86</sup> Archer (1867), 254 [286].

<sup>87</sup> Weiner (1992).

<sup>88</sup> NMS(CS), Robert Brodie, auctioneer, ‘Catalogue of an Important Collection of Genuine Antique Chinese Objects’. Copy inserted in Register of Specimens on Loan. Volume 1. *Times* (1930a).

Yet, in hindsight, the extensive provision of loans had, for some, exerted a marked, lasting, and deleterious effect on the shaping of the collections in Edinburgh:

When the Royal Scottish Museum was under the Science and Art Department a very large number of loans were sent down from the South Kensington Museum. They remained on loan for thirty or forty years, and in 1922 they were all called back and only very few of them were returned to us permanently. That, of course, was very prejudicial to the Royal Scottish Museum because during all the years in which those objects were there on exhibit similar objects were not being bought, so when they came to be taken away we had lost the opportunity of buying them and during a period when prices were much lower, in consequence, we suffered very prejudicially.<sup>89</sup>

For Curle the availability of items on loan, combined with direct and indirect control of the Museum's purchases, had shaped not only its collections but had also influenced development of expertise and connoisseurship by its staff (see Chapter 4). With major acquisition decisions, particularly regarding items in the industrial stream, taking place in London, there was little necessity to foster expertise in Edinburgh. Although the Museum did have some particular expertise – Smith, for example, was DSA's expert on Persian art collections both before and following his appointment as Director in Edinburgh – the distribution of specialist expertise was heavily weighted towards London.

Temporary collecting was largely distinct from the practices of constructing the Museum's 'own property'. In some instances, however, temporary residency in the Museum was part of an object's route into the 'permanent collections'. Annotations in the Loan Register record numerous examples of items, initially deposited on loan, being transferred, by gift, bequest or purchase, to the Museum's own collection. Notable amongst these was the collection of over 800 items of arms and armour, ecclesiastical furnishings and

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<sup>89</sup> Curle, evidence in Royal Commission (1928), 89, para. 1097.

textiles loaned in 1903 by the executors of the late Noël Paton and purchased by the Museum in 1904.<sup>90</sup>

### ***5.7 Geographical turns in collecting: where did collections come from?***

Analysis of the Loans Register reveals that in the early decades, although many loans were from Scottish firms or private collectors, significant numbers were from other parts of the United Kingdom. In the period 1865 to 1880 more than half the lenders (34 out of 64) had addresses in England, with firms in the industrial (English) Midlands, particularly in the Potteries and the Black Country, featuring prominently. From about 1880 onwards the proportion of new lenders from outside Scotland dwindled. Between 1881 and 1890 only 12 of the 37 (32%) were from outside Scotland, and of the 44 new lenders recorded in the decade 1900 to 1909, only four (9%) had addresses beyond Scotland. The Loan Register also shows that, almost without exception, loans were confined to the industrial collecting stream.

The Register shows that there was something of a similar trend within the permanent collections. There was a shift to ‘Scottishness’ in the Art and Ethnographical Department during the twentieth century as the Museum increasingly acquired objects of Scottish manufacture, by gift, purchase and loan. This was, in part, due to lack of space in the National Museum of Antiquities, and its growing emphasis on archaeology – Rowatt’s view was that it ‘tended to be absorbed in pre-historic affairs to the almost total exclusion of all later periods

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<sup>90</sup> Dobbie (1904), 3; (1905), 2.

of history in Scotland'.<sup>91</sup> The appointment to the Museum's staff in 1932 of Finlay, whose expertise was in Scottish crafts, exerted a 'gravitational' effect which further built up the collections in this area. The development of the Museum's role in relation to Scottish crafts was exemplified in Finlay's curation of the temporary exhibition, 'Scottish Everyday Art', in 1936 and in the Museum's involvement in plans for 'A Museum of the Scottish People' to be built on the outskirts of Edinburgh.<sup>92</sup> After the creation of a Technological Department in 1901, there was a drive to collect objects of Scottish industry (the focus on archaeology within the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland having left this field open).

The natural history collecting stream throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries collected both locally and globally. From the Registers it can be seen that donations of individual specimens or small collections tending to be predominantly from within Scotland. By contrast, acquisitions of larger, pre-formed natural history collections, often taxonomic rather than geographical in scope, contained a high proportion of exotic specimens, as did purchases.

In the later nineteenth century the geographical specificity of collections was a prominent feature in museum discourses generally. The utilitarian approach adopted towards the industrial collections demanded close attention to sites of acquisition. As an undated memorandum of the South Kensington Museum declared, 'What importers and art students equally desire to know is the exact place of production of a particular manufacture. It is not enough to say that

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<sup>91</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.1, Rowatt to Lewis, SED, 20 May 1936.

<sup>92</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] to Lewis, SED, 20 May 1936.

it is Indian ... the merchant who desires to import Indian articles of art interest can do nothing unless he knows the exact town of their manufacture'.<sup>93</sup> A similar imperative for specificity of location – long a factor of the work of acclimation societies – gained impetus as a consequence of Darwin and Wallace's exposition of natural selection as the mechanism of evolution.<sup>94</sup> The Natural History Register reveals an increasing attention to the site of 'finding' of objects. This trend is particularly evident in acquisitions for the cabinet collections, although it is less evident in the specimens acquired for display: many specimens obtained for exhibition, particularly mammals and birds, were captive animals, the wild origins of which were generally unrecorded.

### *5.8 Sites of production of museum objects*

The preparation of many zoological specimens for display involved practices of modelling. These and other practices of fabrication, particularly the production of engineering models, formed a distinctive category of collecting which was enacted through and reflected in both the allocation of space within the building for workshops, and in new professional identities and job titles (Chapters 3 and 4). Through modelling, the Museum participated in networks of fabrication as both recipient and producer. For example, whilst many of the plaster casts were supplied from or via the South Kensington Museum, in 1870 Archer supervised the casting of the 'Prentice Pillar' in Roslin Chapel for South Kensington.<sup>95</sup>

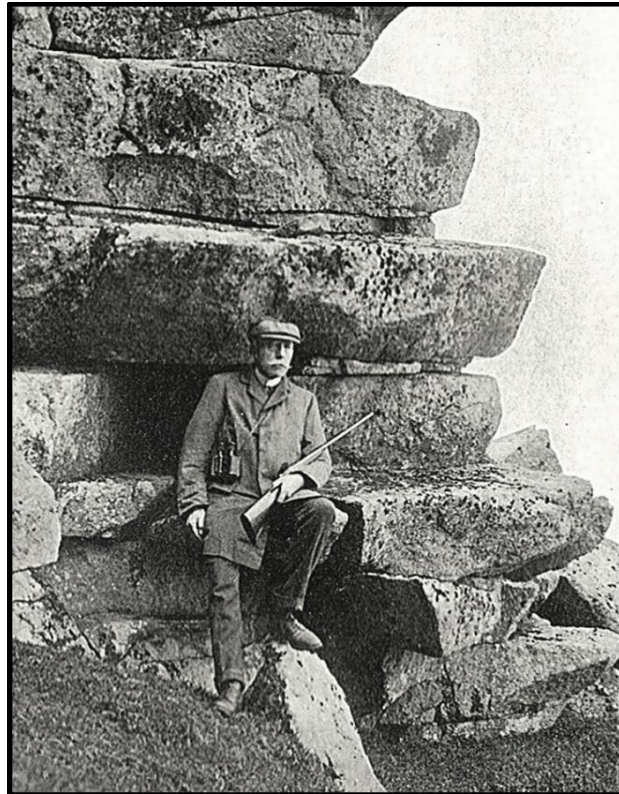
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<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Skelton (1978), 301.

<sup>94</sup> Darwin & Wallace (1858); Darwin (1859).

<sup>95</sup> GB37/ED84/37(1878), 19, minute of 24 June 1870.

Archer's involvement in the casting points to the Museum's engagement in practices of 'finding' through fieldwork.



**Figure 5.13. William Eagle Clarke collecting on Fair Isle. He carries the tools, binoculars and gun, used in the processes of selection and removal by which free-living animals were transformed into objects which could be processed as specimens (NMS(NH)/[n.n.]).**

In the context of the Museum the concept of what constitutes the 'field' is problematic. For Wilson and Archer the 'field' (their sites of 'hunting' and 'finding') was the meeting room, the factory, the national and international exhibition, the letter, and in relation to production of the cast of the Prentice Pillar, a chapel. Later in the nineteenth century, whilst these forms of

acquisitions remained crucial to the Museum, a few of its staff engaged directly with other places of finding; sites at which objects were excavated, killed, happened upon or where objects could otherwise be possessed. In other words, although most of the objects travelled to the staff, on occasion the staff journeyed to an object.

Archer undertook extensive travels in Europe in the 1870s.<sup>96</sup> These were, however, primarily vacations and few specimens resulted, although he did suggest that, during a visit to Sicily, he acquire ‘cotton fabrics made or used by the natives’.<sup>97</sup> Before his appointment to the Directorship of the Museum, Smith had been actively involved in archaeological excavation and had, on his own behalf and as a representative of DSA, found and acquired objects of antiquarian and cultural interest in Turkey and Persia.<sup>98</sup> In visits to Persia following his appointment to Edinburgh he continued to seek out and solicit objects. In the twentieth century some of the Museum’s curators made extensive excursions to sites of ‘finding’ for the purposes of collecting. Ward’s participation in excavations in Egypt provide one example (Chapter 4) and, beginning in 1901 Clarke began systematically visiting British lighthouses and lightships to observe the annual migrations of birds and to collect specimens (Figure. 5.13). His concern was to map migration routes, part of his interest in animal distributions generally.<sup>99</sup> These examples notwithstanding, assessment of the registers show that members of the Museum’s staff were only rarely the collectors, in the sense

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<sup>96</sup> His travelogues, signed ‘A’, appeared in *The Scotsman*: Archer (1871); (1872a); (1873b).

<sup>97</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary of H. M. Commissioners for the Exhibition of 183[?], 11 July 1871, p. 436. Exceptions include ‘1870.17.1-8 Moorish Specimens Purchased in Tangier by Professor Archer’.

<sup>98</sup> Smith & Porcher (1864); Scarce (1973); (1986); (2004); Stronach (2004).

<sup>99</sup> Bartholomew, Clarke & Grimshaw (1911); Clarke (1912).

of being finders, of the objects in their keeping. Further, other sources suggest that research activity was not encouraged. At least initially, Clarke had to take un-paid leave to undertake field-collecting and there was some discussion of reducing Traquair's pension on the grounds that he 'had devoted much of the time to his private work'.<sup>100</sup>

Having examined matters of acquisition, I turn now to processes of discard.

### ***5.9 Practices of discard***

Although the Museum referred its registered objects as forming the 'permanent collections', the career trajectories of some objects involved them moving out of the collections. Processes of collecting included processes of discard. Here I use the term 'discard' to include not only disposal *per se* but also the loan of Museum objects to, and their exchange with, other institutions. Such loans and exchanges were a means of assigning objects to locations beyond the material spaces of the Museum and involved processes of selection similar to those of disposal. To avoid fragmenting topics I examine here all categories of loan, some of which intergraded one into the other. I include discussion of temporary loans although these might more appropriately be considered not as discard but as a matter of displaying beyond the material spaces of the Museum (see Chapter 6).

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<sup>100</sup> Berry (1948), 97; GB227/ms37099/13, McIntosh to Gunther, 4 October 1911.

### 5.9.1 *Lending as a practice of discard*

During the first decade of its operation, the Museum's staff had been concerned to acquire objects and there was little flow of items outwards. Rearrangements in relation to the extension of the building in 1875 resulted in reassessment of collections and by 1877 a small number of 'duplicate' items, mostly illustrating industrial processes, were identified to form 'small series for loan to local institutions'.<sup>101</sup> For Michael O'Hanlon, 'To categorise an artefact as a "duplicate" is to turn it into something which is at one level inauthentic, merely a version of what becomes the "original" retained in a museum's main collection'.<sup>102</sup> Venues to which the loans could be made were strictly circumscribed. Archer interpreted his authority as restricted to making loans only to 'Schools of Science and Art, or Science and Art Classes in connection with the Department, or to Corporation Museums, or Public Libraries'.<sup>103</sup> Other lending was rare, although with the sanction of the Department, in 1883 he lent a few specimens to the International Fisheries Exhibitions, London, and some reredos panels were lent to the Messrs Doulton, ceramics manufacturers (Archer's protest that he had no authority to loan to a commercial company being overruled by DSA).<sup>104</sup> Smith, Archer's successor, interpreted his authority thus:

This Museum has never been authorized to grant loans to other Museums, nor have its collections been formed with a view to such a system of circulation. Only a comparatively small portion of the collections – portable art objects usually – could under any circumstances be circulated, the Natural History specimens and those in the technological, ethnographical, and mechanical engineering sections, as well as the

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<sup>101</sup> Archer (1877), 2.

<sup>102</sup> O'Hanlon (2000), 28.

<sup>103</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to Secretary DSA, 16 March 1883, p. 235.

<sup>104</sup> Archer (1883), 587 [707]; GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 22 February, 16 March and 10 August 1883, pp. 227-229, p. 235 and p. 264; GB37/ED84/38(1884), 156, minute of 2 November 1882.

numerous plaster cast reproductions of Architecture & Sculpture being altogether unsuitable for such a purpose.<sup>105</sup>

In consequence lending by the industrial stream was rare, although some objects were sent to the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908.<sup>106</sup> A notebook provides evidence that, from at least 1907, the Natural History Department was making loans, thereby actively engaging in networks of circulation.<sup>107</sup> In so doing it was both aligning itself with practices in natural history elsewhere, and distancing itself from practices within other disciplines within the Museum. The Museum's Minute book recorded:

It will be in the knowledge of the Lords Comm<sup>rs</sup> that the accumulation of specimens of the same kind is feature inseparable from the progress of a Natural History Museum. As naturalists in all parts of the world freely bestow their collections on the Museum, it necessarily happens that duplicates are numerous. Unless opportunity is taken to effect exchanges these surplus objects cumber the stores, and in the case of outcast furred and feathered specimens tend to become a culture-ground of moths, so that in no long time they are fit only for the crematorium. The Museum, too, occasionally acquires unique specimens, probably from access to a favourable habitat, which in the interest of Natural Science it is well to distribute widely on the system of exchange. Hence it is the policy of the Director of the Museum to form relations with the authorities of similar Museums at home and abroad with a view to the filling-up of gaps in a series and enrichment of the collections by drawing upon the redundant stores of each.<sup>108</sup>

The situation regarding loans and exchanges was outlined in a Treasury letter of 23 September 1912 and formalised in 'General Instructions'.<sup>109</sup> It established five categories of loan, authority for the first two of which lay with the Director, whilst that for the others was with SED: These were: 1) 'Exchanges' – to be made exclusively from Natural history, 'it being in this department that specimens of the same kind accumulate'; 2) Loans from the Stock of Redundant Objects' – which 'must not be lent to private persons, but only to institutions concerned with public instruction' and that they 'must be

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<sup>105</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 3, Smith to Department, 29 December 1896, pp. 354-355.

<sup>106</sup> *Times* (1908b).

<sup>107</sup> NMS(NH) 'Objects on loan from the Museum, Vol. 1' [1909-1939].

<sup>108</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 16 August 1912, pp. 290-293.

<sup>109</sup> GB587/ID 126015, p. 7.

taken solely from the stock of surplus or discarded objects'; 3) 'Loans of Objects for Reproduction' – 'The occasional lending of objects from the exhibition collection to reputable business firms for the reproduction of a work of art'; 4) 'Loans of Natural History Specimens for Scientific Study' – loans from the 'exhibited collections' were to be only to 'well-accredited persons engaged in scientific study'; 5) 'Loans to Temporary Exhibitions'. Despite these provisions, requests for loans for exhibition were generally considered unfavourably. As Curle told a Royal Commission:

We sent something to Wembley. We lent an engine to the Railway Exhibition. We have sent a model of an engine to New Zealand. We have lent things in Glasgow. There are not many temporary exhibitions in Scotland. We do not lend things in Edinburgh. There is no reason why people should see things at the foot of the "mound," where exhibitions are usually held, when they can see them at the other side of it.<sup>110</sup>

Following Curle's giving evidence to the Commission the policy was relaxed. In addition to the loan of a fragment of Madonna and Child to the exhibition to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Art Collections Fund (1928), further loans were made to exhibitions in London.<sup>111</sup> Loans were also made to exhibitions in Edinburgh, including several staged in the Royal Scottish Academy at the foot of the Mound.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, lending from the industrial stream was a rare occurrence.

Whilst the granting of temporary loans was a means of displaying the Museum beyond the Chambers Street building (see Chapter 6), making exchanges and the granting of permanent loans were, effectively, devices for

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<sup>110</sup> Curle evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 90, para. 1106. See also, GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 9, Curle to Davidson, 21 and 23 May 1925; p. 93 and p. 108; GB587/DP(G)/Letter-book 9, Curle to Comptroller-General, Department of Overseas Trade, 24 July 1925, 193. The reference to 'the foot of the "mound"' was to the Royal Scottish Academy, at the junction of Princes Street and the Mound.

<sup>111</sup> *Times* (1928a).

<sup>112</sup> Rowatt (1935), 4; Rowatt (1937), 7.

expelling objects: ‘Permanent loans get rid of the difficulty of obtaining permission from many donors to give away material which they have presented to the Museum’.<sup>113</sup> Making a ‘permanent loan’ or an exchange was effectively a mechanism for discarding objects by situating them as part *of* the Museum, but ones which were not, and in all likelihood would never again be, located *within* the material Museum. Exchanges were confined to the natural history stream and had, with the sanction of DSA been undertaken since 1867, although the process was circumscribed: ‘we have to face the rule which prevents us exchanging with private collectors or any but public Museums’.<sup>114</sup>

Transfer was another means by which unwanted objects were removed from the collections. It required the sanction of the Museum’s administering department, and was only rarely used.<sup>115</sup> Examples include the transfer, in 1871, of reptiles to the Royal Zoological Museum, Berlin, and in 1875 ‘a duplicate skeleton of Sibbald’s Rorqual’ was transferred to the University of Edinburgh.<sup>116</sup> One particularly substantial transfer was that of the botanical collections, including extensive collections of timber and the Hugh Cleghorn Memorial

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<sup>113</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.3, Undated typescript, ‘Loans made to Provincial Institutions’, in file ‘Drafts of Lecture programmes, lectures, guides, etc.’

<sup>114</sup> GB587/[n.n.], ‘R. H. Traquair Letterbook 1874-1905’. See also Traquair to Layard, 14 January 1884, p. 132; GB37/ED84/36(1872), minute of 5 Oct 1867, 82; ‘R. H. Traquair Letterbook 1874-1905’, Traquair to Bower, 3 September 1879, p. 69-71 (re exchanges with Perth Museum); ‘List of Birds proposed to be exchanged with the Albert Institute, Dundee, October 1895’ and ‘List of specimens of Birds proposed to be exchanged with the Dumfries Museum in return for specimens of British Mollusca, November 1895’, p. 228 and pp. 229-230; GB37/ED84/36(1872), minute of 5 Oct 1867, 82.

<sup>115</sup> For examples of sanctioning of a transfer, see GB37/ED84/40(1893), 5, minute of 10 February 1888 and 184, minute of 29 June 1888. See also GB587/ID 126015, pp. 4-5.

<sup>116</sup> Traquair (1876), 480 [642], See also Department of Science and Art (1878), minute of 12 April 1875, 146.

Library.<sup>117</sup> In 1928 a Royal Commission recommended that botanical collections in Edinburgh be rationalised: ‘the botanical material would be better utilized by the Royal Botanic Garden than by the Royal Scottish Museum’, although lack of storage space at the Garden meant that implementation of the recommendation was delayed until 1938.<sup>118</sup> The circumstances of the transfer being the result of a Royal Commission signals to yet another agency beyond the Museum itself, being instrumental in shaping the collections and processes of collecting.

### *5.9.2 De-accessioning and expulsion*

Although ‘General Instructions’ had referred to ‘discarded objects’ this categorisation was problematic as there was no mechanism for de-accessioning. Past policies of accumulation, notably Jameson’s ‘refuse nothing’ and Wilson’s acquisitions of raw materials and stages in production processes, presented problems in relation to available space. The registers record that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, decayed items were, on directorial authority, disposed of so as to safeguard the rest of the collections: processes of decay are themselves a form of passive disposal and decayed items were deemed to be out of place in the Museum.<sup>119</sup> A ledger lists natural history specimens destroyed in

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<sup>117</sup> Archer (1885) 257-258 [299-300]. The Cleghorn Library was acquired by bequest in 1895, the collection comprised 907 books and numerous pamphlets. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897b).

<sup>118</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 88, memorandum para. 9; Royal Commission (1930), 92 [615]; GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] Director to Secretary SED, 7 January 1938.

<sup>119</sup> Wheatcroft (1987). On decay and the entanglement of cultural and natural histories see DeSilvey (2006). Examples of disposal by directorial authority include :

284.4. ‘Esquimaux Gloves of Reindeers skin. 14 pairs’ Annotated ‘2 pairs removed, destroyed by moths. 1<sup>st</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> 1878. – [in different hand] withdrawn destroyed by moths 24 Feb. 1883’.

284.5. ‘Esquimaux Shoes [of Reindeers skin] 14 pairs’ Annotated ‘2 pairs [removed, destroyed by moths. 1<sup>st</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> 1878] 1 pair, Moth eaten, destroyed 12/2/17 A.O.C.’[Curle]

the period 1889-1927.<sup>120</sup> However, apart from destruction of decayed items, there was no formal process for expelling objects.

The lack of mechanisms for de-accessioning resulted in the accumulation of items which presented problems of location and significance. The basement space served as both a ‘cabinet’, housing reserve collections, and a dumping-ground for objects destined for disposal. In 1914, Martin suggested to SED that criteria be developed for disposal of registered objects ‘in order that the Museum’s space might not be needlessly encumbered’.<sup>121</sup> Curle revived the issue of de-accessioning in 1922: ‘By this means a desirable clearance of accumulated rubbish can be effected’.<sup>122</sup> He wrote:

I suggest that Disposal Boards in the Royal Scottish Museum might consist of the Director, and the Keeper or Assistant Keeper, where there is no Keeper, of any department, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Museum nominated by yourself; that such Boards should meet when required and take action on a note or memorandum by the senior officer of the Department setting forth a list of objects which it is desired should be disposed of.<sup>123</sup>

The Board was duly constituted, its first meeting being on 21 January 1923.<sup>124</sup>

The actions approved at Board meetings were subsequently annotated against the appropriate entries in the Museum Register, thereby formally expelling the object from the Museum. Thus practices of disposal, like registration, were enacted through a number of sites – the meeting room of the Board, and the documentary

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1858 May 27<sup>th</sup>. Fancy and other stationery. [Purchased from] De La Rue & Co., London 93 lots. Of these 33 lots of writing papers ‘The specimens 1 to 33 have been withdrawn with the exception of a few sheets of each. 13 April 1866’.

<sup>120</sup> NMS(NH)/38, ‘List of specimens destroyed 1889 to [1927]’.

<sup>121</sup> NMS(CS)/[n.n.], Minute Book, Disposals Board, Vol. 1, 1923 to 1940, Martin cited in Transcript of Curle to Secretary SED, 20 Dec. 1922.

<sup>122</sup> Curle (1923a), 4.

<sup>123</sup> NMS(CS)/[n.n.], Minute Book, Disposals Board, Vol. 1, 1923 to 1940, transcript of a letter Curle to Secretary of SED, of 20 Dec. 1922.

<sup>124</sup> NMS(CS)/[n.n.], Minute Book, Disposals Board. Vol. 1, 1923 to 1940.

sites of disposal Board minutes, disposal lists, and the registers themselves – and involved Board members drawn from beyond the Museum.

		<b>Destroy</b>	<b>Sell</b>	<b>Workshop use</b>	<b>Other</b>
21 January 1923	Cellars 2 & 15	155	177	3	
28 January 1924	Art & Ethnographical	27	105		
26 November 1925	Art & Ethnographical	21	30		
26 November 1925	Technological Department	49	10	21	
24 April 1930	Art & Ethnographical	27	9		Permanent loan 27
24 April 1930	Technological Department	50			Permanent loan 7
25 October 1930	Library				
27 October 1932	Natural History	107			
27 October 1932	Art & Ethnographical	72	198		Retain 10
28 March 1935	Art & Ethnographical	14	103		
28 March 1935	Technological Department	84	45 (as scrap)		
27 January 1936	Art & Ethnography	14	177		Retain 10 Gift 1
27 January 1936	Natural History Department	94			
2 November 1936	Art & Ethnography	22	81		
2 November 1936	Technology	1	72		
22 August 1937	Library				
5 April 1938	Art & Ethnography	3	268		
5 April 1938	Technology Department	13			
24 November 1938	Natural History	272			
24 November 1938	Art & Ethnography		262		
24 November 1938	Library				
4 April 1939	Natural History	487			
24 October 1939	Art & Ethnography	20	77		Transferred to other Government Dept. 66

**Table 5.1. Actions of Disposal Board, 1923-1939 (Source: NMS(CS)/[n.n.], Minute Book of Disposal Board).**

The Board erected a taxonomy of objects and plotted their possible trajectories out of the Museum: 'Objects of absolutely no value to be destroyed as worthless', 'Objects for which there was a possible value to be sold or, failing a purchaser, to be destroyed', and 'Objects, otherwise worthless, which it was considered, might be used in the Museum workshops'.

For a summary of actions taken under each criterion in the period 1923 to 1939, see Table 5.1.

### ***5.10 Conclusion***

This chapter has examined how processes of collecting involved epistemological and material relocation. Collecting included practices of discrimination, performed through accumulation and discard, performed in a variety of sites both within and before the Museum. Crucial to the transition from 'before' to 'within' was the process of registration which was a means of transferring ownership, imposing order and disciplining objects. Scrutiny of the registers has shown them to be problematic and heterogeneous sources, constructed and valued in different ways in different parts of the Museum. Even which document constituted the definitive, 'permanent' or 'master' register, was at times a matter of contestation (Figure 5.14). The complexity of these sources notwithstanding, analysis of them has brought into view processes by which the collections, and the intellectual architecture of the Museum (and through it the material architecture), were shaped and fashioned. The varied documentary practices were themselves productive of a heterogeneity which was in tension with the Museum as a holistic site.



**Figure 5.14. Department of Technology registers. Although labelled ‘master registers’ these documents were scroll registers in the sense used in ‘General Instructions’.**

Further, this analysis has constructed a geography of decision-making. Whilst what was accepted as gift or bequest was a decision taken by the Museum’s staff, decisions on what to discard required ratification by a Disposal Board whose members were drawn from beyond the Museum. The selection or approval of the purchase of objects of high value was largely conducted in the nineteenth century by DSA, whilst in the twentieth century such decisions required the sanction of SED. Most decisions on what to discard were taken by

the locally-constituted Disposal Board, although this was not always the case as evidenced by the role played by a Royal Commission in the transfer of botanical collections out of the Museum's care.<sup>125</sup>

The chapter has brought further into focus the relationship between place, objects and those charged with their care: what, for Alberti, was 'the intense association between keeper and things kept', and the sites in which the practices of keeping were conducted.<sup>126</sup> The collecting practices of the Museum were informed by ideologies of the roles and functions of the Museum and inextricably were linked to, and tempered by, matters of space. The gravitational effects of collections exerted their influence not only in attracting further similar material but also in configuration of space to accommodate the collections. The extent of the entomological and ornithological collections, for example, was a major factor in the allocation in 1927 of a hall as a Study Room, an environment in which the cabinet collections could be curated and studied. Curle's remarks about representing ship-building provides yet another example of the relationship collecting and space: 'We have no models of merchant steam ships, of battleships one, one obsolete specimen. We cannot take them in. All the ship builders are extremely friendly to us, and I do not think there would be any difficulty in obtaining models if we had the accommodation'.<sup>127</sup>

Where decisions were made about what material would constitute the Museum, and where and how objects should be sought, shaped the intellectual and material architecture of the Museum. On a smaller geographical scale, where

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<sup>125</sup> Royal Commission (1929; 1930); Rowatt (1939), 4.

<sup>126</sup> Alberti (2011a), 63.

<sup>127</sup> Curle, evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 96, para. 1278.

an object was kept, and its material association with other objects, was also a matter of how it should be seen and valued.

Collecting prescribed the other practices, since only that which was collected was available to be displayed, used for educating, and visited. As Knell observes, decisions made at various nodes in the networks of collecting limit and structure the repertoires that the collected object may perform: 'Collecting objectives constrain data capture, and influence specimen preparation and preservation, which together seriously restrict future use'.<sup>128</sup> As I will show in the next chapter, the processes of collecting both enabled and constrained those processes of exhibiting.

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<sup>128</sup> Knell (1997), 11. See also Chalk (2012).



## DISPLAYING: SITES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

It has been proposed that collections could be seen as the brain of the museum, exhibitions the voice.<sup>1</sup>

### *6.1 Introduction*

Having considered those processes by which collections were made, maintained, sustained, and classified, this chapter addresses the ‘voice’ of the Museum, its displays and the practices of displaying. The sites of display were (and are) where visitors and object exchange gaze.<sup>2</sup> But, as I shall show, the sites of displaying included also those spaces away from the visitors’ gaze in which the politics, theatricality and artifice of the displays were produced.

This chapter examines how the epistemic authority of the Museum was constructed and made visible to the visitor. As I hope to show, discourses of ‘reality’, ‘realism’, ‘originality’ and the ‘authentic’, constructed differently at different times and in different disciplinary contexts, constituted different epistemic and material spaces of display and displaying. As Forgan puts it, ‘the physical, intellectual, and material context of the museum is constantly changing’.<sup>3</sup> In order to construct an historical geography of displaying, the chapter focuses primarily on those actors involved in the production of displays

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<sup>1</sup> Keene (2005), [4].

<sup>2</sup> Shelton (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Forgan (2005), 583.

(the actions and reactions of audiences, in so far as they are recoverable, are the subject of Chapter 8). Their actions were productive of reciprocal processes which sought to construct what the Museum was and did and, simultaneously, ‘to construct what a visitor is and does’.<sup>4</sup> Museum displays were (and remain) sites of particular social and cognitive relationships and of particular ways of knowing.

The principal sources which permit an examination of the sites and processes of display production include the Annual Reports, press reports, and photographs and plans of exhibits, and, principally, the *Guide* which provide floor plans and case-by-case listing of the exhibits.<sup>5</sup> The building itself also forms part of the archive, exhibiting evidence of past usage, a haptic geography of displaying.

In constructing a geography of displaying, several questions are key. What was displayed? How and why were objects displayed? Who were the intended audiences and what meanings were intended? Where did displaying take place? In relation to this last question, as I hope to show, displaying extended through and beyond the material Museum. For this reason I have chosen to use the term ‘displaying’ in preference to ‘exhibiting’ which may carry stronger connotations of a congruence between building and process than the evidence demonstrates.

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<sup>4</sup> Alberti (2007), 376.

<sup>5</sup> Under the term ‘*Guide*’ I include *Catalogue of Industrial Department* (editions 1867; 1869), *Catalogue of Natural History Department* (1872), *A Guide to the Collections* (editions 1908, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1916, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1924); *A General Guide to the Collections* (editions 1929, 1935).

## *6.2 Changing concepts of the role and form of display: what to display?*

Conn has argued that, from the middle of the nineteenth century, whilst scientific work became more distanced from objects, the role of the museum in public display increased.<sup>6</sup> Yet, paradoxically, in the Museum the proportion of its holdings presented for public scrutiny reduced as views of the place of museums changed. As Alberti has shown, throughout Britain, the proliferation of public museums during the latter half of the nineteenth century marked both greater public access to collections and, simultaneously, greater restriction.<sup>7</sup>

For Wilson, in the nineteenth century, new transport and communications technologies altered geographies, ‘abridging Space and Time’: ‘The great globe has seemed before our eyes to contract into smaller dimensions... The entire globe is now an open market-place and bazaar for every nation’.<sup>8</sup> The shrinking globe was productive of a rise in consumerism and consumption and a vast proliferation of objects which might potentially be displayed in an industrial museum. For one critic, museums were becoming ‘not nearly so instructive as the shops of Regent Street or Holburn’.<sup>9</sup> The discourse over what was appropriate to display is illustrated in the presidential address to the 1895 annual meeting of the Museums Association:

To crowd a gallery with great things like Elephant and Rhinoceros, Lion and Tiger, Zebra, Deer, and such like, which any boy can see in life in the first Menagerie which passes through town, is the height of folly. Were this done, how infinitely more profitable might the great space thus wasted have been used...[for] display of spirit-

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<sup>6</sup> Conn (1998), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Alberti (2007). For discussion of the proliferation of museums, see Murray (1904); Lewis (1984b).

<sup>8</sup> Wilson (1858), 11. In such a statement Wilson was signalling to what has become known as ‘space-time convergence’ for discussion of which, see Brunn & Leinbach (1991).

<sup>9</sup> Jevons (1883), 54.

preserved specimens particularly of soft-bodied invertebrates, thus filling existing gaps in the chain of organic being.<sup>10</sup>

It was not only questions of what was to be seen, but how things should be seen, that were to the fore. As an editorial in *The Scotsman* in 1852 declared of the potential role for a museum in Edinburgh: ‘We must teach our people what they have to look for. We must give them the means of distinguishing between things that are of value and things that are worthless. And this is to be done, not by books or popular lectures alone, but by museums in which the objects are exhibited to the eye’.<sup>11</sup> Yet the gaze had to be directed so as to dispel perceptual promiscuity and instil a discipline of seeing. Gazes were (and are), regulated, directed, focused, and framed materially and epistemically, through the technologies of display – guidebooks, label, the display-case and the design of the display (see Chapter 6).<sup>12</sup> Conn, for example, has drawn attention to the role of the display case in framing the field of view and limiting engagement to a single sense – vision – whilst Pearce observed that the ‘The ability of cases to stand in regimented rows contributed considerably to the solidarity of the classificatory regimes’.<sup>13</sup>

Wilson referred to the ‘exhibitional galleries’, distinguishing the spaces of collection display from the other spaces comprising the Museum – the laboratory, library, and lecture theatre.<sup>14</sup> Throughout much of the nineteenth century, however, the term ‘exhibit’ or ‘exhibition’ hardly featured in the Museum’s rhetoric since ‘collections’ carried the implication that the objects

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<sup>10</sup> Norman (1895), 21.

<sup>11</sup> *Scotsman* (1852).

<sup>12</sup> Albert (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Pearce (1992), 105; Conn (1998), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson (1858), 7.

were on exhibition or were intended for exhibition. Not until 1880 did the Annual Reports begin to differentiate between ‘exhibited’ collections and collections ‘in reserve’.<sup>15</sup> The distinction reflected conflicting demands on objects which were expressed spatially through the partitioning of collections to serve different functions and audiences (see Chapters 5 and 7). Yet, as I suggest in this chapter, exhibition and ‘reserve’ were both forms of display, albeit performed in different material spaces and for different audiences. Nonetheless, the partitioning of collections was productive of an increasing proportion of the material architecture of the Museum being off-limits to the vast majority of visitors. These spaces were devoted to behind-the-scenes functions of accommodation of reserve collections and to the hidden work of exhibit production. In these hidden sites, the object lessons to be displayed were rehearsed and constructed. By being behind-the-scenes the contribution of those spaces and those who worked in them – preparators, conservators, curators, taxidermists, model-makers – to give ‘voice’ to objects was effaced. Objects were given the appearance of speaking for themselves, and doing so with the authority of the Museum. The building itself was a prime agent in establishing that authority.

### ***6.3 The building as display***

#### *6.3.1 The ‘walled in space’*

As discussed in Chapter 3, the museum building was not merely a container for display of its contents, it was itself a materialisation of discourses. Before his

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<sup>15</sup> The first example occurs in the Annual Report for 1880. See Traquair (1881), 569.

death, Wilson's collecting of industrial material had resulted in 10,350 objects which 'If properly displayed those would fill a space equal to that afforded by the Museum of Practical Geology, Jermyn Street, London, or to fully one half that of the New National Gallery in Edinburgh'.<sup>16</sup> But the scale of the building was not informed merely by the size of the collections. Its form and size was a material representation of national pride, a display of intellectual wealth and sophistication. This was architecture as advertisement suffused with symbolic meaning.<sup>17</sup> The form of the building signalled to higher things. The flight of steps, by which the visitor ascended from the street, was more than a pragmatic solution to the challenging topography of the site, but were a metaphor for the challenge of learning, an invitation to climb from the mundanity of the street to a higher reality operating within its walls.<sup>18</sup> The cathedral-like interior, its glazed roof providing a view to the heavens, was an awe-inspiring setting calculated to be read as a site of deep truths and authoritative knowledge, whilst the bridge connecting the Museum and the University proclaimed the two buildings to be conjoined sites of learning and knowledge-making.

Fowke and Matheson had planned to incorporate stone from different parts of Scotland into the façade thereby representing the materiality of Scotland in the very materials of the building: 'this feature will in itself form a geological museum'.<sup>19</sup> This 'lesson in stone' was not realised, but parts of the interior finish provided other object lessons. For Carla Yanni, 'Ferro-vitreous construction was evidence of engineering achievement' and the conspicuous use of modern

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<sup>16</sup> Galletly (1860), 213 [299].

<sup>17</sup> Forgan (1998); Prior (2006).

<sup>18</sup> Duncan (1995), 10-11. See also Prior (2002), 180; Vereker (2006).

<sup>19</sup> *Scotsman* (1861).

materials – cast iron and plate glass, and the incorporation of gas lighting – served to constitute the building’s modernity.<sup>20</sup> The design linked classical learning, symbolically associated with Renaissance Italy, with state-of-the-art innovation. Other object lessons included the floors of parts of the ground floor which were themselves a display of the products of British industry: the encaustic, glazed and tessellated tiles of the sections of the corridor along the north façade were representative of the products of Minton & Co., Maw & Co., William Goodwin, and the Architectural Pottery Company.<sup>21</sup>

Wilson devised an esoteric symbol, a concept ‘map’ of technology, as an emblem for the Museum (Figure 6.1). He described it thus:

A circle, to imply that the Museum represents the industry of the whole world; within the circle, an equilateral triangle, the respective sides of which shall denote the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, from which industrial art gathers its materials; within the triangle an open hand, as the symbol of the transforming forces which change these materials; and in the palm of that hand an eye, selecting the materials which shall be transformed.<sup>22</sup>

A version of this symbol was used on some object labels (Figure 6.2) but it was not used on the building itself as Wilson had intended. Within a year of his death in 1859 a different set of icons, indexes and symbols was selected to symbolise the Museum’s status and authority. Rather than Wilson’s optimistic celebration of the potential of human ingenuity, the iconography chosen presented a memorialisation of past achievement situating the Museum as a site of remembrance of pasts, rather than a driver for the future. The statuary, although not materialised until 1889, was an integral part of Fowke and Matheson’s design

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<sup>20</sup> Yanni (2005), 104.

<sup>21</sup> Galletly (1869), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson (1858), 22-23.



Figure 6.1. George Wilson's 'map' of technology on his grave-marker in Old Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh This is the 'logo' he designed for the Museum (photograph by the author).

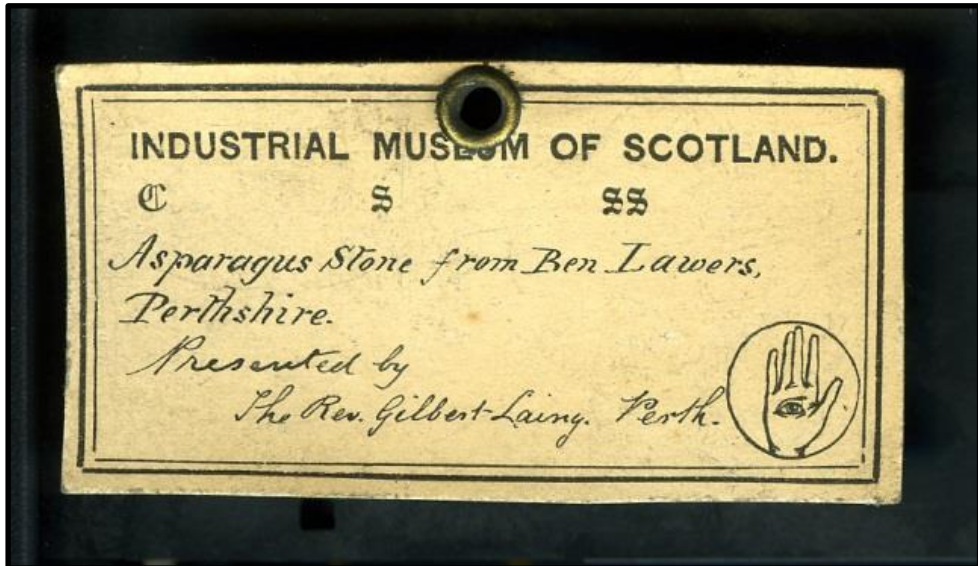


Figure 6.2. A specimen label with pre-printed hand and eye emblem (photograph by the author).

(see frontispiece), although details of its design were modified subsequently<sup>23</sup> – Charles Darwin would have been an unlikely choice for inclusion in the early 1860s.<sup>24</sup> Carved spandrels by John Rhind (1828-1892) over the doors featured Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, flanked by Michelangelo, James Watt, Isaac Newton and Darwin and were together a display of a secular hagiography which associated the Museum with Royalty, Empire, and great figures in science and art (Figure 6.3). The hagiography of the spandrels was echoed and elaborated inside the building by a frieze bearing names of past great figures from art and science – engineers John Smeaton (1724-1792); James Brindley (1716-1772), and the architect and painter Giotto di Bondone (*circa* 1267-1337) are discernible in a photograph taken in about 1900 (Figure 6.4). The portraits in stone over the entrance and the procession of names in the frieze enrolled the figures depicted and named in lending their authority to the Museum and its contents.

On a different scale, the placement at the entrance of oak panels bearing the names of benefactors was a display of munificence which associated the Museum with the contemporary ‘great and good’, and served as an encouragement for others to emulate their example: ‘Screens have been erected on which are to be inscribed the names of generous donors, who have given donations of the value of over £100.’<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> GB587/IS.2009.12, Fowke watercolour of front elevation; *Illustrated London News* (1861); Fowke (1862b).

<sup>24</sup> GB234/MW5/78, ‘Sculpture work contract’.

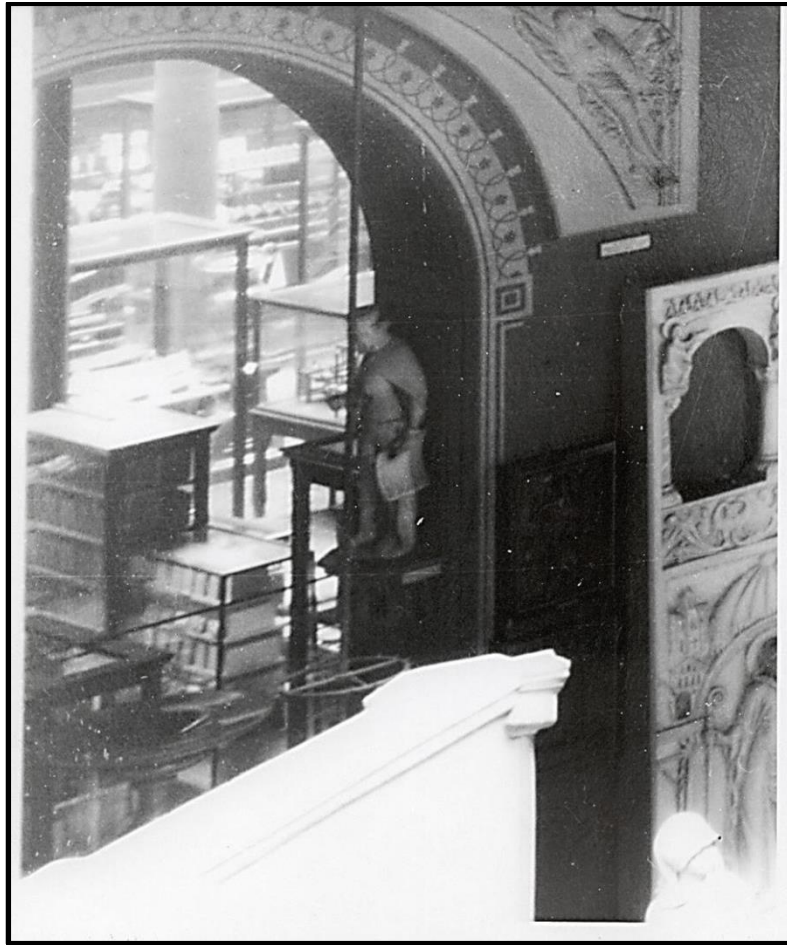
<sup>25</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.3, untitled, undated, and unattributed typescript ‘When I came to the Museum the methods of display...’ in file ‘Drafts of Lecture programmes, lectures, guides, etc.’



Figure 6.3. The main entrance with spandrels by John Rhind depicting, from left to right, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Michelangelo and James Watt (photograph by the author, 1 January 2004).



Figure 6.4. Detail from a photograph of the Great Hall, circa 1900 (Figure 3.9) showing a section of the frieze commemorating the English civil engineer John Smeaton (1724-1792).



