

Chapter 6

“A Small Town of Character”: Locating a New Scottish University, 1963–1965



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The ancient Scottish universities of St. Andrews (founded in 1410), Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1495), and Edinburgh (1583) are among Europe’s most celebrated institutions of higher learning, renowned for their liberal commitment to religious and social inclusion. Established centuries before the union between Scotland and England in the early eighteenth century, the Scottish universities occupy a unique and distinctive position in British higher education. Although the three oldest were religious foundations, Edinburgh was established by the city’s council, which remained the governing authority until 1858. Two years later, King’s College Aberdeen combined with Marischal College, a separate institution established in the same city in 1593, to create a powerful quartet of Victorian universities that educated in the mid-nineteenth century proportionately twice as many Scottish students as the similar number of English universities educated from the population south of the border (Anderson, 2006, pp. 12–13; Whyte, 2015, pp. 4–5, 32).

Scotland’s relative preeminence in British higher education began to wane in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when six new “redbrick” universities were established in the larger industrial cities of Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bristol, mainly inspired by the civic higher educational ideals developed in London and Edinburgh rather than the ecclesiastical traditions of Oxford and Cambridge. Further new university colleges, emerging in smaller cities and towns such as Nottingham, Reading, and Southampton and also initially offering degrees validated by the University of London, reinforced the changing geography of British higher education (Beloff, 1969).

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Plans to expand the network of British universities in response to a rising population, a growing demand for graduates in science and technology, and a political desire to increase participation rates among geographically and socially disadvantaged communities were extensively debated during the period of the Labour government after 1945 (Anderson, 2006, pp. 131–133). Alan Barlow's (1946) report on "scientific man-power" included one of several proposals for a new, publicly funded university (Shattock, 2012, p. 44). By the late 1950s, after almost a decade of Conservative rule, public finances had sufficiently recovered from World War II for these plans to bear fruit. Between 1961 and 1968, 24 new universities were chartered in the United Kingdom, including ten preexisting, local-authority-controlled Colleges of Science and Technology that were expanded and redesigned as independent universities. Based on a generous, but means-tested, system of student grants, the proportion of 19- to 20-year-olds attending university rose sharply from circa 5% in 1960 to 14% ten years later (Robertson, 2010, p. 19).

It was during this period of unprecedented expansion that the principal characteristics of British university life were established based on a presumption of high student mobility and the separation of home and campus (Anderson, 2006, pp. 139–141; Committee on Higher Education [hereafter CHE], 1963, p. 162). The most eye-catching developments were the seven new "plateglass" universities established *ab initio* during the 1960s on green-field sites adjacent to Brighton, Norwich, York, Canterbury, Colchester, Warwick, and Lancaster (Tight, 1987). These proposals were agreed on separately by the British government between 1958 and 1961 without parliamentary scrutiny and based solely on the recommendations of the University Grants Committee (UGC), a government quango established in the aftermath of World War I and chaired from 1953 to 1963 by Keith Murray (1903–1993), a Scottish agricultural economist (Beloff, 1969; Shattock, 1994).¹

The UGC's Subcommittee on New University Colleges, created in 1959 to stimulate discussion on the nature and location of new institutions of higher education, received dozens of proposals for new universities from towns and cities across the country. This list was eventually whittled down to the seven projects recommended to government by UGC members and the small circle of Treasury civil servants, university vice-chancellors, Oxbridge academics, and industrialists with whom Murray confided at regular dinners in London's Athenaeum Club. The "back-room" nature of these decisions, and their bias toward the more attractive county towns and cities of England, a country still perceived to be inadequately served by its existing universities, caused understandable resentment in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Shattock, 2012, pp. 16, 43–54).

In July 1960, the government agreed to establish "a committee of persons outside the Government service, under an independent chairman of high status . . . to study

¹The National Archives of the UK, University Grants Committee [hereafter TNA, UGC] 7/238. Fifth university for Scotland: Extract from Hansard, June 20, 1961, p. 935.

the fundamental long-term problems arising in the field of full-time higher education.”² The Committee on Higher Education (CHE), set up in February 1961 under the chairmanship of the LSE economist Lionel Robbins (1898–1984), was intended to provide firmer evidence on which to guide future decisions (Carswell, 1985; King & Nash, 2001; Layard, King, & Moser, 1969; Robbins, 1966; Shattock, 2014). The Robbins committee consisted of twelve members, including two Scottish individuals: Robbins; four university representatives from different disciplines (Oxford humanist Helen L. Gardner; Cambridge-trained educationalist H. Lionel Elvin—director of the Institute of Education at London University; Scottish-born Edinburgh psychologist James Drever—educated in Edinburgh and Cambridge; and chemist Patrick Linstead—Rector of his former alma mater Imperial College London); two heads of independent schools (Kitty Anderson and A. Chenevix-Trench); an industrialist (Edward Herbert, who died in April 1963); and representatives of local authorities (Harold C. Shearman), the Vice-Chancellors Committee (Philip Morris), technical research (Scottish-born David Anderson), and technical education (R. B. Southall).³ The committee meetings were also attended by P. S. Ross of the Treasury as secretary, Keith Murray (UGC), and Antony Part (Ministry of Education). Claus Moser and Richard Layard (both LSE) were responsible for the statistical data collection and analysis (Stewart, 1989, p. 333).

Far from initiating the expansion of British higher education, as is often claimed, the lengthy deliberations of the Robbins committee between 1961 and 1963 temporarily halted the ad hoc process of expansion that had been gathering momentum under Murray’s chairmanship of the UGC, a tenure that ended shortly before Robbins published his recommendations (for personal recollections, see Robbins, 1971; Annan, 1982; Moser, 1987). The Robbins report, published on October 23, 1963, contained a mass of statistical data on every aspect of British higher education, ranging from projected student numbers and likely employment demand for graduates in different sectors of the economy to the most effective means of university governance based on international comparisons (e.g., Callender, 2014; Scott, 2014; Shattock, 2014).

The report recommended the immediate further expansion of the existing system and the creation of up to six new universities to be located in or near to large cities and with an emphasis on science and technology (CHE, 1963, pp. 163, 272). To counter the earlier bias toward England, Robbins endorsed the expansion and reorganization of Scotland’s existing universities, specifically the redesignation of Glasgow’s Royal College of Science and Technology as Strathclyde University (1964), and indirectly also the transformation of Edinburgh’s Heriot-Watt College into Heriot-Watt University (1966), as well as the conversion of Queen’s College

²TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Committee meeting, November 2, 1960, p. 1.

³TNA, Department of Education and Science [hereafter ED] 116/11. Committee on Higher Education (Robbins committee): Agenda and minutes: Composition of the committee. University expansion in the 1960s was shaped by very few women. All individuals cited in this text with their first-name initials were men.

Dundee, previously part of St. Andrews, into an independent university (1967; see CHE, 1963, pp. 132–133; Paterson, 2003). The Robbins report specified that at least one of the six new universities should be established in Scotland (CHE, 1963, p. 284).

Drawing on previously unused documents in the UK National Archives, we consider the debates about the location of the new Scottish university recommended by Robbins and analyze the decision to award this institution to the county town of Stirling. As a geographical inquiry into the factors that influenced the location of a major British university, this chapter may rectify the paradoxical absence of research on the basic geographies of the working environments in which most professional geographers earn their living, mindful of the enormous economic, social, and cultural advantages that university towns and cities have enjoyed since the 1960s compared to otherwise similar urban centers that lack institutions of higher education (Cochrane & Williams, 2013; Goddard & Vallance, 2013; Lawton Smith, 2007; Parkinson et al., 2006; Tight, 1987, 1996).

Early Initiatives

Following the 1946 Barlow report, several local authorities approached the government with the aim of securing a new university. To promote Scotland's case, Joseph Westwood, Secretary of State for Scotland in the Labour government, organized a meeting of representatives from five Scottish boroughs—Dumfries, Inverness, Oban, Perth, and Stirling—on May 2, 1947, to discuss a proposal he had previously circulated for a fifth Scottish university. Although these exchanges ended with a cautious, financially motivated decision to focus on the expansion of existing universities, Westwood “seemed to think that we would need to fight England for the university and was quite pleased that he had, in a sense, stolen a march on England with the early propaganda.”⁴

In the event, nothing of any significance happened for more than a decade until 1960 when, in the midst of the UGC debates about new universities for England, the Scottish case was revived. On April 28, Alan Thompson, Labour MP for Dunfermline, tabled a parliamentary question to John Scott Maclay, Secretary of State for Scotland in Harold Macmillan's second Conservative government, demanding to know why none of the new universities mentioned in the media were located north of the border. In early August, a group of local MPs, town councilors, and local government officials made a more concerted attempt to promote the case for a new

⁴TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Ernest Fyfe, Provost of Dumfries, to Colonel J. G. Crabbe, Dumfries; The Reverend J. A. Fisher, Castle Douglas; and Hugh S. Gladstone, Penpont, May 6, 1947; see also Mr. Parker, Scottish Education Department, to H. A. de Montmorency, UGC secretary, April 28, 1947.

