

Adam Smith Gala Dinner, Saturday 10th June 2023, Bute Hall
'The Story of Smith & the University of Glasgow'
Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, University of Glasgow

Guests- it's a pleasure to add my welcome to Rachel and Sara's. Welcome to our Bute Hall for the culmination of this week's tercentenary activities. Thank you all for being with us.

For those of you who have participated in our Smith @ 300 events, I hope you will have enjoyed all of the thought-provoking and insightful discussions which have taken place.

I want to take a moment to thank each and every one of my University colleagues who have organised this programme of events. There are too many to name but if I could especially thank Professor Graeme Roy, Dr Craig Smith, Professor Sara Carter & the College of Social Sciences team- Amy, Lynda, Sam, Claire, Charlotte. And our brilliant events team led by Robert and Monika, with our colleagues in facilities and security who have helped make tonight happen.

I also want to sincerely thank our brilliant students who are here this evening and our partners here in Scotland and across the world who have joined together with us for this programme- particularly to the Hunter Foundation & John Templeton Foundation for their support.

What I would like to do, is to take you on a short whistle-stop tour on how the history of our great University is intertwined with that of Adam Smith.

Hopefully some of you will have seen the Smith exhibition in Kelvin Gallery curated by our fantastic Archives team. Many people who visit the University do not realise how much of Glasgow, and indeed Scotland's history, is preserved by our brilliant Archives colleagues. Some of the images of the assets will show on the slides on the screen.

While Smith was born in Kirkcaldy, 60 miles to the East from our city, we like to think of him as an adopted son of Glasgow.

And whilst I might be biased, it's no wonder Smith chose to come to study at the University of Glasgow.

Both the University and the city are steeped in centuries of history and culture. According to legend, Glasgow was probably founded in the 6th century. Fast forward 900 years later, Glasgow was granted royal burgh status in 1450- and the following year, on the suggestion of King James II, the University of Glasgow was founded via Papal Bull to exist for the benefit of the people of Glasgow.

Next week we'll celebrate 572 years of the University during our annual Commemoration Day.

Fast forward another 250 years to the 1700s and the University was in the midst of reform, at the cutting edge of teaching delivery. Indeed, much like today we had to compete with some of the finest institutions in Scotland.

At the time the Scottish Education system was noted for its practical emphasis, the breadth of subjects covered, and the focus on incorporating values and virtue into the students (making them good and useful members of society). This responsibility is something we have carried through to this century.

From the early 18th century, a series of important changes were made...

...In 1714 the University created a Chair of Medicine, and henceforth we've seen some of the most important medical innovations the world has ever seen come from our institution: such as the Glasgow Coma Scale and the use of ultrasound in medicine.

From 1727 we abandoned the Regent system whereby a single professor taught a class for all subjects. Instead, we adopted a subject professor who became a specialist in their subject – much like Smith's division of labour concept.

The 1700s also saw the University attract Francis Hutcheson, one of Smith's greatest role models, to the University, first as a student in 1710/1711. Hutcheson became a professor. His teaching style was unique as he was very focused on making learning much more accessible to students, moving away from the use of Latin in lecturing.

Hutcheson led a reform of teaching at the University, but he was also a strong supporter of reform more generally, arguing for freedom of expression and criticising privilege. He wanted to understand how society worked and who for, so that he could make it better, a view that Smith inherited. Hutcheson was Smith's great inspiration and Smith wrote of the '*never to be forgotten Dr Hutcheson*'.

This period also marked the beginnings of Glasgow's- and Scotland's-Enlightenment.

We heard this week in the Scottish Parliament from many of our politicians who have joined us this evening on the importance of Smith as a central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment...

...He knew and was friends with all of the main figures. His closest friends were David Hume, the philosopher and historian; Joseph Black the chemist who discovered Carbon Dioxide and Latent Heat; and the father of modern Geology, James Hutton.

Among his fellow students were Tobias Smollett, the famous novelist who studied medicine; Rev. Alexander Carlyle, the noted diarist; Gavin Hamilton, the famous painter. Smith was also schoolfriends with the politician James Oswald and with the famous architect Robert Adam who designed Culzean Castle and Bute House- now residence of Scotland's First Ministers.

Smith was a member of the main Enlightenment clubs and societies where ideas were exchanged and theories developed. Smith was also deeply interested in what the Scots called '*improvement*', the practical application of science and technology to improve the lives of the population. This approach flows through to our activities as a University today, leveraging our research strengths for the benefits of the communities we serve.

