

## Thomas Law Patterson (1842-1915) and the Egyptian Collection at the McLean Museum



The McLean Museum/Watt Library during Patterson's time.

Thomas Law Patterson was born in Glasgow in 1842. His connections with Greenock seem to date from relatively early in his professional career, it being his place of residence in 1868 when he gained a joint patent *for the invention of "improvements in obtaining or manufacturing saltpetre, iodine and bromine."*

Although the 1871 census records him as an *'Analyhine Chemical Enginer'*(sic) living in Govan, he seems to have moved back to Greenock around 1874, as local street directories start to record him from that date. His first business in Greenock seems to have been as a partner in Patterson and Ogilvie *'analytical and consulting chemists'*, based at 29 Cathcart Street, Greenock.

This partnership may have been relatively short lived for by 1878 he is listed as a manager with John Walker & Co., sugar refiners. The London Gazette of 14 November 1876 recorded that:

*'Hugh William Walker, Sugar Refiner, and Thomas Law Patterson, Analytical Chemist, both of Greenock, in the county of Renfrew, North Britain, have given the like notice in respect of the invention of "improvements in treating and utilising residual liquids obtained in manufacturing or refining sugar."*

He was eventually granted a patent in 1877:

*'To Hugh William Walker, Sugar Refiner, and Thomas Law Patterson, Analytical Chemist, both of Greenock, in the county of Renfrew, North Britain, for the invention of "improvements in apparatus for purifying or refining sugar."*

The census of 1881 and street directories up until 1901 confirm *'Sugar Refinery Manager'* as his profession but around 1891 his professional life seems to have taken a new direction with the 1891 census recording him as a *'Consulting Chemical Technologist'* living at *'Maybank'*, 59 Finnart Street, Greenock. It was at Maybank he died in 1915 leaving a widow, Margaret and two sons, one of whom, Thomas Stewart Patterson (1872-1949) went on to have a distinguished career in Chemistry.

In many ways Thomas Law Patterson was a model of the engaged Victorian citizen. He was professionally successful, a prize winning member of the Greenock Camera Club and an active member and secretary of the Greenock Philosophical Society. He was also the local secretary representing the Egypt Exploration Fund in Greenock and in the 1880s he was frequently the chairman of the Museum Trustees.

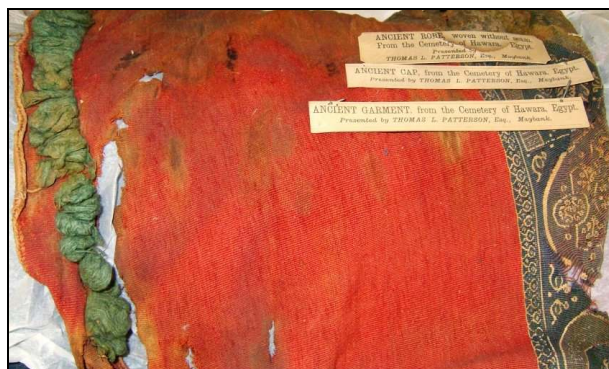
The earliest donation of Egyptian material came into the Museum in March 1888 and consisted of material from Petrie's digs for the Egypt Exploration Fund at Naukratis, San-el-Hagar, Tell Nebesheh, Defenna and Tukh-el Karmus. This was a sizeable donation and seems to have been acquired by T.L. Paterson for the Museum. Patterson's papers do not seem to have survived, but entries in the Museum Trustee minutes and elsewhere suggest that Patterson's role in the late 1880s was as an interlocutor between the Egypt Exploration Fund and the Museum.

At the Museum Trustees meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1888 (chaired by T.L. Patterson) it is recorded that:

*'Mr. Patterson also informed the Committee that, being in communication with the Managers of the Egypt Exploration Fund, he had received a letter intimating that they had "resolved to forward a selection of antiquities to the Greenock Museum".'*

At the Trustees meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> June 1888 it is noted that: *"on the motion of Mr. Patterson £2 was voted to the Egypt Exploration Fund and £2 annually"*.

The appearance of an Egyptian collection in the Museum seems to have served as a springboard for Patterson to promote the work of the Egypt Exploration Fund locally and on Tuesday 1st May 1888 there appeared a lengthy article in the *Greenock Telegraph* describing the work of the Fund and citing T.L. Paterson as the local honorary secretary to whom donations should be made. Later that month further donations of Egyptian material facilitated by Paterson came into the Museum.



Part of Patterson's Hawara donation

These were of Coptic period textiles from the cemetery at Hawara which had been excavated by Petrie that year, confirming Patterson's role as a conduit for bringing Egypt Exploration Fund sourced items to the Museum. Interestingly the Museum also received some Hawara mummy wrappings from Amelia B. Edwards the following year – perhaps Patterson's Hawara donation came via the same route.