University of East Stirlingshire somewhere in the vicinity of Falkirk–Grangemouth–Larbert, midway between Edinburgh and Glasgow.⁵

Some of the ensuing correspondence, including Maclay’s responses outlining his interpretation of the UGC criteria for assessing the suitability of proposed locations, was leaked to the press, triggering a wave of counterproposals from other Scottish towns.⁶ On September 15, a *Glasgow Herald* article on “How to start a new university?” described how Falkirk, Inverness, Dumfries, and Ayr might develop proposals as persuasive as those successfully advanced by Brighton, York, and Norwich, adding—in a follow-up article on September 30—that the Highlands “will not lack well-wishers if they undertake the quest.”⁷ Over the next two months, the UGC received requests for further information on submitting proposals from Dumfries (October 6), Falkirk (October 18), Stirling (October 19), Inverness (November 1), and Perth (November 8), and the secretary of town council in Ayr contacted Thomas Moore, the town’s veteran Conservative MP, on November 1, asking him to lobby the government on the town’s behalf.⁸

On September 21, Malcolm MacPherson, Labour MP for Stirling and Falkirk, wrote to Maclay expressing his concern about the “undignified rivalry among several localities for the one prize.”⁹ In MacPherson’s view, Scotland needed a more united front. One way to achieve this, he argued, was to ask the existing universities to sponsor the new institution, having decided on its location, just as the universities of Oxford, Manchester, and Birmingham had done in the case of Keele University in England—a suggestion forwarded by Maclay to the UGC. Despite a reserved response from UGC secretary Cecil Syers, who noted that new proposals would have to await the “Government’s decision on the general expansion question,” Murray—a native of Edinburgh and an alumnus of the city’s university—agreed to meet representatives from the six alternative Scottish locations at a hastily arranged gathering in St. Andrew’s House in Edinburgh between Christmas and New Year 1960.¹⁰

While insisting that there was no need for a new Scottish university given the capacity to expand existing institutions, Murray acknowledged that the Robbins

⁵TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Alexander Duncan, Secretary of the Proposed University for East Stirlingshire Campaign Committee, to Malcolm MacPherson, Labour MP for Stirling and Falkirk, August 3, 1960; Duncan to Maclay, August 8, 1960; H. H. Donnelly, Scottish Education Department, to Cecil Syers, UGC secretary, August 29, 1960.

⁶TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Niall MacPherson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, to Arthur Woodburn, Labour MP for Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire, August 20, 1960; Maclay to M. MacPherson, September 8, 1960.

⁷TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Making it five: The *Glasgow Herald* Leader Article, September 30, 1960.

⁸TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland.

⁹TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: M. MacPherson to Maclay, September 21, 1960.

¹⁰TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Syers to F. M. M. Grey, Scottish Education Department, October 4, 1960, p. 1; Duncan to Murray, November 17, 1960; J. E. Fraser, Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, to Murray, December 19, 1960.

committee might revise this assessment. He therefore encouraged representatives from each town to submit full applications to the UGC within six months, based on the successful applications from Norwich and York. Each town was instructed to demonstrate sufficient economic vitality, including the ability to generate the necessary financial support for a new university, estimated to be roughly 3% of annual capital expenditure during the development phase; the excellence of existing facilities, including transport links with other centers of learning across the UK; the housing supply for academic staff and students, based on the assumption that a new university would need to accommodate about 60% of its circa 3,000 students; the capacity of local schools to accommodate an influx of new pupils; and the community's wider cultural vitality and support for the proposal. Submissions would also need to identify a green-field site of at least 200 acres.¹¹

No full submissions were made within the next six months, but Murray received the following response to a question he asked his Scottish colleagues about the Airthrey estate that Stirling representatives had mentioned in the meeting:

. . . the Department of Health have decided that about 190 acres of this site should be offered to the County Council as the previous owners of this site . . . if there was any serious intention to use the Airthrie [*sic*] site for a university, the best plan would probably be to remove the existing maternity hospital altogether so that the whole of the estate would be available for university purposes . . . the happiest solution would presumably be for the Town Council of Stirling and the County Council to agree to keep the land available for use for a university, if the local people want to pursue the idea of a university at Stirling.¹²

This reassurance about an available site of about 200 acres or more might have been the moment in which Murray chose to support the idea of a University of Stirling. The matter certainly remained on the policy agenda through several questions about a new Scottish university in parliament (June and December 1961, March 1962) as well as respective memoranda sent to the UGC by the Scottish Union of Students (August 1961); the campaign committees for East Stirlingshire (December 1962, March 1963) and Stirling (August 1963); and the National Committee for a New University in Scotland of the Educational Institute of Scotland (February 1963). The latter sent its memorandum to both the UGC and the Robbins committee and was able to arrange a meeting with the chief secretary of the Treasury in April 1963.¹³ As John Rankin, a Labour MP from Glasgow, had expressed the wider mood that calling "attention to the need for another university in Scotland . . . deploras the fact that when seven universities are provided for England none is considered necessary for Scotland,"¹⁴ it suggests itself that this asymmetry became a central concern for the Robbins committee. This body's meetings were in fact

¹¹TNA, UGC 7/238. Fifth university for Scotland: Meetings with the chairman of the UGC about a new Scottish university, January 26, 1961.

¹²TNA, UGC 7/238. Fifth university for Scotland: William Murrie, Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Scottish Office, to Murray, January 4, 1961.

¹³TNA, UGC 7/238. Fifth university for Scotland; TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland.

¹⁴TNA, UGC 7/238. Fifth university for Scotland: Extract from Hansard, June 30, 1961, p. 935.

attended by UGC chairman Keith Murray, who, according to Shattock (2012), exerted “a powerful influence on the Committee” (p. 39).

The task of the Robbins committee was to advise the government on what principles its long-term development of higher education should be based (CHE, 1963, p. iii). Over a period of two and a half years, the committee held 111 meetings, consulted more than 400 written submissions, conducted over 120 interviews, and visited several institutions at home and abroad, thus providing the basis for a new phase of evidence-based planning in higher education (CHE, 1963, p. 1). As an outcome of these deliberations, the Robbins report raised the target number of students for the early 1970s from the previous UGC figure of 170,000 to 218,000 and recommended institutional expansion through four strategies:

- the foundation of six further new universities;
- the upgrading of ten Colleges of Advanced Technology (CAT) and some ten Regional Colleges, Central Institutions, and Colleges of Education to universities;
- the development of five Special Institutions for Scientific and Technological Education and Research (S.I.S.T.E.R.);
- the establishment of at least one of the six new universities in Scotland (CHE, 1963, pp. 281, 284).

In a press statement, the government endorsed most of the Robbins report’s recommendations, including the formulation of a ten-year program for university expansion and the foundation of a new university in Scotland. Yet by February 1965, when the government suddenly announced that no more new universities would be needed for about ten years (Mountford, 1966, p. 43), only part of the post-Robbins expansion program had been pursued. The ten CATs in England and Wales were about to be upgraded to universities; the Royal College of Science and Technology in Glasgow had been transformed into the University of Strathclyde, thus turning the search for the fifth Scottish university into the sixth; and the new Scottish university was to be founded in Stirling.¹⁵

A New University for Scotland

The post-Robbins expansion program was implemented promptly by the UGC’s new chairman, John Wolfenden (1906–1985), an Oxford graduate in philosophy (Queen’s College, 1928), who subsequently held a Henry P. Davison scholarship at Princeton University (1928–1929) and a philosophy fellowship at Magdalen College Oxford (1929–1934) before serving on invitation as a school headmaster at Uppingham School (1934–1944) and Shrewsbury School (1944–1950). Wolfenden was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading in 1950

¹⁵The decisions on chartering Heriot-Watt University, the University of Dundee, and the new University of Ulster in Coleraine, Northern Ireland, were still pending.

and remained in this position until chairing the UGC from October 1963 to 1968. He is probably best known for recommending the decriminalization of homosexuality in Britain as the chair of the government committee that now bears his name and that reported in 1957 (Weeks, 2004).

Only two weeks after the publication of the Robbins report, on November 8, 1963, Wolfenden wrote to all towns and cities that had previously inquired about the possibility of establishing a new university, encouraging them to submit a full proposal by the end of the year. A separate letter was addressed to Imperial College London, Manchester College of Science and Technology, and the Royal College of Science and Technology in Glasgow regarding the possible development as S.I.S.T.E.R. institutions, asking for a ten-year development program with estimated costs. The following letter was sent to six towns and cities in Scotland: Ayr, Dumfries, Falkirk (East Stirlingshire), Inverness, Perth, and Stirling:

As you will have seen from the Government's statement about the Robbins Report which was published on 24th October (Cmnd. 2165), the University Grants Committee have been asked for an early report on the specific recommendation in the Robbins Report that a new university should be located in Scotland. The Committee have given some preliminary consideration to this matter and, in order that they may have the fullest possible information before them when they come to advise the Government, they have agreed that the promoting bodies in each place concerned should be given an opportunity of supplementing, if they so wish, the representations already made. I am accordingly writing to the appropriate people in all the places in Scotland which have been suggested as possible sites for new universities and inviting them to submit any additional information, which they may wish the Committee to have, by the end of the year.¹⁶

Although the UGC had discussed in a meeting on November 7, 1963, "how they should handle the Government's request for an early report on the proposal in the Robbins report for the foundation of a new university in Scotland" and what "action they might take with regard to the areas which have requested interviews," the letters addressed to interested locations in England and Wales and to potential S.I.S.T.E.R. institutions were sent despite the Robbins committee's suggestions about five further new universities and five S.I.S.T.E.R. institutions not having been formally taken forward by the government via the UGC.¹⁷

Subsequently, Wolfenden's efforts focused entirely on founding a new university in Scotland. On January 27, 1964, the government formally accepted the UGC's endorsement of the Robbins committee's recommendation that at least one new university was required in Scotland to absorb the rising number of qualified students, asking the UGC "to advise on the choice of a location from those that have been suggested."¹⁸ For making a decision in this semipublic round of bid evaluation—

¹⁶TNA, UGC 1/172. Subcommittee on New University Colleges: Report of the Committee on Higher Education: Letters regarding the recommendation of new universities and of special institutions for scientific and technological education and research, November 21, 1963, Annex b.