Smith was a member of the Glasgow Literary Society and the Provost's Political Economy Club. He also joined Professor Robert Simson's club, a university club that met in the University tavern on Friday evenings and then on Saturday walked to the nearby village of Anderston for lunch. It was famed for its relaxed intellectual conversation, for Professor Simson singing ancient Greek odes to modern tunes, and for its card playing... although I'm informed by our Smith experts that Smith himself was an unpopular partner at the card game 'whist', as he would get lost in a train of thought and forget to play his hand.

At the time of the Enlightenment, the city was also going through a significant economic transition...

Smith first came to Glasgow at a time when the city was on the up. Its growth is indicated by the rising population, from 14,000 in 1700 to 81,000 in 1790.

There were periods of political instability in the 1700s, brought about with the Jacobite risings and the malt tax riots in the city. Following the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments, Glasgow took advantage of its geographic location, and became a major port for trade with North America. This in turn developed a ship owning and building industry: an industry in re-exporting tobacco. By the 1770s Glasgow handled above 50% of all the tobacco imported into Britain.

People often point to Smith learning about the economy by watching the nascent industries developing in Glasgow. While this is certainly true, what is perhaps more intriguing is how he developed such strong views against mercantilism, and particularly against colonisation and slavery in a city- and amongst a group of people he socialised with- who were all profiting from it.

Smith gave a lecture to the city's Lord Provost Cochrane's political economy club on Hume's Essays on Commerce, so it seems he was open about his economic ideas even among the discussions with the Tobacco Lords.

Smith could see in Glasgow a city that was changing at an astonishing rate, one of his biographers says that *'The town was his laboratory.'*

And in recent years, this period of Glasgow's history has had an impact on our University and the decisions we have taken as a civic institution.

Because although the University of Glasgow never owned enslaved people or traded in the goods they produced, we received significant financial gifts and support from people who derived their wealth from slavery.

We have had to grapple with the fact that two parallel histories of the University of Glasgow exist: one benefitting financially from slavery and the other leading the movement for abolition, driven by the thinking of Smith and his University successors that slavery was evil.

In the 18th & 19th centuries, University of Glasgow academics helped to lead the abolitionist movement in Glasgow and it was Glasgow academics who sent two anti-slave trade petitions to Parliament.

And so, the issue facing the University has been how to address this parallel history?

In 2016, some of our academic colleagues in History at Glasgow met with myself and our Senior Management team and we recognised that we had to open up this hidden, darker part of our history. A report conducted by these history colleagues recommended a 'programme of reparative justice.'

This was the beginning of a process whereby the University would seek to diversify its community and work to build creative relationships with new partners in regions which had been impacted by slavery. And, to use our resources as a major international centre of research and learning to increase understanding of slavery, colonisation and its legacies, and enhance racial equality in education and society.

We signed an agreement in 2019 with the University of the West Indies. This MoU set out our ambitions to work together in the foundation of a Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research.

I know my colleague Professor Simon Anderson from UWI is here with us this evening, and I hope he would agree that this new Centre, co-located in Glasgow and the Caribbean, will help to stimulate public awareness about the history of slavery and its impact around the world.

Importantly, we are also looking at the wider approach we take as a 'global' and anti-racist University.

As part of this, we have created the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies at Glasgow and we've taken steps to begin internationalising - and decolonising - the University's curriculum and our Hunterian Museum. We've also made a conscious decision to use our diverse history to name our new buildings, such as our Learning Hub named after James McCune Smith, another world-changer bearing the Smith name.

James McCune Smith was born a slave and became the first African-American to ever receive a medical degree - which he did in 1837 from the University of Glasgow.

Just this week we've also seen our inaugural annual conference, organised by our first cohort of James McCune Smith PhD Scholars. These scholarships are supporting black UK students to undertake PhD research at the University.

We know that we have a long way to go in ensuring racial justice in Glasgow and beyond. But the University of Glasgow was, I believe, the first institution in the UK to come forward with a programme of reparative justice.

Just as Smith was forthcoming in his views on mercantilism and having these discussions openly with his peers and this city, we want to continue to push forward action in the UK and encourage our peers to step up in this space.

Turning back to Smith and beyond his critique of mercantilism, what else can we say about the legacy he left on the city of Glasgow?

In 1776, Smith published the first edition of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. The work sought to explore, through historical and contemporary examples, what made or caused nations to be wealthy. Much of this discussion investigated the influence of commerce upon contemporary society, for better and for worse.