**Figure 6.5. Stencil over archway on the ground floor connecting the Great Hall with one of the stacks to its south. The inclusion of one of the under-gallery gas light-fittings shows the photograph to have been taken prior to electric lighting being installed in 1902 (NMS(I)/24272).**

The decorative stencils on the archways connecting the galleries incorporated classical elements together with stylized representations of a thistle and a rose (Figure 6.5). The juxtaposition of these botanical emblems of Scotland and England, respectively, symbolised the Museum's role in respect of both constituents of the United Kingdom. The colour scheme also associated the Museum with the arts. In the early nineteenth century, dark red was the

background colour of choice for paintings.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the ‘chocolate red’ décor devised by James Gamble of DSA for the first phase of the building associated it with other prestigious and fashionable sites of artistic display. By 1875 Gamble’s thinking had changed resulting in the second phase of the building being painted light-green and French grey, with capitols picked out in red. The original red décor, now darkened by soot from the gas lighting and other atmospheric pollution, had come to detract from the Museum’s prestige. The fact that, for reasons of financial stringency, the original portion of the building could not be redecorated in the new colour scheme, in the eyes of its Director, further undermined the Museum’s status: ‘for four years one-third of the main hall has been of one colour, and the remainder of a totally different one. The effect of this upon strangers, and especially foreigners, is simply grotesque’.<sup>27</sup> Pale colours not only reflected light, they also reflected modernity. Thus in 1937 ebonised casing was repainted for use in the temporary exhibition of Coronation robes: ‘Most of the exhibition cases available were of a standard black-framed type, but such a colour was wholly unsuited to the elegant and light-coloured costumes to be displayed, and the cases were treated with a light buff-coloured distemper’.<sup>28</sup>

Developments in artificial lighting technology similarly overtook the Museum changing it from a site of technological innovation to one of old-fashioned dimness and dowdiness. The interior which had seemed so brightly lit,

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<sup>26</sup> Waterfield (1991). See also Clifford (1988), 48.

<sup>27</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to Secretary DSA, 9 November 1878, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> Rowatt (1938a), 2-3.

by the 1890s seemed so dim that ‘the contrast on entering the Museum on open evenings from the brilliantly lighted street outside is very striking’.<sup>29</sup>

### *6.3.2 A locale for the local or the global?: display of and for Scotland*

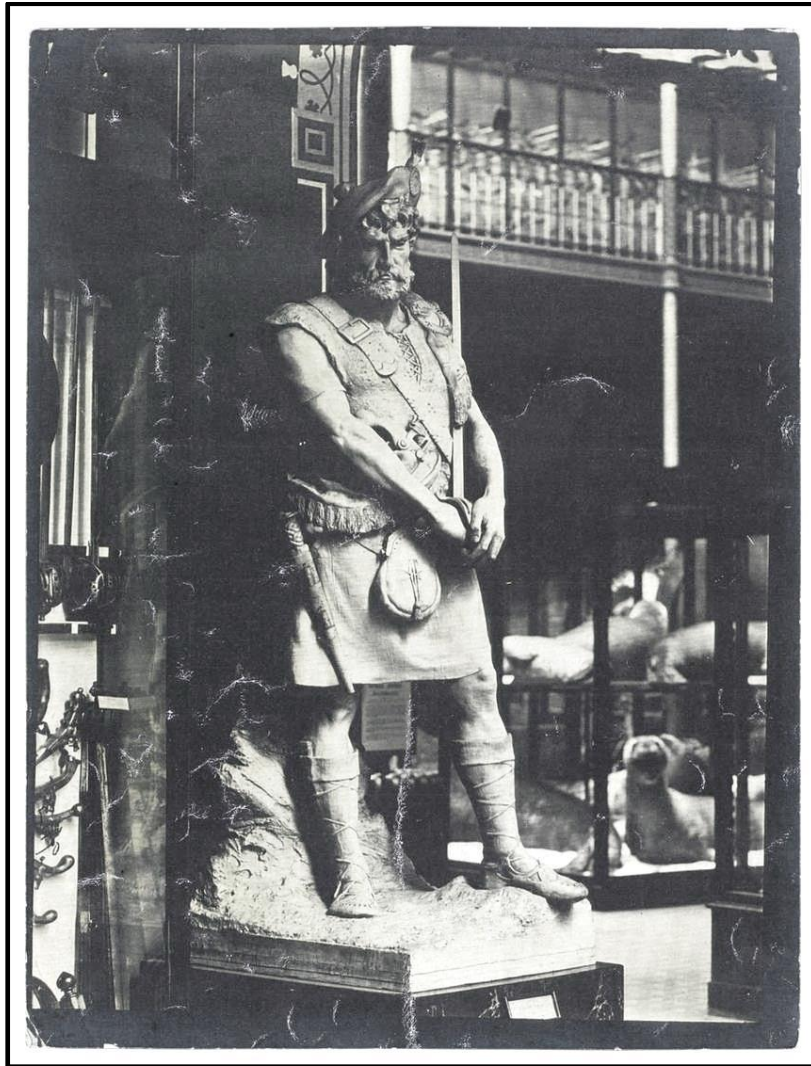
The preservation of portions of the Flodden Wall, and their incorporation into the displays in the twentieth-century southward extension (see Chapter 3) situated the Museum within the longer run of Scottish history.<sup>30</sup> However, this ingression of the local also manifested a tension between the Museum as a ‘world survey’ and a role in displaying its place in Scotland. This tension is evident in other juxtapositions such as those shown in a photograph taken between 1905 and 1916, of a display of Scottish weapons and a statue of Rob Roy MacGregor, with, in the background, Antarctic seals, an Indian elephant, and an American bison (Figure 6.6). Such displays subverted the distinction between the role the Museum and that of the National Museum of the Antiquities of Scotland, a distinction that the rhetoric of successive Directors sought to maintain. Curle, who had served previously as Director of the Museum of Antiquities and for a while during the First World War simultaneously held the directorship of both museums, wrote: ‘The province of the Scottish National Museum of Antiquities is the illustration of Scottish history and archaeology and its function is so clearly defined that there is little risk of overlapping there except, possibly, in the field of Comparative Archaeology’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 3, Smith to Secretary DSA, 7 October 1897, [unnumbered page between 413 and 414].

<sup>30</sup> Bryce (1910), 18.

<sup>31</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 86, memorandum, para. 4. For a survey of the Museum’s display of Scottish archaeological specimens, see Black (1893).



**Figure 6.6. Photocopy of a photograph of a statue of Rob Roy at east end of Great Hall, with view through archway to the large animal hall beyond, 1905-1916 (GB587/IS.2009.25).**

#### ***6.4 Philosophies on display***

Before 1865 arrangement of the displays was largely set within the context of University teaching. As Prince Albert declared of the Museum in 1861: ‘it will afford the means of supplying the student with practical illustrations of what he

has been taught in his class-room'.<sup>32</sup> For Allman, as for Forbes and Jameson before him, the Natural History Museum was, a vital site for his teaching, whilst for Wilson, the industrial displays were not only to be 'the text' of his University course, but also to carry the broader remit 'to serve non-academic as well as academic Students, and to benefit the entire community of Scotland, as well as every stranger who may enter its doors'.<sup>33</sup> Locating the displays in a discourse of University teaching gave them the authority of the University and co-located the interests of students and the working people – 'aiding the pursuits of the scientific student, but in imparting to the general public that acquaintance with natural objects which experience has shown to have so powerful an influence in refining the tastes and elevating the intellectual and moral condition of the community'.<sup>34</sup> Such discourses distanced the Museum from sites of idle loafing, and mere spectacle. They influenced what was displayed and how objects were arranged. As Allman wrote:

My main object has been to render the collection as complete as possible in *type forms*, believing that an educational value will thus be given to it far beyond what would be derived from the employment of the resources at my command, in an accumulation of *species* into whose details the public cannot be expected to enter, and which can leave upon the mind of the general visitor nothing but confused impressions of a multiplicity of forms among which he can recognize no definite relations, and whose endless details must only dishearten the student, and render the collection in a great measure powerless as an agent of public instruction.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, to make 'definite relations' visible and to mitigate against 'confused impressions' the visitors had to be shown *how* to look and *what* to see. The arrangement and juxtaposition of objects was one set of practices by which meanings were made (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>32</sup> Prince Albert quoted in *Scotsman* (1861c).

<sup>33</sup> Wilson (1856b), 19-20.

<sup>34</sup> Allman (1865), 254 [588].

<sup>35</sup> Allman (1856), 194 [228].

#### *6.4.1 Sequencing the natural world*

Subject to the limitations of appropriate space, objects were sequenced according to a variety of criteria. In the nineteenth century, the displays of zoological specimens were arranged in two principal ways: systematically and geographically. Representative or ‘typical forms’ constituted the systematically ordered ‘general collection’ illustrative of the Animal Kingdom as a whole. In the separate British animal display, in Allman’s view, ‘specific detail’ was essential.<sup>36</sup> Here Allman continued Forbes’s policy with respect to ‘the formation of a collection illustrative of the British fauna’ to include, so far as practicable, a representative of every British species. Despite the cramped conditions in the Natural History Museum, he ordered special display cases to be constructed for the British material and introduced labels which indicated the geographical distribution of each species in the British Isles. The use of geography as an ordering term, productive of the distinction between British and ‘other’ faunas, persisted in the displays developed in the new building (and continued in the Royal Museum building until its temporary closure in 2008).<sup>37</sup>

In the twentieth century a form of geographical display on a smaller scale was introduced in the form of habitat groups. The aim was, in each group, to contextualise specimens within ecological relationships and to capture and reconstitute a particular site and instant in time. Curle outlined the new approach thus:

The present arrangement follows that familiar in every museum – collections of animals arranged systematically, from Protozoa to Mammalia. It is proposed to devote additional

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<sup>36</sup> Allman (1856), 194 [226].

<sup>37</sup> The British Bird Hall and the British Animal Hall were redisplayed in 1971 and 1974, respectively. Lyster (1974); Clarke (1977).

galleries to the illustration of the general principles of biology, such as evolution, heredity, variation, migration, and the like; and to the illustration of man's relations with the animal world, as shown by typical animals from which he derives benefit (furs, silk, leather, food, &c.) and by typical pests from which his goods and crops suffer.<sup>38</sup>

This shift towards thematic displays on 'general principles of biology' required more space than the taxonomically-ordered serried ranks of specimens that they were to replace. In consequence, as Curle stated, their introduction demanded a consolidation of the typological displays, a process which 'goes hand in hand with the increase of the cabinet collections to which staff and outside specialists must go for the comparison and identification of specimens'.

For geology, as for zoology, some displays were systematic, others geographical. In 1870, Archer rearranged and reclassified the world-wide collection according to Dana's system, 'especially as the system of Dana is that taught by the Professor of Zoology and Mineralogy in the University of Edinburgh'.<sup>39</sup> The accompanying catalogue, which included not only those minerals represented in the collections but also all known minerals as an expression of Archer's aspiration to 'complete' the collection: 'Each species is also numbered the same as in his [Dana's] book, so that any notes made by the student in the Museum can be easily compared with the manual at home'. Archer constructed his 'account' of mineralogy on physical structure: 'In Case No. 1, I have endeavoured...to illustrate the general physical properties of minerals, so as to assist the student in understanding some of the crystallographic forms, the

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<sup>38</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 87, memorandum para. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Archer (1870b), iii. For system of classification, see Dana (1868).

lustre, colour, and other distinguishing characteristics which must be known before descriptive mineralogy can be understood'.<sup>40</sup>

For the rock specimens, in the care of the Geological Survey of Scotland, a geographical schema was adopted. Here the focus was on Scotland, the intention being to construct the fabric of the country as a three-dimensional map 'to supplement the Maps and Memoirs of the Geological Survey':

In arranging it [the rock collection] for exhibition, the following system is followed: – in the first place, advantage is taken of the political divisions of the country, the specimens are grouped to represent well-marked districts...In the second place, the rocks of each large district are arranged as a series in stratigraphical order, beginning always with the oldest stratified deposits.<sup>41</sup>

In a later revision of the displays, the labelling again followed the same style and the primary objective 'is that of illustrating the geological maps, a set of these is exhibited as close as possible to the rock specimens to which they relate'. Each map was ruled into sixteen equal areas and the specimen was accompanied by a 'ticket' stating its collection locality and a miniature version of the ordinance map also ruled into sixteen areas:

in order to indicate approximately where the corresponding square is to be found in the geological map, one of these subdivisions is coloured vermillion. Within that red square is a black dot, pointing out in what part of the area the precise locality is to be found...To indicate this more precisely more slender pins are inserted in the geological maps...each pin bearing a small number corresponding to that of the rock-specimen it is desired to locate.<sup>42</sup>

The sequence in which the displays were to be viewed was made even more explicit by arrows painted onto the cases.

In addition to the Scottish collection, John Goodchild also arranged an 'index collection', intended to illustrate geological principles and technical

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<sup>40</sup> Archer (1870b), iv.

<sup>41</sup> Geikie (1870), iii.

<sup>42</sup> Goodchild (1902a), 221.

terms. In this series the locality of the origin of the specimens was ‘obviously a matter of quite secondary importance...If a rock from Peru or from New Zealand answers the purpose of illustrating some special feature better than one from Scotland, what does it matter that it comes from abroad?’<sup>43</sup> Whilst the rock specimens were related to a scale of one-inch to the mile the geological displays incorporated an additional display element which used the gallery and its environs on a scale of 67,316 miles to the inch:

On the scale chosen the diameter of the sun works out at about thirteen inches. A gilt ball of this size has been made in the museum and fixed at the south end [of the geology gallery], where it forms an object just conspicuous enough to catch the eye without being unduly obtrusive. On the railing north of it (at a distance of 115 feet...) a steel pin with a globular head about a tenth of an inch in diameter representing the earth is firmly driven into the top of the oaken hand rail.<sup>44</sup>

A brass pin set into the handrail 48 feet from the ‘sun’ represented Mercury, a slightly larger pin, 90 feet from the ‘sun’ was Venus, and Mars was a pin on the window sill of the north wall. A label described the relative locations of the outer planets, Jupiter being approximately at the south face of the Signet Library (approx. 656 feet; 200 metres, away) and Neptune at the Free Church College (approx. 2953 feet; 900 metres away).

#### *6.4.2 Sequencing the industrial collections*

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in emulation of the taxonomies and systematics developed in the natural sciences, efforts were made to develop classification systems for man-made objects. Nonetheless, by the middle of the nineteenth century there were few generally agreed systems. Wilson and his

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<sup>43</sup> Goodchild (1902a), 223.

<sup>44</sup> Goodchild (1902b), 157.

successors had to devise and materialise their own classifications. In part these served to distinguish the Industrial Museum and the discipline of technology from that of Natural History. His example of the epistemic space of each setting?

– a dead horse:

The Museum of Natural History would include either a horse in life, or its skin stuffed, as its type in death, but the Industrial Museum looks chiefly with interest to the carcase rejected with horror by the keeper of the natural history collection. Its ears and hoofs appear as Prussian blue, with numerous applications, the iron shoes as swords and guns, the bones as gelatine and isinglass, the skin as leather, the blood as manure, the flesh as food for domestic animals.<sup>45</sup>

Archer followed Wilson's general schema of representing manufacturing processes from raw materials to finished products. For him the four elements of display were:

1st, The raw materials drawn from the three kingdoms of nature; 2nd, Those materials in the various stages of preparation by which they are fitted for the purposes of art or manufacture; 3rd, The processes of manufacture by which the material is converted into various articles of utility or ornament, and 4th, By specimens of superior design and workmanship in various branches of manufacturing art which may serve to teach and to stimulate others engaged in similar workmanship.<sup>46</sup>

In the temporary accommodation provided in Argyle Square, he arranged collections under fifteen 'well-marked divisions': quarrying and collieries; mining, smelting, construction materials; fine works in metal; agriculture; glass and pottery; costume and personal ornament; manufacture of textiles; decorative art; food and foodstuffs; paper making, printing and lithography; educational appliances; chemicals; tools and machines; 'miscellaneous collections, such as arms, basket work, and a variety of articles, which we have been compelled to place together for want of other space'.<sup>47</sup> Following the opening of the first phase of the new museum building in 1866, making available 17,050 square feet

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<sup>45</sup> *Scotsman* (1855a).

<sup>46</sup> Archer (1861b).

<sup>47</sup> Archer (1863), 235-236 [279-280].

(approx. 1584m<sup>2</sup>) of display space, the arrangement of displays changed. The *Catalogue of Industrial Department* reveals a diversity of ordering schemes.<sup>48</sup> Some exhibits were arranged on the basis of the materials from the objects were made – ‘pottery and porcelain’, ‘building materials’, ‘paper and its applications’, ‘woollen fabrics’, ‘vegetable fibres’, ‘metallurgical specimens’ and alike. Other assemblages were based on the form of the end-product – ‘buttons-lace-poplins’, ‘decorative furniture’, ‘arms, including shot and shell’, ‘light-house models and apparatus’, ‘architectural and engineering models’, ‘philosophical instruments’. Yet others were juxtaposed according to processes of manufacture – ‘manufacture of pottery’, ‘manufacture of glass’, ‘silk manufacture’ – or, literally in the case of the ‘food collection’, with processes of consumption. Still others were organised geographically – ‘Japanese objects’, ‘Chinese specimens’, and so on. One schema advocated for the new display spaces made available by the second phase of building, but never realised, was to materialise its internal geography as a stratification in which ‘space will be found on the ground floor for raw materials of industry derived from the earth, on the first gallery for raw materials obtained from the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and on the upper gallery for the manufactured products elaborated from both classes’.<sup>49</sup>

By the early twentieth century, the displays were arranged in a mixture of typological and geographical juxtapositions (Figure 6.7). The first floor galleries designated ‘Ethnography’ presented an arrangement which commenced with Greenland and progressed southwards and then eastwards through the Pacific.

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<sup>48</sup> Galletly (1869).

<sup>49</sup> *Scotsman* (1874a).

These ethnographic collections, particularly in the extensive African collections, as in some other museums, were structured in relation to ideas of cultural evolution:<sup>50</sup>

It lends additional interest to a study of this collection when it is remembered that every civilised nation at one time passed through a primitive stage, and that many of the implements, weapons, and utensils used by our remote ancestors, but which have perished, would find their exact counterpart among the objects in this collection – made, one may say, by people living in the present day.<sup>51</sup>

As in other museums at this time, these exhibits were associated with European archaeological objects suggesting that the ethnographical objects represented a recapitulation of stages of technological evolution through which western peoples had passed in their distant history. The ethnological gallery included objects and model representations implements, lake dwellings and dolmens, or ‘Rude Stone Monuments’, from the European Neolithic. Such juxtaposition constructed a Whiggish view of an evolutionary process which placed western ‘civilisation’ as the culmination of global history.<sup>52</sup> This narrative of progress was particularly evident in the description of the displays in the Great Hall in which, having directed visitors to casts of Greek and Roman statues, thence to ‘examples of art work of Nations older than Greece’ represented by Islamic and Indian antiquities, drew attention to ‘a huge Monolith from Central America ...[which] stands still apart from any historical development, but near it is a group of sculptured stones from Scotland, England, Ireland, and the Isle of Man...which are way-marks in the history of Early Christian art in these

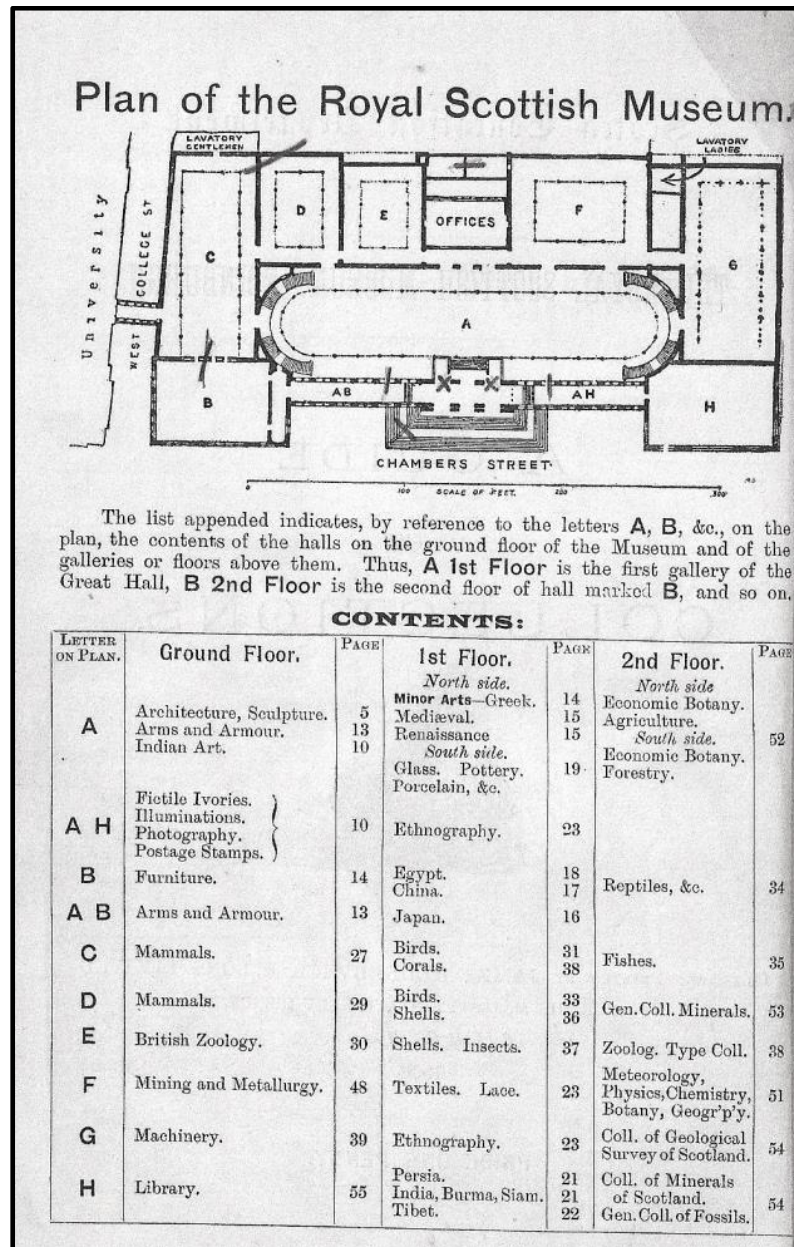
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<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of evolutionary display elsewhere, see Coombes (1997).

<sup>51</sup> Royal Scottish Museum (1908), 25. Almost identical phraseology appeared in subsequent editions until 1924.

<sup>52</sup> Wingfield (2011).

islands'.<sup>53</sup> Visitors were then directed through objects of European art culminating in a display of armour and Scottish weapons.



**Figure 6.7. A mixture of thematic and geographical categorisations of displays listed in *A Guide to the Collections* (1908), 2.**

<sup>53</sup> Royal Scottish Museum (1908), 10. Similar wording was used until the 1924 edition.

Additions to the collections could change the spatial arrangement, displacing existing displays and forming new juxtapositions. For example, Vallance reported that:

the changes in the Great Hall, rendered necessary by the setting up in suitable positions of the casts from the Treasury of Cnidians and the Pergamos Frieze recently acquired by the Museum. The effect of the new arrangement on the appearance of the hall is entirely satisfactory, and the alterations will facilitate the future grouping of other specimens according to style and periods – always a difficult matter where large objects of various dimensions have to be dealt with in a limited space.<sup>54</sup>

This rearrangement required the relocation of, among other objects, the 18-metre-high plaster cast of the Tabernacle from Léau from opposite the entrance to the east end of the hall: ‘This brings the Tabernacle into proper relation to the objects with which it is classified’.<sup>55</sup> With the acquisition of the cast of the Treasury, the Tabernacle ceased to be ‘an imposing centre-piece in the large hall of the Museum’, to become regarded as an object which had ‘somewhat cramped the entrance’.<sup>56</sup> The material and metaphorical movement of the Tabernacle to its ‘proper’ place provide a vivid illustration not only of the pragmatics of space but of how the displays were continually in a state of rearrangement and of how classification was itself a matter of epistemological and spatial location.

### ***6.5 Constraints on display: the pragmatics of space***

Fowke and Matheson’s designs for the material architecture of the Museum had been made in abstract, largely before substantial collections of industrial objects had been amassed. What they imagined the Museum to be imposed constraints

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<sup>54</sup> Vallance in Dobbie (1908), 8 [864].

<sup>55</sup> Vallance in Dobbie (1908), 8 [864].

<sup>56</sup> For its role as centrepiece, see *Scotsman* (1889), and for its role in cramping the entrance, see Vallance in Dobbie (1908), 8 [864].

upon what it would become. The intellectual architecture was not always in accord with the material architecture and, as noted earlier in this chapter and also in Chapter 3, compromises had to be made over how objects could, or should, be displayed. A range of practicalities tempered plans for strictly categorical presentations, frustrating aspirations to present ‘proper’ arrangements of objects and fuelling bids for extra space. For Archer, in 1862 struggling with the challenges of working in the confined spaces of the University museum and the Temporary Museum, the purpose-designed building offered the prospect of co-location of the natural history and the industrial collections: ‘juxtaposition with the applications of the materials of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms to industrial purposes, will have a double value as a means of instruction’.<sup>57</sup> As Finnegan has pointed out, one late nineteenth-century view of natural history was aesthetic – Nature was the source of the beauty found in art, and so careful observation of nature could heighten the appreciation of beauty.<sup>58</sup> However, by 1878 Archer expressed concern that ‘At present the Archaeological section is mixed up with Zoology, the Mechanical section with Architecture; and many other anomalies exist for want of space’.<sup>59</sup> He argued too for the urgent need of ‘Store Rooms’, ‘Preparation Rooms’ and better office accommodation. Writing at the turn of the century the Museum’s Curator reiterated concern that the constraints of the material architecture brought to the fore ‘the incongruities of a mixed museum’ in which ‘natural history collections were becoming so overlapped with the art collections, that elephants and sixteenth century

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<sup>57</sup> Archer (1863), 237 [281].

<sup>58</sup> Finnegan (2005), 135.

<sup>59</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to Secretary DSA, 29 November 1878, 61-62.

tapestries were intermingling, and the two things did not go well together': the photograph of the Rob Roy statue (see Figure 6.6), taken at about the time this remark was made, provides a vivid example of the incongruities of display.<sup>60</sup> Martin, reporting on the Museum in 1911, complained that he was unable to present objects 'in congruous groups or as units with a fitting regard for culture, period and style', and that 'The better arrangement of objects so as to exhibit them in their historic relation and sequence is in several sections retarded by want of room in the courts and galleries'.<sup>61</sup>

### *6.5.1 Space and limitations on display*

The site for the Industrial Museum directly influenced the arrangement of the displayed collections. As Wilson and Allman stated in July 1856 in their specification for a purpose-designed museum:

The Upper Gallery in the East side of the Quadrangle could be connected with the upper Hall of the University Museum by a suitable archway crossing West College Street. The provision of this physical link to the University suggested the arrangement of the new building as it would cause least alteration to the University if the east galleries of the new building were allocated to natural history.<sup>62</sup>

Even when a bespoke building was provided, its design and phased construction imposed constraints on the displays. Writing in 1869, Galletly noted that:

The particular construction of the building has also influenced the arrangements, by requiring that all large and heavy objects should be on the ground floor. Another circumstance, which prevents the placing of some specimens where it would be desirable, is the want of permanent cases in many sections. For these reasons the existing classification is rather one of convenience than one with any pretension to scientific accuracy.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Vallance (1902), 57.

<sup>61</sup> Martin (1912), 2.

<sup>62</sup> GB2229 Parcel 30/12, Memorandum of Wilson and Allman to Secretary DSA, 23 July 1856.

<sup>63</sup> Gellatly (1869), v.

As he noted, such weighty matters as elephants, moose, rhino and heavy engineering objects were, of necessity, confined to the ground floor. A few objects, notably samples of armour plating and two fossil trees, were too large or heavy to be accommodated and were displayed outdoors ‘within the palisading on the north side of the Industrial Museum’.<sup>64</sup> Within the building the size of some objects subverted their rational display. The cast of the Bologna Gateway acquired in 1889 provides a striking example. There being no available space to accommodate it within the typological sequence of architectural objects in the Great Hall, the cast was erected in the West Wing, the ground floor of which was allocated to engineering and the other floors to collections of ethnography and economic botany (Figure 6.8).<sup>65</sup>

Lack of display space, particularly for large items, was a recurrent concern. In 1929 Curle reported that ‘the question of space is a serious problem. A particularly fine specimen of a Stanhope printing press, in original condition, which has been acquired has had to be stored in the reserve collections...the purchase of specimens for storage is not desirable’.<sup>66</sup> The ability to place items on display was further constrained by concerns about the structural integrity of the building and its suitability to changing modes of display. As Curle declared in 1928:

I understand the structure is not sufficiently strong. In that respect I would like to say that our galleries are in all probability carrying a weight much greater than was ever contemplated. When the Museum was built the casing would be much lighter, the glass would probably be ordinary sheet glass, and a definite number of cases would be considered appropriate to the galleries. As the Museum became more and more congested we crowded case on case to the greatest possible limit; finest plate glass has taken the place of the sheet glass; heavier fittings are probably used inside cases, so that

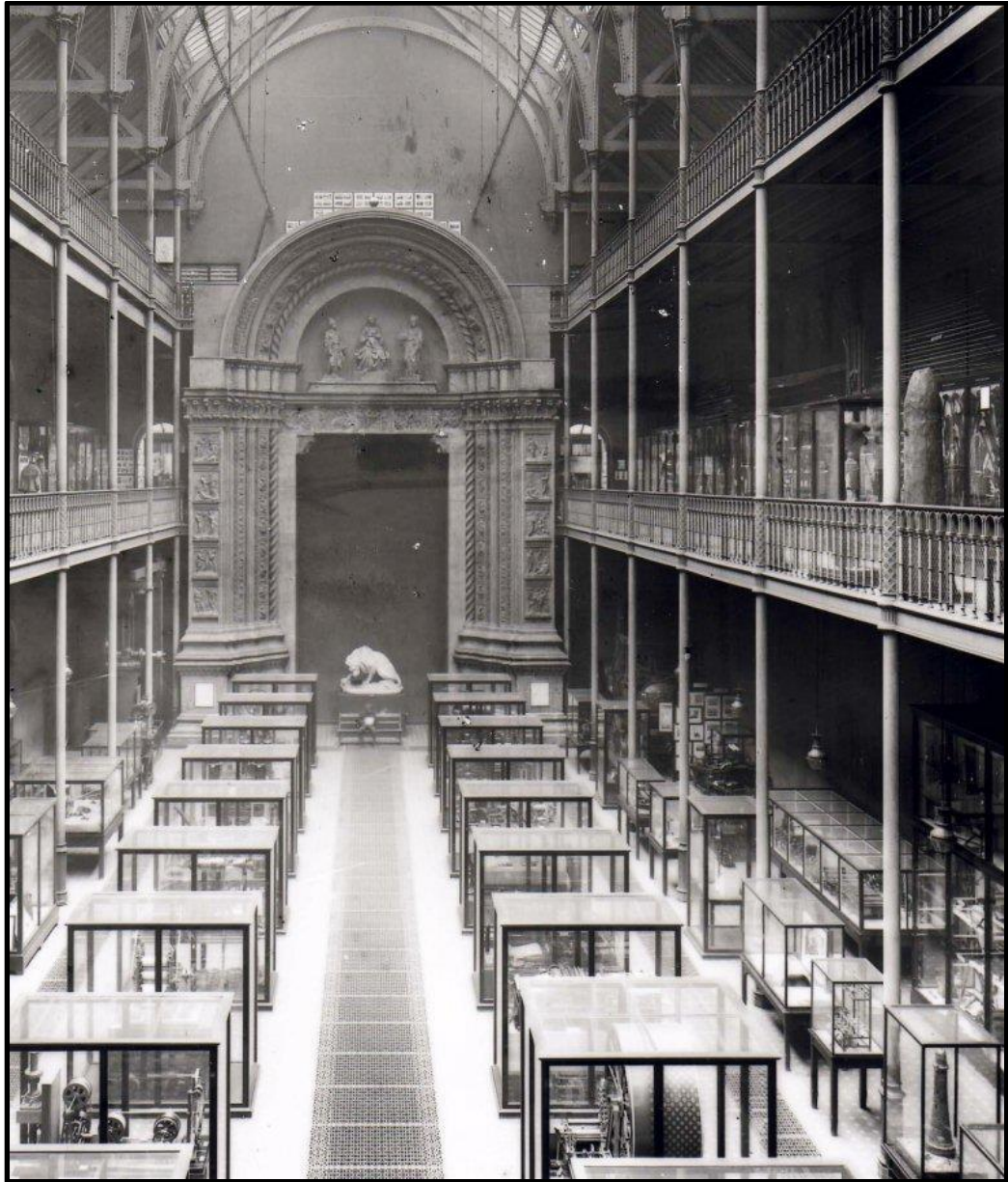
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<sup>64</sup> *Scotsman* (1869).

<sup>65</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Smith to Secretary DSA, 16 November 1887, pp. 293-295.

<sup>66</sup> Curle (1929), 6.

now the galleries are carrying a weight very much larger than was originally contemplated.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 6.8.** An object out of place: the massive cast of the Bologna Cathedral Gateway, juxtaposed with heavy engineering (ground floor), ethnography (first floor) and economic botany (top floor), dominating the south wall of the West Wing, *circa* 1900 (NMS(I)/19840).

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<sup>67</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 91, para. 1134.

### 6.5.2 *Space and opportunities for display*

Whilst lack of space challenged rational display, the phased construction of the building created different challenges, and the pulsed production of new built space temporarily overwhelmed the staff's ability to fill it. Such matters prompted the mobility not only of the Museum's own objects but also brought the permanent collections into juxtapositions with objects and collections on temporary exhibition. Following the opening of the second phase, in 1875, for example, two floors of one of the newly-constructed stacks were used for a 'Collection of Engraved National Portraits, lent by the South Kensington Museum'.<sup>68</sup> Other temporary exhibitions followed.<sup>69</sup> From the beginning the Museum authorities viewed temporary exhibition as a vital part of its role. But as the Museum's own collections grew and were arranged to fill the display spaces, new sites for temporary exhibition were required. In 1884, to accommodate an exhibition of 320 facsimiles of Rembrandt etchings and photographic reproductions of Raphael cartoons, the lecture theatre was temporarily converted into exhibition space, a reconfiguration made permanent in 1897.<sup>70</sup>

Temporary exhibitions were a means of renewing public interest in the Museum and the need for further space for loan exhibitions formed part of the Museum's bids for additional accommodation in the twentieth century (see Chapter 3). Dobbie complained that, for want of adequate accommodation, the staging of temporary exhibitions necessitated displacing parts of the permanent

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<sup>68</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (n.d., *circa* 1875).

<sup>69</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1877); Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, [1878]; Audsley (1878); Redgrave (1878); [Muston] (1879); Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1880); Muston (1880); Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1889).

<sup>70</sup> *Scotsman* (1884).

displays.<sup>71</sup> However, competing demands for funding meant that Oldrieve's plans for dedicated temporary exhibition space were never realised.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless the Museum continued to supplement its own displayed collections with objects on loan. Mostly these were art objects. Lack of space sometimes necessitated their being displayed in incongruous juxtapositions with the permanent displays. In 1913, for example, stained glass panels made by the Aberdeenshire artist Douglas Strachan for the Palace of Justice in The Hague were exhibited in the Persian gallery.

The phases of extension of the building in the late 1920s and in 1934, whilst not providing the dedicated space for temporary exhibition that Dobbie had wished for, nonetheless produced space which was beyond the Museum's immediate capability to fill with 'permanent' displays. From 1926 the Museum displayed a variety of loan collections. The completion in 1934 of a further extension enabled the Museum to develop its own ambitious project, Scottish Everyday Art: 'Space in the Museum is now so fully occupied that it would have been very difficult to house such an exhibition but for the fact that extensive rearrangements are at present being carried out throughout the Art and Ethnographical Department owing to the approaching completion of the extension at the west end of the Museum'.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dobbie (1906), 1 [925].

<sup>72</sup> GB234/RHP 48271, 'Edinburgh Royal Scottish Museum H M Office of Works, Edinburgh', 1925.

<sup>73</sup> Rowatt (1937), 1.

## 6.6 *Different publics and different displays*

In the nineteenth century, concerns were expressed about the sheer quantity and diversity of material on display in British museums. An exhibitionary complex which entailed too much complexity was deemed by some critics as being ‘anti-educational’: ‘A crowded gallery, except in very exceptional circumstances, at once condemns the curator’.<sup>74</sup> Meyer, writing about the Victoria and Albert Museum, stated: ‘It’s *too much* overwhelms the receptivity of the freshest of visitors; this *too much* is an aberration of museal science’.<sup>75</sup> In other words, ‘Looking at everything generally ends in remembering nothing’.<sup>76</sup>

From the mid-1860s, several authors such as John Edward Gray and Thomas Henry Huxley advocated the production of different ‘accounts of nature’ both to reflect the needs of, and to themselves construct, different audiences.<sup>77</sup> This heterotopic arrangement Huxley dubbed the ‘new museum’. Further developing this concept, Bather advocated three categories of collections: ‘(1) a stored series, accessible only to investigators, (2) an exhibited series intended for the instruction of students and for the assistance of amateurs, freely open to such people, but denied to the public, (3) a smaller series of carefully selected objects, so displayed as to make the utmost appeal to the great public’.<sup>78</sup> This categorisation of objects and visitors constructed a museum differently for each. The Museum adopted this tripartite model. In addition to displays intended for the ‘great public’, it developed displays to meet the needs of students. The type

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<sup>74</sup> Jevons (1883), 59; Flower (1889a), 19.

<sup>75</sup> Meyer quoted in Bather (1903a), 326.

<sup>76</sup> Blackie (1875), 5.

<sup>77</sup> Gray (1865); Huxley [1868] quoted in Huxley (1896), 127.

<sup>78</sup> Bather, (1903b), 73.

collections were designed to serve the needs of university students, and the School Gallery, opened in about 1901, was an initiative to engage the Museum with school-level education (see Chapter 7).<sup>79</sup> The creation of ‘series’ accessible only to investigators required practises of space which increased the behind-the-scenes areas of museum buildings to accommodate off-display ‘cabinet’ or ‘reserve’ collections. As Alberti has noted, this partitioning of collections reconfigured social relations increasing the power and status of curators (see also Chapter 4).<sup>80</sup> It was they who selected those objects to be placed on display, and those to be kept behind-the-scenes: they both managed and stage managed the boundary between the public and the non-public spaces (establishing the criteria for Foucault’s fifth condition of heterotopia).<sup>81</sup> Various social rituals had to be performed and *bona fides* established to cross the border between the public displays and the cabinet collections.

For Traquair the creation of cabinet collections was a matter not only of epistemology, but also of practicality:

the exhibited collections in a large museum ought to be more or less limited in extent...Whole classes of objects, such as dried insects and crustaceana, lose their colours by exposure to light, and therefore only a selection of easily replaceable species should be exposed. Fishes and reptiles in spirit not only become, in like manner, when exhibited, bleached and ruined, but as the spirit containing them becomes in most cases brown, their appearance is not attractive, while to the ichthyological expert a stuffed fish is in the majority nearly useless. The ornithologist finds a collection of skins most useful for his purpose, but unstuffed skins of birds are hardly suitable for being looked at through glass. But far more than this, the exhibition of endless rows of closely allied species, as of stuffed birds, not only occupies much valuable space, but is bewildering rather than instructive to the general student.<sup>82</sup>

The public displays, he suggested, should provide an illustration of ‘classification, and contain ‘all the animals, or other natural history objects which

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<sup>79</sup> [Vallance] 1904, (unpaginated).

<sup>80</sup> Alberti (2007; 2011a).

<sup>81</sup> Foucault (1984), 49.

<sup>82</sup> Traquair (1892), 177-178.

ordinary people are likely to read of in books of travel or popular natural history works'. Thus his aim was to produce a display which was an atlas of the Animal Kingdom.<sup>83</sup> For him, by using collections to display classificatory practice meant that the contentious matter of evolution through natural selection could be avoided: 'I hardly see the necessity for occupying space by large geographical groups or arrangements, upon which Mr A. Russell Wallace and others seem to put so much stress'.<sup>84</sup>

Initially the cabinet collections were stored in drawers and cupboards beneath the display cases, but in the mid-1920s a Study Room was opened: in 1920 a Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science had highlighted the need for museums to make space for 'the advanced student' to carefully examine and compare specimens.<sup>85</sup> This partitioning of space allowed different behaviours; the public and student displays being purely scopic sites, the cabinets offering the possibility, under appropriate supervision, for 'investigators' to undertake hands-on investigation. From 1922 onwards the Museum's Annual Reports distinguished between work done by staff on the display collection and that done on the cabinet collections, particularly in Natural History: 'The progressive arrangement of the cabinet collections makes but little appeal to the casual visitor but is of real importance to the serious student'.<sup>86</sup>

Although occupying different material and epistemic spaces, the displayed and off-display collections were intimately associated. Dobbie, giving

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<sup>83</sup> For discussion on selection processes in constructing scientific atlases see Daston & Galison (2007).

<sup>84</sup> Traquair (1892), 178.

<sup>85</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science (1920), 278.

<sup>86</sup> Curle (1927), 7.

evidence before the Select Committee on Museums of the Science and Art Department in 1898, whilst a Professor in University College of Wales, observed:

I consider it of the highest advantage both to a college such as ours and also to the public, that a museum should be associated with a body of teachers...the teaching of geology and zoology implies the existence of collections of natural history just as much as the teaching of chemistry does a laboratory...Without that a public museum, according to my experience, is apt to degenerate into a mere collection of curiosities.<sup>87</sup>

### *6.6.1. Collections and resources*

The epistemic boundaries between ‘rational amusement’ and serious study had long been contested in the Museum, and in museums generally. With the physical as well as epistemic separation of these spaces of knowledge making, the tensions were more marked. How should resources be allocated? Who were the target audiences for displays? Some commentators gave precedence to the ‘serious student’. Charles Tate Regan, a curator at the British Museum (Natural History), argued in 1919 that ‘At the present day the educational value of museums is appreciated to a much greater extent than the fact that museums are – or ought to be – centres of research, and that in a Museum of Natural History research may be more important than education’.<sup>88</sup> His colleague Bather declared that ‘The post-graduate student is really the most important class for which the Museum has to provide’.<sup>89</sup> In 1920, a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science concluded that ‘Museums can and should be developed into centres of research’. Its recommendations recognised the competing demands of students and other museum audiences reinforcing the

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<sup>87</sup> Dobbie in evidence to Select Committee (1898), 172 [296], para. 2940.

<sup>88</sup> Regan (1919), 65.

<sup>89</sup> Bather (1913), 178.

divide between display and cabinet collections: ‘Access to exhibition cases by scholars is undesirable; if specimens are to be handled they must form part of a special teaching series’.<sup>90</sup>

Under the administration of SED, whilst attending to the demand of students, the main focus shifted to the construct of ‘the casual visitor’. As Martin declared:

But something remained to be attempted on behalf of the casual visitor, who, in point of number, forms by far the largest constituent of the statistics of attendance. The casual visitor enters a museum in quest of something to look at; he thinks it necessary to make a tour of all the courts and galleries, pursuing an aimless way through diverse sections from Natural History to Egyptology, and so on; the multitude of impressions fatigue his mind; and, probably, he leaves the building not only with no gain of positive knowledge, but with an impaired faculty for acquiring knowledge. It is this experience, accentuated by the fact that museums devote, perhaps, an excessively large share of space to the setting forth with scientific severity long series of allied specimens for the satisfaction of students and learned men, which creates in the public mind a feeling that museums are in great part desert areas – costly elaborations of dullness....The casual visitor has hitherto been a neglected educational opportunity.<sup>91</sup>

In this spatial discourse a tension was established between ‘ordered knowledge’ of the cabinet and the ‘realism’ of the display: Martin drew the distinction thus:

For the one [the student] there is required such a systematic arrangement and co-ordination of material as will facilitate the acquisition of ordered knowledge; for the other [the casual visitor], an arrangement that brings in a certain amount of realism, is, as far as possible, self-interpreting, instantly conveys some idea of a fact in Nature or a stage in the growth of mankind, and takes advantage of spectacular possibilities. The distinction, moreover, has contributed to the working out of a consistent policy by the officers, and will, it is hoped, enable them to resist the tendency to miscellaneousness which afflicts a Museum.<sup>92</sup>

For him, ‘The problem of the Museum administrator is how to hold the interest of the casual sight-seer, for until he is interested there can be no hope of instructing him’.<sup>93</sup> But satisfying the needs of both students and ‘the non-scientific sight-seeing visitor’, Martin argued, required new spaces: ‘Owing to

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<sup>90</sup> British Association for the Advancement of Science (1920), 269 and 277.

<sup>91</sup> Martin (1914), 6.

<sup>92</sup> Martin (1912), 3.