¹⁷TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Report of the Committee of Higher Education, New University in Scotland, November 7, 1963, p. 4.

¹⁸TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: J. P. Carswell, Treasury, to E. R. Copleston, UGC secretary, January 24, 1964, Note.

Cumbernauld New Town had joined the competition in December 1963—Wolfenden chaired a UGC subcommittee consisting of four other UGC members—the historians Asa Briggs (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University, educated in Cambridge and previously based in the Universities of Oxford, 1945–1955, and Leeds, 1955–1961) and Lucy Sutherland (Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University); the physicist Francis Arthur Vick (Director of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment Harwell, first Vice-Principal of the University College of North Staffordshire at Keele, 1950–1959); and Iain M. Stewart (Chairman of Thermotank Ltd. in Airdrie, Lankarkshire). Briggs and Vick had also been members of Murray’s earlier UGC Subcommittee on New University Colleges (1959–1961).

Apart from Stewart, Wolfenden’s UGC subcommittee lacked Scottish expertise, which prompted the suggestion by Ronald Edwards, chairman of The Electricity Council, to co-opt additional members with Scottish background or experience such as Lord Polwarth, a Scottish representative peer.¹⁹ To take Scottish views into account, the UGC subcommittee had invited colleagues from the Scottish Office’s Education Department (Mr. Graham and J. A. M. Mitchell) and Development Department (James McGuinness and Robert Grieve) to give their views on a suitable new university location during the UGC subcommittee’s first meeting on February 28, 1964. However, when the press reported that Wolfenden’s subcommittee was to visit seven potential university locations in Scotland in April and May 1964, Gordon Wilson, secretary of the Scottish National Party, complained that the visitors included six “English people” and only “one Scots gentleman”:

When one considers that the Scottish Universities were founded long before the two countries were joined together and that their organisation, their tradition and their whole method of operation is based on a completely different system from the English system, this would appear to be nothing less than a deliberate attempt on the part of the Government to destroy yet another aspect of Scotland’s national life in the interests of uniformity throughout the United Kingdom.²⁰

In the context of increasing national sentiments, Wilson felt that a committee of Scottish people with one English representative, or at least a majority of Scots knowledgeable of “the real feelings of the people of Scotland,”²¹ would be much more appropriate for the fundamental task at hand, so he asked Wolfenden to resign from the subcommittee before its return to Scotland on May 17. In his response, Wolfenden referred to the UGC’s need to carry out the duty of advising the government and assured Wilson that the subcommittee received plenty of advice “on particularly Scottish problems.”²²

¹⁹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Edwards to Wolfenden, February 28, 1964.

²⁰TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wilson to Wolfenden, May 1, 1964, p. 2.

²¹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wilson to Wolfenden, May 1, 1964, p. 3.

²²TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wolfenden to Wilson, May 6, 1964.

The Competing Locations

The seven Scottish locations competing for a new university after publication of the Robbins report were—in alphabetical order—Ayr, Cumbernauld, Dumfries, Falkirk, Inverness, Perth, and Stirling (Fig. 6.1). Dumfries, Stirling, Inverness, and Perth were local authorities that had jointly approached the UGC about the possibility of a new university for the first time in 1947 and separately again in October and November 1960. Falkirk had started the second wave of lobbying for a new university in Scotland in August 1960, whereas Ayr expressed its interest first in November 1960, and the new town of Cumbernauld in December 1963. In addition, Dunkeld and Kinross (both Perthshire), the county town of Duns (Berwickshire), and Scotland's first new town East Kilbride (South Lanarkshire) had been suggested as suitable sites for a new university in Scotland but not been pursued further.²³

Stirling

The small historic county town of Stirling, located on the northern fringe of Scotland's central population belt, within the 26-mile commuter radius of Glasgow and 35 miles from Edinburgh, had about 28,000 inhabitants. It offered to use the Airthrey estate, a site of 303 acres, including the late-eighteenth century Airthrey Castle, for the new university. This site was situated about one mile from the Stirling town center in a picturesque landscape with a central loch (which can be walked around in one hour) and bordering hills. Stirling promoted itself as a pleasant community in the heart of Scotland within easy reach of other centers of learning, hosting an annual festival, and providing a sufficient number of schools, staff housing, cultural amenities, as well as financial support from local authorities and the community at large. Although no specific total of such contributions was mentioned, £25,000 per year were promised by Lanark County Council. The new university was seen as incorporating the broad fields of the arts, social sciences, and pure sciences, with industrial facilities located nearby for applied sciences.²⁴

Stirling had a strong advocate in Thomas Erskine Wright (1902–1986), a former fellow of Queen's College Oxford (1928–1948) based at St. Andrews (1948–1962). Wright was not only a native of Stirling but was also a member of the UGC until December 1963. Wright wrote on several occasions to both Murray

²³TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: The Reverend Bruce Robertson, Dunkeld, to Murray, December 28, 1960; R. R. Kydd, Kinross, to Murray, December 29, 1960; TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Report of the Committee of Higher Education, New University in Scotland, November 7, 1963, p. 3.

²⁴TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Royal Burgh of Stirling, Submissions to the UGC for the establishment of a university in and adjacent to the Royal Burgh of Stirling, n.d.; Royal Burgh of Stirling, Proposed university at Airthrey estate, Supplementary memorandum by the sponsoring committee, n.d.

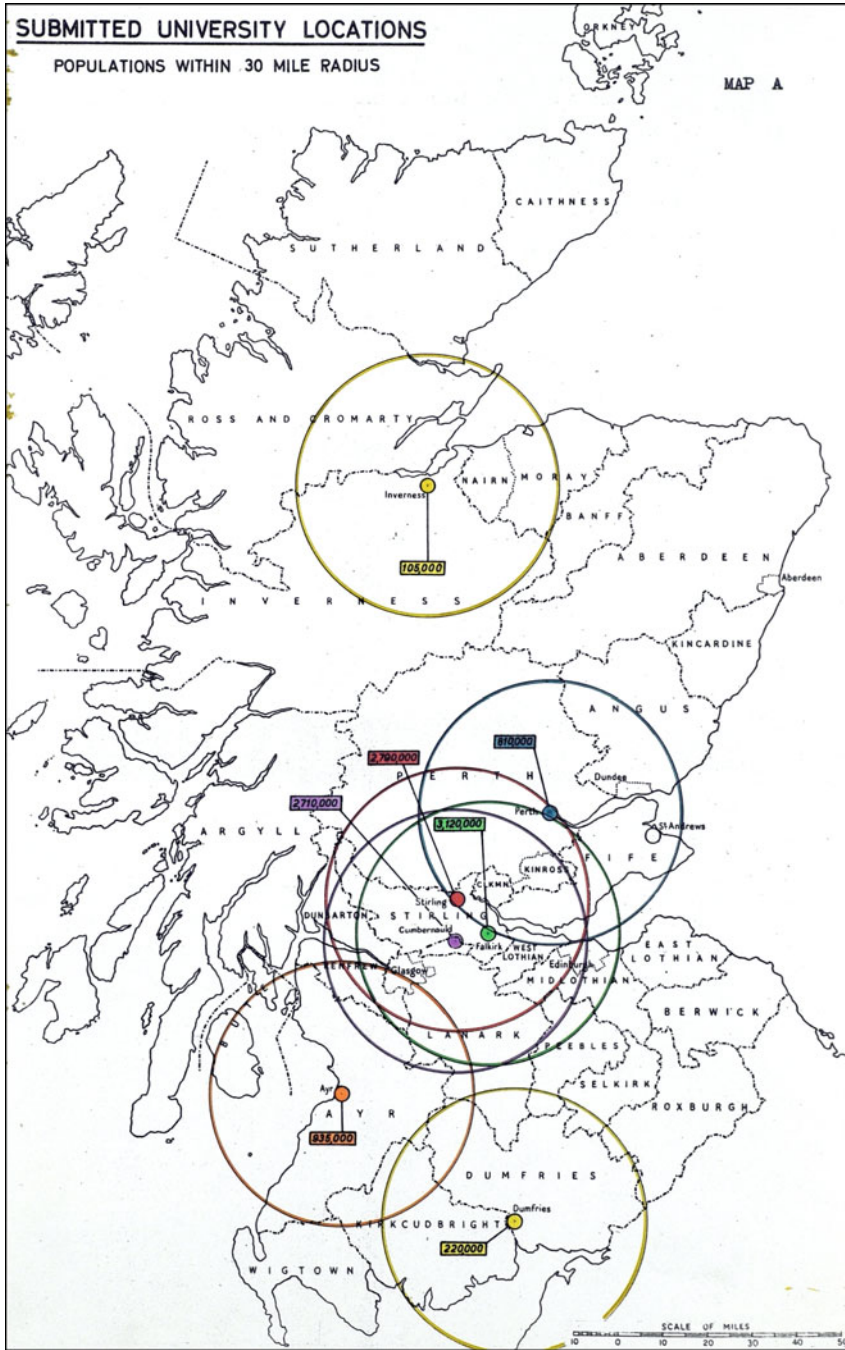


Fig. 6.1 Map on the locations and population catchment areas of places applying for a new university in Scotland (April 1964). Source: The National Archives, Kew, University Grants Committee, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Proposed university locations, Map A. Reprinted with permission.

