The Founding of the Edinburgh Medical School

ROGER L. EMERSON

ABSTRACT. This article seeks to show that the usual accounts of the founding of the Edinburgh Medical Faculty in 1726 give undue prominence to John Monro, an Edinburgh surgeon, and to George Drummond, later Lord Provost of Edinburgh. They do so because their authors have ignored the ways in which patronage appointments, such as medical professorships, were and had been dispensed in the city of Edinburgh and in its university. There the Town Council was only nominally independent when it came to making professors. Medical historians have been equally cavalier in their treatment of the roles of leading politicians, especially of Archibald Campbell, first Earl of Ilay and later third Duke of Argyll, who was the most important Scottish politician working between c. 1716 and his death in 1761. A more realistic view of the history of Scottish medicine would not ignore the realities of politics and the relation of these to institutions, such as the Edinburgh Medical Faculty. Keywords: Lord Ilay, George Drummond, Edinburgh, university, medical, faculty, patronage, professorships.

An Edinburgh school of medicine existed in some sense before the creation of the Edinburgh University Medical Faculty because instruction in the basics of a medical education—anatomy, botany and materia medica, medical theory and practice, including midwifery—was available in the city.¹ Many studied as apprentices and servants of the town’s physicians and surgeons.² The faculty created in the university in 1726 evolved

1. If one were to give it doctrines, they would be those of Archibald Pitcairne and Sir Robert Sibbald. See Andrew Cunningham, “Sydenham versus Newton: The Edinburgh Fever Dispute of the 1690s between Andrew Brown and Archibald Pitcairne,” in Theories of Fever from Antiquity to the Enlightenment (Supplement to Medical History, 1981, 1), pp. 71–98.
2. Helen Dingwall gives figures for these that suggest that in 1700 there were about 150 surgical apprentices and servants in the city to which should be added the apprentices and servants of physicians and simple apothecaries. Dingwall, Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries Medicine in Seventeenth-Century Edinburgh (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), pp. 25, 70.
after many years in which appointments of teachers had been made both outside and in the university. Those appointments were made in much the same ways and by the same politicians. The creation of the faculty was thus as much the work of political leaders seeking to expand their power and to stay in office as it was the result of the agitation of medical men and Edinburgh Town Councillors responding to long-felt needs. This view modifies or contradicts the usual accounts of the founding of the faculty.

The story usually told of the founding of the Edinburgh Medical Faculty goes somewhat as follows. John Monro, a retired military surgeon from a cadet branch of a landed family, began in 1700 to keep an Edinburgh apothecary’s shop. Three years later, he joined the surgeons’ guild, called the Incorporation of Surgeons, and by 1712 rose to be its member on the Town Council and eventually the Deacon Convener of the Trades (1714)—head of the city’s nonmerchant trade guilds and an important local figure. By then he had a bright son named Alexander, in whom he saw a boy to realize his dream—the creation of a medical faculty in the town’s university and a burgh hospital where the doctors and surgeons might teach as they did in Leiden. There Monro had studied in the 1690s while serving with the forces in Europe, and there he became friendly with Hermann Boerhaave. He would make his own son another one-man faculty like Boerhaave.

Animated by this dream, Monro gave special thought to Alexander’s medical education, which was excellent. After attending the University of Edinburgh and serving an apprenticeship with his father, he went to London, where he studied with William Cheselden, William Whiston, and Francis Hauksbee. He then went on to Paris to study botany and surgery. Next he proceeded to Leyden, where he, too, studied with Boerhaave. Returning home in 1719, he brought with him a modern knowledge of anatomy and surgery and the skill of making the wax preparations now needed for its teaching. In 1720 he was, upon the recommendation of the Incorporation of Surgeons, made a professor of anatomy in the town and college, first during the council’s pleasure and then, in 1722, for life during good behavior. That job had been arranged by his father and his father’s friend, George Drummond, an

3. The Edinburgh Senatus Academicus might see the faculty as having been created in 1726, but it would not have a dean and regular minuted meetings until the 1770s. By then the city supported two schools of medicine since there was virtually a complete one operating extramurally at Surgeons’ Hall.
important local politician, who bamboozled the council by naming Alexander a professor in the college, not merely in the town. George Drummond was to be six times the Lord Provost of the city and knew how to manage things.

John Monro, in the meantime, had befriended Dr. Charles Alston, who taught botany in the city. About 1723 Monro also encouraged a group of four young doctors, friends of his son, to begin the teaching of chemistry and the theory and practice of medicine in the city. They supplied instruction that the professors of those subjects were not doing in 1724 or 1725. The four young men were given chairs in the university in 1726. A professor of midwifery was appointed in the town at the same time and the medical faculty was complete. Most of John Monro’s dream had been fulfilled. About the same time (1725), George Drummond had begun agitating for a teaching hospital, which in a small way opened in 1729. It was to grow into the Royal Infirmary, one of the great hospitals of the eighteenth and later centuries. That is the story of how the Edinburgh Medical Faculty was created. It was all due to John Monro and George Drummond.

We should take all this as a nice folk tale but one that is false or at the very least misleading in its simplicity. Most historians of Scottish medicine have accepted it, mainly because the story seems so well founded.4

It originates in an autobiographical sketch by Alexander Monro that was available in manuscript to earlier writers but was published fully only in 1954. Those who have written on the topic have believed Monro’s account, but the story rests on Monro’s word and has little or no independent corroboration. Where there have been diversions from it, they have generally only pointed out other obvious factors making the teaching of medicine desirable at that time. It would cost less to educate medics in Scotland than in Holland; the country could finally afford to improve its universities; there was an increased demand for medics partly because the British services were now more open to Scots and the medical professions were now regarded as more honorable; Scotland was more settled; and so on. All those are true, but the old story lives on while the politics surrounding the creation of the medical school and the faculty of 1726 are ignored. I would like to look primarily at the politics of university and medical and surgical patronage in Edinburgh c. 1690 to c. 1730. That story must begin with other chairs in the university and the way they were filled.

**Politics and University Appointments**

In 1690 the University of Edinburgh, like all the others in Scotland, was visited by a Parliamentary Visitation Commission, which purged it of most of its politically unreliable Jacobites and Episcopalians and brought it into line with the new Williamite order established by the Revolution of 1688. Government politicians, not the Town Council of Edinburgh, which had the legal right to fill the chairs, really appointed the new men. The legal fiction of council appointment was maintained, but greater politicians called the shots. This became and remained the norm at Edinburgh throughout the eighteenth century.

Every principal and professor of divinity from 1690 until 1806 was chosen by politicians and accepted by a docile Town Council. All the Regius professors of ecclesiastical history save one were picked in the same fashion. The professors of Hebrew, and the arts faculty chair, were chosen in four of eight cases by politicians and in three

---

5. Erlam, “Alexander Monro, primus.”

others by the local ministers. In the law faculty, the Regius professorship of the law of nature and of nations was treated after the first appointment (a political job as the country was dissolving as a separate sovereign entity) as a place to be awarded to a lawyer who could not yet be given something better in the courts. The other chairs, civil law and Scots law, were nominally in the gift of the Town Council, which was to pick from two presented by an nominating committee of lawyers. The committees, after the initial appointments, always presented a twosome, only one of whom would serve, so the council did not pick these men either. This was also generally true of the holders of the chair of humanity or Latin and of the chair of universal civil history and Roman antiquities, which were also filled by the lawyers who composed a majority of the committees which drew up nominations for the Town Council.

The other arts chairs were little different. After about 1703, the competitive examinations, which had been mandated for the filling of chairs by the Visitation Commission of 1690, lapsed. They did so when the nephew of the Lord Advocate was appointed. The Lord Advocate was the chief legal officer of the Crown in Scotland and had given it as his opinion that examinations were not good ways of getting the best professors. From 1703 to 1806 very few places in the arts faculty were filled without the concurrence of the leading Scottish politicians, who in all but about a dozen cases actually chose the man whom the council appointed. Nominally the patronage of the chairs lay with the Town Council, but in reality it was exercised by the politicians who handled Crown patronage in the country. Regius chairs and the others were treated in basically the same ways. There were no private patrons other than the Crown appointing to Edinburgh chairs until 1790. Of the 127 appointments made at Edinburgh in the years 1690 through December 1806, no more than twenty-five (20 percent) can plausibly be seen as made without the political interference of outsiders and about some of those we know very little. The Town Council made the appointments, but in doing so it usually acted for and at the behest of others. This is the context in which we have to understand the creation of a medical faculty at the University of Edinburgh, but we also need to look at some of the events that led up to the creation of medical chairs.7

7. These statement and those in the previous paragraph are based on my unpublished study of university patronage in Scotland 1690–1806.
Scots had long hoped to teach medicine and law in their own universities, but they had been too poor to realize these aims. The failure of the Melvillian reforms of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries persisted in the form of the memory of lapsed medical chairs at Glasgow and St. Andrews and in the mediciner’s post at King’s College, Aberdeen, which had become a sinecure for a local doctor who treated the boys and staff but did not teach. Scots studied law and medicine in foreign universities—principally but not exclusively in France until about 1572 (the date of the St. Bartholomew Massacre), often in northern Germany until the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), and then predominantly in Holland from about 1640 until 1740. They did not go to England. The hope of introducing law and medical teaching in the universities persisted and was seemingly realized when three medical chairs were created in Edinburgh University in 1685. These reflected a growing demand for medical education that is best reflected in the activities of the surgeons. Surgeons and physicians both helped establish the medical school, but the surgeons initially contributed the most to this complex story. How complex all this could be is perhaps best seen in the oldest of the medical school chairs, those of botany and anatomy, both of which were first created in the town and not in the university.