Smith had considerable negotiation skills. In 1757 The Town Council broke the tradition allowing students at the University to bring a bag of meal (or oats) with them to eat during term-time without paying a tax to the corporation. They introduced a duty on the oats and so the University sent Smith to complain to the Council. He successfully negotiated with the Provost to restore the tax. An early example of Smith's distrust of corporations.

Another example of Smith's negotiation skills saw him support James Watt, to establish a workshop at the University. He'd previously been prevented from setting up a workshop in the city through the objection of the company of hammermen so Smith helped arrange a position for him as instrument maker to the University.

Watt's Workshop allowed the development of scientific instruments and laid the foundations for him to work on a series of cutting-edge inventions.

Beyond the city of Glasgow, Smith also had a lasting impact in his time at Balliol College, Oxford- it's amusing that Smith complained of the quality of teaching at Oxford in his time, he was much more enamoured with the approach taken at Scottish universities.

Smith moved in the most intellectual social circles of his era and was a key influencer of his time. He probably met anyone who was anyone in the 18th century: Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire, Quesnay, playwright Dr Johnson, Edmund Burke. We're quite certain he never met Robert Burns, but we do know the Bard & Smith were fans of each other..

Smith was also a mover and shaker on the political scene of the 18th century. He acted as a policy adviser to the government and was hailed by William Pitt the Younger, the Earl of Shelburne, and the abolitionist William Wilberforce, as an expert on economic matters. He met with many of the leading politicians and enlightenment figures throughout his life.

And of course, Smith left a lasting impact on our institution. From 1751 he was Professor and Chair of Logic at the University, and later as Professor of Moral Philosophy, Dean of Faculties and as Rector from 1787-1789.

In the 1750s the University built its own observatory and a new University Library was completed. The University grounds held a physics and botanical garden (and it held John Simson, the Professor of Divinity's, pet cow). William Cullen and Joseph Black also kept a modern laboratory on campus and Smith was involved in supporting and raising funds for all of these.

At the time Glasgow accepted non-conformist Protestant students, attracting many able young men excluded by Oxford and Cambridge. Universal education was a priority for Smith.

From my own perspective I like the fact that he was also an able University administrator and fulfilled a number of financial roles. He was particularly trusted with the University Finances and, as Praeses/Vice-Rector, chaired University meetings. As Professor Ryan Hanley, our colleague from Boston discussed this week, Smith needed the University to be able to thrive.

When Smith taught he would teach the main public lecture in moral philosophy 5 days a week between 07:30 and 08:30. While I admire his commitment to teaching, I'm not sure our students nowadays would appreciate a lecture on moral philosophy at 7:30 in the morning...

Like Glasgow's international outlook today, Smith too attracted students from across the world.

Smith is described throughout his life as having a passion for books and an amazing memory, but he was an awkward fellow. He was required to start his lectures with a prayer, to teach natural religion and to attend services in the chapel. He was described as focusing on the philosophical rather than the theological when he did so, and was often seen smiling to himself in apparent amusement at the sermon in the University chapel.

His inaugural lecture was called *De origine idearum* – On the origin of ideas. We know it met with acclaim, but no copy survives.

Smith was a gifted and popular lecturer. Though not as rhetorically gifted as Hutcheson, he became something of a celebrity. Students would discuss his ideas and he set a fashion for political economy in the wider city. His student John Millar explained that he was so popular and affection for his eccentricity so great, that students started to adopt his '*peculiarities of pronunciation and manner of speaking*' - although perhaps that was just his Kirkcaldy accent!

Smith probably earned around £200 per annum from his University salary and he had a rent free house in Professor's Court at the College.

By 1778 his income was reckoned at £900 from pensions, customs house salary and royalties. This made him one of the wealthiest men in Edinburgh but despite his wealth, Smith left a relatively modest will. This is because he had undertaken a long set of charitable donations which he had kept private.

Smith had a real fondness for the University, and he had real pleasure at being appointed Rector. He also sent his heir, David Douglas, to Glasgow to board with Professor John Millar and study law.

In my office I have a facsimile of a letter Smith wrote which expresses his thanks and joy at his appointment as Rector in 1787- I think he probably felt quite lucky and privileged to hold this role. It's one thing that Smith and I have in common: I too feel immensely proud to be able to say I'm Principal of this great, historic and world-changing University.