(August 8, early September—letter “Retained by Chairman”²⁵—, November 12 and 22, 1960) and Wolfenden (October 26, November 3 and 11, 1963) in their role as UGC chairmen. In Wright’s first letter, written only a few days after Falkirk supporters had revived their expression of interest in a new university in correspondence with the Scottish Office and local MPs on August 3, he suggested that if another Scottish university were ever to be set up,

... the best location would seem to be Stirling (centre of communications, residential area, history & general amenities): in saying this, I am not, I think, influenced by partiality for my native town—in fact, it was Arbuckle who first urged its claims upon me!²⁶

Pursuing the idea of William Arbuckle, Secretary of the Scottish Education Department, further over the coming four years, Wright used his subsequent letters to both UGC chairmen for strengthening the case of Stirling, mainly by discrediting Falkirk’s campaign for a university in East Stirlingshire. This intention is most evident in the surviving correspondence with Wolfenden:

... there is some resentment that Falkirk has been rather blatantly trying to ‘beat the gun’. There is also some suspicion of the people who are campaigning for ‘East Stirlingshire’. I was told that the Trust Fund was constituted for a new university in Scotland (no location specified), but that it is in fact run by the same people as are campaigning for East Stirlingshire.²⁷

In an attached note, Wright referred to his informal discussions with representatives of Stirling County Council, who faced the dilemma that two towns within their boundaries—Stirling and Falkirk—were competing for a new university. He explained that he advised them to declare their support for a University of Stirlingshire and to remain neutral in regard to the two locations in order to raise the chances that the UGC would choose a site within their county. However, he subtly added in parentheses that “they seemed in fact to favour Stirling” and concluded the note with a stunning request: “as the meeting was a private one, my name should not be mentioned in their subsequent deliberations.”²⁸ Wolfenden seemed overly receptive to his former fellow Oxonian’s blunt tactical moves in his response to all three letters, writing of “your zealous compatriots”; promising “a tour of Scotland with discussions on the spot in each place”; and looking forward “to receiving your further advice on all this on Thursday,” presumably at the next UGC meeting.²⁹

²⁵TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Murray to Wright, September 13, 1960.

²⁶TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Wright to Murray, August 8, 1960.

²⁷TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wright to Wolfenden, November 3, 1963.

²⁸TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wright to Wolfenden, November 3, 1963, Note on an informal meeting with the Convener & Clerk of Stirling County Council, November 2, 1963.

²⁹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wolfenden to Wright, November 5, 1963.

Inverness

Inverness, the small cultural and administrative center of the Scottish Highlands, had circa 28,700 inhabitants, medieval origins, and a representative nineteenth-century castle and cathedral. It was frequently portrayed as a remote tourist destination in the economically deprived and depopulating, but environmentally very attractive, Highlands along the northeast coast of Scotland. Accordingly, the promotion committee’s submission to the UGC stressed the importance that a new university would have for economic development, industrial expansion, and sociocultural enrichment in the Highlands. Accommodation existed for 1,100 students in town, and for a further 400 students in the unoccupied Cameron Barracks. Local financial contributions of 10% were in place for a university of 1,500 students, amounting to circa £225,000 a year for ten years.³⁰

Inverness was put forward as an ideal place for studying biology, botany, zoology, geography, geology, forestry, medicine, and Celtic studies, which represented a more specialized range of studies than that envisioned elsewhere. Moreover, the inclusion of subjects such as geography addressed the fact that they had been excluded from some of the more experimental curricula in the new English universities for lack of backing from learned societies and powerful lobbyists (Johnston, 2004). In addition to the 70 acres of the Cameron Barracks, a site of 80 acres was immediately available within a ten-minute walk, and there was a possibility of obtaining more land in the future. Given that the UGC subcommittee was after a site of at least 200 acres, this limitation might have been a competitive disadvantage.³¹

Inverness received the most support in writing from a diverse group of interested parties, starting in 1960 with the Scottish Union of Students informing the Secretary of State for Scotland that, in their view, the new university should be a residential one and located in Inverness because locations in the central belt would be too close to the existing institutions that were serving this area well.³² Just after the publication of the Robbins report, Margaret Cohen, who held an M.A. in English Literature from Edinburgh and a Ph.D. from Cambridge, urged the UGC to consider Inverness as a location for the new university because it would “strengthen the whole cultural life of the north” and enable Highlanders to study in their home region.³³ A month later, the medieval historian Lionel Butler (University of St. Andrews) reminded Wolfenden of their meeting in his Oxford college All Souls in 1956 or 1957 with

³⁰TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Proposed erection of university in Inverness, December 27, 1963.

³¹TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Proposed erection of university in Inverness, December 27, 1963.

³²TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: D. John Parker, Vice-President of the Scottish Union of Students, to Maclay, November 30, 1960.

³³TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Cohen to Copleston, October 25, 1963.

the aim of arranging a meeting with him and his colleague R. J. Adam, a native from the Scottish Highlands keen to press the case for Inverness as a private person.³⁴

Wolfenden politely declined the invitation to be hosted at All Souls but invited written comments, in which the historian Adam included a three-page memorandum that he also sent to the Inverness promotion committee. In this document, he elaborated on five main arguments: the suitability of the town; the advantages of the surrounding region; the establishment of faculties for the humanities, the sciences, and environmental studies; the possibility of adding a new scheme of first-degree studies; and the relevance of a university to the Highland situation.³⁵ Other backers added to these arguments the new university's importance for preserving a distinct Scottish heritage.³⁶

Further support arrived from the Presbytery of Inverness, the Presbytery of Chanonry and Dingwall, and the local Conservative MP, Neil McLean. In addition, Ex-Provost Robert Wotherspoon, chairman of the local sponsoring committee, met with Wolfenden on December 13, 1963, to strengthen the case of a new university in Inverness.³⁷ Most lobbyists argued that increased student mobility would attract students to the Highlands and that teaching staff would reside in the place of the university rather than spending time on commuting.³⁸ Yet, not all lobbying was supportive. Wolfenden was sent articles from *The Inverness Courier*, in which the author expressed the highly critical, but clearly narrow-minded, view of those ignoring the significant economic and sociocultural benefits generated by incoming student mobility:

... we ... see absolutely no benefit to either the Highlands or Highlanders coming from a university at Inverness. On the contrary, we know that for young people to have all their education in the one area, and particularly in the one town, is the most stultifying thing that could happen to them, and parochial narrow-mindedness is the main disastrous effect, as can be seen in the case of certain of the already established Scottish universities.³⁹

Ayr, Dumfries, Perth, Falkirk, and Cumbernauld

The other five locations competing for the new Scottish university submitted memoranda on their case to the UGC by the deadline of December 1963 but received far less written endorsement than Stirling and Inverness. Additional supporting letters were received from the Presbytery of Ayr for Ayr, and from Prime Minister Alec

³⁴TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Butler to Wolfenden, November 24, 1963.

³⁵TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Wolfenden to Butler, November 26, 1963; Adam to Wolfenden, December 7, 1963, including memorandum.

³⁶TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: The Reverend John A. Muirden, Rosskeen, to Wolfenden, May 12, 1964.

³⁷TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland.

³⁸TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: The Reverend A. Gordon McGillivray, Inverness, to Wolfenden, December 7, 1963.

³⁹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: *The Inverness Courier*, Friday, May 8, 1964.

Douglas-Home, acting in his capacity as the Conservative MP for Kinross and West Perthshire, for the site offered by Lord Mansfield near Perth. Representatives of these destinations were also treated differently by Wolfenden, who met with Wright as a supporter of Stirling in the context of the UGC meetings in November and December 1963, and arranged to see the chairman of the local sponsoring committee of Inverness also in December 1963, but declined similar requests from Dumfries and Perth.⁴⁰

Ayr, a county town of circa 45,000 inhabitants, originated as a vibrant medieval port town and was located 32 miles south of Glasgow on the west coast of Scotland. The sponsoring committee of a new university emphasized Ayr’s excellent social, cultural, recreational, and educational facilities; the presence of local and regional industries; local community support; and famous Ayrshire men such as the Scottish poet Robert Burns. Four sites were available for purchase, the largest one comprising 204 acres adjacent to the foreshore, and local authority contributions to the finances were estimated at 2% to 3% per year.⁴¹ By the end of November 1963, the town clerk of Ayr was concerned about press reports quoting Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP for West Lothian, as saying that the new university “is almost certain to be sited just outside Falkirk.” The clerk therefore asked the UGC secretary whether preparing a full submission, as invited by Wolfenden earlier in the month, was still sensible—an incident that may have reinforced Wolfenden’s emerging reservations against Falkirk.⁴²

Dumfries—known as “The Queen of the South”—was the second claimant for a new university located south of the central belt of Scotland, at the edge of the Southern Uplands, circa 80 miles south of Glasgow and 35 miles north of the English city Carlisle. The small historic county town of 27,000 inhabitants represented itself as a growth point in the southwest of Scotland, situated in unspoiled countryside with many historic landmarks and proximity to the north of England. Two sites owned by the Secretary of State for Scotland encompassed an impressive 700 and 1,900 acres, but the minimum amount of listed contributions from the local authority was relatively low—£8,180 per year for ten years—even though more was promised. The regional center underlined its thriving cultural bodies; rich opportunities for tourism and leisure; links with university education and scientific and technical facilities for special studies; modern industrial facilities, some of which related to agriculture; excellent communication links; and sufficient private and public housing for students and staff. The submission maintained that the large prospective sites and the small community would be well suited for developing a truly residential university. This assessment was considered important, for according to the Robbins report, half of English students but only 13% of Scottish

⁴⁰TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland.

