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Visitors visiting books: visitors' books at the Library of Innerpeffray

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ABSTRACT

The Library of Innerpeffray, in rural Perthshire, is the oldest free public lending library in Scotland and contains unique manuscript records which are invaluable resources for the fields of library and tourism history. This article argues that two key developments contributed to Innerpeffray's transformation from a lending library into a reference library and visitor attraction: the impact of one of the library's patrons, Robert Hay Drummond, and the growth of tourism in mid-nineteenth-century Perthshire, within the wider development of Scottish tourism. Two sources are explored for the first time: annual reports sent to the Governors of Innerpeffray between 1891–1907 by the then-Keeper of Books, Mrs Christian Birnie; and the first volume of the library's visitors' books, which contains visitor details from 1859–97. The article presents some preliminary findings about inscribed locations, gender, and repeat visitors to emphasise the value of visitors' books which primarily contain visitor details without additional commentary.

KEYWORDS

Visitors' books; Innerpeffray; Scotland; tourism; library history

It is impossible to pass over the venerable beauties of Innerpeffray, [...] established for the good of the community, and carrying back the mind to the antient situation, and the genius of Scotland. (Newte 1791, 248)

In Alice Crawford's introduction to *The Meaning of the Library* (2015), she considers "the library' as a changing and organic entity, something that is constantly adapting and becoming something else" (xvi). As this article will explore, the Library of Innerpeffray can indeed be depicted as "a kaleidoscope image, forever nudged into new versions with each turn of the cylinder; a concept endlessly and energetically reinventing itself" (Crawford 2015, xvi). Throughout its long history, the Library of Innerpeffray has physically relocated from a private home to a chapel to a purpose-built reading room, and institutionally transformed from a lending library into a reading room and visitor attraction. In 1859, the first entry was inscribed in the original Innerpeffray visitors' book, starting an extensive record of visitors to Scotland that continues to this day. This article is the first to investigate the visitors' books at Innerpeffray and focuses on the earliest volume,

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which spans the period 1859–97 and contains almost 10,000 signatures of visitors. By first revisiting the history of Innerpeffray through the lens of its development into a visitor attraction and then presenting some initial findings, the article will demonstrate the importance and value of both the library and its visitors' books.

In 1992, Alastair J. Durie published one of the first academic studies to highlight the value of visitors' books – an influential analysis of the tourists who signed their names in the “Register of Visitors” at Abbotsford House in the Scottish Borders, the historic home of Sir Walter Scott (1992, 42). In the years since Durie's foundational analysis, the field has matured, and many useful works have recently been published which investigate visitors' books at different sites across the world. Within Scotland, in-depth research into visitors' books has thus far been limited to those at Abbotsford. The scholarship includes Durie (1992) and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (2017), as well as Ian Donnachie's (2005) work on the “visiting books” of the New Lanark factory near Glasgow, which may be the oldest extant visitor records in Scotland (Donnachie 2005, 147; Durie 2011, 77). Studies into visitors' books are connected with research into tourism, and indeed the field of Scottish tourism is “a flourishing area of study”, with many important works investigating the growth of tourism in Scotland and the causes of its lasting popularity as a holiday destination (Durie 2012, 1).¹ This discussion of the Library of Innerpeffray visitors' books is intended as an addition to the corpus of scholarship in this area.

Despite its significance as the first free public lending library in Scotland, remarkably little has been written about the Library of Innerpeffray. In addition to a limited number of articles and book chapters, most notably those by Paul Kaufman (1964; 1965; 1969), Mark Towsey (2010) and Katie Halsey (2017), there are two key full-length works: George Chamier's *The First Light: The Story of Innerpeffray Library* (2009) and Jill Dye's doctoral thesis, “Books and their Borrowers at the Library of Innerpeffray c.1680–1855” (2018), the most comprehensive work on the library to date. The central focus of Dye's doctoral research is the first 100 years or so of the library's manuscript borrowing registers, from 1747–1855, although the records of the books borrowed and by whom continue until 1968. The library's early borrowing registers are also part of an ongoing Arts and Humanities Research Council project into the history of reading across eighteen historical Scottish libraries, “Books and Borrowing 1750–1830: An Analysis of Scottish Borrowers' Registers” (2021).

Prior research at Innerpeffray has been limited to the library's early history – neither Dye's thesis nor the ongoing “Books and Borrowing” project continue past the mid-nineteenth century, and other research has primarily focused on the period of the Scottish Enlightenment (Cairns Mason 2009; Towsey 2010; Fenyes 2014; Halsey 2017). Moreover, although *The First Light* purportedly covers the entire history of the library, very little is written about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Chamier's opening timeline of key events in the history of the library, the visitors' books do not warrant a mention, with no reference made to their introduction in 1859 (2009, vi). This disregard of visitors' books appears to be the case in many institutions – Chaim Noy writes that despite “the significance of these books as historical records, precious little research has been done to document and address them” (2015, xv). Until now, the Innerpeffray visitors' books have historically been neglected and underutilised.

Though the borrowing registers are the best-known manuscript sources at the Library of Innerpeffray, the visitors' books contain considerably more names of people from the past and therefore represent an as yet untapped resource for scholars of tourism and

library history. In her own period of investigation, 1747–1855, Dye discovered that “only an estimated 1021 individuals used the library”, whereas early research indicates that around 10,000 visitors travelled to the library between 1859–97 – a significantly higher number of people in a much shorter period (2018, 86). Furthermore, as books could only be borrowed by local people, while visitors travelled to Innerpeffray from across the world, it is possible to make global, as well as regional, connections through the visitors’ books. The following discussion will argue that two internal and external factors transformed the Library of Innerpeffray from a rural seventeenth-century lending library into an international nineteenth-century visitor attraction: one of the key individuals involved with the running of the library, Robert Hay Drummond, and the development of leisure tourism in mid-nineteenth-century Perthshire.

The evolution of a visitor attraction

Located near Crieff in rural Perthshire, the Library of Innerpeffray was founded c.1680 by David Drummond, third Lord Madertie (1611–1694), who made his personal collection of books available to the local population by moving them from his home to a nearby chapel (Dye 2018, 9).² Madertie also made provisions for a Librarian, or “Keeper”, and ensured that his books would be “preserved entire” and “augmented by [his] successors [...] for the benefit and encouragement” of the local populace in perpetuity (Will of David Drummond, Third Lord Madderty 1680, 5). Established three years before the opening of the “Bibliothek of Kirkwall” in Orkney, and requiring no subscription or borrowing fees, the Library of Innerpeffray is therefore the oldest free public lending library in Scotland (Kaufman 1965, 264).