The chair of botany had a double origin, in the needs of local surgeons and physicians to have someone to teach botany and pharmacy to their apprentices, of which Edinburgh had quite large numbers by...
the end of the seventeenth century,\(^9\) and in the need to have competent keepers of the city’s various gardens belonging to the Crown, the Incorporation of Surgeons, and later to the town and university.\(^10\)

In 1670, James Sutherland (1639–June 1719) was appointed gardener to a new but small private garden (it was 40 feet by 40 feet) maintained after c. 1667 by Sir Robert Sibbald and two of his friends. By 1675, this had expanded to a plot 300 feet by 190 feet. In the following year, Sutherland was made Intendant of the Physic Garden by the Town Council, with an annual salary of £20, and a new status was given him: he was “joined with to [sic]” the professors teaching in the college, where he would thereafter give botany courses to students and to the apprentices of the surgeons and physicians. This right was worth about £20 yearly. Twenty years later he founded another garden near the college buildings where he taught and in the same year assumed the direction of the Royal Garden at Holyrood Palace. These places, all patronage positions, allowed him to deal in plants on the side. In 1699, he became King’s Botanist and in 1710 a Regius professor in the burgh but not in the college. Collectively, these posts were worth about £50. In his career, he had established or been the first appointee in three gardens, two chairs, and the position of King’s Botanist. At the height of his career, his places altogether were worth about £100 annually, to which should be added his unknown profits from the sale of plants. His income, which few teachers equaled, was partly spent on his numismatic collection and on books that related to his virtuoso interests. When he resigned his college chair in 1706, along with his control of the Physic Garden and the College Garden, he kept his other titles until 1714, when his royal warrants were not renewed by George I.

Sutherland’s accomplishments created a situation in which no one group could control the nomination to the university chair of botany; they had to negotiate with others who expected to be considered

---


and consulted. If all were not consulted, the appointment might not be worth having. The surgeons had a near veto over appointments because they specified the person with whom their apprentices were to study botany. Since their apprentices provided the principal market for his skills, the surgeons could render the chair nearly worthless to an incumbent they neither liked nor approved. The Town Council could deny the use of the best, but not the only, garden in the city, and they could appoint someone who did not hold the Regius chair. The Crown, too, could always give the posts of Royal Botanist and Keeper of the Holyrood Garden and Regius professor to someone other than the choice of the surgeons or the Town Councillors, thus establishing another school of botany in the burgh. And, finally, the university could make life difficult for anyone not suitting the professors. It was not unknown for men to have assigned to them inconvenient teaching hours or to have the students barred from attending their classes. All these considerations counted in one or another subsequent appointment. Politicians brokered the arrangements leading to appointments of men on whom the various interested parties could agree or whom they could be forced to accept.

When Sutherland resigned his university post in 1706, he was succeeded by Charles Preston (July 1660–December 1711), who in the previous year had applied to the Incorporation of Surgeons for the privilege of teaching the apprentices and had received it.\textsuperscript{11} His success as a teacher may have been the cause of Sutherland’s resignation since the surgeons had stipulated that their apprentices were to attend Preston and only Preston.\textsuperscript{12} That would have reduced Sutherland’s income from teaching fees if the now elderly man were still teaching. A few months later, Preston was made professor of botany in the university with the Town Council noting in its appointment that his “abilitie and qualifications...for teaching thereof being sufficiently known”; in short, he was not tried for ability.\textsuperscript{13} In this instance, the comment was more than the usual puff for a favored man. Preston was a Leyden doctor, well known to London men like John Ray,

\textsuperscript{11}. Ibid., pp. 28ff.
\textsuperscript{12}. Minutes of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (hereafter RCSE, Minutes), 8 November 1705, Library of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.
Sir Hans Sloane, and James Petiver and in Paris to Joseph Pitton de Tournefort and other academicians. There he had attended at least one meeting of the Académie des Sciences in 1699. Preston was, in fact, one of the best educated and well-connected scientific virtuosi of his time in Scotland. His father was also a well-placed Edinburgh lawyer and Court of Session judge. He himself was friendly with Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, then a manager for the Duke of Queensberry’s interest and soon to be a leading intellectual. Preston was familiar with all the Edinburgh men of learning, many of whom were gathered in the medical corporations and in a virtuoso club sustained by Sir Robert Sibbald, with whom he was also friendly.

When Charles Preston died in 1711, he was succeeded by his younger brother, George (1665/66–February 1749), who at one time had been surgeon major to the forces in Scotland. He had sought and gotten the support of the Incorporation of Surgeons. He also claimed that he had not been fully paid for acting as Surgeon Major to the forces in Scotland and by 1707 was owed four years’ back pay. This debt seems to have been still outstanding as late as 1712, but it may have mattered in the awarding of this post. He, too, was clearly a competent botanist with connections. Two years later, in 1714, he was still feeling poor and asked James Erskine, Lord Grange, SCJ, to be put on “the Establishment of Guards & garisons” which would allow him to “improve the science of Botany.” Preston had begun enthusiastically, but gradually he lost interest in his profession and in students. By 1738, when he resigned, he had long been all but inactive as a botanist and teacher.

Charles and George Preston did not get the Regius professorship and keepership of the Royal Garden. After Sutherland’s resignation, politicians awarded those in 1715 to William Arthur as political gifts from his relatives, Baron Sir John Clerk, Sir John Inglis, and Adam Cockburn, Lord Ormiston, SCJ, all men in office and with ties to


16. RCSE, Minutes, 3 August 1711 and 31 December 1711.

17. George Preston to Lord Grange, 10 April 1714, Mar and Kellie Papers, MS GD 124/15/1122, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh (hereafter SRO).
Scottish political factions of some power in 1712. Arthur did not teach, but he might have had he not been involved in the 1715 effort to take Edinburgh Castle for the Jacobites. The Jacobites failed, and Arthur fled the country. His successor in the Regius appointments in 1716 was Charles Alston (October 1683–November 1760).

Dr. Alston started life as a writer or solicitor and servant to the duchess of Hamilton, whose influence secured the Regius posts for him. Alston was willing to teach and by 1720 able to do so. Once appointed, he had gone to Leyden and studied botany and medicine, taking his M.D. at Edinburgh in 1719. In June 1720, he began to teach botany in the King’s Garden but not in the university, and in the winter he gave a course in materia medica. He was a good teacher who quickly acquired an international reputation as a botanist. By the mid-1720s Preston may have more or less stopped teaching, and Alston had a near monopoly of the teaching of his subjects in the city. Alston seems to have been everyone’s choice and to have been unopposed when he sought the university’s professorship upon Preston’s resignation in 1738. Lack of opposition suggests that he also had the backing of influential men. While it must remain a speculation, he would probably have been backed for the professorship by the important men who sat with him in the recently formed Edinburgh Philosophical Society—its president, the Earl of Morton; its vice president, Sir John Clerk; and its secretaries, Colin Maclaurin and Alexander Monro. Alston had taught with the latter men for a long time before he officially became their colleague. He probably would have had the support of the Hamilton family. By then, he also would have made the acquaintance of the government’s patronage, manager in Scotland, Archibald Campbell, first Earl of Ilay. Lord Ilay was a keen botanist.

18. Fletcher and Brown, Botanic Garden, p. 24. Clerk would have had support from the Duke of Queensberry; the others were members of the Squadron faction that had helped them into offices. The Squadron Whigs held power in Scotland from c. 1716 to 1723 and again from 1742 to 1745.
22. Ilay was the manager of the Argathelian party—the family–based Whig faction headed by Ilay’s brother, John Campbell, second Duke of Argyll—and by then the manager
By 1738, all the offices that counted were back in one man’s grip, the only one who could make the posts pay well. The involvement of politicians in appointments continued after Alston died in 1760. The Incorporation of Surgeons recommended Dr. John Hope (May 1725–November 1786), who in 1761 became King’s Botanist, keeper of all the gardens, and professor of both botany and materia medica. He claimed he owed his post to the aid he had received from the third Earl of Bute. Bute had just inherited the political machine of his uncle, the third Duke of Argyll, and was busy showing his power and enlightenment by making men in Scotland. Like his uncle, Bute was a talented botanist and a knowing man in several other sciences, including astronomy, chemistry, and natural history. In 1786 his successor was picked by Henry Dundas, then the government’s manager in Scotland.