<sup>93</sup> Martin (1912), 11.

the style of construction of the building the galleries are all of an open character. The public, as is their right, have access at all times to all places, and when visitors are numerous to the Museum study is out of the question'.<sup>94</sup> Martin's focus on 'realism', a 'staged authenticity', necessitated new behind-the-scenes sites in which spectacular possibilities could be constructed.<sup>95</sup>

#### *6.6.2 (Re)presenting nature: making the authentic*

Realism was constructed differently in the different disciplinary spaces of the Museum. Throughout the later nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, the Museum displayed a variety of models and facsimiles: glass sea anemones, papier-mâché insects, plaster fishes, microscopic organisms made visible through enlarged models, and ships and industrial and agricultural machinery shrunken and made manageable for display. The models were acquired from numerous suppliers and were embodiments of a geography of production and supply and a vivid material example of what James Secord terms 'knowledge in transit'.<sup>96</sup> Most of the huge architectural objects on display in the Great Hall, and the skeletons of extinct animals, were translations in plaster of objects from elsewhere (Figure 6.9).<sup>97</sup> The Annual Reports and the Registers list biological models from, among others, Wards in Rochester, Fric in Prague, Les Fils d'Emile Deyrolle in Paris (Figure 6.10), Auzoux in St. Aubin d'Ecrose and Edward Gerrard in London. Electrotypes of coins, medals and other metalwork were supplied from the likes of Elkington of Birmingham and Franchi in

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<sup>94</sup> *Scotsman* (1909a).

<sup>95</sup> Dean MacCannell coined the term 'staged authenticity': MacCannell (1973).

<sup>96</sup> Secord (2004a).

<sup>97</sup> Swinney (2008). For a general discussion of models in museums, see Jordanova (2004).

London; plaster casts came from Simon in Brussels, Lelli in Florence, Kreittmayr in Bavaria, and from the workshops of the British Museum and South Kensington. Several of the casts were acquired as a result of the Convention for Promoting Universal Reproductions of Works of Art brokered by Cole in 1867.<sup>98</sup>



**Figure 6.9. Architectural casts in the Great Hall, *circa* 1900: a spatial narrative of progress in which a monolith from the New World (a) was ‘a thing still apart’ (GB587/IS.2009.6 [NMS(I)/38216]).**

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<sup>98</sup> Baker (2007).



**Figure 6.10. Enlarged model of a longitudinal section through a sea anemone by Les Fils d’Emile Deyrolle (photograph by the author, 15 October 2000).**

Many of the casts had been produced in duplicate or multiple copies: ‘When moulds are made for the South Kensington Museum the Edinburgh and Dublin Museums obtain casts for the cost of casting only’.<sup>99</sup> One notable example was the Eastern Gateway of the Great Stupa at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, casts of which were exhibited simultaneously in South Kensington and in the Great Hall of the Museum (Figure 6.11).<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Donnelly (1899), 19 [605].

<sup>100</sup> Mitter (1997), 225; Barringer (1998); GB66/ED28/25, ‘Science and Art Department Minute Book’ minute 47291, 8 December, 1870, p. 54.



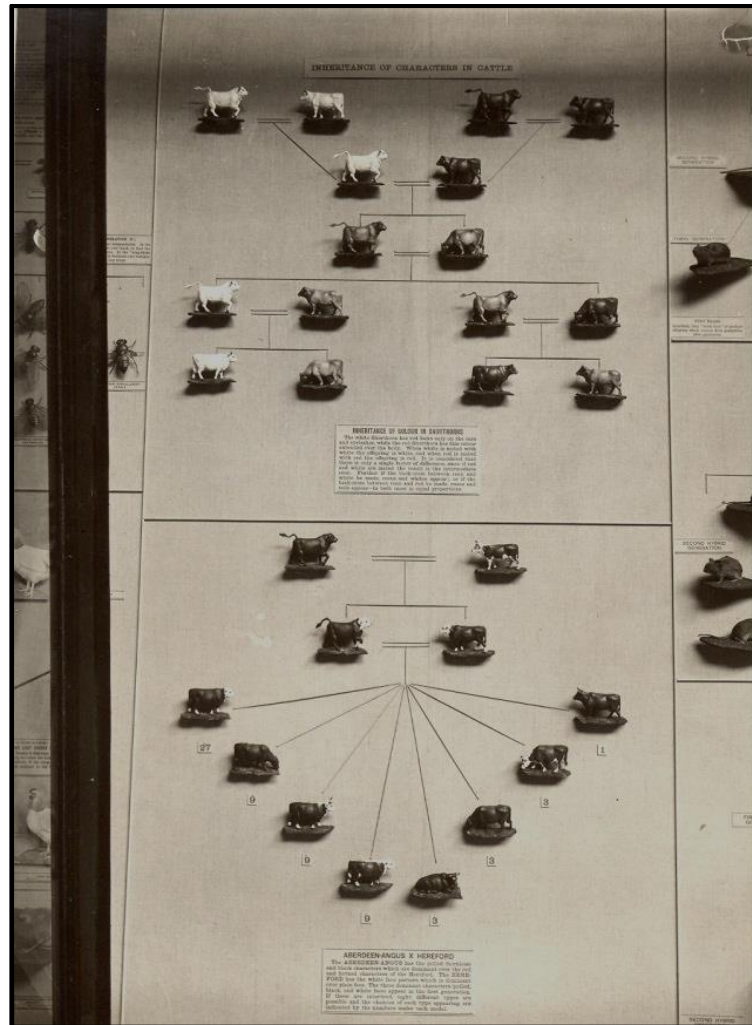
**Figure 6.11.** Part of the cast of the Gateway from Sanchi on display in the Great Hall. Detail from an engraving from *Illustrated London News* 85 (2349, 26 April 1884), 392.

Zoological specimens were represented mostly by taxidermy, itself a form of ‘remnant’ modelling.<sup>101</sup> Although Alberti has argued that by the late Victorian era the taxidermy workshop had been deprived of credibility as a site of scientific knowledge making, commercial taxidermists, ‘merchant naturalists’ to use Sally Gregory Kohlstedt’s term, nonetheless, supplied much of the zoology displayed in the Museums.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Griesemer (1990); Swinney (2011).

<sup>102</sup> Alberti (2007), 393.



**Figure 6.12. Photographic slide showing part of a case in the Evolution Gallery, opened in 1929, representing inherited characters in domestic cattle (NMS Natural History slide collection, unregistered).**

By the 1930s dynamic processes such as mitosis and meiosis were reified and made visible as models, and Mendelian inheritance was depicted through the use of miniature cows perched on the branches of their stylized family tree (Figure 6.12).

As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has shown, during the latter nineteenth century, emphasis was placed on an object being a faithful replica and there was

‘the willing acceptance of copies, casts, impressions, photographs, diagrams, and other surrogates for primary artefacts amongst museum professionals and museum visitor alike.’<sup>103</sup> For Cyrus Adler ‘for the purposes of study a cast was as good as an original’.<sup>104</sup> For some critics casting was a matter of ethics: ‘Pleasant though it may be to have these original relics at South Kensington, is not their removal [from their original locations] a veritable vandalism – in short, a defiance of the system of using plaster casts?’<sup>105</sup>

During the twentieth century, a ‘cult of the original’ began to pervade the decorative arts.<sup>106</sup> Prior to World War I casts were an important resource for the training of artists and were commended as a resource education in the humanities by a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.<sup>107</sup> Their relevance dwindled, however, in the inter-war years. As Allan wrote in 1948: ‘To the majority of the art-minded public and the connoisseurs for the last twenty years plaster casts have been an anathema’.<sup>108</sup> In the inter-war years, in the ‘arts’ portion of the Museum (and in museums generally), ‘real’ was associated with ‘original’. In the natural and engineering sciences, where the pedagogic mission was not subsumed by aestheticism, ‘realism’ had different meanings. For the taxidermist, for example, ‘realism’, a life-like look, involved *increasing* levels of artifice. The artifice involved in eschewing death further distanced the display objects from those of the cabinet (see also Chapter 5).

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<sup>103</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 31. On mechanically-produced representations, see also Daston & Galison (2007), 115-190.

<sup>104</sup> Adler (1941), 67.

<sup>105</sup> *Times* (1883).

<sup>106</sup> Secord (2004b), 146.

<sup>107</sup> Browne (1913); Mullen (1913); British Association for the Advancement of Science (1920), 275.

<sup>108</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.10, Allan to Miller, April 1948.

#### 6.6.4 *Contrasting views of realism*

The discourse on the nature of ‘natural’ specimens is illustrated by the different attitudes of two successive generations of Keeper of the Natural History Department. Traquair disapproved of ‘pictorially mounted’ exhibits with specimens presented in ‘habitat groups,’ which, since the late 1880s, had been advocated by some curators in British museums.<sup>109</sup> For him: ‘A museum is a place where people who wish to study may find the material necessary for such study. But I have no faith in the idea of its being a place where people, who have no natural inclination for the studies concerned, may, by theatrical display, be induced to cultivate an inclination which they would not otherwise possess’.<sup>110</sup> For Traquair the setting of the specimens had to look ‘right’, since a museum’s authority and credibility was predicated on its style of presentation, a particular museum aesthetic:

I should certainly have the birds and beasts in the exhibited collections well stuffed – no horrid distorted abominations of bad taxidermy: but I should have them mounted on plain polished wood stands, and in like manner all the mountings and fittings and labels, though plain, should be in good taste and pleasing to the eye. For though Art is no part of the functions of a natural history museum, it adds much to the comfort and pleasure of those who examine the specimens if everything around looks right.<sup>111</sup>

Traquair’s deputy, Clarke, introduced a different aesthetic on succeeding to the Keepership: ‘he was not only in a position to carry out the replacement of the specimens in the show cases but to begin the series of nesting cases which now feature in the galleries, and in which the colouring soft parts as in life was a welcome innovation’.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> See, for example, Wood (1887). Fritsch used the term ‘natural groups’ to suggest the form of display which later came generally to be termed ‘dioramas’: Fritsch (1904).

<sup>110</sup> Traquair (1892), 191.

<sup>111</sup> Traquair (1892), 179.

<sup>112</sup> Berry (1948), 96-97.

In 1909 Clarke encouraged sponsors to commission from the Glasgow taxidermy firm of Charles Kirk tableaux depicting the nesting habits of British birds, which ‘fully illustrate the various types of bird architecture of the British avifauna’. Each included: ‘The nest and sufficient portion of its actual site and surroundings with the parent birds and their eggs are combined so as to show the group as it might be seen under free and natural conditions’.<sup>113</sup> Mostly ‘the actual site’ was translated from a specific location and instant in time, although some groups recontextualised specimens already in the collection – the golden eagle nesting group, Z.1916.42 (Figure 6.13), for example, incorporated adults, nestlings and an egg registered as Z.1913.89, Z.1912.98, Z.1890.68 and Z.1879.72.6 respectively.<sup>114</sup> Ritchie commented on this shift to scenographic exhibition:

In the old days natural history museums were satisfied with their accomplishment if they presented to the visitor rows of animal remains, as stereotyped in their arrangement as the systems of classification they illustrated. But when we have become familiar with the external appearance of an animal, which the old placed all their emphasis upon, we have learned only a small fragment of its full story. There is much more worth knowing, animate and inanimate, its adaptation to different conditions and so on.<sup>115</sup>

The habitat group approach was not confined to Natural History. For the temporary exhibition on David Livingstone, artefacts sent from the Congo State by the Regions Beyond Missionary Union were incorporated into a life-size reconstruction of ‘a witch doctor’s dispensary’. The construction of the dispensary, including a painted savannah background, sought to relocate the objects in an ecological setting of colonial Africa.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Vallance (1910), 5.

<sup>114</sup> McGowan & Swinney (2010).

<sup>115</sup> Ritchie (1923).

<sup>116</sup> Royal Scottish Museum (1913).



**Figure 6.13. Golden Eagle eyrie at Corroul Forest, Highland, a habitat group produced by Charles Kirk, Glasgow (NMSZ.1916.42).**

These new styles of zoological display required specimens to be mounted in poses which, in life, were transient. This necessitated the relocation of taxidermy from being an activity conducted beyond the Museum to one undertaken within its material architecture. The recruitment of Wotherspoon onto the Museum's staff in particular underlay the move of relocation of taxidermy (see Chapter 4). The construction of the illusion of 'nature' required spaces away

from the public gaze. In these spaces carcasses were ‘enchanted’, brought back ‘to life’ to be presented in (and as) a piece of living landscape, a snapshot of nature, a spectacle in which disbelief was suspended and through which, to cite Alberti, ‘The viewer’s imagination...reanimated dead exhibits’ and transported them (both the visitor and the animal) to a different place and time’.<sup>117</sup> To banish death, and achieve this ‘staged authenticity’, workshops, fumigation chambers, and tanks for macerating carcasses were required. A new rooftop taxidermy workshop was constructed in 1938, co-locating the mounting of specimens with maceration processes which had long been conducted on the roof.<sup>118</sup> Behind-the-scenes spaces of preparation of displays were crucial to other disciplines: as noted in Chapter 4, geology laboratories and art preparer’s rooms were located in the rooms at the top of the Administration Block.<sup>119</sup>

Under Clarke’s keepership the Natural History Department also engaged with zoological sciences in the University of Edinburgh developing exhibitions on recent systematic research (Figure 6.14). This included an exhibition in 1912 of photographs illustrating the work of James Cossar Ewart, the University’s Professor of Natural History, on the evolution and selective breeding of sheep. The exhibition served as a form of ‘publication’ and popularisation of Cossar Ewart’s research.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Alberti (2007), 390. See also Alberti (2011b).

<sup>118</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.2, Colville to Secretary SED, 20 November 1936; GB587/DP(C)/1.2, Peck to Rowatt, 22 December 1936.

<sup>119</sup> NMS(NH)/156, Sketch plan in Ritchie folder; Brian Jackson, *pers. comm.*, 15 November 2004.

<sup>120</sup> Ewart (1913); Ewart (1914).

ILLUSTRATIONS having reference to the  
**Evolution of the Sheep.**

Kindly loaned by Professor J. COSSAR EWART,  
whose work on this subject is shortly to appear.

1. Head of Sardinian Moufflon Ram. In the Moufflons, as in all other wild rams, there are horns. In the European Moufflons, with rare exceptions, the horns curve forwards along the sides of the face.
2. Head of a Red Moufflon of Asia, with the horns directed backwards behind neck—perverted.
3. Head of Moufflon Ewe. Though Urial <sup>and</sup> Ammon Ewes have horns, Moufflon Ewes are apparently always hornless—the absence of horns in tame sheep is doubtless an inheritance from their Moufflon ancestors.
4. Sardinian Moufflon Ram. Note the white patch on side of body (saddle), and the very short tail—in all wild sheep the tail is very short.
5. Urial Ram with horns of the Sardinian Moufflon type—in some Urials the tips of the horns are everted.
6. Head of Urial Ewe with goat-like horns.
7. Head of Marco Polo's Sheep (*Ovis ammon poli*) with long spiral horns—the tip-to-tip interval may be 56 inches. A specimen in the British Museum measures 41 inches at the shoulder. *O. ammon poli* is especially associated with the Pamirs or "Roof of the World."
8. Horns of a Fat-Tailed Sheep which reached Egypt about 2,000 B.C., with horns of the Marco Poli Type.
9. Head of a Merino Ram presented to Arthur Young by King George IV.—The Merino is probably mainly descended from a race of the Egyptian Fat-Tailed type, and from a hornless race of the Moufflon-Soay type.
10. A Soay Ewe of the hornless (Moufflon) variety which left Soay in 1892, and died in 1914. As the figures show the tail is as short as in wild sheep.

Figure 6.14. Part of a label for an exhibition of James Cossar Ewart's research on the selective breeding of sheep (NMS(NH)/[n.n.]

### 6.6.2 *Penetrating the vitrine*

Whilst zoological displays were enchanted through processes of remnant modelling, modelling practices also animated the displays of engineering. In 1901 some simple models, ‘arranged so that the visitor can put them in motion’, were used to illustrate the workings of different designs of engine.<sup>121</sup> The animation of mechanical models, further facilitated the following year by the installation of electric power, was conceived as enabling ‘the visitor to better understand the general lines along which modern engineering practice was moving’.<sup>122</sup> The initiation of the motion by pressing a button provided a new level of engagement, through the glass, between visitor and object. Like the reanimated animals, the mechanism was sanitised. Machines did their work without the scalding heat of steam, without smoke or soot, without the smell of oil, petrol or grease, without din, and even without the vicissitudes of the human operator: with few exceptions, there was no representation of humans in the models.

Another display technology which permitted transgression of the boundary presented by the glazing of the display case was the ‘museum microscope’. Designed by Galt and Rowatt of the Museum’s Technological Department, and first introduced 1901 and patented as No. 5666, it comprised a compound microscope manufactured by Watson and Sons, Holborn, mounted horizontally so that the eye-piece projected through a dust-tight aperture in the front of a specially designed display case (Figure 6.15).<sup>123</sup> The microscope was

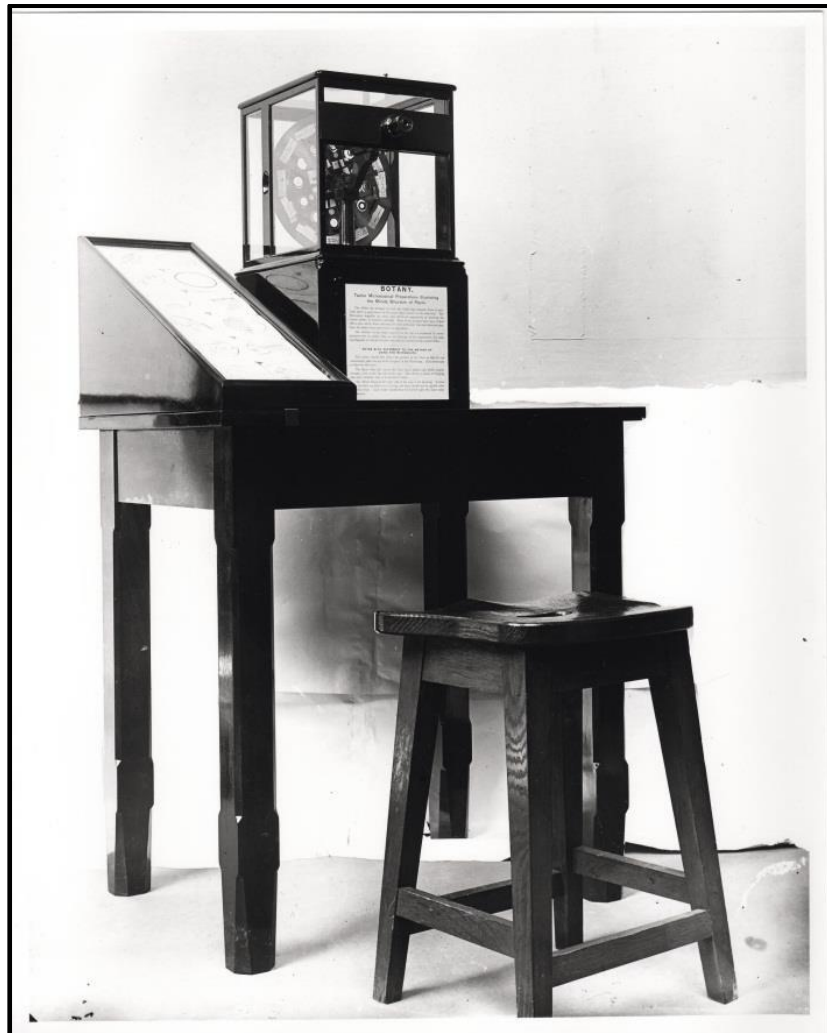
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<sup>121</sup> Galt in Ogilvie (1902a), 7 [365].

<sup>122</sup> *Scotsman* (1905).

<sup>123</sup> Galt in Ogilvie (1902a), 8; Watson and Sons (1902).

arranged to be focused on a selection of slides attached to a revolving wheel which the viewer could turn to select the slide that he or she wished to examine. Alongside each microscope were displayed instructions on its operation and a diagram of what the visitor was supposed to see through the eye-piece. Half a dozen of these microscopes were introduced during the first decade of the century.



**Figure 6.15.** The ‘museum microscope’ with instructions on its use and label informing the viewer what to see (NMS(T) [n.n.], object yet to be registered).

### ***6.7 Constructing psychological space: displaying beyond the material Museum***

Having considered displaying on various scales within the building I now turn to matters of display beyond Chambers Street. Kevin Hetherington contends that items not themselves exposed to the public gaze may, in card indexes, catalogues, postcards, and alike, be ‘just as visible as items [otherwise] on display’.<sup>124</sup> Thus, whilst, for Pearce, accessioning into a museum removed an object from circulation, in Knell’s view ‘the object as performed and imagined is always in circulation unless completely concealed (whether in a museum or as private property)’.<sup>125</sup> In a variety of ways, the Museum put objects on display and made them ‘circulate’ through a diversity of other sites, creating what for David Fleming constituted ‘psychological space’ – those zones of awareness created through publicity, marketing and alike.<sup>126</sup> Through the construction and manipulation of the architecture of this psychological space the expectations of visitors were configured. It was mainly in textual and pictorial forms and by word of mouth that the sites of the reciprocal gaze of viewer and viewed was extended beyond the material spaces of the Museum (Figure 6.16). As Prior observes, ‘Even before a visitor enters [a museum]...a range of effects, presuppositions and modes of perception are set in play’.<sup>127</sup> However, the Museum authorities did not have a monopoly of control over this psychological space and the press, publishers of guidebooks, postcards, and other textual and pictorial materials helped configure this space.

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<sup>124</sup> Hetherington (2004), 166.

<sup>125</sup> Knell (2010), 23.

<sup>126</sup> Fleming (2005), 55. See also Kelly (1955).

<sup>127</sup> Prior (2002), 173.



**Figure 6.16.** A commercially-produced stereoscopic image, one of *The Waverley Series*, showing the Great Hall *circa* 1900 (GB587/‘Small illustrations of the Museum’, Box 1).

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the weekly publication in the press of the number of visits portrayed the Museum as a destination of choice. Similarly, verbatim extracts from the Annual Reports in *The Scotsman* validated the Museum as a site for attention. Although such reporting ceased by 1900, twentieth-century Directors, particularly Martin and Curle, actively courted the press. From at least the mid-1920s, Scottish newspapers frequently ran articles about new developments in the Museum. As Curle stated: ‘We have used the local press very freely for the purpose of propaganda, and I think every month probably there are one or two articles on things in the Royal Scottish Museum which appear in the “Scotsman”, the “Glasgow Herald” and the evening papers’.<sup>128</sup> Newspapers beyond Scotland also occasionally ran articles about the new acquisitions and displays.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 95, para. 1247.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, *Times* (1925); (1927); (1928b; c); (1929).

Whilst for much of the period 1854-1939 the work of producing displays was hidden away from the visitor, from the latter part of the 1930s some of the press articles described and illustrated these processes, thereby putting on display the technical virtuosity of the staff. For example, the work done to reconstruct a larger than (human) life-size ceramic statue of the deity Wei Tuo, rejected by other collections because it had been smashed in transit from China, was the focus of press attention with one headline declaring ‘Edinburgh men work a miracle: a ton of broken earthenware transformed into a Chinese god’.<sup>130</sup> Some of the images in the Museum’s slide collection (Figures 6.17 and 6.18), another means by which the psychological space was projected (literally) beyond the Museum’s buildings, also showed the processes of production of museum specimens (Figure 6.19) and more than half of the film ‘The Royal Scottish Museum’ made in 1938 (discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters), featured behind-the-scenes spaces of object conservation and construction. The captions in this silent film drew particular attention to the labour involved in putting objects on display and to the specialist craft skills located in the Museum: ‘Much work is involved in the preservation and restoration of specimens’, ‘Groups illustrating animal and bird life under natural conditions are prepared’, and ‘Mechanical models are made in the Technological Workshops’ often from manufacturers’ original plans, and ‘Craftsmanship is all important’.<sup>131</sup>

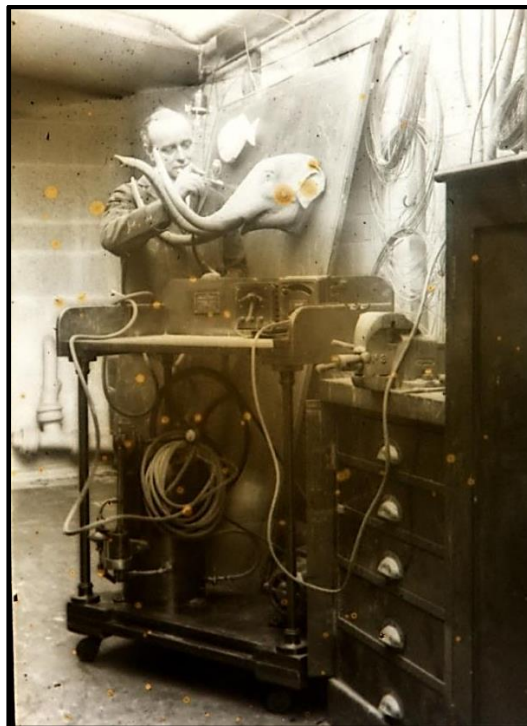
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<sup>130</sup> *Weekly Herald* (1937).

<sup>131</sup> GB2120/2274.



**Figure 6.17.** The Natural History photographic slide loan collection, unregistered, in store at the NMS Collections Centre, West Granton (photograph by the author, 12 January 2004).



**Figure 6.18.** A slide labelled 'Natural History preparing room', showing David Wotherspoon spray-painting a model of an extinct elephant for inclusion in the Extinct Animals hall, shortly after he joined the Museum staff in 1929 (NMS Natural Sciences Department, unregistered object).



**Figure 6.19. The Museum as a site of craftsmanship: workshop staff assembling a model of a lift bridge in a frame from the film ‘The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh’, 1938 (GB2120/2274).**

Images of objects in the Museum’s collections also featured on postcards. In 1912 the Museum published two sets, the ‘Natural History Series’ and ‘Art and Ethnographical Series’ (for an example, see cover illustration).<sup>132</sup> Postcards numbered 6 to 14 in the Natural History Series featured habitat groups, displaying and advertising the quality and modern style of the exhibits. During the 1920s there was considerable discussion about how museums in Britain could create wider audiences. Lord Sudeley, speaking in the House of Lords in 1921, had urged museums to publish illustrative material about their collection.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps in response, in 1922 the Museum commissioned a new series of postcards from the Zinco Collotype Company.<sup>134</sup> In yet another initiative to configure its psychological space or sphere of influence, the Museum responded

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<sup>132</sup> GB587/IS.2012.1. Postcard, Art and Ethnography Series No.1; Martin (1913), 7.

<sup>133</sup> Sudeley (1921).

<sup>134</sup> *Museums Journal* (1922); Committee of Council on Education (1923), 26 [961].



Figure 6.20. Poster advertising the Royal Scottish Museum, 1930 (GB587/IS.2009.8).

to recommendations of the 1928 Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries that British museums should do more advertising by producing a poster ‘designed for display in hotels, tourist agencies, etc. in the city and elsewhere; it is hoped this will be the means of interesting visitors in the quality and character of the exhibits in the Museum’ (Figure 6.20).<sup>135</sup> Not until 1938, when direction signs ‘To the Royal Scottish Museum’ were attached to lamp-posts at either end of Princes Street, was overt signposting of the Museum sanctioned by the City authorities.<sup>136</sup>

### ***6.8 Conclusion***

This chapter has examined how material and epistemic constructs were made visible, and how, for much of the period 1854 to about 1930, the processes of their production were rendered largely invisible, through practices of displaying – practices which enacted different sites within and around the Museum.

Practices of display were not confined to the material spaces of the Museum’s halls and galleries. In particular the chapter has shown how collections were, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, increasingly materially divided between front-of-house and behind-the-scenes spaces and how different strategies of displaying were enacted for each. The finite capacity of the building resulted in these two forms of space being antagonistic – an illustration of how, to use Livingstone’s phrase, ‘Intellectual change and spatial constraint went hand in hand’.<sup>137</sup> The chapter has shown how even objects in the cabinet

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<sup>135</sup> Curle (1931), 4.

<sup>136</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.3, Rowatt to Paterson, 9 May 1938.

<sup>137</sup> Livingstone (2003), 37.

collections, whilst not on public display within the Museum were, nonetheless, to use Knell's term, never 'completely concealed'. They were translated into, and materialised and displayed as, a variety of printed forms, thus remaining in circulation in different material representation as knowledge in transit. Such translations were themselves conducted in behind-the-scenes sites within the Museum building – the print shop, the photography studio, the curator's offices – and in other distributed sites such as the premises of government and commercial printers, binders, and alike. In printed and pictorial forms, the Museum and objects in its collections were brought into view in the widely-distributed sites of reading and reception. Objects, including the Museum itself, were also made to circulate as oral description, in formal lectures and through word of mouth (matters to which I turn in the chapters which follow).

As with collecting, the selection and display of objects was never objective. It was a cultural practice of inclusion and exclusion which both reflected and constructed knowledge. The chapter has provided an illustration, to use Whitehead's terminology, of how 'argument is embedded (whether implicitly or explicitly) within the placement, juxtaposition and text...and within the dialogue between objects, architectural setting and visitor routes'.<sup>138</sup> The processes of displaying were enmeshed with those of making the Museum an authoritative site in which 'truths' were made visible. This involved the fostering and promoting of what, for Harry Collins, is 'the convention' implicit in accepting the testimony of the senses as a reliable guide to the workings of nature. After all audiences had ample opportunity, in performances by stage

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<sup>138</sup> Whitehead (2009), 25.

magicians, for example, to enjoy having their senses deceived. Its proximity to the University, the association in the statuary and the decorative frieze with the great and the good of learning, the declaration of its modernity in the form of the building, and the framing of objects within vitrines, were just some of the mechanisms by which the authorities sought to foster the ‘convention’ and to differentiate itself as a reputable and authoritative part of the exhibitionary complex. Traquair’s insistence on a display aesthetic which presented natural history objects as isolated specimens is but one example of how the Museum’s staff worked to differentiate its displays from more theatrical presentations: ‘inferior things, such as the groups [of mounted animals] we often see in the bird-stuffers’ shops, with brown paper rocks, powdered glass for snow, and animals drinking at looking glasses for water, are simply ridiculous’.<sup>139</sup> When the policy was reversed and habitat groups introduced this was done by taking control of the quality and style of taxidermy through relocating the production process in-house. Alberti, drawing on Knell, has argued that, ‘if objects are to act as data, they need to be impartial – their constructedness needs to be hidden by those whose credibility depends upon them’.<sup>140</sup> Yet, as I have shown, the creation in the late 1920s of new staff roles and new spaces of in-house production was associated with initiatives to display the sites of display production. Such display, in the press and through the medium of film, I suggest, constituted intermediate sites, of the sort suggested by MacCannell, between ‘front’ and ‘back’ of house.<sup>141</sup> They show that ‘vocabularies of separation’

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<sup>139</sup> Traquair (1892), 182.

<sup>140</sup> Alberti (2008), 81. See also Knell (2007).

<sup>141</sup> MacCannell (1999), 91-107.

between sites of display and the sites of production of the displays were by the 1920s being dissolved and the status of its technical staff and their level of skill, rather than being hidden, was itself enrolled as an element in constructing the Museum's authority and credibility – extending such claims beyond the curatorial realm into the craft skills of the technical staff. The Museum was portrayed not merely as a site of static display but as a site of active processes of displaying and the production of displays.

The chapter has shown that the Museum was, at least in relation to the industrial collections, in part an extension of the display practices of South Kensington. In style, and in substantially in content, the Museum in Edinburgh was effectively part of an extended geography of display forming a 'Greater South Kensington'. DSA required of Archer that 'He will seek the advice of Scientific Superintendents in completing and arranging the collections' and he duly sought advice on matters of display: 'As I am now receiving the large plaster reproductions, if My Lords would permit Mr. R. A. Thomson, your Museum Superintendent, to come to Edinburgh and give me the benefit of his experience in the arrangement of them'.<sup>142</sup> Yet, South Kensington's control over the display practices conducted in Edinburgh was not total. Archer's comment that Thomson's participation in the arrangement of the cast displays involve 'comparing our views' signals to the relationship of South Kensington and Edinburgh being to some extent dialogic.<sup>143</sup> Further, it has been shown that matters of which objects were considered appropriate for display (and which

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<sup>142</sup> GB66/ED/28/11, minute 2572, 9 March 1860, p. 75 [119]; *Scotsman* (1860); GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 14 January 1873, p. 540.

<sup>143</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 14 January 1873, p. 540.

not), and the manner of their displayed, were not unique to Edinburgh (or South Kensington). Discourses on who museums were for and how publics might best be constituted and served, and the material and spatial manifestations of such discourses, were evident in public museums throughout Britain, continental Europe, and North America. As an arm of government, the Museum was bound by recommendations of various Royal Commissions, Select Committees, and the like. Its display practices were constructed through a range of discourses conducted through a variety of sites.

In summary, this chapter has indicated how complex the geographies of displaying were: displays were not static; classification and re-classification involved spatial as well as epistemic relocation. As objects were reclassified, new spaces constructed, new objects acquired or made, or new display technologies became available, things (were) moved. The displays were, at least potentially, in a continual state of flux. Yet there was substantial inertia in the system. Lack of resources, often manifest as lack of space, resulted in some displays not being renewed for decades. Notwithstanding this, the form of the displays was intimately associated with the object lessons to be conveyed. These pedagogic practices are the subject of the next chapter.



## EDUCATING: SITES OF SPEAKING FOR OBJECTS

A museum presents probably the only effectual means of educating the adult, who cannot be expected to go to school like the youth.<sup>1</sup>

### *7.1 Introduction*

As shown in the previous chapter, displaying was intimately associated with the pedagogic (didactic), aesthetic, and social educational missions of the Museum.<sup>2</sup> For Forbes, however, ‘Museums, of themselves alone, are powerless to educate’, for him, they needed ‘to be explained by competent teachers’.<sup>3</sup> Wilson recognised the need to speak for objects, insisting that designated spaces of oration and audition be integral to the Museum: ‘To render such collections useful, the Museum should contain at least two large Lecture Theatres, and two Smaller Lecture Rooms, for the accommodation at the same hour of separate Classes under distinct Professors or Lecturers’.<sup>4</sup> It is this process of speaking of and for objects, like the visual processes of displaying, was largely that of teaching visitors how to view the displays that I consider in this chapter.

The chapter examines the processes and practices of educating and the Museum’s place, and how it was established and maintained, in relation to other

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Practical Art (1853), 30 [38].

<sup>2</sup> Zeller (1989) characterised the educational role of museums as three-fold: aesthetic, pedagogic or social.

<sup>3</sup> Forbes (1853), 9.

<sup>4</sup> GB2229 Parcel 30/11, Wilson to Maxwell, 9 February 1857.

sites of education. In the context of the construction of an historical geography of educating as practiced by the Museum, key questions are: By what means were the lessons conveyed? What lessons were to be taught and where? Who were the ‘pupils’ and who the teachers? Where were curriculums set and where, and by whom, were the lessons delivered? The sources available with which to address these issues are mostly documents prepared by the Museum. These documents enable a view of the lessons intended to be conveyed, but there is little extant material, unmediated by the Museum, which reveals what was learnt (Chapter 8).

The Museum’s Annual Reports provide accounts of pedagogic activities organised under the auspices of the Museum itself and by outside bodies. Other sources, particularly the reports of SED and papers prepared by the Edinburgh School Board, also show how the Museum was enrolled in networks of formal and informal education. Together such sources reveal how different forms of object lessons demanded different spatial formations. The practices of space of educating were some of the drives for the configuration and reconfigurations of the material spaces of the Museum and informed the planning and development of the building.

In order to construct an historical geography of the Museum in relation to educating, I firstly examine the spaces performed through practices of oration calculated to supplement the speaking to the eye discussed in the previous chapter. Following discussion of the pedagogic practices which contributed to the materialisation of the Museum and to its location in the intellectual landscape of the nation, I focus attention on evidence for the object lessons aimed at different categories of audience; students, the general public and school pupils,

respectively. A further section focuses on the relationship between technologies of educating, the distributed sites of their production and their effects on the material architecture of the Museum.

### *7.2 Speaking for objects: sites of speaking at visitors*

Many authors have considered museums a primarily scopic technology, ‘storehouses of science which render knowledge tangible, and speak so powerfully to the mind through the eye’, a process which for Forbes was that of ‘eye-instruction’.<sup>5</sup> Yet, Forbes recognised, the gaze was promiscuous (as I have shown in Chapter 6) and had to be schooled. In the museum, as in other matters of geography, the eye had to be instructed, schooled in ‘visual literacy’.<sup>6</sup> This was a matter of ‘disengagement from a broader field of attraction...for the sake of isolating or focusing on a reduced number of stimuli’ – what for Jonathan Crary was ‘paying attention, and, for others, was ‘selective disattention’.<sup>7</sup> Whilst objects were displayed in universities or in society museums the curator was on hand to direct viewer attention – Jameson, for example, relocated much of his teaching from the class-room to the museum where he instructed his students in how to look and what to see.<sup>8</sup> Once the collection was open to the masses, the curator could not himself always be present to provide instruction. His voice had to be provided by other means, since, left to their own devices, objects might present a visual cacophony drowning out each other. In a speech to the Museums

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<sup>5</sup> Forbes in a letter to John Drew, cited in Wilson & Geikie (1861), 513. See also Miller (1849).

<sup>6</sup> On training in observation in geography, see Driver (2001). On ‘visual literacy’, see Lawn (2009b), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 58; Crary (1999), 1.

<sup>8</sup> For his use of the collections in his teaching, see Jameson (1837a), 141 [183]. On the lack of labels, see Allman (1856), 194 [229].

Association in 1907, the wife of one of the Museum's directors described the role of museums as the 'giving of the right interpretation of history and the objects seen'.<sup>9</sup> Her statement echoed views of the pedagogic mission that were more widely held. For example, a report on a nature-study exhibition held in London in 1903 declared that: 'Accurate observation and correct inference are ministers of sound judgement, on which depend the manifold varieties of efficiency which make up the total of national welfare'.<sup>10</sup> For William Jevons:

There seems to be a prevalent idea that if the populace can only get to walk about a great building filled with tall glass-cases, full of beautiful objects, especially when illuminated by electric light, they will become civilised...To the far greater part of the people a large brilliantly lighted Museum is little or nothing more than a promenade, a bright kind of lounge, not nearly so instructive as the shops of Regent Street or Holburn. The well-known fact that the attendance at Museums is greatest on wet days is very instructive.<sup>11</sup>

To distance themselves from department stores and other sites of consumerism or mere gawking, museums directed the gaze through the interlocutory or ventriloquistic skills of their curators.<sup>12</sup> A prime role of the staff was to give objects a voice and the curatorial objective was 'to arrange and label museum displays in ways calculated to enhance their public legibility by making their meaning instantly readable for the new mass public'.<sup>13</sup> For one modern-day commentator, the museum's mission was 'to objectify texts and textualize objects'.<sup>14</sup> Labels, the visual translations of speech frozen in print, were a means by which the curatorial voice was 'thrown'. Objects and words, (often visualised as printed text) worked in tandem to create knowledge. Labels supplemented the

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<sup>9</sup> Lady Carlaw Martin quoted in *Scotsman* (1907).

<sup>10</sup> Nature-Study Exhibition and Conference (1903), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Jevons (1883), 55-56.

<sup>12</sup> On the curator as ventriloquist, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 35. On 'speaking to the eye', see Bennett (1998).

<sup>13</sup> Bennett (1998), 29.

<sup>14</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 31.

knowledge discernible from the objects and their juxtapositions, but for some museum practitioners and critics, the printed word was not enough. Speaking to the ear, face-to-face, was required to complement speaking to the eye. Lessons in visual literacy could not be presented effectively solely visually. As William Jolly, Inspector of Schools, stressed in a lecture ‘Realities v Words’ delivered in the Museum in 1887, ‘realistic teaching’ demanded interplay between objects and words:

The greatest evil in teaching Geography is the over-use and abuse of Verbal Memory, the glib but empty employment of words without any real knowledge of the things they represent. Every examination furnishes abundant illustration. Pupils will speak of ‘coarse linen’, and yet know nothing of what it is, nor be able to name examples; nay, often they will tell you that ‘coarse linen’ is ‘jute’, both being associated with the same town on the Tay.<sup>15</sup>

In the Museum in the nineteenth century the lecture theatre was the crucial space for the spoken word, but in the twentieth century practices of oration fashioned and occupied other spaces, including those of display. The extension of the role of the Attendants to engage visitors in conversation amongst the exhibits, and the appointment of a Museum Demonstrator (see Chapter 4), provide examples of this shift of the epistemic and material location of the spoken word. As I will show, there was, in the period 1854-1939, an increasing separation of educating from the other practices of the Museum. This was manifest in the construction of new audiences, the appointment or redeployment of staff, and the construction or apportionment of material space. It involved spaces beyond the Museum – the classroom, the University, the offices of the School Board or Education Authority, the meeting rooms of professional

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<sup>15</sup> Jolly (1887), 8-9.

associations of both teachers and curators, and alike – each of which became part of the performance space of the Museum.

### *7.3 Bringing the Museum into view: imaginative geographies of a teaching museum*

As I have demonstrated, the processes of constructing the psychological space, what might be termed the ‘psychological architecture’, of the Museum were themselves processes of education (and of displaying). Image-building was (and remains) a crucial part of museum construction. Creating publics for a museum through discourses on what such an entity could be, and what performative power it could realise, was itself a pedagogic process (one which is on-going).

#### *7.3.1 Political vision and imagining the Museum*

As shown in Chapter 3, much of the rhetoric associated with the founding of the Museum was framed in terms of its power to contribute to, and through, education. The Queen’s speech, delivered in November 1852, in promising a comprehensive scheme for art and science education ‘on a scale befitting an enlightened nation’, foreshadowed the formation of DSA.<sup>16</sup> Through its role as ‘organiser and overseer of a system of industrial education for the working class’ the Department was, from its inception in 1853, deeply involved in standardising UK-wide systems of formal education, principally through the training of teachers in both the arts and, especially, sciences.<sup>17</sup> For Playfair, DSA’s joint

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<sup>16</sup> Cardwell (1957), 69.

<sup>17</sup> Butterworth (1968); Jarrell (1983), 332.

head, the study of science was essential to Britain's industrial progress: 'As surely as darkness follows the setting of the sun, so surely will England recede as a manufacturing nation, unless her industrial population become much more conversant with science than they are now'.<sup>18</sup> For him the education of the working classes was the DSA's patriotic mission. Its focus was not solely on that generation of future workers still in school, but also on those generations comprising the current workforce. Museums in London, Dublin and Edinburgh provided a means of addressing this audience. As was declared in the Annual Report of the Museum of Practical Art, in essence a forerunner of DSA, 'A museum presents probably the only effectual means of educating the adult, who cannot be expected to go to school like the youth'.<sup>19</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, for Lawn, 'Museums were placed on the front line in the educational agendas'.<sup>20</sup> It was through skirmishes along this front line that the University of Edinburgh, various learned societies and individuals such as White opened up the psychological space, and forged the political will, for a museum in Scotland.

The appointment of Wilson as its Director did much to establish the initial intellectual and material form of the Museum. His lectures, delivered in a variety of locations – public hall, board-room, lecture theatre, the pages of the press, the pamphlet, the offices of DSA – promoted and projected his vision for the Museum. He described his objective as being 'to commend the Museum to the more educated portion of the non-academic classes of the community'.<sup>21</sup>

Publication of his lectures and their being reported in the press extended the

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<sup>18</sup> Lyon Playfair, 1851, cited in Cardwell (1957), 68.

<sup>19</sup> Department of Practical Art (1853), 30.

<sup>20</sup> Lawn (2009b), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson (1857b), 168 [208].

audience beyond the sites of his oration into extra-mural sites of reading and social discourse:

The Director commenced in November, in the University of Edinburgh, a series of daily lectures, as Professor of Technology. Of these the contents, present and prospective, of the Industrial Museum may be regarded as the text. The inaugural lecture, having excited some interest, has been published and circulated pretty widely, at the author's expense, among those likely to become contributors to the Museum. It has led to the promise of gifts from various parties in Scotland, England, and Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

### 7.3.2 *Ordered objects: orderly society*

Museums were enrolled in discourses of 'improving' the quality of the workforce through educating adult workers in matters of aesthetic and scientific 'taste'. They were, in the words of one author, 'educational engines'.<sup>23</sup> For Archer, in addition to meeting the needs of enrolled students, the Museum was 'to supply a means of instruction to the masses, and to elevate the public taste'.<sup>24</sup> Raising the taste and knowledge of the working people was part of a discourse of 'civilising'. For Wilson the Museum had the potential to reconfigure the world. He declared, 'It will largely help us to hold recovered India, and to diminish the recurrence of American panics' and that 'It will increase our civilisation and add to our power to civilise the rest of the world'.<sup>25</sup> In a Britain mindful of recent revolutions in Europe and alarmed at violent protest in Ireland, museums were a technology for maintaining the social order. For Forbes, himself a candidate for the Museum's Directorship, 'Out of sound knowledge springs charity, loyalty' and patriotism: 'the love of our neighbours, the love of just authority, and the love of our country's

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson (1856c), 192 [224].

<sup>23</sup> Rudler (1877), 140.