Introducing the second volume of *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (2006), Giles Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley write that “the history of libraries is not primarily about institutions, but about the individuals behind them” (2006, 4). This is certainly true of the Library of Innerpeffray, which has been significantly impacted by its various Keepers and Patrons.³ In 1739, Robert Hay Drummond (1711–1776) inherited the Innerpeffray estate and became the fifth Patron of the library (Dye 2018, 48). Described by Chamier as the man “who was to give the Library its new shape”, Hay Drummond initiated the first “period of significant change” since the library’s opening in the seventeenth century (2009, 32; Dye 2018, 48). Indeed, many of the changes enacted by Hay Drummond in the mid-eighteenth century can be viewed as catalysts for the evolution of the library into a visitor attraction. Two of these key changes were the design of a new library, which opened in 1762 and still welcomes visitors today, and the purchase of a substantial number of new books.

It is likely that when Hay Drummond started initiating changes at Innerpeffray, he was inspired by the intellectual culture of the Scottish Enlightenment and the library at Christ Church, Oxford, from where he graduated in 1731 (Sharp 2004). Rather than maintaining Innerpeffray as a depository of books for browsing and borrowing, Hay Drummond designed the eighteenth-century library building to be “a proper central place for the Gentlemen [*sic*] of the neighbourhood to meet”, “for the conveniency of such as shall come to read” (*Minute Book of the Governors of the Innerpeffray Mortification 1723–1811*, 15; as quoted in Dye 2018, 49). In other words, Hay Drummond envisioned Innerpeffray as a reference library and reading room – somewhere that educated men could consult

texts and hold academic debates. In keeping with this goal, the first floor of the library was constructed with appropriate features for a reading room. The room is open and spacious, with three large windows designed to make the most of available daylight for reading and a grand fireplace to keep reference users warm throughout their long visits. Additionally, the books are stored in floor-to-ceiling, locked bookcases whose top shelves are inaccessible without the use of a ladder – clearly not designed with casual browsing in mind. In addition to the architectural design of the building, Hay Drummond also showed a preference for large folios when purchasing books for the collection. These were oversized books which would not have been convenient for borrowing and carrying home, but which would have been more suitable for reference (Dye 2018, 55). Again envisioning a library suitable for classically-trained gentlemen, Hay Drummond “overwhelmingly recommended old books for the new building” instead of more contemporary works suitable for the wide-ranging tastes of local borrowers (Dye 2018, 56).

Although Dye could not find any evidence to suggest that Innerpeffray was actually used as a gentlemen’s club style reading room before 1855, details from the 1891–1904 annual reports of the Keeper of Books, Mrs Birnie, suggest that the library was indeed used in the way Hay Drummond intended during the nineteenth century. In 1896, Birnie writes that “Chairs and additional Tables” were donated to the library “by the generous liberality of a gentleman” (1896, 1). And in the report of the following year, she states that readers “who availed themselves of the privilege of consulting books in the Library” were “unanimous in expressing gratitude to the generous donor, who last year, so kindly provided accessories for their comfort and convenience” (1897, 1). Although Birnie does not disclose the name of the “generous donor” who supplied the reading room furniture, she reveals that multiple visitors were indeed using the library for the consultation of reference texts.

By enacting changes to the library’s design and purpose, Hay Drummond inadvertently started Innerpeffray on its path to becoming a visitor attraction, necessitating the introduction of visitors’ books to record guests’ details. The placement of the new library, built eighteen inches from the original chapel in order to avoid incurring additional taxes, meant that visitors could view the site where it all started in the seventeenth century and thus experience the entire history of the library (Chamier 2009, 37). The “lofty well proportioned room” not only allowed for chairs and tables but also provided plentiful space for visitors to gather and enjoy the “magnificent views of the winding river Earn below, and the rich farmlands of Strathearn” (Chamier 2009, 39–40). The bookcases lining the walls to create that central space kept the rare sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books protected and secured with lock and key, with only the Keeper able to remove books for consultation and display. Finally, the antiquated folio volumes that Hay Drummond purchased as being more appropriate for reference were ideally suited for showing to groups of visitors who would have had difficulty crowding around smaller books. As exemplified by a surviving 1811 letter from the Perth Library and Antiquarian Society which enquired about visiting such a “valuable treasure for the Country”, it is clear that the changes implemented by Hay Drummond pushed the library into becoming a prestigious visitor attraction (Letter from Alexander Murray & John Willison 1811).

In addition to the impact of the internal changes detailed above, the evolution of Innerpeffray was further propelled by the development of leisure tourism in Scotland, which

produced hugely increased visitor numbers to Perthshire and inspired the library to introduce its visitors' books in 1859. There were, however, select visitors to Innerpeffray before the 1850s, "the decade when large-scale tourism really began to take-off in Scotland" (Durie 1992, 52). According to Richard W. Butler, these "highly significant and noteworthy visitors" to eighteenth-century Scotland can be viewed as "the precursor of later, more conventional tourists" (1998, 123). Three such early visitors recorded their travels to the Library of Innerpeffray in writing: Richard Pococke, Thomas Pennant, and Thomas Newte.

Perhaps the earliest travel writer to visit Innerpeffray is Richard Pococke, Bishop of Meath, who toured Scotland in 1762, although his letters remained unpublished until 1887. In addition to providing a brief history of Innerpeffray, Pococke details the route he took to get to the area and his means of travel, "having had an extream pleasant ride round these beautiful romantick vales", before concluding that the library must have allowed Maderty to live "entirely abstracted from the World" (1887, 244–245). Probably inspired by Pococke, whose accounts he had consulted in manuscript form and whom he referred to as "[m]y old friend", travel writer Thomas Pennant described his own visit to Innerpeffray in his hugely influential *A Tour in Scotland*, undertaken in 1772 and published in 1776 (Pococke 1887, lxi; Leask 2020, 77). Appearing under the heading "Camp of Strageth", indicating that he initially visited the area in search of the nearby Roman ruins at Strageth, Pennant's account may be the first to mention the 1762 building: "Reach the village of Innerpeffery. At this place is a good room, with a library, founded by David, Lord Madderty, which still receives new supplies of books" (1776, 90).