In all these appointments, a decent respect was paid to professional accomplishments and public usefulness by the great men who meddled with them. All the botanists had reputations and connections outside the kingdom; all of them did useful things, such as sell plants to the aristocrats with large gardens and reforestation projects. The appointments to this chair were ones that enhanced the city’s reputation as a teaching center and made it a prominent node in the botanical networks of the century. They promoted the pursuit of useful plants and those that could and did expand the pharmacopoeia.

The surgeons had a greater interest in the chair of anatomy. Before the end of the seventeenth century, they had established procedures for the teaching of anatomy and later claimed to have recommended all the anatomists who taught in the burgh beginning in 1695. In the general ferment in medical education around 1706, they had acted to prevent a stranger from teaching in the town in 1705 by setting up a professorship of their own. They made the surgeon Robert Elliot (1669–1717) their recognized

---

24. RCSE, Minutes, 4 August 1777, vol. 6.
25. The surgeons were protecting a monopoly but also complex deals between the guild and a member with the Town Council which had allowed them to build a new guild hall in 1696; Anderson, The Playfair Collection, p. 3.
teacher. The Town Council gave him this status in the burgh and made him Keeper of the University Museum with a salary of £15, but he was not made a professor in the university.26 Dr. Sibbald had patronized the botanists; Dr. Archibald Pitcairne and his friends (of whom the most important at this time was the Earl of Mar) patronized the anatomists. Elliot had been Pitcairne’s student at Leyden, and his appointment showed the determination of the surgeons to have modern anatomy and iatromechanical physiology taught in the city. He kept his post until his death in 1715.27

On 5 August 1708, Elliot was joined in his profession by Adam Drummond (1679?–1758). Drummond taught until 1720, when he resigned. John MacGill (1660?–1734) replaced Elliot after his death in 1717. MacGill held the post from 1717 until he and Drummond resigned to make way for Alexander Monro (September 1697–July 1767) on 21 January 1720.28 The surgeons appear to have looked after their interests by themselves, but, as in the case of the botanists, politicians were also involved, even though some of these posts were not university jobs and the salaries they carried were very small.29

In 1708, when Drummond was added as a conjoint professor to the surgeons’ chair of anatomy, Dr. Archibald Pitcairne, who had long been associated with the Incorporation, asked the Secretary of State, John Erskine, eleventh Earl of Mar, to help Drummond.30 He was not the only one to do so. Someone named Erskine was also soliciting Mar and his brother, James Erskine, Lord Grange, SCJ, for a profession of anatomy and physick, which was to go to the brother of George Erskine of Balgowny. Neither Mar nor Grange thought this

26. This makes one wonder if the museum contained teaching specimens and preparations that were recognized as important to the teaching of anatomy. Underwood, Boerhaave’s Men, p. 95; “Act in Favour of Robert Elliot, Surgeon,” Armet, Extracts, p. 109.
27. The fullest account of Elliot is in Underwood, Boerhaave’s Men, pp. 90, 91, 94, 95, 97, 104. Others say he died in 1714; Peter J. and Ruth Wallis, Eighteenth Century Medics (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Project for Historical Biobibliography, 1988), p. 186.
28. RCSE, Minutes, 6 March 1717; 27 January 1720. Alexander Monro in 1719 had been able to accelerate his entry into full membership in the guild by a month, which points to the fact that his career was being pushed by someone. Officially the story was that he needed to qualify because he was about to leave Scotland. The last test was on bandaging, a requisite for a surgeon going into the forces. It is likely he just wanted to hurry so that he would be fully eligible for the professorship he soon got.
29. Dingwall is one of many who presents this as a story of medics pursuing professional ends; Dingwall, Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries, pp. 77ff.
30. Pitcairne to Mar, 4 November 1708, Mar and Kellie MSS, MS GD 124/15/755/3, SRO.
One suspects the brothers Erskine thought the pleas a year late. In 1707 chairs were created as a means of securing support for the union, but in 1708 the politicians who could create Regius chairs were mostly English, and they were not disposed to do so. By 1709, Dr. Pitcairne seems to have wanted a Regius chair of some sort created for Drummond—either in the town or university. He was willing to have a patent for the chair, even if it omitted any salary. This was partly because he feared the aspirations of another man, Abercromby, who in 1709 was trying to obtain something of this sort with the support of the former chancellor of Scotland, James Ogilvie, first Earl of Seafield. All this shows that the matter of the creation of a chair of anatomy was something that in 1708–1709 involved national political factions and was not going to be left only to the Surgeons’ Company or the Town Council. It was as much a matter of political patronage as of professionalization among aspiring surgeons. The new post would involve granting status and money and thus show the strength of the politicians who could give these. It would be a political matter, and not just because some public funds might be used to pay for it.

That this situation persisted is also suggested by the appointment of John MacGill (or McGill) in 1716. His appointment looks like a reward for his service as a surgeon in the 1715 Rebellion. He had met Lord Ilay by that time and had probably by then become his personal physician in Scotland, a place he held at his death in 1734. MacGill’s brother, an Edinburgh architect who died in 1734, was also connected with the Campbell Lords. Between 1716 and 1734, Alexander MacGill did a considerable amount of work for the Duke of Argyll, for Lord Ilay, and for their aide and distant relative, Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton. Alexander MacGill also

31. Erskine to Mar and Grange, 5 February 1708, Mar and Kellie MSS, MS GD 124/15/754/6, SRO.
32. The Erskines secured the new chair of law of nature and of nations at Edinburgh University for Charles Erskine and the newly endowed chair of ecclesiastical history at St. Andrews for Patrick Haldane. The Edinburgh chair of Greek also went on a Crown appointment to Regent William Scott, who got no increase in salary.
33. Pitcairne to Mar, 24 January 1709, GD 124/15/755/4, SRO. Who this Abercromby might be is quite uncertain.
34. John and Alexander Monro also had served the government troops at Sheriffmuir, where Lord Ilay had been wounded. Wright-St. Clair, Doctors Monro, p. 28; Sir Robert Douglas, The Peerage of Scotland, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: G. Ramsay, 1813), 1, 106.
built a number of civic buildings in Scotland. He was admitted a burgess in the Campbell capital, Inveraray, in 1720. All that points to Campbell patronage. When John MacGill got his post as anatomist for the Surgeons’ Company, he, too, would surely have had the backing of Argyll and Ilay. The place would have rewarded a friend by enhancing his status and increasing his income. While we have no clear evidence that this is why he was chosen, it is also pertinent to note that in 1716 John Campbell, an Inveraray man, was elected the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. His election was owing to the rising power in the city of the Campbell brothers, Argyll and Ilay. They could by 1715 control the elections to the Edinburgh Town Council and had secured a majority that lasted for the next several years. Lord Provost Campbell and the council should be thought of as agents, not as men acting independently or primarily in the interest of the Incorporation of Surgeons. Men like Ilay and Argyll actually concerned themselves with the appointments of tide waiters (ordinary customs men whose posts were worth only £5–10 annually but also included perquisites and offered opportunities for illegal enrichment) and were not likely to let this place go without trying to determine who received it.

That pattern seems to have been repeated in 1720 when Alexander Monro got the place, first during the pleasure of the council and then for life and good behavior in 1722. Monro was supported by the Incorporation of Surgeons and by the Royal College of Physicians, which both urged the Town Council to appoint him. Significantly, the incumbents appointed by the surgeons and town both resigned to make possible Monro’s appointment. And Monro’s father, John, lost a minor city job, which made it easier to patronize his son.

The best account of the Monro appointment is that in E. Ashworth Underwood’s *Boerhaave’s Men* (1977). Like others, he gives too much credit for the founding of the Edinburgh medical school to John Monro and George Drummond. Monro’s appointment is there seen as a crucial step in a plan devised by John Monro to create a medical school in Edinburgh University. He did not question

the accuracy of the self-aggrandizing Memoirs left by Alexander Monro I. 38 These claim for himself and his father an importance they did not always have. Underwood and others have retold old stories, but they have offered no new evidence to back up their claims for John Monro, claims that are implausible given the way Scottish politics was then pursued. There was also a behind-the-scenes story that has not been noticed by those who have considered this matter. 39 It is time to look at the creation of this chair from other angles because there is more to the story than the hopes of John Monro to establish a medical school in the city with the aid of his friend George Drummond.