<sup>24</sup> Archer (1868), 279.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson (1857c); Wilson (1858), 55.

good. In proportion as these virtues flourish, the weeds of idleness, viciousness, and crime perish'.<sup>26</sup> The public for museums, as Forbes envisaged it, was composed of two broad categories. The first comprised the middle classes, and social elite who possessed the intellectual capacities to appreciate and understand the objects on display. The second was the working classes who, in his view, lacked the capacity to appreciate the objects. For them the primary lesson was in the ordered display, a materialisation of the moral and intellectual superiority of those capable of undertaking and appreciating such ordering. Through arrangement of objects, Nature was depicted not as chaotic but as ordered, regulated and knowable. The ordered array was calculated to engender in the worker 'a reverential sense of the extent of knowledge possessed by his fellow-men'. For Forbes, 'It is not the objects themselves that he [the working man] sees there and wonders at, that make this impression, so much as the order and evident science which he cannot but recognize in the manner in which they are grouped and arranged'.<sup>27</sup> For Lee Rust Brown, museums 'charted a natural world whose apparent surfaces were only an index to what could be "seen"'.<sup>28</sup> In other words, observable characters led the eye to an appreciation of the logic of classification which bore witness to the rational order of nature and of the human mind capable of understanding it. This was a sort of 'civic seeing' through which 'the eye of the visitor was distanced from the exhibited objects in order to look through them to perceive the order underlying

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<sup>26</sup> Forbes (1853), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Forbes (1853), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Brown (1997), 143.

them’, an order which conveyed the lesson that there was a natural social order in which everything and each individual had, and had to know, his or her place.<sup>29</sup>

For Allman, writing in 1862, the Museum was ‘a source of rational amusement, and an instrument of instruction for the working and middle classes.... It is an element in the popular mind full of significance, and capable of becoming in the hands of the philanthropist and legislator, an agent of unspeakable importance in the intellectual and moral elevation of the community’.<sup>30</sup> For him it had a vital role ‘in imparting to the general public that acquaintance with natural objects which experience has shown to have so powerful an influence in refining the tastes and elevating the intellectual and moral condition of the community’.<sup>31</sup> In Meyer’s words, museums were ‘places in which good manners may well be taught’.<sup>32</sup> Expressed in Foucault’s terms, museums were part of a technology for keeping people in their place and for making them ‘docile bodies’ and willing agents in their own education.

#### ***7.4 Audiences, space and pedagogy***

The Department’s declared focus on adult working-class audiences to some extent assuaged the University of Edinburgh’s fears that the government was attempting to establish the Museum as a rival teaching institution (see Chapter 3) and Treasury’s concerns that establishing certain facilities in the Museum was, in effect, subsidising the University. The focus was expressed in spatial form with the DSA noting that ‘whilst Government has undertaken to provide buildings for

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<sup>29</sup> Bennett (2006), 269.

<sup>30</sup> Allman (1862), 185 [529].

<sup>31</sup> Allman (1865), 254 [589].

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, 1902 cited and translated by Bather (1903), 326.

the Natural History Collection, [insertion] & a large lecture room for the Public use [insertion ends] it is no part of the duty of the Department to provide classrooms at the public expense to be used exclusively by the students of the University as the Professor of Natural History informed Capt. Fowke they would be'.<sup>33</sup> Further, 'Office of Works to be informed that the laboratory, &c., should not be included in any plan, and that my Lords cannot sanction erection of additional class rooms, nor any other teaching than such as may be addressed to schoolmasters of public schools, and the industrial classes'.<sup>34</sup> This latter pronouncement clearly identified working people and school teachers as two of the DSA's prime target audiences, and made clear that child audiences would be addressed only indirectly. The third audience was those students enrolled on university and college courses. Through its genealogy and its practices, the Museum was intimately associated with the teaching of students.

#### *7.4.1 Object lessons for students*

Until 1901, the Museum was open, free of charge only on two full days a week. The other three days – not until 1901 did the Museum open on Sundays – were designated 'student days'. This temporal segregation of audiences gave working people free access when they were most likely to be able to take advantage of the Museum: in the evenings, on Saturdays (increasingly many businesses operated a half-day Saturday) and on that weekday when most businesses in the city operated a half-day.<sup>35</sup> On the other three days of the week, by day the Museum was

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<sup>33</sup> GB66/ED/28/11, minute 2571, 9 March 1860, p. 74 [118].

<sup>34</sup> GB37/ED84/35(1864), 270, minute of 16 February 1860.

<sup>35</sup> Swinney & Heppell (1997).

ostensibly a site of ‘private’ study for *bona-fide* students, and a site for contemplation by those non-students prepared to pay for admission (see Chapter 8), an arrangement which mirrored that operated at the South Kensington Museum. The segregation of students and others was given increasing spatial expression as, around the turn of the century, the Museum adopted Bather’s tripartite classification of audiences and collections (Chapter 6).

On student days the Museum was metaphorically an extension of the lecture room or studio. For students at the School of Art, whose training in artistic appreciation and practical ability involved sketching with ‘scientific exactitude’ the works of classical antiquity, the Museum’s displays of cast provided a vital resource.<sup>36</sup> Other displays were organised specifically as material illustrations of courses taught in the University and, later, some of the other local colleges. Notable among them were the type collections ‘brought together especially to meet the wants of students of the general subject of Zoology, whether engaged in private study or attending professional lectures’.<sup>37</sup> As during the nineteenth century the University’s course increasingly placed emphasis on internal anatomy rather than external characters, so type collections were supplemented with dissections and models as exemplars to the students: ‘This collection, when completed, will place within reach of every student of Zoology all the illustrative material that is required for the study of the embryology, comparative anatomy, and classification of the more important groups of the animal kingdom’.<sup>38</sup> Other

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<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of training in art through drawing of classical works, see Browne (1913); Mullen (1913); Frayling (1987). ‘Scientific exactitude’ and art training in Edinburgh is discussed in Naik & Stewart (2007).

<sup>37</sup> Royal Scottish Museum (1908), 38.

<sup>38</sup> Dobbie (1904), 2.

‘type’ collections included the Botanical Type Collection opened in 1902, containing ‘dissections...such as teachers and pupils may repeat with ease’, and the type collection of ores.<sup>39</sup> The specimens of rocks were not just available to view, but also to touch:

In studying the different types of rock structure students find it advantageous to be able to handle specimens whenever it is possible to do so. To meet their requirements a set of the commoner types of rocks and minerals has been placed on a table in this gallery, accompanied by a notice that the specimens are available for study on the spot if proper application be made.<sup>40</sup>

These type displays, intended for use by students, were all on the top floor: the internal geography of the building was stratified according to intended audience.

Student days and admission fees were abolished in 1901, when the Museum transferred to the administration of SED, and counting of individual student visits ceased. Nonetheless, the Annual Reports indicated that colleges continued to make use of the collections, and that some displays were arranged with the needs of certain courses in mind. In his report for 1932, for example, Ward noted:

The use of the collections by students of the University in the Faculties of Art and Medicine is well maintained in spite of the removal of some of the classrooms to the outlying district of West Mains, and the Engineering department of the University has been accommodated by a special arrangement allowing the students to study for half an hour before the regular time of opening. Students from other institutions, such as the Dental Hospital, the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, and the Heriot-Watt College carry out systematic courses of study in the Museum. Further, the College of Art students make full use of the resources here offered in the form of suitable subjects for measured drawing, sketching or painting, and for the study of design and pattern generally.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ogilvie (1903), 10 [302]; Martin (1913), 11.

<sup>40</sup> Smith (1893), 276 [336].

<sup>41</sup> Ward (1933), 3. The University of Edinburgh had opened its King’s Buildings campus, approximately 2 miles south of the main campus, in 1924.

#### *7.4.2 Object lessons for adult audiences: constructing a general public*

For Wilson the lecture theatre was a vital component of the Museum, the site which integrated the other functions by providing a site for oration on ‘the contents of the galleries, the investigations of the Laboratory and Workshop, and the records of the Library, as illustrating the various departments of Technology or Industrial Science’.<sup>42</sup> To meet these needs Fowke and Matheson incorporated an 800-seat lecture theatre in the east pavilion. Wilson was long dead by the time it opened. His own lecturing had been conducted largely as part of his University duties: ‘The Lectures delivered in connexion with the Industrial Museum are given by the Director in his capacity of Regius Professor of Technology in the University of Edinburgh’. Following his death, and the abolition of the chair of technology, DSA sought to restrict its employees’ lecturing and Archer was ‘to deliver one public introductory lecture in the year; but not more, in order that his attention may not be distracted from the special duties of the Museum’.<sup>43</sup> Although constrained in his own lecturing, in the summer of 1867 Archer proposed the instigation of a series of winter lectures. He wrote to the Secretary of the Department:

As you are aware, there is a large lecture-room, for which, at present, we have no use; but from enquiries I have been making, I am inclined to think it will be possible to obtain well qualified extra-academic lecturers, and arrange with them to give courses on Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, &c during the coming winter.<sup>44</sup>

His proposal was for a series of Lectures to Artisans, in the 1870s termed ‘Lectures to Industrial Classes’, modelled on those given at the DSA’s Museum

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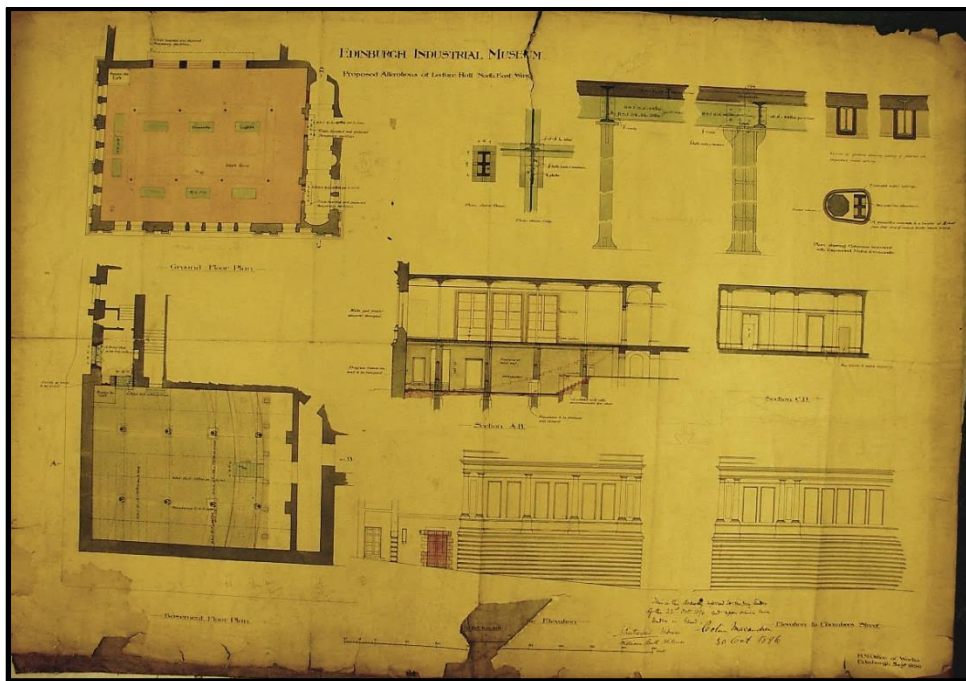
<sup>42</sup> Wilson (1858), 7.

<sup>43</sup> GB66/ED28/11, Minute 2572, 9 March 1860, p. 75 [119].

<sup>44</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 18 July 1867, p. 213.

of Practical Geology in London.<sup>45</sup> The Department granted permission, but eager to demonstrate that the series was self-financing and against Archer's wishes, insisted on charging: 'A fee of one shilling is charged for admission to each course, and the lectures are given without expense to the State, whilst the educational usefulness of the Museum, and its beneficial influence on the working classes in Edinburgh have been materially advanced'.<sup>46</sup> Archer drew his lecturers from the University:

I have found it an easy task to induce the most eminent members of the Senatus Academicus and others of equal ability to undertake the task and others of equal ability to undertake the task, and all seem equally pleased with the results. The abundant appliances of the Museum have much conduced to the success of the lectures, and have shown its fitness to become a great educational institution.<sup>47</sup>



**Figure 7.1. Plans, signed Colin Macandrew, HM Office of Works, Edinburgh, 30 October 1896, for the conversion of the lecture theatre into display space (GB587/IS.2010.12).**

<sup>45</sup> GB587/Scrapbook (RSM) 6, handbill for Professor Tait's lectures, p. 86.

<sup>46</sup> Science and Art Department (1870), xxv [433].

<sup>47</sup> Archer (1869), 412 [582].

The audience, he wrote, comprised mainly, ‘the better class of artisans, who being generally heads of families, were thus receiving instruction they could communicate to their children, and which at least enabled them to direct in the best manner their children’s education’.<sup>48</sup> By 1873, however, without subsidy from the public purse, the costs of the series had become prohibitive and it was abandoned. In 1884 the lecture theatre used as temporary exhibitions space, an arrangement made permanent in 1897 (Figure 7.1) (Chapter 3).

Around the turn of the century, the Director recognised that neither the objects in themselves, nor in combination with labels and guidebooks, were satisfying the perceived information needs of many visitors. In 1892 Smith reported:

The experiment by Mr. Goodchild of giving occasionally a demonstration in simple language on the chief points of interest in the various sections of the Gallery [the display of the Geological Survey of Scotland] has proved more successful than was expected. In addition to the regular students of Geology who have attended these demonstrations there have been several other visitors who have taken advantage of the opportunity.<sup>49</sup>

With this initiative, oration and audition became integrated into the display spaces rather than being confined to a designated lecture room. The expansion of the role of Attendants at the turn of the century to provide visitors with information about the displays (see Chapter 4), was another initiative which increased direct engagement between staff, visitors and objects. Whilst Edinburgh was in the vanguard of introducing face-to-face engagement with visitors, other institutions took similar initiatives. In 1898 some of those giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Museums of the Science and Art

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<sup>48</sup> Archer (1875b), 437 [635].

<sup>49</sup> Smith (1892), 396 [452].

Department had pressed for ‘living guides rather than paper guides’.<sup>50</sup> Guide-lecturers were introduced into some North American museums in the first decade of the century and guide-demonstrators appointed at the British Museum in 1911 and at the British Museum (Natural History) the following year.<sup>51</sup> Lord Sudeley was an advocate for more face-to-face engagement between curators and a museum’s public:

It has always been the habit to look upon museums as great depositories of vast knowledge, to which students could go and obtain information, but not places in which the ordinary public could gain much pleasure or information. Visitors to museums look first at the guide books and labels and then wander listlessly and aimlessly about, very often without the slightest knowledge that they were passing exhibits of the greatest interest and value, and it has been obvious that they have desired very much to have somebody to come forward and explain the exhibits to them. It has been calculated that of the number of visitors who go to museums-I am speaking now of museums where there is no popular guidance-at least three-fifths of them when they leave do so with the greatest dissatisfaction and with the feeling that they have obtained very little information.

There is no doubt that of late years great pains have been taken to elaborate the labels and make them as clear as possible, and at the present moment in all the large museums they are exceedingly good. But that is not all that is required. What is wanted is the spoken word to aid and assist in interpreting the labels in an attractive and pleasant manner. The present system is all very well for students, who are able to make out exactly where the exhibits are that the guide books announce, but the ordinary intelligent public want their curiosity aroused in order to obtain the information, and that can only be done by a human being.<sup>52</sup>

Sudeley did not make specific reference to developments already in place in Edinburgh. On his appointment to the Directorship, Martin had declared that ‘the educational possibilities of the Museum were not exhausted by simply acquiring, classifying, and exhibiting specimens’, and, in 1911, he had inaugurated a series of ‘lecture-demonstrations’ by curatorial staff on Wednesday and Saturday evenings throughout the winter.<sup>53</sup> These talks were ‘to supply, in an interesting and informing manner, some facts bearing on the objects in the collections,

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<sup>50</sup> Graves, evidence to Select Committee (1898), 111 [235], para. 1869.

<sup>51</sup> For an account of the American experience, see Roesler (1909). On the appointments to British museums, see Hallett (1913); Leonard (1914); Kavanagh (1988).

<sup>52</sup> Sudeley reported in *Hansard* (1913), para. 349.

<sup>53</sup> Martin (1912), 8-10.

which should assist the visitors to realize that the contents of the cases were not mere isolated specimens, but had a relation to each other, and that taken together they had a story to tell'.<sup>54</sup> For Martin, the displays themselves had limited capacity to represent such surroundings:

The true situation of an object, the background, the atmosphere, required to produce the right mental impression are wanting. For perfect appreciation the observer must be able to supply imaginatively, or must have supplied to him, a knowledge of the place, it may be in an architectural design, in the development of an art or in the history of an invention, out of which an object has been taken. To realize the full meaning of an object in respect of beauty, utility, human interest, there must be a certain ideal reconstruction, only possible to a mind more widely informed than the Museum visitor can be expected to bring with him. The Lecture-demonstrations were intended to link up what in Museum conditions is separate: to fill out a picture of which a single feature only can in Museum conditions be presented.<sup>55</sup>

Martin's 'link up' was an epistemological relocation of objects, which involved re-contextualising them in their 'natural surroundings', and establishing articulations between them other than those represented in their material juxtapositions within the Museum displays. It was the function of the 'lecture-demonstration' to supply the necessary knowledge of place. These presentations were in two parts, each conducted in a different material space:

The plan here adopted was that of assembling the audience in a hall, casting pictures of the objects on the screen, explaining them, relating them, and, the mind having been familiarised with the illustrations, thereafter directing or accompanying the audience to the place in the Museum where the concrete specimens were to be found. Thus the lecture, together with the lantern slides, prepared for study of the actual exhibits and for the grasping of their significance.<sup>56</sup>

The need for the new space of oration and audition, in part, was based on Martin's belief that talks delivered in the exhibition spaces were ineffective since only a small number of people could cluster about the speaker so only a few

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<sup>54</sup> *Scotsman* (1911c). Lectures included 'Egypt: its Arts and Crafts'; 'Common Animals of the Seashore'; 'Art and Literature of Chadea and Assyria'; 'Bridges: Principles of their Construction'; 'A Roman City: Pompeii'; 'The Clothing of Animals'; and 'How to Study Natural History in a Museum'.

<sup>55</sup> Martin (1912), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Martin (1912), 10.

obtained ‘an “eye-witness” verification’ of his discourse.<sup>57</sup> The technologies of image projection, a vital component of the lecture-demonstration, demanded a different sort of space; a room in which the audience was corralled and static and the ambient illumination controllable. In 1911 a room off the Main Hall was made the ‘Demonstration Room’. Demand soon exceeded the room’s 100-seat capacity and the venue was switched to the larger capacity University examination hall – the lower floor of the rooms which prior to 1866 had been the University’s Natural History Museum. For the audiences the examination hall was contiguous with the Museum, accessed via the bridge over West College Street: ‘you can enter the museum and find your way to the University examination hall without seeming to leave the museum’.<sup>58</sup> Martin distinguished the Museum’s role from that of other institutions: ‘These Lecture-demonstrations, it should be said, are not put in competition with any lectures given elsewhere; they are strictly related to the contents of the Museum’.<sup>59</sup> In addition curatorial staff gave occasional talks in Scottish provincial museums as part of a strategy which ‘follows legitimately from the policy adopted by the Museum, as a national institution, of assisting the provincial museums’.<sup>60</sup>

Curators were relieved of presenting the lecture-demonstrations when, following his retirement as Curator in April 1914, Vallance was immediately re-engaged in the new role of Museum Demonstrator:

the primary object in creating the post of Demonstrator was the increase of pleasure and enlightenment on the part of the visitors who should gather at stated hours for a tour of the Museum. It was felt that the majority of visitors could not carry away from the

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<sup>57</sup> Martin (1912), 10.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, evidence to Select Committee (1913), 4 [340], para. 69.

<sup>59</sup> Martin (1912), 5.

<sup>60</sup> Martin (1914), 5.

extensive body of material shown the knowledge of more than a few isolated facts, and the appointment of a demonstrator was meant to promote the wider appreciation that must be sought by means of explanations of the exhibits in their historic or scientific sequence and relationship.<sup>61</sup>

For Martin 'the living voice' would 'do for the casual visitor what handbooks, printed guides and labels, however copious in description, fail to do'.<sup>62</sup> The words of the curator were no longer presented only via anonymously authored printed text; but were delivered face-to-face such that the speaker formed part of the display. Providing a person to act as both ventriloquist and medium was a principal strategy by which the message of the object was standardised, controlled, and contained. Through the Demonstrator, and the sequencing of lantern slides, objects were disciplined so as to 'speak' one at a time, not in raucous cacophony, and their voices controlled so as to convey the 'correct' messages and produce 'the right interpretation'.

The post of Demonstrator lapsed with Vallance's death in 1915, and for the duration of the war lecture-demonstrations ceased. They were re-instituted in April 1919 as 'Guide Demonstrations', when, for want of 'a single individual capable of demonstrating effectively in the various sections', three demonstrators were engaged on a grant from SED, one for natural history lectures, one for art, and another to lecture on engineering and mining.<sup>63</sup> This third category did not prove popular and was dropped leaving Miss Katherine Chart and Miss Jacobs to provide demonstrations in art and natural history, respectively, every afternoon, except Sunday, and on those evenings when the Museum was open. This series continued into the 1930s, although Miss Jacobs was replaced by a Miss Harvey.

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<sup>61</sup> Martin (1914), 6; GB587/Scrapbook (RSM) 1, Handbill, 'Demonstrations to School Classes', pp. 66-67.

<sup>62</sup> Martin (1914), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Curle (1920), 2.

In addition Mrs Murray Thomson, who was engaged by the Edinburgh School Board to give lectures to school groups, lectured to adults: ‘For some months demonstrations for children were given by Mrs Murray Thomson; but, as it was found that adults attended these classes to the same extent as children did the ordinary demonstrations, the differentiation was dropped’.<sup>64</sup> The engagement of lecturers necessitated not only the allocation of spaces in which their talks could be delivered but also of office spaces in which they could be prepared, an office being allocated to ‘lady lecturers’ (Figure 7.2).

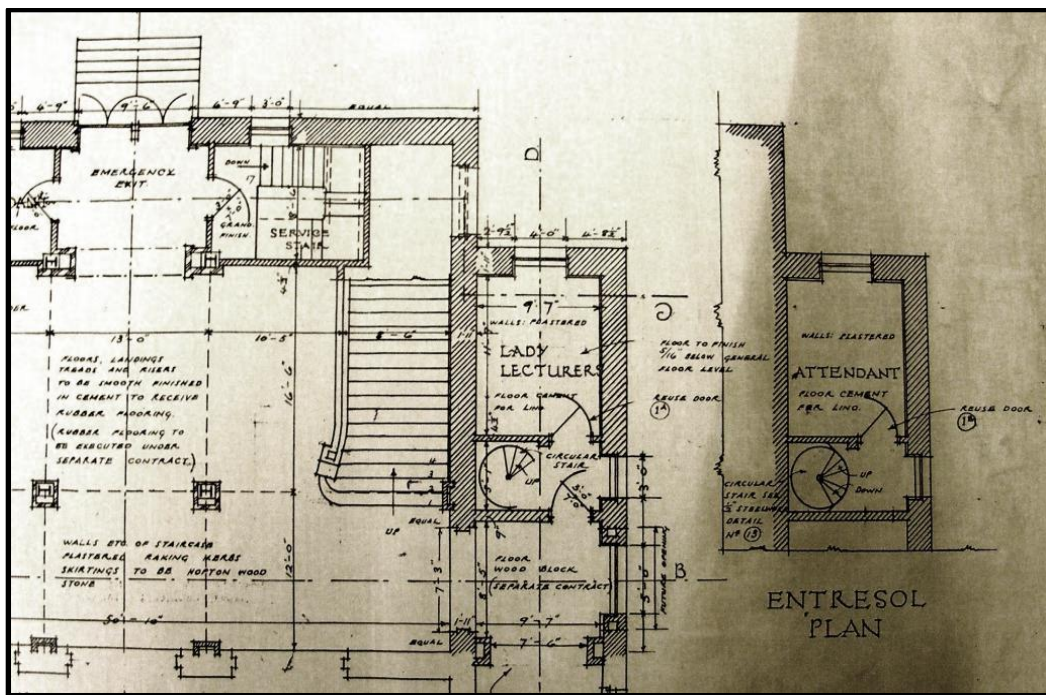


Figure 7.2. Making space for production of speech: detail from a plan, dated 1930, for the construction of additional office accommodation to include an office for ‘Lady Lecturers’ (GB587/IS.2010.56).

<sup>64</sup> Curle (1921), 2.

THE ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM

**SATURDAY EVENING LECTURES**  
**WITH LANTERN & CINEMATOGRAPH ILLUSTRATIONS**

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- 22nd October, 1938 : "Land Transport through the Ages."  
By T. Rowatt, M.I.Mech.E.
- 5th November, 1938 : "Four Centuries of House-Furnishing."  
By Ian Finlay, M.A.
- 19th November, 1938 : "Native Life in British New Guinea."  
By R. Kerr, M.A.
- 3rd December, 1938 : "Studies in Bird-Life."  
By A. C. Stephen, D.Sc.
- 17th December, 1938 : "The Story of the Lighthouse."  
By R. W. Plenderleith, B.Sc.
- 7th January, 1939 : "Animal Geography."  
By A. R. Waterston, B.Sc.
- 21st January, 1939 : "Tapestry Weaving in Europe."  
By W. C. Wallis, F.S.A.Scot.
- 4th February, 1939 : "The Steel-Makers."  
By A. R. Hutchieson, B.Sc., M.I.Mech.E.
- 18th February, 1939 : "Petroleum."  
By D. Balsillie, F.G.S.
- 4th March, 1939 : "African Negro Sculpture."  
By Cyril Aldred, B.A.
- 18th March, 1939 : "The Spring of the Year."  
By Miss M. I. Platt, M.Sc.
- 
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These lectures will be given at 7 p.m.  
Entrance to the Lecture Hall through the Museum.

**ADMISSION FREE**

T. ROWATT, *Director.*

Figure 7.3. Lecture programme for 1938-1939 (GB587, Plan Chest, [n.n.]).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the average audience for the guide-demonstrations did not exceed fifteen, and they differed from the former lecture-demonstrations in that they took place entirely within the display areas: 'Much larger attendances are not really desirable, as in the restricted space of the galleries there is apt to be congestion'.<sup>65</sup>

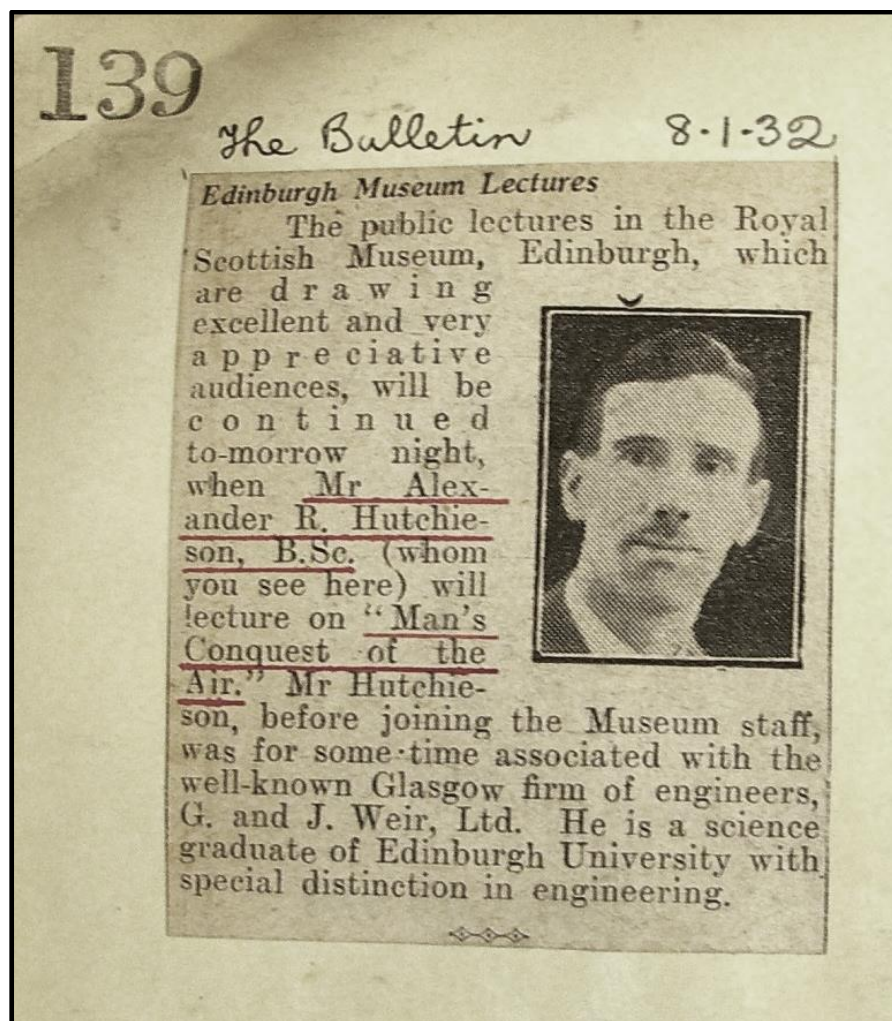


Figure 7.4. Displaying authority: an advertisement for one of the series of lectures given by the curatorial staff (GB587/[n.n.], Royal Scottish Museum Scrapbook 2, p. 139).

<sup>65</sup> Curle (1928), 1.

Evening opening and the lecture series ceased as a result of austerity measures imposed through the *National Economy (Education) (Scotland) Order* (1931). When it was reinstated, a new series of fortnightly Saturday evening lectures was inaugurated. These lectures were given voluntarily by the Museum's staff. By 1933 these lectures, which were held in a lecture hall in the University, and accessed via the bridge, attracted an average audience of 200 (Figure 7.3).<sup>66</sup> The lectures were promoted through posters and advertisements in the press. The latter included both a photograph and brief biography of the lecturer, thereby putting on display the lecturer, and his or her credentials and authority to speak (Figure 7.4).<sup>67</sup>

The lecture series were in association with Edinburgh Public Libraries' 'Education at Home' programme, and a reading list was produced to accompany each.<sup>68</sup> They, therefore, formed part of a network of pedagogic activities involving not only the Museum but also the University, the Public Library, and in the city's distributed sites of reading.

One minority audience for the Museum's practices of educating was curators. In the early decades of the twentieth century staff from the Museum had been sent to spend short periods in major museums in Cambridge, London and Oxford. The aim was for them to gain practical experience and training in curation of particular kinds of objects, to widen the outlook of the staff, and to get to know their southern counterparts so as to encourage cooperation and

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<sup>66</sup> Ward (1934), 1.

<sup>67</sup> Numerous examples in GB587/Scrapbook (RSM) 2.

<sup>68</sup> For examples, see GB587SB(RSM)2, pp. 166 and 190.

mitigate against rivalry in collecting.<sup>69</sup> Thus the Museum was part of a network information exchange productive of a professionalization of museums. Its role in this network was increased, albeit briefly, when in 1931 Edinburgh was the northern regional centre for a course for curators in provincial museums organised by the Museums Association.<sup>70</sup> The catchment area was Scotland and the north of England. It was in part universal suffrage introduced in 1928, that was the driver for the Association organizing these courses: ‘the increase in the electorate leads to a demand for Popular Education which takes the form of (a) Inspiration; (b) Instruction’.<sup>71</sup> The *Scotsman* reported on the course in terms of their being a site for promoting citizenship:

It will be appropriate to remark here that curators of museums and such like institutions should realise, and be proud of, the responsible position they occupy, for by giving bias in this or that direction, they....may be instrumental in influencing for good the future welfare of their fellow citizens, and not only by preserving the best of the past, but by sympathetic co-operation, to improve the present and, as far as possible, provide for prosperity.<sup>72</sup>

In subsequent years, members of the Museum’s staff took an active role in training curators from British provincial museums through hosting seconded staff. For example, in 1933 a Miss Wallace from Perth Museum was given two week’s ‘training in the identification and treatment of ethnographical specimens’, and a Miss Mosby from Worksop Museum was instructed in the repair and restoration of art objects and in ‘museum technique relating to natural history’.<sup>73</sup>

As has been shown, during the twentieth century the Museum operated several distinct forms of talks which involved different epistemological and

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<sup>69</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 86, memorandum, para. 3, and 90, para. 1112.

<sup>70</sup> Wake (1931); Ward (1932), 2. GB587/DP(C)/8.3, Typescript (undated and untitled) in ‘Draft of Lecture programmes, lectures, guides, etc’.

<sup>71</sup> Bather (1930).

<sup>72</sup> *Scotsman* (1931b).

<sup>73</sup> Ward (1934), 3-4 and 8.

material spaces, and different personnel. They included lectures presented by the curatorial staff, talks by lecture-demonstrators (since 1919 personnel engaged by the Museum but not strictly part of the Museum's staff) funded by SED, and lecture-demonstrations given by a teacher employed by the Edinburgh School Board (after 1919 the Education Authority).<sup>74</sup> This diversity exemplifies the problematic nature of 'populariser', 'expert' and 'non-expert', and the complex nuances of division of labour which constituted 'professionalization'.<sup>75</sup> The funding of these three categories of lecture represented the Museum's engagement with education provision on different geographical scales. This distinction in funding was reflected in the documentary practices of the Museum, the data on the SED and the Education Authority funded series being reported separately in the Annual Reports. The different educational activities, whilst forged in different epistemological and administrative spaces, shared the same material spaces.

#### *7.4.3 Object lessons for pupils: spaces for 'a definite school method'*

Since at least the mid 1890s, the Schools Inspectorate in Scotland had encouraged schools to collect objects, especially collections of raw and manufactured products from various parts of the world for use in the teaching of geography.<sup>76</sup> Although extramural teaching in military drill or swimming for boys and cookery for girls had for many years been sanctioned as 'attendance' at school, not until 1899 did the Scotch Day School Code extend attendance to

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<sup>74</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 92, para. 1150.

<sup>75</sup> Fyfe & Lightman (2007a).

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Ogilvie (1894), 317 [375].

include approved visits to other sites, including museums.<sup>77</sup> This extension presented opportunities for the Museum and in his annual report for 1901, Ogilvie declared that ‘special sections may be still further developed, particularly as accessories to the study and teaching of science, art, and technology in Scotland’ and noted the formation of a display of ‘collections directly related to the work of teaching Elementary Science’: ‘Most of these are models or scientific instruments which, while too costly to be in the possession of the majority of science schools and classes, are likely to be found of great use in supplementing the descriptions given in class teaching or in text-books’.<sup>78</sup> Reporting on a spatial separation of school pupils and other Museum audiences, Ogilvie wrote that a display had been:

specially arranged to illustrate nature teaching, as well as those stages of science and art instruction which are of importance in junior schools... he trusted that when ready it would on the one hand afford special facilities for class visits to the museum, and on the other hand prevent such visits inflicting any discomfort or inconvenience upon older students or upon general visitors to the museum.<sup>79</sup>

He was referring to the School Gallery, under the stewardship of the Department of Technology, established to display the material apparatus and equipment of teaching.

In 1911 the Edinburgh School Board undertook to encourage schools to incorporate visits to museums in their teaching practices The Clerk to the Board wrote:

The Board have had under consideration the question of extending the system of visits of school children to various places of interest in the city in accordance with Article 24 of the Day School Code. It is felt that the value of this instruction in other surroundings than those of the schoolroom is very great, and that the lessons so learned will have a very beneficial reaction upon the ordinary work of the school....Any one class might

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<sup>77</sup> Scotch Education Department (1899), 14.

<sup>78</sup> Galt in Ogilvie (1902a), 8.

<sup>79</sup> Ogilvie (1902c), 45.

quite profitably visit the Museum six times in the course of the winter as part of the organised work, but, of course, the pupils should be encouraged to continue to visit frequently outside school hours. The pupils should, however, be enjoined to visit the Museum with a definite purpose. Aimless wandering through the halls and galleries of a great Museum hinders rather than helps to the formation of a habit of concentration.<sup>80</sup>

The objective was for the museum to become part of a network of spaces of knowledge-making extending beyond the classroom and beyond the hours of formal education. To ensure selective attention, practices of speaking, listening and viewing involving pupils, objects, teachers and curators were envisaged as coalescing in, what for Martin, was ‘a definite school method’:

It may, therefore, be useful to outline here this endeavour to associate the Museum directly with the work of the schools, not by assembling school children to hear a discourse from the lips of a Museum officer, but by a definite school method, the teacher informing himself and then conducting his class to the Museum, the subject being both introduced before the visit and recapitulated after the visit in the schoolroom.<sup>81</sup>

In order to ‘strengthen the interconnexion of the Museum and the schools and colleges’ and to provide the ‘positive effort needed to train teachers in the use of the Museum collections,’ Martin instituted in 1912 a Museum Advisory Committee on Education comprising H M Inspectors of Schools, members of Edinburgh School Board and representatives of local Training Colleges.<sup>82</sup> At its meeting in May 1914 the Committee recorded its view that the range of subjects in the School Gallery was too diverse and unfocused and suggested that attention to the discipline of geography might be applied: ‘a real service would be rendered to education if the geographical side of the Gallery were steadily developed...The subject, it was held, abounded in opportunities for illustration by a Keeper who kept himself abreast of the recent movement whereby

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<sup>80</sup> Peck (1912), 1-2.

<sup>81</sup> Martin (1912), 7.

<sup>82</sup> GB587/ID 148376, 4 November 1912, pp. 165-166.

Geography, in the largest meaning of the term, has become practically a new science'.<sup>83</sup>

To further encourage teachers to make use of Museum visits Martin suggested that: 'By arrangement a teacher may have the guidance of an officer to the contents of the cases, and from him may receive such help as is required to place the subject of immediate study in its relation to cognate subjects which are exemplified in other parts of the Museum'.<sup>84</sup> He also offered the use of the Demonstration Room, together with a special selection of lantern slides, for those teachers wishing to bring their pupils for instruction. Martin described his aim as 'enlarging the place of the Museum in the educational system'.<sup>85</sup>

Yet for Martin the 'definite school method', which centred on the class teacher, was inadequate. The diversity of objects on display offered the potential for distraction and the temptation for pupils to 'range at large among the exhibits' thereby making 'what should be an educational experience into an agreeable "outing"'.<sup>86</sup> In Martin's view, teachers were ill-equipped to discipline the gaze of pupils in the Museum environment: 'The exhibits are so extensive in every department that no teacher handling a class of 30 scholars can himself put the collections to effective use. The time spent in the Museum was by no means wasted, but something was left to be desired on the score of exact and methodic [*sic*] tuition'.<sup>87</sup> With the appointment of the Museum Demonstrator, the 'school method' changed to become a 'museum method'. This decentred the role of the

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<sup>83</sup> NMS/[n.n.], 'Minute Book of the Advisory Committee of the Royal Scottish Museum from 1912 to 1961', minute of meeting May 1914.

<sup>84</sup> Martin (1912), 5.

<sup>85</sup> Martin (1913), 4.

<sup>86</sup> Martin (1914), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Martin (1915), 6.

class teacher and brought to the fore the Museum Demonstrator (see Chapter 4) who gave lecture-demonstrations directly to parties of pupils.<sup>88</sup> Unlike his demonstrations to adults, which generally took place in the displays, these were in two parts, each of which used a different material space:

Assembling the class in a small room...the Demonstrator occupied twenty minutes to half an hour in giving lectures in simple language with explanations of objects thrown upon the screen, these being followed by visits to the actual objects in the collection, with further instruction regarding them.<sup>89</sup>

Following Vallance's death, over the winters of 1916-1917 and 1917-18 Grace H. Jacobs gave the presentations to school groups. The School Board lecture-demonstrations, which had been suspended due to the war, were reinstated at the beginning of 1918.<sup>90</sup> The use of the Museum by school groups under the guidance of their own teachers also continued throughout the war and in the following years.

In the inter-war years the number of school pupils increased and class sizes became larger. For reasons of economy the Education Authority increased the size of classes approved to visit the Museum from 30 pupils to 50, necessitating the Museum to provide larger premises to accommodate school groups: 'in order to accommodate the larger classes there was no alternative but to sacrifice one of the Museum workrooms and to transform it into a lecture room' (Figure 7.5).<sup>91</sup> Teachers found the facilities lacked ventilation, over-hot, and were generally oppressive; an 'almost a lethal chamber' according to one.<sup>92</sup> Ward, and later Rowatt, used these complaints to bolster the case for a new

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<sup>88</sup> GB587/Scrapbook (RSM) 1, Handbill, 'Demonstrations to School Classes', pp. 66-67.

<sup>89</sup> Martin (1915), 6.

<sup>90</sup> Committee of Council on Education (1919), 21 [891].

<sup>91</sup> Ward (1934), 2.

<sup>92</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.1, Rowatt to Secretary SED, 16 October 1934.

bespoke lecture theatre and by 1938 detailed plans had been drawn up (although this was not constructed until 1961).<sup>93</sup>

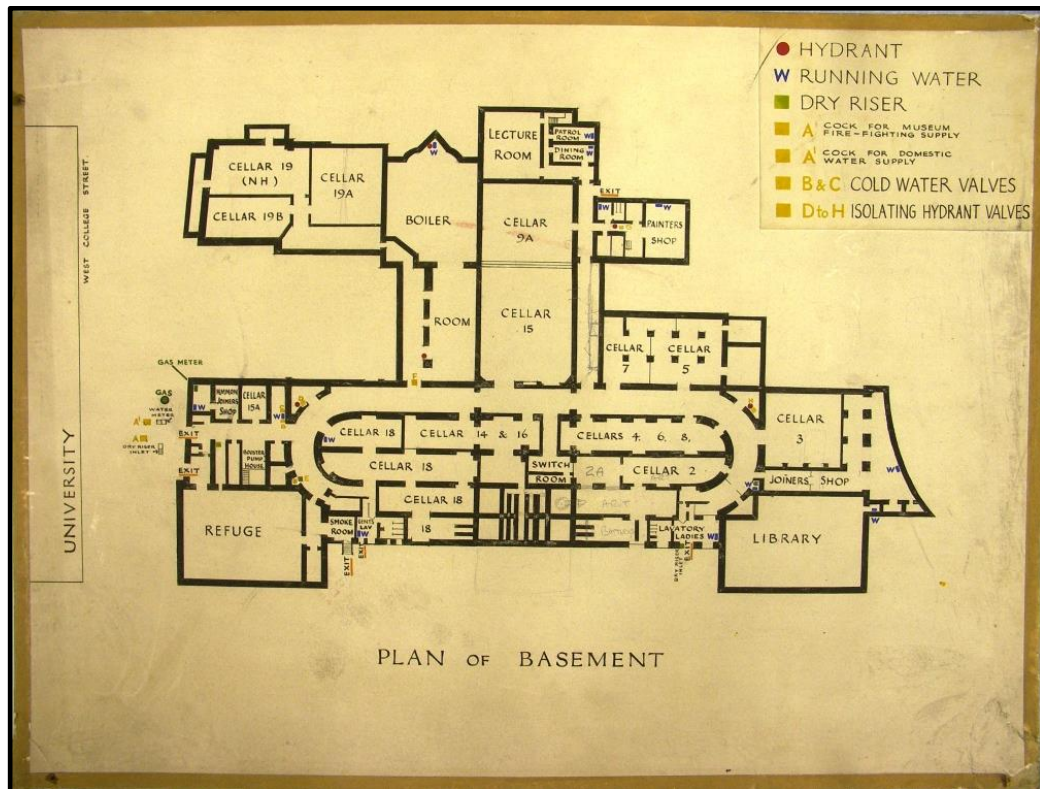


Figure 7.5. The ‘almost lethal chamber’: a basement workshop converted for use as a lecture room. Undated plan, associated with wartime planning (circa 1939). The air-raid shelter in the basement of the East Pavilion is marked ‘refuge’ (GB587/IS.2010.56).

The in-house facilities were only one of the sites in which educational processes of the Museum were enacted. In particular the increasing availability of projection technologies elsewhere took the Museum, as translated into, and

<sup>93</sup> Rowatt (1935), 2; GB587/IS.2009.53, Plan, signed S. Sim, ‘Royal Scottish Museum: New Lecture Hall’ H. M. Office of Works, November 1938.

represented by, its slide and film collection, into extramural spaces. In the hands and voices of teachers and freelance lecturers, images and descriptions of the Museum and its collections circulated through widely distributed lecture rooms and classrooms.

Further initiatives to extend the reciprocal reach of museum and classroom followed the publication in 1931 by the Board of Education of the *Memorandum on the Possibility of Increasing Co-operation between Public Museums and Public Educational Institutions*, popularly known as *Museums and the Schools*.<sup>94</sup> Although strictly the report applied only to England and Wales, SED launched its own initiative and through the Museum distributed a circular, *Museums and Galleries and the Schools*, to Education Authorities throughout Scotland urging them to promote the use of museums by schools.<sup>95</sup> Ward wrote that, 'At a time when many schemes for adding incidentally to the interest of the instruction given in the schools are barred by reason of the expense they entail, it appears especially appropriate that attention should be given to the possibility of a fuller utilisation of the resources of institutions which have already been provided for the public at great cost'.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to encouraging schools to use its facilities as part of formal lessons, the Museum also encouraged school pupils to visit beyond the school day. In 1934 the Edinburgh Branch of the National Council of Women organised a series of three lectures for children during the Christmas and New Year

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<sup>94</sup> Board of Education (1931).

<sup>95</sup> Scottish Education Department (1933), 40-41 [820-821].

<sup>96</sup> Scottish Education Department (1933), 41.

holidays.<sup>97</sup> The series coincided with the opening of a display, the Children's Gallery, itself an initiative to attract young people (Chapter 6). Three years later Saturday morning leisure-time classes for children were initiated following the pattern established at the Victoria and Albert Museum. A Miss Nina Morison 'was invited to try the effect of going round a department of the Museum and expounding the contents to such children as cared to accompany her', an initiative which, for *The Scotsman*, was 'A remarkable illustration of how school children may be led to the trough of knowledge, and also to drink of its contents, in a wholly voluntary spirit'.<sup>98</sup>

### ***7.5 Oration, space, and pedagogical technologies***

In thus developing the processes of educating, the Museum was involved in networks of production and consumption of educational materials, 'pedagogical technologies' (to use Lawn's term), which, in turn, required reconfiguration of its material architecture.<sup>99</sup> The lecture-demonstrations initiated in 1911 relied on technologies and spaces of projection. The Museum did not have a photographer on staff and bought or commissioned slides from commercial producers. Labels on the Museum's collection of slides show that many were supplied by the local firm of A. H. Baird, which had premises on the corner of Lothian Street and Brighton Street. Other slides were purchased from different commercial suppliers, at home and abroad. The slide collections comprise images of objects from the collections and illustrations, mostly copied from books and other

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<sup>97</sup> *Scotsman* (1934b); Cowan (1935).