In 1791, another famous tour of Scotland was published by Thomas Newte, who writes that:

It is impossible to pass over the venerable beauties of Innerpaffray, fronting Castle Drummond [...] the antient seat of the Lords of Maderty, its chapel, public library, and school, both established for the good of the community, and carrying back the mind to the antient situation, and the genius of Scotland. (Newte 1791, 248)

Like Pennant, Newte visited after the completion of the new building and commented that the "hall where the books are kept" was "both spacious and elegant", but that in his opinion the Keeper's wage, "not amounting to ten pounds annually" was "miserably small, and should certainly be augmented" (1791, 248). Intriguingly, Newte's true identity may go some way to explain his feelings about the librarian's salary. "Thomas Newte" was the pseudonym of William Thomson, who worked in his youth as a "private librarian" for Robert Hay Drummond's brother, Thomas Hay, the ninth Earl of Kinnoull (Bayne 2004). This connection to the Drummonds may also explain how Newte came to visit Innerpeffray, although, just as Pennant emulated Pococke, it is probable that Newte also read the publications of the travel writers who went before him. This tallies with what we know of the literary basis of much tourism – Precious McKenzie writes that Victorian readers "devoured books about travel" and "sought adventure which the travel writing of the past decades had inspired" (2012, 3, 7). It is certainly striking that the decade of the 1850s not only saw the introduction of visitors' books at Innerpeffray but also new books about travel added to the collection, with "the first instance of a Victorian travel book and the popular *Emigrant's Manual*" borrowed from the library in 1855 (Dye 2018, 66).

Whereas travelling had once primarily taken the form of upper-class tours around Europe, a transitional period in the latter eighteenth century is demonstrated by the

above accounts of writers such as Pococke, Pennant, and Newte, who played significant roles in “developing the fledgling tourism industry” in Scotland (Butler 1998, 124). However, despite these influential eighteenth-century visitors, it was not until the influx of large numbers of nineteenth-century tourists that visitors’ books were introduced to the Library of Innerpefferay. Much has been written about the “total transformation” of tourism in nineteenth-century Scotland, and various developments within Perthshire can be seen to have contributed to the increasing visitor numbers to Innerpefferay, including improved transport links and the success of other local tourist attractions (Butler 1998, 126).

While Pococke travelled to Innerpefferay on horseback in 1762, nineteenth-century visitors had many more options for travel thanks to the increased availability of boats and trains – indeed, it has been argued that “the advent of steam-powered travel permanently altered the face of Scotland as a tourist destination” (Butler 1998, 131). As the nineteenth century progressed, visitors could access rural areas of Scotland more quickly and reliably than ever before – at Innerpefferay, a train station was opened on the railway line between Crieff and Perth in 1866 (“Innerpefferay Station” 2021). A striking example of the improved speed of train journeys is provided in a contemporary travel book about Dunkeld, a nearby town. Before the implementation of new railway lines, a trip between the cities of Perth and Inverness took three days by coach, but by the time the guide was published in 1879, the same trip took only five hours by train (*Dunkeld: Its Straths and Glens* 1879, 108). With this considerable advance in the speed of travel, tourists were able to travel much further in their limited leisure time.

In 1879, another contemporary travel guide detailed some of the reasons for Perthshire’s specific appeal:

It is studded with palatial residences, and abbeys grey with age and full of historical interest. Its scenery is unrivalled, its rivers and lakes limpid as crystal, and its cities, towns and villages alluring to the welcome stranger. (Drummond 1879, vi)

Indeed, tourists were drawn to the local area by a wide range of attractions, including the following sites that also kept records of visitors: the Crieff Hydropathic Hotel, opened in 1868 by Doctor Thomas Henry Meikle, who signed the Innerpefferay visitors’ books three times; the historic home of the Drummond family at nearby Drummond Castle; and the Leighton Library at Dunblane. Although Durie (2011, 79) claims that “registers were kept, and kept rigorously” at the hydropathic hotels throughout Scotland, and Sinclair Korner reported in his book *Rambles Round Crieff* that the head gardener at Drummond Castle “kindly request[ed] the visitor to write his name and dwelling-place in a book” (1858, 32), there is currently no indication that these visitors’ books survive. Information does exist, however, about visitors received at the Leighton Library in nearby Dunblane. Twenty miles from Innerpefferay, the Leighton started opening its doors to groups of tourists known as the “Water Drinkers”, who were drawn to the area by the nearby Cromlix mineral springs discovered in 1813. Instead of paying the usual subscription fee, the “Water Drinkers” paid a “new short-term borrowing fee” while they were visiting the area (Halsey 2020).

The unexplored archive

I shall now look more closely at previously uncatalogued and overlooked material evidence within the Innerpefferay archives: a series of Annual Reports in the form of letters

written to the Governors of Innerpeffray (1891–1904), and a sample from the first Visitors' Book (1859–97).

Historical evidence relating to the administration of the Library of Innerpeffray is scarce, but recent archival work has uncovered a series of letters containing Annual Reports from 1891–1904. These letters were written to the Governors of Innerpeffray Library by Mrs Christian Birnie, Keeper 1890–1914, who “spent nearly sixty years at Innerpeffray” due to her familial links to her brother James Christie (Keeper 1855–68), and husband James D. Birnie (Keeper 1868–86) (Chamier 2009, 70). Within the letters, Birnie indicates that records such as these were not kept in the preceding years, stating that she was producing these reports for the first time, “[i]n accordance with a suggestion made by the Governors” (1892, 1). In her reports, Birnie lays out statistics from the previous years, relating to how many books were borrowed, where borrowers came from, what new books were acquired by or donated to the library, how many visitors' names were recorded in the visitors' books, and the names of some notable visitors.