THE CONTEXTS OF THE APPOINTMENT OF ALEXANDER MONRO, PRIMUS

In the years around 1705, several interesting innovations were made or proposed that suggest that the demand for more or more regular and better medical instruction had increased. There was the effort of an outsider to lecture on anatomy in the town and the creation of a profession by the surgeons in 1705. In 1705 the university granted its first medical. 40 Extramural classes by Dr. Sibbald were announced around 1706, recognizing the demand for better teaching. 41 Politicians were thinking about one or more medical degree and anatomical chairs by 1708. With the chair of chemistry and medicine, sought and obtained by Principal Carstares in 1713, Edinburgh University finally got a medical chair. Some of this may reflect the establishment at Glasgow of the physick garden and the appointment of a botanical teacher (1704) and the beginning of anatomical teaching in the university (c. 1714) and the appointment of a medical professor in 1714. 42 When appointments had been made there, national politicians had also been involved. In Edinburgh the men who controlled Scotland and in whose factions the Town Councillors were enrolled

39. This account was given an enormous push by Erlam’s publication of Alexander Monro’s autobiography, but the story rests on Monro’s word and has little or no independent corroboration.
41. Andrew Cunningham, “Medical Education.”
also had been involved. In a place where all public and semipublic jobs were given out with calculation and where the men of power sought to monopolize their distribution, it simply does not make sense to regard the appointment of Alexander Monro as the work of only his father and his friend George Drummond, who hoodwinked a Town Council into making a new chair in the university.\(^43\) That was not the way things were done. Town Councillors knew their rights, were aware of precedents, but also knew who feathered their nests.

Monro had the endorsement of the Incorporation of Surgeons, but this in itself would not have allowed him in January 1720 to displace the friend and physician of powerful political figures unless those office holders and their patrons saw it in their interests to allow a new man to take the job. In 1718–1720, Lord Ilay and his brother the Duke were struggling with the politicians in the Squadrone faction for the control of all the patronage of Scotland. They were unlikely to surrender any gains. Their protégés were living, walking symbols of their influence and power. Men so conscious of such things, and of the means of displaying and maximizing their power, were unlikely to let any of it slip. MacGill could not have been forced out except by an Argathelian-dominated Town Council that was unlikely to dump its real leader’s personal physician. Monro’s appointment should be seen as one negotiated not only with John MacGill and Adam Drummond but with Ilay or his managers, one of whom was George Drummond, and with whomever had backed Adam Drummond for his post in 1717.\(^44\) It should also be seen as one in which the majority of the town fathers were led by Lord Provost John Campbell, MP, and not only by George Drummond. When Monro became a professor of anatomy, the Town Councillors appointed a young man from an impeccable Whig background to an insecure post. They also put him in the university, but it is improbable to see this as an inadvertent or shifty maneuver by George Drummond. Such commissions were carefully considered, carefully written legal documents; this story is simply unlikely. The Argathelians were straining to extend their control of every burgh.

\(^43\) Wright-St. Clair, *Doctors Monro*, p. 32, n. 27.

\(^44\) Alexander Monro tells us that Adam Drummond had promised to demit his half of the place after having seen fine anatomical specimens sent home by Alexander to his father from London in 1718. Underwood, *Boerhaave’s Men*, p. 103.
and institution by any means they could find. None of this was out of the ordinary. What would have been was for John Monro, a landless surgeon possessed of little influence and status, to have engineered the appointment of his son to a post that was certain to bring more income to its holder and that increased his status by honorably incorporating him in the university. That would not have happened without the concurrence of politicians more important than George Drummond, then only Dean of Gild, even though he was on old Argathelian who had served with Argyll and Ilay. Drummond was important, but he would not become Lord Provost for five more years. Ilay expected to be consulted when his men on the Town Council handed out a valuable new place, even when it did not require the resignation of one of his friends. Circumstances had not changed much in March 1722 when Monro was “given tenure.” Then the Lord Provost was another Argathelian, John Wightman, looking after the interests of the faction and doing so in an election year when the party was straining to secure more power.

What is more likely to have happened is that John Monro went to his cousin Duncan Forbes of Culloden, the friend and political ally of the Campbell brothers, the sheriff of Midlothian and advocate depute, and told him that it would be a good thing if his bright son, Alexander, who had had such a good education and who wanted to teach, were to get a chance to do so. What was being given up was not worth all that much to Drummond and MacGill, who had already had the benefits their offices could give them. They were established in practice, and their practices would continue to benefit from their having been professors. They had not been lecturing steadily for fees but demonstrating anatomy on only several corpses a year with apparently no lectures in between anatomies. Alexander Monro’s post in the university promised more regular lectures, for which there was a market and which would augment his slim income from a new practice. Forbes and his friends in the Argathelian party would have recognized the merits of the appointment. They would then have worked to arrange this matter, one bound to increase their popularity with important men in the burgh and in the country some of whom had long hoped to see medicine taught in the university. George Drummond may have played the visible part but he was only one of the Argathelian agents in Edinburgh and not yet as
important to the connexion as were Forbes, Campbell, or Wightman, although he may have been closer to John Monro. We have no reason to think this appointment was treated differently from others made at the university in the same period, most of which show the interference of politicians supporting their own.\textsuperscript{45} However it was arranged, it certainly involved more than his father and George Drummond if it was like most other appointments of the time. Those who have considered this appointment have omitted references to the politics of appointments and have given us no reasons to think that this one was different from most. Once it was made, the university was also better able to compete with Glasgow, where in March 1720 another Leyden graduate, Thomas Brisbane, was appointed the chair of botany and anatomy and where the latter subject had been taught in some fashion for at least six years.\textsuperscript{46} That appointment also had a political dimension.\textsuperscript{47}

THE MEDICAL CHAIRS

The requirements of medical education for the city’s many apprentices to both surgeons and physicians were apparent and had been since the late seventeenth century. What were needed by those who would practice as physicians and surgeon-apothecaries were teachers of anatomy, botany, materia medica, and medical theory and practice. The surgeons, with the help of their political friends, had addressed the first two of those \textit{desiderata}, but specifically medical instruction remained lacking. The attempt to create university medical chairs in 1685, when Drs. Robert Sibbald, Archibald Pitcairne, and James Halkett were appointed professors of medicine, recognized the need for medical education to be carried on in the university. Those appointments came to nothing.\textsuperscript{48} Later in the 1690s there were other

\textsuperscript{45} The models for this appointment can also be looked for in the Glasgow University appointments made between 1713 and 1721. All but one of those jobs involved titled politicians. In one where a titled gentleman cannot be found, his presence can be inferred from that fact that the appointee had been the tutor to the Master of Belhaven. Finding a good place for a former tutor usually relieved the family of a financial obligation. The same patterns are evident in the other Scottish colleges. See Roger L. Emerson, \textit{Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century} (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1992). Unfortunately, none of Ilay’s political correspondence survives until about 1724; then it shows the Earl to have been constantly concerned with posts worth much less.

\textsuperscript{46} Geyer-Kordesch and Macdonald, \textit{Physicians and Surgeons}, p. 194.

\textsuperscript{47} Emerson, “Medical Men,” p. 192.

\textsuperscript{48} The record of the visitation proceedings in the David Gregory Papers (MSS Dk.1.2.2, EUL) shows that Pitcairne was in Edinburgh but was not called before the visitors
moves in the direction of medical education. New facilities available at the Surgeons’ Company in the 1690s provided places where lectures on anatomy, chemistry, and medicine could be and were given. There was a proposal by someone in 1704 to establish an infirmary for Edinburgh and its environs. The houses of Old Greyfriars were to be converted into a hospital which would possess an apothecary’s shop. A physician was to be employed and there was “to be A professor of medicine to be instituted, and in the mean tyme, the College of physicians is to appoint one who is to attend as long as the[re is no] apothecary & is to have a proper chamber in ye house—minister, governor, surgical operations take place, serves a 12 mile radius if they will tax themselves for it.” All that would have required action by at least the Town Council. Since the proposal was one of many for the revival of Scotland’s prosperity and civic health, intervention by the Scottish Parliament was also likely to have been in the mind of the writer of the proposal. That would have involved the political managers of the country.

The first of the specifically medical chairs to be established after the failure of the original medical professorships in 1685 was the chair of chemistry and medicine, which was created by the Town Council in 1713. The background to this creation is usually said to be the general interest in establishing professional education in Edinburgh on the Dutch model, a cause that Principal Carstares had taken up and which he supported until his death in 1715. However, as noted, Glasgow University, late in 1712, came to a decision to seek the establishment of Regius chairs of medicine and law. By August 1713, the university had secured its medical chair and was actively

---

50. Papers of John Spottiswoode, MS 2933/131, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS). The entry is dated 1 May 1704.
51. A recent Scottish thesis on the influence of the Dutch in Scotland finds that memories of earlier Scottish attempts to found professorships were more important than recent Dutch examples: Esther Mijers, “Scotland and the United Provinces, c. 1680–1730: A Study in Intellectual Relations” (Ph.D. diss., St. Andrews University, 2002), chapter 1.
52. The University of Glasgow had corresponded with the Earl of Glasgow and perhaps with the Earl of Loudoun about the founding of a medical chair as early as 6 July 1706; Principal John
looking for a man to fill it, although it was not to make an appointment until June 1714. What Glasgow had secured, Edinburgh wanted. By 22 December 1713, Edinburgh’s Town Council had, at Carstares’s urging, appointed Dr. James Crawford (c. 1682–February 1731) as its first professor of chemistry and medicine. This looks very much like a creation designed to keep Edinburgh abreast or ahead of its Glaswegian rivals. Crawford had petitioned Carstares for the creation of the post and had gotten the endorsement of the university professors and of the fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He was a local man (from Leith), a Leyden M.D. who also held the same degree from King’s College, Aberdeen, where his sponsor had been Archibald Pitcairne. He was also something of a virtuoso since he had serious interests in both languages and history.