⁴¹TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Proposed establishment of new university, Submissions by Ayr Town Council to the UGC, December 30, 1963.

⁴²TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Robert C. Brown, town clerk of Ayr, to Copleston, November 25, 1963.

students resided in halls. The submission argued that higher education facilities would contribute in significant ways to the recent government policy of creating growth and development in the southwest of Scotland and would thereby address key concerns of regional development and planning.⁴³

The city of Perth, situated along the River Tay and the railway line from London to Inverness, about 22 miles west of Dundee, represented itself as a historic county town situated within a scenic agricultural area within easy reach of Scotland's population centers and as a gateway to the Scottish Highlands. Serving as Scotland's capital and one of the richest merchant towns in the Middle Ages up until the fifteenth century, Perth was the place in which John Knox precipitated the Reformation in Scotland by encouraging iconoclasm in 1559. The large burgh of circa 41,000 inhabitants offered a readily available and purchasable site of 200 acres located about 1 mile northeast of the town center. It was argued that Perth provided rich cultural, unrivaled recreational, and excellent educational facilities and that no problems were anticipated in regard to available housing for students and staff. Local authorities promised £11,400 per year for ten years, and a public appeal for funds was considered if the campaign to found a university in Perth were successful. In many ways comparable to the proposals submitted by the historic market towns of Ayr, Dumfries, and Stirling, the document presented by the promotion committee of Perth did not specify what subjects the members envisioned the university should emphasize.⁴⁴

Falkirk differed from the other contenders because it was the only industrial town with a heritage of heavy industry that had originated in the late eighteenth and flourished in the nineteenth century. Situated like Stirling in the Forth Valley, the larger town of circa 40,000 inhabitants was located further southeast and thus closer to both Edinburgh (23 miles) and Glasgow (26 miles). New industrial strengths were foregrounded in the adjacent Grangemouth area, with a focus on dyestuff, pharmaceutical, and petrochemical industries; and in Falkirk, with an accent on light casting-industries as well as coach- and caravan-building. The proposed University of East Stirlingshire was supposed to focus on science and technology in an area of industrial growth. The statement that a faculty for the social sciences but none for the arts was envisioned for the new university might not have been well received by the humanists on the UGC subcommittee, and it was also a disadvantage in the light of Glasgow's newly upgraded University of Strathclyde.

The submission of the largest sponsoring committee of all claimant towns, headed by James Drever from the University of Edinburgh, who had been a member of the Robbins committee, offered the Callendar estate at Falkirk as a site of up to 800 acres for the new university. It was stated that 105 acres of the Callendar estate

⁴³TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Dumfries area university committee, Proposal to site a new Scottish university in the Dumfries area, December 1963.

⁴⁴TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Robert Ritchie, Lord Provost of the city and Royal Burgh of Perth and chairman of the university promotion committee, to Wolfenden, December 27, 1963.

were owned by the town council, and were readily available, and that other parts could be bought from supportive private owners. The financial support from ten local authorities amounted to £100,000 a year for ten years, and the professionally produced memorandum not only discussed the usual advantages and amenities but also contained a number of supporting statements evidencing local, regional, and national enthusiasm for the project.⁴⁵

The county council of Stirling remained neutral in regard to the two competing sites in Stirlingshire, as recommended by UGC member Wright, but this stance changed shortly before the UGC subcommittee's field visits in the spring of 1964, when the county clerk of Stirling offered to assist if Stirling were chosen over Falkirk, for the Airthrey estate was located outside the burgh in the landward area owned by the county council.⁴⁶ The direct rivalry between the two locations was very evident because East Stirlingshire's original submission warned that locating "a university in some quiet, exclusive residential backwater confers privilege only on the few,"⁴⁷ whereas Stirling's supplementary memorandum, sent to the UGC shortly before the field visits, evoked the weather for taking a dig at Falkirk—"The district is free from the fog which often in winter covers the industrial area to the south."⁴⁸

Cumbernauld New Town, located 13 miles to the northeast of Glasgow city center and thus halfway to both Stirling and Falkirk, was also very different because its center had been under construction since 1963, for a town with a targeted population size of circa 70,000 inhabitants. Of the seven contenders, it was the only place that did not send a full submission to the UGC by the December 1963 deadline but only a preliminary report of eight pages and the new town's official development brochure. This lack of a full submission prompted the Cumbernauld Development Corporation to explain to the UGC in March 1964 that it was in touch with the responsible Education Committee of Dunbarton County Council about a full submission, implying that complicated planning processes underpinned the new town development.⁴⁹ The Cumbernauld Development Corporation suggested that a site of 300 acres with potential for expansion could be fitted into the new town's master plan, stressing both ample time for planning the town with an integrated

⁴⁵TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Promotion committee for the proposed University of East Stirlingshire, Submission to the UGC, December 1963.

⁴⁶TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: James D. Kennedy, county clerk of Stirling, to Wolfenden, December 2, 1963; TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Kennedy to Wolfenden, March 12, 1964.

⁴⁷TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Promotion committee for the proposed University of East Stirlingshire, Submission to the UGC, December 1963, p. 9.

⁴⁸TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Royal Burgh of Stirling, Proposed university at Airthrey estate, Supplementary memorandum by the sponsoring committee, n.d., p. 2.

⁴⁹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: G. R. B. MacGill, General manager of the Cumbernauld Development Corporation, to Copleston, March 6, 1964.

university and the unique chance of the new town and new university growing up together.⁵⁰ Yet Cumbernauld's chances seemed slim given that the new town had still to be built, whereas student places were needed imminently.

The Decision

Throughout the decision-making process, Wolfenden gauged opinions on the potential locations for the new university during lunch and dinner meetings and through correspondence with individuals such as Wright, a tireless advocate for Stirling, and Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon and the Chancellor of St. Andrews from 1948 to 1973. Considering the distribution of population with an emphasis on the west of Scotland and the prospect of two universities in Glasgow and four in the east, Douglas-Hamilton argued that the new university should not be established further east than Stirling. He supported Inverness's claim with a view of countering depopulation in the Highlands but also suggested his family's property, the High Parks at Hamilton in South Lanarkshire, as a possible university site located in the southern agglomeration of Glasgow. In response, Wolfenden specified the key challenge of the decision-making as the contrasting opinions of those who felt that the central belt already offered enough university places and those who argued that saving a remote depopulating area should not be the main reason for locating a new university there.⁵¹

At the first meeting of the UGC Subcommittee on New Universities, held on February 28, 1964, the members were informed by Wolfenden that one of the factors to be taken into consideration when deciding on the new university was regional planning. For that reason McGuinness and Grieve from the Scottish Development Department had been invited to give their views on the matter. The Robbins report had made an argument for choosing large cities or places in their vicinity as locations for new universities, whereas the previous UGC Subcommittee on New University Colleges, which had approved six of the seven new English universities, regarded local support, student lodgings, a site of not less than 200 acres, and the attraction to well-qualified staff as the most important criteria because staff required pleasant surroundings and good facilities for themselves and their families.

Most of these UGC and Robbins criteria gave weight to the claims of Cumbernauld, Falkirk, and Stirling because they were located in Scotland's central belt (Fig. 6.1), whereas considerations of regional development and planning were treated in a highly ambiguous way. McGuinness from the Scottish Development

⁵⁰TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Cumbernauld Development Corporation, A new university in the new town of Cumbernauld, Preliminary report, December 12, 1963.

⁵¹TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: The Duke of Hamilton and Brandon, Lord Steward of the Household and Chancellor of the University of St Andrews, to Wolfenden, February 7, 1964; Wolfenden to The Duke of Hamilton and Brandon, February 10, 1964.

Department underscored that academic success was more important than subordinate regional considerations, whereas his colleague Grieve first supported the case of Inverness in many ways (e.g., influx of new money, students counterbalancing seasonality through tourism) but then called it an isolated area. Furthermore, a clear statement in the minutes on the local and regional economic benefits of a new university in remote areas was immediately extenuated as follows:

A university placed elsewhere than in the central belt would have a considerable effect in helping to regenerate the outer areas, e.g., in Dumfries or Inverness. Nevertheless, the Development authorities would not support a university in a particular area merely in order to provide an economic boost.⁵²

It was further brought to attention that Inverness lacked local labor and resources for a university catering for circa 3,000 students, and that Dumfries would be better placed to offer both but was short on staff and student accommodation. Another argument for a location in the central belt was the possibility for Cumbernauld, Falkirk, and Stirling to recruit students from the local population and a wider commuter area. In response to the chairman's question about building a university into the new town of Cumbernauld, McGuinness explained that the terrain was not well suited or very attractive and that inconvenience was expected for the first five years. The narrative of the minutes then centered squarely on the choice of Falkirk and Stirling, culminating in a final paragraph on the perceived advantages of Stirling:

Stirling was situated at the "superior" end of the central belt and was within comparatively easy reach of Edinburgh and Glasgow. It was an attractive place and came nearest to achieving the best of both worlds.⁵³

This first UGC subcommittee meeting concluded with agreement on two visits over two days to the seven aspirant university locations in the spring of 1964. On April 28 and 29, the UGC subcommittee, consisting of Wolfenden, Briggs, Stewart, Sutherland, and Vick (not on April 29), and two UGC colleagues visited Dumfries and Ayr on the first day and Cumbernauld and Falkirk on the second. The committee members spent between two-and-a-half and four hours in each place and continued their inspections of suitable sites—according to Wolfenden "the pleasant end of the task"⁵⁴—two weeks later in beautiful weather with visits to Stirling and Perth (May 12) and Inverness (May 13). All visits attracted wide coverage in the local and national press, especially in Inverness and Dumfries, the latter of which had tried to obtain a university in the seventeenth, nineteenth, and mid-twentieth centuries and had been unsuccessful on all occasions.⁵⁵ Dumfries's representatives specifically

⁵²TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: UGC Subcommittee on New Universities, Minutes of a meeting held on February 28, 1964, p. 3.