The sections of the reports which detail specific names of visitors have a distinctive research value, as they provide information about which individuals were considered important (and worth emphasising to the Governors) at the time, as opposed to which visitors seem significant from a modern perspective. It is worth bearing in mind that these reports were presented to the Governors in order to demonstrate the importance of the library and to request additional funding and resources, as in 1894, when Birnie emphasises that “more good modern Books are needed for general readers” (1894, 1; underlining in original). Birnie carefully words her letters to portray Innerpeffray in a positive light, and always emphasises the improvements that the library has made over the previous year. For example, Birnie repeatedly states that the “number of Students, and others interested in Literature, who have availed themselves of the privilege of consulting Books in the Library, has greatly exceeded that of any former year”, despite no evidence that the library recorded reference readers separately from borrowers and general visitors (1893, 1). In spite of this potential lack of objectivity, Birnie's reports provide an invaluable insight into the history of the library between 1891–1904.

Innerpeffray's extensive archive of visitors' books dates from 1859 and survives to the present day, with modern visitors still adding their names to the record after their tour of the library. This extant source is particularly striking given that manuscript documents such as these seldom survive without any volumes, pages, or signatures missing (Durie 2012, 12). Although several of the British hotel visitors' books that Alan McNee surveys “show signs of having had lines crossed through, or sections of pages excised with knife or scissors”, there is no evidence of either censorship or removal of entries within the Innerpeffray visitors' books (2020, 150). As Durie specifically laments visitors' books which were “cut up for signatures of the famous”, it may be advantageous that the visitors' books at Innerpeffray went unnoticed for so long, as signatures of notable figures such as Doctor Elsie Inglis, J. M. Barrie, George Bernard Shaw, and Bing Crosby have not been removed and sold (2011, 73).

The first volume of Innerpeffray visitors' books contains almost 10,000 signatures across a thirty-eight-year period, with an average of twenty-six lines per leaf across 188 double-sided pages. Digitisation and transcription of these visitors' books is currently underway, and a sample of the first 3000 entries has been used to draw preliminary conclusions here. In addition to issues which affect any transcription project, such as

handwriting legibility and factors including pen and ink quality, there may also be transcription issues particular to the “unique medium” of visitors’ books (Noy 2015, xv). In the Innerpeffray visitors’ books, entries often become less legible as visitors approach the bottom of the page, where there is less available space and nowhere to lean one’s hand while writing. Visitors seem to have been reluctant to start writing on the next blank page, whether it be moving from verso to recto or turning the page to start a new spread. Most lines within the visitors’ books contain one or two visitors’ names, most often one individual’s name or a husband and wife pairing written as “Mr and Mrs” followed by their surname. Entries on the very bottom line of a page, however, are frequently condensed into one line in order to take up less space and prevent moving on to the next leaf. For example, on 18 July 1871, the Cooper family signed the Innerpeffray visitors’ book, each member of the family getting a separate line for their name, despite the handwriting indicating that one individual wrote all of the entries. Immediately below the Coopers, on 22 July 1871, an individual from Glasgow wrote his entry at the very bottom of the page as “John H. Watt and friends”, without listing his friends’ names *Innerpeffray Library Visitors’ Book Volume 1 1859–1897*, fol. 21r. Hereafter *ILVBV1*. This may be a manifestation of tourist conformity, or perhaps an enduring conviction regarding the value of paper and a subsequent reluctance to be seen as wasting space, despite the “rise of the steam press” which had “made these books more accessible” during this period (James and Vincent 2016, 152).

Although this form of entry was conventional and appears throughout the Innerpeffray visitors’ books, John H. Watt might have named all of his travelling companions, following the example set by the Coopers above and thus providing more information about who exactly visited the library, if there had been more available space. Exemplified by John H. Watt and his mysterious “friends”, not every single visitor was recorded, and not every entry indicates a single visitor. One member of a party often acted as a representative for the entire visiting group, writing their name only with the addition of phrases such as “and party” or “and family” and/or “friends”. In these cases, it is difficult to infer exactly how many individuals were travelling together, and impossible to know for sure who was in a certain party. As a consequence, these people remain silent and invisible in history. As William St Clair put it in another context: “[s]ince no writer of the time bothered to record them, it is as if they never existed” (2002, 231).

In a similar fashion, David Allan notes “the phenomenon of group subscription” in Georgian subscription libraries, where “it was very common indeed for one member of a household to subscribe” on behalf of the entire home. Obviously, this is a “complicating factor when attempting to gauge” numbers of borrowers, subscribers, or indeed visitors to an establishment (2015, 111). On very rare occasions, a visitor or indeed, the Keeper, might indicate how many were in a travelling group – for example, on 18 September 1886, the number four is written in brackets after W.N. Graham from Glasgow’s entry of “and party” – but for the majority of group entries, it is necessary to make an educated guess (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 69v). In his analysis of the Abbotsford visitors’ books, Durie counted “and party” entries as six people and “family” and “friends” groups as four (1992, 45). As that approach uses inconsistent numbers for what may have been synonymous terms for groups of people, I have opted instead to count each of these group phrases as two additional visitors. When the writer was travelling with one other person, it would take just as much time and energy to write their name as it would to

write a placeholder such as “and family”. It is therefore more accurate to calculate these group entries as counting for at least two people in addition to the named individual, allowing for a possible degree of underestimation.

In addition to those invisible and unnamed individuals whose identities were obscured by terms such as “and family”, it is likely that some visitors were not recorded at all. We know that at Abbotsford House, each visitor “was requested to enter his or her name, and place of residence in the visitor’s register before they were shown round the rooms open to the public” (Durie 1992, 43). Due to the lack of surviving administrative records, we do not know if this was also the case for visitors to Innerpeffray – we cannot currently say how strongly each Keeper encouraged visitors to sign their names, or whether a signature was required before entry. The standard protocol may also have differed depending on how important a visitor was deemed to be – particularly notable visitors may not have been required, or asked, to sign the visitors’ book. For example, although multiple contemporary sources confirm Queen Victoria’s 1867 visit to Abbotsford, her name does not appear in their visitors’ books (Durie 1992, 43). Various reasons could account for this absence, but the knowledge that Queen Victoria visited Abbotsford without signing its visitors’ book raises the question of whether she ever visited the Library of Innerpeffray. Although her signature is similarly absent from the Innerpeffray visitors’ books, Chamier (2009, 68) asserts that she stayed in nearby Drummond Castle, and the library was gifted a personalised and signed copy of her 1868 book *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*. This book still survives in the Innerpeffray collection, and indeed boasts the following handwritten inscription: “Presented to the Inverpeffray Library by Victoria Reg | Balmoral, June 1869” (1868). The signed page is considerably damaged, with significant foxing and multiple rips and tears, indicating that it has been on display extensively in the past. Regardless of whether Queen Victoria visited the library, the evidence of her link to Innerpeffray demonstrated through her gifted book has evidently been a source of pride for past Keepers, who have chosen to show off her signature.