Between July and November 1713, he had been traveling outside Scotland, but on his return he had lost no time in making his request. Crawford was replaced in 1726 by Argathelian politicians, which suggests that he may not have had their support for this position but relied upon the first Duke of Montrose, from whom he later expected favors. Possibly because there was no salary attached to his position, James Crawford applied for the Glasgow chair of medicine, which carried a salary of £50 and had not yet been filled. On 16 January 1714, Crawford was given permission by the Edinburgh
Town Council to take the Glasgow medical chair if he wished and if he could get it.\textsuperscript{56} In the end, he did not seek the place or else rejected the Glasgow offer, which went almost by default to Dr. John Johnston, who was recommended by the college to the Secretary of State, Lord Mar, and installed in June 1714.\textsuperscript{57}

Edinburgh men continued to think about the establishment of a more elaborate and formal school of medicine. This was partly the result of applications for the M.D. degree that continued to come to the university, even though it lacked a proper medical faculty. Each time the university granted a degree, it had to ask for examiners to come in from outside its walls to aid Dr. Crawford when he examined candidates for the M.D.\textsuperscript{58} But there were also other reasons, which related to the practical accomplishments of the teachers of medicine in the burgh. By the early 1720s Charles Alston was teaching botany in the town; Monro had an anatomy class in the university (he actually taught in the Surgeons’ Hall until 1725);\textsuperscript{59} Crawford was at least sometimes teaching chemistry and pharmacy in the college.\textsuperscript{60} All of them had students—Monro is said to have had enough to give him an income of £196 13s. in his first year of teaching.\textsuperscript{61} That left the teaching of both the theory and practice of medicine to be established on a regular footing. William Porterfield (1696–July 1771) announced his intention to lecture on those subjects in 1723, which shows he also saw a clear demand for the teaching of medical subjects.\textsuperscript{62} That demand he resolved to meet and was encouraged to

\textsuperscript{56}. Principal William Carstares to John Stirling, 16 and 21 January 1714, MS Murray 650/1, GUL.

\textsuperscript{57}. Stirling letters, 6 January, 6 March 1714, Murray MS 650/1, GUL; Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: Records of the University of Glasgow from its Foundation Till 1727, 4 vols, Cosmo Innes, ed. (Glasgow: Maitland Club, 1854), II, 412. Crawford’s broadside says that he turned down the Glasgow offer so as to preserve the reputation of Edinburgh University—for which the Town Council should reward him with the chair of Hebrew. That the Glasgow post nearly went begging shows how little demand there was then for medical teaching in Glasgow, a fact borne out by Johnstone’s small classes.


\textsuperscript{59}. Wright-St. Clair, Doctors Monro, p. 36. He moved into the university to be more secure from those who thought he was robbing graves in order to do his anatomies. The long-term effect of this was to make a separation between the university and the incorporation, which would eventually support a competing medical school.

\textsuperscript{60}. What is known of Crawford’s teaching is summarized by Anderson in The Playfair Collection, pp. 4, 5, 142.

\textsuperscript{61}. Wright-St. Clair, Doctors Monro, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{62}. Peel Ritchie thought that was the case; The Early Days, pp. 298–299.
do so by the Royal College of Physicians and by his appointment as a university professor of medicine by the Town Council in August 1724. The council was still presided over by Lord Provost Campbell, the same man who had been in office when Monro was given his chair. The Council’s appointment of Porterfield as professor of medicine bound him to “give Colleges regularly, in order to the instructing of Students in the said Science of Medicine.” Porterfield did not lecture in 1723–24, and he seems not to have done so in 1724–25. He also did not examine candidates for the doctorate with Professor James Crawford. It may be that Porterfield overestimated his market or, more likely, that others were more successful in serving it. What happened to Porterfield is an intriguing question that has no sure answer. We know he did little and seems to have vacated his professorship by 1726 after Lord Provost Campbell was replaced by that equally compliant Argathelian George Drummond. There is, however, a very plausible guess that can be made about why he left his chair, one which points again to politics in the universities.

In 1726 a Visitation Commission sat at Glasgow University, where it insisted that the medical professors there should teach if five students requested their services. The commission was run by the Earl of Ilay, who sat on it and who had packed it with men who enjoyed his favor—men such as Lord Provost John Campbell, Lord Milton, SCJ, Charles Erskine, Edinburgh’s Principal William Wishart, and the reverend James Alston. This was a commission designed to bring a recalcitrant institution under Ilay’s control. One way of bringing pressure to bear on professors was to make them perform the duties required by their commissions. Such pressure was applied to Professors Brisbane (anatomy) and Forbes (law); Professor Johnstoun (medicine), while not a political “enemy” or

---

64. Quoted in Peel Ritchie, *Early Days*, p. 298. The Lord Provost of that year was John Campbell, so the chair was established during the ascendancy of Lord Ilay, who had triumphed over his Squadrone opponents in the elections of 1722, a victory he consolidated in 1727 when he and his friends elected even more Scottish MPs to vote with the government in London. Ilay then got to issue new royal warrants and commissions for appointments which had lapsed on the death of George I. That helped to support his influence for many years to come.
65. Mungo Graham to Principal Stirling, 3 February 1719, MS Murray 650/1, GUL; Coutts, *Glasgow*, p. 208.
“knave”—Ilay’s terms for Forbes—was also encouraged to be more willing to teach. If this attitude prevailed in Edinburgh, where Ilay’s men were fully in charge of the Town Council, which had the right to visit the college and discipline the professors, then Porterfield may well have been told to teach or go. Ilay would have had no compunction about the dismissal of Porterfield and may have urged his friends to ensure it. What happened to the professor remains unclear, but he probably got sacked along with James Crawford, who by 1726 may not have been teaching when he too disappeared as the professor of chemistry.67 By 1725, Porterfield and Crawford had both found competition from two sets of extramural teachers who may have taken over the market for their skills.68 If Porterfield had seen the need but had not met it, and if the young doctors knew of the value of Monro’s chair, as of course they did, they would have needed no urging from anyone to try to supply the demand they perceived to exist.

One of the sets of extramural lecturers on medical topics was a duo composed of Dr. William Graeme (1701–1745) and Dr. George Martine (1702–1741) who had probably met as medical students at Leyden in c. 1720. There they also would have met one or more of their rivals in the competing foursome. Graeme may have been lecturing on medicine by, if not before, autumn 1725, when he was given the rooms at the Surgeons’ Hall vacated by Alexander Monro in October of that year. Martine joined him in 1725—probably in the autumn since medical lectures generally began in October or early November.69 They lectured together for about two years, with Martine teaching some anatomy and the theory of medicine and

67. Underwood thought Porterfield might have been prevented from getting students by John Monro, but if this were the case, then we would surely have heard that he at least offered or tried to give courses in the years they are presumed by Underwood to have failed. No indication that he did so has been found. Underwood, Boerhaave’s Men, p. 112. Crawford retained his chair of Oriental languages until his death in 1731.

68. James Crawford had taught off and on but probably was not doing so regularly by c. 1725/6. Crawford last examined a candidate for the M.D. degree in 1725, so he was still a professor until at least 4 May of that year. His chair was certainly treated as vacant and filled in 1726. Crawford continued in his Hebrew chair until his death on 25 November 1731. See “Charles Mackie’s List of Deaths,” MS 36987, St. Andrews University Library, St. Andrews, Scotland (hereafter SAUL). He was also referred to by others in March 1731 as having “lately died”; Colonels John Campbell and John Middleton to Lord Milton and Ilay, March 1731, SC 47/169, NLS.

Graeme the practice of medicine. The fact they taught more than one year points to a market that needed lectures on anatomy, medicine, botany, and chemistry. The fact that they had an audience while others were also lecturing on the same topics says the audience was substantial. Indeed, Graeme bragged that they had as many students as the foursome with whom they competed. Martine probably gave up lecturing in Edinburgh in 1727; Graeme said he himself taught for three years. They left Edinburgh only when it was clear that they were not to have the university appointments they sought. Martine returned to St. Andrews, where he practiced until 1739–40, when he secured a post as a military doctor, a place that soon cost him his life at Cartagena. Graeme had moved from Edinburgh to London by the autumn of 1728 because in that year he published in London “A Proposal to teach the Theory and Practice of Physick, in a Course of lectures.” In the following year, he produced a short work on the study of medicine and seems later to have taught in London where he became an FRS (1730). Martine also became an FRS (1740).