The Shrine of Ramses II at Tanis  
From T.L. Patterson's Album

Patterson also collected photographs of the Egypt Exploration Fund digs and kept at least one album of them (now in the McLean Collection). It seems likely that he also collected smaller items such as amulets.

The success of the Egyptian material with the public was not lost on the Trustees who also subscribed to the memorials produced by the Egypt Exploration Fund to document their efforts, the first volumes being received in October 1888 and were, appropriately, for Naukratis and Tanis. This set a pattern where the Museum continued to subscribe to the Egypt Exploration Fund memorials and later those of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt even though they had not have received any items from those particular excavations.

Patterson also seems to have been energetic on behalf of the Egyptian collection in other ways. The annual meeting of the Trustees in January 1889 recorded the visit of Amelia B. Edwards to the Museum (probably a visit arranged by Patterson himself):

*“A very valuable addition to the antiquities in the Museum is the interesting collection sent by Miss Edwards, hon. secretary of the Egypt Exploration Fund, through Mr. Patterson, our chairman. This acquired, if possible, an additional interest owing to the admirable lecture delivered to the Philosophical Society by Miss Edwards. That lady visited the Museum, and was well pleased with the manner in which the Egyptian relics are shown in the case constructed by Mr. Rennie some years ago for the display of such specimens.”*

From 1890 onwards the Museum seems to have had more direct dealings with the Egypt Exploration Fund and certainly by the end of the decade the local secretary of the fund had now become Thomas Rennie (1835-1902), the Curator of the Museum. In the Museum files is a letter from Amelia B. Edwards recording the donation of the temple frieze block from the Great Temple of Bast at Bubastis:

*To the Curator  
McLean Museum  
Greenock*

The Larches  
Westbury on Srym  
Near Bristol  
11 September 1890

Dear Sir

*I have the pleasure to inform you that the President and Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund beg to offer for your acceptance on behalf of the above museum, a bas-relief slab from the site of the Great temple of Bubastis, a description of which will be found on the next page. I am, moreover, instructed to add that it is owing to the generosity of John Scott Esq. C.B., who paid for the cost of transporting the said block, that the Fund is enabled to make this donation.*

*I am, Dear Sir  
Yours Faithfully*

*Amelia B. Edwards  
Hon. Secy., Egypt Exploration Fund*



The Trustees meeting of 26 Sept 1890 records the correspondence with Amelia B. Edwards regarding the temple stone and the role of John Scott in transporting it (Scott was another Trustee of the Museum). After the meeting the Trustees examined the stone and:

*“Asked Mr. Patterson to write an article on the subject for the Museum and for publication, this he kindly agreed to do.”*

The Greenock Telegraph also recorded the arrival of the Temple frieze:

*“Notable among the gifts received at the Museum is a large granite slab engraved with Egyptian figures. This, was forwarded by the committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund, and came here owing to the generosity of Mr. John Scott, C. B. It is fully described in an article written by Mr. T.L. Patterson, a copy of which is placed for reference beside the stone. The paragraph appeared in the Greenock Telegraph.”*

Although donations of Egyptian material were to continue until the outbreak of the First World War, the year 1891 was in some senses the high point of acquisitions for the Museum, for in that year the Museum acquired a mummy cartonnage and a recumbent stone lion (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art , New York.



Henri Édouard Naville recorded the find of the cartonnage in his notes: *"On one of the hills, quite at the top, and at very small depth, among rubbish of broken bricks and chips of stone, we found about twenty coffins, most of them of women. They generally fell to pieces when they were moved. Two of them, which we took away, were made more carefully; the mummy being in cartonnage and enclosed in a double coffin painted in red."*



*Old Kingdom Recumbent Lion – formerly part of the McLean Collection*  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/100006632>

Both items came as a result of Naville's excavations at Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina, Ehnasya).

Once again the local press covered the event:

*"The department of antiquities has received most important additions. Miss Edwards, honorary secretary of the Egypt Exploration Fund, intimated that the president and committee of that body were pleased to present to this Museum a double mummy case from the necropolis of Ha-Khenensu, consisting of an outer coffin with carved mask and an inner cartonnage, richly painted, also a stone lion of fully life size from the Great Temple of Harshefi, time of Rameses II., about 1,500 B.C. .These came to hand quite recently. Preparations are making to show them to the best advantage. The brightness of the painting of the cartonnage is wonderfully preserved, and, along with the fine carving of a human face on the coffin, is well worthy of note. These add greatly to the small but interesting collection of antiquities in the Museum."*

Greenock Telegraph 29.12.1891

From the mid 1890s onwards Thomas L. Patterson plays a less important role in the direct acquisition of objects for the Museum's collection. In an important sense he no longer needed to do so. He had essentially achieved his aims. He had succeeded in convincing the McLean Museum trustees that the presence

of an Egyptian collection was both a necessary and desirable part of the Museum's mission. That such a collection not only contributed to the educative function of the institution, was attractive to visitors but also enhanced the status of the Museum.