Alternatively, evidence from the Innerpeffray visitors’ books suggests that some visitors were recorded even when they did not leave their signature. While some individuals will undoubtedly be missing, with no record of their visit at all, others could be recorded without a member of their group signing the visitors’ book. In Noy’s ethnography of the Ammunition Hill Memorial Site in Israel, he observed that only a “relatively small number of visitors”, around 10%, penned an entry in the present-day visitors’ books (2015, 73). At Innerpeffray, it appears as though the Keeper of the Library sometimes recorded entries in the visitors’ stead. Two instances have so far been discovered of entries that appear to have been written by the Keeper rather than by the named individuals, who on both occasions were members of the nobility. One entry from 10 September 1875 reads, “The Right Hon. Lady Willoughby de Eresby – and party (Librn)” (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 32r). As Lady Willoughby de Eresby and her party would have travelled to Innerpeffray from her “summer residence” of Drummond Castle, “Librn” is not an abbreviation for a location but rather indicates that the entry was written by the Librarian (Korner 1858, 32).

Other visitors choose not to be identifiable – either by not engaging with the visitors’ book at all, or by writing under false or fabricated names and thus remaining anonymous. Noy comments that “visitors are well aware” that the visitors’ “book is as open to the public gaze as is the museum’s display as a whole”. Visitors inscribe their names with

the knowledge that their entries might be read by others, and “it is up to the visitors to choose if and how they identify themselves publicly and recognizably on the visitor book pages, or if they wish to choose anonymity” (2015, 59). McNee has discussed examples of entries “with obviously fictitious names”, including the whimsical “Podgy Wodgy, Ayr Fairy & Hoppety Poppety” written in the nineteenth-century Athole Arms Hotel visitors’ book at Blair Atholl, a Perthshire village about forty miles from Innerpeffray (2020, 149). Whether entries such as these are altogether fictional, references to playful nicknames, or indeed children’s toys, other entries can be misinterpreted due to our own assumptions. Returning to Abbotsford, McCracken-Flesher mentions the recent discovery that Mark Twain visited the site and signed using his birth name “Samuel L. Clemens” rather than his more-famous moniker, thus hiding in plain sight from those who may have been thrown off the scent by his later, negative “public pronouncements on Scott” (2017, 32).

While these puzzling entries are fascinating, it is also worth considering visitors who, perhaps unintentionally, may never be identified from their entries. Two individuals who visited Innerpeffray on 2 May 1876 left entries which do not provide any clues for further research, signing their names only as “Mrs Curr” and “Miss Duncan” with no indication of their places of residence (*ILVBV1* 1859–1897, fol. 33r). Even with a location supplied, as with “W. Wallace” who visited from Glasgow on 31 October 1876, it is highly unlikely that a visitor could be identified from only a first initial and commonplace surname (*ILVBV1* 1859–1897, fol. 41v). Entries such as these are not atypical within the Innerpeffray visitors’ books and act as a reminder that “source materials, however plentiful”, are often “incomplete, randomly surviving”, and sometimes “incomprehensible” (St Clair 2002, 227–228). Indeed, the “unfamiliar figures” such as Mrs Curr, Miss Duncan, and W. Wallace, who often make up so much of surviving historical records, are frequently “hard to place, troublesome to introduce, not easily summed up in a phrase or two—and there are so many of them” (231).

James and Vincent have identified the importance of paying “closer attention” to the “material qualities” of visitors’ books, specifically emphasising how “their material forms reflect the status claims and resources” of site caretakers (2016, 152). Although Chamier did not mention the visitors’ books when stating that the manuscript borrowing registers were “rescued” and “rebound” in the 1920s, it is clear that the first volume has indeed been rebound, most likely arranged by William M. Dickie of Cambridge University Library, who in 1926 catalogued all books published before 1801 in the Innerpeffray collection (2009, 92). Whereas the later volumes of visitors’ books at Innerpeffray retain their original half-leather bindings, the first volume seen today is a hardback quarto bound in brown leather with “Innerpeffray Library Visitors Book 1859–1897” embossed in gold on the spine (*ILVBV1* 1859–1897). It is possible to infer that visitors were important to Innerpeffray by considering the resources dedicated to commissioning a large book specifically to record visitors, with money spent on it in both 1859 and 1926. Furthermore, as Noy outlines,

the very presence of this medium implies, at least within the eyes of the site’s management, that visitors’ feelings and thoughts are worth articulating, and related to this, that the site has a status worthy of such a writing surface (2015, 47).

The choice to provide costly, aesthetically-pleasing, and custom-made visitors’ books makes it apparent that visitors were deemed a valuable aspect of the library, but also

that the institution was considered prestigious enough to warrant recording visitor details – indeed, as Noy writes, “the visitor books served to attest to the grandeur and the finesse of the institution” and its management (2015, 19).

The value of visitors to Innerpeffray is accentuated by the manner in which Birnie detailed the numbers of visitors to the library each year. In her annual reports, Birnie recorded “the number of names entered in the Visitors Book” with an additional explanatory note that “[t]his is not the total number of visitors as some enter one name only ‘& party’” (1891, 1). In addition to demonstrating that she was aware of visitors’ book customs, it appears that Birnie wished to emphasise just how “appreciated and greatly valued” the library was by both local people and visitors (1896, 1). Furthermore, before going on to list notable visitors to the library in the previous twelve months, Birnie further asserts that “those who have visited once in the season, do not as a rule, enter their names when they come a second or third time, or oftener” (1895, 2). Once again emphasising to the Governors that there were more visitors than officially recorded, she reveals that some individuals visited the library more than once, and such repeat visitors will be explored in more depth below. From both Birnie’s reports and the introduction of the visitors’ book, it is evident that there was a mutual process whereby visitors endorsed the library’s importance, and the library valued them in return.