The four other young (but slightly older) men, John Rutherford (August 1695–March 1779), Andrew Sinclair (or St. Clair) (c. 1698–October 1760), Andrew Plummer (1698–April 1756), and John Innes (1696–December 1733), had probably been teaching in the town since autumn 1724, when they advertised lectures in the theory and practice of medicine in the Caledonian Mercury. These lectures were to begin on 10 November 1724. They promised to teach chemistry in the following year, by which time they had acquired a house for use as a laboratory and rights to the use of the college “physic garden” to sustain a pharmaceutical business they planned to conduct and that they soon started. Their chemistry lectures began in February 1725. These men, like Graeme and Martine, had studied medicine at Leyden; in fact, all six had studied abroad and all but...
Martine had a continental degree. He took his at St. Andrews, with which his family had long been prominently associated. For the teaching of anatomy, they relied on Monro, but all of the young doctors must have relied on Alston for the teaching of botany and materia medica since there is no indication that George Preston was actively teaching. Had he been, the college physic garden would not have been granted for the use of the foursome.

Alexander Monro’s account of these developments ascribes to his father, John, a leading role in the planning and creation of the medical school, but these developments showed a general interest in medical education in the city, one extending beyond Monro’s reach. There was the new competition from Glasgow that was now equipped to teach botany, anatomy, medicine, and midwifery. There was a demand for medical teaching in Edinburgh that was strong enough to support six extramural teachers, two of whom were independent of Monro and Drummond. Moreover, the appointment of Porterfield in 1724—never claimed by the Monros as something they had sponsored—was an appointment whose incumbent could have taught both the theory and practice of medicine, as Professor Johnstoune was expected to do in Glasgow. The success of the extramural lecturers, of Alston and Alexander Monro and the promise of Porterfield to teach all show the same thing—an effective demand for medical teaching. John Rutherford also may have taught chemistry in Edinburgh as early as 1721, although he perhaps did so for James Crawford. The time was ripe, and the political conditions were favorable for the creation of new chairs. That politics, and not the wishes and interventions of John Monro, was likely to have precipitated the creation of the faculty is suggested when one looks at the two sets of competing teachers and the needs of the politicians, led by Lord Ilay.

The ties of the duo all ran the wrong way for men looking for a place in the gift of a Town Council that owed fealty to the Argathelians. Martine came from a minor Jacobite family settled in St. Andrews, where, as a student, he had himself rung the university

74. Ibid., pp. 110–119, passim.
75. For an account that concentrates on the Royal Infirmary and gives more credit to Lord Provost Drummond see Chitnis, “Provost Drummond,” pp. 86–97. This can be usefully supplemented by two pamphlets: Edinburgh’s Infirmary: A Symposium (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for the History of Medicine, 1979) and Michael Barfoot, Lord Provost George Drummond, 1687–1766 (Edinburgh: Scotland’s Cultural Heritage, 1987).
bells for the Pretender during the ’15. Things like that were still remembered ten years later, particularly by Ilay’s enemies, who for years accused him of being a secret Jacobite. The appointment of a one-time Jacobite was something Ilay could not allow. Graeme was very likely a distant relative of the Squadrone-supporting Duke of Montrose, whose family name was Graham, a variant spelling under which the doctor also appears. Such men realistically could not expect much help from Ilay or his friends on the Town Council, over which George Drummond presided in 1725–26. The duo was also not likely to be able to call on any important political supporters who were allies of Lord Ilay. Lord Provost Drummond might tell Professor William Cullen in 1756 that the choice of one set of young men over the other had been difficult to make, but Drummond’s difficult choices were usually made in his patron’s interest. It was not in Ilay’s interest to appoint either Graeme or Martine. The lesser Argathelians would not have acted contrary to the Earl’s wishes, certainly not in 1725 when Ilay was intent on consolidating his power base in Scotland.

The other four seem rather differently situated politically. Andrew Sinclair was some sort of cousin to Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, SCJ, who by 1725 had become Ilay’s Edinburgh manager. One would assume he and his cousin were in the same camp. In 1742 Plummer was listed as a strong supporter of the Argathelians, and he is likely to have been so earlier because his estate lay in Selkirkshire, which was a shire pretty much in the Argathelian’s political grasp after 1722. John Rutherford also came from the same area. He had been looking to a teaching career since 1721, when he applied for the new medical professorship established at St. Andrews by the first Duke of Chandos, a man friendly with Ilay and very like him. Rutherford’s application in 1721 had been supported by James Erskine, Lord Grange, SCJ, then one of Ilay’s political allies. Less is known about John Innes, but he did get a

77. “Medicine,” p. 12, Horn MSS, MS Gen. 1824, EUL.
78. Thomas Hay to the Marquis of Tweeddale, 27 April 1742, Yester Papers, MS 7046/91, NLS; Plummer had refused to vote his shares in the Bank of Scotland for the Marquis to become governor, adhering instead to Ilay and his friends.
79. Allan Logan to James Erskine, Lord Grange, 11 October 1721, Mar and Kellie MSS GD124/15/1214, SRO; St Andrews University Minutes, 4 December 1721, III, 75, Muniments Room, SAUL.
minor city job (physician to Heriot’s Hospital) in 1730 when such patronage was generally controlled by Ilay’s friends. The little that is known of their politics suggests these men were of or in Ilay’s party and could expect his backing while the other two could not. There is every reason to think that the men chosen for the professorships were chosen with an eye to their and their family’s politics. Professors Porterfield and Crawford may have suffered deposition for their politics as well as their nonfeasance.

In another way that counts politically, the duo of Martine and Graeme were less well positioned to apply for the university positions. Graeme was a member of the Incorporation of Surgeons, but Martine was not then affiliated with any Edinburgh medical corporation. The university was unlikely to give a teaching chair in medicine to a man in the surgeons’ guild because that would not have given the university the prestige it would need to attract men to study medicine at Edinburgh University. The surgeons as a trade guild were represented on the Town Council and were not novices at playing politics, but they were unlikely to find as much impressive support as the more dignified Royal College of Physicians. Its members came generally from more wealthy landed families, had more liberal educations, and could secure the endorsements of politicians of greater weight. Politically, the cards were stacked against the other two.

One must also not underestimate the tense political atmosphere in which these appointments were considered and made. After the general elections of 1722, Ilay was trying hard to oust his Squadrone opponents from the administration of any Scottish patronage, but at the end of 1724 he had not yet done so. His chance to do so came in 1725 when Scottish towns were convulsed by the furore created by the Malt Tax imposed in that year. When it was levied and collections attempted, serious riots occurred in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Ilay came up from London to see that this new law was enforced, despite the opposition of the judges on the Courts of Session and Justiciary, notably the opposition of Adam Cokburn of Ormiston.

80. This position paid little, but in 1755 it was a matter of concern to the Argathelians, who filled it in that year. George Drummond to Lord Milton, 18 October 1755, MS 16692/219, NLS.
the Lord Justice Clerk who presided over the latter court, which handled criminal cases.\footnote{What follows relies heavily on Eric G. J. Wehrli, “Scottish Politics in the Age of Walpole” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1983).} Ormiston was a Squadrone man. Arriving in the city on 16 August 1725, within a month Ilay had forced the striking brewers to brew again and to pay their taxes. Halfway through that period, the Duke of Roxburgh, a Squadrone man and the King’s personal friend, had been sacked as Secretary of State for Scotland. The news reached Edinburgh by the end of August. On the heels of that, it became apparent that Walpole had given the Earl a nearly free hand to manage many things in Scotland as he saw fit. For Ilay, that meant punishing some but rewarding others and showing that he had a near monopoly of government patronage other than that belonging to the Treasury. He was the man to whom Scots should look for favors. He showed by his actions that he could secure them and that he could do so in the universities. At Glasgow,\footnote{At Glasgow, the assertions of his power came in the selection in 1727 of Neil Campbell as principal and in the protection of Professor John Simson; see part I and Anne Skoczylas, Mr. Simson’s Knotty Case, passim.} the Aberdeen universities,\footnote{Emerson, Professors, Patronage and Politics, pp. 45–58.} and St. Andrews,\footnote{At St. Andrews, Ilay’s men were defenders of Alexander Scrymgeour, for whom they tried to find an honorable way out of his troubles with the local clerics. See the forthcoming articles on Professors Alexander Scrymgeour and Archibald Campbell by Anne Skoczylas.} he undertook in 1725–1728 to demonstrate his power—through the visitation of Glasgow University (1726), by appointments made in Aberdeen (1725–1727), and by the defense of alleged heretical professors at Glasgow and St. Andrews (1727–1736). The Edinburgh civic elections in the fall of 1725 were prepared for in this atmosphere. They were as rancorous as they were carefully planned to return men through whom Ilay could control the burgh.

