

University College London: The Scottish Connection

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One of the most striking things about the founding and early years of the University of London (later University College London) is the very large number of Scots and of Edinburgh-educated Englishmen who were involved in either governing or teaching at the University (H. Hale Bellot, *University College London 1828–1926*, 1929).

Of the original founders, the two most important, Thomas Campbell and Henry Brougham, were Scottish-born and educated. Thomas Campbell, a poet of some reputation in the early years of the nineteenth century, was born in Glasgow and attended the university there in the early 1790s. Henry Brougham, who took the title Baron Brougham and Vaux when he was appointed Lord Chancellor in the whig administration which took office in 1830 and passed the great Reform Act of 1832, was born in Edinburgh and studied there in the 1790s, becoming a lawyer and one of the founders of the Whig *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.

Others involved in founding the new University in London in 1825 were Dr George Birkbeck, an Englishman who took his medical degree in Edinburgh in 1799, James Mill and Joseph Hume, who were at school together in Montrose and who both studied in Edinburgh in the 1790s, James Loch, an Edinburgh-educated Scottish lawyer and estate manager, Zachary Macaulay, father of Thomas Babington Macaulay and a self-educated Scot, and Leonard Horner, the first Warden of the University of London, born and educated in Edinburgh, where he was a contemporary and friend of Brougham and Mill.

Two of the liberal-minded aristocrats who joined the first Council of the new university were Englishmen educated in Edinburgh, the Marquis of Lansdowne and Viscount Dudley and Ward. Of the first Professors appointed at the new University of London, a number were Scots, including Edward Turner and his successor Thomas Graham (chemistry), John Ramsay McCulloch (political economy), John Borthwick Gilchrist (Hindustani), Robert Grant (zoology), and Alexander Maconochie (geography).

The Scottish connection is perhaps unsurprising, given that there were until 1828 four long-established Scottish universities producing graduates and only two English ones. Another factor was that Scots and Scottish-educated Englishmen tended to be nonconformist in religion, while dons at Oxford and Cambridge had to be subscribing Anglicans; the new non-subscribing University of London was therefore a natural home for such men.

Even more striking was the number, and calibre, of the early Professors in the medical school who came from the famous medical faculty at Edinburgh University. Many of them were pioneers in their fields, and many were involved in rivalry for coveted posts north of the border. They often brought their quarrels and quarrelsome personalities with them to London, with the result that the University's medical school, though instantly eminent, was also

subject to public rows and controversies, as in the famous Pattison affair of 1830–1831. Among them were Charles, later Sir Charles, Bell; Granville Sharp Pattison, Anthony Todd Thomson, John Gordon Smith, Robert, later Sir Robert, Carswell, the great surgeon and pioneer of ether, Robert Liston (from 1835), and William Sharpey (from 1836)

Two eminent, if controversial, English medical professors who had studied in Edinburgh were John Conolly, pioneer of humane lunatic asylums, and John Elliotson, who used mesmerism as a form of medical therapy until he was forced to leave the University in 1839.