The first entry in the earliest Innerpeffray visitors’ book was written on or around the 8th of April 1859, detailing Scottish historian and antiquarian Mark Napier’s visit across the previous two days. Napier writes a detailed, seven-page account of his visit to “this interesting and curious Library”, which was motivated by his long-term research into David Drummond’s brother-in-law James Graham, or “the Great Montrose”, an eminent Scottish soldier and writer who fought in the seventeenth-century civil wars in Scotland and England. Within his extended entry, Napier details where he stayed (with one of David Drummond’s descendants, Captain Arthur Hay Drummond); how he found out about the existence of the library (through friends, Reverend Henry Malcolm of Dunblane and the Right Reverend Alexander Forbes, Bishop of Brechin); the reason for his visit (to investigate links with the Great Montrose); precisely which books he consulted (three volumes owned by Montrose and a Bible owned by Montrose’s sister and David Drummond’s wife, Beatrix Graham); and who he dealt with at the library (“the Librarian Mr. Christie, who joined [him] most zealously in the search, and to whose obliging and intelligent cooperation [he] was much indebted”) (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fols 1r–7r).

Napier’s seven-page entry is the only one of its kind in the Innerpeffray visitors’ book archive, and within the first volume, there are only two additional entries which contain “free-text content” (Singer 2016, 394). That is, content which cannot be categorised as metadata – information other than the date and details about the inscriber including their name, address, and occupation. On 21 January 1873, Alexander Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, one of the men who told Napier about Innerpeffray, inscribed the phrase “Nil nisi Cruce” – a Latin maxim meaning “Nothing unless by the Cross” – in addition to his name and title (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 23r). And on 26 September 1865, Adam White included additional information about his profession and visit: “Adam White, for 27 years an assistant in the Zoological Department, British Museum, spent many hours this day in the Library of Innerpeffray” (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 10v). By detailing that he spent “many hours” at Innerpeffray, White implies that he was consulting books rather

than merely touring the library. He confirms this in an article published the following year in the London periodical *Good Words*, writing “I was on my way to examine for a second time, the curious library of Lord Maderty [*sic*] at Innerpeffray, where are many books that belonged to the great Marquis of Montrose” (1866, 213).

After Napier’s illustrious introduction, the following three entries date from 19 December 1860, and after 3 May 1861, the book starts to record many visitors to the library each year. The first 3000 entries, referenced within the remainder of this article, cover a period up to 5 June 1885. I use the term “entries” here rather than “visitors”, because, as explained above, many entries include phrases such as “and party” or “and family” which do not specify the number of visitors within each group; those phrases are counted as two additional visitors here. In some instances, as noted above, a single entry does indicate how many people were in a travelling party. On 21 August 1863, for example, when “Mr & Mrs & Mr Charles Wright” visited from Crieff, there were evidently three recorded visitors to the library (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 9v).

As [Figure 1](#) indicates, there was a gradual upwards trend of visitors to the Library of Innerpeffray over the first twenty-five-years that the visitors’ book was in use. The incongruous absence of any entries in 1864 stands out, especially as borrowing at the library is recorded as having continued as usual, with 275 books borrowed between 1 January and 9 December 1863 (*Innerpeffray Library Borrowers’ Register 1859–1898*, fols 22r–27v). As previously mentioned, there are no missing volumes or pages in the visitors’ books which would explain this gap. Fol. 10r records visitor details from 13 October 1863–24 December 1863, with the last recorded entry in 1863 a “J. Hannah” from “Trinity College, Glenalmond”. On the next line after this entry, “Viscountess Strathallan & Miss Drummond” record their visit to the library on 31 May 1865 (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 10r). Although the most likely explanation may be that the visitors’ book was mislaid or lost, there is no clarification within the book itself or in any other surviving documentation for this seventeen-month interruption in the records.

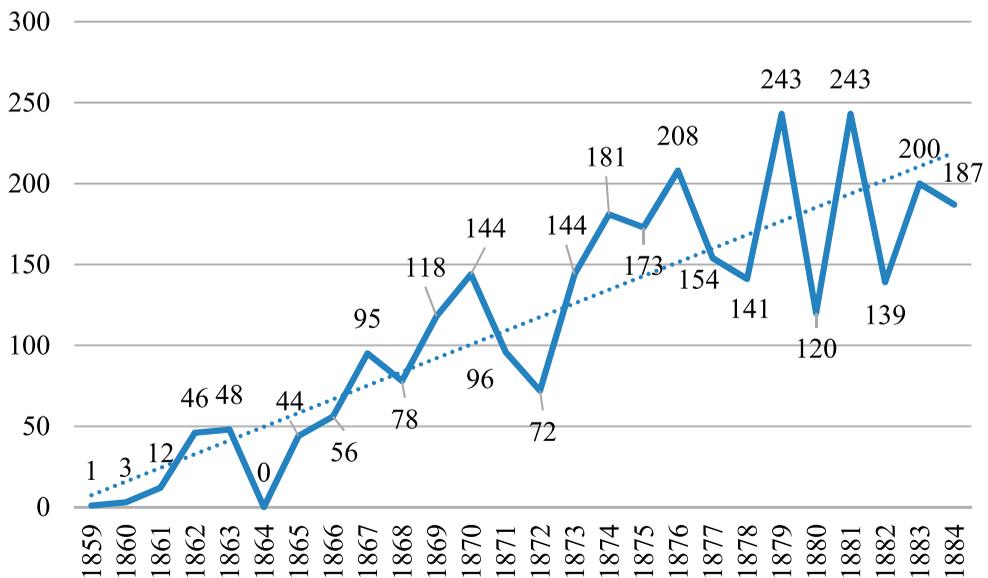


Figure 1. Number of entries per year in the Library of Innerpeffray Visitors’ Book (1859–1884).

As the examples above of J. Hannah and Viscountess Strathallan demonstrate, visitors provided different levels of information within their entries. While J. Hannah provides a specific address, referring to the school in Perthshire that was opened in 1847 by William Gladstone, Viscountess Strathallan and Miss Drummond do not include any details of their places of residence, which as they were members of the nobility would have been public knowledge (“History of Glenalmond” 2021). Indeed, when *The Antiquary* magazine reported “several valuable contributions” to Innerpeffray in September 1909, it named two donors as “Viscountess Strathallan”, with no address provided, and “Mrs. Haldane, of Cloan” (Bibliothecary 1909, 350). The magazine felt it necessary to specify which “Mrs. Haldane” it was referring to, but there was no need to provide additional contextual information to identify Viscountess Strathallan.