<sup>98</sup> *Scotsman* (1937b).

<sup>99</sup> Lawn (2009b), 26.

published sources.<sup>100</sup> For Gillian Rose, speakers, images and audiences ‘intersect in ways that produce difference...around what can and cannot be seen’. Screening images, therefore, was a form of displaying which, like those other aspects of displaying considered in Chapter 6, sought to foster selective disattention and to restrict the repertoire of acceptable reactions to both an object and its representation on screen.<sup>101</sup>

In 1914 Vallance advocated the use of cine film: ‘it might be introduced in association with the ordinary screen and accompanied by full spoken descriptions: the ordinary screen showing the still life objects in the Museum cases; the moving film showing life in process of change’.<sup>102</sup> Not until 1935 did the Museum use film. Rowatt described its use for different publics:

The films will be used for lectures to two different audiences. Starting in September, there will be a series of lectures for school children held after school hours. Schools will be circulated and pupils encouraged to attend these lectures. A fifteen-minute film will be shown, and this will be followed by a lecture lasting for about half an hour. A scheme of lectures for adults will commence in October these being given on Saturday nights, a time which has been found very popular at the Museum in the past. The same films will be used for those lectures, though the approach to the subject will be different.<sup>103</sup>

His plan was to buy films ‘illustrating various subjects in the departments of art, natural history and engineering’, and to have the Leith-based film-makers J. Campbell Harper Films Ltd re-edit them to enhance their relevance as illustrations to lectures given by the Museum’s staff. Rowatt, who in 1937 joined the Scottish Educational Film Association, was adamant that the films, even if supplied with a soundtrack, should be shown silently as ‘we prefer our lecturers

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<sup>100</sup> The natural history slide collection, NMS Department of Natural Sciences [uncatalogued].

<sup>101</sup> Rose (2003), 214.

<sup>102</sup> GB587/[n.n.], ‘Minute Book of the Advisory Committee of the Royal Scottish Museum from 1912 to 1914’, minute of 24 October 1912.

<sup>103</sup> *Scotsman* (1935), 8.

to do their own lecturing'.<sup>104</sup> To distance and distinguish film in education from its use as entertainment, there was a widely-held view that educational films should be silent allowing the voice of the teacher to integrate them into the lesson.<sup>105</sup> Buying films from widely-dispersed suppliers, the Museum gradually built up 'an extensive film library'.<sup>106</sup>

Yet Rowatt's ambitions extended beyond screening films, to making them. In 1938 he commissioned Harper to produce a film about the Museum itself.<sup>107</sup> The brief was to represent and locate the Museum 'as one of the social services'.<sup>108</sup> The film was produced to be screened in the Social Services Section of the Scottish Pavilions at the Empire Exhibition in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, 1938, and was subsequently shown in numerous towns and cities in Scotland and England, in several museums in North America, and at the Museums Association meeting in Belfast.<sup>109</sup> Thus, film, like slides, formed part of networks of production and use which extended beyond the material spaces of the Museum.

Another technology, radio, further extended this reach. Museums and broadcasting was the theme for a conference in York in December 1931 and in March the following year the Museums Association encouraged its members to mount events to coincide with a series of talks broadcast by the BBC on topics

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<sup>104</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.2, Rowatt to Rush, 25 February 1937; GB587/DP(C)/1.4, Rowatt to Erpi Classroom Films Inc, New York, 25 June 1938.

<sup>105</sup> Wilson (1935); *Scotsman* (1937a). On tensions between projected images as instruction and as entertainment, see Driver (2003).

<sup>106</sup> Edinburgh Film Guild (1939).

<sup>107</sup> GB2120/2274.

<sup>108</sup> On plans for a film on water supply, see *Scotsman* (1935). Quotation is from Rowatt (1938b).

<sup>109</sup> Rowatt, (1939), 4; GB2120/2274.

relevant to museums.<sup>110</sup> Ward organised exhibitions and talks to coincide with the broadcasts.<sup>111</sup> The Museum was seen, at least by some, to be in the vanguard in responding to the opportunities presented by the new technology.<sup>112</sup>

In 1911 the introduction of lantern-slide presentations necessitated the allocation and adaption of space within the building. The popularity of these illustrated talks prompted calls for better facilities. A theatre ‘capable of accommodating between 400 and 500 persons’ was initially part of Oldrieve’s brief, although it was removed from the planning process for reasons of economy (Chapter 3).<sup>113</sup> The introduction of cine re-invigorated calls for an extension to the Museum building. There were preliminary discussions about constructing a temporary lecture/film theatre to the south of the Museum but, in the event, a more modest provision had to suffice:

One of the halls on the top floor of the Royal Scottish Museum has temporarily been converted into a cinema hall to enable the museum to gain experience in the latest methods of creating interest in the exhibits in museums and rendering those exhibits more informative to the public. In this hall will be shown films mainly explanatory of the exhibits in the various sections of the museum.<sup>114</sup>

The capacity of 120 seats proved insufficient to meet demand, however, and the venue for the Saturday evening lectures by the curatorial staff was switched to the University’s examination hall. By 1936 average attendance at each lecture was 537 and several topics were so popular that the performance had to be

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<sup>110</sup> Bather (1932).

<sup>111</sup> Ward (1933), 4.

<sup>112</sup> Markham (1933a; b).

<sup>113</sup> Martin (1912), 10.

<sup>114</sup> MNS(L)/DP/8.1, ‘Royal Scottish Museum: Cinematograph Developments’ in ‘Draft for Lecture programmes, lectures, guides, etc’; For discussion about new spaces for projection, see GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] to Secretary SED, 7 November 1935; 12 November 1935; GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] Director to Secretary SED, 22 November 1937.

repeated.<sup>115</sup> The amount of technology now required for a lecture made the transformation of a space of examination into a temporary space of exposition troublesome:

Before every lecture the examination tables and chairs have to be removed from the hall and stacked in an adjacent building, while the platform, desk, screen, lantern, cinematograph projector and equipment, safety lights, etc. require to be transferred from the cellars of the Museum, where they are stored, to the examination hall. Immediately after the lecture – sometimes, to meet the requirements of examinations, the same night – all this material has to be transported back to the Museum, and the hall re-converted to an examination hall. For a lecture hall the seating is unsatisfactory, the lantern and cinematograph arrangements are makeshift, the acoustics of the hall are poor, and the entrance and exits far from convenient.<sup>116</sup>

Technologies are never neutral, their incorporation into practices, as Agustín Benito reminds us, is always charged with cultural values.<sup>117</sup> The materials of its practices of educating, as for aspects of the materiality of the Museum as a whole, were productive of, and reflected, the epistemologies and ideologies which located educating within the Museum as one of a variety of sites educating.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Morison described the objective for her Saturday tours for children in terms of inculcating museum literacy:

My aim is to help children to *read* the Museum. At school, children are taught to read books, not to become writers of books, but that they may learn all that the writers of books may give them in the way of inspiration and mental training. In a museum, besides being directed to look at beautiful things, they must be shown how certain things are made, and why.<sup>118</sup>

This declared mission has resonances with the founding objective, as expressed by Fleming, to ‘teach our people what they have to look for’, and with Lady

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<sup>115</sup> GB587/DP(C)/8.1, [Rowatt] to Parker, SED, 1 January 1937.

<sup>116</sup> Rowatt (1936), 2.

<sup>117</sup> Benito (2009), 41.

<sup>118</sup> Morison (1938), 438-439.

Martin's concept of the Museum's role being to convey 'the right interpretation of history and the objects seen'. These views each recognised that objects alone invite a multitude of responses and that the reining-in of the perceptual promiscuity they could engender required combining objects and words and the teaching of a visual literacy. Such a process could not be undertaken through objects alone (any more than books alone could teach the skill of reading). It required 'the living word' of competent teachers:

It is not sufficient that they should be well versed in the department of science, antiquities, or art committed to their charge. They must be men mindful of the main end and purpose in view, and of the best way of communicating knowledge according to its kind, not merely to those who are already men of science, historians, or connoisseurs, but equally to those who as yet ignorant desire to learn, or in whom it is desirable that a thirst for learning should be incited.<sup>119</sup>

Examination of the practices of educating has provided vivid examples of how new epistemologies and technologies were productive of differentiating roles, expertises and spaces within and beyond the material Museum. As with processes of collecting and displaying, the educational intent was constrained by the availability of resources: An article in *The Scotsman* alluded to different forms of space over which the Museum operated distinguishing between its sphere of influence and its material architecture: 'While the sphere of the Museum's work is widening, and it is taking an increasing place in the life of the community, it is still greatly hampered in its usefulness by inadequate resources, and especially of space'.<sup>120</sup> In part, the constraints of material space were alleviated by extending some of the teaching functions beyond the material Museum – to rooms in the University, for example.

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<sup>119</sup> Forbes (1853), 12.

<sup>120</sup> *Scotsman* (1913b).

The transfer to SED placed the Museum in the general landscape of school-level education at a time when the parallel system of class-based schooling – ‘primary and secondary for middle classes and elementary for working classes’ – was being transformed into a single state-funded ‘educational highway’ stretching from elementary school to University.<sup>121</sup> Whilst, following this transfer, the main focus of the Museum’s educational activity shifted away from university and college audiences towards school pupils, nonetheless components of all parts of the ‘highway’ continued to use the Museum in their teaching. Hooper-Greenhill identified an ‘educational turn’ in museums generally in the twentieth-century.<sup>122</sup> I would suggest, however, that in the Museum this ‘turn’ was merely a change of emphasis and target audience in long-run engagements with educational processes.

In a composition, ‘Why I like the Museum’, submitted in the competition staged in 1938, one ten-year-old essayist wrote:

The Royal Scottish Museum, which is situated in Chambers Street is to me a most interesting place.

My Saturday visits I enjoy most for then I listen to some wonderful stories of the different nations of the world. These stories being told by Miss Morison, who takes a great interest in children.

I also like the Museum because of the drawing class. We are allowed to draw the objects shown in the cases, some of which are really beautiful. Since I have been attending the class my drawing has very much improved.

My favourite halls are the Bird and Animal sections. In the later is a huge African Elephant whose height competes with that of the giraffe for the tallest animal in the building.

The Aquarium is also very interesting, and the fish, even although I am not too interested, are always very attractive. As I feel at present, I shall always find time to visit this most interesting place every week.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Finn (1983), 176.

<sup>122</sup> Hooper-Greenhill (2007), 5.

<sup>123</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.4, Attachment to Rowatt to Wignall, 30 December 1938.

The essay mirrors much of the intent of the Museum, which was, no doubt, the reason for Rowatt's selecting it for publication. For him, museums were places for prolonged, intense, engagements between visitors and objects:

If in search of information, the visitor, having obtained answers to his queries, went away completely satisfied. On the other hand, the visitor who visited a museum for pleasure must be more careful. He must steadfastly resist all inclination to "see" the museum – a process which in practice involved walking rapidly all over the building without seeing anything. He must select the class of object he wished to study and enjoy, make straight for that section of the collections, and then spend an hour or so in a leisurely and comfortable examination of the specimens. This came the real test of the efficiency of the museum, for if the display was good, that visitor obtained so much satisfaction from his visit that he was certain to return; in fact it was only when the visitor was enrolled as an habitu  that the museum was satisfied.<sup>124</sup>

But what were visitors really like? What did they actually do and experience? What knowledge was produced in that 'fugitive moment of encounter' at the boundary between the material embodiment of curatorial intent and its utilisation by the visitor?<sup>125</sup> What did visitors make of the object lessons presented by the Museum? The processes of visiting and the visitor experience are the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>124</sup> *Scotsman* (1934c).

<sup>125</sup> For a discussion of the term 'fugitive moment of encounter', see Forgan (1998).

## VISITING: GEOGRAPHIES AND MOMENTS OF ENCOUNTER

Just as a text exists because there is a reader to give it meaning...so an archive exists because there is a user to give it meaning. I shall talk about use, but I am only too well aware that I have very inadequately unearthed the real, hidden history of use, a history which would contrast, say, the conservative and fixed nature of writing (that which is the archive) with reading (the use of that which is the archive).<sup>1</sup>

### *8.1 Introduction*

Previous chapters have addressed the role of the Museum in the ‘transmission’ of knowledge through exhibiting and educating. Here the ‘circuit of communication’ is completed by shifting the focus onto the process and practices of visiting, through which the Museum was produced as ‘a social and cultural product, continually reproduced through use’.<sup>2</sup> In changing the focus from production to consumption my concern is with what visitors *actually* did and experienced. Whilst in the period under study a didactic ‘transmission-absorption’ paradigm dominated the discourse of educating, recent scholarship recognises visitors as active agents in the construction of visits: visitors are, in the words of one commentator, ‘variegated, textured beings, marked by their own history and experience and by the constructive proclivities they brought with them into the museum’.<sup>3</sup> For Pearce, ‘it is the *convergence* of object and viewer which brings the meaningful object into existence’, and so, in Knell’s

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<sup>1</sup> Joyce (1999), 37.

<sup>2</sup> MacLeod (2005), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Hein (2006), 6. See also Falk & Dierking (2000); Hooper-Greenhill (2007); Knell, (2007).

terminology, produces the intangible twin to the tangible object.<sup>4</sup> This involves a metaphorical relocation of both object and viewer, one which, for Pearce, lies at the core of the museum experience, ‘because it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of his own experience that he [the viewer of an object] can take part in the excitement which objects offer’. Visitors were principal actors whose actions, in Lefebvrian terms, *inhabited* and *situated* the Museum as place.<sup>5</sup> The visitor is, therefore, a vital component in the complex interactions and recursive processes which simultaneously brought into being both public museums and the public who visited. As numerous scholars have noted, the intent of the producers and the actions and experience of the visitor did not always correspond.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a challenge to the construction of an historical geography of visiting is to navigate around accounts produced or mediated by the producers and to obtain accounts of actual visits so as to distinguish between the theorised and the empirical visitor.

Unlike the processes examined in previous chapters, visiting is not a process *of* the Museum. Rather, it is an enactment by each of those who visit. There is, therefore, a tension between the uniqueness of the experience of each visitor and the collectivities constructed by the typological classifications of visits and visitors as expressed in the Annual Reports and other published sources. Whilst the demographics of the visits are examinable through the quantitative data which the Museum produced, such data provide little indication of what a visitor experienced. To glean information on the practice of visiting

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<sup>4</sup> Pearce (1992), 219; Knell (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Hornecker (2005). See also Withers (2009).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Alberti (2009), 153; Whitehead (2009), 32-33.

and what constituted a visit it is necessary to interrogate other sources, only some of which is it possible to seek out with systematic rigour. As Patrick Joyce noted of archives generally, the processes of visiting are substantially a ‘hidden history’, recoverable and reconstitutable only in fragments.<sup>7</sup>

## ***8.2 Fragments for constructing a geography of visiting***

The form of the building itself may be considered as an archive. Patterns of wear of its fabric, and the patina on its surfaces and fittings, attest to past activities. This is, in part, what Starn terms ‘materials memory’ and DeSilvey discusses as haptic memories, redolent of past sensations.<sup>8</sup> Such information is, however, difficult to interpret as it was continually eroded by processes of cleaning, maintenance, repair, replacement, demolition and rebuilding. Nonetheless, inferences about what visitors did (or were supposed to do) may be drawn from the facilities which the Museum considered appropriate to provide, and from the systems in place to direct and control behaviours (matters examined in Chapters 3 and 7). The allocation of space to particular facilities, ranging from cloakrooms and refreshment rooms to exhibits aimed at specific audiences, reflected the Museum’s response to its perceptions of visitor’s and its expectations of them. The purchase in 1870 of two hundred enamel labels instructing ‘Do not lean on the glass’, and one hundred instructing ‘Do not touch’, for example, suggests that some visitors were indulging in haptic engagements that did not meet with curatorial approval.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Joyce (1999), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Starn (2006) 13; DeSilvey (2007).

<sup>9</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Galletly to Secretary DSA, 13 January 1870, p. 350.

Qualitative data on visitor experience are scarce. Although, for one present-day commentator, ‘the visitor’s experience of a museum may be understood as a narrative in space’, few visitors committed that narrative to paper.<sup>10</sup> Apart from being counted into the building, the vast majority of visitors left no documentary trace. The 1938 film ‘The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh’ provides a view, albeit mediated by the Museum authorities and the film’s makers, of what constituted a visit and suggests what visitors experienced immediately prior to World War II. Those visitor accounts of experiencing the Museum that do exist are diffuse and difficult to recover and, as I show, are often problematic sources, in part, because they are not evenly distributed in time. First-hand oral testimony is especially highly skewed since it is possible to capture accounts of personal experience only from the final years of the period under study and from one generational cohort. In addition to its temporal skew, the methodology is open to criticism on a number of grounds, not least the likelihood that the content of the dialogue is shaped by the context and process of the interview itself.<sup>11</sup> Memory is a reconstructive process, subject to both loss and accretion. Recollections of those who experienced the Museum in the past are mediated through the passage of time, subsequent experience and the dynamic processes of memory.<sup>12</sup> As Hayden Lorimer suggests, ‘the passage of time quickly erodes ephemeral multisensual realms, rendering them all the more

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<sup>10</sup> Barry (1998), 108.

<sup>11</sup> Macdonald (2005), 119.

<sup>12</sup> Bartlett (1932); Ost, *et al.* (2002).

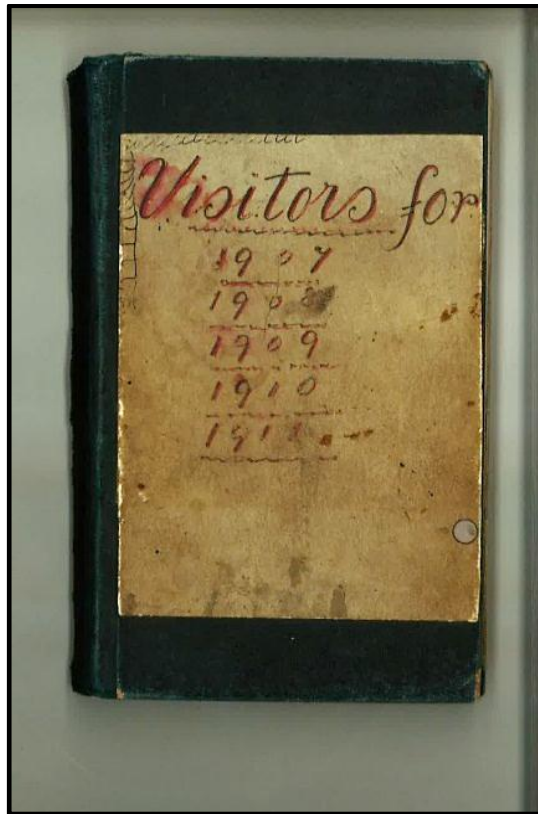
elusive'.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, excerpts from two interviews are quoted here to give voice to visitors.

Other sources are difficult to garner by systematic means and their recovery relies substantially on serendipity. Where written records of a visitor's experience are extant their very existence marks them out as atypical. There were, however, some categories of visitors left a record of their visit. Inscriptions in visitor books formed part of the rituals controlling access to the behind-the-scenes collections. Surviving documents provide the name of the visitor, an indication of their field of interest and, often, an indication of where they came from.

In what follows I interrogate these varied sources in order to construct an historical geography of visiting. The analysis is in five sections. The first examines the practices of translating visits into data and their use to construct taxonomies of visitors – as working class, student, investigator, teacher, general public, and alike. The second discusses how the Museum authorities used these categories in their interpretations of visitor behaviours. Section three examines visitor's own accounts of what they did and what they experienced. The fourth section addresses some behaviours which the Museum authorities considered out of place, before, in conclusion, I discuss the behaviours and experiences of invited guests at conversazioni.

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<sup>13</sup> Lorimer (2003), 202.



A

The notebook is open to two pages of yellowed paper. The left page is titled "August 18<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> 09" and the right page is titled "August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 8<sup>th</sup> 09". Both pages contain handwritten data in red and black ink, organized into columns for days of the week, dates, and numerical readings. Some numbers are crossed out with red lines.

August 18 <sup>th</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup> 09			August 29 <sup>th</sup> to September 8 <sup>th</sup> 09		
Wednesday	18	32203	Sunday	29	46839
		63893			76317
Thursday	19	32949	Monday	30	47685
		64462			77052
Friday	20	34118	Tuesday	31	48318
		65259			77488
Saturday	21	36692	Wednesday	1	49435
		67218			78396
Sunday	22	37731	Thursday	2	49840
		68726			78702
Monday	23	39084	Friday	3	50347
		69814			79433
Tuesday	24	39926	Saturday	4	52532
		70497			80778
Wednesday	25	41882	Sunday	5	53417
		72024			82186
Thursday	26	42582	Monday	6	54019
		72590			82630
Friday	27	43214	Tuesday	7	54618
		73101			83003
Saturday	28	45545	Wednesday	8	55710
		74920			83827
		4150			1916
		16455			

B

Figure 8.1. Visits made data: cover (A) pages (B) from a notebook recording turnstile counter readings (GB587/[n.n.] 'Visitors for 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911').

### *8.3 Quantifying visits: constructing publics*

As Robert Anderson observed, Victorian museum administrators collected extensive quantitative data about visitors.<sup>14</sup> Those responsible for the museum in Edinburgh were no exception. A handful of notebooks, accounts ledgers, and alike, is indicative of the diversity of documentary practices which 'translated' visitors into data. Counting and accounting for visits involved both human operatives and observers, and mechanical devices. The entrance to the purpose-built museum was fitted with turnstiles each incorporating a mechanical counter. These formed part of the making and maintaining of the boundary between the Museum and the material spaces outside. In 1866 they were described thus: 'Our temporary lobby which is a temporary brick structure 12 feet by 18 feet, one half of which is occupied by the arrangements for umbrellas, sticks, &c, and the remainder contains the turnstiles'.<sup>15</sup> In 1875 the two turnstiles were relocated to the newly-constructed main entrance. A notebook, covering the period 1907-1911, shows that the practice was to transcribe the counter readings after each daytime and evening opening period (Figure 8.1).<sup>16</sup> Although from 1901 they were no longer associated with charging, the turnstiles remained in use to count visits until 1913. Thereafter, visitors were counted in by the Attendant at the door.<sup>17</sup> A second notebook containing daily visit numbers 1912-1918 reveals the Attendant's role in selling publications and records the number of postcards and the number of copies of the *Guide* sold. Certain momentous events were also

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson (2000).

<sup>15</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1. Archer to Secretary DSA, 11 June 1866, p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> GB587/ID 127782; GB 587/[n.n] 'Visitors for 1907 1908 1909 1910 1911'.

<sup>17</sup> Martin (1914), 9.

recorded, an entry for Sunday 14 April 1912 reads ‘Loss of Titanic and 1514 lives’, that for 15 August 1914 ‘WAR Der Tag’. The data from the notebooks were compiled, tabulated and analysed and published in the *Annual Report*. From these data, visits and visitors were categorised and audiences profiled.

### *8.3.1 Profiling a ‘general public’*

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, throughout much of the nineteenth century the Museum was ‘public’ on only two days of the week, and in the evenings. At other times it was, at least ostensibly, a site of ‘private’ study by students. The distinction between public and private was, however, subverted by the system of charging by which those willing and able to pay the 6d entrance fee could enjoy the Museum on student days, thereby largely avoiding mixing with the ‘lower orders’. The different kinds of visiting periods were productive of two ‘publics’, distinguished by the times on which they chose to visit: a paying public, perceived as comprising those of higher social status, and the ‘industrial classes’. For these different audiences the Museum was two different places. The relatively low numbers paying for admission suggests that those who did so experienced the Museum as an uncrowded site of social refinement, and as a place to observe not only the objects on display but also the creative work of students sketching. Paying days were a time when art students might meet with those with the potential to become patrons or purchaser of their works. For those who gained entry by payment, the Museum was part of a marketplace of entertainment and education.

Making visitors conspicuous as data – through their publication in the Annual Reports, in the press (throughout much of the nineteenth century weekly totals being published in the press) and in some city guidebooks – was itself a form of display which promoted the Museum as a destination worthy of a visit.<sup>18</sup> Successive Directors frequently related the number of visits to the city’s total population (Figure 8.2): for example, ‘204,933 persons have visited this Museum during 1871, a very large number when the population of Edinburgh (196,500) is taken into consideration’.<sup>19</sup> The methodology was flawed since it made no allowance for repeat visits. These data were interpreted, nonetheless, as showing that the Museum had established a niche. Curle argued that, as a proportion to the population of the city, the Museum attracted 1.1 visits, a figure which compared favourably with the one visitor per head of population claimed for all the London government-funded museums combined.<sup>20</sup>

Successive Directors drew inferences about who was visiting from data on the timing of visits. The number of visits on free days vastly exceeded those made during charging periods. The especially large numbers attending free on Saturdays and in the evenings was presented as evidence that ‘the working classes take especial interest in the institution’, prompting Archer to report that, ‘I am assured by many eminent men, whose occupations, professional, or otherwise, give good opportunities for knowing it, that the beneficial effects of the Museum are plainly seen upon the general body of the working classes’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Reid (1905), 44; Reid (1929), 42.

<sup>19</sup> Archer (1872), 471 [765].

<sup>20</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 92, para. 1159. The figure was given as 1.7 but amended in manuscript – see NMS copy (Acc. 15574).

<sup>21</sup> Archer (1870), 477 [933].

The success in attracting working-class audiences was a prominent recurrent theme in the Annual Reports throughout much of the period 1854-1939. Writing after charging was abandoned, one Director noted:

The bulk of the visitors to the Museum belong really to the artisan and labouring classes and include a large number of children from those grades of Society. The number of local visitor of the wealthier classes is relatively small. This arises from the situation of the Museum in the old Town on the very edge of a populous slum area.<sup>22</sup>

He added that ‘boys attending adjacent schools & coming to the Museum during their luncheon hour’ formed a substantial element of the Museum’s audience.

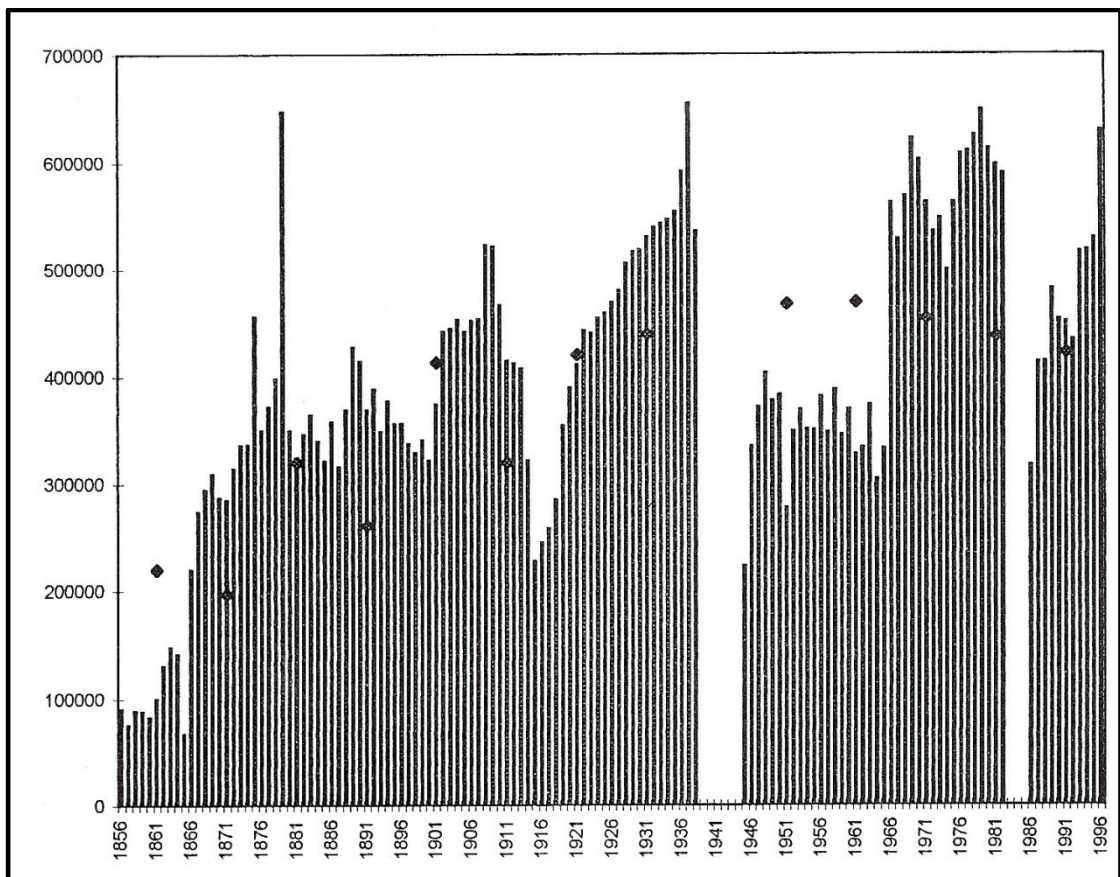


Figure 8.2. Number of visits 1866-1996. Diamonds represent the population of Edinburgh (from Swinney & Heppell, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> GB587/DP(C)/6.1, Draft memo, undated.

Sunday afternoon opening, introduced in 1901, proved particularly attractive: ‘That the Museum makes a special appeal to the working class population in the city is evident from the increasing crowds that visit the collections on Sunday afternoons’.<sup>23</sup> The number of Sunday visitors peaked in 1928 when 7,853 people attended in one day – the average for a Sunday throughout that year was 3,926. Curle noted that, especially on Sundays, up to ten per cent of visitors were children under the age of ten.<sup>24</sup>

### *8.3.2 The Museum’s hinterland: where were visitors from?*

In its early decades the Museum authorities recognised its catchment area as being local, ‘for Edinburgh is not visited by many strangers, except in the summer months’.<sup>25</sup> As the century progressed, more extensive public transportation systems and an increasing trend for Saturday afternoons to become leisure time allowed Smith to report in 1886 that: ‘A considerable proportion of visitors consist of workmen and their families who come to Edinburgh from other places on Saturday afternoons and local holidays’.<sup>26</sup> This trend continued into the twentieth century. In 1927, Curle noted that ‘a great number of holiday-makers find their way to the Museum’.<sup>27</sup> Two years later he wrote, ‘If the Sunday crowds are for the most part composed of local people, visitors to the city are probably responsible for the numbers on week days. The number of strangers is

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<sup>23</sup> Curle (1929), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 86, memorandum para. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Archer (1870b), 477 [933].

<sup>26</sup> Smith (1886), 341 [389].

<sup>27</sup> Curle (1928), 1.

especially noticeable in summer on days of holidays in other large towns'.<sup>28</sup> Provincial towns were, however, not the only hinterland served and he claimed that he detected segregation of interest groups which mirrored their origins: 'To rural visitors r the Natural History collection makes a special appeal, whilst those from mining and engineering centres flock to the Technological Department'.<sup>29</sup>

Something of a way in which visitors were viewed at one moment in time, and the experience of the visitors, was indicated in the 'Lavatory Attendants' Duties' issued in 1913 (this document also brings into view yet another category of museum worker not considered in Chapter 4):

The following instructions have been prepared for the guidance of the attendants in charge of the museum lavatories.

1. Every visitor is, without exception, entitled to the free use of the urinals, and on no account are the attendants to do anything, either by word or deed, which might hinder them from so doing.
2. The charge of one penny for the use of the closets is to be continued, but the lavatory attendants are at liberty to exercise their discretion as to enforcing this charge under exceptional circumstances, especially in the case of young people from the country. This discretion is also to be exercised in considering whether the charge of one penny with use of soap and towel is to be enforced.

Every sympathy should be shown to young people, especially children.<sup>30</sup>

### 8.3.3 Seasonality of visits: when did visitors visit?

The number of visits was markedly seasonal. The data published in the Annual Reports show that, throughout the nineteenth century, numbers of visits on non-charging days generally peaked in January, the New Year holiday contributing substantially to that month's figures. A smaller peak was evident in July and August. Evening visits were also most numerous in January, slumped in summer, increased again in the autumn. By contrast, the number of visits by the paying

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<sup>28</sup> Curle (1929), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Curle (1928), 1.

<sup>30</sup> NMS(T)/Letter book 10, Galt, 20 August 1912, 'Lavatory Attendants' duties'.

public peaked in summer and early autumn and, as might be expected, student numbers were generally lowest in July and August. In the twentieth century, the abolition of charging, the introduction of Sunday afternoon opening, and the abandonment of detailed recording of student visits, changed the ways in which visitor data were presented in the Annual Reports. Nonetheless, the seasonality of visiting continued to show a broadly similar pattern but with an additional peak in March and/or April, probably reflecting the fact that Easter was increasingly observed as a public holiday. This seasonality of visiting formed part of an annual cycle of leisure usage of the social spaces of the city of which the Museum was but one.

The seasonal cycle was, however, subject to various perturbations. As successive Directors recognised, who visited, and in what quantity, was influenced by a variety of factors. The abolition of the ‘fast-days’ throughout southern Scotland was cited as contributing to a decline in attendance in 1885.<sup>31</sup> The prolonged warm summer of 1921 was ‘not conducive to seeking recreation indoors’ and the miners strike later that same year prompted Curle to write that ‘the great amount of unemployment in the winter and the consequent general impoverishment prevented to a large extent the influx of strangers into the city at Christmas time, many of whom in other years found their way to the Museum’.<sup>32</sup> The weather too was a factor in influencing the numbers of visitors. ‘When the weather is often cold and wet’, as Rowatt noted, ‘all museums are visited by large numbers of children’.<sup>33</sup> Rival attractions were another cause of fluctuations

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<sup>31</sup> Smith (1885), 341 [389].

<sup>32</sup> Curle (1922), 2.

<sup>33</sup> Rowatt (1937), 4.

visitor numbers, the Empire Exhibition, held in Glasgow in 1938, being identified as causing a drop in numbers.<sup>34</sup> By contrast the Museum's staging of temporary exhibitions often boosted numbers. In particular, the exhibition in 1879 of the gifts received by the Prince and Princess of Wales during their visit to India and Burma and the 1937 exhibition of facsimiles of the robes worn at the coronation of Edward VII caused dramatic peaks in attendance, and the opening of Scottish Everyday Art in 1936 resulted in an immediate 'two or three times' increase in the numbers attending on a Saturday evening (see Figure 8.2).<sup>35</sup>

#### *8.4 Distinguishing visits: rituals of privileged entry*

Whilst most visits were recorded as clicks of a turnstile or by the Attendant or Patrol at the entrance, some visits were distinguished by documentary practices. Two sets of visitor books attest to this.

##### *8.4.1 Distinguishing student visits*

Students wishing to visit on those days set aside for them were required to establish their credentials for free entry and to sign the 'students' entrance book'. The criteria governing which college students had free admission is unclear from the records, but they were controlled by DSA, and according to its minutes, at least in some periods in the nineteenth century, certain students were charged admission 'at the same rate as at South Kensington Museum'.<sup>36</sup> Following abolition of entrance fees in 1901, no detailed accounting for student visits was included in the Annual Reports. For a while in the 1920s, students from the

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<sup>34</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.4, Rowatt to Eggleton, 23 November 1938; Rowatt (1939), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Rowatt (1937), 4; Swinney & Heppell (1997).

<sup>36</sup> GB37/ED84/38(1882), minute of 20 February 1880, 153.

School (later the College) of Art, wishing to copy items on display, were required to obtain a permit granting them authority ‘to interfere with the free use of the collections’.<sup>37</sup> But no record is extant of the numbers granted. The Annual Reports and other published sources, notably evidence given to government committees and commissions, recount that other students, particularly those of natural history and medicine, made extensive use of the displayed exhibits, but this is generally quantified only in terms of the numbers of institutions whose students used the Museum, not in terms of numbers of visits (see Chapter 7). Whilst art students primarily used the exhibits, natural history students and ‘scientific workers’ more frequently required access to the cabinet collections. From the 1880s, the increasing separation of display and cabinet collections meant that, particularly in the Natural History Department, the majority of specimens were stored behind-the-scenes. The declared aspiration was that ‘non-exhibited collections in a large museum should be freely available to *bona fide* students and investigators who may have need to consult them’.<sup>38</sup> Admission to non-exhibition spaces had to be requested, *bona fides* established and ‘need to consult’ specific items negotiated. Part of the mechanism which maintained the boundary between the Museum as public space and its behind-the-scenes spaces was the ‘Scientific Workers’ book. The use of the book began in February 1927, shortly after the majority of the cabinet collects, particularly the entomological and ornithological specimens, had been re-housed in a dedicated study room. Entries recorded the visitor’s name, home institution, and the particular parts of

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<sup>37</sup> Curle (1923a), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Traquair (1892), 177-178.

the collections he or she wished to examine.<sup>39</sup> Before 1940 there are only 40 signatories, 27 of whom were overseas researchers, suggesting that cabinet collections were little consulted. The figures, however, may under-estimate scientific interest in the collections since the Annual Reports suggests that not all study was conducted on the premises: ‘The scientific value of the cabinet collections is indicated by the use made of them by specialists: several collections, including Scottish freshwater plankton, hymenoptera, fossil molluscs, fossil echinoderms and fossil reptiles, have been borrowed by experts to further their research’.<sup>40</sup> Yet, such mention of objects visiting investigators rather than *vice versa* is rare and the Annual Reports emphasise the investment of curatorial labour in the reorganisation of cabinet collections rather than the use made of them.<sup>41</sup>

#### 8.4.2. *Distinguishing distinguished visitors*

The existence of a Visitors’ Book reveals something of the way in which the experience of esteemed visitors differed from the norm (Figure 8.3).<sup>42</sup> The book, the first entry in which is dated 10 May 1907 the last marking a visit by members of the Museums and Galleries Commission in September 1986, contains 185 signatures in the period up to September 1939. These include those of members of the Royal family and their entourage, politicians, and leading academics. As Paula Findlen has shown for a sixteenth-century visitors’ book, autographs in such a book form part of a reciprocal conferral of status. The invitation to sign

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<sup>39</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], ‘Scientific workers in Natural History Department’, 1927-1959.

<sup>40</sup> Curle (1928), 5.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Grimshaw in Rowatt (1934), 7.

<sup>42</sup> GB587/ID 134761.

recognised and reinforced the esteemed status of the honoured guest whilst, at the same time, prestige was conferred upon the Museum through its being honoured by the visit. The book was therefore the site of a set of memorial inscriptions connecting the Museum to centres of intellectual, political and social power.<sup>43</sup>

G.L.4-3 bk 100 lvs-8-07

ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM.

DATE	NAME
30. I. 1908 <sup>36</sup>	W. Lang Bürgermeister Köln Trine
37	Blck Chapman - Housty, Wark, North <sup>47</sup>
13 <sup>th</sup> July <sup>38</sup>	William Stewart University of Glasgow
27 " 39	Whippley Cambridge.
40	Edward A Wilson - Westal, Cheltenham.
26 <sup>th</sup> August <sup>41</sup>	Budh Singh Chudha, 23 Central Hill, Upper Norwood, London S.E.
20 <sup>th</sup> October <sup>42</sup>	John Abernethy 62 Palmerston St.
" " 43	Robert Munro Elmbank, Leigs.
19 <sup>th</sup> November <sup>44</sup>	John Kerr Edinburgh.
10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1908 <sup>45</sup>	J. M. Hooley, North Western Rhodesia.
" " 46	Wm McGowan Edinburgh
" " 47	James M Robertson Sydney N.S.W.
Jan 6 <sup>th</sup> 1909 <sup>48</sup>	Marjorie Sinclair.
49	John Sinclair.
50	D. B. Anderson Toronto
51	D. Fraser Halifax N.S.
52	John Johnston Cape Breton N.S.
53	H. Hamilton Halifax N.S.
54	B. S. C. Selver - Halifax N.S.
55	J. W. Smith Jersey Park

Figure 8.3. Page from Royal Scottish Museum Visitors' Book (GB587/ID 134761).

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of the role of visitor books in museums, see Findlen (1994), especially 137; Macdonald (2005); Alberti (2007), 379.

The signatures of George V, Queen Mary and their retinue in July 1920, a record of the first Royal visit since Prince Alfred's opening of the building in 1866, inhibited further use of the book, for many years it being displayed open at this page. The hiatus was broken by the visit of Stanley Baldwin in January 1930. Thereafter the book was signed only sporadically with museum professionals, particularly those from overseas institutions, contributing about half the entries. This reflected the development of a museums profession, a community of practice, not only within Britain but beyond, which coincided with the Museum being trumpeted in the press as a model of modern museum development and one of the five most progressive in the Empire.<sup>44</sup>

Distinguished guests were not the only category of visitor that was greeted and escorted around the exhibits. Teachers, and later, school parties were also greeted and guided (see Chapter 7). In the early twentieth century, most pupils visiting as part of an organised school visit would have experienced the Museum as interpreted through their own teachers. The appointment of a Museum Demonstrator in 1914, produced a different sort of school visit, one in which the party was escorted, and the lesson standardised and delivered by an employee of the Museum (Chapters 4 and 7).

Depending on when they attended, general or 'casual' visitors were likely to have experienced the Museum as a site of education, animated by the voices of teachers or that of the Demonstrator speaking to audiences amongst the displays. The sight and sound of these activities would, I suggest, themselves present the Museum as a place of instruction associated with other sites of schooling.

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<sup>44</sup> Markham (1933b).

### *8.5 Visitor accounts of their visits and experience*

The Museum's documentary records resound with the Directors' 'voice' and the Annual Reports are littered with phrases which describe the reactions of visitors as perceived by the staff: 'the industrial classes...take a very lively interest in the Museum'; 'much enjoyed by the public'; 'the appreciation of the public has been marked'.<sup>45</sup> Visits were described as providing 'a pleasant interlude in the school curriculum' and 'The Holiday Class increased not only in size, but also in the value of its activities to the children who attended it'.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere visitor reaction was inferred from quantitative data: 'The interest which the public take in the Museum Collections is further shown by the large sale of a guide'.<sup>47</sup> Visitors' willingness to queue for entrance to some temporary exhibitions was interpreted as further evidence of the Museum's popular appeal.<sup>48</sup> The Reports of successive Directors are replete with descriptions of objects, collections, lectures and demonstrations being 'interesting', 'of interest', or 'attractive', often couched in terms of justifying their own actions. Typical of such comment was that about a small exhibition on explosives:

The second section of the explosives exhibit presented by Nobel Industries Ltd., London, has been mounted and placed on exhibition. By a symmetrical arrangement of the specimens and a selection of the most suitable colours for backgrounds, a very pleasing exhibit has been made out of somewhat unattractive material, - an exhibit, indeed, which claims the attention of visitors whom one would not expect to be interested in explosives. By similar methods a diagram, made in the Museum, detailing the complicated process of the Shale Oil Industry has been made attractive-looking and is, thus, an advance on the general form of such diagrams.<sup>49</sup>

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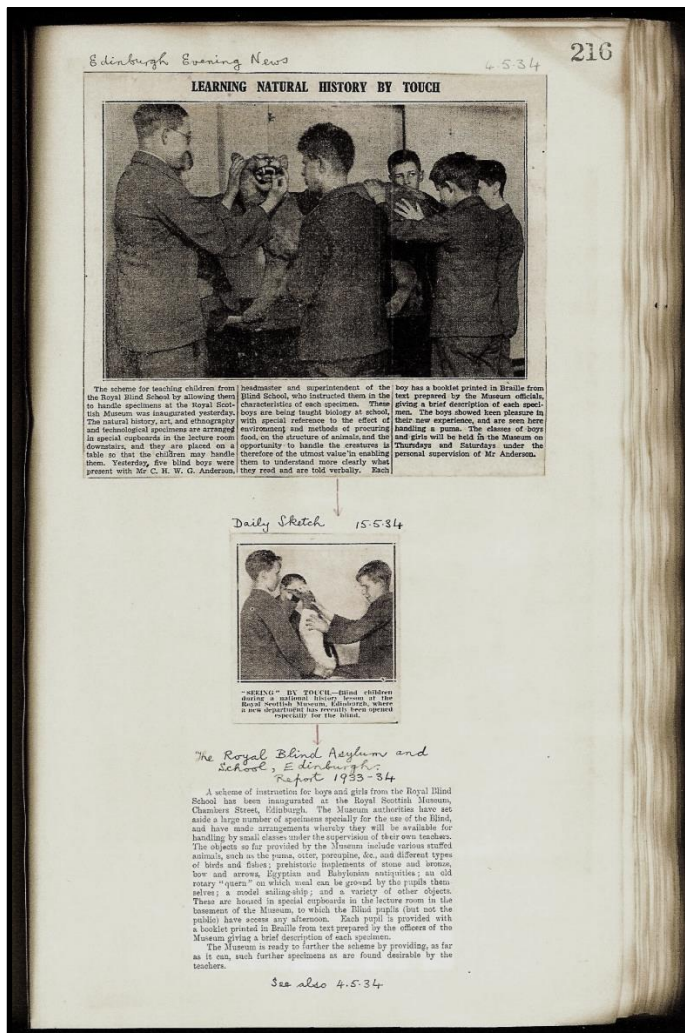
<sup>45</sup> Archer (1869) 411 [581]; (1876), 473 [607]; (1885), 255 [297].