Control of the Town Council meant control over the university and over its appointments. Ilay was very much a participant in the elections of 1725 because he did not return to London until 17 November, by which time they had occurred. How closely he watched these and how prepared he was to reward and punish medical men can be seen in a letter to the Duke of Newcastle dated 16 September 1725. The letter is worth quoting at length because it suggests that a man so interested in what the Town Councillors were doing in the aftermath of the Malt Tax Riots would have
known and approved of the action that has been attributed to Lord Provost Drummond rather than to the man he served. If there were jobs to be handed out in this period and men sacked or punished, they would have had his approval. Ilay’s letter to Newcastle warrants that statement:

...Some days agoe a secret design began to discover it self in this City of overturning the Present Magistrates & all their interest at the new Elections, & in particular of putting at the head of the Mechanick corporations [the crafts guilds] a very active person who I think is a Jacobite, & whose brother was in the late Rebellion: the office intended for him is called Deacon conveener, & the Man is one Eaton a Goldsmith: this officer amoung other privileges has the keeping of the Standard of the Tradesmen [the Blue Blanket], which in cases of insurrections is held in veneration amoung them to a degree that is incredible; this fellow had a majority amoung those of his own trade, got himself chosen their deacon (or Chief) & had made such interest amoung the deacons of the other trades, that he thought himself sure, but the present Magistrates & Town Council having a right to appoint one of the deacons to be extraordinary (as they call it) whereby such person has no vote in the Town Council but in disposing of publick money, they named, by a majority this Eaton to be extraordinary deacon: when the Assembly of deacons met to chuse their deacon conveener, there was the utmost effort made by the enemy to chuse this person, but, as it had been forseen [sic], some of his friends thought it would be an affront to their body to put at their head [one] who had hardly any vote in the Town Council, this brought the Votes to an equality, & consequently to the casting vote of the present deacon Conveener, who is one Keir a Baker by trade, & who has been very usefull during the late distractions; upon this they quarrelled to that degree among themselves that nothing but this Keir’s putting an end to the meeting by declaring the Vote against Eaton could have prevented some disturbance. I am ashamed of troubling your Grace with such minute circumstances, but as the Elections in this City are of the last consequence to his Majesties service in Scotland, I think it my duty to watch every step in them as narrowly as possible, & I believe all will go very well: the Enemies of the Government seem to think it absolutely necessary to leave nothing undone that can prevent the abating of the present seditious humour of the People, & therefore daily spread some false report to keep up the disaffection: they endeavour to preswade the people that the present ministry will very soon be overturned, & name some persons in England (whom your Grace may easily guess) who will be put into power & will ease this Country of the Malt Tax...
In the present contest in this City relating to their Elections, Mr John Macgill Surgeon & Apothecary has been very active & usefull, he has always been zealous for the Government, & at the late Rebellion he served as a voluntier; I would beg leave to recommend him to the office of his Majesties Apothecary (40lb per Ann.) Which is possess’d at present by one Henry Hepburn a near relation of the Justice Clerks, he has instead of assisting the Magistrates amonug those of his trade, absented himself out of Town during the whole time of the late disorders & and present contests.

I am My Lord very confident that a proper distribution of the favours of the Government to those who deserve well, with an absolute exclusion to all who oppose or show an avowed indifference in his Majesties service will soon bring this Country to a sense of their of their duty.  

A man who so narrowly watched Edinburgh politics in 1725 would not have ignored the creation of four new chairs for five men in the university and town or have been indifferent to who got them. Ilay was giving favors on behalf of the government and excluding the unworthy from offices; he would have been consulted about the plans of the foursome whose jobs were worth more than the post of King’s Apothecary. It would have been almost unnatural for these appointments to be made by the Town Council without consulting their betters, particularly since these posts were contested and worth contesting.

There was another reason for Ilay to have been interested in and consulted about these appointments between 1724, when the foursome first applied for Town Council favor, and 1 February 1726, when they petitioned for the chairs they later got. Lord Ilay himself had serious interests in medicine, to which his honorary M.D. from King’s College Aberdeen (1708) attested. To give a peer and a trained civil lawyer who sometimes sat as a judge a medical degree, rather than an L.L.D. or D.C.L., shows a solicitude for a personal interest that ought not to be missed. The Earl’s library catalog also shows how interested in medicine and chemistry he really was. By 1726, he had quite a sizable collection of medical and chemical books.

86. Ilay to Newcastle, 16 September 1725, Scottish Papers MS 54/16, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO). I thank Andrew Cunningham for transcribing this letter for me. This election was being planned much earlier. See the letter from Lord Provost John Campbell to Robert Walpole, 29 June 1725, quoted in The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715–1754, Romney Sedgwick, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), I, 523.

and had proven himself to be a competent amateur botanist and chemist as well as a man with many other scientific and mathematical interests. But, because the earl was in the city when such things were likely to have been considered, it is not surprising that there are no references to the appointments in his surviving correspondence. The foursome had another advantage. In his university appointments, Ilay usually chose the many-sided person over those with more narrow interests who were less likely to do publicly useful things. Dr. Martine was no narrow specialist. He had interests in anatomy, chemistry, mathematics, and physics and eventually published in what counted as all those fields. He was later known for his edition of Eustachius’ anatomical works and commentaries. He seems to have lectured on some anatomical topics in one of the years he taught in Edinburgh. But none of that was obviously useful to the lieges since the university had a better anatomist who seems already to have been cooperating with the foursome. Martine had been a successful teacher of chemistry, but his interests in chemistry were theoretical and ran to heat and to thermometers with which to measure its intensity and other means to measure its quantity. In all that he was a forerunner of Joseph Black, who used his published

---

89. These letters are principally to be found in the Saltoun Papers held at the National Library of Scotland. If papers of his exist at Inveraray Castle, they are now closed to scholars.
90. The rules the Duke seemed to follow with respect to professors were simple: pick from the list of nominees the best-qualified man, or a man who is acceptable, if recommended by someone who must be placated for political reasons. Since most men were about equally well recommended, the list of nominees usually gave him options. Ilay appointed very few fools and many outstanding men. A surprising number of them shared his interests in medicine, chemistry, botany, and history as well as his moderation in religious matters and his professional learning in the law.
91. George Martine to Dr. James Douglas, 4 August 1735, MS Gen. 505 D 626/3, GUL. The work on Eustachius was printed after Martine’s death by Alexander Monro primus in 1755; other anatomical works were published by him in the 1730s. A list of his publications is given by Mackenzie, “George Martine,” p. 1835.
92. Wright-St. Clair, Doctors Monro, p. 39.
93. His brother, Arthur, told William Wilson in 1755 that William Cullen should be advised to teach in Edinburgh whether or not he had an appointment because George Martine had “success in that way against a greater opposition.” William Wilson to William Cullen, n.d. [1755], Thomson/Cullen MSS, MS 2255/73, GUL.
94. His work on animal heat was published in both English and Latin, and his essays on heat supplied a text for Black’s Edinburgh chemistry course.
work on heat as a text in his own course at Edinburgh after 1766. That would not have looked particularly useful to men like Lord Provost Drummond and his patrons. Unlike Cullen and Black somewhat later, Martine is not known to have supplemented his theoretical interests with chemical consulting for businessmen. The Councillors and Ilay in 1726 would have been more impressed by the pharmaceutical company run by the four others or the ability and willingness that Plummer displayed later in life to do chemical assays of mineral ores. Martine’s interest in physics and mathematics may also have seemed more or less irrelevant in a college, which had just acquired an even better physicist and mathematician in the person of its new professor of mathematics, Colin Maclaurin. Graeme had more limited interests being primarily a medical man concerned with the practice of medicine and the teaching of it.

The four M.D.s by 1726 had all taught some aspect of medicine. They were all chemists whose chemical knowledge was being put to commercial and public purposes. Ilay, who backed a number of chemists in their efforts to improve bleaching and other industrial processes in Scotland, would have found this a point in their favor.