In his evaluation of surviving visitors’ books in Scotland, Durie notes the presence of different written instructions on what information should be included within entries. In the visitors’ books at New Lanark, visitors were directed to enter their details under three headings: “Date”, “Name”, and “Residence”. At the Glasgow Necropolis, visitors were instructed to provide further information: “date, names, residence and country, and then ‘by whom introduced’” (2011, 77). At Innerpeffray, there are no surviving instructions, either in the form of printed or written column headings within the visitors’ books or of external signage. Noy has discussed Ken Arnold’s view that explicit instructions such as “museum labels” can sometimes “stand in for [an] absent curator” – it may be the case that, as today, visitors were not left alone in the library, and consequently there was no need for instructional signs in or next to the nearby visitors’ book (2015, 49; 2006, 99). Noy comments that this was often the case in historic visitors’ books which were “reserved for signatures that confirmed the visit”, where visitors were escorted by an “owner or a member of the staff, who made sure that the items on display remain[ed] intact” (2015, 19). The only printed markers within the Innerpeffray visitors’ book are two red margin lines on the left-hand side, and barely noticeable horizontal lines across each page. While most visitors obligingly wrote the date within the red lines, the additional information provided varies in both content and structure. Although much recent research has focused on free-text entries with extensive commentary, I now wish to highlight the considerable research potential of visitors’ books which have recently been depicted as “mere lists of names” (James and Vincent 2016, 151) in “well-behaved but impenetrable rows” (McCracken-Flesher 2017, 21).

Location, gender, and repeat visitors

Location

As noted above, visitors provided different levels of information about where they had travelled to the library from. Some, like L. Sym on 11 September 1884, gave their full street address: “1 Park Terrace, Ayr”, whereas others included their workplace, as John Ingram from Glasgow’s “Mitchell Library” did on 30 August 1879 (*ILVBV1* 1859–1897, fols 63r, 45v). In both of these cases, it is possible to determine the city and country from the information given. Other locations, however, are not as easy to decipher without supplementary information. In 253 of the first 3000 entries, there is either no information on the visitors’ location, or the information is unclear. For example, two

visitors who wrote that they had come from “Dundonald” in November 1875 may have been from either County Down, Ireland, or Ayrshire, Scotland, both of which have villages with this name (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 32v). There are additionally occasions where contextual knowledge is lost or perhaps was “too universal or so ubiquitous as to be taken for granted” (St Clair 2002, 227). On 14 April 1874, a Sister Josephine indicated that she had come from “S. Michael’s House”, with no indication of town or country (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 26v). From a modern perspective, more information is required, but Sister Josephine might have assumed a contemporary reader with the appropriate local knowledge would have known what she meant without further clarification.

The vast majority of entries by those visitors whose locations can be determined – 2342 out of 3000, or 78% – list Scottish placenames. It is worth pointing out, however, that some visitors named the place they were staying in while visiting Scotland, rather than where they had travelled from initially. When Beatrix Potter’s parents visited the library in August 1868, they recorded their location as Kippen (most likely Kippen House in Dunning) (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 15r). When they visited again in August 1869, they listed both “Garvock” and “London”: the former to indicate where they had travelled from that day, Garvock House in Dunning; and the latter where they usually lived, South Kensington in London (*ILVBV1 1859–1897*, fol. 16v). With this in mind, the Scottish visitor numbers may be inflated slightly from visitors who listed their temporary Scottish address with no mention of their usual residence, as in the Potters’ first entry. Within Scotland, Edinburgh (23%), including districts such as Granton, Leith, and Portobello, is named most often, followed closely by Crieff (22%) and its surrounding areas, and Glasgow (20%), including suburbs such as Govan, Hillhead, and Kelvinside. A considerable number of entries also named locations within and nearby the cities of Dundee (7%) and Perth (5%). As Edinburgh and Glasgow are the two biggest cities in Scotland, this makes sense, as does the inclusion of Crieff as Innerpefferay’s nearest town. Despite the caveats listed above, the predominance of Scottish visitors at Innerpefferay largely confirms Durie’s point that Scottish people in the nineteenth century were intent on exploring their own country (2012, 4). Furthermore, there are similar statistics in the 1825 New Lanark visitors’ book, where 16% of visitors wrote that they came from Edinburgh and 15% from Glasgow. On a related note, Edinburgh and Glasgow seem themselves to have been hubs for many nineteenth-century visitors to Scotland, as Donnachie also writes that most visitors from Europe entered Scotland from Edinburgh, and many American tourists started their holidays in Glasgow (2005, 151).

Within the United Kingdom, 303 entries list places in England as their location, eighteen list locations within what is now Northern Ireland, and two list Wales. The remaining 82 entries are from locations beyond the British Isles, as shown in Figure 2. There was a sizeable number of visitors from India and the United States, with 15 entries detailing locations including modern-day Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai, and 16 specifying locations including New York, Chicago, and Virginia. As these visitors from beyond Europe were wealthy enough to travel all the way to Scotland, it may be easier to identify them. Durie notes that American tourists in particular “tended to be a roll-call of the well-known, the educated, and the wealthy”, which makes the job of tracking them down considerably easier, although this adds to an existing disproportionate emphasis on the rich and famous, rather than discovering more about less well-known figures (2012, 50).