In a curious way Patterson's life provides both a beginning and an end to the era of Egyptian collecting at the McLean Museum. The Museum acquired its first donation of Egyptian material in 1888, a mere 12 years after opening. The last donation occurred in August 1914, a selection of items from Antinoe. Patterson died on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915.

By the time of his death Patterson seems to have been a semi-forgotten figure. Supervision of the Museum had passed to a younger generation some decades previously, and they seemed to be happy to carry on with the legacy of the arrangements that had been put in place by Patterson. His death is not recorded in the Museum Trustee minutes for 1915.

The development of the Egyptian collection at the McLean Museum was therefore the result of a conjunction of a unique set of circumstances:

- British control in Egypt, enabling the Egypt Exploration Fund to work there and export objects.
- A new Museum in Greenock eager to develop and expand its collections.
- The personal interest and dynamism of an individual who was able to bring the two together.

Of these three factors the most crucial was the enthusiasm of Thomas Law Patterson for Ancient Egypt, using his connections with both the Egypt Exploration Fund and the McLean Museum to make the possibility of an Egyptian collection in Greenock a reality, successfully seizing the opportunity to convince his fellow citizens of Greenock that it Ancient Egypt was important and relevant to their lives and to the lives of future generations in Inverclyde.

## Appendix

### Thomas L. Patterson Egyptian Library

The Egyptian library of Thomas Law Patterson was bequeathed to the McLean Museum on his death in 1915. It shows that Patterson's interest in the subject went well beyond that of the general and that he acquired professional and specialised textbooks.

- Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe: W.M. Flinders Petrie: 1889
- A Season in Egypt - W.M. Flinders Petrie: 1888
- The Inscriptions of Siut and der Rifeh: F.L. Griffith: 1889
- Egyptian Obelisks: H.H. Goringe: 1885
- Egypt Vol. I: G. Ebers: 1887
- Egypt Vol. II: G. Ebers: 1887
- Voyage in Egypt 2 Volumes: P.V. Denon: 1802-1807
- Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia: G. Belzoni: 1820
- The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh: W.M. Flinders Petrie: 1883
- Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers: Amelia B. Edwards: 1892
- A Thousand Miles up the Nile: Amelia B. Edwards: 1889

- History of Ancient Egypt Vol.I: Professor Rawlinson: 1881
- History of Ancient Egypt Vol.II: Professor Rawlinson: 1881
- Ancient Egyptians Vol.I: Sir J. Wilkinson: 1878
- Ancient Egyptians Vol.II: Sir J. Wilkinson: 1878
- Ancient Egyptians Vol.III: Sir J. Wilkinson: 1878
- Egypt Under the Pharaohs Vol.I: Dr. Henry Brugsch-Bey
- Egypt Under the Pharaohs Vol.II: Dr. Henry Brugsch-Bey
- The Empire of The Hittites: William Wright: 1884
- The Mummy: E. Wallis Budge: 1893
- Egyptian Archaeology: G. Maspero: 1887
- L'Archéologie Egyptienne: G. Maspero
- The Bible and The Monuments: W. St. Chad Boscawen 1895
- Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de L'Orient: G. Maspero: 1886
- The Pharaohs of the Bondage and the Exodus: Charles S. Robinson 1887
- Cleopatra's Needle and Egyptian Obelisks: Erasmus Wilson: 1877
- Cities of Egypt: R.S. Poole: 1882
- A Short History of the Egyptian Obelisks: W.R. Cooper: 1877
- Egyptian Life and History: M.E. Harkness: 1884
- Fresh Light on the Ancient Monuments: A.H. Sayce
- The Races of the Old Testament: A.H. Sayce: 1891
- The Life and Times of Joseph: H.G. Tomkins: 1891
- Records of the Past Vol. I: A.H. Sayce: 1888
- Records of the Past Vol. II: A.H. Sayce: 1889
- Records of the Past Vol. III: A.H. Sayce: 1890
- Records of the Past Vol. IV: A.H. Sayce: 1890
- Records of the Past Vol. V: A.H. Sayce: 1891
- Atlas of Ancient Egypt: 1894
- Archaeological Report of the Egypt Exploration Fund 1890-1891
- Archaeological Report of the Egypt Exploration Fund 1911
- Grammar of Ancient Egyptian Language: Renouf: 1875