⁵³TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: UGC Subcommittee on New Universities, Minutes of a meeting held on February 28, 1964, pp. 3, 7.

⁵⁴TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: *The Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, May 13, 1964.

⁵⁵TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: *The case for a new Scottish University*, November 2, 1960, p. 6.

accentuated the town's advantages over Inverness as a rural area, maintaining that the latter was too remote, whereas Ayr was confident that its connection to Robert Burns would help generate increased financial support if the town were chosen for the new university.⁵⁶

Cumbernauld highlighted its unique chance of building up the university together with the new town, thereby benefitting from cheap land and good housing. Falkirk tried to enthrall Wolfenden and his UGC colleagues through a helicopter flight over Callendar House estate, resulting in the evaluation that "Falkirk has by far the most active and widely based Promotion Committee and are extremely keen contenders for the University."⁵⁷ Yet this intensity also generated very critical comments in the UGC subcommittee's report on the field visits, which called the flight somewhat unnecessary, identified "fundamental dissensions" among the more than 25 attending members of Falkirk's promotion committee, and characterized the discussions disrespectfully as "widely discursive."⁵⁸ At a dinner with six colleagues from the Scottish Development Department and the Scottish Education Department, the UGC subcommittee members stated not only that they found Dumfries too remote, and the local authority in Ayr too unreliable, but also that Falkirk did not possess any advantages that neighboring Cumbernauld would not have.⁵⁹

The impressions noted after the second site visits in mid-May seemed to be more positive and much fairer, especially in regard to Stirling, where the promotion committee stressed that the facilities could be adapted to any type of university desired. The only hesitant remarks in an overly lengthy UGC report section on Stirling claimed that the readily available site was "very undulating and wooded and the siting of the university within the estate might not be easy," whereas Perth was acknowledged to be a very attractive place offering a site that was "largely treeless with gentle slopes where it is not completely flat," yet its closeness to Dundee and St. Andrews was seen critically.⁶⁰ After a three-and-a-half hour drive to Inverness the next morning, the UGC party was "somewhat bemused by scenery" before being treated to twelve different speeches, during which the novelist Eric Linklater compared Britain in terms of its distribution of population and higher education to "a

⁵⁶TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: New university in Scotland, UGC visits, April 27–28, 1964, pp. 2–3.

⁵⁷TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: Sixth Scottish University, n.d., p. 1.

⁵⁸TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: New university in Scotland, UGC visits, April 27–28, 1964, pp. 6–7.

⁵⁹TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Note of discussion with Scottish Development Department and Scottish Education Department Officials, Edinburgh, April 28, 1964.

⁶⁰TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: New university in Scotland, UGC visits, May 12–13, 1964, pp. 2–3.

Fig. 6.2 UGC subcommittee visit to the Airthrey Castle estate in Stirling (from left to right: William MacFarlane Gray, former Provost of Stirling; Michael Kelly, Provost of Stirling; John Wolfenden, UGC chairman; G. W. Norman, town clerk of Stirling; and Lucy Sutherland, UGC subcommittee member). Source: The National Archives, Kew, University Grants Committee, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: *The Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, May 13, 1964. Reprinted with permission.



badly loaded ship,” arguing that a University of Inverness “would help to redress the balance.”⁶¹

The Glasgow Herald eagerly compared the value of the sites in Stirling, Perth, and Inverness, capturing some of the subcommittee members’ great enthusiasm about Airthrey Castle estate at Stirling during the field visit (Fig. 6.2). Apparently, such moments of inspection seemed to be less enjoyable in Inverness, for it was reported in the press—and to some extent confirmed by the UGC notes blaming the speeches—that

Sir John and his six-strong party were in such a hustle after an hour-long meeting that they did not have time to step out of their cars and examine the four sites pointed out to them. They drove slowly past possible sites at Holme Mains, Beechwood, round the Cameron Barracks, and peered out from a vantage point window at the barracks towards the spacious Longman. Then they rushed a Press Conference of less than five minutes in time to catch a south-bound plane from Dalcross.⁶²

⁶¹TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: New university in Scotland, UGC visits, May 12–13, 1964, pp. 3–4.

⁶²TNA, UGC 7/239. Fifth university for Scotland: *The Press and Journal* [Inverness], Thursday, May 14, 1964.



Fig. 6.3 UGC subcommittee visit to the Cameron Barracks in Inverness (Brigadier Maitland Makgill-Crichton chatting with Wolfenden surrounded by other subcommittee members and the local sponsoring committee). Source: The National Archives, Kew, University Grants Committee, UGC 7/239. *Fifth university for Scotland: The Press and Journal* (Inverness), Thursday, May 14, 1964. Reprinted with permission.

Wolfenden's brief discussion with a brigadier of the Cameron Highlanders apparently added confusion about the Cameron Barracks' full availability for the new university,⁶³ so it might be possible that Lucy Sutherland's rather grim facial expression during this exchange preempted the UGC subcommittee's final decision that was considerably shaped by her views, which she subsequently communicated to her colleagues in writing (Fig. 6.3).

After the field visits, additional information requested by the UGC subcommittee members was submitted by the town clerk of Ayr on where students from the district were studying (68% at the University of Glasgow), by the town clerk of Dumfries on the availability of lodgings within a half-an-hour travel radius, and by the Cumbernauld Development Corporation on the availability of student accommodation.⁶⁴ Wolfenden received further letters, from the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine in support of Falkirk and from Norman Petch, a well-known Scottish scientist who was Cochrane Professor of Metallurgy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, in

⁶³TNA, UGC 7/244. *Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: New university in Scotland, UGC visits, May 12–13, 1964*, p. 5.

⁶⁴TNA, UGC 7/239. *Fifth university for Scotland*; TNA, UGC 7/244. *Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit*.

favor of Stirling. Wolfenden responded to these approaches very differently by reassuring Petch that the subcommittee would keep his considerations in mind and explaining to Elgin that the decision would be made “in the full knowledge that inevitably there will be six times as many people disappointed as satisfied.”⁶⁵

The subsequent second meeting of the UGC subcommittee, during which the locational decision was made, took place on June 5, 1964. Lucy Sutherland, an influential Oxford historian, soon to be elected principal of St. Hilda’s College, had outlined her evaluations in writing because she could not participate in the subcommittee’s post-visit meeting. She ruled out both Dumfries, which was “likely to become a second St. Andrews in its draw to English students from over the border,” and Inverness, which exhibited “too much Highland regionalism,” as too inaccessible, thus reiterating press statements that raised concerns about recruiting and retaining staff in remote regions.⁶⁶

In Ayr, Sutherland observed a lack of local support beyond the request of gaining material advantage. She also argued against Falkirk and Cumbernauld because of their closeness to Edinburgh and Glasgow, respectively. She reasoned that Falkirk’s site lacked adequate building space—presumably because of some protected woodland and the relatively small share that was owned and ready to be built on—and that the university’s “chief advantages lie on the technological side, while the student demand is likely to be for the Arts.”⁶⁷ Cumbernauld would be an interesting yet “eccentric choice” due to the early stages of what she called an experiment with an unknown social future, the main reason why she favored “a more orthodox choice.”⁶⁸

Eventually, Sutherland chose Stirling over Perth—between which she did not see “a great deal of difference”—because the latter was too close to Dundee and Stirling would be “more generally accessible.” However, she asked whether the university could be sited within the historic setting of this “small town of character” rather than miles from the town center.⁶⁹ Seen together with subsequent discussions of the subcommittee, this reasoning confirms our argument that Stirling was chosen over the rival Scottish locations partly because Sutherland and her colleagues, many of whom had been based at Oxbridge at some point during their education and career, wished to reproduce the creative setting of the ancient universities.

The assumption that “In Stirling [the area] has a town which is the historian’s delight, while dons might turn the Bridge of Allan, for better or worse, into another

⁶⁵TNA, UGC 7/240. Fifth university for Scotland: Wolfenden to the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Grand Master Mason of Scotland, June 5, 1964.

⁶⁶TNA, UGC 7/242. Fifth university for Scotland: Visits to prospective sites: Sutherland to Wolfenden, May 27, 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁷TNA, UGC 7/242. Fifth university for Scotland: Visits to prospective sites: Sutherland to Wolfenden, May 27, 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁸TNA, UGC 7/242. Fifth university for Scotland: Visits to prospective sites: Sutherland to Wolfenden, May 27, 1964, p. 2.

⁶⁹TNA, UGC 7/242. Fifth university for Scotland: Visits to prospective sites: Sutherland to Wolfenden, May 27, 1964, p. 2.

North Oxford”⁷⁰ had already been made in the autumn of 1960 by two journalists of *The Glasgow Herald*, Robert D. Kernohan and James Holburn, in their memorandum on a new Scottish university. Their suggestion will not only have appealed to the Oxford humanists on the UGC subcommittee but also seemed to have been visionary in regard to how Bridge of Allan has actually developed ever since. Yet although the town of Stirling afforded the much longed-for “dreaming spires” of Oxford, the reality of the 1960s modernist campus turned out to be architecturally quite different in style than the historic town center and thus became an experiment in its own right—albeit a very successful one (Neave, 1976).