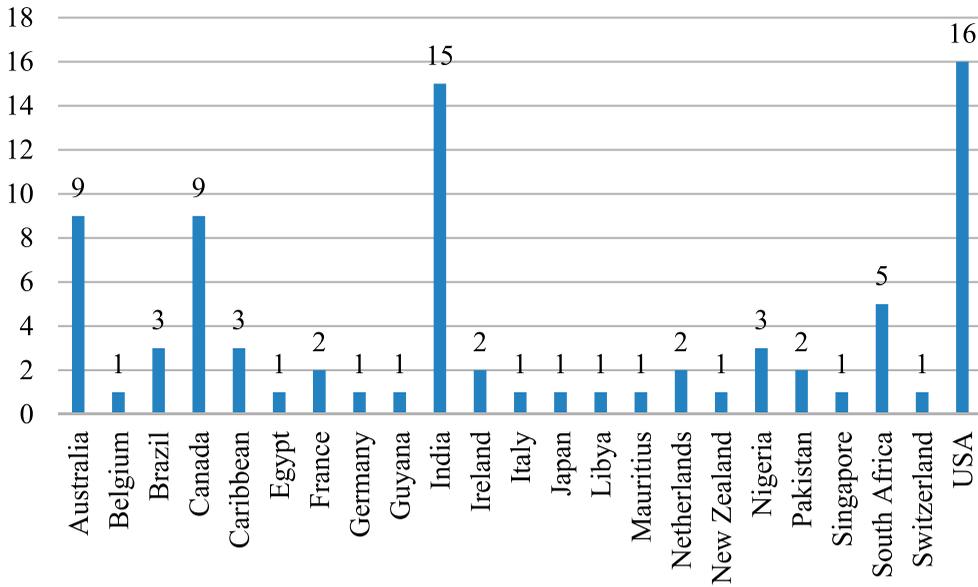


Figure 2. Entries containing countries outside of the United Kingdom, 1859–1885.

Gender

Using only the titles and names provided by the visitors themselves to assume gender, there are more entries that indicate women than those that indicate men in the Innerpeffray visitors' books, with 1368 female names and prefixes such as "Miss" and "Mrs", and 1177 male names and titles such as "Mr", "Reverend" and "Doctor". There are additionally 455 entries which do not provide enough information to indicate gender. The fact that there are more women visitors than men named in the Innerpeffray visitors' books, with many groups of women travelling alone without a (named) male companion, is striking, as it belies the widely held opinion that women did not travel as much as their male counterparts.

Certainly, Durie (2011, 77) remarks that "signatures of women are very rare indeed" in the Abbotsford visitors' books, but Donnachie reports that at New Lanark, "a large proportion of visitors were women", recorded "often in parties of their own sex, and occasionally singly" (2005, 159). One of Donnachie's suggestions for these increased numbers is that "socially concerned" women were particularly drawn to the "pioneering infant school" at New Lanark, raising the possibility that women were also interested in viewing the Innerpeffray school (2005, 146–147). Additionally, while new "[p]ublic libraries were much less accommodating to female users", the Library of Innerpeffray never discriminated against women readers (Sutherland 2015, 135). Dye writes that 54 women borrowed books from the library before the 1850 Public Libraries Act, with even higher numbers of women and children recorded in the post-1855 borrowing registers (2018, 113, 66). Although more research on this topic is required, there may be a correlation between Innerpeffray's welcoming atmosphere to women borrowers and its high numbers of women visitors.

Repeat visitors

One of Durie's research goals was to discover "whether the same names recurred year after year" at popular visitor attractions (2011, 79). Although Birnie writes in her reports that those who visited more than once did not, "as a rule", write in the visitors' books multiple times, there are 145 entries which record visitors returning to the library on more than one occasion (1892, 2). My process of confirming that individuals did actually visit multiple times, rather than two separate but similar people visiting, is based on four factors: their name, their listed location, their travelling group, and their handwriting and/or signature. Admittedly, all of these criteria can change over time – a visitor might get married and change their name; they might move; they might at one time visit with a partner and later with a friend; and, as outlined above, one individual sometimes wrote the entries for an entire party, preventing orthographic comparison. With this in mind, an individual is only labelled as a repeat visitor if they meet two or more of the above criteria.

Adopting Dye's term of "super-users" to describe prolific Innerpeffray borrowers, certain individuals who repeatedly visited the library can be categorised as "super-visitors" (2018, 98). Two "super-visitors" of note were Robert and Janey Mudie from Broughty Ferry, who each visited the library four times over a period of nine years, accompanied by different friends and relatives each time. Many of these associates later returned to the library accompanied by new individuals, suggesting a word-of-mouth process by which Innerpeffray became known as a visitor attraction. Repeat visitors can also reveal developments in an individual's life, as with Alex Thom from Crieff, who visited the library on three occasions over five years. On each occasion, Thom's entries show that he has progressed in his career: first, visiting as a recent graduate, and later as a Doctor and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (*JLVBV1 1859–1897*, fols 28r, 31r, 43r). It is evidently possible to investigate multiple avenues of research into these visitors who travelled to Innerpeffray more than once.

The evolution of the Library of Innerpeffray is an important case for the academic study of both library history and Scottish tourism. This article has emphasised the importance of a considerable body of underutilised archive material, and closely examined the Innerpeffray visitors' books for the first time. Building on past in-depth investigations into visitors to Abbotsford and New Lanark, the data from the Library of Innerpeffray represents a significant addition to a growing corpus of visitors' books. Historically speaking, it has been shown here that two key factors contributed to propelling Innerpeffray from a small lending library to a visitor attraction with global appeal: the eighteenth-century influence of Robert Hay Drummond, and the nineteenth-century development of Scottish tourism. Furthermore, this article has highlighted the importance of visitors' books such as those at Innerpeffray, which have often been overlooked as containing no more than the "nominal recording" of visitors' details (Noy 2015, 19). As demonstrated, it is possible to extrapolate significant lines of enquiry about locations, gender, and repeat visitors, which can be applied to our wider knowledge about visitors to nineteenth-century Scotland. There is still much to discover about these informative and illuminating records, and the potential for research projects based upon these sources is extensive. Indeed, the visitors' books at the Library of Innerpeffray "provide a marvellous jumping off point for further enquiry, explanation and comment" (Durie 2012, 16).

Notes

1. For more information on the development of Scottish tourism, see: Womack (1989); Butler (1998); Durie (2003); Haldane Grenier (2005); and Leask (2020).
2. Many variant spellings can be found in early publications about Innerpeffray. In Pococke's original 1762 letters, he wrote "Inverpeffery", which was mistakenly changed to "Innerpeffary" in the Scottish History Society edition of his work (1887). And while Thomas Pennant (1776) used "Innerpeffery", Thomas Newte (1791) spelled it "Innerpaffray", as in the epigraph to this article. Additionally, both "Madderty" and "Madertie" are used interchangeably in historical records, with books belonging to David Drummond in the library typically signed "Madertie".
3. A Drummond family tree (1471–1918) with "patrons of Innerpeffray" marked in bold and a list of Keepers of the Library (1691–2005) can be found in Chamier's *The First Light* (2009, 122; 125).

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