<sup>46</sup> Curle (1928), 2; Rowatt (1940) 1.

<sup>47</sup> Dobbie (1909), 2.

<sup>48</sup> Rowatt (1938), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Curle (1926), 8.



**Figure 8.4. Cuttings pasted into Royal Scottish Museum Scrapbook of classes for visually impaired pupils (GB587/Scrapbook RSM 2, p. 216).**

Visitors, however, rarely got a chance to ‘speak’ for themselves. Notable exceptions occurred when in the twentieth century, as discussed in Chapter 7, the focus of the Museum’s pedagogic mission shifted to school pupils. Following the appointment of Vallance as Demonstrator, extracts of reports made by teachers to the School Board on the new form of object lessons were printed in the Annual Reports. One teacher reported that ‘the girls and boys have been intensely

interested’, another that their pupils ‘have attended willingly and regularly, and have been much interested in the lectures’. Another wrote thus of the lecture-demonstration series:

Teachers and pupils are unanimously of opinion that these visits are both interesting and of good educational value...These lectures can be made the bases [*sic*] of much valuable teaching in school, and are specially adapted to bring out clearly the results of accurate observation and the interaction of geographical conditions and national histories, and at the same time they teach pupils to trace cause and effect, and store their minds with much interesting and valuable detail, which they are asked to reproduce later in the form of composition exercises.<sup>50</sup>

Reports of a visit of visually-impaired pupils from the Royal Blind Asylum contained some of the earliest extant records of pupils’ own experience (Figure 8.4).<sup>51</sup> These pupils reported being ‘amazed’, ‘delighted’, transformed, and inspired. On encountering a model aircraft one pupil recalled being transported in his imagination beyond the Museum, musing: ‘Whilst we looked at it with its wings and propeller, we could well imagine the exciting adventures our airmen must have’. Several of his fellow pupils made reference to the revelatory nature of their tactile experience: ‘I used to think that a leopard was about the size of a horse’, ‘the feeling of its fur was very soft and nice’, ‘I thought, perhaps, it [a model bi-plane] was somewhat like a balloon without the air bag’. One pupil commented: ‘Unless we see things as they really are, we are apt to get into our heads conceptions that are altogether wrong’. These first-hand accounts reveal also that the encounters with the objects had been mediated not only through braille labels, but also through spoken commentary: ‘After our inspection, our visit was not ended, for a gentleman gave us a short lecture on the coins we had seen’; ‘A very kind engineer – at least I suppose such must have been his

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<sup>50</sup> Martin (1915), 6-8.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Martin (1914) 8-9; (1915), 8-9.

occupation, for he knew so much about engines, aeroplanes, &c. – explained the different parts to us’. The pupil’s letters, like the essays submitted to the ‘Why I like the Museum’ completion in 1938 (see Chapter 7), were, however, part of ‘composition exercises’ by which the pupils were ‘schooled’ to write. The writings were mediated by their teachers. Their publication in the Museum’s Annual Report was further a matter of selection by the Museum staff and there are no records of which letters were not selected to be sent, or what comments were edited out. Nevertheless, these reports provide glimpses of what these pupils experienced and how they reacted to that experience.

With the exception of teachers’ comments and pupil exercises, few visitors committed their experiences of the Museum to paper in a form which remains extant. The letter pages of the press were sites in which visitors occasionally recorded their reactions either to the Museum as a whole, to particular exhibits or the actions of fellow visitors. In 1933, in a statement which echoed Forbes’s some eight decades earlier on juxtapositions of objects reifying learning, one commentator suggested that, ‘The most impressive aspect of the whole museum can only be grasped after a thorough tour of inspection of the whole building and some knowledge of the work done there – that is, the incalculable knowledge and learning which lie in the cases, and the scholarship and skill possessed in the minds and hands of the staff’.<sup>52</sup> Whilst this visitor perceived the Museum as a reification of knowledge, others recounted experiences of the Museum that, for them, were unsatisfactory, distressing and evidence of ‘moral depravity’: disapproval of the display of nudity of statues, the

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<sup>52</sup> DLM (1933).

amorous activities of young visitors, and the sale of alcoholic beverages were just some of the subjects raised.<sup>53</sup>

A few museum professionals noted their impressions of the Museum. A picture postcard sent, in 1930, showing the Main Hall conveyed the message: ‘Here today, Not a patch on "our" Museum’.<sup>54</sup> The recipient was Douglas Alexander Allan, then Director of Liverpool Museum and the writer, C. Hay Murray, a member of his staff. In 1945 Allan, who had grown up in Edinburgh, was appointed Director of the Royal Scottish Museum and, on the occasion of his retirement in 1961, reminisced about his own childhood in the early years of the twentieth century: ‘I made my first acquaintance with the Royal Scottish Museum on a Saturday excursion with my parents, presumably during the winter, for the lasting recollection is of the severe attack of earache which followed’.

Apart from the pain he recalled:

the great entrance hall was still a maze of drab plaster casts of figures, tombs and doorways edged about with cases framed in the polished black mahogany that marked the passing of the good Prince Consort. The visitors tiptoed about the exhibits, scanning the labels and exchanging ideas in suitably hushed voices, grimly supervised by the attendants... The major excitement came at dusk when a small crowd assembled to watch the hall lights being lit – a fascinating performance in which a small trolley was pulled round a miniature overhead railway, igniting one by one in its progress a spiky *cheveaux-de-frise* of gas jets.<sup>55</sup>

Another visitor at about this time was Adolf Meyer, then undertaking a tour of European and American museums as part of the production of a redevelopment plan for the Dresden Museum. For him:

Throughout the museum there is by far too much exhibited for the great public, and, in consequence, this not only tires the visitor, but the exhibits are damaged seriously by being constantly exposed to the light... I found nothing that was directly worth imitating or particularly useful in planning for a new structure. The ventilation is primitive and the

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<sup>53</sup> Scot Abroad (1890); *Scottish Leader* (1891); ‘A Mother’ (1908). For further discussion, see Swinney (2004a; b).

<sup>54</sup> GB587/IS.2009.7/1.

<sup>55</sup> Allan (1961), 37-38.

building was not adequately fireproof...The cases are of wood with clumsy framework, and are black. To make them dust proof, velvet strips have been placed between the frames and the doors, but without grooves, and then the doors are screwed on to the outer framework; besides being locked up at several places. To open them, one must get a ladder, and then, with a screw-driver unscrew them in several places. No attention is paid to this inconvenience, however, since they are not accustomed to anything better, and they even regard this method of installation as an advance on that of other museums.<sup>56</sup>

According to Rowatt's Annual Report, a member of the staff of the Brooklyn Children's Museum who visited the Museum in the summer of 1931, at a time when a temporary exhibition of children's drawings was being staged, declared that 'I took more notes on the Royal Scottish Museum than on any other of the eighty-seven museums I visited'.<sup>57</sup> The nature or content of the notes was not revealed. These examples of school pupils' and museum professionals' accounts notwithstanding, first-hand accounts of visitor experience are rare.

Of those few accounts that can be recovered, many were committed to paper only long after the events and feelings that they report had passed into memory. Forgan's notion of the visitor experiencing a 'fugitive moment of encounter' draws attention not only to the fact that such encounters were rarely recorded in material fashion at the time, but also recognises that memories are subject to modification as subsequent experience crowds in upon them.<sup>58</sup> Similarly attempts to garner recollections through oral testimony inevitably involve tapping memories of events temporally far distant from the experiences being recalled. Interpreting memory as eye-witness or first-hand accounts is problematic. I demonstrate this in relation to oral history in a subsequent section, but before doing so I examine some published accounts by visitors.

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<sup>56</sup> Meyer (1905), 559.

<sup>57</sup> Rowatt (1940), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Forgan (1998), 214. For discussion of the nature of memory and recall, see Bartlett (1932); Motzkau, *et al.* (2009).

### 8.5.1 *Recollections in print*

Allan's reminiscences conjure a place of reverential quiet with visitors 'tip-toeing' through the halls and galleries conversing in hushed tones. Yet in the same 1961 article he referred to other aspects of the Museum's ambience, mentioning in particular the chiming of the clock, the 'whir of engines' in the technology displays and the noise of footfalls on the wooden staircases: 'how they still resound to the thump of the youngsters' feet as they race up and down when the blue uniformed warders are out of sight, though not out of earshot'. He suggested also that the regular visitor would associate the Museum with 'the peculiar compounded aroma of soap, floor polish and the general cleanliness'.<sup>59</sup> The article in which he made these observations was a valedictory piece on the occasion of his retirement as Director, and was coloured, no doubt, by a tendency to highlight his own agency in guiding the Museum. The reference to visitors being 'grimly supervised' was a rhetoric which allowed him to represent himself as fostering a more relaxed, welcoming, and informal atmosphere under his Directorship.

Among other descriptions of what people actually did is a recollection of the Refreshment Room. Writing in 1931, a correspondent recalled how he 'used to sit in the first-class refreshment room, which was on the ground floor, and order a pie and a bottle of lemonade. I used to think that there was not another place like the Museum in the whole world'.<sup>60</sup> By the time of its writing, however, the Refreshment Room had been closed for nearly four decades. This temporal

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<sup>59</sup> Allan (1961), 39-40.

<sup>60</sup> R. A. (1931).

separation of event and its recall poses challenges to the interpretation of this kind of information. As Allan's recollections suggest, and as is shown in the examples that follow, reminiscence, and what is selected for recollection, may be influenced by numerous factors including subsequently developed agendas.

James Whittaker had spent his childhood in the slums of the Canongate: 'I wonder if you realise the kind of setting in which my life is lived, or what existence is like for poor children and manual workers in an industrial town'.<sup>61</sup> In his autobiography written over 20 years later, he represented himself as a lonely precocious child who, from about 1912 when he was aged six, visited the Museum regularly as a respite from his living conditions: 'From the earliest times Museums have attracted me. In the British Museum in Edinburgh [*sic*] I spent far more hours than I did elsewhere; for although I did at times play with other urchins, I more often than not wandered alone, and my wanderings usually ended in either the Castle or the Museum'.<sup>62</sup> He recalled that the Egyptian the mummies, in particular, 'spoke' to him:

I felt, even at that time, there was an understanding "something" about them that understood me and my loneliness. I knew they knew I adored them. I knew they knew I wanted sunshine and quietness and colour. And I was often aware of a "something" coming from them that filled me with a warm, soothing fullness – a sensation which seemed to sooth away all the rough dirtiness and misery in the life I knew.<sup>63</sup>

He reminisced that he had been inspired to become a curator:

I wanted to collect sculptures, busts, swords; ancient jars, Chinese pottery and goblets; Japanese screens, Italian carvings. I wanted to gather together all the beauty man had created – and can create when he chooses – and then bring people to it: people from the small hovels and dilapidated houses, from the narrow, squalid byways, so that they might be warmed and purified in the beauty before them.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Whittaker (1934), vii-viii.

<sup>62</sup> Whittaker (1934), 46.

<sup>63</sup> Whittaker (1934), 46-47.

<sup>64</sup> Whittaker (1934), 57.

Another published account was that of a visit by a Mrs Smith and her three children during the Easter holidays in 1928. The writer tracked the family's route through the Museum, contrasting the children's energetic and enthusiastic reactions with their mother's jaded response:

From case to case they [the children] scamper. Mrs Smith wonders how they can derive so much amusement from cursory glances at exhibits. Whenever she lingers, an impatient hand tugs at her sleeve, and an eager voice says, "Come on, mother". She is there for the little ones' pleasure, so she comes on. Fragments of Greece, Egypt, China, and Babylon flash past like so many telegraph posts. Mrs Smith's head begins to ache as well as her feet.

"Let's sit down, and rest for a little while," she pleads.

"No, mother, we haven't seen half of it yet," says John the masterful.

"I'll sit here, and you can go round by yourselves then," says Mrs Smith, sinking wearily on a clean but hard bench.

"Come back here for me," says Mrs Smith feebly. From where she is sitting she commands a general view of the vast interior. The high spaces ring with the tripping footsteps of young people. She wonders why there are so few grown-ups in the museum, and why they should be so much more listless and apathetic than the children.<sup>65</sup>

Remarkably the writer documented not only the family's conversation but also Mrs Smith's thoughts as she pondered how 'inanimate objects can tyrannise' and that 'only quite young children are free from this sense of oppression'. The author recounted Mrs Smith's feeling that the atmosphere was 'redolent of accumulated fatigue', and her imagining of the 'noise of rubbing and scrubbing and scraps of chat' as an army of charwomen toiled throughout the night. Her musings on how each displayed object 'was at one time a thing of joy or use, treasured and cared for by some living person, and derived from its owner a share of individuality, a personal life so to speak' did not escape the writer's attention. Nor did the fact that, whilst her children thought the Museum 'lovely', it was, for her, 'dead'.

The Smith family, of course, was fictitious. Theirs was an imagined visit, the author, one J. Little, deploying literary transference to comment on the

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<sup>65</sup> Little (1928).

Museum. But what of Whittaker's account? In a sense his was a double transference. His thoughts as a man in his late twenties projected backwards onto himself as a youngster. To what extent did they reconstruct his thoughts and experience as a six-year-old and to what degree were they his attempts as an adult to beguile a potential publisher? Certainly, as his writings show, the account of his engagement with the mummies was coloured by hindsight, especially his later reading about Ancient Egypt and by his own experience of the Great War: 'for what little knowledge I have might fill my imagination with too many fears and ogres would come, instead of sleeping peace and tranquillity, from those linen and gum-sealed bones'.<sup>66</sup> Although, in autobiography he described his occupation as that of greaser in a cotton mill, this was a job he had taken only after his academic ambitions, and his plans to take up a Workers Education Association grant to study at University were thwarted by ill-health. Nonetheless, Whittaker's recollections provide one of the few published records of the reaction of a member of the working-class to the Museum.

### 8.5.2 *Memories and reminiscences*

The account of the Smith family's visit made reference to 'fascinating buttons'. These were the push-button switches which allowed visitors to activate the electrically-powered models of industrial machinery. These button-activated exhibits remained an enduring memory of many of those who visited.<sup>67</sup> An article in the *Evening Dispatch* in 1937 recorded the behaviour of children: 'They

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<sup>66</sup> Whittaker (1934), 47.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Withers, *pers. comm.*, Sept 2006.

patter all over the building gazing to left and to right in awe, and linger longest in the machine hall with thumbs pressed upon buttons that make wheels go round'.<sup>68</sup> One such young visitor was Harry Hawthorne, born in 1917, a pupil at Infirmary Street School. Interviewed for this thesis and quoted by permission, he recalled:

I was probably brought here by an elder brother, first we went I was about five, that would continue for about two or three years – cos I had three brothers older than me - and of course as I got to about eight or nine I probably managed myself you know...it was a very staid sort of the place very [hesitation] cruel and dark in places. There did nae seem a great variety of items to look at, and of course the thing that attracted us was whether we could press the buttons – but of course the trouble was very little boy wanted to press the buttons, you couldn't always get in the queue quick enough – and err the animals. But later on I became more interested in subjects and one that, err, interested me was of course one that was actually effected by the First World War. I took an interest in sort of military things aye from a sort of young age...I had a lot of relatives in the First World War ...One thing that I was interested in was medals and decorations. Now the Museum, I think it was in that first part as you turn right, had several cases of medals and decorations, and I was very keen err student of that, and err, not that I ever managed to collect them. But I got to know practically every medal and its ribbon....and the other thing I was interested in slightly, err well I mean I read a lot, and that was astronomy and I liked to get up to the very top-floor at that time to see this planetarium. I mean I knew all about, well, in the sense that there was these planets which went round the Sun. But to see them actually in a globe is different from reading or looking at a drawing as their all lying flat on the paper, and you could press the button and they would go round and you could see their orbits and that and, of course, I was taking it sort of seriously. That was a bit I went to quite a lot because I was going to study that...and then of course the animals, to see actual animals, like the whale bone, the only whale bone in Edinburgh that I ever knew was whale bone jaws in the Meadows...but to see these other animals, to see the size of them, like the elephant, I mean you may have seen drawings or I mean you may have even seen pictures of them but to actually stand beside, and your only a little boy, [chuckled laughter] looking up at the, these were the ones I remember mostly. But it was always a sort of everything changed so slowly, It didn't really matter if you were there one year and you went back three years later very little had changed, some of the exhibits may have gone but others just hung on and on, there was not much variety...It was later on that, I don't know whether personnel changed or what, but people started to look more to the future bringing in subjects that people would be interested in especially about other countries.

When asked what the Museum was like before the Second World War he responded:

Well, as I say a lot of people come to it but I don't think that people came so much to learn very much they just came to look at things. and of course there was no sort of [long pause] of approach like entertainment that came later...everything was so static there was very few people who ever climbed the stairs to see if there was anything up

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<sup>68</sup> *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (1937).

there because it was mostly err well costumes, that type of thing, maybe insects err that and a lot of people never even got even that stage.<sup>69</sup>

By his own account ‘a bit of a ragamuffin’, the young Hawthorne viewed the Museum’s security staff, ex-NCOs in peaked caps and uniforms displaying their military honours, as stern figures of authority: ‘They looked at you with suspicion, not that we were going to be any bother or anything’. Later in life he established a local history group in the Edinburgh’s Southside and wrote on the area of his boyhood upbringing as well as on military matters.<sup>70</sup>

Like Hawthorne, Janet Bruce grew up in Edinburgh’s Southside and recalled being taken to the Museum when she was about six years of age in the mid 1930s.<sup>71</sup> She recounted that, in the winter months she would visit practically every Sunday: ‘it was your walk and, if it was cold, it was a place to come’. Thus, for this family, regular visits to the Museum formed a seasonal component of wider patterns of leisure activity in the free public spaces of the city: for her, in the summer these would include the ‘King’s Park’ [Holyrood Park]. Each Museum visit, Mrs Bruce recalled, lasted about an hour: ‘On Sunday, if you were taken at all, it was generally your older sister who took you’. Included in these excursions was her younger brother, for whom ‘the mechanical things’ held particular fascination: ‘we’d stand there for ages playing with the knobs [the push buttons]’. She remembered also that ‘going towards the mechanical place there were [hesitation] beasts, and there was an elephant and a skeleton, and we used to be there for ages’. These visits with her siblings were restricted:

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<sup>69</sup> Transcription of extracts from an interview with Harry Hawthorne, recorded 20 May 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Hawthorne (1989); (1990); (2005).

<sup>71</sup> Janet Bruce, interview recorded 7 October 2009 (quoted by permission).

I can't remember ever going up the stairs, then, it was always on the level, [hesitation] I think that it would be just that one area that we would be in I don't think we'd be anywhere else. It was later on, you know, that, when you went with the school visit that you maybe went upstairs to see things...Every teacher you had, there was always one time in the year that you went to the Museum. We were probably taught subjects, that we were going to see, probably Africa and I certainly remember the Eskimos...and the wild animals as well. We would have to write essays on the subjects...Sometimes we had to draw the subjects that we had seen.

Asked if she could recall how she felt during her visits, Mrs Bruce responded: 'sometimes you could be quite awe-stricken, yes I used to be awe-struck at times. There was always so much to see, so much to take in'.

Hawthorne was interviewed in May 2008, shortly after attending the party which marked the closure of the building so as to allow the major refurbishment of the Royal Museum Project to begin. His recollection that in the Museum of his childhood 'there was nothing to attract you other than what was there and everything was so static' must, therefore, be framed in relation to this recent experience of the dynamism of the party which featured a rock band, dancers, jugglers, and stilt-walkers. He himself recognised the limitations on memory as a tool for the construction of history: 'The thing is, of course, that when I was as young as that I had no real impression and unfortunately, even when I began to take a proper interest I never made any notes like I've done when I grew up a bit you know. So it's all really just memory at that early stage'.<sup>72</sup>

#### *8.5.4 New technologies, new visions: visitors on film*

““Looking” in the museum’, for Forgan, ‘requires standing in space, movement through space, and mobilizing the senses to create attention, before any response

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<sup>72</sup> Transcription of extracts from an interview with Harry Hawthorne, recorded 20 May 2008.

or understanding of what is exhibited can be achieved'.<sup>73</sup> For Barbara Kiirschenblatt-Gimblett, visitors experience museums both 'visually and kinesthetically'.<sup>74</sup> The film, commissioned from Campbell Harper in 1938 showed visitors in action, moving through the spaces of the Museum (Figure 8.5).<sup>75</sup> Most were dressed in street clothes, suggesting that the thermal environment experienced inside the building did not encourage the removal of outdoor clothing. From the number of fur stoles in evidence, it would seem that, at least in the late 1930s, a visit to the Museum was an occasion for dressing up. Since the film was part of the pedagogic process designed, in part, to show visitors, and potential visitors, what constituted a visit, no doubt many of its sequences were staged. The film exhibited visitors to themselves and presented, in parts, what purported to be a visitor's eye-view. As such it indicated aspects, of the visitor experience and, although it had no soundtrack, it nonetheless showed this experience to be aural as well as visual. Visitors characterised in the captions as 'young and old, layman and student' were shown giving rapt attention to the objects on display. This involved not just the intensity of the gaze but also direction of the gaze through gestures such as finger-pointing and through animated conversation (seen, but unheard, on this silent film). A group of children under the tutelage of Nina Morison examines an exhibit and sketches avidly (Figure 8.5A-B). Other children are shown giving their attention as objects were explained by accompanying adults (Figure 8.5C-D). Sequences, such as that of a man dressed as a railway worker inspecting a model of a

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<sup>73</sup> Forgan (2005), 583.

<sup>74</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), 59.

<sup>75</sup> GB2120/2274.



Figure 8.5. A-H. Visitor behaviours: frames taken from the film 'The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh', 1938, showing visitor behaviours and styles of dress (GB2120/2274).

locomotive boiler, suggest the film-maker's intention to associate the displays with everyday experience beyond the Museum. Not all visitors, however, are shown attending to objects. The camera lingered on one man reading a newspaper (Figure 8.5F), on a group of middle-aged women, seated with travel rugs on their laps suggesting that they were settled for a while, watching the other visitors (Figure 8.5H), and captures three young women giggling as they stumbled arm-in-arm on the stairs, no doubt contributing to the sort of 'thump' on the staircase which was part of Allan's reminiscence of the pre-war Museum (Figure 8.5E). The inclusion of these sequences suggests that the behaviours shown were deemed to be appropriate parts to a visit, but at other times certain behaviours were frowned upon.

## ***8.6 Appropriation of space: the Museum as sites of protest and assignation***

Some behaviour attracted attention because it was considered out of place in the Museum. Because such behaviour attracted attention, it is, in consequence, over-represented in the available sources.

### ***8.6.1 The Museum as a site of protest***

The inadequacy of cloakroom facilities in the first phase of the building prompted some visitors to disobey instructions about carrying canes and umbrellas. On one Saturday evening in 1866 'upwards of a thousand umbrellas were deposited and many were carried in, in defiance of the officers in

attendance'.<sup>76</sup> This was a matter of protest against the inadequacy of the Museum's own facilities but, on other occasions, the Museum provided a high-profile venue for protests over matters of more general import. On the evening of Saturday 14 November 1874, for example, a mob of students, 'howling, whistling, thumping, and apparently exciting themselves to acts even worse than any they actually perpetrated', occupied the Museum in protest at the election of Lord Derby in preference to Lyon Playfair as Rector of the University.<sup>77</sup> Museums and galleries were also used as sites of militant protest by the Women's Social and Political Union as part of their campaign for women's suffrage. Museums were prime targets: 'This was wonderful propaganda, for it made the disappointed sightseers think more deeply than before on the matter of votes for women'.<sup>78</sup> The Museum was attacked in February 1913 when a piece of lead-encased electrical cable, bearing a luggage label 'To the Liberal Government – Votes for Women', was hurled from one of the galleries and crashed through one of the display cases below.<sup>79</sup> Amidst fear of an escalation in the violence of the suffragette's campaign, the authorities reacted by temporarily closing the building and for some days afterwards its reopening restricted visitors to the ground floor.

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<sup>76</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 1, Archer to Secretary DSA, 11 June 1866, p. 150.

<sup>77</sup> *Scotsman* (1874b).

<sup>78</sup> Pankhurst (1959), 270. For the Museum's precautions, see GB587/ID 148376, minute of 14 November 1912, pp. 334-336.

<sup>79</sup> *Scotsman* (1913c).

### 8.6.2 *The Museum as a site of assignation*

Such stick-wielding and missile hurling were exceptional. Most visitors adhered to the norms of behaviour expected by the Museum authorities, although the frequency in Annual Reports for the 1850s and 1860s of comment on the good conduct of the visitors suggests some anxiety that things might have been otherwise. From the 1870s and throughout the following two decades, the behaviour of visitors was hardly mentioned in the Reports, presumably because it was considered to be appropriate. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, it appears that this was not so and Smith sought authority to supplement the controlling influence of the police patrols by identifying Attendants with badges of authority:

A good deal of inconvenience is caused by the Attendants in this Museum wearing no distinctive dress or badge by which their official character may be recognised by visitors. A certain amount of inconvenience arises from this cause at all times but more especially when the building is crowded as it generally is in the evenings. There is great difficulty on those occasions in preventing disorderly conduct on the part of some of the visitors, a difficulty which is much aggravated by the want of a distinctive uniform or badge for the Attendants on duty. Their right to interfere with disorderly visitors is continually being challenged. To increase the number of policemen sufficiently would be very expensive.<sup>80</sup>

What constituted the ‘disorderly conduct’ and the perceived threat is unclear, although, at about this time, one correspondent to the press suggested that the late-opening hours of the Museum on a Saturday was a strategy by the city authorities to entice young people inside as a means of reducing trouble on the streets.<sup>81</sup>

From the 1890s, the behaviour of young people was a cause of recurrent comment. Of particular concern was their appropriation of the Museum as a site

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<sup>80</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Smith to Secretary DSA, 26 March 1889, pp. 648-649.

<sup>81</sup> An Old Attendant (1890).

of amorous liaison and ‘a place of assignation’.<sup>82</sup> One disgruntled visitor wrote in 1890: ‘I am utterly disgusted, on going into the Museum one Saturday evening, to find this magnificent building full of amorous school boys and girls, whose sole object in coming seemed to be to look at one another’.<sup>83</sup> Another writer recorded in verse the behaviour of amorous young visitors:

### **The Cry of the Museum of Science and Art**

Museums, in common with others, must feel;  
And I have a plaint, which I cannot conceal;  
So to you, oh my masters, I make this appeal,  
For the sake of my Science and Art, sir.

When I hold my receptions at evening chime,  
To foster the craving for knowledge sublime,  
All the small mashers come just to idle the time,  
In my palace of Science and Art, sir.

With their collars and cuffs, in their exquisite bliss  
They strut for the choice of a suitable miss;  
Till I wish them sometimes in a certain abyss;  
For the sake of my Science and Art, sir.

All my servitors here do their best to appal,  
But they dodge into corners around every wall;  
Where they kiss and they tussle *ad libitum* – all  
For the sake of my Science and Art, sir.

The din that they make as they flirt on the stair,  
Is enough to upset the giraffe or the bear,  
Or the patient gorilla that’s sitting down there,  
For the sake of my Science and Art, sir.

There’s an old couple, tired with their walking around,  
And they can’t get a rest here – unless on the ground –  
For on every seat these small mashers abound,  
In my palace of Science and Art, sir.

There’s a group flirting now just under the whale,  
Just behind the quiet elephant’s beautiful tail –  
And another behind a complete suit of mail,  
In my palace of Science and Art, sir.

There’s another – oh sacrilege! – taken their stand  
Beside my old treasure from Egypt’s far land –

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<sup>82</sup> An Arts Student (1890). See also Swinney (2004a).

<sup>83</sup> Scot Abroad (1890).

Oh, if only that mummy could slap with his hand!  
For the sake of my Science and Art, sir.

I love little folk; let them come as they may,  
With their fresh young faces, but not for more play;  
Let their elders come with them – there’s nothing to pay –  
And *teach* them my Science and Art, sir.

I have plenty of store, and variety as well:  
From a skeletoned whale to the tiniest shell;  
Bring the boys and the girls, for I’ve something to tell,  
In my palace of Science and Art, sir.

Poor things, they must learn, and some I can see  
Take an interest in things; so a shame it would be  
To exclude, for some others who make over-free  
With my palace of Science and Art, sir.

But the small masher pest I rise to oppose;  
With his brains in his collar, his cuffs, and his toes;  
But there is the gong! So I now must repose,  
In my palace of Science and Art, sir.<sup>84</sup>

Concern about appropriation of the Museum space by young people continued into the twentieth century, although there were contrary views.<sup>85</sup>

‘What harm is there in allowing the young people to promenade as long as they behave themselves and do no damage’ wrote one correspondent, declaring that ‘Museums were built for the masses as well as the classes’.<sup>86</sup> Curle described the popularity of the Museum on Saturday evenings as ‘not an unmixed blessing’. In the 1920s approximately a quarter of the visitors on a Sunday were ‘children of sixteen years or younger’.<sup>87</sup> Curle wrote:

It is not altogether to the benefit of the more intellectually minded members of the public that the Museum should become to the extent it has a resort on Sunday afternoons for young persons of both sexes whose interest is more centred in one another than in the Museum collections. Strict order is maintained, but the Museum would be source of greater pleasure and profit to the bulk of the visitors if it were possible, by some means, to restrict entry.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Wood (1890).

<sup>85</sup> Dissatisfied (1926).

<sup>86</sup> Satisfied (1926).

<sup>87</sup> Curle (1923a), 25 [959]; Curle (1923b), 1.

<sup>88</sup> Curle (1927), 1.

In the event, no such restricts were imposed, but Curle's concern that the Museum should be used for serious purposes prompted him to request that the police remove the ice-cream vendors who had established a thriving trade on the steps of the Museum.<sup>89</sup>

The serving of alcohol, which was part of practice in DSA's museums to encourage working people into the premises, was particularly controversial.<sup>90</sup> For the temperance and abstinence lobbies, who relished the potential of museums to divert people away from the public houses and gin palaces, the selling of alcoholic beverages made the Museum one of the city's 'dens of iniquity' and placed the Queen in the invidious position of being 'the proprietress of the largest public house in the nation'.<sup>91</sup> The dual identity of the Museum as a place of learning and as a site for the consumption of alcohol was particularly pernicious:

Saw some youths of about 16 sitting with glasses of beer before them. Young men like that would not go into a public house. They would not dare because their respectability was at stake, but they were not afraid to enter a respectable place like the Museum. The bar attached to the Museum was a snare, and they ought in the interests of morality to remove it altogether from that place.

### ***8.7 Visiting by invitation: the Museum as a place of civic entertainment***

Whilst certain kinds of making a spectacle of oneself, socialising and promenading were activities which the authorities sought to deter when the Museum was reckoned public space, in the private space of the *conversazione* such activities were positively encouraged and promoted. As one nineteenth-century social commentator remarked, 'The modern *conversazione* means a room

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<sup>89</sup> GB587/DP(C)/6.1, Report by Acting Superintendent Dennison, Edinburgh City Police, 24 July 1923.

<sup>90</sup> Swinney (2004a); (2010a).

<sup>91</sup> *Scottish Leader* (1891).

or suite of rooms thrown open for the reception of a miscellaneous mob of fashionables or of celebrities, foreign and native, political, literary, scientific, or artistic'.<sup>92</sup> When in conversazione mode, to borrow Duncan's phrase, the Museum, 'was contiguous with a series of like spaces...that together mapped out the social circuit of a class'.<sup>93</sup> Far from the Museum being 'thrown open', access to conversaciones was by invitation only. The conversazione was a temporary reconfiguring of the display space from public to private. 'Participating in a conversazione', as Alberti reminds us, 'had symbolic significance, a collective affirmation of identity – such activities were used to engage with other members of the middle orders and to display cultural clout'.<sup>94</sup> These events served not only to affirm guests' social status but to associate the Museum with social elites (Figure 8.6). Although descriptions of the behaviours of visitors in the public spaces of the Museum are sparse, the activities of the social elites and celebrities gathered at conversaciones attracted the attention of the press and so were reported in some detail. Almost without exception conversaciones were not Museum events. For these occasions the Museum was 'lent to' the Town Council and so became a site of civic entertaining, and an 'instrument of civic pride'.<sup>95</sup> The space was reconfigured, the moveable portion of the turnstiles being 'cleared away' and the refreshment areas expanded into some display spaces.<sup>96</sup> Programmes were issued for the larger gatherings and the Council sought to

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<sup>92</sup> Sala (1859), 301.

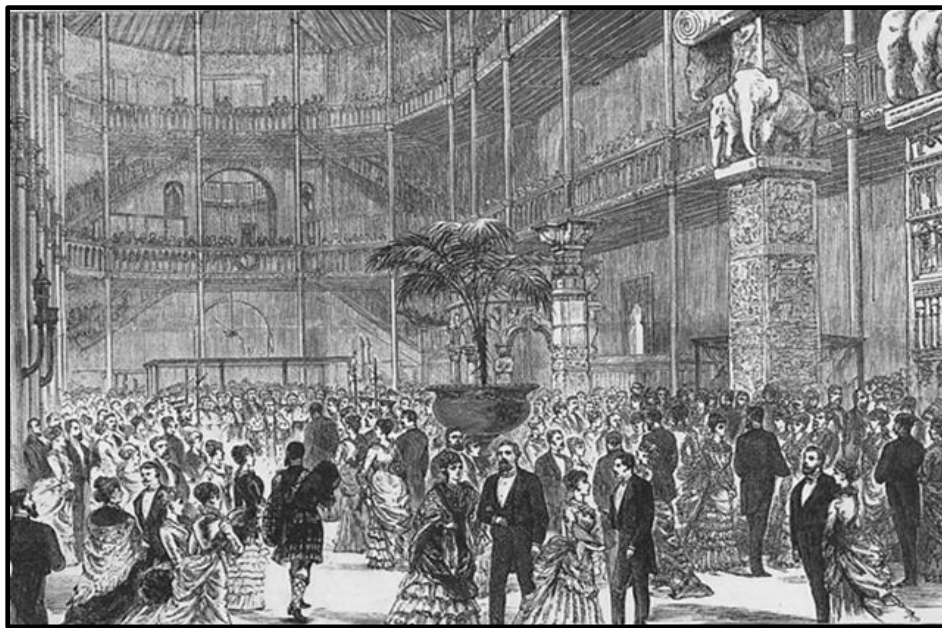
<sup>93</sup> Duncan (1995), 36.

<sup>94</sup> Alberti (2003), 244.

<sup>95</sup> GB37/ED84/39(1892), 129, minute of 10 June 1887. For discussion of the role of museums as instruments of civic pride, see Mason (2007), 87-88.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, *Scotsman* (1913d); GB587/ID 127782; GB587/[n.n.] 'Visitors for 1907 1908, 1909 1910 1911'.

direct and control the traffic to and from the event through the publication of carriage regulations (Figure 8.7).<sup>97</sup> The Museum became an exhibition of the Council's largesse, the symbolic trappings of municipal authority, and of the City's learning and civic sophistication. It was a site of conversation, of spectacle, and of the grand-standing and speech-making of 'platform culture'.<sup>98</sup> Conversazioni held in the Museum differed from many of those staged in other places since, although they involved formal speeches, they only very rarely included lectures or demonstrations.<sup>99</sup> A description of one particularly large conversazione in 1879 indicates how guests were greeted:



**Figure 8.6. The conversazione celebrating the tercentenary of the University of Edinburgh, 1884. (*Illustrated London News* 85, 26 April 1884, 392).**

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<sup>97</sup> See, for example, Edinburgh Town Council (1879); Edinburgh City Council (1892).

<sup>98</sup> Hewitt (2002). See also Finnegan (2011).

<sup>99</sup> For examples of practices in conversazioni elsewhere, see Naylor (2002), 503-504; Alberti (2003).



**ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM JUBILEE.**

**RECEPTION**

IN THE

**ROYAL SCOTTISH MUSEUM  
CHAMBERS STREET**

ON

**Monday Evening, 12th December 1904**

**ORDER BY THE MAGISTRATES.**

I.—The Drivers of all Carriages, whether Private or Hackney Carriages, taking parties to the Museum, must approach with the same in a single line by way of George IV. Bridge and Chambers Street, and set down at the entrance to the Museum, and after setting down shall drive off by the East.

II.—The Drivers of disengaged Hackney Carriages in waiting shall draw up with the same in single line, on the South side of Chambers Street, with horses facing Eastwards, and on the East side of Lindsay and Bristo Places, Bristo Street, Chapel Street, and Buccleuch Street, with horses facing Northwards, and after taking up shall drive off by the East.

III.—The Drivers of Private Carriages in waiting shall station the same on the North side of Chambers Street, with the backs of the Carriages against the kerbstone, and horses facing the Museum. On taking up they shall drive off by the East.

IV.—Parties who, on leaving, wish to hire a disengaged Hackney Carriage, must take the first of such Carriages in waiting.

V.—The Driver of a Hackney Carriage shall not take up a party leaving the Museum except at the entrance to the Museum, and all parties wanting Hackney Carriages are requested to wait at the Museum till the Carriages come up in their regular order.

BY ORDER,

**DAVID LYON,**  
*Depute Town Clerk.*

CITY CHAMBERS,  
EDINBURGH, 8th December 1904.

*N.B.*—Every person guilty of any wilful breach of this Order will be liable to a penalty not exceeding 40s.

Figure 8.7. Regulating and configuring traffic in the streets around the Museum: a notice issued in December 1904 regarding the reception to celebrate the Museum's jubilee (GB587/[n.n.]).

Having divested themselves of their wraps in commodious cloak-rooms provided in the outer vestibule, the company entered the Museum by the east corridor, and turning to their right were presented to the Lord Provost and Magistrates, who, in their official robes, and attended by the sword and mace bearers and the halberdiers, had stationed themselves opposite the main entrance for the formal reception of their visitors. Mr Macpherson, Chief City Officer, had the somewhat arduous duty entrusted to him of announcing the 3000 ladies and gentlemen as they successively appeared for presentation.<sup>100</sup>

A report of another indicated how, with the greetings and formal speeches over, guests mingled to the strains of a military band:

The formal portion of the proceedings being now over a general promenade followed, and all were left to follow their own bent in amusing themselves during the rest of evening. The refreshment room began to be pretty generally patronised, and a good deal of bustle and crowding took place; but this did not seem to detract from the geniality of the assemblage. The room soon got unbearably hot, and many made their escape into the adjoining shrubbery, where ices, coffee, fruit, and wine were served to the ladies by their partners. An animated promenade was kept up until ten o'clock, and the more prominent and interesting objects in the museum came in for a fair share of attention.<sup>101</sup>

This particular event was in January, the 'shrubbery' being one of the ground-floor halls, planted with palms, ferns and evergreens, to transform it into a temporary 'winter garden'. The experience of guests being overly warm was probably one shared by visitors at other times, especially when the building was crowded on sunny evenings or in winter when the gas lighting was in use.<sup>102</sup> On the January evening that the reporter described, despite the bustle, attention was apparently given to the objects on display. At many conversaciones, however, with as many as 3,500 guests present, viewing the objects was well-nigh impossible. As one commentator noted of one particularly well-attended event, 'only a very hurried glimpse could be obtained. The promenaders, however, had the satisfaction of reflecting that they could come again another day for a more

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<sup>100</sup> *Scotsman* (1879).

<sup>101</sup> *Scotsman* (1875), 5.

<sup>102</sup> Swinney (1999c).

leisurely survey'.<sup>103</sup> Matters of space also dictated dress codes and for many of the larger events, because of the small capacity of lack of cloakroom facilities, gentlemen were requested to 'consult the convenience of the attendants and their own comfort by coming only in such head-gear as can be thrust into an overcoat pocket' – certain Edinburgh outfitters advertised hats appropriate for these events.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the eminence of the invited guests, even on such prestigious occasions not all conformed to the expected norms of behaviour. David Milne, the boiler-man on duty in the Museum on the evening of the *conversazione* to celebrate the opening of the second phase of the building in January 1875, recorded in verse his account of guests' behaviours including an altercation involving Town Councillors James Buchanan and Daniel Sutherland:

Some members o' the civic board did cause a little bustle,  
And at the cloak room barrier wi' the bobbies had a tussle:  
Buchanan got the richt about, and Sutherland as cronie,  
Was frae the barrier oot at the *Conversazione*.

But things were a' sune put tae richts, the crood began dispersin',  
The Bobbies and Attendants sune had room for free conversin';  
By twal o'clock the place was clear, and an account fu' bonnie  
Next mornin' in the press appeared o' the *Conversazione*.<sup>105</sup>

On the occasion of the *conversazione* to mark the University's tercentenary in 1884, attended by such luminaries as Louis Pasteur, Robert Browning and Frederick Leighton, the event was marred by the 'block, crush, and free fight that took place' as guests were trying to leave whilst late-comers were arriving.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Scotsman* (1879).

<sup>104</sup> Richardson's Outfitters (1880).

<sup>105</sup> Extract from a poem by David Milne, GB587/[n.n.]. See also Burnett (1997), 146.

<sup>106</sup> Populus (1887); Anderson (2006).

The Town Council's use of the Museum to host *conversazioni* formed a part of its strategy to promote the city as a place of learning and refinement. Its staging of these events as receptions for major conferences also promoted the city as a conference venue. The Lord Provost used such occasions to promote local trades: 'the several works and decorations have been executed by our city tradesmen in a manner most creditable to all concerned'.<sup>107</sup> A small-scale reception held in 1873 for a party of 200 Americans 'of whom a considerable proportion are ladies, and comprises several professors and clergymen, and other gentlemen of position', travelling as a group under the auspices of Thomas Cook, further illustrates the Council's involvement in promoting the City as a destination of choice in an expanding tourist economy.<sup>108</sup>

The guests themselves were a spectacle, objects of interest, and the 'animated and picturesque sight' of their comings and goings attracted spectators.<sup>109</sup> As one observer recalled, 'The *conversazione* that used to be held in the Museum was a sight to see – the old ladies in their silks and satins and the men in dress clothes'.<sup>110</sup> Another noted that the assembled guests formed 'a pleasing spectacle, with so large a company of ladies and gentlemen in evening dress promenading and viewing the many objects of interest'.<sup>111</sup> The associational juxtaposition of the elite with a site which, whilst exclusive for the duration of the *conversazione*, was at other times open to all, served as potent advertising for the Museum. Following the transfer of the Museum to SED *conversazioni* were

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<sup>107</sup> Falshaw (1875).

<sup>108</sup> *Scotsman* (1873b; c).

<sup>109</sup> *Scotsman* (1873d).

<sup>110</sup> R.A. (1931).

<sup>111</sup> *Scotsman* (1868).

much less frequent and generally were not hosted by the City Council. For example the Bishop of Edinburgh hosted the event staged as part of the 1913 annual meeting of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.<sup>112</sup>

### ***8.8 Conclusion***

The distinction between the site in *conversazione* mode and its ‘public’ mode is a vivid example of how the same material spaces performed a variety of different functions, each productive of, produced by, and catering to, different publics. This chapter has examined these publics and has recovered something of how visitors experienced and performed the Museum. It has been concerned with the audiences that the Director and the Museum’s governing authority sought to create in Edinburgh, and with the audiences that they saw, counted, described, and categorised. The planning processes, of the building and the various spatial and temporal sub-divisions within it – room, exhibition, display case, *conversazione*, lecture, and so on – imagined audiences into being just as they imagined the building (Chapter 3), collections (Chapter 5) into material existence, and produced its staff (Chapter 4).

Whilst the extant sources construct the ideal visitor, few sources are available to bring the actual or empirical visitor into view. Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey note that in historical studies of the mobility of science through popular culture generally, the lack of sources has meant that the focus has been on the sites, the methods, the theatrics, and the individuals tailoring the

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<sup>112</sup> *Scotsman* (1913e).

knowledge for consumption rather than on the consumers themselves.<sup>113</sup> Yet, as Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson remind us, ‘hidden and dispersed practices of looking ...which while never giving rise to the consolidated forms of the review, the essay, the treatise, nevertheless constituted “reception” and “context” as historical realities’.<sup>114</sup> Of those few sources available to reconstitute the visitor experience, the fact that many were produced at a distance from the experiences they reconstitute requires that they be read with caution. Whittaker’s reminiscences, for example, were mediated by decades of subsequent experience and the economic necessity to demonstrate that his story was worth buying, and worth reading. Similarly, the Smith family was a fictional construct which, whilst seeming to signal to the Museum as a resort of those of limited means, articulated a political agenda and the nature of the Museum’s appeal, or the lack thereof, for the author. Nonetheless such accounts do suggest both the rational and the visceral responses of visitors. Other examples of such response were Hawthorne’s sense of awe at the huge bulk of the blue whale and the elephant in comparison with his own frail childhood body; the amazement of the sightless child at his discovery of the size of a leopard; and the fascination of the crowd outside with the glamorous celebrities and other social elites attending conversazioni. Accounts of the Museum contain other direct or indirect references to bodily sensations. The records of the sale of ices at the refreshment rooms, particularly at times when the building was particularly crowded, indicated visitors’ responses to the thermal environment within a building subject

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<sup>113</sup> Cooter & Pumfrey (1994), 243.