For their decision, the members of the subcommittee could draw on Sutherland’s letter and different memoranda about the visits; one-page summaries on the contender’s location, population, site, and local industries; an ordnance survey map of the proposed site’s or sites’ locations in relation to the respective town (scale 1:25,000); and two quite sophisticated thematic maps that enabled them to compare the locations of proposed universities in regard to (a) the size of their populations within a 30-mile radius (Fig. 6.1) and (b) potential student populations in areas within one hour of travel by train or bus (Fig. 6.4). Transparent overheads allowed the presenter to superimpose on these maps a second layer conveying the corresponding information for each of the four existing university cities. From the perspective of regional policy, both maps suggest that Inverness, Dumfries, and Ayr would have been the most suitable locations for the new university, if the government had indeed wanted to stimulate regional development and economic growth in Scotland’s more rural and remote areas, to support equivalent living conditions, and to encourage geographically disadvantaged strata of the population to access higher education.

Yet in their final, unanimous decision, the members of the subcommittee largely followed Sutherland’s reasoning when recommending to the government—via the UGC—that the new university in Scotland should be located at Stirling—a recommendation formally accepted and publicly announced by Quintin Hogg, the Conservative Secretary of State for Science and Education, in the House of Commons on July 17, 1964.⁷¹ Stirling’s location, site, and sponsorship seemed to guarantee effective growth of the new academic institution, to be attractive to students and staff from elsewhere, and to act on the Robbins report’s suggestion to place new universities within the vicinity of large population centers (90% of Scotland’s population concentrated on the industrial belt between Glasgow and Edinburgh at the time). Against any consideration of regional development and planning, the subcommittee argued that their geographical location outside of Scotland’s central population belt spoke against Ayr, Dumfries, Inverness, and Perth as sites for the new university. Among the three central locations, Stirling and nearby Bridge of

⁷⁰TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: The case for a new Scottish university, November 2, 1960, p. 5.

⁷¹TNA, UGC 7/245. University of Stirling: Wolfenden to John Spencer Muirhead, chairman of the New University Sponsoring Committee at Stirling, July 18, 1964.

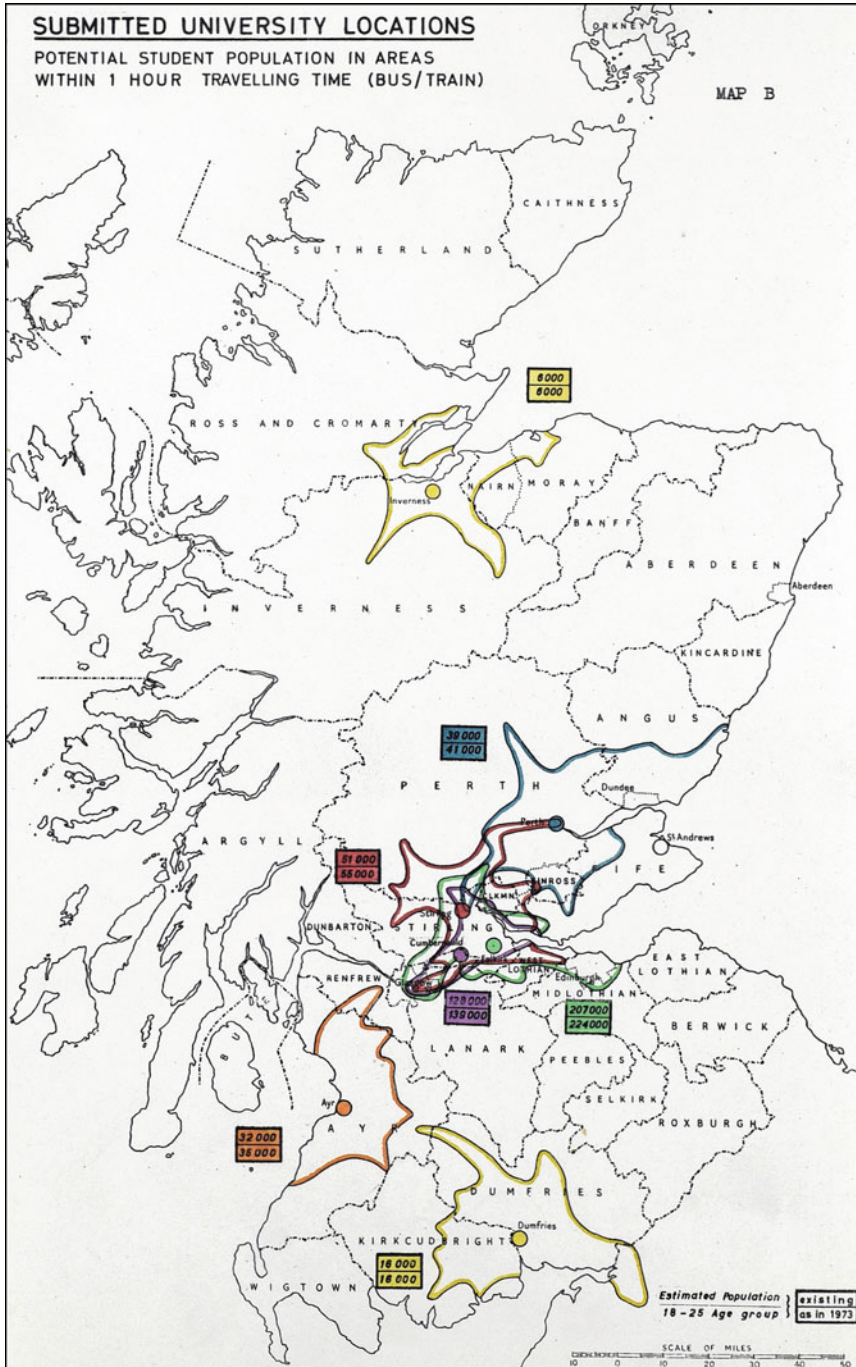


Fig. 6.4 Map on the locations and student catchment areas of places applying for a new university in Scotland (April 1964). Source: The National Archives, Kew, University Grants Committee, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Proposed university locations, Map B. Reprinted with permission.

Allan provided suitable lodgings and housing and were seen as the most attractive—to such an extent that the subcommittee thought academic staff at a university in either Falkirk or Cumbernauld would want to reside in Stirling.⁷²

The members of the campaign committee for a University in East Stirlingshire were so disappointed by this decision that they repeatedly wrote to government officials, complaining almost one year later to Frank Cousins, Minister of Technology in Harold Wilson's first Labour government, that they had been "shamefully passed over" as a heavily populated industrial area because of "political manoeuvring, both ordinary politics and shady academic politics." The East Stirlingshire committee argued further that Stirling was "a small exclusive county town in the historical claimant tradition, and incidentally a claimant that had done absolutely nothing in the way of respectable campaign."⁷³ In a previous letter to Prime Minister Harold Wilson, it is documented that, shortly after the government's decision for Stirling, the Falkirk supporters had learned that the secretary of the Falkirk campaign committee, Alexander Duncan, had been instructed to visit Wright at St. Andrews at the start of their campaign in early November 1960.⁷⁴ From the perspective of the Falkirk supporters, the ensuing interaction might only have generated Wright's interest in establishing a university in Stirling. According to Duncan,

Professor Wright gave me a hearing, and subsequently used his influence with Sir Keith Murray, the Chairman of the University Grants Committee, to arrange for a series of meetings at St. Andrews House [*sic*], Edinburgh, in December 1960 between Sir Keith Murray and representatives of the 6 claimant areas, 5 of these having staked claims following the start of our own campaign. . . . A year ago, when the formal Submissions were being made by the Scottish claimant areas, it transpired that the Stirling Submission was 'ghosted' by Professor Wright.⁷⁵

Adding insult to injury, Murray had apparently stressed to Duncan in Edinburgh "the importance of having pledged financial backing."⁷⁶ Yet the Stirling campaign had raised only a fraction of the local financial support lined up in Falkirk and Inverness, a fact that created a row in the days of the final decision about the possibility that local-authority backing should be transferred from Falkirk to Stirling,

⁷²TNA, UGC 7/240. Fifth university for Scotland: New University in Scotland, Report from Subcommittee on New Universities, June 18, 1964.

⁷³TNA, UGC 7/240. Fifth university for Scotland: Duncan to Cousins, April 10, 1965.

⁷⁴TNA, UGC 7/237. Fifth university for Scotland: Wright to Duncan, November 10, 1960.

⁷⁵TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Duncan to Wilson, November 13, 1964, p. 1.

⁷⁶TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Duncan to Wilson, November 13, 1964, p. 1.

if the latter were chosen as the site for the new university.⁷⁷ With an undertone of gratification, Wolfenden then announced the government’s choice to the six defeated campaigns with a daring appeal: “I hope that you will now feel able to lend your full support to the new Scottish university at Stirling and to encourage those who had expressed their support for your own proposal to rally round the new foundation.”⁷⁸

This correspondence, surviving in its full lucidness, therefore confirms the impression that a group of former and present Oxonians did not take the risk of choosing a novel type of university site—or of following the Redbrick tradition expressed in the Robbins committee’s preference for populated industrial areas. Instead, they aimed to reproduce an exclusive historic and environmentally attractive university setting similar to that so familiar to the UGC members from their alma mater. The involvement of Oxford alumni in the decision-making process had undeniably been impressive—in 1929 Murray, Wolfenden, Sutherland, and Wright had been all at Oxford University in one capacity or other, and Sutherland was still working there in 1964. Coincidentally, the Stirling campaign’s leader, the renowned solicitor John Spencer Muirhead, who had graduated from Oriel College with a double first B.A. degree in 1912, had been made honorary fellow there in 1962—in the same Oxford college in which Murray had worked from 1929 to 1932.