One of Smith's biographers refers to Glasgow as a 'reformed and progressive university'- and I would like to think this description, particularly Glasgow as a progressive institution, rings true today.

But before coming to today's University, I want to reflect on this slide where you see the Theory of Moral Sentiments. In the many lectures and workshops we have heard this week it is striking that there is one common theme: the fact that, for Smith, economics and ethics always go hand in hand. We should understand his work in its entirety. Our many wonderful distinguished speakers this week have explored this topic in depth. Is Economics a moral science? For Smith it was: economic activity was analysed in its social setting. And although in modern economics mathematics and abstraction sometimes takes our analysis away from its societal setting, we should never forget that economics is a moral science, and above all should not be an amoral discipline. This is particularly true today, as the reality of humankind's remaining - and dwindling - carbon budget threatens our very existence.

After Smith's passing in 1790, the University continued to host world-leading scholars, inventors, thinkers, creatives. And a quick plug for our festivities next year, we'll be commemorating the bicentenary of Lord Kelvin, another of our famous alumni.

I'm aware much of my talk has focused on the many remarkable men who shaped Smith's time at Glasgow. Of course, regrettably this is a symptom of that period of history. It wasn't for another 104 years until the University had our first women graduates in 1894, with Marion Gilchrist and Alice Robson graduating in medicine, following the creation of Queen Margaret College for women 26 years previously.

Here in our Bute Hall, the first secretary of Queen Margaret College, Janet Galloway is commemorated in one of our stained-glass windows.

Without seeking to minimise the obstacles and challenges we have faced, I believe we have been successful so far as a University because of our capacity to embrace and drive change... whilst remaining loyal to our historic roots as a civically-minded University founded by and for the people of Glasgow.

The size and shape of our university has changed enormously since Smith. We've been at this site in Gilmorehill since the 1870s. We have campuses in Dumfries and a teaching and research presence in many countries.

I know Sara has already spoken on the work of the College of Social Sciences but I also wanted to note the role of our social scientists here in Glasgow in addressing major societal challenges.

Sticking to the theme of Smith- Professor Nicola McEwen who is here this evening joined the College earlier this year and will be building a new Centre for Public Policy, evaluating the role of government as Smith also sought to do in his work.

And Professor John Tsoukalas in our Business School heads up the Scottish arm of the Productivity Institute, we know of course Smith viewed technological innovation as a means to boost productivity.

Beyond our College of Social Sciences, we're focusing as a University on those cutting-edge technologies which have the potential to boost Scotland's productivity: from quantum technologies to Precision Medicine, to solutions to the net zero challenge. We are proud that in the 2021 UK Research Assessment the University was ranked for the first time, top in Scotland, and one of the very best in the UK measured by grade point average.

In recent years we've focused our campus development on the old Western Infirmary site to create our new Mazumdar-Shaw Advanced Research Centre, the Clarice Pears School of Health & Wellbeing and early next year we'll open our new Postgraduate Hub & Adam Smith Business School. I'm sure Smith would be amazed to see the transformation of the University and the city, to see a new building named in his honour and to see Glasgow continue to be at the forefront of this period of technological enlightenment.

And like Smith & Hutcheson before him we know there's much more we must do to understand privilege and make society a fairer place. We have a number of politicians here this evening, and my conversations with many of you have focused on how our universities can step up to address the many challenges Scotland faces – from economic growth, to inequalities, to pursuing a just transition to net zero.

For our part we're continuing to widen access to education and to work alongside our local community- particularly through the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District along the River Clyde.

I've spoken of Glasgow's shipbuilding legacy - but now many of those areas of the city synonymous with Glasgow's industrial legacy now face decline. The Glasgow Riverside Innovation District (or GRID) is led by the University, and sees us working together with partners in the Govan area and along the Clyde to create an innovation district focused on inclusive growth.

And our focus on sustainable development is why last week our University was ranked 13th overall in the world, 1st in Scotland and 2nd in the UK in the Times Higher Education rankings for our impact and our contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

As a civic University we are committed to continuing to make a positive impact and build on the work of people like Adam Smith.

As Smith said, *"No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable."*

We will move forward as an institution with this in mind, building on the progress we've seen in the 300 years since Smith shaped our University.

I hope this evening is an enjoyable end to this week's programme of events. Once again thank you to all of my colleagues who have organised the tercentenary- and to all of you – including our many distinguished speakers - for your participation and enthusiasm for Adam Smith.

Please do enjoy the rest of the evening in the great surroundings of the Bute Hall.

Thank you.