<sup>114</sup> Bal & Bryson (1991), 186.

to overheating through solar gain in summer and through the effects of the gas lighting in winter.<sup>115</sup> The wearing of outdoor clothing and rugs suggests that at other times visitors experienced the building as not overly warm (see Figure 8.5).

The most accessible information on the Museum's performance relative to its objectives is the attendance figures. The click of the turnstile produced one public, the payment of an entrance fee another, the guest list and guest ticket, the schools booking documentary practices, and the signing of visitor books yet others. This is not to suggest that membership of each of these categories was mutually exclusive, nor to imply that the categories were homogeneous. Each visitor's experience was unique. Nonetheless, the practices of recording and reporting on attendances constructed ways of seeing, categorising and classifying publics – industrial classes, stranger, young persons, casual visitors, excursionists, students, scientific workers, guests, and even non-visitors. The material presented in this chapter illustrates how the Museum was engaged not merely in collecting and classifying things, but also in collecting and classifying people. As Macdonald reminds us 'Museums are bound up with collectivities of various kinds'.<sup>116</sup>

As the annual visitor figures show, repeat visits were common and for many residents of Edinburgh and its environs visiting the Museum was a frequent and regular part of their leisure-time activity. As the testimony of Whittaker, Hawthorne and Bruce show, repeat visiting often privileged particular

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<sup>115</sup> *Scotsman* (1866); (1875). See also Swinney (1999c).

<sup>116</sup> Macdonald (2006c), 112.

objects or groups of objects, associating some objects more strongly than others with the site in the narrative of visiting.<sup>117</sup>

The chapter has demonstrated that the Museum was not a single space, but was a mosaic in time and space. Within a matter of hours exhibition space could be, and was, transformed into a place for civic entertaining – a transformation which altered the status of the senior staff from host to guest. In a matter of minutes, closing the insect cabinets and opening the other cabinets changed the study-room from a site of entomological investigation into one of tactile ornithological study. Any consideration of the process and experience of visiting is inevitably and intimately interwoven with the production of the form of the entity being visited. This is also to observe that distinguishing between visiting, educating and exhibiting is, inevitably, somewhat arbitrary. How one thinks of these processes as together constituting the historical geography of the Museum is the subject of the final chapter.

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<sup>117</sup> Whittaker (1934). See also interviews with Hawthorne and Bruce, reported in Chapter 8.



## CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF A MUSEUM

The geographical imagination is always rooted in a sense of difference between places.<sup>1</sup>

### *9.1 Introduction*

The objective of this thesis has been to put the museum in its place as a site for the making of science by addressing the over-arching question: what might an historical geography of a museum be? To address the question, and to illustrate the resources that might be sequestered and the processes by which these might be manipulated, it has constructed an account of the Museum in terms of numerous processes of becoming. It has sought to consider the Museum holistically by elaborating methodologies which move beyond tracking the career paths of individual objects or people, or the development of any one discipline. This it has done by examining themes, which *a priori*, were deemed characteristic of what a museum is and does. 'Doing' these themes has exposed certain questions and highlighted certain circumstances which have more general application in relation to the role of museums as sites for the production of science.

The thesis strengthens the legitimacy of doing an historical geography of science in terms of its site. But at the same time it has raised questions about the

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Cosgrove paraphrased by della Dora (2010), 5.

nature of the categories of spatial ordering, 'place' and 'space'. In this final chapter, I reflect on the materials and methodologies that I have used and on the sort of geography that they have produced. Connecting content back to context, I consider the categories which gave birth to the study, and discuss how the compass of geographical enquiry may be extended beyond the idiomatic to produce rich and nuanced views of museums as geographical 'things' more generally.

My thesis has been informed by Withers' assertion that 'we should not just claim that... science has a geography, but that we show how and where and do so by grounding empirical work in appropriate historical and theoretical context'.<sup>2</sup> It has presented an examination of a museum through the lenses of critical geographies of science and critical museology. Over the last four decades a spatial turn by historians of science has, on the one hand, recognised the making of scientific knowledge as situated actions involving particular material and intellectual resources gathered and interacting in a particular site. On the other hand, it has shown that an integral part of knowledge making was the communicative action by which knowledge embodied in material forms was made mobile within (and away from) what Livingstone has termed 'spaces of circulation'.<sup>3</sup> Much of this critical focus has been on the laboratory, the 'privileged place for the construction of natural knowledge'.<sup>4</sup> But other sites, such as the ship, the field station and the meeting rooms of scientific society,

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<sup>2</sup> Withers (1999), 68.

<sup>3</sup> Livingstone (2002), 24. See also Secord (2004a).

<sup>4</sup> Golinski (2005), 102.

have received attention.<sup>5</sup> For Simon Naylor, ‘Scientific knowledge, it is now assumed, is and always has been locally produced; constructed, contested, negotiated and consumed by a group of interested parties across a complex array of sites, from the laboratory to the drawing room, from the jungle to the zoo’, and, as his own studies show, the museum.<sup>6</sup> Public museums, along with other public sites such as the botanical and zoological gardens, have featured in others’ lists of ‘venues of science’, but rarely, hitherto, have they been a primary focus of attention for critical geographies of science.<sup>7</sup> The Museum received scant mention in Withers’ *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520*, although, as I shall show, the problematic nature of its ‘national’ status may have been a contributory factor.<sup>8</sup>

This thesis has situated the Museum as the ‘field site’ (*and* the ‘laboratory’) for testing some of the theoretical propositions that have been advanced for the importance of place and the significance of movement over space in historical studies of science. How applicable are the theoretical and conceptual models developed or elaborated largely from studies of conscribed sites, such as the laboratory, to the construction of an historical geography of a museum?

For Michael Lynch, whose focus was on laboratories, attention to process and practice necessitates a re-evaluation of the categories used in spatial analysis

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<sup>5</sup> For a categorisation of sites of science making see, for example, Withers (1999); (2001), 19; Livingstone (2003); Powell (2007); Finnegan (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Naylor (2002), 494.

<sup>7</sup> Thrift, Driver & Livingstone (1995), Livingstone (2003), 17; Finnegan (2008), 374.

<sup>8</sup> Withers (2001).

and ‘a revised understanding of what “place” includes’.<sup>9</sup> The entanglement and co-production of site and practice, which has been a recurrent theme in this thesis, led Lynch to question even the adequacy of the term ‘knowledge’ to accommodate ‘the “contents” of scientific activity’, since, for him, these included not just intellectual enquiry but the practices of place constructive of material environments.<sup>10</sup> Such concerns prompt reflection on the ordering categories ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘site’ as used in the analysis of the Museum as a site of science’s production. How do these terms map onto, and contribute towards, an understanding of the Museum at moments in its past?

## **9.2 The Museum as a site of science-making**

Lynch characterised the laboratory as a site in which technologies, human bodies, and disciplinary practices are mutually constructive of the ‘place’ of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> From analysis of the Manchester Museum, Alberti drew the broadly similar conclusion that the history of a museum is not only a history of its built space, disciplines and practices, but ‘it is also fundamentally a history of people, and how they related to objects’.<sup>12</sup> Such views echo Pearce’s contention that ideas and their objective expression are intermeshed and inseparable and are fundamental to Lefebvre and de Certeau’s concepts of place as socially constructed, the product of performances. In turn, these constructivist concepts of

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<sup>9</sup> Lynch (1991), 73. See also Powell (2007).

<sup>10</sup> Lynch (1991), 74.

<sup>11</sup> Lynch (1991).

<sup>12</sup> Alberti (2009), 178. See also Alberti (2011a).

place resonate with the constructivist view of scientific knowledge as ‘natural knowledge’.<sup>13</sup>

As I have shown, in a number of its processes the Museum was enmeshed in ‘mixed economies’ which involved performance both within its walled-in space and beyond it. Understanding the spatial dimensions of the processes by which the Museum operated has required attention to social relationships played out on a variety of scales, from global collecting, to national policy, to discourses in the architectural arena, to the psychological space constructed through the products of the Museum, to the embodied actions of individual actors, to the arrangement of the contents of individual display cases, cabinets and storage boxes. This attention to matters of space has produced multiple geographies – geographies of provenance (of objects and of people), geographies of production (of objects, of juxtapositions, of identities, and of ideas); geographies of administration, of collecting opportunity, of reception, and of reputation, to list but a few.

Before considering the practice of geographical enquiry in relation to the Museum and museums generally, I focus on the role of the Museum in relation to one particular category of geographical knowing, the nation. What, in the Scottish context, was a ‘national museum’ and to what extent did the Museum fulfil criteria for such a thing?

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<sup>13</sup> Golinski (2005), 98.

### ***9.3 The administrative geographies of the Museum: the nature of ‘national’***

The concurrence of the development of museums and of the nation-state – conceptualised as a form of social association productive of the individual as citizen<sup>14</sup> – has been a matter of considerable academic attention.<sup>15</sup> For Macdonald, ‘museums are products of modernity and their development is deeply implicated in the formation of the modern nation-state’. As such they were technologies which ‘played significant roles in the modernist and nationalist quest for order and mapped boundaries’.<sup>16</sup> But, for Scotland, a stateless nation throughout the period 1854-1939, what constituted a *national* museum? Given the administrative control exercised from London – a recurrent theme throughout the thesis – to what extent did the Museum fulfil the role of a national museum in representing a territory of Scotland and a Scottish identity?

The rhetoric of ‘nation’ and ‘national’ pervaded the lobbying for a government-funded museum in Scotland – referred to as ‘a National Museum for Scotland’ or ‘The Scotch National Museum’<sup>17</sup> – and has been used frequently ever since, most recently in the Royal Museum Project. One defining characteristic of a national museum is its funding from the state’s exchequer. Although the natural history museum of the University of Edinburgh had been supported by order of the King from ‘Our Revenues arising in Scotland applicable to the uses of our civil government’, by the middle of the nineteenth

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<sup>14</sup> Prösler (1996), 26.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Knell *et al.* (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Macdonald (1996), 7.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post* (1853); *Caledonian Mercury* (1854); *Ipswich Journal* (1854); *Scotsman* (1855b).

century there were no distinctly separate Scottish revenues.<sup>18</sup> The Museum was a state museum in the sense that it was funded by the UK exchequer and its reports were made to the Parliament at Westminster. As envisaged by White, numerous contributions to the Museum's global collecting activity were made by 'spirited sons of Scotia', 'patriate' and expatriate individuals who identified themselves as 'Scottish'; by birth, genealogy, residency, education, or other affiliation.<sup>19</sup> Aspects of its collecting, particularly in natural sciences and in the Technological Department, sought to present Scotland in material form: a vivid example is provided by the Scottish Mineral Hall which fashioned an overview of Scotland from its rocks and minerals. In this sense, the collections had a strong Scottish inflection.

As I have shown, however, throughout the nineteenth century much of the Museum's agenda was set in South Kensington and the DSA's 'branch' in Edinburgh was subject to practice and protocols developed in the Department's flagship museum, the South Kensington Museum.<sup>20</sup> Further, given the DSA's role in devising and delivering standardised UK-wide systems of education, particularly through the training of teachers, its museums were enmeshed in the ideologies and practices which pervaded the Department's wider educational agendas. The Museum's Annual Report was presented to Parliament as an appendix to that of DSA and a Departmental minute provides evidence that, at least for a period around 1860, the senior officer of the Museum was required to

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<sup>18</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Transcript of King's Warrant, 23 October 1812, 'Catalogue &c The Museum of the College of Edinbr'.

<sup>19</sup> Arachnophilus (1847a).

<sup>20</sup> The Annual Reports of the Science and Art Department included the Museum in Edinburgh in a section headed 'Branch Museums supported by the State'. See for example Science and Art Department (1871), xxvi [106]. See also Swinney (2002).

submit a monthly report: ‘He will keep a diary of his proceedings, a copy of which will be sent monthly to the Department’.<sup>21</sup> As Curle later observed, ‘The administration is conducted under regulations, some of which are Treasury instructions, either specially directed to the Museum or applicable to the Civil Service as a whole, while others have been either framed or approved by the Scottish Education Department’.<sup>22</sup> This statement draws attention to the unique system of administration applied to the Museum and highlights the multiplicity of sites in which the processes were enacted.<sup>23</sup> This geographic diversity has been a prominent and recurrent theme throughout the thesis. The multiple sites in which the Museum was performed produced it as a British museum: a museum *for* Scotland not a museum *of* Scotland.

In its global coverage it formed part of a practice of territorial surveillance, ‘the sciences of national survey’, productive of what Thomas Richards has termed ‘the Imperial archive’.<sup>24</sup> It was, therefore, an element in what, for Richard Finlay, were ‘certain “imaginative geographies” of foreign and distant lands [which] enabled the British, including the Scots, to compare and contrast their own supposed superior national characteristics against those of “inferior” peoples’.<sup>25</sup> For Withers this was a process of ‘self-definition’ constitutive of national identity and imperial authority.<sup>26</sup> The Museum was, I suggest, a potent symbol of the imperial partnership between Scotland and

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<sup>21</sup> GB66/ED28/11, Minute of 29 April 1860, p. 184 [118].

<sup>22</sup> Curle in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 85 memorandum para. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Other UK national museums had a body of trustees or governors.

<sup>24</sup> Richards (1993). See also Withers (2001), 234.

<sup>25</sup> Finlay (1997), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Withers (2001).

England.<sup>27</sup> This construction of views *from* Scotland was simultaneously a view *of* Scotland as a vital component of the domestic ‘empire’ of the United Kingdom. The Museum was a mechanism through which Scotland was constructed and (re)presented as ‘North Britain’, populated by North Britons, an identity actively fashioned as much by agents south of the Border as by those to the north.<sup>28</sup> Tim Barringer, writing of the gate from Sanchi, declared, ‘the monument was situated in British India, rediscovered, excavated, photographed, and published by officers of the British army; the South Kensington cast was proudly displayed at the imperial centre as a symbol of responsible British custodianship of, and authority over, Indian history and culture’.<sup>29</sup> Standing inside the entrance to the Museum in Edinburgh the cast was, I contend, no less a display of British authority, but one which displayed Scotland as itself an agent of that authority. The gate’s simultaneous display in London and Edinburgh situated Scotland not only in relation to far-flung outposts of empire, but placed it as part of a distributed heart of empire.

The Museum’s role in the Empire was further displayed in the floral emblems incorporated into its internal decoration and in its crest, itself a slightly modified version of that of DSA, which featured the thistle, rose and shamrock, botanical symbols of Scotland, England and Ireland respectively, bound together beneath a stylised Imperial Crown (Figure 9.1).<sup>30</sup>

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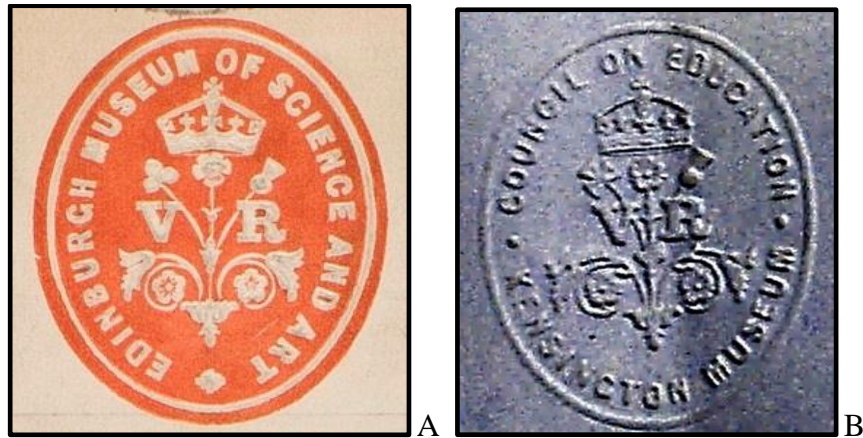
<sup>27</sup> For discussion of the historical nature of the partnership, see Withers (2001), 195-198.

<sup>28</sup> Morton (1999).

<sup>29</sup> GB66/ED28/26, Minute of 8 Dec 1870, pp. 53-54; Barringer (1998), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Youngusband (1919).

The Museum was an element in other forms of self-identification, ‘collectivities’ to use Macdonald’s term, on a variety of geographical scales.<sup>31</sup> Inclusion in the guest-list for conversaciones, for example, served to delineate the City’s social elite and Hawthorne, Bruce, and before them Whitaker, all utilised the Museum as a landmark in their self-portrayals as citizens not just of Edinburgh, but more specifically as ‘Southsiders’ (Chapter 8).



**Figure 9.1. Emblem of (A) the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art and (B) the South Kensington Museum (Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, 1897a, 1).**

## ***9.4 Materialising an historical geography***

### ***9.4.1 The Museum as heterotopia***

A photograph of what may well have been children from the Southside offers a focus for discussion of matters of spatial categorisation which gave birth to the thesis (Figure 9.2). Judging from the children’s style of dress, the photograph was taken shortly after the acquisition in 1911 of the object of their inspection

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<sup>31</sup> Macdonald (2006c), 112.

'[Z.]1911.174 Case of Gannets, with Nests, young birds and egg. Also suitable rock work in same. Purchased [from] Mr. Charles Kirk'.<sup>32</sup> This image provides an illustration of the heterotopic nature of the Museum, a 'contact zone' filled with 'boundary objects', productive of a multiplicity of geographies (see Chapters 1 and 2).<sup>33</sup> The instant captured in this photograph occurred simultaneously in, and was constitutive of, a variety of 'places'. The children were in the material setting of the British Bird Hall on the ground floor of the Museum building, a place of instruction and inspection. This was a setting in which the gannet was placed as part of the avifauna of the British Isles and in a classificatory scheme of the Animal Kingdom. The scene enclosed within the case was a representation of another place, a sea cliff on the Bass Rock, and presented a narrative of the life-history and breeding behaviours of the gannet, each of the mounted skins operating by synecdoche in making these constructed specimens stand for those gannets living beyond the Museum. The moment of the shutter's release also represents the photographer's place, both materially as shown in the framing of the composition of the image, and metaphorically, in his or her seeking to capture the moment and the (human and non-human) participants' place in that moment. Further, the image is itself a material object with its allotted place within the material records of the Museum. The photograph, however, suggests just some of the sites in which the Museum was enacted. As the thesis has shown, the Museum was performed in diverse sites, some definable by Cartesian coordinates, others, such as the registers, portable –

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<sup>32</sup> NMS(NH)/[n.n.], Natural History Register.

<sup>33</sup> Smith & Agar (1998), 2. See also Digby (2010), 46. On boundary objects, see Star & Griesemer(1989);. On contact zones see Clifford (1997), 188.

although even such portable sites of action had their allotted place: ‘The permanent Registers to be kept in a fire-proof chamber, and, when removed for reference, to be returned to this chamber every night’.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 9.2.** Photograph of a group of children in the British Zoology Hall, *circa* 1911 (NMS(NH)/153, Arthur S. Clarke Papers).

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<sup>34</sup> GB587/226015, p. 6-7.

#### 9.4.2 *The 'turn to process': practice and space*

The scrutiny of the practices of space which enacted the Museum has, to adopt Smith and Agar's terms, privileged 'the territory' of the Museum over its 'site'.<sup>35</sup> It was 'a turn to process' of the sort which has been a prominent form of geographical enquiry over the past half century.<sup>36</sup> The scrutiny of the Museum has provided a further demonstration of the role of site in the production of natural knowledge. It has shown how what counted as the 'contents' of scientific activity and as 'scientific knowledge' was itself not stable and changed over the period 1854-1939. Thus, for Mason, the Museum 'exemplifies the historically and culturally contingent nature of knowledge which can render one taxonomic system entirely logical to a particular period or culture and yet incomprehensible, illogical and virtually invisible to the eyes of another'.<sup>37</sup> The thesis has sought to demonstrate something of the logic of arrangements at moments in the past. In the Art and Ethnographical Department in particular, the shift from collecting objects representative of manufacturing process to collecting fine finished pieces and the turn away from replicas, was an 'aesthetic turn' productive of different categories of knowledge, and constitutive of new disciplinary boundaries. Over the period classification of manufactured objects *per se* ceased to be a science and the classificatory practices of connoisseurship – 'the "science" of identifying and grouping works of art'<sup>38</sup> – themselves became part of a process which increasingly polarised 'art' and 'science' within the Museum.

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<sup>35</sup> Smith & Agar (1998).

<sup>36</sup> Golledge (2002), 1; Secord (2004a).

<sup>37</sup> Mason (2004), 315.

<sup>38</sup> Belozerskaya (2005), 39.

My methodology has allowed 'place' to emerge out of an examination of practices and performances and it has also allowed different spatial scales of operation to become apparent. For example, at any given moment the space of the Museum was that arena or territory which was global – as objects and their accompanying documentation were received from various parts of the world. Yet, at the same time the 'space' of the Museum was demonstrably a political thing, being bound up with administering departments in London, most notably at South Kensington. By contrast, the category 'place', the Museum's site of operation, was an altogether different thing; one of day-to-day local practice. However, my research has demonstrated complex relationships which extend beyond the material architecture of the Museum and problematize the term 'local'. The Museum may be conceptualised as a site in which a variety of 'local' practices conducted in various parts of the globe – acquiring, identifying, documenting, and such like – were consolidated and integrated through 'local' practices conducted in the spaces bounded by the Museum's walls – acquiring, identifying, labelling, registering. Thus the Museum may be considered to have been made through a complex of local practices performed both distally and proximally. Such activity conducted across multiple physical scales blurs simplistic distinctions between 'global' and 'local' and of 'the centre' and 'the field', thereby challenging the notion of a duality of 'heterotopic' and 'nonheterotopic' sites for the making of scientific knowledge.<sup>39</sup> For some studies (this one included), the museum *is* the fieldwork site.

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<sup>39</sup> For further discussion of the relationship between global and local, see Ueno & Kawtoko (2003). On distinguishing heterotopic and non-heterotopic sites, see Ophir & Shapin (1991).

The concept of a ‘constellation’ – for Felix Driver and Raphael Samuel, ‘the product of all sorts of social relations which cut across particular locations in a multiplicity of ways’ – is useful in regard to the Museum.<sup>40</sup> The metaphor of the Museum as part of a constellation carries the implication of dynamic forces, akin to gravity, a metaphor deployed by Alberti in relation to donations but which, as I have shown, acted upon, people and ideas as well as objects. This concept of the Museum as part of a constellation of sites and actions has resonance with Golinski’s characterisation of a museum as a site which ‘can open out’ to the world beyond, and provides a telling example of how, as Doreen Massey counsels, the local is inevitably the product of ‘the world beyond the place itself’.<sup>41</sup> In consequence, to quote Tim Cresswell, ‘places need to be understood through the paths that lead in and out’, Livingstone’s ‘spaces of circulation’.<sup>42</sup> Flows, into, through, and out of the Museum imbued its spaces with their unique identity. The concept of the place of the Museum being produced through mobility supports Knell’s contention that, ‘the object as performed and imagined is always in circulation’ retaining and forging ‘geographical connections beyond the museum’.<sup>43</sup> As I have shown, the constellation of which the Museum formed a part comprised a diversity of sites – locations of collecting as ‘hunting and gathering’, government offices, other museums, schools and colleges, the home, lecture rooms, society meeting halls, council chambers and many more. The Museum itself was a constellation. The foregoing chapters have shown that, even within the Museum, the practices of

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<sup>40</sup> Driver & Samuel. (1995), vi.

<sup>41</sup> Massey (1995), 184; Golinski (2005), 97.

<sup>42</sup> Livingstone (2002), 24; Cresswell (2004), 43.

<sup>43</sup> Knell (2011), 25.

space were enacted differently through different material and epistemic spaces. Different disciplines were disciplined differently, ‘the Royal Museum being’ in the words of one of its Directors ‘a complex museum consisting really of four museums in one...An Art Museum, a Technology Museum, a Natural History Museum and a Geological Museum’.<sup>44</sup> There was, in other words, no uniform Museum method, but rather a dynamic tension between Museum practices and disciplinary practices developed largely beyond the Museum. As I have shown, an on-going challenge for Directors was to maintain institutional integrity in the face of the diversity of disciplinary practice.

### ***9.5 The sites of the ‘work of science’ and the demonstration of science***

Much of the attention of critical geographies of science has been on the laboratory. For Golinski, the laboratory ‘straddles the realms of private seclusion and public display’ and is a place where ‘intrusion by outsiders is unwelcome’ whilst ‘what is produced there is declaredly “public knowledge”’.<sup>45</sup> Crucial to knowledge production by the laboratory was movement from private to public space, whereas, for him, in museums ‘natural knowledge is not made through passage from private to public realms at all’.<sup>46</sup> My analysis challenges this view. I contend that, in the Museum the differentiation of spaces for cabinet collections and display collections, as in other museums which adopted Huxley’s ‘new museum’ schema, differentiated private and public space. The boundary between these was vital to the way in which knowledge was produced. Scholarship on the

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<sup>44</sup> Curle, in evidence to Royal Commission (1928), 89, para. 1094-1095.

<sup>45</sup> Golinski (2005), 84.

<sup>46</sup> Golinski (2005), 95.

role of transition between private and public realms in the production of knowledge is pertinent here. Harry Collins, drawing on Shapin's distinction in seventeenth-century laboratory practice between 'trying' and 'showing' an experiment and on Gooding's contrasting of 'experiment' and 'demonstration' in the nineteenth century, elaborated the relationship between 'the *work* of science' and its demonstration or display.<sup>47</sup> For Collins, 'An "experiment" was done to find out something about the natural world, whereas "a demonstration" was intended to reveal that something to an audience'.<sup>48</sup> David Gooding conceptualised this as 'a passage from a private space to a public space'.<sup>49</sup>

Collins proposed four categories of performativity: experiments, demonstrations, epideictic [epideictic] 'displays of virtuosity', and entertainment. For him, 'Demonstrations are designed to educate and convince once the exploration has been done and the discoveries have been made. Demonstrations have the power to convince because of the smoothness of performance, distancing the audience from the untidy craft of the scientist'.<sup>50</sup> His taxonomy distinguished the spaces of experiment from those sites of the witnessing of phenomena which, for Shapin, was the means by which knowledge was made to spread from the site of its production. Though the testimony of those socially and 'geographically privileged' to witness, 'matters of fact' were established and made mobile so as to travel beyond the site of their making and to adopt the form of universal knowledge through processes of consensus.<sup>51</sup> Martin Kusch dubbed

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<sup>47</sup> Gooding (1985), 108; Collins (1988), 727; Shapin (1988), 399.

<sup>48</sup> Collins (1988), 727.

<sup>49</sup> Gooding (1985), 108.

<sup>50</sup> Collins (1988), 728.

<sup>51</sup> Shapin (1988), 375.

this process ‘knowledge by agreement’, a ‘communitarian epistemology’ which makes knowledge the procession of groups, rather than individuals, and confers social status on the members of the group.<sup>52</sup> Collins’s distinction between sites for the ‘untidy craft’ and those for the faultlessly ‘smooth’ demonstration is, I think, helpful in considering museums as sites of knowledge production.

Within the Museum, as shown particularly in Chapter 6, the work of science and that of demonstration of science were productive of different material spaces. Unlike the laboratory, much of the material space of the museum (and of the Museum) was given over to public display, although as I have shown in the Museum, the backstage functions, and the spaces to accommodate them, increased over the period 1854-1939. These behind-the-scenes spaces – the laboratories, workshops, studios, study rooms, and offices – were sites for the work of science: the public spaces were those for witnessing demonstrations in the form of displays. In the display science was stripped of any sense of uncertainty; the ‘effect of truth’ was achieved by presenting axioms. The boundary between backstage and front of house was one of axiom production and ‘impression management’.<sup>53</sup> Reflecting on how experimental knowledge moved through society, Golinski, noted that ‘As facts are translated from the language in which they were represented among specialists to language appropriate for a lay audience, they become consolidated knowledge’.<sup>54</sup> In its translocation and translation from the behind-the-scenes spaces, knowledge was

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<sup>52</sup> Kusch (2002), 335.

<sup>53</sup> Ophir & Shapin (1991), 12.

<sup>54</sup> Golinski (2005), 34.

consolidated into uncontested and incontestable truths – for Collins, a process of ‘enchantment’<sup>55</sup> – to be witnessed and carried away by a general public.

The public museum was a site for a democratisation of witnessing, a site which mediated between ‘elite science’ and a wider audience, and where the material evidence of truth-claims was laid out for all to see.<sup>56</sup> Here ‘truth’ was made visible objectively. Knowledge was made certain and ‘natural’, or ‘neutral’, through its appearing to involve no ‘work’, part of the mechanism to distinguish sites of science making from those of ‘downright entertainment’, to use Collins’s term, and to foster the convention that acceptance of the testimony of the senses was a reliable guide to the working of nature – after audiences had ample opportunity to enjoy having their senses deceived, by stage magicians for example.<sup>57</sup> One scholar has even suggested that the necessity to make the work of production of displays invisible applies not only to individual displays but to museums as a whole: ‘The point of a museum is that it has no history, but represents the objects it contains transparently, in an unmediated form...The museum cannot allow itself to document its own frequently changing display arrangements, since then it will have a history, and if it becomes a historical object in its own right then it can [be] investigated, challenged, opposed or contradicted’.<sup>58</sup>

However, as I show, beginning with Goodchild’s talks to visitors in the early 1890s, there was a turn to exhibiting epideixis itself. The virtuosity of the curator was put on display not only through anonymously authored text but in

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<sup>55</sup> Collins (1985), 144.

<sup>56</sup> For discussion of the dialogic nature of these processes, see O’Connor (2009).

<sup>57</sup> Collins (1988), 726.

<sup>58</sup> Clunas (1998), 44.

face-to-face engagements with audiences. In seeking to display uncontested knowledge museums, as Conn noted, concerns lay with ideas which were already consolidated and not necessarily with the presentation of up-to-date ideas.<sup>59</sup> Traquair's insistence on displaying classification rather than evolutionary theory provides but one example. As I have shown, for the Museum, constraints on resources – funds, space, staff and the availability of appropriate objects and collections – resulted in large amounts of inertia in the process of display and redisplay: exhibits could not generally be renewed to embrace new epistemologies and generally remained in the public gaze long after the ideas which informed them had fallen out of currency.

Attention to practices of educating (Chapter 5), together with those of displaying considered in Chapter 7, has drawn into view aspects of the geographies of science beyond those of the laboratory. In the geography of the laboratory, there were neither spaces nor staff roles involving the inculcation of disciplinary 'literacy' or the translation and demonstration of science to socially and intellectually variegated audiences. These practices of space distinguish the Museum from more conscribed sites of science making in which 'the regulation of bodies and instruments and face-to-face interaction of experts' were 'tightly bound up with the microgeography of spaces cordoned off from an extra-scientific "outside"'.<sup>60</sup> To quote Gooday, '*selective accessibility* has been almost universally accomplished by the discretionary management of a laboratory's entrances and exits, keeping students and staff inside and unwanted visitors

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<sup>59</sup> Conn (1998), 18.

<sup>60</sup> Finnegan (2008), 372.

outside during normal working hours'.<sup>61</sup> By contrast, the Museum was a site in which material spaces of selective accessibility ('insider' spaces) were delimited, but where much of the space was public, accessible to 'insider' and 'outsider' alike. As shown in Chapters 4 and 7, these very processes and practices of audience engagement were productive of relationships between people, objects and the material spaces of the Museum and the construction of new expert identities, such as that of the guide-demonstrator.

In making knowledge mobile the Museum, like other sites of knowledge-making, relied on a trio of technologies, the material, the literary and the social.<sup>62</sup> The social element, however, was much less controlled and restricted than in sites such as the laboratory, the ship, the society meeting room and alike, in which the numbers of witnesses was small and their testimonies were channelled (at least proximal to the event of witnessing) through relatively conscribed communities – each defined through its social interactions and its specialist literatures.<sup>63</sup> The communities for public sites of knowledge making and the trajectories by which knowledge flowed out were diverse, and consequently more difficult to map. Practices of material exchange, social interactions and writing and reading are more easily reconstituted from a relatively conscribed community, than from the multiple and variegated communities which constitute the general public.<sup>64</sup> For the Museum, something is known of 'the investigative practices' of students – composition and letter writing by school pupils, and the

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<sup>61</sup> Gooday (1998), 224.

<sup>62</sup> Shapin (1984), 484.

<sup>63</sup> Golinski (2005), 31.

<sup>64</sup> Shapin (1984), 484.

sketching with ‘scientific exactitude’ by art students being examples<sup>65</sup> – but, as discussed in Chapter 8, those of the majority of visitors are substantially unrecoverable. The imagined audience predominates over the empirical visitor and analysis of what Alberti has called ‘the museum affect’ is hindered by a lack of sources.<sup>66</sup> The empirical visitor, a vital actor in the construction of the museum as ‘place’, comes into view only fleetingly. Accounts of what lessons visitors adopted or constructed for themselves, either during a visit or in conversations after the event, are too sparse to enable theories to be tested. It is perhaps telling that whilst many of those who recall visiting in the pre-war years have vivid memories of the Museum as a place of push buttons, none to whom I have spoken recount any of the principles of engineering that their button-pushing was intended to illustrate. One interviewee recalled how visiting schoolboys raced from case to case in competition to get the most mechanisms in motion simultaneously, rather than studying the intricacies of those motions.<sup>67</sup> What knowledges were constructed from a visit and how was that knowledge used? What form did the Museum’s psychological architecture actually take? Were museums in general, and the Museum in particular, effective in their pedagogic missions and as the agents of social control that they have been theorised to have been? Such questions must remain largely unanswered.

The geographies of laboratory practice and those of museums differed not only in the ways in which knowledge was formed and flowed outwards; they differed also in their engagements with anterior or ‘upstream’ sites of knowledge

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<sup>65</sup> Naik & Stewart (2007).

<sup>66</sup> Alberti (2007).

<sup>67</sup> Conversation with David Lamb, February 2004.

making. As shown in Chapter 5, the work of science extended before the Museum. The construction of taxonomies (and collections) and the classification of objects – by location of finding, by material, by form, by use, by ownership, and so on – whilst conducted within the Museum, was also conducted anterior to it. Matters of provenance were themselves matters of categorisation and classification which constructed the identity of objects and of people – private collectors and dealers, alike, specialised in collecting (in the sense of either finding or amassing, or both) objects from a certain geographical territory, or of a particular kind. Discrimination, connoisseurship, and ‘curatorial’ expertise and authority extended upstream of the Museum. Processes by which objects were gathered together, juxtaposed and compared, valued, and given meaning were conducted along the routes by which they were made to travel to the Museum and were performed by explorers, travellers, private collectors, dealers, model-makers, taxidermists and others and transacted in diverse sites. Thus the Museum formed a part of widely dispersed nodes in what in Latour’s terms are sets of ‘networks’, or, in Livingstone’s terms ‘spaces of scientific knowledge’.<sup>68</sup> In the diffuse and distributed distal portions of the networks the social interactions between the actors, both people and things, and the accrual of knowledge, expertise, authority and trust about objects, demonstrable within the Museum, are less readily discerned and captured.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Latour (1987), 123; Livingstone (2000), 286.

<sup>69</sup> On their enactment within a museum, see Alberti (2011a).

### ***9.6 The place of the discipline of geography in the Museum***

Focusing on processes has also brought into view what might be dubbed ‘the facts of failure’: ‘failure often exhibits more clearly than success the constraints and resources available for the diffusion of science’.<sup>70</sup> The abandonment of the distinct Educational Museum, the realisation of the impossibility of achieving encyclopaedic coverage; the shift away from collecting processes to the collecting of products, and the jettisoning of the discipline of botany and the botanical collections, are but a few examples. As shown in Chapter 5, practices of accumulation and discard were not just material but epistemological – ideas, like objects, were accumulated and discarded. The failure to develop a specifically geographical exhibit illustrates the ways in which what constituted the discipline of geography as portrayed, or as envisaged as it could be portrayed, in the Museum changed over time. In 1886 a temporary exhibition was staged in the Museum by the Royal Geographical Society (London). According to press reports, it ‘consists of a collection of the appliances used in geographical education at home and abroad’ and included ‘wall maps, atlases, diagrams, globes, telluria and planetaria, relief models, text-books and other appliances’.<sup>71</sup> In order to ‘*See that the Things are taught as well as the Words*’, Schools Inspectors urged that schools make a collection of raw and manufactured products from various parts of the world for use in the teaching of geography.<sup>72</sup> In this sense the international collections of national museum represented one large class-room for the teaching of geography. By 1914, however, what

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<sup>70</sup> Shapin (1983), 151-152.

<sup>71</sup> *Scotsman* (1886).

<sup>72</sup> Jolly (1887), 9; Ogilvie (1894), 317 [375].

constituted geography, and what provisions were required for its teaching was considered to be more specific, requiring particular kinds of display and spaces within the Museum. As part of a continuing discourse on geography in schools following the publication in 1912 by SED of *Memorandum on the Teaching of Geography in Scottish Primary Schools*, the role of the School Gallery was discussed in relation to displaying matters of geography teaching. The Advisory Committee suggested that ‘the geographical side of the Gallery’ be developed (Chapter 7).<sup>73</sup> The outbreak of war stifled any such plans, but in 1937 Rowatt attempted to develop a gallery on geography, modelled on the Geographical Museum in Leipzig – at that time, according to Rowatt, the only exhibition on geography in Europe. There was a protracted correspondence on the matter with Edgar Osbert Giffard of George Philip & Son at the London Geographical Institute and other geographers. Eventually, a small committee of local geographers was formed to develop ideas for the content and arrangement of such a gallery.<sup>74</sup> Progress in developing specific proposals was slow and was eventually again overtaken by the outbreak of war and plans to formally link the Museum with the teaching of the discipline of geography were abandoned.

Such facts of failure serve as an indication of the place and nature of the Museum at given moments in its past. They show what the Museum might have been, was not, or did not wish to be. The lack of success of Patrick Geddes’s bids to secure the Directorship, in 1903 and again in 1909, for example, suggest that SED envisaged a rather different role for its museum than that agenda of the

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<sup>73</sup> Scotch Education Department (1912); GB587/ID 148376, minute of 27 May 1914, pp. 165-166.

<sup>74</sup> GB587/DP(C)/1.2, ‘Memorandum on the Proposal to Establish a Hall of Geography in the Royal Scottish Museum’, 28 June 1937.

‘cosmic presentation of Universal Geography’ which he advocated and with which he experimented in the Outlook Tower on Edinburgh’s Royal Mile or those concepts he and his associates espoused for a National Institute of Geography.<sup>75</sup> In his 1903 address to Dunfermline Natural History Society, he made no specific mention of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art but was critical of the style of collecting, display and presentation of South Kensington Museum on which it had been substantially modelled, describing it as ‘the vast, costly, and confused national accumulation of architectural and decorative fragments, of furniture and bric-a-brac of all kinds...the central storehouse associated with the teaching and misteaching of art for the last half-century’. He advocated the application of Linnaean-type systematics, as used by the curators in the adjacent British Museum (Natural History):

Such museum curators will bring over and apply their natural history methods of presentment of the Protean forms of life in their geographical and historical order; and, in short, they will rearrange these historic fossils of the world’s Art-life as plainly and instructively as they have already done its earlier and pre-human fossils.<sup>76</sup>

In the event, in 1903 Dobbie, a research chemist and senior university academic was appointed, and in 1909 SED controversially appointed Martin, a newspaper editor, to the post. These two radically different appointments, both in preference to Geddes, reveal a repositioning of the Museum from being primarily a site of academic study to one of popular education and broader communication.

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<sup>75</sup> Geddes (1902), 143. See also Bartholomew (1902); Withers (2001), 225-232.

<sup>76</sup> Geddes (1903), 94.

### ***9.7 Towards an historical geography of museums***

The focus on practice is a response to Starn's demand (see Chapter 1) for studies which analyse empirical materials rather than an over-theorizing the dynamics of museums.<sup>77</sup> The methodology hinges on a recognition that, to quote Massey, 'places are processes', and this has brought into view a distributed geography through which the Museum's practices of space were enacted.<sup>78</sup>

The thesis took as a starting point the view that 'geography matters' and that the site of knowledge making plays a vital role in the kind of knowledge produced. Such a view demands attention to the particularity of place, to the practices by which place is 'made' and a privileging of empirical material over theory. This necessitated that the focus be firmly on *a* museum (the Museum), rather than on museums as a locale. Yet, to borrow from Allan Findlay and Alan Werrity, 'the empirical lens should not be allowed to cloud the wider picture'.<sup>79</sup> Others have charted something of the practices of place through which other museums emerged in particular moments, although more detailed studies are needed before an historical geography of museums, as locales can be constructed.<sup>80</sup>

The constellation that was the Museum (like other sites) is a complex of fractal spaces, the amount of detail discernible increasing as the magnification of scrutiny is increased, or in Smith and Agar's terms, as the application of different analytical techniques produces different spatial representations.<sup>81</sup> The extensive

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<sup>77</sup> Starn (2005).

<sup>78</sup> Massey (1991), 28.

<sup>79</sup> Findlay & Werrity (2010), 228.

<sup>80</sup> Fortey (2008); Alberti (2009).

<sup>81</sup> Smith & Agar (1998), 2.

timescale of the study, some 85 years was, with hindsight, overly ambitious and has resulted in a map which, in parts, is sketchy. Close attention to each of the components of the constellation would permit more detailed maps to be constructed. Yet it has provided an overview, an overarching geographical analysis of the practices of space performative of the Museum and has constructed the particularity of place, the uniqueness, of the Museum in a manner which might permit comparison with other such institutions. As Alberti insists, any museum 'is not unique in its uniqueness'. The research reported and analysed in this thesis has illuminated complex geographies of the Museum's production and maintenance and has outlined methodologies which might be deployed to explore similarities (and differences) with museums elsewhere. The thesis is therefore a response to Alberti's call for more detailed studies, of people, things and sites, as a means of moving towards wider history (and, I would suggest, an accompanying geography) of museums.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Albert (2009), 192-193.



**End-piece. Chambers Street and the main entrance to the Museum, 1938. A frame from the film 'The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh' (GB2120/2274).**

The frontispiece to this thesis is Fowke's imaginative representation of a museum yet to be materialised. It set the building in a streetscape which, at the time of painting, was itself aspirational. The watercolour embodied something of the three elements of the Museum's architecture, the material, the intellectual and the psychological, and so was itself part of the production of a museum in physical and metaphorical space. As the corresponding 'bookend' I present a frame from Campbell Harper's 1938 film made about a year before the temporary closure at the outbreak of war, the event which marks the endpoint of the subject matter of this thesis.



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                  ED28 Board of Trade and Education Department,  
                  Department of Practical Art and Science and Art  
                  Department, Minutes
- GB227          University of St Andrews Library
- GB234          National Records of Scotland
- GB236          Edinburgh City Archives
- GB237          University of Edinburgh Library, Special Collections
- GB551          Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of  
                  Scotland
- GB587          National Museums Scotland Library [NMS central archive]  
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                      2) 1877-1891  
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                  IS Library object [a numbering series, created as part of  
                      a cataloguing initiative commenced in 2009, used  
                      mostly for pictorial items held by NMS]

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<sup>1</sup> Arranged by Archon code. See National Archives (n.d).

Information Services, an administrative unit which includes the NMS Library]

GB2120	Scottish Screen Archive 2274 'The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh'
GB2229	Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland Archive
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NMS	National Museums Scotland [excluding Library]
NMS(A)	Department of Art and Design Archive
NMS(CS)	Department of Collections Services
NMS(D)	Directorate Files
NMS(I)	Image Library
NMS(NH)	Natural History Department Archive
	UD University of Edinburgh Natural History Museum, Daily Report Book
	UW University of Edinburgh Natural History Museum, Weekly Report Book
NMS(RMP)	Royal Museum Masterplan and Royal Museum Project Archive
NMS(T)	Science & Technology Department Archive

### Abbreviations

Acc.	Accession number
n.n.	no unique identifying number
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland
SSA	Scottish Screen Archive
TNA	The National Archive

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## Appendix I

### A nomenclatural history of the Museum

The nomenclatorial history of the Museum, with its profusion of similar names which in different historical contexts designated different material and metaphorical spaces, demands some analysis. Since the Museum is guardian of some of its own archival records, to assist those who may in the future wish to consult these records, this brief outline of that history has been extended beyond the time-frame considered in the thesis, and brought up to the present.

The Royal Scottish Museum, which closed its doors at the outbreak of war in 1939 and remained closed for three years, had been known by that name since 1904.<sup>1</sup> Prior to that, since 1864, it had been the ‘Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art’, and before that it was the ‘Industrial Museum of Scotland and the Natural History Museum, Edinburgh’. This latter name reflected the genealogy of the geological and zoological collections in the ‘Natural History Museum of the University of Edinburgh’, a museum which, over the years, had itself been known variously as the ‘Royal Museum’, the ‘College Museum’, the ‘Toun College Museum’, the ‘King’s Museum’ and the ‘Queen’s Museum’.<sup>2</sup> With the enactment of the *National Heritage (Scotland) Act* at midnight on 30 Sept 1985, the Royal Scottish Museum ceased to exist, as did the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. As of 1 October these two institutions were

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<sup>1</sup> For SED’s request to use the title ‘Royal’, see GB234/HH91/245.