Conclusions

*On the other hand it might be held that the location [Cumbernauld New Town] would be relatively unattractive both to students and staff, apart perhaps from social scientists.*⁷⁹

This chapter has begun to contribute to a new research agenda on the histories, politics, and geographies of British university expansion in the 1960s. By reconstructing the debates and decisions about locating a new university in Scotland, we have shown that, after the recommendation made by the Robbins report in October 1963 to found at least one new university in Scotland, government policy on university expansion continued to be shaped by what Shattock (2012) called “a common ‘Oxbridge’ culture built up particularly through the War years which bound together senior university figures, the UGC, Treasury officials and (some) politicians” (p. 15). This key finding underlines the abiding significance that closely knit personal networks across different economic sectors and that informal exchanges

⁷⁷TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Duncan to Wolfenden, June 6, 1964.

⁷⁸TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: Wolfenden to Drever, Provost of the East Stirlingshire Sponsoring Committee, July 18, 1964.

⁷⁹TNA, UGC 7/244. Fifth university for Scotland: Action following UGC visit: UGC, Subcommittee on New Universities, New university in Scotland, Points for consideration, June 5, 1964, p. 3.

and gentle(wo)men's agreements had for evidence-based policy-making in the post-Robbins era.⁸⁰

Our analysis has revealed that devious lobbying and counterlobbying practices had discredited the campaign for a University of East Stirlingshire in Falkirk since November 1960, and repeatedly from October 1963 onward, with the sole aim of promoting the Stirling campaign. This situation made the efforts of Ayr, Cumbernauld, Falkirk, Dumfries, Inverness, and Perth seem doomed right from the start. The key person able to influence the thinking of both Murray and Wolfenden as the successive chairmen of both the UGC and the UGC subcommittee responsible for choosing the locations of new universities was fellow UGC member Wright, who had been born in Stirling and lived there. He had also been based at Oxford at the same time as other key decision-makers, especially Murray, Sutherland, and Wolfenden, whose undergraduate college Wright entered as a fellow in 1928, the year Wolfenden graduated.

In conjunction with other archival documents, the correspondence with Wright suggests that Stirling had already been chosen in the UGC chairman's mind when Wolfenden wrote to the seven claimant locations in early November 1963 to request supporting statements by the end of the year, and also when the government officially asked the UGC in January 1964 to advise on the location of the new Scottish university from among the places that had previously expressed an interest in such an institution. In this context, Anderson's (2006) characterization of the University of Stirling as one of "eight new universities on greenfield sites" (p. 136) created by the UGC under Keith Murray, whose chairmanship ended in October 1963, contains—perhaps intuitively—more truth than the subsequent work of Wolfenden's UGC subcommittee and their field visits implies.

This argument gains further traction when one considers that Shattock (2012) characterized Murray as "powerful" and Wolfenden as "a much less committed figure" (p. 39). Scottish-born Murray might indeed have pondered Stirling as the most suitable location for a new Scottish university since his meetings with local sponsoring committees in December 1960. Having formed an "unofficial inner group" (Shattock, 2014, p. 114) with Robbins, Morris, and Linstead, Murray might also have actively pursued this agenda during the Robbins committee meetings, for example, by assuring that the new Scottish university could be located *near to* rather than only *in* large population centers, for it was he whom Wolfenden

⁸⁰Similarly dense intersectoral networks were reconstructed in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s by Craggs and Neate (2017) in regard to former colonial administrators becoming New Town general managers.

recruited as the chairman of Stirling’s Academic Planning Board after consultation with the Scottish Education Department and the local sponsoring committee.⁸¹

Like the earlier debates about the locations of the new English universities, approved before Robbins began his deliberations, discussions about Scotland’s new university were essentially ad hoc and informal and thus fitted the bigger picture of how Shattock (2012, p. 3) characterized British higher education policy in the second half of the twentieth century. Partly as a result, discussions about the location of the new Scottish university recommended by Robbins were as unsystematic as the debates about the new English universities. Although the Robbins report was based on a mass of statistical research on the necessary scale and character of Britain’s higher education system, minimal attention went to the long-term economic, social, and cultural implications of a new university in the various locations considered. Even less thought was given to the potential of different towns and cities to influence the teaching and research environments of a new institution of higher education.

The Robbins report also did not address the wider national geography of the proposed expansion in any significant way, an omission that can be linked to Johnston’s (2004) point that geography had few advocates in British policy circles during the 1950s and 1960s for lack of engagement and collective action by the learned societies and leading academic geographers. The absence of geographers in the decision-making might have made it easier for the UGC subcommittee to invert prevailing aims of regional development and planning. British regional policy, originating from the 1930s and shifting its focus from full employment to economic growth in the 1960s, was at that time attending to three problem regions: rural, depressed industrial, and congested areas (McCrone, 1969). Under such circumstances, the strong contender of Falkirk, in need of a university to support industrial transformation in the Falkirk–Grangemouth–Larbert area, was sidelined as much as the remoter rural locations that required economic and cultural development, especially Ayr, Dumfries, and Inverness as the capital of the Scottish Highlands.

In the tradition of the English “Baedeker towns” that had been awarded universities under Murray’s UGC chairmanship and were developing their new institutions during the 1960s—all run by Oxbridge-educated Vice-Chancellors—the choice came down to a site featuring a picturesque landscape near a historically appealing county town in Scotland’s central population belt.⁸² We therefore argue that this choice of location reproduced the setting of the ancient universities rather than considering the long-term economic, social, and cultural implications of different university locations for Britain’s urban network and experimenting with new types of places for learning, teaching, and research—as the new universities in England did with their innovative curricula (Briggs, 1991). From 1965 to 1975, such geo-

⁸¹TNA, UGC 7/245. University of Stirling: Wolfenden to MacFarlane Gray, former Provost of Stirling and member of the New University Sponsoring Committee at Stirling, August 25, 1964.

⁸²TNA, UGC 7/241. Fifth university for Scotland: Submissions: Royal Burgh of Stirling, Proposed university at Airthrey estate, Supplementary memorandum by the sponsoring committee, n.d., p. 1.

graphical experimentation occurred in West Germany, where the government followed the advice of geographers and regional planners to adopt a rather rationalist planning perspective when locating new universities in old industrial and rural areas, as with the universities of Bochum and Constance, respectively (Mayr, 1979). The success of this strategy subsequently led to the recommendation “to choose smaller towns as locations of universities in order to intensify the regional educational and economic activities and potential in underdeveloped areas” (Mayr, 1979, p. 324).

Our analysis has demonstrated that the new Scottish university only partly modernized an ancient university system. The all-important locational decision to select Stirling over other possible towns reaffirmed a traditional, Oxonian view of an appropriate setting for a university, an outcome only partially offset by the architectural choice of using modern brutalist architecture, albeit in a modest way. From this perspective, the Wolfenden era seemed to continue the Murray era that favored small historic towns for new arts-based universities. This perpetuation contrasted with the idea of universities developing the natural, technical, and social sciences in larger industrial cities, a view reminiscent of the Redbrick era and epitomized by the Robbins report. In terms of location and subject orientation, the rivalry between the Stirling and Falkirk campaigns, headed by an honorary fellow of Oriel College Oxford and a member of the Robbins committee, respectively, arguably exemplified the competition between an arts-based Oxford model and a science-based LSE view on where new universities should be located and how they should be designed.

These opposing views reflected wider, multilayered tensions in British society, such as those between Oxbridge and the civic universities (Anderson, 2006, pp. 136–137). A second strata of tensions evident in the divergent perspectives discussed in this chapter existed between a more arts-based Oxford University with close connections to politics, as illustrated by the dominance of Oxford-educated UGC members, and a more science-oriented Cambridge University, whose alumni figured more prominently on the Robbins committee. This difference was reinforced throughout the twentieth century by the practices underlying these institutions’ conferment of honorary degrees (Heffernan & Jöns, 2007, p. 414). A third frictional interface was that between old-school humanists and increasingly powerful modern scientists, as expressed in the Robbins report’s support for science and technology and a “belief in the ‘white heat of technology’ in the electoral programme of Harold Wilson” (Anderson, 2006, p. 150). Yet Murray, as the new chairman of Stirling’s Academic Planning Board, strategically bridged these varying cultures by asking Robbins to become the first chancellor of the new University of Stirling, an appointment the LSE economist accepted after some consideration (Howson, 2011, p. 987).

Lastly, we argue that the chance to establish a second new university in Scotland—as tentatively suggested by the Robbins committee (CHE, 1963, p. 155)—and thus to use a new university for stimulating economic growth in deprived regions was sadly missed by the British government. This option might have been prevented by looming financial austerity that prompted the government to put a hold on further expansion plans in April 1964, just before the Scottish field visits took place. After adoption of the view that the existing universities would be able to accommodate the target numbers of students, it took another ten months, and a change of government, before Anthony Crosland, the new Labour Secretary of State for Education and

Science, announced on February 24, 1965, that no additional new universities would be needed for about ten years (Mountford, 1966, p. 43). This decision ended the ambitions of over 40 promotion committees that were still arguing for new universities in England and Wales at the time, and whose stories remain to be told.

Acknowledgement We are grateful to Peter Meusburger, Robert Anderson, Holger Nehring, and David Antal for insightful comments on an earlier version of our chapter.

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