Indeed, chemistry and the ability to teach and use it may have been of greater importance in the choice of the four men than has been realized. The four all taught the subject jointly in the university for some time after 1726; they jointly replaced the professor of chemistry, James Crawford. They also had a laboratory in which they

95. Scots Magazine, August 1743, 5, 385.
96. This story is told by Emerson, “The Scientific Interests of Archibald Campbell,” pp. 45–46.
97. “That the Chemical colleges be begun the first Saturday of febry by Dr. Plummer to be continued every Saturday in the following order viz. Dr. Plummers for february Dr. St. Clair for March Dr. Inness for aprile and Dr Rutherford for May That on the second thursday of march there be two chemical Theses given out by Dr. St Clair, two chemic: physiological by Inness, Two Physiological by Dr Rutherford, and two Practical by Dr. Plummer each of these at eight days intervals” (Minutes of the Professors of Medicine and Partners of the Chemical Elaboratory in Edinburgh, 26 January 1731 MS Gen. 1959, EUL). This distribution of functions is at odds with the Town Council’s assignment of the chair of chemistry to Plummer and Innes, the chair of theory of medicine to St. Clair, and of the chair of the practice of medicine to Rutherford. Craig, History of the RCPE, p. 393. That distribution of functions was corrected on 9 February 1726 when the men were given “full power to all of them to profess and teach medicine in all its branches”; NLS, MS 17603/36. Peel Ritchie believed that Rutherford and Innes shared the practice chair, which would follow the pattern of chemical lecturing; Early Days, p. 302. That this belief is correct is borne out by a letter concerning the appointment of Robert Whytt that says that Andrew St. Clair had replaced Innes in teaching chemistry and asks that Whytt be made professor of the theory and practice of medicine and chemistry; “Notes on Universities,”
could teach chemistry and pharmacy, but the university did not have one that was adequate.\textsuperscript{98} Crawford had had rooms in the college, but he seems to have had no laboratory supported by a yearly grant from the town or its college. That may have mattered. The cost of employing men possessed of a laboratory would in the long run have been less than employing men lacking one that the town would be expected in due course to build.

The town had already encouraged this foursome of young doctors. When the four petitioned the council for their posts, they referred to the fact that they had “undertaken the professing and teaching of Medicine in this City, and, by the encouragement which the Council had been pleased to grant them, had carried it on with some success.”\textsuperscript{99} As successful men, they were asking for further favors, not initial ones. George Drummond as an old man wrote to Cullen in 1756, saying that both sets of doctors petitioned the Town Council for appointment to the university and that the council “were only making a trial, and were somewhat uncertain about its success.” He was perhaps confused about when they had first had some encouragement.\textsuperscript{100} The four had taught longer, had found an audience, and had survived the competition of their rivals. It is also interesting that Drummond does not confirm Monro’s account of their appointments. Drummond was, however, wrong about the tentative nature of the appointments given in 1726 to the men who got “a preference in our choice.”

Drummond’s recollection of the appointments as tentative, and a trial may reduce to his understanding of a permanent place as

\textsuperscript{98}. That it did so is suggested by a letter of George Drummond to William Cullen in February 1756. Drummond wrote: “At that time I should have cheerfully come in to the Town’s accommodating them with a laboratory, if our finances would have admitted of it.” Cited from Cunningham, “Medicine to Calm the Mind,” p. 57. See also Anderson, The Playfair Collection, pp. 4–5. Plummer came in time to have a considerable apparatus, the sale of which presented a problem when William Cullen was appointed to succeed him in 1755.

\textsuperscript{99}. Cited in Grant, Story, p. 310.

\textsuperscript{100}. George Drummond to William Cullen, 3 February 1756, Thomson/Cullen MSS, MS 2255/1-47, GUL.
one which was funded—a not unlikely way for a placeman like Drummond to regard a post. This finds some support in Dr. Graeme’s 1729 claim to have ‘been for three Years publickly Teaching, in a Place [Edinburgh] where, though Physick has no settled Establishment for a Professor, yet it is much studied and well understood.’\textsuperscript{101}

For part of that period, his rivals had been settled, and Porterfield had been settled before them—but not salaried. The greatest problems with the tentativeness recalled by the former Lord Provost lie elsewhere. The college’s professors, whom the four joined, regarded the new appointments of 1726 as creating a “faculty” of medicine. Moreover, the men who held the appointments were full members of the university, as the professor of midwifery was not.\textsuperscript{102} Two of the medical professors each year were to sit and vote in the Senatus Academicus, an institution that dates from this year. Finally, it is difficult to understand how the positions could have been regarded as temporary or unestablished when the four men had been appointed for life on good behavior even before Graham had left town.

Finally, one needs to look briefly at the appointment that rounded out the medical school of 1726, the professorship of midwifery, created in the town for Joseph Gibson (c. 1698–c. January 1739). Gibson held an M.D. but practiced as a surgeon in Leith.\textsuperscript{103} He was for some time a library keeper to the Surgeons Company, in succession to Alexander Monro.\textsuperscript{104} Gibson was also an Episcopalian, which would

\textsuperscript{101}. “Had” would make more sense in this quotation since he surely knew of the appointments of the four men to professorships in 1726; perhaps he did not think of them as really permanent because theirs, like Porterfield’s, were unpaid. The emphasis has been added.

\textsuperscript{102}. On 1 November 1726, the Minutes of the RCPE recorded the thanks of the university to the college for having in the past supplied examiners for degree candidates. It was noted, “now that there was a sufficient number of Professors of Medicine to make a Faculty of Medicine” that “they would no longer trouble the Colledge any more upon that head.” The message was conveyed by Professors Robert Stewart and Colin Drummond, professors chosen perhaps because the first had some medical training and the second later lectured on ancient medical texts. The Town Council seems to have regarded the new appointments as creating a faculty since it said that medicine in all its branches could now be taught there and the “Professors of that Science may by themselves promote students to their degrees, with as great solemnity as is done in any other College or University at home or abroad.” The faculty formally appeared in 1730 when the professors of medicine and anatomy were granted that status by the Senatus Academicus. Peel Ritchie, The Early Years, pp. 300–302; French, Robert Whytt, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{103}. It is not recorded where he got his M.D. degree, but D. B. Horn thought he had one; “Midwifery,” p. 2, Horn MSS, MS Gen. 1824, EUL.

\textsuperscript{104}. Wright-St. Clair, Doctors Monro, p. 34.
not have made him eager to subscribe the Westminster Confession, as every professor in any Scottish university had to do.\textsuperscript{105} That may be why in 1726 he was not made a member of the university, as was his successor, Robert Smith. The teaching of both was similar: They taught some medical students and not just the local female midwives. Gibson’s skills and political connections must have been good. The first were attested to by the Surgeons’ Company and Royal College of Physicians, which both supported his petition to the Town Council for the post he received.\textsuperscript{106} The second is suggested by the fact that he got an appointment despite not being going to the right church. Unfortunately, nothing more seems to be known of him.

CONCLUSION

Given the way earlier chairs in the town and the universities were created or were filled, one can be reasonably sure that Lord Provost Drummond and John Monro did not engineer either Alexander Monro’s or these medical appointments by themselves. The divinity chairs all had been politicked for. That was less true of the law chairs, but they too went to well-connected men, men about whom the council had no choice. The chairs of botany were little different. When the chair of chemistry was created in 1713, it seems to have been in imitation of the Glasgow foundation, which was a Regius chair and came through or from the Earl of Mar, the Secretary of State for Scotland. When the Edinburgh chair of anatomy was created in 1720, Ilay’s friends were involved. Finally, the Lords Provost, John Campbell and George Drummond, were involved in the creation of the chairs of anatomy and medicine; both were Argathelians sitting on a council that was not all that independent. The likeliest conclusion is that the creation of the Edinburgh medical school faculty in 1726 was a political job carried out by these Argathelians with the support of their leaders. There is some slight confirmation of that in an obituary of Lord Ilay. There he is credited with the creation of several chairs in the Scottish universities. The only one that he is known to have created is the Glasgow chair of practical astronomy. The obituary is accurate in all other respects, which leads one

\textsuperscript{105}. Register of the Episcopal Congregation in Leith 1733–1777, Angus MacIntyre, ed. Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1949, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{106}. Grant, Story, I, 315.
to think that the Edinburgh chairs should be added to his list. We should all think less of John Monro and George Drummond, who were at best only among the supporters of a general movement to establish medical education in the city, a movement which in 1726 was more likely to have been directed by Lord Ilay than by his henchmen, who were never allowed so much independence.\textsuperscript{107} We should also ask more questions about the political contexts in which institutions such as this are built and managed.

\textbf{ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.} I am grateful to the librarians and keepers of the depositories and libraries whose records and manuscripts have been cited in this essay. Their help and their permissions are acknowledged with pleasure, the pleasure given by the memories of the happy hours spent working in their collections. I am also grateful to Michael Barfoot and Fiona MacDonald for suggesting that I write this piece and to Andrew Cunningham who, in the past, gave me materials which have found a home here.

\textsuperscript{107} “As [Argyll] was well acquainted with all the branches of Learning, He got several New Professions established in Several Universitys of Scotland, and particularly encouraged the Professors of Physick in the University of Edinburgh, which is now a School for that Science, famous all over Europe and America.” “A Character of His Grace Archibald Duke of Argyll 1761,” SC 17612/218, NLS. The only other chair in which he may have had a hand, other than the ones in Edinburgh and Glasgow, is the Marischall College chair of Oriental languages, but the author also might have had in mind the fixing of chairs at Glasgow in 1727 and at Marischal in 1754.