<sup>2</sup> For eighteenth century use of ‘Royal Museum’, see GB237/La III 352, documents dated April 1793 relating to Walker’s bids to acquire the collection of James Nasmyth; for usage of ‘King’s Museum’ see GB587/[n.n.], Natural History Museum Daily Report Book, Jameson to Treasury, 22 February 1823; for the use of ‘Queen’s Museum’, see GB587/[n.n.], Natural History Museum Daily Report Book, 12 June 1846.

amalgamated to become the ‘National Museums of Scotland’, with responsibility for the collections of both institutions became vested in a body of Trustees.<sup>3</sup> The former Royal Scottish Museum building was renamed the ‘Royal Museum of Scotland (Chambers Street)’, the parentheses being added to distinguish it from the ‘Royal Museum of Scotland (Queen Street)’, the new name for that portion of the Findlay Building and York Buildings which housed the displays and temporary exhibition gallery and offices, respectively, of the former National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

In September 1992 the name Royal Museum of Scotland (Queen Street) was dropped in favour of ‘The Museum of Antiquities’.<sup>4</sup> This change obviated the need for the parentheses in the title of the building on Chambers Street which became simply the ‘Royal Museum of Scotland’. In the financial year 1995-1996 this name was further shortened to the ‘Royal Museum’, a change instituted so as to avoid confusion with the ‘Museum of Scotland’, a new building being constructed next door. As of 13th October 2006, with a re-branding project, the name of the umbrella organisation changed to ‘National Museums Scotland’. The strictures of the *National Heritage (Scotland) Act*, however, required the retention of its former title for all formal purposes: ‘National Museums of Scotland changed its operating name to National Museums Scotland in October

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson, R. G. W. (1986) The end of an era. In Brock, S. & Harley, A, (Eds) *Royal Scottish Museum Final Report 1983-84-85* (pp. 7-9). Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> National Museum of Scotland Annual Report: April 1993-March 1994; NMS General Notice 54/1992 (30 September 1992)

2006 as part of a wider programme of strategic change. We retain the name [the] National Museums of Scotland for statutory purposes'.<sup>5</sup>

Beneath this umbrella the two primary elements of the complex of buildings on Chambers Street, the Royal Museum and the Museum of Scotland, were unified under the name the 'National Museum of Scotland'. The Director, Gordon Rintoul, intimated to Her Majesty the intent to drop the sobriquet 'Royal' and 'to christen the whole complex the **National Museum of Scotland** from mid-October 2006', although he indicated that change was to be phased in:

We would naturally wish to continue referencing these antecedents where appropriate. For instance we would refer to "the Royal Museum building" in our signage and communication material, and focus our major development work on "the Royal Museum Project". However once a large part of the building closes for redevelopment in 2008, and the newly transformed joint museum opens in 2011, we would focus on the use of the new National Museum name as the identity for the site as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

In February 2009 Catherine Holden (NMS Director of Marketing and Development for National Museums Scotland) clarified the usage of the nomenclature, thus:

we'd changed the name of the Chambers St complex to the National Museum of Scotland in October 2006.

We refer to 'the Royal Museum building' or 'the Museum of Scotland building' where there's a need to identify architectural units, but we want to promote an integrated whole and not prolong the sense of 'two buildings'. We know visitors found that extremely confusing, and very few used the RM name. Gratifyingly, the NMOS name has been widely adopted.

The launch of the new suites of galleries in 2011 will provide more meaningful segmentation than architectural style, which helps visitors - promoting several enticing 'chunks' (natural world, world cultures, science and technology, story of Scotland). Sally's [Sally Manuireva, Director of Public Programmes] Visitor Engagement Workstream (with M&C input) are developing an orientation strategy for the whole of NMOS from 2011 which will confirm the precise phraseology.

FYI Trustees wished 'Royal' to be retained in 'the Royal Museum Project' title for major gift fundraising, particularly abroad, but the public campaign is likely to use another strapline to motivate gifts, and of course our full re-opening in 2011 will be the launch of the completed National Museum of Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> National Museums Scotland (2007). *National Museums Scotland - Review 06: Looking Back, Looking Forward*. Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland (my emphasis).

<sup>6</sup> NMS(D)/[n.n.], Rintoul to Sir Robin Janvrin, 6 September 2006.

<sup>7</sup> NMS(D)/[n.n.], email, Holden to Swinney, 3 February 2009.



**Figure 1. Cartoon commissioned from Calman by the National Museums of Scotland, circa 1985 (Photograph in National Museums Scotland Image Library).**

From at least as early as 2009 NMS was using the new name in its publicity materials (e.g. on the temporary placarding on the north façade). As indicated by both Rintoul and Holden, the Royal Museum identity persisted in some signage and for fund-raising campaign for the Royal Museum Project (2004-2011).<sup>8</sup> The name Royal Museum remained prominently displayed over the front door of the building until after its closure to the public at the beginning of the major building works for the Project in May 2008.

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<sup>8</sup> National Museums Scotland (2008-2010) *Making the World of Difference: The Royal Museum Project Newsletter* (seven editions). National Museums Scotland website [http://www.nms.ac.uk/our\\_museums/national\\_museum/our\\_new\\_museum/latest\\_news.aspx](http://www.nms.ac.uk/our_museums/national_museum/our_new_museum/latest_news.aspx) [accessed 20 March 2011].

Given this complex nomenclatorial history it is hardly surprising that, for many, the Museum has long been known as ‘the Chambers Street Museum’ (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> Throughout this thesis ‘the Museum’ is used to refer to both the building and the administrative entity.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Allan, D. A. (1961) The Royal Scottish Museum. *Scotland's Magazine* 57(7) (July 1961), 36-40; MacDougall, I. (2009) *Through the Mill: Personal Recollections by Veterans Men and Women Penicuik Paper Mill Workers*. Falkirk: The Scottish Working People's History Trust; Wilde, J. (2000) *Drawing the Whale. Poem & Place: An Event by John Wilde for National Poetry Day 2000*. Chapelhill Press.



## Appendix II

### The Museum Library and the Patent Library

For Wilson, a library was an integral component of the Museum:

Its more immediate purpose is to guide those in charge of the Museum in acquiring, classifying, labelling, and describing the contents of the collections; and to assist the analysts of the Laboratory in the prosecution of researches of public economic interest. The hope, however, is indulged, that when fully developed it will contain a collection of books on applied science in at least French, German, and English [with] geographical, geological, and mining maps and sections, illustrated works on architecture, shipbuilding, machinery, and the like, so arranged as to be accessible for reference and consultation by practical men.<sup>1</sup>

In part Wilson's hope was realised and by 1912 the Museum had amassed a substantial library which was described as being 'intended to be a collection of specialist literature relating to the objects in the Museum and to the theory and practice of education'.<sup>2</sup> In addition, for much of its history, the Museum also housed collections of Specifications of Patents. It had been Wilson's aspiration that the Museum would maintain 'the records of the patent offices or similar institutions of the civilised countries of the world'. The collection of patents had been transferred to the Museum in about 1875. In its role in collecting patents the Museum seemingly overlapped with other collections in Edinburgh. A report prepared by a Mr Gurdon of the Treasury for the Clerks of the Director of Chancery, Scotland, recommended that, with the closure of the Register House Patent Library in 1881, one of the staff from Register House be transferred to the

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, G. (1858: 9). *Directory of the Industrial Museum of Scotland*. In Wilson, G. & Archer, T. C., *Directory of the Industrial Museum of Scotland, and the Natural History Museum, Edinburgh*. London: Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education.

<sup>2</sup> GB587/ID 126015, pp. 12-13.

Museum to assist with the work of maintaining the Museum's patent collection.<sup>3</sup> After some delay Adam Bryden Steele was duly transferred.<sup>4</sup> The Patent Library opened to the public in February 1883. The Museum contained a complete set of patents dating back to 1617.<sup>5</sup> Its role as the patent repository in Scotland was formalised by the provisions of the *Patents, Designs and Trade Marks Act*, 1883 and, later, the *Patents and Design Act*, 1907<sup>6</sup> – the patent library was the only part of the Museum's operation governed by statute. In addition to 300 volumes of British Patents, by 1896 the collection included 720 volumes of French and US patents, and the collection of Ordnance Survey maps the British Isles, was growing rapidly.<sup>7</sup> This put even more strain on the Museum's limited space and finances since the library was to be open on Friday and Saturday evenings, as well as by day. Either the librarian, Mr. Muston (graded as a Clerk), or Mr Steele were required to be present whenever the collection was open, thus incurring additional annual overtime cost of £31 4s 0d.<sup>8</sup>

Although the patent collection and the Library were co-located with and shared staff, they were governed by different regulations.<sup>9</sup> The Library and the Patent Library both had practices of collecting and documentation which differed

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<sup>3</sup> GB587/DP(P), Archer to DSA, 8 June 1882, p. 116; GB GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to DSA, 12 January 1883, p. 215, makes reference to a minute I 56028/82 of 22 December 1882. See also GB587/DP(D) Archer to DSA, 22 February 1883, pp. 225-226.

<sup>4</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to DSA, 12 January 1883, p. 221.

<sup>5</sup> GB587/DP(G), Draft attached to Naftel to Allan, 13 July 1951.

<sup>6</sup> Archer, T. C. (1875). A library of patents for Edinburgh. *The Scotsman*, 1 March 1875, 6; GB587/ID 126015, unpaginated annotations.

<sup>7</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897). *Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: dimensions of museum*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh: Museum of Science and Art.

<sup>8</sup> GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 2, Archer to DSA, 22 February 1883, pp. 225-226.

<sup>9</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1897). *Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art: Dimensions of Museum*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art; Ogilvie, F. G. (1902a: 3 [301]). Report for the year 1901 [on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art] by F. Grant Ogilvie, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., the Director. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1902 [Cd. 1064], 1-15 [297-313]; GB587/DP(D)/Letter-book 3, Smith to DSA, 20 May 1889, pp. 672-673.

from those of the rest of the Museum. For example, whilst the Library, *per se*, charged for admission, as did the Museum itself on certain days, access to the patent collection was free as was required by the legislation. For these reasons the Library and Patent Library have been excluded from detailed examination in this thesis.



## Appendix III

### Annual Reports of the Museum 1855-1939

#### Introduction

The publication vehicles for the Annual Report of the Museum during the period 1855-1900, when it was administered by DSA, have been discussed by Swinney.<sup>1</sup> He demonstrates these reports to be bibliographically challenging because they were presented in multiple forms – the reports were presented in précis (or summary) as well as in *extenso*, sometimes incorporated into each of several different volumes of *Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons Sessional Papers)* and/or, for some years, as separates or ‘non-Parliamentary publications’.<sup>2</sup> Initially, following the shift of administration to SED, the system of publication remained largely unchanged. The form of publication changed, however, during periods of social and economic upheaval during and in the aftermath of the First World War. A summary report only was included in the Report of Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, which contained a statement that ‘The report of the Director of the Museum for the year, though for reasons of economy these reports are no longer printed annually, has been distributed widely in neostyled form and its principal contents have been

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<sup>1</sup> Swinney, G. N. (2002) Reporting on the museum: annual reports of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. *Archives of Natural History* 29, pp. 99-108.

<sup>2</sup> The term used within the report within *Parliamentary Papers* to refer to a more extensive report published by HMSO but not itself a Parliamentary Paper.

reproduced in the daily and other newspapers'.<sup>3</sup> The *extenso* report was produced and circulated in typescript, in 'neostyled form'.<sup>4</sup>

The reports for the period 1855 to 1939, which present to Parliament and to a more general readership the official view of the operation of the Museum, are a prime source for a historical geography of the institution during that period.

### **Sources, conventions and method**

The concordance listing and citations below are based on *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers 1901-1921*, and later catalogues, digitised as *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* (HCPP).<sup>5</sup>

#### *Volume and pagination*

For most years the Annual Reports of the Museum were produced as Command Papers, 'Presented to both houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty'.<sup>6</sup>

The pagination of Sessional Papers is itself complex. Having been issued to Members of Parliament as separates, with their own pagination, the papers were

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example Report for 1926-27.

<sup>4</sup> The neostyle, which resembled the cyclostyle, was developed in the 1880s as a system for producing multiple copies of documents using a machine which etched and printed from a wax-covered stencil. By the 1920s the name was no longer a trade-name and had largely lapsed from general usage, having been replaced by *Roneo*, a contraction of 'Rotary Neostyle'. For details, see Room, A. (1982) *Dictionary of Trade Name Origins* (revised edition). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp 148-9. Some of the neostyled copies have blue covers mimicking the blue books (see note 6 below).

<sup>5</sup> Cockton, P. (c. 1983) *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers 1901-1921*. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey. For conventions used see Cockton, P. (1991 [1988]). *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1801-1900. Guide to the Chadwyck-Healey Microfiche Edition*. Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge. HCPP is a product of ProQuest, Cambridge. 2005-2009.

<sup>6</sup> Both the House of Commons Sessional Papers and House of Lords are also referred to as 'blue books', because, as separates, they appeared in blue covers. For example, see Anderson, R. G. W. (2003). Blue books and the museums: Scrutiny and statistics in mid-Victorian Britain. In Beretta, M., Galluzzi, P & Triarco, C. (Eds) *Musa Musaei: Studies on Scientific Instruments and Collections in Honour of Mara Miniati* (pp. 443-456). Firenze: L. S. Olschki.

bound into volumes for each Parliamentary session. The pages of these volumes were then sequentially numbered in manuscript (later an over-stamp or overprint was used). These repaginated volumes were deposited in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords libraries and in certain other UK libraries (the copies in the UK Deposit Libraries, or Copyright Libraries, are repaginated). In the published indexes to Parliamentary Papers it is the volume pagination (*i.e.* the manuscript or overprinted pagination) which is cited.<sup>7</sup> Hence, these catalogues serve as finding lists and index only to the copies held in certain library collections.<sup>8</sup>

Digitisation has introduced a further complexity in pagination. HCPP uses the manuscript or overprint pagination for some citations, and the printed pagination for others. For yet other a new pagination, corresponding to neither, is used.<sup>9</sup>

### *Authorship*

Reports of the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education were signed by the Lord President, the Vice President and the Secretary to the Department whilst those of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland were signed by the Lord President of Council and the

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<sup>7</sup> Anonymous (1919) *General Alphabetical Index to the Bills, Reports, Estimates, Accounts, and Papers, Printed by Order of the House of Commons, and to the Papers Presented by Command 1852-1899*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office; Anonymous (1960) *General Index to the Bills, Reports and Papers Printed by Order of the House of Commons and to the Reports and Papers Presented by Command 1900 to 1948-19*. His Majesty's Stationery Office.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of these two forms of pagination see Pemberton, J. (1973) *British official publications* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oxford: Pergamon; Swinney, G. N. (2002) Reporting on the museum: annual reports of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. *Archives of Natural History* 29, pp. 99-108.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the Report for 1907 and 1928.

Vice-President of the Committee of Council, together with the Secretary Scotch (or Scottish) Education Department. Whilst they were undoubtedly based on a report by the Director of the Museum, since they carry no intrinsic indication of the fact, the Lord President and the Vice-President must be considered the authors of these summary reports.

### *Conventions*

In the listing below, Command Papers (prefixed 'Cd.' prior to 1919 and 'Cmd' for the Parliamentary Session for 1919 and subsequently) are cited in the form: Parliamentary Session; volume number (in Roman numerals); paper number; title; pagination as printed; manuscript or overprinted pagination (in square brackets). For those annual Reports produced in 'neostyled' form, the code at the foot of the paper is also cited<sup>10</sup> – this is probably a collation code (equivalent to a printer's code) used in the production process.

## **Annual Report for 1901**

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1901**

1901 [Cd. 585; 586] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1900-01; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd 585 (31 [31]) and Cd. 586 (29 [115]) contain brief statement about the transfer to the Department, 'during the last year', of the Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh. Neither document contains an extensive report.

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<sup>10</sup> The code is presumed to be that applied and used by the reprographics unit. In the report for 1924, coded 3570, each page is given a suffix (*e.g.* 3570-1; 3570-2, etc). In all other coded neostyled reports the code applies uniformly throughout the document.

## **Annual Report for 1901**

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1902**

1902 XXXIII [Cd. 1108; 1109] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland 1901-1902, with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 1108 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 36-37 [36-37] [Duke of] Devonshire & [Lord] Balfour of Burleigh.

Cd. 1109 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 34-35 [80-81] [Duke of] Devonshire & [Lord] Balfour of Burleigh.

Cd. 1109 Part V. of Appendix. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. Report for the Year 1901, by F. Grant Ogilvie, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 899-914 [945-960].

1902 XXXIV [Cd. 1064] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for the year 1901 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Science and Art Museum).

Report for the Year 1901, by F. Grant Ogilvie, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 1-15 [297-313].

## **Annual Report for 1902**

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1903**

1903 XXII [Cd. 1592; 1593] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1902-03; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 1592 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 33-36 [33-36] [Duke of] Devonshire & [Lord] Balfour of Burleigh.

Cd. 7593 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 31-34 [75-78] [Duke of] Devonshire & [Lord] Balfour of Burleigh.

Cd. 1593 Part V. of Appendix. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. Report for the Year 1902, by F. Grant Ogilvie, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 927-945 [991-989].

1903 XXIII [Cd. 1584] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1902 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Science and Art Museum).

Report for the Year 1902, by F. Grant Ogilvie, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 1-17 [291-309].

### **Annual Report for 1903**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1904**

1904 XXI [Cd. 1973; 1974] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1903-04; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd 1973 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 33-35 [33-35] [Lord] Londonderry & A. Graham Murray.

Cd. 1974 [Section] XI. Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh. 31-33 [75-77] [Lord] Londonderry & A. Graham Murray.

Cd. 1974 Part VI. of Appendix. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. Report for the Year 1903, by James J. Dobbie, Esq., M.A., D.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 713-730 [757-774].

1904 XXII [Cd. 1972] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1903 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Science and Art Museum).

Report for the Year 1903, by James J. Dobbie, Esq., M.A., D.Sc., on the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. 1-18 [351-370].

### **Annual Report for 1904**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1905**

1905 XXIX [Cd. 2520; 2521] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1904-05; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 2520 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 37-39 [37-39] [Lord] Londonderry & [Lord] Linlithgow.

Cd. 2521 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 35-37 [83-85] [Lord] Londonderry & [Lord] Linlithgow.

Cd. 2521 Appendix Part VI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Report for the Year 1904 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1131-1148 [1181-1198].

1905 XXX [Cd. 2445] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for the year 1904 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Royal Scottish Museum).<sup>11</sup> 1-16 [307-324]

Report for the Year 1904 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1-16 [309-324].

### **Annual Report for 1905**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1906**

1906 [Cd. 2942; 2943] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1905-06; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 2942 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 37-38 [37-38] [Lord] Crew & John Sinclair.

Cd 2943 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 35-37 [81-82] [Lord] Crew & John Sinclair.

Cd. 2943 Appendix, Part VI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Report for the Year 1905 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1017-1037 [1663-1681].

1906 XXXI [Cd. 2836] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1905 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Royal Scottish Museum).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The digitised version uses the institution name Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, although the printed document uses Royal Scottish Museum throughout.

Report for the Year 1905 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1-19 [923-943].

### **Annual Report for 1906**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1907**

1907 XXIII [Cd. 3521; 3522] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1906-07; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 3521 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 36 [36] [Lord] Crew & John Sinclair.

Cd. 3522 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 34 [78] [Lord] Crew & John Sinclair.

Cd. 3522 Appendix Part VI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Report for the Year 1906 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1069-1088 [1113-1132].

1907 XXIV [Cd. 3349] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1906 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Royal Scottish Museum).

Report for the Year 1906 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum 1-18 [379-398].

### **Annual Report for 1907**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1908**

1908 XXVIII [Cd. 4084; 4085] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1907-08; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Cd. 4084 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 37-38 [37-38] [Lord] Tweedmouth & John Sinclair.

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<sup>12</sup> The digitised version uses the institution name Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, although the printed document uses Royal Scottish Museum throughout.

Cd. 4085 [Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 35-36 [81-82] [Lord] Tweedmouth & John Sinclair.

Cd. 4085 Appendix Part VI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Report for the Year 1907 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1003-1128 [1151-1176].

1908 XXIX [Cd. 3974] Report by the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1907 (Museums, &c. (Scotland): Royal Scottish Museum).

Report for the Year 1907 by James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., F.R.S. on the Royal Scottish Museum. 1-24 [855-880].

### **Annual Report for 1908**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1909**

1909 XXI [Cd. 4779] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1908-1909; with Appendix (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] XI. The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 40-42 [154-156] [Lord] Wolverhampton & [Lord] Pentland.

#### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1908 by the Director James J. Dobbie, Esq., D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-28. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1909.

### **Annual Report for 1909**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1910**

1910 XXVI [Cd. 5252] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, 1909-10 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] VIII. The Royal Scottish Museum 35 -37 [145-147] [Lord] Wolverhampton & [Lord] Pentland.

### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1909 by the Acting Director, David J. Vallance, Esq., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-28. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1910.

### **Annual Report for 1910**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1911**

1911 XXI [Cd. 5683] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1910-11 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] IX. The Royal Scottish Museum 39-42 [661-664]  
Morley of B.& [Lord] Pentland.

### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1910 by the Acting Director David J. Vallance, Esq., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-26. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1911.

### **Annual Report for 1911**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for 1912-13**

1912-13 XXIV [Cd. 6242] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1911-12 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] IX. The Royal Scottish Museum 38-41 [840-843]  
Morley of B.& T. McKinnon Wood.

### **Annual Report for 1911-12**

#### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1911-12 by the Director Sir T. Carlaw Martin, LL.D., F.R.S.E., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-31. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1912.

### **Annual Report for 1912-13**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1913**

1913 XXII [Cd. 6726] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1912-13 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] IX. The Royal Scottish Museum. 38-40 [692-694].  
Morley of B. & T. McKinnon Wood.

#### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1912-13 by the Director Sir T. Carlaw Martin, LL.D., F.R.S.E., on the Royal Scottish Museum' Edinburgh. 1-24 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1913.

### **Annual Report for 1913-14**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1914**

1914 XXIX. [Cd. 7392] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1913-14 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] IX. The Royal Scottish Museum. 53-56 [53-56] Morley of B. & T. McKinnon Wood.

#### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1913-14 by the Director Sir T. Carlaw Martin, LL.D., F.R.S.E., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-28 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1914.

### **Annual Report for 1914-15**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1914-16**

1914-16 XX [Cd. 7928] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1914-15 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

[Section] IX. The Royal Scottish Museum 42-45 [886-889].  
[Lord] Beauchamp & T. McKinnon Wood.

### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1914-15 by the Director Sir T. Carlaw Martin, LL.D., F.R.S.E., on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.1-26 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1915.

### **Annual Report for 1915-16**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1916**

1916 VIII [Cd. 8278] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1915-16 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Royal Scottish Museum 21 [749] [Lord] Crewe & T. McKinnon Wood.

[During the war there was no separate non-Parliamentary report]

### **Annual Report for 1916-17**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1916-17**

1916-17 XI [Cd. 8648] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1916-17 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

Royal Scottish Museum 21-22 [773-774].

### **Annual Report for 1917-18**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1918**

1918 IX [Cd. 9091] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1917-18 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 20-22 [1022-1024].

**Annual Report for 1918-19**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1919**

1919 XXI [Cmd. 264] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, for 1918-19 (Education and Schools (Scotland): Committee of Council's Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 20-23 [890-893].

**Annual Report for 1919-20**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1920**

1920 XV. [Cmd. 782] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland 1919-20 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 35 [893]. Arthur James Balfour & Robert Munro

**Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1919-20 by the Director on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-16 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1920.

**Annual Report for 1920-21**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1921**

1921 XI. [Cmd. 1266] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland: for 1920-21 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 36 [332] Arthur James Balfour & Robert Munro.

**Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1920-21 by the Director on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-23 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1921.

### **Annual Report for 1921-22**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1922**

1922 VII [Cmd. 1666] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1921-22 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 29-30 [545-546] [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & Robert Munro.

#### **Non-Parliamentary Publication**

Report for the year 1921=22 [*sic*] by the Director on the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 1-27 London: His Majesty's Stationery Office. 1922.

### **Annual Report for 1922-23**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1923**

1923 X. [Cmd. 1885] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1922-23 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 25-26 [959-960] [Report signed] [Lord] Salisbury & [Lord] Novar.

#### **Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 March 1923]**

Report for the year 1922-23 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-19.<sup>13</sup> 25 May 1923.

### **Annual Report for 1923-24 / Annual Report for 1923**<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Typescript neostyled bears no reference mark.

<sup>14</sup> Neostyled reports were for the calendar year.

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1924**

1924 IX [Cmd. 2174] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1923-24 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 24-25 [234-235] [Report signed] [Lord] Parmoor & Wm. Adamson.

### **Annual Report for 1924-25 / Annual Report for 1924**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1924-25**

1924-25 XII [Cmd. 2433] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1924-25 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 27-28 [455-456] [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & John Gilmour.

#### **Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1924]<sup>15</sup>**

[3570] Report for the year 1924 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-8. [n.d.].

### **Annual Report for 1925-26 / Annual Report for 1925**

#### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1926**

1926 X [Cmd. 2676] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1925-26 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 33-35 [371-373]. [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & John Gilmour.

#### **Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1925]**

[10464] Report for the year 1925 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-10. [n.d.]

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<sup>15</sup> Report for period April 1923 to December 1924.

**Annual Report for 1926-27 / Annual Report for 1926**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1927**

1927 VIII [Cmd. 2902] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1926-27 (Annual Report).

The Royal Scottish Museum 28-29 [868-869]. [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & John Gilmour.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1926]**

[5381] Report for the year 1926 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-13. April 1927.

**Annual Report for 1927-28 / Annual Report for 1927**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1928**

1928 IX [Cmd. 3111] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1927-28 (Annual Report).

Royal Scottish Museum 29-30 [329-330] [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & John Gilmour.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1927]**

[275.50. 4/28.] Report for the year 1927 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-9. February 1928.

**Annual Report for 1928-29 / Annual Report for 1928**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1928-29**

1928-29 VI [Cmd. 3312] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1928-29.

The Royal Scottish Museum 36 [416] [Report signed] [Lord] Balfour & John Gilmour.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1928]**

[D 27711-5- C I] Report for the year 1928 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-9. 2 March 1929.

**Annual Report for 1929-30 / Annual Report for 1929**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1929-30**

1929-30 XIII [Cmd. 3565] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1929-30 (Annual Reports).

[Section] 26. The Royal Scottish Museum 41-42 [313-314]  
[Report signed] Lord Parmoor & Wm. Adamson.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1929]**

[D 25490-90 D J] Report for the year 1929 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, F.S.A., F.S.A. (Scot.), Director. 1-12. 19 March 1930.

**Annual Report for 1930-31 / Annual Report for 1930**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1930-31**

1930-31 XII [Cmd. 3867] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1930-31 (Annual Reports).

[Section] 24. The Royal Scottish Museum 43-44 [1033-1034]  
[Report signed] Lord Parmoor & Wm. Adamson.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1930]**

[32596-1-90 B A] Report for the year 1930 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Alex. O. Curle, C.V.O., F.S.A. Director. 1-16. 10 February 1931.

**Annual Report for 1931-32 / Annual Report for 1931**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1931-32**

1931-32 IX [Cmd. 4033] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1931-32 (Annual Reports).

[Section] 23. The Royal Scottish Museum, 39-40 [307-308].  
[Report signed] Stanley Baldwin & Archibald Sinclair.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1931]**

[978-1 – 90 D B] Report for the year 1931 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Edwin Ward, F.S.A. (Scot.) Director. 1-18. 12 February 1932.

**Annual Report for 1932-33 / Annual Report for 1932**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1932-33**

1932-33 X [Cmd. 4322] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1932-33 (Annual Reports).

25. The Royal Scottish Museum 40-41 [820-821]. [Report signed] Stanley Baldwin & Godfrey P. Collins.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1932]**

[D 23972-1] Report for the year 1932 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Edwin Ward, F.S.A. (Scot.) Director. 1-14. March 1933.

**Annual Report for 1933-34 / Annual Report for 1933**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1933-34**

1933-34 XI [Cmd. 4601] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1933-34 (Annual Reports).

30. The Royal Scottish Museum 41-42 [909-910] [Report signed] Stanley Baldwin & Godfrey P. Collins.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1933]**

[D 23136-1 – 90 F D] Report for the year 1933 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Edwin Ward, F.S.A. (Scot.) Director. 1-13. March 1934.

**Annual Report for 1934-35 / Annual Report for 1934**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1934-35**

1934-35 VIII [Cmd. 4850] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1934-35 (Annual Reports).

29. The Royal Scottish Museum 45-46 [627-628] [Report signed] Stanley Baldwin & Godfrey P. Collins.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1934]**

[D 42141-1 – 90 C E] Report for the year 1934 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Thomas Rowatt, M.I. Mech.E., Director. 1-14. 6 February 1935.

**Annual Report for 1935-36 / Annual Report for 1935**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1935-36**

1935-36 X [Cmd. 5140] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1935-36 (Annual Reports).

Chapter VIII. The Royal Scottish Museum 46 [50] [Report signed] J. Ramsay MacDonald & Godfrey P. Collins.

**Neostyled Report [to year ending 31 December 1935]**

[31328-1] Report for the year 1935 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Thomas Rowatt, M.I. Mech.E., Director. 1-13. 10 February 1935.

**Annual Report for 1936-37 / Annual Report for 1936**

**House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1936-37**

1936-37 X [Cmd. 5428] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1936-37 (Annual Reports).

Chapter IX, The Royal Scottish Museum 48-49 [325-326] [Report signed] J. Ramsay MacDonald & Walter E. Elliot.

**Non-Parliamentary publication**

Report by the Director of the Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, for the year 1936. 1-19. Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office (1937).

## **Annual Report for 1937-38 / Annual Report for 1937**

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1937-38**

1937-38 X [Cmd. 5709] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1937-38 (Annual Reports).

Chapter XIII. The Royal Scottish Museum 72-73 [576-577]  
Report signed] [Lord] Hailsham & Walter E. Elliot.

### **Non-Parliamentary publication**

Report on the Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, for the year 1937. 1-24. Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office (1938).

## **Annual Report for 1938-39 / Annual Report for 1939**

### **House of Commons Parliamentary Report for 1938-39**

1938-39 X [Cmd. 6007] Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland for 1938-39 (Annual Reports).

Chapter XII. The Royal Scottish Museum 75-76 [987-988]  
[Report signed] [Lord] Runciman of D. & John Colville.

### **Non-Parliamentary publication**

Report on the Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, for the year 1938. 1-22. Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office (1939).

## **Annual Report 1939**

[Reports to Parliament were suspended]

### **Neostyled Report**

Report for the year 1939 on the Royal Scottish Museum by Thomas Rowatt, O.B.E., M.I.Mech.E., Director. 1-30. [n.d.].

## Appendix IV

### Content of photographs as temporal landmarks

Evidence from content of photographs used as temporal ‘landmarks’ to assign dates to images used to illustrate the thesis.



Figure 3.9.

- a) Gate of Sanchi at entrance and column from Halicarnassus at north-east end of hall ([A.]1896.50) – arrangement post 1896.
- b) Gas lighting track, removed 1902.

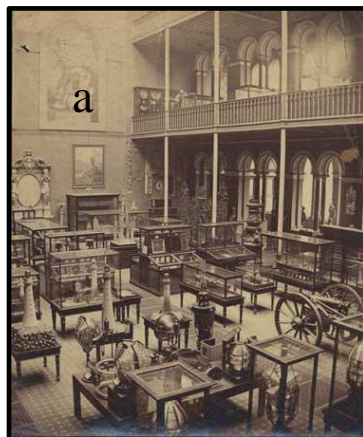


Figure 3.12.

- Displays moved into building in 1865.
- a) Temporary east wall, removed when the Great Hall was completed in 1875.



Figure 4.1.

- a) Tabernacle, acquired 1889 ([A.]1889.30).
- b) Gate from Sanchi exhibited at east end of hall – the gate was moved to a location in the middle of the hall, at the entrance, so as to accommodate the column, entablature, and portion of the ceiling of the mausoleum at Halicarnassus acquired in 1896 ([A.]1896.50).

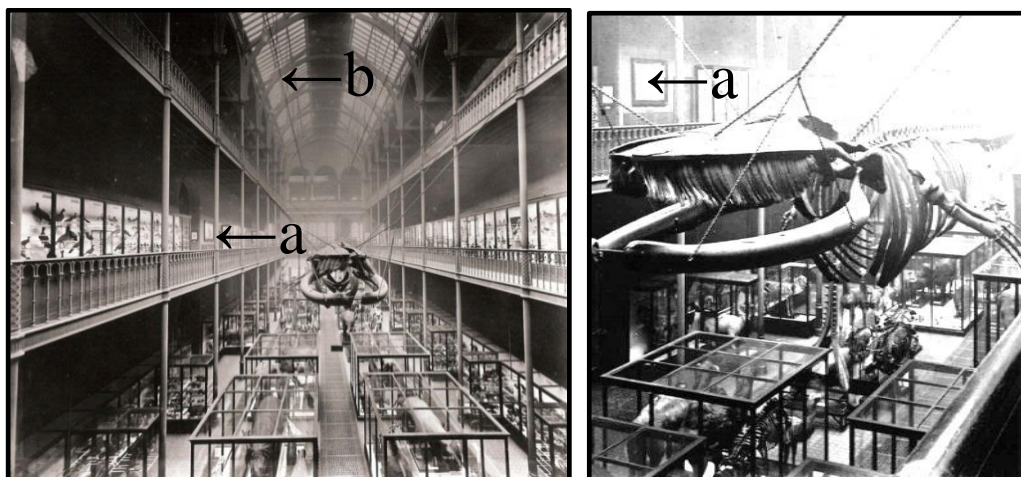


Figure 5.2A.

- a) Paintings of extinct birds, hung in 1892.<sup>1</sup>
- b) Gas lighting track, removed 1902.

<sup>1</sup> Traquair, R. H. (1893) Report of the Keeper of the Natural History collections. p. 281 [341] in Smith, R. M. Report of the Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art for 1892. Fortieth report of the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, Appendix F. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893-94 [C. 6905], 276-284 [336-344].

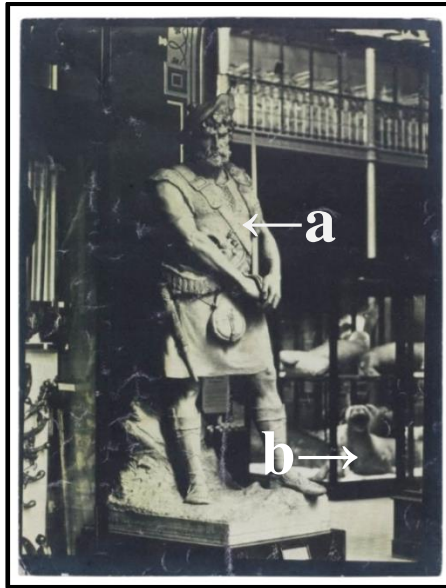


Figure 6.6.

- a) Statue of Rob Roy on loan to the Museum 1885-1937 (A.L.76.2).
  - b) Leopard seal donated by W. S. Bruce in 1905 ([Z.]1905.167.3).
- By 1916, the Scottish weapons had been relocated to a second floor display space.

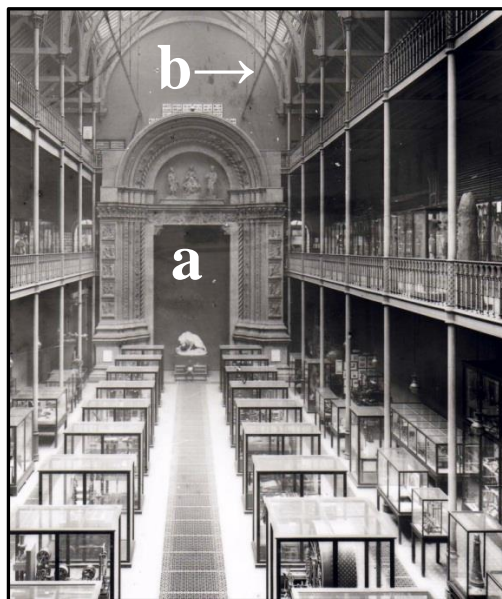


Figure 6.8.

- a) Cast of gateway from the Basilica di San Petronio, Bologna, erected 1889.
- b) Gas lighting track, removed 1902.

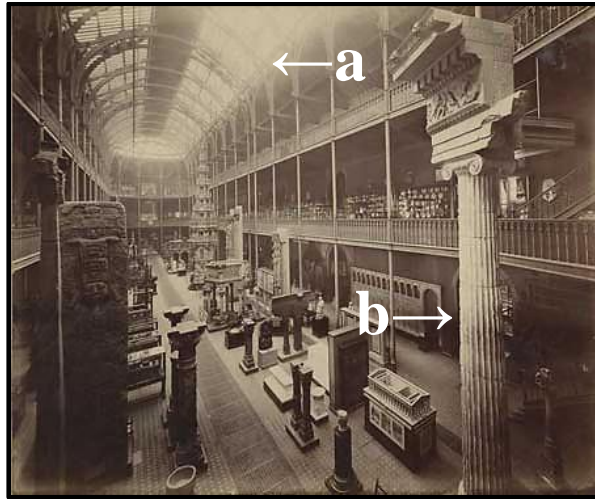


Figure 6.9.

- a) Gas lighting track, removed 1902.
- b) Cast of column, entablature, and portion of the ceiling of the mausoleum at Halicarnassus, from the original in the British Museum, and acquired in 1896 ([A.]1896.50).

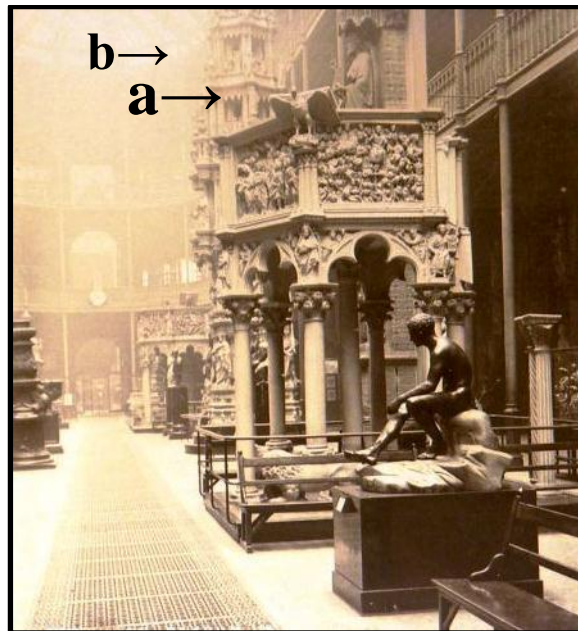


Figure 6.16.

- a) Cast of tabernacle by Cornelis Floris de Vriendt from the church of St Leonard at Léau, Belgium, acquired 1889 ([A.]1889.30).
- b) Gas lighting track, removed 1902.

## Appendix V

### Form of registration numbers

Chapter 5 discussed how the different collecting streams were produced by, and maintained, their own registers. As a result of the operation of similar registration schemes in different departments a number of different objects might share the same number. With the introduction of computerised databases in 1982, in order to ensure that registration numbers were unique, they were prefixed with letters indicating the department in which they were registered. At about the same time there were international initiatives to identify institutions by unique codes such that registration numbers were truly unique.<sup>1</sup> The Royal Scottish Museum registered its institutional code as RSM. The institutional code was subsequently amended to NMS following the collections amalgamation into the National Museums of Scotland in 1985 and in 1988 the departmental codes were amended to reflect the administrative restructuring conducted as part of the amalgamation process. Throughout the thesis registration numbers are quoted with their departmental code in parentheses: ‘A’ for History and Applied Art, ‘T’ for Technology, ‘Z’ for zoological collections in Natural Sciences and ‘G’ for geological collections in Natural Sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> A. E. Leviton, R. H. Gibbs, Jr., E. Heal and C. E. Dawson (1985) Standards in herpetology and ichthyology: part 1. Standard symbolic codes for institutional resource collections in herpetology and ichthyology. *Copeia* 1985: 802-832.



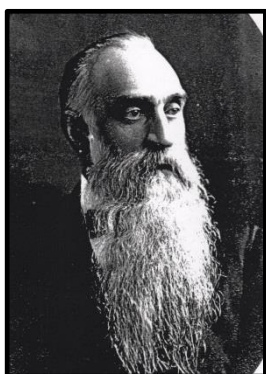
## Appendix VI

### Directors of the Museum

Throughout the thesis Directors are referred to by their surname only. For the sake of clarity and uniformity, I broadly follow library cataloguing practice by using the final element of the name, even though for some Directors, such as Thomas Carlaw Martin and Robert Murdoch Smith, there is evidence that they used a compound form of surname.<sup>1</sup>



**George Wilson** (b. Edinburgh 1818; d. Edinburgh 1859)  
Director 1855-1859  
FRSE 1845



**Thomas Croxen Archer** (b. Northamptonshire 1817; d. London 1885)  
Director 1860-1885  
FRSE 1862

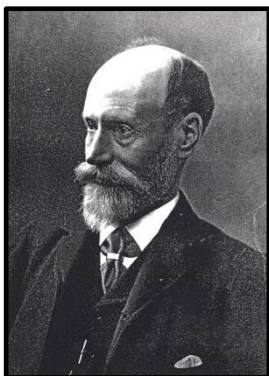
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<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 2002 (revised 2005). American Library Association (ALA), Canadian Library Association (CLA), and Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). Chapter 22, Headings for persons. Press reports consistently referred to Carlaw Martin, and to his wife as Lady Carlaw Martin - for examples, see *The Scotsman* (1913) The Insurance Act: consumption among domestic servants. *The Scotsman* 19 July 1913; *The Scotsman* (1920) Secretary for Scotland: local authorities and a higher status. *The Scotsman* 28 July 1920. Robert Murdoch Smith signed his correspondence the Museum's Annual Reports 'R. Murdoch Smith, Col., R.E.' and used this form of his name in other publications, notably Smith, R. M. (1876) *Persian Art (South Kensington Art Handbooks)*. London: Committee of Council on Education. However, in the *Army List* he appears under 'S'.



**Alexander Galletly** (b. Perth 1829; d. Nantwich 1894)  
Resident Assistant (1855-1860) and later Curator (c.1860-1894)

Galletly was the Museum's accounting officer in the interregnum between Wilson's death and Archer's appointment and acted for the Director on other occasions whilst the Director was absent, most notably during 1887 whilst Smith was on six months special leave in Persia.<sup>2</sup>



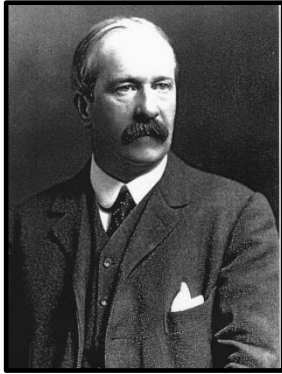
**Robert Murdoch Smith** (b. Kilmarnock 1835; d. Edinburgh 1900)  
Director 1885-1900  
KCMG 1888  
FRSE 1886



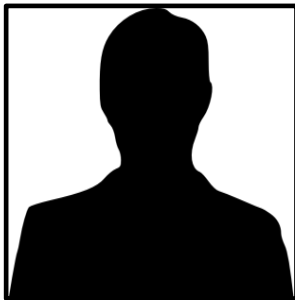
**Francis Grant Ogilvie** (b. Aberdeen 1858; d. Edinburgh 1930)  
Director 1900-1903  
Commander of the Order of the Bath 1906; Knighted 1920  
FRSE 1888

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<sup>2</sup> GB37/ED84/35(1864), Précis of the Minutes of the Science and Art Department, minutes of 1 December 1859 and 21 December 1861, pp. 259 and 364; GB37/ED84/40(1892), Précis of the Minutes of the Science and Art Department, minutes of 6 May 1886 and 11 January 1887, pp. 91 and 112.

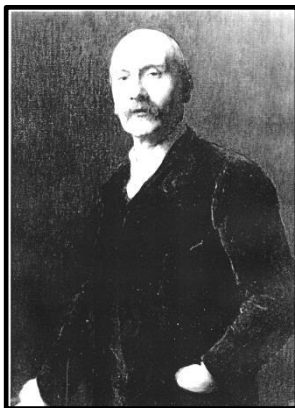


**James Johnston Dobbie** (b. Glasgow 1852; d. Fairlie 1924)  
Director 1900-1903  
Knighthood 1915  
FRSE 1903



**David James Vallance** (b. 1849; d. 1915)  
Curator

Vallance was appointed Acting Director in the hiatus in the period 1909-1911 following Dobbie's resignation and Martin's completion of his appointment with the Scottish Agricultural Commission. There is no known image of Vallance.

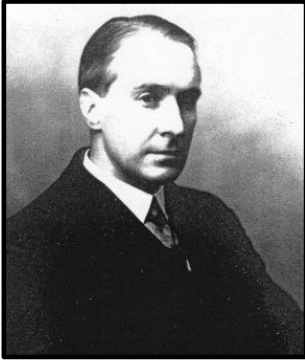


**Thomas Carlaw Martin** (b. Linlithgow 1850; d. Edinburgh 1920)  
Director 1911-1916  
Knighthood 1908  
FRSE 1912



**Alexander Ormiston Curle** (b. Melrose 1866; d. Edinburgh 1955)  
Director 1916-1931

Before being appointed to the Directorship of the Royal Scottish Museum, Curle was Director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. For the period of war-time austerity, 1916-1919, he held both directorships simultaneously.



**Edwin Ward** (b. Cheshire 1880; d. Edinburgh 1934)  
Director 1931-1934



**Thomas Morton Rowatt** (b. Kew 1879; d. Edinburgh  
1950)  
Director 1934-1944  
OBE 1939  
FRSE 1935